

Emergency Landing

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/77637361) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/77637361>.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Heated Rivalry (TV) , Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Ilya Rozanov , Shane Hollander , Hayden Pike , Jackie Pike
Additional Tags:	Ilya Rozanov Loves Shane Hollander , Shane Hollander Loves Ilya Rozanov , Anxious Shane Hollander , Airplane Crashes , Book 6: The Long Game (Game Changers) , Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence , Not Beta Read , Soft Ilya Rozanov , Hayden Pike Finds Out About Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov , Good Friend Hayden Pike , Coming Out , Relationship Reveal , Established Relationship , Shane Hollander is Obsessed with Ilya Rozanovs Curls , Traumatized Ilya Rozanov , Comfort , Panic Attacks , Unreliable Narrator
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-01-13 Words: 5,691 Chapters: 1/1

Emergency Landing

by [manyfandomsmember](#)

Summary

A reimagining of the night the Ottawa plane catches fire

Notes

In this one, Shane is meant to be written as an unreliable narrator, so in this fic we see a lot of details being skipped over or "unimportant" thoughts being ignored. I've never written like that before, so it's either a greatly written unreliable narrator or it's utter shit writing so let me know I guess.

Also in this fic we have Shane in a seemingly never-ending spiral of panic attacks. While the symptoms are never explicitly stated it is obvious that he is having one so please read with caution!

We also explore an undertone theme of trauma from Ilya as well as Shane. We get a glimpse into healing but also the impact the incident has on both of them

ALSO: I am using Google Translate for the Russian so if it's wrong, please let me know! (I had one commenter inform me already THANK YOU)

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

The first thing Shane registers is the sound of his phone vibrating the nightstand by his head. The second is the smell of the hotel air conditioning. The third is Hayden's snores coming from his bed. It's middle-of-the-night quiet being punctured by the harsh rattling of Shane's phone against fake wood. He fumbles for his glasses before tapping his screen on.

The notifications were direct messages from Instagram.

Ilya's Instagram.

He'd never messaged him on Instagram before.

Shane opens the app and scrolls to the top of the neatly stacked messages.

"Shane."

Shane's heart jumps in his chest.

"You are the best thing in my life."

Shane's heart reaches out for fondness, but finds lingering fear instead.

"I love you. Always. Maybe from the first time I saw you."

This felt like a goodbye. Ilya was on a plane from Tampa to Columbus, why was he trying to tell Shane goodbye?

"I am thinking only about you right now. A million memories. Thank you for those. Whatever happens, I am with you. Safe in your heart. I believe it."

Shane feels like he's going to throw up.

Those sounded like last words. Ilya's last words. *His* Ilya's last words. Panic claws at Shane's throat.

"Ilya?" Shane types back. He receives *"message failed to send"* as a response.

"Ilya, please."

"Message failed to send."

The next notification that buzzes his phone is a headline.

Ottawa Centaur's Plane Catches Fire. Emergency Landing Required.

At first it doesn't filter as real. Just block text. A tongue-in-cheek reporter trying too hard to be first. His brain tries to skim past it like it does everything else – rumors, trade talk, highlight reels – until he remembers Ilya's messages...and until autoplay kicks in.

There it is, a shaky phone video, breathing sounds just a *little* too loud, the camera jerking to try and capture something in-frame.

A bright smear against a black sky. A moving speck, glowing unnaturally bright.

The Centaur's plane is on fire.

Every thought he has collapses inward at once, sucked through like an implosion. His brain thinks of nothing.

He's jerking upright before he's realized he moved, heart hammering in his throat, the room tilting, the curtains wavering in the stale air-conditioning like they're underwater. The mattress seems to heave beneath him. His hand is in a sweat-slick grip around his phone, fingers clumsy and numb. His lungs forget how to work. He drags in air that won't stay and lets out a sound that should be a breath but tears itself free as something raw and broken.

