

find light in the beautiful sea

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find light in the beautiful sea

by [weeb_grass](#)

Summary

“Ilya,” he breathes into Shane's open, slightly panting mouth. Shane jostles their position, pointing his thumb at his own chest in an exaggerated manner.

“Shane,” he replies. Quietly, like it's a request, not a statement. Ilya's eyes gentle, and he kisses Shane's nose.

“Shane.”

Or: another "Shane stays post-tuna melt scene" fic.

Notes

"... I choose to be happy."
- *Diamonds*, Rihanna

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

Shane's panting slows, then stutters as he realises what he's just let slip. His breath picks up again, swallowed down by lazy kisses Ilya keeps offering. His chest swells beneath this newfound kindness, feels like blossoms have rooted in his lungs, their petals expanding in real time. The weight of Ilya's kindness is new, and he can't decide if it's unwelcome. His breathing accelerates still, and suddenly, he's unsure of his place in this home, on this couch, his world tilting sideways, everything sliding an inch to the left of where he remembers last placing it. The weight of his name, thick and heavy on Ilya's tongue, slips from his lips and rolls down the canted angle the livingroom takes.

Ilya's hands slide up his flanks, then down, settling at his hips. Thumbs dig into his hipbones, grounding him to the pressure. He's hyper-aware of every place they're touching: his thighs splayed over Ilya's hips, his hands gripping his shoulders. Ilya's hands, sturdy, strong hands, buoying him as his body floats between that sparse space of reality and the suddy, ear-popping ocean flow where his name spills out of beautiful boys' lips and the chopped up sound of it sends him careening into bliss. He should move, he thinks, he should move from here.

He feels those big hands pull him closer, abdomen to abdomen, chest to chest. Their spend touches Shane, cooling and tacky and sticking to his skin. He fights off the familiar instinct to reach for tissues. He fights off the less familiar instinct to drop to his knees and lick it from Ilya's body. He pictures it clearly, the shock in Ilya's expression, morphing into delight. He adores the moments Shane acts on his primal instincts, like he's unlocked a new level of freak shit they can do together in the bedroom. He's not sure where calling Ilya by his first name falls on this list of kinks, but it did seem to make him come embarrassingly quickly.

"Hey," Ilya mumbles, turning his head to kiss Shane's clavicle. He feels like a bird, feathers bent in the wrong direction, not sure in which direction he should fly. His breath is still coming out in waves.

"Hey, Shane, hey."

Shane feels a full-body tremor run through him, and he turns his face into Ilya's neck, breathing in the heady scent of expensive cologne and sweat. He needs to shower, he thinks. He needs to shower, and dress, and leave before the sticky sap of Ilya's words traps him in this moment. This moment, where the coo of Ilya's voice sounds confessional, post-nut bliss revealing something Shane knows shouldn't be tangible, but nevertheless was stroked alongside his cock not two minutes prior.

I think I could love you, Shane thinks wildly, breath catching on unspoken words. *And I think... I think you'd like to love me too.*

What does he do with this knowledge? At the very least, stop humoring it.

Ilya doesn't appear to be feeling similar compunctions about this. He unsticks their bodies, Shane mourning the loss for a fraction of a second, then reaches for the tissue box to wipe them down. Shane watches with mild fascination as Ilya cleans his own abdomen messily, quick and inefficient, he misses a lot of spots. But when he reaches for Shane, he's sure to

wipe down every sticky inch of skin, paying special attention to his happy trail, where drops of come have congealed in his hair. His brow furrows when he can't clean it off with the dry tissue, so he brings the paper to his mouth, wetting it with spit before he reaches back down again to finish the job. It's an intimate and crude gesture, so very Ilya. Shane hates himself for knowing this.

"I—" Shane tries, cutting himself off when Ilya deigns to glance up at him, heavy lids and upturned lips heady and knowing. Shane clears his throat, tries again. "I—"

"маленький жеребец, you breathe so heavy. What are you running from?"

Shane chuckles. It comes out breathy and wained. He nearly chokes on his own laughter. When his eyes catch Ilya's gaze, he is smiling, meeting him in the moment where they are "Shane" and "Ilya."

"Come on, Hollander, you want to shower, yes?" Ilya slaps his ass playfully, then rolls him off his body onto the couch. Shane's breath leaves him in a gust, and the time they had shared, stretched out sweet and syrupy, snaps like lengthened taffy.

He is foolish, he thinks. So incredibly foolish.

Ilya must catch onto his hesitation. He stands, brow furrowed, hand still outstretched to pull Shane to his feet, but it's falling back to his side, slowly. Shane doesn't know what to say, how to explain that he feels like they've taken twelve steps forward and two steps back. Or maybe not. Maybe their path isn't linear, their feet simply circling around each other, treading the same footpath, but never meeting in the same place. Shane looks up, wary expression unguarded. He wants to bolt, hide himself from the way Ilya's mouth makes his last name take shape, an awful reminder that they're only this nebulous *something* when Shane's got his dick out.

He tries something stupid. It's not like the outcome will matter anyway; he's already one panic attack away from calling an Uber.

"Ilya," he says surely, eyes refusing to leave Ilya's. He's fighting against every instinct to avert his gaze, to let the word die at their feet. But it's such a beautiful name. Shane would like to have it.

Ilya's eyes widen, then crinkle in glee. *Russians don't blush*, he'd told Shane once, whispering filthy things into the soft skin of his inner thighs. He blushes now, blood rising to the apples of his cheeks. He's so handsome, Shane thinks, so incredibly handsome.

"Ilya," Ilya repeats his own name, like he's holding Shane's reverence in his mouth, tonguing at it like a newly-capped tooth.

Shane shakes his head, ridding himself of the cottony clouds clinging to his thoughts. He needs to start acting normal again. Well, normal for Shane. Still, if he's not going to bolt, he could use some semblance of routine. Especially if Ilya's going to keep *looking* at him like that.

“What time is it?”

Ilya walks to one of the side tables, picking up a wristwatch he must have removed at some point during their day together.

“Four, why?”

Shane shrugs, feigning nonchalance.

“I usually do cardio right now.”

Ilya's nose wrinkles in disgust. Shane would call it cute if he wasn't worried the compliment would get him thrown out on his ass.

“Cardio in the evening?”

“Well,” Shane shuffles his feet, lingering embarrassment from earlier choking up his words. “During travel, yeah. Strength training in the morning, so my muscles have time to recover before the game.”

Ilya rolls his eyes playfully, then jerks his head in a “come” gesture. Shane follows diligently, because of course he does.

