

all I can breathe is your life

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by [tangledsynapse](#)

Summary

“Shane takes a deep breath and flexes his fingers in the fabric of the hoodie as he tries to find the words, tries to be brave to ask for what he wants. He’s pretty sure Ilya would try to give him the world, would give him the last breath out of his lungs if he asked. And honestly? He’s not sure whether that makes this any easier. He’s used to struggling in silence—they both are—and he’s had to learn how to ask, how to make his wants and needs known.

And, today, what Shane wants is to be taken out of his head for a little bit.”

Shane’s been having a stressful season. Ilya knows just how to get Shane feeling better.

Notes

Hello hello! This is me arriving fashionably late to the Heated Rivalry fandom, featuring lowkey the spiciest AND most tooth-rotting fic I’ve written to date. You’re welcome :)

FYI this story takes place sometime after Ilya’s trade to Ottawa while Shane is still in Montreal and I’ve tried to keep this pretty canon compliant at least to the TV show so far

Title/inspo for this fic is Iris by The Goo Goo Dolls because a) what a classic and b) I’ve been so unwell thinking about these two with this song

As always, I do not own these characters; I’m just doing this for fun!

Chapter 1: I know that you feel me somehow

Inhale.

He continues to sweep, to inspect, to deep clean every inch of the place despite his bruised body protesting, aching in places he forgot he even had.

Exhale.

It's a deep sigh, world weary, trying to release some of the exhaustion that has sunk all the way down to his bones.

Every breath, every moment brings him back into his body, reminds him that he feels like he wants to crawl out of his own skin. The past few weeks have been brutal with the onslaught of games, with the pressure that seems to be mounting on him this season. Their results could be worse, but he's definitely not playing to the standard he's set for himself. Every time he's out on the ice, it feels like work, feels like he's punishing himself.

Shane would be hard-pressed to pinpoint exactly when he stopped enjoying hockey the same way he did in his youth. Hockey, he knows, is still probably one of the best things that has ever happened to him. It's given him the lifestyle he has, a career he's passionate about, and has introduced him to some of the most important people in his life. But somewhere between the bright lights and the headlines and never-ending grind of trying to get as close to perfection as any human being can realistically accomplish, he feels like he's lost the childlike wonder he thinks he might've had a long time ago.

Although that's not entirely the truth either, he supposes.

With one specific opponent, every time he steps onto the ice it's like the world falls away; everything else disappears as if they're the last two people on earth. It's a bit antagonistic, sure—as is the nature of competition—but it's playful, never even the barest hint of malice. The cold air feels a bit fresher in his lungs, invigorating. He feels like the weight of expectation gets lifted off his shoulders. It's fun, and he thinks he actually performs better for it, knows it brings the best out of him.

That this particular man brings the best out of Shane off the ice as well is just a bonus.

It's been over a month since Shane was last able to see his boyfriend, much to his profound disappointment. Even though Ilya is in Ottawa now, their schedules continue to work against them, with opportunities to see each other during the season too few and often far between. He's grateful that Ilya is closer than he was while still playing with Boston, but Shane is finding it harder and harder to ignore how difficult it is to be apart like this.

Much to his relief, it's Montreal's bye week and by some miracle it mostly overlaps with Ottawa's. Ilya already texted him with an ETA earlier in the day and is set to be getting back at any moment; Shane knows all he has to do is try to hold himself together for a few more moments before he'll be able to breathe easy again.

The way things stand, there's an emptiness that he just can't shake. It lingers like the dull throb of an old wound, sitting just beneath the surface. Shane is grateful for his relationship with Ilya and is grateful for the man he's becoming as a result of finally realizing who he truly is and who he wants to be, but he'd be lying if he said he never cried himself to sleep, aching for the empty spot in his bed to suddenly disappear.

All he wants, all he needs, all he craves is Ilya's lips, his hands, his soft words of reassurance. Shane's strung-out nerves are practically screaming for it at this point, and the anticipation simply continues to build. His love for Ilya is beautiful, breathtaking; but it's also agonizing, not having those strong arms wrapped around him every night as he tries to fall asleep, greeting him first thing when he wakes up in the mornings.

He finishes wiping down the bathroom mirror, resolutely trying to avoid looking at the face he must be making as he swallows back the feelings threatening to claw their way up his throat. A few seconds later, the sound of the front door shutting pulls him away from his spiraling thoughts and back into the present. The pull he feels is stronger than magnetic, it's damn near gravitational as he gets up and starts moving towards the door.

It's a beautiful sight: Ilya, toeing off his boots and shrugging off his winter coat, running his fingers through perfect curls where they'd been smashed down by a hat. The smile that greets Shane once Ilya realizes he's entered the room is blazing, brighter than the sun itself. And Shane's on a collision course; the second he's got Ilya within arms' reach he's grabbing him by the hoodie and pulling him closer. Shane rests his other hand on the nape of Ilya's neck, making his intent known.

Ilya knows exactly what Shane is looking for, and without so much as a second of hesitation is leaning down just slightly to meet Shane in the middle. The resulting kiss is sweet, and maybe a bit messy, but it's a *welcome home*, an *I missed you*. It's comforting and familiar and everything Shane needs right now. It's perfect, and Shane knows he'll never, ever get over how good it feels to have Ilya like this.

