

As Long as You're Here

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As Long as You're Here

by [makeit_takeit](#)

Summary

Ilya pulls back then, looks Shane in the eyes, and it takes a lot to make eyes that icy and blue feel warm, but he manages it, somehow.

“I am feeling,” he says, voice gone all sly, face suddenly smug, “that we may be, what is it? *Compatible*, in this way—what do you think?”

Shane has to remind himself to *breathe*, to blink; he nods, an automatic, emphatic *yes*.

Notes

I was taking December off, I swear! But then episode 5 happened and I had questions. BURNING questions, that required much thought and discussion. Which lead, necessarily, to playing fill-in-the-gaps. So here we are.

I've only seen the show, I know nothing of the books, so please take this with a grain of salt. It's not much, but please accept this offering in the hopes that it can help us all make to to midnight Thursday night.

Happy Reading!!

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

Shane is propped up against the padded upholstery of the hotel headboard, head tipped back against the polished wood above it, trying not to watch the clock. It's not that late, really—the sun sets early in February, even in Tampa—but it feels like it, somehow, like he's wasting time, like the night's slipping away from him.

Butterflies are running riot in his stomach, sweat breaking out across his forehead. He rubs his clammy palms against the slick fabric of his shorts, blows out a long, steady breath.

He's been watching the replay of the All-Star broadcast on his tablet, or trying to anyway. For all that he watches the iPad playback basically minute by minute on the bench, he likes to get the big picture, the wide-angle view of things after the fact. It's a little game he plays with himself, seeing if he can pick out all the things he did wrong, the things he missed, before the coaching staff points them out in film review.

But of course, there's no film review tomorrow, no one to answer to for his performance in the game this afternoon. No one cares that much about an All-Star game, not in any way that really matters.

And anyway, it was a good win today—a good game, a good time. Low-pressure, easy.

Nice, to be playing with Ilya for once, instead of against him.

Nice that instead of someone always having to lose, they could both win, this time.

It's embarrassing, though, now that he's watching, to see how much of the broadcast is actually focused on the two of them. To see the way the guys in the booth just keep talking and talking and *talking* about the two of them playing on a line together, speculating about how their rivalry will translate into teamwork, wondering how Ilya will feel about being put on Shane's wing, reminding the viewers at home that no matter how talented two players may be, that's no guarantee they'll have any chemistry on the ice.

Which, to be fair, was something Shane had been wondering about himself. If that adversarial electric current that runs between them off the ice, that's always sizzling and crackling when they're opponents on it, would be muted, maybe even go cold when they were suddenly wearing the same sweater.

But instead it had just transformed, morphed, somehow. Turned less competitive and more collaborative, the second they had a chance to be allies instead of enemies.

It felt natural, automatic out there with Ilya on his wing, Ilya's voice yapping in his ear, demanding the puck, pointing out the play. It felt loose, fun in a way hockey doesn't ever really feel anymore, not for Shane. Because even meaningless, low-stakes hockey like an All-Star game still carries weight, in Shane's mind; it's still a big stage with lots of eyes trained on him, still an opportunity to put his best foot forward, make a good impression, be a role model and an ambassador.

Still important, because being Shane Hollander means every word he says, every step he takes needs to be considered, careful, measured. Because mistakes aren't really an option, and neither is even the appearance that he might not be taking something seriously.

And it's not that Shane's not glad, obviously. Glad it was fun and easy instead of awkward and tense, like he'd been afraid of.

Glad it went well, all things considered, after he'd been anxious for weeks about what might happen, or not happen, when they were forced to interact, to deal with each other whether they wanted to or not.

And yeah, it had felt good to have some fun out there today—but Shane's very aware of just how much that fun was Ilya-focused in a way that maybe it shouldn't have been. *Probably* shouldn't have been, he reminds himself, because Ilya is—.

Ilya is still all the things he's ever been: unpredictable, infuriating, confusing, an unrelenting asshole.