“Everything is a science with you,” he grumbles half-heartedly. He leads him to the bedroom, where he begins rooting around in his dresser for—

A pair of shorts are thrown at his face, followed by a T-shirt with the sleeves cut off. It's a *Boston Raiders* T-shirt, and Shane *knows* it doesn't mean anything, that Ilya probably owns enough Raiders merch to fill the dresser entirely, but he can't help the giddy feeling that swoops down into his stomach. It feels territorial. Ilya doesn't ease the feeling when he asks, without turning to face Shane: “You need clean boxers too?”

And— oh, God— the thought seizes him. He imagines saying yes, of slipping them on over his thighs, the waistband digging into his hips. He's not as tapered as Ilya, not as lean. He pictures the hems riding up, hugging his groin just a bit too tight. His body taking up intimate space that belongs to Ilya alone. Sharing that space, smelling of him, ridding himself of them later when they no doubt fuck against the kitchen table. Or the couch again. Or maybe they'll find their way back to the bed this time, where Ilya will mouth at him through his own boxers, the shape of him filling Ilya's mouth like his name had earlier.

“No, but— probably after. You know, after these ones are all sweaty. And stuff.”

Ilya turns back toward him, smirking.

““And stuff.””

“Shut up, asshole,” Shane chastises, any heat behind it dimmed by the grin he sports.

“Not ‘asshole,’” Ilya corrects, stepping away from the dresser to reach for Shane, gripping his jaw with one hand. “Ilya,” he breathes into Shane's open, slightly panting mouth. Shane

jostles their position, pointing his thumb at his own chest in an exaggerated manner.

“Shane,” he replies. Quietly, like it's a request, not a statement. Ilya's eyes gentle, and he kisses Shane's nose.

“Shane,” he lets it fall from his lips like a breath, wispy and coveted. They stand there for a moment, on the precipice of something. But Ilya steps back, breaking through the clouds of Shane's thoughts, running his hands down his shoulders in a loose grip.

“Change,” he says gruffly, clearing his throat of the name that settles in his lungs like the sickly tar of cigarettes. “I'll take you to my gym.”

Shane nods, hurriedly stepping out of his sweatpants and into the gym shorts Ilya threw at him earlier. He shucks the borrowed T-shirt, debating over whether or not he should throw on the tank, but he knows the material will cling to his skin. He hates that feeling, opting to leave the shirt on the bed. He looks up, noting that Ilya is also just in sweats, his shirt thrown haphazardly atop the dresser. Shane feels an instinctual impulse to reach out and fold it, but refrains. This is not his space, despite how accommodating Ilya's been.

Ilya leads him out of the bedroom, down a flight of stairs into a large basement, walls lined completely with mirrors. The floor is lined with mats, and there's a hefty amount of equipment. Only one treadmill, but maybe Ilya plans on using the stationary bike.

“Bin of water bottles over there,” Ilya jerks head chin in the direction of the far corner. “Towels too. Do you have music preference? I usually play speakers, but we can do headphones if you wish.”

“Oh, no. Whatever you usually play is fine,” Shane stammers, knowing full well that he's got a playlist set aside solely for running, the timing curated to the five miles he likes to get in on cardio days. By the way Ilya smirks in response, he must know this too, or at least be making an educated guess.

“Mm, we'll see.” He wanders off toward the bench press, pulling up Spotify on his phone.

“Wait—you're not—” Shane makes a gesture toward the bike. Ilya's brow furrows as he tries to decipher what Shane means, then smiles knowingly.

“Ah, no. Arm day for me. I do cardio in the morning, like a sane person.”

Oh, God, Shane thinks, watching Ilya go back to scrolling through his music. Great, Shane's going to make himself look like a half-drowned rat while Ilya spends the next hour pumping blood through his biceps. They're not on equal footing here.

Ilya chooses a playlist, something electronic and foreign, sends Shane a flirtatious wink, then makes his way over to the kettle bells. Shane lets out a deep breath, starting his treadmill warmup and trying not to watch the way Ilya's ass flexes in his shorts when he starts up a set of kettlebell swings.

After a few minutes of light jogging, followed by the beginnings of zone two strides, Shane feels himself loosen up. The music is nice, setting a good tempo for his run, and Ilya's a surprisingly polite gym partner. He keeps to himself, no snide remarks or set-ups for conversation. He appears to be checked out, solely focused on his routine, which allows Shane to slide into the meditative state he so often falls into when he starts his runs. By mile three, he's completely spaced, wondering how he'll set up the floorplan for his team tomorrow night, wondering what they'll be eating for dinner, wondering if this is what it's like all the time, with a partner, if people just exist in the same space with one another. He wonders if that's what love is, coexisting in most moments, with the occasional bout of affection being passed on to keep everyone involved on their toes. Do people cook together? Do they eat together? Does one play video games while the other reads, nobody's bones getting jumped for at least a few hours?

He thinks of his parents, how his father can sit for hours solving a puzzle while his mom checks her email next to him. Oftentimes, she has her feet up, both tucked into his lap to keep them warm during those long, Ottawa winters.

He catches sight of Ilya as he pulls himself up on the pull-up bar. One, two, Shane loses count after ten, distracted by the flex of Ilya's muscles, the strain on his neck. He wonders what Ilya would do if tonight, instead of getting on his hands and knees for him, he asked Ilya to lie on his stomach. If he crawled atop him, naked, rubbing CBD cream into his traps. Would the nonsexual intimacy destroy them? Could they lie down together afterward, exchanging goodnight kisses, whispering each other's names without Shane having another borderline panic attack?

His thoughts have grown too pointed. He ups the speed of the treadmill and completely blanks for the final two miles.

When he's finished, he teeters off the treadmill, walking out his stiff muscles for a minute. He grabs a towel, dries off as best he can, then grabs a floor mat to begin his post-run yoga routine.

It's not much, just enough to stretch the right muscles, help with the lactic acid buildup in his joints. Down dog to sphinx to cobra. Holds cobra for a while, then drops down to child's pose, breathing through the come down of his run. He's so focused on steadying his breaths that he doesn't notice Ilya's finished his workout until his feet are planted right next to his face. The music has changed too, something soft and lyrical, definitely not workout music.

"I cannot finish my reps with you looking like this, Hollander."

Shane flinches at the use of his last name, but his face is tucked beneath his arm, so hopefully Ilya doesn't catch it.

"It's just yoga."

"It's just distracting, is what it is."

Shane huffs out an irritated breath, turning to meet Ilya's eyes. He's closer than Shane expected, having squatted down for their conversation.

