

when the bells toll

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when the bells toll

by [Tizniz](#)

Summary

Shane was fine until the fire alarm.

Or, mostly fine.

He was holding on. Because he knew that once practice was done, he could go home, have a nice long shower, and then hide away in his bed. There'd be no expectations of him, no one looking to him for what to do next, no one needing something from him. They'd been taking from him all day and he could feel the pieces of himself disappearing. He wasn't sure how he'd managed to run the drills he did during practice.

Notes

We back with another non-verbal Shane fic! He is so precious and dear to me. And as someone who spent the last week struggling to not go non-verbal, it felt even more right to post this.

While there is Hollanov in this, and lots of thoughts of Ilya, majority of this story is actually more focused on Shane and Hayden friendship. I didn't mean for it to end up like that but Shane deserves a friend like Hayden. I will take no Hayden hate.

Also, this was mostly inspired by the moment with Arthur in the kitchen. That'll make sense when you read. The image popped into my head and the rest came together.

Xx

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

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From the moment Shane had woken up that morning, everything had been wrong and too much.

Usually the rink was his safe space; he would put his skate to the ice and nothing else mattered for a while. But today had been different. Worse.

The lights had been too bright, a low buzzing sound seeming to emanate from them. His teammates' laughter was too sharp, a spike straight into his mind. The chatter was going too quick, innuendoes lost on him and his literal processing of words. The seams of his gloves, normally unnoticed, pressed into his skin uncomfortably, making him hold his stick wrong. They'd also been surprised with new practice jerseys today, meaning the fabric is stiff and itchy against his neck and wrists where his undershirt meets his gloves.

Everything had pressed against him, making it near impossible to breathe. Words slipped away from him one by one as practice progressed. JJ and Hayden had to pick up, Shane needing to rely on his two A's to help him get through the drills. No one seemed to notice though, well used to Shane being quiet and stern. It also wasn't *technically* on Shane to do the drills – that was more of a coach or assistant coach thing – it just became something Shane took on to his already heavily weighed down shoulders.

Stumbling off the ice had been a relief, such a stark difference to how Shane normally felt, and it was the first time someone sort of noticed something wrong.

Hayden, naturally.

He hadn't said or asked anything, thankfully, but he had been shooting Shane concerned little looks as everyone chatted and undressed. The noise had been an overwhelming wave against Shane's already prickly skin. He'd decided against a shower here, even though the sweat drying on his skin would only make things worse, desperate to get out.

And then the fire alarm went off.

The siren had made most of them jump, but it made Shane wince, pressing a hand to his head. Another chunk of him shrivelled up and died.

But he was the captain. He had a responsibility.

“C-come on, guys.” Shane chokes out, throat tight as panic slowly crept up from his chest. “You know...you know...”

“Get some clothing on and get your sweaty asses outside!” Hayden yells over the loud siren, stepping half in front of Shane. “We don’t know if this is real or not!”

There’s grumbling but the team does move quickly, shoving their feet into shoes, tugging on a shirt or hoodie to cover their exposed skin, heading for the door.

Shane’s fingers curl into the hem of his shirt, eyes darting from one stall to the next, making sure everyone is gone. His eyes flicker past Hayden’s face, his best friend having turned around to level him with a look full of concern now. “Uhm, sh...shower...” They need to check the shower. Make sure no one is left in there. But Shane can’t get the words out. The alarm is still going, blaring loudly, the lights flashing and dancing across the walls. Shane closes his eyes and swallows, bile rising in his throat.

A hand on his shoulder, heavy and grounding has him opening his eyes. Hayden is looking right at him.

“I’m going to check the showers and then we’re leaving. I’ll be with you the entire time.”

Direct, clear instructions. Someone to follow.

Shane nods.

Hayden is gone for maybe thirty seconds, but it feels like it stretches out for so much longer. The rules of what they’re supposed to do, Shane’s unspoken responsibilities as captain, feel so far away.

Shane feels lost.

But then there’s a hand on his shoulder once more and his feet are moving. The hallway is worse, the sound echoing off of the walls that stretch along the corridor. Shane actually reaches up and covers his ears, wanting to close his eyes too, but he needs to watch where he’s walking. Hayden squeezes his shoulder and keeps guiding him forward.

Just before they make it outside with the rest of the team, Shane lowers his hands, swallowing down the bile lingering in the middle of his throat.

He has to be a captain now.

Except when he and Hayden make it to the meeting point for the team, other clusters of various people who work in the arena scattered about the large parking lot, Comeau is already talking.

