

Open Door Policy

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Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov , Rose Landry , Hayden Pike , Jackie Pike , Svetlana Vetrova , Grigori Rozanov , Alexei Rozanov Andrei Rozanov , Yuna Hollander , David Hollander , Harris Drover , Troy Barrett , Zane Boodram , Ottawa Centaurs Team Ensemble (Game Changers) , Original Male Character(s)
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Open Door Policy

by [OopsHiHollanov](#)

Summary

“He does not know you are here.” It wasn’t a question.

Shane shook his head, the anxiety he hadn’t felt for the past two hours slowly crept back into his body.

“Why not?” Ilya asked.

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Shane Hollander lives a normal life in Ottawa. He works at a record shop with his best friends and he lives together with his boyfriend. But when Shane meets his new Russian neighbor, he realizes that his life could be so much better.

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Or an AU in which Shane is in an extremely abusive relationship and Ilya helps him escape into a better life.

Notes

Hi guys!

First of all: thank you for reading this fic, it's very different from the stuff I usually write, but I am very proud of it and really wanted to share it. It is not finished yet, but I've planned it all out and I have written some chapters ahead. I don't want to promise you weekly updates, but I will definitely try my best!

This story contains some heavy stuff and I found it was quite difficult to tag. I think I did it right, though, but if I missed anything, don't hesitate to let me know.

I will also put some extra TWs in the notes before the chapter.

Enjoy reading and let me know what your thoughts are, comments always encourage and inspire me to keep writing!

TWs for this chapter: DV, mentions of ED (though, it's really minor and I wouldn't even say it's an ED)

Chapter 1: 1

In most abusive relationships, the people on the receiving end tend to not see it coming. Not before it's too late. Not before he's got you so isolated from everyone you love, your ego so broken down that you believe everything he says. Not before you're completely convinced that you deserve everything he does to you.

That's what happened to Shane Hollander too. It all started two years ago, during his second year of college.

He met Ethan in his second year of his Master in Physiotherapy. Shane had always loved sports and wanted a back-up plan if he didn't make it to the NHL. He played for his university and quickly became one of the best players on the team, even though he'd only been in his second year. Ethan Myers was a senior who also played hockey, though he wasn't as good as Shane. Ethan had quickly asked Shane out on a date. Shane, who hadn't exactly been in the closet, but was also very cautious to tell people about his sexuality, had been ecstatic and immediately agreed. Ethan was very handsome, he was a bit bigger than Shane, because he was older. Shane was intimidated by him, but Shane had (mis)read the intimidation as being in love for the first time.

They had been happy for the first few months of their relationship, but after Ethan graduated and got a serious job at an accountancy firm, the first cracks started to show. Shane hadn't seen them back then, he was too smitten with the older man. Ethan had started to make himself the most important person in Shane's life. He demanded all of Shane's time and not much later, Shane dropped out of school. Which also meant that the chances of becoming pro were slim. But Shane, young and hopelessly in love, thought it was a romantic gesture.

Shane had taken on a job in a local record store in Ottawa, where he met Hayden and Rose. Rose was the manager and she was really proud of her little business. Shane had always thought of her as a power woman. To start a business so young, was admirable to Shane. Hayden also had big dreams. He wanted to become an actor, but Shane always thought of Joey from Friends when he thought about Hayden's acting career. He did admire the determination, though.

When Shane wasn't working, he was at home. It was his job to make sure the house was spotless and there was food on the table. Ethan made longer days and paid most of the rent. So, it only made sense for Shane to pick up the slacks by doing all the chores. Ethan was often tired, which Shane could understand. He was happy to do it, really.

The first time Ethan hurt Shane was a little over a year ago. Shane had gotten a bit drunk with Rose and Hayden after they had gone out for drinks when the shop closed. Shane hadn't cleaned the house and there wasn't any dinner made.

Ethan was mad, rightfully so. He had worked eight hours and came home to a mess. Dirty laundry, dusty floors and nothing to eat. He had yelled at Shane that evening.

"Where the hell have you been?"

Shane was barely inside the apartment; he had just closed the door behind him. Ethan was standing in the middle of their apartment, still wearing his office clothes. His expression made Shane's stomach tighten.

"Out with Rose and Hayden," Shane said, his voice a bit smaller than he would've liked it to be.

"You said you'd be home by seven," Ethan replied, his voice sharp with anger. Or maybe irritation.

Shane glanced at the clock. It was almost nine. "Fuck, I'm sorry."

Ethan scoffed. "I've been home for almost two hours, Shane."

"I know," Shane replied, "Sorry."

"Look at this place," Ethan said as he threw out his arms in frustration.

Shane looked around. He hadn't really noticed it that morning, but he understood Ethan's frustration. The kitchen was still dirty with dishes from breakfast that he had meant to clean up, but he was running late. The floor hadn't seen a vacuum in days, and the laundry basket was stuffed full of dirty clothes.

And there was nothing to eat.

Shane swallowed. "I—I'm sorry, Ethan."

Ethan took one step closer to Shane. "Yeah, you've said that."

"I was going to clean it," Shane said, avoiding Ethan's angry eyes.

"Oh yeah? When? You've had all fucking day."

"I was at work too," Shane replied. But he knew that was a weak excuse. Ethan's job was much harder, he also made longer days.

Ethan scoffed again. "Yeah, a couple hours at a failing record shop. I have worked for eight hours, Shane."

"I know."

"And I come home and what do I get?"