"Hey you," Shane breathes out when they part, a smile on his face as he presses his forehead to Ilya's.

He's met by an amused hum that still sends a gentle warmth through his whole body. "Hello to you, too," Ilya murmurs quietly, intimately.

It's only when Ilya pulls back that he can see firsthand how rough things must have been for Shane. He knew Shane had been tired, the exhaustion clear in his voice on phone and video calls, but now he's able to get a much better look at the slight dark circles under Shane's eyes, the way those eyes have got a bit less light in them than they should. It makes him ache on the inside, to realize that Shane's been struggling, putting on a brave face.

It makes him ache to know he hasn't been able to be here.

There aren't enough words in Russian or in English, Ilya thinks, to describe how much he misses Shane when they're apart like this. He knows what he signed up for when he and Shane decided to try and make this relationship work, and he wouldn't trade it for anything

(or anyone) in the world; sometimes, though, he wonders what it would look like if things were different.

Ilya gently cups Shane's face, softly brushing a thumb over those irresistible freckles. Shane leans into the touch, closing his eyes and turning his face just slightly to press a kiss to Ilya's palm.

"You ok?" Ilya asks, keeping his voice light.

"Yeah," Shane exhales, nodding as if he's trying to convince himself just as much as Ilya. "I'm fine."

"Just tired, that's all," he adds, his voice wavering slightly.

"You sure?" Ilya tries to gently prod; he won't push Shane too much today, but he knows they'll need to talk about it eventually. "Is ok, if not," he continues, trying to offer reassurance.

Ilya's softness, his kindness starts opening up the cracks in Shane's careful yet fragile façade. Tears begin to well up in his eyes, the edges of his vision blurring. Shane realizes there's no use in trying to deny how he's feeling, no use in continuing to shove it down. So, Shane simply shakes his head no in response to Ilya's question.

If he falls apart, so be it; he's got Ilya to help him pick up the pieces.

And Ilya can see the hurt, the struggle clear on Shane's face as he pulls him in for another embrace. He presses a soft kiss to Shane's temple and gently rubs his back, more than happy to stand here for however long it takes for Shane to release some of the pressure that's been building.

"Has been rough few weeks for you," Ilya whispers, barely audible if not for their proximity. "I know you've been anxious."

This soft affirmation, the way Ilya is gently wrapped around him offering more protection than any shield has the knots in Shane's stomach slowly unraveling. He relaxes into Ilya's safe, grounding, familiar touch and brings down his walls, takes off the mask.

"I missed you," Shane murmurs against Ilya's collarbone. "I wish you could've been here."

"Me too," Ilya breathes. "Me too."

"I'll be ok, I just..." Shane starts before trailing off, choking back a sob.

"I know," Ilya soothes, that deep Russian accent settling over Shane like a balm for his frayed nerves.

Shane simply holds on a little bit tighter, tears flowing freely from his eyes. He focuses on the strong, solid build beneath his hands, focuses on the steady, assured touches he's receiving from Ilya in return. He takes a deep breath in and smells the leathery, woodsy notes of Ilya's cologne, a hint of ozone from the cold air outside that lingers on Ilya's clothes. He

tries to match the rhythmic, cyclic, tidal motions of the chest that rests against his own, calm against Shane's storm.

There's something about Ilya's presence that Shane finds anchoring, stable, calming. Ilya is the steady hand reaching in to pull Shane out of the waves, the roof that shelters him from the rain. Ilya is the literal and metaphorical shoulder Shane is able to lean on when he can't pretend to be strong anymore. And Shane couldn't put his finger on exactly when he started to notice Ilya's ability to steady his nerves like this, but deep down he suspects it started long before they decided to be officially together.

Slowly but surely Shane's unsteady breaths start to settle, his tears begin to slow.

Ilya speaks softly into Shane's ear when he finally breaks the long silence. "I'm proud of you for being honest with me."

"Yeah?" There's hope in Shane's voice.

Ilya takes a deep breath in and lets it out slowly, also finding comfort in having Shane in his arms like this. Because even though Shane might be the one who needs support right now, for the first time in weeks Ilya truly feels like he's home.

"Yes." Ilya kisses Shane's temple. "Always proud of how brave you are."

Shane simply smiles against Ilya's shoulder, gently squeezing his middle. There's a *thank you* wrapped up somewhere in the gesture, but he suspects Ilya would be content without it.

"Feel better?" Ilya asks, pulling back slightly to get a good look at the man he loves.

Shane nods as Ilya cups his face and gently wipes away the tears. Ilya gives Shane a warm smile before pressing featherlight kisses to each of Shane's eyelids, to the dusting of freckles on the bridge of his nose, to pink lips Ilya swears he would know by feel alone. Shane briefly deepens the kiss before pulling back and placing both hands on Ilya's chest.

Ilya can tell Shane is pointedly avoiding eye contact, can practically see the gears turning in his head.

"What's going on in that pretty head of yours, huh?" Ilya asks softly, covering Shane's hands with his own.

Shane takes a deep breath and flexes his fingers in the fabric of the hoodie as he tries to find the words, tries to be brave to ask for what he wants. He's pretty sure Ilya would try to give him the world, would give him the last breath out of his lungs if he asked. And honestly? He's not sure whether that makes this any easier. He's used to struggling in silence—they both are—and he's had to learn how to ask, how to make his wants and needs known.