“It's child's pose, good for relaxing. There are many harder positions than this.”

“Mm, that is not what I meant. But now I am curious. Show me.”

Shane flashes him an agitated look.

“I just ran five miles!”

“What, and this is hard?”

“Uh, yeah, a lot of yoga poses require a shitload of core strength. And I'm kind of beat.”

“Mm,” Ilya hums again, rocking back into a seated position, resting his head against one of the mirrors. His legs are splayed out in front of him, chest still heaving slightly from exertion. His arm muscles are pumped up, swollen and veiny from his workout. Beads of sweat drip down from his hair onto his chest. Shane wants to lick them off.

“Come on Hollander, is not that hard. Show me what you can do.”

Shane knows he's being goaded now, but he takes the bait. Something primitive and proud sparks in him, wanting to show Ilya *exactly* how flexible he is, *exactly* how far he can be bent. He transitions to down-dog, walks his feet up to hanging man, then rises, exaggerating the spread of his fingertips as he smirks in Ilya's direction. Ilya smiles back, half-heartedly, eyes already drawn to the wide span of his body. Shane relishes the attention, turning toward the mirror so that Ilya has a complete view of his side. Then, he drops to his knees carefully, bending back, back, until he feels his forearms touch the mat, his hands grabbing at the heels of his feet. He tucks his head between his elbows, breathing through the burn in his stomach and shoulders. King pigeon pose.

“*Fuck*, Shane. Show me another.”

Lightning zings up Shane's spine at the sound of his first name. He walks his feet out carefully, then, relying solely on his core and his glutes, he hoists his legs up, holding them over his shoulders. Scorpion pose.

He holds himself there, eyes squeezed shut as he focuses on maintaining proper form. His muscles begin to shiver from the strain, sweat dripping from his hairline onto the mat.

“*Oh.*”

He squints one eye open, glancing to the side. He regrets it immediately, forearms wobbling before he rights himself hastily. Ilya's eyes are hooded, his chest heaving like he's overly exerted. He's pushed the waistband of his sweatpants down his hips, the cut V of his lower torso slick with sweat. He's got his cock in his hand, lazily pumping himself as he watches Shane, a predatory glint in his eye. When he catches Shane watching, he smirks.

“*Ilya—*” Shane grits through his teeth, straining against his bodyweight. He feels heavy, heated and sluggish. He wants to drop, to take Ilya's cock in his mouth and let his mind blank out for a few minutes longer. He focuses on Ilya's breathing, listens to the ragged in-out of wet huffs and choked-off groans.

“Get back into first position,” Ilya grunts. Shane hears him shift his weight, working against his basal instincts not to turn his head and look. “The baby pose.”

“Child's pose,” Shane corrects. He lowers his legs slowly, abs and glutes aching against the strain. As soon as his knees hit the ground, he relaxes his core with a huff, letting his forehead fall heavily between his forearms. His palms are damp, his chest dripping. He feels loose and lightheaded, wrung out and laid atop the mat to dry. He's so focused on regaining feeling in his limbs that he jerks when he feels a warm palm press into his lower back, sliding up his spinal cord in a comforting manner. When he looks up, it's to face his own reflection in the full-length mirrors. Ilya is kneeling behind him, hand smoothing over the notches of his spine. When Ilya catches him looking in the mirror, his eyes darken. He brings his other hand up, smoothing both palms down Shane's flanks, then up. He's hovering over Shane, fingers digging into tight shoulders, thumbs pressing into the cusp of his neck. Shane groans, dropping his forehead to the mat. Ilya leans in closer, kissing the spot between his shoulder blades. Shane relaxes back into the hold, only to freeze up when he feels Ilya's cock brush up against his ass.

“I—”

Ilya must feel him stiffen, bending down while tilting Shane's chin to the side with his fingertips.

“Hollander, what is it? What is problem?”

Shane feels the blush rising to his cheeks, letting his gaze slide down so as not to meet Ilya's eyes.

“It's just... we ate earlier.”

Ilya's brow furrows. He's clearly been thrown into deeper confusion.

Shane sighs, mentally preparing himself for destroying the mood.

“I'm usually pretty strict about my diet.”

Ilya nods once, slowly.

“Yes, something something biotic. I know this already. What does this have to do with me fucking you?”

“No, I— not like, strict for training. I mean—” Shane huffs, knowing his cheeks are beet red by now. He takes a deep breath, reminding himself that this is *Ilya*. That if anyone knows his body, it's this man. Even if he's teasing, he's never cruel. And— and surely he knows, right? Surely, after all these years—

“I just can't eat, um, certain things. Before we, you know. And plus I'm all sweaty and gross. It's just not... nice. Down there. It's not nice.”

Ilya purses his lips, like he's thinking through everything Shane just told him. Then his eyebrows raise, and his mouth pulls up into that signature smirk of his.

“Oh, I see,” he says, low and rumbling, sliding closer so his chest presses against the side of Shane's arm. He speaks quietly into his ear, tickling the hairs at his nape. “You like to keep things clean for me. Keep things nice.” He kisses the soft spot behind Shane's ear, then mouths at his earlobe languidly. “Pretty little hockey boy. With his pretty little asshole.”

“Ilya—”

“No, no. Is sweet. That you think I give a shit.” He trails kisses across Shane's cheekbone, pecks the corner of his mouth, then bites his chin playfully. But when he pulls back, there's a heat in his expression that has Shane's stomach flipping. His thighs squeeze involuntarily. “I tell you something though, since we are in the spirit of admitting things now.”

Shane feels him slide back, his lips leaving sloppy kisses across his shoulder blades. He mouths at Shane's spine, kissing each notch open-mouthed, hungry. Shane watches him move slowly down his back, both hands gripping his hips as his mouth moves from one lower back dimple, then across to the other, each getting their own teasing nips.

“I was fucking you long before you learned how to prep for me,” Ilya speaks to his ass, pulling the hems of his shorts and boxers down with his teeth. His hands move to Shane's ass, kneading and spreading his cheeks with wanton desire. Shane feels flustered, embarrassed and aroused all at once.

“I will be fucking you long after.”

And then, proving a point to absolutely nobody, Ilya *licks his fucking asshole*.

”*What the fuck!*”

It's definitely an expletive, not a question. Shane jerks forward, nearly hitting his head on the mirror. Ilya's head pops up. He looks at him like he's a man possessed.

“Jesus, Hollander! You act like you never had your ass eaten before.”

“You *know* I haven't!”

Ilya's answering look is smug, way too self-assured for the position he's put himself in.

