

light reflects the chain on your neck

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light reflects the chain on your neck

by [silverstreaks](#)

Summary

“But yeah,” Shane continues, “tell him I’m not mad. Well, not about the accident, at least. I’m mad about him for ruining our plans last night.” He smiles sheepishly. “Sorry I didn’t text.”

I’m sorry I didn’t text last night, by the way.

I was looking forward to our plans last night. I’m mostly mad at Marlow for fucking that up. I was gonna ask you—

“Ilya? You good?” Shane pulls back the hand Ilya was holding to poke him on the chest.

(He seems to be under the impression that the last game he played was against the Boston Bears.)

--

Ilya goes through seeing Shane unconscious on the ice again, and people try to convince him that they are going to be okay.

Notes

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

If you made him recount each moment of the day, all those years ago, when Cliff Marlow did a too-hard check on Shane, Ilya would say he doesn't remember. He would feign nonchalance, and the all-too familiar veil over his face would fall. He would look bored, but, in his head, he would be going over each second as if it were a game tape he needed to pick apart.

Because he was there, on the ice. He was just a few feet away, far enough to not be able to do a thing but close enough that a sprint could have saved him. (No one but Galina knows that he still carries that same guilt to this day.)

When the medics fussed over Shane, Ilya was right at the outskirts, where the only thing stopping the cracks in his voice from growing noticeable was the quiet of how he asked them if Shane Hollander was okay. If the captain of the other team was okay. If there was any sense to continuing the game, as if they weren't just two minutes into the first period.

He could feel the desperation bleeding into every English word he tried to utter, but even in his state, he knew no one would recognize it, because the people sees and hears what it wants, and they wanted Ilya to be nothing more than a good player and a concerned opposing captain.

Maybe if she was close enough, Svetlana would recognize it. She would have done a better job at getting him back to his game than Johansson was trying to do.

Blazing on his chest and tight around his throat, he's pretty sure that his mother would have known immediately.

Most definitely, if Shane were awake, he would have known the panic in Ilya's face before he could even say a word. But then again, if Shane were awake, Ilya would not have been panicking at all.

Seeing him lying on the ice, motionless, with the Montreal team's medics putting a collar around his neck and carefully placing him on the stretcher, it was all—too much. Too familiar. Too terrifying of a scene, that Ilya swears he saw his mother's lying corpse on the ground next to Shane.

(Growing up, Ilya had always told his mother she was beautiful. She would always pause before chuckling and ruffling his hair. She probably never thought he would tell her that; she definitely never believed him every time.

His mama was always sad, but she was also always beautiful. Tragically beautiful.)

Despite his teammates and the refs trying to get him away from Shane, Ilya was close enough for him to know that Shane could hear him. He was close enough for him to hear Shane's own words: "Ilya, we're not alone. They can see us, Ilya."

And like he knew it would happen, it was Shane who got him to snap out of it. Svetlana wasn't here, and his mother's body has long been buried. Ilya skated back to his bench, and it

was all because of Shane.

(When they took him away and after the crowd had applauded, Ilya played. If you asked him to recount every moment of what happened on the ice after the accident, he would look you dead in the eye and say “I do not remember”, and it wouldn’t be a lie.)

In the years since then, he had started a foundation with Shane, moved to Ottawa, gained friends, got engaged, outed, and married until Shane himself began playing with him on the Centaurs. You know, just the works. Ilya’s sure that someday down the line, when he’s retired and as old as Scott Hunter, he would look back at his twenties and be appalled by how chaotic it all was. How much drama there was. Which, frankly, checks out; after all, he’s European. His life was predestined to have drama.

Currently, though, in his early thirties, the only thing he’s sure about is that all that drama must have finally fizzled out. Right? Surely, he has exhausted every bit of danger and excitement there is to exhaust.

Nope, not a fat fucking chance.

The day started out good. Ilya woke up to the hair on Shane’s nape tickling his nose, only barely stopping himself from sneezing. His husband has been telling him he’s due for a haircut, but Ilya has always opposed.

“It’s getting annoying to deal with,” Shane reasoned. “And I don’t think it looks good on me. I honestly don’t know why you like it so much.”

Ilya raised an eyebrow. “Pulling your hair is easier when you’re sucking my dick.”

“You definitely have your favorite English words,” Shane muttered exasperatedly.

“Moya lyubov,” Ilya said beseechingly, “We are in playoffs. Since you could not grow a beard, your hair is all you have. Do not cut it.”

Shane scoffed and rolled his eyes. “You’re a dick.”

Ilya beamed. “Yes, a dick you love to suck especially when I pull your hair. Glad we’re on same page.”

With a surprised laugh, Shane pushed his husband off the couch, but he never did book a hairdresser appointment.)

He doesn’t know how long he’s been awake, basking in the early morning with his husband in his arms. They were so close together that Ilya could see the steady thump of Shane’s pulse on the side of his neck.

It’s a game day, so he’s sure it won’t sound until at least after the sun rises. Even when he was in Boston and Shane was in Montreal, they were both in agreement that game days should not have hectic mornings. It was one of their most frequent excuses to sleep over each other’s places, after all.

So, Ilya coaxes his husband up with quiet kisses on the back of his neck, feels him slowly wake up, and knows he is when he hears the heavy inhale that Shane does every time he gets out of his sleep.

“Good morning, *solnyshko*,” Ilya mutters from where he’s kissing down Shane’s shoulders.

He stops when his husband shuffles away to lie on his back. His hand reaching out for Ilya whose own was already finding Shane’s before getting pulled on top of him. They trade kisses, soft ones that hold none of the urgency they usually have after a game. Just silent: full of adoration and devotion.

When they pulled back, Ilya was already tracing the freckles on Shane’s cheeks with the pad of his thumb, and Shane wasn’t holding back from smiling up at Ilya. He holds the hand cradling his face, places a kiss on Ilya’s palm. “*Good morning, my love*,” Shane whispers back in Russian.

It was starting off as a good day.

It started off as a good day.

It started off as a good day, and it’s looking to end as one of the worst days of Ilya’s life.

Ilya was the first to drop to Shane’s side the moment they all realized he wasn’t getting back up. Somehow, Shane’s helmet was on the ground next to him, and that wasn’t the only thing there.

There was blood on the ice, which he was trying his motherfucking best to not look at, but he couldn’t. Because the blood on the ice was the end of a trail that led to the left side of Shane’s head. The red trickled down his ear, and Ilya couldn’t help the way his fingers hovered over the wound, unbelieving that it was there.

“Shane?” He couldn’t even hear his own fucking voice. “Shane, wake up.”

There is a pounding on his head that grows stronger when he doesn’t receive even a single twitch in response. It echoes down his face, the back of his neck, his shoulders and chest, arms, torso, stomach, and legs. He’s freezing and sweating at the same time, and if he spared even a split-second look to his hands, he would know they were trembling.

But Ilya didn’t care about that. He didn’t give a single fuck about anything else other than the way Shane’s face was lax and unmoving.

He looked like he was just sleeping.

(So did his mom.)

“*Moya lyubov*, please—” his breath hitches “--please wake up. Shane? Shane—”

He didn’t know where to put his hands, so they remained hovering over his husband’s face. Ilya tries to keep his eyes on Shane’s face, but it’s almost instinct how he looks back and

forth between the blood on the ice, the blood now steadily matting his hair—oh god, he should have agreed to cut it—and his eyes that were still closed and unmoving.

Ilya keeps murmuring his pleas for Shane to wake up. He knows they are murmurs, because he couldn't hear them. Or maybe he was shouting, and it was just not louder than the steady pounding.

