

My name is Shane || Меня зовут Шейн

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by [Kzzak](#)

Summary

Shane Hollander decides to show off the progress he has made with Russian. Ilya goes nuts over it.

Set in Ilya's apartment during Episode 4.

Notes

The 'Shane learning Russian' thing on here has been explored a bit, but I was desperate to add my spin on it. With the help of a special someone, I decided to use that scene from Episode 4 at Ilya's as the setting.

First Heated Rivalry fic! This show has taken over my brain like a parasite but instead of it being a bad parasite it's a parasite of two hot hockey players who love each other.

Was listening to this song while writing a decent amount of it, it feels quite Hollanov to me (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EQto-edK_8w)

Chapter 1

Menya zovut Shane — My name is Shane

Shane wanted to tear his hair out. Ilya's phone had just rung, leading to him getting up from the couch in his apartment to answer the call, and Shane's mind was in a tailspin.

The first reason for this was Ilya saying that he was fucking countless women on the side. Of course, it would be stupid to assume that he was the only person Ilya was seeing for sex, but Shane fell into the trap of believing that anyway and the revelation that his assumption was incorrect stung, searing a feeling of failure into his brain. He couldn't help but feel crushed.

The second was that he felt like he had botched that conversation completely. He wasn't sure why or how, but Shane just got the sense that he was missing something, like Ilya has communicated messages and subtexts concealed beneath the literal sense of his words. All he could do was hope that Ilya didn't think Shane didn't like him. Or that he was a moron. He knew that when Ilya said that he was boring and that he didn't like Shane as a person, he was just joking. But what if there was a kernel of truth there? Why couldn't he even begin to hold a candle to Ilya's confidence and charisma?

“Папа,” Ilya breathed into the phone; tone laced with concern. Shane knew what that word meant: *Papa*, Dad. He had decided to pick up some language learning app a couple of weeks prior. Initially he thought it was going to be some casual thing — something he did for 10 minutes each day. What he hadn't expected though, was that on some days off, he could fall into a zone, tapping away basic Russian words and sentences for an hour, maybe even two.

He had realised he was beginning to take it way too seriously when he bought a notebook to write down the bits and pieces that he was learning.

...That wasn't taking it too seriously, was it?

Shane's ultra beginner-level Russian couldn't make out what Ilya was saying, with each Russian syllable and word blending into the next into a mass of native language fluency. What he could tell though, was that Ilya's tone was distressed and very concerned, with him using an increasingly raised and clipped voice with the person on the other end. He uttered another “Папа”, and then there was a stretch of silence. Shane wondered if Ilya was both a) alright, and b) done, but those questions were quickly answered when Ilya yelled into the phone. Presumably at someone else, because who would yell at their dad like that?

That second call was over in 20 seconds, and Ilya returned to the couch in a slight huff. Shane couldn't help but think that seeing an aggressive Ilya like this... it was scary but also strangely intriguing — maybe even arousing.

“You still hungry?” Ilya questioned, to which Shane responded with a sharp and polite, “No, but thank you.”

Both of them resumed watching the hockey game on the TV, but Shane couldn't leave it there. He needed to signal to Ilya that he was there and that he *cared* — he had little desire to let Ilya suffer in silence with no respite in him. An idea slinked into his head, and Shane instantly became convinced that it was the best possible thing to say after some quick analysis of the pros and cons in his subconscious. A way to show that he truly cared about the man seated next to him.

“How's your father?” Shane asked, angling his head to face Ilya, albeit not head-on.

Ilya stopped rubbing the back of his neck, and let a couple seconds pass as he looked at Shane with an unreadable expression on his face.

“Ah, you speak Russian now?” He exclaimed, again with a tone that Shane just could not place. Shit. Was he angry?

“I know the word for father,” he reflexively blurted out in response, letting out a nervous chuckle in tandem.

A gentle, genuine — at least Shane *thought* it was genuine? — smile crept across the Boston captain's face, and he pulled Shane into him; his right arm protectively slinking around his shoulders. Shane resolved to rest his head on Ilya's chest.

He had said the right thing. He sighed. Externally it looked like it was out of contentment, and it's not like he *wasn't* content, but internally it was out of relief.

