

in a silver swirl i take a lungful in

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by [garlic09](#)

Summary

shane gets sick before a game against boston... looks like he wont be seeing ilya later (unless???) ft. ilya bringing shane russian food

He hadn't told Rozanov, why would he? They'd exchanged their usual quips in the days leading up to the game, riffing about who would win, how many goals they'd score. But underlying it all was the knowledge that they'd end the night in each other's arms. Shane refused to admit it, but that might have been part of the reason he was so determined not to get sick. If it was any other game, any other team... It had been four months since he'd seen Rozanov. Four months of convincing himself he would finally end it, while simultaneously counting down the days until they would see each other again-- until this game. A game Shane would not be attending.

Notes

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Chapter 1

Shane had really tried to push through it. Three days ago, he'd woken up with his throat feeling like sandpaper. The dry swallow that greeted him when he opened his eyes had filled him with dread.

He remembered gulping water, hoping it would magically disappear, to no avail. By the second day, his head was pounding, and he could barely hide the unrelenting drip of his nose.

Shane didn't get sick. It didn't happen. He had a very tight grasp on his immune system, his diet was perfect, he washed his hands, he *didn't* get sick.

Until he did.

They'd flown out the night before, and Shane had felt like death when he collapsed on the hotel bed, thankful the team had splurged for single rooms for once. He just had to get through the game; if they were gonna beat Boston, they needed Shane. Hayden had seemed suspicious when Shane left dinner early, but he didn't pry.

He hadn't told Rozanov, why would he? They'd exchanged their usual quips in the days leading up to the game, riffing about who would win, how many goals they'd score. But underlying it all was the knowledge that they'd end the night in each other's arms. Shane refused to admit it, but that might have been part of the reason he was so determined not to get sick. If it was any other game, any other team... It had been four months since he'd seen Rozanov. Four months of convincing himself he would finally end it, while simultaneously counting down the days until they would see each other again-- until this game. A game Shane would not be attending.

The pounding on his door snapped him out of his melancholy reverie.

"Shane! Aye, Shane! Where you at, buddy?"

Hayden's loud voice felt like it was ricocheting through his skull. Shane groaned softly, his arm slung over his eyes. The distance between the bed and the door seemed insurmountable.

"Shane?" There was genuine concern in Hayden's voice.

Another voice joined him at the door, J.J.

"What's wrong with Hollander?"

"I don't know.. He didn't come to breakfast, and he hasn't answered any of my texts."

The knocking started again. Shane groaned, the pounding in his head was enough he didn't need anything else. With what felt like a herculean effort, he swung his legs out of bed, the

comforter still wrapped around his shoulders. With his eyes screwed up from the pain in his head, he hobbled toward the door, veering slightly to the right.

“Should I get coach? He has the keys to everyone’s room, right?”

“I don’t know...”

“He might still be asleep?”

“No way, Shane never sleeps thi- Shane!”

The light from the hallway felt almost blinding when Shane cracked open the door. Hayden and J.J. were standing there in their suits, eyes wide.

“Oh god, Shane—”

“You look like shit, man.”

Hayden pushed the door the rest of the way open and pressed the back of his hand to Shane’s forehead. Shane tried to protest, Hayden was not his mother. But all he could do was sway where he stood.

“Oh, Shane, you’re burning up. Let me call Michael.”

Shane really did not want to see the team doctor right now, he didn’t want to see anyone. He wanted to lie down in the dark for the next week. He wanted to push his head deep into the pillows while fingers ran through his hair... he wanted...

He leaned to the right again, letting the doorframe support his weight. He felt lightheaded, his sinuses felt rock hard, and he had to keep his mouth half open so he could breathe. Hayden and J.J. had five seconds before Shane turned on his heel and fell back into bed.

Thankfully, Hayden seemed to understand. He looked at Shane sympathetically and patted him on the shoulder.

“Why don’t you just go back to bed. I’ll call Michael, and he can stop by later,” he said.

“Coach can give him the extra key.”

