sunlight in the gloom

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at https://archiveofourown.org/works/87582526.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Heated Rivalry (TV), Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Ilya Rozanov, Shane Hollander, Hayden Pike, Jackie Pike, Yuna Hollander, David Hollander
Additional Tags:	Future Fic, Pre TLG, Established Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov, Secret Relationship, Hurt/Comfort, Emotional Hurt/Comfort, Hurt Shane Hollander, Protective Ilya Rozanov, Caretaking, Fluff, Angst, Angst with a Happy Ending, Fluff and Angst, Car Accidents, Minor Injuries, Hospitals, Blood and Injury, Happy Ending, Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence, Oneshot, Comfort
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-06-29 Words: 8,294 Chapters: 1/1

sunlight in the gloom

by imbihesgay

Summary

LILY: bored of me already, Hollander?

LILY: is not nice to ignore me, sexy

LILY: shane, seriously, are you ok?

Another half hour passes, and he's had enough. He calls in the next best reinforcement he can think of.

Yuna Hollander answers on the second ring. "Hi sweetheart."

"Hey." He tries to keep his voice even and calm, rather than panicked and uneasy, which is how he feels. "Have you heard from Shane?"

"Shane? No, not since this morning. Why?"

"I-" Ilya hesitates very briefly, sure suddenly that he is overreacting. How will it look to Shane's mother, when he is home safe and sound, and his overly possessive boyfriend is calling every family member to check up on his location?

"Ilya." Her voice grows more serious. "What's going on?"

--shane gets into a car crash and doesn't answer his phone- worried & protective ilya ensues!-

Notes

a few notes!

takes place pre tlg but like not sure where exactly in there. most likely not canon compliant cause i didnt care enough to double check lol
mostly just some angst for poor hurt shaney and then worried/caretaking ilya!! honestly just some word vomit i had to get out, no real narrative or anything just funsies!

(NOT REALISTIC WITH MEDICAL SCENES OR INJURIES OR WHATEVER BECAUSE ITS FANFICTION. PLEASE DO NOT BE THE REALISM POLICE IN THE COMMENTS, JUST HAVE SOME FUN! THANK YOU!)

thanks for reading and i hope you enjoy!!

“Mm, do not go. Stay here forever.” Ilya’s voice is muffled as he buries his face in the crook of Shane’s neck.

The sensation is utterly intoxicating- Ilya’s body pressed into his. Even in the early hours of the morning, he smells incredible. Expensive shampoo, cologne-y body wash, freshly cleaned sheets. He smells like luxury, cleanliness, and *home.*

Shane wants so badly to take him up on his offer to stay. But, he has practice in Montreal in two hours and he needs to haul ass to make it from Ilya’s house to his.

For a beat, Shane leans in. He lets Ilya mush their bodies together. He feels the nudge of his strong, crooked nose in the soft skin of his neck, and exhales.

Then, reality sets in. He really has to get to practice. The Voyageurs are not as forgiving as the Centaurs probably are, about being late for drills.

“I have to go,” he says mournfully.

“It is cold.” Ilya reaches down and tugs the collar of Shane’s puffy winter jacket up higher around his neck. It's the dead of winter and the roads are icy, so he’s been more anxious about Shane making the commute between their homes. He’d told him not to come last night, but Shane couldn’t resist. They see each other in such precious, brief bursts. He needs to take every chance he gets.

“I’ll be careful,” Shane says.

Ilya studies him for a moment, his eyes swimming with unsaid things. Worry is evident on his face. “Please.”

“I promise.”

“You will drive so slowly and so boring.”

“Of course.”

“You will not text and drive.”

“I never do that!”

“Alright.” Ilya leans back in to press their lips together in one lingering embrace. The contact is so warm Shane almost forgets about the wind chill outside. “Let me know when you made it safely, okey?”

Normally, this is where Shane would make some kind of snide comment or teasing retort. But, he knows Ilya gets pretty serious about things like this. The wellbeing of his loved ones.

“I will, I promise.” Shane takes his hand between two fingers and kisses each cold knuckle. “Go inside, it’s cold. I love you.”

“I love you more, *moya butylka dlya vody.”*

Shane stares at him in disbelief. “What’s…did you just call me a water bottle?”

Ilya smirks. “You are getting so good.”

“Fuck you.”

“Soon.” Ilya kisses his forehead, sighs, and steps back. “Soon, Hollander.”

“Bye, Ilya.”

“Bye Shane.”

Shane shuffles down the walkway toward his car, catching himself at the edge of the sidewalk when he nearly slips on ice. He catches himself easily, relieved Ilya didn’t just see him fall and crack his head open. He’d never live that down.

When Shane gets to the Voyageurs rink, he shoots Ilya a quick text to let him know he’s made it safely, then deposits his phone in his backpack. Hayden and JJ are already on the ice when he walks in, both fucking around while they wait for the rest of the team. The vibes have been…unpredictable, lately.

Since coming out to the team, Shane hasn’t been completely sure how to handle most interactions. He used to feel like he knew all of these guys so well, like he could anticipate what they were going to say and do before *they* even knew they’d be doing it. But now, in the aftermath of him confessing to them that he is attracted to men -even with no mention of Rozanov- it’s been tenuous.

Shane hates unpredictability. It makes him anxious. He likes knowing what’s going to happen next, likes being able to predict the future and plan accordingly. Unexpected things really fuck with his head.

Which is ironic, considering Ilya Rozanov. But he’s the one exception Shane is content to let in. That surprise has been the best thing that’s ever happened to him.

