

i still want to win

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i still want to win

by [Rozalov](#)

Summary

after Shane and Ilya's Boxing Day fight, Ilya has a game. it doesn't go well
or, baby's first panic attack

Notes

mostly canon compliant, it would be more compliant if I bothered to look up dates

also: i only half understand how hockey works, so sorry lmao

Edit: adding another ch that I did NOT plan on writing, which is... slightly less canon compliant but isn't hooorribly off either so whatever. Also changed a bit at the end of ch1 bc I realized it made no sense

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

edit: okay I went back and edited a bunch of lines to be slightly less inaccurate about hockey lmao

He could win again.

If he could win again, why did he feel so—so—he couldn't think of the word. Sick, but worse. He was sweatier than normal and his stomach hurt and his hands wouldn't quite stop shaking. His breath kept hitching. He'd been fine in the first period, scored twice, fought for that same determination he'd used to lead the Bears to victory after the Olympics. His fury and his heartbreak had been enough. He'd been savage and hungry and it had gotten him what he wanted.

The second wasn't going nearly as well. The Sharks had caught up—Ilya should have blocked that pass from Kopov, he was right fucking there. He wanted to reassure his team, he wanted to show them it was okay, that they still had this, he wanted to score again, prove he was one of the best hockey players alive, prove he wasn't okay with just losing games and smoking weed, he wasn't like that, he—

He couldn't breathe. He was still skating, back on the ice but on autopilot. Except that he couldn't focus on anything and he had no idea who was around him and for a terrifying moment, he looked up and he actually couldn't process the colors on the ice. He had no idea who was who.

He was gasping for breath. Someone scored. He had no idea who it was. He was either going to vomit on the ice or burst into tears, and neither of those were real options. Last time he'd cried on the ice was for his first cup win. He hadn't shed a tear for his broken ribs or when he got his thigh sliced by a skate or when Scott Hunter broke Ilya's fucking nose. He didn't even know what was wrong with him now.

He skated to the bench. His linemates were still celebrating, though he heard, like through water, Barrett say, "Wait, Rozanov, you too--"

Wiebe opened the door and Ilya was stumbling onto the bench. Wiebe's eyebrows drew together. "Rozanov, what--"

"Take me off the ice," Ilya rasped. "I don't—I can't--"

"Alright, alright, come out here--"

Come out, Ilya thought, trying not to choke on hysterics. *God I fucking wish.*

But he got off the ice. Wiebe brushed him behind him, sending the second line out as Ilya's line followed him off the ice. Ilya didn't care. He just had to--

"Roz, what happened?" Their physio, Lauren. Ilya shook his head. "You okay? What--"

"I'm fine," Ilya rasped. "I just—I think I'm gonna be sick, I just--"

He was back in the locker room. He stripped off his jersey, trying to haul in breath, trying to control his body. He didn't know what the fuck was happening, he didn't know what his fucking problem was--

Sorry I still want to win cups instead of smoking weed with my teammates between losses--

They weren't even losing—maybe they were, he had no idea who had just scored—and he was the captain, he should have been out there, he'd abandoned his fucking team, no wonder Shane thought he was just some reckless loser--

Ilya's fingers could barely put his skate guards on. His chest felt like it was caving in and he—fuck. Fuck. Was he really crying? He swiped his fingers under his eyes and they came away wet and—

“Rozanov?”

Ilya ducked his head, wiped his face. “Am fine,” he said, managing to dodge into one of the bathroom stalls. He did not want to vomit, if he was going to kneel on a filthy bathroom floor he wanted it to be for a good reason, and this—whatever this was—was not a good reason—

It was Lauren’s voice. “I reviewed some of the footage, it doesn't seem like you got hurt—”

“Not hurt,” Ilya said hoarsely. Except that was it, wasn't it? He was hurt. His boyfriend had his heel on his heart and he felt like he was drowning and—

There was the sound of people in the hallway, then everyone was coming back to the locker room. The second must be over.

“Am fine, really,” Ilya rasped, hoping Lauren would leave. “Just must have eaten something bad.”

“Do you want some water?”

“I will get some later.”

“Alright. But if you need anything, you know where to find me.”

“Yes.”

Someone banged on the stall door. Ilya flinched back, his whole body reacting violently, memories of his father banging on his door at home and shouting about his losses—

He nearly choked on tears. He slapped a hand over his mouth, trying to muffle the sound, trying to force it all down. He used to be in control, he used to do this, he could still do this—

“Yo, Roz, what is the deal? Wiebe wants to talk to you and you just disappeared—”

“I—” Ilya couldn't breathe. “I—”

“Rozanov?”