Ilya played with his hair and scalp, while the Voyageurs' captain rested his hand in the inside of his rival's thigh. His eyes were closed; he felt blissful, protected against all the harms and worries of the world, because he was here in the moment, with Ilya.

Shane let the moment sit for one minute, then two, just enjoying the physical sensation of Ilya's fingers caressing his scalp.

A thought crossed Shane's mind. Showing off his very limited Russian worked before with Ilya, why not try it again? He wanted to impress the man and make him like him, so he resolved to give it another shot. He gazed up at Ilya, and in response he looked down at him, a calm demeanour gracing his face.

“Меня зовут Шейн. Как тебя зовут?” *My name is Shane. What is your name?*

Ilya's face lit up, and a lopsided smile crept across his lips. “Wait, you're *actually* learning Russian?” he exclaimed.

Shane's cheeks flushed. “It was just a little thing,” he explained, giving a slight shake of his head, “started using Duolingo just to, um—,”

Ilya's eyes and facial expression were half astonished, and half full of lust and desire; a semi-open mouth morphed into a shocked smile.

“—learn a bit of Russian, I guess?” Shane breathed in, slightly embarrassed about the confession but in too deep now, “I wanted to be able to talk to you in your first lang—”

Shane, however, was unable to finish that sentence before Ilya rushed to him, climbed on top of his seated body, and crashed his lips into Shane's. Ilya's hands gripped his scalp — unwilling to let go — and his black hair was coming out in tufts between his fingers.

His head separated from Shane's as if he were done — resulting in a confused and concerned look from the Canadian — but instead he looked into Shane's eyes and breathed out a short “меня зовут Илья.” *My name is Ilya.* Ilya took Shane's chin into his hand, and their lips made contact once again. It was initiated by Ilya, but Shane couldn't help but lean into it.

Several minutes had passed in what could only be considered a passionate make-out session, and they had now rested again on the couch, both seated upright yet close to each other. Ilya's arm had again found its way resting around his shoulders and upper back.

At this point, Shane felt he was in too deep: He had committed to this ‘say Russian things to Ilya’ game, and he didn't feel like stopping. Besides, the first two times went well, and third time's the charm, right? He turned his head to face Ilya's.

“Илья, где метро?” *Where is the train station?*

Ilya let out an uncontrolled burst of laughter. “What?” he questioned in the accent that made Shane want to melt into the floor, “You want to know where train is?” His tone was a bit exasperated, but not actually angry. Like he was dealing with a kid.

“Где метро? Я хочу метро.” Shane blabbered, offering a mischievous smile. *Where is the train station? I want the train station.*

Ilya's arm was prostrated out, gesturing towards Shane with an upwards-facing palm. “You want train station? That makes no sense!” Ilya said enunciating the final words and rolling his eyes, but the smile etched upon his face betrayed his true level of amusement.

An impish smile then danced across the Russian's face, and Shane held his breath in both anxious trepidation and excitement. “You want train?” Ilya said smoothly, crawling towards Shane in a predator-like fashion, “I can show you where train is.”

A blush quickly threatened to cover Shane's whole face as Ilya's hand disappeared under the waist of his pants and into his crotch area.

“Ilya!” Shane cried out, turning his head and shielding his eyes out of shock if anything, even if the sight wouldn't be entirely unpleasant.

Ilya laughed, “Sorry, sorry, too much,” and Shane gave him a chuckle, trying to show that the apology was both accepted and not needed.

It was then Shane's turn to have his round of fun.

He felt like being an uncharacteristic little shit. Look, he saw an opportunity to take a page out of Ilya's book, and he didn't want to let it go to waste. Shane of all people knew how easy it could be for Ilya to rile someone up. That fucking Russian was a master at it, and he was able to do it all with a devilish, lopsided grin on his face. Shane had fallen victim to Ilya's enraging antics far too many times, whether on the ice, through texts and calls, or in person like they were now.

He knew what he had to do.

"Ilya," Shane said, drawing out the final syllable and putting a whining spin on it just a bit, looking up at the gorgeous face of his boyf— *whatever he was*.