Practice is fine. It’s good, really. He’s fine, and everything is normal, and they’re going to figure this out as a team. It doesn’t matter that the checks feel a bit harder than they did before, or that the guys all seem to be in a really big hurry to change afterward, or that none of them invite him to the after-practice drinks he knows they’re going to. He tells himself it’s because they know he doesn’t drink. He’s sure that's why.

Still, when he chuffs out to the parking lot, despite his best efforts to maintain a positive attitude about all of this, it hurts. He can’t deny that. Things are different now, and he knows he can deal with it, but he fucking hates that he has to.

It’s a well-practiced thing now, to call Ilya when he’s having a bad day. It’s something he never would’ve done before. He would have handled it on his own, or *maybe* called his mom

if he wasn't worried she was too busy to deal with the burden. Lately though, after a rough day, the only thing he finds comfort in is a soft Russian accent over the receiver.

"Cannot have phone sex right now, Hollander, I am busy doing laundry."

A smile teases the corner of Shane's lips. "Ilya, I wasn't-"

"Okey, okey, you have convinced me. Are you hard?"

He laughs, shaking his head in disbelief. "You are such an asshole."

"Mm, fuck yeah, I am a bad boy, aren't I?"

"Jesus Ilya! I'm trying to talk to you."

At that, the voice on the other line softens. "Did you have a bad day?"

Shane exhales heavily, chewing on his lower lip until he tastes coppery blood. "They're still…it's still weird. I hate it. It makes my skin crawl."

"Shane…"

"They're acting like I'm a different person all of a sudden. I don't know. Maybe I shouldn't have come out."

"You did nothing wrong."

"It feels like I did."

"Well you didn't, Shane." Ilya's voice is firm and inarguable on these words. "You are doing nothing wrong just…fucking *existing.* I hate them for making you feel like you are."

"I know you're right." Shane exhales, leaning his head back against the seat. "I miss you."

He doesn't even make fun of him for the fact that they saw each other just this morning. "I miss you too."

"Can I see you this Friday?"

"Of course. I will come to you."

"Alright. I'm gonna head home and wash this day off. I love you."

"I love you more, *moy sladkiy.* Please drive safely. Text me when you are home, okay?"

"Okay."

The line disconnects and Shane sighs once more, setting his phone down on the center console before he shoves the key into the ignition. The engine gurgles, heaving like it's making a valiant effort to start, but nothing happens. He tries again, cursing under his breath when the car still doesn't start.

“Fuck!” He slams a fist into the steering wheel, a momentary lapse in composure at this frustration.

A knock on the driver’s side window startles him, and he glances sideways to see Hayden standing there, hands on his hips. With a huff, Shane rolls the window down.

“Car trouble?” Hayden asks with a grin.

“I’m not in the mood,” Shane bites back.

“Come on, I’ll give you a ride.”

Too exhausted to argue, Shane nods, collecting his things and exiting the car. He’ll deal with it tomorrow.

He follows Hayden across the lot to his truly hideous SUV, climbing into the passenger seat while Hayden adjusts the heat. It’s fucking freezing outside.

“You need to just get rid of that Jeep,” Hayden says as he pulls the car out of the parking lot.

“Don’t shit talk my Jeep,” Shane mutters, curling in on himself to try and warm up.

“Oh right, it’s fun to be stranded after a grueling practice.” Hayden arches an eyebrow at Shane while he navigates the car toward the highway.

“Better than this grandma-mobile,” Shane says with no real malice in his voice. In fact, he can’t fault Hayden for having the thing. It’s crash-safety tested from top to bottom, and has plenty of room for his wonderful kids. If Shane had kids, he’d want to keep them safe too.

Maybe someday.

There’s a few beats of quiet before Hayden speaks again, something in his voice more somber this time. “It’ll get better Shane. You know that, right?”

Shane clears his throat, adjusting uncomfortably in the spacious seat. “What do you mean?”

“The team it’s just…it’s fresh, you know? It’s new for them. They’re trying.”

He exhales, drumming his fingertips along the faded thread of his jeans. Outside the window, the trees lining the highway are a green blur. His Montreal place is a bit more secluded than Hayden’s, so he appreciates him being willing to go out of his way to drop Shane off there. He’ll have to make it up to him.

“I know,” Shane says quietly, “it just fucking sucks that they have to *try* so hard to accept me.”

“It does,” Hayden agrees. I don’t know why their skulls are so fucking thick. They *should* just do it, without thinking.”

“Like you did,” Shane adds. “You know how grateful I am to have you, right man?”

Hayden cuts him a wry grin. “Grateful for me *and* my grandma-mobile?”

Shane groans. “Watch the road, you idiot.”

Laughter fills the cabin, and Hayden turns his attention back to the road. There aren’t many cars out at this time of day, and with the weather, most people are probably trying to stay inside as much as possible. Shane tries to just relax and enjoy the ride.

It happens so fast he almost doesn’t realize it. There’s a loud curse from Hayden, then the car jerks sideways. Shane grabs on to the door handle, entire body clenching up as Hayden loses control of the car. They’ve hit a patch of black ice and spun out of control.

After a few horrifying seconds of uncertainty, the front end rams into the siderail, which at least stops their spinning.

“Fuck!” Hayden exclaims, moments before a second impact collides with the car.

The car behind them, going freeway speeds, slams into the back bumper of Hayden’s SUV. Shane’s stomach feels like it’s levitating out of his body as the velocity of the hit flips the SUV forward over the rail.

For a brief moment, they’re weightless.

Then, the roof slams down into the icy embankment on the other side of the rail.

The cabin of the car is filled with wheezing breaths. Shane’s ribs are burning like fire. His head collided with something on the way down, blood trickles from his forehead into his eyebrow. The airbags deployed which he thinks is why his entire face hurts. His vision is blurry, breaths ragged. They’re suspended upside down, held in only by their seatbelts.

