

After the rain comes good weather

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After the rain comes good weather

by [gsmaxwell](#)

Summary

It had been almost two years since Shane had stepped foot in the Bell Centre in Montreal. It felt like an entirely different place through the visiting team entrance.

Ilya played with Mishka ears for a moment, then sighed dramatically. “*Fine, I will go to Montreal.*”

“What?” Shane’s heart skipped a beat. “I’m not asking you to.”

“*You think I’m a bad husband?*”

Or: Shane plays Montreal for the first time, and it goes about as well as expected.

Companion piece to *There have been threats* and *If you're afraid of wolves*. March 2016.

Notes

I've cut and chopped this thing so many times I hope I didn't miss anything.

This story wanted to be about five different things, but I think it finally got wrestled into submission.

Enjoy!

March 2016

Shane was barely holding it together.

It had been almost two years since he had stepped foot in the Bell Centre in Montreal. It felt like an entirely different place through the visiting team entrance.

Of course, the Bears had played the Voyageurs since they traded Shane. Those games had been high selling, but something had always kept Shane off the roster. Once had been a lower body injury, another a very well-timed bout of bronchitis. More often, it was a simple panic attack, and LeClaire had reluctantly scratched him at the last minute on the advice of Shane's therapist, the medical team, and the NHLPA.

Each no-show game seemed to throw gas on the fire for the fans. Boston was frothing at the mouth to taunt the Montrealers for letting Shane go; Montreal looked to be ready to burn the arena down to make sure he didn't leave alive again.

Not to mention there hadn't been a fucking peep from CISI about whether or not the guy from the warehouse ("Dante," Shane kept trying to say his name in front of the mirror, but that felt like some kind of Bloody Mary ritual and the guy wasn't a boogeyman— he was *real*) was still interested in offing Shane Hollander. They had said barring a major betting event, Shane should just relax and live his life.

Easier said than fucking done.

The silence was worse than the threats. He had started to prefer the abuse from the fans.

When he had hit the two-year anniversary of leaving Montreal, he decided that enough was enough. The longer he waited to face it, the worse it got. It was to the point where he only had to see that Montreal was on the schedule to send his heart rate through the roof. The Bears were comfortably in a playoff spot and Montreal was tanking.

He had tried anti-anxiety meds during the off season and quickly decided they weren't for him. Even a second shaved off his reaction time threw off his entire game. And if he didn't have hockey, then what did he have left?

After one of the more serious arguments he had ever had with his parents where even his mom had been against his decision, he kept trying to play med-free.

Which landed him here.

At the Bell Centre.

White-knuckling his way through anxiety and PTSD with nothing more than sheer will power and bullheaded stubbornness.

He had lied to his therapist, his teammates and his parents that he was feeling good.

It was, of course, Ilya who called him out on his bullshit.

"I'm fine," Shane had insisted, his tablet propped up on his knees. He was wearing a sweater Ilya had forgotten the last time he had been in Boston, and it still smelled a bit like him.

"Ah, yes. Good joke. Have you heard of the one where Dallas Kent wins the Hart?" Ilya frowned. He was in bed as well, but Mishka flopped in his arms with his tongue lolling out. *"Tell them to fuck off again. Montreal doesn't deserve you."*

Shane ran his hands through his hair. It was getting long, and he knew his parents were going to point it out.

"I can't keep running."

"Why not?"

Ilya made it sound so simple when it really wasn't.

Shane's parents and grandparents had taken him to the Bell Centre before he could walk, lifting him up to see him the plaques and trophies, and history of the place and, especially, the players. When he worked through the bullying, the losing, and the injuries, the image of his number in the rafters had kept him going. He had fully believed he would be on the team that brought the Cup here. He thought about when he would bring his own kids there, one day, he was going to be able to show them a legacy.

He was supposed to have represented something good. Great.

"I'm going to go this time," Shane insisted. "And play."

"I don't like it."

"You don't have to."

Ilya played with Mishka ears for a moment then sighed dramatically. *"Fine, I will go to Montreal."*

"What?" Shane's heart skipped a beat. "I'm not asking you to."

