

Are my legs gonna last?

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Are my legs gonna last?

by [Victorcardal3](#)

Summary

Title inspired by pool (stripped) - by Samia

Ilya's life was perfect. The Centaurs were thriving with both Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov. He'd always loved playing against Shane, but playing with him, with his ring on his finger, was a whole other level. He couldn't have been happier.

He doesn't remember why it happened. Or why it had to happen to him.

Or

Ilya gets in a car crash and everything changes.

Notes

This chapter is short, PLEASE cut me a break ive never written on here before! if I tagged anything wrong pleaseeee let me know!!!! I will update very slow because I have very bad attention span im sorry :(((

also holy shit guys it made me manually type

into each sentence and its like the middle of the night you guys are welcome for my slaving away.

Chapter 1: Chapter 1

It was a bright day. A good day. Busy, but good. Ilya's heart always seemed to be ablaze these days. The sun was out enough to have melted the snow on their driveway, enough to expose soft tufts of dead grass and dirt. The very brink of march. The very start of spring. It wasn't the first spring he'd spent in Ottawa, but it was the first he'd spent with a ring on his finger.

He'd snuck out when he'd gotten home. Shane was so tired after the game, falling asleep in the car. Ilya hadn't had the heart to wake him, he'd carried him inside and tucked him into bed, taking his time savouring that look of peace on his face. Because everything was calm now. He had a home. A person to go home to. He felt lucky, like he'd been dealt a good hand for the first time in his life.

The roads were still wet with slush, though it was melting under his tires as he drove through the city. He'd bought a cheaper car, whether finally surrendering to Shane's insistent whining, or finally seeing there was more to life than fancy cars. He was going to get flowers, big, obnoxiously expensive, colourful flowers. Flowers were cheesy, sure, but Shane liked cheesy, and Ilya liked the rosy pink blush that adorned his freckled face whenever he did things like this. The radio played some pop song Ilya was barely listening to, even if his fingers unconsciously tapped the beat on the steering wheel. Even with his sunglasses on he had to squint, the sun was blinding against his windshield, warming him from his head to his toes, and burning holes in his eyes.

The florist wasn't too far from their home, maybe a few roads or two, just into Ottawa on a cozy little corner street. It was special to Ilya, it was where they'd gotten their wedding flowers from. It made him laugh a little, thinking of himself vowing to never buy flowers anywhere else ever again. Even almost a year later, he'd kept that promise. Ilya pulled to a stop at the red light, leaning his chin on the top of his steering wheel as he waited.

A minute or two later, the light turned. He drove forward, and maybe he should've looked, but there was no time for that, before his vision blurred as his head slammed back into his seat, and the car flew, and oh, silly him, had he forgotten his seatbelt? His vision went black. Nothing, the last thing he heard was the sickening crunch of metal on bone, and that licking pain of fire on his ankles.

'Beep'

His eyes fluttered open, eyelashes fluttering against his cheeks, before his eyelids flickered down again. Everything felt blurry, like looking through a kaleidoscope. He blinked away those shapes, his eyes adjusting to the fluorescent lights hung above his head.

'Beep'

Hospital. His mind flicked through memories, confused. He couldn't remember why he was here. Ilya looked around, over the IVs in his forearm and his palms. Ilya would make no claims to be in pain then. He had little memory of it. That bleary feeling between waking and

dreaming, the sort of vague comprehension that ceases to exist in just a moment's time. He was alone, under that stream of lights, in a sterile hospital bed. The only sound was a ringing in his ears, and the beeping of a machine, before he drifted off again.

“Ilya.”

A whisper. It wasn't loud. It shouldn't have woken him. But the voice was so familiar he was roused. He braved the battle of prying his eyes open, the heavy weight of them like pushing iron. Everything felt too real this time, his limbs were heavy, his entire body felt bruised, and his head spun. A cold, gentle hand touched his cheek, and he could focus again.

“Shane.”

He breathed out. Just a hush of air, barely comprehensible. Ilya fought through the nausea, and focused his eyes on the wrinkle of Shane's forehead, and the soft frown of worry on his lips. Those big freckles on his cheeks like constellations Ilya wished he had the energy to reach up and touch. He'd felt like he was drowning, but just looking at Shane made him able to breathe again.

Shane was crying, these big crocodile tears that just begged to be kissed away. He was sobbing, a mix of crying and disbelieving choking laughter.

“Ilya, oh my god, Ilya. You're okay. I- I'd gotten to the scene, and they were dragging you away on that gurney and they wouldn't let me drive with you and you weren't breathing and I thought-“

Ilya squeezed his hand again, fingers lacing in his, stronger this time. He wanted Shane to know he was alive, he was strong and he was here and he wasn't going back under and scaring him again. He wouldn't dare.

“Hollander. I'm okay. So much- worry. You worry too much.”

Shane let out a snort of a watery giggle at that, even in pain Ilya wanted to see him smile. Shane couldn't deny it, though. He had been worried, so worried. Ilya offered a weak attempt at a wink, that had an endeared smile curving on his husband's lips.

Shane swatted at Ilya, but he didn't pull away, didn't dare. He was practically glued to his side, as though he was afraid Ilya would close his eyes and never wake up again if he dared let go. Ilya wouldn't have it any other way. Even if his body felt regurgitated, he had his lover close enough for him to kiss whenever he felt like it. Maybe he had almost died, but with Shane dotting on him so carefully, it was a welcome distraction to the pain that was vibrating up his entire body. The closeness made him sleepy again, drifting that edge of weary exhaustion and lucidity.

A kiss to his cheek stirred him again. Shane was leaning over, cheek to cheek with Ilya, thumbing through his hair. Ilya could see the ring on Shane's finger, and he suddenly wanted to kiss it.

“Ilya? Look at me.”

His eyes slid to Shane on command, and Shane smiled again, his face was still wet, puffy, sleepy, too. Ilya smiled around the tube in his nose, looking up at Shane with adoration

“You look so worried, but not enough to give me real kiss?”

Shane pounced like a dog waiting for permission. Ilya sighed into the kiss. Out of all the fear and grogginess that was striking him, the last of his husband's lips melted him into heavenly bliss.

“You scared me.”

Shane had pulled away, his face softening with quiet worry, he was upset. Not in a joking manner right now. Ilya knew him better than enough, which meant he knew when to be serious. Even in his concussed mind, he knew this was a serious moment.

“I’m sorry, Shane.”

He murmured back, a little ashamed. It wasn’t just his life he’d put in danger, he’d nearly broken poor Shane’s heart. Or maybe he had anyway, by the look in his big puppy dog eyes. The pout on his lips lessened a little.

“I know you are, Ilya. I know.”

Shane sat up on the bed, cuddling in close to Ilya. He lifted his arm to accommodate his husband’s weight, even in his weakness he caved into him.

Shane wasn’t done fretting yet. Ilya could see the blood on his lips from chewing anxiously, a habit he’d watched, and discouraged, Shane from picking up.

