

how i remind u

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by [vividblossom \(dirty mudblood\)](#).

Summary

After an injury takes Shane's memory, Ilya is left as the only one who remembers. [Ilya POV]

Notes

While you do not have to read Shane's POV to read this one, it's recommended!!

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

At twelve years old, Ilya finds his mother unconscious and doesn't understand what's going on. He remembers how pale she was, how her breathing was rattling and uneven, how... limp she seemed.

Until he had called out for his father, who came into the room angry and cursing Ilya's mother's name as he pulled Ilya away from her. Ilya remembers his fingers slipping through her hand; cold and stiff and clinging to his.

At twenty-seven Ilya thinks he might be reliving his worst memory. Because Shane, *his* Shane, is impossibly pale and his breathing is stuttered and the hand that Ilya is clutching is so damn *cold*.

He holds Shane's hand between both of his, attempting to warm it. After his mother was cold, *this* cold, it was over. There was nothing Ilya could do to save her. If he could just keep Shane warm...

"Ilya," Shane whispers. It's more like a punched out breath, but Ilya can make out the vowels of his name. Yes, yes, Shane. Keep saying it. Never stop saying it.

"Is okay," Ilya hears himself say over and over and over. Who is he trying to convince? Shane or himself? "Is okay."

"They can see us. Ilya, they can see it."

Let them! He wants to *scream*. Let them see. The crowd, the team, God. Let them all see that Ilya's heart is lying broken on the ice. Trying to say his name.

Hands attempt to pull him off. Stop. Stop it. He shoulders them away. He will not leave Shane.

"Ilya."

"Let him go, Rozanov. He needs the medic."

"Ilya."

"We have to get him to the hospital. *Now*, Rozanov."

No. No. Because when Ilya let go of his mother's hand, she was gone. He can't let Shane go. Not now. Not ever.

Ilya is finally forced to relent. There's nothing he can do for Shane. He's just as useless as he was at twelve. Useless when the people he *loves* need him the most. He lets faceless people pull him away and watches as the medics load Shane, *his* Shane, onto a gurney and cart him off the ice.

The rink had been so silent before that Ilya is startled when people begin to hesitantly clap in a show of good sportsmanship for a fallen opponent.

The game is over. Ilya doesn't even care that Montreal gets the technical win because they were up 3-2 when the clock was stopped. Ilya starts pulling off his gear before they even make it to the tunnel beneath the stands.

He doesn't remember what he says to Cliff Marlow. Definitely not anything nice. Definitely not anything a captain should say to another player.

It was a dirty play and everyone knows it. At least Cliff seemed to understand that defending himself wouldn't go over well because Ilya can't remember if Cliff said anything at all.

He wants to *kill* him. He wants to take Cliff Marlow's stupidly long neck and step on it with his skates. He would gladly see his teammate laid out on the ice instead of his... *his Shane*.

Because without Shane there is *nothing*. Send him back to Russia for all he cares. Let him die penniless and alone and ostracized. He'd never be able to play hockey again. He'd never be able to look at the ice and not see Shane there looking lifeless and calling for him and Ilya not being able to do a *goddamn thing*.

He's getting ahead of himself.

He drives to the nearest hospital and is turned away. Shane Hollander is not here, they say. Ilya doesn't relent. It's probably a stupid American privacy thing but it's *bullshit*. He says as much while slamming his hands on the counter.

The woman settles him with an unimpressed look. She probably deals with irate assholes like him all day. He's not special. But *Shane* is special and Shane is somewhere, maybe in this hospital, *alone*.

He begs her more gently. It's hard to say no to a grown man crying right in front of you. Her face softens.

It's not a stupid American privacy thing, she tells him, but there *is* another hospital across the bridge that has a neurosurgeon on call so maybe Ilya should check there.

Neurosurgeon? Ilya might throw up. He decides it would be best not to open his mouth and instead nods thanks.

The traffic across the bridge is *horrible* and Ilya doesn't understand who taught these people to drive. It feels like they're only inching forward and he can feel frustration crawling across his skin.

"Fuck," he slams on the horn and curses in Russian. *"I could fucking run faster than you fucking assholes are fucking driving your fucking cars."*

He finally pulls into the hospital's lot and throws his car into park somewhere that probably isn't even a spot but he's already wasted too much time. What if Shane is in *surgery*? What if he's still calling out for him and Ilya isn't there holding his hand?

He gets lucky. *Very* lucky. The guy at the front desk immediately looks at Ilya with stars in his eyes and Ilya can tell right away he'll be able to leverage his way into getting

information.

“He’s here,” the man says and Ilya breathes a sigh of relief. At least they’re in the same *building*.

“He is okay?”

“I’m not supposed to say. *But* there haven’t been any pages for neuro. So take that how you’d like. Ugh, I watched the game on my break. So crazy. It’s so nice of you to check on him. I was so happy when Boston drafted you, I knew you would be—“

“Can I see him?”

Ilya will probably regret his rudeness later. Especially when the receptionist’s eyes brighten in curiosity.

“It’s family only. I’m sorry, Mr. Rozanov.”

“I will give you tickets,” Ilya says, his mounting frustration making him desperate. “Fuck it. I will give you *season* tickets. Box seats. Whatever.”

The man smiles.

Ilya nearly lost it when he walked into room 203 and saw Shane (*his* Shane) unmoving and hooked up to a million machines that were beeping in time with his heartbeat.

Thank God he still has a heartbeat. Ilya clutches his crucifix and prays to whoever, whatever is listening.

“He is okay?” Ilya asks the nurse who is pushing a syringe of fluid into a bag hooked up to Shane’s arm.

She raises an eyebrow, obviously confused how Ilya was given a visitors pass but thankfully she doesn’t question it.

Ilya was surprised the receptionist didn’t ask for his left nutsack as payoff. Ilya would have given it to him. Anything to be *here*. But he was able to get off with a few promised tickets and signed merchandise.

“I can’t disclose medical information to anyone who isn’t family,” and Ilya knows for certain offering box seats won’t change that, “we’re trying to contact his parents. If they want to tell you, they can.”

Ilya wants to *scream*. He wants to shake this woman until all the information comes tumbling out of her.

He *is* Shane's family, dammit. Shane is the only family he has *left*. But because it's not on paper he has no right to be by his side? He should have married Shane long ago. He should have married him the first chance he had.

Because Shane's parents won't be giving Ilya Rozanov permission to access their son's medical chart. They will probably be calling Hayden Pike and asking him to come to the hospital to stand in for them. The thought makes Ilya drop into a chair and press the heel of his palms to his stinging eyes.

Hayden won't *know*. He won't know that Shane is allergic to penicillin or that he had chickenpox when he was a kid or that Shane's blood pressure is abnormally low, even for an athlete.

But Shane hasn't told his parents. Not about being gay, not about being with Ilya.

Ilya spends hours in that seat and waiting for the door to open and Hayden to enter and demand to know why Ilya is in Shane's hospital room, crying and exhausted.

He never comes. Shane's parents must have not contacted him. They're probably working very hard to get to Boston from Ottawa. From what Shane has told Ilya about his parents, there's no way they missed the game tonight.

Yuna Hollander is probably worried sick about her son and Ilya wishes he could call her. Tell her that he's breathing and the monitor is beeping steadily and that he will take care of Shane until she arrives.

Where is Shane's phone? He could text her, at least. Assure her that her baby isn't alone. But how would Ilya explain that? He spends the next few hours counting his regrets.

They should have told someone. Anyone. *Everyone*. Why did they keep this between them? It seems so silly now.

Shane *will* wake up. His Shane is strong. He maintains the safety features on his gear. He takes care of his body to the point of obsession. He is strong and he will wake up and, when he does, Ilya will tell him that he *loves* him and is ready for the world to know it.

The thought excites him a little. The idea of being able to hold Shane's hand in public. Of wearing Shane's number during his games (*not* against Boston, obviously). The thought of joining Shane's family for the holidays, maybe, and being at a table full of everyone else who is important in Shane's life. Ilya wants to *be* at that table.

Six hours. It's gone from late to the middle of the night with Ilya just... sitting. Listening to the monitors. Nurses come in periodically to check on Shane and say nothing to Ilya in the corner. He almost dozes off at one point, his mind finally catching up with his exhausted body from a game against Montreal and running around Boston looking for Shane.

