

would you still love me

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would you still love me

by [UglyGreenJacket](#)

Summary

“Hey,” Ilya’s voice, deep and rough, resonates through Shane all the way down to the bottoms of his feet.

He turns his head toward the sound, but doesn’t open his eyes, instead opting just to keep the blissed-out look on his face as he waits to hear what Ilya’s going to say.

Shane imagines it’ll be something like, ‘*You are perfect. Such a good boy.*’

Or maybe in Russian, ‘*I love you so much.*’

But much more likely, ‘*I give you ten minutes, and then I blow you in the shower.*’

Fingers brush against his cheek, and Shane leans into the touch, lost in the feeling of being loved and wanted so wholly. And then, “Would you still love me if I was a worm?”

His eyes open, and he wonders if his dopamine-addled brain has just misheard. “I’m sorry. What?”

Notes

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

They've just had fucking *incredible* sex, and Shane's eyes are closed against the onslaught of release and pure feeling Ilya Rozanov brings out in him.

He's so lucky that whatever god or cosmic entity that exists in the universe brought them together, because he's so in love, and truly, most days he still can't wrap his head around the fact that he's married and gets to live with the perfect man and play on the same team and have fucking *incredible* sex before morning practice.

"Hey," Ilya's voice, deep and rough, resonates through Shane all the way down to the bottoms of his feet.

He turns his head toward the sound, but doesn't open his eyes, instead opting just to keep the blissed-out look on his face as he waits to hear what Ilya's going to say.

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Fingers brush against his cheek, and Shane leans into the touch, lost in the feeling of being loved and wanted so wholly. And then, "Would you still love me if I was a worm?"

His eyes open, and he wonders if his dopamine-addled brain has just misheard. "I'm sorry. What?"

"Would you still love me if I was a worm?" he repeats slowly, as if that will magically make it make more sense to Shane.

"I don't...think I understand?"

Ilya seems to be getting frustrated, his mouth suddenly tense, but Shane can't quite figure out why. "What is not to understand? If I am worm, would you still love me?"

"Is this some weird internet thing I don't know about?"

"You do not know anything on the internet," Ilya says matter-of-factly.

"Thanks," Shane deadpans, but Ilya keeps going.

"Yes, is internet thing. Now, would you love me if I was a worm or not, Hollander?"

But answering isn't that simple for Shane. There's a lot he needs to know before he can definitively say. For example, "Do I know that you're the worm?"

"Sure."

"And do you like...have all the same memories from being a person as the worm, or have you always been the worm?"

“Hollander.”

“And how did you get to *be* a worm exactly?”

Ilya pinches the bridge of his nose. “Jesus Christ.”

“Is it permanent? Do you revert back to being a human? Assuming you were human to begin with?” There were so many things at play in this weird scenario.

But Shane never gets the answers he’s seeking, because Ilya looks away and sighs, and when his eyes come back to Shane, they look defeated, and Shane feels like he’s missed something important. “Nevermind, we have to get ready.”

He climbs out of the bed, and Shane props himself up to watch Ilya move around the room. There’s a tenseness to his shoulders that Shane hasn’t seen since the days they were still hiding their relationship from the world, and one of them would always have to leave.

What could have possibly made that settle back into Ilya’s body? Did this really have to do with the bizarre question Ilya had just asked him?

“Can I take a shower with you?” he asks when Ilya starts to move towards the bathroom. He’s never asked before, but for some reason, he feels like he should today.

Ilya looks at him for a long moment, head cocked to the side like he’s trying to figure Shane out. He finally says, “Sure.”

They move around each other like they normally do under the hot spray of the water. Ilya rubs at the sore muscles on Shane’s shoulders, and Shane lathers the soap over Ilya’s back.

It’s normal. A little quieter than he’s used to, but they’re tired, so that’s an easy explanation.

He thinks maybe he’s overthinking it all until they’re getting ready to leave, and he asks, “Do you want to stop by Starbucks on our way?”

“Sounds good,” Ilya says. There’s no smile, no comment on Shane being willing to be in the same car as Ilya’s overly sugared drink of choice. Just a simple nod.

Shane starts to panic a little, and he has to remind himself to breathe as they get in the car and start the drive to the stadium.

He’s not sure what to do. He’s clearly missing *something* here, but Ilya’s not telling him, and Shane is shit at reading between the lines.

