

today i'm empty, my love

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today i'm empty, my love

by [kenhinasuga](#)

Summary

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Distractions, Galina would shake her head, disapproving and understanding at the same time. But Ilya really thought it's enough, wanted to believe so badly that for him love *does* fix everything. He knows the crashes after seeing Shane are always the worst. So empty and meaningless, sadness a knife splitting him open until the void threatens to consume him, its ugly head baring teeth.

Ilya's luck has run out.

Or: Ilya has a bad depressive episode when he's at the cottage with Shane.

Notes

this takes place in the long game after ilya told shane about seeing a therapist but before their forced coming out (so before he told him he has depression)

this is inspired by some of my own depressive episodes...sorry ilya

please let me know if i should add any tags/trigger warnings i might've forgotten!! i don't want anyone to go in without knowing something important that might harm them!!

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

Ilya shouldn't have come. He has been feeling off for a while, a quiet feeling lurking somewhere at the corners of his mind like it's been watching him, waiting to pounce at the most inopportune time. Apparently that time is off-season, the only time he has several undisturbed days with Shane.

Shane knows about the sadness he carries with him, but he's never had to see it before. In part because Ilya didn't want him to, pride and shame ugly things with teeth, and in part because he's simply been lucky. His worst episodes held at bay by the overwhelming happiness to just get to be with Shane, hold him, talk to him, love him as openly as they can.

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Ilya's luck has run out.

He wakes up to blinding sunlight streaming into the familiar room at Shane's cottage, their room, but Shane isn't next to him. His brain feels like it's full of mud, turning every thought heavy and weighing down his limbs like they're lead. He reaches for Shane's side of the bed, empty, still a little warm, and the simple movement takes as much effort as getting up after playing an entire game that went into overtime *twice*.

All he wants is to roll over and press himself into the residual warmth, coat his lungs in Shane's scent still clinging to the pillow, but he can't. The feeling is too far away to reach for it, stuck somewhere he can't get to, drowned by the sludge making up his insides.

Ilya closes his eyes, starting to hurt from the bright sunshine glaring directly at him as if disgusted by how wrong he is. The warmth should feel good on his face, promising a day in the water, wet skin glistening under its attention, but it doesn't soak into him like it usually does. As if that all encompassing dark mass inside of him has made it out, repelling everything that's supposed to be good. Ilya manages to turn his head, press his face into his pillow, willing sleep to take him again.

He slips in and out of the dreamscape only a half-awake brain can conjure up. All the worst moments of his life mashed together into an ugly caricature.

There's his mother in the distance, in the hammock, lifeless arm dangling over the side, Shane is right there with him, but Ilya just called him by his first name and he slips away from him before he can even blink. His father's voice is a relentless drone in the background, Lazy. Not good enough. You should be ashamed. Your country deserves more. It merges with Alexei's

voice, More. More. More. Ilya is suddenly right beside the hammock, staring at his mother's corpse. Her face is blurry, flickering as his brain grasps for the memory of her eyes, her nose, her smile. Then it changes. Everything goes quiet. He stares at Shane's unmoving body, still and rigid. Shane's eyes are open, but there's no life in them, and he speaks without moving his mouth. I can't do this, Rozanov. It's a bad idea. Hockey is more important. You're not worth it.

Ilya startles awake, instantly blinded by the sun, mercifully still alone. He forces his eyes to stay open, breathing a little ragged. His heart *hurts*, the constant ache so loud, reverberating in the emptiness of his chest, brain too muddy to deny all the lies breaking his heart.

He can't go back to sleep, fears what else awaits him there, but he can't get up either. He can't in the literal sense, effort too great, and because of the tiny alarm bells ringing somewhere in the distance.

Shane can't see me like this.

Ilya is truly down on his luck when Shane slips into their room as if summoned. He catches his eyes, always drawn to him like a moth to the light. Shane smiles at him so happily it's like a slap across the face. A distant memory of a slap because not even the shame and guilt, the *joy* he should be feeling but isn't, can win against all that miserable, endless emptiness.