“How can you—” Shane swallows around the lump in his throat, twisting his neck uncomfortably so he can glare at Ilya over his shoulder. “That *cannot* be pleasant.”

Ilya's answering smile grows somehow more cocky.

“I think you'll find it can be very pleasant.”

“No not— for you, idiot! That can't be pleasant for you!”

“Oh, I assure you,” Ilya teases, voice low and sultry, “is most pleasant. For me.” He grabs Shane's hips, dragging him back toward his face. Just as Shane loses his view of his eyes, he quips: “Let me show you exactly how *pleasant* I can be, moy lyubimyy.”

“Ilya, I—” Shane cuts himself off with a near squeak, as Ilya’s chosen that moment to lick clean up his crack again. And again. He follows by lazily circling Shane’s rim, mouth sloppy and wet against Shane’s exposed hole. Shane keens, folding in on himself. When Ilya narrows his field of view, kitten licks and messy kisses replacing broad swipes, Shane’s head reels. He turns his cheek, resting it against the mat. His fingers claw uselessly at the edge of the mat, holding onto it as though he has any hope of grounding himself, funneling the sensation of Ilya digging his thumbs into the meat of his ass to leverage his body into some exterior channel. But there is nowhere to place these sensations, no closed box to lock and place atop a shelf in his meager collection of memories with Ilya. *Here, I am touching you*, says Ilya’s hand, his calloused fingertips tracing lazy circles into the soft skin of Shane’s inner thigh. *Here, I am kissing you*. His mouth, diving in and pulling back, hot puffs of breath cooling the spit on Shane’s skin. Another kiss, another taste of something Shane always imagined would be left to be desired. He’s never felt so vulnerable, so utterly flayed open. Ilya has taken this shameful, humiliating piece of him and exposed it to the light. And, instead of mocking him, of teasing his body for being just that, a body, he is on his knees. Worshipping him.

You love me, Shane thinks, wild and uninhibited. Ilya uses his thumbs to spread Shane open, one digging into the edge of his rim. He spits, lewd, right atop Shane’s hole, then pushes the moisture in with his tongue. *Jesus fucking Christ, I think you love me*.

The terror of the thought is dulled by the sensation of having two hands grip his hips, pulling him back aggressively. Ilya’s switched tactics, mouthing around Shane’s hole in a sloppy manner, teeth occasionally catching the meat of his ass, tongue dipping in and out of him in no real rhythm. Ilya’s hands squeeze his hips, his thighs. They move across his skin erratically, like he can’t figure out where to place them. Shane feels lightheaded, unable to track Ilya’s movements, his intentions. It’s as though the other man is genuinely making a valiant effort to, quite literally, *make out with his ass*. It’s disgusting. It’s wet and raw and lurid, and it’s going to make Shane come.

He feels it, the tightening of his balls, the clench of his fists. He tries to warn Ilya, gets out a whining, half-hearted “Ilya, I—” before his voice drops down to a groan. He digs his forehead into the mat, pressing himself back into Ilya’s grip, silently begging him to keep going. To touch him, to touch him, to *please, God, please don’t ever stop touching me*.

Ilya moans, long and drawn out, the vibrations traversing Shane’s bones, his body shivering with it. And he’s coming, body jerking and taut. Ilya holds him through it, kisses him through it, mouthing at him while he ruts into the gym floor. Shane feels something inside him shake loose, dislodging a few of those little boxes he’s kept locked up and sewn into the meat of his heart. Ilya, head against his chest after their first time, letting Shane kiss his sweaty hairline. Ilya, sending a Snapchat, toothbrush in hand, toothpaste painting his teeth, smile bright around it all. *I will see you tonight, yes?* Ilya, standing at the doorway, one foot out the door before he decides against it, slipping back inside to sneak one last kiss.

Ilya, pushing himself up onto his haunches, smiling lecherously at Shane through the mirror and wiping his mouth with the back of his forearm. His other hand pets Shane’s lower back, fingers rubbing the notches of his spine. He pushes his sweats down just past his ass, then takes himself in his hands, maintaining eye contact as he lazily jerks himself off. He rests his

palm between Shane's lower back dimples, not forceful, but not exactly gentle. Shane says nothing. But he stretches his arms out in front of him, allowing Ilya to look his fill at the long lines of his body. He presses his ass back into Ilya, rubbing against him, wanton and slightly uncharacteristic. That must do it, because suddenly Ilya's coming with a "fuck, oh *fuck*, kotik," hot strips of come painting his lower back, his ass, dripping down his exposed hole and staining the yoga mat. Shane tries not to think about whether they would've lasted just a bit longer if they'd been a little braver. He mourns the lost opportunity he knows he wouldn't have taken—but deeply desires—to have Ilya inside him. Coming inside him raw, whispering his name like it's something dirty. Or maybe not dirty, very clean, very boring, fucking him into something very *not* boring, something transcending a collection of whispered last names. Something tender, like the way Ilya is now, standing to grab them a towel, wetting it with his water bottle and wiping Shane down. Tender, when he touches Shane with an intimacy he steps into with ease, cleaning Shane's ass like it's a privilege. It's—a lot. Shane almost wishes he'd tossed the towel at his face, locker room actions, familiar and teasing. Not this, this hiking his shorts up for him, kissing the spot between his back dimples the way disciples kiss the feet of kings.

Shane rises from child's pose, stretching his stiff neck. He catches Ilya's smiling, sedated eyes in the mirror, and he does not ask what they're doing.

"Dinner?" Ilya asks, standing from the mat and pulling his sweats back up over his ass. "Or you want shower first?" Shane half expects a jab about his obsession with cleanliness, but it doesn't come. The silence where the joke should have followed hangs between them, stale and uncomfortable. Shane comes to a minor epiphany, watching Ilya's expression slip from easygoing to trepidacious, then completely blank. He doesn't know what he's doing either. He has a man here in his house, a man he wants to stay, and he's walking on eggshells trying to keep him here. He's making him sandwiches, stocking his fridge with his favourite soda. He's letting him use his gym, his shower, keeping him for dinner. He wants this person here with him in his home, in his bed. He wants to eat him out on his unsanitary gym floor, then feed him dinner.

Shane stands, unsure of his steps, his words. He needs a minute, or maybe two. He might need another seven years to wrap his head around the fact that Ilya Rosanov wants to fuck him missionary style and call him by his first name.

"I think a shower would be nice," Shane mumbles, following Ilya out of the home gym. "You mind if I take it myself? You can order food while I'm in."

Ilya throws a searching look over his shoulder, probably wondering why Shane's throwing away a perfect opportunity for a fourth orgasm, but nods.