And, today, what Shane wants is to be taken out of his head for a little bit.

"I want..." he starts, shaking his head as if to correct himself. "I need..."

"Tell me what you need," Ilya whispers after a short pause, encouraging Shane to keep going.

Deep down, Ilya suspects he knows where this is going, and is going to be more than happy to oblige, but he remains patient. Ilya stands almost as still as a statue, not rushing Shane. After a moment, gorgeous brown eyes finally meet his gaze, looking contemplative, deep and soulful. It causes his breath to hitch slightly when Shane looks at him like this, looks at him like he's wanted. Loved. Worthy.

"You," Shane answers. "Always need you."

"Need me to fuck you?" Ilya asks softly, with sincerity, no hint of judgement or humor in his voice.

"So bad," Shane smiles.

There was a time he's sure he would've been ashamed to look needy like this, but now? Shane looks at Ilya, looks deep into those steel blue eyes, and all he sees is the genuine devotion written plain across Ilya's face. He wishes he could permanently etch it into his memory, the way Ilya's eyes just slightly crinkle around the edges when he smiles the way he's smiling at him now.

At this point, Ilya is pretty sure he knows what Shane is looking for, but just to make sure, "I think you want me to take my time with you, yes?"

"Yes," Shane breathes out. "Please."

"I've got you, Shane," as if to emphasize his point, Ilya wraps one arm around Shane and pulls him in close. "No need to beg tonight."

Shane nods, swallowing hard against the emotions that Ilya's tenderness always seems to bring out in him.

"Lead the way," Ilya gestures towards the stairs with his head.

Whatever lingering nervousness Shane still has starts to make way for excitement, anticipation. He takes Ilya's hand and starts to gently pull him along as they ascend the staircase leading up to the bedroom. Everything about it feels comfortable, familiar, almost routine at this point in their relationship. However, Shane is by no means uninterested; it only serves to make him more confident, makes him feel like he's in the drivers' seat just as much as Ilya is when it comes to sex.

The second they reach the bedroom Shane is slipping his hands beneath Ilya's hoodie. Ilya takes that as his cue to yank off the thick material as well as the t-shirt he'd been wearing underneath, tossing it to the side. Shane places his hands on Ilya's now-bare chest and pushes him backwards towards the wall.

With a devious, knowing look in his eyes, Shane drops to his knees in front of Ilya, making quick work of the front of his sweatpants. He presses soft kisses across Ilya's abs, letting his blunt nails scrape along that perfect trail of hair before taking the head of Ilya's dick into his mouth. Ilya sighs, fighting the urge to close his eyes as he combs through Shane's hair to cup the back of his head.

“Fuck, Shane,” Ilya practically moans around the words as Shane teases the slit with his tongue.

Shane multitasks, pushing down Ilya’s sweatpants and boxers the rest of the way as he takes Ilya even deeper. He sets a slow, languid pace, less about getting Ilya off and more about letting himself enjoy exactly what he’s been missing for weeks. A gentle tug on his hair has him reluctantly pulling off and standing back up, playfully nipping at Ilya’s pec as Ilya kicks his pants to the side.

“I think you’ve got too many clothes on,” Ilya reaches for Shane’s t-shirt with a wicked grin, working it up and over his shoulders as Shane raises his arms.

Shane quickly shoves off his pants and boxers, briefly considering stopping to fold them but ultimately tossing them in roughly the same direction as the rest of their clothes.

“Bed, please,” Ilya murmurs, and at this point he’s not quite sure if it’s a plea or a command.

Either way, Shane is eager to comply, stepping backwards until he hits the bed then pulling himself almost back to the headboard. Keeping steady eye contact with Ilya, he puts one arm behind his head and rests the other hand on his chest.

“Wanna see you,” Shane offers by way of explanation.

Ilya smiles, the words music to his ears as he climbs up onto the bed. Shane takes in the view, takes in how ethereal—almost godlike—Ilya looks in the soft lighting of the bedside lamp; the halo of delightfully messy curls, the expanse of golden skin, the body that he thinks could put the works of Michelangelo to shame. He knows he probably looks like he wants to eat Ilya alive but can hardly bring himself to care.

“Glad to know you still find me sexy after all these years,” Ilya jokes as he comes to rest on his knees and elbows, hovering just above Shane.

The first thing Ilya ever noticed about Shane was how beautiful he is. And while there’s so much more to what he loves about Shane than just his looks, every time Ilya looks at Shane there’s a hint of that feeling from the first time. Ilya softly traces plush, pink lips with his thumbs, admires the warmth of Shane’s brown eyes in the low light, fights the urge to kiss every individual freckle until he’s mapped them all out with his lips.

Ilya whispers, reverence clear in his voice. “I don’t think I tell you enough how gorgeous you are.”

At that, Shane pulls Ilya in for a kiss before sliding his hands down to Ilya’s ass, grinding their hips together. They spend a few minutes just like this, kissing and grinding against each other, breathing in the same air, swallowing the soft gasps and moans that escape each other’s lips.

