forwards beckon reboud

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forwards beckon reboud

by Literal_Multifandom_Trashcan

Summary

Shane shut his eyes, leaning back against the couch.

He was fine. He had to be.

What am I meant to do, Shane thought desperately to himself, when I can’t remember why I was even recovering in the first place?

or:
shane relapses with his ed, no one has a good time

Notes

hello!!! major tw for eating disorder talk, graphic mentions of vomiting and purging, etc.

this is once again fully based on my own disorder and my own mental health issues! please keep in mind no one has the exact same experiences, please stay safe reading! this work is deeply personal to me, so i hope you all enjoy it <3 stay safe and always here if anyone needs to talk!

It was getting bad again.

He was so lucky to be *out* and *proud*, on a new team with people who supported him and Ilya, with a coach who he was so grateful to have.

Things had been going so so well. Until he had gotten the request to do a modelling shoot. Him and Ilya were no stranger to brand deals, hell, Shane wasn't even a stranger to clothing brand deals that involved him in varying states of undress.

It wasn't that the brand deal had gone badly. It was some athletic underwear line, trying to diversify their consumer base by getting an Asian queer man to model for them. Again, something Shane was no stranger to.

He had felt pretty indifferent about the pictures-unlike Ilya, who was so thrilled with them that he had pinned Shane to the wall as soon as the pictures were released to the public, muttering in a mix of Russian and English about how hot Shane looked.

No, the bad part was after. It was some stupid, tabloid article, the kind that had nothing better to do than comment on random inconsequential shit.

"*Hockey star Shane Hollander appears to have gained weight, as seen in pictures he took in his latest brand deal. Is this star athlete letting himself go?"*

Ilya hadn't seen the article yet. Unfortunately, Shane *had*.

He had been doomscrolling on his phone, lounging on the couch, one hand absent-mindedly petting Anya. Ilya was at practice. Shane had been on strict orders to rest after he'd been checked hard in their last game, resulting in a mild concussion and some bruised ribs.

Shane had insisted he could still go to practice, but he'd been ganged up on by Ilya, his mother, and coach Wiebe. So he'd been relaxing all morning, trying to force himself not to

feel envious of the fact that Ilya was out on the ice while he was stuck at home.

And-little known fact about Shane Hollander-he did not *know* how to relax. Physically couldn't. Hence the doomscrolling.

Shane knew if Ilya had seen the article he would've done everything in his power to prevent Shane from reading it. But Ilya hadn't seen it, and he wasn't here to stop Shane.

So he read through it, body going cold and heart sinking into his chest with every word he read. It was a stupid tabloid piece, he *knew* it was, but still…

Shane had made leaps and bounds in his recovery. He'd gone to therapy, seen a psychiatrist, worked with Ilya on slowly challenging fear foods, on training his brain to just enjoy eating without immediately thinking about calories and macros.

But he *had* gained weight. He *had* been eating more freely, eating more unhealthy foods, for the most part stopped tracking his calories so obsessively.

And that was the worst part. Because the article, while tasteless and invasive, wasn't *wrong*. The biggest thing about eating disorders that no one talked about was the noise. The near constant noise surrounding food and drink and exercise - the way you unwillingly started to see people fitter and thinner than you as competition.

It made Shane feel like a horrible person. He remembered when he was deep in his disorder, he used to wish every night that he'd get so sick he'd stop feeling hungry, just so he could lose weight faster. He *hated* thoughts like that.

Shane had practiced tuning out the noise over the years, but once he started thinking about it, he couldn't *stop* thinking about it. He'd managed to avoid big triggers with the help of Ilya and his parents-taking him to restaurants where they didn't list calories, making sure medical professionals knew not to make comments to him about his weight or diet.

This, though? This was definitely bad. His hand stilled in Anya's fur as he finished reading the article. Against his better judgement, he scrolled down to read what people were commenting underneath.

There were, of course, the normal people. The ones who were condemning the article, showing support for Shane, a solid subsection thirsting over him expressing how they still thought he was handsome no matter what. Fans saying that he was still playing great hockey regardless of what he looked like and that was all they cared about.

But then he scrolled down further. And of course, stumbled across the mean ones. It was like a car crash-he couldn't look away.

He looked better before.

