Seconds For a Lifetime

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Seconds For a Lifetime

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Summary

> “I do sometimes still think about how my life would have been if I never got injured,” Shane started to whisper. Ilya looked at him, he was focused on the ceiling. He grabbed his hand and placed it over his own chest. “But, you know, I’m glad that it led me here. To you,” the fondness that laced his tone opened Ilya in half.
>
> Ilya laid on his side, so he could contemplate him better. The sigh of Shane naked, only with the light sheet covering little of his modesty had something divine about it.
>
> “Maybe we could have met either way.”

AU where neither of them play professional hockey but they make their way to each other eventually (Kids' coach shane and uncle ilya fall in love one practice at a time -and gay bar flirting-)

Notes

TRIGGER WARNING FOR THE FIC: there are discussions of depression and suicide attempt. PLEASE if this is triggering be careful and take care <3

so i was lurking on twitter and people keep sharing fanfics so i got jealous and i wanted to WRITE because i used to love writting. it's been more than a year since i last wrote a fic so my enlish is rusty and my hability to write is questionable. I don't even know what is compliant to the book (i think the name of Hayden's daughters) and what to the show (i think the name of ilya's brother) and i'm sorry about that. also i'm pretty sure that ilya's niece does not appear in the book and in the show doesn't have a name also her sister in law doesn't have a name. If they do, well my bad. They are more or less my OC now, so...
this fic was written by a sleep deprived (during finals week) and sick (the first part of this fic literally came to me in a fiber dream) master's student.
English is not my first language but as that one ao3 author's note said: i have no respect to it so do not correct me. THANKS

Also, i saw the discourse going online about some fics being AI, that made me sad and i stopped writting for a bit, but i can assure you this was made with no sleep and avoiding responsabilites (as god intended).

ENJOY! <3<3<33

See the end of the work for more notes

Shane

There are simple almost insignificant seconds in one's life that completely altered the direction of our lives and most of the times we don't even notice. And Shane Hollander, even if he didn't want to admit it, was not the most observant person ever. So, more times than not, he would not realize his life has just been fundamentally altered.

There are times when its obvious. Even he could tell that.

Like the first time that he grabbed a hockey stick. When he was about four years old and his mother decided that it was time for him to take hockey lessons. Realistically, he can't remember that moment, however its on tape and he has rewatched it many times throughout the years, specially after de accident.

There are times that it feels like falling into a void, like the blissful second that his lips landed on another guy's and the gut-wrenching second that came after. When he noticed that he would never kiss a girl again. The sheer realisation that he was gay. That he was that thing that his teammates made fun of. He liked dudes, he liked them aesthetically and physically. And that was a hard pill to swallow for him as a seventeen-year-old.

There are seconds that feel infinite, like when he was still on the ice, couldn't move an inch of his body. He could only feel pain, pain, pain. And the fact that he knew that it was the end for him. For his career, which had never been past his rookie season. That would never be more.

So, yes, there were moments that would be forever engrained in Shane's mind. Seconds where he could pinpoint the instant his life changed forever. Nevertheless, he didn't know that the mid-annoyance that he was feeling that second, was going to be de driver to the change of his life.

He crossed the street, he could have shouted from where he was, because the alley where they were was quite narrow, but he didn't want to be rude. So, he approached the stranger.

"Hi, sorry," he said, trying to be amicable. The stranger barely lifted his gaze towards him. It was only a split second, but the deep eyes that appeared in his vision made Shane be lost of words. He cleared his throat awkwardly, *keep it together, Hollander.*

The stranger didn't say a word. *Okay, rude.*

"I don't think you are allowed to smoke here," he tried, gesturing the cigarette in-between the stranger's plum lips. He was fully aware of the way his eyes lingered on them more than it was convenient.

The stranger blinked. Once, twice. Like he was assessing Shane, like he was considering whether he was deserving of an answer.

"Okay," he said. Just that. Shane was flabbergasted. His voice was deep and masculine and was laced with an accent, which sounded eastern European, however Shane was not too

versed on them to pinpoint the exact country.

Right. They stood there for some time. None of them saying anything, and the stranger was still smoking. Shane could appreciate the irony given the fact that he was under a huge fucking sign that said “please, do not smoke.” Maybe the guy couldn’t read English? Shane wouldn’t want to assume. Maybe he didn’t even know what Shane said to him.

He didn’t know if he should say anything more. The stranger had his eyes still on him as he smoked, as he was thinking. What? Shane couldn’t know.

The door of the gym opened, and a bunch of kids came out. All of them had changed out their hockey attire and were looking for the adult that came to pick them up.

Shane wondered if that was the reason the stranger was here. Maybe this serious, gorgeous man was waiting to pick up his kid. And somehow, that thought crushed Shane’s mind and heart. Which was ridiculous and immature, he hadn’t even exchanged a whole sentence whit him.

Before he could think harder about it, a tiny girl gripped the stranger’s hand. Shane knew that girl. Of course he did. They tell you not to pick your favourites out of the bunch when you are hired as a hockey coach for these little monsters but is not easy. They wiggle they way into your heart easier that one would think. And Shane has been a coach for some time now, he has met countless of children, and he has had many favourites (in secret), but definitely none like this little girl over there.

Anastasia Rozanova.