He turns sideways, alarmed when he sees Hayden’s head slumped over, eyes closed.

“Hayden!” he croaks, voice raw and wrecked, weaker than he anticipates. “Hayd?”

Shane extends a shaking hand toward his friend, fighting to get a few fingers on his neck. A pulse, thank god, a strong one. He’s bloodied and bruised from his own airbag. It must’ve knocked him unconscious.

Panic pulses through his veins. They have to get help. Should he try to unclick his seatbelt? Should he try to crawl out? He’s not sure how hurt he is. His ribs definitely hurt like they’re cracked, and his nose is probably broken from the airbag, and he sort of wants to throw up. But there’s also adrenaline coursing through his body, which numbs everything to a dull ache.

His phone. He can call 911.

He scrambles for his pockets, cursing when they come up empty. Scanning the car, he finally spots his phone on the dashboard. The screen is cracked beyond repair, black and dark.

Christ.

Stay calm, he tells himself, bracing his hands against the dashboard to try and keep his body steady, *help will come. The car behind us must have stopped.*

A quick glance in the rearview mirror makes him go pale. There is no car. He sees no one. Surely they wouldn't have rammed the SUV and just driven off, right?

Right?

"Hayden?" he tries again, voice hoarse. "Hey man, come on, wake up."

No answer from his unconscious friend. Shane's throat tightens with panic.

"Hayden!" It's more of a scream this time, still frail and broken, but imbued with effort and fear.

He tries to unbuckle his seatbelt, but it's locked. His hands are trembling. Still, he sees no cars behind them.

A cold dread fills his body, mingling with the burning pain and the racing panic.

No help is coming.

Shane is usually very good about texting Ilya when he's arrived somewhere.

Ilya knows it's overbearing, this need to constantly check in and make sure he's safe. It is hard being so far apart from Shane for so much time, when he can't physically touch him and feel the pulse underneath warm skin. So, he's a little needy. He wants to know where Shane is, when he's safe, how he's getting home.

After losing someone he loved more than anything, Ilya can't bear the thought of it happening again.

So, when an hour passes by and Shane still hasn't texted, Ilya starts to get nervous.

It is no problem. He's sure Shane just got busy, was exhausted after practice, jumped right into the shower. Maybe even fell asleep before dinner. He's done that before.

He will call him. Once he hears the grumpy voice on the other line, everything will be okay.

The phone rings. And rings. And rings. Finally, he hears Shane's gently monotone voice.

You've reached Shane Hollander. You can leave a message if you want to, and I will call you back. Or you can text me, that's fine too. I'll text you back. Thanks bye!

Ilya clicks **END** on the call, chewing anxiously on his inner cheek. Now that is weird.

He sends Shane a text.

***LILY**: bored of me already, Hollander?*

LILY: *is not nice to ignore me, sexy*

LILY: *shane, seriously, are you ok?*

Another half hour passes, and he's had enough. He calls in the next best reinforcement he can think of.

Yuna Hollander answers on the second ring. "Hi sweetheart."

"Hey." He tries to keep his voice even and calm, rather than panicked and uneasy, which is how he feels. "Have you heard from Shane?"

"Shane? No, not since this morning. Why?"

"I-" Ilya hesitates very briefly, sure suddenly that he is overreacting. How will it look to Shane's mother, when he is home safe and sound, and his overly possessive boyfriend is calling every family member to check up on his location?

"Ilya." Her voice grows more serious. "What's going on?"

"It is probably so silly," he says, tapping his fingers on the kitchen countertop. "Shane did not text me when he got home from practice, and he usually does. He is not answering his phone. I…I am getting worried."

"Hmm. Let me try him. Stay on." The line goes quiet.

Ilya waits an agonizing two minutes before the line clicks back live. "He isn't answering. Does he share his location with you?"

"Oh! He actually does. I had not thought of this. Hold on." Ilya puts her on speaker and opens his settings tab, pulling up the shared locations.

Svetlana

Luca

Shane

He clicks Shane's name, fiddling anxiously with the crucifix around his neck with his free hand. His eyes go wide as the screen populates.

"He is…on the highway…" Ilya's brow furrows. "But this has not updated in forty-five minutes. Why would it not update, Yuna?"

"If his phone was turned off," she says, "maybe it died? That's why he isn't answering?"

"He has a charger in the car," Ilya replies flatly. There's a feeling in his stomach, something he cannot explain. A tension pulled taut in his gut that tells him something isn't right. The same sort of heavy dread he felt that one cold morning, before he opened the bathroom door and found his mother's limp body.

“Something is wrong,” he says.

“Ilya, I-” Yuna hesitates audibly. “Are you sure?”

“I have feeling. In my stomach. A bad one. Like he is in danger.”

There’s a brief pause. “Alright. I’ll call 911 for a wellness check? Where is he on the map?”

Ilya gives her the coordinates of his last updated location, then says, “I am going to start driving toward Montreal. Just in case.”

“Are you sure you want to do that? It’s a long drive, and everything might be fine, honey.”

“It might not be fine.” Ilya grabs his keys from by the door, already sliding his shoes on. “Please, keep me posted if they call you back.”

“I will. Be *safe* Ilya, there’s black ice on the roads.”

“I will.”

The line disconnects and he races for his car. His fingers are clenched so tightly around the wheel the next moment that he has to force himself to relax, exhaling a shaking breath.

He needs to calm down before he can turn the car on and drive, it wouldn’t be smart to drive in this condition.

Shane is probably fine. Most likely, Yuna is going to get a call back from the emergency services saying she’s wasted their time and everything is fine. Most likely, Shane will call them back after a little while and apologize for being so flaky- say he forgot his phone in the car and got too into a hockey documentary. Most likely, everything is okay.