"You think I'm a bad husband?"

The word would never stop a thrill from running down his spine.

"How are you getting that from what I said?"

"Bad husbands sit home on their day off and watch their man have a panic attack on TV. Montreal is only two hours away."

"Montreal isn't safe," Shane said quickly. "What about... you know," his voice dropped, even though he knew no one was listening in the privacy of their own bedrooms. *"The mob."*

Ilya sniffed, unimpressed. *“I have played in Montreal since then, it has been fine.”*

“I don’t like it.”

“*You don’t have to,*” Ilya mocked his accent, and Shane glowered.

“Can you be sneaky, at least?” He hated how much relief he felt at the thought of Ilya there.

“Yes, yes. I will do a fake name. Moustache. Sunglasses. Newspaper with holes to spy.”

“Fuck off.” Shane stared at the screen, his toes curling under the blankets, and sighed. “Well, if you insist, I guess so.”

He’d managed to talk Ilya out of actually going to the game, because that was insane. Instead, Ilya dropped Mishka off at Shane’s parents and booked a room on a different floor.

But Ilya and boredom were a dangerous combo, and Shane had to suffer through him texting increasingly inappropriate messages all day. Shane had come to interpret that as Ilya’s way of being encouraging and supportive, not distracting and a nuisance.

Lily: [picture sent]

Shane quickly slammed his phone on his thigh before someone could see.

Now he just had to channel the dick pics and filthy promises into motivation to get on the ice and not throw up.

This game also marked just over two years since he had been traded. He had been avoiding the headlines, but the press had been relentless.

There had been no way to avoid the pre-game media.

Visiting teams normally just did interviews by the locker room, but they had made an exception for tonight. Shane forced himself to be calm as he walked into the press room. It was filled to the brim, and the second he stood on his mark, a dozen mics were shoved into his face. It was hard to not flinch at the flashing lights, so he kept his gaze low.

The second he nodded that he was ready, the questions, in French and English, crashed like a tidal wave. The Bears’s PR team had to cut them off with a scowl and chose one at random.

“Shane, first time back in Montreal since the trade—what are you expecting tonight?”

Shane gripped his elbows.

“A lot of passion,” he said. “I love the Montreal fans and how much they love the game. I’m excited to see the energy.”

He swore he heard someone snort.

“Do you think the reception of the crowd will affect your game?”

Shane shook his head. “No, they’re here to see good hockey and that’s what I want to give them.”

“Shane, there’s been a lot of speculation about why you haven’t played here since the trade. Injuries, illness—can you clear that up?”

He knew that question was coming. His hands were clammy and he could feel sweat pooling along his spine.

“There’s always a lot of moving pieces in the background. Unfortunately, it hasn’t worked out before, but I’m glad tonight is happening.”

“Can you be more specific?”

He shrugged, trying to keep his face neutral.

“I’m not getting into that,” he said evenly, repeating what the Bears’s team had coached him on. “Just happy to be there playing tonight.”

“Was any of it related to why you left Montreal in the first place?”

He saw LeClaire scowl, but Shane had prepped for this one as well.

“At the end of the day, trades happen, and guys get moved,” he shrugged non-committally. “I’m grateful for my time in Montreal, and Boston for welcoming me.”

“Do you have any regrets, leaving Montreal, your teammates and your fans?”

The tension was mounting in the room, and Shane took a split second to take a breath and push through the sharp spike of adrenaline that made him want to turn tail and run.

“I loved the team and the fans,” he echoed, hating how wooden his responses were. “I– I don’t regret anything about my time here.”

“Last questions,” someone from the media team cut in quickly.

“You were a fan favorite here. Do you think you owe it to them to—”

“Do you feel the organization handled your exit fairly? After the Olympics—”

““Shane, what would you say to Montreal fans tonight who feel you betrayed your team—”

The PR person gave a curt nod, and Shane quickly left, his shoulders hunched against the frantic flashing of lights. The tunnel back to the locker room felt dark and fuzzy as he outpaced the management team.

