a work in progress

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a work in progress

by buttercupkisses

Summary

What do you say to someone who you spent the last decade believing was dead?

That’s what his father told him anyway.

His mother was dead.

She couldn’t handle it anymore, she couldn’t handle him anymore so she ended it. Took her own life while he was at school.

It was for the best his father told him. They were better off without her.

or ilya finds out his mother is alive and tries to make up for lost time.

Notes

happy christmas. this silly little thing is written for the prompt attached and well i'm a sucker for found family and everything alike so of course i had to fulfil it when I suddenly had a burst of inspo the other day and im happy to say its now finished x

See the end of the work for more notes

November

Ilya would describe his relationship with his mother as a work in progress.

Something that has potential to bloom into something beautiful, but hasn't yet been given the time and nutrients to grow.

He adjusts himself in his seat. He arrived at a local cafe, hidden away from the main stretch, twenty minutes before the time they agreed to meet, the chance of missing his mother becoming too damning on his mind to handle.

Shane had reassured him plenty of times that he didn't need to worry and that his mom did want to see him. But even that didn't stop the little nagging voice in the back of the head that has slowly been becoming louder by the hour.

Why would she reach out if she didn't want to see him? Shane had pointed out when he found Ilya restless and working out in his home gym past midnight. Shane was always his voice of reason. He brought a calm to his mind that was forever a storm racing. When Shane was there the world stopped, even if only for a few moments, and Ilya savoured those moments.

He thinks of the letter that arrived at his arena a few weeks back. How he believed the whole thing was some elaborate joke, from a rival fan that somehow caught a whiff of his dysfunctional family and wanted to wind him up further. That was till he picked up the phone, dialed the number written at the bottom and heard his mother's unmistakable voice on the other line.

At first the phone call was stilted.

What do you say to someone who you spent the last decade believing was dead?

That's what his father told him anyway. His mother was dead. She couldn't handle it anymore, she couldn't handle *him* anymore so she ended it. Took her own life while he was at school.

It was for the best his father told him. They were better without her.

'Илья"

His head snaps up at the sound of the voice, spoken in a familiar accent, that he's only recently become reacquainted with.

Before him stands his mother, dressed in a long brown coat and a scarf delicately wrapped her neck.

She looks the same, as he remembers from his childhood, but also so very different. The years have obviously worn on her, in her face and her stance. Her once platinum blonde hair

is now streaked with grey strands and the frown lines on her face are far more prominent than he once recalls.

There's a nervous air about her too, making her seem so much smaller than her actual size. Almost as though she's afraid he's going to shout at her. As if he's going to blame her for leaving him with his father for the entirety of his teen years and early adulthood.

But he can't, not when he can still recall the fear in her eyes whenever his father came close. When he came home late, smelling distinctively of alcohol and cigarettes, how his hand would clench around the material of her shirt, pulling her in close.

Forcing her to look him in the eye.

Still, it's a lot to process that his once believed dead mother is alive and well, standing in front of him.

"Do you want me to get you a drink?" Ilya asks in Russian, wanting to do anything to break the silence they have fallen into.

He doesn't even know if she understands much English. There's so much they don't know about each other. So much time to make up between them.

His mother shakes her head. "Who would I be to let my son buy me a drink?" She says and he watches as she makes her way over to the queue of people near the counter, joining the back of the line.

Ilya's eyes remain on her the whole time, not that he's afraid she is going to hightail it out of there, just because he can't quite get over the aspect that she's actually here. (Well maybe a small part of him worries she is going to disappear into a puff of smoke if he dares look the other direction).

He can't lose her, not when he has just got her back in his life.

"So." his mother says returning to the table, a steaming cup of tea in her hand and a plate with a pastry in the other. "How are you?"

It's such a simple question. Like they are friends catching up over a warm drink on a cold winter's day.

Ilya nods, "Good, I have been good."

It's not a lie. His life with Shane has been good. Better than he imagined, better than he ever let himself imagine he could have.

He wonders how much she has read up on him. If she has read the smear campaign spread across Russia that have spent the last half a decade dragging his name through the mud. How he's a betrayal to his country. His selfishness, his one night stands and his lack of respect for everyone around him.

"I'm glad… I'm so sorry. For everything." She looks down at a mark on the table.

Her hand hovers above the table, as if she's going to take hold his hand, but on a second thought she pulls back. He doesn't make an attempt to return it. Just for once he needs to be the one who's given the comfort that she's not going to leave.

"Yeah." It's not him accepting the apology. But it's the closest thing he can give if he wants to remain honest with her.

She takes a sip of her tea, it's still scolding and he wonders if she burns her tongue. "So tell me about your life. Do you have a family of your own now?"

Ilya continues to wonder if she has been googling his name, trying to find out if any potential children or wives exist. Does she have google alerts for his name on? If this is some sort of test to see if the media is telling the truth about him.

"Yes." He settles on.

He's not sure if it's the right thing to say. So much of his personal life is a secret, something tucked into a little box and kept out of the public eye just for himself.

He wants to go home, to Shane, to Anya and the little family they have built just the three of them. He doesn't think he is ready for this.

Her face dims a little at his lack of answer. "Tell me about them. *Please*."

Her voice sounds desperate and it's almost as though that breaks the dam just by using the word '*please*.' As if all of Ilya's problems can be solved with one simple word.

"I have a partner… we have been together for a long while. Met when I first came to Canada." he smiles to himself thinking back to that cold day in Saskatchewan when an eager Shane Hollander approached him, all charm and smiles. "And we have a dog together. Her name is Anya." He imagines Shane and Anya curled up on the couch both waiting for him to get home.

For someone who insists he is a cat person till the day he dies, they are both becoming increasingly close.

"Can I see a picture?" she asks tentatively, her voice soft.

For most people he would come up with an excuse, make a witty remark or try to change the subject, but for some reason he trusts her. Well not for some reason - she's his mom.