"I said I was sorry," Shane's voice became smaller and smaller.

"You always say that."

There was something in Ethan's voice that made Shane look down.

"I'll clean it now."

“That's not the point.”

“I'll do it.”

“That's not the fucking point.” Ethan spat.

He took another step towards Shane and Shane reluctantly took a step back. “The point is, that Hayden and Rose are apparently more important to you than I am.”

Shane shook his head, guilt flowed through him. “N—no, it's not like that.”

Ethan laughed, though there was no humor behind it. He took another step forward and grabbed Shane's wrists, hard. Shane flinched as Ethan pushed him back against the door.

The noise of the impact seemed to have shaken Ethan out of whatever trans he'd been in. He immediately let go of Shane's wrists. “Sorry. I uhm—I didn't mean to do that.”

Shane, still a little shaken up, replied “I know. It's okay.”

“I've had a shitty day.”

“I know. It's okay,” Shane repeated. Maybe more to calm himself down than Ethan. He wasn't sure.

“And then I come home to this mess, I just—I lost control there for a bit.”

“It's okay. I uhm—I'll start cleaning now, why don't you order us some food, babe?” Shane suggested and quietly removed himself from the door.

Ethan nodded. “Thanks.”

Later that night, Ethan had been all over Shane. After they had made love, Ethan told him to just come straight home after work from now on.

Shane did.

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Shane had been avoiding looking at himself in the mirror lately. He didn't look the same as he used to. He was much slimmer than he had been in college. When he was still playing hockey, he had needed to eat a lot to keep up with the training and fuel his body properly. He had gained a lot of muscle after puberty, especially in his shoulders and legs, and he used to like that about himself. Ethan preferred thinner boys, though. He had mentioned it a few times over the past year, usually when they were watching something together and Ethan pointed out an actor that he found attractive.

Shane wasn't playing hockey anymore anyway, so he supposed eating less made sense. He didn't need all those calories anymore. He wasn't training for hours every day. There was no reason for him to keep eating like he was.

That wasn't the only thing that had changed, though. The skin around his eyes always seemed a little darker now, like he hadn't been sleeping properly. Which made sense, because he hadn't been sleeping properly for a while. He often woke up during the night, sometimes because Ethan was moving around beside him, sometimes because he had a bad dream, and sometimes for no reason at all. Once he was awake, it could take hours to fall asleep again.

This morning, though, Shane *had* to look in the mirror. He needed to check the damage from the night before. He carefully pulled down the collar of his shirt and looked at his shoulder first. There was a faint red mark there, but nothing too bad. He turned his head and checked the side of his face. There was some swelling around his cheek, though it was already starting to go down.

It could have been worse.

He had dropped one of Ethan's expensive wine glasses. His mother had given them to him, and they were an heirloom. Shane had been careless and dropped one while putting the dishes away. It had slipped out of his hand and shattered on the kitchen floor. Ethan had been very upset. Shane understood why. If something belonged to his family and had been passed down for years, he would be upset too. It wasn't like Ethan had hit him for no reason. Shane had made a stupid mistake, and Ethan had been angry.

Ethan had punched him and then locked him in the kitchen. He had told Shane he could come out when the mess was cleaned up. Shane had cleaned up the broken glass as carefully as he could, but Ethan had forgotten about him. He had gone out with a few friends and hadn't come home for hours. Shane had been angry when Ethan finally came back.

Not very angry. He knew Ethan hadn't meant to leave him there that long. He'd just been distracted. But Shane had told him that he thought it was unfair, and Ethan hadn't liked the way he'd said it.

So Ethan had punished him again for talking back.

Shane looked at himself in the mirror one more time. The bruising wasn't too bad. Most of it was underneath his clothes anyway, and the marks on his face could easily be explained if anyone asked. He'd fallen. He'd bumped into a cupboard. He'd been clumsy.

Nobody at work would notice. Or, if they did, Shane would just tell them he was fine. He'd gotten quite good at that lately.

He splashed some cold water onto his face and dried it with a towel. His hands were still a little shaky, but he was pretty sure that was because he hadn't eaten yet. He'd be fine at work. He had already had a double espresso, although it wasn't doing much. He was exhausted, but he only had an afternoon shift, so it was five hours. Hayden and Rose would be there too. He could manage five hours.

But first, he needed to clean the apartment.

He would do it properly this time. It was Saturday, which meant Ethan didn't have to work and could sleep in. Shane needed to be quiet while he cleaned. Ethan had had a long week, and the last thing he needed was to be woken up by a vacuum cleaner.

So Shane didn't use it.

He took the broom from the cupboard instead and swept the floors carefully, making sure not to knock it against the walls or furniture. The apartment wasn't very big, so it didn't take too long. He collected the dust into a small pile and swept it into the bin.

He had done all the laundry the day before, so at least he didn't need to worry about that. He'd folded everything too and put Ethan's clothes away in the right drawers. Ethan liked his shirts folded a certain way, something Shane really appreciated about Ethan, because he was the same.

The kitchen was the last thing. Shane wiped down the counters, cleaned the sink and put away the dishes from the night before. He found a tiny piece of glass underneath one of the cupboards and immediately got down on his knees to pick it up. He didn't want Ethan finding another piece later. Once everything was clean, he started making breakfast.