Shane nodded, turning on his heel and stumbling back to bed. The darkness of the room felt amazing after the bright light of the hallway. He couldn’t survive another second standing up. Groaning, Shane fell forward into the bed and smushed his face into the soft pillow. The comforter was only half on top of him, and the left leg of his sweat pants was rucked up, but he didn’t care.

He could feel his headache in his entire body, and it worsened when he coughed dryly. Even his ears felt stuffed up. He felt...weak. He could barely move, flinging his arms around to adjust his position on the bed. No matter what he did, he couldn’t get comfortable. It was embarrassing, everything hurt, he was in a random hotel in Boston, he couldn’t even play in the game, and he was going to spend the entire night alone.

Time passed slowly. Shane didn't have the energy to do anything but lie there. Even the idea of grabbing the remote or his phone felt impossible.

At some point, the team doctor came by. Michael was nice, unobtrusive. He dropped off some decongestant, tissues, and Gatorade. After a rudimentary examination, he diagnosed Shane with 'sick' and told him to rest and see how he felt in the morning.

"Call if you need anything. Or if you start barfing."

Shane had groaned in response, and Michael had laughed as he closed the door.

With some meds and a little Gatorade in his system, Shane was feeling slightly less dead. He fell in and out of consciousness for the next several hours. His dreams were strange, full of snowy mountains and something that might have been an elk? Either way, they all circled back to a muscular chest and a pair of strong arms.

Eventually, Shane found enough energy to flop in the direction of the nightstand. His phone and the remote had been untouched all day. After a moment of deliberation, he went for the remote.

The game was still going on, but barely. There were ten minutes left in the third period, and Boston was leading by three points. Shane felt for his team; he knew they relied on him, and he had disappointed them. As he stared at the screen, Rozanov scored a goal. He had a broad smile on his face, and Shane felt knots building in his stomach that had nothing to do with his illness.

Groaning, Shane rubbed a hand across his face. He knew it was stupid, stupid to miss Rozanov, he probably didn't even care that Shane wasn't there. He probably had a list of people he could spend the night with that weren't sickly Canadian hockey players.

As soon as the thought entered his mind, he reached for his phone. He had several well-wishes from his teammates, a long message from his mom about electrolytes, and three messages from Rozanov.

The first was a continuation of their previous conversation. Shane had bet he would score two goals this game, something that seemed almost comical in his current state. Rozanov had replied with his own bet.

Lily: *Two is easy. I will do four.*

The message was from eight in the morning. The second was from two, probably when Rozanov had left for the stadium.

Lily: *Hotel Indigo?*

Montreal usually stayed at the same hotel each time they visited Boston, and this time was no exception. In another world, Shane would have been a step away from blushing at the message. Whenever Rozanov messaged before the game, Shane always felt warm. The idea

that he was thinking of him that far in advance, that he was planning out his day, made Shane feel things that he didn't want to think too much about.

The third text had to have been sent right before the game. Likely from the locker room, Rozanov hunched over his phone, face in his locker.

Lily: *You are sick?*

Shane did not smile at that. He absolutely did not lean his head back into the pillows and beam up at the ceiling. It didn't matter anyway; once Rozanov realized Shane was not in any state to be doing anything, he would disappear. On screen, Rozanov scored another goal.

"That is Boston's Ilya Rozanov with his *fourth* goal this game! He is absolutely on fire tonight," the announcer sounded over the moon. Shane's eyes flicked back to his phone, and he felt a cheesy smile return to his face.

This was embarrassing. Shane needed to get his shit together, he was going to spend the night sick and alone in this bed, and then tomorrow he would fly back to Montreal, and it would be months before he saw Rozanov again.

Yet, despite himself. He started typing.

Jane: *Four. Impressive*

Jane: *Also, yes and yes.*

He pressed the phone face down into the mattress and covered his face for what felt like the millionth time that day. Something about being sick seemed to make him stupid, but he couldn't lie to himself like this. He wanted Rozanov here. He wanted him next to him in bed, wanted his stupid muscular arms around him, and his fingers in his hair.

The game was ending as Shane lay there. Boston won, of course, and he watched Rozanov fist-bump each of his teammates as they made their way off the ice.

