

Emergence

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Emergence

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Summary

Admitting how they really feel after Shane's panicked debacle with Rose, Shane and Ilya figure out what being in love without hiding it is like, especially when your boyfriend gets creamed on the ice.

“Concussion and a fractured collarbone but...”

“Could have been worse.”

“Could have been worse!” Shane agrees cheerfully, his brows knotting as he notices Ilya’s discomfort, reaching out his good hand. “Hey, heeey! C’mere!”

Ilya sighs, taking Shane’s hand.

“Yesss, bet-ter... I’m sorry I didn’t text you last night,” Shane pouts, and Ilya cuts him off, shaking his head and stroking his thumb across some of Shane’s freckles.

“No, no, it’s okay, don’t worry about that. How are you feeling?”

Shane shuts his eyes. “Loopy. Pretty bored and headachey. Not awful.” His glazed eyes open again and he looks up at Ilya. “How about you?”

“Didn’t sleep at all. Worried like hell about you.”

“I know, I’m sorry... and I was planning on asking you something last night! I’m mostly pissed that got fucked up.” He pulls Ilya’s hand to his mouth for a kiss. “Will you... come to my cottage this summer?”

Notes

See the end of the work for [notes](#)

LATE SPRING 2017

“It smells like cigarettes,” Shane complains, bringing the hoodie to his nose again anyway.

Ilya rolls his eyes and pulls on the new hoodie, identical to his that he’s now given to Shane. “You want to smell like me or not?”

Shane slips his arms into the hoodie and zips it up, stepping to Ilya to hug him tightly around the waist. “I do, I just wish you didn’t smell like cigarettes.”

Shane had mentioned Ilya’s smell lingering in his bed, cologne and soap and uniquely Ilya, and Ilya had gotten the idea to swap hoodies when they meet up, something discreet to keep each other close while apart. Being together has challenges they had not expected; what had once been an ache packed away and hidden in a dark corner was now full-hearted excitement and earnestness, catching each other being corny and honest in ways that made them both giddy and laugh at each other and themselves. Being in love freely felt like falling all over again. It left both of them feeling heady and reckless and the scant times spent together safely behind closed doors were all-encompassing, wrapped up in each other and forgetting everything else. The All-Star game had felt like hiding in plain sight and gave them something to pin their connection to if they needed. They could always say they’d buried the hatchet there. They’d been lying for long enough already, after all.

Ilya tucks his chin against Shane’s shoulder and sighs happily, hands slipping under Shane’s clothes to rub circles against his back. “I’ll keep wearing this one, and next time, we swap, so then I can wear you and you wear me.”

Shane nods, kissing gently against Ilya’s neck. “I like this plan, that’s a good plan.” They’re winding down, waiting for Shane’s Uber to get close enough to the corner for him to walk up the street for his pickup. He leans back and kisses Ilya’s mouth, patting his ass. “I don’t wanna go,” he whines against Ilya’s lips, kissing him one more time before he grabs his phone off the nightstand and checks the app. “Yeah, but I gotta.”

Ilya walks him to the door and they share one last hug and kiss, exchanging I love you’s before he’s striding down the driveway and up the street. Ilya watches until he can’t see him anymore, standing there a while longer to watch the Uber drive past with Shane in it.

The house feels especially quiet and empty now, but also christened. The last time Shane was here, he’d panicked. Bolted. Run into the arms of Rose. That miasma feels cleared now, recalibrated with lovemaking that started in the kitchen and worked its way into the bedroom. Ilya pads back to the bed and turns his back to it, spreading his arms to fall into the sheets still warm from Shane. He hates being in love to a point, it felt uncool and deeply vulnerable,

not to mention how fucking complicated their entire deal is. But he adores it, too, indulges in soaking up the last of Shane's warmth in the bed and feeling the ghost of Shane's hands and lips on him, absorbing the memories and savoring the time they had together, knowing all too well what it is like to wait in between.

