

emotional motion sickness

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emotional motion sickness

by [tabroc](#)

Summary

Ilya knows Shane's body better than anyone.
He knows when something is wrong.
But Ilya doesn't know how to approach it.
AKA
A short fic featuring comfort of my favorite couple.

Notes

This fic takes place before The Long Game and has spoilers (nor really) for Role Model (just that Harris and Troy are dating)

Ilya is playing for Ottawa and Shane is still playing for Montreal.

Please please please read the tags! This fic features topics of body dysmorphia and eating disorders!

Title from "Motion Sickness" by Phoebe Bridgers

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

Ilya knew something was wrong with Shane, he just didn't know how to approach it.

He had learned from an early age that feelings were things you swallowed. When his mother died, he had cried over her body not understanding why she wasn't coming back. His father hadn't raised his voice. He hadn't needed to. He simply looked at Ilya and said "Enough. You are man now."

There had been no room for grief after that. Only responsibility. Strength. Silence.

So now, years later, with Shane asleep in their bed and something sitting heavy on his chest, the instinct to ignore it was the same. Don't name it. Don't touch it. Don't make it real.

He sat on the cold tile of the bathroom floor, knees pulled to his chest, deep in thought. Ilya's apartment was quiet except for the low hum of the vent and the faint sounds of the city outside. From the bedroom came the steady rhythm of Shane's slow breathing.

Dinner replayed in Ilya's head, whether he wanted it to or not. Shane pushing food around his plate. Saying he wasn't that hungry. Smiling like it was nothing. Ilya had noticed, of course he had, but he had said nothing. Calling attention to it felt wrong somehow.

Shane had always had strange ideas about food, some "healthy" system involving words Ilya barely remembered how to say. But that wasn't it. This was absence.

And the absence scared him.

The man he loved was clearly hurting and Ilya didn't know how to help him.

"Stupid," Ilya muttered to no one in particular. He pressed the back of his head against the wall, tightened his arms around his legs and exhaled hard through his nose.

"Ilya?" Shane's voice drifted in from the bedroom.

Shit.

Ilya stood slowly, he turned off the bathroom light before opening the door. The bedroom was

dim, the only glow coming from the streetlights outside. Shane was propped slightly on one elbow, his eyes half open, his hair sticking straight up in a way that made Ilya's chest ache.

Shane reached for him. Ilya took his hand and climbed back into bed.

"Are you okay?" Shane asked softly.

"Is nothing. Go back to bed." Ilya leaned down and pressed a kiss to Shane's temple. He hated how easily the lie slipped out.

"Are you sure?"

No.

"Yes."

Shane hesitated, then rolled onto his side, turning his back to Ilya. The space between them wasn't large, but it felt deliberate. Ilya moved closer, resting his chin in the crook of Shane's neck. He inhaled deeply, smelling the sweet scent of Shane's strawberry shampoo. It was a familiar comfort.

He wrapped an arm around Shane's waist and let his hand drift slowly up his chest. It was instinctive. Intimate. And-

Ilya stilled.

His fingers traces over bone where there used to be muscle. Subtle, but unmistakable. He brushed his thumb lightly across Shane's chest again, slower this time, more cautious. The spaces between Shane's ribs pressed back against his hand.

Ilya's brow furrowed.

Shane had always been smaller than most of the league, 177 centimeters surrounded by men built like tanks, but he had always been solid. Strong. Compact in a way that made him dangerous and fast. But this? This felt different.

Ilya wondered how he had missed it. How many nights he had held him like this without

noticing? Or had he noticed and refused to think about it?

“Alright,” Shane reached out and turned on the lamp beside the bed. “I can hear you thinking. What’s wrong?” He shifted to face Ilya.

The light stung. Ilya closed his eyes for a second, then shook his head. “Nothing.”

Shane sighed. “Ilya, what’s really going on?”

“I worry,” Ilya said finally. The word felt small, inadequate.

“About?” Shane tilted his head.

Ilya poked Shane’s chest, gentle but insistent. “You feel different.”

Shane raised a brow “What are you talking about?”

“You’re... smaller. You weren’t always like this”

Shane’s brow creased. “Ilya, I’m fine. You’re imagining it.”

