

## what the hell are you?

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# what the hell are you?

by [andmynewlymeltedheart](#)

## Summary

Ilya remembers the last time those hands touched him.

## Notes

Based on the moment from Episode 5 where Svetlana says, “You’re playing on the same team as Hollander this year, right?” and after Ilya jokingly asks if she thinks he’s mediocre, she says, “No. He’s amazing. Those hands.” And Ilya gives her a face like she just stepped on his pet turtle.

Title is from “It’s You” by Peter Peter which dropped today and is the only thing I’ve been listening to.

Pls comment and lmk what you think!

“Those hands,” Svetlana said, a passing compliment, an allusion to the attractive player they belonged to, but at their mention Ilya’s mind went quiet, like a summer night on the edge of the ocean. Cool, a rushing the only sound to remind him that he wasn’t floating in the void of night.

Ilya was, for a moment caressed by *those hands*. Their tender grasp was something that should have been foreign to strong hands like this man’s. Ilya’s thoughts drifted to a warm palm, slightly calloused, cradling his peck and grasping as if trying to reach beneath skin and bone to feel the beating of his heart. Legs mounted across his own, securing him to the supple cushions of the sofa, keeping him tethered to the earth at a moment when it felt as though everyone else had cast him adrift, leaving him to quietly die inside of his own body. And his other hand, in sure and smooth strokes, pleasuring him, lifting from him the duties and the struggles and the sheer weight of everything. Letting him breathe for the first time in...God. He didn’t know how long.

The ease he felt at the touch of those hands was delectable, and Ilya felt almost greedy as his body asked for more.

*More.*

*больше.*

Under the pressure of those hands, every muscle that was tended to relaxed. His were the hands of Midas, and his touch made everything inside of Ilya feel as though it had turned to gold. In his life, Ilya had earned a great deal of fame and even more fortune, but never did he feel as wealthy as he did when those hands held him. Or when he held this man.

As pleasure wracked through his body, the other man’s name, *his first name*, had somehow passed his lips unchecked. His mind found a moment of vulnerability, and in that moment released a piece of something that he had unknowingly fought so hard to protect.

It hung in the air a moment, dangling over the both of them— a sword hanging above them, hanging on by a thread. Then—

*“Ilya.”*

The thread snapped. The sword crashed down on them. But for a moment, just before the peril was made apparent, they were kings on a throne, delighting not in perfumes or vine fruits but in the gloriously intoxicating presence of one another. For a moment, everything was devastatingly beautiful... it was easy to ignore their wounds; the blood pooling around them mingled in what might have been the last embrace any part of them would share. But then, the reality of it set in.

He hadn’t said it outright, and neither had Ilya, but the unspoken truth of the last few years of their lives, hidden in the shadowy corners of souls, had stepped into the light.

Shane loved him.

And Shane left him.

And for God-knows-how-long, Ilya waited on the couch, hoping against hope that he would return. Loving him in silence. And hating himself for it.

Ilya was in the same spot now as he was when Shane left. Everything that felt warm and truthful with him now felt cold and false, and not even Svetlana could bring that warmth back. Ilya looked at her, a rush of love overcoming him as she kept him company. He had the thought that if he were alone, he would spend his evening hoping...wishing... knowing that if he could do anything just by willing it to *be*...

But he wouldn't. Shane wouldn't magically appear on his couch, or at his doorstep. He wouldn't call. He wouldn't suddenly awaken to find a notification from "Jane." Maybe Shane wouldn't even remember that day they spent together, unrushed and relaxed, a day that (for better or worse) was seared on Ilya's heart.

Ilya felt a pit in his stomach at the realization that maybe, just maybe...he had been nothing to Shane. Nothing other than a convenience, a spring he could drink from, simply to sate himself and nothing more, and leave when it dried.

He'd seen it happen to his mother. She was young and bright and beautiful in the earliest of his memories, and her smile shone on him not like the sun, but like a candle in the darkest night. A guiding light, leading him forward. And as the years went on, her wick burned and burned for everyone but herself, until she felt she couldn't go on burning, and her light was snuffed out.

