under crashing waves

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under crashing waves

by boxysmiles

Summary

He's seen a few other guys get their bell rung. Has seen a couple of them get to their knees almost immediately; has seen them struggle to their feet, then almost wipe themselves out again. Has seen them kneeling with a dazed expression, trying to figure out where they are.

And has seen a couple of them lie there. He's been one of them before.

Swallowing down bile, he asks, "How long did I take to get up?"

Please have tried. Please, please, have been one of those guys kneeling almost immediately. Please have been moving. Please have let Ilya seen that.

A couple of years into playing on the same team together, Shane gets concussed. It's a little bit different this time.

Notes

would like to thank youtube for the hockey concussion compilations and for sea for giving me a rundown on her own concussion . much appreciated in my research for yaoi purposes <3

and also I am not a medical professional (obviously!)!! I looked up a lot of info and followed the general consensus of what I gathered should be done following a concussion for athletes with a medical team, but I'm here to write Shane whump lmfao ty !! <3

See the end of the work for more notes

Shane's head is fucking killing him.

"God," he complains. He's either underwater or he's ten drinks deep. Whatever the reason, his speech is definitely slurred. His tongue is heavy and awkward in his mouth. There's a strange taste in the back of his throat.

And *fuck,* his head hurts.

"Shane," a voice says. "Shane, hey. Look at me."

He would maybe recognise that voice if he was somewhere on land. But his head is somewhere *very* deep in the ocean — the pressure compounding against his head feels like it's trying to squeeze his brain out of his ears.

"Shane," the voice is insistent. He groans at it. *Go away, now.* Let his brain melt out of his ears in peace. "Shane. Look at me."

Look? Fuck. What *is* Shane looking at? A world spinning. Waves. Water.

Underwater. Must be.

And then the sun seems to break through the surface as he tries to follow the direction, and he squeezes his eyes shut as it reflects piercingly into his vision.

"Too bright?"

Shane grumbles something in agreement. There's suddenly another voice, and Shane can't follow the conversation. Are they speaking to him? Are they even speaking English? He doesn't know. It all sounds like gibberish. Someone shouting at him through the water, no one deciding to just break for air.

Slowly, the underwater shouting stops. The brightness dims.

"Okay. Shane, the light is off. Do you want to try opening your eyes for me?"

He really doesn't. But the voice then tells him to, and Shane has never been good at disobeying. He tries, squinting his eyes open, and groans as everything seems to lurch. The room spins, like the water has suddenly turned into violent waves that are trying to drown him in the ocean, and he can't find his way up.

"Sick," he manages to gasp out.

"Yep, okay," the voice replies, calm and measured, and Shane hardly hears it at all. He throws up, he thinks. Maybe. He's not sure. The room keeps spinning. There are voices still around him, still trying to talk to him underwater.

Slowly, the world stops spinning so violently. The waves that have been thrashing him, keeping him under, start to calm. He breathes through it, slowly getting his senses back.

His heart is pounding in his chest. The sound of blood rushing in his ears is just something else *on top* of everything else that he's feeling all too much of right now.

"Shane? You with me?" One voice asks.

He's lying down now. He doesn't remember moving. His heart skips again, a distant, awful feeling starting to creep into the pit of his stomach.

"Yeah," he does his best to reply. He's trying *really* hard to listen, to fight past the panic, to find *something* to clutch onto.

"Do you know what happened?"

It's not Ilya speaking to him. Not his mum, or his dad.

Breathe, breathe. He knows this voice, he's sure. It's familiar.

Panic won't help him. He tries to starve it off.

"Uh," Shane replies. His head is still fucking killing him. Trying to wade through memories, trying to grasp onto anything, is like trying to grasp onto sand in a moving stream: it slips right through his fingers. "I don't.... know?"

"That's okay," the voice reassures. It's softer now, thankfully. Which is certainly better for his head. Fuck, his *head.* The pain is starting to kick up even more now. His pains are cut into by the voice again as they ask, "What do you last remember?"

"Um." He tries, and tries, and *finally,* manages to grasp something. "In the dressing room?"

"Yeah? Why?"

Why. Shane doesn't know. Doesn't care. *Fuck.* His head is killing him, that's all that matters.

But under that, there's still the panic: *what happened?* His body isn't listening to him. His mind is barely able to keep up. Fuck, fuck, *fuck.* What happened?

He tries to piece it together. Why, *why?* Why was he in the dressing room? And what happened from there to get here, now?

"For... for the game," he manages. He sees flashes of colour, hears the roar of a crowd, a memory that lets him grab hold.

"Against who?"

He groans. The answer doesn't come easily, but it finally comes. "Florida."

"That's good, Shane. That's right. Home or away game?"

"Home," he says.

"Alright. Why were you in the dressing room?"

"Um. It was..." He groans again. His head and his tongue feel like there is just a measly, awful, fraying string clumsily knotted together and trying to keep everything working. It is really, *really,* not working. He gets lost long enough that he needs another prod. *Why were you there, Shane?* He manages to piece together, "Second period. Had to... had to re-tie my skates."

"Okay, good, good. Anything else?"

Shane stumbles again. His tongue is so fucking *heavy.* There's still that tang at the back of his throat. Blood, maybe? He smacks his lips together a couple of times.

"Shane. Do you remember anything else?"

"Tastes like blood," Shane manages.

"You bit your tongue pretty badly," is the reply. "Shane. Do you remember anything else? After the second period?"

"Getting back on the ice," Shane recalls. Remembers stepping out for the last period, now. He frowns — at least, he thinks so. His mouth feels weird. "Ilya?"