He’s calling out names, counting heads, relaying information to the assistant coach. Shane has no idea where Theriault is and finds he doesn’t care. Because all he can focus on right now is that fact that he’s failing as captain.

He should step forward, take over for Comeau, but the other man is glancing at him, sneering lightly, and returning to the task.

He'd done that during practice too. When Shane's words had faltered and Hayden hadn't spoken up quick enough, Comeau had made a comment and taken over, leading most of the guys in a drill. The others had glanced at Shane, as if waiting for an okay to do it. All Shane could do was nod and agree.

Now he finds he can't say anything. A protest or agreement. Even when his name is called for attendance, it's Hayden that replies for Shane.

His words are officially gone.

By the time everyone is allowed to go back inside. Shane knows he's in trouble.

There's no way he can pretend to be captain of this team, not when Comeau has taken over and everyone is looking to him for guidance, not when Shane can't do anything more than shake or nod his head at the quiet questions Hayden asks.

God, he still has to go inside and get his stuff too. He can't just leave.

But Hayden proves exactly why he's Shane's best friend.

The mass of people is filtering back inside, a sea of bodies that has Shane taking an aborted step back instead of forward, when Hayden places a hand on Shane's shoulder once more, ducking his head until only his face is in Shane's immediate line of vision.

"You can hear me, right?" Hayden asks, quiet enough that no one can hear them. Shane gives a small, jerky nod. "Okay. Good. Then I want you to go and wait by my car." Shane's eyes widen a fraction but Hayden shakes his head. "No. I'm not letting you be alone like this, Shane. I'm going to go in and grab our stuff. There's nothing else to do, okay? Practice is done. Everyone is just going to be joking about the false alarm. It's okay for you to not be there."

A small, pained whine escapes Shane's throat and his fingers reach out, curling into the hem of Hayden's shirt.

"It's okay." Hayden repeats, voice calm and even. "You don't have to be captain right now. Just be my best friend, Shane. Can you do that?"

Shane nods, blinking away the tears. He wants to reassure Hayden that's he's okay. That he's fine. That he can go home. But there's no words. Just an overwhelming pressure of *too much too much too much*.

“Okay.” Hayden’s hand slips away from Shane’s shoulder and down to where Shane’s fingers are clutching to his shirt. He’s careful, gentle, as he uncurls Shane’s fingers. “Go wait by my car. I’ll be out in five minutes. Then we’ll go home.”

Shane sucks in a breath but nods and turns, walking on stiff legs towards the player section, eyes already scanning for Hayden’s car.

He can follow simple instructions. His mind can handle that. Even if it can’t handle anything else.

Shifting from one foot to the other, Shane stands at Hayden’s passenger side door. It’s a bit chilly, considering he’s only wearing sweats and his undershirt, but it was better than some of the guys had managed before the alarm had gone off. The uncomfortable part is that Shane opted out of showering, and now he won’t be going home to shower.

Maybe Hayden will let him.

God, Shane hopes he can shower. The sweat clinging to his skin is making him roll his head along his shoulders. He bites at his bottom lip, trying to distract himself. He stares down at the ground, praying none of the other guys make an appearance before Hayden comes back.

If they do, Shane has no idea what to do. He can’t speak. That much is more than obvious right now. His brain is simultaneously running too fast and completely void of everything.

Suddenly and sharply, Shane wishes Ilya were here.

His boyfriend is good at helping Shane when he’s like this, able to understand Shane even when Shane can’t say a word.

The world blurs as tears burn in Shane’s eyes and he scrunches them closed, willing the tears to fuck off.

“Shane?”

He whirls around, stumbling into the car lightly, but it’s only Hayden, their bags hanging from each of his shoulders.

“Sorry.” Hayden winces sympathetically, “Didn’t think you heard me walking up.” Shane shakes his head, ducking his head before it’s noticed that he’s about to cry. Except Hayden is apparently extra attentive right now, because he releases a small sound and steps closer, “Hey...it’s alright. You don’t have to hold it in, bud. Not with me.”

Shane bites harder on his lip and shakes his head, curling his arms around himself. His back presses purposely into the solidness of the car.

“Okay, okay, we’ll try again at home. I’m going to load these up,” Hayden shrugs a shoulder, “Can you get yourself settled and buckled in?”

That Shane can do. He turns around and forces one arm away from his body, opening the door as Hayden goes to place their bags in the trunk.