Once the ice was empty, Shane turned off the TV. He didn't really care about the post-show interviews or recap. His reflection in the black screen stared back at him; he really did look pathetic. Surrounded by blankets, his shirt twisted around his middle, tissues piled at his side. It was for the better that Rozanov didn't see him like this, it was possibly the farthest from sexy Shane had ever been.

Almost as if on cue, his phone buzzed. Flipping it over, Shane expected to see something from Hayden or coach, but another name was lighting up the screen.

Lily: *It was easy. Montreal is weak without you.*

Shane did not blush. He was absolutely stone-faced.

Lily: *What is your room number?*

Shane blinked. There was no way Rozanov was being serious. He must not know how sick Shane was.

Jane: *I'm really sick. It's gross.*

He wished it wasn't the case. Wished he could rally, but he was pretty sure if Rozanov saw him, he wouldn't want Shane's mouth anywhere near his dick. His phone buzzed again.

Lily: *I know.*

A moment passed.

Lily: *Room number?*

Shane was a weak, weak man.

Jane: *1206*

He didn't know what he expected to happen, and Rozanov didn't seem to be very forthcoming with his plans.

Lily: 👍

Shane didn't let himself get his hopes up. He didn't know exactly what the official announcement had said, but it obviously hadn't been clear enough. Rozanov was going to take one look at him and turn on his heel.

But, until he did, Shane could lie back in bed and daydream about a universe where Ilya Rozanov would show up at his doorstep.

Chapter 2

American pharmacies were overwhelming. So many bottles of different sizes and colors, each of them bragging about being the strongest or the longest lasting. Ilya felt like his vision was melding the colors together into a psychedelic rainbow. It hurt his eyes. After a pause, he reached for a green bottle that claimed it was the best for clearing the sinuses. He hoped the flavor was alright.

Once he checked out, he made his way to his car. He placed his purchases, medicine, ginger ale, and cough drops, beside the plastic bag already in the seat. Hollanders' hotel wasn't far, so hopefully the *shchi* would stay warm.

As he pulled out of the parking lot, he turned on the radio; they were discussing the game.

"Rozanov was really something. Four goals in one game! Montreal didn't have a chance."

"Well, of course, they didn't. Not with Shane Hollander out of commission. A rough start to the season for Montreal."

As much as he liked to hear about his own successes, Ilya turned down the radio. The game had been good, obviously, but it hadn't been as fun as it could have been. Ilya liked playing against Hollander, *with* Hollander. He had been excited for it. The flash in the other man's eyes when Ilya checked him, the way he would whoop when he scored a goal. It was the best part of any Montreal game.

His teammates had cheered when they'd learned Hollander was sick. Marlow had clapped him on the back, a smile on his bearded face.

"Easy win tonight, aye, Roz?"

Ilya had smiled, but his heart hadn't been in it. He'd been thirty seconds from leaving the locker room when he sent that text, he knew there wasn't any point. If Hollander wasn't sick he wouldn't be looking at his phone, and if he was sick he certainly wouldn't want to hear from Ilya.

Yet, when the game had ended, Ilya had gone straight for his phone. He blamed the buzzing that had filled his chest when he saw two notifications on adrenaline from the game. He had asked the question without even thinking, ignoring the implication. He knew Hollander was in no state for anything, he wouldn't miss a game for anything short of death's door, but Ilya still wanted to see him.

Turning into the parking lot, he came to a stop in front of the Hotel Indigo; the entryway was deserted. Ilya hadn't expected anyone to be there, but just to be safe, he pulled out the baseball cap and sunglasses he always kept in the glove box.

With his jacket pulled up practically to his ears, Ilya made his way through the revolving door, bags in hand. Two Montreal players were at the far end of the lobby, chatting. Ilya kept

his face away from them as he waited for the elevator.

He had the elevator to himself, thankfully; he really didn't need anyone recognizing him. Belatedly, he realized he had no idea what he was going to say. Hollander had sent him his room number, but that didn't mean he wanted Ilya there.