The sound changes. The beeping gets faster and Ilya panics and shoots to his feet. Is that good? Is that— Shane's groan is music to Ilya's ears. He feels tears prickle the corner of his eyes.

Shane (*his* Shane!) is awake. Those beautiful, dark eyes flutter open and Shane attempts to pull himself up with a whimper of pain.

Ilya smashes the red call button for the nurse a dozen times before dropping it and placing a hand on Shane's chest to keep him down.

"I call nurse. Should be here soon, just relax."

"Rozanov?" Ilya almost smiles at the slurred way Shane says his name. "What are you doing here?"

The words... they don't make sense. Obviously Ilya knows what they *mean*, but what does Shane mean by them? Is he asking how Ilya got past the front desk? Does he not realize they're in a hospital?

His eyebrows furrow. Shane's face looks young and apprehensive and... and not very happy to see him.

"We are—"

Just then, the door to Shane's room bursts open and a flurry of movement makes Ilya leap back from Shane's bedside to make room for the nurse.

"Mr. Hollander! Good to see you awake."

She changes the cuff to the blood pressure monitor and Ilya sees Shane watching him from the corner of his eye, but he's more focused on the number that pops up after the cuff deflates.

He breathes a sigh of relief. It's a good number, as normal as it can be for Shane.

"Mr. Hollander, try to follow the light, m'kay?"

The nurse removes a pen looking light from her pocket and flashes it in Shane's face. It immediately crumples in pain and Ilya feels the hot white flash of protectiveness.

"You are hurting him!"

The nurse ignores him, but clicks off the light. Shane's eyes crack open cautiously. The nurse pulls out a little stack of flashcards and reads off the top one.

"What's today's date?"

Shane looks confused. And then he looked *scared*. Come on, Hollander, Ilya silently begs. You have, like, a million calendars. Answer the question.

"Em..."

Ilya feels his body tensing more and more. Dread fills him from head to toe. The nurse doesn't look all that confident either. "I don't know."

“Who is the current President?” She asks next.

“Is Canadian,” Ilya reminds her quickly. Ilya doesn’t even know if *he’d* be able to answer and he’s lived in the U.S for almost a decade. It’s not like he’s been allowed to vote.

The nurse returns his frown. “Oh. I guess that wouldn’t work, then. Sorry, it’s a list of acute concussion evaluation questions. It’s alright if you don’t know.”

Ilya can tell Shane is thinking very hard about it. He has the little lines on his forehead that Ilya wishes he could smooth out with his thumb.

“Obama?”

Well, Ilya knows *enough* about American politics to know it’s not *that* guy. He tries not to let it show on his face, but he’s full-fledged panicking now. He silently begs the nurse to ask another question.

“Mr. Hollander, what year is it?”

Shane looks to Ilya again, with more desperation in his dark eyes. It makes Ilya feel *sick*. Why doesn’t he know? Ilya doesn’t understand. Why doesn’t Shane know?

“Hollander,” he knows his tone is harsh when Shane flinches. “What year is it?”

Shane rubs his neck awkwardly, a little tell that Ilya knows from their years together. He’s anxious. He’s probably scared. Ilya wants to go to him so badly, but he knows that his touch wouldn’t be accepted and he doesn’t think his heart could take it if Shane flinched away from him.

“I... I’m not sure,” Shane says finally. “I thought... 2009?”

Ilya closes his eyes. 2009. Bile rises in his throat. 2009. Who were they in 2009? What were they to each other? Nothing. 2009. Worse than nothing. Rivals. In 2009 Shane had hated Ilya. In 2009, Ilya was just *Rozanov*.

“I’m guessing that was the wrong answer,” Shane attempts to joke. Another nervous habit of his.

“Yes,” Ilya swallows. Swallows again when it does nothing to clear the thickness in his voice. “Is wrong answer.”

“How wrong? What year *is* it?”

“Twenty-seventeen.”

Shane gasps and Ilya can practically feel the panic in that small sound. God, Ilya wants to hold him. Protect him from this fear. He wants to tell Shane it’ll be okay. They’ll figure it out like they always have. Ilya can’t find the words. He’s not even sure if he believes them himself.

Ten *years* gone. Stolen from Shane. Stolen from Ilya.

The line monitoring Shane's heartbeats spikes, steadily climbing along with Shane's frantic breathing. On instinct, Ilya steps forward.

"What is happening to him?" He asks the nurse as other medical staff rush in to crowd around Shane's bed.

The nurse is saying many words that Ilya doesn't understand. He can only see slivers of Shane's body through the gaps in the crowd. Ilya can't bear to watch anymore, especially knowing he's unwelcome at Shane's side.

His hands flex and tense at his side as he slips out of the room. The curtain in Shane's room had been drawn so Ilya hadn't realized it was already morning. There are people laughing at the nurse's station. Eating breakfast. Talking on the phone. How can they act so normal when Ilya's world is falling apart?

He walks, alone, to his car and sits in the silence. He'd driven this one to the game because Shane prefers to ride in this one rather than Ilya's other, sportier cars. There are napkins in the glovebox for Shane's perpetual allergies. There's a half empty pack of cinnamon gum waiting for him.

Ilya grips the steering wheel and *screams*. There's no echo when it's over. Just the sudden plunge of returned silence. Shane should be here, next to him. They should be on their way to Ilya's home where they'd have a few *days* together before Shane had to return to Montreal. They were so excited to not be on such borrowed time.

There's no time anymore. There's only 2009.

Ilya's father had dementia. He has watched his only living parent forget him. He watched the recognition leave his eyes, replaced by weariness and disregard. The same way Shane had looked at him.

And now Ilya is stuck as the only one who remembers. The only one who remembers how his mother laughed. Who remembers how his father taught him to tie his skates. Who remembers the *everything* that had been the last few years with Shane Hollander.

Ilya is truly alone carrying so many memories and he can't... he *can't*.

He turns the ignition and drives. The best thing about Boston is their twenty-four hour liquor stores. It doesn't even seem to phase the clerk when at not even six in the morning, Ilya is buying a bottle of vodka and a pack of cigarettes.

It makes him realize he's not the only person who is trying to numb the memories. It doesn't make him feel better to know that.

"Thanks," he murmurs and grabs the paper bag. The door chimes as he walks out; a mockingly cheerful tone.

Outside it's spring but it's still North-East cold. It doesn't bother Ilya. If anything, the wind biting his ankles feels good. He decides to walk the rest of the way home. Fuck it if his car gets towed. He balances the bottle under his arm to pull out a cigarette and holds it between his lips while he rips open the new pack of lighters.

Ilya hasn't smoked in a year. It was a promise he'd made to Shane.

"I just want you to take care of yourself," he'd said, his voice a little shy. *"I want you around for a long time. Okay?"*

It was the closest he'd ever come to telling Ilya he loved him. And Ilya's promise to stop was the closest he'd come to saying it back.

The filter is getting a little soggy from being held in his mouth so long. He smells the tobacco under his nose and his body *wants*. It remembers the clarity the burn in his lungs had offered. The rush of nicotine, the way it forced him to take slow breaths of smoke that made him dizzy.

His mind won't let him. Because he *remembers*. He remembers Shane's little frown every time he came to bed smelling like smoke. He remembers Shane's tense shoulders when they watched that documentary after Ilya's father died that said smoking increases the chance of developing dementia, something Ilya was already prone to.

Shane must have been thinking about what it would be like to be forgotten. Ilya couldn't even fathom it. He'd nuzzled Shane's jaw and told him, *"Dazhe esli moy razum zabudet, moyo serdtse vspomnit."*

Even if my mind forgets, my heart will remember.

Ilya throws the cigarette on the ground and stomps on it as if it was already lit. Fuck.

The worst place to find answers is the internet. After an hour of Googling, Ilya has convinced himself that Shane is dying, somehow, of cancer. His search history would be concerning to anyone who didn't know of their relationship, surely.

hit head cant remember

why no memories after hit head

shane hollander

shane hollander nhl head

can memories come back

shane hollander montreal

Armenia reddit

amnesia reddit

shane holland

He searches until the vodka makes the screen too blurry to type properly. He finds the Montreal Voyageurs twitter, which had released a statement in the afternoon that Shane was home (home Ottawa or home Montreal?) and recovering after an injury. It makes Ilya breathe a little easier, knowing Yuna Hollander is with her son.