But there’s this niggling feeling in his chest, this tightly wound anxiety that seems to say: *what if it’s not fine?*

He does not know what to do with that.

Against his will, his mind goes to the worst cas scenarios. Shane dead on the side of the road, or kidnapped by insane stalker hockey fans, or alone on his bathroom floor having slipped and fell- dying. Helpless and on his own without Ilya there to look after him.

“Stop,” he says aloud, forcefully. “Stop it. He is fine. Stop it.”

Ilya is catastrophizing and overreacting. He needs to take a deep breath, get himself together. Shane is not dead on the side of the road, or kidnapped, or probably in any danger at all. Ilya is going to get a call any second, letting him know that everyone is okay.

Any second now.

Just in case, he waits. Sitting in the driver’s seat of his recently purchased, modest sedan - because the sports cars were making Shane nervous. He always said he was afraid Ilya would

get into a fatal car accident- he waits patiently for Shane's call.

After what feels like an unbearable amount of time, Yuna's name appears on his screen again.

"Tell me he's okay," Ilya says into the receiver, before she can even speak.

"Ilya." Yuna's voice is wrecked, a hitched sob in her words that makes his blood run cold. He's *never* heard Shane's mother so emotional at all, let alone so…so…*scared.*

"Yuna." His own words are hollow with fear. "Why- what has happened?"

"Emergency services called me back," she sobs, and he hears shuffling in the background, David's voice muffled as he speaks. "There was an accident. We're going to the hospital now."

No. Ilya blinks. This cannot be happening. This isn't happening.

"Shane is…" he falters, unsure of what exactly his own question is.

"Responsive, they said, thankfully," she says, "but injured. We aren't sure how badly."

Responsive. *Alive.*

"Thank god," Ilya manages. "Alive."

"Alive," she affirms. "We are leaving for the hospital. Um, it's St. Mercy. Will you…are you able to…"

Her question dies off at the end, uncertainty tinging the words, though he puts it together immediately.

Can you even show up for him? Without worrying about being caught?

Shane won't like it. He's extra worried about them being very careful, especially with how tenuous things are with his team right now. He doesn't want their secret getting out and further complicating anything. He would want Ilya to stay put.

"I can't not," Ilya says, "I-I can't- I have to-"

"Yes," Yuna interjects, "please come. He'll need you, I know it."

"How do we-"

"Wear a hat, and a hoodie. Text when you're here and we'll sneak you in the back. Whatever it takes, sweetheart. Just, *please* drive safely."

"Please keep me posted," he says.

"I will. See you soon."

“How did you find us?” Shane asks as the EMT finally cuts him free from his seatbelt, breaking his fall with a pair of strong arms. His ribs scream in protest, and he’s sure his face must be a swollen, horrible mess by now. The blood has all rushed to his head from being upside down for so long.

“What?” the paramedic asks while they haul him up onto a gurney.

“How are you here?” he repeats, head dropping back against the stiff built-in pillow. They’re moving him toward an ambulance now.

“Your mom called,” another replies. “She was worried when she couldn’t get a hold of you. Thank god she did.”

Shane’s chest aches in a new way. He looks over at Hayden, who is still in and out of consciousness, struggling as the EMT’s load him up in his own ambulance.

“Can someone call his wife?” Shane asks, surprised still at how syrupy and slow his own voice sounds.

“Your friend?”

“Uh-huh. He’s Hayden Pike. His wife is Jackie.”

“We will call her,” says the paramedic, “now just breathe Shane, we’re gonna get you some fluids and…”

Her words trail off in the blistering pain of his head. He tries to follow along, but he mostly just finds himself nodding.

The ride to the hospital feels like an eternity. He thinks he might be drifting in and out of consciousness too, by the way people keep snapping his name to keep his focus.

The emergency room is mostly a blur of pain and disorientation. They confirm a few things. He did break two ribs, likely from the force of the seatbelt. His nose is broken, probably from the airbag, which also caused other cuts and abrasions to his face. His chest and stomach are blooming with ugly purple bruises.

They wrap up his ribs and tape his nose, which does little to help how frankenstein-y his face looks. He’s given pain medication and cognitive evaluations, luckily there doesn’t seem to be any head trauma, though they do diagnose him with whiplash.

Overall, he’s in pretty rough shape. But he’s alive.

Hayden is too, thank god. They update Shane that he is awake, though he’s got a pretty bad concussion and minor injuries compared to Shane. Jackie is with him.

He’s also told to expect police to stop by for a statement about the hit and run. He’s dreading that.

Then, he’s wheeled into a private room, where his parents are waiting.

As soon as his mother sees his face, she crumbles. He knows he looks scary. He's swollen and bruised purple under his eyes, cuts and scrapes all over his bandaged face. He must look downright hideous.

The meds are really strong. He's actually pretty calm about how upset she looks, even though somewhere in the back of his mind he's sure he should be more worried. He should feel more guilty for putting her through this.

All he can muster is a small, relieved smile at her. "Mom."

"H-hi sweetheart," she says, reaching over to slide her fingers into his. Her hand is so small and delicate compared to his large, calloused one, he thinks if he squeezes too hard he'll crush it.

"I'm okay," he tells her, nodding assuredly, though he regrets it when it sends a sharp pin of discomfort up his neck. "I'm okay, I promise."

"We know, son." His father hovers, but looks afraid to touch him. "Thank god you're alright."

"I wish Ilya could be here," Shane tells them, brow furrowing as he's suddenly swept with a feeling of deep longing. "I was so scared."

"Oh, baby." Mom's voice wobbles. "You're okay now. I'm sure that was terrifying."

"Did anyone call him?" Shane asks.

