

Coffee break

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Coffee break

by [deadwizardskinnie](#)

Summary

Shane gets kidnapped.

Ilya goes pretty fucking crazy.

That's it. That's the fic.

I had so much fun writing this.

Inspired by [this tweet](#)

Notes

Like, what do you mean Shane gets kidnapped and Ilya goes to get him back?
Insane. Look where imagination can take us.

Hope you enjoy reading it and that it meets at least half of your expectations.
Love you, x

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

Some things only happen in the movies.

Alright, maybe not *only* in the movies, but definitely not very often in Ottawa. And they especially do not happen to professional hockey players.

In broad daylight, no less.

Shane is coming back from practice. It was optional, so of course Ilya did not bother getting out of bed earlier. By the time Shane got back from an early walk with Anya, Ilya was still in the middle of his coffee.

There were not many people on the ice. Shane was the first one to show up and the last one to leave. And practice was good. Two rookies showed up and spent the entire time staring at Shane with little heart eyes. That is what Ilya calls it, ever since Hayden taught him the phrase.

On his way home, Shane is in an unusually good mood. Lately, everything has been going right. He plays for a team that respects and accepts him exactly as he is. He got the A on his jersey, even though he insisted he did not deserve it.

Ilya is doing better. He goes to therapy regularly and takes his meds. The side effects faded a long time ago, and that spark has returned to his eyes, the one that went completely dark last season.

Shane genuinely likes his life.

On the way, he decides to stop by a tiny Eastern European style café that sells freshly made bliny. Normally, Shane makes them for Ilya himself ever since he learned how, but today he does not feel like cooking.

The café is located in one of Shane's least favorite neighborhoods. Ritchie Street is not a place Shane visits often, except for the rare occasions when Ilya is craving Russian comfort food.

And the thing is, Ottawa has a very low crime rate. It is calm. Shane might be biased, but it feels warm, family oriented, and a little boring.

That is why, not even in his wildest dreams, does Shane expect that as he walks back to his car with his café purchases, something heavy and blunt will slam into the back of his head.

As he falls, the bag of bliny slips from his hand, along with the coffee he planned to drink before getting home. Ilya makes terrible coffee. Shane only drinks it when he has to, and he would never tell him that.

The last thing Shane thinks before losing consciousness is that the coffee spilled straight onto the bag of bliny, soaking it completely. That probably could have been salvaged, if not for the

heavy black boot that crushes everything into a mess.

Ilya is bored.

He finished his coffee a while ago and, truth be told, he is starting to get hungry. Not that he cannot make breakfast himself. They just always eat together, and Ilya has a pretty good feeling that today means bliny from his favorite café.

Shane thinks it is always a surprise. In reality, Ilya can predict it about ninety percent of the time, the exact day Shane decides to treat him.

Shane has rituals. Rituals Ilya would never dare disrupt.

He knows them all by heart, which is why Shane not being home exactly forty five minutes after practice ends is very, very unusual.

Ilya waits another five minutes before calling him.

By the fourth ring, (Shane always picks up on the second if he has the phone in hand, or the third if he is driving and answers through the car) Ilya knows something is seriously wrong.

Generally speaking, Ilya is the kind of person who keeps a cool head in almost any situation. The only exceptions are Shane and Anya. Or any of Jackie's kids. Or any of the Centaurs players.

Alright, so maybe Ilya does not keep his cool all that often, but this time...

Wrong. Wrong. Wrong.

Where is Shane?

AJ is panicking.

He does not know why he let himself be talked into something this fucked up.

And of course, he got the worst possible job.

Shane Hollander is lying in the back of his car, stretched across the seats, eyes tightly blindfolded. AJ barely managed to drag him inside. And AJ is not small by any means, but Shane Hollander is about one hundred ninety pounds of solid muscle.

Jesus fucking Christ.

Of course they hit a red light. Why did they choose rush hour? Who came up with this plan?

Zu came up with this plan. Who else would.

AJ nervously taps his fingers against the steering wheel when he hears a pained groan from behind him. AJ sighs internally. Of course.

