

I've Seen Love Die, Way Too Many Times

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/77413696) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/77413696>.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Heated Rivalry (TV) , Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid
Relationships:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov , Shane Hollander & Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov
Additional Tags:	Hurt/Comfort , Angst and Hurt/Comfort , Angst and Fluff and Smut , Eventual Smut , Shane Hollander Needs a Hug , Shane Hollander Loves Ilya Rozanov , Ilya Rozanov Loves Shane Hollander , Depressed Ilya Rozanov , Ilya Rozanov Needs A Hug , Protective Ilya Rozanov , Eating Disorder Not Otherwise Specified , both of them have mental health issues , my_pookies , Mutual Masturbation , Frottage , Tender Sex
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-01-10 Words: 7,123 Chapters: 2/2

I've Seen Love Die, Way Too Many Times

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Summary

Kinda AU where Shane and Ilya are forced to discuss their mental health issues before TLG?

Shane goes to surprise visit Ilya a month after he's moved to Ottawa only to find that his mental health isn't great. Shane's isn't either after a health scare and he's forced to focus his exercise behaviors with Ilya. (TW ED/discussion of suicidal thoughts).

Notes

YURR PART 2 IS UP. There is smut in chapter 2 so if you're here for that just fast forward lol (or don't, this fic is very tender and made me cry a lot while writing).

Title is from Emergency by Paramore which has gone triple platinum in my headphones the last couple days thinking about these freaks.

Chapter 1

At precisely 4:07pm, Shane Hollander stood at the dark mahogany door before him, knocking before stepping back. He hadn't told Ilya he was coming—it was a surprise—but they usually tried to make time on the weekends anyway during the offseason since Ilya moved to Ottawa one month ago, and according to their shared Google Calendar, both of them were supposed to be free. One day helping Ilya move in Ottawa, then two back-to-back weekends at Shane's house in Montreal, partially spent wrangling Hayden's kids. This would be their fourth weekend together, hopefully of many, and Shane wanted to celebrate the month Ilya had been in Ottawa with a weekend at the cottage.

He had meticulously planned it out: spend the night so Ilya could pack his stuff even though he was probably just going to throw whatever shit was clean into a suitcase, drive up to the cottage tomorrow after waking up extra early for a run. The weather was supposed to be perfect for swimming.

Shane waited for a breath, and then knocked again—nothing. He wondered if the Ring camera that Yuna had insisted on was set up yet, and pressed the button.

“Hey. It's Shane” he smiled.

Seconds later he heard a stirring and footsteps coming down the stairs, greeted by Ilya shirtless in grey sweatpants—looking disheveled, but Herculean as always.

“Hey. I wasn't expecting you.” Ilya said sheepishly.

“It's a surprise.” Shane responded. “Hi.”

Ilya forced a smile and pressed a kiss to Shane's forehead—his boy. He beamed like sunshine, and Ilya prayed that no one would ever take this away from him or make Shane feel like he did in the moment.

“Let me go put on a shirt”, Ilya said, and Shane followed him upstairs.

“Sorry for the mess. I have bit of a.. migraine,” Ilya explained as he opened his bedroom door.

He wasn't as meticulously clean as Shane was, however he usually kept his room neater than this—clothes on the bed or draped over a chair instead of strewn over the floor, cigarettes and other paraphernalia inside of the nightstand drawer instead of everywhere.

“So is this like, a hangover migraine? Stress?” Shane asked. He knew that Ilya was trying to befriend his new team before the season, and for him that meant lots of drinking and clubbing, however Ilya would have to have an absurd amount of alcohol coursing through his Russian blood to be this hungover.

“Stress. Kind of. Not really.” Ilya answered, sitting down on the bed with his head in his hands. “Haven’t been sleeping good.”

“Well, you’re not doing as much cardio as regular season conditioning”, Shane reasoned. “I could get you some magnesium.”

“No. No need.”

“You should really get this checked out if it continues, Il. It could be like, a brain tumor or something. Or I heard on this infectious disease podcast that people from post-Soviet Eastern Europe are more prone to Tuberculosis.”

“I don’t have a fucking brain tumor, Shane. Or TB. I’m good.” Ilya tried his best to perk up, but it was still clear that something was up due to his unwashed hair and the circles under his eyes.

“Okay, well. I had a late lunch, so I was planning on doing dinner at like, seven?” Shane declared while glancing at his Apple Watch. Ilya wanted to laugh at how much he loved that Google Calendar, how religiously he followed it, when Ilya barely knew what day it was. “Do you want to grab something to eat maybe, and then have an hour or two on the ice before that? I want to see your new rink.”

Ilya nodded. “You’ve played in Ottawa before. It’s your fucking hometown.”

