they come and they go

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they come and they go

by garlic09

Summary

someone breaks into shanes apartment and beats him up and no one knows...well no one except ilya who shane butt dialed and heard the whole thing

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“Hello?” Ilya whispered into the phone. Muffled sounds were coming through the small speakers, but he couldn’t pick anything out. He muted the TV and turned the volume on his phone as high as it would go, then pressed his ear against the speaker. There was a man’s voice echoing, but it wasn’t Shane.
“–ualt! All your fucking fault.”
What?

Notes

okay so i had this idea and idk if i executed it exactly how i wanted to but i figured id put it out into the world anyway

See the end of the work for more notes

Chapter 1

The San Francisco/Chicago game had just gone into overtime, and Ilya was considering calling it a night when his phone lit up. He was lounging in the middle of the couch, his legs up on the coffee table, and had been in that position since he'd gotten back from practice three hours ago. Grabbing his phone off the table was the most he'd moved since his shower.

Incoming Call From: *Jane*

He picked it up immediately, his brow furrowing. They so rarely called and never without prior notice. It had to be something serious for Shane to break any of their unspoken rules.

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"–ualt! All your fucking fault."

What?

"Listen, man, I'm sorry. I'm so sorry–"

That was unmistakably Shane's voice. The audio was muffled and kept being overwhelmed by rustling sounds. Ilya moved to sit up straight, putting his hand over his other ear to try to pick up as much sound as he could. The voices, Shane and the other man, were still talking, their tone getting more and more irate.

Ilya realized, slowly, that Shane hadn't called him on purpose. His phone was clearly in his pocket, or something, and Ilya wasn't meant to be hearing this at all. But what even was he hearing?

"I lost my house, my fucking wife left me!"

The other voice was practically spitting the words out. Shane sounded borderline angry himself, but there was something else under the surface. Was it fear? Ilya didn't understand. He pressed the phone even closer to his ear, fighting to pick out the words from the rustling fabric.

"I can't help you. I'm sorry, listen…What are you–"

The sound that followed was one Ilya knew well; it was common in hockey, whether from the boards, a stick, or another player. Air being pushed out of someone's lungs forcibly, their body gasping, fighting to breathe again. The deep wheeze that came out of Shane was one that only happened after being hit in the ribs, hard. Ilya felt his whole body tense, memories of bruised ribs and sharp pain flashing through his mind. But that didn't matter right now, the swirl of anxiety forming in his stomach was not for him.

“You’re gonna fucking pay! You’re gonna pay for what you did to me,” the other voice, louder than before. “Get inside! Fucking get inside, you worthless piece of shit.”

The phone speaker crackled, and sounds became muffled again, but Ilya heard the distinct sound of a body hitting the ground. Shane’s body.

This wasn’t happening. There was no world in which this was happening. Ilya was a statue, gripping his phone as if his life depended on it. This couldn’t be right. The world wasn’t this cruel. Who in their right mind would attack Shane Hollander? Hockey’s golden boy. He wasn’t a fighter, not by any stretch.

“The fuck–” Shane’s voice was raspy, and Ilya heard him cough and spit something out. “Do you want from me?”

His voice was shaky, his breath catching on the inhale even as he seemed to fight to keep his voice steady. Ilya’s mind was racing, his blood was pounding in his veins, and what was he doing? Sitting on his fucking couch? His mind was still catching up, trying to understand what he was hearing, but he realized it didn’t matter. Shane was in danger, and there wasn’t a soul who knew about or could do anything to prevent it, except him.

He needed to call 911, needed to do something, but he couldn’t hang up on Shane. It was agony, he had to listen, had to know, but each ragged breath Shane took was like a knife to his heart.

“I want you to suffer. Because you made me suffer,” the man sounded even closer. Spitting the words through his teeth at Shane.

Svetlana had always made fun of Ilya for installing a landline; she called him old-fashioned. He had never been more thankful for it until this moment. He leapt over the side of the couch, nearly knocking over his coffee table in his rush.

From his phone, he heard the sound of a scuffle, Shane panting, and the sound of skin on skin.

Surprisingly, Ilya had only gotten in one fight in his life. It was in Russia when he was twelve, and he had lost. He still remembered being on the ground, the other boys above him, kicking him over and over again. The fight hadn’t left any lasting impression on Ilya besides a lesson in how to throw a punch, and the knowledge of what it sounded like when someone kicked another person with all their might.

“Without. You. They. Would. Have. Won.”

Each word was broken up with a kick and a heaving, hiccuping breath out of Shane. Ilya turned on his heel and sprinted for his desk, the sight of his rarely used landline nearly bringing him to tears.

“If Detroit had won, I would have everything right now! Fucking everything!”

Shane's voice was ragged, and he was stumbling over his words, deep rasping breaths leading to coughing.

"Please. I-I'll give you anything. Anything you want. I have–"

"Oh you're gonna cry? You're gonna fucking cry?"