In the rearview mirror, AJ watches Shane Hollander try to push himself up. AJ made sure to tie him in a way that makes it impossible. The tinted windows help, but AJ is starting to sweat.

“What the fuck?”

AJ presses his lips together, trying not to respond. Which, for him, is completely unnatural. First of all, he is the biggest chatterbox on the planet. Second of all, Shane Hollander is his fucking idol.

That is probably the only reason AJ agreed to pick him. He could not pass up what was likely his only chance in life to see him up close.

Even if it meant tying him up and temporarily blinding him.

“Hello?” Shane Hollander speaks again. His voice trembles, and AJ feels a stab of guilt.

“Uh, hi?” AJ cracks.

“Hi?” Hollander squeaks.

“I mean, yeah. How are you?”

“How am I?” Hollander repeats blankly.

AJ goes quiet. He has no idea what to say. If Zu were here, she would have gagged Hollander already. Or knocked him out again.

“Is this some kind of prank?” Hollander asks after a moment. “Because if it is, it is really not funny. Ilya is going to lose his shit.”

“No. It is not a prank.” AJ hesitates, then goes with the simplest explanation. “We kidnapped you for ransom.”

Hollander makes an indistinct sound.

“We? Who is we?”

“Me and Zu.” AJ shrugs.

“Who the fuck is Zu?” Shane manages.

“Oh, she is my partner. And my friend, I think.” AJ pauses. “Although I am not sure she would call me that. I am pretty sure she kinda hates me.”

A few more seconds of silence pass.

“Ransom? You want money for me?”

“Yeah. You are worth a lot of cash.”

“And this is the method you chose to get it?” Hollander no longer sounds scared. He sounds irritated.

AJ clenches his jaw. It is not like they did not try a million other things. He and Zu worked their asses off just to stay in Ottawa. The problem is that Zu is absolutely terrible at holding any kind of legal job. Crime is in her blood. Letting her work anywhere with a cash register is like tossing a sheep into a lion’s enclosure and expecting it not to get eaten.

AJ, on the other hand, could not keep a job for a different reason. He is simply useless at everything except breaking the law. He can steal all kinds of vehicles, deal, scam people. That is the only thing he is good at, the only thing where no one calls him a loser.

But Shane Hollander does not need to know any of that.

Shane Hollander should stay quiet for the next few hours until they get exactly as much money for him as they need.

“Listen. Sorry about the bump on your head. I hope you do not get a concussion. And it is nothing personal.” Okay, AJ is lying, but how else is he supposed to calm a kidnapping victim. “We really need the money.”

Zu.

Zu needs the money. AJ does not anymore.

Hollander mutters something in response. AJ hears his uneven breathing and recognizes a panic attack. He has seen plenty. There is just not much he can do to help right now. He reluctantly considers knocking him out again, but they are close enough to avoid that.

Shane cannot breathe.

The situation he is in is so absurd that, if not for his pounding heart and lungs that refuse to cooperate, he would be laughing.

How did this happen? It was such a good day.

The man behind the wheel sounds young. Inexperienced? Or maybe experienced. Shane is tied almost as securely as if Ilya had done it himself.

Oh. Ilya.

Poor Ilya. He really does not need this right now. Tears sting at Shane’s eyes. What if the kidnappers decide this is not worth it? What if they cannot get what they need and just get rid of him?

Ilya is only just getting back on his feet. Only just learning how to live the life he deserves.

Eventually the car stops, and Shane is still fighting his own body. He knows the signs of a panic attack and knows that is exactly what is happening, but he cannot distract himself. How are you supposed to, when you are being kidnapped?

The man gets out of the car. Shane hears muffled voices outside. A moment later, two pairs of hands pull him upright and drag him out.

Shane is still gasping for air. His legs give out completely, and they have to pull him along the ground.

“He is having a panic attack,” one of them says. The same one who was driving.

“Tough. He will be fine,” the second voice replies flatly. It sounds like a young woman. “As long as he stays alive until we get the money.”