"Honey, *he* called *me*. He's the only reason we found you so quickly." She cups Shane's cheek oh-so-gently. "He was worried when you didn't get back to him."

"Does he know I'm alive?"

The question seems to land heavily in both of his parent's hearts. Mom looks overcome.

"Yes, kiddo," Dad murmurs, placing a gentle hand over Shane's knee. "He's on his way."

"He can't be," Shane replies, blinking slowly as he tries to keep his wits about himself. The drugs are making him feel exhausted and gooey. "We'll get caught."

"Don't worry darling, we'll take care of that." Mom presses a featherlight kiss to his temple, narrowly avoiding a bandaged cut. "Just relax and rest, you're safe now."

A very prevalent part of him is still incredibly worried, and wants to tell his mom as much, but he doesn't have it in him. The meds are dragging him into a very sleepy haze.

He tries to hold out, but in the end, darkness wins.

"...I know it looks scary, but he's okay, Ilya."

"Okay? Look at his face! He is hurt, Yuna."

"I know honey, but he's going to be okay. The doctor said they don't expect any long term damage, and he's broken ribs before with hockey. The nose will probably upset him, but it'll heal."

"Where the fuck is Pike? He was driving. Is he-"

"He's in rough shape too, Ilya, and it wasn't his fault. I know you're upset, but you have to take a deep breath."

"I'm sorry. I know I am…being unfair. But…I can't stand this. *Look* at him."

There's a pause, and Shane tries to lift his heavy eyelids. Pain radiates through his abdomen, and his face throbs with it. He tries to open his mouth, to speak, but all that comes out is a weak, guttural noise of pain.

The room goes quiet.

"Shane?" his dad asks after a breath.

"Mmmmggh," Shane replies eloquently. His eyes flutter open, squinting against the dim lamplight of the hospital room as he takes in the three figures before him.

His mom is standing beside the nightstand, wringing her hands nervously together. His father is just behind her. And right at his side…

Ilya.

Standing there, eyes red-rimmed and bloodshot, curly hair a wreck like he's been dragging his hands through it. He's disheveled, as though he'd raced here in a hurry, which he probably did. The gold glint of his crucifix seems especially stark here in this sterile environment.

"Shane?" Ilya murmurs, stepping closer until his fingertips brush Shane's.

"Ilya," he rasps, blinking up at him. It hurts to even *talk*, every bone in his face throbs with pain, but especially in the central area. Each small movement of his broken nose sends shattering shards of discomfort throughout him, and each breath makes his ribs light ablaze with a burning agony.

"He is in pain," Ilya says suddenly, fumbling at the bedside for a button. "We need a nurse. He needs medicine."

"Honey, let him wake up a little." Mom lays her hand gently over Ilya's, stopping his frantic motion. "Shane, baby, are you with us?"

"Uh-huh," he replies. It hurts too much to say anything more.

"They want to keep you overnight, just to make sure you're good to go," she tells him. "So we can leave in the morning. I've talked to your coach already."

“Out?” he manages.

“For a few months,” Dad confirms.

Shane closes his eyes and lets out a long, shaky breath. It burns his ribcage and shudders out of him with a pained wheeze.

“Can he breathe?” Ilya frets.

“Probably just his ribs,” Mom replies, patting Ilya’s arm. “It’s okay, sweetie.”

“Hayden?” Shane rasps.

“As good as dead,” Ilya growls.

“He’s fine,” Mom says. “Jackie is taking him home tomorrow as well. Concussion and some bumps and scrapes, but looks like he got off pretty okay.”

“Got off too easy,” Ilya mutters.

“Accident,” Shane grunts, “na’his fault.”

Ilya’s eyes are burning when they meet Shane’s. “Does not matter. He did not get you home safely.”

“You’re scared,” Shane says, a little embarrassed at how weak and slightly slurred the words are.

Ilya’s gaze hardens a bit. “Of course not. You will be fine. Nothing to be afraid of, Hollander.”

“I’m okay,” Shane insists. And, he is. He’s in so much fucking pain it actually is starting to make him feel blinded, but he knows this will heal. “I’m *okay,* Ilya.”

There’s a brief pause, and then, a small sob chokes from Ilya’s throat.

“Baby,” Shane whispers, “baby, it’s okay, it’s okay.”

“We’ll go find the nurse,” Dad murmurs, taking Mom by the hand as they head for the door.

In the privacy left, Shane opens his arms. Ilya sniffs out a shaky laugh, wiping at his eyes with the back of his hand.

“I cannot lie in bed with you, Shane, your body is broken.” Ilya shakes his head, wet sounds coming from the back of his throat. In lieu of cuddling, he takes Shane’s hand in his own and squeezes.

“M’sorry I scared you,” Shane says earnestly.

“No, you do not be sorry, Hollander. Fuck. Thank you for…for making it back to me.” Ilya drops his head forward, one hand coming up to press the crucifix into his chest. He murmurs

something quietly in Russian- it sounds like it might be a prayer.

“I love you,” Shane says, unsure of what else he can do.

“I love you too,” Ilya replies.

For a while, they just stay there quietly, holding each other.

Hayden swings by the next morning after he’s discharged to see Shane.

He looks pretty rough himself. A black eye from the airbag, and some minor cuts and scrapes. He seems to have gotten off a bit better than Shane, whose pain unfortunately seems to be getting worse as his bruises bloom purple and his skull radiates with his broken nose and whiplash.

“Hey pal,” Hayden murmurs, coming to stand beside the bed. Shane’s slumped over his pillows, coming down from his latest dose of pain meds.

Ilya is sitting on the other side, hands crossed in his lap, jaw set tightly as he looks at Hayden. Shane feels a little bit like he has a guard dog baring his teeth anytime Hayden gets too close, but he knows this is Ilya holding back.