He also learns about amnesia. Different from dementia, thank god, and the relief prickles Ilya's eyes with tears. The memories could return. They *would* return. Reddit user [deleted] said so. Ilya ignores Reddit user DailyBrainGain's comment about the memories of his wife not fully returning.

Shane Hollander's name also returns a few articles about Ilya. *Mother Bear: Ilya Rozanov Furious after Teammate's Cheapshot.*

Ilya clicks into the link and sees a still of his face. It must have been directly after Shane was hit because his own face is slack in alarm. It's a video. He doesn't press play. His stomach sours just thinking about watching a different angle of Shane falling to the ice and watching himself be fucking useless to help him. He's pressing the arrow to return to the search results when his phone chimes. He blinks once to clear the haze of alcohol from his vision, and then again to be sure that he's really seeing *Jane* pop up on his screen.

He hits the notification so quickly he accidentally swipes it away and has to fumble his way through his phone to his messaging app.

Jane: *Hi*

Hi? Ilya wants to rage. Fuck this 'hi' bullshit when he's been so damn *scared*. But it's overwhelmed by the utter relief that Ilya can't even find it in himself to be annoyed, not really. It's Shane, *his* Shane, at the other end of the line and looking for him. He's probably furious that Ilya left him at the hospital, but he'd have to understand that Ilya couldn't stand to see him like *that*. Ilya will explain.

Ilya: *Christ Hollander are you OK? You gave me scare. Can I call?*

Not his best work, but he's still a little off kilter from the vodka even though Shane's text has sobered him significantly.

Jane: *I can't. I have a concussion.. Did you see what happened?*

Ilya's eyebrows draw together. What the fuck kind of question was that? Ilya was *there*. Maybe Shane still hasn't seen the footage. Maybe he's avoiding it like Ilya is.

Ilya: *?? of course? What do u mean?*

Jane: *I'm sorry. I have a concussion. I don't remember anything after the middle of 2009.*

Ilya stares at his phone. 2009 stares right back at him.

Ilya: *You do not know me?*

Jane: *I don't.. I'm sorry. But I looked at our messages. I think we're important to each other.*

Ilya scoffs loudly, startling himself at the sudden, loud sound. If that wasn't the understatement of the fucking century. Important? No. They are so much *more* than important, Ilya doesn't even have an English word that comes close.

His scoff breaks into a small, heartbreaking sob. Shane wouldn't know that reading their exchanges through text. They're casual. Careful. They're different when they're on the phone or video calling or in person. They are *sud'ba*.

Ilya: *Yes. Very important. I'm sorry you do not remember.*

Jane: *Are you my girlfriend?*

Ilya: *Girlfriend??*

Jane: *Ok so no. Sorry*

Ilya sighs, realizing that in Shane's 2009 memory he's straight.

Ilya: *Stop with the sorry. I am not your girlfriend, Hollander*

Ilya tries to think of a way to tell Shane something so significant about himself. It had taken him *years* to accept the truth of it. Texting *you are gay* is easy to be denied. Shane doesn't even know who Ilya really *is*, why would he trust his word?

He considers telling Shane his real identity, but pauses. They're in a very delicate area right now. If Shane right now feels the same as Shane back then, Ilya is sure that their communication would stop. And at least, for right now, he has this.

Ilya: *You have app looks like calculator. Password is 2481*

Ilya waits patiently for Shane to respond. He knows it'll be a shock to find more than a handful of Ilya's lewd photos, but at least it's undeniable proof.

He waits. He waits. He scrolls on Instagram to kill some time. He waits until he can't wait anymore.

Ilya: *Did I scare you?*

After an hour of no response, Ilya locks his phone. He tries to tell himself that Shane is injured and probably resting, which is a good thing, but it doesn't dull the ache in his chest or the pounding in his ears. After a long while of lying in the darkness, Ilya finally falls into a fitful sleep, lulled by the thrumming of his breaking heart.

The next morning, Ilya's arms reach for someone who's not there. It all comes back to him in a rush and a throbbing headache. He needs to get up and get ready for practice, but his body feels so damn heavy. He presses his hands over his eyes to block out the too-bright light coming in from the windows.

Ilya usually loves the natural light that his bedroom affords. It faces the East and so every morning he's able to watch the hues of the sunrise. He loves it especially when Shane is in his bed and Ilya can watch the light dance across his pale body and cast shadows across the planes of muscle. Another reminder of what he's lost.

His phone chimes and he ignores it at first. It's probably his coach asking where the fuck Ilya is, but fuck him too. Fuck his whole team and fuck Cliff Marlow especially. If Ilya sees him today... Well, he's not really sure what he'd do. Something very mean. Very violent, surely.

Ilya wouldn't be able to hide today the way he has the last few years. He feels raw and exposed, it's probably all over his face. And it's not like he could *explain*. What would he say?

Two nights ago I saw the man I'm in love with strapped to a gurney and carried away from me and I couldn't even go after him. I spent hours trying to find him because I don't have anyone else who is important to him's contact information. He doesn't remember me. Being on the ice is meaningless if it isn't with his Shane.

Fuck. What if Shane is never able to play again? Ilya's stomach lurches. It would devastate Shane. Ilya loves hockey, but it could have been anything. He just likes to be the *best* and it just so happened that he was the best at this sport. Hockey is Shane's *heart*.

He finally grabs his phone. He should at least tell his coach he's sick or something. He needs to stay in this country and that means keeping his very well paying job. He jerks into sitting position when he sees a response from Shane.

Jane: *I'm not scared. Is your name really Lily?*

Ilya releases a trembling breath. "Thank fuck."

Ilya: *lol no. Was precaution. You are semi-famous yu know. We were being careful.*

Jane: *I'm regular famous.*

Ilya smiles. He can imagine the pinched, pouty expression on Shane's face right now. He misses him so fucking much.

Ilya: *lollll*

Ilya: *Send me pic of you*

Jane: *Why?*

Ilya: *Want to see if you are ok with my own eyes*

It's a risky request, but Ilya can't help it. He needs to see Shane's freckles, his beautiful almond eyes, his cute nose, his plush upper lip. He needs to see that somewhere out in the world, his Shane is still here.

Jane: **image attachment**

The photo is of Shane lying across his blue Montreal bedsheets. Good. That means he's only four hours away from Ilya instead of nearly seven. He feels closer. Ilya feels his bottom lip tremble and he presses the phone screen, lit up with Shane's picture, to his chest. He will carry Shane in here forever.

He wipes the tears from his cheeks and looks at the picture again. Shane thinks he's slick because he's angles the camera to capture the peripheral of his spread legs, but Ilya already knows that trick of his. Fuck, this is *his* Shane.

Ilya: *There he is.*

Ilya: *OK now point camera lower*

A week after Shane's injury, word spreads that he'll be at Montreal's home game against Boston. He knows that the team secretly hopes Hollander won't be cleared to play yet, but Ilya would do just about anything to see Shane on the ice again. Even if that meant losing.

Ilya skates onto the ice to the roaring sound of fans, but his focus is on Montreal's sideline. Shane is sitting, *pouting*, next to his coach and Ilya's chest cracks open. They're in the same room together and that's something.

He plays a good game just to show Shane what he's missing, as if he needed the motivation to get back on the ice faster. They haven't gone this long without seeing or touching each other in *years* and Ilya focuses all of his pent-up energy on the ice.

They have Dennis Mulinovo, a rookie, in Shane's place and Ilya feels for the kid who can't seem to find his footing. It doesn't dull the excitement of the win, though, especially when Ilya looks over and notices Shane's little smile.

Ilya's heart leaps. It's a good sign. 2009 Shane wouldn't be smiling like that at Ilya's win. Maybe his heart is remembering.

Ilya rushes out of their locker room. He's not sure how long Shane will stick around after the game. They've been texting as Jane and Lily all week and so Ilya knows that Shane's been struggling with bonding with his teammates.

And he wants to catch Shane before he leaves and... something. He hasn't gotten that far yet. Talk to him, of course. Confess his identity as Lily?

He spots Shane on the bench outside the visitor's locker room and Ilya freezes. He looks so lonely and sad and lost, alone out here on the bench. Ilya is irrationally angry at Shane's teammates and coaches who would leave him like this.

"Your team missed you on the ice today. My team not so much."

Ilya keeps his voice carefully controlled and light. Shane's head jerks up in surprise, but doesn't seem upset to see him.

"Fuck off," he laughs.