Well. Now Shane knew about three more things he did a bit ago: one, the beautiful stranger was Russian, two, he was the father of his most talented and favourite student, three, fact two made him out of fucking reach. Not that he thought the man would be interested in men, much less Shane, but a man can dream. Also, fucking fact four, Shane had almost forgotten, he was married, or at the very least had a partner. The beautiful woman that usually drops and picks up Anastasia from practice.

As if spelled out of a charm, the stranger looked towards Anastasia and said something in a language he could not understand. His voice was still rough and masculine, however sweeter. Shane hated that he thought it was endearing.

He thought his name was mentioned in the hushed conversation that was happening in Russian right in front of his nose. He wanted to say that it was rude to talk in another language when there were people in the conversation that couldn’t understand a word. But Shane guessed the stranger and him were not having a conversation to begging with, and he should probably leave them to their thing.

“Shane Hollander,” the stranger said, Shane thought he had made it to heaven. His name sounded like something sinful. Should kids be hearing this? Should *he* be hearing this? “Ilya, I am Anastasia’s uncle. Nice to finally meet you, she talks about you a lot.” Ilya extended his other hand.

Shane was about to faint. But he shook his hand without thinking it twice. Nice. He had a firm handshake, not like him who was probably shaking like a teenager full of hormones.

“Ah,” he said, he wanted to kick himself on the head with a stick, “likewise. Anastasia is an incredibly talented player,” he smiled at her.

“Of course, she takes it after me.” Ilya’s eyes were soft and Shane needed to get away from this man as soon as he could.

“Do you play hockey as well?” He could not understand why his mouth kept going when he was supposed to leave.

“A lot of time ago,” Ilya said, the look on his eyes was like the one Shane had while thinking of himself on the ice. Reminiscing. “I am happy she likes it, though.”

Shane smiled and nodded. “Shaneeeeee,” he heard a voice scratched, making him realize that he had things to do.

“Well, I should get going. I hope I’ll see you again, Ilya.” And then because he couldn’t help it, “and so you know, please follow the rules.” He pointed the sign with his head and tried to smile flirtatiously (he probably didn’t succeed).

Ilya smiled back. It was more like a smirk, but a win was a win. Before turning his back, Shane could see Ilya throwing the cigarette to the ground and grinding it with his foot. He guesses that asking him to use the bin would be too much.

He made his way towards Hayden’s kids, shaking his head and smiling like a loon. He was sure the expression stayed on his face all the way to his best friend’s place, when he dropped his kids.

He could not say it, but even as much as he loved Hayden’s children (he was Arthur’s godfather), he still had a special thing toward Anastasia, specially when they were at practice, where Ruby and Jane were literal menaces to society and Anastasia was silent and smart.

He didn’t even think about the fact that he hadn’t told Ilya his surname, and somehow, he knew.

Ilya

Shane Hollander was teaching his niece hockey and Ilya had just found out. He was out of words.

The same guy, Nastyonka was gushing about all day. The perfect and so nice and polite hockey coach Ksenia met, him. Shane Hollander. Wow. He couldn’t blame it on his family for not telling him that. They, Ilya was sure, couldn’t know who Shane was. They couldn’t know that the night nineteen years-old Shane Hollander was pushed so hard that he could

have lost his life on the rink, Ilya was seeing it all on his shitty computer. Knowing that a fall like that could be career-ending.

He was right.

And when he moved out of Russia for good, when he left everything behind, he thought that maybe Canada's most boring city could bring him some stability. He didn't even know if Hollander was living in Ottawa, he didn't care at the time (he didn't move there because of *Hollander*, he moved there because he knew the name of the city and felt weirdly attached to it). Honestly, his knowledge of North America was strictly based on hockey. And maybe he could have gone to Boston or Montreal, where the big teams were, but there was something appealing about Ottawa. And it was as secluded and boring as it could get, so he probably could run away from his father and brother.

The little money he made, was well managed, some for him and to pay his basic-living-necessities and the rest went back to Russia. More specifically, to Ksenia, his sister-in-law. So, she could feed, dress, and take care of his niece, while his god-awful brother spent his salary on prostitutes and drugs, probably.

That was, of course, until his big brother fucked up again. And this time he did it in a cosmically big way. So cosmical that he abandoned his wife and his daughter and never came back. Ilya hadn't spoken to Alexei since he came to Canada, about six years ago, and he packed his things and left with the little money he had saved. He got lucky, of course, finding an easy job that could let him improve his English and an affordable place to live. It was not much, but it was enough.

When Ksenia called him, two years ago, she was desperate. Her family had cut her off after she got married to Alexei, again, Ilya didn't know the exact reason why, but he could imagine. She basically told him that he was the only living family Anastasia had, who would love her and keep her safe of whatever her husband had gotten himself into. Ilya closed his eyes and said a sentence that would change his life forever: *Come to live with me in Canada.*

The whole ordeal was much more complicated that Ilya first though, but they made it through. And for a year and a half, Ksenia and Anastasia had been living with him in his tiny apartment, which was nice for him alone but now seemed always overcrowded. Even if Ilya loved both a lot.

When they made it home, Ilya heard someone in the kitchen. Ksenia was home early, that was good. He had realized that she had been picking extra shifts at work so they could move out Ilya's place. He hadn't asked them to move, he was fine with them there, but he was also aware that as his niece grows, she would want her own space, her own room and Ilya's two room apartment was not ideal.

"*Hey*," he said.

