I Will Follow You Into the Dark

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I Will Follow You Into the Dark

by andmynewlymeltedheart

Summary

Ilya Rozanov is looking for a fight, and Shane Hollander is looking for Ilya.

Notes

I hope you all enjoy the first chapter of this fic! I'm not sure if I should write more, but I do have a plot coming together for this that could be lowk devastating (and then healing.) lmk what you think!

Chapter 1

Ilya Rozanov never knew how to keep his mouth shut— it'd been a problem for him since he was a young boy. He remembered a time, what felt now like a lifetime ago, when he first faced the consequences of this.

A schoolmate, a greasy shit named Fyodor Volkov, cornered him after school and tried to kiss him as they walked near each other on the path through the woods that led towards home. Ilya was not against kissing boys, in fact, he quite enjoyed it, though in a different way than he enjoyed kissing girls.

He felt as though he was an undeniably handsome young man, and enjoyed the perks that brought, but even at fourteen Rozanov had standards. He thought Volkov was thoroughly annoying. Add to this that his classmate constantly smelled like boiled eggs, and one could understand why Rozanov was simply not in the mood to swap spit with the dental-hygiene challenged Volkov. Ilya wordlessly pushed him off of him, several times, before Volkov got the hint and ran the rest of the way home. Ilya almost felt bad as he saw his figure, red as a beet, darting through the half melted snow. *Almost*.

But then the little asshole spent the following day running around the school telling anyone who would listen that Ilya was a "nasty little queer" who tried to jump his bones after school. Though Ilya told himself he had nothing to worry about, there was a small pang in his stomach, a warning that he would be in danger if someone even suspected this was true. What he needed was some manner of plausible deniability— a way to keep the heat off of him while taking Volkov down a peg. At lunchtime that day, Ilya took a deep breath and climbed atop a table to address the rumors.

"I want to discuss something with my fellow classmates. There is a rumor spreading that I, Ilya Grigorovich Rozanov, am, according to Fyodor Volkov, a, 'nasty little queer,'" Rozanov boomed, an incredulous shade to his tone.

"Well," he continued, silently hoping this would work with his classmates en masse, "The rumors… are true.

The cafeteria sat in a stunned silence. Fyodor was…smiling? Constipated? Ilya often found it difficult to tell with him. He continued.

"I am gay… in the same way that our friend Volkov here is good at hockey," another beat of silence. Then, uproarious laughter from all sides of the room, bellowing off the cool marble and reverberating throughout.

"So! Since rejecting this piss smelling bitch makes me gay, then, Volkov," Ilya said, turning his direct attention to his foe, "…losing to the worst team in the league because you are a shit goaltender makes you Tretiak."

The laughter escalated into jeers and insults thrown vigorously in Volkov's direction. He was fuming, eyes locked on Ilya's, heat and rage radiating from him. As Volkov charged him, Rozanov felt a giddy rush, excitement flooding every molecule in his body. Finally— a *challenge*.

Fyodor had already gone through quite a bit of puberty at that point, his skin stretched over his new size, his neck thicker, legs struggling under the weight of their new muscle. Ilya was still very boyish at this point— thin as a rail, all lean muscle, but fast. Naturally, he lunged for Ilya, who ducked several times before Volkov took a cheap shot, tackling him to the ground.

"Don't worry, Fedya!" Ilya said, squeezing Volkov's face together with one disproportionately large hand, his face turning red, bloated, and fishlike, "Only me, your mama, and God saw your little piss puddle freeze over on the ice when Balinsky took his shot."

Fyodor gathered Rozanov's arms in a balled up hand and pinned them to the ground, spitting in his face.

"Kinky. And by the way, you straddling me in the cafeteria…in front of everyone… definitely does not make you gay. But you getting *har*—"

Fyodor cocked his fist and landed a punch, solid as stone, on Ilya's cheekbone. He paused for a moment, and Ilya laughed. Volkov struck again in the same exact spot.

"At least I have a mama," he hissed, holding his hand around Rozanov's neck.

Rozanov faltered for a moment, just a fraction of a second. The shock of his mother's death hadn't lost its potency in the twenty-three months since she took…since she passed. Yet Ilya quickly regained himself, fighting a strangled feeling that was not from the hand clasped around his throat.