Kinda shocked Hollander would let himself go like this-always thought he was one of the more disciplined guys in the sport. Idk.

Hopefully he doesnt crack the ice when he steps on it with all that extra weight lmao

lowkey if i was married to a guy like ilya rozanov i would not be letting myself look like that, esp bc rozanov has like millions of hot ppl wanting him, idk thats just me though

Ilya could be doing sm better than shane like WHAT bro leave him for someone who actually cares abt how they look…i want my partner to at least make an effort to look nice for me it seems selfish to not do that

The last few comments rung a particular chord with Shane, and all of a sudden tears were clouding his eyes, blurring the words on the phone screen.

He knew, ever since he had first met Ilya, that Ilya was attractive. Ilya had dozens of beautiful men and women propositioning him. Even after they had come out as married, much to Shane's chagrin.

Shane carefully stood up so as not to disturb Anya from where she was laying next to the couch. He wandered over to the bathroom, mind scarily blank. Fetched out the scale from where it was buried far, far back in the cabinet below the sink. It was dusty-Shane didn't think he had stepped on it since maybe a full year and a half ago.

Ilya was always quick to hide away scales if they were in hotel bathrooms. Shane felt a cold sense of dread fill him as he stepped on.

The number was high. It made him want to claw his skin off. Fuck. *Fuck*.

Shane swallowed, placing the scale back into its previous spot, hiding away the evidence that he had weighed himself. He went to his bedroom, mechanically changing into workout clothes.

Without even realizing it, his brain had already calculated how long he would need to exercise to work off the calories from breakfast. He checked the time as he filled up his water bottle in the kitchen. Ilya wouldn't be back from practice for another hour and a half.

Shane could easily fit in some weightlifting and heavy cardio on the treadmill. Burn off the three hundred calorie breakfast he had eaten, shower quickly, tell Ilya he'd had a mid-morning snack and wasn't that hungry. The guilt he already could feel building for thinking about lying to Ilya was heavily overshadowed by the looming way his body looked in the mirror.

It wasn't a relapse, he told himself, it wasn't.

His mind was quick to manipulate the narrative, justify it in his head. He was being healthy, getting back into shape for the hockey season. Was getting back in shape to look good for Ilya, because he owed it to his husband to look at least a little attractive.

Shane, before he'd even processed where he was, found himself in their at-home gym. He threw on a random playlist, one of Ilya's hype gym mixes, before starting off with stretching

and then grabbing some free weights.

He honest to god lost track of how many reps he was doing. He was facing away from the mirror, focused entirely on how much his muscles burned, how much he was sweating.

Shane chugged at some water. Set the weights down and walked over to the treadmill. He checked the time-over half an hour before Ilya would get back. A short window, yes, but enough.

He paused the music, turning the treadmill on, high incline and fast speed. He could hear feet thudding as he ran, nauseous at the sound of his full body weight hitting the ground. His chest burned, legs aching.

In hindsight, exercising this intensely after getting injured was a bad idea. The whole reason he had been barred from practice was so he could rest. But that stupid fucking article rang in his brain.

It wasn't possible to crack the ice with extra weight. Shane had played against guys bigger and heavier than him, and as far as he was aware, never in the history of ice hockey had someone weighed so much the ice broke underneath them. But the thought still haunted him.

At this point, Shane was panting heavily from exertion, sweat burning his eyes so much to the point where he could barely breathe. All of a sudden, saliva filled his mouth.

Shane barely had enough sense to press the STOP button on the treadmill, rushing to the bathroom as quickly as he could and dropping to his knees over the toilet. He retched a few times, before everything he had eaten for breakfast came up, along with the water he had drunk a few minutes ago.

For a while, Shane just sat on his knees in front of the toilet. He could hear Anya pawing at the gym door in concern for him, could feel the sweat drying on his skin in an uncomfortably overstimulating way.

And the worst part? All he could feel was relieved. Because his stomach was blissfully empty, and the exercise meant he had burned even more calories off, maybe even managed to make up for dinner last night.

Exhausted, Shane flushed the toilet, quickly swishing with mouthwash to get the taste of vomit out of his mouth. He checked the time. He had just enough time left to shower and go back to laying on the couch as though he hadn't even left it.