Ksenia was a beautiful woman, not much older than him. She was thirty-two years old, but the years spent next to his brother had taken a toll on her. She was also an amazing person and an incredible mother. Shiny blue eyes and dark hair. And Ilya truly wondered how the fuck his asshole brother had managed to marry such a woman.

"Hey, Ilyushka, how was your day?"

Before Ilya could add anything, Anastasia came running down the hall. "*Uncle Ilyuskha has met coach Shane,"* se said happily.

"*Ah*," her mother said, leaving down the vegetables she was cutting and kissing her daughter's head. "*He has met your favourite person. Did you like him?*"

His niece frowned. "*No, he is not my favourite person, mom. That is, you and uncle, but he is very nice. Right, uncle Ilyushka*?"

"*About that*," Ilya said, "*you have never told me that my niece was being coached by Shane Hollander*."

"*You know him?"* Ksenia and Anastasia said at the same time. A part of Ilya was so glad that his niece looked almost identical to Ksenia and nothing like his side of the family. For years he had been so sure that nothing good could came out from his family, but, he guesses, Anastasia was the proof that even on barren lands beautiful flowers could bloom.

"*He used to be an NHL player, had a terrible accident and had to quit mid his second season*."

He could see the sympathy on his sister-in-law's face.

Not wanting to dwell on the conversation, Ilya washed his hands and picked something to do, he started helping Ksenia as they cooked the dinner in silence.

A while later, when Ilya was watching a cartoon show with his nice in hopes that she would fall asleep soon, he felt the couch dip to one side.

"*Sometimes, I feel like you like them more than my daughter*," she said laughing.

"*Yes, well. Your daughter has incredible taste for cartoon shows. Some of them are interesting*."

She laughed. It was nice hearing her laugh again. For the fist couple of months, after their arrival, Ksenia was scared and sad and so, so sorry for everything —even if Ilya had reassured her that she didn't need to be sorry about a thing —, that for a second Ilya thought that she would be forever sad, it was like seeing his mother all over again.

Ilya felt anger towards his brother, towards his father, and towards himself. The men in that family always ruining their partners' lives. Not that Ilya had partners. He had hook ups, and friends with benefits and one-night stands, or he used to, now it was less frequent given his housing situation. But he couldn't bear the thought of what his family seemed to keep doing to other people, and while Ilya had grown and learn and knew he was not his father (much less his brother), he was still scared. He knew he was more like his mother, sad and too broken inside to manage all their feelings. But he got up everyday with the idea that he could do better, he couldn't change his DNA, but he could not let it win. And even if Ilya loved his mother with every inch of his being, he didn't want to become her.

So, hearing Ksenia laugh, was a reminder that everything was worth it. A reminder that he had a family now. One that loved him and could know him for who he was. It felt nice. Ilya had never known what it was like before. Neither of them had.

Anastasia was falling asleep, Ilya knew he was going to be the one carrying her to bed.

"*You hadn't answer to my question before, you know."*

Ilya was entranced by the show, he slowly moved his head toward Ksenia, "*what question?"*

"*About Shane, did you like him?"*

Ilya wonder how she could possibly know. She hadn't been there. She hadn't seen how he had been relented speechless by a beautiful Canadian, with stunning freckles. He was sure that his hard learnt English had left his body the second Shane had approached him. The moment his mouth opened Ilya could only look at it, not registering a word he said. And then he stood there, waiting for Ilya to say something, as if he could. As if it was possible. As if Ilya hadn't met an angel. He hadn't known that the pretty guy that was standing awkwardly in front of him was Shane Hollander, of course. He had only seen him in his hockey attire and in one interview and that was when he was nineteen, now he was twenty-six and still pretty. After Anastasia said that the stranger was her hockey coach and that his name was Shane, something inside Ilya's brain clicked. It made sense.

Either way, Ksenia hadn't been there when Shane had smiled at him just so, so, so perfectly before turning away, that made Ilya's body turn into goo. He was pathetic truly, and they had only had one conversation.

"*What do you mean?"* he asked, there was no way that Ksenia knew.

"*Like, do you think he is good? Anastasia loves him, and I feel good about him, but what do you think?"*

Ilya shrugged, hopping that doing that he could shake off the feeling that this was a more nuanced question. He thought that if he took the nonchalant road this Shane Hollander topic would be dropped.

"*He is all right, I guess. Boring Canadian, obviously. That's not new here, but, you know, he seems like a perfectly fine guy*."

The Shane Hollander topic was not, indeed, dropped. It was very much a constant thing in the Rozanov's house. Because, for the past three weeks, Ilya had been on pick up duty for Anastasia after her practice. And what he didn't know was that his niece talked about Hollander all the way back home. Every day after practice.

That was great for Ilya and his quest of not developing an embarrassing crush on Shane. Something that he was failing terribly at.

For the past three weeks, every time that Ilya had been in that alley, he had lighted up a cigarette, just in hopes that a pretty Canadian would come his way and tell him off. It had not

happened. Sometimes, Shane would make a face or glare at him, only one other time he said that he should not do it, at least not when the children were around. That made Ilya drop the habit, the tone Shane used was tired and sad, like he had given up on Ilya but wanted to try one last time.

Well, Ilya stopped. Now he was trying other ways to catch Shane's attention, but the coach seemed to be focused on doing whatever but talk to him. Ilya didn't know why, but he saw a challenge and he was also not going to give up without trying.