Ilya didn’t answer. His hand still rested on Shane’s chest.

“No,” he said quietly. “I know your body.”

Shane stilled.

Ilya swallowed. He pulled his hand back, then stopped himself and placed it back on Shane’s chest.

“I can feel your ribs,” he said. “I don’t like that I can feel them.”

Ilya frowned, his eyes staring over Shane’s shoulder. He blinked and moved his gaze to make eye contact with Shane.

“Are you trying to be smaller?” His voice came out wrong, too blunt, in a way that surprised him. “I don’t understand.”

Shane’s mouth tightened. “Ilya, I’m fine.”

Ilya didn’t move. “You’re not.”

Shane exhaled sharply and pulled back enough to put space between them. “I said I’m fine,” he snapped, then sighed. “You’re overthinking it.”

“I am not-“

“You are.” Shane shook his head, running his hand through his hair. “I’m playing just fine. I feel fine. I’m fine.”

Ilya opened his mouth, then closed it again. He nodded stiffly.

“Good,” Shane said. “I don’t want to talk about this.” He reached over and turned the lamp off, sending the room back into darkness. “I’m going back to sleep.”

Shane rolled onto his side, facing away from Ilya.

Ilya lay there, staring into the dark. He listened to Shane’s breathing as it evened out. He wasn’t asleep, Ilya knew that, but he was far enough away that the conversation between them was over.

He shifted closer, pressing his forehead lightly between Shane’s shoulder blades.

Stupid.

Ilya blinked awake, stretching slowly, the familiar weight of sleep still clinging to him. He rolled onto his side out of habit, reaching for warmth, and found nothing.

Shane's side of the bed was empty. The sheets were cool, already losing the imprint of his body.

Ilya frowned.

For a moment, he lay there, listening. No shower running. No rustle of movement. Just the distant hum of the city outside and the faint tick of the clock on the wall.

Confused, Ilya pushed himself upright and swung his legs over the edge of the bed. The floor was cold against his feet as he padded toward the bedroom door, rubbing the sleep from his eyes.

"Shane?" he called quietly, his voice still half-asleep.

There was a clatter from the kitchen. Relief flickered briefly in Ilya's chest as he followed the noise.

Shane stood near the door, halfway dressed in his practice gear. His bat was already swung over his shoulder, skates dangling from one hand. He was tying his shoes with focus on his face.

"Morning," Shane said, not looking up.

He finished tying his laces, straightened, and immediately moved toward the door.

"Did you have breakfast?" Ilya asked. He didn't mean for it to sound as cautious as it did.

Shane nodded once. Too fast.

Ilya's brow creased. "Game day today," he said gently. "Make sure you eat."

Shane shook his head and reached for his keys. "I'll eat. Don't worry about me."

Silence stretched between them. Ilya stood in the doorway watching Shane's movements. It felt like watching someone slip through his fingers.

“Wait,” Ilya said before he could stop himself.

Shane paused with his hand on the door handle.

“No kiss goodbye?” Ilya asked, trying to keep his tone light.

For a moment, Shane didn’t move. Ilya wondered if he’s pushed too hard, if he’s asked for something Shane wouldn’t do. Then Shane turned back around.

He crossed the small distance between them and pressed his lips to Ilya’s, brief but real. Warm. Familiar.

When he pulled back, he held Ilya’s gaze. “I love you,” he whispered, like it was something fragile.

“I love you,” Ilya said back, though Shane was already turning away.

The door opened. Closed. Clicked softly behind him.

The apartment instantly felt too quiet.

Ilya stood there longer than necessary, fingers brushing over his lips where the kiss still lingered. The warmth was already fading, leaving only the memory behind.

He exhaled and turned back toward the kitchen. The counters were clean. Too clean. He opened the fridge, scanning its contents until he spotted an opened yogurt container on the middle shelf.

Ilya lifted it out and peeled back the lid.

It was nearly full. Barely touched.

Something sharp and tight twisted in his chest. Shane hadn’t really eaten breakfast. Ilya hadn’t needed to see it to know, but seeing it anyway made it worse.

He closed the container carefully and set it back where he’s found it, like moving it might

somehow make the truth louder. Leaning back against the counter, he closed his eyes and took a slow, steady breath.