He was used to the scrutiny. He wasn’t Ilya who seemed to feed off the taunts and heckles, but he didn’t mind them on the road.

It was good for people to hate his talent, his drive — it meant he was doing his fucking job and playing for his team.

He just wasn't used to them hating *him*.

There were several texts waiting for him.

Lily: wow montreal really sucks

Shane: yeah they—

Shane deleted words. They, what? Shane had been lying to them, of course they were upset. If he had told the truth—

But he *did* tell the truth and Theriault traded him.

But what if he—

He tried to close that. The *what ifs* were the things that caged him in sometimes. It did him no good to do this right before a game. He needed something else to focus on.

Lily: what is french for ‘voyaguers suck’?

Shane winced; he usually coped with the filming by blocking out the part of his brain that was self-aware and pretending social media didn't exist. He never watched clips of himself, and the thought that someone (thousands of someones) had just watched that trainwreck made his hands clammy.

Shane: don't troll the fans

Lily: or “Dagenais has a small dick”

Shane: not helping. and not true

Lily: 🤔 🤔 🤔

A ghost of a smile spread across his face. Usually, after a shitty PR session, he was in his own head in the locker room, the effort of keeping the questions at bay knotting his stomach that no amount of breathing exercises or forced focus could fix. But this was helping.

Shane: stop thinking about jj's dick

Lily: fine. I will think about yours 🍑

Shane: arg. you're a freak

Lily: i will think about the sounds you make when you—

A heavy hand on his back made his heart rate spike, but it was just Marleau.

“Don't worry about those assholes, Hollandaise, we got your back.”

Shane made a face.

“Come on! We tried Lando, Holly, Hallz, Halzy,” Marleau rolled his eyes. Around them more guys on the team snickered. “Hollandaise is clever! Why do you hate them *all*?”

“I mean, I don’t hate them—“

“I’m going to find one that works,” Marleau vowed.

Shane didn’t know how to say he never did nicknames. Hayden had also tried them out when they had been rookies together, but it just didn’t work. He was Hollander, or *capitane* or just Shane.

Lily: i will think about the sounds you make when you cum in my throat

Fuck. Shane didn’t know who had taught Ilya this kind of English, but he always had a sick thrill of jealousy and appreciation.

Shane: you can’t text me like this before a game

Lily: are you hard in the locker room? pervert

Shane: no you asshole

Shane: just wait until you play next

Shane: ill get my revenge

Lily: you.

Lily: golden good hockey boy.

Lily: sext me before game.

Lily: what will you do

Lily: send me video of wrapping your stick?

Lily: tell me what your curve angle is

Lily: so hot

Shane: fuck you

Lily: oh so scary

Lily: im thinking about it.

Lily: Hard 🍆💦

Shane took a shuddering breath and put his phone down. Ilya was infuriating, but it was helping. The disastrous PR session felt further away now.

It was time to head out for warm ups and Shane let Marleau lead the way down the tunnel.

Focus on hockey. Drown out the crowds. They were supposed to boo him tonight – he was the opponent.

Don't think about who else might be in the stands.

.... It didn't seem so bad when he thought about Ilya watching though.

The roar felt louder than normal, and everything felt backwards as the lights from the rink lit up the tunnel. Fans were screaming as they started to emerge, crowding the metal barriers running up the elevated seats so they could catch a glimpse of the team as they passed. There were a lot of signs being flashed, but Shane kept his eyes on Marleau's number.

He almost ran into him as Marleau paused for a second, reaching up to snatch a jersey dangling over the side. The kid holding it – barely a teenager – swore at him, but Marleau breezed past, stepping onto the ice. Shane frowned as he followed, watching Marleau detour to the bench and pass the jersey to the equipment manager. His heart stuttered.

TRAITRE was scrawled in bold letters right under the name HOLLANDER, and Shane swallowed hard.

TRAITOR.

He shook his head, trying to dislodge the feeling as he gave a wide circle around the rink.

It wasn't the worst that could happen.