Shane gave Anya a reassuring pet before he got into the shower, making a mental note to give her a treat. He resolutely ignored the mirror, and the way he felt sort of lightheaded as he showered.

By the time Shane was back on the couch, some stupid show in front of him and Anya next to him, his legs ached and his chest sort of burned and he was, unfortunately, feeling hungry in the worst way possible.

Shane ignored the feeling. He had worked out so hard to the point he had thrown up everything he had eaten that morning, all before Ilya had even gotten home so the other man couldn't be suspicious.

It should've felt like success. It didn't.

A deep, dark, disgusting part of Shane wished that Ilya and his parents had never found out about his food thing. Wished that he could still get away with restricting heavily and forcing his fingers down his throat after every meal, wished that he could go back to obsessively tracking his calories without anyone batting an eye in suspicion.

They wanted to help. Shane *knows* that. Knows that what he's doing is bad for him, that without intervention all those years ago he would've slowly but surely killed himself one day.

This wasn't a relapse, Shane reminded himself for the hundredth time. It was a moment of weakness after reading something stupid online.

Ilya would never know about this, his parents would never know about this, his therapist would never know about this. Because to them, this would really, really seem like a relapse into his disordered eating.

It wasn't, because outside of the exercise he had just done, Shane wasn't obsessively counting calories, wasn't binging and then purging nightly, he was just…thinking. And he should know better than to even have these thoughts, because last time had taught him that he couldn't hide, that everything would come to a head and he would get caught.

He ignored the voice in his head that told him he was weak for recovering, that really, he would be doing everyone a favor if he just dove headfirst back into everything. Ignored the way he knew a feeling of pride would bubble up if he lost a concerning amount of weight, proved the people online wrong, that he wasn't letting himself go and he was disciplined.

Shane shut his eyes, leaning back against the couch.

He was fine. He had to be.

What am I meant to do, Shane thought desperately to himself, *when I can't remember why I was even recovering in the first place?*

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Ilya took a swig of his water, covered in a thin sheen of sweat as he sat next to Bood in the locker room.

Practice was tough, today. It was always tough, but today was especially difficult because Shane wasn't here. And while Ilya was glad he had managed to convince Shane to stay at home and rest, getting on the ice without Shane by his side would always be weird.

He was excited to go back home. To greet Anya, kiss Shane, maybe catch up on the newest episode of Inspektor Gavrilov while he rested his head in Shane's lap, cook up a delicious dinner for them. He *loved* domestic life, loved being boring with Shane. He had never grown up seeing healthy romantic relationships, but now he was living in one, and it was more than he could ever ask for.

Barrett winced at something on his phone from across the room.

"Damn." He muttered. Ilya and Bood both looked at him curiously, having been the only ones to have heard the man's exclamation.

"What's that about?" Bood asked.

Barrett held up his phone.

"Ilya, have you seen this? It's an article about Shane. One of those stupid tabloid ones, but still…it's getting some coverage. It's pretty brutal."

Ilya leaned forward to read the headline, heart sinking down deep into his stomach as he read every word.

"*Hockey star Shane Hollander appears to have gained weight, as seen in pictures he took in his latest brand deal. Is this star athlete letting himself go?"*

Oh, this was bad. This was really, *really* bad.

He could only pray that Shane hadn't seen it yet, but part of him knew that was wishful thinking. He mentally cursed every single person involved in the writing of that article.

"Jesus, what the fuck? He just looks like he's bulking. I don't understand why people even care about this shit. Performance athletes' weights fluctuate all the time, especially during the

off season. He still looks damn good. What are people's responses?" Bood asked.

Barrett hesitated, seeming to notice the way Ilya's face was slowly darkening with righteous fury.

"Lots of people are condemning the site. But some people are agreeing, saying Ilya should leave Shane for someone better, stupid shit like that."

Bood hesitantly glanced at Ilya. The Russian was looking like he was genuinely going to commit a murder.

"Shane wouldn't-wouldn't take shit like this personally, right? Like, he knows it's all crap and stuff. He's the most disciplined guy I've ever met, especially when it comes to diet and exercise. I kinda admire him for it."

Ilya directed his scowl at Bood.

He knew the comment was in good faith, knew Bood was being supportive in the way he knew how, knew that for most athletes it wasn't really all that serious.