Ilya hopes he's smiling back, hopes if he's failing, Shane will just chalk it up to grogginess from too much sleep. "Good morning...well, it's past noon." Shane sits on the edge of the bed and leans over him, fingers brushing through his curls. "Sleep well?" He can't do this, can't have Shane, haloed by the sun, looking down at him with those eyes, offering such easy love with his gentle touch.

It's wasted on him. Ilya wants it so bad, wants to want it, but it's bad today, really bad. "Anya wanted to say goodbye." Shane looks down at the floor and pats the bed. A ball of fur jumps eagerly onto the sheets and bounds towards Ilya. *Right*, Yuna is taking Anya to meet her doggie friends at the park and give them some time alone.

Anya nudges her wet nose against his cheek and licks him. Ilya manages to lift his arm and give her a few pats. He tries not to linger on how the soft fur should make him feel lighter, how he should be squeezing her and giving her kisses. "Have a good day. Don't trouble *babushka*." Anya yips as if she understands him and Shane laughs softly. Ilya needs them to leave.

The doorbell rings and Shane gathers Anya in his arms, leaving the room and granting his wish. Maybe he can go back to sleep, he'd rather face another nightmare than having to explain whatever is wrong with him to Shane.

Sleep doesn't take him and Shane returns, frowning this time as he sits on the bed. "Bad dream? You look exhausted." His touch is gentle against the side of Ilya's face and Ilya wishes he could be better than this, could at least pretend that's all it is, anything to buy him more time and get this under control. He can't seem to form the words and Shane is right, the exhaustion is killing him.

“Yes,” he says simply, voice a low drawl, and focuses his eyes on Shane’s chin. It’s technically not a complete lie, but Ilya doesn’t want to see his face right now in case he catches on. “Wanna talk about it?” *Oh*, somehow this is worse, but he should’ve expected Shane to take him at face value and he can’t be angry at getting away with it when that’s actively what he’s trying to achieve. Being found out would be so much worse.

“Not really,” he manages to say. Ilya really needs to be alone again, maybe a shower will help, maybe tying stones to his feet and walking into the lake will make it all go away. The thought crawls across his brain like molasses before settling on his chest like a weight meant to crush him. Shane is right *there*, his home, his future, his fucking *heart* is sitting right there and he’s thinking about death for absolutely no reason. He wants to bash his skull against the wall until it’s cracked open and he can cut out whatever part of his brain stores sludge and sadness and emptiness.

It must show on his face, first honest flicker of emotion probably turning his expression into something twisted. Shane grabs his face, forcing him to meet his eyes, and Ilya hates the concern he sees, he doesn’t have it in him to reassure him. There is no reassurance in *I’m really fucking sad and empty, so can you please leave me alone to drown myself in both*.

“What’s wrong?” Shane’s gaze flits over his face, thumbs stroking his cheeks. Ilya shakes his head. If he opens his mouth again he might let something spill out and all that ugly needs to stay far, far away from this beautiful man. But Shane isn’t having it, squeezing his cheeks between his palms and dropping a kiss to his lips. “Ilya,” he says pointedly, “talk to me. Tell me what’s wrong?”

Ilya grabs his wrists, pulling until Shane’s forced to let go, and rolls over, hiding his face against the pillow that smells like Shane, a scent that is calm and love and home to him, but isn’t enough today. “Nothing...” He mumbles into the pillow and Shane huffs in disbelief. “It’s clearly not nothing,” he starts, sounding a little angry, and Ilya stiffens.

Shane stays quiet for a moment and then his voice is softer. “Maybe you should eat? It is past noon...like I said...and you always get a little moody when you’re hungry.” Ilya *is* hungry, but he has no appetite, won’t be able to stomach anything anyways.

A hand rests against his back, gentle pressure right between his shoulder blades. Ilya doesn’t respond, shoving his face further into the pillow until it gets just a little harder to breathe. Shane smooths his palm up and down his spine. “Hey, come on, you’re not gonna chirp me for the terrible Snickers reference?” Ilya didn’t even notice that, so that’s a no, no chirping from him.