There was nothing he could do. Not now.

Outside, the city carried on, life moving forward without waiting for him. Ilya stayed where he was, silent, listening, and let the worry settle heavy in his chest.

Ilya was about to leave to get to practice. As he tugged his jersey over his head, he decided to text Shane.

Lily: I love you.

The reply came almost immediately.

Jane: I love you too.

Ilya exhaled, the tension in his shoulders easing a little.

Lily: Did you make it to practice okay?

There was a pause. Ilya stared at his screen waiting for an answer.

Jane: I did.

Jane: Now stop texting me so I can prepare to beat you tonight.

A faint smile tugged at Ilya's mouth.

Lily: You can try.

Jane: I'll see you later.

Ilya locked his phone and slid it into his pocket. *I love you too.*

Tonight was hockey.

The locker room smelled of sweat, tape, and hockey gear, a sharp contrast to Ilya's apartment. Voices echoed off the tiled walls, sticks clattered against benches, and somewhere someone laughed loudly.

Ilya sat on the edge of the bench, elbows on his knees, fingers tapping against his thigh in a restless rhythm. He'd already retaped his stick twice. Troy Barrett sat beside him, focused on lacing his skates.

"You look... serious," Troy said after a moment, glancing at him.

Ilya huffed out a breath. "Hypothetical question," he said slowly. "If someone you cared about... Harris, for example... was not eating. Not enough. What would you do?"

Troy's hands paused mid-lace. He looked up fully this time. "Wait," he said. "Is Harris not eating?"

Ilya shook his head quickly. "No! Not Harris. Harris is example for the hypothetical. For... um... science."

Troy narrowed his eyes. "Alright... well if it were Harris, I'd try to get him to eat. Small steps first. Ask what's going on. Make sure he knows I'm paying attention."

"And if he, Harris, I mean, doesn't want to answer?" Ilya asked. His voiced stayed casual, but his fingers had stopped tapping.

Troy leaned back, resting his palms on the bench behind him. "Then I don't know... I'd probably tell someone who could help. Someone who can do more than I can."

Ilya nodded slowly, his eyes fixated on the floor. "What if I couldn't tell anyone? What if it

would be... dangerous to tell someone else?"

"Dangerous? This is pretty serious for a hypothetical situation..." Troy said, frowning slightly.

Ilya froze. His jaw tightened. "I mean I can't tell someone," he rushed, stumbling over his words. "Because it makes problems for us... What's the word? Relationship at risk. Something bad, uh..."

Troy raised an eyebrow. "Do you mean jeopardizes?"

"Yes! Yes!" Ilya snapped his fingers, relief and frustration tangled together. "It could jeopardize the relationship if people found out we, uh, date. Hypothetically."

Troy studied him for a long second, then stood and placed a hand on Ilya's shoulder. It was firm, grounding. "You're thinking too much about hypotheticals, Ilya," he said quietly. "Just keep an eye on him. That matters more than you think. You don't have to fix everything."

Ilya swallowed and nodded. "Yes. I understand. Thank you, Barrett."

"Yeah," Troy said, grabbing his stick and giving Ily's shoulder a light squeeze before stepping away. "Come on. The game's not going to wait for any hypotheticals."

Ilya picked up his stick and followed him toward the tunnel. The cold air from the rink washed over him as the doors opened. He could hear the cheers from the crowd as the Centaurs entered the ice. The bright lights reflected off the polished boards. He tightened his grip on the stick, exhaling through his nose. Focus on the game Ilya.

Ilya skated to the center, glancing across the ice as they took their positions. At the center, his eyes found Shane.

"You... okay?" Ilya asked.

Shane's jaw tightened. "Can we not talk about this right now?" He muttered, his eyes flicking toward the referee.

Ilya nodded, forcing himself back into position. The puck dropped, and the game began.

The game settled into its rhythm quickly. It was fast, physical, and loud. The roar of the crowd pressed in from all sides, the air sharp and cold as blades carved into the ice.

Ilya took his first shift like he always did. He was aggressive on the raw, shoulders low, his legs burning as he pushed through. Montreal was fast tonight. Too fast.