He can't stop it. He can't contain it. He can't do anything except *see* – crumbs of memory flashing like someone hitting fast forward on every moment he's ever had with Ilya. Ilya, his beautiful Ilya. His curls damp from a shower. His laughter muffled into Shane's bare skin. His text from just a few hours earlier that read "*Wheels up from Tampa. I'll sleep the whole way. I love you*" followed by a heart and a *stupid* little plane emoji.

Shane's breath stutters, then chokes on itself completely. His chest seizes tight, like invisible hands have wrapped around his ribs and are squeezing, squeezing, squeezing. Tight with grief. Tight with pain. Tight with loss. Suddenly there are tears everywhere – sliding down his face, into his mouth, soaking his palms – and he can't tell if he's breathing or if he's choking on his own oxygen.

"Shane—" Hayden's voice scrapes through the dark, thick with sleep turned violently alert. Sheets drag, Shane's mattress dips. A lamp snaps on and the light hits like a slap. "Hey, hey. What happened? What – shit – *Shane?*"

Shane folds in half like he'd been punched, knuckles pressed to his mouth because if he opens it he's going to scream loud enough to tear the world in two. His mind drifts to Ilya's knuckles pressed to Shane's mouth, keeping him quiet in a hotel room as he makes Shane fall apart. His tears fall harder. His whole body shakes, wild and uncontrollable. He clutches his phone in a white-knuckled grip, typing with hands that don't feel like his own.

"Ilya. Ilya please. Please, please answer me. Tell me it's not true. Ilya please. I love you. Please."

The words blur and swim. He can't see the letters on the keys. His vision keeps tunneling and turning back to blinding white, like lightning behind his own eyes. His body is freezing and burning at the same time, sweating chilling on his skin while his heart pounded so hard it *hurt*.

Hayden's hands are suddenly there, warm and firm and anchoring. Grasping his shoulders, shaking him lightly. "Shane, breath. What happened? I've got you, Shane, but you have to breathe so you can tell me what happened."

Shane manages to choke out, “*Ilya*,” before shoving his phone into Hayden’s face. His words are gone, drowned somewhere under the roaring in his eyes.

Hayden goes still for a single, terrible second, his eyes scanning the messages.

“Okay,” Hayden says then, voice going flat and calm. “Okay, I’ll call Jackie. She knows Hayes’ wife. I’ll get information.”

There’s ringing. Distant. Too loud. Too far away. Shane can’t process sound – it feels like it’s happening in another room, another *world*. He’s curled into himself, shaking so hard the headboard starts to rattle. Hayden pulls him in, wraps an arm around him, and Shane just *breaks* there, sobs tearing out of him like they’ve been held back for years instead of the last ten minutes.

“He’s freaking out,” Shane hears Hayden say into his phone, words low and fast over the sound of Shane falling apart. “Yeah. Yeah, the plane. We don’t know anything yet– Shane, get off your phone, you’re going to make it worse.” Shane drops his phone into his lap with a dull thud. “They were flying from Tampa to Columbus. What? Okay, yeah. Please. Please just – yeah. Text me. I’ve got him, I love you.”

Against his better judgement, Shane tries to open his Instagram DM’s again, because stopping feels like surrendering. Like letting go. Like tempting fate. Like admitting *Ilya* was–

Shane couldn’t do this.

If he stopped desperately messaging *Ilya*, maybe *Ilya* would just stop *existing* in the world. His hands become useless. He just keeps dropping his phone. His fingers won’t obey him. Every breath he draws is jagged and wrong.

“*Ilya*,” he keeps trying to say, but his name splinters every time it reaches his lips. “Il- Il- Il-”

“I know,” Hayden murmurs, holding him so tight it should hurt, his phone balanced on his thigh. “I know, buddy. I know.”

Minutes pass like years stretched thin like they’re see-through. Or maybe they’re only seconds – Shane can’t tell. He keeps slipping, consciousness sliding away like he’s falling through deep water, surfacing only to find himself already crying, drowning in his own tears. There are sounds – his, Hayden’s, the hum of the vent – and they all blur into one, too loud moment.