Whatever the man did next made Shane make such an excruciating sound that Ilya flinched where he stood. It was impossible to tell what he was doing, but it made Shane heave and retch, the sound ricocheting through Ilya's mind.

Ilya fumbled with the phone, his hands shaking. He held it to his left ear, keeping the other to his right. The sound was all muffled again, and he couldn't make out any of the words.

"Nine one one. What's your emergency?"

"I–uh," Ilya wanted to scream. His brain could barely remember his own name, much less translate his thoughts into English words. "Someone, my, my friend. Is being hurt. In Montreal."

"Being hurt? Do you have an address?"

"Uh– yes I-," he knew it, he knew the address. He'd given it to cab drivers dozens of times. On the other phone, he could hear Shane gasping for air. Ilya forced himself to think back, closing his eyes. Shane had told him the last time he had been in Montreal. Ilya saw it in his mind, the way Shane had whispered it to him right before the game, his face inches from Ilya's, a soft smile on his lips.

"4641 Rue Poitevin. The address is 4641 Rue Poitevin," his eyes flew open.

"Alright sir, we can send someone to check it out. Could you provide any more information?"

Ilya could feel his heartbeat pounding in his head, and his hands were shaking.

"It is, apartment. Eleventh floor. I do not know who, but he is angry and hurting him."

"And where are you, sir? Are you there too?"

It felt as though his body was splitting in two. One half trying to explain that he was in Boston, but Shane was in Montreal, and he knew he was in trouble. The other was listening to the broken wheezing and wet coughing that was coming through his phone. The man was going on about some bet he had lost and how Shane's goal had made it happen, interspersing his words with kicks and punches, or at least that was what Ilya could gather from the sounds Shane was making. He felt so helpless, hundreds of miles away, barely able to understand what was happening on the other end of the line.

"Okay, thank you, sir. The cops are on their way. Can I get your name for the report?"

"Uh– it's– Lily. My name is Lily," his tongue felt two sizes too big. Before the operator could ask anything else, he hung up. They had all the information they needed, and he couldn't

focus on anything else but the pained noises coming out of his phone.

Shane wasn't speaking anymore, and the other man was talking so quickly it barely sounded like English. All Ilya heard was Shane's ragged, hitching breaths.

He needed to… he didn't know. He needed to be there, needed to grab the man by the back of the neck and throw him as far away from Shane as he possibly could. Needed to gather Shane in his arms and run. But he couldn't do anything, he was in Boston and Shane was…

Oh god

Was Shane going to die? Was he going to have to listen to Shane be beaten to death on his stupid fucking phone? Tears filled Ilya's eyes, and he stumbled sideways. His entire body was shaking, he couldn't think, couldn't feel. The only thought in his mind was *ShaneShaneShaneShaneShaneShaneShaneShaneShane.*

There was no point, he told himself as he ran for his car keys. It was nearly a five-hour drive from Boston to Montreal; he had practice in the morning, and he didn't even know where he was going. Phone pressed to his ear by his shoulder, Ilya pulled on his shoes, nearly tripping in his haste to get out the door. He needed to be in motion, he couldn't just sit here and *listen*.

A broken whimper came through the phone, and Ilya felt the tears begin to fall. Shane, his Shane, usually so alive and bright. Ilya needed to see him, needed to touch him, last time couldn't have been the last time, he wouldn't let it be.

Suddenly, there was a new sound coming through his phone—a pounding, fists on wood.

"Police! Open up!"

Something bloomed in Ilya's chest, but it felt too soon to call it hope. He was halfway to his car, his shirt much too thin for the cold Boston weather, but he didn't care. He froze where he stood, focusing all his energy on listening.

The intruder cursed, and Ilya heard the sound of chairs being pushed around. A choking gasp followed. *Shane,* it sounded like he was trying to force out words, but something was stopping him.

"Motherfucker how did they–"

There was a crash, and suddenly dozens of voices filled the space. Ilya's phone speaker crackling with the onslaught of sounds, he pulled it away from his ear for a moment, flinching. It sounded like the cops had broken down the door. Their voices blended together in a whirl of English words and Quebecois accents.

Ilya forced himself to pick apart each voice, he needed to know, needed to understand.

"–to look at me. Sir? Sir?"

"Looks like a broken rib or two. Minor head wound based on the bleeding."

“Sir, can you tell us your name? What was that?”

“James get his jacket off, I need to see–”

For a moment, all Ilya could hear was loud rustling, then suddenly the audio was clear as day. The EMTs must have knocked Shane’s phone out of whatever pocket it was in, and now it must just be lying on the floor beside him. If only it had been a FaceTime, then Ilya could see him, see each breath he took, and count it as a blessing.

In the background, Ilya could hear the man who had attacked Shane shouting something, and the sound of the cops shouting back. If Ilya did anything when he got to Montreal, it would be to find out who that man was and make him wish he had never been born.

