Last Call

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at https://archiveofourown.org/works/76115411.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Heated Rivalry (TV), Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid
Relationships:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov, Hayden Pike & Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander, Hayden Pike, Ilya Rozanov
Additional Tags:	Near Death Experiences, Car Accidents, Medical Inaccuracies, Hurt/Comfort, Angst with a Happy Ending, Social Media, if i've read dozens of fics thats like having read the books right
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2025-12-21 Completed: 2025-12-26 Words: 9,324 Chapters: 3/3

Last Call

by HollowIsTheWorld

Summary

> "- Fuck, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. There was a wreck... pushed my car into the water. I can see the lights from the first responders, but... I don't think they're going to make it. And I can't get out. I tried, Ilya, I swear I tried. I just... I love you. That's all I'm thinking right now. I love you, and I'm so sorry I'm not going to-" There was a choked-off sound. Shane fighting off a sob, Ilya thought, and a matching noise came out of his own throat. "I wanted to marry you. I wanted to marry you more than anything in the whole fucking world."

Chapter 1

Shane didn't lose consciousness. Not as the car door crumpled in, or as he saw the semi-trailer crunching through the front of his Jeep like it had the structural integrity of a soda can. He was awake for every horrifying, stomach-flipping moment of the car spinning off the road, past the already trashed guardrail, and into the water. He was awake for the airbag deploying into his chest and trying to move and finding that his legs were pinned under the steering column and his left arm was boxed in where the door had bent.

And he was awake as the cold rush of water began to pour over his shoes.

He struggled for a minute, shoving at the door, smashing his hand against the button to lower the window. It didn't respond, and the door didn't budge. His right arm was about all he could move.

When the water seeped up to his knees he stopped, gasping for breath. He didn't even feel all that hurt - if they got him out of the water he thought he might walk away with nothing worse than some nasty bruises.

But the water was coming in quick. Maybe he'd get lucky - maybe the fire department was coming in after him right now.

But maybe he wouldn't. Maybe he was about to drown in his car, twenty-five minutes away from home. Maybe he wasn't going to make it home.

The Centaurs plane had to make an emergency landing.

Shane closed his eyes against the memory. The panic he'd felt. The dread of grief that had gripped his heart. The texts from Ilya that would have been his last words if...

It took him a minute to find his phone where it had slid down the dash and gotten wedged against the windshield. Small relief - he'd been afraid it had fallen out of reach, already ruined by the water.

The water was covering his thighs by the time he got his fingers around it. He opened his and Ilya's chat, hesitating over the keyboard.

dont forget you need more ginger ale. down to 2 cans

Shane's stomach rolled again. How could he just... text back? From a grocery reminder to a goodbye death text in under an hour.

His finger hit the call button almost without thinking. The phone rang and rang until - *This is Ilya. I will never listen to your voicemail*. Despite everything, it made the corner of Shane’s mouth pull up.

It was for the best that he'd gotten his voicemail, Shane thought. He could speak to him, say goodbye, but Ilya wouldn't have to hear this. Not while it was happening. Shane would hang up before the water...

"I love you, Ilya," he said softly. "I love you so, so much."

Ilya unclipped Anya's leash and hung it up on its hook, toeing off his shoes and dropping his keys back in their bowl by the door.

"Ready for dinner, girl?" he asked Anya and she perked up, jauntily leading the way into the kitchen. He plugged in his phone - he'd ran the battery down taking pictures and videos of Anya chasing birds in the park - and followed after her.

His phone started ringing halfway through the process of getting out the dog food, and he and Shane had learned the hard way that Anya's generally good behavior did not extend to behaving if they left her food unattended at dinner time. Even Shane had admitted that was on them.

"Whoever that is will have to wait, won't they?" he told Anya conversationally. She wagged her tail, looking between him and the food bowl.

When he reached the phone a couple minutes later, the screen was still flashing, telling him that Shane was in the middle of leaving a voicemail. He picked up as he dropped onto the couch. "Hello, Shane. Sorry, was giving Anya dinner. What is up?"

"...Ilya."

Ilya sat up, his insides going cold. "Shane? What is wrong? You don't sound right."

"I... I love you, Ilya."

Ilya could barely breathe. Dread coiled in his gut. "I love you too. Always. What-"

The line went dead.

Ilya sat there for a moment, frozen, heart pounding, listening to the silence. Then he called Shane back.

Directly to voicemail.

He called again. Voicemail. Again. Voicemail.

He stood up and began pacing around the living room as he went to his own inbox and played the message Shane had been leaving when Ilya had picked up. Something was wrong. Something was so very, very wrong, he was sure of it.

I love you, Ilya, Shane's voice came through the speaker. Wrong. He sounded all wrong. Soft and scared. *I love you so, so much.*

Ilya held his breath.

"I - Fuck, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry. There was a wreck... pushed my car into the water. I can see the lights from the first responders, but... I don't think they're going to make it. And I can't get out. I tried, Ilya, I swear I tried. I just... I love you. That's all I'm thinking right now. I love you, and I'm so sorry I'm not going to-" There was a choked-off sound. Shane fighting off a sob, Ilya thought, and a matching noise came out of his own throat. *"I wanted to marry you. I wanted to marry you more than anything in the whole fucking world. Just... remember that, okay. I love you, and I wanted to spend the rest of my life with you, and I want you to be happy. Please. For me. Just... try. Please try to get through this. I love you so, so-"*

The Ilya of two minutes ago, blissfully unaware of what was happening, picked up, cutting him off.

Ilya had stopped pacing at some point. He stood frozen, his phone making sounds he wasn't registering, refusing to process what he'd just heard.

Shane couldn't be *dead*. He couldn't be. He was out grabbing groceries while Ilya took Anya for her walk and there was absolutely no way he could just be *gone* now. They'd moved in together, fully. They were getting married *next week*. He couldn't be...

