

say you'll always keep me

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say you'll always keep me

by [writingcap](#)

Summary

Shane has never been religious. But he found himself praying, to something, to anything, to the wind that can anchor every wish he had for Ilya—to keep him safe, to keep him healthy, to make him happy again.

He thinks of Ilya's cross on his necklace, and thinks of his Mom.

Is he going to meet her now? Will he get the chance to tell her how wonderful her son grew up to be? Will he be able to tell her that he tried to love him for the both of them the best way he knew how?

Or: what if it's Shane's plane that almost crashed?

Notes

Title is from One Direction's Truly, Madly, Deeply because I've already used Home before and it didn't quite fit, and If I Could Fly was a bit on the nose... Anyway, enjoy.

(Also borrowed some lines and dialogue from The Long Game)

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

Montreal lost their game in Washington which was annoying.

Everybody was grumbling as they all trickled down towards the locker room. Hayden bumped shoulders with him as they went, offering the slightest smile when Shane looked at him. He nodded back and went straight into changing out of his gear.

He already knew Ilya was going to be a little shit about this because he checked their game against Carolina that afternoon and saw that they won. They were probably on their way to Florida now, or already landed.

But to be quite honest, he won't mind Ilya being a little shit about it. He's actually proud that the Ottawa Centaurs won, that *Ilya won*. He knows he must be feeling pretty good right now. He deserves that.

They haven't really spoken much since their call about talking once they see each other again, a few texts and even less short calls. It's not like they really talk a whole lot in between games since both of them are intensely focused with playing, and talking to each other really was a big distraction. Especially when the face time calls would end with both of them asking to see each other more, panting, desperate and needy.

But it's never been this terse, or charged with something Shane's hoping would go away very soon.

He checks his phone and sure enough there's a text from Ilya that they've landed safely at Tampa Bay.

Lily:

Landed 🛬

You did the losing this time then?

Shane:

Ha.

Don't get too comfortable.

Lily:

But I am 😏

And then, a picture of him in the hotel lobby drinking with the Ottawa Centaurs fills up Shane's phone. He only has a second to look around him, afraid that somebody close might see and wonder why he's looking at the picture. He hides his phone flat on his stomach, breaths a sigh as he notices nobody paying attention to him.

He almost, *almost* wanted to chastise Ilya. He knew that he'd probably be in the vicinity of his team, knew their game just ended and he still sent it. They were careful about it in ordinary days, but more during times like this.

But he takes a second look as he sneaks a peek again, and sees his big crooked smile stretched across his face, his arm around Zane Boodram, Wyatt Hayes next to him in a pout close to Ilya's cheek, Luca Haas in the background holding a peace sign, and even Troy Barrett who was sporting a little smile behind them.

He smiles, and counts five in his head before he deletes it off their thread.

Shane:

Enjoy.

Don't drink too much

And congratulations :)

Lily:

I miss you moy lyubimyy

Then he follows it up with a selfie of his own, just him this time, left palm on his cheek as he leaned on it, eyes hooded probably from all the alcohol he drank already, and Shane didn't want to admit it, but he has to, tired and sad. Ilya really looks tired and sad, and he's an asshole for not noticing it sooner. But still *so beautiful*, so beautiful it made his chest hurt.

They have so much to talk about, and soon. He'd see him soon. They're flying home tomorrow, and Ilya will be home in the evening by then, too.

He'd hug and kiss him soon enough.

Shane:

I miss you too

He has a much harder time deleting this picture off their thread this time.

Shane sits across from Hayden in the plane.

The Montreal Metros were not loud today. Usually they were a bit rowdier, and everyone's sitting on something, and that'd be enough to get a laugh from most of the team.

But not today.

It was drizzling a bit outside, but not enough that they needed to delay their flight. But the fog outside their aeroplane windows were enough to also blanket their team in a hush none of

them were really familiar with. Drapeau was trying really hard to get their spirits going, saying something to Comeau to annoy one of their teammates, but it was futile.

Shane doesn't know if it was the rain, or the loss yesterday, or something else entirely. But he welcomed the quiet, preferred it even. He didn't like it when they got too loud in the plane, walking up and down the aisle like a bunch of douchebags poking fun on some of the rookies.