"What is it, my beautiful boy?" Ilya said, smiling lovingly down at him.

Wh— oh *fuck*.

Shane suddenly felt his heart rate explode and his head rush with blood. The way the buffer, taller man said that to him, the look on his face, the words he said, all made him realise that he absolutely adored this man. That he wished he could spend the rest of his life in this position, in this place — existing in a state of pure bliss.

Indeed, he felt his resolve crack and thought that maybe trying to piss Ilya off right now wasn't appropriate because at the moment he was completely head-over-heels for this man, and he didn't know what to do about it. But if he didn't follow through, then he would have to come up with something else to say.

Maybe he could say 'I love you'?

Shane expelled that thought before it could mature. No. God no, he couldn't. Ilya had just admitted to him that he was seeing women. The two of them were just fuckbuddies. Fuckbuddies that had gotten very close, yes, but fuckbuddies nonetheless.

He stuck to the original plan.

His eyes made contact with the playful ones of the man he was entwined with on the couch. It was an amazing moment. But he had to ruin it. He felt a small smile come on.

"У тебя есть метро?" *Do you have a train station?*

"Do I have— that doesn't make any fucking sense either, Hollander!" Ilya cried out in mock hurt, "How can you, ah, how you say, *butcher* my language like this? How?!"

Shane laughed, genuine and full of mirth.

"What bullshit is this app teaching you? I could teach you, way better."

"Could you?" Shane asked, eyebrows raised, playfully mocking him.

"Yes, I— okay hang on. Don't move." Ilya instructed. Shane was all too happy to oblige.

During Ilya's temporary absence, Shane knew then and there that this was heaven, and that he wished he could have this forever.

"Okay," Ilya smirked, with a slightly devious edge to his tone and face, and returned with a sheet of paper torn out from a lined notebook and a Boston Raiders-branded pen. Shane scoffed. Of course he would pick *that* pen for *whatever* this was.

"You think you're so good at Russian, eh? Trying to impress me, huh?"

A small, playful smile formed on the lips of the Montreal Voyageurs' captain. "Well, no—"

Unfortunately for Shane, however, Ilya had found his footing and was taking metaphorical laps around him. Circling his prey. Shane had never been so intrigued yet spooked by a blank sheet of paper and a pen.

"You know Russian alphabet, Hollander?"

"I mean, yeah?" He responded, albeit with some hesitation. He didn't really know where this was going, and frankly when it came to Ilya that fucking terrified him.

"Good," Ilya grinned, sitting down and putting his folded hands behind his head, triumphant and in a position of confident relaxation, "prove it," he commanded, "write my name in Russian."

"That's fucking stupid—"

"No!" Ilya said, "I want to see, I won't laugh, promise," holding up his pinkie finger and wiggling it.

Shane craved the sweet release of death.

Still, he grasped the pen in his hand and drew a backwards 'N' for the 'I' in Ilya. The man in question was watching contently, a smug yet inviting look on his face.

He continued the rest of the letters for Ilya: the 'л' for the 'l', and then the 'я' for the 'ya'. Shane wondered if this was some mystical tactic to try to capture and ensnare him further in Ilya's grasp. He hated that it could very well be working.

"No, no," Ilya exclaimed, leaning forward, "you forgot the, ah, *myagkiy znak*, the— how you say, *soft sign*?" Shane couldn't help but find Ilya's upward inflection adorable, as if he were looking to *Shane* for guidance and approval that he was making sense and communicating correctly.

"Give me the pen," Ilya commanded, and Shane obliged.

"See, you need to put the *myagkiy znak* here," he explained, gesturing to the space between the 'л' and 'я' in the 'Иля' that Shane had written, and writing in a little 'ь'.

Илья. И'ya.

“Do Rozanov now,” he instructed.

“Ilya,” Shane whined, but Ilya would have none of it.

“I want to see! Come on, you did Ilya— Actually, Ilya does *you*.”

Shane said the line he had to say way too often. “Fuck off, Rozanov.”

“Do it,” Ilya pleaded, “for me?” He pouted.

Ilya was fucking pouting. Shane sighed. The fucking things he did for this man.