Shane

Shane was so close to losing it. He had been trying to stay away from Ilya Rozanov. Maybe it was not the most mature nor the most professional response to what he was feeling, but it was the only thing he could do. It was not wise to develop a juvenile crush to the family member of one of his students. While it was not forbidden, it was heavily recommended against.

But life was getting in the way of Shane protecting his peace. As usual.

Ilya apparently was the one in charge of picking up Anastasia from practice from that day onwards and everyday he stood there, under the same "please, don't smoke" sign. After the day Shane had decided to give up trying to convince Ilya to stop smoking near kids, the Russian hadn't been seen with a cigarette in-between his lips —Shane wouldn't admit how sexy he looked, not even at gunpoint. The development from that day, as it seemed, Ilya tried to make small talk with Shane, even if it was just a silly: "how was practice?" And Shane was having trouble breathing just from small interactions. He really needed to stay away.

It was not helpful that Anastasia loved talking about her uncle. She did before Shane knew who he was, but now that he knew… Shane wished he could go back to not knowing. Because apparently, he was hot and nice.

Shane's heart was going through it. Honestly.

It had been three weeks after Ilya stopped smoking, almost two months after he started picking Anastasia up after practice. And Shane was sure he had a problem. He would not want to admit it aloud, but he was starting to measure time in before meeting Ilya and after. So, it was safe to say that he had a full-on problem.

"You need to get laid," Rose said, removing Shane from his Ilya-induced contemplation. He almost choked with his Ginger Ale.

"What?" he coughed.

"Yes, babe, I don't know what has gotten into you these weeks but, you know, when was the last time?"

And Shane hated the fact that Rose had gotten him to tell her all her deepest confidences. Damn Rose Landry and her ability to make Shane feel safe, because now she was using it against him.

“I don’t know,” he stammered.

The thing is that Shane, knew. He was all too aware of the months that had passed. But he was not a one-night stand guy. Those arrangements didn’t really work for him. More often than not it backfired, leaving him hurt. Leaving him with a broken heart. Leaving pieces of him that Rose had to pick up and glue together. And he was fed up with that. He didn’t want to. He just wanted to fall in love and have a normal, happy relationship, or whatever. Otherwise, he preferred being on his own.

“If you don’t know, that means it has been too long, babes.”

“It’s whatever,” he tries to shrug it off. In hopes that Rose would leave him.

“Not whatever-me, Shane. I’m going to get you some this weekend.”

“Never in your life say that again, I’m begging,” Shane said.

Rose laughed. “Right, it did sound terrible as I was saying it. But. The point still stands.”

Shane sighed. There was no use trying to go against her. He just hoped that she would forget.

That’s the exact reason of Shane being at a bar on a Friday night, which was a quite rare occurrence. In his defence he would say that he had seen Ilya that afternoon after practice. He had tried to start a conversation with him and Shane eloquently had spluttered something about having to go back inside the rink and subsequently ran for his life. *Real classy, Hollander.*

So, when he was in his apartment, borrowed deep down in his self-loathing, Rose knocked his door, with a bottle of good Russian vodka and one goal: make him dance that night. And Shane, who was tender and sensitive from his misstep with a hot Russian, drank the alcohol and didn’t put too much of a fight.

Now the effects of the alcohol had wore off and he was on sober duty, as he could tell that Rose was all out that night. The bar was one that Shane had never been to, but that was not very narrowing on the options in Ottawa, Shane was not the type of guy who you would find drunk or partying every weekend. However, he had been living in this city for the vast majority of his life, still, the bar Rose had dragged him to was new. He could appreciate it for the novelty of it, and —Rose had not mentioned before walking straight towards the door—, it was a queer bar. When Shane noticed the abundance of rainbow flags and LGBTQ+ positive signs, Rose winked at him and mouthed something that seemed remarkably similar to “get laid”. He should talk to her about her interest in his sex life.

Since she started to dance to the music, Shane decided that he needed something to drink.

A few steps before reaching the bar his steps halted.

Well.

Fuck.

Ilya Rozanov was on the other side, pouring drinks like out of Shane's deepest fantasies. He was dancing slightly while mouthing the lyrics of the song blasting through the sound system, he was wearing all black, and his blond curls looked even more divine than ever.

In the hypothetical case that Shane would want to have sex that night, the prospects were completely ruined by the presence of Ilya. Not because he thought that he had any chance with the man, but because he was all Shane was able to think about.

He shook his head. *Get it together.* That second was the moment Ilya chose to look his way; a slow smile creeped his way onto his face.

"Look who is here. Shane Hollander," he said. The girls besides him turned to look at Shane, then she looked at Ilya again, smiled at him —as if she knew something Shane didn't— and nudged Ilya with her elbow. Then she moved to attend another costumer, which left Ilya to serve Shane.

"Hi, I didn't know you work here." He wanted to punch himself on the face. He could admit, he was not the most social person, but his limited social skills were always more tested whenever he was in Ilya's proximity.

"Ah," Ilya said, as if that gave him somewhat a clue, "otherwise you wouldn't have come here, yes?"

Shane was taken aback for a second. So, Ilya had noticed that Shane was consciously not talking to him. He was trying to prepare an excuse when he saw Ilya's smirk pull his lips. "Fuck off," he said.

Ilya shrugged, he was right and they both knew it. Shane wondered if Ilya knew about Shane's crush. Well, shit. He pondered if he was going to have to quit everything and move to Mars.

"What do you want to drink?" Ilya said, already looking for his options.

