

stay (cause you're all i need)

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by [blankjournals](#)

Summary

“Don’t go,” Ilya manages to choke out, burying his face under Shane’s chin and squeezing his eyes shut. He inhales sharply, pressing his nose deeper into Shane’s throat to breathe in his scent. Right now, it’s Ilya’s body soap, vanilla and spice, masked under salt and skin. He inhales it like it’s his own personal supply of air, what he needs to extinguish the burning in his lungs.

“Ilya,” Shane says, voice urgent, “you’re shaking, I—your breathing’s too fast—” He tries to pull back, needs to see Ilya’s face, needs to see what’s wrong, but Ilya just shakes his head and clings tighter.

“Please don’t go, Shane,” Ilya whispers, pleading. *I’m sorry, please don’t go, don’t go—*

OR: ilya and shane accidentally recreate the tuna-melt day, and ilya realizes just how much old wounds hurt.

Notes

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

Boston - 2017

It's amazing how old wounds have a way of finding their way to the surface. Things that don't even hurt anymore, don't even ache, like bruises barely visible on their last day, trying to cling on to the last bit of pigment.

Maybe amazing isn't the word. Maybe it's a brutal truth, a bitter-sweet part of living.

But Ilya's wound has somehow resurfaced, stitched closed and long healed, but tender to the touch.

It doesn't help that the entire day, by some fucked cosmology, has been an echo of *that* day. The day he (against his better judgment) asked Shane to stay for the night.

Stay is all he managed to say to Shane when they were still perched up in bed, half-dressed after another round. Ilya's voice had been low, almost teasing, a little whiny if he remembered too hard. His request was signed off with a kiss, and he refused to leave Shane's personal space until he agreed.

Shane will never know what Ilya wanted to say, what story he was hiding behind that simple word: *Stay a little bit longer. I am terrified of asking you. I am afraid to know if we are capable of doing anything outside of having sex, but all I know is that when I am with you, Hollander, everything else becomes background noise. The world blurs, and the noise in my head floats away to a place where it can't hurt me anymore. You step through the hotel door, through my front gate, through any opening, slipping through the tiniest cracks, and you settle my mind in a way I didn't know was possible, an impossible peace, gentle but too good to be true.*

Please stay, because I went grocery shopping and prepped enough food for two people like a lunatic, and by tomorrow, it needs to be all gone. Because you and I ate it together, not because I had to throw it out because you didn't stay. So please, please stay, Hollander, Shane

His greed is bottomless, a never-ending abyss. Shane is his, and he is Shane's, and there's maybe half a year left till he can join the Ottawa team and be closer to his boyfriend. But it's too far, not *nearly* close enough, the dates on his calendar feel endless and always out of reach. Every time he marks off another day, the ache sharpens instead of dulling.

How can Ilya accept being in love with Shane, knowing Shane loves him back, and not be allowed to spend hours on end with him? It's like a piece of his happiness is dangled right in front of him, and just when he thinks he's finally caught it, allowed for a moment to hold it, it's yanked away again, faster than he can sink his claws in.

But maybe Ilya has perfected the art of wanting from a distance, of being robbed of the joys in his life and having to deal with the aftermath on his own.

Boston plays Montreal tomorrow, which means Shane flew in last night, and he snuck off to spend the night and then the entirety of today with Ilya.

It's not enough. It's never enough, not being able to see him for weeks on end.

It's strange, the urgency he felt yesterday when Shane finally arrived at his house, the desperation to see, to grab, to hold him, like he needed proof he was alive and real. He *wanted* him, *needed* him—god, he did—and it was simmering beneath his skin somewhere, slowly burning him from inside out. But they didn't have sex.

You would think they would have, with the way they knocked shit over as Ilya carried him upstairs, Shane's legs wrapped around his waist, hands tangled in his curls like he wanted to rip them out. Eight years later, and he still grabs Ilya's hair like he's afraid he'll disappear, like he's afraid someone else will take him away.

As if.

They fell into bed, airport clothes and everything (which Shane complained about the next day), tangled and out of breath, laughing at themselves, mouths glued together and refusing to part. And then Ilya had slowed, not even with real thought, as he slipped his tongue inside, chasing the familiar heat of Shane's mouth, relearning, remapping every part of him.