He was going to have to quit. He was going to have to quit being captain because he was a bad leader and quit this team because he had let them down and quit hockey because he was a fucking disgrace and—

“Roz, are you—”

Ilya opened the door. It was Wyatt.

Wyatt stared at him. “What—”

“Sorry,” Ilya said hoarsely. “Sorry, I am sorry—”

“For fucking what? What the fuck are you talking about?”

“I am—we haven't won in weeks and I—I should have—I am captain, I could have—I should have—” He couldn't breathe again. He was actually gasping. He had never felt like such absolute shit in his life, he—

was being folded carefully into Wyatt's arms. He flinched at first, but Wyatt held on, and then Ilya was crying into Wyatt's shoulder pads, wracking sobs like he was going to shake apart. By the time it was over, Ilya was hauling in air, dizzy with exhaustion, but he couldn't lift his head from Wyatt's jersey. He didn't want to see the absolute horror from everyone. He was a fucking embarrassment.

Someone patted his head. Ilya stilled. They did it again, hesitant, like they'd never comforted anyone before but had been told this was what one did. Someone was whispering, then there was a *shut up, dumbass*, and someone patted Ilya's head again, stroking a little bit, like he was a dog. Ilya took the first almost normal breath he'd managed in—well, honestly maybe since the first had ended.

He swallowed, sniffled, and lifted his head.

The whole team was there. Ilya took a trembly step away from Wyatt—and Troy, Jesus, it was Troy who had been petting him gently—and gave a shaky laugh. “Sorry,” he said hoarsely. “I—”

“If you say sorry one more time,” Wyatt said threateningly.

Ilya opened his mouth to chirp something stupid back at him, but nothing came out. His head felt fuzzy and floaty and... not quite as bad as before. It maybe was not all dark.

“What happened?” Troy asked.

Ilya shook his head. “I—am having bad day,” he said slowly. “I—”

Wiebe showed up in the doorway. “That's more than a bad day,” he said. “I've seen you beg to keep playing after fractured ribs and whatever the fuck you did to your ankle in October. You have never asked me to take you *off* the ice.”

Ilya cringed back.

“But I'm glad you did," Wiebe said.

“Yes,” Ilya said, low. “I was bad. I was playing badly. I should have—”

“No, I'm glad you took yourself off the ice because I don't want you getting yourself hurt,” Wiebe said. “The last couple minutes, I knew there was something wrong but you were moving too fast for me to figure out what it was. And when you came over, you looked fucking out of it. I'm glad you had the sense to pull out.”

“The only time Roz pulls out,” someone muttered. Someone snickered, someone said *shut the fuck up, not now*, but Ilya gave a choked laugh.

“So,” Wiebe said. “To everyone else, you guys are on fire, let's keep putting pressure on that left side, and see if we can't win this shit, huh?”

There was a cheer. Ilya, even only half dressed, should have said something. He was the one failing everyone, he had to at least—

“And Ilya, can we talk before I have to be back out there?”

Ilya closed his mouth. Nodded.

“Alright,” Wyatt said, stepping up before everyone could file back out. “Remember what Roz said before the game?”

“That we're FUCKIN' CENTAURS,” Dykstra said.

“I think he also said, neigh, bitch.”

Ilya coughed on a laugh, wiped his face.

“So NEIGH BITCH,” Wyatt yelled. “Let's fuckin EAT the Sharks!”

There was another cheer, and everyone whacking each other, laughing. Someone was neighing. Ilya smiled, though it felt like someone was choking him, his heart aching up in his throat. Wyatt might make a good captain when Ilya was fucking fired.

Wiebe gestured for Ilya to follow him. He did. God, he was exhausted. He lifted a hand to press against his—his—temple, yes. His eyes were gritty with dried tears and his chest ached and he just wanted to go to sleep for about fifteen days. *Lazy*, his father's voice whispered. *He can be... how you say... lazy.*

He swallowed again.

“Okay,” Wiebe said, once they were alone. He checked his watch. “I've got two minutes. What's going on?”

Ilya shrugged slightly. He was trying to slip back into his normal self, his usual laid back confidence, but it was hard when *sorry I still want to win cups* still wouldn't stop echoing in his head and he was standing there with his wet face and red eyes. “I said. Bad day.”

“And I called bullshit. Talk to me.”

