Gods do love you

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by underfallingstars

Summary

> Ilya would tear the world apart, if it came to it, if Shane asked it of him. He’d lay down at Shane’s feet and rip his own heart out to give it to Shane, trust him to treat it tenderly.

If the gods exist, that Shane is Ilya's is probably proof of it

Notes

Happy new year, friends! (And happy 162th fic to this one, I can't believe that's something that's real)
I hope you all had a wonderful end of the year and an even more wonderful start of a new one. My brain is still broken, heated rivalry still has me by the throat, and a prompt generator sparked this. I hope it's a fun read <3

See the end of the work for more notes

The guys have faith, and pray. Ilya knows this.

They pray to the hockey gods, to the cup, the one they see in their dreams like the people of old, in visions of a future they chase after and pay for with their bodies, with chunks of which that they might never get back, sacrificed for a reality that slips between their fingers when they wake up, leaving only its aftertaste on their tongue.

Some, though, believe in the gods the rest of humanity worship as well, even if Ilya is sure many would abandon them, if they were promised a cup in return for their defection. He knows this because he's seen it, the pendants hanging around necks and prayers falling from lips and the feverish look in their eyes when they've been lucky enough to go the whole way through, hoist the cup that many have held before them, that they've worshipped and loved and turned into a thing of legend.

Some say it's a sign of favour, from the gods. Hockey gods or otherwise, it doesn't really matter.

What matters is that they reached out, for them, touched them and blessed them, handpicked them for the honour of lifting the trophy high above their heads, rewarded them for the bits and pieces they've left behind themselves, in exchange of no promises of glory beyond that which their minds could come up with, in their dreams.

Ilya isn't sure he believes that: that they were picked, blessed, loved.

He's got a creaky knee, that hurts in the winter, when it gets cold and humid, and aches at the end of the season, when the playoffs are looming in the horizon, when he's about to start the long climb to the top; half his mouth is new, his dentist lovingly replacing the teeth he was born with, with a new set, and whenever he's checked against the boards, the air in his lungs punched out of them, he prepares to welcome the ache of bruised ribs like he would an old friend, waiting for the echo of past hurts to come along with this new one. Ilya is familiar with all of them, with the pain and the injuries that come with the season, with the sport, with the fight to the death that might become the road to victory.

His body is not the result of his devotion to the gods, though; it is not a list of his sacrifices in an effort to win their favour, but a testament of his efforts, his dedication to the sport where he's determined to be the best.

When Ilya wins, it's not because some mythical being woke up and decided to smile in his direction, bless him with a little luck, a little speed, a little aim. It's because Ilya's put in the work, the effort, has spent countless hours honing his talent so that he can become the best, so he can go the whole way through, and win *everything*.

There are no gods to thank for that, hockey or otherwise. Ilya's not even sure he believes in any, despite the cross around his neck, resting in the dip between his collarbones.

He believes in his mother, though, and in remembering her, and he wears her cross to take her everywhere with him, close to his heart, but he doesn't believe in her God.

There are few things that Ilya believes in, and even fewer of them are things that he can't see, can't touch, can't bear claw marks on their flesh, from how hard he's fought to have them, to keep them.

There are few things that Ilya believes in that aren't himself, the work he's done, the efforts he's put in, chasing after goals that were dreams that were mirages, when he started.

Shane is warm, sprawled on the bed besides Ilya, the sheets half-pooled around his waist, half-tangled with his legs. He's warm under Ilya's touch, two fingertips pressed to the underside of Shane's ankle, as Ilya draws circles around it.

He barely reacts, still fast asleep, when Ilya lightly traces the path of his veins snaking around his ankle, pressing against the thin skin covering the bone. It's soft, and delicate, paper-thin, and Ilya is filled with the urge to put his lips on it, chase the shape of them and make his way up Shane's legs, reacquainting himself with the lines of Shane's body, more familiar to him than any others, even his own.