He's still dangerous, not just for the threat he poses to Shane's career and his reputation but to his emotional well-being, to his *sanity*, and—.

Three days ago, Shane arrived in Tampa feeling nervous, guarded, prepared for things with Ilya to be contentious, nerve-wracking. He'd had a plan, had resolved that he would be cordial, friendly. He'd try his best to convey to Ilya that he hoped they could have an amiable professional relationship going forward, when it was required of them, and hope that they could just...leave it there, maybe.

Because Shane's also resolved not to lie to himself anymore, or at least to *try* not to. He's not an idiot, he knows he wants something from Ilya that he probably shouldn't want, something Ilya almost certainly can't or won't give him, so. He's smart enough, *realistic* enough to know—he really shouldn't let this...*thing* with Ilya keep dragging on, shouldn't let himself get pulled in any deeper.

When he'd seen Ilya at the bar, alone—only a few hours after landing in Tampa, and the first time they'd laid eyes on each other since that night at the club in Montreal that Shane wishes, for a million different reasons, that he could forget—he'd thought, might as well seize the opportunity.

Might as well bite the bullet, get the initial awkwardness out of the way, so he could move on with his weekend without the looming question hanging over him, of when and where he'd finally have to.

Deal with Ilya.

Then that first conversation had gone better, honestly, than Shane had the balls to even hope for; the whole experience in Tampa had been a good one, actually, with none of the potential pitfalls he'd been so worried about.

And that's the whole reason he'd decided not to go out with the guys after the game, had decided on a nice quiet night enjoying a last, solitary walk on the beach and an early night in. Better that, than risk being in forced proximity to Ilya, especially with alcohol involved. Better than chancing a run-in that might undo the tentative equilibrium they seem to have struck over the last 72 hours.

Shane had walked down to the beach earlier tonight feeling relieved that he'd made it through the game, through the whole *weekend*, really, relatively unscathed. He'd been ready to soak up the last rays of warm sunshine he's got coming his way for the next few weeks, at least, then head up to his room, pack up his shit. Get a good night's sleep ahead of his five a.m. wake-up call.

Fly to Columbus, then to Pittsburgh, then to Philly with his team. Get back home and finally, finally just—move on. With his season, with his life. With finally facing the reality that he's been trying so hard for so long to avoid.

With figuring out who he's going to be, how he's going to live his life now that he's not hiding the truth anymore—at least not from himself.

Then Ilya showed up out of nowhere, sought him out, tracked him down. Made him feel like—maybe.

Maybe, y'know?

Maybe the bridge Shane thought he'd burned, when he walked out of Ilya's house and straight into Rose's arms, when he'd said *I can't do this*, and meant it, in that moment, wasn't totally destroyed after all.

Because Shane's been working on it, on the *not lying to himself* thing, and he can admit now that what he really wants is something more from Ilya than...whatever the thing is they've been doing for the better part of the last decade. He can admit he wants it, but that doesn't mean he can have it, doesn't mean Ilya is willing—or able—to give it to him.

As soon as Shane could admit to himself that he wanted it, he'd had to admit just as quick that it was probably off the table. That it was just some wild, crazy fantasy that Shane could let himself indulge in occasionally—what it might be like, to have Ilya in his life in a real way—but that could never be fucking reality. Like, obviously.

And he'd been prepared to let it go, to never bring it up again, to just let the break they made be clean, final, and call it good enough.

But then Ilya showed up on the beach, and now.

Now here Shane is, still wired, wide-eyed and jittery, still feeling the phantom burn of the trail Ilya's thumb left, tracing its way down Shane's.

Still feeling the phantom burn of his eyes, hot on Shane's face, telling him he could come by at eight.

Still second-guessing all his decisions: to open this door, to ask for Ilya's room number knowing where it would lead, and to. Well.

To lay his cards on the table, when he gets there. To tell the truth—finally, completely—and just...see what happens. To face down likely rejection, and to just—deal with that, if it comes.

When it comes, his mind supplies unhelpfully. He blows out another long, long breath.