Eventually, Ilya decides to show the rest of Shane’s body a bit of overdue attention. He turns his head just slightly to start kissing his way along Shane’s jawline, then moves to leaving open-mouthed kisses down Shane’s neck. Ilya teases him with a graze of his teeth and is

rewarded by a quiet whimper. He loves how responsive Shane has always been for him, fucking loves getting Shane worked up like this, desperate and vocal and just aching to be touched.

Ilya moves to Shane's chest and is met by a series of bruises, new and old, marks that tell the story of a season as brutal as the one Shane's been having. There's an emotion he can't quite place, but he feels a pang of sympathy in the pit of his stomach as he kisses each one gently, wishing he could take them away. He makes a mental note to go back and figure out who dealt them, to make their lives a living hell the next time he sees them on the ice.

He presses one last kiss to Shane's sternum before reluctantly climbing off so he can grab the lube out of the nightstand, positioning himself between Shane's legs when he crawls back over. Ilya starts working Shane open with one hand, resting the other on Shane's abs so that he can feel the subtle twitching of the muscles beneath.

Shane forces himself to take deep breaths as he feels cool, slick fingers get to work, his body relaxing under Ilya's touch. That dull pressure, not quite uncomfortable but always a little bit strange, quickly fades as pleasure takes hold, sinking deep down into his core. Ilya's hands are like magic in everything they do, and Shane can't help but feel like this is one of his favorite applications of his boyfriend's dexterity. He lets out a breathy moan as Ilya hits just the right spot, clutching the sheets in one hand and reaching down to grab Ilya's free hand with the other.

It's a gesture that speaks to a different type, a different level of intimacy, a deeper connection. Shane's always trusted Ilya with his body, his pleasure; but now he trusts Ilya with his mind, with his heart.

Ilya's motions are familiar, practiced, based on over a decade of knowledge of exactly what Shane likes, what he wants, what he needs. He knows exactly how to bring Shane right up to the razor's edge without sending him tumbling over the side. Each thrust, each curl of his fingers is slow, deliberate, exacting. He peppers the inside of Shane's thighs with kisses, partly to be a bit of a tease and partly for his own selfish enjoyment.

"Ready?" Ilya asks once he knows he's given Shane enough prep.

Shane, in lieu of an answer, simply pulls Ilya back on top of him before quickly flipping Ilya onto his back. He kisses away the surprised expression he gets in return as he climbs over and straddles Ilya, making his intent clear. Strong hands wrap around his thighs, Ilya chasing his lips when he pulls back.

"You spoil me, sweetheart," Ilya's voice cuts through the silence, deep and raspy and dripping with lust.

Pet names like this are rare from Ilya, and the encouragement is all Shane needs to start slowly, carefully sinking down onto Ilya's length. He smiles, breathing through that exquisite stretch as he adjusts, slightly tightening his grip where his hands are resting on Ilya's chest. Shane's got Ilya's perfect, gentle, confident hands rubbing soothing patterns into his skin, blue eyes looking at him like he's just hung the moon and all the stars. It's almost

overwhelming being on the other end of Ilya's intense focus, but Shane knows there is absolutely nowhere else he'd rather be.

Ilya simply drinks in the view as Shane bottoms out with a soft moan, starts meeting the slow, lazy motions Shane starts to make with his hips. If Shane was gorgeous before, Ilya knows he's nothing short of stunning now. He takes in the sleek lines and subtle power of the muscles beneath his fingertips as he drags them along Shane's chest, abs, thighs. Shane must have found an even better angle as he throws his head back with a soft gasp; Ilya wishes he could lavish Shane's neck with kisses, wishes he could feel that strong pulse beneath his lips, taste the subtle sheen of sweat starting to show.

With a wicked grin, he gives Shane's neglected dick some attention, giving him a couple of teasing strokes from the base to the tip. The resulting sound is sweeter than any symphony to Ilya's ears and it only serves to spur him on further.

"Fuck," Shane groans, drawing out the word as long as his next exhale. "Ilya," he whispers. It's a breathy, needy thing, spoken with a deep reverence.

And, god, it's heady, the knowledge that Ilya and Ilya alone is the person that gets to see Shane like this, the only person that Shane has ever wanted, ever needed like this. How he ever managed to get this lucky, Ilya will never know but he's not about to start questioning it now.

"Shane," Ilya murmurs, full of wonder and affection, like a call-and-response. "Always so good for me," he exhales. "Fuck, you feel perfect, take me so well."

He's equal parts unable and unwilling to hide how affected he is, his own breathing starting to get more strained as Shane keeps working them both closer to the edge. Time could slow to a halt, the rest of the world could fall away for all Ilya cares. Everything he wants, everything he needs is right here in this bed.

Shane feels like he's starting to get close, that telltale feeling starting to build. But doesn't want this to come to an end just yet, wants to enjoy it just a little bit longer. He pauses for a moment to catch his breath, appreciate the burn that's setting into the muscles of his thighs, distinct and separate from the soreness that sits in various other parts of his body.