He knew every spot on the ice: the weird warp in the far corner, the slight imperfection on the blue line where someone wobbled with the paint machine years ago, a divot on the boards where Hayden chipped his first tooth. He kept his eyes down as he shot past the signs and pounding on the plexiglass as people shouted insults at him.

White noise. That's what he was listening to.

After a lap to steady himself, he glanced on the other side of the ice where the Voyageurs were warming up. It was startling to see the red and blue from the wrong side.

He caught some of his former teammates glancing at him. Hayden had requested and gotten a trade to Toronto, so he didn't even have that friendly face.

Some gave a tight nod, others looked away. A few seemed to be sizing him up. His stomach twisted again when he locked eyes with JJ stretching halfway down the zone. He moved forward instinctively, but JJ glanced away to talk to Bobyr, the rookie draft the Voyageurs had acquired from the Ottawa-Montreal-Boston trade.

The guy, a nineteen-year-old out of Alberta, looked huge with a neck as thick as Shane's thigh. Shane swallowed hard and turned back to his Boston teammates who were warming up with a bit more intensity than normal.

Price passed him a puck and they shot back and forth for a while as Shane settled into the familiar movements.

Marleau was stretching on one side, and Shane joined him.

"Thanks," he said quietly when they were close enough to talk. He glanced at the tunnel where the pimply teen was still looking pissed. "You didn't have to do that."

"I assume whatever they wrote was bad, right?" Marleau said, his jaw hard.

"It wasn't nice," Shane nodded.

"Well, don't worry. We're going to fuck this team up, and then they can be angry at all of us."

Shane snorted. The Bears had a tendency to go over the top sometimes, and tonight he was along for the ride.

He steadfastly didn't look at the Montreal coaching staff.

Soon enough, they were back in the tunnel as the rink reset.

The arena was full now, and the preshow videos were playing and making the building rumble with the cheers and stomps of the crowd. It was always like this – a tsunami of passion and energy from the ground to the ceilings.

Shane's heart felt hollow.

The lights went down, and they headed on the ice, Shane going first this time as captain.

The noise hit, and he kept his head down knowing that the cameras would be laser focused on him. The roars and cheers shifted to hurl predictable abuse, unmistakably directed at him.

This was going to be a disaster, he thought, panicking.

He couldn't do this. He was going to fucking freak out and have to be stretched off the ice. It would be mortifying, and he would have to quit hockey. Quit North America. Maybe he could play in Europe. He already spoke French, surely somewhere would take him. Belgium? He would take a decent chocolate endorsement. Fuck his nutritionist.

The bench came up too fast and he clipped the boards hard, awkward as he hauled himself over with blood thumping in his ears, nearly deafening him.

LeClaire glanced at him, his face fixed into his game scowl, and sent out the second line to take the first shift.

For the top half of the first period, Shane felt like he was watching the game through a telescope, breathing hard even though he was just sitting there. His limbs felt locked, and each shift change he felt LeClaire's eyes on him before the coach subbed in someone else.

He had to fucking get it together. Was he really putting himself through this just to sit on the bench?

His hands were trembling so bad he missed his face with this water.

Finally, Boston managed to score, drawing ire from the other team. The atmosphere didn't feel friendly as someone shoved Callahan, the Boston forward who scored, shouting something. McLeod, a Voyageur Shane had helped move in two years ago, got in Callahan's face, and gloves dropped.

Shane stood, his anxiety distracted, prepared to jump in, but the linesmen broke up the spat before it started. The crowds shouted outrage, wanting to see blood, but Shane sat down gratefully. Callahan got a bullshit penalty for goalie interference, but the goal stood.

He could hear LeClaire cursing behind him. Marleau peeled off from where he had been angrily talking to the ref, shaking his head.

"Fucking bad call," Marleau looked ready to kill something.

"Hollander," LeClaire barked and Shane jumped. He went automatically to the face off as the decibels of the rink seemed to explode. He settled into his crouch, avoiding the eyes of Kissling.

"Shane," Kissling said civilly, and Shane finally glanced up. Greg Kissling had always been quiet, an older guy who padded out the bottom six. He wasn't usually on a powerplay, but the Voyageurs were lacking high shooters.

