

fate's got a funny way, baby

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fate's got a funny way, baby

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Summary

Ilya groans as he pushes himself off the couch, popping his back before padding toward the door. He opens the door with the bitchiest expression he can muster, ready to yell at whoever is disturbing his time to mope.

Until he realizes he is looking at Shane fucking Hollander.

~*~*~*~*~*

Ilya does not go to the cottage.

(Shane goes to him instead.)

Notes

These fictional men have my soul at the moment, so here's a little story about them.

Title from Hayley Williams' "Good Ole Days"

~*~*~*~*~*

Ilya should have called him.

He almost did. He can still remember the moment his finger hovered over the button, when his heart was beating out of his throat. When he thought, *it would be so easy*, and he thought, *I could say yes*.

And then he didn't.

Ilya has never been a coward. Apparently, he is only a coward when it matters.

For not the first time, he lets out a string of curse words in Russian, slamming the back of his head against the cushion of the couch.

He could be in Canada right now. He could be fucking Hollander through the mattress, or making out with him on the couch, or just holding his hand. Ilya never thought he'd get to the point where he would pine about Hollander's *hands* but, well, it's been a long several years. It's been a hell of a journey.

Ilya should be at Shane's cottage right now. Instead, he is getting tipsy off of shitty American beer on his couch, two days into a two weeks where he could make any spontaneous choice, but instead he will stay here probably for at least a few more days. It is easier to waste time than to face the things he does not want to face.

Like how Shane looked in that hospital bed when he asked him. Like how Shane looked on the ice, broken and bleeding and not moving, and Ilya could do nothing but shout at the paramedics to move faster, watching the love of his stupid life slipping away between his fingers and thinking, for not the first time, that he really had to let him go.

And then he didn't, kind of. He said maybe when he should have said no. He watched Scott fucking Hunter go on the ice and do what Ilya hasn't had the courage to do and he had to go ahead and be a sniveling coward about it anyway.

He cannot stand being beaten by Scott Hunter. But this is not a game, this is his life, and he is doing what needs to be done.

He thinks a few bottles of vodka will be able to make him think that's the right thing to do.

Ilya resists the urge to throw something across the room. Barely. He's been working on that stupid rage thing too, for as much as he gets paid to have it. He knows nothing good comes with bringing it home with him.

Ilya is in the middle of contemplating if he should drink another beer or walk into the harbor when the bell on his door rings.

Now, that's confusing for a handful of reasons. Firstly, he is obviously not expecting anyone, and he lives in a high rise building with an actual doorman who would stop anyone he doesn't recognize. He wonders, vaguely, if it could be Svetlana. He wonders, with more horror, if it is one of his teammates, and they think now is a good time to convince him to come out of his shell for a little bit despite how loud he was about wanting to have the time off.

Ilya groans as he pushes himself off the couch, popping his back before padding toward the door. He opens the door with the bitchiest expression he can muster, ready to yell at whoever is disturbing his time to mope.

Until he realizes he is looking at Shane fucking Hollander.

They stare at each other for a long, awkward moment. Ilya has no fucking idea what his face looks like now.

"Hey," Shane finally says lamely.

So lame. So *boring*. Ilya wants to love him for the rest of his life. “You’re here.”

“Yeah, well.” Shane shrugs. “It was awkward, in that big house by myself. Figured I might as well, you know. Go somewhere else.”

And by somewhere else, he means another country, states and territories away, showing up with nothing more than a small duffle at his feet and the clothes on his back. Ilya wants to leave him. He wants to let this stupid, adorable man ruin his entire life.

Ilya could shake his head. He could close the door and end this for good the way he should have done a thousand times before.

Instead, he steps back to let him in.

Shane’s shoulders visibly relax. He grabs his bag and scurries into the apartment as if someone might see him. As if he has not been here before, plenty of times, including the one where he walked out on Ilya and Ilya thought it was the end for good so he cried all goddamn night like a lovesick teenager.

Shane sets his stuff down in the hallway. Slowly takes his jacket off as if he’s still expecting Ilya to grab him by the scruff of his neck and throw him into the cold.

Ilya steps back. Figures he’s in too deep now, so he heads into the apartment. “Want a drink? Beer? Ginger ale?”

“Yes,” Shane says. “Ginger ale, please.”

Ilya grabs himself a beer. He nearly takes a swig out of the bottle of vodka but he figures he should probably have some of his senses for this. He has a feeling this is going to be a big discussion that could end in a fight or the best thing in his insane life, and he wants to remember all of the details anyway.

He hands Shane the drink. Notices very sharply that Shane lets his fingers touch his.

So that's how it's going to be.

Ilya doesn't even open his beer before demanding, "Why are you here, Hollander?"

Shane says, softly, "You didn't come to the cottage."

"Didn't seem like a good idea."

"Bullshit," Shane says, so viciously and suddenly that Ilya feels his eyebrows shoot up. "You chickened out."

