

winters here

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winters here

by [batman](#)

Summary

‘I am having a panic attack,’ Ilya says serenely. ‘In your exhibitionist cottage.’

(Post-season finale.)

Notes

[holds ilya up] i like him a normal amount

note: sex after smoking weed. we love to see it.

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

The next day, when they've shaken and showered off the benign horror of talking endorsements with Shane's mother and safe sex with his father, Ilya turns to him and holds up a little glass jar.

'Weed?'

'God, no,' Shane says immediately. 'Not once. Nope.'

'Relax, I'm not going to shove it down your throat. It's already sore enough as it is—'

Shane shoves his head into a pillow, fingers gripping his soft curls too tight for a second before he gathers himself. Can't help bending over Ilya and kissing the nape of his neck, then the back of his ear. Something so heady about this proximity, post— post. Something less hungry, yes, but freer, and so more ebullient. Like dragging stones, by his ankles, that've disappeared out of nowhere. So sudden that he's stumbling forward out of pure inertia, and taking off.

Kissing Ilya now feels like that, he decides. Like flying. The weightlessness of it, the wind of it, makes his eyes burn.

'Can I smoke, at least?' Ilya asks.

'You can do whatever you want,' Shane says. It comes out thick, wet. 'Whatever you want, Ilya.'

*

It's a beautiful unending day. The summer solstice is approaching, the sun staying out longer and longer, so that everything is surreally bright well into the evening. The sunsets seem to last forever too, slow enough to count twenty different colours and have time left over to kiss and kiss.

Ilya rolls his joint in the late afternoon, expert fingers taking care of the thing in under a minute. Shane watches as he licks the paper and presses it closed, watches as he taps it even. He's no stranger to it, especially not since meeting Rose, who's partial to everything marijuana, but everything Ilya does feels like the first time it's being done. Every new thing about him that Shane gets to learn a hit of drugs in itself; and so, how lucky that all these years in, there's so much left to discover.

They settle in the living room after Shane's put on the longest indie mix he could find—Ilya's request, *can we have some terribly cheesy music, please, the worst you can do*— the couch pulls out into a conversation pit, possibly his favourite thing about the cottage apart from the woods outside. Enough place for Ilya to sprawl out spread-eagled, enough place for Shane to curl against an armrest with a book.

‘Oh, no,’ Ilya groans. ‘Not the glasses. How am I supposed to concentrate on my trip with you looking like that two feet away from me?’

‘That sounds like a you problem,’ Shane says, carefully picking the bookmark out and tucking it inside the dust cover flap. It’s the latest Applebaum, which Ilya gave him no small amount of hell about, *oh, educating yourself on the triumphs of my great country, are you*. ‘Let me know when you get hungry. There’s brownie mix in the cabinet.’

‘Father, son, and holy shit. You beautiful genius.’

Yes, Shane decides. Like flying. Terrifying, yes, the future suddenly opening up wide before them earlier than planned. That’s the thing of it— not that the future is possible, because of course it is; Shane was planning it. But plans follow schedules. People don’t. It’s always been the hardest thing for him to accept. Something fundamentally alien about unpredictability that he’s never managed to wrap his mind around, despite all his efforts. Rose breaking up with him in that restaurant. Scott Hunter kissing his partner on the rink. Ilya Rozanov, all of him, all of who Shane has become, in light of him.

‘I like you,’ Shane says, frowning to focus on a particularly long organisation name.

‘Just like? I thought we loved each other passionately. Catastrophic.’

‘I love you,’ he adds. ‘But I *like* you.’ Looks over just in time to see Ilya take a long, deep drag. The curl of smoke he exhales is almost bluish-white, disappearing into the ceiling.

Ilya’s eyes fall closed, a smile licking at the corner of his mouth. ‘I like you too. And I will like you more in an hour when you will make me those brownies. And I will like you most when you will feed them to me Roman emperor style.’

The hour goes by. Hozier croons over the TV speakers, the sun beams in, Applebaum explains. After a while Shane forgets to even look over at Ilya, so calm is the afternoon, so steady Ilya’s silence. The joint has been smoked away, though its green smell lingers.

It’s then that Ilya speaks. ‘Hollander. What are you doing?’

Shane looks over, raises his eyebrows. Ilya’s still on his back, staring up at the ceiling, breathing slow and deep. ‘Still reading. You?’

‘I am having a panic attack,’ Ilya says serenely. ‘In your exhibitionist cottage.’

Oh. ‘Oh,’ Shane says. Reaches for his phone as discreetly as possible. He doesn’t have any whole peppercorns, but there’s plenty of sugar—

‘Stop looking up what to do,’ Ilya says. ‘Just talk to me. It’ll pass.’