Ilya saunters over to the bench to take the vacant seat next to him. He throws himself onto the seat with a sigh, purposely knocking their shoulders together. This close, Shane smells like the cinnamon gum he favors. Ilya's mouth waters like Pavlov's dog. He can practically taste it on his own tongue.

"Enjoy it while you can," Shane is saying to him as Ilya tries to calm his dick down. "I'll be back on the ice by the time we play you guys next."

Ilya feels true, overwhelming relief. In an attempt to act cool, he feigns shock. "You mean they will not make Mulinovo starter?"

Shane snorts which makes Ilya's grin widen. He missed this laugh. "Shut up. It was his first game. No one's that good to start out with."

"We were," Ilya responds and then nudges Shane with his elbow. "But not everyone is you and me, yes?"

Shane's cheeks are red. Does he realize?

"Well, I can't see why anyone would want to be *you*."

"Excuse me. Am handsome, very good at hockey..." Ilya trails off. He wants to list other things that Shane had always loved about him, but they get stuck in his throat. Maybe he can remind Shane...

"That's *it*?" Shane laughs.

"Babies and animals love me," Ilya says finally, "They can read, how do you say, vibes?"

Shane's grin is so bright that Ilya feels everything inside of him melt under the warmth of it. "Vibes. Right."

Ilya rubs his hands against his thighs and then together. He fiddles with the knuckle of his right hand. He wants to say more, but not here. Not where anyone else could hear them and misunderstand.

“So. I was thinking, maybe we get something to eat. Captain to captain.”

Yes, that’s a good excuse. Shane will feel inclined to accept because of his sense of obligation and then Ilya will get him alone and say *I am Lily and you are my Shane and we’ve never said so before but we love each other more than anything except maybe you love hockey a little more but I accept second place because at least it’s a place in your heart.*

“Tonight?” Shane asks incredulously. He’s never been good with impulsivity, Ilya knows this. Shane likes plans and organizers and timetables. But he hopes he’ll make an exception, just this once.

“Would be hard tomorrow when I am in Boston and you are still here with our broken head.”

Shane rolls his eyes. “Shut up, Rozanov. Just... why? Shouldn’t you be with your team, I don’t know, celebrating?”

It’s not a no, which makes Ilya’s pulse kick up a few notches. If he plays it cool, he might get Shane to agree after all.

“We win all of the time. I will be there for the next hundred celebrations, they will not miss me during this one. Think of it as apology for my teammate giving you broken head.”

Shane laughs, which is a great sign. He even subconsciously shifts closer to Ilya while doing so. “My head isn’t *broken*, asshole. But. Alright, I guess. Where do you want to go?”

Ilya nearly teases Shane about his stringent diet. Almost lists off the few “safe” restaurants that Shane can find a filling meal, just to remind Shane that even if *he’s* forgotten, Ilya remembers him. He says none of this.

“Sushi okay?”

Ilya knows it will be, but he’s rewarded with a small, surprised smile that makes Shane look boyish and cute.

“Yeah, actually. That’s... Are you sure you don’t want something more– I thought Russians only ate goat and pickled things.”

If it wasn’t absolutely tearing Ilya’s soul to shreds, he’d laugh at the fact that Shane has told that joke before. It’s just as dorky and boring as the first time. And the second time. But it’s so... *his* Shane that Ilya has to start moving before he does something crazy like get on his knees and beg Shane to remember him.

He stands and offers his hand. “We will go to all you can eat. I’m sure they will have something other than raw, calorie-less fish on menu.”

Shane smiles shyly and accepts Ilya’s offered hand. A current of familiarity and longing shoots through Ilya so violently that he accidentally pulls Shane up a bit too forcefully and nearly launches Shane into his chest.

“Sorry,” Shane says quickly, which is so like him and his Canadian tendencies. Ilya turns quickly, feeling his face get hot.

“Stop with sorry. We go now, yes? You did not play but I am very hungry from the hard work.”

Ilya can’t see Shane’s face, but knows he’s grinning as he races to catch up and responds, “fuck you,” before they sprint towards the exit, shoving each other as they go.

Ilya would never admit it, but he lets Shane win if only to see the victorious smile on his face.

Ilya can’t even fucking look at him. He shouldn’t have brought him here, not *here*, where he and Shane have shared a meal a hundred times before. Not where they have a usual table that they’re sitting in now. Not in these low, warm lights that make Shane’s skin look like the softest silk.

Instead, Ilya pretends to be interested in the fish preparation even though he sort of hates watching the heads get cut off and the scraping of the scales. Poor fishies. And he eats more than he should so that he has an excuse not to talk, but to listen to Shane.

Everything Shane says, Ilya wants to say *I know, I know, I fucking know. I know everything about your silly macrobiotic diet and I know you think the Admirals will take the Cup again this year and I know everything you love about Montreal because you’ve shown them all to me.*

He needs to tell Shane about Lily. He hypes himself up for it, but each time he opens his mouth he finds no words.

“Am full to bursting,” he groans instead. The food sits like lead in his stomach. But Shane laughs like Ilya knows he would and asks the waiter for the check.

Maybe Ilya just can’t do it *here*. It’s fine, he tells himself, if Shane reacts badly. It’s fine if he’s angry or confused or... or if he doesn’t want to see Ilya again. It’s fine. He has to tell Shane because he can’t stand being the only person who *knows*, but maybe not here in a place that has collected so many of their memories.

They step outside and Ilya does absolutely nothing. He doesn’t call for a taxi, he doesn’t tell Shane about Lily. What’s his excuse now? He’s— he’s shaking a little bit. By habit, he reaches for his cigarette carton and pulls one out. Shane doesn’t even remember his silly promise, right?

“Is addiction,” he says sheepishly, looking for some sort of permission. “I cannot help it.”

“They say the hardest part is putting the first one down.”

Ilya is going to fucking *die*. Can Shane see that this is killing him? Ilya can see so clearly the first time Shane took the cigarette from between his lips and kissed him instead. “*They say the hardest part is putting the first one down,*” he’d said and Ilya had wrapped his arms around Shane’s waist and said, “*will not be too hard if this is what I get instead.*”

“Yes,” he finally whispers. “I have heard that before.”

They break off into silence. Ilya needs to get this over with so he can go find a bar and drown himself in liquor and grief.

“I should—”

“Would you like to—”

They both pause.

“You first,” Ilya insists, buying himself just a few more moments of *this*.

“Just...” Shane looks out to the street. “It’s still early. I can’t drink, you know, cause of my head, but I have some randomly good vodka at my apartment. You know, Russian. It was probably a gift, but I don’t remember if I *like* vodka all that much and wouldn’t want it to go to waste. So.”

Ilya blinks. Is Shane... inviting him over? His heart pounds. Would it be wrong to accept? A selfish indulgence to be in Shane’s home again and smell his plug in air freshener and see his million decorative pillows? Maybe he’s mistaken. 2009 Shane would never invite Ilya Rozanov into his home.

But this isn’t 2009 Shane. This is 2017 Shane and this is *his* Shane.

“Fuck you,” Shane chuckles nervously. “Do you want to come over or not?”

Oh god, yes.

“Russian vodka, you said? Let’s go. Canadians do not deserve such good quality. Whoever bought for you was a fool.”

It was Ilya, obviously, but it wasn’t for *Shane*. Shane liked seltzers and light beer. The vodka is Ilya’s for the time spent over Shane’s where he used to have everything he ever wanted; a sexy man cuddled up to him, empty balls, and good quality alcohol.

He swallows at the reminder of what he’s lost and turns away to hail a cab.

“Vodka is over there,” Shane says as Ilya, who is already moving on autopilot, steps through the door. “And glasses...”

Without realizing, Ilya has already navigated his way through Shane's condo with familiarity. He needs a drink and he needs it *now* for the liquid courage to fess up about who Shane has really been texting the past week.

His hands tremble slightly and he curses as liquid sloshes and spills over the lip of the glass and across his fingers. Shane has a dumb towel-holder-thing that his interior designer had insisted *went with the ambiance* and Ilya reaches for it to clean his mess.

"Have you been here before?"

Ilya freezes, the towel crumpled in his clenched fist. "Why do you ask this?"

"I'm kidding," Shane says and cautiously joins Ilya in the kitchen where he awkwardly leans against the counter. "You just... seem to know where everything is. I can still barely find the bathroom."