Ilya sighed as he got up and followed Shane, forcing a smile as he pulled a black T-shirt over his head. He was a nice distraction from this. From the state he was in, from the monotony and emptiness of life. Everything blended together except for Shane, who stood out like the first glint of sunlight on an early morning. He stopped by the pantry on his way out, grabbing a protein bar despite only having one of the same protein bar earlier that morning. He really hoped that Shane didn’t notice that all he had in his pantry right now was protein bars and ramen.

They walked in the Ottawa midafternoon sun, with dusk just beginning, turning parts of the sky a buttery yellow. It took everything in Ilya to think of the sun and flowers and Olympic gold medals, and not how it mimicked the jaundice he’d seen on his mother’s face after her liver failed from taking so many pills.

At this point, skating and shooting goals was muscle memory for Ilya. He sparred playfully with Shane on the ice, admiring the amount of new muscle that he’d accumulated while skating behind him. On the other hand, Ilya hadn’t been lifting as much. His joints ached, but he didn’t say anything.

After a particularly bad turn, Shane slipped and thankfully, fell on his tailbone. Ilya immediately sped towards him, forgoing all grace as he slammed into the wall and managed to keep himself from falling as well.

“How’s your head?”, he asked, though it seemed silly. Apparently, once again according to Shane, falls with a direct axial load could accentuate a concussion. Whatever that meant.

“Dude, I’m fine.” Shane stood back up again, skating away from Ilya, and then playfully turning around and shortstopping to spray ice shavings in his boyfriend’s face. “How’s yours?”

The fluorescent lights of the arena didn’t help Ilya’s headache. Being on the cool ice, however, did.

“I told you, I’m fine.”

“Dude, you’re sweaty as hell.”

Ilya didn’t have the heart to tell him that he wasn’t really that sweaty, his hair was just greasy because he couldn’t remember the last time he bothered to wash it. He was always wearing a helmet when he was working with the kids on the ice anyway, and he’d just slipped on a hat at other times—no one had said anything, except for Shane.

After a few more silent minutes of each practicing their own hockey drills, Shane’s eyes met Ilya’s and his head cocked towards the locker room. Ilya was slightly impressed that his mannerisms were starting to wear off on his lover, and chuckled to himself. Maybe the distance between them wasn’t so bad after all.

Shane took his time to meticulously fold his dirty clothes and place covers on his skate blades before putting them back into his practice bag, sitting in front of Ilya and hoping for a show as he did so.

Ilya looked back at him and smiled, knowing what he was doing, only to be met with a grimace.

“Dude, where the hell are all those bruises from?” Shane gestured towards the markings interspersing Ilya’s ribcage and a few on his shoulders. “I thought you don’t start practicing with the team until like, August.”

“No. Just skate drills,” Ilya replied.

“What?”

“No pads. I hit the wall a lot.”

“You’re going to break a fucking rib or something, dude. You probably hurt your neck doing that and that’s why you have a migraine.”

“It’s fine. Building up my tolerance,” Ilya joked. He didn’t have the strength to tell Shane that the pain of hitting the walls of the rink over and over let him feel something, something other than the endless abyss he’d felt lately.

Shane didn’t say anything. Neither did Ilya.

They stopped into a nearby deli before retiring to Ilya’s house—Ilya ordered a sandwich, Shane picked up a salad that he begrudgingly gave up on reading the packaging of after Ilya’s

name was called and he grabbed his sandwich in his mouth due to having an armful of ginger ales.

Shane paid. Still nothing, all the way to Ilya's new house, which still had boxes stacked up in the foyer and living room. He dug in a box to find a fork for Shane before settling on the couch.

Ilya set a ginger ale and a glass with ice on the table in Shane's spot before flicking through the streaming service on the TV, trying to find something that they both hadn't seen, landing on *The Great Pottery Throwdown*—Shane was a slut for Bake-off, and it was supposed to be made by the same people or something.

He looked over at his boyfriend to ensure that his food was okay, only to see him picking at it with his ginger ale unopened. Their eyes met, and Ilya nodded his head towards it in the way that he did when he wanted to get someone's attention without being overly annoying.

“Oh—I have sparkling water. Thanks, though.”

Ilya turned his head back to the TV, hiding his concern. He should've remembered that while they were out, Shane liked sparkling water with a slice of ginger in it now? Or was it a ginger shot? He couldn't keep up.

They ate in silence for the next 30 minutes or so, both fully engrossing themselves in the show. Ilya was convinced that he could beat all of these people even though he'd never done pottery before—how hard could making mugs and bowls be? He thought of how he'd love to take his anger out on one of those 10kg blocks of clay, to smash the pieces that didn't turn out right.