"Greg," Shane said back, and then the puck dropped.

Shane spent the next few minutes focused on the powerplay kill. It felt almost like cheating that he knew everyone's weak spots. Kissling was always slow on a breakaway, JJ forgot to check the left side, Drapeau tended to get cocky during powerplays and travelled out of the net more than he should.

He took it all in instinctively. They held off the powerplay until the last thirty seconds when Shane, sticking to the outside of the fray, caught a pass from Marleau. He took off like lightning down the ice. Kissling wasn't able to keep up as the energy in the barn shot through the roof.

Time slowed. His heart beat on each glide as the crowd faded to the background. Drapeau was out of place, and half a second too late. Shane caught a look of panic on his face as Shane snapped it clean into the far corner.

Shane sailed past as the sound slammed back in, like someone had cranked the volume. His heart was pounding wildly as he took what felt like a hollow victory lap, fist bumping the

Bears across the bench before Marleau and St-Vincent grabbed him in a triumphant hug.

Montreal challenged for an offside.

It was petty, Shane thought as he sat back down on the bench, a tight coil of frustration in his chest. An asshole move. He pushed the frustration and anger down. The cameras were trained on him, and he knew everyone was waiting for him to show any sign of irritation so they could jump at him.

The call stood, and Montreal erupted in disapproval. Shane heard it clearly this time, but he tried to not let it reach him. Not fully. He kept the anger and tension locked tight, coiled beneath the surface like a spring. Let them implode, let the crowds scream out their frustrations.

The rest of the game flew by, though it was boiling in unreleased tension. Shane focused on what was happening but it felt like everything was going wrong. All the hits on both sides were nasty, and they barely went ten minutes without a minor scuffle breaking out. Everyone was missing passing, on both sides, and it was hard to keep from taking control of plays for both his current and former team. Did all guys feel like this after being traded?

It was too much. It was stupid to feel responsible for both fucking teams, as if they were both two sides of a coin, and he was the sliver of metal between them.

By the third period, the Bears were up by one, but Shane was too wound up to care.

He found himself lined up next to JJ during a face off.

Around this time, everyone was exhausted, and tonight had pulled more energy than normal. He glanced over, hoping to see some sign of familiarity from his old teammate and friend, but JJ had his gaze steadfast on the play.

Montreal won the puck, and JJ took it with desperation. Shane was on his heels as they flew down the ice like a terrier chasing a rat. JJ was bigger, but Shane was faster, and he stole the pass, wiping it back towards Montreal's net, when Bobyr seemed to come out of nowhere and clobbered him.

The whistle rang out as Shane slammed into the boards, and the tension that had been boiling over all game finally released as if someone hit a release valve.

Gloves littered the ice as Price yanked Bobyr off Shane, fists flying as they squared off. Shane found himself in the crush anyway as everyone seemed to want to get in on the fight, and he felt his helmet cut into his cheek as he took a glancing blow.

Shane wasn't a chicken – his fights were rare but he was scrappy and he had been training with Price for a year now. But, before he could get a good blow in, someone grabbed the back of his jersey and pulled him off balance and out of the fray.

“Fuck off, JJ!” Shane tried to twist out, but JJ had the upper hand as he pulled Shane back several feet like he was a disobedient child. “If I want to fight–”

“Please,” JJ rolled his eyes, slipping into casual French. “I’ve seen you fight, *capitaine*. You should leave it to the big boys before you get hurt.”

Shane glared and let himself be dragged back more as the refs and linesmen waded in to pull everyone apart. The crux of the fight was over anyway.

“I’ve learned a few tricks,” Shane shot back, and JJ let go of his jersey.

“Right,” JJ snorted and went to skate off, but this time Shane grabbed him.

“If you believe I would have left like that then— then fuck you,” he said low and angrily.

JJ tried to shake him off but Shane held on tight. The focus was on the fights and wrestling matches simmering down ten feet away. No one was watching them right now.