Not for the first time, Ilya feels a pang of concern for the man in front of him. How scary it must be in a place he's so unfamiliar with, surrounded by people he doesn't know who know everything about him. Shane seems to realize this too as his gaze falls and his eyes glaze over in thought.

"Ah," Ilya says, wanting to make Shane feel better. "I have perfect explanation."

Shane looks up at him through long lashes. "Yeah?"

"I am stalking you. I look through your window to see which place you keep the cups, in case I need stupid fancy glasses."

It works. Shane laughs so hard his freckled nose crinkles. Ilya really might die here.

"Through my window? We're on the sixteenth floor."

"Humble brag. My apartment is on eighteenth."

Then he takes a large gulp of his drink. It's burning and painful going down, but it spreads warmth through Ilya's extremities and he groans. *This* is real vodka. He licks his lips to savor the taste.

"Is it good?"

Ilya arches an eyebrow. Shane's face has become very red, very fast. "Is the *best*. No one does it like Russia. American vodka is made with corn. *Blech*. Blasphemy. And Canadian vodka is probably made with maple. You all like too sweet liquor."

Shane's eyes go soft. "Your English... How did you get so good?"

The question startles Ilya because the answer is *Shane*, but Shane doesn't *know that*. He doesn't know how hard Ilya has worked to get stronger at his language and doesn't know Ilya's Duolingo app streak is *years* because he's always been desperate to find the right words that Shane would understand to tell him how he feels.

Ilya knows he's blushing. He attempts to play it off and mimics Shane's casual lean against the counter, but all it does is bring their legs close to intertwining. "I read New York Times. Do the crosswords."

Shane bites his lip and looks down. He must realize how close they are because his foot twitches next to Ilya's. The air feels like it's being sucked out of the space, like the walls are pushing in on them.

Ilya has fucked Shane here. Over this counter. He's bent Shane over the island and eaten his ass until he came across the marble. Does his body remember?

"My dad loves the New York Times."

I know, I know, I fucking know!

His heart in his throat, Ilya pushes out a scoff. "Of course. So being boring is, what, genetic?"

Shane's body tips forward slightly. It's as if he wants— *needs* to be closer to Ilya. And Ilya wants to draw Shane to him. He wants to kiss him like Shane seems to want.

"Wow," Shane whispers, a little dazed. "Genetic."

Jesus Christ. He could take Shane right here. He could have him again just like this. This is still his Shane. Fuck. Fuck, fuck, *fuck*— he *can't*. He's keeping too much from Shane right now. Shane doesn't know that this isn't their first time. He has no idea that Ilya knows his body better than he knows his own and it would be so fucking *wrong* to let him do this without knowing the truth.

Please, Shane. Please. God, *please*. Anything, even the smallest inkling that you might remember me. Anything to hint that our souls are still connected. *Sud'ba*.

But Shane has the look of timid excitement of someone waiting for the first move. They are long past that now. There's no hesitation anymore, no thrill of learning each other's bodies. It's softened and changed over the years into something more intimate. His Shane wouldn't wait to be kissed.

This.. This is not his Shane after all.

"I should be going."

"Oh," Ilya almost cries at the embarrassed disappointment in Shane's voice. "Really?"

"Yes. Early flight back to Boston in the morning and we have night game against Rangers."

Shane looks lost. His eyes shoot from the floor to Ilya's face back to the floor to watch as their legs get farther and farther apart as Ilya pushes himself off the counter.

"Oh. Okay. Good luck."

Ilya pastes on a faux cocky smirk. It's a natural expression for him, but right now it's a mask to hide the anguish that is leaving Shane Hollander. He knows that Shane hates to be alone. He knows that, when he first moved in, he had kept the TV on in the living room to soothe the loneliness.

"Do not need it, is just New York. But thanks."

Shane follows him to the door in an expression that resembles a puppy being kicked and not understanding *why*. Ilya doesn't want to leave him like this. Shane is so anxious all the time, Ilya knows he will drive himself crazy tonight wondering what went wrong.

He *has* to leave before he does something he regrets. But before that...

"You will be in Boston in two weeks, yes?"

Shane's hyperbolic ears perk up and he nods quickly. His tongue peeks out to anxiously wet his dry mouth and Ilya wants to follow its trail with his own tongue.

"Good. I hope you will be on ice by then. Is boring to not play against you."

Shane smiles timidly, but it's a smile nonetheless and Ilya breathes a sigh of relief.

"Yeah," Shane murmurs. "It's boring if it's not you too."

Ilya leaves. He takes the sixteen flights of stairs down to the parking lot because all the pent up energy in his body is making him restless. The door slams behind him before he rounds on the concrete wall next to it and slams his fist into it. Again. Again. Fuck, fuck, *fuck*.

The hotel his team is staying at is at least five kilometers away, but Ilya starts walking. His hand aches at his side, but not as much as his chest. He rubs at it with his good hand. Shane, Shane. His Shane. Every step away from his building feels like a thousand miles.

The sky opens up with a deep rumble and soaks his hair, his shirt, his face. The rain at least covers the tears slipping down his cheeks and the thunder masks the choked sobs that he's unable to keep down. Shane, Shane. Please. This can't be the last time.

He pulls out his phone and dries it as much as possible on his sleeve.

Ilya: *bad game today. You will get them next time. Fuck cliff Marlow.*

They see each other again two weeks later in Boston. Ilya is both thrilled and worried when he sees Shane in his Voyageurs uniform and doing stretches on the ice. He knows Shane has been anxiously waiting to get back on the ice, but Ilya can't help but be worried. Is he really okay to play? What if he gets hurt again?

To his credit, Shane also looks nervous. Not that anyone would be able to tell, but Ilya is a veteran of Shane's barely-there quirks. He could write an entire book about Shane's microexpressions and this one screams panic, though to outsiders it would look carefully blank.

They skate to the face off and Ilya can not help but to smile. To be facing each other again in their sport... There's no words for it. Coming home, maybe.

"Hollander, relax."

Shane's eyebrows dip and then smooth out again. "I'm fine."

"You maybe do not remember, but your body will. You are very okay player, it will be fine."

It's not good form to give your opposing team a pep-talk, but Ilya is all about good sportsmanship. And the consequential loss 2-1 to Montreal doesn't make him regret it at all, not with Shane's teammates surrounding him and the relief written plainly across his face.

"See? I told you, Hollander. The body remembers."

In the locker room, Ilya grabs his phone.

Ilya: *Nice game. Shame about Boston*

Shane responds a second later, like he was maybe waiting for Lily's text.

Jane: *I still can't believe you're a bears fan. I should have known from the tattoo*

Ilya: *Better than voyager tattoo. Whatevr that would be lol*

Every morning Ilya wakes up and tells himself that today will be the day that Shane remembers. And every night he tells himself the same thing about the next day. It's a cycle that lasts two months.

In the meantime, Ilya throws himself into hockey. He puts all his energy and frustration and sadness into training and into each game.

"What is your fucking problem, Rozanov?" Hunter asks after the third time Ilya checks him into the boards to clear the puck for his teammate. Ilya blows him a kiss and skates off.

His hard work has paid off. Against all odds, Boston makes the Stanley Cup final against the Admirals. Shane was right that New York would make the Cup again, but Boston led a complete upset in the playoffs to make it along with them. Shane would be so proud.

Ilya thinks that hockey is the thing that is keeping him close to Shane. Everything about it reminds Ilya of him, of them. Every assist, every goal, every victory is with Shane's name in his heart. And so, as Boston takes the Cup with a buzzer beating goal by Ilya, there is nothing else in his mind but Shane, Shane, Shane. His Shane.

He kisses the Cup as it's handed to him. There's so many things he wants to say. So many things he should have said long ago. He wants to tell Shane that as happy as he is right now to have won, it's nothing when he can't celebrate with the person he fucking *loves*.

He wants to say that he will wait forever if he has to. That if Shane never gets his memory back, they will make new ones. That they are inevitable. *Sud'ba*.

"For you," he shouts, hoping Shane is watching. "I will never forget!"

Ilya is the captain of the Stanley Cup champions. He should be out celebrating with his team, but he's drinking alone in his New York hotel room instead. He wishes he could call Shane right now. Video call, preferably. He wishes he could flip his camera to show Shane the New York skyline and tease him for not making it to the Cup.

Most of all, he wishes he could see Shane's face; proud and soft and a little horny like he always gets after Ilya wins. He wishes Shane could *tell* him that he was proud. They've been talking about Ilya taking another Cup and evening up their score for years and now Ilya has finally done it and Shane isn't even here to celebrate with him.