"Um," Shane starts, scratching the back of his neck nervously, "If it's an option, could you try to just get me a simple protein? Veggies, a complex carb if that's available—"

"I can follow your stupid diet, Hollander." The words are sharp, the knife edge of them dulled when Ilya reaches out to squeeze his hand. Only briefly, dropping it to gesture toward a hallway door. "Bathroom door there. Is attached to the en suite. Towels in the cabinet beneath the sink." He leaves Shane at the door, padding his way toward the kitchen in his

low-hanging sweats and untied Adidas. Shane's hit with the blinding thought that he just had is ass eaten out for the first time in his life with his sneakers on the entire time.

Shane exits the shower still reeling from the whiplash of Ilya's actions these past five hours, but at least he's clean, and his muscles are loose. He towels off, noting that he smells like Ilya now, having used his shampoo and body wash, both nicer brands than he'd been anticipating. He doesn't know what he was expecting, figuring Ilya's not exactly a "three-in-one" soap kind of guy, but he wasn't quite expecting sage and sandalwood. And that's the crux of the matter, really: Shane doesn't *know* Ilya. He doesn't know what his pregame routine is, doesn't know how he spends his weekend mornings; hadn't known, until very recently, that Ilya likes tuna melts and canned Cokes.

But, I do know him, Shane thinks wildly, staring at his ruffled, towel-dried reflection in the large, en suite mirror. *You know the little sounds he makes right before he's about to come. You know he likes to be held after sex, cheek pressed to your chest and breathing heavy, like he's pep-talking himself into leaving the bed before he falls asleep. You know he likes to be called handsome, absolutely preened the night you caught him in a tux after an all-star game, loose-lipped and fixated on his perfect bowtie, the word slipping from your mouth before you had time to think it through. You know he's brash and strong and borders on cruel during a game, but you know he'll only ever touch you with the intention to pleasure you. To bring you joy. And isn't that something?*

Shane leaves the bathroom, closing the door quietly. His head's foggy, confused. This state of mind isn't helped when he walks into the living room, the smell of baked fish permeating throughout the house.

"Ilya?" He rounds the corner of the column separating the kitchen from the living room. Ilya's at the stove, stirring a pot of— Shane peeks over his shoulder— quinoa. There's another pot on the burner next to it. Steamed broccoli.

"I thought you were ordering out," Shane says mindlessly, his fingers reaching out to slip into the pockets of Ilya's sweatpants. He grips his hips, pressing his forehead to Ilya's upper back. Ilya hums, the noise reverberating throughout his chest and tickling the kiss Shane presses between his shoulderblades.

"No need. Your diet is as boring as you. Had everything here."

Shane doubts he just happened to have fresh fish waiting here in his fridge, unprompted, but he chooses not to comment. He'll let Ilya keep believing he's being smooth about all this.

Shane sits at the counter, watching patiently and with slight fascination as Ilya prepares their dinner. He plates the baked salmon, serves them equal amounts of quinoa and broccoli, then jerks his head toward the kitchen table. The table is set up near a full-length window, offering a perfect view of Ilya's backyard. The garden is not big, by any means, but it's green and well-tended. Shane spots a large, antique bathtub spilling over with vines. He pictures stepping out there in the morning, wrapped in Ilya's duvet, drinking green tea from a

mismatched mug. He shakes his head, ridding himself of the thought before it has a chance to grow roots.

Dinner is actually... really pleasant. The Admirals game is playing in the background, volume lowered. Ilya ribs Shane about his tripped play during his last game. Shane snipes back about some mistake or other Ilya had made playing against Philadelphia last week. Ilya deflects, then mocks, teasing, and they're thrown into another loop of hockey talk. Until they're not, until Ilya stops them in their tracks, mouth half full with a bite of fish, and he asks: "The fish is okay?"

Shane startles, stares down at the bite he holds delicately on his fork.

"The— yeah, it's good. Thanks."

"I did not know how long to cook it, wasn't sure if you like it dry. Also, could not figure out oil? Or butter? But you are so picky, I don't know." Ilya waves his fork around, like he's annoyed, but his eyes are bright with mirth.

"Oh, um, butter is usually fine, in small quantities. I try to avoid seed oils."

Ilya nods, shovelling another bite into his mouth with the delicacy of a primate. Quinoa falls from the corner of his lips. Shane is sickeningly charmed.

"I will remember this next time."

Shane's breath catches. *Next time*, he thinks, heart beating wildly in his chest. *Next time, when I have you in my bed for four hours, only to make you dinner with the groceries I had to purposefully stock for you afterwards.*

Dinner conversation shifts after that. It's only tangentially related to hockey, inasmuch as hockey is related to Shane. He somehow finds himself spilling his pregame routine, talking through the neurotic way he plans out his game day afternoons. He answers big questions: "Why Montreal, not Ottawa?" "What about off-season, where are you during summer?" "What if there was no hockey, what would you be doing then?" Small questions: "What is your favorite movie? I'll watch it on next flight." "Do you incorporate sprints in your cardio? My trainer's been hassling me about it." "Do you prefer fish or chicken? I can make either, is no bother." No questions at all: "No, no, I actually don't like to stay up that late, bad for performance." "Mmm, I like podcasts for strength training, but only trashy, pop music for cardio. Makes me faster, I think." Blushing slightly, eyes downcast as he admits: "My favourite colour? What a silly question, Hollander. Probably brown." Shane calls him boring, and they both laugh.

Dinner concludes unceremoniously. Ilya washes the dishes, Shane dries them. Ilya shows him where they go, and Shane stores this information away in the "next time" cabinet that has now squeezed its way between the "noises Ilya makes when he's annoyed" shelf and "ways I can make him come" collection of files in his mind. By the time they're finished with the dishes, it's nearing eight p.m.

“Ah, so,” Ilya starts, staring down at his hands, wringing them together. If Shane didn’t know any better, he’d say he looks bashful. “I usually take bath around game day. Salts and stuff, for the muscles.”

Shane adds another fact to his stack of “Things About Ilya That Are Unimportant And Unsubstantial, But Integral To Me Now.” He smiles, slight and a bit guarded, reaching out to thumb at the waistband of Ilya’s sweats.

“Oh?” He tries to sound nonchalant. He’s failing miserably. “Would you like company?”

Ilya crowds him against the edge of the counter, kissing him slow and languid. His hands travel up his waist to his shoulder blades, to the cusp of his neck. He buries his hands in Shane’s hair, tugging gently. When they break, Ilya planting one last, lingering peck on his jutted lower lip, he turns, tugging him toward the bathroom.

