

control

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by [agador](#)

Summary

He has his diet that he hates but that's fine, too, because he also has the self-control to stick to it. And maybe that's its own reward, how good it feels to be able to be in complete control of at least one part of his life.

Or, Shane isn't okay, no matter how much he tries to convince himself otherwise.

Notes

hi all! I finished TLG and was a bit let down at how little we see of Shane's personal struggles. we get hints that he's also struggling with some mental health issues that are just kind of...brushed off at the end and well, that's not really how that works! so here's my attempt to explore some of the anxiety and guilt I imagine he'd have to deal with after the shock of being outed starts to wear off.

this fic is mostly canon compliant with the novels (HR/TLG, I haven't read the others) and contains references to Ilya's canonical suicidal ideation and Shane's disordered eating/control issues. I'm not a therapist, I'm not here to diagnose Shane with anything and have, admittedly, little familiarity with EDs so I personally wouldn't consider what he goes through an eating disorder, though I do think his use of food as a way to exercise control is worrying, to say the least, and is really what I wanted to explore.

I personally write with the show in mind as far as picturing the two of them since I watched the show first, but you can picture whichever version you prefer.

anyways, please enjoy~

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

About once a week Shane lets himself wallow over how much he hates his fucking diet.

He tries not to think about the food he eats too often. Its nourishment; carefully balanced to meet his exact dietary needs to keep him in top shape. His macros are carefully calculated by his dietician to keep him full and well energized for his physically demanding career, without anything that could slow him down. He sticks to his diet because it's good for him and he tells himself (and everyone around him) that it's working, really he can feel a difference in his energy levels and performance.

So what if it's the blandest, most tedious shit he's ever fucking eaten? What does that even matter, in the long run? He is in control of himself, of his body and his cravings and won't break his diet no matter how much he might really want a bite of Ilya's burger.

He shakes his head at Ilya's offer of a bite and tries not to sulk as he shoves a floret of (lightly roasted, lightly seasoned, non-buttered) broccoli in his mouth. He fucking hates broccoli.

Ilya has stopped poking at Shane's diet, for the most part. He still offers up bites from his own plate more often than not, but Shane thinks that's maybe more of Ilya's unconscious need to provide for the people he loves than it is a dig at Shane's food.

Things have been easier between them since the wedding. Shane never thought that being outed would have smoothed over so many of the friction points in his life but, well, being closeted wasn't exactly a walk in the park either. Even if it was one of the most terrifying moments of his life, it'd be worth going through it anew everyday if it meant seeing Ilya able to breathe easy again.

They talk to each other more, now. Ilya tells him when it feels like too much, when he needs space or, more often, when he just needs Shane to be there, to hold him, to love him. He knows a lot of the credit goes to the work Ilya has done in therapy, and the fact that Shane finally pulled his head out of his ass long enough to notice just how unhappy his husband had become. But no matter the cause, Shane's happy that the light had returned to Ilya's eyes.

So they talk and they laugh and they fuck. They go out to eat together with their friends and Ilya keeps a hand pressed to the small of Shane's back, to the nape of Shane's neck, grounding and present and so fucking *visible*. It's scary sometimes, still, but so thrilling that everyone in any room they're in can so clearly see that they belong to each other.

Things are going so well between them that Shane kind of *forgets* to tell Ilya that maybe he isn't doing as well, personally.

Not that he's lying, no never that. It's just—

Sometimes Shane feels like he's drowning. No, that's dramatic. Sometimes Shane feels a bit overwhelmed, that's all.

He sleeps wrong and wakes up with his shoulder killing him and thinks, *fuck how am I supposed to play like this?* It's fine, he does his stretches his PT had given him when he was first recovering from the broken collarbone and he's good to get through his morning work out. He had been warned that it was possible he'd have lingering issues with stiffness in the shoulder that may get worse as he ages, it's fine. He's getting older, his body has been through a lot, he can manage it. That's not something he needs to bother Ilya with, especially when he knows his husband has plenty of his own aches and pains.

He watches the easy way Ilya laughs with their team and has to swallow back a tidal wave of guilt when he remembers the months—*months, Hollander!*— where that laughter had been missing and he just hadn't been present enough to notice it. Shane tries not to think about it, but sometimes his brain likes to remind him how alone Ilya had been, in the worst depressive episode of his adult life. It likes to play that reminder on a loop some days, a constant stream of *you didn't see, you didn't help, you left him alone alone alone alone and all he needed was you*. But that's his burden to bear. He tries to shut that line of thinking down as best as he can, unwilling to let even a hint of it leak out enough for Ilya to see. Most days he's able to force himself past it but, on days when the thought spiral out of his control, he throws himself into training until he's so physically exhausted he can't think. He has a system.