Shane wrote it out, letter by letter, taking care with each stroke of the pen, almost as if he were doing calligraphy.

Розанов. *Rozanov*.

Shane looked up occasionally to glance at Ilya. He watched on; eyes trained on the paper and moving pen, with a serene, content look on his face. Shane’s cheeks became pinker as he realised that what he was doing was pleasing the Raiders’ hulking captain immensely. He had no idea why, nor what the machinations were inside the other man’s head, but it’s not like he was *mad* about it.

“Hang on, hang on,” Ilya suddenly exclaimed once Shane was finished writing the man’s surname. “You’re writing like preschool kid,” and Shane didn’t have the time to stammer out an indignation before Ilya continued: “In Russia, we write in cursive. Let me show you,” he said, and before Shane could react properly, Ilya put his hand around Shane’s on the pen. His heart fluttered, as if he were some teenage girl. What the fuck was happening to him.

“You start with the ‘Il’ in Ilya,” Ilya explained, dragging out the intonation. Their hands slowly moved in tandem, guided by the Russian’s surprisingly fluid movements. Together, they wrote out his first name in Russian cursive. If Shane’s heart fluttered when Ilya’s hand touched his, it was now beating rapidly in response to the gentle and caring touch.

“And then you do again with the ‘Po’,” Ilya further demonstrated, guiding Shane’s hand once more to write out Ilya Rozanov’s name in a Russian cursive that looked way different (and way better) than his own printed block letters.

“And that,” Ilya declared, taking his hand off Shane’s once the final letter was done, “is what you’ll have tattoo of soon.”

Shane expelled air through his nose as if to scoff, but he couldn’t keep the thin smile off his face, “Fuck off, Rozanov,” he said, completely without malice. Because how could he be seriously angry?

The fact is, Shane was having the time of his life.

He— Oh no.

A paralysing, heart-stopping realisation hit Shane like a full-speed train.

He loved Ilya Rozanov.

His breath hitched in his throat.

He couldn't love him. Loving another male player was one thing, but loving the captain of the fucking Boston Raiders? No.

No, this could never work out. How the fuck would they be even able to date? They couldn't. It was impossible, unfathomable. And how could he fall in love with someone who saw him as just another conquest? Another trophy to mount on the wall?

Shane stood up suddenly, bolting upwards from the couch and destroying the tender moment he and Ilya had been building and experiencing for half an hour.

"I should—" he stuttered, breathing frantically. Ilya's face of surprised disappointment threatened to break Shane's heart even further. But he couldn't give in. He knew the truth; he knew that *this* wouldn't and couldn't work.

Shane continued. "I should, uh—" he said, stuttering and gathering his affairs, "I should go."

"Team meeting in the morning, I forgot," he put forward as a pathetic and flimsy excuse. He faced forward, refusing — or unable? — to look at Ilya at *all*, let alone in the face. Jesus Christ, he was such a killjoy fuck-up.

"Okay," Ilya said, nodding with an astonished smile: stripped of all positivity.

"*You* forgot team meeting?" The Boston captain questioned him, clearly deeply suspicious. Fucking shit.

"Thanks for the tuna melt," Shane responded, looking down and completely dodging the point because he was a fucking coward unable to own up to his mistakes or explain himself.

Shane continued to um and ah, before finally looking at the man he was ditching, "I'm sorry, this... I can't."

Ilya could see right fucking through him as usual, giving him a look that made sure Shane knew that Ilya wasn't buying a cent of his excuses.

"Hollander," Ilya said, gesturing with an expecting upwards palm, silently challenging him to reverse his decision.

"I, just," Shane said, shaking his head slightly, "I can't, uh... I can't do this."

"Hollander," Ilya said, tone full of disappointment and prodding him even more for an actual explanation or *anything*. But Shane had nothing to give. The shame burned inside of him, rendering speech difficult.

"I'm sorry," he said as a final goodbye, because he knew then that he desperately needed to get out. Get away. Go home. He offered a final glance, and Ilya's expression was so tragic that it made Shane want to escape out of sheer anguish.

He fled the scene of the disaster via the front door and brought himself into the car. Starting the engine, he reversed out of the driveway of Ilya's apartment, completely unable to bring himself to look back at what he had left behind. **Who** he had left behind.

