

Toska (frozen tears)

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Toska (frozen tears)

by [Birds On a Concrete Wall \(AmetistLex\)](#)

Summary

New Year holidays and wishes haven't been the same since he became twelve, but Ilya wanted to try and recreate that faint feeling he craved with Shane this year. He freed his schedule, bought decorations for the cottage and planned the activities for their short holiday, even fresh snow just fell from the sky — but today things turned out the way they did. Ilya could tell Shane felt guilty, so he reassured him it was okay to go and manage his career.

It was. It still is. Ilya is the one who is not okay.

*

He shouldn't be feeling this way, but somehow, Ilya feels more fragile than a colorful bauble on a tree.

Notes

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

Ilya does not cry. Russians do not do this.

Well, especially Russian men — as his father told him ever since he was a little kid and fell on the ice for the first time. It was a nasty fall, and skating blades were sharp. There was a lot of blood, and it's been pretty scary as Ilya can vaguely remember — but there was no place for the tears on ice, that's a lesson he learnt well.

Maybe too well, considering how now Ilya wants to cry so badly, yet he can't. Tears just wouldn't come out, despite the sharp stinging pain under his ribs and a sour taste in his mouth. He doesn't have any blood or injuries, though, so he can't even justify crying, which makes all of it worse. Ilya hates how *weak* he feels, despite not taking any real hits.

Strong wind blows, and something behind Ilya's back rattles against the glass cottage window. He jerks up, immediately turning around, even though he knows there should be no one near their house, not people nor wild animals.

It's just a small bush, its branches mockingly letting out a knock when they hit the glass, but somehow it sounded like a gunshot in the middle of all the quiet nature sounds Ilya already got used to. *Stupid Canadian bush.*

Ilya is sitting outside in his hoodie and beanie in front of a peacefully cracking bonfire. He sits there and stares at the flames, slowly boiling himself in the strangely bittersweet atmosphere. Shane cleaned the bench from snow, and he put logs on fire for Ilya to sit and look at, he also prepared a thick coat on a hanger — which Ilya did not put on anyway in a strange fit of rebellion, — and sausages for him to grill.

And then Shane left.

This is the most difficult part for Ilya to deal with at the moment.

He stares at his hands, that are still freezing despite warm air from the fire that gently reaches him in waves. "It's not the end of the world. It's just for one night. He needs to go and bag that brand deal," he tells himself in quiet frustrated Russian.

No, he doesn't. They would sign the contract even without him being present in the meeting. Yuna could handle it.

"Shane would want to be there in person. He cares about his reputation," Ilya continues out loud, arguing with his own thoughts, desperate to unravel the fog in his head.

They should've offered the brand deal to you as well, then, so you could go with him. Are you not as good as Shane Hollander?

"Well, I am a bad reputation. And it would be crazy for us to be publicly together... on a billboard."

And here you have your answer, Ilya mocks himself. Why you're sitting here all alone and wallowing in ugly misery, uneuliy ti pedik, Ilyushka —

— suddenly, at the end of the thought the voice in his head sounds awfully like his brother's, and Ilya gets startled.

"Idi nahui," he curses bitterly in emptiness. It's unfair. His mother's voice keeps fading in his memories with each day, with each unfortunate hit he gets in the head, no matter how desperately he tries to grasp at its remains or look at her photo, but that fucker's voice, and his dad's voice are still so damn loud.

Too loud for this empty, silent cottage. Ilya involuntarily looks back, hoping for a miracle, but the inside of the house is still dark and unmoving. He should go back, turn on the lights, complain about bad heating again (Shane didn't think he'd beg to visit the cottage over winter), and eat something, for fuck's sake—

But it's still a little bit nicer here, next to the bonfire. Ilya has good memories about it now, it brings the sense of comfort. Peacefulness, no matter how fragile it is.

He digs into snow with the toe of his shoe, and kicks some to the side. His mood would be better, if it wasn't for the date.