Shane finally goes completely limp. His body feels soft, useless. The kidnappers are not ready for it, and Shane drops to his knees.

Then he blacks out again.

Ilya is panicking.

He has never been this scared in his life. Not even when he was on a plane whose fucking engine caught fire kilometers above the ground.

He paces back and forth. Anya senses his stress and pads after him across the carpet.

Ilya pinches the bridge of his nose. Is he overreacting? Maybe Shane stayed with the rookies to practice. Maybe he just wanted to drive around, listen to music.

No. Shane would rather get a concussion in a game than drive around Ottawa in the middle of rush hour.

Ilya calls Haas. Just like Shane, he would never skip practice.

“Sup, cap?” Luca answers surprisingly fast.

“Do you know where Shane is?”

“Uh, no?” Haas sounds confused. “I left before him, obviously. He was still on the ice with those two kids.”

A small, minimal wave of relief washes over Ilya.

The next person he calls is Mickey, one of the rookies.

Ice cold panic crashes back in when Mickey tells him that after practice, Shane stayed behind to help them collect pucks. After that, everyone went their separate ways.

What does that mean? What is he supposed to do now? Is it too early to call the police? Should he go look for him himself? Wait a little longer?

The decision makes itself.

The phone ringing makes Ilya flinch so hard he nearly drops it. Unknown number. He answers without hesitation, already imagining the worst case scenario, a call from the hospital.

“Yes?” His voice is tight, but he does not care.

Silence.

Ilya checks if the call is still connected.

“Ilya Rozanov?” A firm female voice cuts in.

Hospital.

“Yes.” He barely gets the word out.

“Good. Listen carefully.”

Ilya frowns. Would someone from a hospital sound this demanding? A chill runs down his spine.

The woman continues.

“We have your husband. He is alive. If you want that to remain the case, you will do exactly as I say. Is that clear?”

Is this a movie?

Ilya loses the ability to speak entirely. Is this some kind of cruel joke? Everyone who has ever known them knows you do not joke about Shane with Ilya. Anyone with half a brain would know they are risking their life even pretending.

Before Ilya can respond, the woman speaks again.

“Do you understand?” she snaps.

This does not sound like a joke.

Ilya swallows. A thousand ways to lose a life flash through his mind.

“Yes,” he hisses through clenched teeth.

Zu is not worried.

Is this her first ransom kidnapping?

Yes.

Is she ready to do whatever it takes to cover her own ass and AJ's when everything goes to hell?

Yes.

Has she ever killed someone?

Yes.

And she still has nightmares. Turns out it does not matter whether the person deserved it.

But whatever. Back then she was not even as desperate as she is now. Back then she did not need the money the way she needs it now.

Zu has killed for family once, and she will not hesitate to do it again, not when the people she cares about are on the line.

Ilya Rozanov seems similar in that way. That is exactly why she chose Shane Hollander.

They watched him for weeks. Hollander is painfully predictable, his daily routine down to the minute.

And AJ did great. She knew he would. He always does. He always stays unnoticed. Zu knows how good he is at leaving no trace.

While he handled that, she had something else to take care of.

Something AJ would not like if he found out. Shane Hollander is his idol, after all. El knows that and she has made peace with it. The second they get the money, AJ can hate her all he wants.

Over the phone, Ilya Rozanov does not sound like he does in interviews. His voice is flat, stripped of any swagger.

He is terrified, and he should be.

He should be terrified. Fear pushes people into the stupidest, riskiest choices.

Like handing kidnappers three hundred thousand dollars.

Shane's eyes go wide when he hears the amount the girl names.

Zu.

That is what the guy from the car calls her. She calls him AJ.

Shane has only been awake for a few minutes, but he does everything he can not to show it. He listens hard, for the first time forced to rely on only one sense this much. Zu is talking to someone on the phone, the police?

He decides to make a sound, to let them know he is here, that he needs help, and then he realizes his mouth is gagged. Instead of words, a panicked noise tears out of him.

Zu goes silent immediately.