It doesn't make the win meaningless. Ilya will become a free agent next year and with two Cup wins under his belt he'll have more leverage for a better contract. But it makes it more... insignificant.

After Ilya's mother died, he thought he'd gotten used to the loneliness of victory. He'd always be alone at the top, he'd always be alone in his wins, he'd always be alone in breaking records.

He had never considered Shane Hollander. And he hadn't realized until this moment, how important it was for them to have each other at the top.

He should not text Shane. He's been telling himself for weeks that he needs to cut off contact as Lily so he can reintroduce himself as Ilya, but he's so *weak*. So weak and so scared because to Shane, Lily is a friend. A confidant. Ilya doesn't know what he'd do if he were completely cut off from Shane's reality.

Ilya: *Did you have a good night? Watch the game?*

Jane: *Yeah. Good game for Boston.*

Ilya: *That Rozanov guy is very handsome*

Jane: *lol I'm sure he'd love to hear you say that*

Ilya: *You do not think so?*

Ilya relaxes across his hotel bed and rests a palm over his bare stomach. It's a risk, but he needs to gauge how willing Shane is to accept his attraction to Ilya. Or what if the head injury knocked his sense out and now he isn't interested in Ilya at all?

Jane: *I have eyes, don't I?*

Ilya grins. Something that he hadn't realized was tense and tight in his body loosens.

Ilya: *yes you are right. Gay ones.*

Jane: *Yeah he's pretty beautiful*

Ilya freezes. Beautiful. Beautiful. He Googles the word just to be sure he has the right definition of it. *The adjective beautiful describes a thing that is pleasing to the senses. A field of wildflowers, a colorful sunset.* Is that... Is that how Shane sees him?

He'd never said anything so juvenile before. Ilya is hot, sexy, even handsome. Shane has said all this before. Beautiful? Never *beautiful*. He doubts that Shane would have said it if he knew who was on the other end of the phone.

Ilya's eyes sting. He shouldn't have asked.

Ilya: *.....*

Jane: *Sorry. Did that make you jealous? Im sure you're beautiful too*

Ilya: *Not jealous. I said first*

Jane: *I'm glad you texted me. I was having a bad night.*

Ilya sucks his teeth. He'd already known that Shane was going to watch the Cup along with his teammates. His teammates who had no idea how to approach Shane or interact with him anymore. Could Ilya blame them? When *this* was how he'd resorted to talking to Shane; behind anonymity and a fake name?

Were they being cruel to him? Excluding him? Were they making Shane feel guilty for Montreal not making the Cup? Ilya feels anger and indignancy bubbling. It's not Shane's *fault*. He didn't ask to be hurt and he didn't ask for the rest of his team to be fucking useless.

Shane's contract is also up next year and Ilya has, secretly, been hoping Shane will sign somewhere else. Somewhere he doesn't have to shoulder the responsibility of the entire team. Somewhere... Somewhere, maybe, where Ilya also is.

Ilya: *Why? Hate to see Boston win? You will get your turn*

Jane: *No!! They're definitely not touching that Cup next year. It's hard with the other guys*

Ilya: *They are being bullies? I will come to Canada, next flight.*

Shane doesn't know it, but Ilya isn't kidding. Fuck the Lily disguise if Shane really needs him. He'd take the consequences of it on the chin later, but not until he got a few punches in to the Montreal team who is making Shane feel this way.

Jane: *Not bullies. And I wouldn't mind that at all. When do you think we can see each other?*

Right now, Ilya wants to say. I will come to you right fucking now if you asked, I wouldn't be able to stay away. But Ilya is stuck in New York and Shane still has no idea about Lily and Ilya really needs time to make a better plan and so he simply responds, *soon.*, and throws his phone under the pillow so he doesn't have to look at Shane's responding text which is probably pouty and whiney.

Ilya swallows. What he wouldn't do to have Shane next to him right now. He'd kiss away all the hurt, all the anxiety. He'd turn Shane into such a mess that he wouldn't *forget* himself, he'd *remember*. Ilya would remind him with his tongue and his teeth and his cock. He'd show Shane just how much Ilya knows about his body, the noises he'd be surprised he could make.

Ilya reaches into his shorts where his cock is hard and throbbing and squeezes.

Jane: *I'll be in Boston this weekend*

Ilya pauses with the toothbrush inside his cheek and foamy toothpaste coming out of the corner of his mouth. He bites down on the brush so can use both hands to send back his own message.

Ilya: *Oh really? for?*

Jane: *Apparently I'm friends with Rose Landry and apparently she's shooting a movie there and apparently i\I've been ghosting her so now apparently i ave to go to Boston to see her*

Jane: *have**

Rose fucking Landry. Ilya has never met her, but he knows all about her. He knows where she grew up, he knows her favorite ice cream flavor, he knows the fucking coffee shops she frequents because when Shane had started dating her, maybe Ilya had become a little tiny bit obsessive.

Jealous. He was jealous. He's still fucking jealous, if he's being honest. To this day, no matter how frequently she and Shane deny their relationship, they make covers with headlines like *Rose Landry Rekindling Romance?* or *Star Crossed: Hockey Superstar and Hollywood Sweetheart Spotted.*

Ilya knows Shane is gay. *Rose Landry* knows Shane is gay. He doesn't have any reason to be jealous of her, except for the fact that she had Shane in the way Ilya can only imagine; publicly, proudly. She got to wear his fucking number to a fucking Montreal game and watch Shane fucking win and then fucking kiss him after.

Ilya: *ah the famous ex*

Jane: *Why did I date her? If im ya know*

Ilya hesitates, but not because he's unsure of what to say. He knows exactly why Shane dated Rose Landry, why he tried so hard to convince himself that he wasn't gay. That he didn't like men and he especially didn't like his *rival*.

"*I'm glad I went out with her,*" Shane had said, drawing patterns on Ilya's bare thigh. Ilya had rolled his eyes and then rolled over on top of Shane so that he could feel his entire weight pressing him into the bed.

"*Yes, I'm sure that you are,*" Ilya responded, jealousy clouding his voice. It made Shane's freckled nose twitch in amusement and Ilya hadn't been able to stop himself from leaning down to kiss it.

"*Not like that. It's just... I don't think I would have understood how, like, different it would be with a woman. How different if it wasn't—wasn't you.*"

"*Mm,*" Ilya trailed his kisses down to Shane's neck and he tilted his head to give him more access to the sensitive flesh. "*Yes. Women are softer, wetter—*"

"*Shut up—*"

"*But you are plenty wet right now, Hollander. Roll over.*"

Ilya sucks in a breath. Sometimes, randomly, he'll be hit with memories that are triggered by smells or sounds or even nothing at all. The past two months have been constant with them and Ilya tries to never think about what he *should* have done, should have said.

Ilya: *The feelings you have were very scary for you. Not so scary to be with a woman*

Jane: *did we...? During that time*

Ilya: *No. You were very good boyfriend to Rose Landry. Was my loss*

It was Ilya's loss then. The minty taste in his mouth sours at the thought that it might be his loss now. What if Shane met with Rose Landry and said to himself, like he did back then, that maybe he wasn't all the way gay? Not that he thinks Rose would go for it again, but who could say no to Shane Hollander and his adorable fucking face?

Jane: *Maybe we'll see each other while I'm there. Maybe i;; pass you on the street and not even know*

Jane: *Fuck. I'll**

Ilya swallows. Fuck. Fuck, fuck, fuck.

Ilya: *I said before we will find each other. u trust me?*

Shane's response is so immediate and so definitive that Ilya has to close out of his messaging app so he can *breathe* again.

Jane: *Yes.*

A result of Ilya's long term cyberstalking of Rose Landry is that Ilya knows the bars in Boston she prefers. Ones where she can patronize without worrying about security and cater to more high profile customers.

An hour ago Shane texted him, *Rose wants to go out for a drink. Do I like tequila?*

No, Ilya responded back immediately, knowing how tequila upsets Shane's stomach, *You do not drink a lot but when you do its something in a can or rum.*

Ilya hadn't heard from Shane since then and found himself pacing an indent into his carpet. Shane, drinking? Shane drinking with Rose Landry. Shane drinking with Rose Landry in *Boston* where Ilya is within reaching distance but Shane doesn't *know* that.

Before he can think better of it, he grabs his keys.

