**memories of the skin**

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# memories of the skin

by loverboysteve

Summary

"How did you get?" Ilya says, keeping his voice low. The dead weight of Shane's head means he's probably close to drifting off.

He moves his hand from between Shane's shoulder blades to trace the raised scar tissue on his shoulder.

Shane pulls back from his absentminded nuzzling. He frowns in confusion at the question, scrunching up his nose and those freckles that Ilya adores.

"Wha-? Oh, that," says Shane, eyes catching on the scar on his shoulder. "Hockey, of course."

—

set after episode 6 at the cottage, where a discussion of scars takes place. shane finds out that some scars are worse than others.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Hockey’s brutal.

Any numb-skulled rookie could tell you that. A half-wit with a pair of working eyes could tell you that. And any player who plays the game like Ilya Rosanov does? Mean and hard? Fast and rough?

Well, he knows, maybe better than most, about how brutal it gets.

There's a myriad of little mementos that get left behind in such a violent contact sport.

Sometimes, they're only temporary — damaged ribs that make every breath a wince. Mottled purple bruises on skin that bloom so deep, they look black.

Sometimes they're more permanent.

Fractured bones. Chipped teeth. Misaligned noses from being broken too many times.

Hockey's a game that doles out scabs and scars aplenty. Ilya is the sort of weirdo that kind of loves them.

He doesn't go *looking* for them—though, he's sure Shane and half the hockey world would disagree with him on that—but there's a certain glimmer of pleasure that prowls beneath his skin after a good, rough game.

It's proof. His body is strong. It takes the hits, it gets back up, it keeps going. *He* keeps going.

Hollander has them too. Any hockey player worth their salt does really — but Ilya’s only ever really been interested in the things to do with Shane.

There’s a particularly raised one on the deltoid of his left arm. A cleaner scar than the most left from a violent game of hockey – so much that Ilya briefly wonders if it hadn't come from hockey.

His eyes trace over it, thumb begging to follow the movement, and Shane watches him.

Quiet has lapsed over the cottage, Yuna and David far down the road by now. There are still plates in the sink, needing to be washed. Coasters scattered on the table, ringed with watermarks.

The fact that Ilya had managed to convince Shane into leaving it for later, instead of tidying it all up now, is probably testament to how exhausting the day has been for him.

Or how much Shane really loves him.

(God. He *loves* him. He loves Ilya so goddamn fucking much, it still doesn't quite feel real.)

They're lounging. Something's Ilya's a professional at, but Shane still needs some practice at. Slow, wandering touches always seem to do the trick.

A warm hand rubbing between his shoulder blades as Shane noses closer to him, a quiet sort of snuffly sound escaping him. Ilya knows his boyfriend is relaxed as he can be, given the events of the day. Still, he can't resist breaking the quiet. The question itches.

"How did you get?" Ilya says, keeping his voice low. The dead weight of Shane's head means he's probably close to drifting off.

He moves his hand from between Shane's shoulder blades to trace the raised scar tissue on his shoulder.

Shane pulls back from his absentminded nuzzling. He frowns in confusion at the question, scrunching up his nose and those freckles that Ilya adores.

"Wha-? Oh, that," says Shane, eyes catching on the scar on his shoulder. "Hockey, of course."

Shane's gaze roams back over to Ilya's face, lips pulled into a small smile. "That's where all of them come from. It happened when I was younger, though. Wasn't wearing proper gear, caught a skate all wrong."

All wrong is an understatement. The scar was up on Hollander's shoulder, which was far from where any skates should be. Ilya huffs, the sound fonder than he intended.

"Your own skate?" He teases.

Shane, predictably, takes the bait.

"*No,* not my own skate, asshole," He scoffs. He's got his angry kitten look on, the reason Ilya can't resist teasing him, even after all these years.

Ilya kisses him just because he can.

Shane looks a tad more dazed when he pulls back, the crease between his brows gone. He smiles, a little dopily, and his lashes are dark and long. They flutter as his eyes shift down.