He made a few breakfast sandwiches for Ethan so he could heat them up later. Eggs, bacon and cheese, exactly how Ethan liked them. Shane wrapped them in foil and put them in the fridge. He grabbed a smoothie he made yesterday. He didn't really have much of an appetite lately anyway. The smoothie would be enough.

Shane glanced around the kitchen one last time. Everything was clean. There was nothing left on the floor. The counters were clear. The dishes were done. He hoped Ethan would be happy when he woke up. That was all Shane wanted.

By eleven, Ethan still hadn't woken up. So, Shane left him a little note.

Hey baby,

I'm off to work right now. I made you some breakfast sandwiches, you can just heat them up when you're ready.

I will swing by the grocery store on the way back. Tell me if you need anything.

Ly x

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Shane figured he could leave a little early, Ethan wouldn't notice anyway, since he had still been asleep. It was something Shane caught himself thinking a lot more often lately. *Ethan wouldn't notice.* He felt guilty just thinking that way, because Ethan loved him. He made sure they had it good. He made sure Shane had a roof over his head, a warm bed to sleep in, clean clothes to wear. He shouldn't think that way about somebody who loved him. And why wouldn't he want to spend more time with the love of his life?

Though, he couldn't help that small, tiny, ungrateful part of his brain. The part that told him that their relationship wasn't normal. That part was harder to ignore lately.

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“Guys, I really need to tell you something,” Hayden said as soon as the store was empty again.

“What is it?” Rose asked, immediately intrigued. She loved gossip, especially when it involved one of them.

“Yeah, sounds serious,” Shane chimed in.

“Okay,” Hayden said, his face turning even more serious than before. “Remember that girl I met the other night? Jackie?”

Shane remembered. Hayden had met her at a club a few weeks ago, taken her home, and spent the better part of the following week telling them both how amazing she was. He had shown them pictures, talked about her for hours and somehow managed to bring her up during almost every shift.

Rose giggled. “How can we possibly forget?”

Hayden glared at her. “Shut up, this is big!”

“Okay, calm down. You sound like you knocked her up or something,” Rose said, obviously joking. Shane chuckled.

But Hayden went still, very still.

Shane’s eyes widened. “Dude, no way!”

“Oh my god, you actually got her pregnant?” Rose said, eyes just as wide as Shane’s

Hayden nodded.

“Holy shit, Hayd,” Shane said.

Hayden ran both his hands through his hair. “I know right! I don’t know whether to freak out or be excited!”

“Both?” Shane supplied.

“Okay, okay. What does Jackie think about this?” Rose asked as she put her hand on Hayden’s forearm.

Hayden sighed in frustration. “I think she is really happy.”

“Okay, so she wants to keep it?” Rose asked.

“I mean, yeah. I guess so.” Hayden dropped into one of the chairs they kept behind the counter. “I don’t know. I’m way too young to be a dad. I’m only twenty-four.”

Rose snorted. “You’re acting like you’re sixteen.”

“I might as well be!”

“Hayd, you are an amazing person! You will be a great father. My parents had me when they were young as well!”

Hayden scoffed. “Yeah, look how that turned out.”

Shane, who had been quietly listening to the two, let out a chuckle and immediately apologized to Rose. Her parents split up when she was five or something. Her dad, who was cool by the way, had gone through an early mid-life crisis and turned into a total hippie. It was a little funny.

“I am not ready to get married, then get a divorce and go through my mid-life crisis all before I turn thirty!” Hayden exclaimed dramatically.

“Oh come on, you big baby. You will be fine. Just show her you’re supporting her in whatever she chooses and be the best damn father there is. No way she is divorcing you then, okay?” Rose said.

It seemed to calm Hayden down. “Yeah, yeah, okay. You’re right.”

“And you don’t have to get married right away,” Shane said.

Hayden nodded. “Yeah, yeah, okay you’re right. Thanks guys.” Hayden said as he looked at both Rose and Shane. “Wow, this feels good to get off my chest.”

Shane chuckled, then, more serious, “You’ll do great, man. I believe in you.”

Hayden smiled at him.

Then, a couple of customers walked in and Hayden jumped back up, clearly needing the distraction.

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At the end of their shift, after Rose had locked the door behind them, she turned around with a mischievous smile on her face. “We need to celebrate,” she said excitedly.

Hayden groaned. “No, drinking will only end in pregnancies. I can’t do that anymore.”

Shane heard Rose chuckle and bicker with Hayden, but Shane himself fell completely silent. Rose hadn’t invited him to go for drinks after work in such a long time, that Shane didn’t know what kind of excuse he could use.

But he really couldn’t.

He needed to go the store, get groceries and go straight home. That was his job as a boyfriend.

“Shane,” he felt Rose tugging on his arm, “Shane, you’ll come with right?”

Shane sighed. “No, sorry I uhm—I can’t. Tonight. I promised Ethan I’d get groceries and make dinner.”

Rose rolled her eyes. “He’s taking up too much of your time,” she said it in a funny way, but Shane knew she actually meant it, she just didn’t want to bother him.

“He doesn’t work Saturdays, right? Why can’t he cook?” Hayden asked, genuinely confused.

“He’s uhm—not feeling too well. Had a long week.” The lie came so easily. Shane thought it sounded pretty convincing.

“Okay, okay. Next time, then?” Rose asked, opening her arms to hug him goodbye.

Shane tried not to wince when she hung around his shoulder, but he saw Hayden eyeing his face.

“Yeah, maybe. Maybe,” Shane said. “Bye guys, have fun! See you Monday,” and with that, Shane quickly left.