Ilya gets the faucet running for the large tub that takes up half the space in his bathroom. He pulls Shane over, asking him to check the temperature of the water, making sure it’s not too hot. They strip, and Ilya grabs Epsom salt from beneath the sink, pouring it into the bath water and mixing it around with his hands so it will dissolve more quickly.

“You get in. I need to shower first, get all the sweat off. Don’t want us soaking in my filth.”

Shane frowns in confusion, fingering a small bruise on his thigh.

“I didn’t think you cared about that kind of stuff.”

Ilya rolls his eyes, turning away from him to turn the shower knob. Probably so Shane won’t have to watch his poorly-concealed care when he says: “No, but you do.”

Shane smiles down at the slowly filling tub. He dips his feet in, letting them acclimate to the heat. Once the water’s high enough to reach his calves, he sinks in, sighing as the water washes over his thighs, stomach, his forearms and fingers. Ilya’s bath is large and luxurious. Shane wonders if that was a purposeful choice; if, when he’d been shopping around for homes in Boston, he’d specified the large tub to his real estate agent. There’s padding built into the side, and an angled edge for Shane to lean back against. His eyes slip shut, head lolling to the side. The water rises to his chest, his neck. He allows it to reach his chin—eucalyptus-scented steam rolling up to wet his nose and cheeks— before reaching up to shut off the water. Ilya’s still in the shower, but he hears the stream of water get choked off soon enough. He watches, chin and mouth dipping beneath the surface of the bath water, as Ilya steps out of the shower, dripping all over the bathroom floor as he walks toward the tub.

He steps into the side of the tub where Shane’s head rests, nudging his chin with his big toe.

“Scoot forward.”

Shane sits up, allowing Ilya to slip in behind him. He leans back against him, the warmth of Ilya’s chest sending shivers through his body. Goosebumps rise on the skin of his arms, and he hides them by slipping down into the water, resting his head against Ilya’s clavicle.

He can feel every inch of Ilya's skin against his. Chest to back, arms wrapping around his torso, one hand splayed over his abdomen, the other resting against his hipbone. Strong thighs cradle his hips, toes poking at his calves. Shane feels his cock, softly nestled against his lower back, and it's incredibly intimate. Ilya kisses the crown of his head, then presses his cheek against it, seemingly content to settle there in silence, breathing in the warm steam of the bath water.

Shane, of course, cannot let a moment of peace rest.

"This is nice," Shane says quietly to the echoing bathroom walls. Ilya hums in agreement, the hand he's placed atop Shane's hip sliding up to his ribs, fingers aligning with the dips between each one.

"Do you do this before most games?"

"Ah, no, usually after."

His other hand now begins playing with the hair at Shane's navel, twirling it around his index finger. Shane shivers again, and Ilya presses another kiss to the side of his head.

"Oh," Shane sighs, closing his eyes and arching slightly into Ilya's touch. "Then why are we bathing tonight?"

Ilya peppers kisses down to his ear. He bites playfully at his earlobe, mouthing at the hinge of his jaw.

"Why does the sun shine, Hollander?"

"Umm—"

Ilya slides his hand down, wrapping his fingers around Shane's half-hard cock.

"Because it can."

Shane arches into the touch, his back pressing fully against Ilya's chest. Ilya groans, the sound of it traveling along Shane's skin, eliciting shivers of arousal from him, despite the heat of the water. The bathroom lighting is dim, but Shane can still see Ilya's hand through the clear bath water. He's jerking Shane languidly, thumb tripping up every few pumps to tease his slit. He tilts his head down, mouthing at Shane's neck, sloppy and wet. Shane moans, tilting his head to the side, giving Ilya full access. He doesn't let the opportunity slip by, mouthing at Shane's neck, then sucking it, then biting down, gently, before lapping at the teeth marks with his tongue. Shane feels drunk on affection, stupid with it.

"You'll leave marks," he says, breathy and unenthusiastic.

"Good," Ilya groans, tugging expertly at his cock with one hand. The other, splayed across his ribs, shifts so that the pad of his thumb rubs at Shane's nipple. "Tell them your Boston girl couldn't keep her hands off you."

Shane's hips tilt up, seeking out the slick, perfect friction of Ilya's calloused palm.

“Mmm, my Boston girl.”

“Yes,” Ilya grunts. Shane can feel him, hardening against his lower back, thrusting against him minutely. The bath water is sloshing, lapping at their chins and chests as they move. Shane feels euphoric, floating both metaphorically and physically. His fingers tingle with pleasure, heels digging into the hard ceramic of the tub. He reaches up with one hand, burying his fingers in Ilya's curls, clawing at his scalp. Ilya hisses, biting his jawline playfully.

“Lily,” Ilya says, pressing the name into his skin. Shane hums in agreement, hips thrusting up, head lolling back into the crook of Ilya's neck.

“Lily,” he moans, relishing in the warmth surrounding him, soothing him. Ilya's hands on his skin, his thighs cradling his hips, his cock rubbing, back and forth, between the dimples in his lower back. Ilya's hand slips down, palming his balls, the tip of his middle finger rubbing against the rim of his hole. He doesn't press in, just applies a gentle pressure there, a promise for later.

“Lily,” Shane murmurs again, kissing the underside of Ilya's strong jawline. “Lily, Lily, my Lily.”

Ilya's breath catches, his hips jerking forward so hard he sends a wave of water crashing into the side of the tub, spilling over slightly. Shane grins, hoping Ilya can feel it spreading against the damp skin of his cheek.

“My Boston girl.”

“*Shane,*” Ilya groans, moving his hand back up to jerk Shane off with renewed fervor. Shane's breathing accelerates. He feels his chest begin to heave, skin prickling everywhere they touch. Ilya's thumb and forefinger pinch at his nipple, his lips leaving sloppy, wet kisses along his neck. Shane feels so warm, like molten lava spilling over rocks. Like ice melting beneath sunlight, his resolve to battle whatever *this* is between them cracking like the fractures of burgs in a springtime lake. He remembers being ten, skating out on the lake near his parents' cabin in late March. Remembers hitting a thin patch, his body crashing through the ice, cold and numbing. He'd thrashed around, crawling out of the lake with shivers wracking his spine.

He feels like that now, slipping through the cracks in the walls he's built around his heart. He remembers that first night, the first time Ilya— anyone— was inside him. Remembers feeling raw and powerless, tears forming at the corners of his eyes when he came. He remembers afterward: Sochi, the playoffs, the silence. The way the seed planted in the meat of his heart had sprouted too quickly, rotting with each passing day. Being young is so hard, Shane thinks. So hard and so terribly vulnerable.