“I should do that. I should do something with my hands,” Ilya stated mindlessly while finishing his sandwich and licking his fingers. “I could beat all of these people.”

Shane grinned, fully done messing with his salad. “You *should* do something with your hands.”

Ilya returned the smile and practically climbed over Shane, shoving him flat on his back so that shining eyes and that stupid grin looked up at him.

Shane chuckled, thinking of something playful to say.

“Getting cocky now, Rozanov?”

Ilya pressed a chaste kiss to Shane's cheek before getting off of him to grab Shane's plate—still half-full as apparently the croutons and meat in his salad weren't to his liking. Ilya

learned not to ask Shane about food he didn't cook, unless he wanted a lecture on ultra-processed foods and preservatives. He stacked his own plate under Shane's, and then grabbed his unopened ginger ale, now wet with condensation, to put back in the fridge for later.

Shane remained seated on the couch, and as Ilya turned back around, he cocked his head towards the stairs leading towards the bedroom. The couch was good, but if he was going to have Shane, he wanted all of him. In pure private. Rough. Hard. Blinds closed. Sprawled out on the bed. Plus, he hadn't devised a hiding place for condoms and lube in the living room yet.

Shane remained fixated on something beneath him, although kind of also staring off into nothingness. Ilya was sure he was judging the dirtiness of his living room. He came closer to make a snarky remark before attempting to tickle him, but Shane's eyes finally met Ilya's, his face white.

"Dude, I like, can't move my legs."

Ilya's mind immediately reeled to Shane's fall earlier, to his prior concussion. What were they doing fooling around on the ice? Had Ilya seriously hurt him, or worse, paralyzed him?

Shane caught the panic in Ilya's expression.

"It just like, really hurts. I don't know. Lot of lactic acid. Probably just that, new weights routine and stuff," Shane explained as he struggled to attempt to get off the couch, obviously trying to blow it off.

A tiny wave of relief hit Ilya knowing that Shane wasn't paralyzed, though it was still unbearable to see him in this kind of pain, especially when he usually took it incredibly well.

"Lay down. I'll call team doctor," Ilya ordered.

"No—Ilya." Shane said, knowing that his team doctor would make a fuss and probably keep him off the ice and out of the gym for a few weeks. "It's probably fine. We can just like, take an epsom salt bath together."

As much as Ilya liked the idea of soaking in a hot bath with Shane, and the thought *buy a hot tub* was now stored in his brain for later, he knew better. Shane handled pain unlike any other, especially being one of the smaller players on the field, and he still didn't look right. His face was scrunched up in the way it was when they both had food poisoning after Ilya convinced him that airport sushi was "fine".

"I'm taking you somewhere. You decide if it's hospital, urgent care or team doctor," Ilya said sternly.

"Urgent care", Shane replied begrudgingly, not seeing the need for all this fuss.

Moments later, Shane was scooped up and put in Ilya's passenger seat; a light butterfly kiss was pressed onto his cheekbone as Ilya buckled his seatbelt for him. He should've taken Shane's car—he hadn't cleaned his car in ages. After running to lock the door, Ilya had one

hand on the steering wheel, and grasped Shane's in the other after looking up the nearest clinic in Google Maps.

As much as Ilya was tempted to run the red light, he was already going 20kph over the speed limit, so he looked over at his boyfriend as his foot pressed on the brake pedal.

"If you need to puke, I think I have something in the back. Towel or something."

"No, I'm fine," Shane sighed, not wanting to puke in Ilya's expensive car.

Shane was not fine, and his salad was chucked back up in the bushes about five seconds after Ilya had parked.

Ilya petted his lover's hair in the waiting room, noting the beads of sweat on his forehead. Thankfully, it was a slow afternoon and didn't take long to get a room.

A nurse came by to take some blood and answer questions, and then made him take a urine test. Ilya helped him into the bathroom, unbuttoning his jeans with swiftness that was usually reserved for quick blowjobs during their earlier, hornier days—without a doubt, if Shane wasn't in pain, he'd be cracking a million jokes about having to help him piss.

The nurse returned with a doctor less than five minutes later, who suggested that the urine test looked like kidney damage, so they probably should go to the emergency room to be safe.

Ilya ignored the part where the nurse said it was non-urgent because Shane didn't have any burns or blunt-force trauma, and sped the entire three-minute drive to the hospital.

They encountered another waiting room, in which Shane looked up at Ilya from his lap, forcing a smile through the fact that his mind was running a million miles an hour and told him that the potential for a speeding ticket wasn't worth it, because they still had to wait thirty minutes.

Ilya disagreed.

Another urine test, in which Ilya didn't crack a single joke again. If this didn't turn out to be something serious, Shane would never hear the end of the piss jokes that were about to ensue, so he tried to play it cool even though his legs burned more than they had ever before during conditioning as Ilya helped him stand up.