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Shane, who still thought he had to smoothe things over with Ethan, had bought way too many groceries, he really wanted to go all out and cook a lovely romantic dinner for the two of them. He still felt bad for messing up last night and for the negative thoughts he’d been having that morning. It was stupid, really. Shane should be more grateful for what Ethan has done for him, for loving him.

The bags were really fucking heavy, though, and he really hated the fact that they didn’t have the luxury of an elevator inside their apartment building. Shane groaned when he looked at the steps.

“Need help?” A deep, accented voice said from behind him.

Shane turned around and his eyes landed on a tall, blonde guy. His hair was perfectly curly and he had the most piercing blue eyes Shane had ever seen. *Fuck*, he shouldn’t be looking at another man like that.

“Uhm—no, thank you. It’s fine,” He replied.

“Looks like heavy bags. I take one, *da?*” The man said, reaching for the bag in Shane’s left hand.

Shane, thankful to relieve his aching shoulder, smiled politely as he handed over the bag. “Yeah, okay, thanks. I’m on the third floor.”

“Ah, I am too. See, not a problem.” The man said kindly.

Shane was intrigued by the accent, but he didn’t dare ask. He shouldn’t be talking to other attractive men. Ethan wouldn’t like it. The man walked past him up the stairs and Shane followed. Trying his best to take his eyes off him. (But failing, miserably.)

“My name is Ilya, I moved here day before this day.”

Shane chuckled. “You mean yesterday?”

“*Da*, English is not first language.”

“How’d you like it so far?” Shane asked.

“Is good, not great.” Ilya replied.

“Yeah, I get that.”

The building was old, the walls were thin and the street was busy. But it was good enough.

Once they reached the third floor, Ilya handed him back the bag. “Thank you, really appreciate it.” Shane said, but he kept his voice low, afraid that Ethan might hear him talking, his eyes kept glancing over at their front door.

“No problem. Name?” Ilya said.

Shane raised his eyebrows.

“Your name. You have not told me.” Ilya said, matter-of-factly.

“Ah, yeah, sorry. I’m Shane,” Shane said and reached out his hand. Ilya took it with a grin on his face. Shane couldn’t meet his eyes.

“If you need strong Russian neighbor to help carry bags, you know where to find,” Ilya said.

Shane huffed a laugh.

Then his front door opened and Shane’s head snapped to the side. Ethan stood in the doorway, eyeing the two of them. Shane felt himself turn red. “S—sorry, need to go. Thanks. Again.” Shane stumbled and quickly left.

Ethan stopped him at the door, grabbing his jaw and planting a heated kiss on his lips. Shane couldn’t help but think he was marking his territory. “Hi babe,” he said, smugly as he closed the door behind him.

“Hi,” Shane said, he somehow felt like he was in trouble.

“Who is that guy?” Ethan asked, his tone neutral.

Shane, who went to put away the groceries, shrugged, going for casual. “Uh—Ilya I think, new neighbor.”

“Hm, why were you talking to him?” Ethan asked.

“He was just helping me carry the groceries upstairs. I’ve bought all the ingredients fo—,”

Shane was cut off by Ethan. “I don’t trust him. Don’t talk to him again.”

Shane froze for a second, afraid of what was to follow. But after a few seconds, nothing did. "Okay," Shane said, his voice small.

"Can you start with dinner? I'm starving," Ethan said and placed a kiss on the top of Shane's head. Shane deflated at the soft touch. *Okay*, everything was fine.

Chapter 2: 2

Chapter Notes

Thanks for the love on this story so far <33 I really liked reading your thoughts on the first chapter!

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TWs: mentions of homophobia, OD's, and child neglect/abuse (though he was like 18/19 in my head here so, yeah)

Ilya put down his bag and suitcase inside his new, empty apartment and stood there for a moment, taking it all in.

This was it. His chance to start over. To take the reins on his own life.

It wasn't much, the apartment. The walls desperately needed a new lick of paint and there was a huge crack in the wooden floors. The kitchen was barely big enough for two and there was only one bedroom. He didn't need more, though. He walked over to the living room window. He'd seen it in the advertisement already, the view was pretty good. The building was on a rather busy street, so there was always something to watch when he was bored, he liked that. Just watch people go on about their day.

Ilya smiled to himself.

He'd only brought one big suitcase and a smaller bag. He hadn't even left that much behind in Russia, he just didn't have a lot of stuff. It wasn't like his family was poor, per se, he just never really got anything. His dad shut him out, not too long ago.

It was sort of his own fault, though. He had been too careless. Ilya knew from a pretty young age that he wasn't just interested in girls, he liked boys, too. But he had always been too afraid to experiment. To keep up appearances, he always took home lots of girls, it seemed like the only thing his dad respected him for.

But a few years ago, he had met his coach's son, Sasha. Sasha was bisexual as well and they confided in each other. They had fooled around many times, so many times that they had gotten careless. One time, when Ilya's dad wouldn't be home until very late, Sasha had asked if he could come over. Ilya had said yes. But he hadn't expected his dad to come home early to the sight of his own son sucking cock.

His father had thrown Sasha out and beat the shit out of Ilya. Ever since then, he hadn't said a word to him anymore. Hadn't given him anything, not even food. Ilya could sleep in the house, but he had to fend for himself. That's when Ilya decided to leave. For good.