Shane and Ilya met at center ice more than once, exchanging nothing more than quick glances and the scrape of skates. Shane didn't look hurt. He didn't look sick. But something was off. His movements were precise, but there was no extra in them.

Midway through the second period, Ilya noticed it for real. Shane's breath was fast, his shoulders rising sharply beneath his jersey.

Ilya's chest tightened.

By the third period, the pace had slowed down enough for the cracks to show. Shane started to miss passes he could make in his sleep.

Shane chased the puck along the boards, his body low. He darted around, his eyes on the puck.

Luca Haas came up behind him, shoulders square, skating hard. It was a clean, legal check, the kind that happened dozens of times. Nothing that would have hurt a healthy player.

But Shane hadn't been healthy.

He staggered as the boards absorbed the contact. His knees gave out beneath him.

"Shane!"

Ilya's voice cut through the arena without thinking. Heads turned his way. He didn't care.

Shane went down hard. His helmet hit the ice with a hollow sound. Trainers rushed onto the ice immediately, forming a circle around him. Ilya skated closer instinctively but was blocked by his own teammates.

He could only watch helplessly.

“Shane,” Ilya said again, his voice tight, barely above a whisper.

Seconds stretched, each one unbearable. Then Shane inhaled sharply, his chest rising. His eyes fluttered open, unfocused. Relief slammed into Ilya.

Shane tried to push up immediately. A medic's hand held him steady. Shane shook his head stubbornly. “I’m fine,” He muttered.

Ilya gritted his teeth. *No you’re not.*

Luca skated up beside him, pale, hands raised. “I didn’t hit him that hard, I swear! He just went down... I’m so sorry!”

Ilya spun around, his chest tight, his fingers curling into fists. “You hit him!” he snapped, his voice came louder than he meant.

Luca flinched. “I didn’t know! I didn’t...”

Ilya’s chest heaved. He swallowed hard, forcing himself to clamp down on the words he really wanted to say. He shook his head, taking a deep breath. Focus. Calm down. “I know. You couldn’t have known,” he said finally.

Luca nodded quickly, shame written across his face.

The trainers helped Shane to his skates, one on each of his sides, guiding him toward the tunnel. His eyes lifted briefly, catching Ilya’s across the ice. A flicker of frustration passed over his face. Then he was gone.

The game resumed like nothing had happened. The puck dropped, players skated, the crowd roared.

Ilya forced himself back into position, every movement automatic. His mind stayed fixed on Shane, on that moment, on the hit that shouldn’t have been anything bad.

But it was.

Ilya had been right to worry.

Ilya unlocked the door to his apartment and stepped inside, dropping his bag with a thud. The faint sound of TV and soft snoring came from the living room. Ilya rounded the corner to see Shane sprawled on the couch, dressed in sweats, with his shoes still on. His arm draped over his head and a half-empty water bottle was on the coffee table next to him.

“Shane?” His voice cracked as he stepped closer.

Shane stirred, groaning. “Ilya, what-“

Without thinking, Ilya knelt beside the couch and pulled Shane into a tight hug. He pressed his lips to Shane’s hair, then his forehead, then a quick kiss on the mouth. Shane wrapped his arms around him, heavy with exhaustion.

“I’m fine,” Shane mumbled, his voice muffled against Ilya’s shoulder.

Ilya pulled back. “You’re not fine!” he snapped, his voice trembling. “You passed out. On the ice. During a game!”

Shane blinked at him, frustrated. “I told the medics, Ilya. It’s nothing. I’m fine. I just passed out for a second. Don’t make this into-“

“Don’t make this into a thing?” Ilya cut him off, his anger flashing. “You could have-“ He stopped himself, inhaling. “You could have been hurt.”

Shane winced slightly but didn’t argue with Ilya. “I’m fine,” he repeated again.

Ilya’s eyes filled with frustration. He wanted to shake him, to make him understand how serious this was. “I’m upset,” he admitted. “I’m upset at you. I’m upset at me. I’m upset that I-“ He stopped.

Shane reached out and brushed a hand over Ilya's, a gentle gesture. "I know you're worried," he said quietly. "But I'm okay."

Ilya let out a shaky exhale, pressing his forehead to Shane's shoulder. "I can't... I can't just watch you hurt yourself," he murmured. He pressed a kiss to Shane's temple, then pulled back to look him in the eyes. "I talked to Troy," he said quietly. "He thinks you should get help."