“That was your proof,” she says into the phone. “Now you will have to take my word for it.”

Then there is silence for a few seconds. Zu is listening to the person on the other end, but Shane cannot hear anything coming from the phone.

“Fine,” she says, irritated.

Fast footsteps close in on Shane, and the gag is yanked out of his mouth, rough and careless.

“Prove to your husband you are alive and well.”

All the blood drains from Shane’s face. He knows that if he were standing, he would hit the ground for the third time.

Tears start sliding down his cheeks. His Ilya. Shane realizes that not once has he worried about his own life. Ever since he woke up in the car, all he has been able to think about is his perfect husband.

They have known each other for so many years, and they have done so little together.

They have never gone to Europe. They planned to next year, after the season. They have not gone out as much as they wanted to. They were supposed to go play pool at a bar, go to another Fabian concert.

They promised Scott and Eric they would both come to the bar and take part in the charity thing. As a couple.

They had so many ideas they wanted to bring to life at future hockey camps.

So many plans and dreams.

Shane does not want to scare Ilya even more. He wants to tell him everything will be okay, that he should not be afraid.

But Shane does not know if everything will be okay, and he is terrified too.

A few terrifyingly quiet seconds pass before the voice Ilya knows better than his own finally comes through.

“Ilya?”

Ilya braces one hand on his knee when he feels himself sway. Shane sounds so scared, even though Ilya knows Shane is doing everything he can not to sound like that, not to make it worse for him.

Shane always does everything he can not to worry Ilya.

He will control his voice even when he is terrified, even when his own life is on the line.

And Ilya does the same.

Despite the tears dripping onto his shirt, the shaking knees and hands, his heart trying to claw its way out of his chest, Ilya forces the bravest tone he has.

“Shane, baby.” He has to keep his voice low. No matter how hard he tries, he cannot trust it at full volume.

“Ilya...”

Shane tries to keep talking, but Ilya cuts him off. This time in Russian, hoping Shane will understand even through the panic.

“Shh, lyubimyy. Vsyo budet khorosho. Pozhaluysta, nikogo ne zli i ne provotsiruy. Zhdi menya. Zhdi menya, ty znaesh, chto ya vseгда pridu.” Ilya knows his voice still breaks anyway.

Shane does not get the chance to signal whether he understood before that bitch’s voice cuts back in.

“I already told you what to do. Don’t even think about involving anyone. We’re watching you, Rozanov.”

The line goes dead.

“Fuck!”

Ilya drops down, both hands on the floor, fighting with everything he has not to smash his fist or his own head into the panels.

Fucking bitch.

He rests his forehead between his hands and forces a slow inhale, a slow exhale. He is not losing it now. He can have a heart attack after this, after Shane is safe at home.

Ilya has never killed anyone. He has never even felt the urge. He hates death and anything that comes with it. And, for all his issues, he is not a fan of violence either.

Now it all evaporates.

Ilya sees red.

He is russian, obviously he has cash at home. Just not even close to what they need. Fifty thousand. The rest he has to scrape together another way.

He paces through the house, yanking open cabinets, staring at paintings and sculptures, most of them chosen by Shane. Most of it is too big, too heavy. He needs something smaller. Something discreet.

In any other situation, Shane would have bitten his head off for this. Right now, it does not matter.

Ilya does not even know the exact value, definitely more than three hundred thousand, but he does not focus on that. He shoves all of Shane's Rolexes into a backpack.

Shane Hollander starts choking again.

AJ sees how much it pisses Zu off, how close she is to smashing Hollander in the head again. That would be the second time. Third, if you count AJ's hit.

Yup. She's done

They get a few minutes of peace, then Hollander starts waking up, and then the awareness hits him and he starts acting like he cannot get air again.

AJ walks up and crouches in front of him. He cannot see Hollander's eyes, and honestly, good. AJ has never liked looking at heavy emotions.

"Dude, calm down. Seriously," AJ says quietly. He knows Zu is listening, and he does not want to push her. "You are two seconds away from getting your head cracked again. Get it together."