Shane puts the bookmark back in, closes the book. ‘I thought we could go hiking tomorrow. There’s a pretty easy trail that goes up to a spot above the lake that I think you’ll like.’

‘Ugh, no. Scratches on my legs from all the...what do you call it? Bushes?’

‘Brambles. Just wear pants? And there—’

‘You know,’ Ilya cuts in, still staring at the ceiling. ‘Yesterday when you were freaking out at table. It made me jealous, you know? Very bad of me. But I was jealous of your freakout with your cute parents.’

‘Jealous?’

‘Your future is straight line. You’re on train with— hmm— ten different stops. It’s so sure for you, and then suddenly this stop came before time, so you freaked out. Yes?’

‘...yes.’

‘I have no train, Hollander,’ Ilya whispers. ‘I have no future.’

‘That’s not true.’ It comes out before Shane’s even finished thinking the words. ‘You— that’s not true anymore. I know it felt like that for a long time, but it’s not. Okay? It’s not.’

‘Pretty words.’

‘I’m serious. Just because—’ And this is hard. Because all at once, the crushing roll of living like Ilya is hitting him again, the way it has ever since that day at the hotel, when he tried to gather Ilya up and hold him together hard enough for it to last when they’d be apart. The exhaustion of it. Of sending money home only for it to disappear, of speaking to absent parents, of making a career in a foreign country, a continent away from whatever, broken as it was, he called home. Of all of that changing, all at once.

He’s loyal to me.

‘Just because your future may not be with the people you thought you’d be spending it with — doesn’t mean that you don’t have one.’ All right, those seem to be words that make sense. Shane takes a deep breath, continues. ‘Just because you won’t be going back there doesn’t mean you don’t have anywhere to go to.’

‘Prettier words.’

‘Ilya.’ Shane knows he shouldn’t, but he leans over Ilya, strokes his hair off his forehead. ‘Yes, I freaked out yesterday. Because I’m so sure of it all, now, that I want to do it right. I want to do everything right. Because—’ Because he knows it’s forever; for him it is. Because he knows that five years from now it’s still only going to be Ilya who does this to him. Because he knows. Like with every other thing in his life— and somehow like nothing else in his life— he knows. ‘Because it’s you.’

‘Kiss me,’ Ilya says. Fragile like a flute. ‘And then make love to me. Tell me all your plans again.’

And Shane has many of them. Plans. He starts rattling them off, bullet points from a list, even as he coaxes blueberries into Ilya's slack mouth one by one to get some sugar into him. Keeps going as Ilya finally straightens up and looks at him like he's inventing making plans, and making, and plans. Desperate wonder in his eyes, like he, too, is trying to wrap his mind around it so earnestly. To wrap his mind around the fact of them, real so suddenly that Shane is almost afraid it hasn't finished forging yet. That one gust of wind— but no.

Because there are plans. Coming back to the cottage every summer, for one. Ottawa and Montreal. Meeting this Svetlana who makes Shane burn up; meeting Rose, who makes Ilya burn up. The silly luxury of jealousy when they know now, more than ever, how singular their affection is. That nothing could possibly get in the way— not between them. Of, maybe; before, maybe— the future might have to be outwitted, if not fought for. But nothing will get between them again.

Shane knows; knows. He knows it *for* Ilya.

'On your back,' he murmurs, finally, when he's gotten Ilya to sit on the bed. The sun coming through the leaves paints green strokes on his skin, his throat. When Ilya lies back it flattens over him, golden forest over his beautiful spread body. 'What do you want?'

'Just you,' Ilya says. 'Whatever. However.'

Their cocks are already straining when Shane gets his hand around them. Hot and flushed, already pulsing along well-worn bruises. This— flying, too. Now that it isn't just release that they have to wait months for and then hide— now that it's just them basking in a constant. Shane had wondered, once, if— in the gorgeous event that Ilya loved him back— it would mean he'd have gotten enough. That it would stop feeling like everything in the world was coming together to hold him, to fill him.

It doesn't. The moment his grip tightens on them both and he starts to stroke, it comes back. The high of touching Ilya, the sweet dull pain of hunger. How right it feels, has always felt— but before, like a *right* he didn't have the right to— now, so right, so relieved, he can't imagine it being any other way. This, here, Ilya under him in a place Shane asked for, called heaven. So pliant for Shane, so open to him, so open, Shane, finally.

'I love you,' Shane says. With every thrust into his fist the setting sun catches on the corner of his eye, a golden metronome in his vision, swinging, blinking in and out.

Ilya catches it too. Looks first into Shane's eyes, then down to his lips, then down his throat, chest, cock, thighs. Back up to his tense stomach, one hand reaching up, slow as if in a treacle dream, surreal. He's lost in it, Ilya, in the sunset. Lips parted, eyes faraway.