The pounding which had grown intense and harsh enough to reverberate around him. In between the haze, he feels the ice around him thundering in the way he knows meant there were people moving fast. Anger starts to boil in his chest, because why the *fuck* were they trying to start back the game while Shane—

“Move over, Rozanov.” Someone pushes him aside, which immediately raises his shackles. “No—” he *begs*, “no, no, no, no—”

Someone else tries to pull him away, and he could see more people moving around Shane. He could see the shirts he knew the Ottawa team's medics wore, but all he registered was that someone was trying to take him away from his husband.

“No, no, no—Shane—” Ilya takes back his arm from whoever the fuck grabbed him, pushes them away when they try to come closer. “Shane, *please be okay*—”

They try to pull him back again, but before he even flinches, there's someone else bodying him away from the scene. “You need to give them space to work on him, Roz,” they say.

There are multiple voices repeating the same thing around him. *Let them work, Roz. He'll be okay.* They say, over and over and over again. What the fuck do they know?

Ilya keeps thrashing and calling for the—still—unmoving body on the ground. His own voice, gravelled whispers in his ears. He doesn't even know what he's saying anymore; everything's drowned out by the pounding in his head.

The pounding, that was growing into a steady rhythm. Constant repeated thumps that resembled—

He watches as they pick him up off the ice and put him on the stretcher. When they carry him up, Ilya's eyes linger on the way Shane's hand falls off the edge.

Unmoving.

The pounding in his head was a steady rhythm. A thump, thump, thump. Constant and repeating, resembling too much of the way Shane's heartbeat was just that morning.

And then, it stops.

He could hear people saying things to him, moving him this way and that like a fucking marionette. If he was a doll, then it was obvious to everyone looking at him—and he knew that everyone *was* looking at him—that his strings were cut.

“Sit him down, move over, rook—”

Someone blocks the light, turns it off, whatever.

“---not been responding to anything—”

The zamboni was leaving the ice, and it looked pretty spotless. Huh, they were quick.

“Roz? Roz, can you look at me—”

There was something he needed to do. Somewhere he needed to go.

“There’s two minutes left on the clock—”

Right, the game.

“Fuck that I’m not letting him back there. Haas, get up—wait, Roz? What—”

The game?

“---his shoes, then take my keys. Roz? Roz, bud, hey?”

Someone’s shaking him, then he’s in the dressing room.

Mechanically, he takes off his skates, gear, and uniform. The game must have ended. Did they win? Probably, if everyone was being so loud.

There’s a door being shut, and he’s moving. It’s quiet, and he watches the buildings and roads melt into each other.

“He’ll be okay, man—”

There’s a sudden wave of heat against him as he steps past the automatic doors.

“---Shane Hollander-Rozanov, this is his husband.”

Ilya blinks. The nurse behind the desk was pressing keys on her keyboard before she looked back at him. “Mr. Hollander is still in surgery, but they should already be wrapping it up. Please take a seat.”

There’s a hand on his elbow which makes Ilya flinch and take a step back. He looks at the person and finds Harris whose hand was now hovering from where Ilya’s elbow used to be.

He must have seen something in Ilya’s face, because he smiles. It wasn’t one of his usual blinding ones; more somber and...something else.

“There you are,” he says. “Come on, let’s sit down a sec.”

Harris leads him to one side of the wall, farthest down from the other visitors.

(Since moving to play for the Centaurs, it was Harris who Shane took a liking to the quickest. On barbecue days at Bood’s, they would sit on the couch to pester the rookies.

“We’re trying to make them feel comfortable,” Shane reasoned. Beside him and absolutely killing Mitchy in Smash, Harris nodded sagely.

Ilya looked at the terrified face on their newest defenseman when Harris pushed his character off the edge yet again.

By unofficial law, players weren’t allowed in the WAGs chats. So, despite the glaring loophole that Shane and Ilya could technically be a part of them, they were not, in fact, welcomed by Lisa.

“I’d love to add you boys,” she said with a faux pity, “but no.” Shane waited for an explanation, but Lisa only smiled at him.

Because he was already in a separate chat with the WAGs that was specifically for trashtalking the Montreal team, Ilya didn’t care; Shane did. Fortunately for him—unfortunately for Ilya—Harris was, and he somehow managed to convince the rest of the wives and girlfriends to include Shane in the chat.

So, by his first Christmas with the Centaurs, Shane was officially invited to the infamous Ottawa Queens’ Brunches.)

Ilya blinks, and there’s a bottle of water in front of him. He turns to his friend who waves the bottle until he takes it into his own hands.

He takes a sip, a gulp, then finishes the entire bottle’s worth of water.

He’s conscious of the way his own chest rises and falls, forcing his breathing into a steady stream. In. Out. In. Out. In. Out.

Then, he nods once. “What happened?”

Harris knows better than to skirt around it. He meets Ilya’s gaze with his own and doesn’t mince his words. “Shane’s in surgery. Bad check. There was blood on the ice.”

Ilya’s breath hitches, but he manages to wrangle it in control. He nods a second time, urging Harris to continue.

“He was down for a while. You were the first one there with him before the medics took control. Coach Wiebe said it looked like he hit his head twice. Once with his face on the plexiglass, then another when he hit the ice.” Harris paused, eyes searching Ilya’s face. Ilya nods.

“How long?”

“They got him out in under five minutes.”

Ilya frowns. That wasn’t five minutes. It was thirty at least. Had to be.

Harris purses his lips. He looked like he was going to deliver worse news. “Ilya,” he says, and Ilya braces himself.

“You’ve been checked out ever since they got him out. The accident happened with two minutes on the clock. We tried to get you out too so you could come with the ambulance, but you insisted on going back on the ice.” He shakes his head. “No one could stop you.”

That’s not—what?

Harris heaved a sigh. “I don’t know how the hell you did it, but you scored another goal before the game ended. Even in the dressing room, no one could get to you. You kept shoving everyone.”

He sighs and shifts his tone, smile a bit pinched. “Coach Wiebe and the guys stayed to hold off the media, but they’re on their way.”

Ilya has spent over a decade in North America, so he’s confident about his English. But right now, he’s not sure he’s getting what Harris has been saying.

“I went back and played?” He asks.

Before Harris could reply, a doctor stops in front of them. “Shane Hollander-Rozanov?”

Ilya nods and stands, Harris a steady presence beside him.

“I’m Dr. Patricia Jeong, and I treated Shane today,” she says. “Your husband is going to be fine. He had a broken nose and a laceration to the face, presumably from his visor breaking. He has a bad concussion and is responsive,” she pauses.

Ilya braces himself.

“He is responsive,” she repeats, “however, he suffered severe trauma to the head and is experiencing memory loss.”

Beside him, Harris gasps. Dr. Jeong looked to him for a second then back to Ilya who was still holding his breath.

“It is temporary,” the doctor emphasizes, “we expect it to go away on its own in a couple of days at most. However, it looks like he’s missing quite a chunk of his memories. He seems to be under the impression that the last game he played was against the Boston Bears.”

Ilya breathes deep in relief. They played Boston last month. They can handle a month’s worth of memories lost.

“Okay.” He nods. “Okay,” he repeats to himself.

He’s okay. He’s okay.

“Can we see him now?” Harris asks.

Dr. Jeong nods with a tight smile. “He is heavily sedated, so I recommend having only one visitor at a time.”

Harris doesn't need to give Ilya a nudge for him to move.

Shane was beautiful.

There was bandage on his cheek for the laceration, as well as a splint over his nose. His eyes were glazed over, and he's hooked up to an IV and a bunch of other wires. There's the steady beeping that resembled the pounding in Ilya's head when he saw Shane on the ice.

This time, he kept the beeping close to his chest—proof that his husband was alive.

"Ilya." Shane smiles.