“What else would it be?” JJ hissed. “No team makes a trade like that unless you asked for it. Theriault said—”

“Theriault is a fucking liar,” Shane spat, knowing how foreign those words sounded coming from him. He had spent years blindly trusting in him. It was how he was raised, to trust in the team and the team in the coach. How many times had he told JJ to trust the system? To trust the game the coach saw in them?

But Shane had thought he was more than JJ’s captain. He had thought they were friends.

And as angry and hurt as he felt, he locked eyes on JJ and saw the emotions mirrored.

The refs seemed to catch on that JJ and Shane weren’t cooling down like everyone else. The crowd was going wild as they were pulled apart, hurling insults at the refs who were stopping what they had hoped would be the retribution they were looking for.

The moment stretched, and JJ blinked, breathing their eye contact. Shane let out a breath and turned to skate back to his bench.

Bobyr got a two-minute penalty for highsticking, a soft slap on the wrist. Shane was wrung out of the whole game now, and it was a push to keep going. Montreal scored again, tying the game and forcing them into overtime. Shane didn’t care who scored. He just wanted to go home.

No one was a winner tonight.

In the end, Montreal managed to get one in, and Shane was the first in the locker room. He pulled off his gear because it felt like it was suffocating him. The room was quiet, and it felt like everyone was avoiding him. Shane tried to ignore it. A regular loss was one thing, but to

lose when something personal was at stake made him want to curl up in a hole and avoid the world for days.

If he had just been faster or more aggressive—

He tried to shake those thoughts off.

Ilya had been vocal during the whole game. It felt fucking weird to smile after a loss.

Lily: they want to waste 200\$ jersey on that? fuck these kids

Lily: tabernak

Lily: this is a good one, yes?

Lily: блядь, что за цирк

Lily: you look sexy when you are angry

Lily: wtf

Lily: porter is too old to be ref

Lily: he cannot see shit

Lily: fuck montreal

Lily: they are playing a tribute to you

Lily: song choice is terrible

Lily: where am i?

Lily: they cut me out!!! 🤨

Lilly: this is a crime

Lily: we look hot together

Lily: i did not get a tribute video from boston

Lily: this is bullshit

Lily: bobby— сука

The messages had tapered off as Boston started to backslide, and he was holding the phone when the final message came in.

Lily: okay, it is done

Lily: come to hotel любимый

He could feel the heat rising in his chest, and for a second the locker room blurred around him. St-Vincent glanced over, eyebrows raised, noticing the way Shane gripped his phone.

“Drapeau and I are going to get drinks,” he said quietly. Shane knew St-Vincent and Drapeau were from the same small town north of Quebec City and hung out every chance the teams played against each other, even with the tension that had existed between Montreal and Boston for the last year. “Do you want to join?”

“Thanks,” Shane ran a hand through his sweaty hair. He appreciated the olive branch, but all he wanted to do was go and forget the whole fucking game. “I’m just going to turn in.”

“Are you visiting your—” St-Vincent stumbled at the word. The team knew Shane was dating someone that they assumed lived in Montreal. It was only in the last few months of Shane hanging out with Ryan that the gender of that person was unspoken. “Your, uh, *chum*.”

“Don’t be an asshole,” Marleau rolled his eyes at St-Vincent and smacked him over the head. “It’s not just a friend, it’s a—” but Marleau paused, uncertain.

“Is what I said!” St-Vincent was uncharacteristically pink. Shane had to bite the inside of his lip because he wasn’t sure if he wanted to laugh or cry. “*Chum* is a...” he glanced at Shane and mumbled. “Boyfriend.”

Shane didn’t meet their eyes as he put his equipment away neatly, a practice that made sure the bag would close.

“Uh, yeah,” Shane said carefully. “I’m going to see... him.”

There it was. The truth. Well, a piece of the truth anyway.

The locker room froze for a moment. Shane’s eyes darted around, his heart pounding as he took in individual reactions. A few of the guys seemed to relax, seemingly grateful that it was finally out in the fucking open.

But some of the others shifted awkwardly, glancing down at their gear or sneaking sidelong glances at each other.

Shane felt a mixture of disappointment and relief. He wasn’t sure what he had been hoping for. Fireworks?