"You have them too, right?"

Shane's fingertips find Ilya's chest and it takes a strange amount of effort not to preen into it. God, Ilya loves when Shane touches him. The fingertips on his chest start softly, sketching a line up to his collarbones.

He knows the scar Shane has found. A jagged one, no more than a couple inches long. It's not raised, just a little paler than the rest of him.

"This one?"

Ilya makes a hum in the back of his throat. "Is... what you call it? Hairline. Little break."

Shane's smile grows a bit wider at that. "Hairline fracture, yeah. This one?"

His fingers have found another, on the other side, slightly lower down. Ribs take the brunt of many hits in hockey — sometimes enough to break the skin.

"Yes. Hockey. Got it in a game against fucking San Francisco, can you believe?"

But Shane's already moving on. His hand cradles the side of Ilya's face, his thumb stroking down the line of his nose. The one that Shane already *knows* has been broken half a dozen times.

"This one?"

"Har har, Hollander," Ilya says. Then takes advantage of the closeness, turning his face to kiss at Shane's wrist. He kisses it once, twice, chaste but meaningful kisses.

Shane lets him, waits til he's released before moving on. His cheeks are a little more pink than they were a second ago.

His fingers give a little wiggle as they dance down Ilya's neck, tapping beats of delirium right into his skin. Into his blood. Ilya watches with a honeyed gaze as Shane hunts for the next marred piece of skin like it's treasure.

He doesn't find treasure.

It's a scar, sure, like the rest of them.

Made of puckered, tight skin that's rough to the touch. Raised just a little. All scars are memories, but this one in particular holds a fiercely stinging one that Ilya wishes he could forget.

"And this one?" Shane asks, a touch of sleepiness lingering in the back of his voice.

He's laid his head down closer again, shuffling in tiny, discrete motions to get closer to Ilya. Like he doesn't quite want to be noticed doing it.

He's still touching the burn-scar on Ilya's shoulder, on the ridge of it, near the neck.

“Ah, that one, not as fun,” Ilya says with a crooked smile.

He keeps his voice light – which is at odds with how he feels. That memory still manages to sting, even years on now. He purses his lips, thinking over whether he wants to unpack that today.

The weeks after his mother's death. The grief that became rage within his father.

He doesn't. Maybe someday, just for Shane. Just because he asked.

But today has already been so wonderful. A little awkward, yes, though wonderful all the same.

Ilya doesn't want to taint it. Memories from Russia—*bad* memories from Russia don't belong here.

“Not from hockey," Ilya says as evenly as he can.

He dotes a touch to Shane's brow, softly rubbing his temple.

“Well, yeah,” Shane murmurs, his fingertips still gentle. He’s sketching lines across Ilya’s skin, feather-soft touches of a lover—no matter how much Shane says he hates the word. He's mapping out the circular shape of the scar. “Unless someone took the cap off the top of their stick and jabbed you with it.”

He chuckles because, honestly, with Ilya’s track record, it’s not entirely too far fetched.

“It’s like…” Shane muses, more to himself.

The touch is back on the scar, circling it with a delicate nail. Ilya shivers.

Despite how he knows that the skin is healed over, it suddenly feels as burning hot as the day he got it. The memory rears its ugly head. Ilya swallows it back down.

“Shane,” he says. Not quite a warning, but nearly.

“Like a…” Shane continues distractedly.

He’s thumbing over the scar now and even if he couldn't see him, Ilya could know the furrow of his brows from his tone of his voice. He's puzzling over it, wondering what would leave such a scar.

Maybe he's wondering how he missed it. Shane has kissed this skin a thousand times. Mouthed at this neck.

Ilya wouldn't have ever expected him to pay enough attention to notice it. People hardly did. Shane is different.

"It's..." The furrow between his eyebrows has deepened, Shane staring more intently at Ilya's shoulder. So close to it dawning on him. Ilya wills him to leave it. *Not today moya lyubov*. "S'like a big freaking cigarette. It's... Wait, is it-?"