Shane hangs his head down between his shoulders, Ilya sitting up slightly and pressing a soft, intimate kiss to Shane's lips. Shane tries to follow Ilya when they part, Ilya taking that as is cue to wrap one arm around Shane's lower back and the other around his shoulders before carefully rolling Shane onto his back, Shane instinctively wrapping his legs around Ilya's waist. Ilya lowers himself down to his elbows, gently combing his fingers through the soft, dark strands of Shane's hair with one hand and brushing across flushed freckles with the knuckles of the other before following the gesture with a kiss to Shane's cheek.

As much as Shane loves the brash, cocky, sarcastic side of Ilya, it's the vulnerable moments like this, the quiet adoration that never fails to get Shane falling impossibly harder in love.

"I love you," Shane murmurs, only audible for the lack of distance between them.

“I love you, too,” Ilya replies before giving Shane a toe-curling kiss. “Always.”

He leans down to whisper in Shane’s ear. “Ready for me to keep going?”

Shane simply nods, reaching up to hold onto Ilya’s shoulders. Ilya starts tentatively, making sure they’ve both adjusted to the change in position. Satisfied, he sets a slightly faster, slightly harder pace than what Shane had been at. Ilya slips one arm behind Shane, pulling him in a bit closer, arching Shane’s lower back just slightly. Ilya knows he’s in the right spot now, enjoying the throaty moan and the blunt nails across his shoulder blades he receives in response.

The new angle is mind-melting, devastatingly perfect in every way, lighting up nerves and synapses that Shane almost forgot that he had. Every thought in his brain has been reduced to mush, the only sounds he’s capable of producing now limited to whimpers, moans, expletives, and the occasional quivering shout of Ilya’s name. Shane can’t help but arch back even further as he sucks in ragged breaths, Ilya pressing wet kisses to his now exposed neck.

Ilya knows they’re both getting close, knows that he probably won’t even need to get a hand on Shane to make him come.

“Where do you want it?” Ilya asks, giving Shane options, knowing that he often doesn’t like to deal with the mess but likes the way it feels.

“Inside,” Shane moans in between reminding himself to keep breathing. “Need you inside.”

He’s not sure how much longer he’s going to last, the margins quickly thinning, every cell in his body singing with pleasure, with excitement, with want.

“Fuck, Ilya,” Shane gasps for air after a couple more well-placed thrusts from Ilya. “I’m gonna—”

“Let go for me,” Ilya presses a kiss to the angle of Shane’s jaw. “I’ve got you.”

Another moment and that’s just about all Shane needs to hit a dizzying peak, crashing over the edge as his orgasm washes over him. Ilya follows close behind, moaning, a shudder coursing through his whole body as he works them both through it. Ilya starts planting lazy kisses along Shane’s neck, his face, his lips as they both start to come down, both men panting, their chests still heaving.

“You ok?” Ilya asks once he catches his breath.

Shane lets out a breathy laugh and smiles. “Very.”

“Good,” Ilya lets out a low hum, giving Shane a soothing kiss as he pulls out.

Ilya then lies down next to Shane; Shane rests his head against Ilya’s shoulder, instinctively seeking out more contact. Ilya, in response, takes Shane’s hand and holds it, brings it up to his lips for a soft kiss.

“I think we need a shower,” Ilya breaks the comfortable silence, the sweat starting to cool on his skin.

“I can hardly move,” Shane exaggerates with a smile, still feeling a bit shaky.

Ilya just laughs softly, knowing that he’s absolutely whipped and not able to find it in himself to give a damn at the moment. He moves to sit up, punctuating it with a quick kiss for Shane, before getting out of bed and heading into the ensuite. He then reaches into the shower and turns the water on, lets it start warming up. After a moment, Ilya returns to the bedroom to collect Shane.

“Time for shower, princess,” Ilya playfully teases Shane, who he has to gently coax into getting up. “Let’s go.”

Shane reaches out towards Ilya, who pulls him in and grabs him up by the hips, lifting him up into the air. Shane clings tightly onto Ilya, mostly just because he can, not because he’s afraid Ilya is going to drop him. The wide, cheeky grin on Shane’s face tells Ilya all he needs to know.

“You’re a little shit sometimes, you know that,” Ilya murmurs against Shane’s lips.

“You love it,” Shane laughs.

Ilya lets out a content sigh. “I do.”

He gently sets Shane back down on his feet before they both step into the shower. Ilya washes himself off first, letting Shane enjoy the heat of the water on his undoubtedly sore muscles. Once satisfied that he’s clean enough, Ilya reaches out to Shane, pulling him into his arms. Shane stands chest-to-chest with Ilya, resting his arms on Ilya’s shoulders.

Shane is as relaxed as he’s been in weeks—if not months—as he stands under the water, eyes closed, enjoying the feeling of Ilya’s capable hands gently washing him from head-to-toe. It’s sheer and utter bliss, how Ilya takes such attentive, such deliberate care of him in moments like this. Shane remembers how terrifying it was at first, but there’s been something so freeing about letting himself be seen, be known like this.

“Want some help getting cleaned up here?” Ilya speaks quietly over the sound of the water, running his hands suggestively along the curve of Shane’s ass.

The question is genuine though, delivered with the kind of open honesty Shane is proud that Ilya is comfortable showing around him. And not for the first time tonight, it hits Shane just how deeply he trusts Ilya, how comfortable he has also become in this relationship.

“Yes,” Shane answers softly. “Please.”

“If you get hard—”

“I won’t get hard,” Shane interrupts.

