if it helps

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by Anonymous

Summary

Ilya gets quiet sometimes.
He's such a boisterous and loudly excited person that when it goes away, it's like a vacuum has sucked the air out of the room. And Shane will never tell him that–it would do more harm than help–but it's true. He loves every version of Ilya, including this one. But there is something young about his cocky arrogance and brightness that reminds Shane of their years wanting and wanting and not having.

Or, I somehow made a cock warming fic that doubles as an Ilya mental health study.

Notes

TW for depictions of mental illness/depression. Nothing extreme at all but this got a lot sadder than I intended.

See the end of the work for more notes

Ilya gets quiet sometimes.

He's such a boisterous and loudly excited person that when it goes away, it's like a vacuum has sucked the air out of the room. And Shane will never tell him that–it would do more harm than help–but it's true. He loves every version of Ilya, including this one. But there is something young about his cocky arrogance and brightness that reminds Shane of their years wanting and wanting and not having.

Still, though, with a vague semblance of regret, it's this version that makes him ache with it. This quiet contemplative listlessness. Staring out windows and at ceilings. Thoughts racing and still all at once. Accepting cups of warm tea and pills from Shane's hand without argument, no matter how much he hates them.

And so badly he wants Ilya to be okay, in whatever capacity that may be. This version, though, is one he loves, too.

Part of it, he's sure, has to do with the wondering at how long this has been happening. How often after Shane left him in a hotel room alone to slink back to Hayden would Ilya stare at the door or lay useless in the bed until his mind unlocked and let him go? Or if in moments of bleakness where now he reaches for Shane and lets himself be held, he would instead reach out in whatever capacity he had over prodding text and chirps on the ice. And Shane couldn't have known, but still he wishes there was a way for him to go back. To hug him. To tell him what all this will be for. Ask him if it's worth it. If it helps at all.

It's so much bigger than Shane. He knows that. Intimately. But still, he wonders.

"Thank you, moya lyubov," Ilya says quietly as he takes the pill from Shane's hand.

If Ilya, young and alone, was just as tired as he is now?

If Shane could live all the moments again, he would, if just to see. A witness to something bigger than their pining so that Ilya could have been *known,* then, and understood that soon he'd never have to be alone again.

He remembers the first time he realized he'd fallen behind. It was before there was anything to fall behind on, but still it was true.

Ilya had walked into his Montreal apartment for only the second time and toed his shoes off by the door, tapping them with the side of his foot to line them next to Shane's. And it had scared him in a way that he couldn't look at too closely, so instead he'd tugged Ilya to him and allowed himself to be tumbled into bed.

It had kept happening. The overhead lights were always off in hotels after the first time Shane had flicked them off in irritation. After tearing Shane's clothes off his body, they would be gently handed back for him to fold and set on whatever dresser or desk they happened to be

by. Ilya always knew which city Shane would be flying away to once he left the hotel room. Once Ilya left Shane's apartment.

The ginger ale.

And functionally, there were things that Shane noticed, too. How Ilya would cling in a way Shane didn't really understand until years later. Drawing sex out whenever he could, going longer and longer and spending more and more time kissing Shane before ever getting naked. How he always wore a gold necklace of a Russian Orthodox cross. How Ilya would pull away quietly, covertly, if Shane kissed his forehead too gently.

It was like Ilya had been fed the same number of crumbs as Shane and somehow managed to piece together a whole person with them. And Shane had fallen so far behind, looking at a scatter of puzzle pieces with no complete image upon which to base it.

It wasn't all Shane's fault, though. Back then Ilya held onto his own crumbs, his own pieces, like gold, doubling back to retrieve them if any fell from his desperate hands.

He waits for Ilya to settle back into the couch before he takes the empty mug from his hands, setting it on the coffee table. He's still learning what to do with this. Sometimes he worries he makes it worse, but Ilya is never angry with him. Just quiet.

Today, he hovers awkwardly before dropping down into the softness of the couch and leaning back against an arm rest. Ilya has glanced over at him but made no other moves, so Shane lifts his hand and curls his pointer finger at Ilya.

He receives a weak smile before Ilya is shuffling and shucking blankets from around his shoulders, and then crawling on the couch to Shane, slotting his torso between Shane's legs so his head can rest solidly against Shane's heartbeat.