(Sometimes, Shane dreams of the plane, crashing instead of making a safe landing or of the way Ilya's voice had shaken when he'd admitted that he wasn't suicidal but maybe, *maybe*. He wakes from those dreams in a cold sweat and shushes Ilya back to sleep before climbing out of bed. He says nothing about those dreams, just like he's never said anything about the dreams he has of waking up in the hospital unable to move. He just gets up and makes

himself his least favorite breakfast from his meal plan and forces himself to eat and drink his bitter herbal tea until he can stop shaking.)

But it's okay, it's fine. Everything is good, now. He has his husband, who he loves more than life, he has a new team that they can play on (*together! finally!*) and they're taking the Centaurs all the way this year, he knows it. He and Ilya are out and they have a dog and friends and Shane's parents who love and support them both.

He has his diet that he hates but that's fine, too, because he also has the self-control to stick to it. And maybe that's its own reward, how good it feels to be able to be in complete control of at least one part of his life.

Ilya makes chicken parm. It smells delicious.

Shane walks into the kitchen while he's cooking and almost scoffs when he sees that Ilya made enough for the both of them. He chooses not to say anything, not wanting to fight when Ilya is clearly in a good mood. He's dancing around the kitchen while he cooks, humming under his breath as he goes. When he sees Shane, his face breaks into a huge smile and he darts over to press a smacking kiss against his cheek.

"I made dinner," he announces, waving his hand towards the hot stove. "Chicken parm, kind of. Grilled chicken, instead of fried, and I can leave the cheese off of yours. Oh! And I found this protein pasta; it looks disgusting so I thought you would like it. Go sit down, is almost ready."

Ilya looks so proud of himself, so happy as he starts plating the food. It looks as good as it smells, and Shane's mouth is watering at the thought of eating it. But it's salmon night on his meal plan. He's been dreading it all day.

"Ilya, you know I can't eat that," he sighs. He goes to the fridge so he can pull out the pre-portioned dinner.

"Why not, it's good. You used to like pasta." Ilya's voice has gone a bit guarded, a bit cautious.

"Yeah well, pasta's not in my diet—too many carbs," he dismisses. Shane stares into the fridge and waits for the reward of *control, restraint, discipline* to flow through him. It doesn't come.

Ilya is quiet behind him for a moment and, when he finally speaks, his voice is the kind of forced-casual that Shane *hates* to hear. "But why? It's carbs, yes whatever, but it's still healthy and you like it. You should have some."

Shane slams the fridge door shut and whirls around. He's so mad, suddenly. He thought they had moved past this, thought that Ilya had finally decided to leave Shane to his stupid *fucking* diet. "I can't! God, could you just lay off? I thought you were done making fun of my diet."

Ilya looks caught off guard. He's got a confused furrow in his brow and his mouth is turned down in a frown. Dinner sits forgotten on the counter behind him. "Why are you getting mad? I asked a question, I'm not making fun."

Shane tries to hold onto his anger in the face of Ilya's earnestness. It's easier, to be angry about this. He can be angry and think that Ilya is just being a dick and forget about this whole conversation. He doesn't let himself look at Ilya.

"I'm mad because I'm so sick of you judging me for what I eat!" His voice breaks on a yell. He's panting against panic he didn't even realize was building in his chest. Shane feels like they're getting too close to *something*, that Ilya is tiptoeing closer to a truth he hasn't even admitted to himself. The rage he'd been clinging to so desperately has vanished. He still doesn't look at Ilya.

"Shane," Ilya says, voice so impossibly tender that it makes Shane freeze. Ilya walks up to him, slow like he's approaching a spooked animal and reaches up to cup Shane's face in his warm hands. He doesn't make Shane look up at him, doesn't force eye contact like he knows Shane is already too fragile to press him any further. He tips their foreheads together and says, "I'm not judging. I'm...worried."

It's like a gutpunch. Ilya has that hitch in his voice he only gets when he's trying not to cry. He pets along the line of Shane's jaw, where it's tight and clenching. Shane doesn't say anything, *can't* say anything, not past the lump in his throat.

"Sweetheart, you are miserable with your shit food. You think I don't see? You huff and pout everytime you have to eat it. Why are you doing this to yourself?"

"I-"

Ilya waits for him to finish, but the thing is Shane doesn't have a good answer, or at least not one he's able to explain without sounding ridiculous.