He doesn’t realize he’s tapping his fingers against his leg continuously until Ilya reaches over and takes his hand. Shane glances at him with a thankful smile, but finds Ilya isn’t looking back.

So, Shane closes his eyes and tries to focus on the small contact between them.

It’s something, at least.

oOo

Practice goes...fine.

They run a few drills, Shane works on his backhand while Ilya helps Hayes by shooting pucks at him from all directions, and then they review video together as a team.

Ilya talks to him. Sits next to him. Pats him on the back when he successfully fires off a backhanded shot into the goal.

It's all *fine*.

"Haas wants me to walk him through my workout routine, so I will see you at home later," Ilya tells him when they're alone in the locker room as Shane is tying his sneakers.

He decides to test the waters. "You have a workout routine?" he asks with a teasing smile.

Ilya shakes his head, a half-hearted smirk curling his lips. "Funny, Hollander." He turns to walk away, hand raised in a wave. "Haas will give me ride home. See you later."

"I love you," Shane calls after him, but the locker room door is already closed. He runs a frustrated hand through his hair and mumbles, "*Fuck*."

He knows he messed up, he just can't figure out how or why his response to a question about Ilya being a fucking worm would upset him. It's not like Shane had gotten any of his questions answered either.

He starts to walk out of the arena, shoulders slumped and heart heavy. He knows he needs to fix this, but he has no idea how.

And then someone in an office catches his eye.

Harris Drover sits at his desk, typing something furiously on his phone, and Shane gets an idea.

He knocks on the door, and Harris tells him to enter. He looks surprised that Shane's standing there, but his welcome is warm and genuine.

"Hey, Harris," Shane says. "Do you have any plans for lunch?"

oOo

They wind up at a sandwich shop not far from the arena, and Shane spends the first few minutes they're there tapping his foot nervously.

If Harris notices, he politely doesn't point it out, and Shane manages to carry on a mostly unstrained conversation with Harris about his upcoming projects for the team that may or may not include Shane and Ilya doing some kind of shirtless calendar for charity.

He's gotten about half of his sandwich down when he finally gathers the courage to ask, "You're like...chronically online, right?"

Harris swallows a bite of sandwich and then smiles patiently. "Yeah, it's kinda my job."

"Is there some...*thing* out there about asking your partner if they'd still love you if you were a worm?"

Realization dawns in Harris's eyes. "Oh, yeah, it's this TikTok trend that's supposed to be a..." he pauses and waves a chip in the air while he thinks. "Relationship test, I guess? Based on what their answer is."

Shane barely manages to get down his bite of food without choking. "A *test*? A test of what?"

"Well, I guess obviously you'd want someone to say yes, right? Like you'd want your partner to still love you no matter what, even if you are a worm, so if they don't, it's a red flag."

Obviously. Yes. No matter what. Red flag.

Fuck.

Shane puts his sandwich down, and then his elbows land on the table so he can run frustrated hands into the long strands of his hair. "Shit, I screwed up," he says, and Harris suddenly looks concerned. "With Ilya."

"Hey," he says kindly. "I'm sure it's not that bad." But the look Shane gives him must tell him otherwise. "Um, do you want to talk about it? I mean, you don't have to, but I'm happy to help if I can."

They're not as close as Harris and Ilya are, but in the time Shane's been in Ottawa, he's grown to really like Harris. He's sweet and cheery with a booming laugh, and Shane intrinsically trusts him.

And Shane isn't great at opening up to people, but he needs help, and Harris seems uniquely positioned to do that, so...why not?

"He asked me that question this morning."

"Okay," Harris says with a nod. "That tracks for Ilya. And what did you say?"

Shane leans into one hand, the other dropping to the table in a tight fist. "I responded with a series of follow-up questions."

He can tell Harris is fighting back a smile from the way his lips suddenly clench tightly. Apparently, Shane's reaction to the question *also* tracked.

"And did you ever answer the question?"

Shane's eyes roll to the ceiling, unable to maintain eye contact while admitting his absolute dumb-assery. "...no."

Harris also didn't look surprised at that. "Did Ilya seem mad?"

"No. Not exactly. He just seems...distant. Sad." Shane bites the inside of his lip. "I should have said yes, huh?"

Harris gives him an understanding smile. "I mean, ideally, sure, but it is a strange question if you're not used to online stuff like that."