Shane had been silent for much too long, and the EMTs surrounding him were speaking more and more rapidly.

“Sir? Sir, we’re gonna move you now.”

“He’s stopped responding. He was conscious when he got here–”

“The rig is ready with life support. Just need to get him out of here.”

“One…two…three!”

There was a loud thump, and the squeaking of wheels and the EMTs’ voices were retreating, taking Shane with them. Ilya realized that, of course, no one was going to pick up and bring a random phone to the hospital. But he had no way of knowing if Shane was alright otherwise.

Well, he had one way. Phone still pressed to his ear, desperate to get any sound he could, he sprinted to his garage. He had grabbed the keys to the BMW; it would be the fastest, and he prayed it had a full tank of gas. It would take an act of god to stop him now.

With each passing moment, there was less and less noise coming from his phone. He knew there would likely be people in and out of the apartment, but with Shane and the intruder gone, he knew there was little point in listening. Still, he couldn’t find it in himself to hang up.

He sat in silence, driving as fast as he could without breaking too many traffic laws, the phone on his dashboard, staring at the name ‘Jane.’ It remained like that as the hours passed, until Shane’s phone died and the call disconnected.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

shane wakes up in the hospital and tries to piece together what happened

Shane came back to himself slowly.

His vision was blurred, all dark shapes and flashing lights. All he could hear was relentless beeping and hushed voices fading in and out.

“Get the–”

“–oving him.”

“Can you grab the–?”

His mind was a whirl, shattered flashes of memory attempting to form into something cohesive.

He had been in his apartment, and someone had knocked on the door, that much he knew. He’d been sitting at his kitchen counter, aimlessly staring at his phone, his thumb hovering over one text chain in particular. He’d meant to work out post-practice, but all he’d done was sit around, barely enough motivation in his body to make dinner.

The knock had been unexpected, but he hadn’t thought anything of it; his neighbors did that Facebook marketplace thing, and people often read the numbers wrong. He swung the door wide, presuming he’d find a confused middle-aged man on the other side. He certainly hadn’t expected the throat punch that had greeted him on his doorstep.

“Shane Hollander, you motherfucker!”

Shane had stumbled backwards and hit the doorframe, scrabbling at his throat. The man in front of him was short and wide, his face blindingly red, nostrils flared, and a prominent vein popping on his forehead. Shane had never seen him before in his life.

Before he could react or bring up an arm in defense, the man had slammed a rock into the side of his head. That’s when everything had begun to get hazy.

Shane knew he was strong, he was a goddamn professional athlete, he could have bench pressed the man in front of him if he wanted to. But that meant nothing; in that moment, Shane was six years old again, and the other boys at hockey camp had him in a corner, their fingers pulling on their eyes and their feet kicking over and over.

The man had continued to yell, something about a bet and Detroit, before he had kicked Shane in the ribs with all his might. Shane could feel wet, hot blood dripping down the side of his face, and his abused throat burned as he fought to regain his breath.

"–ane? Shane? Shane, can you hear us?"

Wading out of memory, Shane pried his eyes open. It took what felt like herculean effort, and they immediately fluttered shut again when greeted with the blinding lights above him.

"Shane, I'm gonna need you to keep your eyes open. Can you do that for me?"

Slowly, he opened his eyes again; the lights were still bright, but after another moment of intense blinking, another shape started to form. A woman, probably slightly younger than his mother, was smiling down at him.

"Hello Shane. I'm Doctor Malhotra. You're at Montreal General Hospital. You came here unconscious in an ambulance. Do you remember that?"

Shane nodded slowly, he felt strangely disconnected from his body, as if it were operating on a delay, and his mind felt foggy and heavy.

"Alright, you're pretty banged up, so we've got you on some strong drugs. You had to get stitches on the right side of your head, and you've fractured two ribs," she said. She was holding a clipboard and ticking things off with a pen as she went. "You've also bruised your throat pretty bad, so speaking will hurt, but there hasn't been significant damage to your voice box or vocal cords."

Shane's tongue felt too big for his mouth as he tried to form words.

"M-my parents?" he croaked.

The doctor nodded at him.

"Once we figured out who you were, we called your emergency contacts. They're on their way, probably should be here in about an hour. They were in Ottawa," she paused, flipping through her clipboard. "Now Shane, I won't get on you for this right now, but you should really have an emergency contact that lives a little closer to you. So keep that in mind, it can be a friend or a romantic partner in addition to your parents."

An image of Ilya flashed in Shane's mind, the concerned way he always acted when Shane got hurt. But no, that was stupid, the doctor had said someone close. Boston was too far to help in any emergency.

"Shane, I know you're probably tired, but you gotta stay with me a little bit longer, okay?"

Shane realized he had been staring off into the space behind the doctor's head. He shook his head slightly, trying to get himself back on track.

"Hey–hey– that's exactly an example of what we're not gonna do. Okay?"