Look, Shane was used to it. This is his team, and has been his team for almost a decade now. They're like family, *sometimes*, most of the time. He can't imagine not playing with them. This will be his legacy, right here, in this team.

He thinks of Ilya, then, what he felt when he left Boston. When he chose Ottawa to become closer to Shane, to build a life with him, to throw away building a legacy with his team.

And Ilya did help build the Bears, as much as he did helping build the Metros.

Now, he has Ottawa and it breaks his heart to think he isn't happy there. But he thinks of his picture last night, and what his Mom told him about Ilya liking Ottawa, and maybe he has the wrong idea all over again.

He'll talk to him. He will.

He texts him before the plane takes off.

Shane:

Flying to Montreal now.

See you very soon

The reply was immediate.

Lily:

Getting ready for game now

See you



He put his phone on aeroplane mode as he settled back in his seat. Once the plane was high up in the skies, Shane took out his iPad and a little notebook he kept with all the Russian words and phrases he was learning.

Hayden nodded to his iPad, knowing what it was for, *who it was for*.

"Going to teach me how to call him an asshole in his language now?"

Shane actually laughed at that as he shook his head, "Absolutely not."

As he settled in, guilt also started simmering in his gut. Hayden just joked about his *boyfriend*, about *Ilya*. His best friend, his teammate knew that he had a boyfriend, and knew exactly who that was.

Even in this tiny space in this aeroplane with his team surrounding him, Shane was able to exist in his truth.

Ilya's not able to do that.

Not even with Troy Barrett who Ilya told him was gay, and made space enough for Ilya to be comfortable to share that he's bisexual. He can't tell Troy that he has a partner, that he's with Shane, that Ilya's probably heartbroken about keeping all of this in—the hiding, and the secret, and just this whole fuckass situation all because Shane isn't ready.

He feels like Ilya is, that Ilya's gearing up at least towards being ready. Shane is a long way from that. He doesn't even know sometimes what he's entirely afraid of, knows it's going to be a shitshow one way or another.

There is no reality where coming out would be smooth, and warm, and completely supportive.

He knows that.

Shane also knows that the Metros have leaned towards more tolerating behaviour with him. They know he's gay, he came out to them. He'd be a fool to say nothing has changed, or that it's been warm since.

Ilya would probably have a better environment with his team. From how he talks about them, and just how they are from his stories. They seem like a supportive bunch. Not that Ilya didn't deserve it because Shane knows he does. Out of everybody, Shane knows it the most.

So, why isn't he able to share it with them?

Because Shane is a fucking coward. *Fuck!*

He continues reading through the Russian that doesn't make a lot of sense in his head, and repeating the phrases under his breath as he goes through it over and over again. He's been trying this phrase that he hopes he's perfected enough when he sees Ilya tomorrow, or later.

Hayden is fast asleep across him, and there's the quiet buzz he's usually used to tuning out when flying. He wonders if it's the engine, or the freezing air conditioner everybody has on blast.

He can hear somebody playing white noise sounds, probably Olsson because he hates earphones so he has it on speaker for most to hear. Shane didn't mind, he liked it. Besides, he has big headphones of his own anyway, letting his YouTube Russian teacher teach him different phrases.

A stewardess walks down the aisle and he raises his hand slightly. She ducks her head close to him to ask what he needs.

He points to his now empty water bottle.

“Thank you.”

The stewardess leaves him with a nod, and a smile as she walks down the aisle again to get him his water bottle. Her walk back to him wasn't as smooth because the plane rumbled.

It was strong enough to wake Hayden.

“What the fuck was that?”

Shane looked back at the stewardess who held on to one of the seats, and brushed it off like nothing happened, continuing to walk to him.

“Turbulence,” he shrugged. To prove his point, the plane did it again, not that strong this time, but the stewardess was right next to him now and was able to pass him his water.

More of his teammates slowly woke up, or like him, put their earphones and headphones down as they asked why the plane started jerking like that.