"You should not." Ilya snapped. He couldn't bring himself to feel bad, not when he was already imagining all the different ways the article could absolutely destroy Shane's mental state. He had been doing so *well*, too.

Fuck.

Quickly, Ilya shoved all of his practice stuff in his bag, swinging it over his shoulder. He ignored the way Bood and Barrett were watching him carefully, like a bomb that would go off any second.

“I am going to Shane.” Ilya said. He briskly left the locker room, not bothering to stay and listen for a response. Ilya could only hope Shane hadn’t seen the vile comments under the article. Hoped this wouldn’t cause a relapse.

He had been prepared for one. Years ago, when him, David, and Yuna had finally convinced him to see someone properly, Ilya had done research online. Nearly all people with eating disorders would relapse at one point or another in their recovery.

It hadn’t happened yet. For a while, Ilya had allowed himself to think that maybe Shane was one of the few people who wouldn’t relapse, who’d be able to recover with no issues.

If anything was going to cause one, though, it would be this.

Ilya drove home. As much as he wanted to speed, get to Shane as quickly as possible and confirm the man was not breaking down at the seams, he forced himself to stay at the speed limit.

Shane would kill him if he got into an accident.

Upon pulling into their driveway, Ilya’s phone rang. He killed the engine on the car, picking up his phone to answer. It was Yuna.

“Ilya,” Yuna sounded breathless over the phone, like she had just ran a marathon. “did you see the article? Has Shane seen it?” He could hear the sheer worry and fear in her voice, the unspoken question between them.

“I saw. I just got back from practice. I do not know if Shane has seen it. It is disgusting.” Ilya spat the last part with an intense vitriol. He had never understood the public's need to comment on athletes' bodies, female and male alike. Why did it fucking matter how much they weighed or how they looked? What mattered was how they performed.

And Shane had always gone above and beyond in hockey, except for when he was starving himself for hours and so lightheaded he passed out on the ice.

“It’s reprehensible. I’ll be making sure it’s taken down by the end of the day, otherwise they’ll be hearing from Shane’s lawyer.” Yuna said firmly. Ilya believed her.

She was not a woman he ever wanted to be on the bad side of.

“Make sure Shane is doing okay? And please text or call if you need anything at all.”

Ilya hummed a confirmation, stepping out of the car into the cold Canada air.

“Yes, I will. Love you.” It had taken Ilya many many years before he felt comfortable speaking to Shane’s parents with such familiarity, but now it felt like second nature.

“Love you too, Ilya. Make sure to take care of yourself, too.” Yuna sounded genuine and kind and it made Ilya’s chest feel warm in a way only a mothers love could. He hung up, pocketing his phone before walking up to their front door.

He unlocked it, gently pushing the door open. He was greeted with Anya, who was enthusiastically wagging her tail, wiggling her butt in the way she always did when she was excited.

Ilya dropped his practice bag, leaning down to scratch at her ears, cooing at her for a few seconds before moving further into the house.

“Shane?” Ilya called out questioningly.

“On the couch!” Shane yelled back. Ilya forced himself to slow his rapidly beating heart, walking over to where Shane was relaxing on the couch, watching a show.

He looked…fine. His eyes weren't red like he had just been crying, he didn't look stone-faced like he often did when he was dissociating.

Ilya relaxed. He had been worried for nothing. He leaned down, kissing Shane briefly.

"How was practice?" Shane asked casually.

Ilya bit his inner cheek. He wasn't sure whether he should bring up the article-if Shane hadn't seen it, the last thing Ilya wanted was for him to find out it existed. But if Shane had read it and was trying to deflect…

"Hard. Wiebe was brutal today." Ilya murmured. Shane just rolled his eyes, smiling indulgently at Ilya complaining.

"You always think that. Drama queen."

Ilya pouted at Shane, leaning in for another kiss.

"How are you feeling today? I know you do not like sitting on couch doing nothing." Ilya asked, testing out the waters.

Shane just sighed.

"Don't remind me. I was a bit frustrated, but I think I am actually feeling better after resting. I had some veggie sticks and finally got around to watching that nature documentary that came out last month."

