

love brought weight to this heart of mine

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love brought weight to this heart of mine

by [writerbri](#)

Summary

Shane tries to remember, peering into the darkness surrounding the car with a furrowed brow. It hurts to move, and he feels something warm and slick sliding down his cheek.

More blood, his mind supplies rather unhelpfully.

He was driving after dark, but he shouldn't have been. He wasn't supposed to be. They had all night together, so why is he here?

I already chose you, Hollander.

Shane inhales sharply as his mind slowly fills in the gaps in his memory. They fought. Ilya told him to leave. Shane did.

And then he crashed.

Notes

This is a canon divergent fic that takes place after the hollanov argument in The Long Game. I thought to myself what would have happened if Shane got into a car accident on the way back to Montreal after Ilya told him to leave and I decided to put them both into a torture chamber about it.

Shane is NOT a reliable narrator in this fic. I don't always love how he's written in The Long Game and in this fic he is drowning in guilt. He's not exactly seeing himself in a good light. It does not reflect how I see Shane, because he is my beloved.

Title: Love Brought Weight by Old Sea Brigade

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

His ears are ringing, as consciousness seeps in bit by bit.

The world feels distant.

He can barely feel a thing. No pain yet, only confusion.

He's slumped against the driver's door, and a clumsy sweep of his surroundings reveals shattered glass and a deflated airbag and blood. Shane's stomach churns at the sight of it, and his eyes sweep to the passenger seat on instinct. There's no one there. Ilya is safe at home, not bleeding and broken in the seat next to him. The blood can only be Shane's, and there's a small amount of comfort in the thought before his mind catches up to his circumstances.

The blood is his, because he got into an accident. He tries to remember, peering into the darkness surrounding the car with a furrowed brow. It hurts to move, and he feels something warm and slick sliding down his cheek.

More blood, his mind supplies rather unhelpfully.

He was driving after dark, but he shouldn't have been. He wasn't supposed to be. They had all night together, so why is he here?

I already chose you, Hollander.

Shane inhales sharply as his mind slowly fills in the gaps in his memory. They fought. Ilya told him to leave. Shane did.

And then he crashed.

He can vaguely recall another car spinning out on the ice and crossing the road into his lane. Then the sound of shattering glass and crunching metal. Then the darkness. There's no telling how long he was unconscious after that, but he thinks that he can hear distant voices calling out.

That's good, he thinks. It means that someone knows he's there.

More pain seeps in the longer he waits. He can feel a dull pounding in his head and a sharp ache in his chest. His left wrist is throbbing in time with his heartbeat, and attempting to move it sends a jolt of excruciating pain all the way up to his elbow. He needs to get out of there, but he can't move. Something is crushed in a way that's pinning his legs, and the smell of spilled oil and warped metal surrounds him.

He can't breathe.

Shane feels his chest growing tighter and tighter the longer he's trapped, even when the voices grow louder and he hears the loud screech of machinery trying to free him. He tries to respond when they shout to him through the shattered windows of his car, but it's impossible to speak past the panic clawing at him. Finally, the driver's door is pulled off of his car

entirely and cold air rushes in. It's a clarifying sensation, and his vision clears up as his breathing becomes just a little bit easier.

"Sir? Can you hear me?"

Shane forces his head to turn, meeting the steady gaze of the paramedic. He blinks against the line shining in his eyes, the pain in his head flaring at the brightness.

"Can you tell me your name?"

His first instinct is not to say it. He's supposed to be in Montreal, not somewhere outside of it in the crushed remains of his car. What if people question it? What if they talk? They couldn't possibly know where he's coming from, but secrecy is a hard habit to break.

He has to answer their questions.

"Shane..." he says, his voice tight and trembling as his seatbelt is cut away. "... Hollander... Shane Hollander."

"Do you know where you are, Shane?"

It hurts to think, but he knows why they're asking these questions.

"Outside of... of Montreal," Shane says, trying to search his mind for how long he drove in stunned, hurt silence after Ilya kicked him out. "Twenty minutes out, maybe?"

"That's good. You know what year it is?" the paramedic continues, reaching in with a c-collar.

Shane groans, wishing that he didn't have to put it on. He knows why, but he still hates it.

"2020," he answers, remaining obediently still as the collar is strapped around his neck. "December."

"Do you remember what happened?"

Shane knows that the questions are necessary, to make sure his brain isn't about to leak out of his ears. Still, he wishes the guy would leave him the fuck alone.

"Another car spun out and it... hit me," he says, his voice flat and quiet. "I hit a tree... I think."

"You hit a few of them, unfortunately. Crushed the front end of your car pretty good. The steering column is pinning your legs so we're gonna have to use some tools to get you out of here. You're about to hear a lot of loud noises. Can you feel your legs?"

Shane hums out a confirmation, moving his feet just to prove it. The paramedic must see, because he seems satisfied as he calls out for someone else to step in. There's a blanket draped over Shane face and upper body so that he's protected from any stray glass or sparks that may go flying, then there's a godawful screech filling the air for a solid minute. He

resisted the urge to cover his ears, his skin crawling and his heart rate rising the longer it goes on.

Then the pressure on his legs is gone, and he feels a sweeping relief as the blanket is lifted away.

“I can’t stop shaking,” Shane informs the paramedic when he sees him again, feeling his whole body trembling as if he’s going to fall to pieces any second.

“That’s completely normal,” the man assures him.