Because he's in it now, with nothing to do but wait, clammy and anxious, for seven fifty-three to roll around, because that's the time he's decided it's reasonable to leave his room, in order to ride up two floors to Ilya's room and get to his door within three minutes, give or take, of eight o'clock.

Shane groans out loud in his empty room, knocks his head back against the headboard in frustration, looks at the clock.

7:46.

He closes his tablet, picks up his phone instead.

Shane's social media feeds and group texts are all full of clips of the game, the guys in the studio commenting on the highlights. They say Ilya's the best wingman Shane's had in years (which, okay, true). They say Shane sometimes gets into his own head, thinks too much and gets caught watching (which, fine – maybe also sometimes true), but that playing with Ilya seemed to keep him fully engaged, moving at full speed all night.

There's Shane being asked about it by Sportsnet after the game. There's Ilya talking about it on ESPN.

It's so over the top, the way everyone is acting about it.

Wayne fucking Gretzky, who's a guest in the broadcast booth for the weekend, says it looked like they'd been playing together forever, like Ilya seemed to know instinctively where Shane would be on the ice, to know just how to set him up for success. Which is exactly how it had felt to Shane, being out there together, but *Jesus*. He didn't know the whole world would be able to pick up on it, too.

It makes him feel caught out, exposed, like everyone can see this thing he's been trying desperately to conceal.

He's not sure why he keeps watching, when it makes him feel all unsteady, almost queasy.

He doesn't want to think about it, or about anything. He wishes again, momentarily, that he'd never asked Ilya for his room number, had just let that moment on the beach wash over him and pass him by, had stood up and dusted himself off, wished Ilya good luck on the rest of his season and left it there, but—.

He puts down his phone, tries closing his eyes, tries some 8-5-3 breathing to center himself, to calm his racing heartbeat.

Because the thing is.

The thing Shane was thinking *most* of all, sitting on that beach with the sunset lights shining off Ilya's perfect fucking face, with Ilya's thumb wrapped around his like a promise, or at least like an invitation, was: it's enough already.

It's been so many fucking *years* that they've been pushing and pulling each other, up and down, in and out. All those years of secret arrangements and stupid misunderstandings, of arguments and apologies and fighting for the upper hand, of pointless posturing and juvenile games that keep them running in circles, leave them ending up right back where they started, time after time.

After all those years, it feels like they've gotten nowhere, and Shane's just—he's sick of it.

It's enough, already, and Shane's tired of the hamster wheel. He can't do it anymore, and if Ilya doesn't like what he has to say, if he doesn't want to hear the truth, well.

Then Shane will cross that bridge when he gets to it.

He watches the clock tick over from 7:52 to 7:53, takes one more breath, and stands up; he pockets his room key and slips out the door. He holds it carefully as it closes, so it doesn't make that loud, ostentatious *thunk* that always echoes down the halls, even with the textured wallpaper on the walls, the thick, plush carpet on the floors.

Not that it matters; the whole hotel is full of MLH people, and they're all out at the afterparty, celebrating the end of another successful All-Star weekend.

There's no one around to hear, anyway.

When the elevator opens on Ilya's floor, Shane cues up a text that just says: *here*. He waits until he's two rooms away before he hits send, fidgets outside of Ilya's door for the five seconds that it takes him to answer.

Shane walks in, shoulders past Ilya in the entrance way, moves silently over to the bed and sits nervously, like a kid outside the principal's office. His heart feels like it's going to beat out of his chest.

Ilya stands by the door, leans against the wall all nonchalant and cool, and Shane hates him, just a little, for the way he can do that, can pull off calm and unaffected in a way Shane just never will.

Ilya watches him sit there, trying not to squirm; levels a look at him: searching, assessing.

"This looks serious," he says, with that mocking undertone he always uses, the one that can still make Shane feel like some lame nerd about to be bullied by one of the cool kids.

"It's *not*," is what comes out of Shane's mouth, knee-jerk and defensive, before he can bite back the lie and correct himself.