Hollander holds his breath, clearly trying to stop the panicked gasping. AJ is not sure that is a great idea, but if Hollander passes out, that would honestly do everyone a favor.

Hollander tries to say something, but the gag blocks him. AJ throws Zu a questioning look. She rolls her eyes. AJ knows that means yes and starts loosening the gag.

Zu's phone vibrates and she walks to the far end of the warehouse to answer, God forbid AJ is allowed to know anything about her plans.

Hollander finally takes a deeper breath, his chest rising and falling a little slower.

"It is really hard to breathe," Shane rasps.

"I am sorry, yeah. Sorry about the inconvenience," AJ says automatically.

What the fuck is wrong with him. If Zu heard that...

AJ has a real problem controlling his crush on Shane Hollander. Not like that. Not that kind of crush. But Jesus. It is Shane Hollander.

And out of everyone on the planet, AJ is the one who kidnapped him.

AJ gives Hollander a few more minutes to breathe, then ties the gag back on. This time Hollander does not panic. He leans against the pillar they tied him to and sits in silence.

AJ does not have anything else to say either.

Just a little longer.

Ilya has no idea how he is managing to drive right now. His thoughts are everywhere except the road.

He knows Shane can hold on a little longer. He knows his Shane. He knows Shane can survive anything. Shane is the bravest person Ilya has ever met.

And Ilya cannot imagine a world without him. Not ever.

Ilya has their future planned out.

A few more years with the Centaurs. Then a well earned retirement and they will see a huge part of the world, places they once only whispered about, as if saying them out loud would make them disappear from the map.

And once, it really did feel like that.

When that video hit the internet, Ilya knows it felt to Shane like the only place left on the map was the four walls of their house.

But then everything worked out, and there are so many things they still want to do together.

They will have kids. They have not talked about it yet, but Ilya knows it is something they both want. Shane would be the perfect dad. The kind who goes to parent teacher conferences, helps with homework, cooks real meals.

Ilya would be the kind of dad who gets irritated looks and lectures from Shane, along with a ridiculous amount of gratitude for taking the kids to loud, sparkly fairs or signing up for the parents' race.

Shane would bake the best cakes out of all the parents, and Ilya would never miss a chance to brag about it.

The other parents would not like Ilya and would adore Shane. They would wonder what Shane sees in him, and Ilya would laugh.

Their kids, on the other hand, would love Ilya, and in return they would wonder why their parents keep giving Mister Ilya those looks.

But nobody would ever stop him from taking care of their children. Everyone would know Ilya is good with them. A little grudgingly, they would drop their kids off for playdates Ilya organized, and they would be very happy Shane is the one providing the food.

Ilya has everything planned.

He knows how they will love each other in the coming years. How they will live. It feels like it was all sitting in the back of his head already, years ago, when what he and Shane had did not even have a name yet.

Zu takes a deep breath and tucks the gun into the back of her waistband, immediately checking that her hoodie covers it.

AJ is going to hate her.

Fuck AJ and his cancer. Fuck him for planning to leave and not even fight.

Fuck all the years they spent together, years Zu wasted on fears that feel stupid and irrelevant now.

And fuck Zu for loving him.

And fuck their life for looking like this.

Fuck everything and everyone that ever got in their way of making it out.

And fuck Shane Hollander for that innocent face and that stupid good heart.

Zu feels like she is going to throw up.

Ilya reaches the outskirts of Ottawa.

An old warehouse, basically in the middle of the woods, makes any hope of anyone getting out alive drop almost to zero.

But not Shane. Ilya will make sure of that.

He does not take a single step toward the warehouse. He has to fight his own body with everything he has not to storm inside.

Just like he agreed with the unknown bitch, Ilya calls the number and tells her he is there.

AJ realizes something is wrong the second Zu ends the call and lunges at him, smashing the pistol grip into his temple, a gun AJ has no idea where she even got.

It is not hard enough to fully knock him out, but it is enough to send him to the floor, long enough for Zu to tie him up and drag him into a different room by the back entrance of the warehouse.