“Ilya, what if you hadn’t woken up? What would I have done? I can’t-“

Ilya could see the panic, the paranoia. Shane was playing through all the possibilities and what ifs. That shake in his hands, had Ilya reached out to steady him almost on instinct. The protest of pain in his arms was immediate, but it was less important than Shane.

“I woke up, Shane. I’m here.”

Shane nodded, steadying himself, eyebrows still furrowed a little, face scrunched up with uncertainty

“I know, Ilya. But if you didn’t-“

Ilya covered his mouth, tracing his bottom lip with his fingers, soothing that frown from his face.

“Shush, baby. I did. I woke up. Stop crying, makes me sad.”

Shane quieted like that, pressing a kiss to the palm of Ilya’s hand. His breathing steadying.

“Okay?”

Spoke Ilya, his voice still calming, gently. He was patient. And maybe a little selfish, because he too did not want to discuss a world where he hadn't woken up.

Shane hesitated, by sighed, and nodded, though a little reluctant to comply. He settled back against Ilya, melting into him.

"Okay."

He had whispered back. Ilya smiled softly, kissing Shane's jaw, then his cheek, then the tip of his red nose.

"I love you."

Shane exhaled shakily, grounding himself in the feel of Ilya's body.

"I love you, too."

The door clicked open. A nurse. Ilya hadn't seen any nurses here yet, but with the smile Shane gave her, he assumed she'd done her rounds on him once or twice.

The woman was slim, her scrubs tied tight around her, hair pulled back into a ponytail. She was older than both him and Ilya, nearly in her forties, he presumed. She had that same tight, slightly wrinkled face that he'd seen on Scott Hunter over the years. Her eyes were kind as they looked at him, surprised that he was awake. Her hands curled around her clipboard tighter, as she stepped closer.

"Mr Rozanov. I am pleased to see you awake. Strong boy you must be, it usually takes at least a few days for a patient of your severity to wake up."

Ilya smiled wearily, rubbing his fingers into the dimples of Shane's back, which had him relaxing into him, yawning sleepily.

He grinned the most he could muster, tilting his head at the nurse, letting out a little choking sound at the tubes in his nose.

"I have always been number one- what's the word- overachiever."

The woman gave a soft laugh. Eyes shining with a sort of interested admiration. She was looking at him like he was a curiosity.

"You are certainly a medical miracle, Rozanov. I'll give you that. It is good you woke up when you did, Mr Hollander did not set his sights off you. We worried he would pass out."

Ilya rolled his eyes fondly, pinching Shane's cheek, ignoring his halfhearted protests. He could see Shane was sleepy, probably why he wasn't chirping back.

"He loves me."

The nurse smiled sweetly

“Oh I know. It is very easy to tell.”

Silence fell for a moment, Ilya distracted with Shane’s closeness.

The nurse cleared her throat, the sound breaking the calm silence.

“I shouldn’t waste any time, no matter how sweet you two are. I’m nurse Miller, though, Hollander knows that. How are you feeling, Mr Rozanov? Any aches, pains? You are on medication, of course. But it is good for me to know despite that.”

Ilya thought for a moment, it made his eyes feel heavy again. The tickle of Shane’s black hair brushed against his eyelashes, he smelled like shampoo and sweat, a welcome scent in contrast to the antiseptic smell of the hospital room. Ilya tried to focus on feeling. He could feel Shane, his ribs hurt, his neck ached, but he could feel. He leveled a hopeful expression at the nurse.

“A little sore. Not too bad.”

After that, Shane was tugged away, even though both of them were reluctant to separate. His absence felt like a sinking hole in Ilya’s chest. The touch had been familiar, it had grounded him. Now all he had was the sense of thin sheets and that stuffy, trapped feeling. Reality. The nurse was polite as she examined him, cold gloved fingers poking and prodding at his bruised skin, apologizing softly whenever he winced a little too hard.

Her touch travelled down to his hips, pressing, Ilya’s gaze followed. He hadn’t looked at himself, but when she pulled away the sheet, he was exposed to the mottled mess of his legs. They were swollen and purple, undeniably unnatural. He wanted to speak, but her gloves sent bolts of agony up his spine, like pressing on a broken bone. Squeezing it. His legs weren’t supposed to feel like this. Her expression was grim, just as pale at the sight of his skin as he was.

“I thought- I was okay,” he forced out. His face was pinched a little, anxious worry. The choking sensation from that awful tube was back. He suddenly wished Shane was still on top of him, he needed to hold onto something. Preferably, his hand.

Nurse Miller looked up. Her eyebrows curved apologetically, stopping her examinations.

“Rozanov, sir. You survived getting thrown from a car, and then having it roll on you. It’s a blessing you aren’t in a coma or even brain dead. Don’t focus on the bad, focus on being alive. That’s all we need you to do.”

Her eyes glanced at Shane

“That’s what he needs you to do.”

Ilya nodded, even if it felt hard. Her voice had been reassuring, but being alive wasn’t enough for him. He wanted to be okay. But, he wasn’t. He saw the grim truth, now. But. She was right. Shane needed him, he needed Shane. Whether he was broken and bruised and irreparably damaged. Shane needed him alive. Even in the worst conditions.

“I need him too.”

She nodded with conviction, patting him on the side gently, her eyes were fond, it was impossible not to be when you witnessed such love. Love was such a beautiful thing, and it was no doubt mistaking that unconditional affection that bloomed between the two hockey players. Even with one bruised on a bed, and the other with eye bags so deep he could've been a vampire. Because love comes in unconventional shapes.

‘Through sickness and health’

Those stereotypical wedding vows Ilya had repeated to Shane suddenly felt real, because Ilya felt so weak, and Shane still looked at him like he hung the stars. Shane loved him even like this, and he loved him all the more for it.

As soon as Nurse Miller stepped away, and the room door clicked shut, Ilya expected Shane to race back into his arms, murmuring sweet words and smothering him with kisses he would never protest away. He didn't. He spared a glance to his right, and his heart filled with softness. Shane was asleep, head lulled on the backrest of a plastic chair. He looked so relaxed, his shoulders losing that tension that had gripped him tight when Ilya had first woken up, and had held him hostage until the very moment he fell asleep. He smiled softly, sleepily, just as exhausted.

He gazed at the drool that dripped from Shane's lips for a moment longer, before settling his own head against the smushed pillow on the bed. His eyes had tired from just an hour of keeping them open, they were grateful for the rest. His mind settled.

As he drifted, his mind thought back to the nurse's words. He was alive, alive enough to see Shane's eyelashes flutter. Alive enough to hear his soft breaths, and alive enough to still feel the memory of Shane's lips on his skin from just a moment ago. That was enough. Shane was all he needed, always.

Chapter 2: chapter 2

Chapter Notes

this will probably be edited by I prefer doing edits on my phone so its easier to upload and then edit so if a bunch of this suddenly changes that's why. its a run on because I am very bad at scenario writing apparently. Lolll

Ilya dreamed.

He was back in April of 2017, when Shane took that fall on the ice. Things had changed that day, Ilya had planned to end their relationship that night. He was falling in love, too hard, too fast. In a way he never had before. It was unplanned, and it scared him. That injury had broken him inside, leaving him with a heaving absence he hadn't felt since he found his dead mother. He'd felt that fear all over again, that gripping dread that had him waking in sweat.