"Uh, do you have Ginger Ale?" Shane asked.

Ilya looked at him, expression serious but his eyes dancing with mirth.

"Of course." He placed it on the counter, "a boring drink for a boring night I guess," he added.

"You are an asshole," Shane retorted. "I'm not going to drink tonight, I have to kind of watch her," he said as he looked towards Rose, still where he had left her, dancing. He felt the weird need to justify himself.

Ilya didn't say anything for a second. "Girlfriend?"

Shane shook his head, turning back to look to Ilya. “Nope, just a friend.” Ilya stared at him, assessing him, same gaze as the first day.

Then smiled at him and shook his head when noticed Shane was reaching for his wallet. “No, not paying for boring drink. When you are ready to drink something more fun, you will pay.” And then he winked to Shane. Shane, who was sober, started to feel a bit dizzy. He went to look for Rose.

Ilya

“Hey, babe,” Svetlana called him, he turned to look at her, “*do you want to come over after?*” she asked in Russian.

It was not that rare that, if both were not too tired after their shift, they would go to one of their houses (lately it had only been her apartment) and have sex. Their arrangement worked wonderfully for both, as neither were interested in a dating and helped to take out the stress after a long shift. It was convenient. It was a friends-with-benefits situation. Because to Ilya, Svetlana was his best friend. Having sex with her was just a perk of their relationship.

But tonight… tonight he could not do it. Even if he couldn’t get Shane, because his mind was set on him and he thought that it would not be fair to her to be thinking of Shane’s brown deep eyes as he fucked her.

The only problem that could be pointed out in his great scheme to sleep with Shane was the fact that the other man had not shown an ounce of interest in Ilya. And that, honestly, was messing with him. He was not sure whose fault was it, that he was in such a predicament. Sure, Ilya did not know for a fact if Shane was even into men as a concept, but he prided himself in having a refined gaydar as Svetlana said or being perceptive as he preferred to say. And all the arrows pointed to a big rainbow sign over Shane. Maybe it was Ilya’s wishful thinking, maybe he was projecting, but it wouldn’t have been the first time he hooked up with an apparently straight man, so. He was not that concerned about that. But Shane *was* in a queer bar, that must mean something.

Shane was in a queer bar, looking extremely uncomfortable and ready to go home, to be fair.

The woman that Shane had said he was here with threw her arms around him, Ilya felt himself tense, and then he chastised himself about it. *He did not do that*. He didn’t get jealous.

The woman, still with her hand on Shane and now kissing his cheek, looked towards him, to the bar and grinned.

“Shots, *Shane-y*, we need shots.”

Ilya could see Shane smiling at her but shaking his head. He kind of wanted Shane to look at him like that. That train of thought again. He needed to stop.

They walked over towards them and before Ilya could open his mouth, Svetlana bodychecked him with the strength of a real NHL player. Ilya was baffled. He wanted to ask her what had gotten onto her, but before he could muster the words, he saw how she was battling her eyelashes and flashing her most endearing smile to the woman Shane was with.

Well, sha had gotten over Ilya not wanting to sleep with her fast. Ilya didn't even have it him to be offended.

Knowing how Svetlana got when she flirted with customers, he approached Shane, who was being completely removed from the conversation and stood there awkwardly.

"Do you want another boring drink?"

Shane bit his lip as if he was thinking his answer. Ilya was not entirely sure if he was aware of what he was doing, and maybe the not-knowing made it more attractive. Ilya wanted to devour him.

"Are you going to get mad at me if I say yes?"

Ilya wanted more than to devour him. He wanted to take his time, he wanted to savour him, and repeat. He was sure that he needed to have his sweet while with him.

"No." He could never be mad at him, but that went unsaid.

Shane smiled at him.

Ilya should not be feeling the things that he was *working*.

"Then I'll have another, please. Are you going to let me pay this one?" He asked, already with his card out.

"No." He knew he was going to have to cover it himself later, but it was worth it to see Shane's expression. It was not that expensive to see him bright up like that, he only had to make sure he always had Ginger Ale, apparently.

Shane opened the can but made no move to leave the counter. Ilya wanted him there the whole night and then wanted to convince him to leave the place with him. He saw as other client tried to catch his attention. Stupid customers and their stupid need to get drinks, distracting him from the important thing: Shane.

The night progressed and Ilya kept serving drinks, pouring shots and being extremely aware of Shane Hollander, who had stopped trying to dance and was just by the bar, contemplating his drink and stealing looks at Ilya. His friend was too caught in Svetlana to realize, and Shane didn't look like he would prefer being with her dancing. As Shane stood there, Ilya saw countless of men and women came up to him and try to flirt with Shane, but they all were just brushed away with the sheer disinterest that he seemed to show everyone.

Ilya did not want to be another one from the pile of Shane's heartbreaks of the night. The funny thing was that it really looked as if Shane was not aware of all the eyes that were on him that night. Ilya wanted to laugh, Shane was too pure.

He glanced at his phone, that he kept in the back pocket of his black work jeans, and said to his coworkers, "Hey, I'm taking a smoke break". He, then, approached Shane and told him, "I'm going outside for smoke, do you want to come? You look like you need fresh air."

Shane stared at him puzzled. "It's not fresh air if you are going to be smoking," he said as he was following Ilya.

He guided Shane to the back door that led the alley where the staff usually took their breaks, knowing full well Shane was not supposed to be there. He conveniently left that out; he knew that Shane was not going to like it.