Forget. I can't forget you. Time passes between their visits, enough time passes that Ilya's only friends are his memories, and he needs them to be solid. Needs them to stick close by him cause they're his only companion, his only connection with Shane when he's not near him.

Shane had shuddered and groaned against him, pulling him closer like Ilya wasn't already pressing him down with his entire weight, like he wanted Ilya to smother him.

They'd made out like a pair of love-sick teenagers, going from heated and bruising to slow, lazy, maybe even a little too sweet. Ilya had to remind himself, in a way, that they still are. Still in their *honeymoon* phase, still making up for what could have been if they'd always been together. Together in the, just for each other way. Back when they were actually young and too naive to understand what they were getting themselves into.

Ilya doesn't even remember when they fell asleep, when their kisses had tapered off to Shane pressing softly at the corner of his mouth, Ilya tilting his head to nuzzle at his cheeks and nose.

He doesn't give himself much slack, even when he feels utterly embarrassed that they just dozed off, giddy and sated after nothing more than making out. Carnal desire giving away to this because it's more than just sex now. Maybe it always was, but now Ilya can name it.

Love. What an emotion. And what a humiliating way it has him acting, Ilya thinks, tries to be grumpy about it, but he can't stop the smile that overtakes his face.

Today is too much like that fateful day. They didn't have sex last night, but they did the next morning, woken by Shane's wonderful mouth fussing at his crotch.

And what was Ilya supposed to do? Say no? Push him away?

The day he says no is the day you know he has been kidnapped by the Russian government, and a duplicate has been placed instead.

He'd let Shane ride him that morning, his body still half-asleep and struggling to catch up with his insatiable boyfriend. It wasn't the first time they'd had sex like that. far from it. Ilya wasn't even trying to draw parallels to that day. Not that he could think much in the moment, not with the way Shane was fucking himself on his cock, bouncing in his lap with the kind of energy Ilya wants to question: *where do you get it, this early in the morning?*

He knows Shane would give him a hockey, athlete-adjacent answer to that, and very seriously too.

But it did cross his mind, after they were done, pressed close, flushed and panting together. That day cut into his thoughts: first just the sex, Shane on top of him just like this, then, when he slipped up and said Shane's name for the first time when they were trying to get off together on the couch, and Shane had said Ilya back.

The three seconds of elation Ilya had felt, pressed their foreheads together, kissed him more softly than he realized he was capable of, delicately and with care.

Shane Shane Shane, he wanted to say it again, over and over, wanted him to answer back with *Ilya Ilya, my Ilya*.

Then snip. Cut. Stop. A fucking crash landing. The abrupt ending. Shane leaving, saying they couldn't do this anymore.

It got worse throughout the day. What started as memories turned into voices, intrusive thoughts taunting him, making his palms sweat and his stomach twist with something close to nausea.

His next mistake was making tuna melts for lunch. He'd opened his fridge and looked at the ingredients he'd prepped and ready to go. He tried to suggest ordering in, but Shane had frowned from where he was perched on the counter and said, "I thought you were going to make me tuna melts. You promised."

And, well, yes, he did. Stupid text he'd sent days before Shane landed. "I can make something more delicious," Ilya had replied, trying to throw him off.

But Shane had just shaken his head and said, "I like the tuna melts you make. I actually only ever eat them when I'm with you."

And again, what was Ilya supposed to do? Say no? Remember: the day he says no to Shane Hollander is the day you know he's been replaced by a government clone.

So they ate the fucking tuna melts, ginger ale for Shane and Pepsi for Ilya, just like that day, and the voices got louder, and Ilya was starting to feel a little more trapped in his own mind, escape door far from his sight. His five senses were slowly drowning in the memory of that day, being unfairly reminded of it.

He is going to leave. Do something different. Be different. Be better. Be enough.