Just as Shane was going to answer *Turbulence* again, and thinking something along the lines of *we've been flying for so many times now—*

They hear a loud bang, and Shane's whole world tilts as the plane shakes from his view, and the fucking aeroplane *drops*.

The hush that settled over them before they flew has been replaced by horrific screams that would haunt Shane if they survived this.

He doesn't know what he holds, or what he does, all he knows is his heart is in his throat, and there's a strong urge to vomit, and Hayden is screaming, but he can't make any sound. Everybody is screaming, and Shane wants to reach out to anyone—to anything, steady himself, but how can he when the whole aircraft is falling?

Fuck.

Mom, Dad—

Fuck!

I can't—shit!

Shane can't even think about—doesn't want to think about—he pushes his name out of his head.

Fuck. Ilya.

He's never been afraid of aeroplanes, never had any real reason to be afraid of flying. He's heard that statistically, it was safer to fly than to travel by driving. He's holding onto that statistic by a thread.

He doesn't want to cry now, doesn't want to think about how he's probably going to die. Doesn't want to think about Ilya finding—

The plane jerks back again, and it makes him take the sharpest inhale of breath as it settles the plane back on air, and everything levels out for a second. You can hear a needle drop with the way all the screaming stopped, and everybody in shock. He's holding on to the sides of his seat with everything he has, afraid if he lets go now the plane would dip again.

His eyes dart around, at Hayden who has tears streaming down his face, at J.J. who was at the aisle behind them with his eyes closed looking up, whispering something—a prayer, a plea. Even the Coach was wiping his eyes with the back of his hand.

The speakers ding and Shane looks wildly at it, he can still feel his blood in his ears, the way it's gasping and begging to be calm, but there's none of that now. He can barely process the words, can only really understand emergency landing, an engine being gone, and that they probably were working out a solution.

He doesn't know if the last part was something he was whispering to himself.

He sees Hayden take out his phone and call, or text. He doesn't know, sees him now through a blurry gaze. He looks up, still refusing to let any of it actually come down.

Maybe if it does, maybe it's not real. Maybe it's not happening. Maybe—

Fuck. Shane is in a falling plane and there's nothing he can do about it.

“Fucking engine's on fire!” Somebody at the back yells, he's not entirely sure because the intense ringing is back in his ears and his heart drops, possibly faster and harder than this plane was going to because he can barely feel it now.

There's just dread and a long way down.

He doesn't have it in him to react, or to scream, or to cry like everybody else.

He closes his eyes, wills this all away, wishes it was a nightmare, wishes he can wake up now, *wishes*, wishes—wishes this was not the end.

He can hear Hayden whispering now, more clearly, he can catch Jackie's name, and the kids, and he swallows. Shit. Hayden has four small children. Jackie has nobody to help her. He can faintly hear the wails of her voice, shouting, and he can feel how Hayden calms down then, how he calms her. Almost accepting, almost defeated.

He thinks of his Mom, his Mom who has done nothing, but help and love and take care of Shane his whole life. He thinks of her in their home in Ottawa hearing about the news, he thinks of her turning towards Dad. Dad who is going to try and be strong, who'll let Mom cry in his chest, who'll brush away the tears as they fall. Silent and heavy and a hurt that would never truly heal losing their only child like that.

Mom and Dad who have put everything they have in Shane, who have supported him through everything.

He thinks of messaging them, saying his final words, reminding them that their efforts were not in vain, that he saw them and he appreciated them, that he could never ask for better parents because they were the best.

But he thinks of Mom who's going to stay up late, night after night reading those messages over and over again, and he can't bring himself to type any words, let alone think of them.

What can he say?

I love you. Thank you for raising me. Good bye.

What use would those words be?

He'd be gone and he'd take pieces of his parents away with him.

He hears more whispers, more screams, more wails, more crying. He hears people comforting each other, he hears people praying and begging. He sees the stewardesses on their seats, scared and helpless.

He feels so helpless.

Hayden looks at him, and he snaps his eyes to his, and there's really no words. He's too far to reach, and nobody is going to move right now. He hopes he knows what Hayden wants to say, hopes that Hayden knows what he wants to say to him, too.