"Playing, right now," is the reply.

Oh no, Shane's heart clenches.

"Is he—"

"He's fine, let's focus on you right now," the voice stops him. "Anything else you remember?"

"Um," he drags out. He tries to remember. He *really* tries. But the room is spinning along with his thoughts, even in the darkness, and he’s struggling to stay afloat or to grasp anything. "Not really."

"Okay. Do you know where you are right now?"

"No," Shane replies.

"You're in the med-bay," is the reply.

"Okay," he manages, when there's a few moments of pause. Sure. Okay. Med-bay. Sure. Yes. He isn’t panicking at all.

He squints, getting used to the darkness in the room, and there's a light on *somewhere* but it's not quite piercing him from above anymore, so he manages to try and use it to try and assess who's speaking to him. Finally, he realises, and he lets his eyes close again. One of the team's physicians; Veronica, a woman not much older than Shane, but something in her soul makes Ilya tease that she's elderly. "Ah. Doc. Hi."

"Hi, Shane," is the exasperated, but fond, response. "Let's hope you remember it's me, this time."

"What happened?"

"Got your bell rung."

"Figures," he says, a beat too slowly. Well. That makes sense.

He doesn't remember it, though. He remembers taking to the ice for their last period, bending down into his skates, making sure he re-laced them right. Remembers giving a nod to Ilya as they skated past each other.

It was a tight, rough game. They really wanted to win this one.

"Let's try and keep your eyes open, alright?"

"Hurts."

"Yeah, I know," is the sympathetic reply. "But you gotta try."

"M'kay. How's... the game?"

"Do you remember the score?"

He lets out a deep breath and tries to steady himself. Remembers, faintly, seeing the scoreboard, but the numbers blur in his memory. He blinks — slowly, carefully. Making sure he doesn't close his eyes like he so desperately wants to. The light in the corner of the room is starting to halo into his vision, and he struggles against it. "Uhh... Two-one? Us leading?"

"Four-one, it's looking to be. Game's almost over."

He tries *really* hard to remember that information and work through it. Four, meaning two more goals scored by them. Two Shane doesn't remember, or wasn't on the ice for.

"Before? Or after?" He asks, hoping she understands. Before or after Shane knocked his head around this badly?

Thankfully, she's been around long enough that she either knows exactly what Shane wants to know, or she's simply dealt with enough concussions to know what the players with head injuries are focusing on anyway. Both things are probably true enough, really.

"After," she replies. "Two by Rozanov. Even after he got sent to the penalty box."

It's been a couple of games since Ilya's managed to get sent there. He's been good at playing clean, lately — or, rather, into goading the other team into trying dirtier hits that give him an advantage.

"That's," he tries to say, then stops. He groans. It's too much effort to try and explain the betting pool that's been building up, the team *waiting* to see when Ilya would manage to get sent back in. If he got sent in *because* of Shane, though, then the guys probably won't take much victory in their wins. He hopes, at least. He thinks they do, at least, like him enough to prefer him un-concussed.

"That's?" She prompts.

He waves it off. "Too much."

For a moment, or longer than that — Shane's head is still aching, the room still spinning with the glare from the light, and he's disoriented as hell and doesn't quite know how long it is — he thinks she'll try and prod him into the answer. But eventually she sighs and settles back.

"How do you feel?"

"Sore."

"Still sick?"

He takes stock of himself, but the nausea has settled. The room is still twisting, but it's not quite trying to crush him under waves anymore. "Not so much."

"That's good," she says. "That's what we want to hear."

He falls quiet. Her fingers press into the bared skin of his wrist. He doesn't know how much of his gear has been stripped down, and he doesn't remember getting any of it off. He wriggles his toes and figures he's still in his skates, so he figures most of his gear must still be on.

"When did the...." he grimaces as he tries to turn his head and ends up coming into more of the light.

Her fingers slip from his wrist as she moves them to tip his head back so he's looking up at the ceiling, silently but effectively stopping him from trying to exert himself too much.

"When what, Shane?" She asks, after a few moments, thankfully when Shane's head has stopped pounding so much. It makes him focus back on the conversation. He takes a moment to get back his train of thought, but his brain is starting to slowly catch up, he thinks. He's not as disorientated as he was when he first came to in the room. Or maybe when he came to *again.* He doesn't know how long he's been in here, or how many times Veronica has tried starting the same conversation with him.

"When did I get knocked?"

"Two minutes into third," she replies.

He huffs. "Better than last time."

She laughs softly — gentle enough that it doesn't hurt his head much. "Yes, better than last time, I suppose. And so far, it's looking like you won't need the hospital. But I'm going to keep you here a little while, just to make sure you're good, alright?"

That's a lot of words. It takes him a moment. All he ends up in reply is a simple, "Mhm."

It falls blissfully quiet. He is becoming all too aware of the pain in his head for it, but he's pulled from focusing on it as he feels something damp at his lips. He realises she's wiping at his mouth, and the metallic taste in the back of his throat seems stronger than ever.

He doesn't feel brave enough to try and stomach the nausea for a couple of sips of water, not yet. He doesn't think it'll quite wash down the taste anyway.

She checks in with him again a couple of minutes later, going over some questions — *do you remember where you are? Do you remember the game? What's your last memory?*

He's not getting worse. Isn't forgetting anything else, or hasn't regressed. He doesn't remember the moment of the collision, though. His fingers try and grip onto something, like he's on a bed with sheets, but he only hits the strange plastic of the medical bay bed.

