

hand to mouth (i'm getting by)

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hand to mouth (i'm getting by)

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Summary

The box lay on the table between them and Ilya scowled at it.

Antidepressants.

He could practically hear his father scoffing from beyond the grave.

Notes

title from Silver Spoon by Erin LeCount

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

The box lay on the table between them and Ilya scowled at it.

Antidepressants.

He could practically hear his father scoffing from beyond the grave.

Shane was still puttering about in the kitchen, putting together one of the healthy breakfasts he favoured. Ilya's slice of wholewheat toast with jam hadn't taken much time to put together, nor had the coffee with milk. Whether he would eat much of it was a different matter altogether.

There was a clatter of cutlery and then Shane sank down into the chair opposite Ilya. His plate was neat, tidy, egg whites and avocado carefully separated to respective halves of the plate. Ilya took a sip of coffee and tried to ignore the nausea in his stomach.

"I could just not take them," he mused with feigned nonchalance, nudging the still-unopened box with his finger.

Shane sighed.

"Ilya."

"Shane."

Shane carefully pushed eggs onto his fork in his usual methodical way.

"We've talked about this."

They had. Talked in ever-tightening circles that all ended in the same answers Ilya hated.

Take the pills.

Fix his fucked-up brain.

Don't do any stupid shit.

Shane had said it in a much nicer way, of course, but the sentiment stood.

Standing in the line at the pharmacy the previous day had been one of the scariest things Ilya had ever done. Scarier than starting a secret relationship with his rival, scarier than moving halfway across the world at nineteen. Scarier even than telling Shane about all of it in the first place.

"People still kill themselves even when they take them," Ilya pointed out. "So, there is no point."

It was a tired excuse. He knew it and Shane knew it as well.

"We agreed you would try," Shane said patiently. "It's just for two weeks to see if they help."

Ilya chewed on his thumbnail and looked down at the box again. It looked so small, so innocent, sitting on the table between them. Beneath the table, Shane's leg was bouncing up and down with anxiety. Ilya hated himself for it.

He slowly pulled the medication back towards him.

"You're supposed to take them with water, I think," Shane said, chair scraping noisily on the floor as he pushed it back. "I'll get you a glass."

Ilya watched him retreat to the kitchen, then slowly opened the box. Upended it so that the blister packs inside cascaded onto the table. They were shiny under the lights. He wondered if his mother had looked at the same view before swallowing the lot.

A glass was placed on the table in front of him and then Shane was grabbing the pamphlet that came with the medication.

Ilya stared at him in disbelief.

"You will read it now?" he asked.

Shane glared at him.

"Yes, I will read it now," he said. "It's important information."

Ilya let his head thunk onto the table beside his plate of untouched toast. It was sweet how much Shane cared. He could recognise that. But all Ilya wanted to do was go back to bed and forget he had ever agreed to see a therapist. Who had prescribed him drugs and told him to talk to Shane. And, like an idiot, he had. And now Shane was reading a fucking pamphlet about side-effects over breakfast.

"You need to eat before you take them," Shane said and Ilya banged his forehead against the table in response.

Then he sat up and slowly pushed his toast across his plate. It was cold now, the jam making the bread soggy in the middle. The thought of eating even a single bite made his stomach turn.

"I am sure it will not matter," he said, picking up the nearest blister pack.

Shane grabbed it from him with a scowl.

"It does," he said. "Take at least one bite."

Ilya slumped back in his chair. He stared down at the toast and suddenly, unexpectedly, there were hot tears welling up in his eyes. He immediately scrubbed a hand across his face, horrified.

A screech from the chair moving and then strong arms enveloped him from behind. Ilya inhaled Shane's scent. Expensive shampoo, barest hint of coffee. He smelled like home.

“I’m not hungry,” he mumbled into Shane’s bicep. Tried to blink the tears back.

Shane exhaled slowly into his hair, then pressed a kiss against the top of his head.

“I can make you something else?” he offered. “Maybe a smoothie, could be easier?”