"I hardly spend any time online."

"I know," Harris says, smile only growing wider and maybe more than a little fond, but it does nothing to help Shane feel better.

He wants to crawl under the table and hide. "How could I fuck up something so stupid?"

Harris doesn't answer, which *also* does nothing to help Shane feel better. Instead, he puts his own elbow on the table and rests his chin in his hand before he asks, "Can I tell you what I've noticed about Ilya?"

It feels like a weird request. Being asked by someone else if they can tell Shane about his own husband. But he knows that Harris is genuine, and Shane isn't exactly the most observant person on the planet, so it's entirely possible that whatever Harris has to say could be helpful, so he nods in acquiescence.

"Ilya's so tough on the outside. He puts on this huge show and bravado, but once you really get to know him, he's a giant softy, and all he really wants is to be loved by the people he cares about."

Once you really get to know him.

But Shane *did* know Ilya, didn't he? He's loved him for years. They've been through literal fucking hell together. They're married. They live together. They—

Shane's face must have registered some kind of hurt because Harris jumps back in.

"Not that you *don't* know him!" he says a touch too loudly as people start to look at them around the shop. "No one knows him like you do." His voice is normal now, lower and kind. "That's so obvious from being around the both of you the last few months. He's so free with you."

Shane's not entirely placated. "But if I know him so well, how did I get this so fucking wrong? All I had to do was say yes."

Harris sits back and folds his arms over his chest, looking thoughtful. "I don't think it's about right or wrong. I think it's maybe just you two misunderstanding what the other needs in a weirdly specific moment."

Shane lets out a huff of breath that could almost be considered a laugh. It is kind of an absurd situation to be in.

“Listen at the heart of it, maybe Ilya just needs that reassurance from you, and you just need to ask questions to better understand. Again, neither of you is wrong, you just have to find a way to meet at a place where you both can get what you need.”

It makes total sense. He’s known Ilya has trouble with his self-worth for a long time, and Shane tries to be aware of that and tell him how much Ilya means to him, especially in the small, quiet moments they have so many of now. But Shane’s innate curiosity and want to fully *know* the context of a situation before he can act can often come into direct opposition with Ilya’s need to hear something specific. And when it’s not overly clear, Shane can sometimes still struggle to navigate it.

He exhausts himself so much sometimes.

“Or I could have just said ‘yes,’” he counters, because it seems so fucking obvious now.

Harris manages to laugh without scaring the entire room of people, but his grin is toothy and warm. “You could have, but then you wouldn’t be you.”

There’s a hint of bitterness to Shane’s voice when he says, “Yeah, well, being me can be a fucking nightmare.”

Harris gives him a sympathetic look and then leans forward to place a comforting hand over Shane’s.

“Listen,” he says in possibly the softest voice Shane’s ever heard him use. “You’ve both had to navigate *so* much over the past year, and you’ve done it with so much grace and love; it’s been incredible to watch, really. But now that things have settled, I’m sure it’s inevitable to notice little chips in the glass here and there.”

Shane can feel something stinging in his eyes that he refuses to acknowledge.

“You’ve had to hide in the dark for so long that living in the light is going to expose some things you maybe didn’t know were there, but if anyone can handle that, it’s you and Ilya.

Shane hopes to god he’s right.

“And seriously, just talk to him,” he goes on. “I don’t think this is nearly as bad as your mind is making you think it is.”

That does make Shane feel a better. At least a little bit.

“Thanks, Harris,” he says, moving his hand out from underneath the other man’s in order to place his on top and give him a squeeze of gratitude. He’s not sure there’s another person alive he could have talked with about this so easily. “You’re a good friend to us both.”

“I’m always glad to help,” Harris says, and then he eyes Shane’s phone on the table. “Now, can we talk about your Instagram presence? I have a few ideas.”

Shane doesn’t even try to suppress his defeated groan.

oOo

Shane [15:17] Will you be home for dinner?

Ilya [15:24] Yes

Shane [15:24] Ok. I'll cook. Love you.

oOo

He's just finished plating the chicken over the spaghetti when he hears the front door open.

Shane takes a deep breath and tries not to be nervous. Ilya is his *husband*. They've had fights before, and this didn't even really count as a fight. He tries to let Harris's words from earlier settle him. This is just a little misunderstanding that Shane needs to clear up.