More waiting. Ilya held Shane's hand as he stared at the door like a predator, tapping his foot aggressively the way he did when he was nervous.

Another doctor came in, followed by a nurse holding two IV bags.

For the first time since leaving the house, Ilya remembered that he and Shane weren't publicly together as the doctor pointed at him and asked if Shane wanted him to step out. He wondered if anyone saw them in the waiting rooms, if anyone recognized them. Shit. Shane was usually the one who was hyper-vigilant about that, but he was in too much pain to care.

“No, it’s fine. We were—training together,” Shane responded.

“Is HIPAA, right?” Ilya asked half-jokingly, now wary of Shane’s privacy.

The doctor nodded at Ilya. “We don’t have that in Canada, but yeah, this is confidential. You have his permission to stay, though.”

The doctor’s warm brown eyes met Shane’s this time. They could be siblings, Ilya thought. Same hair, same eyes. She was missing his freckles, though.

“Well, Mr. Hollander, you’re going to have to hold back on your training a little. Your urine and blood tests showed that you have elevated creatinine, which means that you have some mild rhabdomyolysis.”

For once, Shane looked puzzled at the medical terminology. The doctor readjusted her badge which read *PGY2 Internal Medicine* and began again, “When muscle breaks down too fast, its contents are released into the blood. Thankfully you and your, um, friend here came in before it caused any real renal damage.”

Both Shane and Ilya looked dumbfounded. They were professional athletes who had been in conditioning for more than a decade, how could his muscle be breaking down too fast?

“So, what’s next?” Shane asked as the nurse behind him hung the two IV bags, trying to stay focused on the path ahead instead of how his entire plan for next season has just been derailed.

“For now, just IV fluids to flush out your kidneys. You might be able to go home in a few hours, but you’re going to need to remain extremely well hydrated the next couple days, as well as no alcohol or over-the-counter medications. And you’re going to need to discuss your training plan with someone to ensure that you ease back into rigorous exercise.”

As the doctor left, Ilya blew a raspberry at the no alcohol part. Shane was unamused.

“This is good.” Ilya said with relief. “You piss it out, then I can take you back home.”

“Yeah, except this messes up my whole summer training plan.”

Ilya’s eyebrows furrowed. “Is summer! What the hell are you doing that’s so important?”

“I have conditioning and stuff. For next season. And I’m trying to bulk up right now.”

Ilya shook his head. “You never let yourself have any fun.”

“Yeah well, it’s hard when...” Shane’s eyes wandered over Ilya’s muscular frame—not as defined as during the season, but still incredibly muscular. “When I’m not you.”

Ilya’s gaze sharpened as Shane turned away. “What do you mean?”

“You know, I’m not as big as you.”

“Yeah, I am center. You’re not. I have to be big because I like, run people over.”

“Yeah, well..” Shane trailed off again. “I don’t know.”

Ilya rose from his chair, moving to the foot of Shane’s hospital bed, careful not to place any weight on him. “What do you mean?”

“I don’t know, I’ve always been a smaller hockey player, and as I get older, I’m worried I’m like, gonna get injured or something. Or not gonna play as well.”

“Is Hayden scaring you again? Is Scott?” Ilya asked, putting a hand on Shane’s hip.

“No.”

“So why you think this, then?”

Shane paused for a long moment, collecting himself and feeling the cool saline solution run through his right arm vein. Ilya took this as his sign to join Shane in the bed, careful not to crush any tubes or catheters as he placed a hand on Shane’s back exposed through the oversized hospital gown.

“You know—you know I told you how I started out skating, right?”

“Yes. Your parents could not tell that their son the figure skater was gay.” Ilya responded, trying to add humor to the situation.

“Shut up, my mom was an excellent skater.”

“I know.”

“Anyways, they told my parents that they should switch me to hockey because I got too big.”

“They didn’t have a older kids skating program?” Ilya asked earnestly. “This is Canada.”

“No, too—too big.”

Oh.

Ilya understood—he was a chubby kid too, however sports like hockey were encouraged from the start in his family. Husky was better than skinny, it was masculine, meant to survive Russian winters.

Ilya’s hand wrapped around Shane’s waist, and pressed a wet kiss to the back of his sweaty head.

“You know I think you’re beautiful, right?” Ilya whispered in his ear. “The most beautiful thing I’ve ever seen.”

Tears welled in Shane’s eyes, which didn’t help the burning sensation in his legs or stomach. “I know that,” he said, smiling. “It’s just—I don’t know, a sports thing.”

“Mm.” Ilya responded as he ran his non-Shane-waist hand through his boyfriend’s damp hair and down the nape of his neck, hoping that his touch would make him feel more secure.