How does he say that he doesn't know how to stop; that he started the diet while they were still hiding and he was so scared all the time of being found out that, by keeping himself on such a strict diet, he could finally take back just that amount of control of his life. How does he admit to Ilya that he's so scared of falling behind physically, that the hit he had taken all those years ago had scared him so thoroughly that any reminder of it, any ache or muscle twinge, throws him back to that hazy place before he knew whether or not he'd just been paralyzed.

How does he tell this man that he loves, so desperately and entirely, that the only way he can even start to forgive himself for not *being there* is to keep himself miserable, just a little bit, until the guilt maybe starts to let up.

There are tears in his eyes. He glances up and almost wishes he hadn't. Ilya is crying.

Ilya should never cry.

"It's just food, Ilya. I'm just trying to stay in shape," he tries to brush off, but there's no conviction in his voice, no hiding the catch in his throat as he tries not to cry.

Ilya crushes them together, gathers Shane close to his body, pressing his face into the crook of his throat and presses a desperate kiss to the top of his head.

"I think," he whispers, haltingly and rough. "I think maybe you are having problems, that you can not handle on your own. And, maybe food is not the issue but...maybe it is a tool? That you are using to hurt yourself?"

"I'm not *hurting myself*, Ilya. I'm not like, depressed or anything," he mumbles into Ilya's shirt. "What do I even have to be depressed about? I *love* my life, I'm so fucking happy to be here, with you. And I didn't—I don't have a traumatic past or anything to *be* depressed about."

Not like you, he doesn't say.

He isn't sad, not like how Ilya gets sad. Not like how he's heard people describe being depressed—the apathy, the bone deep sorrow that clings to every aspect of life. It feels wrong, to even compare his *whatever* to what Ilya has been through.

Ilya pulls back, hands still cradling Shane's face. "I have learned that bad things do not have to be done to you, for you to feel bad. But, no, maybe you are not depressed. But Shane, you are not *okay*."

Shane crumbles.

He's denied it for so long. He's okay, he's fine, everything is alright, he's fine he's fine he's *fine*.

Ilya catches him as he sobs, his strong arms coming up to wrap around Shane and hold him together as he breaks apart.

"I'm sorry," he gasps between heaving sobs. *I'm sorry for not being okay, for not being able to tell you. I'm sorry I wasn't there and that I let us both hurt for so long. I'm sorry that I still feel like I deserve to hurt, even when we're both finally able to be happy.* He says none of that aloud, but it seems that Ilya can hear it all the same.

He leads them over to the couch and tugs Shane down into his lap. Ilya's hands shake, just a bit, as they card through Shane's hair. He doesn't hush Shane's cries, doesn't try to calm his tears, like he knows how desperately Shane needs to let them out.

When he feels wrung dry and empty, he pulls one of Ilya's hands up to his mouth to press a kiss against his knuckles. "I love you," he whispers.

"I love you, too. More than anything." Ilya is quiet for several long minutes before he shuffles them around until he's spread out on the couch with Shane curled up half on top, half tucked into the back of the couch. Shane nuzzles a bit into his chest, humming contentedly when Ilya starts to card through his hair.

"Would you talk to someone, like I do? A therapist? If you aren't ready to talk to me, you still deserve to talk to *someone*, Shane."

He thinks about it for a moment, forcing himself to work past the squirmy feeling of shame that starts to rise at the idea of needing to go to therapy.

"Do you think I need that? Therapy?"

"Yes," Ilya's reply comes, gentle but firm.

"Oh."

His thoughts are a tangle that he can't quite work through. He wants to disagree, just on reflex, and say that he's fine.

He isn't fine.

"Okay," he whispers. Ilya squeezes him tight and Shane can feel the tension start to leak from both of their bodies. A knot he wasn't even fully aware of starts to loosen in his chest.

He'll start doing research into therapists in the morning but, for tonight, he thinks all he needs is to feel his husband wrapped around him.

"Do you think dinner is ruined?"

Ilya's breath hitches, but then he's laughing, loud and surprised, in Shane's ear. "I can heat it back up, is okay. Do you want me to?"

"Yeah. Just, in a minute?"

Ilya hums. Shane tilts his head up and presses their lips together, sweet and unhurried.

He isn't okay but...he will be.

End Notes

this is my first dip into this fandom and I really hope I was able to do Hollanov justice--I fell in love with them from the first watch of the show and have been obsessed since.

I'd really appreciate any comments or kudos you have to spare!

fic is retweetable [here](#)!

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