Canada sounded like the best option. He'd looked at European countries first. Germany, the Netherlands, maybe somewhere in Scandinavia, but it all seemed too close. Besides, Canada was closer to Boston. Svetlana was in Boston. Svetlana was Ilya's best friend. She moved there when she was young, but visited Russia a couple of times a year. She was, besides Sasha, the only one he had told about his sexuality. She didn't mind. She was amazing.

It took a long time, though, to get the visa and an apartment, but he finally managed. He had saved up a lot from different jobs in Moscow and he'd be good on rent for the first two to three months, but he desperately needed a job, otherwise he'd be on the streets in no time. Ilya was easy, really, he'd do anything for money. Well, not anything, he wouldn't become a prostitute or something like that. But other than that, he wasn't picky. He'll start looking tomorrow.

Ilya looked around the apartment again. It came furnished, which was a huge plus. There was a decent couch against the wall, facing the TV, which was not decent, but it would do. He walked towards the bedroom. He had a wardrobe, big enough for the small amount of clothes he had and a bed. The bed was queen-sized, more than enough.

The apartment wasn't quiet, Ilya could hear the people outside, he could hear his neighbors when they talked a bit too loud or vacuumed the floor. Russia was quieter, aside from his dad's snoring when he was drinking and watching loud TV. But here, Ilya was completely alone, he could do anything he wanted to.

He could leave his shoes on inside.

He could listen to his own music.

He could invite another guy over.

Not that he had the confidence to do that just yet.

That was always weird to Ilya. He was so confident when it came to women. Women were easy, and he didn't mean that in a bad way, they just were. Because other guys sucked. Especially Russian guys. Ilya actually takes time to understand what a woman wants. He had Svetlana to thank for that. They taught each other the ropes of sex.

With men, though, Ilya had only been with one. Sasha. And they hadn't even had actual sex yet. They had sucked each other, jerked each other off and made out endlessly, but they never had sex. He wasn't as experienced as he would've liked to be.

He hoped Canada would change that for him.

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That night, Ilya had trouble sleeping. Besides the worries floating through his head, mostly money-related, he kept hearing screams and yells. Not loud enough to hear what they were saying, but it sounded pretty bad. The walls were thin.

So, that morning, Ilya was glad the apartment came with a coffee machine. He made himself a double espresso and dumped an ungodly amount of sugar in it. Just the way he liked it. The caffeine seemed to do the trick and Ilya felt energized enough to go explore. Look for a job.

He started his search at the library at the end of the street. He had typed his resume on his phone, but he wanted to print some copies, to leave at potential jobs. He'd written everything in English and checked it over ten times, he was pretty confident with how it looked.

Writing wasn't as much of a problem as speaking, though. The Russian vowels and consonants differed so much from the English sounds, he often struggled to get everything across. And with writing, he could take his time and look things up. When he was speaking, he couldn't. Often, Ilya would know exactly what he wanted to say in Russian, but he couldn't seem to find the English words. It was a little embarrassing, really.

After getting a few copies, Ilya walked back outside. He had no plans on how to do this and decided to try the grocery store he passed earlier, first. He'd worked in stores before, he could do that.

He walked in and went straight to the service desk. A grumpy-looking old woman looked up at him.

"What can I do for you?" She asked.

"I need job." Ilya said.

She pointed at the flyer on the wall. "You can always apply online, though we are not really looking for more staff right now. Sorry," She said.

Ilya sighed, but thanked her anyway.

The next place, a small café, was only looking for someone with experience in hospitality. Which Ilya did not have.

The place after that, wanted someone who spoke English more fluently and the place after that had cut him off immediately.

Ilya hadn't expected to find a job immediately, but he was still bummed. He was a stubborn guy after all.

It was already past noon and Ilya thought he'd deserved a break. He noticed a small bakery and decided to get a sandwich from there. He had also ordered a coffee and found a free bench in the park behind the bakery. He sat down and took in the scenery.

Canada's cities were a lot more colorful than Russia's. There was more greenery as well, which Ilya really liked. After finishing his coffee, he decided he'd go for a different strategy. He was just going to walk around and explore the city. He'd enter only when something spoke to him, when it felt right. Ilya wasn't very religious, but his *mama* was. So, maybe she could help him. Guide him towards a place that *would* hire him.

He'd lost his *mama* when he was twelve years old. His father always said it was an accident, but Ilya knew better. He had found her on her bed one day. He was excited to come home, because his coach had told him he could join the better team of the club. He had been so excited to tell his mother, but he was too late.

He found her still body on the bed with an empty bottle of pills on the ground beside her. He knew something had been wrong right away. Later he'd learned what an overdose actually was. It hadn't been an accident. She had killed herself.

By two p.m., Ilya started to get a little annoyed. Every single place declined him, mostly because his English sucked. It felt patronizing. Ilya's English might suck, but he knew how to work hard. He knew how to be on time, keep his mouth shut and do his job. He wasn't stupid. He was pretty damn smart actually, but he couldn't get it across in English.

Ilya had practically given up for the day when he stumbled upon a street sign. *Tire Centre* was what was on it, with a little hockey sign next to it. Ilya decided to walk towards the Tire Centre, curious about the local hockey team, he needed to keep up with his hockey somehow.

He looked at the huge building across the street. He'd come looking for a job. Never had this crossed his mind. Could this be that sign he was waiting for? Ilya's expectations were very low, but he had been rejected a dozen times today, what was one more rejection, right?