There wasn't anyone in the hallway, and Ilya pulled up his texts to double-check the number before he knocked on the door. There was no noise coming from the room, and no light was coming from beneath the door. Ilya hoped Hollander wasn't asleep.

After a moment, he knocked again, bouncing on his heels. Keeping his chin tucked in his jacket, he looked side to side. The last thing he needed was one of Hollander's teammates finding him outside the man's door with medicine and soup.

He was close to giving up. Maybe he could just hang the bags on the doorknob and text Hollander to grab them. That would be fine.

He raised his fist to knock for a third and final time when the door finally swung open.

The image that greeted him was one that would stay in his mind forever. Ilya had never before wished for a photographic memory, but he never wanted to forget a single aspect of what was in front of him.

Hollander was standing in the doorway, slightly hunched. He had what looked like the hotel comforter wrapped around him like a cape, dragging on the ground behind him. His shirt was so twisted it looked uncomfortable, and his sweatpants were somehow slung low and rucked up high. His hair was a disaster, sticking up in more ways than Ilya could count, and his nose was almost comically red. He was squinting at Ilya, a slight pout on his face. They stared at each other for a moment. Hollander's eyes were slightly glassy, and he blinked slowly at Ilya like a cat. He seemed to be still processing the other man's presence. It gave Ilya a moment to collect himself, his brain still frozen on how *soft* Hollander looked. He had a sudden urge to gather the other man in his arms and squeeze, but he restrained himself.

As much as Ilya would love to stand and make eye contact with Hollander, they needed to get out of this hallway before one of his teammates appeared. Ilya stepped towards the doorway, but Hollander didn't move.

"So you are sick. Not just scared I would beat you?"

It was not what Ilya wanted to say, but he couldn't say what he wanted to say. It was weird enough that he had shown up with no intention of having sex, holding soup and medicine, he had to insult Hollander. It was all about balance.

Instead of replying, Hollander began to cough, deep, dry ones that made his shoulders shake.

"*Bozhe moy*, Hollander. Go. Sit."

Ilya stepped inside the room and lightly pushed Hollander in the direction of the bed. The man didn't resist and fell face forward onto the mattress.

The room was dark and a complete mess. The blankets and sheets were tangled up, half on the floor. There were tissues and a half-full Gatorade bottle on the nightstand, and Hollanders' usually neatly folded clothes were scattered across the floor.

Ilya sighed. It was a sad sight, and he knew Hollander must hate it. He was always impeccably clean. The man still had his face pressed into the mattress, so Ilya got to work. He collected all the dirty tissues and put them in the small trash can, then put the can beside the bed. He put the Gatorade in the mini fridge, though Hollander would need it later. He replaced it with a replenished glass of water and the ginger ale he had bought. He didn't go so far as to fold Hollander's scattered clothes, but he did dump them all back in the suitcase. He also cracked the blinds slightly, allowing a little light into the room.

When he turned back around, he saw that Hollander had shifted slightly; he was staring at the nightstand, brow furrowed. Alongside the water, ginger ale, and cold medicine, there was a small styrofoam container. Ilya felt the back of his neck redden, thankful Hollander couldn't see his face in the dim light.

"It is *shchi*," he said, sitting down in the desk chair that was beside the nightstand.

Hollander still looked confused. Ilya shouldn't have been surprised. Why would a Canadian-Korean know Russian food?

"It's soup. Cabbage and meat. Good for you, and warm."

He reached into the plastic bag he was still holding and pulled out a spoon. Hollander still hadn't moved. Ilya was beginning to get concerned; the man had yet to say a word to him.

"Hollander, can you speak?"

He groaned in response, closing his eyes.

"Yes," he whispered. His voice was rough and scratchy. "Jus' hurts."

He started shifting in the bed, attempting to sit up against the pillows. It looked like it was taking a lot out of him, he really was in bad shape. Maybe Ilya shouldn't have come. As if he could read his mind, Hollander looked at him again.

"Why are you here?"

He had positioned himself against the pillows, so he was half sitting up on the headboard. His head was lolled to the right, brown eyes on Ilya.