His heart aches. His ribs ache. His lungs burn like they’re filled with smoke.

The room is terrifyingly small.

Hayden’s phone rings. “Hey, Jackie.”

Shane’s breath catches again.

“She knows where they’re landing,” he says to Shane. “North Carolina. Emergency landing, some airport — yeah, yeah. Text the address. Got it.”

The words were hitting Shane like fragments of glass. His brain latches on to *landing* and spins out dizzy, spiraling, and sick. Landing means alive. Landing means wheels and ground and *after*. Or maybe it means pieces. And sirens. Maybe—

His spiral sharpens but Hayden's voice cuts through again, sharper this time, the command tucked into the gentleness. "Hey, Jackie sent me the airport. We're driving, not flying. Four and a half hours."

"Now," Shane rasps, his voice shredded raw. "Hayden, we have to go *now*. Please, Hayden, *Please*."

"I know," Hayden says, already moving. "Shoes, hoodie, you can cry in the car. We're going. It's going to be okay, Shane."

Somehow Shane is upright. Somehow gravity is working. The carpet under Shane's socked feet is rough and solid and he can barely feel it. Hayden is putting a hoodie into Shane's hand and sneakers by his feet. Shane is still crying, breath rasping in and out like it's made of splinters, chest aching and tight.

The hallway is too bright. The elevator is too slow. The night outside smells different – wet pavement after late rain, cold air that bites at his damp cheeks – and his stumbles into it, into movement, into the car and towards the promise of highway. The promise of *Ilya*.

Doorhandle, seatbelt, dashboard buttons.

The world narrows to motion as Shane's car door shuts.

Hayden drives.

Shane keeps drifting in and out.

Time melts and reforms wrong, slippery under his hands. He swears he actually blacks out at times – not sleep, not rest, just the world cutting to static like a bad signal and then slamming back into him without warning. One second, there is nothing, just a ringing silence, and the next there are headlights bleaching the asphalt, interstate signs flashing green and silver, the dashboard clock glowing unkind numbers – 3:17 a.m., 4:02, 5:11.

His throat feels raw, like he'd swallowed glass, every breath scraping. His chest keeps tightening, loosening, tightening again, in a terrible rhythm he can't control. His hands shake in his lap even when he tries to hold them still. Every time he surfaces from a gray fog, every time the awareness drags him back, his phone screen is still devoid of Ilya's name. No notification. No typing bubble. Nothing. Just Shane's messages that remain unsent.

"I think I'm dying," he whispers once, even his own voice shaky and far away. The words don't even feel like his own, they just show up, fully formed in his mouth. "I think my body is dying."

Hayden's eyes don't stray from the road. His jaw is tight, hands white-knuckled around the steering wheel. "You just had another panic attack," he says. "Your brain is convincing you

that you're in danger. Your body is following what your brain says. Keep talking to me. You're okay, Shane. It's all going to be okay."

But Ilya might not be.

The thought was jagged and unbearable. It keeps circling back, sinking barbs into his heart each time it passes through. It just sits there and *hurts*.

His imagination wouldn't stop replaying it. The distant flame painted on the dark sky. The bold-red breaking news banner on his phone, covering the goodbye messages from his Ilya. He sees it behind his eyelids every time he closes his eyes. But he also sees Ilya, laughing on his couch after a run, the last time they were together, with his earbuds dangling and his shoulder pressed into Shane's. A moment that feels like a lifetime ago. He sees Ilya tangled in sheets, hair everywhere, sweat drying on his skin. He sees Ilya's half-asleep smile he only ever gives *Shane*. He hears Ilya muttering Russian against Shane's collarbone, his neck, the shell of his ear. The private, soft syllables that make Shane feel safe.

Now nothing feels safe.

He presses his forehead to the cool glass of the car window, breath fogging it with every exhale, and he prays – not to anything he believes in, just *something*, to the sky, to chance, to whoever might be listening – please let him be alive, let him be okay, let them land in time.