She had a hand out, hovering over his shoulder.

“You hit your head pretty good, and you’ve got a pretty bad concussion on top of the stitches. You’re gonna be out of commission for about three months, and you’re gonna need some physical therapy,” she turned to look at the door. There were figures outside, but Shane couldn’t identify them. “Now, I don’t know everything about the circumstances of your injury, but the police would greatly like to speak with you. Personally, I think you need a little time, at least for some of the medicine to wear off, but it’s up to you. If you want me to let them in, I will, or I can have them wait until your parents arrive so some of the pressure is off of you.”

She gave him a conspiratorial glance. Shane noticed that her earrings were shaped like hockey sticks. He smiled at her.

“I think I like the second option,” he whispered, his voice was like nails on a chalkboard.

“Sounds good,” she said as she turned for the door. “Now, you get some rest, and I’ll see you in a bit.”

Shane let his eyes drift shut as he heard the latch click. He felt woozy and floaty, like his limbs weren’t connected to his body.

Three months… three months without hockey. They were already out of the playoffs, but Shane had been pushing for that MVP award at the end of the year, and it didn’t look like it was in the cards now. This would screw up his whole plan, he’d been a hair’s breadth from perfecting his fitness routine, and now he’d practically have to start from scratch. He’d have to spend the whole summer fighting just to get back to where he was.

He groaned softly, bringing his hand up slowly to touch the bandage on his head. His mind still hadn’t really caught up to his body, or what had happened.

Someone, a fan, well not a fan of him, had broken into his apartment and beaten him up. Images flashed in his mind of the man kicking him over and over, his ribs throbbed at the thought. He’d felt so… helpless. Unable to get to his feet, to fight back. His ‘peak fitness’ had meant nothing when he was in real danger.

Shane was used to pain, it was part of playing hockey. He’d had three concussions, bruised his ribs, sprained his wrist, and been hit in the head more times than he could count. He prided himself on his ability to get back up and try to play, even when his coaches forbade it. But this pain had been different, it had been unexpected. On the ice, Shane knew it was coming, and he could compartmentalize, pushing it down and away for later. But going from a boring night alone to a hard punch in the throat had thrown him. He’d been off kilter, and it had cost him.

Shane felt pressure build behind his eyes and blinked, trying to force it back. It was stupid. He was fine now, he was going to be okay. But he had been so scared, so deeply terrified, it had been overwhelming, and now, now he just felt empty like his circuits had been fried.

He felt himself slowly drop away into sleep, his mind letting up, at least momentarily, so he could rest.

It wasn't for long.

Yuna Hollander was not a quiet woman, she spoke her mind and made her stance clear, particularly when it came to Shane. The door to his room was still closed, but Shane could hear her marching down the hallway, her voice echoing through the halls.

Shane blinked slowly, returning to the world of the living as the door opened. Doctor Malhotra poked her head in, her smile fixedly in place and her eyes wide.

"Hello Shane," she said. "Your parents have arrived, and the police are demanding to speak with you. Do you think you're up for that?"

There was a growing pounding in his head and an aching in his ribs, but Shane nodded. He knew it had to happen, and there was little point in delaying the inevitable. Doctor Malhotra nodded and stepped into the room, holding the door open behind her.

"Shane!"

Yuna rushed in, pushing past the doctor to get to Shane. Her hair was tied back in a messy knot with loose strands hanging in front of her face. Her hands were frantic, fluttering around. She clearly wanted to touch Shane, but wasn't sure where it was allowed. His father followed shortly behind, the bags under his eyes prominent.

Shane realized, belatedly, that he had no idea what time it was, only that it had been around nine when the man had knocked on his door.

Behind his father were two SPVM officers, looking stern.

"I know everyone probably has a lot of questions for Shane, but I want to remind us all that he has a concussion and a pretty hefty dose of pain meds," said Doctor Malhotra, shutting the door behind the two cops. "So let's do the absolute minimum for now."

Yuna sat beside Shane and took his hand in hers, gently rubbing her thumb on his skin. Both his parents looked very old all of a sudden, hair sticking up and lips pursed with anxiety. They'd clearly been woken up and driven all the way from Ottawa, and for that, Shane was grateful.

"Are you alright? Do you need anything?" Yuna said to him, gently brushing his forehead with her fingertips.

Shane shook his head. All he wanted was to sleep and wake up to find this was all a dream, but he wasn't that lucky.

"Alright, Mr. Hollander, we won't take up too much of your time," said one of the policemen. He was tall and thin, holding a dark blue notebook. "We just need to go over the basic facts we have."

Shane nodded. Yuna squeezed his hand.

“The man who attacked you, Warren Byrne, was an American citizen living in Montreal on a work visa. As we understand it, you had no prior engagements with Mr. Byrne. Is this correct?”

“Yes,” Shane rasped. His father reacted slightly to the sound of his voice, it looked like he was about to cry. Shane looked away.