"It's shark week," he whispers to Ilya. "Do you want to watch the sharks?"

"Yes. Okay."

"Okay."

Ilya wavers in and out of sleep and Shane dedicates his time to brushing Ilya's hair with his fingers and rubbing his back.

Yes, this version he loves, too, as much as it aches.

The idea comes to him after a brutal loss from the Toronto Guardians on home ice later that year. Ilya is pacing the locker room like a rabid dog fit to bite and he has more than a few bruises up his arms from the game. It had been an off day for everyone but Shane doesn't think it would've pissed Ilya off so badly if it wasn't Toronto.

And later that night, against their dining table, they'd taken out the loss on each other. Just like they used to when it was against each other they would win and lose. Ilya is always kind and attentive, but in this he's also punishing, pushing Shane to the brink and pulling him back again over and over. Never too much. Always exactly what Shane needs.

But it gets him thinking, that night, in bed. Ilya breathes loud and deep in sleep and Shane thinks that a sleep apnea machine is probably in his future, and it's something he's been keeping track of in his phone notes. But still it means he's home. In bed with Ilya. And that night, body still aching from the game and Ilya's frustrations, he wonders how else their lives outside of this house affect the sex they have.

It should seem obvious. Overwrought nights after the wedding or milestones they've crossed as a couple. Brutality after losses and wins alike from both of them, hockey and adrenaline pumping in their veins. Sweetness after grocery shopping or a domestic night on his parents couch.

Ilya's pills stay on Shane's side of the bed. In his drawer. Ilya doesn't like looking at them while rooting around through his eclectic collection of junk at his bedside. And sometimes, on nights like this, Shane stares at the orange bottle and wonders.

Ilya doesn't tend to initiate sex on his quiet days, and Shane doesn't push for it. But sex is something Ilya finds comfort in. Joy and love made manifest in a connection with Shane's body.

He doesn't think Ilya would be up for fucking Shane into the dining table. But maybe something gentler. Lower stakes. Shane's body without any expectations.

If it would help.

"I had an idea, but you might not be up for it, and that's alright."

Ilya's head is on Shane's chest, facing the back of the couch so he isn't even watching the television. "What is it?" he asks quietly.

"You can say no–"

"I know, Shane, what is it?" Ilya turns his head so his chin juts into Shane's sternum and the breath from his nose hits Shane's chin.

"I know you're having a quiet day, and I'm happy to hold you for as long as you want me to."

He lifts one brow and there is a flicker of amusement and laughter beneath the quiet. "What is it, Shane?"

"Can I put your dick in my mouth?"

Ilya blinks at him a few times and then laughs, turning his head again to rest his temple to Shane's chest. "I would always say yes, Shane, I am not a fool."

“I’m not–or, if you want a blow job, yeah, I’ll give you one, but that’s not what I mean.”

“Then what?”

Ilya doesn’t pick up his head and his eye lashes flutter against Shane’s skin every time he blinks.

“Can I just show you?”

“Yes. Okay.”

Ilya switches positions with Shane, watching him curiously the whole time. He rests heavily against the arm rest and allows Shane to shove another pillow behind him.

He moves slowly. Weighed down by an invisible something, and Shane hopes he’s right. That he read this right. Ilya won’t be mad either way, he’ll be grateful for whatever care Shane gives, but so badly he wants to get this right.

He is gentle moving Ilya’s shorts down his hips, and then past his feet, folding them up and setting them on the coffee table. “Do you want to pick a movie?” he asks as he shakes out a blanket, wrapping it around his shoulders to take with him between Ilya’s legs.

Ilya's face sets to confusion, “I can? Is that part of this?”

“Doesn’t have to be. There aren’t any rules here, Ilya. But if you would like to put on a movie or a tv show, that is good, too.”

It isn’t lost on Shane that Ilya hasn’t gotten hard or even started to twitch, and he thinks that’s a part of it, too. The lack of initiation, of libido. The medication? The quiet? He doesn’t know. An imageless puzzle piece.

He’ll ask at some point. There’s no need for secrets anymore.

“Okay,” Ilya says, and flips the channel.