He unlocks his phone, and scrolls through his camera roll till he gets to the photo of the three of them, at the cottage. Shane's face is squashed into his and he is smiling brilliantly into the camera.

He's gorgeous.

Beneath them is Anya, her tongue hanging out to the side as she sits at their feet.

He'd told Shane he had deleted it, that it was gone from his phone, but in the middle of the night he found himself recovering it and hiding it in one of his personal albums. He can't help it, it's one of his favourite photos. Shane doesn't need to know.

He turns the phone round, and holds his breath. Watches his mother's face for any sign of disgust, of discontent or disappointment. It isn't an obscured fact that Russia isn't the most accepting place. He can only imagine what the tabloids would say if they knew about the relationship he has been hiding all these years.

But there's nothing, her face remains blank.

After around thirty seconds she swallows, pushing the phone back towards him. "I'm so happy for you." A singular tear begins to roll down her cheek and she is quick to brush it away, as if it doesn't exist. "Really."

She reaches across the table, finally closing the distance between them and takes ahold of his hand. Her hand is soft, as they hold each other, her thumb rubbing soothing circles into his rough and calloused skin and Ilya feels his body relax into the touch.

"So, how did you meet the lucky guy?" There's a teasing lilt to her voice and Ilya can't help but share a wobbly smile.

"Hockey. That's the Shane Hollander." The words come out confidently, even though Ilya feels as though he's a few words from falling apart.

Something like recognition flitters across her face at the name. "Your hockey rival? I didn't recognise him. Looks very different out of uniform."

So she must have kept up with his carer somehow.

"You know him?"

"Of course I do. Two hotshot rookies who have been playing against each other from day one."

Ilya swears he read that headline somewhere or the other on some media outlet. He wants to ask her what else she has read, but he holds back.

"That's the one."

She's quiet as she processes the new information throw at her. She doesn't appear upset by it, just taken aback. She wouldn't be the first one who can't get over how the supposed to be rivals are in love with each other, and have found themselves in a long term romantic relationship.

"Well I wouldn't have expected that…" She says slowly, as if she's choosing her words carefully. "But you have always been full of surprises and seem to have built a brilliant life together."

“He’s — uh, he’s the reason I decided to come today. I wasn’t sure if you would turn up but he said to do it.” Ilya admits.

Maybe it's rude, being so open about his worries about his mother. About worrying that she would disappear out of his life for the second time. But he wants her to know how important this is to him. How desperately he needs this to work.

She pats the top of his hand. “Well he clearly cares for you a lot. And one day I hope I can meet him.”

Ilya smiles at that. “That would be nice.”

And he really means it.

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When he gets home, Shane is waiting for him at the door, wearing one of Ilya’s old Boston hoodies, the cuffs having been rolled up a couple of times and he looks up at him expectantly. Ilya wonders if he’s been on high alert since he first heard his car pull in.

He opens his arms in a silent welcome, and Ilya immediately falls into them, trusting Shane will hold him and not let him fall. He inhales his familiar scent, sandal wood mixed with something like pine. Steady. Warm. His.

He doesn't know when, but Shane moves them so they are sitting on the couch. He feels small and curls up against his chest, enjoying the feeling of being held in strong muscular arms. Shane still doesn’t say anything, just lets Ilya sit in silence his faced pressed against his stomach.

There's a wet feeling on his ear, and he pulls his face away from Shane's stolen hoodie that's now wet - not that he was crying, of course not - to find Anya sitting next to them. Her ears are pricked and she’s looking at him inquisitively as if she’s asking him what’s wrong.

Ilya reaches a hand out, and strokes the soft fur on the top of her head. She leans into his touch, and then begins to attempt to lick his hand.

“Disgusting.” Shane comments, the first thing he’s said since he’s gotten home and Ilya looks over to find his boyfriend watching them.

“Its a sign of love.”

“It is still disgusting.” He wrinkles his nose but he’s still smiling. Ilya pushes himself up so he's sitting beside Shane, leaning into his side but no longer a dead weight on his lap.

He glances around the room and notices a bottle of vodka, sitting in front of the television that he swore he didn’t put there. He squints at the label, and he recognise it immediately. Its

the bottle he has shoved on the top shelf, in the study, just in case of emergency vodka.

“If you needed to forget today.” Shane provides helpfully as if he can read his mind.

But he doesn’t want to forget, more the opposite. He wants to paint the moment on the back of his eyelids so every time he closes his eyes he can see it. So he can see his mother's face, hear her voice and recall her touch.

Shane seems to understand because before long the bottle disappears.

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Ilya and his mother continue to meet up. It starts off as a lowkey meeting, whether it be at a local cafe for lunch or a morning stroll through the park as Anya runs around ahead of them barking at all the squirrels that cross her path.

Anya, of course, falls in love very quickly. She’s easy to please and when his mother gets down to her height, offering out of her hand she’s on the receiving end of slobbery kisses in no time.

Today is like every other as his mother kneels down, not caring about the dirty ground beneath her getting on her perfectly pressed dress, in greeting and gives Anya a kiss on the top of her soft head before getting to her feet, as the dog watches her intently.

“Where shall we go, Anya?” She asks, in that typical dotting dog voice that every person seems to be born with and Anya wags her tail in response. She turns and runs towards the woodland area, her mind already made up.

Ilya respects her decisiveness.

“She’s lovely.” His mom says, her eyes following after the dog, with a softness in her eyes.

Ilya nods in agreement, “She’s such a good girl.”

They begin to walk side by side towards the wood where Anya has disappeared off to. The only sign of her existence being the occasional crunching of the leaves under her paws and a small woof when she spots some wildlife up a tree.

“It suits you, this.”

Ilya turns to his mother who’s stopped in the clearing and is just staring at him with a funny look on her face. It's unsettling.

He gestures with his hand for her to explain further.

“Settled. With a family who loves you.”