'Shane,' he says. Fingertips grazing against Shane's navel. 'Red Shane.' Against his hipbone. 'Orange Shane.' Over his sternum. 'What's— what's this colour called?'

Shane looks down at the swathe of dying sunlight on his skin. 'I don't know. Honey.'

‘Honey,’ Ilya echoes. ‘Мед. Honey, honey. Honey Shane.’

‘Honey Shane,’ he laughs. ‘I like that.’

‘You like that? Honey?’

‘I like that.’

‘Honey,’ Ilya says again. ‘I want to eat you. I want you all over me, oh, God, I love you. Sunset Shane.’

The sunset is slow, agonising. Shane twists over Ilya in a curve that makes half his muscles scream in pain, the other half in delight. Works them both gentle and unhurried, as much as he can when all he wants is to crawl down the bed and take Ilya into his mouth, swallow him down whole. Every vulnerability of him. Every drop of his glistening sweat. He resists, because every time he tries to move away Ilya shakes his head in what almost looks like fear, and clutches the wrist Shane’s pressing into the mattress by his flank. Shane wants to stroke that fear off his face, but wants, more than that, for Ilya to work through its wave— to see that Shane is still going to be here at the end of it.

So he keeps going, steady, synchronised with each sharp breath of Ilya’s, as they get faster and faster, beyond words now, though Shane tries.

‘Good?’

‘Hollander, I’m going to *die*,’ Ilya says. ‘Don’t stop. Don’t— stop. Don’t—’

*

Like flying. The sun is one thin line of red on the horizon when Ilya comes to, and even that starts to fade when he turns on his side to look at Shane.

‘Still high?’ Shane asks.

‘A little.’ Ilya inches forward, presses a kiss to Shane’s lower lip. ‘That was amazing. You should try it sometime.’

‘Maybe.’ He smiles. ‘Don’t really need it with you.’

‘Disgusting, don’t say things like that. And you really should try. I want to see what you will be like.’

‘What if I just want to watch an ocean documentary for four hours straight?’

‘Then,’ Ilya says, rolling on top of him and bending down for one more kiss, ‘we will do that. We will do what you want.’

*

The blueberries are still out on the couch when they start on the brownies. Ilya's flopped over an armrest in what looks like a terribly uncomfortable position, eating them by the handful. Shane keeps looking over to make sure he isn't choking, but Ilya's too busy watching cat videos upside down on his phone to notice.

It's only when the smell of the baking brownies fills the kitchen that Ilya ambles over. Wraps his arms around Shane from behind and makes to lick the spatula, grumbles when Shane pulls it out of his reach. Licks a line up the side of Shane's throat instead, biting his earlobe, then pressing a long, long kiss just behind it.

'So, do you like them?' Shane asks.

'Like what?'

'My plans.' He tries to turn around in Ilya's arms, but Ilya holds on tighter, sways him a little. 'I need feedback.'

Ilya huffs a laugh, presses his forehead into Shane's shoulder. Keeps swaying him, so slow the movement almost doesn't register, their feet firm on the floor.

'I like them,' he says, finally. 'I like that I am in all of them. That you are so sure of me.'

'I'm always sure of everything. You know that.'

'Well, I'm not. I think the only thing I'm sure of right now is you.' Ilya exhales. 'I feel brave now.'

'Good,' Shane says after a beat, trying not to betray his stinging eyes. 'You make me brave too. So if you're only gonna be sure of one thing, let it be us.'

*

Ilya's eyes are still a touch too bright when they both settle onto the couch outside, by the fire. A routine of theirs now, the crackling heat, the chill, the stars.

Tonight, in the clear sky, they seem the brightest they've been all spring. They'll only get brighter in the summer, when Ilya and Shane will still be here. This year and the next. The one after that.

'Hike tomorrow?' he asks.

Ilya hums, turns his head on Shane's thigh to look up at him. Puts a finger to his chin, pretends to think. 'I don't know. We can go another day. We still have time, right? Before all the bugs start coming out of ground and everything gets all gross?'

'You don't like bugs?'

'I don't fuck with bugs. Horrible little creatures that God didn't intend to make.'

'Hey, they play an important role in the ecosystem.'

'Yeah, of scaring me. Now tell if we have time before they—'

Shane laughs, swallows a pang of ridiculous, soaring love. Bends down to press his lips to Ilya's forehead.

'Yes,' he promises. 'We have all the time in the world.'

Здравствуй, моя хорошая. Держи чистосердечное, я буду любить тебя всю зиму, а зимы тут вечные!

Hello, my dear. Here's a confession - I'm going to love you all winter, and winters here are eternal!

- Graffiti found on a wall in St. Petersburg

End Notes

you can find me [here](#).

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