Shane sighs, content, and settles onto the couch between Ilya’s legs, spreading the blanket out to cover Ilya’s bare skin and keep it warm. He can feel Ilya watching him, and it's such a vulnerable thing. “You’ll tell me if you don’t like it?”

“Yes, Shane, I will tell you.”

He positions one arm under Ilya’s thigh, sure that the weight will put it to sleep shortly. With his free hand, he takes Ilya’s still soft cock into his fingers and opens his mouth to take it inside. Ilya’s legs relax even further into the couch, and when Shane glances up, his entire face is so *confused* and sweet. But he’s not stopping him, so Shane maneuvers the soft flesh further behind his teeth so it rests heavy on his tongue, and lets go, slinging his now free arms up to gently hold Ilya’s waist.

“Oh,” Ilya whispers, and his hands find Shane’s hair. “Oh.”

Shane doesn't mean to lose himself. He meant to stay present and feel every twitch of Ilya's body. To listen to the pattern of his breathing and check on his face every few minutes. But Ilya does this to him without trying.

His mouth is full and Ilya's thighs against his arms are warm and strong. The smell of Ilya's crotch hangs in Shane's nose and he cannot get enough. Maybe it's inherently sexual but he doesn't think it needs to be. Not when his head is in the fucking clouds and he feels like he's *home.*

He can't even pry his eyes open. And this was supposed to be about Ilya, but it's Ilya's thumb that gently strokes his cheeks along the path of his freckles. Ilya could probably leave him here forever and he wouldn't move an inch.

There are voices on the TV and he hopes Ilya picked a movie he likes. He likes cartoons and animation and silly storylines that tug at heartstrings. And he likes the Animal channel on television.

But he doesn't hear any of that.

Just a constant stream of gentle Russian words that he begs his brain to understand.

Ilya's dick cycles over and over. Partial hardness back to soft and back again, and Shane doesn't do anything for it. Sometimes he adjusts his mouth and his tongue drags against it, but only briefly. Never with any intention or invitation.

He can't know how long it's been. But finally when Ilya pulls him away, cradling Shane's chin in his palm, through hazy blurred vision he finds the slightly reddened wet of Ilya's eyes still trained on him.

"So good, Shane," he says through a tremble. "You take care of me so well, moya lyubov. I'm so safe with you. Perfect."

Yes. Yes, if it helps.

They don't talk about it that day, not when Ilya shuts the TV off and takes Shane to bed to sleep. He's fragile in a way Shane wasn't expecting and so he lets himself be held and holds in return, pressing kisses to Ilya's jaw as he falls asleep and begins to snore in Shane's face.

And the next day is better, louder, so they don't talk about it then, either. And it's months later, after many weeks of travel and away games, and after the playoffs and the award gatherings, and after they've packed up to go to the cottage for the summer, that he has another day that is so quiet Shane is pacing over it. He does it in another room, or out on the deck, or up and down the driveway because he knows that Ilya would be upset if he saw it.

And he knows he cannot fix it. He knows. He's not trying to *fix* it.

So he shakes it off and goes inside, turning on the electric kettle and watching Ilya's exotic bird documentary from the kitchen. When the water has boiled, he pours it into a mug with a tea bag and a glob of honey and brings it to Ilya, sitting at his side, and watching the exotic birds sing and dance.

"For someone so scared of loons you sure do like watching birds."

"Yes," Ilya agrees wistfully, "these birds are not evil. They are very pretty and romantic. Unlike loons."

Ilya hadn't ever been truly scared of loons. Nor did he hate them all that much if the tattoo on his body was any indication, but it was always good for a laugh. Or a smile. "Romantic?"

Ilya sips the tea and shifts to lean heavily against Shane's side. "Yes, are you watching? Everything they do is for love. All this dancing and pining? Romantic."

Shane rests his head against Ilya's on his shoulder, content to sit and wait with him.

"You can do that thing again," Ilya says softly the next day, when the quiet hasn't gone away and Ilya is back on the couch. "I wouldn't mind. I would like."

And Shane is buzzing with anxiety that he is sure Ilya can feel no matter how he's tried to hide it. There are things he can't think about on days like this. He cannot think about the Russian cross on Ilya's chest, or the woman who used to wear it. He cannot think about what it all means and how nothing he'll do will ever be enough to change this for Ilya. To take it away. And he loves every version of him, so much that a thousand years from now archaeologists would find it written on the pearly white of his bones, and still he wishes Ilya didn't know this feeling.