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“Sorry,” Shane says, eventually, mouth still tucked against Ilya’s temple. Ilya sniffs against Shane’s chest, but at least he’s stopped shaking, stopped rocking, has gone still. “I didn’t mean. Or—I didn’t want you to get upset.”

“Hollander,” Ilya sighs, his voice so soft and kind, the way he can be when he wants to be, “it happens. Life is just—shit, sometimes.”

“No, I—shouldn’t have pushed,” Shane says, because Ilya’s family, his life back in Russia is really none of Shane’s business, none of his concern. If Ilya says that having—something—with Shane isn’t possible, then that’s that. Who is Shane to second guess his reasons?

He shakes his head, braces his hand against Ilya’s chest and pushes himself back, puts some space between them. “I should let you get to sleep, sorry.”

“*Shane.*” Ilya’s hand wraps around his arm, his voice low, insistent. “I don’t want to sleep. You should stay.”

Shane is still sitting in Ilya’s lap, knees straddling his hips. His stomach lurches suddenly, queasy and unsteady. He’s glad he could be here, could be a literal shoulder to cry on when Ilya clearly needed one, but that doesn’t mean things are suddenly different. Shane said what he came to say, and it didn’t change anything; Ilya made it clear this can’t go anywhere, at least not beyond the same circular path they’ve been following up until now, and he’s got his reasons—*good* reasons, reasons Shane can’t argue with or refute, so.

So there’s nowhere else to go, from here. This is the end of the road.

He suddenly feels like a rat caught in a trap, heat radiating out from each point of contact between Ilya’s fingers and Shane’s skin, five little independent brands searing into his forearm.

“I’m not sure, if.”

Shane doesn’t drop his hand from Ilya’s chest, doesn’t move.

“I get it,” he says, “about why we can’t be—anything. But I don’t know if I can be, just like. *Nothing*, anymore.”

He keeps his voice pretty steady, he thinks, matter-of-fact.

“I understand,” Ilya nods, quiet in the silent room. “I cannot blame you, but. As long as you’re here.”

He tugs, so Shane tips forward, so they’re pressed together again, Ilya’s arms wrapping around just like they were before, this time with a whole different intent. And just like that, the hairs on the back of Shane’s neck, on his arms are all standing up, like he’s filled with static electricity all of a sudden.

Ilya's chin is dipped down, his expression cautious. His head isn't tucked down anymore, his face turned up, but his eyes aren't on Shane's face. The careful, watchful gaze that's usually fixed on Shane is notably missing; Shane can feel its absence like a phantom limb.

"Is just one more time, yes?" He goes on, voice rumbling through Shane's chest where they're pressed together. "What can it hurt?"

And Shane isn't sure, actually, about what it could hurt—or *who*.

He's not sure about what he should do next, if he should stay or go. Because if this can't be anything more than it is, which is—.

It's not *nothing*, not really, Shane knows that much. But it's not *something*, either, and it can never really *be* something, at least not the kind of something Shane can admit, now, he really wants it to be, so.

The question is, what's the alternative?

Decide that's not enough for him, that he'd rather walk away than take what he can get?

Give up what he does have—give up *Ilya*?

Ilya, who is clearly wounded, clearly lonely and hurting, and not just tonight. Shane's seen the evidence of it plenty of times before, heard the angry phone calls and seen the tension in Ilya's face, in his body language when he talks about his family, about his home and his country.

Shane can't imagine getting up and going back to his room, leaving Ilya here alone now, after this.

But he can imagine himself, lying in the dark in his own empty hotel bed, wishing he were still here, wishing he hadn't left.

It's an easy answer, when he thinks of it that way.

"I...guess, maybe," he sighs into Ilya's mouth, pulls back just far enough for their eyes to meet. "I guess I can stick around awhile, eh?"

Ilya smiles, the big blinding one that never fails to make Shane's stomach flip over.