He doesn't remember the moments right before it. After it. Doesn't remember anything from here to this bay.

"How'd I get hit?" He asks eventually, trying to calm himself down.

"It was... a rough game," she hesitantly says. "You went into the boards."

He remembers the footage from his first concussion. Remembers how motionless he'd been, lying on the ice after the hit.

He feels sick again. But it's not quite because of the concussion, this time. It's because he knows Ilya was *right there.* Ilya would have seen him on the ice, would have seen him hit the boards, or would have seen the aftermath of it all.

He's seen a few other guys get their bell rung. Has seen a couple of them get to their knees almost immediately; has seen them struggle to their feet, then almost wipe themselves out again. Has seen them kneeling with a dazed expression, trying to figure out where they are.

And has seen a couple of them lie there. He's been one of them before.

Swallowing down bile, he asks, "How long did I take to get up?"

Please have tried. Please, please, have been one of those guys kneeling almost immediately. Please have been moving. Please have let Ilya seen that.

He doesn't think that if he'd been unmoving, taken off in a stretcher again, that Ilya would have stayed out on the ice. But maybe if the coach was desperate, their score close, and—

He almost tries to shake his head free of those thoughts. Coach Wiebe isn't like that. He's not Shane's old coach. This isn't Shane's old team. Shane's well-being would be put first. *Ilya's* well-being would be put first.

And Ilya must be okay — must believe that Shane is okay, and that he can play without worrying too much. Two goals in the last period: he's driven. Focused. Very possibly *very* angry.

Shane swallows thickly.

"Not long at all," she reassures. "Actually, too soon for my liking, really. Wyatt made sure you stayed down at first when it was clear you were unsteady."

He has a lot more questions, a lot more pieces of the puzzle that he wants to have but doesn't: how did he get off the ice? Who helped him off? Was it Ilya? *Where* was Ilya during all of this? Did he say anything? How long was he with Shane until the game resumed?

That's... that's a lot of talking, though. And his head is hurting fiercely. He doesn't have it in him to try and ask that many questions, to try and put that entire puzzle together.

"How much longer? In the game?" He asks instead.

"Should be wrapping up right about... now," she says, quickly tapping her phone on and angling the screen away from his eyes so that she can see it. After a moment, she confirms, "Yeah. We won. Four-one. They're getting off the ice."

Shane struggles through his thoughts as he tries to envision the next couple of minutes: the team celebrating, then Ilya meeting them at the gate as they all get off the ice. Ilya, hurrying his way through getting his gear and his skates off, trying to tell the team that they did a good job while also trying to get to Shane as quickly as possible.

And then, hardly a minute later, Shane can hear the sound of skates walking down the hall.

Veronica makes a soft noise, somewhere between a laugh and a sigh.

"Ilya," she greets, voice quiet.

"How—" his voice is rough, and it cuts off before he can even get a full sentence out. Too worried, or his brain working too fast, the English not coming to his tongue quickly enough. The sound of it makes Shane's heart clench.

He knows this worry. He's seen it before. He *knows* what it's like to be on the other side of it, too. He's seen Ilya down for the count once before, and he was worried his own heart would simply give up in his chest for so many hours after it.

"Okay," Shane says, as steadily as he can. He ignores the flare of pain in his head as he rolls his head and looks to the doorway, where Ilya stands. Tall. Skates and most of his gear, all still on.

Ilya moves fast. Shane blinks, and it seems like Ilya is at his side, taking hold of his hand. Shane tries to get his vision to focus properly, to focus entirely on Ilya.

He wants to reach out, wants to put his palm on Ilya's cheek, wants to brush his thumb over the worried lines he sees. They run deep — Shane thinks he might just go tumbling again, crushed under the weight of it.

"Concussed," Veronica relays.

Ilya hums, unsurprised. His eyes flick to her, though Shane does not follow it — she's too close to the light in the corner of the room, and the pounding in his head isn't getting any better.

"Yes. I can tell," Ilya mutters.

Shane squeezes Ilya's hand. "Okay, though."

Ilya squeezes back. He mouths out the word *'okay',* like he's testing the weight of it. Like he's testing what the cost would be to retaliate against it.

It must be too much. He just swallows it down, and he nods for now.

"I'll go talk to Brandon," Veronica says. "Ilya, if he gets worse, you yell out immediately."

"Don't yell," Shane mumbles, preemptively grimacing at the thought of the chaos it'll unleash on his skull. It already feels plenty rattled.

"Don't get worse," Ilya replies.

Veronica pats the bed as she stands up and makes her way out, shutting the door most of the way behind her.

"How do you feel?" Ilya asks.

Shane lets his eyes close. He keeps the tightest hold of Ilya's hand that he can, letting Ilya know he's not intending to fall asleep on him.

"Not great," Shane replies, honest. Everything still feels like it's swimming, like he's somewhere in the depths. He's still struggling to keep his head above it all.

He hears Ilya moving, the gear rustling, the leather of his skates creaking as he shifts in them. It feels like every sense has been dialled up too high, all of it blurring together into a messy, awful cacophony of sensation.

It almost startles him when he feels Ilya brushing a strand of hair away from his face.

"Pretty eyes open, please," Ilya whispers.

Shane would *really,* really, rather keep them closed. Especially with everything so intense. But he squints, then blinks them open properly when he sees Ilya's expression: the worry has settled in even deeper, more outwardly on display now that it's the two of them alone.