“You insult me, thinking I don’t know you by now,” Ilya laughs. And it’s beautiful, melts something inside of Shane’s heart every time.

Shane doesn’t bother to dignify Ilya with a response, sheepishly hiding his face against Ilya’s neck. As loathe as he is to admit it out loud—mostly at the risk of stroking Ilya’s ego—he actually loves how Ilya is still every bit the sexy, sarcastic, Russian asshole he started falling for all those years ago.

“So,” Ilya circles back, “I’ll ask it again: *when* you get hard, do you want me to make you come?”

When Shane really reflects on it, one common thread that stretches all the way back to their first hookup is the way Ilya had always been generous, always kind (even when he wasn’t necessarily nice) to Shane during sex. Ilya was his first—if not only—for practically everything and while, yes, he does remember feeling nervous about his lack of experience or trying new things, what Shane remembers even more clearly is how respected, how safe he always felt with Ilya. Shane knows that Ilya would be devastated if he ever hurt him like this, ever did something Shane didn’t want.

“Yeah,” Shane acquiesces, accepting that Ilya is probably (definitely) right. He’s certainly not about to turn down a second orgasm, especially when he’s been missing Ilya like this for weeks.

Ilya drops a kiss onto Shane’s shoulder as he pulls him impossibly closer, hiking one of Shane’s legs up around his hip to improve the angle. He reaches around and starts gently pressing into Shane with one finger, meeting little resistance as he does so. Shane, in return, lets out a breathy, pleased sigh as he relaxes into Ilya’s hold. Ilya adds a second finger after a moment, keeping his motions unhurried yet purposeful.

“This ok?” Ilya asks, checking in.

“It’s perfect,” Shane offers in response as he presses a soft kiss to Ilya’s collarbone.

It’s not long before Shane’s dick starts taking some interest in the proceedings, getting hard where he’s pressed up against Ilya. Ilya notices Shane’s breathing pick up, notices the way he subtly shifts, seeking even more contact. Ilya, distantly, knows he’s also probably starting to get hard, but at this point he’s laser-focused on Shane, intent on making Shane feel sexy and wanted and just—good. In this moment, he wants nothing but to give Shane the type of buzz, the pleasure that Shane can only get from him.

“How do you want me?” Ilya murmurs in Shane’s ear.

He can feel the full body shiver that Shane has in response, can hear the sharp inhale and he can’t help but grin, teasing Shane’s earlobe between his teeth.

“Your mouth,” Shane is quick to answer. “God, Ilya, I’ve missed your mouth.”

With a short but messy kiss, Ilya gently releases Shane, propping him up against the wall before slowly sinking to his knees. Ilya kneels on the warm tile and it feels more holy than a

prayer, feels tangible and solid and real as he firmly grips Shane's hip with one hand, letting the other roam freely across flushed skin. With one smooth, practiced motion, he takes Shane into his mouth, briefly adjusting before setting a brutal pace. He's breathing heavy through his nose, his jaw aches, his knees are almost immediately sore but the taste, the weight of Shane on his tongue is too intoxicating for him to care.

Shane sinks his fingers into Ilya's hair as his own breaths become more ragged, as he starts feeling that familiar tingling at the base of his spine.

"Ilya—" he warns somewhat halfheartedly, knowing full well that Ilya has zero intention of stopping.

The sensations are overwhelming: the warm, wet heat of Ilya's mouth; the strong grip on his hip, tight enough that Shane hopes it might leave a few bruises; the absolutely obscene sounds coming out of both of them. It's enough that it's got Shane practically seeing stars, breathless as he finally feels that sense of release, his second orgasm hitting him harder than a hit into the boards. Ilya takes it all, working Shane through it until he starts to feel overstimulated and pulls him off.

Ilya is immediately back on his feet, crowding Shane against the wall of the shower, hands on either side of his head. Shane could easily feel boxed in, caged, trapped, but all he feels is content. Safe. The kiss that follows is surprisingly sweet considering everything they've just done, and Shane can feel the love-drunk smile on his face as he continues to come down, warm and happy and boneless.

"How was it?" Ilya asks, sounding far too pleased with himself, his voice now a little bit rougher than before.

"That was so fucking hot," Shane murmurs before pulling Ilya in for another kiss. "You drive me crazy, you know that?"

Ilya chuckles. "Good crazy, I hope."

"Good enough to keep you around," Shane murmurs against Ilya's lips, voice full of mirth.

Ilya feigns affront, rolling his eyes and giving Shane a playful smack to the thigh, which only makes Shane giggle even more. At this point, Ilya knows they're testing the limits of Shane's water heater and decides to get them both out of the shower before the water starts getting cold. He shuts off the water and reaches out for the towels, passing one to Shane before stepping out of the shower and starting to dry off. It's a comfortable, companionable silence as they get dressed and change the sheets, both trying to ignore just how much they missed this casual domesticity.

Afterward, they find themselves on the couch with a rerun of one of last week's games on at low volume, less so actively watching the hockey game and more just enjoying each other's company. Shane's got Ilya's head resting against his chest as he gently combs his fingers through damp curls; Ilya's got a hand slipped just beneath the hem of Shane's sweatshirt, softly stroking the bare skin of Shane's hip with his thumb.