The miles crawl. The horizon glimmers with the thin morning air, light rising in thick, tired stripes. By the time they pull off the interstate and towards the airport, Shane feels hollowed out. Like everything had been scooped from his chest and replaced with emptiness.

The airport is too bright in the distance, bleaching color from everything around. It is too loud, surrounded by rolling suitcases, boarding announcements, ordinary laughter and chatter that feels inappropriate as Shane's world continues to crumble. It's too full of people who are not dying. Full of people who are getting coffee, checking watches, moving through their morning like the world hasn't just ended.

Shane and Hayden burst through the sliding doors, not caring how they look – Hayden frantic, hair messy, eyes sharp and wild; Shane wrecked, tear-streaked, hoodie half-zipped, barely upright on legs that feel like wire. His breath stutters. Everyone is staring. He can't make himself care. Not anymore.

"We need – Ottawa," Hayden says breathlessly to the first person in a uniform that they can find. "He's an emergency contact–has the plane landed–please–"

There's movement nearly immediately, that strange softening in people's faces that happens when they recognize a fear they hope to never feel. A hand gestures. A badge flashes. Someone speaks quietly into a radio. Someone else appears. Shane's walking – no, he's being guided – past doors marked *authorized personnel only*, the kind he isn't authorized to go through. The corridors smell like coffee and stale air.

Shane barely registers any of it, language dissolving into muffled sounds. His ears ring like he's underwater. The only thing he truly understands is that he's moving forward, and

forward is supposed to take him to Ilya. forward is the only direction that exists.

Finally, a quieter room.

Shane lets a breath out as he begins to realize, slowly, like finally surfacing from the deep waters, that he's surrounded by partners.

WAGs. People he's seen in arenas and hallways and postgame lounges. Women he's nodded at and made small talk with. Mothers of children he's watched run through the halls. Faces of people whose names he half-remembers only because Ilya speaks of them so fondly.

They're all here. And they're *all* looking at him.

No one really looks surprised that he's here. No one looks confused on *why* he is.

That hits late. It slides under his guard only after the worst of the panic has broken, when he's just standing there gulping down air that doesn't seem like enough to fill his lungs. He follows their gazes, and they all lead back to his face.

Him. The wrecked one. The one who made Hayden drive him for four and a half hours. The one who *sprinted* through the airport. The one who stood while his best friend asked for Ottawa *by name*. The one who is very, very clearly waiting for one specific person.

Oh, he thinks, dazed. *Oh*.

He's done it. All of this – the bolting from the car, the begging at the desk, the way he'd said *Ilya* out loud more than once without thinking – he's essentially drawn the outline *and* colored it in. He hasn't just cracked the door open, he's blown it off the *hinges*.

A flush crawls up his neck, hot and shaky. Under any other circumstance, he'd be utterly mortified. Under any other circumstance, he'd be running math in his head – management, teammates, media, consequences. Their entire life was built between lines they never crossed in public.

But this wasn't any other circumstance. It was this one.

"The plane landed," someone says softly, and a hand appears on his arm, warm and steady. He blinks at her – Ilya's teammate's wife, he realizes belatedly, remembering photos of a golden retriever and a baby in a tiny jersey. Her face is calm in the specific way of someone who has lived with this sport long enough to know it can scare you half to death. "They're safe. They're being evaluated. They'll be in soon."

Safe.

The word unspools slowly through him. It doesn't penetrate, not really – it skims under the surface, rippling but not sinking. Safe is too big of a promise. Safe has edges and loopholes. Safe doesn't erase the last five hours of *hell*.

He stares at the door anyway, because the door feels more real than any spoken language.

It becomes real only when he sees it happening – the way the room changes and shifts as the door opens for the first time. A player, some staff, a flight attendant. Shocked, pale, exhausted. And then noise. Small, choked sobs, and laughter that breaks halfway through. The thud of people crashing against each other.