He tries *Elevation 27*. He tries *Central III*. Shane is nowhere and it's reminding Ilya of trying to track him down at the right hospital and it makes him anxious, so fucking anxious that he needs to see Shane *now* and screw the consequences.

He tries *Brewsters*. It's more of a club than a bar and Ilya knows it all too well. He and his team had celebrated their first Cup win here, all those years ago. Ilya had been so young and so guarded and life had been so different, bad different, without Shane in it.

It looks the same as it did then. It smells the same too; like liquor and sweat and perfume. There's a photo of himself he can see hanging behind the bar where a woman had drawn the bar's name in lipstick on his torso and they filled the Cup with beer for Ilya to drink out of. He had taken that woman home that night and her lipstick had stained him red all over.

He turns away from it. That's not who he is anymore. That's never who he wanted to be, just what he thought he *should* be. What he *had* to be with no mother and no father and not in his home country and away from everything and everyone he knew and loved.

But then, Shane. *His Shane.*

"Hello," a voice pulls him from his trance and Ilya looks over to find two beautiful girls grinning at him.

It's obvious they know who he is and Ilya would normally stick around to hear how great and handsome and talented he is, but he thinks Shane Hollander might be in this bar and that's more important than his ego.

"Sorry," Ilya yells over the music. "I am looking for someone."

"What do they look like?" One girl leans forward, props a hand on Ilya's arm to steady her drunken stumble. "We'll help you!"

"He is—"

He is right there. The multicolor lights flash across his shoulders, his face. His mouth is slack, why are his cheeks wet? Where is Rose Landry? Ilya steps forward to go to him. He wants to make whatever is wrong go away. He wants to protect Shane from anything, *everything*.

Shane rushes forward, though, and knocks into Ilya so forcefully it nearly sends him onto his ass. Ilya looks at Shane's retreating back in bewilderment. For a second, just a second, he'd thought he saw recognition in those dark eyes.

"Was that them? I think he's leaving," the drunk girl says unhelpfully but Ilya pauses to give her a tight smile before racing through the crowd and after Shane.

Outside, he whips his head left and right trying to find which way Shane had gone off to. He spots the head of long, dark hair about to cross the street. Shane's shoulders are trembling and he's wiping at his face. Fuck. Fuck.

Ilya runs to him in a panic. Was he hurt? Was he angry? At who? At Ilya? He grabs Shane by the back of his shirt and tosses him into an adjoining ally between two buildings. He looks down at Shane and knows that he probably looks angry but it's only because he's so damn *scared*.

"What the fuck was that, Hollander? Why did you not stop when I called for you?"

"I know it's you, *Lily*."

Ilya feels all the air knocked out of him. Oh, god. How? Why? Shane sneers at him and Ilya feels like sand is slipping through his fingers. No, no, no. "Yeah. All this time... Let go of me."

Ilya complies. He'd never keep Shane where he doesn't want to be, but he has to *understand*. They can't leave like this. There's still so much he needs to *say*.

"You are angry with me," Ilya says quickly. "Because I kept this from you."

Shane pushes on his chest, but Ilya doesn't budge. If he wants to leave, then leave, but Ilya won't give him space he doesn't need. He wants to count every freckle one last time, if it's the last time.

“I’m angry because I’ve been thinking I’ve been dream-cheating on my not-boyfriend Lily with dream-Ilya and then I find out not-boyfriend Lily and dream-Ilya are actually the same *fucking* person and then I see that person practically glued to a girl in a club—”

Ilya isn’t sure what most of any of that means, but he thinks... his entire chest cracks open. Light is spilling out of him and birds are singing and there are sunsets and beaches and everything is *beautiful, beautiful, beautiful* because Shane Hollander wants *him*. Not just Lily, not just Rozanov, but the person the two of them creates; *Ilya*.

“That was... So many English words I do not understand. Dream-Ilya, what is this? But I think... maybe you are jealous?”

Shane spats. “Fuck you.”

He tries to push away, but Ilya has him now. He has his Shane and he’s never letting go.

“Sweetheart.”

And Shane melts into him like he always has. Ilya rubs at a tear streaked cheek and even as Shane glares at him, he’s unable to suppress his smile.

“You are so lucky you are so pretty because you are so *stupid*.”

“You—”

“Sh, sh,” Ilya presses a finger to his Shane’s lips. “You are so dumb because... I am in love with you, Hollander. It broke my fucking heart to see you... and then in the hospital. You did not remember me. You continued to not remember me, but you talked to Lily. I thought only way I could keep you. I thought I’m only one who would ever remember.”

“Remember what?” Shane whispers against Ilya’s finger.

“This.”

Ilya kisses him like he never has before; full of grief and desperation and fear. He puts everything, two months worth of everything, into the kiss. And Shane gives it right back. He’s never let Ilya fully take the lead and he isn’t starting now. *His Shane*.

They break apart. Shane’s eyes are glassy and his lips are indecently red and wet and Ilya needs to get him home *now*.

“Come to mind,” he begs. “I will remind you.”

In the elevators, Shane pounces. Ilya moans and is back hits the railing as Shane’s lips and teeth and tongue work over his neck and jaw. Shane is making hungry little noises that Ilya

doesn't even think he realizes he's doing.

He manhandles Shane into his apartment, *finally*, and crowds him against the door. He bites at Shane's lips and then soothes it with his tongue. Fuck you for leaving me, it says, but, God, thank you for finding your way back.

"Fuck, Hollander. I've missed this mouth. This ass."

Ilya reaches into Shane's pants to squeeze and kneed the flesh. He pushes a finger through Shane's crease and feels the dry, furred hole there. His cock pulses in his jeans. If he doesn't get inside Shane soon, he'll come in his pants.

"God, *stop. Stop.*"

Like a jolt of electricity, Ilya jumps away. "What is wrong? I was too rough?"

He's about to offer that they stop here. He'd rather tuck Shane safely in his bed and jerk off in the bathroom if that meant he wouldn't scare Shane off.

But Shane giggles shyly and says, "No! I'm just... I don't remember..."

Fuck. Ilya's cock kicks up again. In 2009, Shane had never been with another man. Ilya had been his first then, and now... Ilya's entire body thrums. He runs his hand under Shane's shirt and plucks at a nipple until Shane is whimpering. He trembles and squirms like he did at nineteen.

"It is not your first time here," Ilya brushes Shane's hole again and Shane jerks, pressing their hard dicks together. Ilya taps Shane's forehead. "But your first time here."

He nuzzles under Shane's ear and purrs, "How lucky I am to have you for the first time *twice.*"

Shane groans loudly and his head falls back against the door with a hard thump. Ilya cradles the back of his head while his other hand unzips Shane's pants and reaches into his boxers to fondle his aching dick. Precum has already soaked Shane's underwear and now makes Ilya's fingers sticky.

"Sweetheart. I will be so good to you," he promises and presses two fingers into Shane's mouth to wet them. On instinct, or maybe Shane *remembers*, he closes his mouth around the digits and sucks greedily. He looks *gone* and it's such a pretty sight with his eyes heavy and lidded and drool pooling on his chin.

Does he have any idea how he looks right now? Like *Ilya's*.

"Oh fuck," Shane is whimpering. "Please. Please, Ilya. Please."

Ilya removes his wet fingers and uses them to breach Shane's hole with just the tip of his pointer finger. Shane's body tightens and contracts around him and Ilya's mouth waters. He knows how tight Shane gets. How hot, how wet, how sloppy.

“Fuck, Hollander, you are gagging for it.”

Shane is pleading and trying to work Ilya’s clothes off. “Off. Clothes off. *Please.*”

Ilya complies because he’s feeling impatient too. It’s been too long since he’s seen Shane Hollander in the bare flesh and he yanks Shane’s pants down along with his ruined boxers. Shane’s cock bobs in front of him and Ilya leans in to give it a tender kiss.

He missed me,” Ilya says as Shane’s cock bucks from the chaste contact and uses one hand to roll Shane’s neglected balls in his hand like he knows Shane likes. “Look how heavy and tight these are, Hollander. You poor thing”

With a hiss, Shane reaches down to quickly grab the base of his throbbing cock. “Christ, Rozanov, you can’t just... *say* things like that.”

“Why not?” Ilya grins. “You know it. I know.”

He knows other things Shane likes, too, and he’s going to prove it. He pats Shane’s hip with an instruction to turn around and Shane does so hesitantly. Ilya’s heart squeezes at the trust Shane is showing him right now.