The sudden drop of the call played in his head. The water. Shane had gone into the water.

And Ilya had very possibly just heard the last gulp of air Shane would ever take.

He wanted to throw up. For a moment, he thought he would.

But he had to be sure. He couldn't collapse while there was some chance, *any* chance, that Shane was okay. With shaking hands, he started making phone calls.

@OttawaCentaurs

It's with heavy hearts that we announce that Shane Hollander was caught in a multi-vehicle wreck this evening. He is currently hospitalized and in critical condition. We ask that you keep him in your thoughts, and respect the privacy of Shane and his family during this time. We will keep you informed of updates as we receive them.

@Hockeyor27

God, Hollander and Rozanov can't catch a fucking break this year, can they? The almost-plane crash, being outed, Hollander switching teams, and now a car wreck?

@AshCentaur91

Wasn't he supposed to get married this summer? Tough fucking break. Hope he pulls through.

@Hollz2Ottawa

Hollander's been my favorite since he was drafted, if he doesn't make it through this I'm gonna lose it

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Ilya couldn't remember when, exactly, Yuna had taken his hand. He just knew she was holding it now, the two of them gripping tightly to one another as they waited. It felt like they'd been waiting for hours, but Ilya didn't dare check the time. Too little time and he'd just feel all the more desperate. Too much and he'd panic, wondering what could be happening that would take so long.

There had been a brief flash of hope at the words *pulled out of the water* and *taken to the hospital* but now it felt like a tease. A taunt. One final moment of believing he could have this before it was ripped away forever. As though there was a God after all and He was dedicated to fucking over Ilya Rozanov personally.

The hand that wasn't holding Yuna's was gripped tightly around his mother's crucifix. *Please. Please. Mama, if you can hear, if there is any truth to our loved ones looking out for us, please don't let me lose him.*

"Shane Hollander?" Ilya, Yuna, and David, scrambled to their feet. *Please*.

"How is he?" Yuna was still holding Ilya's hand. David's hands were on her shoulders, and Ilya couldn't tell if he was supporting himself or holding his wife up.

The doctor's face wasn't reassuring. "Shane wasn't breathing when the firefighters pulled him out of the water. The paramedics were eventually able to get his heart beating again-"

Ilya heard himself let out a pathetic, broken whimper. *Please*.

"-but his heart was stopped for at least six minutes. Possibly longer."

Yuna's hand squeezed Ilya's. "What does that mean? How is he?"

"The crash itself didn't do much damage. But his heart stopping... That means a high risk of brain damage from the lack of oxygen, and there's no way to tell how much, if any, damage was done until he wakes up."

"Do you know when that might be?" David asked.

The doctor's expression was pitying. Ilya was twelve years old, watching paramedics avoid his eyes as they took his mother away, none of them sure how to say what had happened. A horrible feeling rising in his chest that everything was ruined, but not quite understanding why.

"We don't have any way of knowing. And... There's a very real chance he might not."

If he hadn't been holding Yuna's hand, Ilya thought he might have dropped to his knees. *Please*.

When the doctor finally led them to Shane's room, Ilya collapsed into the chair next to the bed, trembling. Shane looked so small, so... fragile. Worse than when he'd been concussed, loopy on painkillers. A base instinct was screaming that Ilya had to rip that tube out of his throat, that it was hurting him.

Yuna had let go of his hand at some point and was smoothing Shane's hair back from his face. "My boy, my poor boy..."

Six minutes. Six minutes without his heart beating. Six minutes of no blood flow to his brain, no oxygen.

Was Shane lying dead in front of him, just waiting for the doctors to get with the program?

Ilya took Shane's hand, muscles shaking with the effort of keeping his movements slow and gentle. He didn't want to hurt Shane. He didn't want to risk jostling the IV.

Shane's hand was warm, but it was limp. Lifeless. His fingers didn't twist to lace between Ilya's. He didn't squeeze Ilya's fingers to let him know he was there, that they were together.

I love you, Ilya. His last words. He had called to deliver his last words, to say goodbye. Just like Ilya had sent from that plane, not knowing if he'd live to see the ground.

But Ilya had survived. Had walked away more rattled than he liked to admit, but unharmed. He hadn't been lain out in a hospital bed while people said words like *life support* and *brain damage*.

Something awful welled up in Ilya's throat, lodged there, nearly burst out. He wasn't sure if he was going to break down sobbing or throw up or start screaming. Start shaking the doctor and demanding that he fix this, that Ilya had lost enough for a lifetime and he wouldn't, *couldn't*, add Shane to the list.

The doctor was saying something. The words rolled over Ilya; meaningless, dizzying sounds. He wasn't sure he could even understand Russian right now. Not if the words came from anyone but Shane.

The machine made an ugly, mechanical sound. Ilya knew the sound of Shane's breathing as well as he knew the sound of his skates on ice, as well as he knew the buzzer that sounded the end of a game. This sound was nothing like it. This was false. It was a foreign *thing* that didn't belong in his fiance.

"Come back." Ilya didn't realize he was going to say the words out loud until he heard them. "Shane, lyubimyy, please, *please*, come back." Shane's face was pale and waxy. Ilya was suddenly gripped by the idea that Shane must be cold - he always complained about how cold Ilya kept the house. And the water - the water must have been freezing. He must have been so cold, and frightened, and alone and Ilya...

No amount of '*there was nothing you could have done*' or '*of course you didn't pick up right away*' was stopping him from thinking about how he'd been feeding Anya, talking to her, while Shane had been trapped in a sinking car.

The connection had dropped as soon as Ilya had said I love you. Had Shane heard him? Had he at least gone under with that small comfort alongside him?

He felt David's hand on his shoulder like it was muffled through a dozen layers of clothes. "He'll pull through this," David said, but it sounded to Ilya's ears like it was himself he was trying to convince. "He's strong. And stubborn. He'll make it."