“And then I was always one of the smaller hockey kids. I still am. I don’t know, it’s just a battle trying to get my body to do what I want.”

“Mm.” Another kiss moistened the shell of Shane’s ear this time.

“And I don’t have a great season last season, and I don’t know, I’m just worried about getting older and like, declining.”

“Shane. You are not that old. And I like that you’re smaller. Perfect for me. And not as much of a—clumsy.”

“A klutz?” Shane corrected, holding back a laugh.

As Ilya heard footsteps coming down the hallway, he shifted towards the foot of the bed again, sitting up straight.

Seconds later, the door handle turned, and the nurse tiptoed towards the bed on the other side of where Ilya sat, her blonde ponytail punctuating her otherwise silent footsteps.

“Taking more blood,” she whispered. “Quick poke, non-IV arm.”

Shane did as he was told and stuck out his left arm. He silently wished he could hold Ilya’s hand as he grasped the stress ball placed inside his hand instead—he’d never been a big fan of needles.

As the nurse stepped away, sealing two green-topped tubes in a biohazard ziploc bag, Ilya leaned in to whisper at her.

“He needs hydration, right? Can he have ginger ale?”

“Um, yeah, that should be okay,” the nurse replied.

“Get him one,” Ilya ordered, and then smiled goofily. Shane looked slightly distraught at the idea of having a full-sugar ginger ale with high-fructose corn syrup in it.

A few minutes later, there was another knock on the door, and Ilya answered before turning around triumphantly with a small green can and a cup of ice chips.

“Your muscles need it. Sugar. Glu-cose.” Ilya smiled, proud of himself for remembering a singular science word that he’d heard from Shane as he jokingly showed off his bartending skills and poured the best can of hospital ginger ale the world had ever seen.

Another two or three hours passed. Ilya flipped back and forth between a soccer match and a golf tournament on the TV, periodically peppering soft kisses on Shane’s head and his hand where his IV was placed, as well as getting up once or twice to pester the nurses about Shane’s fluid intake. Shane drank one ginger ale and three gatorades while texting his mom

and trainer about his updated summer plan while Ilya slipped him saltine crackers, carefully rationed to settle his stomach.

One panicked FaceTime call from Yuna later, the doctor who looked like Shane's sister returned with a clipboard and a fourth Gatorade.

"Mr. Hollander, your serum creatinine is decreasing, so we're good to discharge you. Rest for the next 72 hours at the very least, keep up with the fluids, and thank your friend here for taking such good care of you."

Ilya grinned at Shane, noting how his freckles looked normal again, before attempting to scoop him up and carry him to the car.

"I'm fine", Shane giggled. "Just help me change back into my clothes."

Chapter 2

Shane managed to hobble in and out of the car, but when it came to the stairs, he was dumbfounded.

“Maybe you should sleep downstairs tonight. It’s past midnight already”, Ilya admitted, omitting that it would likely be for Shane’s own good to spare him of his sleep troubles. “I’ll go get you my pillows and extra blankets,” he added, knowing that Shane was a blanket hog.

“No, Il, that’s the whole reason I came here”, Shane protested.

“To sleep with me?” Ilya joked, smirking.

”No, to be with you”, Shane replied sleepily.

His sheepish smile got to Ilya, and seconds later he was hoisted over his boyfriend’s shoulder. Surprisingly, he didn’t feel as small as he should, as he reminded himself that Ilya deadlifted more than his own bodyweight.

Shane was settled with another ginger ale and tucked in like a little kid when Ilya kissed his forehead briefly. “I’m gonna go smoke real quick. Just for my head.”

Ilya began to rummage through his nightstand for a lighter and was surprised when he couldn’t feel Shane rolling his eyes at him.

“Oh shit—I totally forgot about your head,” Shane said, feeling like a total selfish prick again. “My gatorade is still downstairs, take it.”

Ilya chuckled. “No, that’s yours.”

Shane frowned—there it was.

“Half. I’m only going to smoke half.”

“Is smoking half a cigarette even a thing?” Shane laughed, while Ilya had switched to looking in the dresser for his lighter.

Ilya smiled. Silence ensued. His smoking habit had been a point of tension in their relationship since their first hookup, and since officially being together and spending more time with each other, Ilya tried his best not to smoke at all around Shane for his comfort, the way he also knew not to bring up Shane’s eating habits. However, tonight he needed this, especially if an orgasm was out of the question.

“You ever think about how much better your cardio would be if you didn’t smoke?” Shane asked jokingly as Ilya continued to dig for a lighter, moving to his backpack, trying to find connection after their earlier conversation in the hospital.

Ilya shrugged. “What difference does it make? I could still play for Ottawa.”