Every version, though. Steadfastly. Without compromise. Every version: this one, too.

"Okay," he responds, already shuffling to prompt Ilya to lay back again, "I can do that."

The first time he does it on a day that isn't quiet is also the first time they really acknowledge it. The first time they talk about what it does for them.

Ilya is playing a game on the television remotely with Hayden–though both lie profusely if asked about it as Ilya claims its someone he met online and Hayden just hangs up on Shane or starts whistling into the phone–and Shane is watching and pretending he can't hear Hayden shouting in the headset as Ilya shouts back.

"This is why you score no fucking goals," Ilya spits, "you can't fucking aim."

Hayden is muffled on the other end, but Shane snorts and leans back. And he can't help it. It's such a light moment and he's transported back to this very couch, so many years ago now, with Hayden on the phone and Ilya on his dick, and how very perverse and hot it had felt.

He glances at Ilya and he's got his face all scrunched up and Hayden is yapping and yapping and Ilya flips his middle finger at the TV as if he could see it.

Maybe he doesn't want that. Not in the same way. Not right at this moment. But still he lays out, and Ilya looks at him–dying on screen in the process and Hayden shouts about it–and lifts up his arm to accommodate Shane's head on his thigh.

"Hi, moya lyubov," he says gently, and runs a hand through Shane's hair. "*Shut up,"* he says, and Shane laughs as he begins to argue with Hayden again.

"Tell Hayden I said hi."

"It is not Pike, Shane," Ilya scoffs and rolls his eyes. "How many times do I tell you this? It is someone who is a huge fan of me, Ilya Rozanov, as I am the best player in the entire league. I get all the goals," there is squawking in the headset and Ilya's face turns into a wider and wider grin, "and they have a poster of me and a signed jersey and they wear it all the time. Superfan, even."

He'd feel bad, but nobody made Hayden do this anyway.

Still, Ilya rests his elbow on Shane's shoulder and leans back comfortably. And–*yeah*, if Ilya could suck his dick while he'd been on the phone with Hayden, Shane can do this again.

He turns so his face is to Ilya's stomach, and he catches Ilya's attention. He's watching Shane, ignoring the game and Hayden, as Shane tugs the strings of his sweatpants. Without a word, Ilya lifts his hips up and lets Shane tug them down to expose his cock, and he must think Shane is about to do something *different* because his smirk is lewd and excited. And unlike the quiet days, his dick is already becoming interested.

"Focus on the game," Shane says, and sits up to shove one of Ilya's legs up onto the couch, creating space for his body.

"*That was not my fault, you are terrible at this,*" Ilya says, but the controller is only in one hand and he's too busy watching Shane to be playing. Still, Shane slots his body along Ilya's raised leg and sets his head on the opposite thigh, taking the hardening head of Ilya's dick into his mouth, and letting his eyes fall shut. "Oh, fuck."

But like last time, Shane doesn't do anything. He just holds, and it takes a minute for Ilya to loosen back into the couch, running his fingers through Shane's hair, but once he does, Shane sighs through his nose. It feels good being like this. To have Ilya hardening further in his mouth, yes, but just to be here, welcomed into this intimacy without question.

He likes breathing Ilya's scent in. How he smells of slight sweat and earth here. How when Shane takes him slightly deeper and tips his head forward, he's moved with every breath Ilya takes.

Unlike the quiet days, too, Ilya never gets soft. And he stays there for a while, hazy and in and out of the clouds. Where he only exists here. Where everything else stops.

And then, wholly unlike quiet days, Shane doesn't just sit there. Not the same way. He rolls it in his mouth and along his tongue, feeling at textures and sucking at the soft spongy head. It is far from a blow job, but it's not quite what he's done before. And Ilya just lets him.

It's long enough for the sun to touch the horizon and Hayden to finally leave to go eat dinner with his family. And then a short while longer as Ilya just rubs Shane's neck and entwines their fingers together. It feels like only seconds, though.

Finally, Ilya tugs on Shane's hair, and pulls him away. He looks about as hazy as Shane feels.

"Come here," he says, and urges Shane up onto his lap to straddle him. Shane is kissed so sweetly and tenderly, hands cradling and rubbing his lower back.