His skin was soaked, and the machine beside him was beeping rapidly in tune to his terrified heart. There was no nurse to come running. There was nothing., No light in the hospital room besides the moonlight sneaking past the curtains.

He was alone again. No nurses, and apparent enough in a way he felt to his bones, no Shane. Ilya swallowed, his throat was thick and dry, it was hard to swallow down his own spit. He was almost peaceful, or at least would have been if his heart didn't feel like it was pounding out of his chest.

His mind lingered back to his dream, and he was struck with a tidal wave of guilt. That pain he felt, that worry that had destroyed him when Shane had been checked into the boards, was the same he saw in Shane's eyes on the day he'd woken up, and the hours since. He wished he could've apologized better, but Shane had only been present in the moments when his head blurred and he was looped up on pain medications. He wished he could tell him right now, he wished he could whisper an apology into Shane's soft black hair, kiss away the tears stains, kiss away all the fear and worry.

Ilya could not. Because Shane was not here.

'He will come back.'

His head supplied. It was silly to think he wouldn't. Visiting hours were protocol, and that rule didn't exclude Shane, even if he wished it did. He knew Shane would be back the minute the sun rose, he'd rush in with that rosy smile and kiss Ilya silly until all his injuries vanished.

Ilya didn't fight the small smile that rose on his lips, thinking of Shane. Whenever his mind strayed to the dark, Shane would find a way to guide him to the light again.

Even if the worst things happened here. Even if the old Ilya Rozanov had vanished in the accident, he would always have Shane Hollander.

That was enough to fall back into slumber, lulled by the infinite lullaby of memories of his husband, and all the dreams and possibilities their life together would hold.

A nurse roused him with the scent of soup. It wasn't anything fancy, the opposite. A pathetic little bowl of broth, oil floating to the top. It tasted like salt and sadness. Ilya was already cranky from being woken up, but the taste and burning his tongue had only fouled his mood further. His eyes looked up at the nurse as he reluctantly ate his soup.

It was a different nurse this time. A man he couldn't recognize with a well trimmed beard and brown skin and eyes that were too big on his narrow face.

"Shane." Started Ilya, pausing his spoonfuls of soup.

The man nodded, listening to him. He had this posture that made him almost look like an evil scientist, hands behind his back, or folded neatly in his lap when he sat down to do a report on Ilya. It was the sort of manners and politeness that almost made someone feel inferior.

"When is he coming back?"

Ilya asked. He didn't mean to sound rude, pushing, in any means. But he urgently needed to know so he could relax again, and possibly stare at the clock in longing.

The nurse's face broke character, curving into a grin. Even love was enough to make his walls crack.

"Mr Hollander was sent home last night. He nearly tried to camp out in the waiting room all night again. My staff and I convinced him to go home and rest. He wanted us to call him as soon as visiting hours opened up, but we figured we should let the poor boy sleep."

The nurse's eyes danced over Ilya, clearly examining his broken body in a medical, scientific sort of way. His pupils filled with a sort of melancholy, that same pity he'd seen painted on every face that looked at him.

"He's been through a lot."

Ilya paused, before nodding. Stress was no small feat. Shane knew he'd probably worried just as much as if he was in Ilya's place, Maybe more, because it wasn't his life at stake, which had made it impossible for him to intervene, to fix. Shane was always fixing Ilya's problems, but this was one he could not fix.

"I know."

Ilya said gruffly, he averted his gaze to his lap, fidgeting with purple and green fingers from where he'd slept funny.

"Cut yourself some slack, Mr Rozanov. This is hard on you, too."

The nurse said, an attempt at reassuring, a backtrack on his accidental blame. Ilya nodded, but it felt rehearsed. It was hard, sure, but it didn't change the fact he was confined to a hospital bed and his husband was destroying himself over it.

Ilya had almost considered letting Shane sleep the day away, but he got anxious in here alone, and he was frighteningly selfish.

"Call him, please."

Ilya begged, his eyes pleading, desperate. The nurse smiled, almost like he had expected it. His hand wrapped in a rubber blue glove squeezed over Ilya's.

"Of course Mr Rozanov. I'll have them call Shane in right away."

Ilya sunk back into bed, listening to the quiet ticking of the clock. His gaze didn't stray an inch until Shane came home to him.

The door opened, and the room felt warm again. Ilya's eyes flickered up, a faint smile settling on his lips. His husband was back.

"Любимый" (darling/beloved) Ilya had whispered, as Shane brushed the knuckles of his fingers over his cheek, brushing wisps of hair from his eyes. His fingers smelled like coffee and soap.

"Hi baby... how are you feeling?"

Ilya didn't want to have to answer. He wanted to bask in this moment forever, but even through the bliss of being reunited, Ilya could see the slightest tinge of undisguised worry in his lover's eyes. Shane's eyes always told him so much, and now they were telling him a story of terror and worry.

Ilya let his hand slide to rest over Shane's, tracing his fingers over the bumps of his knuckles.

"I'm okay. You see that. I am awake, and I am not going to get worse, only better."

Shane smiled, hearing the words from Ilya was reassuring, maybe because he knew Ilya would never lie to him. Not anymore, at least.

"Promise?"

Ilya let out a breath. So persistent, he thought. The smile he fought to push back broke through anyway.

"I promise."

Shane's face scrunched up with a small grin. With age, with them starting their thirties, Shane had these small crooks around his lips that became especially prominent when he smiled like that. Ilya had once found himself teasing him about it, but he thought there was no sight more beautiful than seeing Shane grow up. Seeing Shane grow up, with him. Ilya never had thought much about aging, but wasn't it a beautiful thing? So many memories, so much love,

packed in one life. Ilya wanted every gray hair, every wrinkle, every back pain if it meant growing old with Shane.

“You are so beautiful.”

Ilya had said, reverent. He reached out to trace the wrinkles by his husband’s lips. The blush that appeared on his face contrasted with his pale skin and darkness of his black hair. Shane was not used to these unplanned, sudden compliments. It sent into shock, sputtering, bluffering, shock.

Not this time, though. Shane was bolder, and he bent down, kissing Ilya on the lips, melting into it with a soft sound. If this wasn’t heaven, Ilya didn’t have any idea what else it could possibly be.

“Our parents are coming. You know they were away, but I called them right after the accident. They were as scared as I was.”

Our parents. It struck Ilya like nothing ever had before. Yuna and David had taken him in as a second son nearly immediately after David had caught them in the cottage. They adored him just as much as Shane. His mama and papa were dead, but maybe his mama had sent him a new family as forgiveness. A family he loved very much.

“Good. I do not want Yuna or David to worry about me. I am okay.”

Shane poked him on the nose.

“Did the nurses say anything? Xrays, CT scans, things like that?”

Ilya shrugged as he leant his against Shane’s forearm, enjoying the feeling of his fingers still in his hair.

“They will. Or maybe they have. I cannot remember too well.”

Shane nodded, resting his chin on Ilya's forehead. He pressed a slightly grease stained paper bag into his hands, the Tim Hortons logo printed into it.