"Come." He pulls Shane closer, right up against him again, nuzzles his face against Shane's neck. Shane's breath catches in his throat. "Just lie down with me."

Ilya scoots his way up the bed, pulls on the comforter then kicks at it, gets one leg under it.

"Clothes off first, though."

He reaches back with one hand, tugs on the back of his shirt so it slips up and over his head, flings it to one side so it drops onto the carpet, then slides further up the bed, still grinning.

Shane follows suit, shrugging out of his shirt, watching Ilya shove his pants and underwear down and off then crawl under the covers. Shane does the same, leaves his shorts on the floor and slides in next to Ilya.

It feels ridiculously, luxuriously good, the warm slide of Ilya's bare skin against his own, Ilya's arms wrapping around him, pulling him in.

Ilya's hand spread wide and proprietary over Shane's ass, face tucked into Shane's neck.

Ilya's hot, damp breath ghosting against the sensitive skin behind Shane's ear, sending a shiver through him.

"You feel so good," Ilya groans, voice thick and low, "missed this."

"You too," Shane says, but that's not—. "I mean, me too."

Ilya pulls back then, looks Shane in the eyes, and it takes a lot to make eyes that icy and blue feel warm, but he manages it, somehow.

"I am feeling," he says, voice gone all sly, face suddenly smug, "that we may be, what is it? *Compatible*, in this way—what do you think?"

Shane has to remind himself to *breathe*, to blink; he nods, an automatic, emphatic *yes*. Ilya smiles again. It's beautiful, when he does that. Unfair, kind of, in the way that it makes Shane feel a little dumb, a little blind and deaf. Momentarily, he feels too staggered by the sight to do anything but lie there while Ilya scoots closer, brings their bodies flush together from chest to knees, then finally brings their mouths together again, wet and dirty.

Ilya's dick is hard and hot against Shane's, slotted together between their bodies. His big hand still has a firm grasp of Shane's ass, fingers digging in as he pulls Shane in tighter, gets him positioned just the way Ilya wants him.

They stay that way for a while, kissing and groping, leaning into the friction of their bodies moving against each other. It goes on, and on—for how long, Shane can't say. Long enough that he's huffing and panting, starting to whine when Ilya thrusts against him just right and the hot, velvety skin of his cock catches and slides against Shane's. Long enough that they're not even kissing anymore, not really, they're just breathing heavy into each other's open mouths, noses pushed flat up against one another, foreheads sweaty, slipping against each other as they strain and slide and grind themselves together, desperate and clinging.

It's a steady build; a long, slow climb up a steep mountain. The room around them feels humid and over-warm, the sheets and blankets damp and sticking to them, the heat and the sweat from their bodies making the bed into a steamy cocoon, the two of them wrapped up inside.

"Suck," Ilya says, and suddenly his fingers are in Shane's mouth. Shane doesn't even question it, doesn't stop to ask why, he just sucks like he's told while Ilya groans, whispers, "make them nice and wet for me," right into Shane's ear.

Shane does the best he can under the circumstances, lightheaded and dazed, his sense of time and place gone all hazy and gold-tinged around the edges.

One second Ilya's fingers are practically down his throat and the next they're gone; the next there they are again, sliding wet and slippery between his ass cheeks, rubbing all slick and hot over his hole, pressing in, and in some more before Shane even knows what hit him.

"This is okay?" Ilya breathes into Shane's mouth, just the slightest hint of uncertainty winding its way into his voice. "It's okay, if tonight is just this?"

And Shane nods, almost frantic, because of course it's okay, it's like—so much better than just okay.

"It's so good," he nods, just a low, punched out whisper between them, "just like this."

Ilya laughs into his mouth, low and evil, but he doesn't stop.

He keeps on, and on, his hips a relentless pressure grinding against Shane's, their erections slotted together just right, Ilya's fingers a heavy, delicious intrusion, stretching and pressing and stroking inside him until all Shane can do is hold on tight—forget trying to keep up—and let Ilya drag him over the edge.

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Shane's got no pre-conceived notions about what might happen next, no expectations at all, actually.