Shane sighs and then the bed shifts under his weight. He presses the length of his body against Ilya’s and drapes an arm over him. “Say something, please.” His breath ghosts across Ilya’s neck, warm and a little wet. Ilya is tired of being stubborn, tired in general, and today is a lost cause.

Galina will be very disappointed when he tells her about his behaviour, his unwillingness to *talk*, and she won’t even try to wrap it up in her understanding therapist voice. Maybe he deserves to be cursed out in Russian, but he kind of wishes it could be Shane instead of his therapist doing the cursing. This sucks.

Shane nuzzles his nose against his neck, peppering a few kisses across his skin, and Ilya takes a deep breath. "Everything is wrong..." Shane's kisses stop. "No, not everything. Just me. Stupid brain is wrong." He wishes he could cry, scream, anything that will make him feel again, anything easier to grasp than this absence.

Shane breathes a small *Oh* against his neck and Ilya really loves him, but he knows exactly what his next words are going to be and how much he's going to hate Ilya's response. "What can I do? What do you need?" *Nothing. A new brain would be great.* He doesn't say it, but he's got nothing else, so he stays quiet.

Shane rolls on top of him and for a moment Ilya thinks he's really going to suffocate now and wouldn't that be beautifully tragic, death by fiancé-shaped weighted blanket. It only lasts for a second and then Shane is on his other side, facing him. He pushes his curls away and pats the back of his head. "You're going to get up and eat something. Even if I have to drag you out of bed myself and force feed you, that's what's going to happen now, okay?"

Ilya turns his head a little and takes in the determination on Shane's face. He knows they're not empty threats, Shane is capable of following through, and he loves him so much, but it feels hollow today and that is enough to send him deeper into the mud, spiraling more and more into the abyss.

Shane doesn't wait for an answer and sits up, pulling Ilya with him. His hands are gentle in between the literal manhandling he has to engage in to get Ilya to the kitchen isle. He deposits him on a chair and starts moving around the kitchen in a flurry, mercifully not trying to get him to talk. Ilya knows he's itching to fill the silence, but he appreciates the effort more than he can express right now.

He tries to focus on the noises Shane can't avoid making, wishing they could distract him from the weight on his chest, and zones out until a plate is set before him. He thanks Shane quietly and eats dutifully, slow and small bites only, aware of watchful eyes on him the entire time. It's easier to swallow than he expected, but he barely tastes anything. He doesn't manage to eat the entire portion and Shane doesn't argue when he pushes the plate away from himself.

"You good to brush your teeth and take a shower?" Apparently, Ilya must look distressed at the very idea because Shane quickly amends his words. "Brush your teeth, please. I'll be right there." He grabs Ilya's plate and turns away before he can argue.

Ilya drags himself to the bathroom, the effort so great he feels absolutely ridiculous. He catches his reflection in the mirror and stares at himself. He wants to say he looks as shit as he feels, but except for his tired eyes and the stern line of his mouth, he looks unsettlingly normal. It should show, how fucked up he is, how wrong, but when he forces a smile, practiced from years of stupid interviewers asking stupid questions, he doubts anyone else would be able to tell anything at all.

Shane didn't fall for it.

He tries harder, more teeth, cockier, but that's not going to convince him either. He tries brighter, like he's going to laugh any second, but that just makes him look insane. His tries

smaller and softer, something gentle that doesn't require him to channel a feeling he doesn't even remember right now. His reflection freezes him in place.

This is how his mother looks in so many of his memories, the almost-real smile that doesn't reach her eyes. The images are so vague now, becoming more blurry and slipping away with each passing year. He dreads the day he can't picture her at all anymore. He adjusts his fake-smile a little more and for a terrible, horrible moment, he sees her smiling back in the mirror instead.

Ilya splashes water on his face, rubbing at his skin until it feels raw, and when he looks up again, she's gone, red blotches blossoming on his skin. Shane's lifeless body flashes before his eyes, the very real image of his body laid out on the ice overlapping with the dream-version in the hammock. Ilya splashes more water on his face, squeezing his eyes shut tightly and then quickly opening them again when it only intensifies the image.

Shane Hollander. *Dead*.