“I got you a muffin, I know hospital food tastes terrible- I know it's not much, but I didn’t want to overwhelm you or anything-”

Ilya stopped the ramble.

“Is perfect, I love it. I would love it even more if you fed it to me.”

Shane smiled, eyes twinkling with amusement and softness that existed every time he looked at him.

“Yeah?”

Ilya nodded, opening his mouth.

That morning was spent with sleepy giggles and crumbs and Ilya licking chocolate from Shane's fingers with quips that turned his lover's ears pink. Occasionally nurses would check up on him, confirming the fluids were flowing correctly, that he was breathing properly, that his heart beat wasn't too erratic. A doctor returned, he could tell by the authority in his eyes, and the long white coat he wore.

"Mr Rozanov, everything seems to be working inside you okay. Our main concern is your legs, which I am almost certain worries you, too."

Ilya nodded, listening intently. This was important.

"You are stable enough to be transferred for X rays. It would be easier if Shane stayed behind, but he would also be allowed to watch from the screening room with the rest of us. Its a matter of what you two would prefer. Our staff and I understand how worried you both are, and it is our interest to make sure you two are comfortable."

Ilya knew Shane wanted to be close by, but he also knew Shane didn't speak up. He was looking at him, waiting for an answer, to comply with whatever instruction Ilya gave.

"I would like him to watch."

Ilya said, and watched as the relief spread through Shane. He squeezed his hand, and Shane squeezed back.

The table he was positioned on was hard on his back, digging into an already bruised spine and tailbone. He grit his teeth through the pain, whispering a thank you as a nurse positioned a pillow underneath him.

They told him to hold his breath, he did. Ilya could listen well. He felt the machine scan over his legs, legs he could not feel or move.

He was rolled back to the hospital room, fitted back into a more comfortable gown, thanked for his compliance. That was the most movement he had since the accident, he hadn't expected it to make him so dizzy.

"When is Yuna and David coming?"

Ilya had asked Shane, in an attempt to distract himself from the urge to vomit all over his hospital scrubs. Shane thought for a minute, mulling the question over in his head.

"Soon. They'll be here by tonight."

Shane laughed softly, clearly thinking something up, a fond twinkle in his eyes.

"Yuna is going to mother you. She's always been like that with me, whenever I get hurt playing hockey, when I was little, and even now. You are going to be smothered."

Ilya grinned at the idea.

"I like to be smothered."

“I know you do, Ilya.”

They had curled up beside each other on the tiny twin bed. Ilya was listening to the sound of Shane’s breaths, tracing patterns into his hipbone, when the door swung open. Familiar faces, relieved, stressed, exhausted faces.

Their parents were here.

Chapter 3: chapter 3

Chapter Notes

this is pretty short!! and again very badly written maybe I will come back and fix it!
THANK YOU GUYS for the support since this is my first ever fic! next chapter will be angst and so will the rest hahahahahahahahaha

Yuna was just as fussy as Shane had promised she'd be, and Ilya was soaking up every second of it. He'd never been dotted on much in his life, there wasn't a single time he could recall so much as a hug from his father. The scent of her was tranquil, it also made him sleepy. She smelt like home.

Yuna reminded him of his mother sometimes, they both had that same tenderness, that same dimpled smile. It almost felt like he was a child again, sick or hurt after playing hockey, and his mama was cooing over him with a warm rag and soup, wiping away his hurt. Maybe that's exactly why he loved her so much. Ilya grinned up into her smothering, tilting his head up happily, basking in the comfort.

"Yuna, I am glad you are here."

He spoke, voice soft, gentle. He was happy, impossibly blissed out despite his injuries that lingered as an ache in his bones that was inescapable. Yuna's eyes were wet as she looked down at him. He recalled the first time he ever saw her, all those years ago in the hotel, before Shane's and his first hookup. It seemed a lifetime ago, a lifetime that was encapsulated in the wrinkles sewn into her cheeks. She was older now, but the kindness in her eyes, the spark, was just as bright.

"Ilya, of course we came. You're our son, how could we not?"

Those were the words that broke him. Ilya had thought he was getting used to this affection, having people who actually looked out for him. But he hadn't, not yet. Tears bubbled from his eyes, Yuna wiped them away with soft hands, shushing him softly. She knew how he felt like he didn't belong, that he wasn't part of their family, but Ilya had wormed his way into their hearts, just as he'd done to Shane, and so many more before them.

Ilya managed to choke out a few words, brushing away his own tears quickly.

"thank you- Yuna- you are just-"

"You are just like my mama."

He was fumbling the words out through tears and blubbing sobs. Yuna had started to cry, too. She'd been blessed with Shane, and was blessed with a second son just as incredible.

“Oh Ilya, we are here for you, because we love you. Shane might have brought you to us, but we couldn't have been more lucky. You are my son, in the same way I'm your mom, maybe not in blood, but without a doubt in love.”

Ilya smiled, nuzzling into her shawl, the same one he'd bought her the past Christmas.

“I love you too.”

Yuna held him, and eventually David slipped by to wrap his own arms around him, Shane clambering to his other side. He was smushed in a pile of love, and it brightened his soul like a torch. He didn't ever want to be anywhere else.

Yuna and David were undeniably curious, he could see it in their eyes. Of course, they had every right to be. Ilya was hit by a car, he would be curious too.

“Have the doctors given any news? All Shane told us was that you couldn't move your legs.”

Yuna was nursing a cup of coffee that Ilya was staring longingly at. His hospital dinner was near inedible, and Shane was forcing him to eat it in bedgrudging mouthfuls.

“I went in for X-rays earlier today, doctors did not say much. I think they will get my results quickly. They said it was- oh what's the word? Urgent matter.”

Ilya said, grateful to speak instead of forcing down more of the meal he'd massacred on his plate with his fork.

Shane glanced up from his spot on the chair by the window, the windows had been opened, and the setting sun was blistering warmth through the glass. Yuna spoke up again, a smile forming on her lips, a sign she was ready to tease. It was quip he'd seen on Shane, too. They were reflections, Shane and Yuna. Maybe that's why he liked her so much.

“When Shane had called us, he made it seem like you were almost dead.”

“It nearly gave me a heart attack.” David had said with a chuckle, mouth quirking up.

Shane blanched at that, sputtering, face turning to a scowl.

“Mom! I thought he was dead, you should have seen him-”

Yuna laughed softly, ruffling his hair.

“I know, I know you were worried. That is a good thing, it shows you love him.”

Ilya warmed. He knew Shane returned his affections, but it was always nice to see it acknowledged by someone else. To know it was so strong, even others felt the impact. Shane rolled his eyes, sitting up, padding over to sit on the edge of Ilya's bed, leaning down to kiss his cheek.

“I am so glad you are not dead. I don't know what I would have done without you.”

Shane whispered, punctuating the words with a second kiss. Ilya smiled, leaning into the press of his lips.

“Me too.”

His husband nudged him again, a slightly amused look on his face. He gestured to the slop of hospital food barely half eaten in Ilya’s lap. Ilya kissed him again, an attempt to stir his attention away from the terrible food that was likely going cold and mushy in his ignorance.