Ilya bristles. So it's going to be a fight. It's going to be an end. He should have expected this. "Maybe I just did not want to spend two weeks with you, Hollander, did you consider that?"

"Of course I did," Shane replies. "I've been doing nothing but thinking for the last few weeks. Overthinking, again and again, and wondering what exactly I said to scare you off, and I think it was inviting you to see me off season. I really think that's all it took."

"That's not who we are."

"Don't be stupid—you knew what I was asking."

Of course he knew. Ilya has stayed up for days and nights wondering if he's made the right decision, if he should have given a no or a yes or something more than a maybe, something substantial and real that would have maybe avoided this entire disaster. But Ilya has never hid away from his own mistakes or all the other shit the world has ever thrown at him, and he is not afraid of this either, even if he is for all the world goddamn *terrified* of Shane Hollander.

“I did,” he admits. “I thought you knew my answer.”

“You said maybe when I asked. You thought about it.”

“Yes.”

“And what? You’re done?”

It should be that simple. It should have always been that simple. But it never was, was it? Not for a while now, at least. Ilya wishes he knew the exact moment it happened but he thinks it will be lost between one blinding moment and the next. He thinks falling in love with this man is always going to be a bit of a car crash that he could never swerve in time to avoid. Shane Hollander was always going to be a natural disaster that blew through his life, ripping up all the trees, supplying all the rain to make the stupid fucking flowers grow again.

Ilya is an idiot for this man. What more does he even have to lose?

So he replies, “Are you?”

Shane stares at him. Looks so broken and scared and upset that Ilya almost reaches out to touch his face.

“No,” Shane says softly. “I don’t want to be.”

Ilya’s heart tears in two. He feels it bleeding out in his hands.

He takes a long sip of beer so he can buy some time. He hopes Shane cannot see the way his hands are shaking. This is the moment he has to decide. This has been what he has been running from and running toward for years now.

He loves this man. He does, he does. Will he give up everything for him?

He will.

Oh, he will.

But he will not go down without a fight.

“You will regret me,” Ilya tells him because it feels like due diligence. “You are a good man. We both know I am not.”

“Shut up,” Shane says, and takes a small step closer. There’s a tiny hope in his eyes. Ilya thinks he would be able to see it from miles away. “Seriously, Ilya, can you just shut up for like ten seconds—”

“This is not easy,” Ilya says. It isn’t. It really isn’t. It never has been, really, but he has always been willing to overlook it, to pretend like everything is okay when it hasn’t been. Ilya has always been good at that, ever since he was a kid, around the time when his father started to hit him and when he found his mother with that empty, lifeless hand sticking out. It has not been easy for him for a long time. It has never been easy at all.

Shane is looking at him like he understands when he doesn’t even know half of it. His head is tilted to the side slightly. It is like he is seeing Ilya for the first time.

“Can I talk first?” Shane asks suddenly, perhaps the most selfish he has ever been.

Ilya nearly chokes on his laugh. Gestures for him to continue.

Shane takes a very, very deep breath before he blurts out, “I told my parents.”

Ilya has a visceral reaction. He literally nearly knocks his beer dead across the room, nearly vaults over the kitchen island to get closer, nearly drops to his knees in his stupid fancy kitchen that he barely uses. He stares at Shane, trying to compute what he has said. Trying to understand the bulk of the implications.

Shane is still holding his ginger ale and he is—shaking. “That I’m gay, I mean. I told them. And they were surprisingly okay with it, and they kept saying things about finding me a good boy in Montreal or whatever, and I was just thinking to myself that—no one knows, you know? That was the whole point but *no one knows*. Anything could have happened to either of us and no one would know to tell the other about it. And it made me sick to my stomach to think that I had something in my life bigger than me being gay that I couldn’t tell my parents about it, and I asked them, you know, what if I was with a hockey player? What then?” Shane reaches up to his face, wiping at the tears that haven’t fallen from his eyes yet. “And they said, I shit you not, ‘as long as it’s not Rozanov’.”

Ilya chokes. He doesn’t know if it’s on a laugh or a sob.

“And I said,” Shane says, and lets out a shaky breath, “that, maybe, this is the best person that has ever happened to me. I told them that it might not be who they were expecting but I think he is the best thing to have ever come into my life, and I might be stupid if I let this get away. No matter the stakes, or the secrets, or whatever the hell else we have to do. You know? God, please tell me that you know.”

“What did they say?” he asks hoarsely.

Shane whispers, “My mom looked me in the eye and said, ‘Rozanov must be a great guy.’”

Ilya rubs his face. He is not surprised to find tears there at the corners of his eyes. He stares at the ceiling and forces himself to breathe through it. He doesn’t know how they got here from there. He cannot comprehend how so much has happened in such a short span of time, like declarations like this should take a week, like an Indian wedding or one of those stupid theme weeks that high schoolers in this country do.