Ilya swallows, his words suddenly getting stuck in the back of his throat. What does he say to something like that? To someone who should be part of your close knit family already but isn't. Part of him wants to shout at her, tell her that if she hadn't left she could be part of his family already but the other part is filled with sadness for not only her, but himself. He has spent so many years feeling alone, searching for someone to moor himself to, give him the stability that he so badly craves.

"They really do. And one day I hope you can meet them. Well Shane, and his parents. They are very nice." He adds on in a quieter voice. "Me and David do puzzles."

"Really?" She laughs. "My Ilya does puzzles!"

"David got me into them. He complained that Shane won't do them with him."

His mother laughs, tossing her head back. She styled her hair into soft curls, that fall down her back, today and Ilya can't help the feeling of satisfaction that has lodged itself into his chest at the knowledge that she's put in effort to see him, even when they are only going for a dog walk. That she sees him worthy of her time and effort.

"He'd like to meet you… I mean I'd like you to meet Shane too." When she doesn't say anything he continues. "You are both important people to me and I want my important people to know each other."

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A pair of arms wrap around his waist, "I can hear your brain whirring." Shane mumbles against his back.

"You cannot hear my brain." Ilya retorts. It's true. He's a very quiet person when he is not speaking. Even his expensive trainers don't squeak on shiny floors.

Shane has started to describe him as a ghost with how he likes to creep up on him and enjoy the way he jumps when he feels his cold hands on his body.

"Hm, not true." Shane begins to pepper kisses down his neck and Ilya loves when he gets like this. Needy, touchy and all his. "Very noisy."

If they weren't expecting a guest within the next few minutes Ilya would be shoving him to his knees, on the unforgiving hard floor, and giving Shane what he so deeply craves. He loves the mixture of lust and pleasure that clouds his features when he has him in his mouth.

Their doorbell rings, and Ilya freezes. He's not sure why. He has been looking forward to his mother and Shane meeting for weeks. Has bored Shane to death in talking about it non stop. *What activities they will do, what they will eat, what conversations they should avoid and what are good conversation starters.*

“It’ll be fine.” Shane whispers and Ilya tries to relax, but his shoulders remain rigid.

He forces a smile on his face and nods. Shane is right, it’ll be fine. It has to be. He won’t accept any other option.

When he opens the door, he finds his mother with a bunch of colourful flowers clutched in her hand. “I wanted to make a good impression.” She provides in explanation, when Ilya just stares down at the explosion of colour on his doorstep.

She turns her attention to Ilya’s side. “Shane, is it?”

The man in question nods, “The one and only.”

Ilya feels like he’s in some sort of daze, as if he can’t quite comprehend the happenings in front of him and for once Shane is doing the talking.

“I have heard lots about you from Ilya.”

“Only good things I hope.” Shane jokes but Ilya can tell it’s a farce from the way his smile doesn’t meet his eyes and he keeps running a hand through his hair. One of Shane's many tells that the average person won’t pick up on. But Ilya knows him and can tell he’s nervous. Not that he would let it on since he’s so set on making sure Ilya is okay. He will have to thank him later.

“Yes.” She turns to Ilya, who realises now that this would be an appropriate time to invite her in, instead of leaving her standing in the cold all night and catching a chill.

It’s strange seeing his mother in his house, next to the photo of his team or infront of his fridge where various photos of Anya are pinned up with magnets. She’s really here. In his life.

She wants to immerse herself in his life.

She takes a seat on the sofa, the flowers already displayed in a vase on the coffee table.

“So Shane.” Her eyes are bright, reminiscent of how they used to be before his father dimmed them. “Is the media telling the truth about you and Rose Laundry? Made quite the power couple.”

Ilya sighs, and rolls his eyes as he sits next to Shane, their thighs squashed together. She had always been quite the gossip and troublemaker; it seems time hasn't changed that either.

Shane turns a delightful shade of pink and his hand comes to scratch absently at the back of his neck. “We are just friends. Romantically not compatible.” His eyes shift to the other side of the room.

“Very close friends actually. She came over for dinner last week.” Ilya provides ever so helpfully.

“With you too?” His mother asks excitedly, her eyes flitting between them.

“Yes. She has good taste in restaurants.”

“I cannot believe you are friends with a movie star.” Her voice sounds dreamy, almost betraying her real age.

“I am a famous hockey player. Very rich. ” Ilya drawls unimpressed. “Yes, but the Rose Laundry dated Shane here.”

“Give it a rest. She will always be more impressed by my ex-girlfriend.” Shane says, patting his chest condescendingly wearing that smirk that Ilya would really like to kiss off his face.

Ilya grumbles under his breath about how he can prove he’s more impressive later.

It doesn’t take long for her wicked sense of humour to surface, even when she stumbles through some of her words the English not quite perfect but the flow of the conversation never stops.

Shane is enamoured as he stares at her, and asks plenty of questions about Ilya’s childhood and his mother is more than happy to provide the answers.

What was he like when he was growing up?

Did he get in trouble all of the time?

Was he as brazen with his words as he is now?

When she has just explained the first time he decided to start an anti school campaign that he received far too many penalties for, Shane is in stitches. Ilya takes in the sight before him, his two families coming together.

When Shane begins to ask for Ilya’s baby photos Ilya decides this is the best time to leave. There's only so many photos he can look at before his embarrassment will have him hoping the ground will swallow him up

“On that note I am going to check on the food.” Ilya says, pushing himself to his feet.

“You cooked?” His mother asks in surprise.

“If I didn’t we would be living off rabbit food for the rest of our life."

“Not true.” Shane squeaks but his mother laughs.

“I have no idea how you put up with him,” She says to Shane before they return to their conversation of Ilya when he was a tyrant as a toddler.

When Ilya walks into the kitchen, he opens the fridge, enjoying the cold air on his hot face. He doesn’t think he will ever know how to act normal about any of these events.