Ilya took a shaky breath. “I am normally better,” he rasped. “At—at separating. At making bad days into winning games. I don't know why I cannot do it today.”

Because Shane had never been the reason before, not like this. Shane had never sounded like his father before.

His eyes were burning again. He scrubbed another tear away.

“Roz, you've got me half convinced to call the team therapist.”

“No, no, I am—” He hiccupped on a laugh. “I actually—I have one. I have therapist already.” God. This would be a full session's worth of talking. He didn't know if he wanted to call, to go back tomorrow. Was therapy why he felt so—so—fractured? Like he'd been hit too hard, broken something inside. He was supposed to be getting better. For his team. For Shane. And look what he'd done instead.

Wiebe did his best not to look shocked. “Alright,” he said, checking his watch again. “How about you call them? The team and I will win this, and then we can get you back in the next game. Deal?”

“I can go back in, I am mostly fine now—” Ilya tried, but Wiebe just held a hand up.

“No. Make your call.” Wiebe looked him over. “We're going with stomach bug, right? That's what you told Lauren, that you were sick?”

Ilya nodded slightly.

“Alright. Stay back here, then. I would've told you to come back out to the bench, but that doesn't make a lot of sense if we're going with 'sick.'”

Ilya clenched his jaw. He couldn't help it. “They probably don't want their pathetic loser captain with them anyway,” he mumbled.

“Rozanov. They all love you. I have never seen a team so inspired by their captain. Alright? Is that what this is about?”

“Is about a lot,” Ilya mumbled. His hands were shaking again. He crossed his arms, tried to still the shivering.

“Go call your therapist,” Wiebe said gently. “And we’ll go from there. Alright?”

Ilya nodded. “Okay.” Then, as Wiebe turned to go, Ilya caught his sleeve. “Spasibo,” he said, low.

“Don’t thank me,” Wiebe said. “I’ll see you out there.”

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Shane overhears Ilya talking about what happened on the ice.

Sort of canon compliant? Would probably change the trajectory a tiny bit but mostly fits in. Sort of. Anyway.

Chapter Notes

Edit: i originally typed this on my phone in my car and posted anyway, so I did just find a bunch of typos and realized I fucked up how scoring works, so that's now fixed

It was 8 in San Francisco, where Montreal had just won by a landslide. So it was 11 in Ottawa, where, as Shane poked through his phone, Ilya and the rest of the Centaurs had been kind of trampled by Philadelphia. 4-2 wasn't nearly as bad as some of the games Ottawa had played this season—to say nothing of last season—but it still wasn't—well. It wasn't great.

There was one text from Ilya, from a few minutes ago, just as Shane's game would have been ending. *Winner winner, chicken dinner. (:* Then a second one. *Harris says that. Is real saying?* Then *proud of you*

Shane wished for a day he could send an identical text back. He supposed he could now, but wouldn't it come off condescending? The Centaurs had lost. Shane wouldn't feel proud of himself after 4-2. Even if he'd scored both goals. It was a team sport, and the Ottawa team was losing.

Shane hesitated over the keyboard. Everything he wanted to say sounded stupid, or belittling, or delusional.

He clicked back to the internet. He'd check how Ilya had played before he responded. Maybe he *had* scored both of those goals, and Shane could comment on something specific.

He hated this. He was proud of Ilya. Even if Ilya was on the worst team in the league, Shane still—

He frowned at his phone. Ilya hadn't played in the third period at all. He'd been pulled, and hadn't come back. Speculation still seemed to be just that, speculation, no two sources having the same conclusion.

Shane ignored the texts from Ilya now and sent one of his own: *are you okay? Why didn't you play in the third period, did you get hurt?*

Shane stripped quickly, trying to rush his way into Ilya answering. He showered, joined the others on the team bus, was shuttled back to their hotel. Everyone else was messing around, already starting on celebrating, but Shane just kept his eyes on his phone. Ilya wasn't answering. He couldn't find any reports that Ilya had been taken to a hospital, but—

“Bro, he's probably fine,” Hayden said over Shane's shoulder, from the seat behind him. Shane flinched and put his phone away. “He's probably just throwing a bitch fit because they lost.”

“That's not like him,” Shane muttered. “You know that, too, when was the last time he just threw in the towel?”

“This whole season,” Hayden said.

That was basically what Shane himself had said to Ilya, but hearing it from someone else—someone who continued to kind of hate Ilya—made Shane feel kind of sick. That wasn't true. Ilya had been trying so hard this season. He'd gone to a terrible team, and yeah, it was taking him longer to pull them together than it had with Boston, but he was *trying*. Surely.