"Ah, yes, that's right. Your mama— a wonderful woman. She told me she puts her breast milk in your milk cartons for lunch so you don't miss hanging off her tit too much."

At this, the larger boy began to pummel Ilya, and Ilya, with both arms no longer pinned, did his best to regain ground. He hurled insult after insult, finding the other boy's emotional pressure points until finally he grabbed Rozanov by the collar. Rozanov jerked his knee into Volkov's crotch, knocking the wind out of Volkov for long enough that he could scramble out from under him and get a good shot in. The lunch hall was utter chaos as students screamed for their favorites, placing bets on which boy would kill the other as teachers fought to regain control over the room. Finally, two of them elbowed through the crowd and grabbed Volkov from Rozanov, who had somehow managed to get Volkov into a sleeper hold.

"You're DEAD *Rozanova*, do you fucking hear me?! You fucking cocksucker."

Ilya smiled, nose crooked and bleeding, a dark purple bruise already forming under his eye and a tooth just barely hanging on. Blood trickled from his fat lip, splitting more as he bared his teeth.

"Wow. You are creative. Get this man into writing," he said dryly, clapping his hands slowly, a twinkle in his eye. He turned and began to walk towards the two teachers waiting to haul him off for his own punishment.

Then, because Rozanov just couldn't resist getting one more in,he turned on his heel and called out. "One more thing, Fedka—" he loved taunting him with these pet names; he could

see his blood pressure rise at the sound, “Tell your mother no need for the nudes— I wouldn’t touch you for all the beautiful breasts in the world.”

Volkov kept trying to break his restraint, and Rozanov laughed, desperately seeking air and coming up short. From that day on he knew he had a gift. He could get under any opponent’s skin— the more they spoke, the more ammo they gave him. It proved invaluable on the ice. Many grown men crumbled under Ilya’s barrage of taunts.

Of course, with his mouth, Rozanov had been on the (attempted) receiving end of his fair share of weaponry, too. He’d been threatened with knives, broken beer bottles, and had even faced a set of brass knuckles (courtesy of his brother.) He’d felt he’d pretty much seen it all— until now.

As he was walking home from a gay bar, where he left his (…colleague?) Scott Hunter (he didn’t yet know if he could say they were *friends*) he felt someone behind him, matching his footsteps. Rozanov was being followed by a short, round man in a gold chain, grumbling drunkenly to himself.

Rozanov wasn’t feeling much of anything at the moment. It had been a long time since alcohol gave him even the slightest buzz, and the adrenaline that was starting to kick in was almost as intoxicating as the best vodka he knew. The man kept mumbling.

“What the fuck are you saying to me, I cannot hear you through the, what, two? Pillsners you have had?” Rozanov said, calling over his shoulder at the man.

“Fuck you, Rozanovsky,” the man slurred, a vein popping from his hairy neck.

“No, thank you. I am celibate at the moment.”

“You fucknin commie bitch,” the man shouted. He’d acquired a friend, who also began following Rozanov in the same manner.

“Commies are Smurfs. Do I look blue to you?”

The man and his friend kept on stumbling through incoherent sentences about how Boston's chances of getting the cup were shot to hell, how it was Rozanov's fault. It had happened before, and Rozanov knew it came with the territory. It was normally his nature to heckle anyone who heckled him, but after the Smurf comment, he kept his mouth shut.

He had made promises that he was trying to keep, no matter what happened.

"I just don't want to see you get hurt," the person said, his large, warm eyes fixed on Ilya's. The months since this conversation felt like years.

"Yes, but I am also crazy like all Russians are crazy. Is fine, I am fine."

"Yes but Canadians are also a bit crazy. How do you think we manage these winters?"

Ilya laughed at this.

"Russians only have winter." The man, the one he was trying now to forget, laughed in his memory, and Ilya caught his breath.

"Canadians are crazy in that they are very boring. Is crazy for anyone to be as boring as an average Canadian."

The man…*Shane*, with all of the ferocity of a newborn kitten, pushed his shoulder, and Ilya caught his hand in his, kissing his palm.

"Fine, but please, just…watch your mouth a bit," Shane pleaded.

