I can watch the old days, she was beautiful then

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I can watch the old days, she was beautiful then

by harperose

Summary

So he followed Ilya. He followed Ilya into the living room. And then, he waited.

Waited for Ilya to collapse onto the couch and do nothing- to stare at nothing. Something that he had been doing more and more recently.

Waited for Ilya to pull out his phone and facetime whoever he was fucking when Shane left Canada.

Waited for Ilya to pull out a secret bottle of vodka and down nearly the whole thing.

(Waited for Ilya to pull out a bottle of pills and accidentally take one too many.)

But Ilya didn’t do any of those things.

Instead, he moved towards the shelf filled with DVDs and movies from Ilya's childhood that were still trapped in VHS.

It was nighttime, they were supposed to be sleeping.

But they were both awake, Shane knew they were. But Ilya didn't.

Ilya probably thought he was the only one awake– something that Shane let him believe by keeping his eyes shut, his breathing even…

And by resisting the urge to reach out, to part his lips and ask where his boyfriend was going tonight– what his boyfriend would do tonight.

After vodka and sex, Ilya shouldn't be doing anything other than sleeping. Normally, he would be dead to the world and Shane would once again feel like he was sleeping next to a corpse. A corpse that, every once in a while, let out a deep snore that sounded more and more like a snort of laughter every time he had the pleasure of hearing it.

The mattress underneath them shifted thanks to Ilya's sudden movement. Movement that he only made when he was certain that his bed companion was asleep.

Shane wasn't sure if he should be thankful or not that Ilya's test for tonight to see if he was awake or not was just gently whispering his name into the darkness.

Because he enjoyed the small kisses that ilya would press to the back of his neck or whatever part of him he could easily reach without risking the mattress moving too much and risking rousing Shane. Shane, who Ilya thought was sleeping when he didn't even twitch after a few kisses that normally he would find irresistible. But tonight, there were no kisses. There was only a call of his name.

Maybe that was a good thing though. After all, if Ilya began pressing kisses to his skin again, Shane doubted he would be able to ignore them. Not after what happened tonight– definitely not after what happened tonight.

So, Ilya only called his name softly. And when he didn't reply, he began moving. Moving out of the bed– away from Shane.

And towards wherever he had been going at night.

A place where Shane would discover– he was brave enough to discover after lacking the courage the previous nights.

Suddenly, the bed stopped moving. Ilya had finally completed his mission and slipped out of it.

But Shane would not follow suit. Not until he was certain the other man was no longer in the bedroom.

He only had to wait a few seconds for that to happen– to Ilya to leave him all alone in the bed in the home they were building together.

Shane's eyes fluttered open, watching Ilya retreating back as he crept down the hallway. And then, when it was safe to do so, he followed his partner who didn't really feel like the partner he had committed his loyalty and life to all those years ago. Because Ilya was being secretive again– just like he had been before they decided to be together. *Really* be together.

Normally, Ilya would open up. Or, well, the new Ilya would open up… eventually. But it seemed like Ilya had reverted back to his past self that was riddled with secrets and avoidance.

And well Shane…

Shane was worried. About so many things– and all of them had to do with Ilya recently.

So he had to know– know something that he knew would cause him to feel guilt about what he found out. Because, in a way, it felt like he was betraying Ilya– betraying his trust to spy on him and uncover a secret that years ago he wouldn't even attempt to uncover. But that was years ago. And now things were different. So many things had changed– so many things had come to light.

And Shane needed to know. He needed to lessen the ever growing knot of unease in his stomach.

So he followed Ilya. He followed Ilya into the living room. And then, he waited.

Waited for Ilya to collapse onto the couch and do nothing- to stare at nothing. Something that he had been doing more and more recently.

Waited for Ilya to pull out his phone and facetime whoever he was fucking when Shane left Canada.

Waited for Ilya to pull out a secret bottle of vodka and down nearly the whole thing.

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But Ilya didn't do any of those things.

Instead, he moved towards the shelf filled with DVDs and movies from Ilya's childhood that were still trapped in VHS.

A furrow appeared in Shane's brow as he watched Ilya pick out an old VHS he had teasingly suggested upgrading to a DVD so many times before. And that furrow only deepened, just for a moment before it ruptured with silent understanding, when Ilya forced the television screen to come alive with that old movie. A movie that Shane knew wasn't supposed to be this.