Hayden has been a good friend to him, even though he knows he could have been a better friend to him. *Shit!*

Shane knows he's skirting around someone, knows he doesn't want to think about him, but he's been there—he's here, at the forefront of his mind, always, all the time, since forever.

Shane doesn't really remember a time when he's not thinking of Ilya Rozanov.

He's been consuming his mind, his heart, his soul, his body since he met him in that freezing old parking lot when they were teenagers. He thinks of it now—sees the way Ilya was leaning on the wall, cigarette on his lips and commits the memory in his brain, wants it to last, transcend all the lives he'll have if this one ends right now.

Then, selfishly, for a second, he thinks how great it is that he's the one on the plane and not Ilya. Because he can't lose him—Shane doesn't think he'll survive that, even more than he'll survive this.

He'd be on hollow ground, everything would eat him up from the inside out.

But that barely lasts for a second because Ilya has lost so fucking much. Ilya has lost his mother, his country, his family, everything he built in Boston. He's lost everything—Shane doesn't know how he'll cope with losing him.

He doesn't try to imagine Ilya finding out—through the news, or somebody telling him their plane crashed. Doesn't try to imagine him in the middle of their locker room, choked up and

unable to cry because nobody knows what Shane meant to him, nobody knows what he gave up for him, nobody knows just exactly how he loved him. Only Shane knows that.

How can he mourn him?

How can he break without letting anybody know?

How can Shane leave him with something that heavy to carry?

Shane hopes—*prays* that somehow, Ilya doesn't love him that much to be that devastated over this. He hopes that the pit in his stomach won't match the despair Ilya could possibly have over him. He hopes that he cries, and moves on as quickly as he can.

But he knows that's not true, in whatever version of his warped reality right now—that's not true, knows that's a lie he's trying to sell to himself. Ilya loves him with everything he has.

Sweet beautiful Ilya with the hazel eyes, and the golden curls, and with a heart that Shane never really thought he'd deserve. Ilya who has proved time and time again that he already chose Shane, how he's been blind to it, how he's been unworthy of it.

Fuck. He hasn't been able to love Ilya right at all. He's not done loving him yet.

He shakily takes his phone out, and lets his tears run down when the plane vibrates again.

He opens his Instagram—it's what Ilya uses for him when they're on the plane and he only has Wi-Fi. He's never really messaged him here, afraid of messages leaking, afraid of somebody looking over his shoulder, seeing Ilya's handle there and being able to deduce what he means to him.

He doesn't fucking care right now.

Who cares right now?

He can't even remember what they were fighting about before all of this—what his point was, why it all mattered to him, nothing matters right now.

Shane is going to die, and he's not done loving Ilya just yet.

He types to IlyaRozanov_81:

Ilya

He sends, but he thinks, *What do you say to the love of your life in moments like this? Do you bare your soul? Do you tell him how he's the most wonderful thing you've ever had in your life? Do you tell him how you've imagined your future together?*

Fuck. They wanted children. They wanted a life together.

They wanted more time.

So much more time.

I want to make sure that you know I love you

You're life's biggest gift to me

The most wonderful person I know I'm sorry for everything nothing else matters only you

Shane has never been religious. His family wasn't, so he never found any reason to be. But he found himself praying, to something, to anything, to the wind that can anchor every wish he had for Ilya—to keep him safe, to keep him healthy, to make him happy again.

He thinks of Ilya's cross on his necklace, and thinks of his Mom.

Is he going to meet her now? Will he get the chance to tell her how wonderful her son grew up to be? Will he be able to tell her that he tried to love him for the both of them the best way he knew how? That maybe he failed, but Ilya was happy for a moment, so happy that Shane knew it was absolutely true.

Tears keep on streaming down his face, and he doesn't care as his thumbs fly across his phone.

If it's not much to ask check on Mom and Dad for me

They love you too I can't have them lose two sons

I can't message them I'm afraid

So afraid Ilya but I love you and I can't go without you knowing and being sure of that

Thank you

You've had my heart since the start yours only yours

And he types the phrase that he kept on repeating in his notebook earlier.