They stood there in silence while Ilya lighted up the cig. He could tell that Shane was looking for something to say, to comment on. Honestly, Ilya appreciated the quiet. He liked the bar and working there, but his ears were ringing and he kind of wanted peace.

"It's a good night," Shane's voice broke through the stillness.

"It is." He breathed out the smoke, slipping his eyes shut and relishing in Shane's presence.

"Hey… I have a question," Shane started tentatively.

Ilya opened his eyes and gazed at him, his side profile. His face was illuminated by the lamp posts and the grim emergency light over the exit door. His freckles were still visible and the quiver of his lip, that Ilya found, it was a tell-tale of him being nervous.

"Maybe I have an answer."

"How did you know my last name? When we first met." The words came out rushed.

"Oh," Ilya hadn't thought of his slip up. He hadn't even realized. "I saw you play when you were drafted."

Shane took a step back, as if he was reminded that he had a life when he used to play in a major hockey league and people from all around the world could watch him play.

"Well, this is embarrassing," Shane said. He tried to make a move towards the door. Ilya stopped him.

"Why?" Ilya tried to step closer.

"You watched me fail, that's what you mean. And I wanted to… agh. Stupid" he didn't finish the last sentence; he mostly murmured that to himself. Ilya was not following.

Ilya took another step closer. He felt like approaching a scared animal. He felt regretful for making Shane upset.

“No. I watched you have worst luck ever and that could have happened to anyone,” he said slowly.

“Yeah, but it happened to *me*,” Shane commented self-deprecatingly.

Ilya was now within touching reach from Shane. “I also had to quit hockey,” he whispered. It had been so long since he had said that to anyone. That made Shane look at him. He reached out to touch his hands and felt pleased when Shane held his fingers.

“I, ah… used to play hockey back in Russia. I was quite good, made my mama proud. I…” he was unsure of how to continue. “She died, when I was twelve. She had this idea that I was going to become an NHL player, which maybe if I had kept practicing and competing, I could have had an opportunity to be drafted. But… when I was sixteen, I quitted. I got sick,” he said, he had never told this to anyone. He was not sure how to even explain it in English. He was not sure if he even wanted to be this open about it.

Shane was staring at him with so much wonder. It made Ilya regret telling him this, because it was going to expose all his ugly truths and it was too soon, too early for Shane to leave him. Ilya never does this, he doesn’t show this side of him. He was not sure why he was doing it now. To Shane Hollander of all people. But there was something about him, that made Ilya want to be soft.

“Sick? What sickness? Oh my God, Ilya, *are you fine*?” he sounded genuinely worried. He lifted his left hand and palmed his cheek, Ilya inhaled deep at the contact, he wanted to stay like this forever.

“It was the same thing that killed my mother,” he whispered. His eyes were closed again, he was feeling really tired all the sudden.

Shane took a sharp breath. “What was it, Ilya?”

“Depression. She took her life and when I was sixteen, I tried to do the same. Obviously, I didn’t succeed. But I couldn’t go back to hockey, because it reminded me too much of her, of how proud she was of me. My father only wanted me to play if I won. And I was not motivated enough to keep wining, so he was not interested on paying anymore.”

Shane hugged him. He threw his arms around him and held him closer and tighter than anyone had done in decades. He was not alone anymore; he had a family and friends now. He had a life that he liked for the most part and he was medicated. But Shane’s hug still recomposed something inside Ilya that he didn’t know it was still loose.

“*Sorry*,” Ilya kept murmuring in Russian.

Shane put only enough space between them so he could look at Ilya straight to the face. “I don’t know what you are saying, but I need you to know that I’m so happy that you are here today.” He had a sad smile over his face, and his beautiful eyes were shiny with tears.

Ilya’s plan to sleep with Shane was going amazingly tonight. Jesus Fucking Christ. They were both watery-eyed.

“I am supposed to fuck you before telling you my trauma, you know.”

Shane honked a laugh, that made Ilya smile.

“Well, you’ll have to fuck me after,” he said sheepishly.

Shane

Shane had gone through a scaring number of emotions for a night out. He had gone from annoyed, to bored, to embarrassed and sad all in the span of a couple of hours. But now he was horny.

As if it was all Ilya had been waiting to listen, when Shane finished speaking, he kissed him.

Shane liked kissing, he like the feeling of the other’s lips on his, he like the not knowing and the anticipation. But he was not prepared to how much he was going to like kissing Ilya. It was as if he was trying to convey everything they were feeling, all the softness and confessions of the night inside a kiss. He was graving him by the waist and pulling him in, Shane felt as if he had never been kissed before.

He took his hands and placed them by the back of Ilya’s neck, his fingers playing with the soft curls there and his thumbs reaching to his jaw, he wanted to deepen the kiss, even if it was bordering public indecency.

God, he wanted to be alone with Ilya.

He wanted to kiss him and never come back for air. He could breathe this kiss and never get tired.

But, at some point, they had to breathe. Staring into the deep end of Ilya’s eyes it occurred to him that this was a terrible idea. “This is a bad idea,” he voiced.

“Why?” Ilya frowned and secured more firmly his hands on Shane’s waist. Shane felt his chest flutter from the action as if now that had been able to hold him, he had no plans to stop.

“I’m your niece’s coach. It’s not like… unprofessional to hook up with you?”