He had to. Ilya had lost too much in his life already. One more, *this* one more, would be more than he could take. No amount of therapy, no amount of team hangouts, no amount of cuddles with Anya, would pull him through if he lost *Shane*.

Ilya didn't realize the doctor had finished talking to Yuna and left until Yuna came to stand next to them, one hand on her husband's arm and the other on the back of Ilya's neck. For a moment, Ilya thought she was going to echo her husband, say that Shane would be okay as though saying it would make it real. But she drew in a shuddering breath and fell silent.

There was nothing any of them could do but wait.

Hayden stepped into the hospital room with a force of effort. Seeing people in hospitals wasn't all that unusual for an athlete, but they were usually still conscious. Maybe a little out of it or drugged up, but this was the first time he'd had a friend hooked up to a ventilator. A machine doing Shane's breathing for him.

Ilya Rozanov was sitting next to the bed, one hand in Shane's, looking almost as bad off as Shane did. He didn't look up as Hayden entered.

"Hey," Hayden said softly, because it seemed like he should announce himself. He set the cards the kids had made done beside the bed, next to a vase of flowers. "The, uh, the kids made him some get well soon cards. They wanted to come see him, but they wouldn't understand that they can't... You know, that he isn't just going to wake up to play with them."

"Yeah." Rozanov was now looking at the cards with a far away look on his face.

Hayden hesitated, then took the seat next to Rozanov. "Have you gone home at all? Even just to shower."

"I'm not leaving him." Rozanov's voice was hard and stubborn. Hayden guessed he'd had this argument a few times already, probably with Shane's parents.

"You can't do anything just by being here. I can stay until you or Shane's parents come back."

"I am. Not. Leaving."

Hayden sighed. "Okay. Shane'd probably kick my ass if I didn't at least try to make you take care of yourself. But I get it. I wouldn't be budging if it was Jackie."

They sat in silence for a few minutes, just listening to the wheeze of the machine keeping Shane's lungs moving. Hayden had never figured out how to be *friends* with Rozanov, still wasn't sure he wanted to be. But right now he wasn't Ilya Rozanov, Shane's arch-rival and the guy who always had an insult locked and loaded. He was Hayden's best friend's fiance, and the best friend in question was lying lifeless in a hospital bed.

Hayden was holding off the thought that Shane was never going to wake up by a thread. It kept muscling its way back in - that six minutes without oxygen was too long. That it was probably even longer, because they didn't know how long he'd been trapped in the car, under the water, before the fire department had pulled him free.

"I..." Hayden started, reconsidered, and looked at Shane.

Shane was his best friend. Uncle to his kids. A part of his family, as far as Hayden was concerned. And Shane would want him to look after Rozanov, in whatever little way he could manage. If Rozanov would let him.

"I know we're not friends," Hayden managed. "But you're Shane's world. If there's anything... I can't think of anything I could do. That's... we're all fucking helpless. But if there *is* something, even if it's just you need another dog sitter or something... Just let me know, okay?"

It spoke volumes about Rozanov's state of mind that he didn't say anything witty or insulting. He didn't crack a joke or make a face or roll his eyes. He just said, very quietly, eyes still fixed on Shane, "Thank you."

He loved Shane. It was still a strange, foreign thought to Hayden. That Ilya Rozanov, of all people, would be smitten with Shane. That he was no great playboy after all. That he was the one who had been putting that smile on Shane's face for so long. Shane's *Lily*.

But it was written all over him now. Not just his face, but every inch of him. The way he sat, angled towards Shane like Shane might vanish. The way he was curled toward him, like he could protect him.

"He called me," Rozanov said. His voice cracked and Hayden barely stopped himself from asking when Rozanov had last had something to drink. "I didn't pick up because I was feeding the dog."

Hayden didn't need to be an Ilya Rozanov expert to hear the self-recrimination in the words.

"You wouldn't have been able to do anything," he said, because it was what you were supposed to say and it was true.

"I would have been there," Rozanov replied.

There was nothing to say to that. Again, Hayden imagined it being Jackie lying there. It being his best friend was already awful; horrible in a way he didn't know how to process, didn't know how he would recover from it. And Shane wasn't the person Hayden had chosen to build a life with. Wasn't the person he went home to at night, wasn't the person whose arms he woke up in in the morning. Shane wasn't the person Hayden did the grocery shopping with, or who he had to work around in the kitchen.

It was Rozanov who was losing all that. Rozanov who was supposed to have a wedding next week and now might have a funeral instead. Rozanov who was staring down the barrel of an empty, lonely life, devoid of the person he wanted to build it with.

Hayden's heart suddenly broke for him. He wanted to pull Rozanov into a hug; only stopped himself because he didn't think Rozanov was a hugger, and even if he was he probably wouldn't want one from Hayden, of all people.

"I'm not leaving," Rozanov said again, as though Hayden had tried to push him to go again. "He called me and I wasn't... He was scared. I could hear it in the voicemail. He tried to keep it out. Did not want me to worry." Rozanov made a scoffing, choked-off sort of noise.

For a moment, Hayden wondered why Rozanov was telling *him* this, of all people. And then the gut-wrenching reasoning hit him. Who else could Rozanov tell? He couldn't very well tell Shane's parents how frightened their son had been. Even at the lowest of Hayden's opinion, *that* would have been more selfish and cruel than Hayden would have expected of him. And who else did Rozanov have? No parents. One shitty, asshole brother Shane had complained about a few times.

When Hayden had put together that Rozanov had gone to Ottawa for Shane, he had thought about hockey. About the lower standing, the rumors that had swirled about why Rozanov would subject himself to such a downgrade. He'd thought about Rozanov's chances of ever holding a cup again, his shot at the Olympics. He hadn't thought about Rozanov leaving his team, and with them most of the people he knew on the continent.