"Why? You watch it so well for me," Ilya countered playfully.

“Okay, fine, but with Americans…we’re both in America a lot. Americans are fucking crazy. Maybe crazier than Russians,” he chuckled, reaching for Rozanov’s face. His fingers always settled on his jaw, thumbs tenderly stroking his strong cheek bones. He loved when Shane did this, and each time he kissed him firmly, humming as he did.

“Is no chance, Hollander,” Rozanov laughed, moving a stray hair on Hollander’s head back into place. “Russia gave America the vodka it needs to be crazy.”

Shane chuckled, but then his face grew serious again.

“Please. I just worry about you. I can’t always be there to protect you.”

“Oh! So you are big protector man now, yes?” Ilya teased, wrapping his arms around his waist. Shane rolled his eyes.

“Please, Ilya. Just… watch it? For me?”

“Okay, okay. Is a promise. I will keep shutting my mouth around assholes.”

“Good,” Shane said.

“Well, not all assholes,” Rozanov said as he pulled Hollander fiercely by the hips as a grin both wicked and sarcastic split his face.

“YOU’RE an asshole,” he said, before pulling him in for a kiss.

“At least I don’t have to watch that fairy Hollander win, either,” the first man said, snapping Rozanov back to the present.

Rozanov broke his promise. He walked up to the man gruffly and grabbed him by the neck of his shirt.

“Say it the fuck again, asshole,” Rozanov seethed.

“There we go!” The man yelled, “Where was this passion all season? You could have fucking had the cup with this.”

“Injury,” Rozanov spat, “Say it. The fuck. Again.”

The man had a glimmer of fear in his eyes, but regained his composure. “What, is he your buddy? Do you compare performances? I bet he likes to watch how you handle your stick. I know I would.”

“Baby,” Rozanov hissed, lifting the man off of the ground a little, “if you want to see my stick in action, you’re going to have to sweet talk me a little better than that.”

As soon as the words left his mouth, he realized he had become, unbeknownst to him, significantly outnumbered as four men began backing him into an alleyway.

“Ah,” Ilya said, covering his newly felt anxiety, “you want to have, what is the word, *or-gee*? That will cost money. And though you look like piggy bank,” Ilya said, eying the gold-chained man and sizing up his chances against the others, “I am thinking nothing comes out when you are spanked.”

By the way they advanced, Ilya guessed that now these crazy fucking Americans that had him cornered in this Boston alleyway were going to try to beat his ass.

Rozanov loved a challenge, and crouched slightly, convincing them to go ahead and give it their best try. The slim one, with the goatee and a crowbar that Ilya could only assume he pulled out of his ass, swung clumsily. Rozanov jumped, just missing it by a second. He was as light on solid ground as he was on the ice, and he egged them on even more.

“Wow, we will get you into practice. Team captain right here.”

The taller, more lithe of the four swung his fist, a big gaudy ring catching Ilya’s lip and drawing a little blood.

“Be honest, I am looking very sexy, yes? I bet your mother thinks so,” he taunted, pointing to the first of his four admirers. He wanted them to be better, to get a good hit in on him. He wanted to feel the pain. He *deserved* it. He must have.

I mean, what really did he have to lose at this point? He’d torn his ACL, and sure he was back on his feet and feeling good but he was completely out for the playoffs. He’d let his team down. His citizenship applications kept getting held up with red tape. And Hollander… Shane…had…could he even say they had broken up? Were they really together? If a bear shits in the woods or whatever the English saying was, did anyone hear it?

Yet even as he felt a searing pain in his shoulder from one of them, and even though he missed whoever hit him, Rozanov kept going.

“Is that the best you’ve all got? Come on! Crazy fucking Americans, right?! Come on!“ He shouted as he regained his footing. Three of the four men got him to the ground, kicking him relentlessly until something clashed, like a trash can lid hitting concrete.

Rozanov’s vision began to tunnel as he saw the short bald man was pointing at him from above. The man moved his hand down, pointing at his leg. Another clash. And then a warmth spread quickly down his leg. Then, footsteps, dropped metal, and then quiet.

****

“I

l

y

a…

?”

It was as if someone was yelling in water— muffled and strange.

“I L Y A.”

