

mess

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mess

by [casdoms \(moffwithhishead\)](#)

Summary

Fuck. He can't do this now.

He pinches his thigh in an effort to redirect his thoughts from spiraling, but it doesn't help. The additional guilt of not wanting to make it about himself seems to tip him over the edge and - fucking, ugh.

Notes

obviously set after their fight in TLG, after they make up, but idk when. pretend it fits.

this fight genuinely haunts me and the way that shane doesn't have the additional context to understand WHY he is like this, WHY it just genuinely didn't occur to him - he ONLY has his guilt and his nausea over knowing that he hurt Ilya. I don't think we talk about it enough, the way that it is so, so easy to accidentally hurt the people we care the most about, and how absolutely devastating that feeling is. and you want to explain why, not to excuse it, but so there's no doubt that you care. the only thing worse than accidentally breaking their heart, is them thinking that it wasn't an accident. that you meant it.

and then the shame/guilt spiral afterwards that you try to hold back because it isn't about you right now, but also like, it's such a physical reaction that you CAN'T stop it.

tw: allusions to suicide, shane's poor self talk, autistic meltdown portrayal, panic attacks, vague, very gentle self harm that isn't really that.

Shane Hollander is a pretty mediocre boyfriend.

In his defense, he's never been a boyfriend before in a way that matters. Or a partner. Or fiancé.

It's just... his brain is so full, so busy, all of the time. It's taking in all of this additional sensory input that apparently other people don't have to deal with, and it makes him a little bit dumb.

Well. Okay, not dumb, he supposes.

Oblivious.

It's like - how it didn't occur to him to cut the burger recipe in half. How it doesn't occur to him to return the polite small talk questions in conversation, because, well... he doesn't care about their answers. What his teammates do on their break isn't his business. What the clerk at the supermarket did this weekend doesn't matter.

("It's the polite thing to do," his dad had explained to him one day when he was a child. "Nobody really cares what the answer is, it's just important that you ask.")

Shane had narrowed his eyes at his dad, "That's dumb.")

The fact that Ilya didn't have people like Shane did didn't *really* occur to him.

Ilya talked about his teammates, he talked about Shane's parents, he talked about Svetlana and Chiron, the team dog. So Shane didn't think to ask about how his boyfriend was doing emotionally because he thought Ilya would've told him if he wasn't doing well.

Which yeah okay, looking back, obviously that was dumb. Of course Ilya wouldn't tell Shane he was lonely. They only had so much time together, and he wouldn't want to spend it talking about how much he was struggling to adjust to his new life in Ottawa. How much he wanted to tell people about them, so he could just have someone who *knows* him.

He of all people knows what that gut wrenching loneliness feels like. He knows what that looks like.

It's instances like this where Shane is really, truly frustrated by the whole being autistic thing. Because what kind of person doesn't consider that their partner is miserable?

Shane stares up at their bedroom ceiling, the panic and guilt building up in his chest as his eyes fill with tears.

Fuck. He can't do this **now**.

He pinches his thigh in an effort to redirect his thoughts from spiraling, but it doesn't help. The additional guilt of not wanting to make it about himself seems to tip him over the edge and - fucking, *ugh*.

He squeezes his eyes shut, and wishes he could have Ilya's weight on top of him without having to talk about why Shane's fighting for his life not to cry.

The hand that's furthest from Ilya comes up to rub over his face as Shane tries to take deep breaths without waking Ilya up. It's fine. Everything's fine. Shane apologized, they talked about everything that's been going on, he apologized again, and fucking Christ, Shane is allowed to be a person. He's not evil or bad for the way his stupid brain does or doesn't process information. It's not fair to beat himself up over this when he knows that Ilya never once blamed him. He never once thought Shane was cruel or heartless or too self obsessed to think about someone else.

Those are just his internal thoughts.

Shane pushes himself out of bed abruptly, and quietly goes downstairs. He lets himself out onto the back patio, completely foregoing a jacket and gasps once the door is closed behind him like he's been holding his breath.

"Fuck," Shane laughs and is freely crying now, "God fucking damn it, *stop*."

His hands go up to his hair and pull, not hard enough to hurt but enough for Shane to take a full, non gasping breath in. Sometimes he wonders if it's possible for airways to completely close off when he's like this, because that's what it feels like. It feels like somebody's squeezing his lungs, stopping him from taking a full breath.

After his chest feels a little looser, he starts pacing and moving his hands at his side absently. Not actually flapping them, because he's still too self conscious to do that anywhere besides the privacy of his own bedroom, but shaking them out. There's too much energy in his chest and he needs to get it out. Maybe it'll flow out of his hands like water flowing over his skin in the shower.

If it wasn't the middle of the fucking night and y'know, the dead of winter in Canada, he'd go for a run. Exactly as he is, barefoot, just the thin flannel pants he's had since high school, Ilya's old shirt and his own neurosis to keep him warm.

"Stop," he says out loud to his brain, hoping that will fix it.

It doesn't, it never does, but he still tries.

There's always the treadmill in the gym, but Shane knows that exercise ends up becoming a substitute for self harm when he's like this, so he doesn't entertain that idea. He just looks up at the sky and makes a frustrated noise.