“I am sorry, AJ,” Zu whispers. “Now listen to me.”

AJ tries to speak, but Zu clamps a hand over his mouth. It hits him all at once that he got played, that Zu lied to him.

“Ilya Rozanov is going to come in here with our money. I believe he has it and that he did not risk calling the cops. Even if he did, we should have some time.” Zu is slightly out of breath. “I will handle everything, AJ. Like I promised, remember? I promised you would start treatment, that we would find a way.”

AJ stares at her, wide eyed.

No. This is not how it was supposed to go.

They were supposed to get the money, tie up Rozanov the same way as Hollander. Leave them in the warehouse. Then, when nobody found them for two days, call the police themselves. By then they would be far, far away, in another country.

And Zu was supposed to use that money to start a new life, one AJ would be part of for whatever time he had left.

Fuck. Fuck. Fuck.

AJ starts struggling, but Zu’s restraints do not loosen even a millimeter.

“You will get the money and you will start treatment with it. Do you understand?” Zu’s voice is steady. The only sign of emotion is her slightly widened eyes. “Hollander and Rozanov were never supposed to walk out of this alive. It is too much risk.”

AJ is sure his heart stops.

Zu betrayed him in every possible way.

“I have to do this, AJ.” Her voice turns desperate, like she needs him to understand, maybe even forgive her. “The second you get the money, you get the hell out to Montreal. They have a good center there with experimental treatment. You will not stay here. I will handle it.”

Zu takes a deep breath.

“And then I will turn myself in to the police, so this ends here and now.”

AJ opens his mouth to protest, but before he can get a single word out, Zu stuffs a rag between his teeth and hits him again.

This time she knocks him out.

Ilya knows he is taking a risk. But the minutes that drag by while he waits for a signal to go inside the warehouse, the minutes where he is forced to imagine Shane somewhere in there, are what really kill him.

He throws the backpack over his shoulder and circles the building carefully, making sure there is no one else outside. He is not being watched. He heard the bluff even through the phone. He can smell amateurs from a mile away.

Maybe he can pull something off. Maybe the element of surprise will give him the upper hand.

He finds a small door at the back, left slightly ajar.

Inside it is dark, and it takes his eyes a moment to adjust.

A quiet conversation pulls his attention. It sounds like this room borders another one.

Ilya strains to listen and holds his breath. The voices are low, but he catches enough to understand the point.

Of course they never planned to let them walk out alive. Ilya figured that much. No one in their right mind would leave them alive after something like this.

Not that he gives a shit, but the motive becomes clear.

Of course a stunt like this has to come with some tragic backstory. Ilya could not care less. As far as he is concerned, these people could drop dead right here, right now.

And that is exactly the plan.

He pulls a pocketknife and flips the blade open. It is the only remotely sensible weapon they have at home. If it were not for Ilya's collaboration with some Swiss company, he would be holding a kitchen knife right now.

But the pocketknife is easier. More convenient.

He waits until the voices fall quiet and the girl steps out of the room, leaving the person she was speaking to inside.

Ilya takes three slow breaths, the kind he learned in therapy.

Cold calm settles into his body, and Ilya realizes he is not afraid. He is, but only for Shane's life.

Just a second longer. Hold on, Shane. It is almost over.

In the second room, he finds the unconscious guy, tied up and folded in half.

Ilya hauls him up by the back of his jacket. The guy is not light, but adrenaline makes it easy. He drags him forward, down the only corridor stretching out ahead.

The knife stays pressed hard to one side of the guy's throat. Ilya is not stupid. He knows exactly where the main artery is.

The corridor spills into a large open space. In the middle of it, with her back to him, stands a small, wiry girl.

Ilya scans the room. He does not see Shane at first glance, but he feels it in his bones that he is here somewhere.

He does not waste a second. He clears his throat, forcing the girl to notice him.

She knows what she is doing. She turns immediately, gun raised, aimed straight at the center of Ilya's chest.