His knuckles were white with strain on the steering wheel as he pulled out onto the road. Get out. Get out. Get out. Don't cry. Don't cry. Don't cry.

As his distance from Ilya's house grew minute by minute, he couldn't stop tears streaking down his face and gathering on his chin, leaving slivers of wetness making their vertical marks on his cheek.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Ilya's perspective from Chapter 1, along with his struggles after

Chapter Notes

I WROTE ANOTHER CHAPTER EVERYONE CLAP

DIDN'T THINK I WOULD DO IT BUT HERE WE ARE BBY

Shane's sudden exit stung, Ilya had to admit.

His couch—which had held the two of them just a couple of minutes prior—now felt badly empty and lacking. It was quiet now; Ilya heard Shane's car speed out of the driveway, with the noise of the engine and wheels getting progressively further away until... nothing.

There was nothing.

No passion-driven kisses. No sultry sentences spoken to each other or whispered into the other's ear. No entanglement of naked limbs. No expelling of breath, nor burst of delight and laughter. Just dull stillness, and the vacuum left by the absence of a presence no longer physically there, yet still there in spirit.

Ilya was just *confused*. Shane offered up a lame excuse about practice and then stuttered out a flimsy explanation about not being able to do 'this' before dashing out of the door almost as quickly as he had gotten up. He and Shane had been having a good time. There was light chirping (mainly from Ilya at Shane's expense), they had begun to kiss, it had gotten increasingly passionate, and then it was like someone had pulled out Shane's power cord—he shut down.

Ilya had gone through the motions of tidying up, his head staticky. He hadn't really felt like he was doing it; it all felt separated from his mind, as if his body were simply moving on instinct.

Ilya had picked up Shane's can of ginger ale. It had been left unfinished on the coffee table. Ilya watched the remaining carbonated brown liquid filter and stream down into the drain of his kitchen sink.

Ilya tried not let it marinate in his head too much. He loaded the dishes into the dishwasher (society's greatest invention, according to him), scrolled social media aimlessly to dampen his thoughts. It was effective, yet once the phone was switched off, the silence and idleness filled his mind again, and with them, thoughts of the star hockey player.

A few hours after Shane left, Ilya typed up a text message.

What the fuck Hollander why did you leave

...No.

What the fuck Hollander why did|

What the fuck Hollan

What th|

The vertical text line in the empty message box blinked at him in a way that almost felt mocking. Needling him as to why he couldn't come up with a fucking respo—

Ilya groaned. This was fucking stupid.

He turned off his phone and went for a punishing run, to 'clear his head' he told himself, not stopping until his legs physically could not take him any further at a running pace. The walk home—several kilometres at this point—was painful. He knew his legs would scream at him the following day, just in time for practice.

It was like penitent self-flagellation that Ilya couldn't make heads or tails of whether he warranted or not. He leaned towards the 'not'—he hadn't done anything wrong. Yet still, for some inexplicable reason, he thought about Shane's exit and couldn't help but feel some level of guilt and culpability.

The water of the shower lashed at his skin in hot, piercing lines, and through the water-induced pain was the haunting image of the man he realised he had maybe fallen in love with. He forced his eyes shut, the water continuing to cascade down his body.

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Practice the next day was...

Well, it wasn't a *total* disaster. Ilya passed to an adequate standard; his shooting was... okay. He manoeuvred in a way that was not entirely graceful or fluid, yet still passable. But everything was *off*. He felt it, everyone could feel it. Marleau brought it up with him, slapping him on the shoulder and asking a concerned "Hey man, you alright?" that Ilya brushed off.

But he could see the eyes his teammates were giving each other. They were barely perceptible, but Ilya had always been a perceptive man. Ilya knew that they were suspicious—worried, even. Their looks begged him for an explanation, which he did not give.

There was an explanation, though. It had been lurking in his mind despite his attempts to will it all away.

He was struggling to cope. Unable to understand. The events of the day prior replayed on loop, specifically the final moment where the Montreal captain made his great escape. It hurt.