Ilya fully calmed down. He was sure, now, that Shane hadn't seen the article. And Shane had eaten a snack after a relatively big breakfast, something they were still working on. He smiled

at Shane.

“Sounds very boring. Very you. I was thinking I will go shower and then maybe we relax a bit before I start dinner? We have everything for oyakodon-Yuna taught me recipe last weekend. Sounds okay?” Ilya asked. He watched Shane’s face carefully.

Shane just nodded, still looking calm.

“Sounds good. Now go shower, you stink.” He said, wrinkling his nose up at Ilya. Ilya just grinned, wriggling his eyebrows.

“You love my stink.” He said, winking suggestively.

Shane playfully scowled at him, pointing at their shared bathroom.

“Shower. Now. Or no cuddles.” He said firmly.

Ilya sighed, as though he had been sent to war.

“Fine, fine.”

He showered, shooting Yuna and David a quick text saying that Shane hadn’t seen the article. He then messaged Bood and Barrett, apologizing for his behavior earlier and asking them not to bring the stupid thing up again.

He had gotten kind responses from both parties. Ilya was thankful the rest of the day went smoothly. He cuddled with Shane on the couch, freshly showered, before wandering over to the kitchen to start on dinner.

Shane sat with him at the counter, talking about some new drills he'd discovered that he was thinking of bringing up next practice. Ilya added to the conversation when he could, otherwise more than happy to listen to Shane talk about his special interest.

Dinner went smoothly, too. Shane plated up a full serving of oyakodon and rice, slowly but surely clearing his plate. He had complimented Ilya's cooking, too.

"This really is just like my mom's. Thank you, Ilya."

Ilya beamed at Shane, pride bursting in his chest.

"Am glad you liked." He said.

They'd spent the rest of the night watching a stupid movie and taking Anya on a nighttime stroll to the park before settling in bed together.

Ilya had kissed Shane goodnight, quickly falling into a deep peaceful sleep, grateful that Shane really, truly, seemed to be okay.

Shane, meanwhile, was grateful that Ilya was such a heavy sleeper. He slid out of bed in the middle once he was sure Ilya was asleep, running the sink to cover the sound of him throwing up. The chicken and egg came up his throat, coating his fingers in a way that made him feel disgusting as he made himself vomit.

He flushed and washed his hands, crawling back into bed with Ilya, who was still asleep. Before, he would feel pride at getting away with successfully purging.

Now, he just felt shame.

Ilya was so happy he was getting better. Shane didn't have the heart to tell him otherwise.

He felt like the worst person alive.

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It was a relapse. Shane didn't know why he had tried to convince himself otherwise last week. He knew Ilya was starting to get a little suspicious about his slow but sure weight loss, but his husband hadn't brought it up yet.

Until today.

Ilya had a media event this afternoon, so Shane figured he'd go to the rink a little early to get some lazy laps in before evening practice. Selfishly, Shane was grateful Ilya was busy that afternoon. It made it that much easier to keep himself on track.

Ilya had arrived at the rink along with a few other Centaur members, kissing Shane and walking with him to the locker room to change for practice.

"Did you eat lunch?" Ilya asked.

Shane swallowed down the lump in his throat, the burning sensation that rushed through him. Ilya hadn't asked him that question since last year. Maybe he wasn't being as discreet as he thought he was.

But he had prepared for this. Shane nodded, forcing a smile onto his lips. He pulled out his phone, showing Ilya a picture.

"I had a burrito for lunch from the new Mexican place that opened up across the rink." Shane said. It really was a beautiful looking piece of food, cut open in the middle to show the layers of beans, rice, chicken, veggies and cheese.

Ilya looked satisfied at the answer.

What he didn't need to know was that Shane had dropped to his knees in the bathroom mere minutes after eating, forcing himself through the unpleasant experience of throwing up everything he had eaten.

The worst part had been that the food tasted *delicious*. It had tempted Shane to order nachos or chips and salsa, consumed with a deep gluttony after just one burrito. He hadn't. Instead he'd gone through the humiliation of purging in the bathroom of the empty rink, thanking god he was the only one there at the time.

They got ready for practice. It was a good feeling-Shane was finally cleared to be back on the ice, nerves itching for a good hard skate despite the fact that he'd only really taken a week off of skating.