Ryan Price sighed across the room.

“Well, *my* boyfriend is here playing a show tonight,” he said reluctantly but firmly. “So, that’s where I’ll be. In case someone wants to know.”

“Wait,” Joe Callaghan glanced up. “This is that Fabian guy, right? Can I come and get an autograph or something? My girlfriend is a huge fucking fan.”

Shane shot Ryan a grateful look as the tension broke a little and finished packing his bag. He couldn’t get out there fast enough.

He had to make a pitstop at his own room before heading to the room number Ilya had texted him. His palms were sweating as he knocked on the door, triple checking the hall was empty.

They hadn't done anything this risky since before, and he felt a strange nostalgic thrill. He heard the door unlock and was pushing in before Ilya fully opened it.

"Oh, Shane Hollander," Ilya grinned and moved as Shane slid past him, shutting the door harder than necessary. "Hockey legend, here to see me? What prize did I win?"

"Shut up," Shane's heart tightened, and he fell into Ilya. The knots in his stomach, the headache pounded behind his eyes, didn't matter anymore as his nostrils filled with Ilya's scent, his hands roamed hard planes of muscle and Ilya lips captured his.

He wanted a lot tonight, but right now he wanted it fast. He kissed Ilya, hot and needy. God, he needed this. Needed *him*, Ilya, the man he had been dreaming about for weeks. He poured his frustration, his hurt, his anger, all the feelings he had thought he was done with for the night into this.

Ilya let Shane shove him against the closet door, burning off the adrenaline of sneaking around. He yielded to Shane for a moment before he pushed back. Shane gave a show of resistance, pushing back against Ilya as he groped Shane's ass. But they both knew what Shane's resistance was for – something for Ilya to push harder against.

Ilya bodied him backwards, and Shane's back hit the bed with a bounce.

"Take off your clothes," Ilya was already bare chested and went for Shane's sweatpants. He ripped his tee shirt over his head, the split second of darkness disorientating enough that he nearly elbowed Ilya in the head.

Ilya ducked, and his mouth was on Shane's cock, pants only halfway down his thighs.

"Oh fuck," Shane groaned, gripping the pillow behind him as Ilya held him firmly and ran his tongue under the head of Shane's dick. "Ilya, you gotta slow down, I'm going to—"

Ilya pulled off with a faint popping sound, his eyes dark as he locked on Shane's and smirked. "Don't worry, I'm going to give you what you want."

"What do I want?" Shane said before he could stop himself, a wave of humiliation and frustration at needing to ask it coursing through him.

Ilya didn't shame him, though. Instead, he ran his warm hands up the top of Shane's thighs, sliding up and between his legs with a solemn intensity, then he kissed him, deep and thorough. Shane shivered and melted back as Ilya's palms met his, lacing their fingers together and pressing his hands above his head.

"What do you want?" Ilya whispered as he finally broke the kiss, moulding himself against Shane. Their bodies were flush from knees to chest, his mouth and breath warm by Shane's ear. "You want to be fucked, sweetheart. You want me to fuck you hard and forget everything. You want me to break you."

Shane hated the whimper that escaped in his throat, hated the sting of tears in his eyes as the truth of what Ilya was saying hit him hard. He fought against the weight of Ilya on him, trying to push him away as if it would change what Ilya was saying.

Instead of letting him go, Ilya gripped his hands harder, muttering something low and intimately warm in Russian in his ear. Shane resisted, hating how tight his throat was, how much he needed to fight, to be held down, to hold himself together just a little bit longer.

“Please, love, is okay,” Ilya muttered, the faint stubble on his face scratching against Shane’s jaw like sandpaper, eroding the last bit of Shane’s resistance. “I have you.”

And then, Shane couldn’t stop it anymore as everything holding him together seemed to fall apart.

He felt like a wild animal, his hands gripping into Ilya’s so hard it must have hurt, a surge of energy making him fight back against everything, everyone, all the fucking pain and rage he had felt throughout the day.