He isn’t so sure about that. It’s a deeply disconcerting sensation, and he wishes that he didn’t feel so cold.

“Alright, Shane, we’re gonna get you out of here now. It will probably hurt, I won’t lie to you, but try to stay as still as you can for us, okay?” the paramedic calls out.

“Okay.”

Shane braces himself for the pain, but it still hurts like hell. He grits his teeth against the cry that rises in his throat as multiple sets of hands pull him out as gently as they can. Only once he’s free of the mangled remains of his car does he feel any kind of relief, his breathing uneven in the aftershocks of pain as they lay him out on a gurney and strap him in.

The next chunk of time is a blur of movement and prodding and questions flying over his head. He thinks that he answers, and he keeps his eyes open when they urge him to stay awake in spite of the splitting pain in his head. The blare of the siren outside of the ambulance doesn’t help at all, and the rhythmic beat of his heart echoed on a machine grates on him. They cut away his clothing to get to the wounds underneath, taking stock of every inch of him they can.

By the time the ambulance screeches to a halt and the doors fly open, there’s nothing he wants more than to close his eyes and sleep for at least a day.

“Twenty-nine year old male in a two-car MVC with head trauma,” the familiar voice of the paramedic calls out as the gurney is pulled from the ambulance. “LOC confirmed on scene but he’s been awake and alert since he was extracted. He has a forehead laceration, possible broken ribs, and edema in the left wrist with no apparent deformity. He doesn’t show any signs of spinal trauma but we collared him just to be sure.”

Shane doesn’t bother listening to the paramedic rattle off his vital signs, blinking the spots from his eyes when the dark night sky above him is suddenly replaced by the bright overhead lights of an emergency room.

“Holy shit!” he hears a voice exclaim from somewhere nearby. “Is that—”

“Our patient,” another person cuts them off coldly.

Shane closes his eyes and swallows hard against the panic that swells up in him once more. He knows that medical staff have to respect a patient’s privacy by law, but how far can he

trust that? How long will it take for word of Shane Hollander showing up broken and bloodied to reach the headlines? How much time does he have before everyone knows?

His body lights up with pain when they transition him to a different bed, and his eyes wrench open when someone prods carefully at his ribs.

“Hello, Mr. Hollander,” a kindly looking man hovers over him with round glasses and dark brown hair that is greying at the temples. “I’m Dr. Harding. I’m going to be taking care of you.”

Shane doesn’t say anything, tracking him with his eyes. He feels a pinch in the inside of his right elbow.

"Do you have any allergies?"

"Penicillin," Shane mumbles, his eyes darting to her as she draws multiple vials of blood from his IV. "And kiwi."

She smiles, amusement in her gaze as she looks up at him. He doesn't understand what's funny.

"No kiwi, got it."

Shane looks away from her, eyeing the doctor as he presses a stethoscope to his chest.

“How bad is it?” he asks once the man is done listening to his breath sounds.

He’s still shaking, and cold, and so very tired.

“I’ve seen much worse,” Dr. Harding assures him.

It isn’t quite as comforting as he means it to be. Shane can read between the lines and he knows for a fact that he won’t be playing anytime soon.

“Is there someone we can call for you?” a different person asks from somewhere in the room.

Ilya.

There’s no one Shane wants more in this moment, and no one he deserves less. Every detail of their argument lingers, replaying in his mind even now. There’s a part of him that still feels the sting, that wants to defend his side, but it’s drowned out by the guilt and sorrow he feels. He’s been hurting Ilya for so long, he knows that now. It wasn’t intentional, but that doesn’t erase the damage done. It doesn’t take back the awful things he said.

He doesn’t even know if he has the right to want Ilya here.

So Shane rattles off a different phone number, and he desperately hopes that news of his crash doesn’t reach the outside world just yet.

"What's your pain level right now, Mr. Hollander?"

Shane considers the answer carefully, staring at the thick splint wrapped around his wrist with thinly veiled loathing. It isn't a bad break, they told him, but just enough that he'll be immobilized for a few weeks to let it heal. He should be grateful that it isn't his dominant hand, but it'll keep him from doing any kind of stick work until it comes off.

Remembering that Olivia the nurse is waiting for his answer, he tears his eyes away from his arm and looks up at her as she checks the fluid drip on his IV. She isn't the one who laughed about his allergy to kiwi. He likes her better.

"Three, I think," he says, doing a mental sweep of his various injuries.

A stitched up laceration on his forehead, a mild concussion, multiple bruised ribs, scattered superficial cuts from the glass, and a broken radius.

"Maybe a four," Shane amends.

"I'll take a three to four," Olivia says, giving him a warm smile. "You let us know if you change your mind about that morphine, okay? I know you wanted to stick with mild pain relievers but you've been through a pretty big trauma and your adrenaline is probably still working in your favor."

Shane knows that he won't reconsider. After an abundance of scans and tests, they decided that none of his injuries were serious enough to keep him for much longer, as long as he remains stable. He isn't about to let something as heavy as morphine get in the way of leaving the hospital as soon as he can, no matter how nice Olivia is.

"Jesus Christ."

At the sound of a familiar voice, both Shane and Olivia turn to look at the open doorway. Hayden looks exactly like someone who got the call that his best friend was in the car accident in the middle of the night, with wrinkled clothes and wild hair. If he squints, Shane thinks he might still see the pillow creases on his cheek. He looks like he's on the verge of freaking out entirely, as he steps further into the room and lets his eyes sweep over Shane.