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Shane has been away for two weeks. Ilya doesn't think he will ever get used to this long distance thing where he wakes up alone, the other side of the bed cold and empty, no matter how many times it happens. They spend more time apart than together yet—

God, he hates it.

When he rolls over in bed, and looks at his phone, he finds a text from Shane already waiting for him sent a few hours ago.

Good morning. Hope today goes well and tell me all about it later!!!

He smiles down at his phone typing out an equally sappy response before pressing send. The shared excitement with Shane is what gives him the boost to get ready and make his way to the train station where he agreed to meet his mother, later that morning.

Today she will be staying over the night, for the first time, and Ilya may have spent the better part of the previous night making sure the guest room was up to scratch and the fridge was fully stocked with foods that he has noticed she has taken a particular liking to, while Shane was on FaceTime doing his best to calm him down (he failed miserably).

He needs this to go perfectly.

He stands at the platform, the wind blowing his neatly styled hair everywhere, and he pulls his coat tighter around his body as he waits for the train to pull into the station. There's a fair few people milling around, and he pushes himself up against the wall when a stampede of children rush past him, shouting at each other as they try to get to the front.

An announcement comes through the overhead speakers letting them know the train is about to arrive at the station, and to please stand back from the platform edge.

Ilya holds his breath. This is it.

It's been a little while since they last saw each other what with Ilya's crazy work schedule and his mother's own busy calendar trying to extend her stay in Canada for a little bit longer. She'd told him one meet up she hadn't wanted to be too presumptuous and expect he'd want her back in his life immediately.

He watches with rapt attention as the train pulls into the station, and the moment the sliding doors open people begin to spill out making a beeline for the station exit.

He searches the crowd for the familiar face as people push past him barely giving him a second glance and definitely not recognising.

The doors shut, the whistle is blown and the train pulls away. It doesn't take long till the crowd clears, leaving an empty platform apart from one other person on the platform. A

young girl sitting on a bench, her eyes glued to her phone and not paying him an ounce of attention.

He rechecks his phone with the train information inputted into it countless times. This is definitely the right platform, he didn't get it wrong. There aren't any texts from his mother, letting him she's missed the train or is running late.

None of it makes any sense.

He's broken out of his daze by his phone ringing, and doesn't bother to check the caller ID before swiping and accepting the call.

”Hello.”

“I am so sorry I just don't think I can do this today." A crackly voice says through the speaker.

Ilya bites his tongue, the anger already boiling beneath his skin. "It's fine." He says through gritted teeth and hangs up before she can get another word in. If he stays on the line anymore then he will only say something he will regret and can't take back.

His phone vibrates a few more times but he doesn't bother to check it. Enough has been said and if he reads the paragraphs his tear ducts will take over and he will embarrass himself in public by doing something stupid, like throw his phone in front of a train or even worse cry.

Later that evening, after spending too much time in his home gym, letting off the relentless energy surging through his body, his phone goes again and he’s about to dismiss the message like the many others he’s received today when he notices Lucas Haas’ name glaring back at him.

Want to come out with us tonight?

-

Ilya doesn’t go out as much as he used to, apart from to celebrate after a tough win.

Before he used it as an excuse to pick up faceless women who wouldn’t stay the night rather than taking it as an opportunity to socialise with his team.

He’s not in contact with many of his teammates since he left Boston. Not that he’s bothered - they were never very close and their relationship was closer to acquaintances than actual friends.

He shrugs off his leather jacket as he slides into the booth where all of his teammates from Ottawa are already sitting together.

“The man of the hour.” Boodram cheers, as he approaches them, banging his fist on the table, causing a few of the other patrons on the nearby tables to look over at the disturbance.

Ilya settles across from him, sending him a small nod in greeting.

“So I take it Haas pulled the short straw.” Ilya muses, staring around the group of men appraisingly.

“And he was successful.” Dykstra says and claps Haas on the back who turns a light shade of pink at the sudden attention.

“Thought your mystery lady friend would have your attention tonight.”

“I don’t have a mystery lady friend.” Ilya rolls his eyes.

His relationship with Shane still remains very much a secret, but it doesn’t stop his teammates from coming up with all sorts of stories when he disappears off on the phone. Some far more amusing than others.

Ilya has decided there’s no point in denying them and letting them have some fun never hurt anyone. It’s not like any of them are smart enough to put together two and two and figure out who it is… well maybe Troy. But he prefers to ignore the knowing stares he sends him every so often whenever Ilya's love life is brought up.

“So it’s over?”

Ilya swallows.

He knows it’s not what they mean, they are talking about his romantic relationships with his ‘mystery woman.’ His relationship isn’t over with his mother because she decided to no show once.

“In your dreams.”

Boodram cackles, and downs the rest of his drink. “Oh yes we’d all love to bed the Rozanov.”

Ilya eyes survey the other man and settles on his face, “I can do way better than you.”

“Well on that lovely note.” Boodram pushes himself to his feet. “I’m going to buy the next round.” He disappears off towards the bar, and Ilya doesn’t miss the flirty glance he shares with the bartender, whose eyes keep falling lower than is socially acceptable.

Haas is watching him out of the corner of his eye as the rest of the guys fall into conversation about last weeks game.

“You okay?” He asks.

He’s still nervous around Ilya, skittish if you will, like Bambi on ice, even though they have been playing together for a little while now.

“Yeah. Just family problems.” Ilya swipes the condensation that’s beginning to build off his glass. “Want this night to help me forget.”

A shot is pushed towards him, he doesn’t bother to look up to see who sent it his way. He tips the contents into his mouth, downing it with a practised ease as the slight burn travels down his throat.

He swallows and nods. “More from where that came from.”

“Families can suck.” Haas agrees and Ilya almost wants him to tell him more. Then decides against it. Another time.

Ilya is drunk.

He's not a lightweight by any stretch of the imagination but when he continues to drink, barely giving himself any time to breath so its not a surprise that his head begins to feel fuzzy and he can't quite think straight.