Ilya stuffed his hands in his pockets and made his way towards the main entrance. Inside, everything was much quieter than he expected. There were no crowds, no music and no players running around. A few people were working behind desks, and somewhere deeper inside the building he could hear the faint sound of machinery. He walked up to the reception desk.

"Hello."

The woman behind the desk looked up with a polite smile. She was pretty, much older than Ilya, but still beautiful. She seemed kind too.

"Hi, what can I do for you?" She asked.

"I look for job," Ilya, suddenly a bit insecure, felt his cheeks redden.

She chuckled.

"Okay, what kind of job?"

Ilya paused, he had no clue, really. "Uh—I don't mind, everything is good."

She smiled. "Everything is pretty broad."

"Yes."

"Well, let me see if I can get anyone down here. Okay?" She said and reached for a phone.

Ilya smiled and thanked her. Then waited around nervously.

A few minutes later, a man came through a door behind the reception area. He was older, probably in his fifties, and wore a jacket with the Tire Centre logo on it. "Hi, I heard someone was in dire need of a job," the man said as he reached Ilya.

Ilya had no clue what dire meant, but he nodded anyway. "Yes, is me."

He reached out his hand. "My name is Martin."

Ilya shook it. "Ilya. Rozanov."

"Nice to meet you, Ilya. Why don't you walk with me. Get to know each other a bit."

"*Da*, okay."

They walked through the hallway. "So, where are you from Ilya?" Martin asked as they walked further into the building.

"Ah, Russia."

Martin nodded, he probably guessed as much. Eventually they reached an office and Martin pointed at a chair. Ilya sat down, rubbing his hands nervously.

"What kind of job are you looking for?"

Ilya shrugged. "Anything. I work hard."

Martin smiled. "I believe you." He asked Ilya a few questions about his previous jobs. Ilya explained that he'd worked different manual jobs in Russia and had spent most of his life around hockey. He told him that he knew how to skate, knew the basics of ice maintenance and wasn't afraid of physical work.

When Martin asked about his English, Ilya hesitated. "Not very good."

"I can tell."

Ilya looked down.

"But you're learning?"

"Yes."

"How long have you been here?"

"This is second day."

Martin's face lit up at that. "Well, count me impressed."

Ilya looked up in surprise. "Really?"

Martin nodded. "Two days is nothing, you'll pick it up in no time. I have no doubt of that son," Martin said.

Ilya smiled, he liked Martin.

“Look, Ilya. I’m going to be honest with you, this is not really how we hire people. Usually, there is a whole application process.”

Ilya sighed, but nodded. He’d expected as much. “I understand.”

“But,” Martin said. Ilya looked back up, hopeful. “I like you Ilya. You seem like a great guy.”

“*Da*, yes, I am.”

Martin laughed. “Don’t get too cocky, son.”

Ilya didn’t know what cocky meant. He knew what cock meant, but that didn’t make sense in this conversation, so he just smiled back.

“We are actually in dire need of a new maintenance guy.” Martin explained that the maintenance job involved keeping the building clean, makes sure everything works as it should and assisting the crew during games.

Ilya’s eyes lit up. “Sounds good. I take it,” he said.

“It's not glamorous work.”

“I don't care.”

“You'll be cleaning bathrooms sometimes.”

“Okay.”

“Emptying garbage.”

“Okay.”

“Cleaning up after games.”

“Yes.”

“Early mornings.”

“Yes.”

Martin looked at him for a moment. “You really don't care what the job is, do you?”

Ilya smiled. “No.”

Martin laughed again.

“Alright. Come back Monday morning. Eight o'clock. We'll get you some paperwork and show you around properly.”

Ilya stared at him. "Monday?"

"Monday."

"I have job?"

"You have a job."

Ilya didn't know what to say for a while. Too stunned to speak. Then he smiled. "Thank you."

"Don't thank me yet. Ask me again after your first Saturday night game."

Ilya laughed.

Martin let him out of his office and closed the door behind him. Ilya stayed where he was for a moment. He couldn't believe it. He had a job, an actual job. *Spasibo, mama*. He thought to himself as he touched the golden cross that always hung around his neck.

Ilya, who was a bit lost in his own thoughts, almost bumped into someone on his way out.

"Sorry!" He said immediately.

"No problem! Hey, you new here? I saw you leaving Martin's office."

Ilya looked up to find a guy, around the same age as him. He was a bit shorter and he wore a kind smile. His denim jacket was stuffed with pins, mostly pride-related. Ilya smiled. "Yes. I am Ilya," he said and extended his hand.

"Harris, nice to meet you," the guy, Harris, said as he shook his hand.

"So, what will your role be here, Ilya?" Harris asked.

"Ah, maintenance guy. Very big job," Ilya joked, but he was still beyond grateful for the opportunity. "What is your job?"

"I am the social media guy!" Harris said excitedly. "Just got hired last month."

"Ah, congratulations. What is social media guy?" Ilya asked, he could guess, but he wanted to be polite. Maybe make a friend.

"I manage the accounts for our men's team! So, I take photos, record videos, basically collect fun stuff so that we can engage with fans," Harris explained.

Ilya nodded. "Sounds like cool job! So, you see team often then?"

Harris nodded. "Well, the season only just started, but they're a great bunch of guys! Do you like hockey?"

"*Da*, used to play hockey back in Russia. I love it."

Harris beamed. "Cool man, I'll see if I can get you in touch with some players. I do really have to run now, but here is my number, text me whenever if you need a friend here. I know

new places can be a bit overwhelming.”