Closing the door once he's inside muffles the world, even though there hadn't been much sounds outside of the arena. But there had been cars passing and the faint sound of someone using a blower, and a truck rumbling in the distance. Plus all the noise inside of Shane's head and body.

He tips his head back against the headrest and closes his eyes, releasing a breath. He doesn't open them as Hayden's door opens and his seat squeaks as he settles into it.

"Straight home, Shane. Promise. No stops between here and there."

Not *Shane's* home, but Hayden's. Which is a comfortable and familiar place. Shane thinks he'll be okay there. Not that he has a choice; Hayden will literally tackle him if he tries to go and be on his own right now.

Slipping his hands under his thighs and curling his fingers up towards them, allowing his nails to dig into the flesh there, Shane wonders what Ilya is doing. Wishes he could text him. But words won't work that way either. Shane's tried in the past. He's stuck without Ilya.

"Shane," Hayden's voice gently coaxes him from the half doze he'd drifted into on the drive, "We're here."

Forcing his eyes open takes his focus, so by the time Shane has managed to shake off most of the sleep, Hayden has climbed out of the car and is standing with the passenger door open. He doesn't offer Shane help or rush him, just lets him take his time, something Shane is grateful for.

Sure, his body doesn't feel like his and his mind has more or less shut down and yeah he can't speak a single word, but he's not invalid.

His legs do feel shaky when he climbs out of the car too, but Shane thinks that's from the practice and then the crash after everything. He just has to make it up the front steps and into the house. Then he can sit and do nothing.

Hayden and Jackie won't have any expectations of him. Shane doesn't have to exist for a little bit.

When the front door is unlocked and opened by Hayden, Shane does have a brief burst of panic.

He adores the twins. Ruby and Jade are his nieces even if there's no blood relation. But together they can be loud, rambunctious, typical young girls.

The complete opposite of what Shane can handle right in this moment.

And each time he comes over, the girls do their best to tackle him like he doesn't weigh about three times as much as them.

So, he panics, fearing that there's about to be squealing pitches and sticky fingers.

Instead, there's quiet piano music playing and the sound of dishes lightly clattering from towards the kitchen.

Hayden nudges Shane into the house and shuts the door behind him before he toes his shoes off and kicks them to the side. "Twins are with grandparents. Sleepover. Only the quiet ones are here."

Shane's shoulders sag with relief before drawing back up with guilt.

"No," Hayden shakes his head, "None of that. Even *I* need a break from the twins and they're my flesh and blood."

Shane dips his chin in a small nod and forces his shoulders down a notch. Then he crouches to untie his shoes, remove them, and line them up neatly on the rack that Jackie has long since given up trying to get Hayden to use.

"Good?" Hayden asks when Shane has straightened again, but he doesn't wait for an answer before ambling towards the kitchen, no doubt in search of his wife.

Hayden is almost as obsessed with his wife as Shane is with his boyfriend.

The thought of Ilya makes Shane ache though so he sticks his thumbs into the pockets of his sweats and follows after Hayden.

Jackie and Hayden are kissing when Shane walks in so he quickly diverts his gaze, staring at a stain on the floor. Could be from the kids, could be from Hayden. Hard to tell in this house.

"Hi, Shane." Jackie's voice, gentle and kind, calls over to him. Shane lifts the corner of his mouth in a small smile that he knows she can see without actually looking at her. At this point though, Jackie is very familiar with Shane's little ways. "You hungry?"

Hayden grumbles about being starving but Shane shakes his head lightly and moves over to the table, sitting in one of the chairs. As usual, the surface of the table is covered in an array of items. Unopened mail, books and toys from the kids, a hockey puck, and various other bits and pieces of the Pike's lives. Shane personally couldn't handle it if it was his own table, but somehow here, in this house, it works and he doesn't feel this intense need to clean it up. He does shift some of the papers – covered in splashes of colours that are probably meant to resemble something but Shane has no idea – so he has a clear spot in front of him, but otherwise, he leaves everything untouched.

“Hi, daddy.” A quiet voice says, barely heard over the married couple. They instantly stop though as Hayden spins around, beaming at his third born.

“Hi, Arthur.” Hayden walks over, leaning down to kiss the top of his son’s head, “I brought Uncle Shane with me.”

“Yay!” Arthur’s little noise of excitement is quiet as well; he’s always been quiet though. It had concerned Hayden in the beginning, but Jackie had been unbothered, claiming they needed a calm soul in their mix. And Arthur is happy, the main thing they all care about, so they’ve simply accepted that he is the opposite of his older sisters and that it’s as simple as that.