"Hey," Shane says, his head dropping back against the propped up pillow behind him. "Sorry for waking you up."

"Don't worry about it, buddy," Hayden says with a disbelieving shaking of his head. "What the hell happened?"

He lets out a sigh, shallow enough that it doesn't expand his ribcage too much.

"Car accident," Shane says, staring up at the ceiling. "Broke my wrist. Got another concussion. I might get a scar out of it too."

He gestures to the bandage on his forehead with the arm that isn't splinted. Olivia slips from the room but not before pointing at the button looped over the side rails of his bed in a silent reminder that he can call her into the room anytime.

“I’m sorry,” Hayden says, sounding truly gutted. “Are the others on their way?”

Shane looks at him again, and his silent blinks must convey his confusion because Hayden looks more than a little bewildered himself.

“Your parents? Rozanov?” he says as if it’s obvious.

“No,” Shane says, frowning as he shakes his head. “I didn’t want to bother them.”

It’s true for his parents, and for Ilya too. But the other reason isn’t something he’s willing to share with Hayden. Not even the pain clouding his mind is enough that he’s going to confess just how profoundly he failed the love of his life.

“Shane, c’mon, you know they’d want to be here. They’ll be pissed you didn’t call.”

He doesn’t respond, closing his eyes and letting Hayden’s words sink in. Shane knows that his parents will be upset that they weren’t his first call. He’ll never forgive himself if they have to find out about it by some reckless social media post or breaking news story. But Shane knows without a doubt that if he lets Hayden call either of them, Ilya will be the next to know. There’s nothing he could say or do to convince them not to call him, and the last thing he wants is for Ilya to be dragged to Montreal for him when he isn’t even sure where they stand.

Ilya would come, because he’s *good* and that isn’t about to change just because they argued.

But Shane can’t bear the thought of him doing it out of obligation, especially if he misses any games when he’s needed by his team.

“They’re letting me go soon,” Shane says without opening his eyes. “I can’t leave unless someone gives me a ride home.”

Silence stretches on for longer than he expects, and he finally risks another look only to see a conflicted expression on Hayden’s face.

“I’m *fine*,” he says, putting as much emphasis behind the lie as he can.

“Yeah, you look like it,” Hayden scoffs, gesturing to all of him.

Shane lets out a heavy sigh, dropping his head back against the pillow.

“I just want to get out of here,” he says, giving Hayden as pleading a stare as he can manage.

It isn’t fair, he knows that. Hayden can be tough on the ice but Shane knows his best friend. He’s soft where it counts, and it’s never more obvious than when he’s with the people he cares about. Jackie and the kids are at the top of the list, but Shane knows that he’s got a place there too.

With a loud groan, Hayden tips his head back and glares up at the ceiling for a long few seconds.

"Your mom is going to kill me, you know that right," he finally says, looking back down at him.

"I'll make sure she doesn't," Shane vows solemnly.

Hayden sinks into a chair, sprawled lazily with his head tipped back and his arms crossed loosely over his chest. Shane feels bad that he's there, seeing the exhaustion written across his face, but he's grateful for it too. He'll have to find some way to thank him, when he can move without his bruised and broken body screaming in protest. As time passes, he's stuck replaying what happened with Ilya again and again.

"I need you to do something for me."

The words slip out before Shane can help it, and he knows that he's more than earned the raised eyebrow that Hayden gives him in return. He's asking enough of him, and another request on top of it might be too much. But there's something that he needs to do, and he isn't allowed to do it on his own.

"They don't want me to use my phone," Shane says, gesturing towards the plastic bag on the table where they've stowed his wallet and phone. "I need to send a message."

Hayden doesn't hesitate to stand, crossing the room with a relieved expression. Shane knows that he must think that he's finally letting someone else know what happened, but that isn't quite his plan. He rattles off his pass code once Hayden has his phone in hand.

"It's for Ilya," he says quietly.

Looking far from surprised, Hayden sits back down and stares at him expectantly. Shane hesitates, picking at the thin blanket covering his legs. There are so many things that he could say, but he can't air it out when someone else is doing the typing for him. He has to keep it vague, but meaningful enough that Ilya understands.

"I'm sorry," he finally says, refusing to look at Hayden as he says it.

Then...

"I love you."

A few moments pass in silence, and Shane can't bring himself to look at Hayden.

"Shane..."

"I don't want to talk about it," he says quickly, his eyes fixed on his lap. "Please just... send it."

A beat passes, then Shane sees Hayden typing out the message. Silence falls as they wait and the more time goes without a responding ping, the harder it becomes for Shane to fight the tears that prick at his eyes. Hayden sets his phone down on the table and takes his seat again, leaning forward with his elbows braced on his knees and his hands loosely clasped.

"I thought you were staying the night in Ottawa."

Shane sinks his teeth into the inside of his cheek, using the pain to ground himself as he swipes at the moisture gathering on his lashes.

"Plans change," he says simply, the words coming out heavy with exhaustion.

He's drained of all energy, and there's nothing he wants more than to shut out the world and sleep for days. He'll get his wish, probably, because there's no way he's going back to playing any time soon. There's just the matter of letting the team know, bracing for when they announce that he's on the IR, and trying to keep his parents or Ilya from coming to Montreal. Shane just has to figure that out, then he can rest.

"You don't have to talk about it," Hayden says, his voice remarkably patient. "But I'm here if you decide you want to."