Ilya thanked him and took the card. Saying his goodbyes as he walked out of the building with a huge smile on his face. Today wasn't so bad after all.

-

When Ilya returned to the apartment building later that afternoon, he noticed a guy huffing in front of the staircase, he seemed to be carrying heavy bags. Ilya, still riding on a high from the job offer, decided to be a kind neighbor.

“Need help?” He asked politely.

The man turned his head and Ilya was sure his heart fluttered. He saw the most handsome man he'd ever seen in his entire life. Dark, thick hair, golden brown eyes, Asian features, but most of all Ilya noticed his freckles. They were mesmerizing.

“Uhm—no, thank you. It's fine,” the guy replied.

Ilya noticed that he looked him up and down as well when a blush formed on his cheek. Ilya decided to push a bit. “Looks like heavy bags. I take one, *da*?”

“Yeah, okay, thanks. I'm on the third floor.” He said, finally giving in, making Ilya grin.

“Ah, I am too. See, not a problem.” Ilya couldn't believe the prettiest man on this planet lived on the same floor as he did.

Ilya learned that his name was Shane as they ascended the stairs. He had to push a bit for the name, but he was sure Shane was just a little shy. Maybe not used to talking to strangers.

“If you need strong Russian neighbor to help carry bags, you know where to find,” Ilya said, trying to lighten Shane up a bit. It seemed to work for a second as Shane huffed a laugh at him.

Then the door across from him flew open. Shane's head snapped to the side and Ilya was sure he could see fear cross his eyes. Ilya frowned at the sight. “S—sorry, need to go. Thanks. Again.” Shane stumbled and quickly left.

Ilya watched as Shane was pulled in for a deep kiss. *Ah*, so that was the boyfriend. Ilya felt the man stare at him with an evil look in his eyes. Ilya glared back at him. He decided then and there that he did not like Shane's boyfriend. However pathetic that may sound.

Chapter 3: 3

Chapter Notes

Hey! Again, thank you so much for your lovely comments and kudos so far, really appreciate it <33

This chapter was beta read by a friend of mine, so if the style feels a little different, that's probably why :)

TWs: Mentions of controlled/distorted eating. Very, very dubious consent.

The last week went by pretty quietly. Shane and Ethan didn't really fight once. Shane was proud of himself. He hadn't gotten everything right for that long in forever. It was good when things were like this. They had finished a tv-show the other night, snuggling up to each other. Ethan was laughing often, even at jokes Shane made. Even though Shane knew he didn't really have a sense of humor. Ethan had told him that a couple of times.

Shane filled the days with reading books that had gathered dust on his nightstand, finally feeling the ease to pick them back up. He still cleaned before or after work and he still cooked dinner every night. That was his job. It was a little boring, honestly. But boring was good. Boring meant a happy Ethan. Because of that, Shane had grown quite fond of being bored.

He had gotten out of drinks with Rose and Hayden without too much of a fuss, they seemed to accept it easier lately. That Shane wouldn't join them anymore. Even though Shane could tell that they didn't like it. Rose always seemed suspicious.

But what really confused Shane was that Ilya kept slipping into his mind. He found himself doing the most mundane stuff; cleaning, cooking, restocking records at the store, anything really. And he'd catch himself thinking of those insane blue eyes or those beautiful curls. Most of all, his accent. Shane couldn't shake that low, sexy voice from his brain.

Right now, he was folding the laundry while Ethan was in the other room, watching TV, and all he could wonder was what Ilya would be doing right now. Would he have a job? Or would he be at home, watching tv too? It was stupid. Shane shook his head in an attempt to shake the thoughts away. Why would he think about Ilya anyway? He didn't know him at all. And besides, he had Ethan. He loved Ethan and Ethan loved him. He didn't need to be thinking of Ilya. It was wrong.

After the laundry was finished, Shane heard the timer on the oven go off and rushed to get the lasagna out of the oven. “Babe, dinner’s ready,” he yelled from the kitchen.

Ethan quickly joined him at the table, not bothering a thank you of some kind. But that didn’t matter, Shane happily cooked for him anyway. Especially this dish. Shane loved lasagna, it was one of the few dishes that actually made him have an appetite again. He gave Ethan a big portion first, before he put the same amount on his own plate.

Ethan dove in, but before he put the fork in his mouth, he eyed Shane’s plate. A look of disgust displayed on his face. Shane felt himself grow smaller under his boyfriend’s gaze. Afraid he’d messed something up.

“Wh—what’s wrong? Is it not good, cause I can ma—,”

“Why did you put that much on your plate?” Ethan cut him off.

Shane looked down at his plate. “It’s the same amount as yours.”

Ethan huffed. “Yeah, I work hard. You don’t really need to eat all that, do you? C’mon. Give me your plate.”

Shane obeyed immediately, but he felt a wave of sadness wash over him anyway when Ethan put half of Shane’s food on his own plate.

“There, that’s better for you. Don’t want you to become fat with your lazy lifestyle, huh, baby?” Ethan said it so kindly that Shane wasn’t sure if he was really wrong. He nodded and thanked him for looking out for him. It was just food, it didn’t really matter anyway.

After dinner, Shane cleaned the kitchen and joined Ethan on the couch. He snuggled up to his side when Shane’s phone buzzed. Ethan immediately perked up. “Who’s that?”

Shane grabbed his phone from his pocket. “Oh, it’s just a text from Rose.” He shrugged.