But there are also regular phone calls now, as well as the ever-present texts. There are nights spent together instead of the quick, concise trysts, and video calls here and there. He's thankful for this not least of all because it blots out his last trip home for his father's funeral. Shane had been there for him so well, as much as he could, and as much as Ilya could let himself allow Shane to support him. There was still such a need to carry it all alone, to not let anyone see or share in what he was going through, but he can't hide this from Shane, and he's glad he doesn't. He'd needed those calls, he'd needed to know Shane was waiting for him back home and would see him before their next game together. Without that, he thinks leaving Russia—because he's pretty fucking sure that after this next time he's never going home again—would have thrown him into a deep depression, and he's beginning to accept that he's trending that way regardless, but for now, being with Shane is a panacea to every stress and worry.

By the time he has put away the leftover take-away from their lunch and righted the way they'd royally fucked up the sectional couch and is checking his phone on the charger again, there are already several texts from Shane.

Jane

You gonna be hard all game for me Rozanov?

Jane

Sorry if I'm distracting. :)

Jane

Try not to lose too massively.

Ilya grins at the texts dopily, catching himself and dropping the wide grin as if he were trying to hide it from someone. He shakes his head and texts back.

Lily

That's a lot of chirp from a guy I just gave jelly legs.

Three dots appear and Ilya imagines Shane grinning in the back of the car, sitting somewhere downtown in traffic on his way to the rink.

Jane

Fuck you, you wish :P

Lily

Such a bad liar.

He gets his things together to make the drive back to the rink, himself, having already been there bright and early for morning practice. He doesn't shower Shane off him, figuring he's going to shower after the game, anyway, and who would know the difference?

He regrets the decision the moment he sees the impact coming with no time to try and get Shane to turn around.

Rozanov shuts himself off completely after they had taken Shane off the ice, focusing on the game as if the hit had never happened. He had become adept at this compartmentalization dealing with his father, both in illness and in death. It's only when he's back at home by himself, bed still full of Shane's scent, that the delayed emotional response hits him, hands shaking and worry tightening his throat. He paces laps around the house and searches on his phone for any sports news with updates about Shane, finding which hospital he had been taken to and calling to ask about their visiting hours. Not until ten the next morning. He could get some sleep, maybe.

Restless hours later, he's on a 4AM run just to do something, to try and burn off some of the nerves and racing thoughts. The neighborhood is quiet and dark as he moves between puddles of sodium orange streetlights, trying to not keep hearing the hit or seeing Shane so still on the ice. He had at least been babbling something as they'd stretchered him off, Rozanov tapping his stick vigorously against the boards from the bench in solidarity. Between that and there being so little update about his condition, Ilya's managed to convince himself that Shane is, relatively, all right.

By half past nine, he's sitting in traffic with a travel mug of hot black coffee, fingers flexing and relaxing against the Audi's steering wheel, rehearsing to himself under his breath what he'll ask to find Shane's room and how he'll do it so nonchalantly and not like he's been up all night wondering how Shane is doing. He parks way the hell at the back of the lot, hands tucked into his jacket pockets as he walks into the reception area and up to the desk. Once he has a room number and a visitor's pass to clip to his jacket, he takes the elevator and hunts out the correct ward, finding Shane's room and slipping inside, feeling his nonchalance drop the moment he is in and looking at Shane in the bed, sagging back against the wall by the door.

Shane looks high as a kite, lifting his head and cooing Ilya's name. Ilya swallows hard, not sure how to approach this, feeling like all his nerves and exhaustion are going to leak out of his eyes at some point for certain. "Are you okay?" he asks as Shane's head lolls a little and he gives a sedated smile.

"Concussion and a fractured collarbone but..."

"Could have been worse."

"Could have been worse!" Shane agrees cheerfully, his brows knotting over the bridge of his nose as he seems to notice Ilya's discomfort, reaching out his good hand not attached to the arm in a sling. "Hey, heeey! C'mere!"

Ilya sighs but goes, taking Shane's hand and swallowing down the urge to cry.

"Yesss, bet-ter... I'm sorry I didn't text you last night," Shane pouts, and Ilya cuts him off, shaking his head and gently stroking his thumb across some of Shane's freckles.

"No, no, it's okay, don't worry about that. How are you feeling?"

Shane shuts his eyes and squeezes Ilya's hand gently. "Loopy. Pretty bored and headachey. Not awful." His glazed eyes open again and he looks up at Ilya. "How about you?"

"Didn't sleep at all. Worried like hell about you."