я тебя люблю

He doesn't even know if the game has ended, if Ilya's team won, if he's seeing this right now. He doesn't want to call, doesn't want to hear Ilya's voice crack and break for him. He's okay with the last memory of Ilya's voice being grainy and a bit hollow with static, far and distant, but warm as he joked about something.

He's not content with it, far from being satisfied, but beggars can't be choosers.

He can still hear murmurs around him as the plane lurches forward again, can hear crying from the other end of their teammate's phones, and he's sure there are more people from land that knows of their situation, know that they're doomed.

And because he's dying, and there's nothing else that matters, and Shane has wasted all of the years he's spent with Ilya in hiding, in secret, restricted and concealed from the world.

Why did he care so much?

What does it matter now?

He should've loved him in the open—Ilya looked beautiful like that, the sun kissing his skin, smile big, and eyes looking at Shane like he's done something right in his life. He should've held his hand walking down Montreal and Ottawa and Boston and the whole fucking world.

He shouldn't have deleted the selfie Ilya sent him last night. He should have left it. He should be looking at it now. He scrambles through his phone and scrambles through the photos he has and tries to find a glimpse of him.

He sees a few of his back at the cottage. He curses himself. *Suffer now, coward.*

He said ten years. Shane told Ilya to wait at least ten years. Now he thinks he doesn't even have ten minutes.

He gets his phone again, now closer to his mouth and holds the microphone.

“Ты мой единственный выбор, Розанов”.

The plane shudders, and Shane can hear a loud thunder from outside till the plane reverberates, and he can throw up from the dip his stomach makes.

Ottawa won their game in Florida which was delightful.

Ilya can still hear the roar of the fans—a lot of them cussing their team out, but he doesn't fucking care because they won. He thinks the winning streak starts here, and he can't be prouder of his team. He knows they've been working so hard, and knows all of the talent contained in this locker room right now.

“Can I just say,” he says, slowly turning around, big fucking grin on his face, “how fucking proud I am? Fucking legends!”

The Ottawa Centaurs growl and cheer, and Ilya thinks he's never heard his team this loud before. He goes to each stall, bumping them on their foreheads, or giving their shoulders a pat or the biggest squeeze he can.

They were all beaming at him, and he's sure he looked at them with that same look, with that same dopey smile.

When he gets back to his locker, he laughs as Hazy jokes about the last goal Haas made, and how Florida didn't stand a chance. He agrees, tugging his jersey off his head, and reaching for his phone.

He was excited to annoy Shane again. Say something about how cursing his team only made them win, and that it was all thanks to him.

It's been okay with the two of them. They promised to talk, and now that talk is only really a few hours away because they'd see each other again soon. Soon enough, he'd be able to hold him in his arms again, kiss him, keep him close for at least a day or two before he has to let go.

As long as they loved each other, and Ilya knew that, and hoped Shane did, too—he was sure that they're going to be fine.

He furrowed his eyebrows when he saw ShaneHollanderHockeyPlayer notifications from Instagram on his lockscreen. Shane never uses Instagram to message him. Ilya does, but Shane rarely replies, and even if he does, it'd be when he's at home, when nobody else can see exactly who he's messaging.

He was just going to open when Coach Wiebe popped his head in, “Roz, the interviewers want to talk to you.”

He smiled warmly at his coach, and nodded his head, “Sure! Just a minute, Coach.”

Ilya should have left the messages, should have changed out of his gear, and followed through his word with Coach Wiebe, should have spoken to the interviewers first.

But Shane never uses Instagram. Shane never messages that much. Shane is not okay.

He opened the messages, and felt his whole fucking world drop.

He reads it once, then again, and once more to make sure he's understanding it right.

What the fuck?

What are these messages? Shane—Shane would never—no. *Fuck*. No. Why would he? He wouldn't. He wouldn't do that to Ilya.

He presses play on the voice message.

“Ты мой единственный выбор, Розанов”.

“You're the only one I choose, Rozanov.”

He repeated it once, and again, the phone close to his ear. The locker room has faded away and there are noises around him, and he thinks somebody is hovering near, and he barely has his gear out, but he stumbles, and he trips, and he's walking out of the locker room.