Everything sounded slow, otherworldly, but there was somehow a warmth in the sound that felt like home.

“O. H. G. D.”

O.

This was one of the stranger dreams Rozanov had in recent memory. He was cold, damp with sweat and feeling thick. Rocks held him up, tiny little rocks, and then something swift and firm and gentle. It was…raining? No, not raining. It was too salty for that. He smelled pinecones.

He smelled home now. He felt home. It was calling to him. Pine and soft hands and cashmere and salt.

“I

L

Y

A.”

He wanted to hold that sound and kiss it.

****

“Pinecones…” Ilya whispered, his eyes rolling. Shane cradled him in his lap, covered in his blood, which he was trying to stop from pouring out of his leg. Whoever did this must have clipped an artery— Rozanov was ghost white.

“Oh my God,” Shane cried, his voice shaking. What the fuck could have happened? Rozanov was fighting for consciousness and Shane began patting his face.

“Ilya, Ilya, stay awake please,” Shane stammered, trying to stay composed.

“Home… is nice dream,” Rozanov laughed.

“What are you talking about?”

“Holding me,” he huffed, a little breathless, “Home…me…the pinecone smell…is all here,” he gestured vaguely to himself.

“You’re not making sense, what happened? How did you—Ilya?”

Rozanov smiled.

And then his eyes rolled into the back of his head.

And then he went completely limp.

Shane screamed.

“HELP! Someone help me! Oh my God, Ilya. No, wake up. *HELP ME.*”

Shane began to shake him once more, but his eyes only fluttered. He put his fingers to Ilya’s neck, and his pulse felt faint and unsteady. Shane cried out again and again, praying to the God that Ilya somehow believed in that someone would see them, help them, help *him*.

At that moment, Scott and Kip passed the alleyway opening.

“*HUNTER*—“ Shane bellowed, his tears flooding his vision, his snot dripping onto Ilya’s shirt and mixing with the blood coming from his shoulder.

“Oh my God,” Scott breathed, “Kip, call someone!”

Rozanov’s eyes fluttered open again, and he smiled.

“Shane!” He managed, his voice weak and croaking.

“Hi, hi. I’m here. I’m with you,” Shane choked, his throat bobbing as he pushed Ilya’s curls away from his face. “I’m here.”

“Where is… I am lost? I think?” He managed as Scott used his hoodie to make a tourniquet for Ilya’s leg.

“I’ve got you, I’ve got you right here.” Shane was rocking back and forth, though to soothe himself or Ilya he didn’t know.

“English is no good now, forget…”

“It’s okay,” Shane managed. His words were strangled with a false show of bravery.

“Americans…my love, they are fucking crazier.” Ilya managed before passing out again.

Rozanov felt like he was in a vise grip, shuddering with the sobs of someone he knew he loved more than anything, but…

Where was he?

It’s very dark.

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Four months earlier (to be continued…)

Chapter 2: Four Months Earlier

Chapter Summary

A morning with Shane and Ilya.

Chapter Notes

This fic is a sort of "what-if," set in the time between the events of Heated Rivalry and The Long Game. Not entirely canon compliant (obviously.) Enjoy!

The sunlight caught Shane's eyes first, peeking through the blinds slowly as the late December morning crept above the horizon. The house was a little cold, though Shane could only tell by the discomfort he felt at the end of his nose. He was conscious, but only insofar as he was aware that he existed. He was in that rare state between the waking world and the world of dreams, where everything felt light and crisp and a little bit magic, and though he knew the arm around his waist was real, he couldn't quite grasp the concept of what "real" was.

Shane roused himself a bit more and went to get up to check the thermostat, when suddenly, the arm tugged him closer, and Shane was surprised to remember that there was a whole man that he loved in the bed beside him. He muttered something in Russian.

"My Russian…s'not that good yet, what'd you say?"

"First," he said, gesturing to himself, "*Your* Russian is *always* good, and second is that I said to get your pretty little ass back in this bed, is too early," his voice was thick with sleep, "and is fucking cold."

Shane turned onto his other side, tucking his hand under his head and grinning as Ilya smiled at him sleepily.

Shane frowned. "My ass is not little."