A wife makes a sound and runs. Presses her face into someone's jacket and shakes with relief. Someone keeps saying *thank you, thank you, thank you* like a prayer.

Shane watches all of it like he's outside his own body. As if he's a ghost lingering in the corner of the room.

He waits.

He doesn't sit. He can't. His body refuses stillness. He paces small, frantic tracks in the cheap carpet, the fluorescent lights buzzing quietly overhead. He's shaking again and he can't tell if it's cold or adrenaline or the absence of Ilya in the room.

He keeps staring at the damn door like he can drag Ilya through it using sheer will alone. Like sheer force of needing him alive will be enough.

Every once and a while, his brain turns back to the other realization – the one about being accidentally outed, about the rooms full of people that have probably already put it together. He shuffles through these thoughts like a deck of cards: the way he'd cried Ilya's name, the way he'd arrived before literal *spouses*, the way he looks right now, stripped bare of any plausible deniability.

If this outed them – so what.

If the whole world found out right here, right now, in this moment, in this fluorescent waiting room that smells like grief – fine, let it.

Let them know who he loves. Let anyone walking through that damn door know exactly who Shane is looking for.

He presses his palms together, hard enough that his knuckles begin to ache. His mind ricochets, every thought about Ilya – his curls, his smile, his laugh, how much he loves Shane.

Minutes pass, though they feel like hours. Shane loses track of the time again, the numbers going thin and meaningless.

There is only the door, the waiting, the quiet roar of fear slowly, slowly turning into hope he's still afraid to touch.

And finally, the door opens again.

It's nothing dramatic – a soft hiss of the hinges, the swing of it opening. But to Shane, it's the sound of his world splitting open once more. Every nerve in his body snaps towards that sound, the movement that comes with it.

More people start coming through in small clusters, almost stunned, blinking in the too-bright lights. More gasps and sobs fill the room. Somebody drops a bag. Someone else sinks into an embrace and cries.

Shane is searching every face.

And then—

Curls.

Not just curls. *His* curls. The unruly bend of them, the way they fall across his forehead, the same forehead Shane has kissed a thousand times. A familiar stride, heavy with exhaustion. A face he knows like the back of his hand, pale, tear-streaked, *alive*.

Everything in Shane gives way.

He's moving before he decides to. He's running, sneakers catching on the dingy carpet, calling Ilya's name out like a prayer.

Ilya's eyes find him, surprise and love flashing across his features. Whatever was holding him upright breaks, and he barely opens his arms in time.

They crash together in the middle of the room, hard enough that Shane's breath punches out of him. He makes a sound he didn't know he was capable of making – raw and relieved and animal – as he buries his face in Ilya's shoulder, clutching to him so tightly his knuckles grow white, his fingers creasing Ilya's clothes.

"Ilya, *baby*. I love you," Shane sobs into his hair, over and over. "I love you, *ya tebya lyublyu*, I love you, I love you, I love you."

Ilya is crying too, silent and helpless, his shoulders shaking. His hands fist into the back of Shane's hoodie, desperate, terrified to let go. He presses his face into the soft skin of Shane's neck, and pours out in rapid Russian in between gasps.

"*O, moye solnyshko, kak ya tebya lyublyu. Ya ochen' tebya lyublyu, moya dorogoy.*"

Shane's brain can't translate, he's not even sure what Ilya is saying, but he's here and alive and that's all that matters to Shane.

Around them, the room is still moving, but Shane's world has narrowed to this. These arms and his heartbeat and his breath ghosting over his neck and the shell of his ear. The world begins to bleed in again when someone asks if they need a hotel reservation for the night.

Shane nods, or maybe it's Ilya's head that moves. There's motion around them again – a form, directions, a shuttle, a keycard. Shane only registers the part where Ilya's shoulder brushes his. The part where their hands keep finding each other like magnets.

The hotel door shuts behind them with a soft click. The silence engulfs them.