He dunks his entire head under the spray of water, getting into his nose and mouth and stinging his eyes. He's hauled away from the sink by the back of his shirt. "What the fuck are you doing? Fuck, Ilya." Shane grabs his face, inspecting him, before pushing him to sit on the toilet and throwing a towel over his head.

There's nothing gentle about the way he dries him off, movements slightly erratic. "What were you even trying to do?" Shane roughly pulls the towel away, bunching it in shaking hands, and pats Ilya's face, wiping softly at his eyes, over his nose and down his neck. His hands are still trembling slightly by the time he's done, taking longer than necessary, and Ilya knows he's out of his depth here.

Ilya reaches for his hand, but Shane slaps it away. "I'm fine. I'm sorry. I wasn't prepared for...*that*." He gestures towards the sink and squeezes his eyes shut, taking a deep breath. "Okay. Sorry, fuck. Brush your teeth while I clean up this mess, yeah? Please?"

It's a bathroom, Ilya wants to say, *a little water is nothing new*, but he complies instead. It would give Shane too much hope that Ilya's a little more...*normal* now. He can't bear to think about the disappointment once he realises he's still far from that. He hears Galina's quiet sigh, *We've talked about this, Ilya. Depression doesn't make you abnormal*. Well, it still doesn't make him normal either, a bad brain isn't normal, shouldn't be normal, and he's allowed to be angry about it.

Ilya pauses with the toothbrush halfway to his mouth. It's a tiny spark at best, but yeah, anger, a hint of a feeling in his chest. If Shane notices he brushes his teeth more roughly than necessary, he doesn't say anything about it.

The spark is gone again by the time he's rinsing his mouth, Shane watching him like a hawk, but anger isn't productive anyways, it's not a feeling worth holding onto. Ilya really wants to go back to bed.

He looks at Shane, about to ask for permission, when he's pulled into a kiss. It's rough and desperate, too many teeth, and over as suddenly as it started. "Don't fucking scare me like

that again. Now go sit on the couch. We're watching TV." Ilya does as he's told, Shane close behind, and slumps onto the couch heavily. Shane throws a blanket over him, despite the warm weather, and tucks him in.

He hovers over him, biting his lip. "You *can* talk to me, you know?" Ilya blinks up at him and struggles to free his hand, awkwardly wiggling to get it out and reaching for Shane's when he finally manages. "I know," he says, voice rough. "Nothing to say. Just sad and empty. No reason, just happens. Not usually when I'm with you."

Shane sits down next to him and intertwines their fingers, squeezing them a little. "I didn't know it got this...bad." His mouth pinches cutely, nose scrunching up, as he regrets his choice of words and squeezes again as if in apology. "Yeah, didn't want you to know," Ilya shrugs to lessen the blow, but it's probably a futile attempt.

"Sad doesn't make you hard, so..." It's a terrible joke and he shrugs again. Shane's eye roll is automatic, but his fingers tighten around Ilya's just a little. "Really? And I was so sure a blowjob was a cure-all." Shane's heart isn't in it either, Ilya can tell, and they look at each other silently for a while. "I love you. Sad and empty or not. I love you so fucking much, okay?" Ilya nods. "I love you, too."

He sinks more into the couch and turns his head towards the TV, screen still black. He hopes Shane understands he can't give him more than this right now, that he meant it, as fucked up as it is, he didn't *ever* want Shane to see him like this and if they keep talking, he's scared it won't ever go away again. Bad days becoming a bad life.

Shane leans back against the couch and turns on the TV. Ilya zones in and out of nature documentaries, a random car show he's never heard of before and hopes to never have to watch again and at least two movies, intercepted by bathroom breaks and Shane shoving something to drink or a snack into his hands.

The end credits of the second movie are starting when the TV suddenly turns off. Ilya blinks at the black screen, eyes slowly focusing, and wonders when Shane turned on the million little lamps around the house, sure they've been holding hands almost non-stop. Shane pats his leg, blanket discarded sometime around the terrible car show, and Ilya slowly looks at him.