"Sweetheart." Ilya's voice cracks. He lets the door fall close behind him as he makes his way to his husband's side, immediately reaching out to hold his hand. "You scared me, *lyubimyy*."

Shane looked at him with furrowed eyebrows and a goofy smile, as if he heard something funny.

"I'm sorry," he says. "Doc said it was a very bad hit."

Ilya feels himself nodding. "It was so fucking scary," he whispers, as if confessing a secret.

"Bet you didn't mind though." Shane's voice was wobbly as it usually was when he was high on pain meds. Ilya frowns at his husband's words. "What?"

Shane nods slowly. "Yeah, betcha won." He giggles. "That tends to happen when I'm off the ice."

Ilya's heart—when will it be given a break, holy shit—stutters. There it is again, the pounding.

"Shane, what do you mean? Of course I fucking minded. You were unconscious for so long."

His husband tilts his head. "Yeah, but like." He shrugs. "Anyway," he segues, "tell Marlow I'm not mad, okay? It's just hockey. Accidents happen."

What.

"Marlow?"

Shane heaves a sigh. "Rozanov, are you being obtuse on purpose?" He blinks, hums. "Mm, obtuse—like, difficult."

Ilya fucking knew what obtuse meant. He won Sunday Night Scrabble against David last week using that word.

"But yeah," Shane continues, "tell him I'm not mad. Well, not about the accident, at least. I'm mad about him for ruining our plans last night." He smiles sheepishly. "Sorry I didn't

text.”

I’m sorry I didn’t text last night, by the way.

I was looking forward to our plans last night. I’m mostly mad at Marlow for fucking that up.

I was gonna ask you—

“Ilya? You good?” Shane pulls back the hand Ilya was holding to poke him on the chest.

(He seems to be under the impression that the last game he played was against the Boston Bears.)

Ilya didn’t want to step away from Shane, not even a second. But not leaving the room would mean that his husband sees him go through the five stages of grief all at once, and that is something he has never wanted for him to see.

He didn’t even get away too far. He’s quite literally just outside of the door, leaning on the wall with his eyes closed and begging for his breaths to even out.

Harris just stood there beside him, tapping on his phone while occasionally looking at him with worried eyes.

“Is he,” Harris trails off.

A breath, then two. Ilya takes a page from Shane’s book and starts forcing his thoughts into boxes. He can sort through them with Galina in their next appointment.

He doesn’t shove his emotions down, though. That was his thing—Shane organized his thoughts but never hid his feelings; Ilya’s brain-to-mouth filter was nonexistent, but you would never know what he was truly feeling. That’s how they spent seven years missing each other’s cues, and it was another thing Ilya didn’t mind shedding once he realized they were both in it for the long game.

“Shane doesn’t remember anything from the past two years,” Ilya finally says, barely above a whisper. “Do you remember his first accident, when I was still on the Bears?”

He hears more than sees Harris’ shock. “Oh.”

Ilya nods, shakes his head, chuckles humorlessly. “Yeah. *Oh*.”

“But it’s temporary, right? Doc said he should be back to normal in a few days at the latest.” The forced optimism in Harris’ voice has always been obvious to Ilya, but this time they both knew he wasn’t even trying to mask his worry at all.

Ilya shrugs. “Still feels like shit.”

Because that’s all he can say, isn’t it? It feels like shit. That knowing Shane still thinks he’s with Montreal: that’s shit. That he still thinks he’s back in the closet when they’ve both been

some of the most high-profile advocates for queer teens? Shit. That—fuck—his husband doesn't even remember that he's his husband? Shit, shit, shit.

"Ilya?" Ilya whips his head to the door. From the small window, he could see Shane shuffling in bed and trying to get up. Ilya quickly wipes at his face—he didn't even realize he was crying—and gets back in the room.

"Shane, don't move around," he says, getting back to his spot beside him.

He gets a beaming smile in return—

(*"Solnyshko," Ilya called him.*

Shane furrowed his eyebrows, but his smile didn't falter. "What does that one mean?"

His heart squeezed, and Ilya could swear that if they put him on the ice right now, he'd be able to pull a hat trick. He placed another kiss on his boyfriend's forehead and translated:

"Sunshine.")

—"Ilya," Shane repeats and immediately takes Ilya's hand in his.

"Don't ever leave again, please," he says.

Ilya blinks away another wave of impending tears, bends down to kiss his forehead, and just stays there. "Of course, *moya lyubov*."

He hears a giggle. "What's that mean?"

Ilya smiles into Shane's hair. "My love."

There's a pause. And then a gasp. Shane pulls back with wide eyes, the shine in his face dimming—*no, come back*—with shock.

He looks over Ilya's face, over and over again as if searching for something. Sincerity, probably, if the hope in his eyes meant anything.

(What hurts Ilya the most isn't that Shane doesn't remember him. It's that he has to watch him relive the moments of unsurety between them. That he has to live through not knowing if this was going to be the last time they see each other; of not knowing that Ilya would leave the life he knew behind—just for him.)

Before Shane can say anything, they hear the door open and allow in the noise from the bustling outside. Harris steps in, and this time, he had Yuna Hollander in tow.

Shane's hand twitches before slowly untangling from Ilya's. The frown on Ilya's face deepens as he watches his husband subtly put space between them.

Right.

“Hi mom,” Shane greets. He smiles at her as she moves to the space opposite Ilya. He shoots Harris a confused look. “Oh, hello.” The polite tone of his voice grates on Ilya’s ears.

Ilya turns to his mother-in-law, and the mist in her eyes tells him that Harris had at least briefed him of what’s going on.

Harris takes a step forward and smiles tentatively. “Hey, man. How are you?”

Shane tilts his head, looks to his mother for...something. He definitely had questions. He often did. And since they got married, it was Ilya who answered them for him.

Now he couldn’t even look at him.

“‘m okay,” he says, “all things considered.”

(Ilya could see that Shane was trying to stop himself from asking who Harris was, and that the only thing doing that was his ingrained Canadian politeness.)

He looks back at Yuna who was still trying to control the tears in her eyes. She looks at Ilya, and he has been her son long enough to know what to do.

“Shane,” Ilya calls.

His husband freezes—he used to do that a lot, before—then clears his throat before turning to Ilya’s general direction but never looking him in the eye. “Thanks for visiting, Rozanov.” Ilya flinches. “I appreciate it.”

“Shane, no,” Ilya says under his breath. He shakes his head, takes a deep breath, and reaches out.

Of course, Shane pulls away.

The air conditioning whirs around Ilya, a little too loud for his liking. The tag of his shirt digs into the back of his neck, and his jacket was too tight.

There is a static in his ears that accompanied the pounding in his head.

“I’m—” they could all hear the way Harris choked around his own words “---gonna get the doctor.”

(“Hayden will always be my best friend,” Shane said to Ilya, one night when they got back from Troy and Harris’ engagement party. “But I think Harris is right up there.”)

With the help of Dr. Jeong, they get Shane briefed on the date.

“So,” he says with furrowed eyebrows, “I’m missing two years?”

Jeong nods. “It looks like your brain reset to when you last had a really bad concussion, which was the Boston match in playoffs of 2017. Quite a lot has happened since then, Shane.”

She didn't need to say it, but Ilya knew they were all thinking about all the shit that's happened since then. They've come a long way, but the FanMail scandal was still a memorable topic.

"Two years is a long time," Yuna remarks, "how could you not have caught this in your tests when Shane woke up?" There was an underlying fury in her voice that Ilya remembers from whenever Crowell tries to say something to them.

Jeong sighs. "I take responsibility for this oversight. When we ran our tests, we asked the routine set of questions. His name, where he is, who the prime minister is—and what match he last remembered playing."

"I said Boston," Shane interjects.