Shoes are kicked off – Shane’s set gently by the door, Ilya’s flung in two different directions before Shane gathers them and places them softly by his own. Jackets are shed and draped neatly over the desk chair. The room glows orange from the parking-lot lights outside, illuminating the unfamiliar furniture. It smells like soap and stale air conditioning.

Shane has Ilya by the wrist.

He realizes it after Ilya reaches for a light switch and doesn’t get very far. Shane releases him, embarrassed, but immediately takes his hand again, threading their fingers together.

Ilya smiles softly at him, kissing his temple with the kind of gentleness only reserved for Shane. “We should–” he starts, his voice rough, then stops because he’s not actually sure what comes next.

Shane swallows. His throat is scraped raw. “I need to shower,” he says, almost too quickly. “I can’t get into bed like this. Need to wash it off. Please.”

“Okay,” Ilya says. There’s no argument, just gentle agreement. “Yes. Shower.”

Ilya takes a soft step back. Shane doesn’t move.

Shane’s heart lurches in his chest, horrible and huge. The idea of Ilya disappearing from his sight – even for ten minutes, even separated by a thin wall and running water – twists something low in his stomach. He sees it without wanting to, the plane, flames painting the night sky. A headline. A door opening with no Ilya walking through it.

“No,” Shane blurts. “I mean–wait. Just..”

Ilya looks at him, his eyes tired and soft, “Shane?”

“Shower with me?”

It’s not flirty, not teasing. Not even shy. It’s stripped of everything but the need to be close. He stands there in the small hotel room, fist clenched in his shirt, one reaching to Ilya. He wasn’t sure he ever dropped his hand to his side after Ilya let it go.

“I just– I can’t–” Shane gestures helplessly, trying to shape air into meaning. “I can’t *not* see you yet. Not even for that short of time. It’s stupid, I know, I’m sorry. I know you’re here, I know–”

Ilya crosses back into Shane’s space before he finishes his sentence. He cups Shane’s jaw in both of his hands, thumbs resting beneath his eyes, brushing his oh-so-precious freckles that Ilya loved so much.

“Not stupid,” he says. “I will shower with you, okay? I am not going anywhere.”

Shane’s chest aches.

The bathroom lights are too bright when they click on, the fan too loud. They both squint. They move like sleepwalkers, or like people returning to their bodies. Shirts tugged over their

heads, pants untied and unbuttoned. Shane doesn't look at himself in the mirror, he only looks at Ilya. *His* perfect Ilya.

Steam blooms in the small bathroom quickly, the water thundering against the tile floor. The sound fills the room, blending with the hissing of the fan. It blocks out the outside world until it's just the two of them.

In the shower, they share the spray, letting it run over their shoulders, down their backs, creating warm trails. It's a slow, quiet process of removing fear from skin.

Shane tips his forehead to Ilya's, both out of exhaustion and need. His eyes are closed, water dripping through his lashes.

"I needed you here," he quietly admits.

"I am," Ilya murmurs, his arms looping around Shane's waist, damp and sure. His voice vibrates against Shane's chest. "I am here. I not going anywhere."

They wash each other's skin, shaking hands covered in soap, tracing patterns over chests, stomach, arms, legs, backs. Ilya's hand keeps drifting back to Shane's pulse point on the side of his neck. Shane's hands keep tangling in Ilya's flattened curls.

The water keeps running.

Eventually they turn it off, standing in the cooling steam, pressed close with hammering hearts. Ilya grabs a towel, gently drying the droplets from Shane's skin, before wrapping him tightly in it. Shane does the same.

In clean clothes, Ilya pulls the comforter down to the foot of the bed, knowing how Shane doesn't like the touch of it. It's too rough and too dirty all at once. He slides the sheets down so he can crawl into bed, propping himself as Shane finishes brushing his teeth.

Finally he falls into bed, wrapping himself around Ilya, breathing in the scent of him. His face is tucked under Ilya's jaw. His heartbeat is too fast, Shane's too loud.