When Rozanov and Shane had talked about coming out, Hayden had thought about hockey again - about the unofficial *don't ask, don't tell* policy of the NHL that lurked behind their promises of diversity and inclusion. He hadn't thought about Russia, about how Rozanov had chosen Shane over his own fucking country.

Rozanov's entire fucking world was lying in a hospital bed, hooked up to a ventilator, and Rozanov had no one to collapse into. Hayden would go home to Jackie, hold her close and guiltily think how grateful he was to have her and she would squeeze his hand as they both silently prayed for Shane to pull through. Yuna and David, wrecked as Hayden knew they must be, had each other, were probably joined at the hip right now.

If Rozanov went home like everyone wanted him to, left Shane's bedside to shower and brush his teeth and take a nap, he would go home to an empty house. An empty house with Shane's existence etched into it.

"You could also crash at our place," Hayden offered, before he could second-guess himself. "If you don't want to go home."

That pulled Rozanov's gaze away from Shane, showing what Hayden thought was the most surprise he'd ever seen on the other man's face.

"Not right now," Rozanov finally said. "Thank you."

And Hayden was immediately certain that he'd been right, that it wasn't just wanting to stay with Shane keeping Rozanov here.

"Well, you just say the word. You've got me and Jackie's numbers. One of us can come sit with him, if Yuna and David are taking a break too."

Rozanov - and maybe it was about time Hayden started working on thinking of him by his first name - nodded. "Yes. If they are gone - I don't want him to be alone."

Hayden understood that. Shane looked ridiculously small and frail lying in that bed, oxygen being pumped into him. Hayden didn't want him to be alone either.

Rozanov - Ilya - reached out and tucked Shane's hair behind his ear, then brushed his fingers over Shane's cheekbones. Hayden half expected Shane to wake up at the touch, to flush red and shy away from the open display of affection when they had an audience.

But of course he didn't. He remained pale and motionless, no signs of life in his features. Hayden reached out and put a hand on the edge of the bed, not quite daring even to touch him. *Come on Shane, you can beat this. You've got all of us pulling for you.*

@OttawaCentaurs

We've received a lot of requests for updates on Shane Hollander's condition. Unfortunately, there are no changes to report. Shane is still in a coma. We can tell you that his car went into the water and he was without oxygen for several minutes. It is now only a matter of waiting and hoping for the best. Please continue to keep him and his family in your thoughts and respect their need for privacy.

@Brillaur86

Yeesh, I was figuring he was pretty banged up, but he stopped breathing? No wonder there's been so few updates, it's really just gonna be a waiting game until he wakes up

@91Canyons

IF he wakes up, you mean

@Brillaur86

some of us are trying to stay optimistic

@CentFan37

This is somehow even worse than if he got hurt on the ice. Hockey players get hurt all the time, but he was just... driving?

@Hockey2Cutey

Anyone in/near Ottawa, there's gonna be a vigil for Hollander tonight

@SennitTennis

there's one in Vancouver too

Chapter End Notes

As a Christmas present to you all, I'm editing and posting the final chapter pretty much as soon as this one goes up. Please leave comments to support me through dinner with my grandmother tomorrow.

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Six days. The six longest and worst days of Ilya's life. Six days of Shane lying in a hospital bed as a machine did his breathing for him. Six days of hospital sounds and smells, six days of nurses who, under any other circumstances, Ilya would have wanted to learn the names of. But there wasn't room in his head for learning things. For recognizing people. Exchanging the simplest of words with everyone else who came to see Shane was almost more than he could manage. Even dropping into Russian with Svetlana had only been a slight relief.

"Your mom and Hayden teamed up to make me go home and shower," he told Shane, slipping his hand back into his fiance's. "I am back now. Refused to try to take a nap. Would not sleep away from you, anyway."

Shane didn't respond. Of course he didn't. Every passing day - every passing *minute* - was a hit against Ilya's hope that Shane might claw his way back to him.

"Did not go *home*, actually," he continued. "Went to Hayden's. Felt... easier. Than our home. Do not worry, Anya is with Bood. The kids are worried about you too."

He felt like he was rambling. He probably was. Maybe it was just the lack of sleep, but he felt like he was losing his mind. Saying whatever occurred to him because too much silence made him feel like something desperate was going to rip out of him, howling and begging for Shane to *wake up*.

Since the moment they'd said *his heart was stopped for six minutes*, there had been a voice at the back of Ilya's head, hissing *he will never wake up*. He would never wake up. Ilya would never see his beautiful smile or hear his laugh or feel Shane's fingers squeeze his in return. *I want you to be happy*, Shane had said. *Please. For me. Just... try. Please try to get through this*.

Ilya didn't have a word in either language for the feeling that clawed at his chest at that. The desperation, the fury, the hopelessness. *How can you think I could? You think I can recover from this? You think there is a world where I look back at this and think, 'yes, he is gone, but I am all right now?'*

He'd listened to the voicemail a hundred times. Maybe more. Strained his ears to hear the creaking of metal, the rush of water as Shane spoke. Heard Shane take a breath and wondered *has the water reached his throat? Am I hearing him try to stay above it?*

"It is our wedding tomorrow," he told Shane, his voice wavering. "You wouldn't miss it, would you? You would not do this to me?"

It was irrational. As irrational as thinking he could change things by simply holding the crucifix around his neck and praying. But Ilya couldn't help but feel certain that if tomorrow

came and went, if Shane lay here motionless in the hospital bed as the scheduled time for their wedding passed by, then that would be it. He would be gone. Ilya would have to talk to Yuna and David and the doctors about life support, about funerals.