“But he needs quiet time, sweetie.” Jackie chimes in as Hayden walks back over to her, Arthur having abandoned his dad upon the mention of his uncle. “So be—”

“Hi, Uncle Shane.” Arthur greets and Shane tries to say something, to reply to this tiny human who understands even less than him about what is going on with him. But he can’t. He can’t even handle *looking* at Arthur.

Shane’s heart breaks a little. His anxiety tightens further in his chest, making breathing just a little more difficult. He curls his hands against his thighs to try and hide the shaking.

From the corner of his eyes, Shane can see Arthur frown, a stuffed dinosaur clutched in his hands. It’s one that Shane had bought him, back when he was even smaller than he is now.

Arthur must make some sort of decision because he starts to climb into Shane’s lap without another word. Both his parents sort of lurch forward, cut off noises of protest but Shane shakes his head, pausing them. Then he pushes his chair back a bit from the table and assists Arthur in settling in his lap. The little boy rests his back against Shane’s stomach and holds his dinosaur in his little arms.

“Can I have some juice?” Arthur requests, like nothing has happened. Shane adjusts his own position a little, curls his arms carefully around the child, making sure to not dislodge the stuffed dinosaur, and settles into the chair. The weight of Arthur in his lap is nice. The anxiety in his chest eases a bit. Shane releases a breath and his shoulders slump.

“Absolutely, bud.” Hayden says after a moment, head bobbing as he nods and goes for the fridge. “Juice coming right up.”

Jackie smiles softly over at the pair but Shane doesn’t look at her, he goes back to staring at a different stain on the floor, letting the weight of Arthur in his lap and the gentle chatter of the Pike’s wash over him.

Things don't get better Jackie prepares dinner with Hayden's assistance, but Shane finds it's easier with the weight of Arthur on his lap. The little boy must notice too because he flat out refuses to move from his uncle, no matter what Hayden bribes him with.

Amber wakes up at some point, crying through the monitor, the sudden sound making Shane flinch and hunch a bit over Arthur. His nephew holds up the dinosaur to Shane and starts rambling softly about random dinosaur facts he's learned as Hayden goes to collect his youngest daughter.

Shane still hasn't said a word since the arena, but no one seems to mind. They'll ask him simple questions that require a nod or a shake of his head, but otherwise they leave him be. Even Arthur talks *at* him, not to him, content with no response. When Amber is carried into the room, she blinks her wet eyes at Shane, and then promptly stops making any noise.

Maybe she, like her brother, picks up on something wrong with Shane. As guilty as it makes him feel, he's relieved that she's quiet. He doesn't think he can handle the noise.

Plates of food are dished out, Arthur refuses to move still, so his much smaller plate is placed beside Shane's on the table and the little boy digs in with one hand, stuffed dinosaur still clutched tightly in his other hand. Shane just stares at the food at first, body and mind remaining detached. It isn't until Jackie's gentle guiding voice tells him to take a few bites that Shane eats.

He tastes nothing. Sort of blanks out the entire dinner. He manages about half of the plate before he has to push it away, finding the thought of another bite nauseating. Hayden seems pleased with how much he managed though and doesn't make a comment like he normally would. He just pats Shane on the shoulder and carries their plates back to the sink.

Jackie wipes Arthur's fingers and cheeks off, smiling softly at her son who is still securely on Shane's lap, his arm wrapped around the child. "You're doing so good, taking care of Uncle Shane." She coos and Arthur nods seriously, like it's a big task he's taken on.

Shane wants to cry a little.

When Hayden walks back over, he hesitates for a minute before he opens his mouth and asks, "Is Rozanov able to be called yet? I figured he was busy or you would have found a way to ask for him by now."

Shane blinks, not expecting Hayden to think about Ilya. He knows his best friend is trying ever since Shane admitted to dating and being in love with Ilya, but it hasn't been easy. Ilya is still *Rozanov* to Hayden.

"It's..." Hayden glances at his watch and then back to Shane, "About six now. What do you think?"

Normally, Shane would know Ilya's schedule. Normally, he'd have a call time arranged. But right now, he has no idea. He bites his bottom lip and shrugs as he shakes his head.

“Hey, all good.” Hayden assures him, “I’ll grab your phone and shoot him a text. How about that?”

Except Shane doesn’t know where his phone is. Because they’d been wrapping up practice when the fire alarm had gone off. And Shane had already not been thinking clearly. So he obviously didn’t have his phone.