"I know, I'm sorry... and I was planning on asking you something last night! I'm mostly pissed that got fucked up." He offers a dopey smile and pulls Ilya's hand to his mouth for a sloppy kiss. "Will you... come to my cottage this summer? Don't go to Russia. Come to my house, we'll have so much fun, it's so private. No one will know. We could have a week or even two? We'd be completely alone, together."

Ilya feels like it's so easy to imagine Shane practicing this, figuring out just what to say. He's learned sometimes waiting on those texts back when Shane is typing can take minutes at a time. Ilya has tempered his impatience over the habit by choosing to see Shane's thoughtfulness in it. He had already been planning on going back to Moscow with Svetlana, just for maybe three or four weeks, long enough to get the rest of his stuff from the storage room of the apartment he'd given to his brother and maybe go by the school to see his niece without her parents being involved.

"I can maybe do both?" he offers for now, not keen on changing plans so last minute or on a whim, even though the idea of going to Shane's cottage is more than merely enticing.

"Maybe cut my Russia trip a little shorter, take a couple days in Boston to repack and then head to you?"

Shane seems happy with that, nodding and lacing his fingers with Ilya's. "Cool. Yeah, whatever works. I just really think you'd like it, and I really want you there. With me." Time together, real time where, unlike right now, they aren't constantly listening for who might be coming or cutting their eyes to the door, is so rare and precious. The thought of two whole weeks seems like luxury.

Ilya leans down and gently kisses Shane's knuckles threaded with his. "I'll talk to Svetlana about it."

Shane is the one to spot the nurse before she knocks and quickly opens the door, pulling his hand away from Ilya's and laying it over his stomach with a grumbled little "oh no". Ilya takes a half-step back from the bed and gives the nurse a tight smile.

"Uh oh," she smiles back, "you're not gonna smother him with a pillow, are you Mr. Rozanov?"

Ilya laughs dryly. "Ah, no, no, but good thinking." He reaches down to squeeze Shane's shoulder in what he hopes looks like a friendly, sportsman-like gesture. "I was just leaving."

Shane frowns, looking at the nurse. "Hey, are you just doing the vitals checks again? Does he have to go?"

The nurse and Ilya look at each other for a moment before she shrugs. "Yeah, just checking in on you. Visiting hours started at ten, so he's welcome to stay."

Ilya steps back and takes a seat in the padded chair by the window while the nurse takes note of Shane's vitals and the fluids from the IV, asking about his pain levels and checking his pupils. When she's satisfied he's fine, she leaves them again. Ilya pulls the chair over to Shane's bedside, taking his hand again. "Are you parents coming down?"

Shane groans. "No. They wanted to but I told them to just meet me in Montreal to pack my stuff and I'm conval-convolesssss-I'm getting better at their cottage near mine."

Ilya reaches up to gently smooth a hand over Shane's hair. "Good, I'm glad they're taking care of you."

"Don't you have to fly out tonight to Dallas?"

"Yeah but it's not even noon. I can go late to practice."

"And say what, 'hey guys, Hollander's fine, I went and checked in on my boyfriend'?"

Ilya huffs, rolling his eyes. "Fine, then I won't go late, but that means I can't stay long."

"I'm probably gonna fall asleep soon anyway." Shane's thumb strokes across Ilya's knuckles and a goofy, sedated smile crosses his lips again. "It's nice to get to see you some more. Yesterday was really rushed."

"I know. I maybe shouldn't have come but I was worried. Seeing you helps."

They're quiet for a while, gazing adoringly at each other, Ilya's colored with concern as he strokes a hand over Shane's hair, barely any pressure, just letting the soft strands glide under his palm. A little beeping issues from somewhere in the corner that Shane reacts to, Ilya assuming it's just machinery and monitors. "That's my phone, will you grab it? I'm not allowed to look at it yet but it might be my parents."

Ilya gets up and finds Shane's things in a duffle bag on a small nightstand, hunting out the phone. He asks Shane for the passcode and pulls up the multiple missed messages. He sniffs when he sees one from Rose, but the latest one is in fact from Shane's mother. "Update us when you can? I tried calling Hayden."

Shane thinks on it for a moment. "Will you text her back? A nurse let them know last night about the injuries, so they've had that update. Just tell her I'm awake and doing okay?"

Ilya nods and composes a quick text, sending it off. Almost immediately there's a reply. "You're not supposed to be looking at your phone!" They both chuckle a little. Shane shrugs his good shoulder.