"Good morning, sweetheart. Apologies. Your ass is the fattest ass I have ever seen. Aside from mine," he grumbled, yawning a little as he spoke.

Shane pinched Ilya's chest lightly, and Ilya caught and kissed the tips of his fingers. Shane felt a flutter in his chest. God, he didn't think Ilya could be more beautiful, but his half closed eyes catching in the sunlight, his curls dropping across them messily but somehow perfectly…he didn't think he'd ever get used to feeling like this.

Ilya leaned in for a kiss, his lips meeting Shane's slowly, then deeply, taking his time. He first prodded lightly at Shane's mouth, and then began to explore, enjoying the feeling of him. As Shane sighed, he began to feel very self conscious. He stopped and pulled himself away.

"What is wrong?" Ilya asked, concern tracing lines across his brow.

"My mouth tastes bad to me," Shane said, looking sheepish as he spoke, "Kissing me right now is probably so gross."

"Shane," Ilya chuckled earnestly, "You eat ass. I eat ass."

Shane covered his mouth and closed his eyes. Ilya rested his palm on his cheek.

"Look at me," he said, and Shane peeked through his eyelids at Ilya, "You could have recently eaten dog shit and I would still want kiss you. Not ideal conditions, but if this is only opportunity? I will make do."

Shane dropped his hand from his mouth and smiled, trying his best to roll his eyes at him, but the sentiment was so sweet he couldn't help but feel a burst of affection. He leaned to Ilya, pressing his lips to his, smiling as he kissed him. He ran his fingers through Ilya's hair and stroked the nape of his neck. Shane began to move his thumb in gentle circles that pulled lightly at the curl gathered there. Shane felt Ilya let out a soft, almost imperceptible moan.

"That feel good?" Shane whispered, kissing down Ilya's neck slowly, exploring a tender spot between his neck and shoulders.

"*Nooo*," Ilya chuckled, the vibration from his throat humming on Shane's lips, "Obviously is *terrible*."

"It is?" Shane pulled away, delighting in Ilya's almost involuntarily whine. Shane smiled gleefully.

"I think you like it," Shane laughed, doing a poor imitation of Ilya's accent.

"Oh! Is like that?" Rozanov challenged, pulling Shane closer to him with one arm and moving his hand to Shane's crotch, eliciting a quiet, "fuck" from Shane. Shane backed off of Ilya's hand and adjusted himself. He had a glint in his eyes as he got back to work. Ilya let out another moan at the same time he did.

"You are being…what is word…"

"A brat?" Shane teased, moving down Ilya's chest in a beautiful, agonizing trail.

“Mmm…yes always…but is different word. Sauce.”

Shane pulled back, a little stunned, and began to laugh.

“What! Is word for being sexy and fun!”

“Who taught you saucy?” Shane was almost in hysterics.

“So…is a stupid word then?” A slight flush colored Ilya’s cheeks, and Shane felt a little guilty for teasing.

“No, no, it’s not that. It’s just not on the list of words I ever thought I’d hear come out of your mouth. I like it,” Shane moved back to Ilya’s lips, kissing him sweetly. Ilya responded, a tender enthusiasm challenging Shane to go further.

“What…other words…would you like to hear me say?” Ilya asked, his voice huskier than usual.

Shane pushed him back onto the pillows, gently but with a firm hand, as if to say *relax, enjoy.*

“Let me think,” Shane said, sliding his hand across his chest and lingering on his nipple, thumbing it lightly.

“Ohhhhh,” Ilya sighed.

“I want you to say that,” Shane smirked as he mounted and slid his hands down Ilya’s chest.

“Fuck, Hollander,” Ilya managed, the words choked and needy.

Definitely that,” Shane affirmed, lifting an eyebrow, taking pleasure in the length he felt hardening beneath him. He ground his hips on Ilya, letting out a heavy sigh as he did. Ilya moaned even louder, his eyes wide with wanting.

“I need…God…I need you now,” Ilya choked out, the build up becoming almost unbearable as Shane slipped his hand beneath Ilya’s waistband and stroked gently. Ilya kissed him hard. It was sloppy and hungry and Shane wanted to feel him all over, in every way.

He quickened his pace slightly, and Ilya flipped him over onto his back, stroking his fingers lightly over his pants in tantalizing lines.