He wonders if the panic shows on his face because Hayden is stepping forward, hands up, “Hey, Shane, buddy, it’s okay. I grabbed your phone. It’s in your bag which is in the car. I’ll grab it. I know your code. It’s okay.”

Shane’s shoulders slump and he sits heavier in the chair, giving a small nod.

“Arthur,” Jackie chimes in, “Why don’t you go to the living room? Curl up on the couch and pick a movie? Uncle Shane will have a quick shower while Daddy will gets the phone and they’ll meet you in there.”

“Okay.” Arthur says, tapping Shane on the arm he has around him, waiting for it to be removed before he slips off of Shane’s lap. Hayden heads out of the room one way and Arthur the other. Shane sits there feeling a bit lost.

“Shane, honey,” Jackie’s voice is a light in the dark. “I’m sorry you couldn’t shower earlier but I know you want one. How about you go upstairs, into the regular guest bedroom you use, and have a shower in that bathroom?” It’s far more details than are needed but Shane appreciates them. Instructions laid out for him. “You have some spare clothes in the drawer there too. Comfy ones. Better than what you’re wearing.”

He wants to say thank you. He wants to say *anything* but he can’t.

Shane stands, legs still shaky, and he takes a couple steps towards the hall before turning and walking back towards Jackie. She smiles and opens her arms, embracing Shane in a warm hug.

“You’re safe here, Shane. Don’t worry.” She whispers into his ear, hugging him tightly.

It’s difficult for Shane to pull away but he does, replaying her instructions in his head as he goes to shower.

The opening sequence of *Finding Nemo* is playing on the TV when Hayden walks into the living room, Shane’s phone in hand.

Arthur had waited for Shane to shower and join him in the living room before starting the movie. Shane has no idea what Hayden’s been doing the entire time because it definitely doesn’t take twenty minutes to grab something from the car but Shane’s mind is too tired to

think it all through so he lets it go.

“Hey, I’ve got Rozanov for you.” Shane doesn’t think he’s ever heard Hayden say Ilya’s name so kindly before. But then again, this isn’t a normal situation.

Arthur had taken residence up on Shane’s lap as soon as he’d settled on the couch, so Shane can’t move but he also doesn’t want to. And it isn’t like Arthur will hear anything with Shane still having no words.

Hayden passes him the phone, ruffles Shane’s hair a little, and then moves to the opposite corner of the couch, flopping onto it so he can watch the movie as well.

Jackie must be done cleaning up then, because Shane knows Hayden wouldn’t be here if there was more to do. He really was a good husband. Maybe that’s what he was doing while Shane showered. He doesn’t linger though when there’s someone waiting for him on the other end of the line.

Shane presses the phone to his ear, immediately picking up on the soft breathing of Ilya. It makes something uncurl in his chest.

“Sweetheart?” Ilya asks, “You are there, yes?” Shane closes his eyes as Nemo’s dad pokes his head out of the anemone on the screen. He wants to respond to Ilya, reassure his boyfriend, but no words fall from his tongue. “Is okay, I hear you breathing. I know it is you,” Ilya speaks in a soothing tone, “You have nice breathing. Nothing like Pike’s.”

Shane’s shoulders hitch a bit in a sort of aborted laugh and he can practically hear the smile on Ilya’s lips when he laughs through the phone.

The mood sobers up a moment later though as Ilya releases a long breath.

“Oh, moya lyubov, I am sorry I am not there. I know it is scary like this.” Shane nods, biting his lip, even though Ilya can’t see him. He hears movement not through the phone and opens one eye enough to see Jackie curling up beside her husband, smiling as Hayden’s arm wraps around her. Shane closes his eye again.

“You are okay though, Shane. You are with Pike’s. They take care of you.” Shane nods again; if he can’t be with Ilya when like this, at least he has Hayden. “And I will be there soon. Couple hours.”

A small noise comes from Shane’s throat, a question and protest mixed together.

“No, no,” Ilya clucks his tongue, “None of that. I am coming. My love needs me. I just got home from rink. I will be on road in next ten minutes. So couple hours before I am at Pike’s front door.”

Shane opens his eyes, glancing over at Hayden. His best friend is already looking at him, a smile on his face. Hayden shrugs, careful to not disturb Jackie, fingers playing with his wife’s

hair. A silent message that it's fine if Ilya shows up. Hayden understands that it's what Shane needs.