Shane's eyes widened, and his expression shifted instantly from exhaustion to shock and then to anger. "You... you talked to Troy?" he snapped, his voice sharp.

Ilya held up his hands, sitting back slightly to give Shane space. "I didn't tell him about us," he added quickly. "I used... hypothetical. I asked him in hypothetical. That's it. I didn't say anything else. I just- I worry."

Shane's jaw tightened, and he looked away, struggling to process both his embarrassment and frustration. "You went to him? About me?"

Ilya lowered his voice. "I didn't know what else to do. You won't talk to me."

"Well maybe this is why! I don't want you talking about me to your teammates. Besides, I'm fine." Shane bristled.

Ilya shook his head, his frustration bleeding through. "You don't understand! I worry! I worry about you."

Shane's chest rose and fell. "Don't. I'm fine."

"Yeah, well that's what my mother said." Ilya snapped. Shane froze. Ilya blinked before he continued. "She said she was fine. Then she swallowed pills and died."

"Ilya--"

"No. Shane you don't understand. When you fell, I just kept thinking about her. How similar you looked to her. I worry."

The anger drained from Shane's face. He swallowed, his eyes fixed somewhere past Ilya's shoulder.

"Ilya..." His voice came out low, cautious. "You never told me that."

Ilya laughed once, short and humorless. "There was no reason," he said. "She said she was fine. Everyone believed her. My father told me to stop crying, to be a man. And then one morning she was just... gone." His breath was uneven. "So when you say you are fine, I don't believe you."

Shane shifted closer to Ilya. "That's not-" He stopped himself and shook his head. "That's not fair to you."

"I know," Ilya admitted quietly. "But it is how I think." He finally looked at Shane again. "I am not accusing you of anything. I am saying I worry."

Shane's shoulders slumped, the fight visibly leaving him. "Come here."

Ilya hesitated for a moment, then sank beside Shane on the couch, pressing close. Shane draped an arm around him, and Ilya tucked his head under Shane's chin, resting against his chest. He could hear Shane's heartbeat

"I didn't want to scare you," Shane murmured, his voice rough. "I just... I didn't want to make it a thing."

Ilya stayed pressed against Shane's chest. After a long pause, he finally murmured, "Then tell me. What's going on?"

Shane hesitated, his jaw tight. "I don't know where it really started," He took a deep breath to calm himself down. "It started with the team doctor. He put me on this crazy strict diet. Said it was for performance, or whatever. I thought I could handle it."

Ilya pressed a gentle kiss to Shane's chest. A gentle I love you.

"I guess it just got stuck in my head. I thought that if I just cut more, if I pushed harder, I'd be better. Faster. Stronger." His voice dropped to a whisper. "Then it just spiraled. I started eating less and less. I didn't mean to scare you. I just thought I could handle it."

Ilya's chest tightened, anger and worry mixed together as he tried to understand. "You thought you could handle what? Nearly starving yourself?"

Shane flinched but didn't argue.

"You already are better," Ilya continued. "You're perfect, Shane."

Shane closed his eyes, his forehead still resting against Ilya's chest. After a long pause his voice came out small. "I'm scared," he admitted. "Scared that if I eat, if I gain weight, I'll lose everything I've worked for. My speed, my--"

He took a deep breath. "I already don't like what I see when I look in the mirror, what if this just makes it worse?"

Ilya's heart clenched. He sat up and grabbed Shane's hands, squeezing gently. "Come," he said, his voice firm but soft.

Shane hesitated for a moment, then stood. They walked together to the bathroom. Ilya's fingers slipped under Shane's sweatshirt, brushing against his skin. Shane grabbed Ilya's hands, tensing.

"Ilya..." Shane groaned, his voice small.

"Do you trust me?" Ilya asked, holding his gaze.

Shane nodded.

"Do you trust me?" Ilya repeated.

"Yes." Shane said, his voice firm.

Ilya carefully slipped Shane's sweatshirt over his head. They stood side by side in front of the mirror, Shane's shoulders hunched, vulnerable, and Ilya's eyes softened. He pressed a gentle kiss to Shane's lips.