“*Shane*.”

Something in Ilya's voice must bleed through. The quiet plea in the way he says his boyfriend's name.

Shane's eyes leave the scar and he stares at Ilya with wider eyes. The realisation is within them. He suddenly doesn't look very sleepy at all. Ilya soothes his thumb over Shane's temple again, studying his face reverently.

It's love. Poking at the old memory, wanting to know all the parts of Ilya – he knows that it's Shane's love for him driving that. Ilya focuses on that and counts all the adorable freckles on

Shane's nose, like he's done countless times before, until the scar stops burning. Until it's just a scar again.

"One day, I will tell you," says Ilya. "I don't want that day to be today. Okay?"

It takes a moment, but eventually Shane's nodding. The furrow in his brow is still there, just changed. Not confused anymore, now concerned.

"Okay," he echoes. His lips are still pursed together, still looking so fucking worried for Ilya that he can't contain himself. Ilya shifts forward, presses his mouth to Shane's, and kisses him deeply.

One kiss melts into two, then three.

"Okay," Shane says again, when they part, sounding breathless.

The worry of his face has diminished a touch. He's almost back to happy and pliant and sleepy – all because of Ilya's kisses. Something fervent trills happily in Ilya's heart at the thought. God, he fucking loves Shane.

"Just–" Shane says, and his hand still on the scar shifts, moving to hold Ilya's neck with an intentional gentleness. "You're okay, right? You— whoever– it won't happen again, right?"

*"Moya lyubov,"* Ilya says, the Russian rolling off his tongue in nearly a purr. His eyes dart over Shane's face intensely. "No. Can't happen. Not possible. I promise."

Shane looks more relieved at that.

Ilya leaves out the part where the dead would literally have to rise from the grave for this particular scar to be replicated. Sure, it would reassure his boyfriend further, but at the cost of giving him too much information.

Heaven help Ilya, he'd probably roll over in the middle of the night and find Shane still awake, worrying about it. About the *whens* and the *hows*, and whether it was possible to raise someone from the dead just to kill them all over again.

No, not today. Someday soon. Being fussed over by Shane was something Ilya loved, but he didn't need it today.

"I'm sorry it happened to you," Shane says, breaking the lapse of silence. Ilya focuses on him, on how the earnest words are. For a moment, before he blinks, Ilya swears Shane's eyes are glassy.

It undoes him in a quiet, simple way. The scar is just a scar. The man before him, in his arms, loves him so fiercely that even the memory of some hurt can inspire tears.

Ilya's throat grows thick. He thinks he surely must've been a saint in his past life to deserve Shane in this one.

"I'm sorry too," he says after a moment, the words sounding a bit too choked up.

He swallows, hard, and lets it pass. Shane moves forward and kisses his shoulder, a few inches shy of the scar, and Ilya feels it all the same.

Someday he'll tell him — the cigar and the grief, pressed into his skin until it warped it. From the very person who was supposed to protect him from hurt.

But today, he's at the cottage.

He's in Shane Hollander's sheets, in his bed, in his arms. Ilya is getting kissed so, so sweetly that it robs him of all the doubt in his heart that he may be unlovable. Now and onward, the scar is just a scar.

Shane kisses his mouth, his jaw. Works his way down his neck. He seals his mouth over the skin of Ilya's neck, blood rising up beneath his kisses, and gets to work making a mark of his own.

End Notes

i luv....suffering. and agony. and giving my favourite chew toys devastating scars to go with bad parents like OUGH >:D but also love! and fluff! and endless kisses!!!! this is my first hollanov fic so pray i did not butcher them. i have, like everyone else, fallen down the heated rivalry rabbit hole and soooo hope to write for them again :D

kudos and comments keep the author going!! i love love love hearing thoughts <3

you can also find me on tumblr @stevebabey but beware, that blog is an amalgamation of shit i luv ok mwah love you bye

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