"Sorry." His voice is a bit slurred and he clears his throat, jaw aching. "Lost track of time."

"You like this." Ilya gives him a half smile and kisses him again. "Do not apologize. It is very sweet."

"You think it's *sweet?*"

"Yes," Ilya nods and pinches Shane's chin to pull him in for yet another kiss. "You are so sweet and good for me, wanting to hold me like that."

"Do you like it, though?"

"Yes." This time the smile shows his teeth and he laughs a bit, but his eyes are glassy so Shane kisses his forehead. "Yes, I like the way it feels. The way it makes me feel."

"How does it make you feel?" Shane whispers against his forehead.

"Mm. Maybe… maybe like you would do anything for me. Like–like you float away so easily just from having me inside you like that, yes? I feel," he blushes a bit and averts his eyes down to Shane's lips, "loved. Very loved."

"That's good," Shane tips Ilya's chin up and kisses his nose. "That's good. That's exactly what I want. Because you are, Ilya. You're so fucking loved."

"I know. I know Shane. I love you, too."

And so it becomes a thing. Not every time, but sometimes. Not always on the worst days, but sometimes. Not always on the vague ones, where the quiet is vestigial instead of glaring, but sometimes. The quiet days aren't as often with the medication, and so in the few and far between, Ilya doesn't ask, not explicitly, and Shane doesn't offer.

But Shane isn't falling behind anymore. He hasn't been in a long time. And he's not always good at reading people but Ilya isn't just people. He's Ilya. He's Shane's. So Ilya will kiss the back of Shane's hand as he's cuddled onto the couch and something about the way his lips press to Shane's skin will tell him that Ilya is asking. Or the way he taps his foot on the coffee

table. The way he sips his tea. And if Shane were to be asked exactly what made it different from every other sip of tea, every other kiss Shane had been given, he wouldn't be able to say. Only that it was. Only that Ilya sighed in relief when Shane understood what he was saying.

There was a night in the 2015 to 2016 season that Shane, in hindsight, saw it. And he wishes he'd said something then–it wouldn't have gone over well, he knows–but he hadn't understood. Not like he does now. It had been after, while Shane was limp on the bed and recovering and Ilya had stepped away to shower. He'd been gone for a few minutes and the shower hadn't started, though the light from the cracked open door still illuminated the hotel room. So Shane had dragged himself from the bed and pushed the door open.

Ilya had been standing here. Eyes empty, brows furrowed, glaring at himself in the mirror. Not even noticing Shane's arrival. And god, Shane hadn't understood. So he'd stepped up behind him and wrapped his arms around his torso, groping at Ilya's chest that he likes so much. And it was on the cusp of too much–the cusp of the line between their relationship and a *more* they couldn't acknowledge–but Ilya had blinked rapidly and snapped out of it, smiling with half his mouth at Shane in the mirror and asking if they should go again.

He's an adept performer. Shane knows that now. In the way he had half the league convinced he was the biggest asshole to have ever stepped foot into the MLH and the other half convinced the sun shined right from said asshole. And Shane was behind, yes, but the day Ilya let him catch up? The day he stopped pretending?

Shane had made it his mission to know Ilya. Every version of him. Whatever and whoever that meant. Mask or not. Quiet or not. Ilya was his to know.

His.

–

Ilya is smiling at the team, wide so it reaches his eyes, patting each one rough on the back as they pass through the board. "I love you, I love you," he says over and over. And Shane is bringing up the rear, but still he gets a curt, "I love you."

He's a good captain. Discerning and precise and dedicated, and Shane likes working under him as captain very much. It was an adjustment, certainly, but not an unwelcome one. Ilya is so open with his love. And he knows from playing against him back when he was a Raider that this love carried over then, too.

How often had he been told he was loved? Before Shane started saying it? How often had he begged to be seen without anyone noticing?

To witness. To understand. That would've been Shane's role.

And Ilya is smiling and exuding sunshine, but Shane knows before they leave the locker room that it will be a quiet night. Where Ilya's eyes will shine a bit and he will quietly layer cheese and lunchmeat onto a sandwich for Shane as he watches on. Where he will hold Shane in bed and press his face to Shane's back, breathing him in. And in the morning, he won't want to go to practice and he will take the pill Shane hands him.