You're too old to do this, Shane complains to himself and squeezes his eyes shut. *Pull it together*.

He remembers suddenly, vividly, being in elementary school and panicking like this. His teacher sent him out into the hallway until he could collect himself, but every person who walked by just made the shame well up more in his chest. His mom had to come get him, and it took Shane *hours* to stop crying.

It feels like he's a puppet and somebody cut his strings. It's suddenly impossible to be upright, and he feels his body drop into a squat, then fall forward onto his knees.

He's hyperventilating now. *Cool*, Shane thinks somewhat hysterically, *Great. Ilya's going to think I've gone insane.*

His hands dig into the dirt just off of the patio so that they don't grab his hair, and Shane tries to take a deep breath. It comes out shuddering, and he makes himself do it again and again and again, until they're more normal sounding. More measured.

"Okay," he whispers to himself, squeezing his eyes tightly. "Okay, just... everything's fine."

It's *not* fine. He should go wake Ilya up. He should ask for help.

("It's okay to need help and to ask for it," his therapist had told him just last week. "It's okay to need it and not feel guilty or like you owe your boyfriend, your partner, anything in return for loving you, Shane.")

But he didn't know that Ilya was struggling so hard. He didn't realize how lonely he was. It didn't even occur to Shane that Ilya could be struggling because he didn't say anything, but he shouldn't *have* to say anything.

There are suddenly hands on his shoulders, and Shane turns around to swing his arms out unthinkingly.

"Hey," Ilya says softly, catching Shane's hands. "Why didn't you wake me?"

The little bit that Shane had been able to collect himself crumbles completely at the question, and Ilya drops down onto the ground next to him. He wraps his arms around Shane tightly, and the pressure immediately helps him take a big, deep breath.

"I -" Shane tries to say, and ends up taking a couple of stuttering breaths, "I - I'm -"

"Shh," Ilya shushes him, rocking them back & forth carefully. "It's okay, you don't have to apologize. I'm here."

That just makes him cry harder, because he doesn't deserve this man who is so kind, and so gentle with him, and loves Shane even when he's like this. And it isn't fair, Ilya deserves to have someone normal, someone who doesn't turn into a nonverbal hysterical mess when the feelings in their chest get too big.

But Shane is selfish, so he doesn't say any of that, but he lets himself be picked up without fighting it. He wraps his legs around Ilya's waist to make it easier to carry him, and muffles his sobs into Ilya's shoulder and neck.

He lets Ilya set him down on the big sofa that was too expensive, and makes a distressed noise when Ilya tries to pull away.

"Shh," Ilya presses a kiss to his forehead and pries Shane's hands off of him, "I'll be right back, okay? Two seconds." He doesn't have a chance to respond before Ilya's gone.

Shane hears the back door close, and Ilya's footsteps running upstairs. He hiccups out a sob, and hates himself for making another pathetic, distressed noise when Ilya comes running back down the stairs.

Suddenly, it feels like Shane's shirt is the cause of his panic, and he pushes himself upright just as Ilya makes it back to the couch. Ilya lets him try unsuccessfully to get his shirt off before he helps. He knows that Shane isn't helpless, and more importantly, that he doesn't want to feel helpless.

"Okay," Ilya murmurs when the shirt is gone and he sees Shane's shoulders relax a significant amount. "Better?"

The only answer Shane can manage is a short nod, which is more than Ilya was expecting judging by the pleasantly surprised look on his face. Ilya sits down next to him on the sofa, picking up Shane's feet so he has somewhere to put his butt, "Is ok? Or you need pressure?"

He reaches his hands out to Ilya, hoping that communication is sufficient.

Ilya just gets up and lays down on top of Shane, pressing kisses to his neck and cheeks once he's comfortable, "I brought blanket for if you get too hot with me on you. The weighted one from Rose."

Shane's nervous system is already slowing down with the familiar weight of Ilya on top of him, and his eyes are drifting shut without his permission. His arms reflexively go around Ilya's back, and the grip he has on his waistband only gets tighter as Shane drifts off to sleep, exhaustion hitting him like a truck.

Ilya spent a good chunk of the day crying himself, so he's not far behind him.

**_*_*_

Shane wakes up slowly, becoming conscious in waves.

First, his brain registers the weight of Anya on his feet.

Second, he becomes aware that Ilya is no longer his human blanket, and he's been replaced by his actual weighted blanket.

Third, he smells food, and hears someone's spoon scraping the sides of a bowl ever so quietly.

The sound is close by, and he reaches his arm out of the blanket to flop around and try to find the source. He lands on a familiar thigh when his arm finally makes it above his head. He hears the bowl being set down, and a hand grabs his forearm while a second one sneaks into his hair.

"Good morning," Ilya rumbles quietly, and Shane swears he can feel the vibrations of his voice through their touching.

He isn't ready to talk yet, or open his eyes, so he pulls Ilya's arm closer and keeps his eyes closed.

"Is okay, you can go back to sleep."

**_*_*_

The second time Shane wakes up, he's alone and he's kicked his blanket off and onto the floor.