Ilya catches the second her eyes flick to the guy, the one she is willing to burn the world down for.

Her pupils blow wide. Her mouth opens in a silent oh. The hand holding the gun trembles.

"Where is he?" Ilya asks, his voice far calmer than anything happening inside his head.

The girl closes her mouth, jaw clenched. She does not lower the gun. He can see her mind racing before she answers.

"He is here. Alive. Like we agreed." Her voice gives nothing away either. "Unlike you, I kept my end of the deal."

"No." Ilya presses the blade harder into the guy's throat. He is sure he breaks skin, because her eyes snap there. "You did not keep the deal."

She knows what he means. There is no surprise on her face. She only tightens her lips and nods slowly.

But Ilya does not expect the tears gathering in her eyes.

"I can still kill him," she says, and for the first time her voice wavers.

Ilya shakes his head. "You will not, because I will finish him a lot faster than cancer ever will." To prove it, he presses harder.

Ilya feels nothing. Truly nothing. All he wants is to get Shane and get the hell out.

He does not even react when the guy's blood starts running down his fingers and wrist.

"Stop!" the girl shouts. Finally, real emotion cracks through. Ilya knows desperation.

“Drop the gun,” Ilya says. It is not a request.

She goes silent for a few seconds. Then, with tears spilling down her cheeks, she lets it go. The pistol skids across the floor until Ilya stops it with the sole of his boot.

Keeping the pressure on the guy’s throat, Ilya crouches slowly, balancing the limp body against his knee, and with his free hand he tucks the pistol into the waistband of his own pants.

He does not take his eyes off her.

When Ilya straightens, she has already dropped to her knees. Curled in on herself, she lets out a small, broken sob. All her bravado is gone. Now she is just a small, desperate girl.

Ilya feels no sympathy.

“Take me to him.”

She does not hesitate. She scrambles to her feet and leads them to the far end of the hall, looking back over her shoulder again and again, throwing anxious glances at the guy.

She has no idea Ilya is not letting her walk away from this.

They took Shane from him.

They reach a massive pillar, and as they round it, Ilya’s heart stutters.

Shane.

He is sitting slumped, head hanging at a slightly wrong angle. Unconscious, but alive. Ilya sees his chest rising in an even rhythm.

But Ilya does not move.

His head starts to throb, like his body is revolting against the idea of standing still for one more second.

The girl follows every command. She unties Shane, pulls the blindfold off, yanks the gag out. When she steps back, Shane starts to wake.

Shane opens his eyes slowly. The first thing he notices is the lack of that painful tension on his wrists, and the fact that there is no gag in his mouth. He can breathe freely.

The next thing is his husband standing right in front of him.

And then the knife in Ilya’s hand, pressed to AJ’s throat, and the blood slowly sliding down Ilya’s fingers, soaking into the guy’s jacket.

In these sick, fucked up circumstances, Shane realizes he has just learned something about himself.

Then he sees the girl, Zu, on her knees not far away, staring at AJ like she is trying to keep him alive with her eyes alone.

Shane is not surprised. He recognizes love when he sees it. He recognizes desperation and fear. For some reason, he knows that was the engine behind all of this.

His gaze goes back to Ilya's eyes. Shane sees so much in them. Terror. Love. Relief. He knows his own look matches it.

Shane manages to lift one corner of his mouth, barely.

Of course Ilya came. He always comes.

“Ty mozhesh vstat?” Ilya asks in Russian, his voice low.

Shane runs a quick scan through his body. He feels mostly intact, except for the pressure and ache in the back of his skull.

He nods slowly.

“Podi syuda i stan za mnoy.”

Shane gets up without thinking. The movement makes him sway, but it does not stop him. He closes the distance to Ilya fast.

Ilya cannot reach for him while holding the guy, but the look he gives Shane is something much more intimate than touch.

Ilya lets out a deep breath when Shane is at his side.

“Shane, lyubimyy. Idi nazad. Vniz po koridoru, tam yest vykhod. Pod lesom moya mashina. Wait for me there.” Ilya issues a command, his gaze never leaving the girl, sharp and murderous.