Shane did not take his very tempting bait, even if he was happy to kiss him forever. Shane couldn't imagine there was anything more like heaven than his mouth pressed to Ilya's.

“You still have to eat. Don’t think you can distract me with kisses.”

Ilya grumbled, the sight of the slimy potatoes with stale bread and dry chicken was less than appetizing.

“It is terrible, Shane. I cannot eat this.”

He whined, feeling like a baby who was being force fed mushed peas and sweet potato. Shane sighed, spooning a tiny bit of potato, pressing it between his own lips, before grimacing. He didn’t even swallow it, spitting it into a tissue, tossing it into the plastic garbage can by the bed.

“Yeah, this is awful.”

Ilya snorted, grinning. He pecked Shane’s nose, absolutely enamoured with the scrunched up expression on his face that was now turning pink. Maybe he’d make Shane eat even more just to see that smush of his face again. Shane swatted him away, turning his head away to force the blush from his cheeks from the kiss.

“I know.”

Shane leaned over to look at his mom and dad where they were drifting asleep. Yuna stirred and met his gaze, perking up. She was always alert if Shane needed something. She could sense it eerily well.

“Mom, can you maybe go get some better food? There's a convenience store in the hospital lobby.”

Yuna nodded, nudging David awake.

“We should probably go home soon, visiting hours are going to end.”

She looked at Shane, that stern, non -negotiable look in her eyes. Shane caved under it every time it was directed at him. Most people did. It was like her own superpower.

“You too, Shane. You know you can't stay here all night.”

Shane groaned, leaning into Ilya, trying to melt into him so he could stay forever. Ilya let his arms twist around him, kissing the back of his head.

Only a few minutes after Yuna and David left, a doctor pushed in, a grim look on his face. Shane and Ilya looked up. The doctor was frowning, creased deep and nervous into his face like a permanent scar. The man cleared his throat.

“Rozanov, Hollander, we got the X-ray results.”

Ilya felt that dread that hadn't plagued him in a long while. It was digging up through his spine, blending into his thoughts. Shane gripped him tighter. Ilya couldn't speak, he was worried the pure panic he was hiding would burst out of him.

Shane took the spotlight for him.

“What is it? Are they bad?”

Shane spoke up, his nails digging into his wrist hard enough it made Ilya wince. The doctor's face fell even further, he shifted nervously.

“There is no easy way to say this, but Mr Rozanov's legs have sustained severe fractures. There isn't much we can do for him. I'm so sorry.”

Ilya's world went dark for a moment. He wanted to pretend this was just a nightmare, that he would wake up in his own bed, with his husband in his arms, and have this all be just a bad dream.

Ilya swallowed, leveling himself enough to be able to speak.

“Does that mean I cannot play hockey anymore?”

Ilya forced out, terrified for the answer. He'd been so close, he and Shane were leading the Centaurs to the finals, his husband and him were finally on the same side, was that really being taken from him?

The doctor made a sound of displeasure, sadness. His face fell even further. The doctor looked like he wanted to weep for them. Shane was breathing heavily, scared. Ilya didn't have the energy to comfort him. He was just as terrified.

“Mr Rozanov, forget hockey, there is a chance you may never walk again.”

Ilya's world went blank.

Chapter 4: chapter 4

Chapter Notes

little angst that was again VERY badly written

Ilya was falling apart. Everything was too loud and too quiet at the same time.

He would never play hockey again.

His career was over before it had even truly begun.

Ilya had so many dreams. Each one was being plucked from him before he could blink, before he could truly feel their loss.

How could everything change so fast? How could he lose everything in just a matter of seconds? In just a few words?

Ilya was a hockey player. What was he without that?

-

Shane's parents didn't come back. Shane had called them, sent them away. Ilya couldn't talk right now. He didn't want to.

Loss was a feeling he'd felt before, but never thought he'd feel for himself. He was losing a part of himself. He was losing his entire identity. From the time he was born, for as long as he could even remember, he'd played hockey.

Now he would not play hockey anymore. he would not play hockey ever again.

An ache had settled between his ribs, tangling itself inside so deeply it pressed into his heart.

It was hard to breathe. His body would not let him breathe. Everything was crashing down so suddenly and he couldn't stop it, forced to endure the earthquake of his entire life.

Shane stayed. They did not talk.

And then Shane left.

Ilya was alone.

Morning came. Ilya had not slept. He thought from countless therapy sessions in the past, therapy that helped, therapy that made him feel good, would've taught him not to feel like this. It hadn't done anything, he couldn't fight it, he was plummeting into darkness, and quick.

He was mourning himself, even when he was still alive. He wasn't Ilya Rozanov the famous hockey player anymore, so who was he?

Shane had come quickly the next morning. He'd seen the signs, he knew it was hard, that this was causing Ilya to slip, but he couldn't let him fall entirely, because if he did, he wasn't sure Ilya would get up again.

"Hey, Ilya."

Shane had whispered, his voice careful, like talking to a stray cat. He didn't want to startle him, didn't want to move too fast. He pressed his hand over Ilya's. It was too cold. He interlinked their fingers anyway.

"Im sorry."

Ilya had whispered. Shane was confused for a minute. Why was he apologizing? Ilya had suffered, and now he was in a hospital bed, apologizing.

"You have nothing to be sorry for, Ilya."

Shane muttered, leaning in close, burying his face in Ilya's blonde curls. They smelled like soap and antiseptic, but he still smelled like home. Ilya looked even sadder, guiltier, and Shane felt even more helpless than before.

"I am sorry we will never play hockey together. I had so many dreams, Shane. I am so sorry."

Shane sighed, kissing his head. His hand was still tangled in Ilya's, holding on impossibly tight, like Ilya might sink into a pit if he didn't hold him hard enough. He felt the tears in his own eyes start to fall, burrowing into the golden curls of Ilya's head. He couldn't take this hurt away, and he felt it like a drum, pounding, pounding, growing louder and louder. His voice was shaky when he spoke, so quiet it was nearly lost in the room as nothing more than air, an exhale of breath.

"Hockey isn't important right now. Even if you never step foot on the ice again, even if you never so much as stand again, I'm not going anywhere. I'll love you just the same."

Ilya heard him. It didn't quell that insecurity in his heart. It was hard to believe, because, he wasn't sure he still loved himself, or even knew himself, without hockey.

"But-"

Shane shushed him, covering his mouth with his hand before he could utter a single word more.

"I love you, Ilya Rozanov. I loved you on the ice, and I'll love you in that stupid wheelchair, too."

Ilya made a move to speak again, Shane did not stop him this time. He could tell it wouldn't be something depreciating. It would just be a plea, and Shane was weak to anything Ilya asked of him.

"you promise?"

His eyes were soft, pleading, desperate in a way Shane had never seen on his face. Heartbreak.

"I promise. I promise so much, Ilya. We are going to fight through this together, because we do everything together. I'll be right by your side through whatever comes."