It's more than Shane deserves. He knows that Hayden thinks that Ilya isn't good enough for him, but he's dead wrong. It's the other way around, and it probably always has been. It's Shane who has been holding them back, and he's the one who handcrafted this miserable situation that Ilya is existing in. He knows that Ilya has been different. Quieter. Sadder. More closed off than he's been in a long time. He just never thought that the source of it was him.

Shane is starting think he never really deserved Ilya at all.

Maybe this is what he gets for not understanding that sooner.

Shane is exhausted, but not so much that he isn't paying attention to the route they're taking.

"Hayden," he says, his voice more weary than upset.

"It's not up for discussion, buddy," Hayden says, sounding more upbeat than he should. "You won't let me call your family and I'm not going to leave you alone. We've got plenty of room for you at ours."

Shane presses his lips together, pushing down the frustration he feels. He knows that Hayden is doing what he thinks is right, and maybe it really is the right thing. But Shane doesn't want to be around anyone else, not even his best friends. The only person he wants is Ilya and that isn't an option for him. So the next best thing is shutting out the world for the next few weeks until he's cleared to play.

"This is kidnapping," he mutters, leaning his head against the cool window.

It's a welcome relief from the dull, persistent ache he feels. Shane should have seen this coming. Hayden would have never let him go home by himself with a concussion, and maybe Shane will find it in himself to appreciate how much he cares later. Much later, when his irritation fades and he comes to terms with his circumstances.

"I'm okay with that," Hayden decides, turning into his neighborhood.

Shane watches the houses pass by one after the next, and he finds himself looking forward to whatever bed the Pikes are going to tuck him into. Every part of him feels heavy by the time they pull into the driveway, and he feels like he weighs a thousand pounds as he climbs out of the car. Hayden hovers with every step he takes, but Shane can't bring himself to tell him to stop even though it grates at him.

"Do you want something to eat?" Hayden asks as he opens the door. "Jackie should be making breakfast right about now. I'm sure I can convince her to whip something up for you?"

Shaking his head, Shane kicks his shoes off and lines them up neatly against the wall as he hears the clatter of dishes and excited babble of the kids drifting from the kitchen.

"I have to call my agent," he says, dreading that he can't rest yet.

Hayden doesn't argue, because he knows that Shane is right. They bypass the kitchen entirely, and he lets Hayden lead him upstairs to the singular guest bedroom at the very end of the hall. The bed is too soft beneath him as he sinks down on the edge, holding his phone out for Hayden to navigate to his contacts.

"You want me to go?" Hayden asks once he presses call and hands it back.

Shane just shrugs, because he really doesn't care right now. Hayden seems torn, and he ends up slipping out with a whispered encouragement to shout for him if he needs anything. Shane watches until the door closes behind him, listening to the persistent ring on the other end.

"Good morning, Shane," Farah answers, a note of suspicion in her voice.

He can't blame her for it. Getting a call from a client first thing in the morning is probably some kind of red flag for her.

"Hi," he says tiredly, rubbing at his eyes and wincing when he tugs at the stitched together wound on his forehead. "I, uh... I kinda got in a car accident last night."

A few seconds pass in silence.

"You weren't drunk, right?" Farah asks bluntly.

He almost laughs, because he can't really blame her for asking that either.

"No, I wasn't drunk."

"You weren't under the influence of anything else?" she checks.

"No, I promise," Shane assures her, staring down at the splint wrapped around his broken wrist. "Another car spun out on the ice and hit me."

"I'm so sorry, Shane. Are you okay?"

He lets out a heavy sigh, tipping his head back and swallowing down the lump that threatens to rise in his throat. He really can't handle anyone asking him that right now. Once he gets himself under control, he opens his mouth and tells her everything. Farah listens to every word patiently, humming sympathetically once he lists out his various injuries.

"And you haven't let the team know yet?" she asks once he's done.

"I wasn't sure who to call first," Shane admits, growing more tired by the second.

He just wants to lay down, but he knows that he has to deal with this first.

"You did the right thing," Farah says, and he feels a measure of relief. "With your permission, I'll initiate contact and discuss how we're going to handle this going forward. I'm sure there will be some medical requirements on your end. I'll try to hold them off on making a public announcement for as long as I can. I'm assuming your family knows?"

Shane hesitates, feeling a sickening wave of guilt wash over him.

"Not yet," he admits, muttering the words like a child ready to be scolded.

"Okay," Farah says, sounding surprised. "Is there a reason for that?"

He shrugs, even though he knows she can't see it.

"I didn't want to wake them up for this. I'm fine."

It sounds less and less believable every time he says it.

"Well, they're probably awake now, right?"

He knows that Farah doesn't mean anything by it, but Shane still feels called out by her words.

"Right," he says, even knowing that he has no intention of calling them.

Seeming to sense his reluctance to talk about it, Farah moves on. They only talk for a few more minutes, and Shane is relieved when he finally hangs up. He knows that he should rest now, but he stares at his phone screen until it blurs in his vision. There's no new notification. No sign at all that Ilya saw his message.

He's starting to think that the silence is an answer in itself.

Shane knows that he can't just sit there waiting. So he tosses his phone to the nightstand and he doesn't even bother pulling down the blankets, grabbing a pillow and carefully easing himself back to lay down.

Once his eyes drift shut, it takes no time at all for him to drift into unconsciousness.