The doctor nods. "Yes, and you had a game with them last month."

"Should've asked him what his civil status was," Harris says under his breath from where he's standing behind Ilya. Shane shoots him a confused look.

"I sincerely apologize for this," the doctor repeats.

Ilya takes a shaky breath. "Shit happens." Now, Shane was shooting *him* an appalled look.

Yuna clears her throat. "I'm not one to overstep in a place where I don't have any expertise in," she says carefully (and with a thinly veiled threat), "but could you please go over all his scans, tests, and everything else to make sure that there are no other *oversights*?"

Dr. Jeong met her gaze head on, but Ilya saw the way she gulped. "Of course."

She tells them she'll have everything run and gone over meticulously before leaving. When she does, it's like everyone breathes a collective sigh.

Yuna breaks the silence first by tucking a stray hair behind Shane's ear. "David's on his way," she tells Ilya, "he just had to stop by your house for some supplies and to get Anya sorted."

Ilya smiled at him gratefully, despite the pang of guilt in his chest. Anya. There were so many things happening that he forgot about her.

"Okay," Shane cuts in, his vowels elongated. "So what did I miss?"

In lieu of an answer, Ilya grabs a chair from the corner and scoots close to Shane, taking his hand back into his.

Shane looks at him, then to their intertwined hands. His eyebrows were furrowed, and there's the slight pout he did when he's trying to figure something out.

(*"Kotenok," Ilya loved to call him.*)

Then, he looks over Shane's shoulder to where Harris is, then to his mother, before back to Ilya's eyes. When they met, there was a flash of recognition, and Shane blew a breath.

“I’m guessing that’s one thing that’s been out of the bag?” There’s a lilt to his voice, and he squeezes Ilya’s hand.

Ilya blinks, then laughs.

His eyes are misty again, but he laughs.

Shane’s recovery was going as interesting as it could.

“Ilya,” he groans, “I promise I won’t even consider getting off this couch.”

They were back in their house in Ottawa. It wasn’t the cottage, because they were still in the middle of the season, but it’s still home.

After Ilya and Yuna gave him a quick rundown of his need-to-knows, with Harris popping in and out with his comments in between of being a welcome committee to the Centaurs who’d insisted on checking on their A, Dr. Jeong came back to tell them that everything else was as they’d initially diagnosed, and that they could take him home in the morning.

A broken nose, laceration to the face, bad concussion, and memory loss. She still thinks his memories would come back in a few days, but Ilya would not be taking Lexapro if he wasn’t constantly expecting worst case scenarios.

It was for his own sake, anyway. In his head, Shane wasn’t going to remember the past two years. At all.

But that’s okay, because whenever he expects something, Shane has always been good at exceeding them.

“If we’re married,” Shane pouted, “where’s my ring?”

From where they were seated at the corner, eating Shane’s rejected chocolate pudding, Troy and Harris laughed. Beside him on the bed, Ilya himself was stifling his own chuckles before reaching into the chain around Shane’s neck, pulling out the ring that was hanging onto it.

Shane looked at it, his eyes crossing. “Oh.”

Ilya laughed under his breath before closing the gap between them and pressed a kiss onto his husband’s cheek.

He was still a bit sedated with his inhibitions down to the basement, so he leaned into the kiss with a goofy smile. “Ya tebya lyublyu,” he murmured.

“I love you, too,” Ilya replied before resting his head beside Shane’s, with just the slightest of leaning so he doesn’t put weight on his husband’s already concussed head. They had the bed reclined up, so they were both seated with their heads on the pillow, and Shane was playing with their intertwined fingers.

It was probably because of the pain meds that Shane had temporarily abandoned what reservations he would have had from being close to Ilya in front of other people without remembering the past two years.

(Or maybe it was habit.)

It took Ilya a beat too long to realize what Shane had said.

Ya tebya lyublyu, he said, with a perfect accent.

With his current memories, Shane would not have known those words.

He probably didn't realize what he said, but even then, Ilya couldn't help the hope grow in his chest.

"You better stay there, Hollander, or I swear to god I will call your mother," Ilya threatens.

On the floor by the couch, Anya looks between her dads. Ilya turns to her. "*Annushka*, make sure papa stays here, and I will give you belly rubs later, yes?" She grins at him, so he places a fat smooch on her nose.

Shane crosses his arms over his chest and tries to blow a raspberry at him. Tries, because he obviously felt a flash of pain in his head from the action. Ilya falters from his step, frowning at the way Shane rubbed at the side of his head.

"Is over seven?" Ilya asks, crouching down in front of his husband.

Shane had his eyes closed, and he tried to shake his head before Ilya shushed him gently cradled his jaw to stop the action. "Stay still, *moya lyubov*."

"kay," Shane replies. "It's not over seven, though. Prob'ly a five?"

With the nature of their work where injuries were a normal thing, they've begun having a pain scale system. Anything five and under was manageable, six and they'd need to adjust the pain remedies, seven and they needed to call Yuna, and anything over that meant a hospital visit.

They both have high pain tolerance, so they've only had to use seven and up just once in the past when Ilya had a really, really bad ankle sprain.

The pain scale was one of the things Ilya had to remind Shane of.

Ilya nods. "Okay, a five is okay." He fluffs the pillow Shane had on his side of the couch and helped him lie down. The lights were all off, and the blinds were drawn up halfway so only minimal light was getting in.

After placing a throw blanket over his husband, Ilya presses a kiss on his forehead. "I'll be right back."

He makes quick work of getting the cold pack and a basin with water and washcloths. It was ten in the morning, and they'll have to eat soon, but David had mentioned they'd have lunch over at noon so at least that's covered.

When he returns, Shane is fast asleep with Anya curled by his feet, resting her head on his shins. Ilya smiles at the image and briefly wishes he had his phone on him.

Instead, he takes a seat on the floor and gently places a cold towel on Shane's head. His bandages were fresh from being changed before they left the hospital, so they still looked good. Despite the slow way Ilya places the compress, the feeling still pulls a slight frown from Shane, and Ilya had to whisper and reassure him to go back to sleep.

For the next few minutes, Ilya watched his husband sleep. It wasn't anything new; there were nights where Ilya couldn't sleep and ended up awake hours after Shane had already been snoring. He just laid there, watching the steady rise and fall of his chest, listening to his soft breaths. It was quiet, but it was a comforting quiet that drowned out the usual noise in Ilya's head.

Now, it was a reminder that Shane was alive. That he passed out on the ice, yes, but they managed to stitch him back together.

They were going to be okay—right?

With a shuddering breath, Ilya couldn't help but carefully run his fingers through Shane's hair, just the side and never disrupting.

When he reaches his ear to tuck back a strand of hair, Ilya frowns. It was clean; relatively, at least. Not a speck of blood or wound.

Before they changed his bandages, they'd given him a quasi-sponge bath to rid his face and head of the crusted blood from yesterday, so it makes sense that he was clean. But...

Somehow, Shane's helmet was on the ground next to him, and that wasn't the only thing there.

The blood on the ice was the end of a trail that led to the left side of Shane's head.

The red trickled down his ear, and Ilya couldn't help the way his fingers hovered over the wound, unbelieving that it was there.

Shane had a gash to the side of his head. Ilya saw it with his two eyes.

There *should* have been a gash to the side of his head.

But as he stares at his husband, the space where the wound should be was clean.

Yuna: Hey, how are you guys doing? We're just packing up the food, and we'll be there in 15.

Ilya: Hi Yuna. Shane's asleep. Okay, I'll leave the door unlocked for you.

Ilya: Also

Ilya: Nevermind

Harris: Roz!! Some of the guys and I will swing by tomorrow lunchtime. Thought to give you two a heads up :D

Ilya: Ok. Thanks.