Ilya let out a small relieved breath, broken at the end, entirely devastated. Shane could see how Ilya lost the tiniest bit of tension, his breathing softer, less erratic. He was lulled into a sense of security, of safety. He knew Ilya was so used to being abandoned. Hockey was abandoning him, so he thought Shane should, too. But Ilya knew he would have no world, no lifetime, when Shane would ever consider running away. He was here for life, till the very end.

Shane stopped talking after that, sinking into Ilya as his lover cried into his shoulder, quiet sobs escaping his lips. They stayed like that for a long time, until they both cried all the tears in the world, and until they could not cry any longer.

(two weeks later)

Ilya was going home. It was still not a good time for Yuna and David to visit him, even if they wanted to whisper similar promises of commitment, to convince their darling boy who they'd taken on so easily, that even without hockey they weren't going anywhere either. But Shane knew Ilya was tired, too tired to see them, even too tired to speak to Shane. They drove back in silence, the radio was turned off, the only sound that played through the car was the rumbling of the engine. Shane wanted to hold his hand, squeeze it, say how proud he was of Ilya, but the way the blonde's hands were curled into his lap was telling enough.

The house smelled better than the hospital had. That distinct smell of Ilya and Shane wafted through the air. Shane hadn't been home since the accident, having been staying in the closest motel possible, in case anything went wrong. Only David and Yuna had been here, to feed Anya, to take her for walks, just to check in on the place. Shane pushed the wheelchair carrying Ilya up towards the front door, his husband's head was bobbed back, clearly deep in thought, half unconscious on his own volition.

As soon as the door unlocked, the sound of nails skittering on the hardwood met their ears, as Anya came bounding around the corner. She smelled them, she knew her parents were home.

Shane scooped her up before she could jump at Ilya. He wasn't sure how he'd react to that right now, and he certainly didn't want to make things worse. Anya was licking at his face, spurring him from his thoughts.

"Hi Anya~ - baby! we missed you. Oh, you missed us didn't you, girl?"

He cooed, kissing her wet nose. She was so excited, bouncing on the back of her paws, shedding fur on Shane's shirt, that he couldn't find himself to wipe off. Anya smelled like wet dog, the stink was so familiar it made him realize how much he missed her. He couldn't help but spare a glance at Ilya, who was watching intently, focused. He could see how much Ilya wanted to just get up, run around with Anya chasing him. For something that had seemed so simple in the past, it was impossible now.

Shane let Anya clamber towards the wheelchair, sniffing at it before barking and pouncing into Ilya's lap, and nearly fell to his knees in relief at the smile Ilya managed to conjure on his face as he hugged Anya, letting his dog curl up into his arms, he buried his nose in her fur, rocking her slowly. Ilya loved that dog, and she loved him.

Shane went to set up Ilya's room on the first floor, since it would nearly be impossible for him to get up the stairs, Shane was also certain he could not lift him, and wouldn't dare risk the chance of dropping him even if he could.

He'd covered the bed in pillows, stealing Ilya's from their king upstairs. It looked good. Staring at the bed made Shane realize exactly how exhausted he was himself. It had been a tough couple of weeks, especially with the news Ilya would be sent for physical therapy, but there was no guaranteeing it would work. Shane had to be positive enough for the both of them, though. Ilya was certainly not. Shane could see why, though. Everything seemed hopeless right now. His boat was sinking, and Ilya didn't just need to paddle, he needed someone else to keep it afloat.

It was a quiet evening, settling in. They fell back into a rhythm, a rhythm with wheelchairs and too many medications and aches and pains and an undertone of sadness, but a rhythm nonetheless. Shane made one of his too healthy meals that made Ilya grunt and complain, but concluded it was much tastier than the hospital and ate it as Shane beamed at him. Anya busied herself under the table, begging for scraps that Ilya happily gave her.

Time passed in soft conversation and TV shows. They couldn't do much else but wait and hope. Ilya was laying on Shane on the couch, wheelchair discarded somewhere, legs limp and head in Shane's lap. Shane kissed his lips like a promise.

Ilya was tucked into bed by 10, and asleep by 12. Shane sat on the edge of the comforter, watching, eyes soft, dilated in the darkness. He was tracing shapes in his husband's back, running over the curve of his spine, the depth of his shoulders, the muscles of his laterals. Touching, feeling. He listened to each soft breath, resting his head close enough to hear the thump of his heartbeat.

Even watching him sleep, Shane could feel him sinking.

Chapter 5: chapter 5

Chapter Notes

actually reads like a grocery list bro I can't write

Shane felt it before he saw it. That quiet distance that set between them, that solemn spirit that lingered in every room of the house, causing even Anya to whine and bark at its intensity. Ilya was back in therapy, not that Shane ever heard about it much. He wasn't sure Ilya wanted to talk, anyway.

They were growing apart, and Shane was trying, but he wasn't good at emotions. He could barely decipher them in himself, let alone another person. But he'd seen these patterns before, those hills that seemed impossible to climb.

Ilya was laying on the couch when Shane got home from their practice. His jersey stuck to his skin, hair plastered to his forehead from sweat and grime. He was almost thankful Ilya was asleep, so he couldn't see that sadness encrypted into his eyes, a sight that seemed all too permanent since they came home.

Shane wanted to be able to say things were getting better, but they only seemed to get even worse. He walked over, settling down beside him. Running his fingers through his hair, he watched each exhale and inhale that escaped Ilya's lips. They were cracked, a little wet with spit that Shane bent down to kiss away. Ilya didn't stir, but he seemed a lot less upset than when he was awake, almost peaceful in a sense, his expression almost soft. He wouldn't wake him, Ilya needed to sleep, and maybe Shane just wanted a little longer to savour this.

Time came easy when Ilya was asleep. Shane could go through his activities, showering, shaving, cooking, without worrying about Ilya.

Ilya -

The thoughts in his head were too loud. He couldn't remember the crash, the exact second he'd swerved in panic, when he flew, when the car came fell on top of him, he could only remember the pain, the sensations he was losing without even realizing it. He could hear the crack of bone and collision of metal in the deepest pits of his mind. This is what plagued him while he slept, what made sweat pour down his back, and make him wake up with wet eyes and even more regret and longing.

He didn't want to tell Shane. He'd take his sleeping pills, and he'd keep his mouth shut. His husband was already juggling so much, he couldn't imagine the guilt if he made it even harder. The kiss on his cheek stirred him, but he didn't open his eyes. He could smell a warm body stinking of sweat above him. He didn't recoil, the scent was welcoming more than it

was disgusting. Melting into his arms would've been so easy, so nice. But Ilya already felt like enough of a burden, he'd only make things so much worse if he forced Shane to stay. His time was a clock that revolved entirely around Ilya, he didn't need to take up any more seconds.

The shower clicked on from upstairs, and Ilya sat up the best he could. His legs were still useless, limp clumps of nerves he resented almost as much as he missed. Physio had been entirely useless, and besides the reassurances of Shane, he was starting to give up on hope.

Those dark thoughts curled in his head again, burrowing in, he tried to fight them away, recalling the most recent appointment with Galina. She'd known how hard this was for him, she knew how this was a big step backwards. But maybe it didn't have to end up at the very start again. He'd made progress, he'd never bounced back from something like this, but other things he'd broached the obstacles.