“It is our understanding that during what we are calling a ‘mental-health episode,’ Mr. Byrne came to your residence with ill intentions,” the cop paused, looking at his notes.

“He kept talking about some bet,” Shane said, coughing slightly. “He’d bet on a game, and I made him lose.”

His mother muttered something beside him, squeezing his hand so tightly it almost hurt.

“Yes, precisely. He was still…expressing that… when we arrested him at your residence. Now we don’t have too much to clarify with you, as we have the attacker and video evidence of him entering your apartment. But we do need to ask if you plan to press charges?”

“Of course he will,” Yuna said quickly, the corners of her lips pulling into a frown. “He could have killed Shane! Look at him!”

“Yes, yes, of course, ma’am. We just needed to be sure.”

After a pause, Shane’s dad spoke.

“What I don’t quite get, and stop me if this is redundant, but how did you all know to go to Shanes?”

Shane paused, trying to piece together what his dad had said. It was a good question, Shane remembered the relief he’d felt when he’d heard the sirens and the police at the door, but realized now he had no idea how they’d gotten there.

“We got a 911 call alerting us to a potential disruption,” said the other cop from her position at the door.

“But who was it?” said Yuna. “A neighbor?”

“We’re not sure, ma’am. The caller didn’t clarify. Just said her name was Lily.”

The conversation continued on, his mother questioning the cops on what the next steps were, and his father listening to the doctor’s explanation of his injuries, but Shane wasn’t focused on any of that. There was a rushing in his ears that had nothing to do with the concussion.

It was a ridiculous thought. The name was common, and Shane was sure the shouting could have been heard throughout the building. One of his neighbors probably made the call, he barely knew half of them, and it was entirely likely one was named Lily.

But that didn't stop his mind from leaping forward, imagining the only Lily he knew being the one to save him. He could have blamed it on the drugs coursing through his veins, or his swollen brain, but he knew in his soul it was just his heart talking.

Ilya lived hours away, in a whole different country. He was probably spending his night out at a bar or with one of the many women he seemed to sleep with, but Shane didn't actually care. He was living in fantasyland, in a world where Ilya was his knight in shining armor, the one person who had helped him, who had *saved* him.

Shane knew it was absurd, the fantasy he was building, but he decided he deserved it. He kept his mind so closed off, limited himself so much, that just this once, he would allow himself to pretend, to imagine that Ilya cared about him so much that he transcended all logic and sense.

If he allowed himself to drift off, pretending muscular arms were holding him and that the gentle hands in his hair were someone else's, no one needed to be any the wiser.

Chapter 3

Chapter Summary

It was still dark when Ilya crossed Montreal city limits.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

It was still dark when Ilya crossed Montreal city limits. The clock on his dashboard was flashing 4:23 am. Ilya knew he should be tired, he'd been up for nearly twenty-two hours, but there was a current of adrenaline pulsing through his body that would not lessen until he saw Shane.

Once the man's phone had died, Ilya hadn't been able to stop his mind from conjuring up the worst possible scenarios. Images of Shane's body, shattered and broken, were burned into his eyelids. Ilya knew what a limp body looked like, and he never wanted to see one again.

As he drove over the bridge into Montreal proper, he realized he didn't have a clue where he was going. He grabbed his phone off the dashboard and closed out of the 'call ended' screen, ignoring the way it made his heart twinge to see it. Half looking at the road, he typed 'hospital' into maps. Nearly a dozen options appeared, and Ilya groaned; of course, this couldn't be simple. He filled his cheeks with air and pushed it out slowly before selecting 'Verdun Hospital.'

It was only a couple of minutes away, and if Ilya was going to have to play hospital roulette, he might as well do it ergonomically. The roads were deserted, and Ilya prayed that the hospital waiting room would be open.

Pulling into the parking lot, he was pleased to see light coming from the building's lobby. It was as empty as the streets had been, but Ilya still pulled a beanie down to cover his head and pulled sunglasses out of the glove box. He knew he was in hockey country now, but he hoped that the sleep-deprived hospital front desk workers wouldn't recognize him, or at least would be calm about it.

He made his way to the front door, the wind cutting into his bare arms. He hadn't grabbed a jacket, something he was deeply regretting now. The warmth of the lobby felt heavenly as he stepped inside.

"Can I help you?"

The woman at the front desk didn't even look up at him, she was slowly chewing a piece of gum and staring at the computer in front of her.

“Uh..yes. I would like to see my friend. I think he is patient here,” Ilya had no idea how he was supposed to go about this.

“Visting hours start at 8 am,” said the woman, who finally looked up at him. Her expression remained bored, and Ilya felt himself relax slightly. She had no idea who he was.

“Oh uh…” he paused. There was no point waiting around until 8 am if Shane wasn’t even here. He needed to figure out a way to see if this was where the EMTs had taken him without being obvious about it. “Can I… get room number at least? I have to work, and I would like to send him something.”