Please. It was the closest thing to a coherent thought that Ilya had been able to manage since that final phone call. *Please, don't let me lose him. Not Shane. Not after everything.*

There were vigils being held all over Canada, and parts of the United States too. Svetlana had sent him some pictures. Hayden and Yuna had both mentioned it. Outpourings of support from his fans, offering the only thing they could. Pictures of Shane, surrounded by candles and flower arrangements. Shane holding one of his cups, his awards. Pictures of Ilya and Shane, arms around each, beaming.

Wasn't he supposed to get married soon? Tough fucking break. Comments on the news articles, on the social media posts.

People loved him. Loved the real him, loved the idea of him, loved the image of himself he projected. Loved what he represented as a gay, Asian hockey player.

"You have to wake up," Ilya told him yet again. "You're so fucking loved." The world would be such a darker, more dismal place if Shane Hollander stopped being in it.

"You promised you wouldn't leave me," Ilya went on. "You... Come on, Shane, just wake up. Just wake up and anything else... If it's brain damage or nerve damage or memory loss or whatever, I'll take care of it. I'll take care of it. Of you. You just have to *wake up*."

Shane's fingers twitched.

Ilya's heart seized in his chest. "Shane?" He leapt to his feet, holding Shane's hand tighter. "Shane, can you hear me?"

It hadn't been his imagination, had it? It had been a tiny movement, but it had felt real, present. He knew every inch of Shane's body, every movement it could make. He wouldn't imagine a movement where there was none.

Right?

"Shane, please, lyubimyy. Please. Squeeze my hand, open your eyes, anything. Tell me you are still here. With me." *Please, please, please.*

Shane didn't move. The fingers in Ilya's hold were slack. Ilya moved his other hand to Shane's face, gently cradled his jaw. "Please, Shane. You are such a strong person. Such a strong fighter. You can beat this. Come on, come back to me."

If he didn't wake up after giving Ilya such a heady, dizzying rush of hope, Ilya thought it would be more than he could take. The grief of it might just kill him. *Please*. He felt the metal of his crucifix and his ring on the chain around his neck. *Mama, please, Help him find his way back to me. Please.*

Minutes passed by without another sign of life, and then - another twitch of Shane's fingers, more noticeable this time.

"That's it." Ilya ran his fingers through Shane's hair - he and Yuna had been keeping it combed, making sure it didn't tangle - just the way he knew Shane liked, like the familiar motion might help Shane come back from whatever darkness he was trapped inside. "That's it, sladkiy. Come back to me."

The pause before there was another movement was shorter this time. Another shake of the fingers. A slow, barely perceptible tightening. A twitch in Shane's face, like he was flinching away from something.

"Come on," Ilya coaxed. "Open your eyes. You're so beautiful, so perfect, so strong, I know you can make it. I know you can do this." Endearments and encouragement kept spilling out of his mouth, hoping that somehow Shane could hear him, could follow his voice back to the land of the living. "Just open your eyes. Just let me see your eyes. Just show me you are still alive, come on..."

And he did.

Slowly, like it hurt him even to try, more and more expression flickered over Shane's face. Ilya gripped Shane's hand harder, and Shane squeezed back, his grip weak but definitely there. His eyes screwed shut tighter and Ilya wished he knew how to turn the lights down. Maybe it was too bright in here for him.

"Come on, Shane. I'm here. Just wake up for me."

Shane made a soft whimpering sound and it made Ilya almost want to take it back, to say Shane didn't have to wake up yet if it hurt.

But he had to wake up. Ilya *needed* him to wake up.

"I know it hurts, sweetheart, I know, but please. For me. Just wake up. Just for a minute. Just tell me you're still alive."

Another pained sound. Shane's head lolled to the side on the pillow. His other hand, the one Ilya wasn't holding, lifted a few inches off the bed and pawed weakly at the air.

He's alive. He's really alive.

Shane's eyes finally slowly opened, looking like it cost him more effort than anything he'd ever done.

Ilya could have collapsed with relief. Shane's eyes were always lovely, but just now they were the most beautiful thing in existence. They were proof he was still alive. Proof he'd fought to stay here, with Ilya, where he belonged.

Shane's other hand lifted again, not much stronger than the last time, but this time Ilya realized what he was trying to do. "No, no." He pulled his hand away from Shane's face to catch his wrist. "No, sweetheart, is helping you breathe. Okay? You understand?"

Shane's eyes were cloudy, confused, but after a few moments he nodded. Ilya dropped his wrist, leaned over, and pressed the button that would call for a nurse, then returned to cradling Shane's face. "It's okay. You're okay. Just wait for doctors."

There was none of Shane's usual sharpness in his eyes, none of his immediate instinct to start planning and questioning and preparing. He looked helpless, his dark eyes bewildered. Ilya leaned down to press a kiss to his forehead. "Is all right, Shane. I am here. Yes. You understand?"

Shane nodded weakly again. He looked so tired. He tightened his fingers around Ilya's again. Ilya squeezed back.

He was alive. Nothing else mattered. It didn't matter if he'd suffered brain damage, if Ilya was going to spend the rest of his life as Shane's caretaker. That was a minuscule price to pay.

A nurse finally came in, her voice brightening as she saw that Shane was awake. A minute later, Shane was being surrounded by medical professionals, which wasn't doing much to fix Shane's bewildered, cloudy expression.

Ilya kept his left hand in Shane's but pulled away his right to get out of the way and work his phone out of his pocket. He texted Shane's parents: *he's awake. being checked by doctors now*. Then, after a moment, he texted Hayden the same. They'd managed some sort of truce this last week, and Ilya knew it would please Shane if they could maintain it.

And God, right now, he would have done *anything* if it would make Shane happy.

"All right," the doctor said, "I think we can take this out." He tapped at the ventilator.

Ilya's heart skipped a beat. "He is all right? Can breathe on his own?"

The doctor nodded, looking between Ilya and Shane. Shane looked like he was struggling to follow the conversation. "Now that he's conscious, he should be all right to manage it. If he needs more oxygen, we can give him support without something so invasive."