“And you *love* this.”

Ilya uses both hands to spread Shane’s cheeks. He takes just a moment to admire the tight, pink hole surrounded by a neat trim of dark hair before he lurches forward to lick over it and press a wet kiss to the center.

Just like Ilya knew he would, Shane goes *crazy* for it. His hips shove back towards Ilya’s face begging for more of his tongue and Ilya gives it to him happily, sending a light smack across Shane’s asscheek that makes his dick jump between his spread legs.

“Yes. I told you. You fucking love it, Hollander.”

He dives back in with renewed fervor. The body remembers, Ilya had told him. It just has to be *reminded*. He bites, sucks, kisses, and pushes his tongue into Shane’s hole until it’s soft and open and Ilya’s face is sloppy wet with his own saliva.

“Okay,” Shane whimpers. “Okay, Ilya, *enough*. I need...”

Ilya is *panting*. “What? *Tell me.*”

“You,” Shane sobs and Ilya rewards him by ducking between his legs to lap at his balls. “*Fuck*. I need you...”

Ilya can practically feel what little patience he had left snapping. Yes. Yes, Shane needs him. *His Shane* is in front of him, sniffing and teary eyed, because he needs *Ilya*.

He lifts Shane and tosses him over his shoulder with a grunt. It’ll hurt his back in the morning, surely, but he doesn’t fucking *care* right now, especially when Shane gives an

impressed grunt.

The deposits Shane onto the couch and is about to follow when he notices Shane staring curiously at Ilya's coffee table.

"You made me a tuna melt."

"Yes." Yes, yes, *yes*.

Tears cloud his vision. Yes, Shane. *His Shane*. He will make him a million more tuna melts, a million more memories, but first...

He shoves Shane's legs apart and pushes them up to Shane's ears.

"Woah," Shane gasps and Ilya gives him a cheeky grin. Bet he hadn't known he was this flexible.

"Open up for me, sweetheart."

Shane obeys which gives Ilya the perfect view of his wet hole and his cock leaking a steady stream of precum across his lower belly. He feels drunk with relief and lust and he almost can't believe he isn't dreaming.

Fuck, please don't let this be a dream. And if it is, please don't let him wake up from it.

"Ilya," Shane whispers, taking him out of his daze.

"This will be quick," Ilya warns. "Has been a long time."

"I- yeah, I haven't--"

Ilya hadn't even considered the fact that Shane, with the new realization that he was gay, might have gone out to experiment. The relief that he hadn't smacks Ilya right in the face.

"I know, Hollander," he says gently. "I meant long time for *me*."

And his own relief is mirrored so genuinely in Shane's face that Ilya realizes he also hadn't considered that *Shane* might have been worried too. With red cheeks, Shane shyly holds himself open a little wider and Ilya moans.

He reaches behind the couch cushion for one of the bottles of lube and packs of condoms they keep around and laughs at Shane's bewildered expression.

"We have done this before. Is hard for us to keep our hands off each other. There is condoms everywhere, easy access."

He says this as he rolls one of the condoms onto his cock and squeezes the tip. He takes in Shane's parted lips and the focus he has on Ilya's dick and playfully wags it to smack against Shane's own cock.

“You like this, Hollander?”

He does it again, smacks the head of Shane’s dick with his own until precum sprays from the tip and dribbles over Shane’s stomach.

“You want this big cock?”

Shane licks his lips, his focus never leaving where their cocks are pressed together. “Yeah. Yeah, give it to me.”

“I’ll give it to you,” he grunts through clenched teeth. “I’ll fucking... Hollander... *goddamn*... I’ll...”

Ilya is *shaking* as he notches the head of his cock against Shane’s opening and slides home. The gasp and moan into each other’s mouths until Shane finally tilts his head to capture Ilya’s lips in a deep kiss.

Ilya starts to move. His teeth grind together. He can already feel the build up of cum in his shaft but he presses down the incessant urge to come. He needs to make Shane feel good first. He needs to *remind him* of how good this feels, of how good they are together.

There it is. He shifts his hips to angle towards the spot at the front wall of Shane’s hole that makes him go limp and cross-eyed.

Ilya smirks. “Yes. I know this hole very well. It belongs to me. I know all the places you like best.”

He increases his pace and fucks into Shane harder, faster, until Shane is a mess of moans and babbling and begging.

“Holy shit,” he pants. “I think I’m gonna— holy *shit*, Ilya!”

Thank fucking christ. Ilya fucks him through it, shutting his eyes because the sight of Shane’s cock shooting across his chest and up to his chin is too fucking much. When Shane clenches around him with the aftershocks, it’s Ilya’s undoing.

“Shane. Oh, *Shane*.”

His vision whites out and his ears ring. He comes so violently he forgets to *breathe*. But Shane is there, rubbing his back and kissing his slack, open mouth until Ilya has enough strength to pull out, tie up the condom, and collapse onto Shane’s messy chest.

It’s too much. His Shane. *His Shane*.

“Hey,” Shane’s whisper is filled with concern and Ilya realizes he’s crying into Shane’s neck like a child. “Hey. What is it? What’s wrong?”

Unable to think enough to form English words, Ilya tells him in Russian. *I love you, I love you, god, I love you and I lost you and it was so terrible to be the only one who remembered.*

“I’m sorry, Rozy, I don’t understand.”

Ilya takes a trembling breath and tries again. “I was so scared. I.. *Moy lyubimyy*, I thought I’d never have you again. And I had so many, what do you say, regrets.”

Shane’s body tenses. “What.. kind of regrets?”

Ilya finally pulls away and balances himself on his arms to look down at Shane. He looks nervous, like he expects Ilya to say he regrets *him*. Them. How wrong he is.

“Maybe regret is not right word. I wished I had said more to you. That you knew more of how I feel and then your mind would not forget me so easily.”

“Ilya—“

“Yes. I know,” Ilya chuckles sadly. “Does not work like that, but my heart...”

More tears clog his throat and Shane winds his hands around his neck to pull him back down with soothing, cooing sounds.

“I’m sorry,” he whispers. “I’m sorry I scared you.”

“Stop with sorry,” Ilya groans and Shane laughs. The sound vibrates against Ilya’s chest and loosens some of the fear that had been gripping him there.

“But, I’m here now,” Shane says confidently. “We found each other just like you said we would. I think this proves that falling in love with you is inevitable in any lifetime, doesn’t it?”

Ilya sucks in a breath and then releases it in a fast *whoosh*.

“We have never... before. We have never said—“

Shane frowns like he can’t believe it. Ilya can’t believe it either, how could they have felt this way and not made it known?

“Really? Then I really was stupid. I’m crazy about you, I’ve *always* been crazy about you. I was an idiot not to tell you so.”

Ilya peppers kisses all over Shane’s face and neck until Shane is squirming from the attention.

“Yes,” Ilya says between kisses. “You are so dumb and... me too. I love you too. *Moy lyubimyy, moy lyubimyy*.”

And then he pulls away again, needing to see Shane’s face to gauge his reaction. “I want to tell. Everyone. I want other people to know. This... is too important. Too important to not be remembered. To not share. Da?”

Shane freezes and Ilya feels his own body lock up, but he can't take it back now. He *won't* take it back. It's a risk, he knows, because Shane had wanted to be so careful. But that was *before* and now Shane's face splits into a wide smile that makes Ilya's heart race.

"We'll tell my parents first. We'll need Yuna Hollander on our side if we want to... but *yes*. Yeah, Ilya, I think our love is too big to just keep between us."

Fuck. "Your parents," Ilya says cautiously. "They do not like me."

"They don't *know* you," Shane corrects. "But you already won some points by staying with me in the hospital in Boston before they got there. So I think they'll come around. They just want me to be happy and *you* make me happy."

Ilya is unable to stop the tears from falling again. "I thought I would fucking *kill* Cliff Marlow. If I was not captain he would be dead for what he did to you."

"Aw. So scary, my big Russian cry baby."

Ilya frowns. "Is not very nice, Hollander. Emotions are normal and I have lot of them right now. I still can not believe... here you are in front of me again. Makes me..."

In a quick motion that surprises Ilya, Shane flips them so that he's straddling Ilya's waist and he laughs at whatever expression is written across Ilya's face.

"Yeah, I'm right here. I'm not going anywhere, Rozanov. Let me remind you."

End Notes

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