"I was so scared," Shane whispers into Ilya's skin. "I just keep seeing it. The video of the plane. The fire. All I could think is I was never going to talk to you again."

Ilya tightens his arms around Shane. "*Dorogoy, ya zdes*," he murmurs. Then, corrects himself in a shaking voice, "Darling, I am here." He kisses Shane's dark hair. "I was thinking same thing. I thought I was going to die. I just wanted to tell you how I love you."

Shane kisses the exposed skin of Ilya's neck. In the dark, Ilya tells Shane fragments of the night. The masks, the way the cabin lights turned unnatural colors, the fear, the panic. Shane doesn't realize he's crying until Ilya's thumbs are tracing soft patterns under his eyes, brushing away tears Shane can no longer keep up with.

When Ilya is done speaking, Shane whispers, "I think I outed us."

"Is okay," Ilya murmurs. "I am glad you were there."

“What’s going to happen?”

“It does not matter. Is just you and me, yes?”

Shane nods, too tired for anymore words.

“Sleep, *solnyshko*, we will figure out in the morning.”

“I love you,” Shane murmurs quietly, a kiss ghosting Ilya’s neck, his breathing wisping through the ends of his curls.

“*Ya tebya lyublyu*. I love you.”

Ilya wraps a hand over Shane’s wrist, feeling his heartbeat. He allows himself to sleep, the rhythm of Shane’s beating heart slowing his panic. The early hours of the morning fade into the late hours flowing towards the afternoon.

The daylight presses tentatively through the curtains.

There are missed messages and calls. A text from Yuna that says she saw the news and is glad that they’re okay. There are articles about the crash, articles about Shane, articles about Ilya *and* Shane. There are words like evaluation and postponed and rest. Ottawa won’t be playing in the Columbus game. They have four days before they need to practice, five before they play Montreal in Ottawa.

Shane calls his own coach from the edge of the hotel bed, socked feet dangling above the ugly hotel carpet, Ilya’s head in his lap. His voice trembles slightly as he asks for a brief personal leave. Promises to meet the team in Ottawa for their game. His coach, unhappy, grants it, but grumbles about how Shane’s lucky to still have a position. He doesn’t say why, doesn’t have to. And Shane doesn’t have to explain what everyone has already seen.

When the call ends, Ilya looks at him with puffy eyes that are still so soft.

“You stay?”

“Of course I’m staying,” Shane says. He leans forward and kisses Ilya slowly. There’s no franticness, it’s deep and steady.

Ottawa feels different when they return to the city.

It isn’t, of course. It’s the same skyline, the same weather, the same people. But it feels like the world has tilted and settled in a new place while they were gone.

Ilya’s house is warm when they step through the door, all familiar shadows and welcoming scents. Ilya stops just past the doorway as if he’d just crossed an invisible finish line, letting his bag slip from his hand and thud onto the floor. Shane closes the door and rests his forehead between Ilya’s shoulder blades.

“Home,” Shane whispers, and he doesn’t mean the house.

For the first twenty-four hours they don't do much of anything. They make coffee they forget to drink, boil Shane's healthy pasta and only eat a few bites each, leave plates in the sink because dish soap feels like a too complicated concept. They move from the couch to the bed in a slow arc, always within each. Ilya keeps curling his hand over Shane's pulse, his thumb brushing the steady beat of his heart. Shane keeps touching Ilya's curls, the slope of his neck, the small scar on his chin.

The first night they sleep with the lamp on.

They don't talk about it, but neither of them reach for the switch. They drift off, facing each other, and when one wakes, the other does too, and they blink together at the yellow light and then relax again.

The second morning is when everything finally hits.

Ilya sits at the kitchen table in one of Shane's hoodies, sleeves pushed up, hands wrapped around a mug that has long gone cold. His eyes go glassy mid-sentence – he'd been saying something small about breakfast – and he presses his knuckle tight against his mouth as if he were trying to hold something in.