It was the best news Ilya had ever heard. He hated that fucking thing, shoved down Shane's throat and forcing air into his lungs. Every sound it had made, every time Ilya had needed to maneuver around it, had been a reminder of how close to death Shane was. He'd be glad to see it go.

He held Shane's hand tightly as they pulled it out, Shane whimpering a little as they did, coughing once it was gone. Ilya ran his fingers through Shane's hair, pushing it back. He was sweating with the effort of just being awake.

But he was awake. That was what mattered.

"Okay, Shane, I'm sure you're tired, but I'm going to ask you some questions, all right? See how your mind is doing."

Ilya sucked in a breath. This was it then - the moment of truth. Shane was at least aware of what was happening and that was something - that was everything - but the results of this

exam were going to tell Ilya the direction of the rest of his life. *Their* life.

"Can you tell me your name?"

"Sha-" Shane coughed. His voice was hoarse and weak. "Shane Hollander."

"Your birthday?"

"May 10th, 1991."

"Can you tell me your job?"

"Hockey player. Just signed with Ottawa."

The relief at that answer was so strong Ilya had to tighten his grip on Shane's hand again, only to let go in a rush as he realized he might be hurting him. If Shane could remember something as recent as his signing with Ottawa he *had* to be all right.

The doctor pointed at Ilya. "And can you remember *his* name?"

Shane looked up. His dazed expression didn't clear, but it did turn fond. "Ilya Rozanov."

Ilya wanted to collapse into him. He barely listened to the rest of the questions, holding Shane's hand and running his thumb back and forth across the back of it. He brushed at Shane's hair, tucked it behind his ear, traced his fingers along Shane's jawline. Despite his obvious exhaustion, color was flowing back into his skin.

He's alive. He's alive and he's here with me and he's still Shane. He reached up to run his fingers over the crucifix. *Thank you*.

A flurry of voices and footsteps announced that Yuna and David had arrived. The medical staff stepped out of their way as they rushed to Shane's side.

"Oh, honey..." Yuna sounded on the verge of tears, more frightened than she had the whole last week. If she was anything like her son - and Ilya knew that she was *very much* like her son - she'd been plowing through on pure stubbornness, and the relief was about to bowl her over.

"Hey, mom," Shane said tiredly.

"That's all you have to say? After you nearly frighten us all to death?"

"I'll be more eloquent later, promise."

Yuna made a choked off little laugh, hugged Shane as best she could around all the medical equipment he was still hooked into, and then whirled on the doctor, demanding to know how Shane was doing. Ilya sat up to listen, but Shane tugged on his sleeve, directing his attention back down.

"Did I miss our wedding?"

He said it so earnestly, concerned, eyes pleading, and Ilya felt the question like a punch in his heart. He'd mostly been too stunned to cry for the last six days, but it hit him now, leaving him gasping for air as the tears started falling, bending down to press his forehead to Shane's.

"Tomorrow," he managed. "It's tomorrow."

They'd have to postpone it, obviously, but it would be *postponed*, not *canceled*. Not gone.

Thank you, Mama. Thank you for not letting him leave me.

"Oh." Shane shifted, pulled their heads apart and managed to pull up his hand to wipe at Ilya's tears. "I have to - Hey, when can I go home?"

"Shane, lyubimyy, you need to rest-"

"I am *not* missing our wedding." Despite how tired he obviously was, there was a lot of force in the words. "What do you think I woke up for?"

Fuck, but Ilya loved him. He loved him so much he was constantly expecting it to just explode out of him, to make him rip open at the seams. How could one person hold on to this much love? Where was he supposed to put it?

Yuna crossed her arms over her chest expectantly. "Well? My son's getting married tomorrow - what are his options?"

Ilya let out a startled laugh. He heard David make a similar sound from where he was standing with one hand on Shane's shoulder, reassuring himself that his son was still alive.

God, Ilya loved Shane's parents too. He remembered the jealousy that had burned in him when he'd first learned of Shane Hollander's existence, seen his perfect interviews with his perfect, supportive parents. How much he'd wanted parents to match and how hard he'd shoved that desire away.

And now they'd decided they were his too. Just because Shane loved him. Ilya made Shane happy, so they liked him. That had been all it took. And now, Shane wanted to get married on time and the expression on Yuna's face said that he was going to, come hell or high water.

"I'd like to take him back for another more MRI," the doctor said. "But as long as no surprises show up, I think we can figure something out."

"Really?" Ilya asked, surprised. After six days unconscious, he'd been expecting to hear that Shane wasn't going anywhere or doing anything for a good long while.

The doctor nodded. "So far, his brain seems to be in good shape. The other injuries he sustained in the crash were minor, and have mostly healed. He needs to take it very easy for a while, but as long as he won't be alone and will rest, he may be able to go home tomorrow."

"I *will*," Shane said firmly. "I'm getting married and I'm not missing my wedding." He tried to sit up, winced, and collapsed back onto the pillow. "Even if I have to get married sitting

down."

"He will rest," Ilya said. "Or I will drag him back to hospital myself."

Shane leaned over and nuzzled at his hand. Ilya felt like he was going to burst. *He's alive. He's alive and already back to arguing with people.*

"But like I said, I'd like to do another MRI before I make any promises," the doctor said.

Ilya nodded, kissed Shane's forehead - *thank you, thank you, thank you* - and let them wheel his bed out of the room. Then he collapsed back into his chair, shaking. *He's alive*.

David and Yuna hugged each other, crying.

"I have to - I'm going-" Yuna waved her phone.

"I will tell Hayden and the Centaurs," Ilya volunteered. It seemed like the least he could do, both to help Yuna out and to check in with the people who were almost as worried about him as they were about Shane.

Yuna stepped out of the room to make her calls - like her son, she seemed to be allergic to sitting still while making a call - and Ilya went to contact Hayden. He'd texted back - *thank god. let me know when we can come by*

Ilya called him. It seemed like the sort of thing that should be said aloud, to make it real.