"I'm good," he says. Sore, in pain, dizzy, concussed, still faintly nauseous at the thought of how much he's worried Ilya. But Ilya is in the room, and Shane's not on his way to the hospital, so as far as injuries go, it isn't so bad — in the grand scheme of things, really.

Right now, in the midst of it, it still does suck. If he's being honest. But not as much as how much it must suck for Ilya to have been on that ice, to have watched him go down, to have watch him *struggle* to get back up.

"Good is not concussed," Ilya refutes.

"Don't argue," Shane mutters. "Hurts."

He means his head, but Ilya mutters and taps at his own chest, then nods in agreement.

"Okay. For now," he says, quiet enough he's almost mouthing it.

Shane makes sure to keep his grip tight. To make sure that Ilya knows he's right here, he's awake, he's conscious, he's following *most* of the conversation and movement in the room. He's slowly, slowly, getting out of the violent waves that he was thrown under.

Ilya takes in a deep breath. Shifts. The leather of his skates creaks again.

"You're still in your skates," Shane says. He thinks his words are slow, his tongue still not quite cooperating with him, but he means it to ask a lot of things: did Ilya even make it to the dressing room? Does anyone know he's slipped into the med-bay? Are they okay with it?

You're not in Montreal, Shane reminds himself.

"Yes," Ilya agrees. Shane didn't actually ask a question, but Ilya's answered anyway with a clear tone: of *course* his skates are still on. Of course, he hurried here as quickly as possible. It doesn't matter if the team know or not — they will have figured it out by now, if they didn't think he'd head here first already. They won't have taken any offence at Ilya skipping out on any congratulatory cheers in the dressing room.

Ilya inclines his head to the other end of the bed, where Shane's feet are propped up on the bed, skates still on as well. Ilya tuts and slowly pulls his fingers out of Shane's hold. He makes a noise of complaint, but Ilya gently shushes him.

"Will take yours off," Ilya says. "Relax."

Ilya makes sure he tugs at the furthest skate first — the right one. The same that Shane laces up first before a game, the same that he unlaces first after a game.

Shane tilts his head back and lets himself try and settle back into the bed. He's slow with the movement, careful, like any sudden movements are going to shake his brain like the end of a rattlesnake's tail.

Ilya loosens up the laces, then tugs the skate off with so much care.

"Okay?" Ilya asks. His voice sounds a little distant, like Shane's let himself get carried back into the waves.

Shane makes a noise that tries to get across a *yes.* He's not sure he's successful, but Ilya takes it as permission to undo his left skate as well. When the skates are off, Ilya cautiously moves back up the bed, sliding his fingers across Shane's wrist and pressing against his pulse point before he laces their fingers together.

He's not sure how long they're there for, but Ilya stays right there as Veronica and Wiebe walk into the room.

Ilya goes to move so that Veronica has room, but Veronica waves him off and stands a little further back, letting Ilya stay closest to him.

"How are we going, Shane?" She asks.

He makes another noise, trying to get across *yes, fine. Yes, still concussed.*

"Do you know why you're here?" She prods.

"Concussed," he replies. "Hit the boards."

"Alright, good," she reassures. She goes over a couple more questions, just to make sure nothing's gotten worse. Makes sure he doesn't feel too sick, that his vision isn't *too* awful.

His head is still killing him. Even more, now, in fact. It's like whatever pressure has been around his head is slowly tightening, like a belt that's trying to be squeezed to slot through the next hole. Which is way, *way* too small.

"Okay. I think he's good to take home and rest up there," Veronica says. "Ilya, you'll be with him? Or someone will be with him for the next twenty-four hours?"

There's a moment of pause. Shane sees Ilya's eyes flick to their coach, a silent conversation, before Ilya quickly nods.

"Yes. Whole time."

Their coach nods. Agreeing that Ilya will also take the time off practice just to look after Shane.

Shane goes to protest, but the conversation is already moving on, and his tongue isn't cooperating.

"Okay, then you know the drill," Veronica says.

"If he gets worse, hospital," Ilya confirms.

"Yep. I'll stay with him now while you go get changed out and get his things," she says, pretty much a command, to get him moving.

Ilya hesitates a moment, still holding Shane's hand, but he lets go after a quick squeeze. Shane wants to say *wait, wait, the next twenty-four hours, wait—*

But Ilya is gone, taking Shane's skates with him, before Shane can even get his mouth moving. He groans and lets his head fall back again.

"Hollander," his coach's voice washes over the room for the first time, but it's not a demand. A gentle, quiet probe.

He mumbles some kind of noise to show that he's listening.

"You just focus on resting, alright?" This is now closer to a demand, but it's still not like it's too extreme of an ask.

Shane's tongue unsticks from the roof of his mouth, making a strange, suspiciously wet noise. He ignores it in favour of trying to get out the word, "Okay."

Wiebe pats his shoulder, still with careful gentleness. He talks with Veronica in a low tone, muttering, not requiring Shane's input just yet about the care plan. Just as he's walking out, Ilya is coming back in. He's sliding back in through the smallest crack of the door that he can manage, trying to make sure as little light slips into the room as possible.

The ends of his hair are more curled than normal, still damp from the quick shower he's managed to take. Shane's glad for it — he's already disgruntled at his own injury, and the fact that he's going to smell of his gear before getting in the car is just something *else* on top of it all. Ilya probably knows it. It's probably the only reason he bothered to get under the spray while trying to hurry to get back to Shane.

"*My love,"* Ilya says gently in Russian. He slips back to English as he holds up some clothes. "Time to change."

Shane groans at the thought of moving. But Veronica and Ilya are by the bed, hands steadying him as he slowly sits up. The room spins, but nowhere near as badly as it has been.