He blinks awake very suddenly, and pushes himself upright. The TV is off now, and the sun is fully up, like it's the afternoon. Shane blinks sleepily at the light coming in from the front windows before looking around to see why the house is so quiet.

He gets his answer when his eyes make it to the backyard, and he sees Ilya on the phone with someone, tossing a ball for Anya.

Shane pushes himself up and shuffles his way over to the back door, opening it and stepping out onto the patio with Ilya. He shivers, but doesn't make a noise until he wraps his arms around Ilya from behind and sighs happily at the warmth.

Ilya chuckles and wraps his free arm around Shane for a moment before Anya is back with the ball. "Sveta," he murmurs, leaning down to pick up the ball with the weird launcher that Shane found, "I'll call you back..." He grins when he throws the ball, listening to his best friend talk, "Yes, something like that."

For his part, Shane still has his eyes closed, and is holding onto Ilya tightly.

"Good morning, moya lubov," Ilya rumbles as he turns around to wrap both arms around Shane, his phone safely in his pocket. "Are you hungry?"

Shane shakes his head and tucks his face further into Ilya's neck, his brain not fully online.

"Okay," Ilya murmurs, pressing a kiss to the top of his head. "We stay here."

**_*_*_

It takes a couple days for Shane to feel like himself again.

It took him a good 48 hours to say more than one or two words at a time, so that doesn't surprise either one of them.

And because Ilya is too good for Shane, and far more than he deserves, he doesn't push. He doesn't ask what that was about, or if Shane's okay. He doesn't try to make him talk about it, and Shane would propose all over again, just for that alone.

Shane says it when they're eating dinner, his eyes firmly on the plate in front of him, "I'm sorry. I know I said that already, but... I should have known you weren't okay."

Ilya just watches him and takes another bite of his food.

Shane takes that as an indication to keep talking, "I might need you to tell me things, sometimes. Things that you shouldn't have to tell me. And I know that's not fair to put that extra labor on you, and it'll probably build some resentment -"

"Shane."

"- But I need you to know, Ilya, that I care so much, and I love you so much that it makes my chest hurt sometimes, but so much of this doesn't come naturally to me, and I -"

"Shane."

Shane takes a deep breath and squeezes his eyes closed, "I'm so, so sorry Ilya."

He hears the plate get set down, and the chair scrape on the floor as Ilya gets up to come over to him. He feels his chair get pulled backwards, and Shane tries to will his lip to stop wobbling when Ilya's hands settle on his cheeks so carefully, so gently, like Shane is something precious.

"You did not know, because I did not want you to know," Ilya tells him calmly, squatting down so they're eye-to-eye. "I am not, nor was I ever, mad at you for not knowing something that I didn't want you to know."

Shane huffs, and tries to squeeze his eyes tight enough so that more tears won't start rolling down his cheeks, "But I hurt you."

Ilya lets all of the air out of his lungs slowly, and considers that for a moment, "Not on purpose."

"Isn't that worse?"

He feels a thumb brush across his cheek, wiping the tears away as Ilya collects his thoughts, "I know you, Shane Hollander. You are not cruel on purpose. I've never questioned whether you are a good person or not. Whether you are unkind or not."

Shane opens his eyes to argue, but the fight drains out of him when he sees the way Ilya's face breaks out into his beautiful warm, eye crinkling smile.

"You shouldn't have to remind me to think about you," Shane finally manages to get out, his tone drowning in frustration with himself. "You shouldn't have to, to - deal with this. You deserve -"

Ilya covers Shane's mouth with his hand, cutting him off, "I deserve to have the love of my life, yes?"

Shane narrows his eyes, glaring, and bites Ilya's palm. It does not make him move his hand, but it does make Ilya grin wider, "A relationship is not transactional, Shane. I am with you because I choose to be. You do not owe me anything for loving you."

That makes Shane pull Ilya's hand down, "I'm sorry that I'm not easier."

To live with, to love, to be around.

"Bah," Ilya says dismissively, shaking his head, "I have never cared for easy, Hollander. But loving you is the easiest thing I have done. Do not apologize for easiest thing, for best thing, that has happened to me."

He brings both of Shane's hands up to his mouth, and kisses each knuckle, "I could say same thing. I am sorry that I am not easier. I am sorry that my brain is so sad sometimes, and that I make you worry about leaving pills in the house, because I worry about that." Ilya rests his forehead on Shane's knuckles for a moment and breathes, "I could say I am sorry for flinching when you reach for me sometimes. I'm sorry for my temper, and the things I say that I don't mean, just because I am angry."

"I love you," Shane whispers, wishing Ilya would let his wrists go so he could pull him in for a hug. "I just want to be worth it. I just want you to be happy."

Ilya breathes out a helpless laugh and looks up at Shane, "Moya lubov, I am *so* happy. Even when I am depressed, even when I am miserable, I am so happy that you are mine." He lets Shane's hands go, and leans in when Shane's arms wrap around him to pull him into an awkward hug, "As long as you will have me, I will be here, okay?"

"Okay."

._*._*._*._*._

"You did something for me I couldn't do for myself. You loved me for who I am."

— William Chapman

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