The dark sunglasses he wears are doing a lot of heavy-lifting as he steps out of the practice arena. Still, the bright sun overhead doesn't do him any favors and squinting against it pulls uncomfortably against the stitches in his forehead. Shielding his eyes, he sinks onto a cold metal bench and contemplates what happens next. He knows that Hayden is probably waiting for his call to come pick him up, but he can't quite bring himself to do it yet.

He knows that being alone isn't ideal, but it's all that he wants right now after a grueling few hours spent shuffled from person to person as they decided exactly what to do with him. No one is happy about the circumstances, from the general manager to his coach to the doctor who glared at his broken wrist as if it personally offended him. They didn't dare to ask why he was out and driving so late at night, and Shane wasn't about to volunteer a made-up story in case someone decided to look a little too closely at it.

All he wants now is to be in his own home, where he can wear *his* own clothes and sleep in *his* own bed.

With his mind made up, he navigates to Hayden's contact and holds the phone to his ear.

"Hey, you ready?"

"No," Shane says, determined not to let himself be persuaded this time. "I'm just gonna call an Uber to take me home, Hayd. I'll be fine."

There's a brief pause, and he imagines Hayden pinching the bridge of his nose in frustration.

"I don't think that's a good idea, Shane."

"Dr. Molson agreed that I only have a mild concussion. I don't even need to be monitored. I just... need to be in my own space, okay?"

"Buddy, you're not intruding if that's what you think," Hayden stresses.

Shane frowns a little, wondering where that came from.

"I wasn't thinking that."

"Jackie's already got a grocery list ready for me, you know. We're gonna have lunch and dinner for you, and it'll all fit into your meal plan. If you're worried about the noise, we talked to the twins about staying quiet for their Uncle Shane. I've got plenty of clothes you can borrow. You can stay as long as you need and—"

"What's going on?" Shane cuts him off.

Another stretch of silence, and his suspicions only grow. The rambling is uncharacteristic of Hayden, and the weirdness of it is just enough to set off alarm bells in his head.

"I don't know what you're talking about," Hayden says.

"You're acting weird," Shane informs him, fully aware of the defensiveness in his voice.
"What aren't you telling me?"

Hayden lets out a heavy sigh on the other end, and somehow Shane knows what he's about to hear before he even tells him.

"Listen, it's not a big deal."

Just like that, He knows exactly what Hayden did without having to hear it. Even then he can't quite wrap his mind around the betrayal. Maybe it's dramatic to call it that, but the last eighteen hours of Shane's life have been pure hell and he thinks that maybe he's allowed that, right now.

"You didn't," he says, his voice low and quiet in spite of the anger suddenly burning hot beneath his skin.

"Not on purpose," Hayden is quick to say in his own defense. "Your mom tried to call you a few times, and she's worried that you weren't answering. So she called me."

Shane's phone was on silent for the meetings, and he didn't bother looking at the alerts before he called Hayden. Maybe he could have prepared better for this if he had.

"So you told her?" he says, his voice remarkably even.

"You didn't give me much of a choice."

"Because it wasn't your choice," Shane fires back.

Shane inhales deeply, trying to calm his racing heart only to wince at the pressure on his bruised ribs. His breath steams in the air as he lets it out and His hand lifts to press over his side on instinct. He lets the ache fade before speaking again. He doesn't know how long he has, and he's fairly certain that the only reason his phone isn't blowing up with calls and texts is because Hayden probably told his parents that he couldn't use it when he went behind his back and told them.

And that means that Ilya knows.

Shane isn't sure he's ever been quite this angry at Hayden.

"I'm going home," he says, allowing no room for any argument. "Thank you for picking me up from the hospital, and please thank Jackie for letting me stay this morning."

"Shane, c'mon—"

"I'll talk to you later."

It's all he can get out before he hangs up, not wanting to let his anger get the best of him. The last thing that he wants to do is say something he'll regret later. Hayden didn't mean to make this harder on him. He was put in a tough situation, and Shane didn't really expect him to lie on his behalf. Still, Shane wishes he could have made this choice on his own. He knew he would have to tell his mom and dad eventually, and that hiding all of this from either of them or from Ilya would quickly become impossible.

Shane just wishes that Hayden had let him make that decision, instead of doing it for him.

Bringing up the Uber app, he puts in the order for a car with too-heavy jabs of his thumbs. Only when he's done does he consider what happens next. He has to bite the bullet, he knows that, but this isn't really a conversation he wants to have. Shane forces himself to do it anyway, navigating to his contacts. He steels himself with a slow, fortifying breath before dialing.

"Shane, honey, you're not supposed to be using your phone."

He huffs out a sigh at his mom's greeting, because he knows he shouldn't have expected anything less.

"It's a mild concussion," he mumbles, fidgeting with a loose string on his borrowed sweatpants.

"Still, you know that it can make you feel worse," Yuna says, her voice soft enough that the gentle scolding doesn't sting at all. "Hayden told us everything. I wish you'd called us."

Shane feels a stinging pressure behind his eyes, and he has to take several shallow breaths before he can bring himself to speak.

"I couldn't," he says, his voice breaking on the words.

There's a brief silence in the wake of his admission.

"Why not?"

Swallowing hard, he glances around and tries to think of any way around having to confess to her. There isn't. Not really. He can't explain why he didn't call without telling her why he was on the road so late.

"I messed up," he says, losing the fight against the tears that gather as soon as the words pass his lips.

"What? With the accident? I thought Hayden said it wasn't your fault."

Shane shakes his head even though she can't see him.

"With Ilya."