Ilya arched an eyebrow, unmoved. Shane wanted to kiss him again, and he did. Which kind of defeated his whole point. He could not care less.

“It’s not like you can give her more preference. I am sure she is your favourite.”

Shane wanted to act surprised. “How do you know that?”

Ilya smiled. “Because I know she is charming like me and you can’t resist me,” he said before bowing down and kissing him again. Shane could not stop smiling into the kiss and he

noticed, Ilya was, too.

The door opened and the girl that was behind the bar with Ilya walked outside, "*Ilya, we need you back inside. You are not getting paid to eat face,*" she said, even if Shane didn't get a word. She was Russian as well, apparently. Ilya stopped kissing Shane reluctantly.

"*No, but look how stunning he is. They should pay me for it, honestly. It would be a better use of my time than to serve drunks*," he said whining, grabbing Shane's face and moving it to look at the girl. "I said that they should pay me to kiss you instead of bartending, I would be much happier. Even if I do it free pleasantly," Ilya told him. Shane felt his face turn red.

"Come on, move your perky ass."

Ilya grunted frustrated and started walking toward the door, with his hand in Shane's. The girl smiled at him. "I'm Svetlana. Ilya's best friend," she introduced herself.

"Pain in ass, she is."

Shane laughed and squished Ilya's hand, he squished it back.

It was kind of a non-spoken agreement that Ilya was going back home with Shane. He just hanged there, by the bar the rest of the night. Watched Rose flirt with Svetlana, and giggle when she got flirted back. And openly ogled Ilya. That was the thing that he did the most, to be fair.

They stumbled into Shane's apartment; Ilya raised his brows at the sight of Rose's good vodka over the table. Shane shrugged it off; he just wanted Ilya in his bed. However, they were too tired to do anything more than kissing passionately for almost an hour and then pass out in a mess of limbs and snores.

The next morning, he woke Ilya up with pecks all over his face that turned into moans and gasps. As Ilya pushed into him and grabbed him by the wrists pinning him to the mattress, the morning caught up to them in the sunbathed room. Shane felt cared for and extremely happy.

The uncertainty of what should he do after didn't even arrive, because when they finished Ilya got up and took him to the shower, then they had breakfast, feet tangled under the table and giggling conversation over coffee.

Weeks passed in a blurry of falling into bed together at night and waking up wrapped in each other, a blurry of text messages and silly dates. Shane was still trying to realize how any of this was happening to him. He was waiting for everything to go to shit. For Ilya to come to terms that he preferred his life before Shane, he preferred random hook ups and more thrilling people. Not the same boring guy every night.

He sighed, smiling against his will with Ilya's last message. He got ready to go to hockey practice.

Ilya

Ilya was, honest to God, the happiest he had ever been. He was not sure how that had happened. He had a stable relationship for the first time in his life. He was dating someone and he was happy about it. The fact of being other less than boyfriends had not even crossed his mind since the first time they kissed.

Ilya Rozanov, who blatantly thought that he was not made to fall in love, was on the throes of going head in. And he was *willing*.

He hadn't told anything to Ksenia, not because he was embarrassed of Shane, but because he did not know what to say. Every feeling that he was going through was so new to him that he was not sure how to explain it. At least he could do it in his native language with her.

What he was sure about is that she knew something was up with him. She had redoubled her efforts in looking for places and she had this look on her every time she caught him on his phone.

Ilya was wondering when was exactly the appropriate time for him to formally introduce Shane as his boyfriend to his only family. He was going to need to ask Shane if he was fine about it. It was a shame that they would not see each other that night, he wanted to ask him in person. However, he felt himself smile as he was going to see him when he picked Anastasia up from practice in the afternoon.

When he arrived at his usual spot, Shane was already there smiling at him. There were some parents at the door, some lingering near them, but Ilya really wanted to kiss him. So, he grabbed him and took him over the corner, then he kissed him. The draught from kissing Shane was worse that the ones he got from nicotine.

Shane relented and kissed him back for a few seconds, before pushing him back gently. "We are going to get caught at this rate."

Ilya shrugged, he was not that worried that some Karen was scandalized because he was kissing his boyfriend in plain broad light.

The second they turned the corner; Ilya was assaulted by a pink tornado with braids that jumped in his arms. Anastasia was getting big for Ilya to carry her, but he would still do it until she was at Uni if he got it his way.

"Where were you?" she asked looking accusingly at them.

"I needed to talk privately to coach Shane," Ilya said with a wide grin, he could see Shane rebuff next to him.

Anastasia didn't seem to mind nor question too much exactly what they had to talk about. She launched herself into some explanation that Ilya was not following because he was too entranced by how Shane was talking to his niece. The care, jokes and smiles he pulled.

The dull boom-boom of his heart that always accelerated when he was near Shane kept getting louder. Ilya had never been gladder that his heart was beating that when it did for Shane.

He was in too *deep*. There was no return point for him.

Ilya didn't get the chance to think about Shane and his family for a couple of weeks. No. That's a lie. Ilya was always thinking about Shane meeting his family, but he hadn't had the time to materialize the thought into de universe yet.

It was a late afternoon, Sunday. Their day. Neither one of them had anything to do on Sundays and usually they spent it holed in Shane's place, intertwined. Ilya was exactly where he was supposed to be.

He had a lot of things he wanted to say to Shane. All his thoughts rushing through his mind in both English and Russian and he was having a hard time figuring everything out.