Ilya talked Shane's ear off all day, like if he just kept talking, maybe he could drown out the voice in his head. He kept Shane busy in every corner of the house, let him browse through the hockey books he'd bought and lined up on a shelf that's only there for show, books nobody but Shane has ever cared about. Let Shane explain, in exacting detail, how much more authentic the books written by ex-athletes are compared to the ones penned by journalists with no real English degrees. Ilya listened to every word like gospel, wrestling his attention away from the buzzing in his mind.

At least he didn't bring up any woman today, or his own history of past sexual partners. How was he supposed to know that asking Shane if he liked women was going to end with him going out and proving just how much he liked women?

Maybe God was trying to punish him when he sent him Rose Landry last year. Definitely laughing.

But it's exhausting, keeping up the performance, trying to soothe a brain that's just screaming danger, danger at him all day, alarm bells rattling his skull.

Shane must see it too. Or see *something*. Something veiled in Ilya's eyes, a slowness in his movements. So, come evening, Shane finally wrestles him onto the godforsaken couch in the living room Ilya's been avoiding all day. He's in a tank top, but the velvet feels off against his exposed skin, cold and rough, rubbing the wrong way.

The TV is showing highlight reels from last night, New York versus... maybe Utah?

Ilya doesn't really remember, can't really pay attention. He tries to focus all his energy on Shane, who's curled up against him, head pressed to Ilya's chest. He runs his hand through his dark hair, which has started to curl longer at the nape. He tries to concentrate, ears straining to catch the soft little noises Shane makes. Looks and sounds like a cat and then gets mad at Ilya for calling him a kitten.

Stop doing that, his brain warns. *Do not pet his hair. You did this last time. He's going to leave again—*

Shane turns, places a kiss on Ilya's sternum, before his lips trail lower, right over the fabric of his shirt. Ilya sighs at the attention, at the distraction, heat curling low in his belly as Shane moves down, down, down, until he's eye level with his crotch, mouth pressing over his growing bulge. His hips jerk at the heat of Shane's breath.

He's going to leave again. Stop him before you do something—

Shane crawls back up, swinging his legs over to straddle his lap. Ilya's hands fly to his hips as Shane yanks his own shirt off, then helps Ilya with his, tossing them aside like they've done something wrong.

He's going to leave—

There's no rhythm, no grace to their movements. Pants and boxers are barely tugged off. They don't even need spit. Ilya's made a habit of stashing lube everywhere.

Too much of it is used, not bothering to warm it between their hands, but Ilya doesn't care, even when the temperature of it makes him hiss. Nothing else computes when Shane finally grips both their cocks, slippery hands moving with a type of practiced ease that has lightning shooting up Ilya's spine.

He's going t—

They're not kissing so much as breathing into each other's mouths. Ilya feels hot all over, every nerve ending slowly coming alive, his thoughts turning slow and distant as Shane moves and twists his hand, just the way Ilya likes, just the way Ilya taught him.

He groans, knocks their foreheads together, trying to keep his eyes open so he can look at Shane, see the pleasure twisting his face, mouth open, freckles blooming darker against his flushed cheeks.

Don't say Shane don't say Shane don't say Shane—

"Ilya," Shane pleads, voice pitching high. He looks at him like Ilya's doing this to him, like Ilya is the one controlling his orgasm, like Shane isn't the one who's got them both in the palm of his hand, literally.

Don't say Shane don't say Shane don't say Shane—

"Ilya, Ilya, Ilya," Shane chants, over and over, voice faltering, begging for something. And Ilya, he's helpless to him.

"Are you going to make me come, Hollander? Hmm? Моя любовь, can you do that?" Ilya pants, biting back Shane's name.

Shane makes a strangled sound, nodding, eyes squeezed shut as he tightens his grip, hand moving faster, the sound of skin and slick filling the room.

Ilya holds on just long enough to watch Shane come first, spilling between their hands and chests. He's beautiful like this, coming apart, toes curling, body bowing forward as he lets go.

Looks so pretty when he lets his desire bleed through, wears it with enough certainty that his eyes glow with molten need, pupils blown wide, confident enough to take the lead like this, take and take all Ilya can give to him.