He *wanted* to fight. He *wanted* to fucking kill something. The guy in the warehouse, the reporters, the fans, the coaches – hell, the entire fucking city of Montreal – and maul them until they were bleeding and shredded and cold at his feet. How dare they make him feel this. *How fucking dare they.*

A sharp cry tore from his throat, a raw, desperate sound that seemed to echo all the fury inside him. His body bucked against Ilya, a flare of chaos before he immediately sank back against him, breath ragged, as if that single outburst had been enough to vent some of the storm.

God, he was so fucked up. A fucking freak.

But Ilya didn’t let go. He bore the brunt, wrapping his arms around Shane despite his struggles, holding him firm even as Shane clawed and held him tight.

“Fuck,” he gasped, tears shamefully started to fall down his face, wetting Ilya’s cheek as he was pressed right against him. *Fuck.*

“I know, I know,” Ilya switched back to English, and Shane could hear the tightness in his throat as well. “Is okay, sweetheart. Is okay.”

“Why is everything so fucked up?” Shane’s fingers were digging painfully into Ilya’s back, his body curling around him. If Ilya let go Shane knew he was done for. “Why are they so fucked up?”

“I don’t know,” Ilya said, his hands squeezing his sides. “I’m sorry.”

“I hate them.”

“Shh,” Ilya kissed his face, his neck.

“I hate this.”

“Is okay.”

“I hate... me.”

“No, sweetheart,” Ilya pulled back to meet his eyes. His hands framed Shane’s face, rubbing at his wet cheekbones with his thumbs. “No you don’t.”

“I should be better than that. Then this.”

“No,” Ilya shook his head firmly. “Impossible.”

“How do you know?” Shane’s voice cracked, accusatory. “How do you know that?”

“I know,” Ilya said, pressing a kiss to his lips. “Trust me.”

He opened Shane up gently, kissing him like he was trying to distract him though Shane loved the way his fingers could make him feel. Shane moaned and bit at his lips, exhausted to his bones but not willing to let Ilya take him without a fight.

When Ilya’s cock entered him, he clung, his arms wrapped around Ilya’s shoulders and gripping his hair. He felt both present and drifting as Ilya nuzzled his jaw until they could kiss again.

He wanted to talk, wanted to tell Ilya that he was okay now and didn’t need to be coddled anymore. But, every time he tried, Ilya seemed to swallow his words with his own.

I love you.

Shane shivered as he whispered Russian against his skin, in words he knew Shane would understand now.

“Ty moy.”

You’re mine.

“Moy lyubimy.”

My love.

“Ya s toboy.”

I’m with you.

Ilya wrapped a large hand around him, and it only took a minute for Shane to come with a cry against Ilya’s neck. Finally, finally, he relaxed.

“Ya ne dam sluchit'sya nichego plokhogo,” Ilya gasped, his own body moving with urgency. *“Ya tebya lyublyu,”* he cried out as Shane held him and he came inside.

They held each other after for quite some time before Shane could feel himself drifting toward sleep. It was Ilya who moved first, trying his best to be gentle as he pulled out, but

Shane still winced.

They rarely didn't use condoms, but in this closeness, Shane let himself feel grateful for the gift this was. The raw, real intimacy he had been craving, needing, for months. He laid there, his eyes closed as Ilya disappeared into the bathroom before coming back with a warm cloth to clean them up and then coax Shane under the covers.

The room was quiet, filled only with the soft rhythm of their breathing, and Ilya's lips grazed the back of Shane's neck.

"Ilya," Shane whispered.

"Yes?" Ilya moved closer, as if he wasn't already trying to crawl under Shane's skin.

"What was that last thing you said?"

Ilya snorted. "You want language lesson now?"

"*Pozhaluyta?*" Shane said. "Please?"

Ilya was quiet for a moment and then said: "*Ya ne dam sluchit'sya nichego plokhogo.* I will not let anything bad happen to you."

Shane squeezed Ilya's hand over his heart and closed his eyes, feeling the warmth of the words sink into him.

"Do you believe me?" Ilya asked softly in the darkness.

Shane nodded against the pillow, the last of his tension easing. His chest felt lighter, his body finally unclenching.

"*Da.*"

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