It doesn't take long till he starts to consider if he would be able to walk in a straight line if a gun is held to his head, he doubts it.

Hayes doesn’t seem to be doing any better, going by how he keeps leaning against Ilya, mumbling nonsense in his ear as they wait for their Uber to pick them up outside of the bar. The rest of their team left before them, or found people to go home with.

“My mum didn’t show up today.” Ilya slurs, the cold air, blowing his hair into his face and he pushes it away with his free hand. He doesn’t mean for the words to slip out but he lost any sort of self control a long while ago.

“That’s rough, man.” Hayes sounds genuinely sympathetic and maybe that's why Ilya cannot stop it spilling out.

“And she’s only just come back into my life and pulls this. I spent ages making sure everything would be perfect. That she would feel comfortable in my world but she couldn't be fucking bothered to come. Shane says that I need to give it some time and then see how I feel.”

“Shane is a man of wisdom.” He peers at Ilya as if he’s seeing him for the first time, taking in his sharp features and his blazing eyes. “You on the other hand. Mhm I’m not so sure.”

Ilya huffs. “Very rude thing to say to your captain.”

“I mean you moved to Ottawa from Boston. I mean who does that and for no reason.” He shakes his head. “But maybe she didn’t mean this maliciously. Speak to her.”

Their Uber pulls up and they pile into the back. Ilya doesn’t even remember entering his house or getting into the bed the rest of the night a blur.

All he knows is the following morning, when he wakes up with an awful hangover is an array of texts from Shane berating him for sexting while drunk.

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Ilya knows he should talk to his mom. There are plenty of his calls and texts sitting on his phone he hasn't got round to looking at.

He has practice and a big game coming up. That's his flimsy excuse for the time being.

There's a knock on the door and one part of him wonders if it's Shane. Till he's reminded he's playing tonight in a whole other city and unless it's been secretly cancelled there's no way he will make it in time.

He opens the door, and finds a rather bored looking delivery driver holding a bouquet of flowers out to him.

"Who are they from?" He asks. The delivery driver shrugs and holds out his tablet for Ilya to sign.

Wordlessly Ilya does and takes the flowers from him and the driver walks back down his drive and gets into his truck.

Ilya places them on his countertop. He doesn't touch them, doesn't prepare them like Shane has taught him to.

He goes to sit on his couch, and stares mindlessly at one of the reality programmes that is playing an old episode. He doesn't take any of it just lets the noise wash over him.

But no matter how hard he tries he can't stop thinking about the damn flowers.

He gets to his feet and walks back over to them and finds a little card stuck to them and turns it over.

I hope you know how sorry I am. please.

He scoffs and tosses it aside but he still handles the flowers with care and begins to trim each stem, as Shane taught him. It's almost therapeutic, the snip of the stems and placing each in a vase of water.

When he's done, he admires his handiwork. For someone, who doesn't have green fingers he would say he's done a pretty job - only a little lopsided.

They sit there prettily on his counter, fitting in with the rest of the modern decor, but Ilya doesn't want flowers.He wants his mom.

He opens up his phone, and the message thread he has been avidly ignoring for the past week. There are multiple missed calls along with texts full of apologies. His stomach turns at the sight but he powers through and opens up the keyboard and types out a simple message.

Thanks for the flowers. I hope to see you soon.

Once it has sent he, turns off his phone and throws it across the room. Hes not sure he's strong enough to read the response.

-

"Should I be jealous that some mystery lover is sending you flowers?" Shane says, dropping his keys onto the table with a clatter.

It has been a very long few weeks apart and Ilya feels desperate to be as close to him as possible, especially when he looks like this relaxed and comfortable in what Ilya is pretty sure is his own hoodie. Not that anyone knows, just him and god does that make him feel special.

"Mhm very jealous." Ilya says, pulling his boyfriend towards him, so they are pressed up against each other and enjoying himself in a slow luxurious kiss. "What are you going to do about it? Suck my dick till I forget about them or use those lovely thighs to ride me." He murmurs between them.

Shane yanks his head away and Ilya chases after him, "Neither."

Ilya pouts, "No fun."

"I think I am very fun."

It's cute, Ilya thinks, how ignorant he is to how boring his life is. He loves him.

"If you say so."

Shane steps away from him, and Ilya lets out a frustrated sigh at the space between them, so he can examine the vase closer. The petals are beginning to wilt and the colours aren't as bright as they were when they first arrived, but Ilya isn't strong enough to part with them quite yet.

Throwing them away feels like losing a part of his mother,

"So, who are they from?" Shane asks.

"Guess."

"Ilya."

"That is not a guess."

"Ilya."

He doesn't seem to be in the mood for a game, a shame really since Ilya gets such enjoyment out of it,.

“My mom.”

A silence settles over them. Ilya's not sure what Shane was expecting. He assumed the answer was pretty obvious.

“How you feeling?” Shane eventually asks.

“Okay.”

Shane sends him a disbelieving look. Ilya hates how well he can see through him, wishes he could go back in time where Shane didn't know when he was happy or sad.

"I've felt like shit for the last week is that what you want me to say?" The words come out sharp but Shane doesn't take a step back, instead he stays grounded in front of him.

He doesn't seem surprised - almost relieved. Ilya hates it. Wants to get a reaction out of him.

"Yes."

Ilya groans and pulls at his hair. It's getting too long but every time he tries to mention he needs to cut it Shane makes a complaint and Ilya has learnt that no matter how hard he pretends he is, he's not very good at denying Shane anything.

"Fine. It's been shit." His voice is gruff and he thinks that if he spends any longer talking about this he might cry. "And I don't know what to think, so can I please kiss you instead?"

Shane nods and lets Ilya lead him to his bedroom, and getting exactly what he's been craving for the past few weeks.

He knows Shane won’t let it rest, and he will bring the conversation up again, but for now he lets him have this. He lets him have him.