This seemed impossible, though. He felt that presence return. Shane had come back to check on him. Ilya yawned, leaning up into his lover's hand, basking in the simple affection. Shane smiled weakly, continuing to pet over his face, leaning down to kiss him, starting at his neck, up to his jaw, his cheek, ending at his lips. Ilya hummed in contentment, kissing him back softly. It was no big gesture, but it brought a small hint of warmth into Ilya's broken heart.

"I invited my parents over tonight, they really wanted to see you. Is that okay?"

Ilya could see the way Shane's hand shook as he spoke, like he was saying the wrong thing and Ilya would shatter. Squeezing Shane's hand, to steady him, or himself, he didn't know.

"Shane. I am okay, just sad. They can come."

Shane nodded, breathing out a sigh of relief. He kissed Ilya again, curling up into his side like a kitten, extra careful not to jostle his legs. Anya had somehow managed to sneak over, settling on the floor licking Ilya's exposed ankle. He wished he could feel it. Ilya shook the thoughts away. Shane was already worried, he didn't need to see his sadness, too. He would do what he always did. Cover it up. He spared a smirk at Shane, pinching his cheek.

"I am sorry I cannot cook. Your food is so bad, it is very depressing."

Ilya complained, quirked a grin and the frown that formed on Shane's face. He got so defensive, and it was absolutely adorable.

"It's healthy! Macros, Ilya- we are pro hockey players and we-"

Shane stopped, realizing what he said. Because, no. Ilya was not a hockey player anymore, he'd had that stolen away from him. The words had left a bitter taste in his mouth. Shane reached for Ilya, hugging him, a sad, helpless expression on his face.

"Oh Ilya, I'm so sorry- I didn't mean-"

Ilya sniffed, kissing his head.

"Is okay. I know you meant nothing bad."

Shane was still sniffing, like the truth was bubbling up all over again, exploding inside him in the form of tears. Ilya was still holding him, running his hand down his back, soothing Shane like he was a baby. This was so stressful for him, he could see it in the bags under Shane's eyes, that helpless, pathetic expression every time Ilya looked at him, how each shot he took at the net on the ice was slow and sluggish. He was burning out, and there was barely any time before he ran out of fuel entirely. The worst part is? It was all Ilya's fault.

The door was left unlocked for Yuna and David to come inside without any fuss. Ilya was still parked on the couch, flicking through channels with little interest. He perked up at the sound of the door opening, hearing the skitter of paws as Anya raced to greet their guests. Shane was in the kitchen, setting the table as perfectly as he could manage, each plate and fork neatly angled the same. This was one of Shane's little quirks, a quirk that almost felt like second nature to Ilya now.

Yuna pushed tin-foiled dishes onto the counter, before making her way towards Ilya, a soft look in her eyes. He attempted a smile, which fell into a sharp exhale as Yuna nearly squeezed him to death in her grip. He hugged her back, feeling a little lighter.

"Oh Ilya, how are you doing? Shane told us the news, we are so sorry-"

Ilya sighed, only nuzzling closer.

"I am sad, but it is life. I will get over it."

That was a lie, Ilya knew it was and Yuna probably did too. There was no getting over something like this. It was big, too big for that. Yuna didn't push, because sometimes forcing the truth only makes things even worse.

"Well, If you ever need to talk, Ilya, you know I'm here."

She spoke gently, no judgement and simply patience as she gestured to herself. It was exactly what he needed. He smiled again, a little less forced, but still felt wrong on his face.

"I know. Thank you."

Yuna knew he wasn't really considering it. Her eyes narrowed, slipping her hands into his and squeezing.

"Ilya. I mean it. Talk to me whenever. You're my son, and I need to know you're okay."

Ilya nodded, sighing.

"I know Yuna. But it is hard. I will try, though."

Yuna nodded, giving a final sharp squeeze to his hands.

"Good."

David joined them by the couch having slipped out of his coat and shoes. He smelled like

cooking, it made Ilya's mouth water. David wrapped his arms around him, nearly mirroring his wife in reaction. David was a little quiet, but he saw the sincerity in his eyes, that calm stature that brought him semblance of peace.

Ilya sighed shakily, burying his face in the crook of his shoulder. He was surrounded by family that loved him and supported him, so why was he still so sad?

The dinner was loud, spoken chatter that Ilya did his best to keep up with. He was doing his best, but he was falling short on smiles and grins, and the exhaustion was only growing like a vine inside him. It should have been familiar, should have been sweet, but it only made Ilya sadder. He didn't deserve this. He was broken in a way he deemed irreparable. Everything felt wrong. Different, in a way it shouldn't be.

Time blinked by in flashes, like a stopmotion movie. He was there, but he wasn't. Ilya watched them pack up and leave, felt Yuna's kisses goodbye, and David's hugs. He felt Shane roll him back to bed, help him up under the covers, snuggle up to him, whisper I love you.. He returned it all, but his mind was distant, far away.

He found the sleeping pills after Shane fell asleep. He didn't have time to think about them, about the life they'd built, about a life they could keep on building. His mind couldn't think about anything but all the things he'd lost. Ilya's hands were shaky as he reached for the pills, pouring the rest of the bottle into his hand. He lifted it to his mouth, swallowing them all. He barely felt them burn down his dry throat, barely felt him drop the bottle, or the tears that rolled down his eyes.

Shane was going to wake up, and he would see him, and perhaps that was the only part that scared him. He'd treaded the line of death more than once, walked the tightrope.

There was so much he'd wanted to tell Shane. That he loved him, that it wasn't his fault, that Ilya was sad because he couldn't see himself as anything other than a hockey player. How sorry he was that he'd become nothing but a shell of the man he once was. That he could barely bring himself to look at him, without seeing his own reflection of disappointment in his eyes.

His hands were shaking too hard to write a letter, to at least say goodbye, but he wouldn't have had the energy even if they were still. Ilya felt that fog sink into his head. He'd felt this before, this airy, floaty feeling when your entire body starts to move too slow. This was the only time he wasn't going to rethink it.

There was nothing to go back to. He was nothing. After that car accident, Ilya became nothing. He'd died when that car fell on him.

The clock ticked, counting down the moments till his body would fall still. Shane was still cuddled up to him, he could feel each tickle of breath on his chest, the love that boiled inside his husband felt fake. Pitying.

His eyelids started to droop, he started to float. Ilya let his head fall limp beside Shane's, watching each flutter of his eyelashes. He was so beautiful. His finger lifted to trace over the mess of freckles above his nose. He looked so much older, Ilya had damaged him. The frown lines in his face were more prominent, stains from tears he'd hidden from Ilya.

Ilya let his lips brush over Shane's for a final time, felt that stutter in his breath, like his body sought him out even unconscious.

A single tear dripped from Ilya's eye, before everything fell quiet.

Chapter 6: chapter 6

Chapter Notes

first ever fanfic done! I hope you guys liked it!!!

Shane might have died that night, too.