"Feeling alright?" Veronica checks in.

"Alright enough," he confirms.

Veronica has seen the team in plenty of states of undress, but she steps out of the room and leaves the task to Ilya. "You let me know if you need any help," she tells him.

It's the perfect kind of moment for Ilya to say something like *no help needed, I have undressed him plenty of times,* but Ilya's lips press together as he nods seriously.

It's a slow going. Ilya strips his gear off with care, setting it aside neatly in a way that he usually doesn't handle it with. Ilya's fingers trace over his bare skin as it's exposed, and Shane shudders under the feel of it, but Ilya moves quickly to get him covered after he sees it.

"Cold?" Ilya asks him.

"No," Shane replies. Not really. He's not sure. It's kind of hard to take note of the temperature when everything else is currently trying to demand his attention. His head feels like it's being pulled in fifty different directions. He wants to claw at his scalp, but when his fingers reach his hair, Ilya pries his hands away by his wrists.

"Shirt," Ilya tells him, raising Shane's arms up now so he can strip him down and then slot the new shirt on. Shane grimaces at the feeling of it. He *really* hates getting into clean clothes after sweating in his hockey gear. "I know," Ilya soothes. "If you feel better, we will shower when home."

Shane sighs in relief. "So glad it's a home game."

"Yes," Ilya hums. "Me too."

Ilya also slips his shoes on for him, though Shane's pretty sure he'd be able to manage it on his own. Still, he knows what this part is like — making sure they take care of each other, that they can remind themselves that their other half is okay, and will get better, and they can help.

Shane reaches for him before Ilya can step away. His coordination is off, and his fingers go past the space of Ilya's head when he's trying to reach for his hair, but Ilya obligingly tilts his head into Shane's fingers anyway. He comes willingly when Shane tugs at him, their lips pressing together for a brief moment.

It's not a cure-all. It doesn't really make a dent in the pain wracking around his skull. But it's still a quiet relief anyway.

"Okay," Ilya pulls back, though he keeps his thumbs stroking over Shane's cheeks. "Let's go home."

Shane wants to drop his head forward, to fall into Ilya's hands, but he manages to lift his head from the way he nods it forward. "Yeah."

Ilya pulls the door open to let Veronica know to come back in. She walks back in with Shane's waterbottle and two tablets, which she presses into his palm.

"Remember," she says, "no ibuprofen. Only paracetamol."

"Yes yes," Ilya replies for them, "we have it."

“I’ll take his gear back for you,” Veronica offers, looking at the pile on the bed.

Ilya hesitates, but when he glances at Shane, he nods. “Thank you.”

Shane slowly tips his head back and pops the first tablet in, then pulls a swallow from his bottle. The tang at the back of his throat, an awful mixture of blood and probably bile, slowly wash down with it. He takes the second, then passes the bottle back to Ilya so he can put it away in his bag.

He goes to reach out for the bag, but Ilya shrugs both of theirs over his shoulder. Shane sighs but lets him take it. He's got other issues, anyway. Like standing.

He does *not* want to do that. He'd really rather just lie back down on the bed, even if it's way too hard and he hates the feeling of the plastic underneath him.

"Come," Ilya coaxes. "Home is waiting."

"Ugh," Shane grunts, but Ilya's right. He'd really rather be at home than here. He just needs to make it there.

He slides off the bed, and Veronica and Ilya brace him on either side in case he leans sideways. He manages not to, though the difference in height from sitting to standing takes him a moment to adjust.

"Good?" Ilya quietly asks.

"Mhm," he manages.

He gets his feet working. One step, then another.

He wonders if this is how he got off the ice — shaky, unsteadily, with people helping to keep him up. He wonders who helped him get to his feet, who helped keep him steady as he made his way off the ice. He doesn't remember it at all, no matter how hard he tries, and the feeling of that settles hollowly in the pit of his stomach. He doesn't remember what he'd been like, what he'd been doing, what he looked like to everyone else.

How much did he struggle to get on his feet? Did he manage to fast enough to try and soothe over Ilya's panic? How much weight did he press into Ilya, dazed and confused? Or did he not recognise Ilya at all, in those moments?

He swallows it all down. There will be footage, if he wants to know. There will be all too much footage.

He makes himself focus on staying upright and focusing on the current task. He doesn't tilt over, at least, though it might be due to Ilya's hand around his waist keeping him balanced. Ilya pauses before the door, giving Shane a moment to brace himself.

"Should've gotten the sunglasses from the car," Ilya mutters to himself.

Shane just squeezes the hand he's gotten around Ilya's hip. He's not letting him go anywhere now — and if Shane doesn't keep this momentum going, he *is* going to talk himself back into just lying on the med-bay bed and sleeping there tonight.

The light is *much* worse than he'd been ready for, though. When Ilya opens up the door, Shane immediately goes to recoil, trying to stop it from cutting straight through his eyes and piercing into all the sore points of his brain. Ilya keeps him upright, standing in the doorway, halfway out of darkness.

Shane puts a hand over the top of his eyes to try and shield himself from it all. Ilya pats at his side.

"Is okay. Keep your eyes closed. I'll lead you."

It's easy to put his trust in Ilya. He lets his eyes scrunch together, trying to create a thicker barrier between the light and his eyes. Ilya takes the first step, and Shane follows, willing himself to try and move faster so that he's out of the lights sooner.

The walk is a blur of darkness that isn't nearly dark enough and a wrecking hammer on his brain. It's like the belt is getting tighter, somehow, even though there's no way there's any space now left for it to try and squeeze.