He doesn't, because Shane is still out, breathing softly into his pillow, but he curls his hand around Shane's ankle, brushing his fingers against the coarse hair there. He keeps his hold a loose circle around Shane's ankle, but one that won't budge, if Shane turns in his sleep, if he moves his foot away from Ilya. Ilya taps his fingertips against it, over Shane's veins, chasing after the echo of his heartbeat.

Shane breathes in deeply, and Ilya watches him as he does. He has one arm buried under the pillow, his hand underneath his head, because that's how he likes to sleep, facing Ilya and with his head resting on his hand, like a weirdo. Meanwhile, his other arm is extended towards the vacant space Ilya has left behind himself, fingers stretched across the mattress, like he's seeking for Ilya even in his sleep. Ilya shifts the arm he's using to prop himself up, still in bed but sitting beside Shane, moves his fingers until his pinkie is brushing against Shane's hand.

There are no claw marks on Shane, but he wears the shape of Ilya's mouth, dark bruises blossoming on his skin, down his neck and on his thighs, across the ladder of his ribs, on every spot where Ilya has managed to make him squirm and call out his name until Shane was shaking, choking on it.

The urge to lean down, breathe some life into the faded bruises scattered across Shane's back is almost overpowering, but it's still fairly early, and it hasn't been that long since they fell asleep. There's something restless in Ilya, though, something clawing at his insides and begging to be let out and he lets go of Shane's ankle, traces an invisible, winding path up his calf, soft as butterfly wings.

He brushes the pad of his finger across the back of Shane's knee, where he's most ticklish, and watches him squirm, brows furrowing for a moment as he draws his leg upwards, and away from Ilya's touch, before his expression smooths again.

Smiling to himself, with a smile that's little more than an uptick of his lips, Ilya spreads his hand on the back of Shane's thigh, and leans forward, until he can kiss Shane's back, the slope of his shoulder blade. He stays like that, lips pressed against Shane's warm skin, feeling

the soft rising and lowering of his back with every breath Shane takes, with every soft exhale, breathing him in in return.

Shane, soft and pliant, fast asleep in Ilya's bed, *their* bed, stretched across it like it's his kingdom, the only place he'd ever want to be, is the closest thing to believing that Ilya has ever come, *will* ever come, probably.

When Ilya draws up, he finds that Shane is awake, an eye cracked open as he stares up at Ilya.

He's still mostly asleep, soft around the edges, half his face hidden in his pillow, but the skin around his eye crinkles when he smiles at Ilya, syrupy-slow and sweet, a reflex that comes as easy as breathing. It puts a hitch in Ilya's breath as well, makes his heart skip a beat.

Sometimes, at the beginning, he had to wait, to see if he'd wake up from this dream, if Shane was really there, real and by his side, or if it was a mirage his brain had crafted and was only one strong wind away from breaking.

So far, it's held, but Ilya's heart still skips a bit, sometimes, when Shane looks at him like he's the only thing in the world.

"G'morning Ilya," Shane says, voice thick, words half slurred against the pillow. He turns his head to the side, to free his mouth, his nose no longer buried in the pillow.

He lifts the arm he had outstretched on the bed, keeps the other trapped under himself, and reaches for Ilya, feather-light fingers brushing against the curve of Ilya's cheekbone.

Turning his face towards Shane's hand, Ilya presses a kiss against his palm, sweet and lingering. It makes Shane smile, wider, still, when Ilya tilts his face so that Shane is cupping his cheek with his palm.

"Have you been awake for long? What time is it?" Shane asks, like he doesn't look two-seconds away from falling asleep again.

The pad of his thumb brushes against Ilya's cheek, softly caressing it back and forth. He hasn't looked away from Ilya since he woke up, was reaching for him even when he was still asleep.

It makes Ilya wants to crawl into his ribcage, fall asleep there to the tune of Shane's heart, and never wake up, never be away from him again.

He doesn't believe, in his mother's God or anyone else's but… As much as he's done, as good as he is, as hard as he's worked, if there's anything out and about keeping an eye on them, the one thing they might be responsible for is putting Shane in Ilya's path, twin stars caught in each other's gravity, intertwined until they can never be pulled apart.

Ilya would tear the world apart, if it came to it, if Shane asked it of him. He'd lay down at Shane's feet and rip his own heart out to give it to Shane, trust him to treat it tenderly.