“Those words…yes” Shane panted, struggling in spite of himself to stay composed.

“How about this,” Ilya lowered himself to Shane’s ear, his voice low and almost hoarse, “I love you, Shane Hollander.” Shane would never get tired of hearing that.

“Perfect,” Shane said, as Ilya pulled his waistband low and took him, slowly and methodically, in his mouth. Ilya looked up at him as he worked, delighting in the role reversal that had just taken place. Shane gasped as Ilya licked his tip. He luxuriated in the wait, and though Shane pretended to be angry about it, he loved it, too.

“Now,” he said, as Shane whined, “There are some words I would like to hear from your mouth,” he said, grinning from below. Ilya brought his mouth back down to Shane, taking all of him with more fervor than before.

“*Fuck*,” Shane gasped, and Ilya chuckled.

“Yes, that is one. Let me see if you have others.”

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After they’d showered together for much longer than they had originally intended, Ilya padded down the stairs and grabbed two ginger ales. He’d grown fond of them over the past few months, though it was still hard to compare to Coke. Still, Ilya would often hold the first sip of a ginger ale in his mouth just a little longer than the rest, trying to experience the flavor from Shane’s point of view. It made him like it even more each time.

Later, after the two had spent their day lounging in front of the TV, Ilya cooked up a dinner of jasmine rice and grilled chicken with a chimichurri sauce and some fresh pan seared tomatoes. He brought the food out to Shane, who was sprawled with one leg dangling off of the couch, and Shane practically lept for Ilya’s hand.

“*Blyat*! You are like a hound, Hollander!” Ilya laughed, pulling the plate out of reach. Shane lifted himself to his knees and kissed Ilya, snatching the plate in the process.

“You are little cheater, ah?” Ilya teased.

“Only with things that don’t matter,” Shane said, more seriously than the mood called for. It took Ilya’s breath for a moment. It was one of those moments where he felt with the fullness of himself just how lucky he was.

Present (to be continued…).

Chapter 3: Present Day

Chapter Summary

Shane talks to the doctor. He wants an update and he's going to get it.

Chapter Notes

lol this is the first thing I've actually had a planned arc for in a while but TRUST IN ME PLS I LOVE YOU AND I LOVE ILYA AND SHANE I AM SORRY I AM HURTING THEM

The light of the waiting room pierced Shane's vision with brutal sterility. It felt like the start of a nightmare, one of those ones where you're in a white void and you're falling and falling and there's no way to right yourself. There's no right. There's no up, no down, just a horrible pit in your stomach and the feeling that something awful is happening. The only difference now was that Shane wasn't waking up from this nightmare. And neither was Ilya.

Shane sat in the cold emergency room. The blood on his shirt had begun to turn brown, drying against his skin, affixing his shirt to his ribs. He felt blank, utterly uninhabited, like he was standing just to the left of his body, reminding himself to go through the motions of breathing, blinking, tapping his leg. He felt nothing but the void and the pit.

A voice broke through, and Shane found the ground long enough to listen.

"Mister Hollander, I'm Doctor Robert," he put out his hand. Shane stared. *Breathe in, breathe out.*

"Uh. Right. Sorry. I wanted to give you an update, not too many details on why this is, but uh. Well, it's funny-"

Remember to blink.

"Funny?" Shane interjected. His tone was harsh, a little angry. *Tap the leg. Tap the leg. Breathe in, breathe out.*

"I just— I checked his medical consent forms. Mister Rozanov filled out the paperwork with his team doctor and…well, he listed…you as his emergency contact."

Shane was stunned. *Blink*. Of course he did that.

"The doctor… assumed it was a joke," Robert continued, a hesitancy in his voice as though he didn't quite know if Shane could actually hear him. "Rozanov was apparently smiling when he turned it in, but when he asked him if he wanted to change it, he said no. It's funny, I thought you two hated each other." The doctor adjusted a small pair of glasses as he spoke, and Shane came back to himself a bit.

"Yeah, no, probably a joke." *At least that's how he would have made it look*, Shane thought. It was fucking reckless, but if anyone could pass it off as a bit…Shane's leg was tapping harder, and he was getting angrier, more impatient.