Hayden picked up almost instantly. He'd probably been glued to his phone since the earlier text. "How is he?"

For once, Ilya felt no inclination to say something snarky like *hello, Pike. Is this how they teach you to greet people in Canada?* "They are doing some tests, but he is okay. No brain damage." It was still the best news Ilya had ever heard in his life. *Thank you*.

"Really?" Ilya recognized Hayden's tone. *How can that be? That's exactly what I was hoping to hear, are you sure this isn't some desperate hope that's gotten the better of me?* "He's okay?"

"Already arguing with the doctor about when he can go home." A laugh tried to tumble out of him, warped into something wet, almost another sob. Was he still crying? He thought he might still be crying. "He says he refuses to postpone our wedding."

Hayden laughed and Ilya could hear the reality settling in for him. "That... of course he is. Of *course* he is. What does the doctor say?"

"That if no 'surprises' come up, maybe he can come home tomorrow."

"*Tomorrow*? For real?"

Again, Ilya didn't even feel tempted to take the bait of an easy argument. He was no less surprised, no less relieved. "With lots of rest. Will be a very calm wedding, I think."

Hayden barked another laugh, loud and almost hysterical. "We'll give you two the calmest fucking wedding of all time, so long as he's there to have it. Christ. Fuck, I'm so fucking relieved. I thought-" He cut himself off, regrouped. "I'll tell Jackie. God, and the kids will want to see him as soon as he's up for it. Do you guys need anything?"

"Not right now. Yuna and David are here. Will let you know."

"'M okay, Ilya," Shane murmured. He could hear that he wasn't being all that reassuring - he was exhausted and the words slurred together in his mouth.

"Hush." Ilya smoothed his hair back for the thousandth time. "If you want me to agree to take you home for wedding, you will let me fuss."

His accent was the thickest Shane had heard it in ages. Shane felt another pang of guilt for causing him so much worry. "Between you and my mom, I'm not going anywhere unsupervised for the next six months, am I?"

"A year. At least." Ilya kissed his cheek, then pressed his forehead against Shane's temple and took a deep breath. "Six days, Shane."

"Yeah." He still couldn't quite believe it. He pawed around for a minute until he found Ilya's hand. The strong, warm grip that had pulled him back. He'd been so tired, every muscle so sore, and he'd wanted to tell Ilya to go away, to let him sleep just a little bit longer. But Ilya's voice had begged him to wake up, even if just for a minute, and through his haze he'd thought *he always wants me to sleep in, if I can. Something must be wrong.* And he'd felt Ilya holding his hand and followed the feeling back to consciousness, where it had taken him several minutes to remember what had happened.

He tightened his grip as the memory butted in on him again. The water creeping up his chest, trying to focus on his goodbye to Ilya so he didn't completely freak out. The moment where he'd gulped in a breath of air he'd been certain would be his last.

Ilya rubbed his thumb against the back of Shane's hand. "You're okay," he said softly. "You came back."

"Told you, can't miss our wedding." He was still so tired, but he didn't want to sleep. The thick blackness Ilya's voice had called him out of felt like it was lurking just past his eyelids. What if he didn't wake up again?

Ilya kissed the hand he was holding. "Good." There was a moment where the silence between them was heavy, Ilya considering saying something. Shane waited, hoping he wouldn't fall asleep before Ilya spoke.

"I am sorry I did not pick up." The words were clipped, the way he sometimes did when he was taking extra care with his English.

It took Shane a moment to realize what he was talking about. He squeezed Ilya's hand as hard as he could - not very hard, under the circumstances - and shook his head. "No. I was glad

you didn't. It was..." He realized the stupidity of what he was about to say and managed a sheepish smile. "I didn't want to scare you any worse."

Ilya snorted in a way that suggested he was about to start crying again. Shane felt stupidly guilty about that too - that he'd put Ilya into such a state. "As though could be any worse than *there was a car crash*."

"I didn't say it was smart." Shane leaned over, resting his cheek in Ilya's hand. His heart skipped a beat. He hadn't thought he'd ever get to feel this again. "I wanted to say goodbye, to tell you I loved you... But if I'd actually been talking to you I think I would have broken down."

"Don't care. Wish I'd been there with you."

Shane again thought of the water climbing up his throat. The cold of it. The way he'd shoved down his desire to scream, to burst into tears, focusing on his goodbye. If Ilya had been on the phone, he didn't know if he would have been able to stop it. Keep himself from breaking down and shouting that he *didn't want to die*. And if he had died, he didn't want that to have been what Ilya had last heard from him.

"You picked up at the end," he said, because the rest was more than he knew how to put into words. "I got to hear you say you loved me one more time."

Ilya bowed his head, his shoulders shaking as he started crying. "You did hear me. I wasn't sure..."

"I heard." *I love you too. Always*. And then Shane had dropped the phone, knowing he was only seconds away from having his mouth submerged. He hadn't wanted Ilya to hear that final moment, the last breath.

Ilya buried his fingers in Shane's hair. Shane knew him well enough to feel the way he was holding himself back from holding tighter, from just climbing into the bed along with Shane. Shane knew it was impractical, but he wished he would. Curling up in bed with Ilya sounded like the best thing in the universe right about now.

"Sleep, Shane," Ilya said softly. "If you expect to go home and have a wedding in twenty-four hours, you need to rest."

Shane nodded, knowing he was right, but his body still fought against it. He didn't *want* to sleep.

Ilya, as in tune with him as ever, cocked his head to one side. "What's wrong?"

What was wrong was that he wanted Ilya a hell of a lot closer than this. "Feels like if I sleep, I'll..."