At least he hopes that's all it is.

Ilya rounds the corner into the kitchen, looking the picture of relaxation in an oversized hoodie and loose sweats. His hair is wet from a recent shower, and Shane wants nothing more than to bury himself in those unfairly giant arms and erase this whole fucking day.

But he can't yet, so instead he just says, "Hi."

"Hello," Ilya replies, and Shane is relieved to see the warmth there.

"How was your workout?"

"Good," Ilya says nonchalantly. "But I am afraid Luca is more in love with me than ever so maybe that is not so good."

Shane chuckles lightly knowing there's probably some real truth to that. "I'll have to have a talk with him then. "Remind him you're mine."

"Mmm," Ilya agrees. "I would love to see it." It's then that Ilya looks down at the chicken parmesan sitting on the kitchen island, and when his eyes flit back up to Shane's, they narrow in accusation. "What did you do?"

Shane's mouth hangs open in obvious offense. "What do you mean, 'what did I do'? Can't I just do something nice?"

Ilya gives him a *look*. The one that says, 'really, Shane?' You really want to go there?' But out loud, he evenly says "No."

Which, okay, that's probably fair. Shane isn't exactly known for being romantic just because. He's made this meal exactly one other time for Ilya's birthday the year before, so it's not like he can play this off as a regular thing either. So, he decides to give up whatever is left of the rouse.

He sighs and shrugs in a defeated sort of way. "You know what I did."

Ilya studies him for a few long seconds, his eyes searching Shane's face, and for the briefest of moments, there's something that almost looks pleased in his expression before it hardens back into neutrality.

"You will have to remind me."

Shane groans and bends himself nearly in half so he can lay his head in his arms on the island between them. "Please don't be an asshole about this."

"Oh, I am asshole?"

Shane looks up to glare at him. "Fuck you, this is hard enough as it is."

Ilya folds his arms across his chest. "Is me, Hollander, it cannot be *that* hard."

Goddamn it he thinks. Shane knows Ilya is right. They're married for fucks sake, he can talk to his husband about how yes, he would still love him if he were a stupid fucking worm.

"I'm..." he stops and straightens himself so he can look Ilya in the eye. Because it's important that he face this even as he wishes he were hidden inside the fabric of Ilya's hoodie. "I'm sorry I didn't answer your question this morning. I...didn't understand it was important to you, and I feel really shitty about it."

Ilya's face does finally soften then, and Shane feels a little steadier because of it. "You do not need to apologize."

"I *do*," he emphasizes. "Obviously, my answer is yes, I just...sometimes I don't get the hypothetical stuff unless you spell it out for me."

Ilya looks *so* fond. "Yes, I know."

"I don't want you to be mad, but I get why you are."

"I was never mad, Shane," Ilya says, but his hazel eyes still seem turbulent. "I just thought the answer was easy. I wanted it to be easy."

"It *is* easy, I just fuck things up."

Ilya moves around the island, and comes to stand by him. Shane continues to stare at the space Ilya had left, still embarrassed that he'd made such a mess of Ilya's feelings, but Ilya takes his hand and yanks him forward and into his chest.

Shane doesn't fight it. Instead he sinks into the embrace, allowing Ilya's strokes against his back to soothe and steady him, and he feels like he can finally relax for the first time since Ilya had walked away from him that morning.

Ilya sways them a bit, back and forth like the sea, and the movement lulls him into calm.

He breathes in Ilya's clean scent, enjoying the way the soft material of his clothes feel against his cheek. He feels grounded. Whole and not lacking. This has always been his safety amidst

life's storms. Even the ones he manages to create himself.

When Ilya pulls back, Shane almost whines at the loss of contact, but Ilya quickly grabs his hands and gives him a lop-sided smile that makes his insides do all sorts of funny things.

"I know, here, that you love me," he pulls their joined hands up to his heart, and then lifts them up towards his head. "But sometimes, I do not know it here. I still struggle with not being enough for you. Is my biggest fear. So when you did not answer, I was sad."

"I know," Shane leans forward and presses his forehead to Ilya's chest. "I'm so fucking sorry, Ilya. My brain is messed up, and it just doesn't process things like it should. I was trying to make it make sense, and I couldn't and I—"

"Is not your fault you did not meet an expectation you did not know I had," Ilya interrupts, and he puts a hand under Shane's chin, forcing his head up to once again meet his gaze. "And there is nothing wrong with your brain. Is perfect."