Because, well—this all feels like uncharted territory, from where Shane's sitting.

Or, like. Laying.

He thinks that might have been the longest he's ever lasted with Ilya's hands on him, and it feels hard-won, like he had to really work for it.

Like *they* had to really work for it, like they chose the scenic route this time instead of always taking the shortest, fastest way from point A to point B.

Like there was an unspoken agreement, a mutual decision to take the long way, to draw it out. To take their time, to make it last.

Shane doesn't know what that might mean, doesn't really want to think too hard about it.

But Ilya keeps smiling against his lips as they keep on kissing through the come-down, laughing in damp little gusts against Shane's jaw while his hand slides up over Shane's pec, squeezing and kneading like he always does, thumbing at Shane's nipple.

Shane groans, tries to keep his eyes open, hands wandering aimlessly across Ilya's sticky skin, blood-hot and velvety-smooth. Shane feels drugged, feels like a fly in honey, everything slow and sweet and heavy, impossible to breathe or talk or even move much at all, weighed down by the thick, sticky pull of this trap he doesn't want to escape.

Faintly, the low hum of a television through the wall from the room next door reaches into his brain, slowly pulls him back to himself, to here and now.

The lamps on either side of the bed are still glowing yellow-gold, the whole room a mirror image of Shane's identical one that's two floors down, on the opposite side of the hall. The comforter and sheets are wrecked, pulled free from one corner and tangled all up and around the two of them; Ilya's feet are sticking out from the mess at the end of the mattress, his toes stark and white against the dim, shadowy darkness beyond the bed, and Shane feels a little prickle of anxiety all of a sudden.

Ilya's looking at him with that focused gaze, icy blue eyes locked on him. It used to make Shane feel intimidated, self-conscious. Like a bug under a microscope, or a problem Ilya was trying to solve.

It took him a while to realize, that's just how Ilya looks when he's paying attention.

"You asked before, and I did not answer," Ilya says, all throaty and low, face still flushed with exertion, a single curl stuck to his forehead with sweat. "But—I would want, yes. To be something, I mean, if—if we could."

A shiver slides down Shane's spine, relief lancing through him like fire, but it's chased by something different, some distant pang that feels more like regret.

"So, then." Shane swallows down his fear, makes himself say what he means. "So then it's *not* just me who feels it."

Ilya's eyes roll, but it's fond.

"Is not just you, Hollander. Obviously."

The way he says it is so fucking matter-of-fact, like this is some mutually understood piece of information they both know and share.

Like he's not shaking the foundations of Shane's entire understanding of the last eight years of his whole private and professional life.

The look on Ilya's face is the same one Shane's come to know well: exasperated, almost-annoyed, like Shane should already know the answer to his own question, like it's stupid for him to even ask. It's so fucking typical; it's Shane's turn to roll his eyes.

"Not that obvious," Shane huffs, but then his hands are back in Ilya's hair, fingers tilting his face so Shane can seal their lips together again, can let the slick heat of Ilya's tongue in his mouth distract him for a few more minutes, so Shane doesn't have to fucking *think*.

For two guys who have known each other as long as they have, who have played each other as many times as they have, who have been thrown together as often as they have, who have spent as much time together as they have—they don't actually, like. *Know* each other, at least not that well.

Shane and Ilya aren't teammates, they aren't buddies, they don't really, like. *Hang out*. They don't even actually talk that much, not counting all the texting, which has definitely become increasingly frequent in recent years, but still tends to be all flirty sexting and plans for hooking up, nothing beyond that.

But what they are when they're alone together, when they're somewhere private and safe, is a whole other thing, an animal unto itself. It's built on equal parts natural chemistry and dogged, determined stubbornness. And sure, it was sparked initially by pure physical attraction and super-charged lust, but it's only been sustained this long by putting in the work, by both of them being willing to bend a little, to give a little, to be flexible enough to keep it going. And at this point, after all the time and effort put in, it's propelled mainly by repetition and muscle memory, both physical and mental.