Shane pulls the chair beside him without asking and tucks himself in close, thigh to thigh. Ilya shudders twice before the tears come, silent and shaking. Shane doesn't tell him he's okay. He doesn't say it's over now. Not because these things aren't true – they are – but to Ilya, it's all still weighing heavily over his mind. So Shane just holds him through it, chin in his hair, lips to his temple, heart pounding in rhythm with Ilya's.

"I thought—" Ilya chokes out. "I thought I was never seeing you again."

"I know," Shane whispers. "I thought you were dead." He admits out loud, for the first time.

They stay like that for a while, mourning something that didn't happen but could have been. Contemplating the ghost of a life with a missing piece. When it finally passes, it doesn't feel like forgetting, it feels like being able to breathe again.

The healing appears in small ways before it does in big ones.

They go to the grocery store – because they can do that together now, go grocery shopping – and forget half of what they need, standing in front of the cereal aisle debating nothing in particular because it feels *good* to talk about nothing and everything in public. Shane pushes the cart, Ilya hooks two fingers through the back of his belt loop and lets himself be carried along.

They burn Shane's healthy protein-filled pancakes the next morning.

Shane claims he doesn't know why they burnt.

"Is because they have nothing good in them," Ilya complains.

"Ilya, they have *everything* good in them. That's why they're healthy."

Ilya rolls his eyes. Shane doesn't tell Ilya they burnt because Shane was too busy watching his fiancé.

They laugh about it and eat them anyway, standing at the counter in socked feet with their shoulders bumping and elbows knocking.

The afternoons are quiet.

Hockey plays muted on the television, moving pictures with no sound. Ilya dozes with his head in Shane's lap while Shane pretends to read the same page three times and never turns it. He mostly plays with Ilya's curls. Outside the weather does whatever it wants, gray skies and brief sunlight.

News alerts buzz on their phones every now and again – some about the plane, others about Ilya and Shane, and some about nothing related to them at all. Shane silences them because he knows what matters.

They talk about the airport waiting room once, tucked under a blanket on the couch.

"Everyone knew," Shane says softly. "Everyone in that room knew I was there for you. I couldn't stop saying your name. Now *everyone* knows."

"Is okay. I did not want to hide anymore. Not if it means you are far away when bad things happen."

Shane kisses his temple. "Okay, we won't."

There's no press conference or dramatic announcement. Just an Instagram photo captioned *ya tebya lyublyu* and comments turned off.

The day stretches on.

Shane gets an email from his coach informing him he will become an unrestricted free agent at the end of the season and will not be offered an extended contract. The rest of the world is told twenty minutes later when his coach announces it during an impromptu contract.

Shane lets it roll off his shoulders. He reaches out to his agent and gets a preliminary contract to sign with Ottawa at the conclusion of the post season. He closes his laptop and kisses Ilya. That's all that really matters.

Their laundry piles up, gets washed, and gets folded. They learn each other's favorite mugs. Ilya listens to Shane talk about the changes he wants to make to the house when he moves in.

None of it is cinematic.

On the evening of day four they lie in bed facing each other with the lights off, the room soft and blue in the distant glow from the window.

"I knew it was you," Ilya says suddenly. "Before I saw your face at airport. I felt you."

Shane smiles, “I would have run through anybody to get to you.”

The morning comes slowly.

Coffee brews as the city wakes up. Ilya laughs at something stupid in the kitchen, and Shane drinks in the sound, letting it roll over him in waves before settling underneath his skin, warming his soul.

Today he would walk out that door and rejoin a team that didn’t want him. But it was okay, because *he* was here.

End Notes

Okay, that's it, I hoped you guys enjoyed my second Hollanov fic and I hope I wrote it well and it didn't seem like a train wreck!

It wasn't beta read so if the format is wrong keep it to yourself.

Russian Translations:

O, moye solnyshko, kak ya tebya lyublyu --> Oh, my sunshine, how I love you

Ya ochen' tebya lyublyu, moya dorogoy --> I love you very much, my dear

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!