Can I do that again? Shane thinks, reaching up to flatten out the hand Ilya has on his chest so that his palm is resting atop Shane's heart, and Shane's fingers are woven between his. *Can I trust you with this?*

Shane thinks, balefully, that he may no longer have a choice.

Ilya's breathing is erratic. He shifts, pulling Shane up so that he's sitting on his lap. His cock slips between Shane's upper thighs, and he fucks into the space between them with rigor. Shane's mind blanks, watching the head of Ilya's cock slip in and out of sight, his hand still moving, quick and efficient against Shane's skin. His body is pulled taut, fingers curling into Ilya's hair so tightly it must be painful. His other hand reaches for the edge of the tub, steadying himself as he jerks once, twice, then—

"Ilya!"

The name is torn from him, his body snapping, knuckles matching the white of the tub's porcelain. Ilya follows quickly, panting against his forehead, arms tightening around him. He breathes out, raspy and choked, Shane's name falling from his lips. Again and again.

"Shane—fuck—Shane!"

Shane kisses him wherever he can reach: his jaw, his cheek, the side of his nose. He tugs at the hand covering his heart and kisses his knuckles, then his fingertips. He feels warm and sedated, cocooned in heat and strong arms. Ilya kisses his closed eyelids, and he feels adored.

They don't linger in the bath, the water growing cold a few minutes after they orgasm. They rise from the water, bodies dripping and fingertips pruned. Ilya towels down his own body, then playfully dries Shane's, swiping at his freckles, then throwing on a falsely shocked expression when they won't wipe off. Shane rolls his eyes, shoving his face away with the palm of his hand. Ilya leaves the en suite for a moment, rifling around in his drawers before coming back with a pair of clean boxers and a T-shirt for Shane. Shane smiles, having just received a handjob from Ilya for something like the hundredth time, yet he still finds himself blushing as he tugs the boxers up over his thighs. He joins Ilya at the counter, body syrupy and loose, watching Ilya grab his toothbrush from a cup on the counter with a lazy smile. Ilya meets his smile in the mirror. He pulls a drawer open to Shane's left and digs around a large collection of spare toothbrushes, handing one to Shane.

Shane freezes, the smile dropping from his lips. Ilya closes the drawer, turning back toward the mirror to brush his teeth. Unassuming, as Shane falls through the cracks in the ice once more.

With shaky hands, he unwraps the toothbrush packaging. He squirts toothpaste on the bristles, then tries desperately to focus all his energy on cleaning his teeth. He fails miserably, staring down at the incriminating drawer as if it just shot both his parents. How many toothbrushes does one man need? Does he really bring over that many girls? Have they been here? In his bedroom? In his bath? Luxurating in Epsom salt and coming on Ilya's cock as water sloshes over the edge of the tub? Is nothing sacred? Not a scrap saved, just for Shane? Something soft and coveted and his?

He thinks of Sochi. Thinks of the way Ilya had looked at him during the skating match.

"We are nothing, Hollander. Not here."

Then where? Shane wonders, hysterically. Where am I anything to you? In your gym? Your tub? Your arms? Where do I matter to you?

He must have stopped brushing at some point, because Ilya spits, then tilts his head, catching Shane's eyes from below. He follows Shane's line of sight, brow furrowed in confusion, before his expression clears. Understanding dawns on his face and he rolls his eyes with an exaggerated huff. Not pausing in his motions, he grabs the toothbrush from Shane's mouth, rinsing it for him. He then places it in the cup next to his own. Afterward, he pulls open the drawer, makes pointed eye contact with Shane, and grabs all the prepackaged toothbrushes with both hands. He carries them over to the small trashcan near the edge of the sink and dumps them with an exaggerated flair. Shane looks at the empty drawer, then the cup full of two toothbrushes, then the trashcan, and finally, *finally* Ilya. Ilya raises both eyebrows, daring him to say something.

He doesn't. He just smiles, knowing his eyes have grown weakly teary.

They crawl into bed together. Ilya begins scrolling on his phone. He's cuddled up against Shane's side, head pillowed atop his chest. He's propped his phone up on Shane's stomach, opening Instagram. Shane flounders, resting his hands on Ilya's shoulders, then his stomach, then his hair. He plays with it a bit, waiting for sleep to catch up to him, but it evades him, and after ten minutes, he's bored.

"What is wrong?" Ilya asks, eyes not leaving his screen.

Shane swallows thickly. He's embarrassed.

"I, um. I usually read. Before bed. It helps me fall asleep."

Ilya huffs out a laugh, rising from his comfortable position on Shane's chest. He reaches for the bedside table, rifling around in the top drawer before pulling out a Kindle. Shane's jaw drops; he can't help it. Ilya catches him before he can shut his mouth. He smirks.

"What, you think I am too much of a blockhead to read?"

Shane's eyes widen in panic.

"What? No, I— I've just never seen you—"

But Ilya's shoulders are shaking with laughter. He's clearly not stung.

"Relax, miliy, I am teasing you. We do not often find ourselves with leisure time when together, hmm? And is not that often I use this. Mostly long plane rides." He turns on the Kindle, then hands it to Shane. "You may buy your book on my account." Shane takes it, but has to hand it back immediately.

"Um, it's all in..."

"Ah, yes, yes. Sorry." Ilya goes to, presumably, the language settings, switching to English seamlessly. He hands the Kindle back over to Shane, then moves to crawl off the bed.

"You need your glasses? I can grab them."

“Oh, um, yes. Well, no.” Shane shakes his head, remembering. “They're back at my hotel. But it's okay, I'll just change the font size on your Kindle.”

Ilya's answering smile is warm. He crawls back beneath the covers, back to his spot cuddled up in Shane's arms. He resumes scrolling social media while Shane purchases the hockey biography he's currently reading, making a mental note to Venmo Ilya for it later. He makes a follow-up note to get Ilya's Venmo. When he goes to Ilya's library to download the book, he's shocked by what he finds there.

“*Little Women?*” Shane asks, eyes scanning the progress bar when he opens the title. Ilya's seventy percent through the book.

“Mmm, was my mother's favorite book. Figured I'd try it.”

Shane nods, eyes scanning the page. It's a useless endeavor; he has zero context for what's happening two-thirds of the way through the book.

“And?” Shane prompts, jostling him with his elbow. Ilya huffs, pausing briefly in his scrolling to answer.