After all those years of trial and error and making adjustments, of learning each other's moves and each other's tells, they've figured out how to anticipate, to intuit each other's thoughts and movements without *needing* to talk.

It's literal years of effort dedicated to just—watching and learning each other. And Shane is probably guilty of—or, like. Maybe especially *good at*. The watching and learning part.

When it comes to Ilya, specifically.

It makes Shane feel all adolescent-sweaty and awkward, too giddy and goofy and stupid; it's always felt a little humiliating, demoralizing, but tonight, suddenly it doesn't feel that way at all.

Because now, finally, Shane knows for sure, heard it right from Ilya's lips: *it's not just him*.

When he finally drags his mouth away, he lets himself meet Ilya's eyes, just barely, a fleeting glance. They're still lying here, wrapped around each other, as close together as they can get, and it's getting late now, Shane knows—it has to be. And they both have things they need to do, both have early flights to catch and regular life to get back to.

He checks the clock, and sighs. He knows he needs to go, he just doesn't *want* to.

Ilya smiles a secret little smile at him, lashes fluttering, all bashful like Shane's supposed to buy that. His first instinct is to roll his eyes, but he thinks about Ilya clinging to him, about the tears left on his shirt earlier, and he stops himself.

It's easy to think of Ilya as bullet-proof, as invulnerable, as incapable of insecurity or fear, but the truth is, *no one* can be all those things, not really. Even Ilya Rozanov needs reassurance sometimes, needs a soft place to land, a safe space where he can lay down his armor.

Shane wants to be that person, that place, with an aching kind of desperate need, but he's not sure he'll ever really get the chance. He runs his thumb over the plush swell of Ilya's bottom lip, traces the curve of the top one, the line of his nose, up along the ridge of his cheekbone. He feels lucky, even if it was just this once, that Ilya let him be that person tonight.

"I really do have to go." Shane almost whispers. "My flight is in six hours."

"Mine is in five," Ilya shrugs, unimpressed. "I will sleep on the plane."

"Yeah," Shane says, noncommittal, already thinking about how much he hates flying commercial, how he always ends up with some chatty seat mate who won't take a hint, how if he manages to fall asleep it's always at some weird angle that leaves him with a sore back or a crick in his neck. "I hope."

"Will *try*," Ilya shrugs again, "and if not." His mouth twists into a smirk, eyes going dark and hooded. "Still worth it," he says, with a raised eyebrow and that fucking wink, and just like clockwork, Shane can feel his cheeks heat, the butterflies in his stomach start up again, and —.

Enough, he thinks. It's just—enough.

He leans in, kisses Ilya one more time, slow and sweet; it feels more final than he wants it to. Then he rolls away; this time Ilya lets him go.

He gets himself up to a sitting position, puts his feet on the floor. He rolls his neck, then his shoulders, boosts himself up off the bed with a sigh.

Ilya stays right where he is, watching; Shane can feel his gaze like a physical weight, feel the eyes tracking his every move as Shane picks up his shorts, his shirt, gets himself dressed, gets his shoes back on.

He uses the toilet, washes his hands, comes back out into the room.

Ilya's still right there where Shane left him, lounging on one elbow with one leg up like some kind of old-fashioned pin-up girl, still just. *Watching*.

Shane steps toward the door, hears Ilya breathe out a low laugh behind him.

"What?" he asks; Ilya just shakes his head.

"Nothing," he insists, that same smirk on his face, like he knows something Shane doesn't. "Goodnight, Shane."

And Shane knows they'll be in Boston in a few weeks, has had it circled on the calendar in his mind since the schedule came out last summer, but he doesn't mention it, doesn't bring it up or ask whether they'll see each other, and Ilya doesn't either.

Instead, Shane just huffs under his breath, smiling in spite of himself. He nods, like he's in on the joke.

“Goodnight, Ilya.”

End Notes

Thanks to all the usual suspects, most especially AD and FNUD.

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