It **hurt**, and Ilya couldn't get it out of his **fucking** mind.

And it was made all the worse by not knowing *why* Shane had ditched him. They hadn't messaged since then, perhaps nothing *too* dramatic normally, but they were regularly messaging on a daily basis now. Ilya didn't try any further messages beyond the failed attempt the day prior. He justified it as simply giving Shane some space.

But he knew that was a lie.

He didn't *want* to give him space. He wanted to demand that he come back and allow him to be held tightly in Ilya's arms. He wanted to rock up to his Montreal apartment in order to get *any* sort of explanation and then comfort him. He wanted to be able to feel his lips against his again, even though they had only seen each other the day prior.

Ilya ignored the cajoling of his teammates and changed, heading off to his car with a few simple goodbyes and parting chirps. The drive home was quiet. He didn't feel like music today.

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Ilya got home and kicked his slides off at the door. He tried not to get too comfortable—he was leaving the next day for another road match.

Something else was on his mind.

Luerlingo?

Julingo?

What the fuck was that app Shane mentioned?

He collapsed into the couch with a heavy *oomph* and opened Google.

'Learn language app'

Google Translate. No.

Learn Languages with Babbel. No.

Pimsleur. No...

Duolingo — *The world's most popular way to learn.*

Ilya's heart stopped. Duolingo! That was the damn app Shane had mentioned that he was learning Russian on.

His mouth had broken out into enough of a smile when Shane mentioned that he knew the word for dad, even though in hindsight 'papa' was self-evident enough. Shit, Ilya thought to himself, it was probably the same in French. Still, just Shane knowing that word filled Ilya with a level of joy that he could never, ever, **ever** admit to anyone, let alone Shane.

And when Shane said his name in Russian and asked Ilya for his? God, it was so *cheesy*, but he was genuinely thrilled. Still, he couldn't help but question Shane to clarify whether he was learning Russian. He was.

Shane was learning **Russian**.

To better communicate with **him**.

At that moment, his heart surged, his brain totally malfunctioned, and something animalistic had taken over him. He couldn't keep his hands, or body, or mouth, off that fucking man. Not that he could process it at the time, but he just couldn't believe it—that Shane was, at least starting, to learn a new fucking language just for him.

It was one of the most beautiful things any friend-with-benefit or fuckbuddy or partner had ever done for him. He remembered that his hands grasped Shane's hair and scalp, afraid that letting go would mean he would slip away. When he looked at Shane, all he felt was *desire*.

Still, Shane had asked him a question — in Ilya's native fucking language — and Ilya had felt obligated to answer.

He brought his head back to look the Montreal captain properly in the eye and answered. "Меня зовут Илья." *My name is Ilya.* He couldn't help but put his lips on Shane's again.

It had calmed down after that. Ilya had been perfectly content to leave it there, relaxing in bliss with Shane on the couch. But Shane decided to be a know-it-all shit, showing off *more* of his Russian and asking him the most random questions about... train stations? So, Ilya decided to have his fun too, and God was it fun. What could he say? The Boston captain loved being a cocky, sexual tease.

Then, the lithe Ottawa native asked him if he had a train station. This didn't make any sense, and Ilya made it very clear that it didn't, all in good fun, of course. Then the little shit *challenged* him when Ilya said that he could teach Shane far better Russian than the app. The desire to put Shane in his place in, like, a non-sexual way, had been building by this point, but had reached a crescendo thanks to Shane's sheer insolence.

Ilya knew the perfect way to get back at him. He ordered him to stay put as Ilya went to fetch some paper and a pen. He went to a desk in one of the guest rooms he barely used, tearing out a piece of lined notebook paper. Paper secured, he searched for a writing instrument. His eyes scanned the selection of pens loose in one of the drawers. There were plenty of normal ones you could get from any stationery store in red, black, blue ink, and then...

A Boston Raiders-branded one.

Ilya smirked to himself. Perfect. He didn't even know how he got this, but he was definitely glad to have one.

He went back to Shane and found him in the exact same spot he told him to stay in, because of course he had heeded his order. Ilya could feel his confident gait as he approached.

"You know Russian alphabet?" Ilya asked the Metros captain.