“Is okay. I think the translation I chose is sometimes not good. But the story is sweet. I think I can understand why she liked it.”

Shane doesn't know anything about Ilya's family. He knows he has a father, a brother. He knows Ilya talks about his mother in the past tense, but he doesn't know what happened there, or anything about her, really.

Except, that's not true, he thinks, fingers hovering over Ilya's bookmarked page. I know she liked Little Women. And I think— or perhaps— I know her son likes it too.

He settles down, cheek pressed against Ilya's curls, body propped up on fluffy down pillows. He opens his biography, turns to the last chapter he remembers reading, and relaxes.

I think I know her son.

He falls asleep to the sound of Ilya's thumb tapping at his phone screen, and the small, periodical breaths he takes, their puffs grazing Shane's chest.

The morning finds them rushed, though not so hurried that Ilya can't find time to make them breakfast. Shane accepts the offer with grace, managing to refrain from grimacing when he watches Ilya throw on toast. He's quick to mentally forgive him, though, when he sees that the bread is pumpernickel, and Ilya doesn't lather any butter or jam on his piece. Instead, when he serves him his plate, filled with eggs and turkey bacon, he offers him a banana and organic, unsalted peanut butter with his meal. The peanut butter is unopened, and Shane preens. He smothers the toast in peanut butter, and cuts the banana into slices, topping his toast with it. He tries not to read too much into Ilya's answering smile.

Shane leaves early, wanting to make it back to his hotel a few hours before the game. Ilya stands with him at the entryway, waiting for Shane's Uber to arrive. Five minutes before their arrival time, Ilya reaches into his pocket, pulling out a key. It's obviously a house key. He holds out his other hand, making a small "gimme" gesture with his fingers. Shane hands over his keys, fingers numbed by their contact. Ilya attaches his key to the ring, eyes not meeting Shane's.

"For next time. If you are here before me."

Shane nods dumbly, pulling the keys to his chest and staring down at them with what he can only assume is a stupid expression. He's trying very hard not to jump Ilya's bones right this second. His Uber is three minutes out.

When he gets the ping that the Uber is out front, Ilya grabs his collar and kisses him. Once. Twice. A third time, lingering, with tongue. A honk sounds from outside. Shane leans in for one last kiss, then opens the door. He makes it three steps out the open door before Ilya calls out "Shane!"

Shane turns, his smile shy. He thinks of the peanut butter waiting for him in the fridge. Thinks of the cans of Ginger Ale Ilya has stashed away in his pantry. He thinks of the Kindle with his book saved on it, his toothbrush sharing a cup with Ilya's. He thinks Ilya looks beautiful, saying goodbye. He thinks this is their first happy goodbye, a parting on equal footing. This is not Sochi. It's not Vegas either. It's not any of the times one of them rolled out of bed during the wee hours of the morning, sneaking back to their own hotel rooms. This is Ilya's home, where Shane's things have started to gather. A place Shane has a key to, so he can come back. Again. And again. It's a place where maybe Ilya loves him, and where, perhaps, Shane loves him back.

Shane raises his hand, throwing Ilya a little wave before he turns, fast-walking down the driveway so he doesn't miss his Uber.

A few days later, Shane finds himself standing outside a bar. He's sitting on the curb waiting for his ride home. He pulls up Lily's contact, starts typing, deletes, repeats. He hopes Ilya isn't watching, his typing bubble disappearing and reappearing every few seconds. Finally, he takes a deep breath and settles on a sentence.

Jane: I met a girl tonight (message sent at 2:07 a.m.)

Jane: she asked me out on a date. but I wasn't sure, um. (message sent at 2:09 a.m.)

Jane: I guess I'm just wondering what I, or what we... (message sent at 2:12 a.m.)

Shane pinches the bridge of his nose. Christ, he's so bad at this. He wants to be straightforward, but he knows how evasive Ilya can be. How he'll twist another person's words and intentions in order to avoid getting hurt. But, Shane knows he can get something tangible from this. He watched Ilya throw away those toothbrushes. That had to mean something, right? The question is: what? What did it mean, exactly? Shane can't do this. He

can't work off signals and social queues. If everyone in the world is communicating using F.M. frequencies, Shane's built on A.M.

Fuck it, he thinks, sending one last follow-up text.

Jane: what should I do? (message sent at 2:18 a.m.)

There. Ball's in Ilya's court now. Shane half-expects something snarky. Something quipped and cruel.

"Is your life, Hollander. Fuck who you want." But, he doesn't want. And he hopes Ilya can see that, had gaged that correctly this last time. He doesn't want to date a pretty movie actress, or any other pretty girl. He doesn't even want a pretty boy; someone nice, maybe, from Montreal. He wants Ilya. Ilya in his stupid silk shirts and his cocky grin. He wants his morning breath and his workout routine and the raspy, half-moaned Russian pet names that fall from his lips when he's coming. Maybe, Shane should tell him this. Text him all these things before he loses his nerve. He wants to be very clear about his desires, now that he's laid them out for himself. He's not sure he can go back to the way it was before. Before he knew how it felt to wake up in Ilya's arms, to say Ilya's name, desperate and loving, his affection smothering those two beautiful syllables.

He's dragged away from his thoughts when his phone starts to buzz.

He turns the screen toward himself, fingers pausing in their tracks when he sees who's calling.

Lily

Well. This is a first.

Shane swallows down his anxiety, then accepts the call.

"Um. Hello?"

"Do not do this."

Shane's heart feels like it's stopped. His body frozen. Everything around him sounds muffled and distant, save for the small breaths he hears coming through his phone speaker.

"I'm sorry?"

"Please do not—" Ilya's voice sounds rough and sleep-heavy. Like maybe he'd rolled over, checked his messages, and called as he was still waking up.

"Do not date this girl, please. I am asking."

And Shane— Shane's heart melts. His smile is so wide, he wishes he could press it into the phone. Wishes Ilya could feel it digging into his cheek. He scratches at the underside of his jaw, giddy, having nowhere to channel his joy.

“Okay,” he says, hoping Ilya can at least hear his smile. He hears a long sigh make its way through the other line.

“Okay,” Ilya replies, voice losing its frantic edge from earlier.

“Okay,” Shane repeats, smiling at the sidewalk like an idiot. He doesn't care. He's missing a date.

End Notes

i like writing shane's pov, not because i'm all that high on the spectrum or anything, but because i'm also hyper-obsessed with my diet. i like to think i offered a sensory experience with the meals described in this fic. you know, like watching eggs get made in studio ghibli films; except everything i eat sucks and is boring and you had a bad time.

cheers <3

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