Except that Shane had taken Ilya's losses and casual attitude and thrown them in his face, and now Ilya wasn't even on the ice.

And lately, Shane kind of thought the ice was the only place Ilya felt like himself. Because he sure as fuck felt distant when he was with Shane.

No. There was no way Ilya was just giving up. He'd scored in the first period, there was no way—

“Hey,” Hayden said. “You good?”

“Yeah,” Shane said, and realized at once that he hadn't defended Ilya to Hayden and also that the time for it had passed. JJ was looking over now, too. “Yeah, I'm fine. Just the—the time zone getting to me.”

“Time zones fucking hate me,” Hayden complained, predictably, and he and JJ started talking about how they dealt with it, as if they hadn't all had this conversation a million times before. Shane hit play on the Ottawa-Philly game on his phone, watched on silent as they got to their hotel, kept watching as he flopped into bed. At least he didn't have to share a room anymore. He turned on the volume. Nothing, nothing, nothing, Ilya scored, nothing—

And then, near the end of the second period, Troy scored off one of Ilya's passes, and then Ilya skated to the bench and went down the tunnel. He apparently didn't come back. He'd been moving like he was in a hurry, but not like he was in pain.

Shane checked the time. Ilya still hadn't answered, and it was now nearly midnight back east. Ilya should have been asleep.

Shane called him anyway.

It rang out. He didn't leave a message. Then he spent a few minutes overthinking that. Yeah, if he left a message and someone else listened, they'd know it was him. But who the fuck would be listening to Ilya's messages? Ilya didn't even listen to his own messages. He was on the verge of calling back—again, and again maybe—when his phone buzzed in his hand.

Lily.

Shane nearly slapped the little green icon.

“Sorry,” Ilya's voice was saying, and Shane sank back into his bed. There was a bit of background noise, then it ended. Ilya sounded exhausted. “Was with the guys. Getting consolation drinks. Had to step out first.”

“Are you okay?” Shane demanded. “What happened?”

“Ah,” Ilya said, with a small laugh. “So you saw.”

“Are you okay?”

“Am fine,” Ilya said. “Just a stomach bug.”

That... made no sense. Shane tried to unjam his brain. “A stomach bug... that's cured by drinking with the guys?”

“Ah, no,” Ilya said. “I am not really drinking. Just. Hanging out.”

“And you think no one will leak a picture of you at a bar after you were pulled with a stomach bug?” None of this made sense. Was Ilya lying to him or—

“No one will leak a picture of me at a bar because I am not at a bar,” Ilya said, voice slightly tight. “We are at Bood's house. Private.”

“Oh,” Shane said, and felt like a dick. “I—are you feeling better then?”

A pause, then Ilya said, voice low, something in it that made Shane edgy and anxious, “No. No, not really.”

“Then why aren't you in bed or something, Ilya, I don't—”

There was the sound of a door closing on the other end of the line, then everything went slightly muffled. A man's voice—Troy Barrett? maybe?—said, “Oh. Hey.”

“Hey.” Ilya.

“Came to get some air,” Troy said, like he had to explain himself. “They're getting trashed in there.”

“Great,” Ilya said. “That will be fun at practice tomorrow.”

Troy(?) snorted. A pause, then, “You okay? Hazy thinks that was a panic attack.”

Shane actually pulled his phone from his ear to stare at it.

Panic attack?

“I know,” Ilya said, and Shane ducked back to listen. Maybe he shouldn't have. He wasn't convinced Ilya knew he could hear this. “I don't know what it was, maybe that, but I'm fine. Really. Won't happen again.”

“I'm not sure that's how they work.”

“Thank you for your confidence in me.”

“Rozanov—”

“I kid,” Ilya said. “Only joking. Yes, yes, I am fine. Scheduled appointment with my therapist and everything. Will be okay.”

“Wait—shit, I didn't realize you were on the phone. You can go back to—whoever.”

“Girlfriend,” Ilya said. Then, snarky, like it didn't matter, like it didn't shatter Shane into a million pieces, “Well, not so much girlfriend, no? Girl I see sometimes.”

“Mm,” Troy said.