"Tell her it's you."

Ilya stares at him for a moment, trying to gauge just how irrational he is right now on whatever medication is taking the edge off his pain. "What, 'hi Yuna actually it's Shane's boyfriend'?"

Shane sticks his tongue out. "No, just say, I'm not the one texting, and you came to see if I was okay."

Ilya thinks about it for a moment and then nods.

Shane

No worries, Shane isn't the one typing. It's Ilya Rozanov. I came down to see how he was doing.

He approves the text with Shane before sending it and the long pause before Yuna replies feels full of anxiety for him, though Shane is grinning.

Mom

Very funny, Hayden. How's my boy?

"Come take a selfie with me," Shane suggests with a smile, holding up his one good arm for Ilya to come lean into him. Hesitant but trusting that Shane knows his parents best, Ilya leans down and gets a photo of the two of them that doesn't look too obviously like they've been fucking for the last decade and recently realized they were madly in love. He thinks. Hopes. He sends it to Yuna without commentary.

Mom

!!! Oh! Well then thank you!

Shane is laughing so hard it hurts. “That’s really gonna do her head in for a while, she thinks you’re Satan.” He touches Ilya’s elbow, rubbing affectionately. “This’ll buy you some points for sure. Text her back and say I’ll call when I have my flights booked?”

Ilya does so and Yuna responds that she’s looking forward to it, thanking Ilya again for being their go-between over the phone and for checking in on Shane. Ilya tosses the phone back into the duffle and pulls the chair back to where it had sat by the window.

“Okay, I really do need to head out if I’m not going to be late.” He looks to the door nervously before risking it to lean down and kiss Shane soundly, earning a cupped hand to the cheek to pull him in a little longer. “I love you, okay? Get some rest and text me when you can.”

Shane hums into his mouth. “I love you, too. Try not to worry too much, okay? Occupational hazard is all.”

“Okay,” Ilya agrees, not quite a promise because he’s not sure it’s a promise he can keep, and he holds himself together until he’s in his car again, safe behind the tinted windows and his sunglasses to actually feel how scary it was to see Shane in a hospital bed, how strong his feelings for him actually are when he isn’t busy trying to shove them all into a box and quiet them. The tears feel like they hold so much more than just today in them and he closes his eyes to wait for them to have their fill.

Weeks later, Shane is home with his parents and Ilya is at the playoffs, or was, alone in his hotel room and on a FaceTime with Shane. Seeing Shane’s face again makes tension drain from his shoulders, letting it out in a sigh, smiling at him. “Hey. How are you feeling?”

“The headaches really suck, I’m pretty light sensitive so it being summer and bright all the time is a bummer, but they’re lessening day by day.” Shane pushes his glasses up the bridge of his nose with one finger and sniffs. “How’s your ribs?”

Ilya startles, tilting his head. “How’d you know about that?”

Shane laughs. “My fuckin’ mom noticed, dude.”

Ilya rolls his eyes, leaning back into the hotel pillows, showered and rooming alone. He ignores the concern about his ribs, which hurt like hell, to be clear, and he nods his chin at the screen. “And your shoulder?”

“Aches. Sometimes sharp pains, especially when I’m like trying to get dressed or in the shower and move it wrong. But way better. Not looking forward to rehabbing it this summer, I can already feel the muscle loss.” His fingers seek tenderly around the healing bone as he talks, wincing a bit and then moving to massage the top of his shoulder, phone set on the side

table by the couch at his parent's place, where he's been sleeping to keep from rolling onto this shoulder in the night.

Ilya sniffs, not enjoying any of the memories of Shane's injury. Planning for the cottage in July has been a good salve to how concerned he'd been for Shane, and gave them both something to look forward to, to pin a spot in the future they knew they'd be able to touch and kiss and actually fucking be together. Even now, Shane is talking in a hushed voice to not wake his parents, though they're probably still watching TV in bed, he assumes, occasionally overhearing what sounds like a crime drama from their bedroom. They both will be relieved to have space they don't have to wear some kind of mask in.

"Hey over the next couple weeks, text me a list of stuff you eat normally at home, so I can stock the fridge for us."