Ilya, come for me, Shane says, before Ilya falls apart, adding to the mess between them. Repeats his name even as he surges down to kiss him, even as Ilya groans his release into his mouth. Says it like he needs an answer, but Ilya doesn't know how else to give one except to be here, in Shane's arms, skin to skin, chest to chest. And if he says anything more, says his name, maybe he will leave again—

“Shane,” Ilya chokes out, the word breaking free before he can stop it, trapped behind his ribs all day.

“Ilya,” Shane says again, so tenderly against his lips, eyes fluttering shut as Ilya's voice washes over him.

And in that moment, there's peace—a fragile tranquillity as they catch their breath, heartbeats slowing back to normal. The house is quiet, except for the TV buzzing in the distance. For a moment, a painstaking second, it's all okay. Shane is here, with him, and they've been doing this for months now. That's his boyfriend. He's allowed to want this. He is allowed to say his name. Shane isn't leaving.

And Ilya knows that Shane will pull back, grab for tissues, and insist on at least a washcloth to clean them both up. And it's okay, he knows it's okay. And yet, as Shane starts to shift away, Ilya's entire body panics.

The voices slam back in, shrill, and deceiving: *he's going to leave, he's going to leave, you said his name, you scared him, he's going to leave, he's going to—*

He locks his arms around Shane, holding him in place, wincing as it only smears the mess further between them as he pulls Shane closer.

I'm sorry, please do not go. I know I'm making a mess, but please—

“Ilya?” Shane asks, a little alarmed, breath knocked out of him as Ilya squeezes tighter.

“Don't go,” Ilya manages to choke out, burying his face under Shane's chin and squeezing his eyes shut. He inhales sharply, pressing his nose deeper into Shane's throat to breathe in his scent. Right now, it's Ilya's body soap, vanilla and spice, masked under salt and skin. He inhales it like it's his own personal supply of air, what he needs to extinguish the burning in his lungs.

“Ilya,” Shane says, voice urgent, “you're shaking, I—your breathing's too fast—” He tries to pull back, needs to see Ilya's face, needs to see what's wrong, but Ilya just shakes his head and clings tighter.

“Please don't go, Shane,” Ilya whispers, pleading. *I'm sorry, please don't go, don't go—*

“I’m not going anywhere,” Shane promises, his throat tight with worry. “*Ilya*, I’m right here. Right here with you. I promise.”

He wiggles an arm free, tangles his fingers in Ilya’s sweaty curls, pushing them back, again and again, like he can brush the panic away. Presses a kiss to the center of Ilya’s forehead, then the right side, then the other side, one after the other, like he’s trying to talk to Ilya’s brain, to mend what hurts the most, *where* it hurts the most.

Ilya presses himself even harder against Shane, aching to crawl under his skin and disappear forever. *Not going anywhere. I’m right here with you*, Ilya focuses hard on those words as Shane repeats them again and again for him, lets them soak into his bones, wills himself to believe them. Let’s them settle in his chest, loosening the tightness enough that he can finally catch his breath. Let’s them echo in his heart until his pulse slows to something manageable. Let’s them bounce around his skull until, at last, the other voices retreat.

He lets himself believe—just for now—that Shane won’t leave. That Shane will stay.

It’s too quiet, once his racing heart has calmed down enough, and Ilya can finally make out the sound of his own breathing, trying earnestly hard to be steady. The sound of Shane’s voice, still murmuring comfort at the top of his head.

The voices are gone, but instead of them sits something else. Shame. Regret. Frustration at his mind for putting himself on display, bare without his consent. It curdles sickeningly in his stomach, coats his throat, and makes it impossible to swallow back.

He was not supposed to freak out like that. He was not supposed to lose himself like that.

His body screams the entire time he detaches himself from Shane, from his warmth. When he pulls back, he doesn’t look at him, even when Shane tries to catch his gaze. He makes a weak gesture with his hand that he hopes Shane understands, and the latter slowly gets up, untangles himself from Ilya’s lap, and Ilya forces the ironclad grip he had around him to loosen.

Ilya’s already stumbling away, trying to put distance between them, an excuse at the tip of his tongue when he feels Shane reach out for him, a brush of fingers against his elbow.

He backs away before the touch can land fully, half-turned so he doesn’t have to watch the way Shane’s face shutters.