Ilya: Hey

Ilya: What happened to Shane's helmet, btw?

Harris: Think it's still intact other than the broken visor.

Harris: Tbh with how hard he hit his head, he was really lucky he had his helmet on the entire time

(Somehow, Shane's helmet was on the ground next to him, and that wasn't the only thing there.

The blood on the ice was the end of a trail that led to the left side of Shane's head.)

Ilya: Hi Rebecca, can I schedule an emergency appointment with Galina this weekend?

Rebecca: Hi Ilya, absolutely! Does tomorrow 11AM work?

The accident happened on a Thursday game, and they got Shane discharged the next day when they were off. So, really, Ilya only had to deal with a whole day of forcing his panic and a million other thoughts and emotions into one big box that he'll bring to his therapist with a velvet bow and a gift card that says 'please help sort'.

With how much Ilya's been compartmentalizing in the last twenty-four hours, Shane should be proud of him. (Except, if Shane knew about this, he would be going on an angry-sad mix of litany on how there was a thin line between compartmentalizing and forceful ignorance and that Ilya was playing skip rope with it.)

He had an appointment tomorrow to deal with his shit. Right now, he has a husband to take care of.

A husband who, hilariously, was being whinier than usual.

"Ilya," Shane drags out, "c'mere." He was batting his eyelashes as if Ilya needed any more convincing other than the state of him.

He sat down on the couch sideways, with his right leg curled into the backrest and his left foot firmly on the floor, so he could directly face his husband who was a mirror image. It was five in the afternoon, nearing sunset, and Yuna and David had taken Anya to play out back.

Shane's bandages were changed, and the new ones took less space on his face. Enough to make his freckles show up again. (When Ilya saw them, he couldn't help but breathe a sigh of relief, whispering "there you are" and pressing the gentlest kisses over them.)

There's a giggle and a soft breath let out. Ilya tears his gaze from Shane's freckles to look back at the eyes watching him. He had been steadily being weaned off the pain meds, so they were looking brighter. Still a bit glassy, and his smiles were still goofy, but Ilya could see a semblance of clarity through the fog.

"Hello," Ilya greets. Shane lets out another giggle. "Hi," he says.

"How are you feeling?" Shane brings up his hands and cradles Ilya's face, occasionally smoothing the pads of his thumbs over his cheeks. Ilya couldn't help but melt into the warmth.

Shane's voice was still coming out with a bit of gravel. "Like I got hit by a bus," he says with a cheer.

Ilya rolls his eyes. "More like got hit by a six-foot-five hockey player."

Shane apparently thinks that was very funny, because he laughs and says so himself. "You're funny."

"Thank you, *moya lyubov*."

Suddenly, Shane gasps. Ilya blinks at him, jostled at the reaction and the way the hands that were holding his face now slid down his neck. They end up resting on his chest.

"Oh no," he hears. "You can't call me that."

Ilya raises an eyebrow. "Why not?"

"My husband calls me that," Shane says and sighs in devastation.

Ilya bites on the inside of his cheek. "He does, doesn't he?"

He gets a nod that was so—sad. As if Shane was delivering the saddest news there could possibly be. "Yeah, he calls me *moya lyubov* and *lyubimiyy*. 'My love' and 'darling'."

"And do you like him calling you that?" Ilya asks. He knows Shane does, because every other time he asked him this, he would just turn red and walk away.

Now, Shane beams and nods enthusiastically. "Ow," he winces at the probably-sudden flash of pain from the motion.

Ilya tuts and strokes Shane's hair.

“I love it when he calls me those nicknames,” Shane continues, “but—” he giggles yet again “---my favorite is the other one.”

This was new.

“Other one?” Ilya prompts. His hand didn’t stop caressing Shane’s hair, and his husband was now slowly melting into it, eyes slowly drooping and his smile was becoming less of a grin and more that of a satisfied cat.

“*Solnyshko*,” he says, “because I’m his little sunshine.”

Shane was now fully drifting into sleep, his head leaning on Ilya’s now-unmoving hand. Any minute now and he would definitely start snoring. Ilya chuckles, carefully maneuvering them so his back is on the armrest, and Shane is nestled between his legs, face in the crook of his neck.

He presses a kiss on top of his husband’s head.

“Yes, you are.”

A few minutes later, the sound of Anya’s excited barks filled the house and was followed by Yuna’s quiet reprimands; distantly, he could also hear the clanging from the kitchen that David was obviously trying to keep to a minimum. “Anya, your papa’s sleeping, keep it down.” Beside Ilya, Shane sleeps like a log and is even beginning to snore.

There’s the familiar padding of her nails against the floor before Anya finally comes to a stop in front of Ilya. She grins at Ilya and barks another time. Ilya reaches out with the hand that wasn’t still stroking Shane’s head.

“Hello, sweet girl,” he greets as Anya excitedly ducks under Ilya’s hand for scratches.

Behind her, Yuna comes into view with an exasperated but amused smile. “We thought half an hour of walking would tire her out, but apparently she got her energy levels from the both of you.”

Ilya blushes. “Shane usually takes her out for a run at this time. Sometimes they go for more than an hour before coming back, and Anya’s still nowhere near sleepy then.”

Yuna chuckles and both ruffles his hair and strokes Anya’s fur before taking a step back. She eyes her son with a worried gaze. “You boys okay?”

Ilya smiles, placing his hand on Shane’s back when Anya’s had enough scratches and decides to settle on the floor beside her dads. “He was still a bit loopy before dozing off, but I think he is getting better. He can nod without so much pain.” Ilya blinks. “Well, kind of.”

Yuna sits on the recliner and takes out her glasses and the word puzzle on the coffee table. After all these years, David had managed to rope her into word puzzles, and it only took Ilya’s involvement to do so.

“And,” Yuna hesitates, and there was a slight frown on her face. “His memories?”

The hand stroking Shane's hair faltered, and Ilya felt more than heard the grunt he got from him in protest. It took a beat for him to get back to it. "I mean." Ilya chuckles, with a little less humor than usual.

"He went on a tirade on how I shouldn't call him nicknames because his husband calls him them." Yuna's eyebrows raise, mirth returning to her face. "So, maybe that's progress?"

His mother-in-law laughs. "It sounds like the pain meds and his amnesia are fighting in his head."

Ilya wishes he were included in the fight so he can give them a piece of his mind. Maybe then Shane would come back, and there wouldn't be a knot in his chest.

"And you?" Ilya looks back to Yuna, not realizing he had even looked away. She had her worried face back on. "How are you holding up?"

Ever since he was twelve, Ilya had thought he would never feel any semblance of motherly care directed towards him. When he had buried his mother in the ground, he thought that she took with her the only warmth he could ever have.

When Shane came and as their relationship grew throughout the years, the constant Russian winter around him had slowly dissipated. The frostbite was gone, but he still had the occasional tremors.

If you had asked Ilya two years ago, before he had agreed to come to the cottage, if he would ever look at someone and find a resemblance to Irina's warmth ever again, he would have punched you in the face. Ilya back then would have shoved you into the closest wall for even insinuating that someone—alive—would come close to his mother. He would have spit on you, and his father would have been proud.

But—

He had found it. Her. Yuna. Nothing and no one could ever fill in the Irina-shaped hole in Ilya's chest, but Yuna Hollander has always come close.

With Shane, the ice around him melted and never came back. There was a reason Ilya called him his sunshine. David was the father figure that Ilya had only ever dreamed of having. And Yuna—she was his mother's gift to him. In consolation. As an apology.

So, even though Ilya always teams up with David in almost every other thing against Yuna and Shane, it didn't take a while until he was completely, unequivocally honest with her.