Tomorrow is December 31st. To Ilya's sincere disgust, Canada doesn't care much about celebrating New Year, just having Christmas, but in Russia, it is the biggest holiday. He could call it his favorite, even, because despite the mixed emotions, there was something special in New Year when he was a kid that he could not feel since then.

Ilya doesn't really like his birthday. It always used to be a big parade of keeping his mask up in front of other guests so his dad could brag about him, the new responsibilities put on his shoulders and promises to achieve more, more, more for their legacy, the sneers from his envying brother. And then sneaking out in secret to clubs and bars that didn't ask about the passport as long as he threw big money at them so he could party with Sveta and Sasha and anyone who'd want to join. By the end of his birthday, all the beer and glasses of whiskey, screwdriver and bloody mary cocktails would mix together inside of Ilya along with pickles and garlic rue breadsticks, and then he usually polished it all with straight vodka shot and a sloppy blowjob in the dirty bathroom — to rebel until his last spot of conscience.

But New Year was different. It is a family gathering holiday, so the spotlight wasn't only on Ilya, and he still remembers the time when Lyokha was sated with his own gifts, running off to play with them, and their dad drank himself out right after the midnight countdown and president speech, so the Ilya and his mom were the only ones left. In this miracle moment frozen in time, she was beautiful, gentle, and they made wishes together, giggling to each other. They wrote them down on paper slips — Ilya with his awkward scribbles and typos — and then burned the paper to the ash. Ilya was too young to drink champagne but his mom would wink at him and say he's allowed only one sip, just for the wish to become true.

He somehow still remembers the first taste of bitter alcohol, mixed with ash — and his wish didn't even fully burn before he eagerly dropped it in a glass so he had to chew on it later. Yet this is still one of the warmest memories in his life, because his mom laughed — and she didn't laugh often, — and then they would dress up and go outside in cold winter night to watch the mesmerizing big fireworks blooming in the dark sky over festive Moscow. Ilya ended up so tired, and so happy, and mom hugged and kissed him before tucking him in, and

for a short moment before falling asleep, he hoped for the new year to be full of these joyful moments.

New Year holidays and wishes haven't been the same since he became twelve, but Ilya wanted to try and recreate that faint feeling he craved with Shane this year. He freed his schedule, bought decorations for the cottage and planned the activities for their short holiday, even fresh snow just fell from the sky — but today things turned out the way they did. Ilya could tell Shane felt guilty, so he reassured him it was okay to go and manage his career.

It was. It still is. *Ilya* is the one who is not okay.

He feels stupidly alone and miserable, even though everything is fine. Everything is *more than fine*. He has a new family, Yuna and David are just amazing, they are finally on the same page in their relationship with Shane, not afraid to say how much they love each other. They even carved these days out of their busy schedules just because Ilya asked — maybe a little too desperately and nervously. And Shane will return tomorrow just in time for celebration. So Ilya's supposed to feel happy.

But Shane is not with him now, and New Year here is not so festive as it was in his childhood, Canada is no fun, but his homeland is thousands of kilometers away — and Ilya still misses it despite confidently crossing the point of no return long time ago. Even bonfire has already died down to weakly glowing coals, and Ilya has frozen his ass off sitting on this bench. Even fucking loons have migrated to a warmer place, leaving him in deafening silence and cold.

Ilya does not cry. On his own. Maybe he'll learn how to do it again with more time, following Shane's soft whispers and promises that he'll hold him through it. Shane has an unexplainable ability to bring the tears out of him, and the scariest thing is that Ilya no longer turns away or hides. Because it's not embarrassing or weak, if Shane sees his emotions full on display. Shane himself smells like "No Tears" shampoo, like a chamomile tea; like care and forgotten sense of home — and Ilya realizes with horror that Shane is the *only* anchor in his life.

And he isn't sure if he can survive without it.

Ilya returns back into the cottage. He can't quite tell how much time passes before he turns on dim lights in the corners. He tries to watch TV or put on the latest match with Admirals so he can scoff at Scott Hunter for fun, secretly admiring him — but it quickly got boring. It feels wrong. Meaningless without another person to bounce off jokes or discuss hockey with.