“I don’t know, your VO2 max would probably be better. How long have you been smoking, anyway?” Shane realized he’d never asked as the question left his mouth. He assumed it was just a lifelong thing for Russians, like drinking.

“Since uh, my mom’s funeral.”

“Oh.”

Ilya finally turned towards him, and shrugged. “I couldn’t cry in front of everyone. So someone asked if I wanted to go smoke, an uncle or something, and I said yes.”

“It was your mom’s funeral, dude. You should be allowed to cry.”

Ilya shook his head. His expression said Not in front of my father.

“So what, you never tried to quit?”, Shane asked, trying to turn the topic of conversation back to Ilya’s smoking habit.

“No, I-I don’t think I could.” Ilya said, having fully given up on finding the lighter, placing the pack of cigarettes back on his nightstand and laying back in his spot in bed, arms crossed against his chest. “Keeps me going.”

“Oh.” Shane replied, still unsure of how nicotine could be the thing that kept such an immense force of nature in motion.

Ilya couldn’t hide it at this point—he had been smoking more since he moved to Ottawa, which was made apparent by a full ashtray and at least two empty packs of cigarettes sitting on top of the dresser.

“Is—is just a lot of change lately.” He said after a beat, turning towards Shane.

“What?”

Shane took a moment to digest what Ilya was saying—his English got worse when he was truly upset about something. He nodded as his eyes met his lover’s blue-gray ones, which contrasted against the dark circles that were made more apparent under the faint glow of the hall light under the door.

When he made plans for Ilya to move to Ottawa and start the hockey school, he didn’t think of how he was making his boyfriend move to a new team, a new country, a new job, a new lifestyle, only that he was excited to be able to see his boyfriend more and start something with him.

Shane felt awful—he thought he’d gotten better at reading people over the years, but maybe Ilya was right—he thought about himself too much. Ilya uprooted his entire life, everything he knew since leaving Russia, for a stupid, self-serving prick.

Ilya could see the worry in Shane’s eyes, the cogs working in his brain, and knew that he had to confess, or else Shane would worry himself sick all night and not get any sleep. He needed sleep right now; they both did.

“I—I’ve just been having a lot more thoughts about my mom. At night. Nightmares.” Ilya admitted, hoping that Shane would understand and this conversation could be put to rest for a while. “Happened some when I moved to Boston too.”

“But it’s worse here?” Shane asked, unsure of why this was—was Ottawa somehow more similar to Russia than Boston? The weather was similar, but the people were nicer.

Ilya shrugged again, looking down at Shane’s chest to avoid eye contact.

After a few seconds, he spoke again, carefully. “In Boston, the partying, the sex, the fast cars. It was all... to keep my head quiet.”

Shane looked at him earnestly, silently begging that their eyes would meet again. After all these years, he still learned that they were more similar than he thought. That Ilya’s brain ran at a million miles an hour, like his did.

“What do you mean? Do you want to go back to that?” Shane asked when Ilya continued to look down. He didn’t forbid him from any of these things, lord knew Ilya still liked to party, and Shane would let him see other people if he wanted, but he did condemn it—he wanted to make sure that he didn’t party too hard, drive too fast, fall out of love with him. In Ilya’s favor, he thought, since he wanted them both to have long and successful careers.

“No.” Ilya moved up to kiss Shane’s forehead. “I chose you. And I think it would’ve caught up with me eventually.”

“What do you mean?”

Ilya shrugged again while staring at the wall on the opposite side of the bedroom, taking a long pause to gather himself before speaking again. “I think I’m like my mother. Genetic, I don’t know.”

“You-you think you’d overdose?” Shane asked, unsure of what Ilya meant.

Ilya’s eyes started to get bloodshot, and Shane could tell from the faint glow of the hall light under the door that he was fighting back tears.

“No. I-I wouldn’t actively do anything. But I think if something happened, like a car crash or something, I wouldn’t try to fight it.”

“Oh.”

Ilya turned to Shane, who looked back at him, tears welling in his dark brown eyes now, his freckles standing out against his flush. “Now, I have a reason to fight.”

Shane fully began to sob, trying his best to fight it, but hot tears ran down his cheeks, landing on his chest. He soon felt Ilya’s weight on top of him and his arms around him, holding Shane like he did when he first confessed that his mother was dead and that his father wasn’t well, in the hotel room all those years ago.

As another tear left Shane's face and landed in Ilya's hair, he ran his fingers through the brown curls, and could feel Ilya crying as well, leaking hot tears onto his shirt through raggedy breaths. He let Ilya cry for a few minutes as he held him—he felt nice, like a weighted blanket, and Ilya still rarely cried or confessed things, often making them into a joke or playing them off. He needed this.