"I love you," he whispered. Then, with slow, deliberate tenderness, he trailed kisses down

Shane's neck, brushing his lips across every inch of Shane's chest.

Shane shivered and suddenly, quiet tears slipped down his cheeks. "I'm sorry," he murmured, his voice breaking.

Ilya kissed his temple, holding him close. "You have nothing to be sorry for," he murmured back, soft but firm. "You have nothing to be sorry for." He repeated.

Shane leaned into Ilya, letting himself be held, letting go of the fear that had built up inside him for so long. Ilya wrapped his arms tightly around him, protective and steady, promising silently that he wouldn't let Shane face this alone.

Ilya's jaw tightened.

"I will kill your shit team doctor," he muttered flatly.

Shane let out a weak laugh through his tears. "Ilya--"

"I am serious," Ilya interrupted, not raising his voice. "He put this stupid idea in your head and then walked away. He does not get to do that. I will not let him do that." His thumb brushed gently over Shane's ribs. "He does not get to convince you that you are not enough."

Shane swallowed hard.

Ilya turned him slightly, so he wasn't looking at himself anymore, cupping Shane's face in both his hands. "Look at me," he said.

Shane did.

"There is nothing wrong with you," Ilya said firmly. "Not your body. Not your weight. Not the way you look." His voice softened, but it didn't lose its certainty. "You are already fast. You are already strong. You are beautiful. You are perfect to me."

"You're biased." Shane breathed out.

"Yes," Ilya said immediately. "Yes I am. Because I love you," He pressed their foreheads

together. “And because I see you. Not a number. Not a diet. You.”

Shane leaned into him fully, wrapping his arms around Ilya’s waist, pressing his face into Ilya’s shoulder.

“I’m so tired,” Shane whispered.

“I know,” Ilya murmured, kissing his hair. “I am here. I will always be here.”

He held him there, steady and unyielding, like a promise Shane could lean on.

Shane shifted slightly, tilting his head back against Ilya’s shoulder. “I... I want to eat something,” he murmured, his voice hesitant.

Ilya looked at him, his brows furrowed. “Something... what?” he asked gently, brushing his fingers through Shane’s hair.

Shane shook his head. “I don’t know,” he admitted. “But something I wasn’t allowed before. Something I loved. Something I love.”

Ilya’s eyes softened, a small smile tugging at his lips. “Something you love?”

He nodded slowly. “Yeah. A... peanut butter bagel,” he said quietly.

Ilya’s grin widened, his heart throbbed with relief. “Alright,” he pressed a kiss to Shane’s temple. “A peanut butter bagel it is. One step at a time.”

Shane exhaled, a small laugh escaping him. “One step at a time,” he agreed.

Ilya guided Shane gently to the kitchen, still holding his hand.

“I’ll make it,” Ilya said softly, reaching for a bagel and the peanut butter jar. He paused, looking at Shane. “Do you want it toasted?”

Shane shook his head. “No... just like how I remember it.”

Ilya nodded and spread a generous layer of peanut butter onto the bagel, making sure not to rush. He handed it to Shane on a small plate, watching him closely.

He watched as Shane took a hesitant bite, his eyes closing briefly as he savored the familiar taste. “It tastes good. Just like how I remembered.”

Ilya leaned against the counter behind them, watching Shane, his heart swelling with relief. “Good,” he said softly. “This is the first of many peanut butter bagels.”

Shane set the plate down and leaned into Ilya’s side. “Thank you,” he whispered.

Ilya pressed a kiss to the top of Shane’s head. “No,” he said softly. “Thank you for trusting me.”

They stayed like that for a moment, small and quiet, letting the weight of the night settle around them and for the first time in a while, Shane felt okay. They stood wrapped in each other, listening to the chaos of the busy city, with the simple comfort of a peanut butter bagel and each other.

End Notes

Is this a safe space to admit that I cried while writing their bathroom conversation?

I know that Rachel Reid said that she didn't mean for Shane's restrictive eating to be seen as an ED, but I felt as if it was important to mention.

I just wanted to let everyone know how loved they are. You are perfect just the way you are. You shouldn't change yourself for the likings of anyone else. You are perfect just the way you are, do not let anyone else tell you otherwise

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!