She made it terrifyingly easy.

Ilya sighs. "It has been hard," he says. "His first accident was already too much for me, and we were not even together back then."

Sort of.

“I know that we will realistically get past this. He will be okay, and we will be back to normal.” His words felt like he was pushing them through his teeth. “But—” Ilya blows a harsh breath. “I don’t know.”

“You weren’t there when Shane was recovering the first time around,” Yuna remarks. She had a pensive look on her face, eyes glazed over as if recalling a distant memory, the corner of her lips upturned. “It took us less time to wean him off of the meds, but while he was on it?” She laughs.

Ilya pays close attention. This wasn’t a story he knew.

“I remember you visited him the day after?” Ilya nods. “He was already off the meds then and was less loopy when you came by. The night before, he was saying all sorts of things that didn’t make sense at the time.”

She smiles. “*‘Please tell him I’m fine.’*” Ilya’s eyes widened. “He kept looking for his phone and told us to *‘text him to come by’*.”

“We thought he was talking about Hayden, because the team hadn’t visited yet. And then, he warned us—honestly, it felt more like a threat—to leave him alone in the cottage over the summer.” Yuna’s eyes twinkled, eyebrows wagging. “He said he had plans.”

Ilya’s cheeks felt warm.

“Of course, when he was sober and Scott Hunter had kissed his boyfriend on television, he told us again that he’d be doing a meditation retreat and that we shouldn’t bother him. And then, well, you know the rest.” Yuna let that hang in the air, with nothing left but whatever chopping David was doing in the kitchen and Shane’s and Anya’s twin snores.

Yuna put down the word puzzle and slid her eyeglasses up her hair. She leaned close and put a hand on top of the one Ilya had resting over Shane’s back. “Shane did not know whether or not there was going to be a future for the two of you. He didn’t even think you would reciprocate his feelings as much as he did.”

She smiles, but they were a bit wobbly and watery to Ilya. He blinks, and his sight clears. Yuna coos and swipes her thumb over Ilya’s cheek.

“The memories he has now are the same memories he had when he insisted on telling you that he was fine. When he made plans, even when you hadn’t said yes yet.

And even if the memories at the forefront of his mind lack the moments you created in the past two years, this is still the same Shane that was sure you would both make it.” Ilya couldn’t help the stream of tears that were steadily falling from his eyes nor could he help the slight sob he let out.

“You will be okay,” Yuna says firmly, as if the weight of it would be enough for Ilya to believe.

When his parents discovered that Shane was learning Russian for Ilya, Yuna had been quick to join him. She's only been learning for a little over a year, but her voice was clear when she says: *"Ilyushka, you will be fine. Both of you."*

("Mamochka," Ilya called out from the ice. He was grinning. "Look, I scored my first goal!")

Irina looked back at him with the widest smile he had ever seen on her.

"I am proud of you, moya lyubov." When Ilya skated towards the edge, his mother was right there with her arms wide open. He fell into them, his face in the crook of Irina's neck as she murmured: "You will be fine after all, Ilyushka.")

The night went by with less tears, after that.

They'd woken Shane up at seven for dinner. David had made something light for Shane, which they all had as well, in solidarity.

He was more alert and less groggy, close enough to his usual state. Eyes and face the clearest they've been that day, and he had wanted to remain that way by refusing to take more high dose pain meds.

"Are you sure?" David asked as he gave him the one paracetamol pill. Ilya was helping Yuna tidy the dining table and let his father-in-law fuss over his son.

Shane nods, and there's a visible pinch in his expression that Ilya could see from where he's drying the plates. "Yeah, I'd rather get it over with sooner than later."

Ilya snorts as he makes his way back to his husband, taking a seat next to him. "That's not how it works but okay." Shane glares at him (tries to, at least). Yuna returns as well, sitting on the chair David was leaning on.

He watches him take the pill, wiping at his chin when a drop of water spills. When he's done, Shane puts down the glass, and Ilya leaves to quickly rinse it out in the sink. Shane hates when dishes get left in the sink.

When Ilya sat back down, Shane was pressing fingers into the temples of his forehead, elbows leaning heavily on the table. Ilya didn't need to look closely to know how hard Shane was digging into his face, so he tuts and carefully pulls back his husband's hands and holds them in his.

Shane sighed a heavy breath, eyes closed, and leaned back into his chair. "Hurts."

Ilya hums. "I know, sweetheart." He gratefully takes the cold compress that David pushed towards them and carefully places it on the spot Shane was pressing on earlier, moving every minute or so.

"s still weird that you're here," Shane remarks. "I know you guys say it's been two years, and I think I'm getting flashes back, but mostly I'm still stuck thinking we shouldn't be sitting so close to each other."

Across Shane, Ilya's eyes meet Yuna's. They were sad, but there was also the same look of determination she had been trying to instill in him since dusk.

"Would you like me to step back?" Ilya asks tentatively.

There was a second of silence—a second too long for Ilya's funny brain—before Shane's hold on Ilya's free hand grew tighter. "No," he says with the same stubbornness Ilya knows Shane got from his mother.

Ilya nods despite Shane not seeing. "Then I won't."

It didn't take a while after that when his in-laws bid their goodbye, reminding them that they each had a parent Hollander on speed dial in case of an emergency.

It didn't take a while until Anya settles into her bed by the fireplace and Ilya guides Shane to their bathroom to wash up and change his bandages.

(Shane wasn't groggy anymore from the meds, so Ilya knew that the unabashed and blatant stares he was getting had to be about something else. His gaze followed him everywhere: from the careful way he cleaned the wounds and re-did the bandages to when he had left Shane for a second to brush his own teeth. He kept quiet though, so Ilya let him be.)

It doesn't take a while until they're both clean and in their pajamas, Ilya in nothing but a pair of boxers and Shane in his matching set, and they finally head off to their bedroom. Ilya leaves Shane to shuffle into the room on his own while he makes sure the warm lights are at their lowest setting.

It was only when he settled into his side of the bed that Ilya realized Shane was already settled into his. He had his back to the headboard and was still watching Ilya intently. Ilya blinks, then carefully slides under the duvet.

He lies on his side, head resting on his hand. "Yes?" He draws out.

Despite the dimmed lighting, Ilya could still see the blush blooming across Shane's face.

"Nothing," he says.

Ilya rolls his eyes and sits up, mirroring his husband but fully turned to him. Shane adjusts himself so he's also turned to Ilya. "You sucked at lying when you had all your memories, and you still suck at it now that you've got a loose screw."

Shane scoffs and punches Ilya's chest. Ilya was undeterred. "Hell, you sucked at lying when the memories you had now were up to date. I still remember you trying to reason out with the nurse when she caught you flirting with me while high on drugs."

Ilya shuddered jokingly. "I still think she laughed her ass off when we publicly confirmed we were together. If I were her I would have joined multiple betting pools. Easy money."

Shane's shoulders were shaking from trying to keep himself from laughing. "You're an idiot," he says.

“Ah, we’re back to the less creative insults,” Ilya says in wonder.

Shane raises an eyebrow. “What insults have I been calling you these days?”

Ilya shrugs. “Nothing much. You have mostly been calling me stupid pet names.

“Cabbage, tomato, pumpkin, lawnmower—”

“Lawnmower?”

“Yes, you’ve called me your lawnmower. I don’t know where you got that.” Ilya shakes his head.

Shane narrows his eyes. “Why do I have a feeling that you’re the one calling *me* your lawnmower?”

Ilya widens his eyes in faux innocence. “No, no, is you.”

Shane wasn’t phased but decided to let it go. Ilya knew he would be slotting this one somewhere in his pretty little muddled head.