“Ilya,” Shane says hesitantly, fingers curling uselessly in the air in front of him.

“I just—” Ilya swallows hard, trying to steady his voice. “I need to—clean up.” He finishes lamely.

Shane looks like he wants to step forward, but he holds himself back, hands finally going down so they can lie limp by his sides. “Do you want me to—”

Ilya interrupts him, more insistent than he means to be. “Alone, I just—there are other washrooms, all stocked for you if you want to shower.”

“Are you sure?” Shane asks one last time. “Are you okay to be alone—”

“Hollander,” Ilya cuts in, and then immediately sucks in a breath when he catches the look on Shane’s face. Hesitant and worried before, but unmistakably *hurt* now.

No, I did not mean it like that. I am not trying to push you away. You are my Shane—

“Shane,” Ilya corrects himself, “Shane, I will be okay, just, few minutes okay?” He gives him an attempt at a smile, and then, before Shane can say anything else, before Ilya can change his mind and fall right back into Shane’s arms and ask him to stay with him forever on that couch, he turns and quickly walks away, like he’s been caught doing something he shouldn’t have been.

Coward.

The shower was just a distraction, to trick his mind into relaxing in time with his muscles as it was pelted with hot water. To maybe melt away his mortification.

Weak.

He doesn’t expect Shane to still be out there when he finally steps out, clean and clothed, hair still dripping rivulets down his shoulder and back. Why would he still be here, after the scene he made, and then, in nicer terms, told him to back off when he tried to help?

He doesn’t expect him to be there, but he’s not going to lie that not seeing him when he finally steps back into his room doesn’t hit him like a gut punch.

His movements are sluggish and slow, like he’s carrying weight, as he finally walks the last few steps toward his bed and plops himself down, back against the headboard. He runs a frustrated hand through his hair before he’s dragging both hands down his face and cursing into his palms.

He’s so busy chewing himself out that he misses the noise from his hallway, the patter of footsteps until they’re directly in his room, and someone knocks.

He whips his head up, and he can’t help the gasp that leaves his mouth when he sees Shane in front of him. He stares at him for a second before he rubs at his eyes to make sure he’s not hallucinating. He blinks away the spots behind his eyelids and focuses on the scene in front of him—and yup—that’s Shane, showered and in new clothes. He doesn’t know what to say.

Doesn't know what to say, but the first words out of his brilliant mouth are: "You're still here?"

And not for the first time that day, Ilya watches Shane's face fall before he schools it back into something more neutral. A moot point, because Shane's face doesn't have to do anything; his beautiful black eyes are so easy to read, they give him away.

"Um, sorry, I just—wanted to make sure you were okay. I didn't know you wanted me to go—anyway—" Shane says, his voice coming out awkward.

"No," Ilya cuts in urgently, "I... I did not want you to go. I thought maybe you would've left because—" He cuts himself off, the rest of his words hanging at the tip of his tongue.
Because you did not want to deal with me. Because I scared you. Because I pushed you away.

Shane stares at him, his gaze inquisitive before he finally says, voice quiet but firm, "I promised you I would not go, that I would be right here."

Ilya doesn't waste any time after that, not with the relief that courses through him at being reassured like that. He reaches out, one last time, in a gesture he hopes conveys *please come over here, please come near me again*—

Shane doesn't hesitate, practically flies across the room until he lands on the bed and crawls the rest of the way to him. Ilya settles over him like a weighted blanket, arms wrapping possessively around him like he's afraid he'll disappear.

Shane immediately resumes his earlier motions, fingers threading through his curls, thumb swiping softly along his jaw, then drifting down to rest on his hips, fingertips tracing slow circles on bare skin. Ilya's head rests below his chin, breathing him in. Even as he tries to convince himself Shane wouldn't leave, it did little to relax his grip, his knuckles white against Shane's skin. Not that Shane seemed to mind; he only pressed closer, humming quietly.

"I..." Ilya starts, swallowing hard, voice rough as he searches for words. Shame coils tight in his gut as he tries to make sense of what just happened. "I am sorry. Did not mean to scare you."