Shane's hand was tight around his phone. Girlfriend. Not even girlfriend. And fuck, it was stupid, it was *their plan*, but Shane wanted, for that brief second, nothing more than to claim that title. Well, boyfriend, not girlfriend, but still. Anything. He couldn't even claim a fake girlfriend title because people would start looking. And he was pretty sure Ilya didn't mean for him to hear any of this, that Ilya was just doing what they'd agreed to, that he hadn't meant to hurt Shane. But there was an edge of bitterness to his voice that made everything so much worse.

Shane took a shaky breath. His eyes were burning. He was maybe on the verge of tears. He pressed the heel of his hand to his left eye, then his right.

Troy and Ilya were still talking. A muffled, maybe sincere *thank you, Barrett*. Then the sound of the door opening. Distant, Ilya yelling, joking, *why is Troy Barrett not drunk yet? He scored goal tonight! You are all failing him!*

Then the sound of that door closing again. And what Shane was pretty sure was the click of a lighter.

“Panic attack?” Shane repeated.

Ilya coughed, and Shane would have bet a thousand dollars that he'd just choked on smoke. But for once, Shane didn't bring up the cigarettes. “Shit,” Ilya said hoarsely, after a moment. “You... heard that?”

“Yeah,” Shane said. “So much for a stomach bug. Why did you lie to me? About that? You know I—I mean, you've seen me have them.”

“I know,” Ilya said. “But mine was stupid. And not so contained as yours. But still,” he mumbled. “Yes. Is what Hazy thinks it was.”

Not so contained— “What does that mean?” Shane demanded. And he knew he was being overbearing, knew he was maybe making all of this worse, could practically feel Ilya shutting down, shutting him out, even from across the continent. But what else was Shane supposed to *do*? When Ilya kept shit from him, straight up lied to him now, and—hang on, had Ilya mentioned a fucking therapist? Shane could only process one thing at a time. “Like—you had a full on panic attack? You're being serious, that's not an exaggeration?”

“No, is just joke,” Ilya said, flat. “Yes, i am being serious. They are being serious. I freaked the fuck out. Was not fun. Took myself off the ice because I—” Shane heard Ilya take a shaky breath. “Doesn't matter,” Ilya mumbled. “Yes. Panic attack. Or something like it.”

“Well, what triggered it?”

“This whole fucking situation,” Ilya finally snapped. “Whole fucking thing. What you said to me, last time. I don't know. Everything. I don't know.” And Shane could feel it again, Ilya pulling back, closing up, and Shane didn't know how to stop it, didn't know how to stop himself.

“Which part?”

“Oh,” Ilya said, and there was something devastating about how flat his voice went, like he simply could not begin to care. “That I just want to smoke weed and fuck up games.” Ilya took in a sharp breath. “I want to win. I fucking want to win, so badly. I’m not—I know you think I’m lazy, that I just—”

“I don’t,” Shane interrupted. “I don’t think that.”

“You do,” Ilya argued. “I don’t exercise enough for you, I just fuck around with my teammates, I don’t pay enough attention to my diet, I—but you are not here. To see. To see me watching footage, and all hours I spend on bike with weirdo Haas staring at me, and talking out plays with Wiebe—”

“I don’t think you’re lazy,” Shane said desperately. And fuck, did he wish he’d never said anything. Wish he’d never made a single comment about Ilya’s habits, because Shane knew he didn’t see everything, knew how he himself handled his life wasn’t, exactly, ideal, that he could stand to loosen up—but then when he saw someone trying that, he lost patience, too fast, and maybe it was jealousy, maybe it was the irritable edge of not eating enough, and maybe Ilya was right about that. Maybe Shane hadn’t trusted Ilya to be trying as hard as he could, because he hadn’t seen the effort Ilya was putting in, but he sort of thought Ilya had been keeping it from him. It was less embarrassing to lose if you hadn’t tried, wasn’t it? And Ilya, as much as he acted blasé, cared. And had a not insignificant amount of pride.

He hadn’t quite trusted Shane, either.

Shane could feel himself spiraling, and he wished he’d never said shit, because this was a tiny panic, and he’d still never wish it on Ilya. And Ilya had had a full blown panic attack today, in public, and had to take himself off the ice. All because of what Shane had said. “God, Ilya, I don’t think you’re lazy. I know you put work in. And I know you want to win—and it’s harder for you to do that, because the Centaurs suck so fucking bad—”

“Okay, well, rude,” Ilya mumbled. “They only suck so bad. Not so fucking bad.”

“I’m sorry. Fuck, I’m sorry.” He scrubbed a hand across his face. “I never should have asked this of you. Any of it.”