Because this…

This wasn't a mainstream movie that made its way onto VHS and trapped inside that case.

This was something else.

This was a different type of movie– a *home* movie.

A movie that Ilya must have smuggled out of his home and his home country and brought here.

Here he chose to watch it in secret, like it was shameful.

Or too personal to share. Or maybe just too painful to share.

Because that smile that exploded onto the screen, the hidden weight behind it and the knowledge of how it would soon decay six feet under the ground, that was painful. To Shane, it was painful. He couldn't even begin to imagine how Ilya ached (and smiled his own sorrowful and sweet smile) when he saw it on the screen… and in the mirror.

“Is that your mom?” The words left Shane's lips before he could stop them– before he could slam his mouth shut and ensure his position was given away.

But maybe something else had already given his position away. Because when Ilya turned to look at him, he didn't look surprised.

He just looked sad.

“Yes,” was all Ilya said before he turned back to the screen– back towards the life dancing across the screen.

“She's beautiful,” Shane commented, not just because he knew it was what Ilya would like to hear– but because it was the truth.

That woman on the screen was beautiful. Even when her smile slipped from her face, she was still so beautiful.

A type of beauty that Shane could easily see Ilya inherited from her.

“Can I watch?” Shane asked when Ilya didn't give him a reply– didn't verbally agree.

But the way that small smile on his lips tugged upwards slightly, Shane knew he agreed. He knew Ilya appreciated seeing a part of his mother that he insisted was true.

Ilya turned back towards Shane. And this time, he served the other man with a raised eyebrow and a teasing twinkle in his eyes.

“You want to watch my beautiful mother?”

Shane rolled his eyes slightly before he took a step towards the couch Ilya was settled on, “Of course I do?” He uttered, not taking the bait Ilya was dangling in front of him.

That seemed to be the right thing to do. Because, quickly, Shane found himself on the couch next to Ilya. And then, he eventually found his lap filled with Ilya’s head and his hand occupied with playing with blonde curls.

Finally, just when Shane felt like the home movies were about to end, his ears picked up on the solid but small voice of the man who could never be small (even if he felt like it sometimes).

“I want to remember her like this.”

Shane's eyes flicked between the mother and son that shared more than just their blood and looks before he spoke– before he tried to suggest, almost like it was something easy, “You can.”

Ilya instantly scoffed, “No,” he gave a little shake of his head, careful not to dislodge the hand in his hair that was trying to sooth away the images of his mother he didn't really want to remember even though he knew he should, “I can't,” he admitted like a shameful secret.

A shameful secret that he knew Shane wouldn't understand. Not personally anyways. But maybe he could still try to understand (before he was forced to personally understand what it was like).

“I want to remember her like this– I want to see her like this in my dreams,” Ilya tried not to notice how Shane's hand froze when he uttered the latter word before he continued, “But I can not,” he uttered the confession woven with despair, “All I see–” he cut himself off before he decided not to– before he decided to give Shane another piece of himself.

A secret he held close to his heart.

“Is her dead body.”

Shane's hands on him grew heavy, trying to offer a comfort he knew his words won't be able to provide.

And then, for some reason, Ilya continued to speak. He continued to spill a secret that Shane probably didn't care about.

“When I try to remember her– I see her dead,” Ilya’s face twisted into an expression of pain before his distraught but so hollow voice continued, “When I dream of her– I see her dead,” Ilya swallowed the lump in his throat before he breathed out another horrifying truth, “I see her death.”

Suddenly, on the television, Irina laughed.

On the couch, Shane stayed silent.

And on Shane's lap…

Ilya just watched and willed his brain to ingrain this image of his mother into his mind. To override the image he saw whenever his eyes slipped closed and he succumbed to sleep.

Ilya knew it wouldn't work. Deep down, he knew it wouldn't work.

Because it *never* worked. And why would tonight be any different?

Why would, when he finally allowed his eyes to close tonight, he not see her face? The last expression on her pallor face that Irina accidently ensured his son would see.

The last memory Ilya had of his mother before she was lowered into the ground, but not forgotten. Never forgotten.

(And maybe that was the problem?)

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