"Mister Hollander, I think you may be in shock. Would you like—"

"Tell me how he is," Shane demanded. His body was not his own, it belonged right now to something else. Something white hot.

"Well, to be honest, it's difficult to say. The bullet in his shoulder pierced straight through, but the one in the leg…we have to get it out…"

Shane thought that you should have to take a course in how to fucking talk to someone to be accepted into med school. And he was certain that thought showed on his face.

"Then get it out," Shane said, matter-of-factly. The hum of the fluorescents was driving him crazy and his face felt warm and contorted. He had stepped halfway back into his body, not fully in control but not fully separate, either.

"That's the problem. He's lost a lot of blood and we don't know— tissue can die. You got him here quickly, but we don't know what the damage is yet."

"What are you saying?" Shane snapped. *Blink. Breathe in, breathe out. Blink.*

“I don’t know yet. But I am hoping for a good outcome.”

Shane felt the anger take him over fully, pulsing through his body. This wasn’t him— this was something primal, protective.

“Is that a fucking medical discipline?”

“Mister Hollander, if the tissue is dead —“

“No! Don’t fucking do that! Don’t tell me “what-ifs,” just fix him.” *Breathe, Hollander*.

“There are a lot of complications that could—“

Shane cut him off again.

“No! It’s your job to fix it, so fucking fix it! Fix him! I don’t fucking care what you have to do just fucking DO. IT.”

Shane was standing now, towering over the doctor, a finger pressed into the other man’s sternum, feeling as though he could break through with ease. The doctor had taken a step back, maintaining his composure, but only just.

Shane stumbled backward and slumped in the chair, returning to himself. He buried his face in his hands, shame coloring his face. He wanted to *hurt* someone. He wanted to hurt this man who was trying to help Ilya, trying to help *him*. He wanted someone else to feel as scared and angry and useless as he did now. He hated himself for it. Shane felt like the room was spinning.

“God, fuck, I’m so sorry,” he managed as he sat back in the chair, closing his eyes. They felt hot, and the pricking behind his nose was impatient, relentless. He felt like there were wood chips in his throat.

“Mister Hollander,” the doctor said, taking a seat next to him. His voice was softer, more human now, “What you saw tonight, a friend in that kind of distress…it was traumatizing.”

Shane laughed mirthlessly.

“Friend.”

The word didn’t come anywhere close to what Ilya was to Shane.

“Colleague, then,” the doctor corrected, oblivious to the idea that his correction was even further from the truth. Or maybe, right now…maybe it wasn’t. Shane didn’t know.

Shane didn’t know anything except the following two things:

1. He loved Ilya Rozanov more than anything in the world.
2. He doesn’t know what to do without—

He couldn’t even think-it. Just one week without him had been torture. He couldn’t think of anything longer being anything other than the worst agony a person could endure.

“My point is,” the doctor’s voice broke into his thoughts, “regardless of your relationship to Mister Rozanov, seeing anyone in that state is horrible. I wouldn’t wish it on my worst enemy.”

“Neither would I,” Shane said, marveling at the irony of it all.

Doctor Robert opened his mouth to speak again, but all Shane heard was an alarm.

“Code Blue, report to room…”

All sound became muffled. It was as though a bomb went off. There were nurses and attendings flying through different doors, rolling carts and a bed and it all felt like war.

Doctor Robert looked at Shane, his eyes wide.

“Is it him?” Shane asked, the pain in his voice palpable.

“I have to go,” Doctor Robert said, hauling towards the door. Shane grabbed him by the arm and ripped him back to him.

“Is. It. Him.” Shane barked through gritted teeth.

“Let me help him, *please*” Robert said, and he turned, running through the door.

Code blue. That meant something bad. Didn’t it?

Breathe in, breathe out. Blink.

A code blue… they’d been watching some shitty hospital show recently… what did it mean? He should know this.

Blink. Breathe in, breathe out. Breathe IN, BREATHE OUT. Blink.

It came to him, yelling in the voice of some actress he’d heard say it every other episode. “No pulse.” “Crash cart.”

Ilya was crashing. Ilya was *dying*.

Breathe, Hollander. BREATHE.

Shane vomited.

Two Months Ago (to be continued…)

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