It was a fair question, one even Ilya didn't know the answer to. The silence in the room was deafening as Hollander stared at him.

"Well," he paused, biting his lip. *Well, I like being around you, and I wanted to see you even if it means we aren't having sex because I like your presence.*

"Well, if you die from illness, then Montreal has absolutely no chance, and then who will come in second this year? It can't be San Francisco."

Hollander laughed, snorting slightly.

“Fuck you.”

“I will need a, what is it you say, a ‘rain check’ on that?”

Ilya smiled, but his stomach was a bundle of anxiety. He knew one of them was going to have to bring it up, but he could have waited a little longer.

Hollander looked shocked for half a second, but then he rolled his eyes and huffed.

“Well, considering I can’t breathe through my nose right now, I might suffocate if I sucked your dick.”

“We can’t have that now, can we?”

Hollander laughed again, but it quickly gave way to coughing. He sounded awful; it was almost retching, and Ilya half stood, ready to grab the trash can. Hollander put out a hand, stopping him.

“It’s fine, I’m fine. Just gross,” he coughed again, into a tissue this time. Ilya grimaced, it looked almost painful, and Hollander was so pale.

“Here,” said Ilya, moving towards the bed. “Is good for your throat.”

He grabbed the container and removed the lid from the *shchi*, letting the steam escape. The smell of saffron and nettle filled the room. Hollander was staring at it, eyes narrowed.

Ilya held it out, the spoon in his other hand. Hollander still looked unconvinced.

“You eat meat and vegetables, yes? Should have sour cream, but I asked for it without.”

It was criminal to eat *shchi* without sour cream, but even a sick Hollander wouldn’t eat that much dairy. When Ilya was young, he would use a ludicrous amount of sour cream, practically covering the bowl. His father always hated it, told him it was unhealthy, but his mom would sneak him more anyway.

Hollander had a strange look on his face; his eyes were wide and glassy. He still hadn’t made any movement to actually consume the *shchi*; all he was doing was watching Ilya, as if he couldn’t believe he was there.

Ilya was beginning to worry that he wouldn’t actually take the soup. That would be deeply embarrassing, it was strange enough that he had brought it at all. But it was all he wanted when he was sick, especially when he was far from home.

Just as he was beginning to regret everything that had led him to this moment, Hollander reached out his hand. He had a softness in his eyes that Ilya didn’t know what to do with, so he just handed him the spoon and crossed his arms.

“Good. eat.”

Hollander stared down into the bowl. Ilya knew the little Russian woman who worked at the takeaway place on his street would be horrified with how long Hollander was taking to eat. She would be insulted, but Ilya was just pleased Hollander was even considering it.

He finally, finally took a bite, and Ilya held his breath, which was ridiculous. It did not matter whether Hollander liked it or not; it was not important.

“Oh shit,” Hollander’s eyebrow shot up his face. “This is really good.”

Ilya’s heart did not beat a little faster at the look on Hollander’s face.

“Of course it is. Russians know soup.”

Hollander smiled at him. Then pushed his nose right up against the top of the bowl, letting the steam wash over his face.

The image of Hollander, surrounded by blankets, letting the warmth of *shchi* wash over his face, elicited such a reaction in Ilya that he felt like he was going to black out. His stomach swooped, and he felt his lips twitching. Hollander, face still buried in the bowl, didn’t seem to notice.

They sat there in silence for a bit, Hollander slowly eating, staring into space. Ilya watching him. If Hollander found it weird, he didn’t mention it.

When he finished the soup, he showed the empty bowl to Ilya, a proud smile on his face.

“That was really good, really helped my sinuses,” Hollander paused, dropping his eyes from Ilya’s, a shy smile appeared on his face. “Thank you. You– you didn’t have to come over here.”

Ilya shrugged.

“Nothing else to do. Boring night.”

Hollander scoffed.

“I’m sure Ilya Rozanov of the Boston Raiders can find something to do on Saturday night.”