Ilya was pretty sure this woman hadn’t blinked during their entire conversation, and she continued not to as she stared at him. She looked like she was having an internal debate of some sort, but couldn’t find the motivation to fight too hard for either side.

“Sure,” she sighed, tapping at the keyboard in front of her. “What’s the name?”

“Hollander. Shane Hollander.”

She typed several things very quickly and then narrowed her eyes at the screen. Her eyes darted between the screen and Ilya for a moment before she spoke.

“How’s that spelled?”

“H-O-L-L-A-N-D-E-R,” Ilya replied. He felt on edge; he’d chosen wrong, he was sure of it.

“I don’t have anyone under that name,” said the woman, snapping her gum. “Are you sure you’re at th–”

Ilya didn’t let her finish her sentence, he just turned on his heel and left. If he was going to do this at every hospital in Montreal, he couldn’t afford to dilly-dally.

Once he was back in his car, he looked at the map again. Four kilometers away was the Royal Victoria Hospital, and then Montreal General Hospital was another four kilometers from there. Ilya started his car and sped out of the parking lot.

What he was doing was both ridiculous and reckless. He was practically shouting his and Shane’s business from the rooftops. There was no reason that he should be in Montreal, and if anyone recognized him, he would be totally screwed. Especially considering he had practice in a few hours. But even as his mind gave him a million reasons why this was a bad idea, he pushed on.

Royal Victoria Hospital was bigger, and he saw people sitting in the waiting room. Once again, as he rushed for the door, he was hit with the dreadful cold.

There was someone else at the check-in desk, so Ilya stood behind them, bouncing on the soles of his feet. The other hospital had been sad and quiet, this one had a buzz of energy. He saw people moving around in the back and the sound of sirens in the distance. He tried to think about what he knew of Montreal geography. Was this hospital close to where Shane lived?

“Next!”

A young man at a computer looked up at him. He looked more awake than the woman had been, but Ilya felt his heart stop when he saw the ‘Boston Strong’ pin on his lanyard. The man’s face didn’t change when he saw Ilya, and Ilya forced his voice to be steady. If this man was even from Boston, there was a strong possibility he didn’t care about hockey in the slightest; most Bostonians preferred football. *Ridiculous*.

“Hi. My friend is here, I think. I would like to see him. If possible,” Ilya paused, realizing that this hospital probably also didn’t allow visitors before 8 am.

The man at the desk opened his mouth, but Ilya cut him off.

“I know may not be visiting hours yet. If not can I get room number? I need to be at work, but would like to send him something.”

It really was a bullshit excuse, but Ilya was at his wits’ end.

“Yeah, for sure. What’s the name?”

“Shane Hollander,” Ilya said, his eyes scanned the people sitting behind the desk, but no one seemed to react to the name.

The man tapped away at his keyboard and then paused, making a face very similar to the woman’s at the first hospital. Ilya felt his shoulder slump. He had chosen wrong, *again*.

“I don’t think we have a patient under that name,” the man said, looking at Ilya, then flicking his eyes to look at the people who had lined up behind him. “Any chance he could be under a different name?”

Ilya shook his head and turned to leave. He could feel a ringing in his ears, and his chest was pounding. This was torture, he had no idea what hospital Shane was in, he had no ability to contact him, and no reason for Shane to even reach out. No one even knew Ilya was in Montreal. He paused for a moment outside the hospital, pressing his hands to his face and breathing deeply.

This had been such a bad idea, he should just cut his losses and drive back to Boston. But he knew he wouldn’t, *couldn’t*. He didn’t care how long it took, he would drive to every hospital in Montreal, hell, he would go to every hospital in Quebec if that’s what it took. He had to see Shane, he had to know if he was alright, not from a press release or a statement, but from his mouth. He needed to look Shane in the eye and hear his soft voice tell Ilya that he was going to be okay.

He all but ran to his car, ignoring the pressure building behind his eyes. Montreal General Hospital next, and then he would just keep driving until he found Shane.

The city was slowly waking up around him, with some cars on the road and a scattering of people on the streets. The sun had not yet risen, but there was a hint of light on the horizon. Ilya stared at it until the line was burned into his vision.

Despite the fact that he had thought the exact same thing at the previous hospital, the fact that this one was busier gave him hope. It was also much larger, and Ilya thought it was a little more central than the other two had been. He pulled into a spot close to the entrance and had his door half open when he saw them.

Yuna and Davis Hollander.

Shane's parents.

Walking out of the front door.

Directly towards Ilya.

He slammed the door closed and flung his head down. His blood was pounding in his ears, they were certain to recognize him if they saw him. But if they were here… that meant Shane was here. Slowly, Ilya peeked up over the edge of the window. They were still walking, David with his arm around Yuna. They didn't appear to have seen him.