“You're the only one I choose, Rozanov.”

He doesn't know if there were people in front of their doors, but he's stumbling through the dark hallway, and then he trips and presses play again, the clear sound of Shane's voice, and

the rumble of something in the background—Ilya can pick up screaming and crying, and can hear the softest cry that Shane doesn't want him to hear.

"You're the only one I choose, Rozanov."

He was on a plane. He's on a fucking plane. He reads the messages again and he can feel the life drain out of him. There are no follow up messages, only the voice message as his last one.

Fuck!

He clicks on the call button, and it doesn't even connect. Ilya can feel the warm, fat tears that roll down his face, can feel his body shut down, can feel his heart stagger, and his stomach lurch threatening to empty everything he's put there today.

No. No.

No. No. No!

No. No.

No.

Mama, please don't take him away.

"You're the only one I choose, Rozanov."

He says in almost perfect Russian. And Ilya knows the exact reason why Shane says that, recalls the argument, remembers how his heart broke—how the fuck is it still beating now?

He knows that—knows that Shane chooses him, too.

He just wanted to be heard, wanted to be seen by the one person he'd do everything and anything for. He clicks the call button again and nothing.

"Fuck!"

How can he function without Shane? How can he continue on life without the person who's given it purpose and meaning? How can the fucking sun shine out tomorrow morning when Ilya's entire reason of being is not there to greet him?

Ilya wants more time. Ilya wanted nothing, but time, now there's none. There's none because there's no Shane.

He can't believe this, he can't believe his fucking life—he wants to get mad, he wants to throw things, he wants to smash something. Anything, something other than despair and the knowledge that Shane took everything with him.

He wanted a life with him. More years to play hockey, to watch Shane play and flourish and be the best he knows that he is, and make Shane proud as he holds another Stanley Cup in his

arms again. He wanted children and dogs and a house they would both call their own. No more living in two cities apart, but together—where Ilya can wake up in the morning with the smell of coffee, and Shane in their kitchen already done with his run of the day, sweaty and comfortable and smiling at Ilya like he knew for sure this was going to be the rest of their lives together.

Yuna and David—*shit*. He can't even—his parents, *their* parents. They were going to be devastated and the three of them would walk around with a Shane shaped hole in the middle of their chests, and nothing would function the same anymore.

They were supposed to be grandparents to their children—Ilya can still see it so clearly, Yuna and David picking up their girls and twirling them around as he wrapped an arm around Shane, while the latter's arm snaked around his waist.

Now there is no partner, no grandchildren, no life, no nothing.

Shane said ten years, fucking hell, he'd do another fifty in secret if it meant he got Shane back.

He can't even think about mourning, about Shane's body, about the people probably looking for Ilya right now. He doesn't know how long it's been, he's still just staring at his phone.

He presses play again.

"You're the only one I choose, Rozanov."

And he already chose Shane. He chose Shane the first day they met, probably took him longer than it should've, but he chose him then.

He tries to remember his laugh, try to immortalise it, let it echo in his memories—his hair is longer in his head now, pushing the memory of that first parking lot.

Instead, he tries to remember him in the cottage where Shane is carefree, and uninhibited, and reaches for Ilya as he kisses his hand. He remembers his warmth, and his light, and his freckles scattered around his cheeks, and Ilya reaches for the memory, but that's all it is.

That's all Shane is now.

"You're the only one I choose, Rozanov."

"Fuck!"

He can hear footsteps now, and he doesn't care who they are because somebody just took Ilya's heart right out of his chest, and nothing else matters now. Nothing else is important.

"Ilya," he was sure it was Troy, "Harris and I are here."

"Hey, buddy," Harris squats next to him, and he doesn't know where to look, what to feel, whether to push them away, or just let them.

“Ilya,” Troy tried again, and then maybe Ilya was hearing things, but he said, “the plane is safe.”

His head snaps up at him, and he’s sure it’s going to hurt later, but he doesn’t care now, “What?”