"Dinner?" Shane's voice breaks a little, probably from lack of use, and Ilya tries to feel his body, willing himself back into existence. It takes him a while, but Shane waits patiently. He's feeling drowsy, still stuffed full of black mud, but yes, he's hungry. He tells Shane as much and something threatens to break inside him at the genuine joy on his face.

"There's pizza in the freezer. We could also order something, but it's going to take a while to get here. Or I could-" Ilya cuts him off, "Pizza is good. Thank you." He wonders if Shane prepared the pizza as a surprise, probably had something sweet and romantic planned to break his strict diet. He looks so pleased with himself and Ilya feels something wet on his cheeks.

Of course, the tears decide to make their grand appearance now. Shane climbs onto his lap and pulls him into his arms without a word, lets him cry against his chest. There's barely any

sound accompanying the tears, but they refuse to stop. Ilya isn't ashamed of crying anymore, not as much as he used to be when everything was so out of his control. When admitting weakness even to Shane, *especially* to Shane, felt like losing everything. Today has been a lot and he wants to hide away, stay out of sight for as long as Shane will let him.

The tears do stop eventually and Ilya is grateful when Shane doesn't let go, fingers gently carding through his hair. He slips his hands under the hem of Shane's shirt, skin-on-skin grounding him for a moment. *You're good here. You're safe. You're loved...* He realises immediately the words are not his thoughts, but a steady stream of affirmations spilling from Shane's lips in a hushed voice. It takes him a moment to understand he's saying them in fucking Russian.

Ilya wants to cry again, but there's nothing left, so he tilts his head and bites at Shane's neck like a feral animal. It releases a little bit of all the weird sensations of half-formed, half-felt emotions wading through the mud. Shane keeps impressively quiet at the attack and Ilya slowly calms down, letting his lips rest against the dip between his collarbones, feeling his pulse.

A familiar ringtone interrupts his moment of peace. Yuna is calling. Shane fidgets on his lap and Ilya reluctantly lets go. He fishes his phone out of his pocket, but it isn't ringing and tries to reach for Ilya's on the coffee table without moving too far away. He doesn't ask Ilya to take the call, only shoots him a quick, "She's probably calling about Anya."

Ilya tries his hardest not to dwell on the fact he forgot all about his dog, his ray of sunshine, his perfect little angel. It grips him with a terror he'd rather not feel, cursing the slow return of emotions. Shane hesitates with the still ringing phone in his hand, obviously finding something more important in whatever Ilya's face is doing at the terrible realisation. He starts to say something, but Ilya cuts him off, "Answer. She will worry."

He swallows the lump in his throat, wondering just *how* worried Yuna would be if she knew what Ilya is putting her son through today. No, she'd be worried about *him*, but it's easier to feel guilty about Shane than acknowledge she would care for him like...a mother.

Ilya exhales shakily and Shane finally answers the call. He gestures over his shoulder with his thumb, eyebrows pinched in question, and Ilya shakes his head. "Hi, mum. Ilya can't come to the phone right now, so you'll have to do with me." It's not even a lie and the easy way he says it, so simple and without unnecessary explanation, has Ilya relaxing against the couch a little.

"Yeah, I'll let him know. If Anya gets restless, we can get her any time, okay?"

"No, not today."

"Give us some time to decide on a day, yeah?"

"I will call you soon."

"I love you, too. Bye, mum."

He hangs up and places the phone back on the table. “She says hi.” Ilya nods. “Anya’s staying the night.” Shane says it carefully like he expects to get scolded, but Ilya feels a devastating amount of relief. He can’t give her the attention she deserves today and he can’t bear to share Shane’s, not now that he’s used to having it despite not wanting it.

Shane taps his chest, cutting off the impending spiral. “You want me to get her?” Ilya shakes his head too quickly and Shane also seems a little relieved. Maybe he’s scared to leave him alone or maybe he’s worried about having to take care of two people, well, one person and one dog. Either way the lack of judgement is the only response Ilya can stomach right now.

“She asked about when we’ll be over for dinner, but I told her...well, you heard. We’ll take it one day at a time.” Ilya tries for a smile because he adores Yuna, loves being at the Hollanders’ home, being a family, but all of it feels so undeserved, more so than usually. Shane slides his fingers into his hair and just looks at him for a little while.