“I think I’ve just been struggling to find as much joy in it this season,” Shane says, seemingly out of nowhere.

And it takes Ilya a second to realize what Shane’s talking about, but he gets there in the end. He wasn’t necessarily going to bring it up tonight, but he’s definitely noticed it too. From a technical standpoint, Ilya knows Shane is as good as he’s ever been; that much is obvious. But the reality is that Ilya watches Shane’s games back nearly as much as his own and he can tell that Shane’s playing has been a bit off this season. In fact, the only time Ilya’s seen glimpses of the hockey player he knows Shane truly is was when he’d been playing Ottawa.

“You don’t smile as much as you used to,” Ilya tries to validate what Shane is telling him. “On the ice, anyway,” he clarifies. “But maybe off it, too.”

Shane sighs deeply, taking a moment to collect himself, to ground himself in the tender touches, the gentle weight of Ilya pressing him into the soft couch.

“I don’t want to retire,” Shane states with particular emphasis.

He knows he doesn’t need to explain himself to Ilya, but for some reason he feels like he has to say it out loud. At this point, he’s not sure exactly what he wants, but he knows it’s something he’s going to have to figure out sooner rather than later.

“But maybe I just need a change of scenery?” Shane adds, sounding unsure, the words coming out more like a question than a statement.

“You think you want to move when your contract is up?” Ilya asks softly, without judgement.

“Yes. No. I don’t know,” Shane groans, scrubbing a hand over his face. “I used to think I’d be at Montreal for my whole career, but now I’m just not sure that’s what I want.”

“You’ve got some time to think about it, at least.”

“Yeah,” Shane exhales, still clearly conflicted.

“Listen,” Ilya starts after a short pause in the conversation, propping himself up to look Shane in the eyes. “Whatever you choose, just know that I’m here for you, ok?”

Shane furrows his brows, skeptical. “Even if I move halfway across the country?”

“Even if you move halfway across the country,” Ilya offers reassurance. “It’ll be tough, but we’ll make it work.”

“Ok,” Shane whispers, a sad half-smile doing nothing to mask the sheen of tears welling in his eyes.

“I love you, Shane,” Ilya gives Shane a quick, chaste kiss. “I just want you to be happy.”

“I love you, too,” Shane answers as Ilya lies back down on his chest, pressing a soft kiss to the crown of Ilya’s head.

Ilya is warm, and cozy, and exactly where he wants to be right now, an idea starting to form in his head as they both doze off.

Chapter 2: I just want you to know who I am

Chapter Summary

Ilya has a surprise for Shane

Chapter Notes

Welcome to the bonus chapter! This work was originally going to be a one-shot but partway through I got the idea for this instead

The next afternoon, Ilya walks back into the house, shutting the door and hanging up his coat. It's still freezing outside, but he's grateful it's not snowing today as he rubs his hands together to work some warmth back into them. He's just been out loading up the car, preparing for the surprise he'd started planning for Shane.

Shane, at that exact moment, walks into the room and sees Ilya come through the door. He'd been off in another room doing some stretches and a bit of yoga; he had heard Ilya getting up to something but didn't think he was planning on going out anywhere.

"What are you doing?" He asks, genuinely perplexed.

Ilya looks up at Shane. "I have a surprise for you," he grins.

"I think you will like it." Ilya does his level best to try and sound convincing. "Go get ready; just wear something comfortable like this, maybe some layers," he adds, gesturing to his own sweatshirt and sweatpants.

Shane, truth be told, isn't typically a huge fan of surprises. He does, however, trust Ilya so after a short moment of consideration decides to go along with it. At the very least, he appreciates the specificity as he goes to get changed. When he comes back down the stairs, he's met by a soft, proud smile from Ilya which has him feeling a bit less nervous about the uncertainty of the situation.

"Perfect," Ilya offers encouragement after Shane puts on his shoes.

Ilya holds out Shane's winter coat for him to put on before opening the door and gesturing Shane through. They go out to the car—Shane's SUV instead of Ilya's car—and Ilya hops into the driver's seat. The shit-eating grin returns to Ilya's face as they make their way down the streets of Montreal, reaching over to hold Shane's hand.

Shane can't quite make out where they're going and isn't super familiar with this part of town as Ilya finally turns off the road into a small parking lot. He can tell it's a small hockey rink though, which serves to only add to his confusion. He has mixed feelings about the idea of putting on a pair of skates right now, his mind immediately going to the training drills that he's been doing all season long.

"I don't have my stuff," Shane protests, but surprises even himself with the lack of conviction in it.

Ilya gestures towards the back of the car with his head as he shuts off the engine. "Check the trunk."

Shane turns and looks back as if he can see behind the seats while Ilya gets out of the car. Shane skeptically unbuckles his seatbelt and gets out, meeting Ilya behind the car where he's already got the hatch open and is moving around the contents inside. He steps up to Ilya, who immediately shoves a duffel bag and a hockey stick into his hands.

"What are we doing here, Ilya?" Shane asks, the hint of annoyance in his voice betrayed by the fact that he shoulders the bag and takes the stick without hesitation.

"Swimming," Ilya supplies, deadpan.

Shane shakes his head with a small smile. "You're an asshole."