"Oh, well, there's nothing you can do to ruin things with him," Yuna says, her voice overly confident. "What happened?"

Sweeping the street around him, Shane makes sure that there's no one around to hear before he fills her in on most of the argument, admitting to how lonely Ilya has been and how awful he was not to see it.

"I'm the worst boyfriend," he declares.

"That's not true," she says, her voice both comforting and determined. "And Ilya would agree with me, so don't start."

A tear escapes, tracing a slow path down Shane's cheek and catching on his lip. It stings against his cold skin. He does nothing to wipe it away.

"I don't deserve him."

"Shane—"

"He's going to break up with me," he goes on, his panic rising and his ribs protesting with every too-deep breath he takes. "I'm asking too much of him."

"Shane, stop."

His mother's voice breaks through, and he goes silent as she exhales a heavy sigh on the other end of the phone.

"Honey, your dad and I are still in Ottawa."

Shane blinks, trying to wrap his mind around her words. He doesn't know why he assumed she's been in the car for their entire conversation. It seemed like an obvious conclusion, but now he's left grasping for answers.

"What?"

"We told Ilya as soon as we could," Yuna explains, her voice more gentle now. "He left about thirty minutes ago."

Shane's eyes slowly close, and he tries not to panic all over again.

"Why?" he says, his voice just barely above a whisper.

He's asking for more than just one answer, he knows that. But it's all that he can bring himself to say.

"Because as much as we love you, you aren't just ours anymore," she says patiently, giving him time to absorb her words. "You have a partner who loves you, and who chose to share his life with you just like you chose to share your life with him. Your father and I are happy to drive there if you need us, but we're not number one in your life anymore. And that's okay, because we shouldn't be."

Shane's bottom lip wobbles, and another few tears slip free.

"He's given up so much for me," he says, his words heavy with guilt and sorrow.

"Shane, he likes being in Ottawa. He told us that he likes this team much better than his old one," Yuna says with a sigh. "He loves his teammates, and his new coach."

The words are an unearned balm to the worries that plague him. Shane shouldn't be allowed to feel better about any of it, but what she says gives him a small sliver of hope.

"He said he likes Ottawa?"

"More than once. And honestly I think he'd live in the city dump if it meant being closer to you. He's head over heels."

Shane opens his mouth to argue more, but his eyes catch on a car creeping up to the curb and he knows that it's his Uber.

"I have to go," he says, scrubbing the tears from his cheeks. "My Uber is here."

There's a moment of silence before his mom responds.

"Keep us in the loop," Yuna says, her voice serious enough that he knows better than to refuse. "And just... talk to him, okay? *Listen* to him."

"Okay," Shane says half-heartedly, carefully rising from the bench. "I love you."

"I love you too. But you're never, ever allowed to wait like this again, you hear me? You call Ilya, and then you call us. I don't care what time of night it is."

Shane can only nod as he makes his way to the waiting car.

"I promise."

Shane is in the kitchen when he hears the door open.

His apartment is filled with as little light as he can manage, with the curtains drawn over every window and only a few dim lamps turned on. He's hunched over his counter, absentmindedly steeping a chamomile tea bag in a cup of steaming water. Quiet footsteps reach his ears but he doesn't look. Not even when he sees movement in his peripheral. He can't bring himself to see whatever expression is on his face, because he's turned over every possibility in his mind since the phone call with his mother. Anger, sadness, disappointment, indifference. Shane has prepared himself for anything, he thinks.

But he still doesn't look.

Ilya doesn't close the distance between them. Not immediately, anyway. Shane knows that he's taking him in. He can feel a prickle of awareness as his eyes sweep over him. He's seen himself in a mirror by now, and he knows how awful he looks. It's a good thing that he's wearing a shirt, because at least the bruises that cover his torso are hidden from sight.

With a quiet exhale, Ilya finally moves.

He tenses as he draws closer, his eyes closing and the string of the tea bag slipping from his fingers. Carefully, as if Shane is some fragile thing, Ilya's fingers brush over his chin and turn his head. A gentle tap of his thumb is the only instruction Shane needs, and he reluctantly

opens his eyes. That beautiful, exhausted face fills his vision, with dark circles beneath his stunning eyes and his cheeks pink from the cold. His hair is a mess that's so clearly been tugged and swept back by his hands more than a few times.

Shane can't help the stab of guilt he feels at his tormented expression. He can see that Ilya is trying to keep his emotions in check but the wounded horror in his eyes is unmistakable.

Lifting his hand, Ilya traces the edge of the bandage on his forehead with his thumb, a crease forming between his brow as the muscles in his jaw jump with the clench of his teeth. Shane braces himself for whatever he might say, knowing that whatever it is will probably break his heart just a little bit. Ilya's hand drifts lower, the pad of his thumb stroking over the smattering of freckles on his cheek to Shane's stress-bitten lips.

"You didn't call me," Ilya says, his voice quiet enough that Shane barely hears it.

Shane drops his head with a careful exhale but Ilya doesn't let him get away with it, lifting his chin again.

"I was fine," Shane says, staring at a spot over Ilya's shoulder so he doesn't have to meet his eyes. "I *am* fine."

He's so tired of saying the same thing over and over again, because even he doesn't believe it at this point. It just... feels like what he's supposed to say. Like he's following some kind of script in an attempt to stop the people he loves from worrying about it.

It doesn't work.

"You blame me."

Shane's eyes snap to Ilya's out of shock, because that thought never even occurred to him. Of course he doesn't blame Ilya. How could he?