As Ilya attempted to regain his breath, Shane spoke again, still petting the baby curls at the nape of his neck.

“I'm glad you're here.”

Ilya repositioned himself so that he could press a salty, slightly snotty kiss onto his lover's lips.

“Me too.”

Shane smiled, his hands wandering down Ilya's back. Ilya pressed another tender kiss onto his soft, ginger ale-flavored lips before grabbing his face and letting a chuckle escape.

“What?” Shane asked.

“I don't know,” Ilya responded. “Funny how life can change.”

Shane agreed—if you told him at eighteen that a hookup during rookie season would lead to him laying in bed all tear-stained exchanging kisses and his deepest insecurities with his former rival, he wouldn't have believed anyone.

“You should really talk to my mom more,” Shane added. “You see her everyday anyway.”

Shane was right—Yuna had basically become queen of the hockey school after they'd gone over the idea with her. She was always cordial and professional, but there was something more there, as she was always checking in and bringing Ilya coffees after a particularly long day. Maybe she had noticed his lack of showering after all. Shit, was that unprofessional?

“And what, tell your momager that I smoke cigarettes because my mom is dead?”

Shane laughed again, this time an actual chuckle. Yuna was still unaware of his smoking habit, but both of them knew that she would see its demise immediately if she found out.

“No.” Shane spoke again. “She, I don't know, is concerned that you don't have a mother figure. She thinks you need one. Just someone to be there for you when I'm not.”

A smile escaped Ilya. For the longest time, he didn't even think about things like that—it was just him and Svetlana as each other's support systems, both children themselves. He hoped that god would protect this boy, the family he came from, how he beamed like sunshine even when his face was wet with tears. Shane was the only person who had tried to make Ilya's life better like this, easier, and he wanted to give him everything for that.

Ilya's hands wrapped under Shane's hips, slowly rotating him towards him so that they were face-to-face.

“Okay?” He asked, looking down at Shane’s still slightly swollen legs before doing anything else.

“Okay”, Shane giggled. It was nice to get off of his glutes, actually.

Ilya pressed a wet kiss to Shane’s forehead, and then another one to the side of his mouth, just barely missing his lips. Another smile escaped him.

Shane took this as his sign to pull Ilya in by the hair, to close the minute distance between them and deepen the kiss. Ilya didn’t protest, but after a minute, whispered against his lips:

“We really don’t have to do anything if you’re not feeling it.”

“But I want to,” Shane smiled, obviously now feeling miles better that he’d gotten things off his chest and it’d been a few hours since he’d gotten fluids. “Just not—“.

“Yeah.” Ilya nodded. No shit. There was no way in hell he was going to put Shane in pain for sex, not unless he wanted it. And not that kind of pain.

“Just be gentle, maybe.” Shane added earnestly.

“No shit.” Rozanov smiled against his lips, kissing him again. And again. As their tongues moved against each other, there wasn’t the normal kind of primal, dirty, feral want, but a deeper, sentimental kind of want there. The kind that said: *I love you. Let me do this for you.*

This was made more apparent as Ilya moved to kiss Shane’s earlobe, and then worked his way slowly and carefully down his neck.

Let me make this even just a little bit better, even if it’s just by making you come, they both thought.

Ilya made his way down Shane’s chest and waist, marveling at the stretch marks along his side as he pulled off his shirt gently, leaving both of them bare, as Ilya never bothered with shirts when he didn’t have to.

His stretch marks. His pristine tan. His muscles. So unlike Ilya, covered in moles and scars, yet they wanted each other. More than anything.

Ilya played with the waistband of Shane’s boxers, peppering kisses along it before pulling it down, and giving a playful lick to the head of his shaft, which beaded with precum.

“Fuck.”

Ilya giggled, before coming back up to meet Shane’s face again, and pulling off his own boxers. He grabbed Shane’s hair firmly, and pulled him into another kiss before grabbing their members and pressing the back of his head to Shane’s.

Shane gasped, immediately filled with the warmth from the head of Ilya’s cock. It was amazing how maybe a square inch of skin could make him feel so warm, he thought.

“Still okay?” Ilya asked while rubbing his thumb against the head of Shane’s cock, which earned him another gasp, a shiver, and another bead of precum.

“Yes,” Shane responded, now fully sex-drunk, his eyes glistening with need. They hadn’t done this since they were back at Ilya’s house in Boston years ago, when they both smelled like tuna melts, and there was something nostalgic about it. Like teenagers discovering themselves for the first time again.

The response was all it took for Ilya to messily spit in his hand and grab both of them together, stroking tightly. There was something about seeing their cocks like this, the difference in size and girth and veininess, even the little freckle Ilya had towards the tip that Shane made fun of, that turned both of them on.