Ilya nodded, hating himself for being so pathetic. For not being able to eat a piece of fucking toast and needing to be made food like a child. Like he was some kind of invalid who couldn’t look after himself anymore.

Shane kissed him again, then went back towards the kitchen.

Ilya tilted his head back and stared up at the ceiling. He listened to Shane opening and closing the fridge, to the low hum of the blender. His limbs felt like someone had poured cement into them overnight.

Not for the first time, he wondered when it would be too much for Shane. When he would grow tired of these dark phases that swallowed Ilya whole every few months. When his patience for Ilya’s lethargy would stop, when he would no longer be willing to drive him to his therapist downtown every week.

Maybe the final straw would be when he realised Ilya was unfixable.

That this was it.

Fucking genetics.

Shane put a glass down in front of him. Mercifully, it was only half full. Shane had made his favourite smoothies, with raspberries and blueberries. He’d even brought him a straw, a glass one because Shane cared about the environment.

Ilya pulled his chair in again and pulled the glass towards him. The nausea reared its head again as he stared down at the smoothie.

“Just a few sips?” Shane prompted carefully. “You need to eat something.”

“I know!” Ilya snapped.

Then he sighed, instant regret already springing up in his chest.

“Sorry.”

“It’s fine,” Shane said, pushing his avocado around his plate, careful not to let it touch the eggs. Then he pulled the pamphlet back towards him and kept scrutinising it.

Ilya took a cautious sip. It was sweet, the slight tartness from the raspberries refreshing on his tongue.

Shane kept his attention studiously on his own breakfast, giving Ilya the space to get through the smoothie at his own pace. Usually their breakfasts were chatty, feet tangled beneath the

table and coffees in matching mugs. For the past few weeks, it had been this. Silent, weighted, tension between Shane's anxious expressions and Ilya's dwindling appetite.

On the worst days, Shane broke his own rules and ate in bed while Ilya stared dully at the ceiling and wondered if there was even any fucking point anymore.

Ilya finished the smoothie and put the glass down with more force than necessary. He picked up one of the blister packs with feigned nonchalance and popped out a single pill. It looked small in the palm of his hand.

Ilya could feel Shane watching him as he put it in his mouth and washed it down with water, grimacing slightly as it caught near the back of his throat.

He didn't feel any different.

"You need to take them for a few days before they can work properly," Shane said, as though he had heard his thoughts.

"Okay," Ilya said.

He felt hollow. Like someone had scooped out his insides with a dull spoon.

Shane put down his cutlery and took a sip of coffee.

"I'm proud of you," he said quietly. "I know it's hard."

He was trying so hard to be nice and Ilya hated it.

"I just took fucking pills, is not hard," Ilya snapped, aggression spiking in every constant.

He let his head flop forwards onto his chest, inhaling and exhaling to try and calm himself down. He wanted to go back to bed. Wanted to close the curtains again and crawl into the sheets and escape into sleep. Wanted to get away from Shane and how much he cared even when Ilya was an asshole to him.

"Ilya," Shane said softly. "Look at me."

Ilya didn't want to.

Then there were gentle fingers under his chin, raising his head. Belatedly, Ilya realised that there tears in his eyes again.

"I want to sleep," he whispered.

Shane swallowed hard and Ilya traced the movement with tired eyes. He could practically see the anxiety radiating from Shane, his brow creased with concern. All he wanted was to reach across and smooth out the skin there but he couldn't find the strength to raise his arm.

"Sleep on the couch? Please?" Shane asked. "Don't go back to bed again."

Ilya couldn't find it in himself to argue. Instead, he allowed Shane to guide him gently to the couch and put a cushion under his head. Didn't protest when Shane tucked one of the plaid blankets around his shoulders and pressed a kiss on his cheek.

"I love you," Shane whispered in his ear. "And I'm not going anywhere."

Ilya numbly watched him put away the breakfast things and despised himself for all of it. For worrying the best fucking thing that had ever happened to him. For being the son of a suicide. For being so unable to accept help that Shane had to fight for every inch like it was a fucking war.

The blanket was scratchy against his cheek as he closed his eyes.

End Notes

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