"I don't."

Ilya doesn't look convinced, and Shane's heart feels like it's being carved from his chest by a dull blade when he sees the tears gathering in his eyes.

"I told you to leave, and you... you..." he can't even finish, cutting off with a strangled intake of breath.

"You couldn't have known," Shane reminds him, hating that Ilya is condemning himself for this.

Ilya searches his face with a distraught desperation.

"You didn't call," he says again, his voice breaking on the words.

The very breath is stolen from Shane's lungs by the wave of anguish that washes over him. He can't help the wobble of his bottom lip, or the tears that gather in his own eyes now.

"I didn't do it to punish you, Ilya," he protests quietly, his own voice trembling.

Ilya doesn't look convinced, his eyes pleading for an explanation that Shane doesn't know how to give. He knows that he'll hate the reason, but Shane can't let him go on believing that it's his fault, or that Shane was somehow paying him back for their argument by not letting him be at his side. A tear slips down Ilya's cheek, tracing a slow path, and Shane lifts his good hand to brush it away before cupping his cheek, running his thumb over the soft skin beneath his eye.

"I've been hurting you," Shane says, forcing himself to say it.

Ilya starts to shake his head but he doesn't let him say anything.

"I knew something was wrong," he pushes on, every word almost physically painful to admit. "I lessened it in my head, thought it was just because your team was losing. I didn't stop to think if you were lonely or hurting. I... I've been so selfish."

"Shane—"

"I don't deserve you here," he says, shaking his head as his own tears overflow. "That's why I didn't call. I-I don't—"

Ilya shushes him, cupping the back of his head gently and drawing him in. Shane knows that he doesn't deserve the comfort, but he sinks into Ilya's embrace anyway. It's everything that he needs, and the tension in his body seeps away slowly as Ilya's warmth surrounds him.

"I'm so sorry," he says miserably, his tears soaking into Ilya's shirt.

"It's okay," Ilya murmurs.

It isn't, but Shane is too tired to argue. He's so overwhelmingly thankful that Ilya is here now.

"I wanted you here," he says, needing Ilya to hear it. "It's all I wanted."

Ilya strokes his thumb back and forth over the base of his neck, carefully pressing a kiss into his hair.

"I'm here now."

They stay like that for a seemingly endless stretch of time, breathing each other in. Shane feels like he can really breathe for the first time since he woke up in the wrecked ruins of his car. Ilya seems to be clinging to him for a similar reason, even if he's far more cautious about it.

"Do you want to take a bath?" he asks softly, running a hand gently over Shane's back. "I can wash your hair for you."

Somehow, it's exactly what he needs. Shane didn't even know it until Ilya offered, and he finds himself wanting nothing more.

"Yes please," he breathes out, nodding his head before pulling away from him. "If you're sure."

Ilya brushes a light touch over his jaw before leaning in to kiss him softly.

"I'm sure."

They make their way to the stairs with their hands clasped, and Ilya ascends a step or two behind Shane. By the time they make it to the bathroom, his whole body is aching fiercely. Shane turns on the lamp that sits on the counter, still unable to endure any bright overhead lights. Ilya takes it upon himself to turn on the bath, his hand stuck under the running water to make sure it reaches the perfect temperature before he stops the drain. Shane watches with a blooming affection filling him to the brim as Ilya carefully adds a generous amount of Epsom salt and drizzles some of his favorite bath oils over the surface, a look of concentration on his face.

Shane vows then and there to never let him feel lonely again, if he can help it. He doesn't care what it takes.

Ilya turns to face him once he's done, giving Shane an expectant look. Even before he tries, he knows that he's going to have a hell of a time getting his clothes off. At the first wince he gives, just by reaching for the bottom of his shirt, Ilya crosses to his side.

"Let me," he says softly.

Shane can only nod, unwilling to refuse his help. Not when it's every bit as much for Ilya's sake as it is for Shane's. Carefully, they work together to ease the clothes from his body. Ilya does the brunt of the work, only hesitating when his shirt is finally lifted over his head and he sees the watercolor smudge of bruises that cover his skin.

"It's from the seatbelt," Shane says quietly.

"Nothing broken?" Ilya asks, his fingers ghosting over his ribs.

"Only bruised," he assures him.

Getting out of the pants is easier, and Shane grips Ilya's hand as he carefully climbs into the full tub and lowers himself down to sit with his splinted arm hanging out over the edge. Just as he thought, the heated water is an instant balm to the bone-deep aches he feels. Shane tips his head back with a relieved hum, knowing now that this is exactly what he needed.

"Good?" Ilya asks, crouching at his side.

Shane nods, turning his head to look at him.

"It's perfect."

A small smile tugs at Ilya's lips and he reaches up to carefully sweep his hair away from his forehead.

"It's safe to wash with this?" he asks.

"I think so, as long as we try not to get it wet."

With a satisfied nod, Ilya rises to his feet and peels away his socks and pants. Shane watches him, only leaning forward when Ilya taps at his shoulder so that he can sit on the ledge behind him. He's never been more grateful for investing in a jacuzzi tub. Ilya's legs dip into the water on either side of him and Shane leans his head against his knee, his hand wrapping around his calf as he nuzzles at the inside of his thigh.

Ilya doesn't make a move to wash his hair yet, rubbing at the sore muscles of his shoulders and neck as Shane relaxes further and further into the water.