Shane now was fully grabbing onto Ilya’s hair with one hand, the other digging into his shoulder as he pulled him in to another sloppy kiss, making out like teenagers as Ilya stroked both of them off, taking extra time to use his thumb and run it between Shane’s ball before another stroke. Fuck.

Shane liked when Ilya touched him there, a lot. He liked when Ilya touched him everywhere.

“Fuck, I think I’m gonna—“

Ilya knew exactly what that meant, and moved back down to finish Shane off with his mouth, only letting go with a satisfying pop once he’d swallowed every last drop of him. Ilya pressed a gentle kiss on the tip—god, how he loved that dick—before returning to finish himself off with his hands, making sure that he came on Shane’s stomach instead of the sheets so they wouldn’t have to change them.

“Fuck, I’m sorry, I didn’t—“ Shane apologized; he wanted to be the one to finish Ilya off.

Ilya pressed a kiss to his forehead as he grabbed Shane’s T-shirt from beside him to clean him up.

“Next time. When you’re better, you can swallow every last drop of me.”

Shane chuckled and nodded. He liked that agreement.

Ilya reached over Shane to crack open his ginger ale, now lukewarm, and hand it to him. After he took a sip, Ilya pressed another kiss to his forehead before adjusting his pillow and assuming his sleeping position.

Shane’s pupils sparkled with admiration, the way they did when he saw Ilya execute a perfect play.

“How’d you get so good with nurses?” He asked, expecting an answer relating to his past sex life with women, and maybe sexy nurse costumes.

“I spent a lot of time in hospitals.” Ilya replied plainly. “My dad.”

“Oh,” Shane responded. God, he was so dumb, why didn’t he think about that?

Ilya could sense that Shane was reeling as he sipped his ginger ale to avoid eye contact.

“I think a lot of the healthcare people, they’re a lot like you,” Ilya noted plainly, breaking the silence. “Their minds move too fast.”

Shane smiled-he hadn’t seen this kind of admiration, for really anyone besides him out of Ilya, and something inside of him warmed knowing that his rough-edged boyfriend appreciated healthcare workers.

“Is not hard,” Ilya continued. “They like when you’re patient and don’t ask stupid questions.”

“You ask me hella stupid questions.” Shane teased.

Ilya smiled. Shane had to put up with his stupid questions.

“Yes, well you need to stop scaring me,” Ilya retorted.

“Hm,” Shane smiled, holding back a grin. Ilya was his, and he was Ilya’s. They enjoyed the silence for a beat, listening to each other’s breaths without saying anything.

“I think we should get a dog,” Shane added, passing the ginger ale to Ilya.

“What? No. Russians do not have dogs,” Ilya responded, adding another item to the ever-growing nonexistent list of things Russians do not do.

“I thought they had like, pet bears and stuff?” Shane joked as Ilya passed the ginger ale back to him, motioning for him to take another sip.

“Yeah, the czars, back in like, the 1500s.”

They both laughed at that, how different their backgrounds were.

“Well. I don’t know, maybe we could have joint custody. Something to keep you company,” Shane added.

Ilya chuckled again. “We’re going to have joint custody? Of a dog? What about during season?” he asked.

“My parents could take care of it when we’re away.”

“No. That is Asian household. Your mom would not want a dog.”

Shane laughed again-that was a good joke.

“I think my mom would be one of those Asian parents who hates the idea of a dog but ends up spoiling it.”

Ilya laughed this time. “Yuna would love a dog. It would be her grandchild.”

They both laughed as Ilya continued. “She would dress it up, bring it to the hockey school like some stupid parents do with their stupid purse dogs. We’re not getting one of those little Japanese dogs, though.”

“Deal,” Shane responded. He’d always been more of a big dog guy, anyways.

Ilya smiled before getting up to head downstairs. When he returned with two glasses of water, placing one on Shane’s nightstand and one on his, he looked his boyfriend in the eyes one last time for the night.

“I’ll make you a deal.” He proposed. “If you finish that and go back to the full-sugar ginger ale, I’ll only smoke one cigarette a day.”

“Deal,” Shane giggled, and put his hand out to shake Ilya’s like they just decided on a bet.

“I’m gonna take a pottery class too,” Ilya announced. “Just so you know, you’re not getting the weaker side of the deal.”

Shane smirked playfully, still not really knowing what the pottery class thing was about or how it related, but happy for Ilya. “Did you see those guys centering the clay? That’s hot. I’m definitely not getting the worse part of this deal.”

When he turned back to his side of the bed, Ilya looked over to Shane’s phone to see him googling *Doberman puppies near me*.

Ilya sighed and smiled before closing his eyes to sleep, knowing that it’d be the first okay night of sleep he’d have in a long while.

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