“You look like shit,” Shane rasps, knowing he looks about ten times worse.

“Yeah? You look like you got into a fight with an airbag and lost.” Hayden smiles at him, though his eyes are dark, somewhat hollow.

“You think that is funny?” Ilya growls.

Hayden’s gaze cuts to him sharply. “I think we almost died together, and if we need to joke about it, you should back off.”

“Guys,” Shane pleads. “Not now. Not here.”

Ilya bites the inside of his cheek, nodding once at Shane, though his brow remains furrowed. Hayden sighs, perching lightly on the edge of the bed, careful of Shane’s wires.

“So you’re outta here today?” he asks conversationally.

Shane nods. “Just waiting on my final discharge paperwork and instructions and stuff.”

“You worried about that?” Hayden taps his own nose and points to Shane. “You were always bragging about how you never broke it during games like the rest of us heathens.”

Clearing his throat, Shane shifts on the bed. “I guess I’ll take it over being dead.”

At that, Ilya shifts his body a little closer, tension rolling off him in waves.

It goes quiet for a moment, before Hayden speaks again. “That was the scariest thing, um, ever?”

“Yeah.” Shane blows a breath out in a huff. “You scared the fuck outta me, man. What were you thinking, getting knocked unconscious like that?”

“Just returning the favor after your Marleau incident back in the day.” Hayden flashes him a weak smile. “What’s friendship if not alternating concussions?”

Shane rolls his eyes. “Eloquent.”

“You know me.”

“How are the kids? Jackie?”

Hayden’s expression drops a bit, growing more serious. He hesitates, grimacing. “They’re hanging in. Jackie’s mom has the kids, they know I’m okay. Jackie was kind of in bits when she got here last night. She settled a little once I was more, you know, awake.” He touches a hand to his head with a few tense blinks. “It fucking kills but they don’t think I’ll have any long term damage.”

“Good.” Shane nods.

Hayden bites his lower lip harshly. “Shane, I…I just wanted to say, I’m really sor-”

“Don’t.” Shane cuts him off, voice firm. “It was an accident, Hayd. It was black ice, and then some asshole not paying attention. There was nothing you could’ve done.”

“I should have-”

“You were watching the road, man. You weren’t speeding. You did nothing wrong. That’s *why* they’re called accidents, okay? What happened…well, you’re not the reason we’re hurt.”

Hayden goes quiet. He fiddles with the sheet on Shane’s bed for a few seconds, then exhales loudly. “Where are you staying?”

“With me,” Ilya interjects.

Shane and Hayden both glance at him in surprise.

“I am?” Shane asks.

“Da. I talked with your parents. They live in Ottawa, so do I. It makes most sense for you to be close to all of us. I have more room. No one is in Montreal if you need help.”

“I’m there,” Hayden says.

“Like I said.”

“Fuck you.”

“No thank you.”

“That’s not what I-” Hayden’s face flushes red, and he scowls. “Shane, you’re seriously *moving in* with the enemy? Shacking up wasn’t enough?”

“News to me,” Shane mutters. “And don’t call it *shacking up.* We’re in love with each other.”

Ilya offers him a smug grin and puffs up his chest.

“Enough,” Shane tells him. He doesn’t like when Ilya pisses all over him like a dog marking his territory.

“It is just until Shane is better,” Ilya replies. “He will need help. I am taking some time off.”

At that, Shane’s head snaps sideways. “What did you just say?”

“Told coach I have family emergency. Need a few weeks.”

“Ilya, Jesus Christ, you can’t just-”

“Shane.” Ilya’s eyes are swimming with unsaid things, jaw set tightly. “Please do not argue. You have not seen your *face*, okay? Just- let me do this. Please.”

Shane’s lips press together in a thin line.

“Your face is pretty fucked up,” Hayden agrees.

“Great. Thanks, Hayd.”

“I’m glad you’re alright, all things considered.” Hayden rests a hand gently over his arm. “And thank you for…being my friend. I love you, man.”

Shane’s expression softens. “I love you too.”

“Alright. Jackie’s waiting for me. Call me, okay?”

“I will. Give the kids my love.”

“I will.”

The door closes softly behind him, leaving Shane and Ilya alone.

Shane glances at him. “So you and my parents decided I’d be staying with you, huh? You guys do a lot of scheming behind my back?”

“Only when we know you will be stubborn about something,” Ilya replies.

“You didn’t have to take time off, Ilya.”

“Yes I did.”

Their eyes meet again, Ilya's burning with an intensity that's frankly, a bit unnerving.

"Well," Shane manages a small smile. "You're about to see how insufferable it is to live with me."

Ilya smiles faintly, getting to his feet and pressing a featherlight kiss to Shane' forehead. "I promise, *solnyschko,* it will be so much better than living without you."

And Shane doesn't really have anything to say to that.

Getting Shane home is stressful, to say the least.

He is stubborn, this much Ilya already knew. Shane does not easily do as he's told, unless they're in the bedroom. Even then, sometimes he is bratty and uncooperative. Usually, that trait is endearing.

Today, it's infuriating.

"Shane, stop." Ilya places a hand on his chest gently to stop his momentum forward. He's halfway out of the car, trying to carry his own bag, despite the way it's making his face wrinkle up in discomfort. Ilya has injured ribs before, he knows exactly how painful it is. And that's excluding all the other injuries Shane's currently sporting.

Shane looks at him with his brow furrowed, and Ilya has to take a deep breath to calm himself again at the sight of his boyfriend's damaged face. Shane is the most beautiful man in the world, always has been and always will be, but he really does look rough right now.