He can tell when they make it outside by the way the lights seem to dim. Then there's the wind, brushing against his skin, ruffling his hair.

Ilya is a silent guide. Usually, when one of Shane's senses is out of commission — like his sight — for other purposes, Ilya will always talk him through it. But even though he's silent now, he's still mindful to keep Shane aware: squeezes against his hip, lips brushing against the top of his ear, as he makes sure Shane walks steadily.

Shane hears the car unlock, and he does his best to squint his eyes open so that he can see it. Ilya leads him right up to the passenger door and opens it for him, flips the interior car lights off before he slides in, then makes sure he's settled before he walks around to the other side.

The opening and shutting of the car doors, while trying to be as soft as possible, are still loud enough to make him flinch. He groans as he sinks down into the seat and threads his fingers through his hair, like he's trying to create a brace for his skull to keep it as steady as possible.

"Sorry," Ilya rasps out when he shuts finally the door behind him — he's still trying to be as quiet as possible as he can with it, but he's doing it too gently that it takes two attempts before it properly shuts.

"S'alright. Not your fault," Shane replies. He lets his head roll, then looks through the slits of his eyelashes to try and see Ilya's expression.

When he sees the storm of it, he reaches out a hand in offering. Ilya lets out a deep breath and quickly laces his fingers through Shane's.

"Sorry for worrying you," Shane tells him, seeing all of that stress bunched up in Ilya's shoulders, all that tension he's carrying still thrumming under his skin.

Ilya doesn't say anything, but he lifts Shane's hand and kisses the back of it. He taps it against his lips a couple of more times, like he's working up the courage to do something, but eventually lets their hands slowly drop back into the middle console so that he can turn the engine on.

Shane pulls against the urge to sleep. He can feel himself starting to drift, exhaustion settling heavily in his bones and trying to drag him down, but he wants to wait until he's at home and in his bed and properly curled up with Ilya. If he falls asleep now, he knows he'll probably just worry Ilya.

Ilya keeps the stereo off, and the screen off as well, and it's only the sound of the car's engine and their breath in the car. Occasionally, the steady, all too *loud* steady thrum of an indicator cuts through it. Shane makes himself keep his eyes open, though they're still squinted against the passing street lights as Ilya drives.

Finally, they pull up to their house. Ilya slowly pulls his hand free and puts the car in park, then cautiously opens up the car door. He keeps it open as he comes around to Shane's side, and stays by his side as Shane swings his legs out and stands.

He's feeling a lot steadier, at least. The dizziness and nausea have mostly passed. Now, it's just the intense squeeze of his brain that's taking up all of his focus.

Ilya opens the door slowly, keeping Anya back with his legs as he opens it up further.

"Stay down," he tells her gently, and when she's a little too excited, he ends up crouching down and hugging her in an attempt to redirect her attention as Shane walks in. "My gorgeous girl, your dad's a little sore, yes? Hey, *calm.* Sit." His attempts in English and Russian aren't doing much. He eventually sighs and says, "Okay. Come out with me. By my side, Anya."

For a moment, Shane's world spins out at the thought of Ilya leaving him. "You don't need to —"

"I need to go shut the car doors," Ilya reminds him. Shane blinks at the wall, realising that Ilya purposefully left them open as Shane got some distance from the sound of them. Ilya kisses his cheek as he steps outside with Anya, his fear of her walking off a little too far keeps his voice tight as he walks out of the house. Distantly, Shane hears him groan. "No, no, Anya. No car ride. I'm just shutting the doors. Come on, get out. Anya, *now."*

The sound of his voice is still loud enough for the back of Shane's head to spike, but his tone is so endearing that Shane can't help but smile.

He manages to toe his shoes off in the doorway, but he doesn't get more than a couple of steps — leaning against the wall as he goes, just in case — as Ilya rushes back inside to get by his side.

Shane is very, *very* tired. Standing up, it seems, has taken it entirely out of him. He leans his weight into Ilya, who rights himself easily.

"Shane?" He asks, an edge of panic in his voice.

"Tired," Shane mutters out, trying to reach out and pat Ilya's skin in an attempt to be reassuring.

Ilya breathes out a sigh of relief. "Okay. Let's go sit."

"Sleep."

"Mhm, not yet."

Shane bites down on a groan. "Ilya."

"Shane," Ilya replies, mimicking Shane's tone, drawn-out and slow.

"Please."

Usually, that's enough to make Ilya at *least* listen to his request. Or it's, at least, enough for Ilya to try and make a deal with him, reaching a compromise. But Ilya keeps their direction heading towards the couch rather than the bedroom.

"Sit, first. You need to eat," Ilya says. He helps Shane down on the couch, then carefully moves a few pillows to Shane's side to force him to stay upright. Anya takes the opportunity to jump up on the couch as well — she tries to climb up over the mountain of pillows, but Ilya lightly scolds her until she remains off them. She's not quite as used to Ilya being the one to scold her, so she listens more easily.

"Not really hungry," Shane replies.

"Your head will hurt worse if you do not eat," Ilya says, patting Shane's knees before he rocks up to his feet. "I will be quick. Will be something easy for your stomach. For me, okay?"

Ilya cups Shane's head, his thumb pressing over Shane's lips, lightly tapping there and waiting until Shane mutters an *okay.*

"Good," Ilya beams. He usually taps Shane's cheek a little harder when he's following a command, but this time he draws back without doing so. Shane's chest twists, but Ilya soothes it over by bending over and pressing a feather-light kiss to the top of his head. "Stay upright. Don't sleep yet."