"I do sometimes still think about how my life would have been if I never got injured," Shane started to whisper. Ilya looked at him, he was focused on the ceiling. He grabbed his hand and placed it over his own chest. "But, you know, I'm glad that it led me here. To you," the fondness that laced his tone opened Ilya in half.

Ilya laid on his side, so he could contemplate him better. The sigh of Shane naked, only with the light sheet covering little of his modesty had something divine about it.

"Maybe we could have met either way."

Shane mimicked his position, still hand in hand, he thew one leg over Ilya's waist, getting them as close as they could be. His eyes open and curious.

"Maybe if I hadn't quit hockey I would have been selected to play in the World Junior Hockey Championship for Russia and you for Canada, maybe our year both countries had made it to the final. And we meet, after a practice," he smiles, "you come towards where I am peacefully minding my own business and say that I am not supposed to smoke there, I probably get shocked into silence because you are so pretty and my English at seventeen was terrible. So, I just stay there and smoke."

Shane grins at him dreamily, "Alternative you is kind of a dick."

"Ah, yes. He also gets drafted first."

Shane laughed at that. "What happens after?" he asked, closing his eyes.

"Mh… I don't know. Probably we get in different teams, but we are like the best players in the league. They all want to be us. And they all want us to hate each other, but secretly we fall in love."

"I don't think I could be discreet about my crush on you," Shane murmured.

Ilya turned and placed his body over Shane's, his smile taking his whole face. "You have a crush on me, Hollander?"

Shane opened his eyes, his expression alarmed. "I mean… we kind of… like," he stammered.

Ilya loved him. He was *sure*. It was definitive.

"You can have a crush on your boyfriend, it is allowed."

Shane's expression turned more alarmed, if possible. Ilya frowned.

"You are my boyfriend?"

Ilya kneeled on the bed, "yes, are you not *my* boyfriend, Hollander?" He tried very hard not to feel ridiculous asking that question, naked, still with a massive hickey over his right shoulder left there by Shane (his apparently not-boyfriend).

"I…" Shane started, Ilya closed his eyes. What the fuck? "You want to be?"

Ilya felt taken aback. What was Shane on.

"I was under the impression that I already was, Shane. For at least a month."

Shane's mouth was wide open. "But you…"

Ilya waited for Shane to finish the sentence. But it never came. "I what?"

"You don't have partners, you get bored and you rarely repeat," he said shyly.

"I *didn't* have partners…who told you that?"

"Rose. I guess Svetlana told her. Like you guys used to hook up, and you aren't anymore, Rose said that Svetlana was happy about us, that you almost never go to the same person twice," he was avoiding his eyes.

"Are you sure Rose didn't mention that the reason Svetlana and I stopped hooking up was because we reached the conclusion that I wanted to be your boyfriend and she had something with Rose? I know for a fact I said the word boyfriend in the conversation."

"I don't know, if she did I probably though she was just messing with me."

Ilya grabbed Shane by the face, they were both on their knees staring at each other. The sun was starting to set, and Ilya felt the temperature of the room decrease. "Why would not believe it?"

He kept his eyes on Shane's; he did not want to miss any emotion crossing his face. "Because…" he bit his lips, Ilya moved his thump to take it out of his tooth. "You are this incandescent person. So fascinating. Everyone wants to know you, to have you, even if its only in fractions. Each night people, men and women, wait in line by the bar just so they

could get a fragment of you, Ilya. And you toss a smile to their way, sometimes even just a look, and you have them. For as long as you want them," he said.

"You don't see you the way other people do, though. The other night at the bar, I thought I was going to show everyone how they teach us to fight in Russia," he tried to joke.

Shane just shook his head. "Maybe some people like my looks or whatever, but they soon find me boring. That's what I'm trying to say. There is so much of you, so much so deep and someday you'll just get bored."

The words fell like rocks at the pit of Ilya's stomach, he could not see what Shane was explaining. Ilya could not phantom getting his share of Shane anytime soon, if ever.

"*I wish I could give you my eyes and my heart so you could see and feel what I do around you. I wish I could make you understand how much I love you*," he whispered in Russian, because the word felt heavier in his mother tongue. Truer.

In English he said, "If I ever get tired of you, I take a walk in the park and picture my life without you. That is real boredom. Not just boredom, that is hell."

Shane closed his eyes, but he hadn't taken Ilya's hands off him or tried to get dressed. The situation could be saved.

"How do you know that?"

Without blinking, Ilya knew what to say, "Because I love you. That simple."

A beat of silence and then Shane's body collapsed over Ilya. Relief.

"I love you, too."

Ilya maneuvers both of them horizontally and clings to Shane like a koala. "I am you boyfriend now, yes?"

"Yes."

"Perfect." Ilya kissed Shane's forehead.

"You should have asked, though. That way I could have been sure earlier."

"You are right. My bad."

Shane

The seconds that passed between Ilya saying I love you to Shane and him saying it back, were probably the most important ones up to that point of his life. They were the ones that

cemented the base of who Shane was from that second from the rest of his life. Shane was in love with Ilya Rozanov. And that was fundamentally true, and that was unchangeable.

There were many seconds that altered the curse of his life, however now he had Ilya by his said. Always the protector, always the supporter. Always reliable.

Always there.

Never bored.

End Notes

give kudos!! (to be read in ilya's voice)

anyways if you have reached this far, thanks. i love you.

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