Shane makes a wounded little sound, like it physically hurts him to see Ilya like this. He lifts a hand to cup Ilya's cheek, thumb brushing gently beneath his eye. "You didn't scare me," Shane assures him gently. "I'm just worried." He pauses, searching Ilya's face. "I don't know what I did to make you think I was going to leave."

Ilya closes his eyes, breathing out heavily, his breath tickling Shane's neck. "Nothing, you did nothing. All in my head."

Shane considers that, brows drawn together, before his fingers return to Ilya's face, tapping twice on his temple. "What's happening in that head of yours?"

Too much. Don't look. Or else you'll disappear. Like all the good things in my life—

“Stupid. It was being stupid.” Ilya tries to brush it off, shaking his head and giving a weak, forced huff of laughter.

Shane bites his lip before saying, “I won’t... I won’t pressure you to talk. I just don’t want to do something that will...” Shane’s mouth twists, eyes scrunching. “Sorry, I don’t know if ‘trigger’ is the right word, but I don’t want to do anything wrong.”

“You didn’t,” Ilya promises quickly, reaching up to smooth his fingers over Shane’s lips. He lets his thumb linger, tracing the curve of Shane’s mouth till it untwists. He leans back down, turning his face away as he tries to blink away the pressure behind his eyes.

Something. He needs to say *something*, so Shane does not worry. Does not worry anymore.

“Today reminded me too much of that day you stayed—the first time I made you tuna melts. My brain put some...” Ilya swallows, *put some not-so-nice thoughts in my head*. “Thought you were going to leave.”

~~Thought you were going to leave me again.~~

It’s not untrue. And Ilya knows he’s not exactly doing a great job of explaining, but he’s too anxious about the thought of revealing something about himself he’ll never be able to take back. That’ll have Shane look at him differently, like he is broken. And he’s not, he’s tried so hard to be anything but.

Silence falls between them. Shane tenses, hands spasming where they rest on Ilya’s back. He tips his head down, searching Ilya’s face. Ilya looks up to find Shane gazing at him, mouth tugged in a frown, eyes wide and shining with anguish.

Fuck. This is exactly why he didn’t want to say anything; he hates seeing Shane hurt for him.

“I’m sorry,” Shane says, so earnestly, like he hasn’t already apologized for this more than once. “Ilya, fuck, I am so—”

“No, no, мой любимый,” Ilya interrupts, shaking his head. *My beloved*. “It was forever ago. You said sorry already, yes? I am not telling you because I’m still mad.”

“But you’re still hurt,” Shane says, his voice trembling. “You’re still hurt by it, and I will forever—”

“Shane,” Ilya stops him again, fingers pressing to his lips to silence him. “I *was* hurt. I’m not anymore.”

“I don’t want you to think I’m going to run away again. I won’t. Not like that. I’ll tell you every day if I have to,” Shane promises him anyway.

Ilya feels his heart twist painfully as he stares at Shane. It aches—all of it at once—love, trust, everything in between.

“I don’t, okay? I don’t. It was just... bad day. Brain was being dramatic. ‘Trigger,’ like you said. I don’t want you to keep apologizing for something I forgave you for long ago. I’ve hurt

you too, you know, so I should—”

“It’s not a competition,” Shane interrupts, not unkindly. “I say sorry, you say sorry, we go around in circles until sorry stops meaning anything.”

“Exactly,” Ilya says, brushing his thumb over Shane’s freckles. “You don’t have to apologize. I know it, I believe it. No—how do you say—bad blood between us.”

Shane huffs a soft laugh, mouth twitching into a hesitant smile. He recognizes what Ilya is doing, trying to distract him with a joke, but he thinks his boyfriend has told him enough to help him understand. So he doesn’t push any further. “Maybe we should stop eating tuna melts?” he teases softly.

Ilya barks out a real laugh, and Shane grins wider against him. “But you love my tuna melts.”

“I love you more,” Shane replies, ears going pink at the admission.

Ilya hides his smile in Shane’s hair, eyes closing, helpless against the love surging through him, all because of four simple words from Shane.

“I love you more,” Ilya whispers, just to argue back with Shane, to know without looking that he’s rolling his eyes at him, to feel his smile growing against the fabric of his shirt.