“The plane for the Metros, it’s safe. They did an emergency landing,” Harris repeats softly, reaching out for his shoulder and he accepts it.

“He’s safe.”

He releases a shuddering breath as his body gives out. He slumps over there on the wall, only a part of his back resting on it, his legs splayed and his head looking up as he can’t stop the tears from flowing.

Harris adjusts himself as he feels him flush against Ilya, and lets him cry.

He brings his hand to his face, and hopes that they forget about the sob he lets out—relief, anxiety, worry. He turns his head on Harris's shoulder and lets himself just release everything.

It doesn’t need to make sense to them now, it doesn’t need to make sense to anyone.

He thought he lost him.

And for a few minutes there, Ilya actually did.

He didn’t know if he was alive, or not, and for those minutes—Shane took Ilya with him. He died with him.

His phone rings and he’s standing up, answering it.

“Hello,” he croaks out.

“Ilya,” he can hear Shane cry out, “Ilya,” he repeats like he can’t believe he gets to say his name again.

“Moy lyubimyy,” he whispers and he can’t help but let a sob out.

“I’m sorry—I’m so sorry,” Shane starts to say, but Ilya’s shaking his head like he can see him. He can hear how loud it was around them, can hear crying all around Shane, and the sound of an ambulance.

“Are you hurt?”

“No—not at all.”

For a moment, they don’t talk. Shane breathes and that’s all Ilya really needs to hear.

He’s alive.

“I thought I lost you.” He runs a hand through his hair, now he’s more aware that he’s left his gear on his body, and he’s lost one shoe. He shudders a breath.

“You’ll never lose me—”

“I did, Shane,” he insists, because he did. He feels like he did. The way he started to mourn him, to think of a life without him. They’ve never talked about it because there’s nothing to talk about. They were healthy, and they were young, and they were going to live out all of their years together.

That’s how their story is supposed to go.

That’s how it’s still going to go.

“For few minutes, I did lose you. I didn’t think,” then he chokes up again, “I didn’t think I’ll see or hear you or kiss you again.”

“You will, Ilya.” Shane reassures him, “I’m in Montreal now, and—”

“And I’m coming to you, soon, now—”

“No, I’ll drive to Ottawa—”

But Ilya’s shaking his head. “You just almost—”

“But I didn’t. I’ll call my parents now, I’m telling them not to go here, that I’ll come to them. So when you come home, I’ll be there. Please. Come home to me.”

“Okay.”

Because what else is Ilya supposed to do? There is no other answer than to come home to Shane. He doesn’t want to imagine a world where he doesn’t come home to him.

Shane tells him I love you in Russian and he closed his eyes, savouring it. He says it back once, twice, thrice till he makes Shane laugh again. He never thought he’d hear that again that he takes a sharp inhale of breath and releases it out, satisfied with the knowledge that he’s safe, he’s alive, and Ilya’s going to see him soon.

He turns around when he ends the phone call with Shane, neither Harris or Troy are there. He walks back to the now empty locker room, and finally changes out of his gear.

Ilya doesn’t know what they told the reporters, doesn’t know what they told the team, but he must have been pretty obvious if Harris and Troy followed him down, and knew exactly why he lost it.

But for now, he really doesn’t care because Shane is alive, and he’s coming home to him now.

Shane doesn't know what he was expecting when he heard Ilya's car pull up in the driveway, all he knew was that he wanted to throw his arms around him, and breathe him in.

That's exactly what he did.

And that's exactly what Ilya had in mind, too.

The wind knocked from both of their lungs as they clung onto each other. Ilya kissed him out of his front door and Shane let him, fuck, he'll let him do anything he wants. Anything he'll ask.

He just wants this from Ilya, this life, this love, this warmth. He just wants him, in all the ways he can share with Shane, in all the ways he'll allow him to take, and to give.

He wants to give him the world.

Ilya pulls him inside, slides his hands up and down his arms as he takes him in, eyes going from the top of his head to the tip of his toes. He can't believe he was alive, either. He can't believe that he gets to have him like this again: in front of him, and looking at Shane like he did something right.

He hopes to do something right.

"You're here," Ilya says, and he kisses him again because he can, because he's here, and because Shane loves him.