And it isn't much different than other quiet nights, except it's that night that things change again.

They're in bed, and Ilya is holding Shane to him just as expected.

"I am sorry," he whispers into Shane's neck.

"No, Ilya, you have nothing to be sorry for."

It's silent for a long time, and Shane would think Ilya had fallen asleep if not for the lack of snoring. This time it isn't a sip of tea or a kiss, but the way Ilya rubs Shane's lower belly.

"Do you want me to–"

"I do not want to let go of you," Ilya interrupts. "I do not know."

"You don't have to." Shane rubs his thumb over the bone of Ilya's wrist over and over. "We can do it this way, too."

"I have a big dick but not that big, Hollander."

Shane laughs at his last name and turns a big in Ilya's arms to see him. Quiet, yes, but still Ilya. Still funny and kind. "Where else do you tend to stick your dick in me, Rozanov?"

Ilya lets him. He watches in interest and disbelief as Shane retreats to the bathroom to prepare, sitting in the doorway against the jamb, squinting in the lights. Normally he would offer to help, but now he just watches. And normally Shane would scold him and demand privacy, but he thinks Ilya needs this.

And he's so gentle with it. The way his temple rests against the frame, curls flat on one side from laying down, *heart eyes* in full force. His cheeks are flushed a light pink. So tired. So beautiful.

"Okay, I'm ready." He offers a hand to Ilya and helps him stand, flipping the light off and directing him back to the bed. Ilya's hands don't leave his body, and it's Shane that is tugged up against him once they are in bed. Ilya is half hard but with some effort and maneuvering, he slips inside so his hips come flush with Shane's ass.

It's different from holding him in his mouth. Not necessarily better, definitely not worse. But Ilya sighs deeply and presses his head up against Shane's neck, and Shane is already in the

process of floating away. It's not pleasure in the traditional sense. Pressure and a sense of knowing more than anything. And his body is reacting to the intrusion as it always would, clenching around Ilya as Shane's dick hardens. But it's not about that.

And Shane could stay here. For always. "So good for me, Shane."

It doesn't escalate beyond that. Ilya holds fast to his body, kissing his spine over and over, and when the quiet has softened enough that Ilya can sleep, he turns Shane in his arms and does.

There is a day, weeks later, where Ilya is ping-poinging around the house. He's not doing anything in particular and Shane has it in his mind to send him out to shovel snow from one side of the driveway to the other and then back again just to get some of his energy out.

"Come watch a movie with me," Ilya demands from him while he's doing his yoga.

"No."

"Yes."

"No."

"Yes."

"Ilya, I'm busy, come work out with me."

"No, get up." Ilya enters the room and tugs at Shane's arm.

"You're sabotaging my health. We're on the same team now, you know. My health is your success."

Ilya rolls his eyes and groans, "God, Hollander, you are so boring."

But he patiently sits against the wall and watches the yoga and Shane is flustered with the leering but not deterred. He likes when Ilya watches him. It turns him on to an unfortunate degree. He thinks Ilya did that to him. Trained it into him starting all the way back in Vegas. But there are worse things to get horny over than his husband watching him.

And finally when he's done, Ilya drags him to the couch and throws himself down onto it. "You could do that thing," he says.

"What fucking thing?"

Ilya waves him off and rolls his eyes. "That thing you do. On my dick."

"I do a lot of things on your dick, you'll have to clarify."

Ilya crosses his arms and purses his lips. *Brat.* "You are teasing me, yes?"

Oh. “No,” he says, “I mean yes. Yes. I–okay.” Shane is already warm from Ilya’s watching and he’s only done this on a none quiet day once, but he’d liked it. So much. “You want–my mouth or–”

“No, Shane,” Ilya reaches out a hand for Shane to take. “You will sit on my dick and watch a movie with me.”

Okay. Yep. Okay. “Yes. Yes, um, pick a movie, I’ll be right back.”

Ilya’s sweet laugh echoes behind him.

It’s different, and quickly Ilya gets them situated laying down instead of sitting when he realizes he cannot see the movie. It’s an animated thing, but Shane is too hazed out before the title card comes on so it doesn’t even matter.