His nose is swollen underneath the tape, and there are dark purple bruises circling both of his eyes. There are superficial scrapes across his entire face, and a split in his plump lower lip that Ilya can't help but look at mournfully. He doesn't like the idea that it might hurt Shane to kiss him. Kissing him is almost Ilya's favorite feeling in the world, second only to being inside of him.

He's walking with a bit of a bend in his posture, surely due to the pain in his ribs. He also looks like his head is bothering him, or maybe it's his neck, from the whiplash. A massage is probably in order.

"I will carry your things." Ilya forcefully pulls the duffel bag from Shane's hands, slinging it over his own shoulder. He uses his other hand to gently support Shane's lower back, fully helping him out of the car.

Shane tries and fails to hide the small grunt of pain as he stands upright. The car ride had been a bit tense. Shane was rigidly gripping the side handle of the passenger door, jaw clenched, eyes darting repeatedly into the rearview mirror like he was afraid of what he might see there.

Ilya didn't push him on it, but he drove extra slowly, and kept his eyes on the road the entire time. He didn't want to give Shane any extra reason to be nervous.

“I can carry my stuff,” Shane mutters, but even that is half-hearted and not earnest. He’s flagging already, leaning his body weight heavily against Ilya.

“Mm, yes you are very strong and sexy.” Ilya squeezes his arm as he unlocks the front door with a bit of struggle. The Ottawa house is a bit more modest than his Boston estate had been, but it’s still incredibly large.

Shane cracks a small smile as Ilya sets the duffel down in the doorway and helps him over the threshold. “You’re being overbearing, Ilya.”

“I am allowed.”

When their eyes meet, the look in Shane’s is intense, something hard to read. Ilya isn’t sure exactly what the burning in his big brown eyes is supposed to convey, but it makes him a little uneasy. Shane is looking at Ilya like he can’t possibly be real- like he doesn’t understand how they’re existing together at this moment in time.

“Are you hungry?” Ilya asks, reaching out to very gently brush his fingertips along Shane’s freckled cheek. It’s hard to see the exact outlines of each little mark right now, with the smattering of bruises and the scrapes and swelling. He’s careful to make his touch featherlight so as not to bring any discomfort.

Shane’s hand ghosts over his abdomen, where his ribs are wrapped tightly. He grimaces. “Not really. It hurts to eat.”

Ilya’s chest aches. “Maybe a smoothie? Something you don’t have to chew?”

He hesitates, glancing at Ilya’s kitchen and then back at him. “You never drink smoothies. Do you even have the stuff?”

Grinning, Ilya takes his hand, leading him through the front foyer until they’re in the kitchen. He helps Shane gingerly lower into one of the barstools, and heads for the fridge. He’d placed a grocery order from the hospital room and had his assistant arrange for things to be restocked so it would be ready for them. He figured Shane would want things that feel safe and familiar right now. And that with his injuries, he probably wouldn’t be up for large meals.

He starts the blender going with all of Shane’s staples; kale, apples, protein powder, the whole shebang. Shane watches with intrigued eyes before Ilya slides him a disgusting green beverage with a bendy straw.

“You just had this stuff?” he deadpans. It’s hard to say for sure under his damaged features, but Ilya is pretty certain he’s saying: *no fucking way.*

“I prepared.” Ilya kisses the top of his head and rubs a palm flat between his shoulder blades while Shane hesitantly takes a sip. “Is okay?”

“Perfect.” Shane glances at him. “How, exactly?”

“I have watched you do it enough.”

Shane's eyes get a little softer at that. At being noticed.

"I love you," Ilya reminds him. It's honestly silly he should even have to say it, but he knows it is nice to hear, so he does it anyway.

"I love you," Shane replies.

Ilya rubs his back while he finishes the smoothie.

Once the glass is empty, Shane insists he wants to take a shower and get the hospital smell off of him.

Ilya cleans up the kitchen while he listens to Shane puttering around upstairs. There's quiet footsteps on the hardwood, then the opening of a door and the sound of the shower kicking on. He hums quietly to himself as he finishes cleaning, then heads up to find Shane. When they sleep over at each other's houses, they usually shower together. Ilya wouldn't mind getting himself clean of the hospital stench.

He raps lightly on the door, but Shane must not hear him, probably already in the shower. Ilya nudges the door open, surprised to see Shane standing in the middle of the room in front of the mirror.

He's naked, clothes in a pile at his feet instead of neatly folded on the countertop or discarded in the hamper. He's removed the wrap from his ribs, making the bright bloom of purple bruising across his abdomen visible. It makes Ilya's throat feel tight and sticky, the sight of the mapping of bruises across his soft skin. His entire right side is smudged with dark purple and yellowed edges. It looks so painful it nearly hurts Ilya.

Shane doesn't even seem to be looking at that, though. His eyes are locked on his face in the mirror, fingers pressing against the tip of his nose visible underneath the tape. His brows are furrowed and his eyes are red-rimmed, liquid pooling in the corner like he wants to cry.

"Shane?" Ilya asks softly, making the other man startle, then hiss in pain as he clutches his side.

"What the fuck?" Shane wheezes. "You don't knock?!"

"I did knock, *dorogoy.* Sorry, I thought you were in the shower already."

Shane quickly turns back toward the sink, wrapping his arms around himself. "Well, get out!"

At that, Ilya is a little dumbfounded. "You want me to get out?"

"Didn't I just fucking say that?"

Ilya blinks in surprise at the sudden venom in Shane's voice. "Shane, I-"

"I don't want you to see this!" Shane snaps, angling his body even further away. "It's disgusting, Ilya. Get out, please."

In a state of complete disbelief, Ilya turns and steps out of the bathroom. The door shuts behind him with an ominous feeling of finality.