-

Ilya isn’t sure why he decides that they should do a repeat. Why he decides that he should meet his mother at the same station with the hope that she doesn’t disappear on him this time. Maybe he's a masochist, that sounds about right, even if Shane would disagree.

He looks up at the illuminated train board, with his mother's trained announced as the next one to arrive.

The train is running on time, there aren't any delays and so there can't be a reason things can fall apart.

The train pulls into a platform. The doors open. His mother steps off.

Ilya considers turning around, leaving her standing alone as some sort of sick payback. But he stops himself, he’s not cruel, even if he likes to keep his hard persona in tact.

His mothers eyes light up when they land on him and she hurries towards him, her little suitcase banging along on the concert behind her in her hurry.

She sweeps him up in a hug, and even though he’s a good head taller than her he feels himself sink into her embrace.

“I am so sorry.” She murmurs into his hair.

He doesn’t say anything. He doesn’t know what to say.

They are sitting in his kitchen, a bottle of alcohol free wine between them. That’s another thing - his mother doesn’t drink. Don't touch it.

Luckily, Shane doesn't drink during the season so it wasn't hard to find something suitable in the back of his fridge.

He wants to ask why she stopped drinking, but part of him thinks he already knows the answer and doesn’t want to peel back that wound when they are finally just fixing things again.

“I got scared.”

Ilya looks at her and takes a long sip of his drink and lets her continue.

“It’s just everything was going so well, our relationship, and I didn’t want to bring you into my mess. Especially, when your life is going so well for you.”

“You’re not a mess.”

“I left you when you were twelve.” The words hang in the air.

“Yes.” Ilya appreciates that she can acknowledge that. That they aren’t hiding behind that fact and pretending it never happened.

"And I don't think I will ever forgive myself for it."

Ilya wants to sit with this. Dissect it apart with his therapist about what it means for him and his future because his father was wrong. His mother did want him.

"Have you been in contact with Andrei?" He asks, trying to change the subject to something easier, that won't make his stomach churn, just at the sound of it.

"I wrote to him around the same time as you but he never responded."

Part of Ilya isn't surprised.

Andrei had always been closer to his father, even when they were still a 'family' unit although family unit feels like a bit of a stretch to describe the nature of their relationship. When his mother left, he only spoke of her coldly and when Ilya was biting back tears at the mere mention of her name all Andrei could do was scoff and curse her out. Neither of them have spoken since their father's funeral all those years ago apart from to hand over his apartment, holding back a few biting words.

“Do you guys ever see each other?”

“No.” His answer is instant.

She nods, she doesn’t seem surprised. “Thought as much.”

“When I first left, when you were twelve, I spiralled while on the road and got involved with people I shouldn’t. Trusted my money with others I shouldn’t. But I’m clean now and I want to be honest with you. Have a life with you in it, no matter the capacity you give me.”

"So why didn't you show up at the station?" It's been on his mind the entire time and he's surprised he's managed to hold back as much as he has.

Her shoulders slump forward.

“It was so much and I thought the moment you see me for who I really am, let me properly into your life and would see how much you are doing better without me.”

“That’s not possible.” He said fiercely. He can't understand why she would ever think it.

“I’m not perfect.”

“Neither am I.”

“And I know you don’t forgive me for leaving but I appreciate you letting me back in even though I’ve hurt you and I will make it up to you.”

Ilya nods, “How long left in Canada do you have till you have to leave?”

It’s the question he’s been putting off. The question he partly doesn’t want an answer to because she isn't a Canadian native. Her extended stay in the country can only last so long till she will have to return to her home country.

“In about a month. But I’ll save up and come and visit every now and then. I mean I have to I got a granddaughter to see now.”

Anya makes a pleased noise at her feet, for not being forgotten, and nuzzles against her feet.

-

December

Ilya frowns down at his boyfriend who is sitting up in bed, a pair of glasses perched on his nose as he stares down at his laptop. He looks incredibly cosy with the duvet pooling deliciously around his hips and showing so much soft skin. Ilya really wants to strip down and get in beside him. But something else catches his attention.

“What are you smiling at?” Ilya asks suspiciously. Shane is pulling a funny face as he stares at the screen, not the usual face he makes replying to potential sponsors and managers.

“No one.” He slams his laptop shut and pushes it away.

Ilya goes to grab for it but Shane is too fast and he dodges out of the way. He jumps out of bed, and holds it above his head.

"Don't you dare."

"Come on tell me." Ilya whines but Shane shakes his head.

“You will see.” Shane says and locks himself away in the bathroom along with the laptop.

Ilya glares at the door, before giving up and retreating back to bed. He will find out one way or another. Shane can never keep a secret from him.

-

Ilya watches as Shane and David walk ahead. They have been in deep conversation about something or other, for the last half an hour or so, and whenever he and Yuna try to investigate they are immediately shut down.

Ilya can only assume it’s a surprise Christmas gift for one of them, or both.

Shane and David send each other knowing looks when they think Ilya and Yuna they aren't looking. Neither of them are very good at keeping secrets so Ilya knows it won't be long till one of them cracks. Shane’s inability to lie is clearly genetic and it's not from his mom's side. Ilya does hope their future children don’t pick up on it too, that would be utterly disastrous. He shivers at the thought.

He needs to have at least one child who can come up with the best pranks to pull on his husband.

The closer it gets to the festive months the busier the local markets become with more people swarming the stools full of all sorts of seasonal fruit and veg. Yuna makes an offhanded comment about one woman who seems to be buying for an army and Ilya has to hide his grin behind the collar of his coat, when the woman stares around at them. He never expected to get on so well with Shane's family, especially when they found about their relationship in a less than respectable manner with Ilya's tongue down Shane's throat.

“Ilya.” He pauses when he hears his name. That can't be right.

“Mom?”

Yuna gives him a confused glance and turns to see where he is looking to find his mother standing a few metres away. She's as well dressed as always, a beanie with a large pom pom placed stylishly on her head. He didn't expect to bump into her so far from where she is staying, especially since it's getting closer to the time she needs to travel back to Russia.