“Still up for food?” He asks after a moment and Ilya appreciates he doesn’t ask anything else, usually so eager to make plans and let his parents know when they’ll be coming. He knows how much Shane loves his parents and how much he loves that Ilya enjoys spending time with them, loves knowing Ilya has a place to go.

He’s doing so much for him today, holding back so much. Ilya leans up for a kiss and Shane follows without question. They haven’t kissed enough today and this slow, sweet, *soft* meeting of lips is like coming up for air. Maybe love *can* cure everything.

Shane’s tongue slides along the seam of his lips and Ilya pulls back. He knows it doesn’t mean anything, Shane isn’t trying to escalate things and even if he was, Ilya can’t blame him, he’s known for always being horny. But he can’t, not right now, and that makes him want to die a little today. “*I’m going to take a walk.*” It slips out in Russian, brain suddenly in disarray at the realisation he probably couldn’t get hard for Shane right now. No, maybe he could get hard, but he doesn’t *want* to and that’s terrifying.

Shane slides off his lap, confusion and concern evident on his face. “*Can I come with you?*” He asks quietly, beautiful brown eyes slightly widened. This is what Ilya wanted to avoid at all cost, worrying Shane, feeling like he’s fragile, *weak*, giving his father that kind of power even in death. He wants none of this, anger flaring in the distance.

“*I’m not going to walk into the water and drown myself*, Hollander.” Shane flinches as if he’s been slapped. “Jesus, fuck, Ilya, I didn’t even *think* about that. Fuck.” It’s only now, Shane cursing in English, that he realises they had this whole exchange in Russian, that Shane had understood Ilya’s response.

For a terrifying moment, he feels cracked open, skinned alive at the thought of not being able to hide behind his native tongue for much longer. But he’s also overcome by so much love for this beautiful man actively learning his language. For him. It makes him feel raw in a different way, undeserving and overflowing, thoughts and feelings wreaking havoc in the muddled cavities of his body. The quick bursts of emotions are so jarring, he feels ready to sleep for two days straight, but it’s good to feel things again, no matter how brief or terrifying.

Shane is breathing heavily, head between his legs. "I'm sorry if I'm being too much, I just want to be here for you. I don't know what I'm doing. I'm sorry." Ilya drops a hand to the back of his neck and gives him a gentle squeeze. Everything is too much today, but not Shane, never Shane. Even when it might be true, when it feels like he *is* too much, Ilya won't ever allow him to think that.

"You're perfect," he whispers above him and the tension drains out of Shane. He lifts his head and looks at him, something fierce on his face despite the panic. "*You* are perfect." He tries to sound defiant, challenging, but it's undermined by the wetness pooling in those big, brown eyes. Ilya leans down and kisses his forehead. Shane leans into it before pushing him away.

"Okay, enough about me. You want to take a walk, so *we* are taking a walk now." There is no arguing with him and Ilya doesn't really want to anymore. Shane gets up, pinching at his eyes, and then points at Ilya. "Oh, and you get to smoke exactly one cigarette." Ilya feels himself smiling at that, something slow and crooked, and Shane's eyes well up, a few tears making their escape down his cheeks.

He tries to reach for him, but Shane catches his wrist. "I said enough... All that matters right now is you, okay?" Something twists in Ilya's chest, *You're part of me.*, he doesn't say it, nodding instead and extracting himself from Shane's tight grip until he can clasp their hands together. "Okay."

They get dressed for the evening chill, Shane insisting on wrapping a blanket over Ilya's outerwear and tugging one of his own toques on Ilya's head. He tugs gently at the curls peaking out and brushes a kiss against Ilya's lips, then grabs his hand and pulls him out into the night.

The sun hasn't set completely yet, last light glistening on the water. It's quiet except for the occasional noise of wildlife. Ilya still startles now and then when a loon sounds particularly wolf-like and Shane's barely suppressed giggles at each small jolt finally soothe over him like balm. No more tiny needle pricks at a happiness he doesn't know how to feel. They don't talk, Ilya doesn't smoke, and after idly walking up and down alongside the water, they settle on a rock. *Their* rock, Ilya thinks, a swirl of fondness mixing into the subdued cocktail of his emotions.