It takes him a few moments to really process what Shane just said.

Disgusting? Shane? No. Never.

Ilya perches on the edge of the king sized bed in his bedroom, wringing his hands together anxiously. He chews his bottom lip down to bits before the bathroom door opens and Shane steps back out in a curling array of steam.

He's dressed now in soft cotton sweatpants and a loose-fitting Voyageurs t-shirt. He looks cozy and clean, and if it weren't for his swollen, bruised face, he might even appear relaxed.

That changes quickly, when he opens his mouth. "Sorry. Didn't mean to snap at you."

"It is okay." Ilya pats the space beside him on the bed, relieved when Shane listens and steps forward.

He reaches out, taking both of Shane's wrists between his fingers tenderly. He rubs his thumb across the joint of Shane's wrist, soft soothing motions that make the tension in the other man's body seem to wither away. Shane softens and sits beside Ilya with a quiet huff of effort.

"You are in pain," Ilya says, looking at him through his eyelashes. "You are out of hockey for a little while. You are feeling…what? Bad about yourself? It is not your fault, Shane."

Shane exhales, jaw clenching as he looks down at their intertwined hands. "Honestly, it's not even about that. It's- I - it's so *stupid*. I should feel lucky to be alive."

Ilya hesitates. "Don't you?"

"Yes, of course. That was so fucking scary. I thought Hayden was dead for a second. But we're both okay, and I'm grateful for that. It's just-" He drops his head, mumbling something Ilya can't quite decipher.

"What, *moy sladkiy?* Hm?" Ilya brings his finger up underneath Shane's chin, gently nudging until their eyes meet. Shane's are watery and red underneath the bruising, like he's trying desperately not to cry.

"My *nose,"* he mutters, words entrenched in a quiet shame.

Ilya frowns. "What, it hurts?"

"No- I mean yeah but- no. It's gonna be…*ruined."* Shane squeezes his eyes shut, a small whine in the back of his throat.

"Sweetheart." Ilya's voice is taken aback. "Nothing about you is ruined."

“I’ve been playing hockey for over a decade,” Shane replies, shaking his head. “Never broken it once, never even had it bent. It’s like, a fucking miracle at this point. You’re always saying how cute my nose is, and you love to kiss it or trace my freckles and what if it’s *ruined* after this? What if my face isn’t my face anymore? What if the face you fell in love with is gone, Ilya?”

The words spill from his lips in a panicked wave, like a dam has been broken. He sounds downright distraught at the thought of this, more so than Ilya thinks he’s ever heard him.

And Ilya’s heart breaks just a little. The thought that Ilya could *ever* stop loving Shane, let alone for something as trivial as what he looks like, is too unfathomable to bear.

“Shane,” he says, eyebrows still furrowed, “you are the most beautiful man I have ever met in the world. But this is not because of your nose.”

Shane scowls, which looks painful under his bruising and tape. “So what, you’re going to say it’s my ass or something?”

“No.” Ilya reaches over and presses his hand over Shane’s chest, feeling the steady thrum of his beating heart.

Their eyes meet, Shane’s softening marginally.

“You are beautiful here, who you are. The man who says *thank you very much* to the postman when he walks by. The man who always makes more than enough food at dinner time so he can drop some off at his parent’s house. The man who is always on jumbotron giving rookies advice during games, even when he doesn’t know everyone is watching. Even when they are not even on his *team.”*

“That kid from Florida needed help with his-”

“Shane. I am in love with *you.* Not the very pretty package you come in. Do you understand?” Ilya’s voice gets a bit heavier at the end of the sentence, more firm. “When I found out you’d been in an accident I-” He swallows thickly. “I could not even comprehend what that would do to me, to lose you, *moy lyubimyy.* You would certainly not lose me because your nose got a little crooked.”

He looks at Ilya with his gaze swimming. Ilya isn’t exactly sure what he’s reading there, but he thinks something like *adoration* might be a nice word for it.

“I love you,” Ilya says, “I love your face, not because it is perfect, but because it is *yours.* Da, Shane? Do you hear me, *moy shokoladnyy batonchik?”*

There’s a pause, Shane’s expression twisting thoughtfully, and then he snorts. “Did you just call me a candy bar?”

“Mm. Yes, because you are so sweet.”

“You’re ridiculous, Ilya.”

“Yes. But, I love you, Shane.”

Shane leans in until his head is resting in the crook of Ilya’s neck. Ilya exhales gently, wrapping his arm around Shane’s back and pulling him in closer, careful of his injured ribs and his aching neck. They sit there for a beat, before Shane speaks softly into the silence.

“Ya, tebya lyublyu.” He says the words softly, but their impact land with weight in Ilya’s chest.

“You scared me,” Ilya murmurs, trailing his index finger along Shane’s knuckles. “You do not know how much I love you. How strongly I feel for you.”

“I know,” Shane replies, emotion thick in his voice. “I feel the same about you.”

“Ah, so you will never get in the car with Hayden Pike again.”

“Oh my god. Ilya.”

“What? It is clear he cannot be trusted with my precious cargo.” Ilya kisses Shane sloppy on the cheek, which makes him practically squeal in surprise.

“You’re so annoying!”

“You love it!”

“No!”

“Yes!”

Shane sighs, submitting a bit as Ilya continues kissing his cheek, down his jaw, sucking the skin of his neck teasingly. His body goes languid, and he makes a small, dreamy sound of pleasure.

“Alright,” Shane acquiesces, “I love it. And I love you.”

“Stay forever,” Ilya murmurs pleadingly into the warm skin of his collarbone. “Don’t ever leave me.”

Shane hums under his breath, a noise of pure contentment. “Okay.”

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!