Ilya is hard this time. Very. Big and warm and stretching Shane just right. It’s different than being fucked only in the stillness of it, and he’s getting hot from it in a way he doesn’t on the quiet days.

He’s right, he thinks, and this proves it. That this doesn’t have to be sexual because now it most certainly is, and Ilya is leaning into it. Hips still and stone as he kisses the crest of Shane’s ear and sucks on his ear lobe. Shane is twitching inside, clenching and tightening over and over around Ilya. His stomach is tight immediately. And he’s probably going to end up leaking on the couch from his own dick, but fuck it.

“Stay still, Shane,” Ilya whispers right into his ear, and it sends shivers up and down his spine.

He lets himself go without a fight. He lets his mind float and gentle and his body contract and implode to exist only in the spots Ilya’s warmth touches him. Along his back, his arms where Ilya’s hands lay, the spot on his cheek that is wet with Ilya’s breath. The only pieces of him are those that have been claimed by Ilya. Nothing else exists. Nothing else matters.

He is able to breathe deep through it, Ilya’s heartbeat in his back, counting the seconds each one of his inhales takes. The hard callous on the lateral side of his pointer finger as it brushes along Shane’s waist. To be only what Ilya’s touch dictates, reduced to nothing more.

The movie might be over. It might have just started or perhaps it’s been three days they’ve laid there. But eventually, Ilya begins to slowly move inside him. It’s not enough to finish from, but it brings him back to the edges of awareness. Little prickles of pleasure that burst in his belly.

They’ve never had sex after doing this. And only once had it been like this, but even his mouth like this had never resulted in a real blow job. This is different though. Ilya is

breathing heavy into his hair and his hand is clutched tight into Shane's waist. Little tiny thrusts in and out against the backdrop of a movie and Ilya's moans.

He would be content if Ilya finished in him and stayed put. Leave Shane be and grow hard again to repeat the process. Grow hard over and over without ever leaving Shane's body.

He tells Ilya as such, and earns a choked off cry in response as Ilya thrusts once into him harshly.

"You cannot say things like that," Ilya pants, "I am trying to be good."

"I'm trying to be good too, you know." Shane puts a hand over Ilya's on his waist and fingers gently at the hard callous. "I'm trying to be good for you.'

It's just that Ilya has many more loud days than he does quiet. Loud days where he laughs and crashes through Shane's life like a bull in a china shop and Shane loves every second. He's bold and unapologetic in his brightness.

Loud days where Shane does something he likes in practice and smashes their visors together to kiss him. Loud days where Shane makes a goal and Ilya jumps up and down from the bench yelling, "That is my husband you jealous fuckers," and makes the team laugh and Shane blush. Where Ilya gets flour all over the floors trying to bake a Russian cookie recipe he found online or sends fourteen photos of his dick to Shane in a span of 30 seconds while standing next to him in public. Where he gets on the floor before every dog he meets even if ill advised and greets them gently, hands out, and lets them come to him.

Every version of him. Every version of his kindness and goodness. Of his patience and humor. Where he smiles and Shane's heart stops. Where he chatters in the car, loose and comfortable in a way he wasn't the first time he rode with Shane. Where he teaches Shane Russian words and makes fun of him for his pronunciation and never gives up, lighting up even further when Shane is able to give him a few sentences here and there.

Every part of Ilya is his to love. To witness. To have. And so desperately he wishes–hopes– that there was someone there, back then, to witness. To know. That there may be someone out there who knew Ilya at thirteen. At eighteen. At twenty-five. And maybe that person is Svetlana. She is very good to Ilya, but she's not always open about their past with Shane as Ilya is. He thinks it's a protective thing rather than something corrosive, and whatever low lying jealousy that he'll never escape from is dampened only by the hope that at least she knew. That she was witness to his triumphs and failures and quiet when nobody else was. That she remembers.

And Ilya deserves that. He deserves to be known. He always did. And now he is. And he always will be.

End Notes

This isn't freaky at all and I'm so sorry, I keep breaking my promises. It was NOT supposed to be like this, and I did NOT set out to write *this* fic. But also, I always write while listening to music and I finished this entire thing before realizing that I'd been listening to "The Last Unicorn" on repeat the entire fucking time so I'm blaming that because that song fucks with me.

I don't know how this happened. Uh.... 😬 😬 😬 😬

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