“It is hard, being away from you, for so long,” Ilya confesses, feeling a little bolder. “Gives me too much time to think.”

Shane hums, pressing closer. “I miss you too. All the time,” he says. “Can’t wait to have you closer.”

“Less than six months,” Ilya reminds him, tries to remind himself.

“Too long,” Shane whispers. *Way too long*, Ilya agrees silently.

“Wait for me, Hollander,” Ilya says, lips crooking into a smirk. “Need to take my team to the playoffs, win another cup—”

“Oh, you fucking wish—”

“Then I fly straight to Canada, and we’ll celebrate at your cottage.”

“Why would I celebrate another cup lost in my own home—”

“Because you will be so proud of me—”

“Sure—”

“And you love me so much—”

“Debatable.”

“And we will eat eight burgers this time because you do not know how to cut a recipe in half —”

“Shut up, that was one time—”

“But this time we’ll share with Yuna and David. They’ll help us finish.”

“I think that’s the smartest thing you’ve said today. Although I don’t think my mom would be too happy to celebrate your win either.”

“I’ll become her favourite son by the end of the summer—”

“Stop trying to steal my mom—”

“Then she shouldn’t be such a cool mother. She needs to watch out.”

Shane is shaking with laughter between them, body melting into Ilya as the last of his worry ebbs away. Ilya grins at the sound, lets it wash over him, warm and bright, impossibly young.

Ilya’s eyes grow heavy with sleep, sleep he knows will finally come now that his mind has stopped shouting, stopped pricking him with pins and needles. He moves himself so he’s lying back, and Shane can lie against him instead. He glances at the window, seeing how dark it’s grown.

“You said you might have to go back tonight? Early practice tomorrow?” Ilya asks slowly, voice thick with sleep, as he trails his fingers idly over Shane’s back.

Shane shakes his head and nestles in closer, tucking his face beneath Ilya’s chin, body moulding to his. “Early practice, yeah,” he mumbles, words slurring as he fights off sleep. “I’ll just leave early tomorrow. Set my alarm already.”

Creature of habit, Ilya thinks fondly, so utterly endeared by everything Shane does, how... Shane coded that he is in all his mannerisms.

He pulls the blanket higher over them, hand lingering at Shane’s hip before pausing.

“Wouldn’t it be easier if you were with your team at the hotel? You’ll have to get up early. I’ll —” His voice breaks, and he cuts himself off, fingers tightening in the blanket.

I’ll be okay, he wants to say. *I’ll be okay, even though I don’t fully believe it.*

“Mm, no, I’m okay. I want to stay, promise,” Shane assures him, voice muffled as he burrows even closer, hand fisting in Ilya’s shirt as firmly as he can while drifting toward sleep.

“You don’t have to stay for me,” Ilya says softly, pressing a gentle kiss to Shane’s temple. “I’ll be okay.”

“Okay,” Shane mumbles, eyelids fluttering shut, making no move to get up, his body growing heavier with each breath.

A few seconds later, his body goes slack, and his breathing evens. Ilya realizes, with a quiet chuckle, that Shane's already asleep.

He bites his tongue before he does something stupid like coo at Shane. His hands itch to pinch his cheeks or run his fingers along his jaw, wanting to relieve the affection thrumming through him, energy buzzing under the pads of his fingers.

He tells himself to calm the fuck down as he tugs the blanket higher, properly this time, and presses one last lingering kiss to Shane's head. Let's Shane's promise—*I want to stay*—lull him to sleep.

End Notes

do i think these 2 shouldve talked it more out? absolutely . do i think 2017 (pre TLG) hollanov wouldve? absolutely not, i probably put too much communication in this already.

i just had an idea, like what if hollanov accidentatly relived like their... "worst" hook-up with each other? tuna melt day for ilya and i guess vegas night for shane. and it was the worst hook-up not bc of the sex but literally how it had them feeling emotionally afterwards. casual my ass.

anyways, i think this couldve been written better but this is all my brain is allowing me to do.

thats all folks. hope u enjoyed.

follow me here to scream with me about hollanov. also if anyone is interested in being my beta reader or russian consultant, hit me up. @twi

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