"Hurry up," Shane grumbles.

Ilya does, to his credit. Still, Anya, in the short time he's gone, manages to climb over the pillows and into his lap. Shane doesn't mind — he keeps his hand on her back, stroking through her fur. When he slows, close to stopping, close to tilting his head back and falling asleep, she nudges and then licks at his hand until he picks it back up again.

Ilya's thrown together some day-old rice and vegetables and tuna. He's got his own bowl of it, barring the usual complaints he carries about when it's such a light dinner. Anya moves off Shane's lap as he reaches out for the bowl and cradles it in his lap. Ilya tucks his leg under him as he sits on Shane's other side of the mountain of pillows.

"Do you feel sick?" Ilya asks, after a few moments.

Shane realises he's just been staring down at the food. His heart is big and pressing against his lungs, and he takes in a deep breath and tries to push it down to the proper size.

The care that Ilya takes with him — it's just a lot, suddenly. It's a lot to think about.

"No," he says. "It's just... Um."

"Just?"

Shane picks up the fork he's been given. Ilya usually knows to give him chopsticks, but he already feels unsteady enough. He's pretty sure Ilya's already gathered that his coordination is going to be a little off, and is certainly going to frustrate him if he tries. He pokes at his own food, now, taking a few moments to gather himself.

His heart is still somewhere in his throat, all the love he has for Ilya so big and overwhelming. He doesn't quite manage to get enough of himself together.

He presses his lips together. Manages to fumble for an excuse as he says, "I bit my tongue."

"Ah," Ilya says. He settles back on the couch. "Yes. I know."

Shane winces as he puts a hand to his mouth. "Was it... bad?"

Ilya falls quiet. Shane glances over at him, and sees the way his face is twisting with his expression. He thinks Ilya won't want to talk about it, and doesn't want to force him to. He nods slowly, then turns back to focus on his food. He scoops some up, a small amount, then puts it in his mouth.

His throat still feels tight. His stomach still doesn't feel like it wants to welcome anything. Still, he chews, and he swallows, because Ilya made it. Because Ilya will worry if he doesn't eat properly after a game.

The twinge of his tongue hurts, but it’s hardly noticeable against his head. He’s mindful to keep the pieces of food away from the area as best as he can.

"Not so bad. Just..." Ilya hesitates to admit, voice breaking through their quiet. Then admits, softly, "Scared me."

Shane puts down the fork in his hand. Grimaces as it clatters too loudly against the bowl, but doesn't let it stop him from speaking.

"I'm sorry," he says.

Ilya turns to look at him, eyes flicking down to the fork that's barely managing to stay in the bowl.

"Is it not good?" Ilya worries.

"No, it's—" Shane laughs, short and sharp. He lets Ilya take the side-step, just for the moment, as he questions, "How could it not be good?"

"It is not very good to me," Ilya replies, exaggeratedly poking at his bowl as he stirs it around. "Very boring meal."

"It's *fine.* I'm not sorry about it," Shane says. He's not going to let Ilya try and let him get away with this any longer, though. He gathers up all the pieces of himself, brittle and careful, as he says, "I'm sorry. I'm so, *so* sorry that I scared you again."

Ilya shakes his head. His jaw tenses in the way that he does when he's trying to restrain some of his emotions.

Shane pushes a couple of pillows to the floor, making it easier for him to scoot across and to get closer to Ilya. Ilya's surprised expression is almost worth the thought of having to go through and wash everything later — he's going to have to, anyway. The post-game stench feels too gross on his skin.

He moves until he's able to rest his head on Ilya's shoulder. There's a slight strain in his neck as he does it, but it's not making his head any worse, so he lets himself breathe in the scent of Ilya's body wash and take comfort. He feels Ilya shudder beneath him, but he keeps his emotions tight enough that he doesn't let them get away from him.

Still, he, too, takes in the comfort. He tilts his head back onto Shane's and puts a hand on his thigh.

"This time, at least, I could go to you," Ilya says, his voice thick. "I could make sure you were okay."

"Yeah," Shane breathes out. He's always been lucky enough that he's never had to experience Ilya getting seriously hurt when they're on different teams, posing as complete rivals. He couldn't imagine just having to skate away, and pretend like Ilya didn't mean ther entire *world* to him.

"Shane," Ilya says, a few moments later. He lightly taps at Shane's thigh. "Hey. Eat."

Shane blinks, realising he'd been *so* close to falling asleep. He huffs in annoyance, irritated at being pulled right back from the brink, but Ilya's hand squeezing his thigh makes himself stop. They eat — slowly, because Shane is, so Ilya is too. Anya gives them her best puppy eyes the entire time, even once their bowls are finished, like there will magically be scraps for her to eat.

"I will feed her. Wait here," Ilya says. He takes Shane's bowl from him and heads to the kitchen, and Shane rests his head back on the couch. He's close to falling asleep again, but he's startled out of it as he hears Ilya's phone ring.

"Ah," he hears Ilya say. "Your parents."

Shane's brain has been moving slowly, but when he realises what Ilya's saying, he almost sits straight up. "Did no one—"

"I messaged them after the game," Ilya reassures. Shane breathes out a sigh of relief and lets himself sink back into the couch. Of course, he doesn't need to worry — of course, Ilya has it handled. Of course, Ilya would be talking to his parents. It's probably the only reason they're not here right now. Ilya has very likely already reassured them he's got it handled.