"I'm sorry I asked you to go to the party," Ilya says after some time passes.

Shane tenses up a little bit at the reminder before he forces himself to breathe, knowing that they have to talk about it eventually. It might as well be now.

"I was surprised," he confesses, hating his reaction in hindsight. "But I was an asshole about it. I haven't appreciated how much you've given up for me."

"For *us*," Ilya corrects him quickly. "I would give up more. Anything for you."

Shane tilts his head back to look up at him, even if it's upside down.

"I don't want you to."

Ilya's face does something complicated, as if he wants to say something but can't quite bring himself to.

"Are you okay?" Shane asks, squeezing his leg lightly. "I know you don't like to talk about this stuff, but I'm worried about you."

A conflicted look passes over Ilya's face, and Shane gives him time to sort his thoughts.

"I've been seeing a therapist."

The confession is surprising, but welcoming all the same. It's something that Shane has wanted for him, and he's as happy to hear it as he is confused. Because Ilya didn't tell him, and he's not entirely sure if it a good thing or a bad thing that he's finally decided to do it after all this time.

"She speaks Russian," Ilya goes on, his hand carefully guiding Shane to lean his head on his thigh again, correctly assuming that the bent position isn't doing him any favors.

"That's great," Shane says.

It has to mean a lot, for Ilya to be able to communicate in his first language. He remembers that conversation over the phone, with Ilya in Moscow and Shane hunched in a stairwell listening to him pour his heart out in Russian.

"Yes. Much easier to talk that way," Ilya confirms.

Shane swallows hard, wishing that he knew more for him.

"How long have you been going?"

"A couple of months."

He tries not to let it hurt, that he didn't know until now. It isn't about him, he knows that. If Ilya is getting the help he needs, he shouldn't feel any kind of way about where that comes from. Even if it isn't from him.

But Ilya must read into his silence, because he's stroking a thumb over his cheek and murmuring his name.

"I've told you things no one else knows," he reminds Shane gently. "Therapy is different."

Shane nods, letting the words sink in and soothe the wound.

"I'm really glad you're going," he says, turning to press a kiss to the inside of his knee.

"Yes, me too."

An easy silence settles between them, and Shane lets Ilya guide him obediently as he retrieves the handheld shower head from the side of the tub. Switching off the plug, he turns on the water once a certain amount has drained before turning on the faucet. Shane tips his head back, his eyes drifting closed as Ilya carefully wets his hair without getting his bandage wet too. Then he's carefully working the shampoo through Shane's hair, and it feels like a fucking dream. He can't help the satisfied hum that rises in his throat, and he can practically feel Ilya's satisfaction pouring from him.

"You're so good to me," Shane sighs.

Ilya pauses for just a moment.

"I try to be," he says.

Shane's eyes open, and he looks up at him again to see the uncertainty written across his face.

"You are," he says, lifting his hand to squeeze his wrist lightly. "You take such good care of me, baby, always."

Ilya stares at him for a long few seconds before nodding his head slowly.

"I'm going to be better for you."

"Shane..."

Closing his eyes, he doesn't let Ilya's protests dissuade him.

"I am," he says stubbornly. "You'll just have to deal with it."

A quiet huff of laughter fills the air and Ilya flicks his ear lightly.

"You're everything to me, solnyshko," he says tenderly, carefully using the shower head to rinse the shampoo from his hair.

Shane knows that, and he's determined to make sure Ilya never doubts that the same is true in reverse.

"Ya tebya lyublyu," he says warmly.

Ilya's quiet intake of breath is unmistakable.

"Ya tebya lyublyu," he says in return after a moment. "I love you so much."

Shane nods, leaning his head against his leg again.

"I know you do."

They stay like that for a long time, until long after Ilya carefully works conditioner through his hair and rinses that too. It isn't until their skin starts to prune from the rapidly chilling water that they finally give up. Ilya climbs out first, and he dries himself off before helping Shane out. With a fluffy towel taken right from the warmer on the wall, Ilya carefully and thoroughly dries him off before whipping off his own clothes and leaving them in a pile next to Hayden's borrowed ones. Shane doesn't have time to question what he's doing before Ilya snags his hand and guides him towards the bedroom.

It isn't until the pillows are piled against the wall and the blankets are peeled back that he understands, when Ilya turns to him with a wary yet pleading gaze.

"I want to hold you, please," he says, tugging Shane towards the bed carefully. "Nothing between us."

Shane nods slowly, reaching up to cup his cheek.

"Nothing between us," he echoes, leaning in to brush a kiss over his lips.

He climbs in first, carefully turning onto his side that isn't bruised. Ilya moves even slower, careful not to hurt him as he drapes the blankets over them and drapes an arm very carefully over Shane without putting pressure on his bruises.

"Good?" he asks in a whisper, gathering him close to his chest.

"Perfect," Shane answers.

It's everything that he needs, and he doesn't know how he ever thought he could do this without Ilya. He knows that it will take him no time at all to fall asleep like this.

"We'll be okay," Shane declares sleepily, needing Ilya to hear it.

Behind him, he feels Ilya breathe in deeply before pressing a soft kiss to the back of his neck.

"Yes," Ilya says, his voice soft and unwavering. "We will be okay."

End Notes

I would love to know what you think!

I'm on tumblr at [prettyshane](#)! I'm also on twitter at [writerbri24](#)! I would love to have some mutuals who are positive about heated rivalry and hollanov. Feel free to come talk to me or send me hollanov prompts!

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