Ilya takes pity on Yuna's confusion and introduces them both.

“This is Yuna," he gestures at the woman standing beside him. "Shane's mom and Yuna, this is my mom Irina.”

Yuna is quick to adapt, clearly learnt from the time she has spent working as Shane's agent, as she politely holds out her hand. David and Shane are now far ahead, having not noticed that he and Yuna aren't keeping up. Right now, they are studying a set of incense sticks from an overly enthusiastic man who's trying to get them to open their wallets a bit further away. From far away Ilya can still make out, how Shane has turned his nose up at the array of scents.

“It’s lovely to meet you.” Yuna says, “I would introduce my husband but he has disappeared off to buy some incense that we definitely don't need.” She provides the explanation with an eye roll with it and Irina laughs.

"Typical men."

It’s almost natural how his mother joins the two of them as they follow after Shane and David. By now their bags are overflowing and Ilya wonders what random vegetables Shane will be bringing home this time. The last time he had proudly announced his purchase of Jerusalem artichokes and Ilya had stared at him in confusion and asked what exactly he thought he was going to fucking do with them.

Shane had shrugged and said he would look up a recipe online.

“You should join us for New Years Eve party.” Ilya’s head whips round to look at Yuna who's staring earnestly at his mother.

She stops, taken by surprise at the offering and causes the people behind them to collide with her. “Oh I couldn't.”

“It would be our pleasure.”

-

Christmas is a blur, spent at the Hollander's house, who dote on him far too much for someone who isn't blood related.. Ilya doesn't know what to do when he unwraps one of his gifts from under the tree and finds a pair of red Christmas pyjamas, that matches with the rest of the family along with being forced to join in with their annual photograph. He tries not to think about being included in the Hollander photo album that sits pride of place on the mantel piece.

Unsurprisingly the food is amazing and he even manages to get Shane to take a few mouthfuls of non diet food, under the pretence that it's Christmas so it doesn't count. Afterwards he helps David clear up and then proceeds to lounge about on the couch and complain about how much food he's eaten and how he will never be able to move again.

Later that evening, when Shane is downstairs playing a particular competitive game of Yahtzee with Yuna, Ilya calls his mom, his phone held tightly to his ear.

"Happy Christmas." She says in Russian and Ilya smiles into the empty bedroom. He doesn't care what he looks like no one can see him and the pathetic faces he's making.

"Happy Christmas Mom." He returns. Never did he imagine he would be saying those words again.

They discuss their day, comparing different gifts they have received and she thanks him for the new watch he got her. He had spent ages choosing it, wondering whether she preferred her jewellery gold or silver and if an engraving was appropriate. In the end he went with silver and her name written in russia on the inside strap.

It was simple but personalised.

When they finally hang up, after he catches her yawning into the receiver one too many times he can't help but feel a little bit lighter as he makes his way back downstairs to join the rest of his family.

-

New Year's Eve is an affair. There are decorations everywhere, music playing from speakers and an array of finger foods that have been neatly presented on trays that Ilya knows Yuna spent hours making. There are also lots of people, people Ilya has never seen before and probably will never see again.

He mourns the privacy of Christmas, just the four of them sitting around a large wooden table, as he stares across the room at Shane who's in a deep discussion with someone he used

to go to school with.

Here, he and Shane are nothing more than friends slash rivals on ice who run a foundation together and play for opposing teams in the same league. It’s not strange that Ilya has been invited, he reminds himself for what might be tenth time that evening. It would only be strange if he hung onto Shane for the whole evening and didn't even attempt to mingle. Although, he has to admit that prospect of getting to know people is slowly becoming less appealing, even when he grabs another glass of drink.

A small part of him wants to be able to walk over to Shane, throw caution to the wind, place a hand round his waist and kiss him in front of everyone. Damn the consequences.

But he can’t. That's not allowed, even if that’s what he wants so badly.

“He’s not going to disappear if you look the other way.” David comments behind him. He's dressed up tonight, his tie a matching colour purple to Yuna's dress. Ilya has already paid them compliments for it.

Ilya turns to look at him for a moment before returning his attention back to Shane. “I wasn’t worried about that,” he says.

“Thats why you are staring at anyone who talks to him with something akin to murder in your eyes.” David is grinning at him knowingly and Ilya really doesn't want to get into this. Definitely not with his future father in law.

“I’m just making sure he is happy.” He says in explanation even though he doesn't need to. He doesn't owe any one an explanation, thank you very much

“Of course.” David nods knowingly and then his attention is caught elsewhere. “The lady of the hour.” He announces.

Ilya looks over to find his mother standing a few feet away, looking rather nervous. She's dressed in a lavender colour dress and her blonde hair has been carefully styled into a neat bun. “Thank you for inviting me. I wasn’t expecting you to go all out.” She gestures at the array of lights and people in every corner of every room

“You can thank Yuna for that. She likes to make quite the impression.” David laughs good-naturedly. Ilya still isn't over the sight of seeing the both of them in close proximity let alone speaking to each other.

It doesn't take long till David is being dragged away by one of the other party goers leaving Ilya alone with his mother.

“Thank you for coming.” He says quietly and she smiles up at him.

"This family means a lot to you so I want them to mean a lot to me."

Did she have to say somethings profound in a room full of people?

"I don't –." He starts again, the words getting stuck in the back of his throat. "I don't think you understand what that means to me."

"I think I do."

Hours pass, and Ilya only has so much restraint as the run up to midnight fast approaches. He forces a smile onto his face as someone discusses the latest football scores that he doesn't understand let alone care about. He makes sure to nod in all the correct places, making a noise in agreement if it requires it but his eyes always fall back to Shane.

He excuses himself from the conversation, walks over to Shane who now has a half empty glass of champagne in one hand and is looking slightly tipsy, “Lovely party.” Ilya greets when he reaches him.