"I mean, yeah?" he responded, some hesitation and *fear* in his voice. Ilya smirked. He liked how this was going.

"Good!" Ilya smiled and put himself into a relaxed position; one that silently asserted hierarchy with his hands laced behind his head, torso leaned back into one of the couch's back cushions luxuriously. "Prove it," he ordered, "write my name in Russian."

Shane's eyes widened slightly, his eyebrows raising up, astonished. "What, no! That's fucken stupid—"

But Ilya refused to let him finish the sentence. He *had* to get him to do it. Fuck, it was priceless.

Ilya promised that he wouldn't laugh (he had only some intention to hold that promise) and playfully wiggled his pinkie finger for extra effect. It was as if he could see Shane weigh up the pros and cons of the situation, like a split-second decision on the ice.

Shane, thankfully, rolled his eyes and relented.

Ilya watched him start; his eyes trained on the movement of the pen in front of him. He didn't *really* have a desire to humiliate him—albeit that would be a fun side effect—and do only that, he was also genuinely curious as to how far Shane had progressed in learning Russian. If he knew the alphabet, writing Ilya's name wouldn't be too difficult. It was a fun exercise, with an extra twinge of *something*.

And Shane did well! He had messed up with the soft sign in Илья, but he could hardly blame him for that: The idea of a random letter that didn't actually have a specific sound at all, ever, must've been awkward to parse for someone who had just started learning. Not even the occasional silent 'k' was that bad in comparison.

The Raiders captain was gentle with his correction, slotting in the small ь to turn 'Ilya' into 'Il'ya.'

Fuck, why was seeing the Metros captain write Ilya's name in Russian stirring some kind of feeling in his chest? ...And crotch. Ilya needed more.

He told a soon-to-be-flustered-and-annoyed Shane to write his surname too, which also took some prodding, but he acquiesced to the demand and did as instructed. It was all so fun and lively and *personal*. Raw.

Until it wasn't. Until Shane no longer found being with him desirable.

Ilya was brought back to the present. His house felt so empty without him.

He sighed.

He went to the Messages app and just... *looked* at "Jane's" contact, thinking. They had so much fun, and Ilya felt so much connection and sheer desire for him like no one with whom he had ever been before. What, were they supposed to go non-contact from now on? God, no. He couldn't handle that. Even if Shane rejected him for a final time, he had to *try*.

He tapped the contact, causing their most recent messages to flood his screen. Ilya's heart skipped a beat. He was *scared*. He was basically never like this—some nerves before each game, sure, but nothing like this. Being this scared over sending a text message, though, made him feel small and like a teenager.

There were so many things he could say.

Come back|

Ilya scrunched up his nose and cursed himself. That was the worst possible text. He quickly deleted it. What the fuck was he meant to send? All his charm and charisma felt like they were crumbling and turning into dust. Why the fuck was this so hard? He couldn't send anything too emotional or charged; that would look stupid. Yet in a horrid balancing act, he had to send something with *meaning*. Something that didn't say anything explicitly, just implied it.

When the idea finally hit him, he only hesitated a few seconds, rather than a few minutes, before sending it. It would work.

имбирный эль

means ginger ale in russian

I was going to tell you but you left before I could

before I could tell you I mean

His mind raced. Maybe that was too pathetic. Ilya reread it, and then again, and again, and oh shit, that *does* sound dumb and *sappy*. He turned off his phone, throwing it to the side, and squeezed his eyes shut, unable to open them because he had probably just fucked—

His phone vibrated.

Are you home?

Ilya's pulse quickened. He typed out a quick message.

yes, why

I'm coming over, if that's okay with you.

Oh my *God*. Ilya's chest felt like it was going to explode.

yes this is okay

I'll be there in thirty.

Ilya brought a hand through his curly, golden locks and breathed out. He didn't know entirely *why* Shane was suddenly okay with coming, and he didn't know if it was going to be a good encounter or one that crushed him, but he resolved to at least *dress* decently. He brushed his teeth and slipped a clean hoodie over his t-shirt.

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Ilya was on the couch when the doorbell rang. His heart rate had been progressively increasing with each passing minute, and he was so on edge that the sound of his own doorbell made him jump.