"I am," he nods, still a bit emotional. It's only really been a few hours. He hasn't had any sleep.

Ilya goes to kiss him again, and he lets the warmth envelope him some more. He tangles his hand in his hair, and he almost gasps at the cold feeling of Ilya's palm on his stomach, going up his chest as it rests on his heart.

"You're really here."

Shane doesn't know how long they stand there, sharing kisses, hugs, and a disbelief that both of them are thankful for. But he needed to ask him something, needed to do something, or else it'd eat him alive for another ten years.

He can't believe he wanted to hide as long as he wanted because as the plane was going down, and nothing else really mattered except Ilya—Shane realised that he didn't want to hide any longer.

He wanted the life they wanted to start *now*.

He had time, they both did, and they wasted so much of it being scared. He's not scared anymore, Ilya makes him feel brave and bold and empowered.

So, he asked his parents for all the candles they could find on such short notice.

Ilya looks around his home now, confused, and a little in awe, “You’re not planning to burn my house down, Hollander?”

“They’re electric, Rozanov. Fucking relax.”

He grinned at him, and before he could even sink down on one knee, he felt like Ilya already knew where he was going with this.

“This is not about me almost dying—”

“Too soon,” Ilya rolled his eyes, and so did he, continuing, but they both had the biggest shit eating grins on their faces.

“This is me realising that nothing else mattered, Ilya. I don’t want to be scared anymore. I don’t want to regret any more time. I want our life to start now.”

Ilya held out his palm, and Shane nuzzled his head right into it, greedy with his touch, with his attention, with his warmth. He wanted this for all the days of his life. He wanted this forever.

“I choose you. I’ve always chosen you.” Then he repeats his voice message to him, “Ты мой единственный выбор, Розанов”.

“You’re the only one I choose, Rozanov.”

“Ilya Rozanov, will you marry me?”

And Ilya’s hauling him off the floor, and kissing him, hard, deep, and desperate and he’s pushing back, and kissing back as hard as he can.

“I didn’t think I’ll hear that in real life,” Ilya laughs, wetly, and kisses him again.

“Is that a yes?” He asks.

Ilya rolls his eyes as he kisses him again, “Yes. I’m saying yes, Hollander.”

He doesn’t have a ring now, all he had was the question and the courage to ask. He can’t have another second with Ilya in his arms, and not know if he’ll have him for the rest of his life, or not.

Tomorrow, they’ll choose rings. Tomorrow, they’ll buy two. Together.

“This summer,” he tells him when they’re laying in bed later.

“This summer, what?”

“Coming out, getting married. We’ll do it all this summer. I can’t wait—I won’t wait another year to start my life with you.”

Ilya beams like the sun, and it’s impossible not to kiss him then. So, Shane does.

“Summer,” Ilya agrees, “okay.”

Till then, they can be less careful, and less scared, and less like the whole world would collapse on them if anybody knew. Shane says he can tell people he trusted, about himself, about them if he wanted.

But Ilya shook his head, smiling, and said, “It’s not long.”

He agreed. Not long, indeed.

He lets his fingers trace his face now, along his moles down to his chest, to his beating heart and Ilya mirrors his hand. They’re alive, and they’re here, and they’re in love.

They’ve chosen each other a long time ago, and *this*, this is the life they’ve been building, and it starts now.

End Notes

thank you again to mint for answering some questions i had for some russian phrases! i appreciate it.

i have actually been trying to write this for the past two days, but whenever i started it i'd cry and refuse to reread the aeroplane scene again, but here we are! after my morning after wedding fic, this was the only fic idea i had (and maybe another two in my notes right now...) but it was angsty and usually not my style. i'm fluff all the way, but also something cathartic about writing this, so i hope you guys enjoy. :) <3

(ily ally dont know if ull see this but end notes dont feel right without ur name)

I'm on [tumblr](#) and [twi](#) if you ever wanna see me scream about hollanov, buddie or superman (most of it is smallville superman) im down for a lot really

i'd love to know what u guys think <333

+++

this is how their messages would have looked [like](#)

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!