The wind outside whistles particularly loud. Shane shifts, and when he realizes it, Ilya raises an arm so his husband could burrow himself into his side. He presses a kiss on Shane’s head, pulls the duvet up so it covers more of Shane, and gently rocks them from side to side. He could feel Shane’s puffs of breath over his chest, as well as the familiar feeling of his fingers fiddling on the crucifix pendant.

Ilya had always adored how much Shane took interest in his mother’s crucifix. Sometimes he would ask questions about her, but most of the time he was content just feeling it in between his fingers.

Even before, when they first spent the night together (in Boston, just before making him a tuna melt), Ilya had felt Shane’s finger tracing the outline of the cross; tentative, deep in thought, and definitely not realizing that Ilya was very much awake.

It made Ilya feel fuzzy and warm. There were times where he wondered if the feeling he had each time would have probably been a taste of what he could have had if he had the chance to introduce Shane to his mother. It was the closest thing to it, after all.

“What are you thinking?” Ilya asks quietly, into the silence of the room, almost just letting it float and not even asking for a response back.

Shane had the crucifix cradled in his hand, thumb gently swiping over the surface. “Just that this all feels surreal.”

Shane tilts his head, and Ilya finds his eyes. “I feel like I time-traveled into a life I didn’t think I could have,” Shane confesses. “Where we’re married, you hang out with my parents, and you take care of me like the devoted husband you are.”

Ilya pinches Shane's nose, causing him to scrunch it up like a bunny. "I *am* a devoted husband."

"I know," Shane chuckles. "It feels weird that I get to have you like this. All of you. Feels like cheating."

He whispers it like a prayer (and maybe it is; he was still holding onto the crucifix) and lets his words float into the air. Then, he blows a breath as if rolling his eyes on himself, shakes his head and shrugs. "I don't know."

"It's not cheating, Shane," Ilya says. "You may not remember it, but you worked for this life. *We* worked for this life. Your pretty little head fails you, sure, but that doesn't erase the fact that this is real."

Shane looks up at him, tender and with wonder and—so *much* love.

Ilya doesn't think he would ever fully understand how Shane does it: loving him. There is so much of it that Ilya doesn't know what to do with it. Then again, he, too, was so in love with him that he didn't know what to do with it.

It was a good thing they were married to share this very heavy burden forever.

Suddenly, Shane lets go of the crucifix and grabs the side of Ilya's neck. Next thing he knows, he's being pulled down into a deep kiss. Their lips were just pressed together, but Ilya could feel Shane's emotions. He could feel whatever he was thinking; all the words he wanted to convey but couldn't.

I love you. I love you. I love you.

And what else is there but to press back with his own.

I love you. I love you. I love you.

"You're a big ol' hypocrite."

Ilya blinks once. Then again. He rubs his eyes just to be sure that it is Galina in front of him. That she really did tell him that he's a hypocrite. In Russian, no less.

"Uh."

Galina sighs, shakes his head hard, then slaps herself. Ilya remains increasingly confused.

"Sorry, I just had to let that one out," she says.

She sighs again, then runs her hands over her already-smooth pants.

"I'm pretty sure you're not allowed to say things like that," Ilya points out. Galina nods.

"Yes, you're right. That was unprofessional of me. But for all intents and purposes, it had to be said."

She looks at him intently. *"Ilya, we have been working together for three years. I have seen you through many events in your life, both good and bad."* She smiles at him gently. *"I personally take pride in how far you've come."*

Ilya feels a slight smile on his lips.

"Do you remember that first year, when you were having trouble dealing with being alone in Ottawa despite having your team, in-laws, and Shane with you?" Ilya nods. *"One thing you were frustrated about was that you had no one else to talk to about the truth between you and Shane. You felt lonely and thought that Shane didn't understand that."*

Ilya remembers. They were good now, but those pesky feelings still sometimes crept in at him.

"And you eventually got past that by finally telling Shane what you feel, that you were lonely and isolated," Galina says.

Ilya snorts. *"And then we had a big fight on Christmas."*

"Yes, but it was a necessary fight. It led to the both of you being on the same page, after all. It all worked out," she winces at—probably, definitely—the memory of the accidental outing. *"Relatively. Eventually."*

"My point is—" she eyes him with intent, a look she usually does when she's trying to make Ilya understand something. It's freakishly similar to the determination Yuna always seems to have. *"--communication has never failed you, and it won't fail you now."*

"I don't really want to communicate to Shane that I saw my mother lying on the ground next to him," Ilya snaps, *"or that I could swear up and down that I saw a gaping hole on the side of his head because his helmet flew off."*

He gestures wildly in the air. *"I don't want to tell him that I'm probably going insane! That I'm probably getting worse, and that he probably should never have married me because I somehow chose to play the fucking game instead of coming with him in the ambulance."*

His breaths come out ragged, as if he did bag skates. Ilya bites at the inside of his cheek, feeling himself come down from the outburst. Across the table, Galina waits with him.

"That's all," he says, like a small child.

His therapist nods. *"Okay, it's good that you got that out of your chest. I've been waiting twenty minutes for that."*

Once again, Ilya blinks at her.

He had come into the clinic five minutes before their agreed time, but Rebecca had waved him in early.

Ilya had asked Yuna and David to stay with Shane for a while, just until the team arrived. He had already texted Harris that he had to leave for something important, and he was

enthusiastic to agree to babysit for a bit. (The babysit was more for the rest of the Centaurs, not for Shane.)

Shane himself wasn't mad about him stepping out for a bit. If anything, he seemed relieved, especially when Ilya confirmed his suspicions.

"You're going to Galina, aren't you?" He asked.

Ilya didn't see the need to lie. His therapist would be proud. "Yes."

Shane nodded. "Good, that's good." He eyed Ilya for a second, searching for something on his face. He must have found it, because he stepped close, reached out, and pressed a kiss on Ilya's jaw.

(The fact of Shane remembering enough to know that Ilya was heading to therapy squeezed Ilya's heart in his chest.)

As soon as Ilya was seated on his usual chair with his usual throw pillow, he gave her a full detailed rundown of the big box of thoughts and emotions he successfully kept intact in the past forty-eight hours. He delivered it with straight words and a calm demeanor. Hell, he even joked.

"It's a big box with a big bow," Ilya grinned. Galina looked at him with thinly veiled concern.

He wasn't joking now.

"Ilya," Galina says. "Dissociating and having hallucinations during a traumatic event is not uncommon. It is normal, especially when the event is very similar to other traumatic events you've experienced in the past. Your system was protecting you from the pain, so you basically went on auto-pilot with a film reel playing in front of you."

"I need you to know, Ilya, that you are not going insane."

Ilya frowns, not really believing her. *"Are you sure?"*

"I told you, we've been working with each other for the past three years." She smiles. "I think I know my own handiwork."

Ilya leans back into the backrest, staring up at the ceiling before running his fingers over his face. He breathes a heavy sigh.

When he looks back to Galina, she continues. *"Since this is the first time you had a vivid hallucination, I want us to continue working through it. Eventually, we can assess for other pathways, such as if we need to up your meds or if the meds you have now are not working."*

Ilya nods, not knowing what else to say.

"You are not going insane, Ilya," she repeats. "You're going to be okay."

When Ilya stepped into the foyer, the house was quiet.

There wasn't the murmur of the TV or the rustling in the kitchen. Instead, he could hear the distant chatter and occasional cackling from the backyard.

He walks his way through the home he and Shane had made theirs: the throw blanket on the couch that had fraying edges because it was one of the few things Ilya brought back from Moscow, the hall that led to the room that held both of their collection of trophies, the shelves that Shane brought that were full of hockey books, and the walls and walls of photos of them and their loved ones.

Eventually, he reaches the glass and wood partition between the living room and the engawa.