He'd rolled over in his sleep, feeling absentmindedly for Ilya, eyes fluttering open when he suddenly felt the loss of breath on his face. That gentle warmth that he felt in tandem to Ilya's heart beat had stopped entirely.

Shane sat up, flicking the bedside light on.

Ilya was pale, so pale. His face was white as a sheet and his lips were nearly blue, like someone had squeezed every ounce of air from his body. He was cold as ice and unresponsive, even as Shane tried to rouse him awake in his panic. Nothing, not even a twitch.

Shane was confused and terrified, until his eyes flicked to the pill bottle laying abandoned on the floor. He felt sick. Shane was going to vomit, and he was going to faint and die all at the same time.

He was calling an ambulance before he had any time to think about what had actually happened.

He sat on the steps of his front porch, shaking as they took Ilya away in an ambulance. He was still gripping his phone in his hand like a safety net, two call logs in his recents. 911, and his parents.

Yuna and David got to the hospital only minutes after Shane had already broken down in a waiting room chair. His mouth was dry from throwing up and he was helplessly wiping tears from his eyes. It felt like a cruel joke. He was just at the hospital because of Ilya, and now he was here again.

Except this was worse, this was so much worse.

He'd pushed too hard, he knew he had, he was so certain his parents could help Ilya. He wanted to cure him, bring back his husband who was happy and always smiling. But maybe this version had always been creeping inside him, maybe there was no curing him, there was just learning to live with it.

Yuna had taken him in his arms as Shane finally let himself break down, collapsing into her arms with tears dripping like a faucet from his eyes.

“Oh Shane.. This isn’t your fault. You tried.”

“He loved you, this would never be because of you, you were so good to him...”

Her words should’ve helped, should’ve pushed away that harsh gnawing guilt he was experiencing. It only made things worse.

He’d tried, but maybe trying wasn’t enough, maybe he should’ve done more, he should’ve paid more attention. Ilya had hidden pills from him for weeks, and he’d been so ignorant he didn’t even know they existed until tonight.

Shane felt stupid, and so, so scared.

He stayed there the full night, with no news, no updates. He didn’t sleep, and neither did Yuna or David. He was more awake than he’d ever been in his life, his mind buzzing with blame and absolute terror.

He didn’t know how long Ilya had been like that. He was still alive when he’d kissed Shane goodnight, still alive when they whispered I love yous.

What went wrong?

Ilya was half of his soul, half of his heart.

If Ilya died, Shane would too.

A nurse woke him, stirring him from where he must’ve fallen asleep. His neck kinked with the pain of laying on a plastic chair for hours. He expected an expression of grim acceptance on her face.

There was none. Just a calm, neutral expression on her face.

“Mr Hollander?”

She confirmed, he nodded, nervous, still fidgeting with the cuffs of his pajamas that he hadn’t bothered to change before rushing over to the hospital.

“Yes. That's me.”

He said, voice meek and quiet, words went unsaid. ‘Is he okay? Is my husband okay?’ He didn’t ask, he wasn’t sure if he’d be able to handle a bad answer.

She smiled softly, expression faint, but quirked on her lips for just a fraction of a second.

“He is stable.”

The nurse said simply. Shane could have ripped his hair out in relief, could've broken down in tears of pure joy. He didn't, instead his eyes glistened a little. He smiled, too.

"Can I see him?"

She nodded.

"You can."

The sound of beeping was almost mocking. He'd just looked down at his husband on a hospital bed. He was here again. He didn't think he could handle it a third time.

Ilya was asleep, paler than he was supposed to be, but breathing and not dead. That was enough.

Shane kissed him, every inch he could reach, each press of his lips a sentiment of his relief. Ilya was still cold under his skin, but his skin was going to return to that pink flush and he would treasure every moment of it.

Ilya woke up.

He didn't look at Shane, who could see that shame in his eyes that went unguarded. Ilya was vulnerable like this, scared.

Shane didn't care, he needed answers. He didn't care if Ilya was scared. He was awake and he'd tried to kill himself and nearly killed Shane, too.

"Ilya."

It wasn't soft, still laced with concern, but sharpened with an angry fear that Shane didn't have the energy to try and disguise. Ilya was looking up at him all sad and punished in his stupid little hospital gown and not even the sight of him so soft could quell Shane's temper.

"Im sorry."

His husband whispered, voice soft as wind. He knew it was useless, sorry didn't mean anything. Shane asked the only thing that did.

"Why?"

He could see Ilya didn't have an exact answer, he could see in the way Ilya avoided his eyes, steering away from his problems like he always did. When Shane was about to yell again, he finally spoke.

"I was sad."

Because of me?"

Ilya looked up, surprised. He'd never been sad because of Shane. He would've ended up dead years ago had it not been for Shane. It was never his fault.

"No, of course not."

Shane sighed, exhaling hard, breathing felt useless, and his anger only grew.

"Then why? How could you do that to me?"

Shane asked, his voice cracking. He saw the exact moment he broke Ilya's heart.

"I didn't want to hurt you, Shane. I- Love you. I'm so sorry."

Both their voices were thick with hurt and regret and absolute pain. Both of them had made mistakes that were irreparable. Their mistakes had nearly cost Ilya's life, and probably later Shane's.

"Im sorry I didn't notice. I should have tried harder."

Ilya sighed.

"It is not your fault. Please, don't say that. You tried. That was all I needed. And you cared. I just couldn't do it."

"Because of your legs?"

Shane asked, curious, a tad too pushy. He knew how hard it was on Ilya, losing a part of himself. Shane had felt that loss too. But he hadn't realized how bad it must've been.

"Yes, because of my legs."

Ilya swallowed, he had more to say.

"And, I was scared of losing you."

Shane's eyebrows furrowed in confusion.

"I didn't go anywhere. You couldn't have lost me."

I know, Shane. But I thought, maybe- you would see me differently. I cannot be who I once was, I lost my whole identity. The identity you fell in love with. I thought you'd see a different man in my place, and you wouldn't want me anymore."

Ilya was crying now, and so was he. His heart was breaking with each word. Ilya thought Shane would leave him? How could he have ever thought something like that? Shane had read his vows at their wedding, and he'd meant every word. From life to death, he would stay with Ilya, he wanted to stay with Ilya. He couldn't imagine a world where he didn't.

“Oh Ilya, you know that’s not true. I love you, I have loved every inch of you. It was never about hockey. I loved playing against you, sure, but I never loved you because of it. Ilya, you are my entire world. You, not hockey, not the man you were on the ice. But the man you were at our wedding, or the man I want to wake up to every morning. That has nothing to do with hockey, and everything for my love for you.”

Ilya was finally able to breathe again. He wasn't lost. He wasn't broken. He was Ilya Rozanov, and if he couldn't be a hockey player, he could still be Shane Hollander's husband.

And maybe that was enough. Maybe that was everything. Maybe that was all he ever needed to be.

Hockey wasn't going to be forever, but with the look in Shane's eyes? He would be.

He rested his chin on Shane's shoulder, nuzzling into him. Safe at last.

“I love you.”

“I love you too.”

That hole in his heart had always been filled, he just needed to be able to see it.

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