From the day he found her, Ilya tried to keep his own candle from burning out, never lighting it for anyone save for those who really needed it. But the heat of his father and brother's needs burned the wick quickly, and so he left Russia, praying that the heat wouldn't reach him here. Ilya locked it all away, every thought and feeling kept safe behind a stony demeanor and a handful of sly remarks, with the hope that he could preserve what was left. Then he met Shane, and something sparked. The flame lit again, and for a while, it burned steadily, its heat somehow never too much. Somehow, Ilya didn't see that the wax was still pooling underneath of him. He wondered how, and even if it... if he could be salvaged.

Maybe Shane already knew the answer to that. Maybe Ilya wasn't worth saving. He blinked hard at the last thought, his mind quietly begging it to leave him be, to give him peace.

Svetlana eyed Ilya, and he knew that somehow she knew. She could read him better than anyone. She knew that he was in love, and even more, she knew that he was hurting. She knew he'd been letting his wounds fester.

Her lips pressed together in a sad smile, and Ilya swallowed, resigned to the knowledge that he couldn't hide it from her. He didn't want her to fix it, or to heal him. He just wanted her to be there with him, and she understood. He was sure as he laid his head on Svetlana's lap that she could sense this, and she began to pet his hair, as if to say, "I know, моя любовь. I know." To say he was lucky to have her would be one of the greatest understatements he could utter.

Ilya's mind fell silent again as Svetlana's nails gently scratched his scalp. The only sound in his mind was the slight churn of the ocean, back and lapping at a shell peppered shoreline. A sparkling horizon sat beneath storm clouds that were now, seemingly, rolling out to sea. They would return. But for a moment, he could see a glimpse of sun.

Maybe Ilya didn't need to rebuild himself. Maybe he could find a way to become something new, something built with elements of what he used to be. And he thought that maybe he didn't *need* Shane's help with that.

He wanted him to be there, though. To sit with him through it. More than he had ever wanted anything, he just wanted Shane. That was maybe the most terrifying thing about all of this. He could rebuild himself alone, he knew that he could, or that he could at least *try*, but no matter what version of himself he was, there would always be a piece of him that would want Shane Hollander.

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Ilya sat now at a bar, beer in hand, wishing he were anyone else. Or at least that he had an outfit that wasn't entirely stupid. He'd spent weeks trying to work the thought of the other man out of his system by all means necessary, and had achieved a not-insignificant amount of success in his task, but as he thumbed the mouth of the bottle he was holding, he wished he could talk to someone or look otherwise occupied. He felt like a bit of a loser, sitting by himself.

He scanned the crowd, inwardly denying what—*who* he was looking for when his eyes met Shane's.

Terror rose like bile in his throat at some fear he couldn't name, and then—a strange sense of calm washed over him as he noticed something about the other man that he didn't realize he'd been hoping for; Shane was alone.

*Shane was alone?*

He sat by Ilya and smiled at him, and the other man's eyes bored into his own, Ilya found that he felt raw and exposed and...

Hungry.

He and Rose weren't together. They weren't...

*Com-pat-ee-bull.*

He couldn't remember what exactly the word meant, but his chest felt full and his stomach flipped.

And for the next few days they played together. They joked. They teased. They sat together, quietly, on a beach at night. Waves pushing and pulling softly over densely packed sand. And

Ilya moved his hand, just a little to the right. As he did, he found that Shane's thumb was moving toward his own.

The thought popped into Ilya's mind that maybe the glow of an electric candle could give the same kind of light as a taper. No fire to burn each other, but light just the same. Sustainable and sure.

Thumbs met lightly, curving around millions of grains. A pulse of energy. Hearts beat faster, in time with each other. Electricity. Possibility. *Those hands.*

Shane caught Ilya's gaze out of the corner of his eye, and his lips curved upward into a smile sweeter than Ilya remembered. Ilya swallowed hard, foolishly attempting to dampen the emotion that was fighting to rush out of him.

Shane's thumb hooked Ilya's more firmly, an affirmation that Ilya's feelings in this moment weren't unnoticed, and they weren't felt alone.

His jaw clenched as Shane spoke.

"What room are you in?"

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