Ilya had only seen Yuna Hollander a handful of times in his life, but he had a few things he knew about her for sure. The first was that she had the same rich brown eyes as Shane, the second being she cared deeply for her son, and the third was that she always looked perfect. At every event and practice, she was put together, her hair neat and her clothes unwrinkled. It wasn't the ludicrous display of wealth Ilya saw the parents of many young hockey players attempting, it was clean and neat. Ilya had always quite liked the way she dressed and thought Shane could maybe learn a thing or two.

However, as she walked across the parking lot, leaning heavily on his husband, she looked uncharacteristically disorderly. Her hair was tied in a messy knot at the top of her head, she was wearing a massive oversized cardigan, and what appeared to be pajama pants. David didn't look much better; they both looked tired and almost a little shell-shocked. Clearly, they had been asleep, or near it, before hearing what had happened, and they had immediately driven to get to Shane.

Well, Ilya could relate to that.

They were almost at their car, and Ilya was still hunched over himself, peeking through the window. By seeing them, he could draw a few conclusions. The first being that Shane was in fact at this hospital, a fact that calmed at least some of the fire under his skin. The second was that he was in stable enough condition for them to feel comfortable leaving. And the third being that now they had left, there was no one in Shane's room. Which meant Ilya might actually be able to get inside.

It was this third fact that restarted the flames that felt like they were licking up his insides. Now that he knew Shane was within reach, that he was *alive,* Ilya had expected his anxiety to decrease, but it had only grown.

What if Shane didn't want to see him? What if he was horrified by Ilya's arrival? How would Ilya even explain how he knew what had happened?

Ilya felt bile rising in his throat, and he pushed his face into his steering wheel. This was ridiculous. He had driven for hours, gone to multiple hospitals, and now he was scared of walking through the front door? He took a deep breath, forcing air into his lungs, steeling himself, and pushed open the door.

Somehow, this lobby was the busiest of them all. There was actually a line and about a dozen people sitting in chairs. Every time someone walked through the massive doors that led deeper into the hospital, Ilya caught a glimpse of the nonstop activity behind them. Everyone had something to do or something in their hands. He found himself inspecting his surroundings. It was clean, all the doctors looked trustworthy, and their facilities seemed up to date. Ilya had only been to a public hospital in Moscow once, but he had not enjoyed the experience. Clearly, Canada was doing a better job, not that he was surprised.

After what felt like an eternity but was probably only a few minutes, Ilya was at the front of the line. Once again, he found himself standing over a counter, looking down at someone in front of a computer. The woman was typing, her hands flying across the keyboard, nodding at the person standing beside her. It was a doctor, her back was to Ilya, and she was clearly relaying some sort of information to the woman at the desk.

The woman behind the desk's eyes flicked up from the screen to Ilya, and she had an apologetic look on her face.

"So sorry, give me just one second–"

"You're good," Ilya said, cracking his knuckles and rocking side to side.

"Alright," she stopped typing to look at him again, a kind smile on her face. "What can I help you with?"

"I'm here to see a patient. Shane Hollander," Ilya said, leaning forward onto the counter and smiling at her. He was fairly certain that this hospital's visiting hours also started at 8 am, so Ilya was going to have to work some magic to get into Shane's room.

Before the woman could do anything, the doctor beside her turned.

"Oh, actually, I'm Mr. Hollanders attending! How can I–"

As soon as she looked at Ilya, she froze, and ice-cold dread filled his veins. He had been lucky so far, too lucky. This was still Canada after all, and hockey was the national pastime. The doctor in front of him, her mouth still hanging open in shock, had earrings shaped like hockey sticks. Ilya felt himself flush slightly.

"Uh–" he said, looking between the woman behind the desk and the doctor. "I know is not visiting hours yet, but…"

The doctor seemed to come back to herself, she coughed and shook her shoulders. Ilya's heart was racing. Weren't there laws about patient privacy? She wouldn't say anything, right?

“Yes. Uh– I. Mr. Rozanov, why don’t you come with me, and I can see what I can do?” She walked around the desk and beckoned him.

He followed her, hunching down as much as he could without looking insane. If she had recognized him, surely someone else in this busy waiting room would. He needed to be somewhere less… Canadian.

She pushed open the double doors and led him into the maze of hallways he had glimpsed before. She came to a stop a few feet inside and turned to look at him. Ilya couldn’t quite place the look on her face.

“Alright Mr. Rozanov. So, as you know, it is technically not visiting hours. However, we do sometimes make exceptions for family, or,” she paused, looking at him almost shyly. “Close friends.”

Right. Close friends. Something Ilya Rozanov and Shane Hollander were well known not to be.

“In this circumstance, which I know is emotionally straining.”

That was one way to describe it.

“I think I can make an exception, but I need to ask Mr. Hollander if he is alright with more… visitors.”

The buzzing under Ilya’s skin was almost painful, and he felt like his mind was screaming at him. He didn’t care what this woman was thinking, what conclusions she had drawn, all he cared about was that he was going to see Shane.