By the end of practice, his body ached in a satisfying way.

Even Wiebe walked up to him, patting him on the back and looking at him appraisingly.

"You were like a man possessed on the ice today. Good job, Hollander. Keep that up and we'll make playoffs for sure."

Shane beamed proudly, smiling at the compliment.

Ilya had borderline pinned him against the wall and ravished him right in front of everyone, whispering in his ear about how hot Shane had looked on the ice. Shane had flushed bright red, ignoring the teasing from his teammates and swatting at Ilya.

Before they all left the rink, Wiebe stopped them, handing out small little bags to everyone.

"Before I forget–you guys have been doing great recently. Just wanted to give you all small gifts before the season starts and things get insane."

Shane peered inside the bag. It was some candies, a protein bar, and some fancy shooters of whisky and vodka.

Everyone thanked Wiebe-it really was a nice gesture.

As him and Ilya left and sat in the car, Ilya pulled out the protein bar from his own bag, handing it to Shane.

“Here-is your favorite flavor. You worked so hard at practice. Is good for refuel.” Ilya said, smiling softly at Shane. He sounded so genuine, and Shane could tell the gesture was purely out of kindness-they always did this, swapped flavors when one got the other's favorite.

Before he could stop himself, Shane flipped the bar over to look at the nutrition facts. He sees the calories listed in bold at the top, and immediately his stomach turns. He doesn’t read anything else on the packaging-doesn’t need to, to know he has absolutely zero interest in eating and ruining his hard work.

He froze, realizing what he just did.

He could feel Ilya’s gaze burning into him.

“Shane? Are you okay? You look sick.”

Shane blinked a few times. He heard Ilya call his name again, sounding increasingly more concerned. Shane forced himself to look up at Ilya.

He set the protein bar down.

“Can we go home?” Shane asked, voice small.

Ilya's face tightens. He takes the bar back from where Shane had put it down, setting in back into the bag.

"Yes, of course." Ilya murmurs.

The car is silent the whole way home.

Fuck.

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"Shane, we have to talk about it." Ilya said.

Shane toes his shoes off, placing them neatly by the door. He swallows down the lump building in his throat, ignoring Ilya entirely.

"Are you relapsing?" Ilya asks bluntly. Shane's hands shake as he takes his jacket off, hanging it up. He stares down at the floor.

"No." Shane says weakly. He feels every breath turn to ash in his chest. Feels like a dirty, disgusting liar, feels like he wants to crawl away and hide because he's lying right to his husband's face.

He doesn't have to look at Ilya to know the man doesn't believe him.

"Okay. I want to believe you." Ilya says honestly. The words are raw.

All of a sudden, Shane feels cold. He wants to cry. He doesn't say anything, walking over to the couch and sitting down. Ilya doesn't say anything either, but Shane can hear him take his own shoes and coat off. Feels the weight of Ilya sitting on the couch next to him.

He sets the protein bar down in front of Shane. Neither of them say anything. Shane stares down at the bar until his eyes burn. He can't bring himself to eat it, because he knows he won't be able to escape to the bathroom and throw up after, and recently because he's been purging more its been taking more effort to actually get the food to come up, and he knows Ilya would hear it.

He swallows dryly.

Shane forces himself to look at Ilya. Ilya has a studious expression on his face, watching Shane with what looks like a mix of concern and *fear*, of all things.

"Shane. If you are relapsing, there is no shame. But if you do not eat, I *will* call Yuna and David *and* coach and tell him you cannot practice." Ilya said firmly.

Shane bristles, irritated all of a sudden.

"Why the fuck does it matter? What kind of logic is that? I'm just-getting into shape for the season. Looking good for you. I mean-I know you say you like me no matter what, but I *want* to look good for you. And it's-it's just a performance diet. For the season."

Ilya just stares at Shane, lips pursed.

"It is kind of logic that keeps you from passing out on ice or in middle of interview. It is kind of logic that keeps you *alive*. Please, Shane. Be honest with me." Ilya says, note of desperation entering his voice.

Shane deflates, fight leaving him at Ilya's tone of voice.

“I…” Shane tries to say something, but fear blooms in his chest. He feels like shit for making Ilya worry, for making Ilya upset. To his humiliation, tears build in his eyes.