"Hi, mom," Ilya says into the phone, and Shane hears him take a couple of steps further away so the volume doesn't carry as much. Still, Shane can hear a low hum of a conversation. It's not obtrusive enough to send any spikes of pain into his skull, so he lets it wash over him as he lets his eyes close.

He comes to with Ilya crouched in front of him, one hand on his thigh, one hand gently cupping his cheek. Anya is back in his lap, only blearily stirring as much as Shane is.

"You will also give yourself neck injury," Ilya tells him. Shane's next noise is something intelligible. Ilya's lip quirks, but it smooths over quickly in his concern. "How do you feel?"

"Better. Same. Not getting worse," Shane says, after taking a moment to make sure he's being honest. He does *not* need to ignore something, only to put himself in the hospital. Ilya certainly won't appreciate it.

"If you get a sore neck, you will be worse," He nods seriously, almost breaking when he says, "Will be very annoying and grumpy. Much worse."

"Fuck off," Shane snorts. He flaps a lazy hand at Ilya, but Ilya just threads their fingers together and takes hold. "How're my parents taking it?"

"They are worried," Ilya replies. "Will be here if you want."

"No," Shane says. He turns his head so he can press a kiss to Ilya's shoulder. All he needs, right now, is Ilya. "Not tonight."

"You want them tomorrow?"

Not when I can have you, he wants to say, but he stops himself.

"I don't... I mean... You shouldn't miss practice." They're mid-season, and they can't afford to have Shane *and* Ilya down for the next game.

"Will be one practice. Maybe two. Like having cold," Ilya replies. "We are just... isolating. Not spreading it."

"A concussion is not contagious."

"No."

"You can go to training."

"Can," Ilya muses. "Won't. Not if you want me."

Shane sighs. He knows he should send Ilya back to training, back to the rink, to keep the team in line while they’re absent. But he *does* want Ilya. And the team will be fine with a practice or two missed by them.

"Always."

"Then I won't. Now, come. Up," Ilya encourages. He uses his grip on Shane's hand to help pull him to his feet. "Shower?"

"Mhm. Yeah, no."

"No?"

"Just... bed."

Ilya puts the back of his hand to Shane's head. "I fear it is worse than thought. No shower? After game?"

"Yes, well," Shane yawns. "I was in the med-bay."

"Yes, I know," Ilya says dryly. "Not in there now, though."

"Too tired," Shane argues. "Bed."

"Alright," Ilya gives in. "Bed, then."

Anya walks right beside them, nosing at their legs as they make their way to the bedroom. Shane's steadier than he's been all night, but he still lets Ilya take his weight and lead him to their bedroom. They keep the lights off, and Shane's eyes are slowly getting heavier, so he once again trusts Ilya to be the one to direct them.

Ilya gets him to sit on the bed, and Shane sits on the edge of it, watching as Ilya moves around the room. He tugs the curtains closed, making sure there will be no light in the morning to slip through.

"Will be back in a moment," Ilya says, leaving the room with hurried steps.

Anya considers following him, but she's also just as tired as Shane, so she decides to jump up on the bed with him. He sighs, but he's long since lost the battle of trying to keep her off the bed. It's certainly not worth the headache of it tonight.

He slowly starts to lower himself down, knowing that the moment his head is on the pillow, he'll probably fall asleep. It'll be good — he would *really* rather be unconscious than deal with the headache he's got pounding against his skull. But he waits until Ilya is back in the room, and he puts a waterbottle and some tablets on Shane's bedside.

"You'll wake me," Ilya leans over, breathing the words against the top of his head, "if you feel worse, yes?"

"Yes," Shane mutters. He reaches up, hands clumsily searching for Ilya's shirt, before he manages to grasp it and pull him down. Ilya kisses him, and Shane hums, pleased.

Ilya pulls back, taking the time to go around to the other side of the bed and get in that way rather than climbing in over or flopping directly onto Shane like he sometimes does. Shane misses his weight, pressing him down into the bed, both of them laughing as they hold onto each other.

He gets one eye open as he turns to look at Ilya. Studies his features as best as he can in the low light, even as the back of his head twinges, too much of his concentration being taken by trying to study the person he loves so much.

"What is it?" Ilya asks eventually, when Shane is still reluctant to tear his gaze away even though he knows he should. Even though his head is begging him to rest, even though his eyes are doing their best to close.

"Annoyed," he admits. For multiple reasons: for being injured. For having his head knocked, and for stopping their usual ease in which they can hold each other. And also, "Would have liked to see your two goals."

"Mhm. Was very hot. But I wanted them to..." He trails off. Shane reaches across the bed and puts his hand on Ilya's arm. Ilya smiles to himself and puts his hand over Shane's own, keeping it there. "Wanted them to know they are wrong, if they think they can win. Even if they hurt one of us."

"They know now," Shane says.

"Yes," Ilya says, close to a laugh. "Yes, they do."

He can feel Ilya's heartbeat underneath his palm. His eyes start to slip closed, and he lets the rhythm of it wash over him. Like a wave, gently cradling him, keeping him afloat.

"Sleep, *my love,"* Ilya whispers. "Will be here with you."

Shane lets the wave take him out to sea. He sleeps.

End Notes

this was originally either meant to combine with an amnesia or a shane having insecurity around 'boring' but. another time!!

ALSO a very happy holidays to those who celebrate!! this will (probably?) be it for me in 2025, so i just want to say it's been such a fun whirlwind with my fandoms this year. hr took me by total surprise and im so glad it did, and i hope i have managed to bring some joy into the fandom as well! <3 <3

i can be found yapping on twt here!

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