He breathed in. Out.

Upon opening the door, Ilya's first reaction was that Shane looked as stressed as he was. His hair was messy, eyes tired and his cheeks were redder than usual. Obviously, he looked good

—it was Shane fucking Hollander—but he didn’t look *good*.

“Hollander—” Ilya expelled in a breath, partially out of shock and partially out of relief.

Shane stopped him before he could get a sentence out. “Can I come in?” His tone was even *less* animated than its usual low baseline. He didn’t sound very at-ease, and certainly not happy.

Ilya blinked before his brain caught up to his mouth. “Yes, yes, come in,” he said in a slightly hurried cadence. He gently guided Shane in with a hand on his shoulder, closing the door behind him for the both of them.

Shane had begun to walk into the living room, and so Ilya naturally followed in tandem. He turned around in the living room to face Ilya, taking in his surroundings once again. A few seconds passed in painful silence, with neither saying a word.

Ilya broke it. He couldn’t bear the tension.

“I, ah—” he began, and—

“I’m sorry,” Shane said, in a tone that sounded on the verge of tears, and Ilya felt his heart break.

“I’m so sor—” he continued, and Ilya approached him quickly, almost as if on autopilot, because God, if he saw this man fall apart then he very well would too.

“Hey, hey,” Ilya said, attempting his very hardest at mustering up the most comforting and soothing tone he could, wrapping his arms around Shane in a protective bear hug. Shane’s hands locked themselves together in a hug, reaching around low on Ilya’s back. “Shhh, shhh, it’s okay.”

“It’s not okay!” Shane said in a raised voice, nearing a yell. “Nothing about this is fucking okay. We can’t be together even if we wanted to because of— of, *everything*, and it fucking sucks.”

It felt like a hockey skate had slashed Ilya’s heart because *he* wanted to, but it felt so horribly unattainable. The culture, the rivalry. It wouldn’t work. This wasn’t meant to happen: He had no idea that some mild-mannered captain of the fucking Metros would mean so much to him.

“I know, I know,” Ilya said, rubbing Shane’s back and trying not to have a meltdown himself. “It’s shit.”

Shane sighed. “Leaving you yesterday was a mistake, and I’m sorry.”

“Why didn’t you text?” Ilya questioned, barely thinking about the words that he was saying.

Shane laughed, but it was joyless. Ilya knew what his actual laughs sounded like. “Because I was scared, Ilya.”

“What?”

“I was scared that— that you were angry at me.”

It was like a train had hit him. Shane thought he was mad at *him*? Ilya was going through it, and quite heavily at that. He tried his best not to show it—he couldn’t fall apart in front of Shane.

“Wh— No, Hollander, *bozhe*. I couldn’t. I thought you were mad at *me*.”

“I wasn’t mad, Rozanov, I was scared. I was so fucking scared.” Shane’s voice began to wobble, just a bit, and—God—Ilya couldn’t do this. So he said nothing, because his social skills had gone completely out of the fucking window and he had no idea what to say.

So they stayed there, hugging in the middle of Ilya’s living room. It was a comfortable silence, but one that felt like it still left things unresolved.

“So, uh,” Shane said in an emotionally shaky tone, “do you have any имбирный эль?”

Ilya’s heart bloomed, and he let out a small laugh. “Yes, of course I do.” Shane’s pronunciation was kind of adorably terrible, but that was far from the thing that mattered most at the moment.

He felt Shane smile gently into his shoulder, and Ilya wanted to melt into the floor.

“You want me to get you some?” Ilya asked.

“No,” Shane said, tone more stable than before, “let’s stay here a bit longer.”

“We can do that,” Ilya said, and a smile crept onto his face, too.

“Good, that’s good.”

Ilya’s arms tightened in the bear hug against Shane, and he opted to respond with something he was pretty sure Shane would understand based on the Russian Luol— Duli— whatever-the-fuck course he was doing.

“Всё хорошо.” *Everything is okay.*

It would be. It had to be.

Ilya knew he would try his very hardest to make sure of it.

Shane muffled out a response in the same language.

“Спасибо.”

*Thank you.*

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