Ilya pulls him into a hug. Shane rests his head against Ilya’s shirt.

“Hey, hey, I am not mad. I could never be mad. I am worried, I am afraid, but I am not mad.” Ilya says soothingly.

Shane sinks further into Ilya, boneless. He can’t bring himself to move.

“Yeah.” Shane says, voice trembling.

Ilya just holds him, remaining quiet.

“Yeah, I’m relapsing. I’ve been purging every night. Tracking how many calories I burn during each workout. I can’t remember the last big meal I ate that I didn’t immediately throw back up.”

The confession was humiliating. It made Shane’s chest burn with shame.

“Can I ask what triggered it?”

Shane sighed into Ilya.

“The article.” He mumbled. He didn’t need to clarify which one-they both knew what he was talking about.

“Shit. That *fucking* article. I was hoping Yuna got it taken down before you read it. You know none of that is true, yes? Is all bullshit.” Ilya said vehemently. He mentally cursed himself for not pushing more that day, for not outright asking Shane if he had read it.

“I know-it’s just…the comments really got to me. About looking good for you. You’re so handsome, Ilya, and I see all the time how many beautiful people want to be with you. I just want to look like someone who’s worth being with.”

Ilya pulled Shane away from his chest, staring at Shane’s face with a deep despair.

“*Oh*, Shane.” He whispered achingly, leaning forwards to press a kiss into Shane’s forehead. Shane could see tears build in Ilya’s eyes. “You are only beautiful person that matters to me. I do not care about anyone else. You are worth everything to me.”

Shane sniffled, hot tears dripping down his face.

“You really mean that? You’re not just saying that to make me feel better?” Shane asked. He felt pathetic, voicing the questions out loud.

“Of course I mean that, Shane. Fuck, I could not live without you. You are my soulmate, in every lifetime. Stuck with me forever. I *love* you, Shane, so so much. I will say it as many times as you need.”

Shane managed a weak smile. Ilya brought a hand up to Shane’s hair, gently running his fingers through it.

“Now we have to have hard conversation. It will not be fun, but I promise after I will give you many kisses and listen to boring podcast and will be very very proud of you. Would you have come to me, if I did not saying anything tonight?” Ilya asked.

Shane swallowed, averting his gaze.

“...No. No, I probably wouldn’t have. I’m sorry.” Shane said weakly. The apology felt like it was flimsy at best. Ilya nodded seriously.

“Okay. Then I am glad I pushed tonight. I am not mad-I know disorder is telling you very mean things and convincing you help is bad. Is not true. Tomorrow, I think we will have emergency joint session with therapist. You said you have been purging. How often?” Ilya asked intensely.

Shane glanced down at the couch.

“Daily, for the past week. Sometimes twice a day, if I eat a lot. I think it fucked up my gag reflex.” Shane whispered. He knows its a serious conversation because Ilya doesn’t even make a sexual joke or innuendo.

“Fuck, Shane, that is…very dangerous. I know you will hate it, but I think we also should have you see doctor. Just to check. I know it is hard, but is a small step back. Does not make you bad person, does not erase years of recovery and hard work.”

Shane doesn’t bother protesting. He knows he has no ground to stand on. Ilya’s words are reassuring to no end. Because as bad as he feels now, he knows he has been worse before, and he knows he had somehow managed to get better.

“Okay. Just…please don’t make me go alone.” Shane is aware he sounds absolutely pathetic, pleading like this. Ilya makes a sad little noise in the back of his throat, kissing Shane through the dried tears on his face.

“Never, Shane. I will be there the whole time. Together, yes?” Ilya uses his free hand to entwine his pinky around Shane’s own. It’s a childish gesture, but it still warms Shane’s heart.

“Yeah. Yeah, okay. Together.” Shane murmured.

Shane is maybe not okay right *now*, but he will be. He's working on it, slowly, painfully, with many setbacks, but still. He's getting better, and that has to count for something.

He ends up eating the protein bar. Slowly, crying the whole time with Ilya gently rubbing his back, but still. He hears Ilya lock the door to the bathroom to prevent Shane from immediately purging. Shane pushes back the urge to, instead setting the empty wrapper down and leaning into Ilya.

It tastes delicious, for the record.

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