Ilya’s heart stuttered in his chest. Hollander had said his name, his first name. That word hadn’t passed his lips in years. The man hadn’t even seemed to notice, just ribbing like usual. It wasn’t even really him saying it, he was just saying Ilya’s full name. But to hear the word formed by Hollander’s lips, the shape of the syllables, made his blood pound.

“Yes. Well. This is fine too.”

Hollander scoffed again, leaning back against the pillows. He looked tired, he was so pale, and there were dark bags under his eyes. He had clearly been sick for a couple of days; this wasn’t a day-one illness. Yet, in all their texts, he had not said a word. Ilya supposed they didn’t really talk about that kind of stuff. Or they hadn’t at least.

They both started speaking at the same time.

“I should go—”

“Do you want to wa—”

Ilya let the words die in his throat, they both stared at each other. Hollander’s ears were turning red.

“I— sorry. Are you? You can go.”

“No, I— I will stay,” Ilya cursed silently to himself. Was Hollander asking him to stay? Why had he opened his fat mouth?

“What were you going to say?” he said.

Hollander sucked his lower lip into his mouth, still not looking at Ilya. Ilya was not about to screw up the first time Hollander had asked him to stay, especially when he seemed so vulnerable.

Hollander sighed, he looked like he was steeling himself.

“Do you want to watch the game? Detroit is playing...”

He looked like he expected Ilya to say no. *In what world*, he thought.

“Well since I will be playing them in two weeks, I should do some research.”

Hollander laughed again, and this time it didn’t turn into coughing. Ilya had no idea where the remote was, probably in the pile of blankets on Hollander’s disaster of a bed. He got out of the chair in a vain attempt to look for it.

At his movement, Hollander began to shift; he started neatening the pillows on the other side of the bed and attempting to straighten the sheets. Ilya watched him, momentarily confused. Then it dawned on him, Hollander wanted him to sit in the bed. With him.

In Ilya’s wildest dreams, he imagined being in bed beside Hollander like a normal couple. Granted, those fantasies usually started in a very different place, but he did always end them with his arm around Hollander’s shoulders.

Hollander didn’t seem to notice the way Ilya had faltered; instead, he was pulling the remote out from beneath his pillow and turning on the TV. Ilya toed off his shoes and shrugged off his jacket, then settled in beside Hollander.

He left about a foot of space between them, it was a large bed, and he didn’t know if Hollander would want him that close. Hollander turned towards him, a frown forming suddenly on his face.

“What if I get you sick? Maybe you should—”

“Russians do not get sick.”

Hollander raised an eyebrow at him.

“I just don’t want to get my germs all over you...”

“Hollander,” Ilya scooted closer to where the other man lay in the bed. In a moment of boldness, he reached an arm out, wrapped it around Hollander’s shoulders, and pulled him close to his chest. “I do not care about *germs*.”

He said the last word like a curse. Considering Hollander had cum down his throat more times than he could count, he didn’t think a little cough was a lot to worry about.

In the back of his mind, he was screaming, his fingers buzzing with anxiety where they were touching Hollander’s shoulder. But he stayed stone-faced, looking at the TV as Hollander softened against him. He was warm, leaning back against Ilya’s chest, Ilya’s right arm wrapped around him.

Ilya couldn’t have told you who Detroit was playing if you put a gun to his head. All he could feel was Hollander’s gentle heartbeat against his chest and his soft breath on his hand where it sat on his chest.

It was better than he had imagined. Hollander eventually turned so that his face was pressed into Ilya’s chest, and his eyelids kept fluttering, as if he were fighting to stay awake. Ilya stayed perfectly still, watching his long eyelashes fan his face as his eyes slowly closed. His mouth was wide open, and a small patch of drool was appearing on Ilya’s shirt. Not that he minded.

A beam of light slowly migrated down the bed as the sun set. Hollander was sound asleep on Ilya, making soft little noises. There were none of the usual signs of stress on his face, his brow was relaxed, and he had a slight smile on his lips. Ilya had meant what he said all those years ago. Hollander, *Shane*, was very pretty

Staring at him, Ilya felt a lump form in his throat.

He was in too deep.

End Notes

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