Ilya is restless, anxious, lost. He's itching for something, and the itch feels awfully close to any kind of withdrawal.

Who needs doping when I have Shane Hollander.

He shoves down thoughts about having a cigarette — Shane will know with his supernatural senses that he broke his promise, and Ilya doesn't want to disappoint him. Again. Instead, he circles around the kitchen in search of *something*, closing and opening cabinets, prominently

ignoring a meal that's been waiting in the fridge. They cooked it together in the morning, so they should eat it together. It is only logical. He doesn't really have an appetite right now anyway.

He stumbles upon a first aid kit in one of the cabinets, and involuntarily holds his gaze on the box for a second longer than needed. He hurts so much, it feels like a physical pain. Ilya thinks of taking some Tylenol-

No.

The thought zaps through him like a lightning.

No.

The pills kill.

That's how they kill.

Ilya doesn't know what his mom felt before she... He choked on his thoughts. If his mom felt the same pain, the same unbearable loneliness despite being with them, when everything seemed to be fine, if something ice cold crawled under her skin just like he feels it now, too... Ilya doesn't want to admit it but with a shiver down his spine, he finally understands how tempting it could be to slip.

Ilya isn't strong like his mom, but he promised to himself, when he first shared this part of his memories out loud, that he would never do it to Shane.

Shane can leave him. But Ilya never will. Fortunately or not, he's always been too *lazy* to do anything about the abyss named *toska* calling him.

As a lifebelt, an anchor to drag him back into reality, his phone buzzes with a new message. Ilya flinches, slams the cabinet door close and hastily pulls it out.

[Jane: That was an unnecessarily long meeting. But I'm done now.]

[Jane: Going to my parents' house to sleep. Will be back to cottage early morning.]

[Jane: How are you there?]

Ilya finally remembers how to breathe with his full chest again. He smiles, fingers struggling to type out the message properly.

[Lily: Not good. Will be better if u show me ur beautiful face😊]

Another buzz, and an image pops up on the screen. Shane looks tired but satisfied, his suit still tidy but hair a little messy. Freckles still beautiful as ever. It's dark and he's apparently in a backseat of a car.

[Lily: 💕💕💕😍🖤🔥💞👉😍😍🐱🙄😜]

[Lily: Gimme call?]

[Jane: The fact that I'm no longer in public doesn't mean that I want to subject my parents to all the sounds hungry Rozanov makes when FaceTiming me. I forgot to bring my earphones with me.]

[Lily: Aw :(Life's not fair.]

Next messages fall one after another, like snowflakes. As if Shane sensed his desperation.

[Jane: I'm sorry... I wish I was with you now.]

[Jane: Just wait until the morning. It's only a few hours.]

[Jane: You can do it, right?]

It would probably not kill Ilya, yes.

[Jane: We'll celebrate amazing New Year, just like you love it. You'll tell me.]

Ilya probably needs to also tell him about the dark thoughts that consume him during New Year holidays, too.

[Jane: I'll call you once I'm home.]

Lastly, a bubble with a short audio message pops up. Ilya clicks on play, drinking in the sound like a thirsty man in a desert. Shane's voice is as tired as he looked on the photo above himself, and it sounds shy but earnest.

~Good night, Ilya. And remember... Ya tebya lyubly~

Like on command, Ilya finally cries.

End Notes

I ground out that tool tip translation from Russian doesn't work on phones so to anyone who needs it:

"what a sad faggot you are, Ilyushka" - words from his brother Ilya hears in his thoughts

"Go fuck yourself" - his voiced out response

There are only 191 works in Depressed Ilya Rozanov tag? I decided I should contribute, because I'm also an expat in a foreign country who is strangely homesick during this time of the year. And I am not suffering alone, Ilya!

P.s. If you struggled to read through the paragraphs in the first half, I am not sorry (and I did begrudgingly break it to separate sentences when my good friend El told me it's too much. I also removed so many dashes). I decided to incorporate some Russian writing style when Ilya's in his thoughts and reminiscing, and went back to more western style in the end when he talks with Shane. Just because I can :)

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