Shane's hand leaves Ilya's face, and he reaches for Ilya's cross, tangling his fingers with the chain. Ilya can feel it digging in the back of his neck, as Shane keeps him close, tugging him down. It breaks the enchantment, the path of his thoughts replaced with the real Shane, splayed on the bed, looking up at him. It's not an unwanted position to be in.

Ilya doesn't move, doesn't get closer to Shane. He stays where he is and studies Shane's sleepy face, the soft curve of his mouth, his hair fanned across the pillow, his forehead. He wonders if the chain will bite into Shane's fingers, if it'll leave behind marks, faint and worn, like spiderweb cracks.

Ilya would chase after them, if it did. He'd kiss them and map them out with his mouth, licking the taste of the metal from Shane's fingers until it was gone, and they were warm and clean and slick with Ilya's spit, until Shane couldn't touch anything without smearing Ilya everywhere.

"What are you doing?" Shane asks, suspicious, fond, amused.

He's still half-asleep, but there's a smile tickling at the corner of his mouth, a knowing glint in his eye as he stares at Ilya from the pillow. Ilya has a feeling it's not the first time Shane has asked him such a question.

"Nothing," he replies, shrugging for good measure.

He goes for nonchalant and misses it by a mile, if Shane's growing smile is anything to go by. Shane's fingers tighten around the chain for a moment, tugging a little more on Ilya as they do, before relaxing and letting go.

"Liar," Shane breathes out, half-laughing, He disentangles his fingers from the chain and lets them drop until they're clinging onto the cross, one finger hooked over the chain. The knuckle brushes against Ilya's throat and he wills it to stay there, pressed against his windpipe. "Weird. Pervert," he adds, like an after-thought, an accusation, not fighting the smile still clinging to the corner of his mouth, the one that digs into his cheek and makes his eyes crinkle at the corners.

"Oh?" Ilya asks, allowing his eyebrows to climb up his forehead, slowly and surely turning into arches, high over his eyes. Shane's smile widens, the amusement deepening, "I am pervert, now?" Shane hums his agreement, nodding as he does. He tugs on the cross, very carefully, and Ilya allows himself to be moved, ever so slightly. "That's not nice, to say about your husband," he reproaches, with a click of his tongue. "Maybe even grounds for divorce."

When Shane laughs, light and carefree, Ilya smiles, pride singing in his veins, every time that he makes Shane laugh like that.

"Fuck off, you asshole," there's too much fondness, too much care and love in his voice for Ilya to ever feel insulted, or hurt.

Instead, it fills him with delight, and he has to clear his expression to keep himself from smiling like an idiot. Only Shane ever manages to make him feel like that.

“Well, you know what they say,” Ilya replies instead, shaking his head as he does. He allows the silence to grow a little between them, Shane’s eyebrows inching up his forehead, before continuing, “you are the people you go out with—”

“Yeah?” Shane interjects, eyes sparkling, mouth curving with laughter already, “who says that?”

“Everyone, Hollander, keep up,” Ilya shakes his head, rolling his eyes as he does, before continuing, without giving Shane that chance to reply, “so, if I am pervert, then that means…,” a pause, Ilya giving Shane a meaningful look, to which Shane replies pursing his lips, trying to flatten them into a line that keeps getting disturbed by the smile he’s trying to repress. Ilya sighs, dramatic and over the top, Shane’s grin winning the fight, “it means you are pervert too, probably even bigger than me, yes.”

“Even bigger than you? No way, that’s just not possible,” Shane replies, shaking his head, his hair flopping from side to side as he does.

Ilya spreads a hand over Shane’s side, lightly tapping his fingers against his stomach.

“Yes, you chose me, remember?” He asks, as Shane frowns. “You asked me to go to the cottage.”

“And you asked me to fuck! In the showers!” Shane blurts out, turning an adorable shade of red, when he realizes what just came out of his mouth.