Shane gives him a wobbly smile, and he feels his eyes start to water. "I do love you. So much. Whether you're a worm or a hockey puck—"

"You might love me more if I were hockey puck."

"—*Shut up*. Or whether you're a car or just *you*. You're everything to me," he finishes with a quiet reverence.

"Thank you," Ilya says, those two words full of meaning, while his fingers brush back hair in desperate need of a trim from Shane's forehead. "Means a lot."

It's quiet between them until Shane works up the courage to ask, "Would you still love me even though I'm a giant idiot?"

"Is stupid question," Ilya replies. "I already do this."

"Fuck you, Rozanov," Shane laughs, and it shakes his shoulders, and a few tears finally spill out. Then Ilya is laughing with him and the sound fills the kitchen with warmth.

"I will not ask you such things again," Ilya says when their laughter dies down, his hands rubbing up and down Shane's arms. "I am sorry, too."

Shane bites at his lip and shakes his head. "It's fine, just maybe don't ask something like that right after you've given me an orgasm? That might help me a little bit."

"Fine, I'll ask right before you have orgasm, then."

"Perfect," Shane says flatly.

Ilya pulls him in again, and Shane is content to let himself drift in the embrace until Ilya's stomach rumbling has them both laughing again.

“Always looking out for that next meal,” Shane teases as they separate and he picks up the plates to take them to the small kitchen table.

“Is that all you made?” Ilya asks, looking slightly skeptical at the size of his portion.

Shane rolls his eyes, but he knows he’s not fooling anyone with the adoring grin so wide it makes his cheeks ache. “There’s more in the warmer for you.”

“And?” Ilya adds hopefully.

Shane sets the plates down. “And there’s ice cream in the freezer.”

“My hero,” Ilya says and then pulls Shane into a kiss that’s long and just the right side of filthy.

oOo

Ilya thrusts into him with lazy, grinding movements that have Shane’s back arched off the bed.

“Hey,” Ilya says, tone even as his hips continue to wreck Shane. “Would you save me if I was tied to train tracks?”

Shane hates how unaffected Ilya sounds, like he’s just casually fucking Shane for Shane’s benefit alone. But the sheen of sweat on Ilya’s forehead and chest gives him away, and Shane smiles because he *knows* how to answer this.

“Of course I would,” he says, scratching lightly at Ilya’s chest to try to get him to *move*.

“But how would you cut rope?” Ilya asks, expression thoughtful as Shane moans when his husband finally hits his prostate.

Shane pants and tries to match Ilya’s hips with thrusts of his own, needing *more*, but Ilya’s big hands come up and hold him still, causing Shane to groan again, this time in frustration. “I dunno, a...knife or something.”

“Mmm, rope is very thick, what if the knife doesn’t work?” He lowers himself and sucks at Shane’s nipples.

“Holy *shit*,” Shane whimpers, and he feels Ilya smile against his skin. The cocky bastard. Fuck, he loves him so much. “Shear clippers then.”

“Where will you get those? You keep them in your pocket or something?”

Shane finds enough strength to glare at him through the haze of pleasure. “Don’t think I don’t know what you’re doing, Rozanov.”

Ilya grins devilishly, bending one of Shane’s legs up to his chest before he starts to thrust so deeply that Shane’s convinced he can feel it in his stomach.

“I do not know what you are talking about.”

“Fine,” Shane grits out, trying to focus on his annoyance to stave off his impending release, because he’s not ready to come yet. Not when it feels this incredible. “I’ll just let the train run over you.”

Ilya’s forehead touches his, and Shane’s brown eyes meet the most perfect shade of hazel. “You would not do that,” Ilya says, and he sounds so sure that Shane swears his heart might burst.

“No,” Shane says with a conviction he knows Ilya feels deeply, and kisses him until he runs out of breath. “I wouldn’t.”

End Notes

You cannot convince me Ilya wouldn't ask Shane this question and that Shane wouldn't fumble the response. I love them both so much.

Thank you so much for reading, your comments help heal my imposter syndrome, and kudos are love. Feel free to come find me over on [tumblr](#) or [twitter](#) though I mostly just lurk there, I'd love if you come give me a follow and say hi. Until next time!

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