Ilya tightened his grip on Shane's hand. "Oh. I know, sweetheart. I don't much like seeing you asleep in this bed either." He pressed a kiss against Shane's temple, then rested his forehead there. "But I'll be right here, okay? If you get lost, I'll call you back again."

That was soothing enough for Shane's eyes to drift closed for a second. "Promise?"

"Always."

Shane tried to focus on the weight and warmth of the blankets, of Ilya's hand in his. He'd followed that feeling, that voice, out of the black once. If it tried to drag him back under, he would do it again.

He took a deep breath, let it out slowly. Breathed through the soreness. "I love you."

"I love you. Sleep now, lyubimyy. Big day tomorrow, yes?"

Yeah. He had a wedding to rest up for. Shane slowly made himself drift off, forcing himself to let go of consciousness with the same techniques he used to make his brain let go of an anxiety he kept finding himself chewing on. Ilya was here. Ilya would make sure he found his way home again. He fell asleep to the soothing feeling of Ilya's fingers running through his hair and the sound of Ilya gently murmuring in Russian.

@OttawaCentaurs

It's with great relief and delight that we can finally give you all an update on Shane. After six days in a coma, he's finally woken up! We're told he's doing well, showing no signs of any brain damage, and is already arguing with the doctors about when he can go home. We'll be putting him through a lot of medical tests before we can tell you when he'll be back on the ice, but right now we're all just grateful he's still here with us.

@wilhelm8543

Damn, dude's born under a seriously lucky star. I thought he was fucked when I saw pictures of that wreck.

@Hollz2Ottawa

Yay!!!! Best news I've heard all month. Even if this knocks him out of playing next season, I'm just glad he's okay.

@AshCentaur91

No brain damage!! As soon as I saw 'coma' in the announcement I thought he was done for. Guess he wasn't ready to throw in the towel yet!

[Image Description: Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov kissing. The camera is zoomed in on their faces, but they appear to be in formal wear. They each have a hand on the other's cheek, showing that they're both wearing wedding rings.]

@IlyaRozanov

The first time we met, I thought you were cute, but annoying. But even though it wasn't exactly love at first sight, I feel like every moment since that one has been leading to this one. I am so grateful to have you.

@Hockeyor27

pour one out for Ilya Rozanov, who I think must have experienced every emotion in existence over the last week

@CentFan37

fr, like do YOU need a trip to the hospital now dude? if i almost lost my fiance and then got married after all a few days later i think my heart would give out

@CelbDoggos

I respect your right to privacy. I do. But where is Anya and was she the ringbearer

[Image Description: Hayden Pike standing up, appears to be giving a speech. His right hand is on Shane Hollander's shoulder. Ilya Rozanov is sitting beside Shane and holding his hand. They're all attired in formal wear.]

@HaydenPike

Ended up being a lot more low-key than anyone expected, but I wouldn't trade it for anything. So glad you're still here with us, Shane, and so glad you got to marry your man right on time. **@IlyaRozanov** I'd say you'd better treat him right, but I already know you will.

@SennitTennis

??? Did Hollander come out of a six day coma and immediately head off to his wedding? What is happening

@Brillaur86

Hollander looking great for a guy who had us all holding vigils a couple days ago

@Hockey2Cutey

I guess they worked?

[Image Description: Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov sitting with their arms around each other's shoulders, grinning at several people around them. You can't see everyone's faces, but it appears to be several members of the Ottawa Centaurs. Everyone is in formal wear.]

@ZaneBoodram

Glad we got to be there with you two. And we're all looking forward to the much wilder reception you've promised us!

@2freeinfamous

I try not to think about celebrities' private lives too much, but I'm obsessed with this. He was on life support 24 hours ago. Did he wake up and just demand an officiator??

@IlyaRozanov

Had to look up this word. Yes. He woke up and said "I am getting married tomorrow, let me go." And the doctor did not say no to him because no one does when he puts on puppy eyes.

@Shockey

Get you a man who will claw his way back from the very brink of death to make it to your wedding on time, I guess.

[Image Description: Two left hands, both with wedding rings.]

@ShaneHollander

Nothing was going to keep me from marrying you. Not even that fucking truck.

@CoreCentaur18

Death showed up for Shane Hollander and he said 'not now, dude, I'm getting married'

@CentaurScorez

And death apologized for wasting his time, retracted the brain damage, and sent him on his way

@Allholl24

This is so fucking romantic I'm going to cry. But also, my guy, shouldn't you still be in the hospital??

@IlyaRozanov

For everyone worried about Shane - is very sweet. I will use these to win arguments when he says he is 'fine' and does not have to follow doctor's orders.

@ShaneHollander

name one time I haven't followed my doctor's orders

@IlyaRozanov

Thirty minutes ago when you insisted on standing up for your toast until Yuna, David, Hayden, and I ALL yelled at you

@Shane Hollander

it was a short speech! I would have been fine!

@Hockey2Cutey

Obsessed with these two having this 'argument' on instagram. They just got married and Shane just had a NDE. There is no way they aren't glued to each other's sides right now. They could be having this argument out loud.

@IlyaRozanov

I am trying to use public shaming to get him to take a nap.

@CoreCentaur18

Shane Hollander, do as your husband says and go back to bed

@Hollz2Ottawa

Shane, istg, if you don't play next season because you're ignoring your doctor AND your husband I will cry and I will post a video so you know it's your fault

@Hockeyor27

Dude, you got married! You did it! Take a nap and recover from THE FUCKING COMA YOU WERE IN

@IlyaRozanov

He is passed out. Thank you all for your assistance. I will use this method in the future when we argue about best way to cook rice

@Brillaur86

I'm telling you right now, I'm not touching the rice argument

Chapter End Notes

I've never done the social media thing before and I don't know how y'all format it. It's in this fic because one of the first bits of this fanfic that came into existence beyond just rolling the vague idea around was 'pour one out for ilya rozanov, who has experienced the entirety of human emotion this week'

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!