The girl lets out a pathetic little sound, and Shane frowns.

“What do you mean?”

“Please.” The girl crawls closer, barely, and Ilya gives a warning growl. She freezes, but she keeps staring at him. “Please. We only needed money for treatment.”

Ilya snorts. Shane knows there are no words that would calm Ilya down right now.

Shane looks at the guy, then at the girl.

They are so young. Younger than them, like they barely escaped their teens.

What happened in their lives that pushed them into this?

“What was your plan?” Shane asks.

Ilya makes an irritated sound but stays silent. He does not move. Not even a millimeter. The blade never leaves the guy’s throat. He is controlling the entire room that way, and the girl starts talking immediately.

“AJ has cancer. Malignant shit. No health fund covers us, we are basically social trash.” She speaks fast. “I wanted... I wanted to get AJ money for treatment. After that I was going to turn myself in, give him a chance to live.”

“After *that*, meaning...” Shane already knows the answer.

The girl’s silence confirms it.

Shane is not ready for Ilya to shove the unconscious guy into his arms. All he manages is a sharp inhale, because in the next second Ilya is straddling the girl.

The impact slams her head against the concrete.

Ilya raises his fist, and Shane knows one punch would be enough to kill her.

“Don’t.”

Zu understands perfectly that Shane Hollander just saved her life with a single word.

Shane watches Ilya’s hand freeze midair. He does not lower it, though. His breathing is heavy, his eyes locked on her.

She stares up at him, terrified, and all the talk about how she would risk everything for the person she loves suddenly rings hollow.

Shane knows it was inevitable. Love does that.

“Ilya, let her go.”

Ilya does it instantly, but he still shoves her away, hard enough that her head hits the floor again.

Shane knows what it costs him.

Ilya walks back to Shane and takes the guy from him again. He does not press the knife to his throat anymore.

Now Shane is in control.

And it will probably take Ilya a long time to forgive him for what he is about to do, but Shane has made his decision.

“Ilya. Take the backpack off. Put it down. Please. Right there.”

“Shane...” Ilya mutters, warning in his voice.

The girl pushes herself up into a sitting position, brows drawn. She is the only one who does not know what Shane is doing. Ilya has already understood.

Shane looks Zu straight in the eyes.

“This is sick. What you planned, what you wanted to do, it is sick. And you know it. I can see it.”

The girl has enough sense to look away. Shane can still tell she does not regret it. She would do it again. And again. And again.

Because Shane and Ilya would do exactly the same for each other.

That one fact is what stops Shane from calling the police immediately.

“You take this backpack and your friend.” Shane nods toward them. “You have a few minutes head start before I call the cops.”

“Shane, you have lost your mind,” Ilya protests.

Shane sees Ilya shaking. Sees his jaw twitch, sees his fists clench.

And Shane loves it.

Because even like this, Ilya does not move. Not an inch.

“If you are lucky, you will get a chance to start treatment,” Shane continues. “If you try anything...” Shane tilts his head toward Ilya. “I won’t stop him.”

Ilya clearly likes that, because he bares his teeth in a vicious, cruel grin.

The first minutes on the way home pass in silence.

Shane breaks it first.

“I stopped at the café for bliny.”

Ilya exhales.

“I know.”

“I wanted us to have breakfast together.”

“I know.”

“This was all fucked up.”

“That is true.”

A few more minutes of silence.

“I really do not like your coffee.”

“I know.”

“I wanted to tell you, because when I thought I might never get the chance to tell you again...”

“Stop.”

Ilya cannot listen to that right now. His brain has not survived the last hour in one piece. He knows Shane has not either, which is why he keeps talking.

Silence again. Shane is the first to break it, again.

“What are you going to do with the gun?”

Ilya tightens his grip on the steering wheel.

“I am going to shoot that fucking bitch in the face if I ever see her again.”

Shane really, really hopes that girl never crosses Ilya’s path again.

End Notes

i have praise kink. Praise me if you like it please.

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