Ilya just smiles back at him before shutting the hatch and walking towards the door. Something inside of Shane melts a little bit every time he sees that smile; he's amazed it still has this effect on him after all this time. He quickly snaps out of his lovey-dovey haze though, jogging a few steps to catch up with Ilya, who holds the front door open for him as he heads inside.

They step into the small rink and it's a simple setup, little more than the rink itself and a couple of benches, a small office in the corner. It's nowhere near regulation size for adult and professional games, but the goals on either end suggest that there might be some youth or amateur hockey that gets played here. Ilya drops his stuff onto one of the benches and starts getting out his skates, redirecting Shane to why they must really be here. He quickly follows suit, sitting down on a bench and opening up his bag.

He looks down at the contents and everything has been packed perfectly, the way he'd do it himself, but Shane can't ignore the uncertainty in the back of his mind. Ilya looks over and sees Shane still looking a bit hesitant, walking over before straddling the bench next to Shane.

"Will be just us, Shane," Ilya offers reassurance. "I reserved the rink for a few hours and told the guy who runs it that I'd lock up when we leave."

"How did you even find this place?" Shane asks as he laces up his skates.

"Had some downtime after the end of last season while you were still in the playoffs," Ilya shrugs. "Got bored. Felt good to strap on a pair of skates for a little bit and clear my head."

“I thought this might be a nice change of pace for you,” Ilya continues. “Besides, I like skating with you, and we almost never get to do anything like this.”

“No coaches, no timers, no drills” Ilya presses a kiss to Shane’s temple. “Just you and me out there on the ice.”

Shane looks at Ilya and feels like his heart could burst out of his chest. He thinks, abstractly, that his mouth might be hanging open but he’s too distracted to notice. He’s so far gone, so completely head-over-heels in love with his sweet, thoughtful, asshole Russian hockey player boyfriend with the perfect curls and the pretty blue eyes that he almost can’t stand it.

Almost.

“You ok?” Ilya asks, checking in.

Ok is an understatement; Shane doesn’t think he’s ever been this ok in his whole life.

“Yeah,” Shane smiles. “I’m great. This is...great.”

Ilya simply smiles, giving Shane a quick kiss before handing him his stick. Shane finally takes a closer look at the stick Ilya has brought for him and—like everything else—it’s perfect, but he has absolutely zero recollection of buying or taping it.

“Who taped this stick?” He asks out loud as he continues to run his fingers along the tape work, admiring it. “I don’t remember doing it.”

“I did, obviously,” Ilya answers pragmatically.

Shane’s brows furrow, even more confused. “You don’t tape your sticks like this though.”

“No,” Ilya shrugs. “But you do.”

It might seem simple, trivial even, but to Shane it’s simply the cherry on top of everything else that is making him feel so deeply seen, and known, and understood. He almost can’t fathom it now, the idea that he and Ilya were supposed to hate each other for a lifetime, when Ilya is the one person in the best position to understand and learn who Shane truly is and what he has to face in his day-to-day. Because Ilya feels it all, is walking alongside him on such a similar path: the fame, the pressure, the physical intensity, the nuances of playing as a center, the locker rooms, the captaincy, the secrecy that they have to maintain. Truly, the list just keeps going.

And Shane? Well, Shane doesn’t really say anything in response; he’s not sure if any words would be able to fully do it justice. Instead, he pulls Ilya in for a tight hug, hoping that maybe what he’s feeling can be communicated through touch alone. He fights back tears—happy ones this time—as Ilya’s arms wrap around him in return and give him two gentle squeezes, which tell him not only does Ilya know, but that he feels the same.

After a moment, Ilya lets him go but brings his hands up to cup Shane’s face.

“Ready?”

Shane nods, wiping away a stray tear. Ilya rewards him with another kiss before standing up off the bench and holding out his hand for Shane to take. Together, they walk over to the open gate, where Ilya presses a soft kiss to the back of Shane's hand before letting go and stepping out onto the ice. Ilya pulls a puck out of the pocket of his sweatshirt and tosses it somewhere towards the middle, skating around it like an invitation.

Shane takes a deep breath and steps onto the ice, picking up speed as he first skates around Ilya before heading towards the puck. Ilya shoots him a mischievous grin before taking the puck and skating away from Shane, as if daring Shane to chase him. Shane knows that if they were fully warmed up there would be no chance in this race, but he's content to let Ilya think he's winning for the moment. They spend the next few minutes like this, almost like a delicate dance, Ilya trying to throw Shane off while Shane lets Ilya remain just out of reach.

He can see why Ilya was drawn to this. There's no pressure, just skating; it's the feeling of the breeze through his hair and the sound of skates on the ice. The cool air fills his lungs and, in comparison to how he's felt the past few weeks, he feels truly alive.

Eventually, though, Shane's competitiveness proves far too strong to ignore and he catches up to Ilya. He knows he has to be careful—they both do, since it's still in the middle of the season—but that won't stop him from a good battle with Ilya to get the puck. Ilya, in all fairness, puts up more of a fight than Shane expects him to, but after a few moments of scrapping Shane is the victor.

And when Shane uses his speed to pull away, looking back at Ilya over his shoulder, he finds himself smiling, the heaviness in his chest suddenly a little bit lighter.

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