“You will regret me,” he says again, choked, “when I cannot live up to these—fuck, what’s the word, fucking English—”

“Expectations?” Shane offers, lips thinning. “I know you will. You always have, even when I didn’t want you to. Isn’t that the whole goddamn reason why we ended up here?”

“You have run away before. When it got too real.”

“I know,” Shane says, and looks like he really does know. Ilya knows he does. He cannot forget the look on Shane’s face when they were in that club. He cannot forget the look on Shane’s face when he ended up back in Ilya’s bed, as if he had found salvation. As if he had come home.

Maybe it was then. Ilya thinks he will wonder for the rest of his life when he fell in love with this man.

Maybe, just a little bit, it was now. It was standing on the other side of the kitchen island from him, through tears, realizing that this is a confession that Ilya thought he would never get and he didn’t know he needed this badly until he felt his heart shattering and remaking itself again and again in his chest. He knew love was cruel but he had almost forgotten that it could be kind too. The way Shane is looking at him across the space is reminding him. It is making him come alive.

Ilya is not a sob-and-simper kind of guy, but he feels like he is about to become one right here in front of golden boy Shane fucking Hollander. The love of his life, Shane fucking Hollander, wearing his stupid Montreal t-shirt and a pair of jeans that fit him perfectly and hope in his eyes that Ilya can feel deep under his skin until he thinks he is going to absorb that hope for the rest of his life, like some kind of plant soaking in sunlight.

Ilya loves him. Of course he loves him.

It is hard to say.

He opens his arms.

And Shane all but runs into them.

Ilya kisses the top of his head first, and then his temple, working his way down to the line of his jaw. Shane is breathing hard, like he's just run a race, and Ilya thinks he never wants to forget a moment of this. He thinks he wants to relive it every single night that they are not together. He wants to dream this moment for the rest of his stupid existence.

He kisses Shane once on the lips. "You love me?"

Shane nods, eyes wide.

"Good," Ilya replies, and grins. "I love you too."

Shane relaxes into his hold like there was any way of doubting. As if Ilya hasn't been chasing behind him for years now, not just on the ice but in these little corners and crannies too, always chasing behind the wisps of smoke Shane leaves in his dust. Ilya has always been the one to fall first but he thinks this is different because it has lasted, and it has been the realest thing he has ever known to the point that he cannot even call the rest of it love. He cannot even think of it as anything that matches the same continent, the same planet, the same galaxy.

Shane twists his hands in Ilya's hair, bringing him back to the present. He presses their foreheads together and shifts forward. Ilya wants to swallow him whole.

He doesn't kiss him, though. Instead, Shane asks, "How long?"

Ilya knocks him slightly in the forehead with his, and rolls his eyes when Shane frowns at him unhappily. "I don't know," he says, because he doesn't. He really doesn't. "Somewhere, sometime. I just know that I do. I know it has been a while. I know it will be forever."

“Have I told you lately,” Shane murmurs, turning red, “that your English is a lot better?”

“Did it for you, sweetheart.”

“Shut up,” Shane says again, and this time he kisses him for real, tongue and teeth and his face in Ilya’s hands, and Ilya understands everything about feeling like he is coming home.

Ilya loves this stupid Canadian. He loves this goodie-two-shoes man with his stupid designer jackets and his petulant scowls and his sweet, earnest smiles. He has only loved one man in his entire life, really, and he knows he will only ever love him. He knows it in a permanent way. He knows it in a oh-fuck-here-we-go kind of way, like the dip of rollercoaster as it takes the plunge, and he thinks he will learn to love that feeling.

Ilya Rozanov has never been afraid of a little danger, after all.

They come up for air, Ilya’s lip smarting where Shane had bitten it when he smirked into the kiss, and Ilya presses his lips to the tip of Shane’s nose. Presses a kiss to only a couple of the freckles that he wants to lavish kisses on for the rest of his life, until Shane is laughing and pushing him away, turning that beautiful shade of pink again.

Ilya loves him. He thinks he would do anything for him.

Shane touches his face softly and asks, quietly, “Come to the cottage with me?”

And, this time, Ilya has the courage to say, “Yes.”

Shane grins, lighting up from the inside out. Ilya will do whatever it takes to see that all the time for the rest of his life. “Okay,” Shane says, and does not back away. “This comes with a condition.”

“Oh boy.”

“Mhm,” Shane says, kissing the spot under Ilya’s chin that drives him crazy and murmuring into the skin there, “You have to meet my parents.”

Ilya feels a primal shiver up his spine. “Hollander.”

“I know,” Shane says, leaning back to grin. “I know. For me?”

Damn him. Damn him all the way to hell.

Ilya kisses him hard enough to bruise. Hopes Shane will be able to feel that for the next week, nipping at his lip with sharp teeth and grinning when Shane gasps into it. He curls his hands in Shane’s hair and almost tugs at it maliciously. Thinks that would be his due, if meeting Shane’s family as what they are didn’t make his entire body feel like a firework.

“Fine,” Ilya says, grinning. “Anything for you.”

He thinks he even means it, too.

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