“To be fair,” Ilya said, still slightly hoarse, “This part was my plan. I was the one who brought up contract ending. I wanted to move to closer team, maybe get Canadian passport. You suggested Ottawa, yes, but this was going to be plan anyway.”

“I shouldn’t have said Ottawa,” Shane said. “Even Toronto—”

“Ah, I hate Toronto,” Ilya said. “Stupid Leafs. Who is afraid of a leaf.”

Shane huffed the world’s smallest laugh. And it wasn’t fair, that Ilya could pull him back to himself, even when Ilya still clearly felt like shit, and Shane couldn’t do the same back. Could only, apparently, make it worse.

Ilya sighed. “I agreed to it,” he said quietly. “And I would do it again, still. I just did not realize how hard it would be. I thought I could do same as I did with Boston, could lead them to victory. But that—that was not only one year, either. I was on team what, three years? Was not overnight. I just. Need to figure out better plan. Different plan, for different team.” Ilya sounded so tired just contemplating it. “And I did not realize how much—how much I miss Russian. Not a single other Russian player here. Is madness.” He sniffled. It was probably cold outside, in Ottawa. “And I still do not see you enough. All the change and still the one thing that matters. Still—yeah. Sorry.”

“I’m sorry,” Shane said. “Holy fuck, I’m so fucking sorry. I never should have—”

“Shane,” Ilya said gently. “I told you. Would have done it even if you did not ask. And is not just hockey, anyway. Is just me, maybe. It is not your fault. Could never be your fault. Okay?”

Shane frowned into space. “What do you mean by that? Actually—did you tell Troy you had a therapist?”

Ilya swallowed. “Yes.”

“Can we use video?” Shane asked finally. “I want to see you.”

“Not here,” Ilya said. “If someone comes out again, like Barrett, they might—”

Shane wanted to scream. Wanted to say, *fuck it, fuck it, I dont care anymore, let them see.*

But they couldn't. Not yet. And Ilya was already exhausted. Shane wouldn't push, not this time. He would be strong for both of them, be smart for both of them.

“Besides,” Ilya was saying. Shane could picture his little sideways smirk. But it felt self-deprecating, in a way Ilya wasn't often. “I am not very nice to look at right now, I think.”

“What do you mean?”

“Nothing,” Ilya said. He sniffled again. Then he said, quieter, “And I don't think I could see you right now and not be able to touch you. Would... feel too bad. This way is easier.”

Shane pressed a hand to his mouth. He would not cry right now.

“Sorry,” Ilya said quietly. “I—will tell you about therapy another time. Not right now. Is a lot. And I—what were they saying? I am wiped. Only reason I am out with them is that—I—well. They. Team did not want me to be alone. After. And I... I also did not really want to be alone.”

Shane bit his lip. Hard.

“Is not your fault,” Ilya said, quietly. “I know you are still thinking that. But I am not. Okay? Is my plan, too. I love you. And I should not have let you leave last time without saying it again.”

Shane's eyes were burning again, and he felt one tear glance hot down his cheek. “I love you too,” he whispered.

“Oh, moy lyubimyy,” Ilya murmured. “Don't cry. I can hear it from here. You look too pretty when you cry and I am not even there to see.”

“Fuck off.”

“Is true.”

“I can't stand you,” Shane whispered.

“I know,” Ilya said.

“I love you.”

“Ya tebya lyublyu.”

Ilya hung up. Shane lowered his phone to his lap.

Then he wound up and hurled it at the hotel room door. It hit with a *bang* so loud Shane flinched, and it dropped to the floor.

Shane looked at it for a moment. He'd never done something like that before. Never punched a wall, never broken a TV. Never really had the impulse to before, either. He got to his feet

and went to the door, picked up his phone. The case had done its job. He'd never broken a phone, still.

He had the impulse to just snap it. Grip it in both hands and crack it over his knee.

It buzzed in his hand. Hayden, in the group chat. *Did anyone hear that noise?*

Shane plugged his phone in. He lay carefully on his back in the bed.

Then he rolled over and screamed into all the pillows.

No, he'd never broken anything. He'd never even tried. But nothing had ever hurt this much, either.

He needed a new plan. He needed Ilya soon, not in years. He needed to tell everyone soon. Ilya had told him once that he could be a bit dramatic, which Shane had thought was rich coming from Ilya. But Shane didn't think it was dramatic, right now, or even an overreaction, when he thought that what they were doing now was slowly choking both of them.

And, even sooner, he needed to show Ilya how much he meant to him.

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