Shane is standing next to him, leaning against him, and Ilya pulls him between his legs, propping his chin on his head and leaving the occasional kiss against his hair. He stares out at the water, the moonlight's reflection swaying slightly from the gentle swell. That one bright spot in the long stretch of darkness draws him in, captivating his attention so thoroughly he almost jumps when it disappears, clouds drifting to obscure its source. The ensuing darkness has him holding Shane a little tighter.

"There's a lot of stars tonight," Shane mumbles and Ilya looks up slowly. The clusters of clouds are spread far apart, one currently covering the moon, but not enough to hide the brilliance of all the small lights illuminating the night sky. Ilya takes a shuddering breath and averts his eyes. "Let's go back. You're cold." Shane doesn't call him out on his lie, both perfectly warm.

On any other day, Ilya would've been content to gaze at the stars with him for hours, but tonight he feels like they're too loud, trying to tell him things he already knows.

And he's actually hungry now.

Shane preheats the oven while Ilya studies the pizza options he prepared. "It's normal pizza, don't worry." He can basically hear him roll his eyes and he abandons the pizza cartons to turn around and look at Shane, back facing him. Shane's hands are stuffed awkwardly in his pockets, shoulders alight with tension and trying to act like it's all very casual.

A flicker of want awakens somewhere. Of course it does now after making him feel like shit for not wanting his fiancé to slip him the tongue earlier. Ilya is adaptive though and he slides up to Shane, pressing himself against his back and wrapping an arm around his chest, fingers splayed over his heart. "Don't-" Shane starts to say, but Ilya interrupts him with an open-mouthed kiss to the back of his neck.

He's still not feeling particularly horny, arousal far off somewhere, but he needs to indulge the flicker, needs to make it catch immediately. It's familiar, *normal*, feeling Shane slowly unwind under his ministrations, and he needs normal so desperately.

Ilya's hand travels down his chest, brushing over Shane's crotch. He hums when he can feel Shane's dick twitching at the attention. Shane arches into it a little before trying to squirm away. Ilya holds him in place, resting his hand low on his stomach and sliding his fingers under his shirt, tracing lazy patterns against his skin. He stops resisting and Ilya experimentally thrusts his hips forward. Shane makes a small noise, stance widening a little as if on instinct, and Ilya can feel himself firming up in his sweats.

Okay, maybe even his corpse could get hard for Shane.

The thought startles a sound out of him that's almost a laugh and Shane positively melts into him. Ilya shoves his hand into the waistband of Shane's briefs, giving him no time to resist before closing his fingers around his half-hard cock and rutting against him.

There's no rhythm, friction probably edging on uncomfortable for Shane, but the soft moans and hiccuping breaths let Ilya know he's enjoying himself. Ilya extracts his hand for a moment, shoving down the offending articles of clothing when he can't get enough space to play with the head of Shane's cock the way he likes. Shane sucks in a breath and Ilya goes back to work. He nudges Shane's legs further apart with his knee and adjusts the angle of his hips, trying to thrust his clothed dick right between his cheeks.

Shane's whimper is interrupted by the oven beeping and they both freeze. Ilya isn't sure who laughs first, but the combined sound of it rushes through him and he drops his head against Shane's shoulder, shaking with it. He's reminded of Shane's erection still clasped tightly in his hand when a particular shake has him cutting off his laughter with a moan.

Ilya lets go, maneuvers Shane to the side, and quickly gets the pizzas into the oven before dropping to his knees in front of him. Shane cards his fingers through his hair, looking down at him with a disarming mix of love and concern. Ilya swallows him down in one smooth motion, an excuse to look away, and plays with his balls as he works his throat around him.

It doesn't take long before Shane erupts and Ilya takes it all greedily. He pulls off with a kiss to the head and tugs Shane back into his clothes. He can't quite manage to get up just yet, dropping his forehead against Shane's thigh, and waiting for his breathing to steady. The exertion of both this and their walk must be catching up to him.