God, how did Shane get lucky enough to have a best friend like that?

"They will take care of you until I am there." Ilya reassures him and Shane refocuses back on the phone call. "And I stay on phone entire time, if you want. So you know I am right here."

Sniffing, Shane sinks further into the couch and nods. He thinks Ilya has this sixth sense of knowing what Shane is saying or doing even when he's not there.

"Okay." Ilya confirms that theory as he agrees, "I stay on phone. Listen to movie and you breathing. Kick Pike if he gets too noisy. But only him. Little Pike and Jackie are okay."

Looking down at Arthur, Shane doesn't think anyone needs to worry about the little boy being a disturbance. He's completely engrossed in the film. And Amber is happy in her little playpen, babbling at one of her stuffed animals.

The environment feels comforting and safe. Exactly what Shane needs.

He releases a long breath, adjusts his hold on the phone, and clues back into the movie.

Arthur falls asleep shortly before Shane does.

The little boy probably should be moved to his bed where he can get a proper nights sleep, but when Hayden makes the slight suggestion, Shane thinks his face does something because Jackie says it's fine for Arthur to stay.

The comforting weight of Arthur and the sounds of *Finding Dory* (picked naturally for their second movie), have Shane dozing off, the phone he'd been holding onto dropping to his shoulder.

True to his word, Ilya had remained on the phone as he drove along the Trans Canada Highway. He's made the occasional comment, more for Shane to hear his voice than anything, but otherwise he's simply been there as a reassuring presence. Probably also why Shane was able to fall asleep.

He rouses at the sensation of a weight being lifted off of him and without opening his eyes, he makes a small whine of protest, fingers reaching blindly for the source of heat that had been attached to him for hours.

"Shhh," A deeper voice soothes, fingers combing through Shane's hair, the touch achingly familiar. "Is okay. I am here."

Another sound comes from Shane's throat, and his eyes still closed, he leans towards Ilya, seeking out the scent and warmth of his love.

"Yes, yes, here." Shane is shifted sideways, resting against something firmer than the couch and yet so much more comfortable. Arms wrap tightly around him and then he's falling back asleep, content in Ilya's arms, not a care for anything else in the world.

The next time Shane wakes up, he registers the smell of coffee. Which tells him it's morning.

"Ngh." Shane grumbles, twisting his neck to push it further into Ilya's chest.

"Good morning, sweetheart." The chest rumbles with the greeting. Fingers comb through his hair, blunt nails scratching at his scalp. "How are you today?"

Silently, Shane does a mental sweep of his mind and body. Physically, he doesn't feel too bad considering he crashed pretty hard mentally yesterday. That always has a physical toll on his body. His mind is a bit tired but he feels more connected to it than he did for majority of yesterday. He's definitely more aware of his surroundings and the noises of the Pike house waking up (minus two rambunctious twin girls who never leave the house this quiet).

Shane reluctantly extracts himself from his boyfriend's chest, propping himself up on an elbow so he can look Ilya in the eye. They're laying along the length of the couch, and Shane sort of remembers being moved around from the corner he'd tucked himself into the night before.

"Hi." Ilya greets quietly when their eyes meet and Shane smiles back automatically.

"Hi."

"You have words?" Ilya asks, hazel eyes darting between Shane's.

"Some." Shane replies, "A few."

"That's good." Ilya lifts his head up enough to peck Shane on the lips, closed mouth because they haven't brushed their teeth, but Shane allows it because Ilya *did* drive to Montreal last night all because Shane couldn't manage a few words. "Few words is better than no words."

Nodding, Shane curls back up on Ilya's chest, "Thank you."

"For coming?" Ilya asks and Shane hums in response. "Always. You only have to ask." He pauses, hand settling on Shane's lower back, "Or, have Pike call from your phone, be scarred because I thought it was you, and then he ask me to drive here."

Shane laughs, only vaguely imagining what Ilya had said to Hayden when the call had connected if he thought it was Shane. It's nice, laughing again. The final bit of tension in his

chest releases.

In a few minutes, they'll get up and join Hayden and Jackie in the kitchen for coffee. Shane will endure being checked in on by Jackie and coddled by Hayden. Ilya will stay plastered to his side as they eat breakfast with the Pike's before going back to Shane's. And things will slowly slot back into normalcy, where Shane can talk and act like a normal human.

But for now, curled up with the love of his life, Shane knows it's okay if he doesn't talk quite yet. He's allowed to stay silent for a little bit longer.

End Notes

love you.

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