The woman that Shane is talking to looks at him in surprise and Ilya knows she has instantly recognised him. He doesn’t pay her much attention, as he stares Shane down, taking in the flush of his cheeks and slight mused look from his hair where he must have been running his hand through it. Ilya wants to mess it up further.

“Shane, your girlfriend is looking for you, it's nearing midnight.” He informs him and Shane looks confused for all of a few seconds before it clicks.

“Where did Lily say to meet?” He asks, and god Ilya forgot what an awful liar he is.

"I think she mentioned in the garden."

He turns on his heels, and leaves Shane standing there. He knows he's watching, and he can't stop the sway of his hips as he walks towards the array of foods and shoves one of the Hors d'oeuvres into his mouth.

Ten

The countdown to midnight begins and Ilya is standing alone in the garden, wondering where the hell Shane has got up to. He hears the sound of footsteps and finds Shane standing there, his hands shoved deep into his pockets.

Nine

"There you are." He breathes but it is still too open with a few people milling around, some couples who have completely ignored the countdown and are already making out and others

in deep conversation. They aren't paying them any attention but he's not about to risk it and chance their names all over the media tomorrow morning.

Eight

He takes ahold of Shane's hand and begins to drag him further into the garden, so they are hidden away by the towering oak trees, so nobody can see them.

Seven

“Are you kidnapping me?” Shane hisses, but he’s smiling adoringly at Ilya in that loose way he gets when he has drunk a couple of glasses of wine and Ilya really loves him.

Six

“Yeah.” Ilya nods, “Going to kidnap you and keep you with me forever.”

Five

"Is that a proposal Ilya." Shane teases.

Four

"You will know when I am proposing to you." Ilya says, placing a finger under Shane's chin and tipping it up to look at him.

Three

Two

Ilya doesn’t wait to hear one as he kisses Shane, the world coming to a halt.

Happy fucking new year.

-

January

Ilya is never very good at goodbyes.

His stomach twists as he stands and watches as his mother makes her way towards the line for security. If he kept hugging her any longer she would miss her flight, he reminds himself. He's not sure when he's going to see her again and part of him is tempted to buy her a way one ticket so he can keep her here forever. Sadly thats easier said than done.

Shane had wanted to come with him to the airport, but Ilya had downright refused telling him Montreal needed him more but now that he was here alone he was deeply regretting that decision.

He had gotten so used to his mothers presence that now he feels empty. Hollow.

Once she has disappeared from sight, one last wave in his direction he returns to his car, staring blankly out of the windshield.

There are families milling around with piles of suitcases and the ache in his chest worsens because it's only a further reminder.

He stares at his satnav as he wonders where to go. There isn't much appeal going back to an empty house when his two favourite people are at least a plane ride away. Eventually he types in his address, turning up his music as he puts together a plan.

Finally he gets back home, having had to sit in far too much traffic for his liking he is immediately met by an energetic wagging dog.

“I was thinking.” he says, couching down on his knees so he's the same height as the overly zealous dog. “We could go spend the afternoon with your grandparents."

Yuna and David are delighted to see them as always.

-

June

Ilya doesn’t like his birthday.

It’s some sort of ingrained feeling in him. Some people hate the rain, whereas others hate the heat. Ilya, however, hates his birthday .

Maybe hate is a strong word, but he has a particular strong dislike to the day. He knows he should enjoy it but no matter how much he tries he can't see the appeal.

Still Shane has never been one to back down from a challenge and when he wakes Ilya up that morning with his mouth all over his body, Ilya decides that he will let it slide.

He can enjoy this part and if Shane decides he wants to spend the day in bed with him Ilya might decide he can be so courteous that he allows him to.

However, once they have cleaned up and Shane has made him a special breakfast in bed he doesn’t try to start something up.

No, he encourages Ilya to put clothes on. The opposite of what he expected.

“So I got a surprise.” Shane says, he looks nervous as he says it and Ilya raises a distrusting brow at him. “I know, I know, you hate birthdays. But hear me out just this once.”

“I’m not sure if I can hear you out. If you have organised secret party downstairs I will not be happy." Ilya warns him

“Trust me.” Before he realises what’s happening his eyes are being covered by Shane’s hand, the world turning to black, and he’s being guided out of the room and down the hallway.

He trips once or twice over Anya's dog toys strewn all over the place, but Shane always catches him with a tight grip at the waist or a strong pull back against his body.

The floor changes, from carpet to something more slippery and he guesses they have arrived in the kitchen.

“Shane I swear if this is some elaborate plan to murder me you will—”

“Why are you so obsessed with the idea that I will murder you. I'm going to ban murder shows from your Netflix I swear.” Shane says from behind him

“Sounds like something you would do.”

“To think I just want to be nice to you and you won't accept it."

“Why are you two always bickering?” A Russian voice interrupts them and Shane finally removes his hand, the sudden bright light causing Ilya to squint as his eyes readjust.

“I thought you are in Russia.” Is the first thing that comes out of his mouth before he immediately slaps a hand over it.

“It’s lovely to see you too.” When Ilya still doesn’t say anything she goes on to explain. “I was in Russia but I wanted to make a trip to come see you for your birthday and lovely Shane helped me plan it.”

His boyfriend goes red, and if it was possible Ilya thinks he would fall more in love.

“I love you.” He mouths over his mothers shoulder as he pulls her in for a tight hug.

There’s a bark behind them and they turn to find Anya wagging her tail as she looks at all of them, looking a bit left out.

“It was a nightmare keeping her quiet,” Shane admits. “She kept trying to bark in excitement when Irina first got here and not even her smelly treats made her quiet.”

"That because she loves Grandma Irina." His mother laughs and then turns to Ilya “Happy birthday Илья”

A very happy birthday indeed.

End Notes

i have finished this and have now realised this is the 3rd fic where i've just started resurrecting characters for funsies. maybe i got problems

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