"You okay? Want me to..." Shane trails off when Ilya shakes his head. Yes, his dick is hard, almost painfully so, but it's so good to just *feel* it. He leans back slowly, looking up at Shane with a smile. "Hope I didn't ruin my appetite." Shane rolls his eyes with a snort and lightly kicks Ilya's knee. "Get up. We need to set the table." Ilya hums, but doesn't move.

Shane shakes his head fondly and leans down for a quick kiss. He loses his balance a little and Ilya doesn't quite manage to steady him, catching him with his body instead. They're sprawled across the kitchen floor and it's a little painful, but it's also perfect, laughter ringing through the house.

Maybe Ilya's still doesn't match its usual timbre, but it's getting there, it's coming from him more real and honest than he thought capable today. "Did you set a timer?" Of course Shane would think about that right now. It only makes the moment more perfect. Ilya wraps his arms around him, ignoring the way Shane's elbows dig into his ribs, and kisses whatever parts of him his lips can reach. "No," he admits, hair in his mouth, and grunts when Shane gets off him. Worth it.

He stays sprawled on the floor for a moment longer, staring at the ceiling and taking inventory. The floor is hard and a little cold under him, but that doesn't really matter when his chest feels almost soft and a little warm for the first time today, feels like it's going to stay that way. "Pizza's almost done. Let's eat on the couch." Shane's voice pulls him out of his thoughts and he slowly gets up.

Shane puts on another random movie as they eat, lots of faceless characters and big explosions. When they're done eating, Ilya spreads out on the couch and pats the space in front of him. Shane lies down, facing away from the TV to look at him instead. Ilya tries to focus on the movie, but it's impossible, feeling his eyes so intently.

Fingers brush against his collarbone and he looks down to see Shane pull his necklace out of his shirt. He fiddles with the crucifix pendant, nestled right next to the black and gold ring on the chain. "We could make her a grave here in Canada. In your backyard or...wherever. A place for you and her to...talk?" Ilya needs a moment to follow. When it computes, he's taken aback by the suggestion, sure Shane has been thinking about it for a while before finally bringing it up. His timing still needs some work.

He tries to imagine it, give it some serious thought. It's difficult, mind still working slowly. A nice headstone and bright, colour flowers. He can see it so easily. It would mean nothing to him. He doesn't need a grave, especially not in a country that might be his home now but carries not a single memory of his mother.

He shakes his head slowly and covers Shane's hand with his own, intertwining their fingers over the necklace, when he tells him as much. "You're here," Shane says quietly, "and you carry her with you everywhere you go."

Ilya wants to kiss him until there's nobody else left in the world, pretend just for a moment he isn't so fucking sad and there's only Shane and happiness in his future. But this moment is good in its own way, steady like he's finally breathing a little easier. "Yes. And that is enough," Ilya whispers, squeezing Shane's fingers around the two pendants. His necklace the only place they'll ever meet, grief and love side by side.

Shane presses a kiss against his neck and Ilya tunes back into the movie. He doesn't know who anyone is or why the protagonist is currently crying with a child in his arms while several tall buildings are going up in flames behind him, but the noise is good, even with the volume on low.

He doesn't get to focus for long, Shane turning stiff against him and not in the good way. Ilya waits him out, scared what else could be on his mind to make him so nervous. Maybe he'll go up in flames like one of those buildings when the next question hits. "Can we talk about today? Not right now, obviously, but..." Shane trails off and Ilya can't bring himself to look at him.

He's so grateful that Shane isn't setting a deadline, isn't pushing him beyond letting him know he cares, and Ilya knows he owes him more honesty. He just can't do it today, definitely not tomorrow, probably not any time soon. He can only promise he *will*.

Ilya forces his eyes to meet Shane's. "When I am ready, okay?" Shane nods, doing very well at hiding how much he wants to talk right this second and fix it all. That's why Ilya needs more time and a day his brain isn't absolute shit to have this conversation. Shane *can't* fix it. They both have to accept that.

"I love you."

"Ya tebya lyublyu."

End Notes

i hope you enjoyed this?

can't wait for unrivaled hollanov is going to keep me insane for the foreseeable future

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