“Yes. Sounds good,” he didn’t even know what words to use. “I– thank you.”

She nodded, then started walking again, gesturing him to follow.

“He should be awake. He slept a little bit earlier, the meds we gave him knocked him out pretty good. I don’t know how much you know about his…situation,” she looked at Ilya again, a bemused look on her face. “But he is a little banged up, there’s some pretty intense bruising, but it looks worse than it is.”

She came to stop in front of one of the many rooms and slowly cracked the door open. She motioned for Ilya to stay put, then stepped inside the room. He stopped himself from pressing his ear to the door, but he did get as close as he possibly could. But to no avail, whatever soundproofing they had was working perfectly.

The anxiety he had felt in the car was back tenfold; he could feel sweat beading on the back of his neck, and his hands were shaking. He squeezed them into fists and shoved them in his pockets, forcing himself to breathe slowly. He just needed to see Shane, just get a glimpse of him. See his chest rise and fall, see the light in his eyes. Then Ilya would be fine.

The door opened again, and the doctor stepped out. She had a soft smile on her face when she looked at Ilya, and he decided he did not need to think about what that meant.

“You can go in,” she said. “There might be some nurses in and out, but they won’t disturb you.”

Then she turned and walked away down the hall.

Ilya reached out for the handle like he expected it to burn him. The fear in him was almost overwhelming, but there was something deeper, a current running through him that forced his hand to turn and his feet to move forward. The rushing in his ears was deafening, and his hand was trembling on the knob.

The room was simple. A bed and two chairs. There was a gentle beeping coming from one of the machines, and the first hints of a sunrise peeking through the window. But the floor could have been lime green, and Ilya wouldn’t have noticed.

His vision tunneled, and all he saw was the man on the bed. He was bandaged and bruised, but his eyes were bright, looking almost golden in the light. He was staring at Ilya like he hung the moon, and it would have taken an act of god to stop Ilya from pushing forward to his side and reaching out for his hand.

His skin was warm. Ilya could see the even rise and fall of his chest. He was *alive*. All the adrenaline and stress and tiredness of the last eight hours hit Ilya like a truck, and he nearly collapsed. Shane was still staring at him like he was something magical.

“Ilya…” he whispered. The sound turned Ilya’s knees even more gelatinous than they had been. “How… how are you here?”

Ilya unclenched the hand that wasn’t gripping Shane’s and gently reached for his face. He had dark purple bruises on the right side of his head, and his eye was almost swollen shut. The bandages were covering the worst of it, but Ilya could see the beginning of the line of stitches. His fingertips hovered over it all, scared of hurting him, but desperate to feel, to understand.

“I–” he said, not sure how to even begin to explain. “I drove.”

“You…drove? From Boston?”

Ilya nodded, rubbing gentle circles into Shane’s hand with his own, his other hand had landed in the man’s hair, gently running his fingers through the left side of it.

“But, how did you know? How on earth did you know I was even here?” Shane’s voice was scratchy, and Ilya caught a glimpse of the bruising on his throat.

The memory of a few hours ago, of the sounds he had heard through the phone, filled Ilya’s mind, and he couldn’t stop the tears from falling. They clung to his cheeks, blurring his vision. His hand shook where it sat on top of Shane’s.

“I– you– I heard it. You, you called me. Accident. I think. And I was...listening to it. To you. Hurting,” the words had never felt so foreign in his mouth. His brain could barely keep up with what he was seeing.

He felt a sob building up in his throat, and he turned away. Shane didn't need to see this. He had enough going on without Ilya freaking out.

But a hand reached out, fingertips brushing his cheek. He heard Shane shifting in bed, and he hissed slightly, in pain.

Ilya whirled back around.

"No, don't. Don't move. Stay," he said.

Shane's mouth was half open, and he nodded, his hand still touching Ilya's face. His eyes were glistening, and Ilya saw his lip trembling.

"I called you? You heard?"

Ilya nodded, sinking to his knees and pushing his face into the mattress. He couldn't stand anymore, couldn't support the weight of his body. Shane's hand moved to his hair as Ilya soaked the sheets with his tears.

"Yes. I heard. I call nine one one. But not enough. I needed to know."

Shane gasped wetly from above him, and Ilya lifted his face off the mattress to see the tears now streaming down Shane's cheeks.

"You? You called them? Oh, Ilya…"

Ilya didn't have words for anything anymore. He felt like he had been sprinting at full speed for hours, and now he could finally catch his breath. He stared up at Shane, both of their eyes full of tears, and brought their tangled fingers to his mouth.

They didn't say anything. They didn't have to. There was more to discuss, more to clarify, but that was for later. For now, they just sat, Ilya drinking in Shane's presence like it was ambrosia, as the sun slowly rose, covering them in a soft golden light.

Chapter End Notes

a man who yearns is a man who earns

End Notes

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