"I'm not that picky, I'm sure I'd eat whatever--"

"No, you definitely would not want to eat my bird food season diet bullshit. It's summer, I'll cook whatever you want, just text me a list, okay?" Shane is smiling, clearly excited about this planning, the anticipation building in a kind of foreplay they're still getting used to, setting the stage not just for sex like so much of the relationship had been up until now but also for quiet, comforting time together, unmanaged time that they could spend doing nothing but slow kisses and staring at the ceiling holding hands.

"I've got a grill, too, so if you like burgers, steaks, whatever, I can cook."

"You can cook?" Ilya says with thick skepticism. "That makes one of us, then."

"You make a pretty mean tuna melt," Shane counters with a smile.

When they say goodnight, it's with the quietest I love you's, Ilya blowing a kiss before sitting in still silence for a long time, letting his mind drift and empty.

The neurochemical high of falling in love aside, Ilya finds that his mind is the quietest it's been in a very long time with Shane, though he assumes surely the death of his father has shut up some of the worrying. All the reminders of how disappointing Ilya was had dimmed at his death, knowing that at least he can stop trying so hard now to do the impossible and gain his father's admiration, respect, love, loyalty... all the things he's seen from Shane's parents even peripherally, knowing that that was an option all along, just one his father had not taken. The playoffs are over, at least for Boston, and instead of eating himself up with regret and anger and waiting around for the inevitable call from Papa, he's calm. Relaxed. A little disappointed, but he hadn't really expected much with all the injuries among his teammates, himself included. It's the first time a loss hasn't felt like it was devaluing him as a person somehow.

These were all the things he doesn't talk about with Shane. At least not yet. In part, he doesn't know how to in English. Emotional nuance is difficult to portray in anything but his mother tongue, but he's trying. Working with a Belarusian psychologist has helped a lot, a new hire to the Raiders health team, able to find enough commonality in the language to get things across better, more true to how he feels them. He has not named Shane, but he has told

her about a relationship that he's very careful with his words talking about, how it's become serious recently and that the rush of being in love for real is unclenching some white-knuckled fist in his chest. He wants to open up to Shane about it while they're at the cottage, maybe say some of the things he'd admitted over the phone in Russian again but this time in a way Shane could understand. Old habits die hard, though, and keeping his true thoughts and feelings behind layers and layers of sarcasm is more comfortable than pulling them back.

Ilya opens his phone and types in his password in Cyrillic for the secure folder, scrolling through photos of him and Shane, some of Shane by himself and a few of Ilya that Shane had taken while they were playing around in Shane's Montreal bed. The most recent one from the hospital makes him sigh, feeling like they'd stuck their foot in the door to eventually telling Shane's parents. He's okay with Shane wanting to keep them to themselves for a while, give them time to have this new phase in private before they share it with anyone else, but he hopes too that Shane's parents will accept their relationship when the time comes to tell them. He knows Yuna carries a pitchfork with his name on it, but he's been assured it's merely her protective, competitive nature around Shane, that once they understand that the rivalry is for sport only, they'll be happy that Shane is happy. All the same, they're perfectly fine keeping the secret a while longer for now, savoring this time without any kind of pretense between them.

Laying in the dark, wide awake, Ilya thinks about the upcoming trip to Russia, soothed only by the following trip to Ottawa and up to Shane's cottage. He wants some better closure, but he wishes he could somehow tie up his last few ends back in Moscow without having to actually go. He knows, reaching to rub the cross around his throat, that he'll visit his mother's tomb, and he knows, too, that it will likely be the very last time. He tells himself it's okay, that she isn't there, that it's a monument to her memory alone, a place he can go for solace, but that she is always with him regardless of where he is. Absently, Ilya kisses the cross and lays it back into the hollow of his throat. His father's passing feels like the end of an era, but it's one he's left with old habits from, all his old coping mechanisms and masks that he'd worn to keep himself in line for his father, to make sure he didn't disappoint Gregori anymore than he already had, anymore than he already did simply by existing.

A bar of light moves across the room as a car passes on the street, its red eyes retreating in the dark, and Ilya rolls over to try and sleep. The time will pass whether he worries about it or not, and on the other side of it is Shane. Knowing that much, alone, he knows he can face whatever may be coming.

End Notes

This series is a companion to [вечнозеленый](#). While this fic can be read as a stand-alone, within the timeline of the joined series it falls between the [first](#) and [second](#) installments of [вечнозеленый](#).

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