("My grandmother's house had this—" Shane's cheeks puffed out as he tried to explain. It was very rare for Ilya to see his boyfriend flailing, so he is obviously amused.

He gestured vaguely in the air. "It's like a veranda?" Ilya raised his eyebrows. Was Shane telling him this or asking?

Shane rolled his eyes. "It's like a veranda," he repeats, this time more sure. "But it's made of wood and runs along the entire outside of the house. It's called an engawa, and it's supposed to be a transitional space between the house and the world outside."

There was a slight raise at the corners of his lips. Ilya hugged him tighter.

"It's probably going to be hard finding a modern house in Ottawa that has one, but it's fun to dream. I remember that was my favorite spot as a kid."

Ilya hummed into Shane's hair. "I'm sure we'll find one.")

Ilya first sees some of his team playing with Anya at the other end of the yard. They had her chasing them, and Troy looked like he was having the time of his life while Bood and Dykstra were trying to climb a tree.

In front of him and sitting at the edge of the engawa, Harris had his phone out and was telling them about, probably, the latest celebrity rumor. As it usually was, his biggest listeners to his rants were Shane, Wyatt, and Haas. The others listen in sometimes, but Harris can go on tangents lengthy enough for the one shared brain cell between hockey players to start bouncing around.

Ilya never listens, and the only reason is that Harris gets his news from *him*.

"Yeah, Rose said something about the affair happening during the filming," Shane comments with a serious face. His bandages look like they've been changed, and he almost looks back to normal.

Haas nods excitedly, snapping his fingers. "Exactly! I mean, they did two movies in one film schedule. Emotions are high, you're practically spending so much time with the same people."

Wyatt shakes his head. “We go on roadies every other day. We spend nights together where emotions are always high. Proximity shouldn’t be a defense for cheating.”

Ilya sighs dramatically, dropping to sit beside Shane; everyone’s eyes snapping to him in surprise. “Just because you *shouldn’t* do something doesn’t always stop you from doing it. I mean, look at how me and Shane started.”

“Roz!” Wyatt and Harris greet at the same time as Luca grins. The kid had come a long way from being the overly flustered rookie. (Ilya tells Shane it’s probably because of him; Shane tells Ilya that it’s probably because any idolish worldview that Luca had of them had been shattered by their antics.)

“Hello you,” Shane greets with a smile. *So sweet, so so sweet.* Ilya returns it with a quiet murmur of “hello, sweetheart” before kissing him on the cheek.

Shane melts into it temporarily, then he pulls back with a troubled expression. “Please don’t compare us to Ariana Grande cheating on her husband with Ethan Slater.”

Harris cackles. “That would’ve been a bigger scandal than what actually happened.”

Shane crinkles his nose, intertwining his hand with Ilya’s. “I don’t know. I’m probably biased, but being outed through *FanMail* of all things still feels like the scandal of the century.”

Ilya stares at his husband even when Wyatt shifts the topic to the newest volume of the latest comic he’s been reading. Harris and Haas looked incredibly immersed into it, but it’s also possible that they’re giving Shane and Ilya whatever semblance of privacy they could.

Shane smiles at him, and then nearly makes Ilya burst into tears right then and there, because he says his next words in Russian.

“I remember everything now,” he says. *“The boys made it a game over lunch.”* He wiggles his eyebrows. *“They had an entire twenty-five-slide presentation of events in the past two years, then they pulled out a fifty-item quiz.”* A chuckle.

“Obviously there were things they didn’t know, but by item thirty-one, I was already arguing with them because they said we won the Stanley Cup last year in the third week of June, but I remember that it was the day before your birthday.”

Shane tilts his head, and there was a twinkle in his eye from where Ilya is sure he was definitely remembering the same thing he was.

“We had so much fun in the afterparty,” Shane murmurs, eyes drifting to Ilya’s lips as he bites his own.

He looks back up, and the mischief melts into a bashful smile. “Next thing we knew I was remembering the fifty dollars Barrett owed Bood from last week’s bet,” he finally says in English.

There had been many moments where Shane managed to render Ilya speechless. Usually, it was in a sexual context. But every now and then, he would say something casually and off-handed that he doesn't realize that Ilya's chest was squeezing in front of him—that he had no other choice but to fall deeper in love with him..

(Often, Shane doesn't realize when his words, actions, or *presence* makes Ilya feel so much. To Shane, asking Ilya if they could eat at the latest Russian place downtown was just him inviting him out. To Ilya, it was everything.)

"I'm sorry I worried you," Shane whispers; a confession into the wind.

Ilya shakes himself from his stupor and brings his free hand to cradle Shane's face, and Shane's other hand immediately holds it, as if it was instinct (and maybe it was). "No, *lyubimiyy*, you don't have to apologize. For better or for worse, in sickness and health, remember?"

"Let me," Shane insists. "That was the second time you went through that with me. Third time, in general."

"And I would go through it again, as long as you came back to me on the other side," Ilya pressed with his own stubbornness.

"I don't want you to go through it again," Shane pouts. He looks at his husband with the sadness that Ilya sometimes sees in them when he himself was having a funny brain day. It was always a look that Shane tried to hide from him, but it was now here in full display.

The breath Ilya drew was shaky, but it also had the determination he found and adapted from the Hollanders. It had the love he carried and breathed for Shane.

It had the claw marks of the strength Irina held desperately to until the end.

Ilya places his forehead onto Shane's. They had long tuned out their friends' chatters.

"I love you," he whispers.

"*Ya tebya lyublyu*," Shane responds. "*We'll be okay.*"

Ilya thinks about the longer conversation they would have later that night. He doesn't often tell Shane about his therapy sessions, but he will give him every detail of today's. He'll confess the hallucinations and disassociation, Galina's plan to up the frequency of their meetings, and the possibility of changes in his antidepressants.

Later, he would tell Shane exactly how scared he was, and he would beg him to never put him through that again. Then, he would apologize for being selfish, and he would let Shane try to convince him that he wasn't selfish for not wanting to hurt.

Later, Shane would confess that going through the same thing a second time wasn't as funny as he thought it was. His knuckles would turn white as he clutched onto Ilya's shirt, angry and in tears for not remembering so much of their relationship—for only having the guilt of

secrecy and the utter terror of love when he finally had the entire world in the palm of his hands.

Later, when they are alone in the confines of their bedroom, they would break and fall apart. They would willingly crush each other into pieces, because they know they would gladly put each other back no matter how long it takes. They would hurt, but they will heal.

So, for now, Ilya smiles. “Yes,” he says with a laugh, then leans forward for a kiss.

“Yes, we will be okay.”

(Later, Ilya would wake up to being slapped on the chest. He would blink confusedly at Shane who had just gasped in appall.

“You fuck,” he would say. “You said I call you *my lawnmower*. I *knew* that it was you who called me that!”

Ilya’s mouth would drop, and he would try to close it before it drops again. He would probably look like a fish.

Then, he would laugh—the brightest he ever had in a while.)

End Notes

hello!! yes, i, too, have been ensnared into the clutches of these hockey boys. if i'd known it would take losing my mind over them for me to be able to write again, i would have done this sooner. but then again, i think the timing's just right.

there's just something so tasty about ilya's depression. something something big russian guy crumbling to the force and weight of his funny brain.

also peep at galina slipping from her professionalism. i just think that after years of being ilya's therapist, she would have known ilya well enough that saying something so out of pocket would snap him out. i mean, it worked.

oh! and title is from you are in love by taylor swift. idk if you caught it, but the light (shane) reflects the chain on [ilya's] neck (irina). he is the warmth that ilya thought he'd never have again when he lost his mother.

let me know what you think! i am on twitter @silverstreaks__ :>

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