He squirms on the bed, tossing around until he’s lying on his back, looking up at Ilya. His blush deepens, as his eyes track the slow spread of Ilya’s grin across his face. Shane tries not to, and it’s a valiant effort, but a futile one, in the end, his eyes dropping constantly to Ilya’s mouth.

“I don’t think that’s true,” he clicks his tongue as he replies, humming as if deep in though. Shane squirms and Ilya briefly squeezes his side. Shane stills. “I remember you were very interested in me that day, yes?” A pointed look, at Shane’s crotch, which makes him flush even harder and attempt to cross his legs, until he thinks better of it. “Even before I was, too.”

“Asshole,” Shane shoots, still fond, faintly embarrassed.

He continues to smile, a faint thing making his lips curl upwards, but his hand drops from Ilya’s cross, back to the mattress, and Ilya can’t have that.

“You keep insulting me, Shane! You hurt my feelings,” he whines, as he flops on top of Shane, careful not to hurt him, purposeful enough that Shane’s lungs lose their air. Ilya wraps his arms around Shane’s waist, all but buries his face in Shane’s armpit. The smell of him is strong, there, not unpleasant, not when Shane is so obsessive with being clean, just strong, and, like that, Ilya can press his ear to Shane’s heart, track it’s beat. He allows his eyes to flutter close. “I have to decide if I forgive you,” he announces, taking a deep breath.

He holds it in for a couple of seconds, before letting it all out in a contented sigh. His face is all but shoved in Shane’s armpit, close enough that his breath tickles the underside of Shane’s

arm.

“You’re so weird,” Shane huffs out, a laugh more than a sentence.

Fondness drips from his words, though, and his touch is soft, when his hands find Ilya’s hair, run across his scalp. Ilya shivers, mouths against Shane’s side and feels him trembling in return.

“Shush,” he replies, tightening his hold on Shane, “I am still forgiving you.”

“That seems more of a punishment for you than anything else, Ilya,” Shane retorts.

He winds his fingers around a strand of Ilya’s hair and tugs on it softly, enough to be felt. He lets go without it hurting, before even getting close to that, and continues to thread his fingers through Ilya’s hair, in methodic passes that are soothing, calming.

Ilya feels his bones liquifying, body melting into Shane’s, which accommodates him in return.

“Being with you is never punishment,” Ilya replies, words said mostly into Shane’s armpit. Shane’s fingers in his hair twitch, for a moment, before resuming their path.

Ilya stays where he is for a second, breathing Shane in, and then he drops a kiss to Shane’s skin, turning his head to press his lips to the side of Shane’s torso, over his topmost ribs. Shane’s eyes are soft, on him, when Ilya rises above him, his hand not leaving the back of Ilya’s head. Instead, it slides down, until he can wrap it around the nape of Ilya’s neck, his thumb resting beneath the hinge of Ilya’s jaw.

“I love you,” Shane murmurs, a quiet thing that’s only for Ilya to hear, his thoughts plucked straight from his head and presented plainly, because Shane wants to, not expecting anything in return.

He’s beautiful, and wonderful, his Shane, the man that Ilya never expected to meet, to be allowed to love and marry, to kiss in front of thousands on TV after they won a cup, and slow-dance with in the middle of the kitchen, to the tune of the rain falling outside their window.

He’s beautiful, in all the ways that matter, and Ilya doesn’t know how someone could have him and ever let him go, because he’d touched Shane once and instead of turning around and leaving him behind, he’d allowed him to hook his fingers in Ilya’s ribcage, given him a hold on Ilya that he’s never going to break.

“I love you too,” he replies, lowering himself enough for Shane to tip his head back, asking for a kiss, only to kiss the tip of his nose instead.

Shane huffs, affronted, and Ilya smiles, sly, but before he can say anything, Shane’s arms are around his shoulders, pulling Ilya down onto his chest, to kiss him properly, and Ilya forgets everything about teasing Shane.

The cross digs into his chest for a moment, and is ignored, melting into the background. The rest of the guys can keep their gods. Ilya has everything he needs, already, and the only thing he'd give up pieces of himself for, is the man in his arms.

End Notes

Thank you all for sticking with me, I hope it was a fun read, and, happy new year!!

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