Ethan held out his hand. “Let me see.”

Shane frowned, but gave his phone up anyway. Ethan had never asked him to check his phone before. This was new.

“Why does she ask you to meet her for drinks?” Ethan asked, his voice laced with something Shane couldn’t quite place. Jealousy, maybe.

Shane shrugged. “She always asks, I told her no already.” Hoping that the conversation would be over with that.

From the corner of his eye, Shane could see Ethan scrolling through the text thread. It was his groupchat with Hayden and Rose. “Jesus Christ, I don’t like this, Shane.”

Shane looked up. “What?” he asked, genuinely confused.

“You guys text a lot, why do they need to see you that often?”

“They are my friends, from work.” Shane said.

Ethan rolled his eyes. “They already see you during the day. Why do they need to see you after work as well? Why do they need to take so much of your time?”

Shane didn’t like the tone in Ethan’s voice. “I—I don’t know what you mean? They uhm—they just want to hang out, I guess. But I told them no already, really,” Shane said, his voice small and submissive in order to not escalate the situation.

“Fuck Shane, it’s a lot of messages!” Ethan said as he was still scrolling. “You should leave this group chat.” Ethan said as he handed him back his phone.

Shane shot up. “What? No, I—I can—,”

“Why? Why can’t you Shane? They’re more important to you than I am? Is that it?” Ethan spat.

Shane shook his head. “N—no, of course not! It’s just, they’re my co—”

“Yeah, your fucking colleagues, not your parents! Leave the chat Shane, I mean it. I don’t like this.” Ethan’s voice was full of anger now and Shane was afraid of what was to come if he didn’t do as told. So, he left the group chat and showed Ethan his phone.

Ethan smiled smugly. “Thank you. That wasn’t so difficult, was it?” He asked, in the sweet tone again that made Shane question all his instincts.

Ethan pushed Shane backwards so his back was on the couch. He leaned over him, his hand brushing over his cheek lightly. Shane shuddered at the touch. Ethan leaned down and placed his mouth on Shane’s possessively. He didn’t really feel like it at the moment, but this was better than being beaten again, so he let Ethan kiss him.

It turned heated pretty quickly and Shane struggled to keep up with the kiss. “Mh, baby, show me I am more important than them, huh? Show me you love me more than them.” Ethan moaned against his lips.

Shane shivered. “Wh—what do you need me to do?” He asked, he couldn’t help the slight tremble in his voice.

Ethan moved from the couch to the kitchen, leaving Shane confused and out of breath. Shane heard the clinking of glasses and a bottle being opened. Not much later Ethan returned with a glass of liquor, probably the whiskey he always made Shane buy, and sat down in the armchair. Ethan took a big sip, sighing contentedly when he swallowed the burning liquor.

“I need you to get off the couch and take off your clothes, can you do that for me?” Ethan asked, though it wasn’t really a question.

Shane was tired, not really feeling up for it. He’d had a long day, cleaning, groceries, cooking, working... So, no, sex wasn’t what he wanted right now. But Ethan, he’d had a longer week. He was probably even more tired than Shane and he still made the time to connect. Even after Shane hurt him with all those texts. Shane reluctantly got off the couch.

Don't be such a fucking wuss. He thought to himself.

Shane took off his shirt, folding it neatly on the couch and followed with his sweats. Then he looked at Ethan as he awaited further instructions.

“The rest too. C'mon, I want to see you. All of you.”

Shane hesitated for a second, but then slowly lowered his boxers as well, folding them with the rest.

He wasn't hard, he never really was, lately. But he could still do this. He still had two holes that worked perfectly fine. Ethan didn't need Shane's dick anyway.

“On your knees,” Ethan demanded.

Shane obeyed again, dropping to his knees before he could think too much.

Ethan opened his legs and urged Shane to sit between them. Shane went to stand up to walk the last meter, but Ethan clicked his tongue dismissively. “Crawl for me baby, you always crawl so pretty.”

Shane felt himself turn red when he lowered his body to all fours, slowly crawling over and resting on his knees between Ethan's legs. He felt humiliated, but he could do this for Ethan.

“I think that pretty little mouth owes me an apology for keeping those texts from me,” Ethan smirked, sliding down his sweats and boxers as he took out his already hard cock.

Shane swallowed. “I'm sorry Ethan, really—”

Ethan chuckled. “Not in words, Shane.”

Shane blinked. “Oh, yeah of cour—”

“Open your mouth, babe.”

Shane opened his mouth and Ethan tapped his cock against Shane's tongue, before sliding in. Shane started bobbing his head up and down Ethan's length at an easy pace, sucking and hollowing his cheeks. His boyfriend moaned softly above him.

“Hmm, that's good baby, but it doesn't quite say “I'm sorry” yet, does it?”

Shane didn't respond.

Ethan grabbed the hair on the back of Shane's head, forcing his gaze up.

“Does it?” He asked again. Voice laced with darkness now.

Shane shook his head. “No, no, it doesn't.” he mumbled around Ethan's cock.

Ethan smirked again. “What can you do to change that?”

Shane knew what Ethan wanted; he wanted to fuck his throat. Work all his frustrations out of him.

“I can let you use my throat,” Shane said, his voice was more confident than he felt.

“That’s my baby. All you have to do is open your mouth and stay still. Be my pretty little fuck toy. Think you can do that, baby?”

Shane nodded and opened his mouth again. Bracing himself for the intrusion that would follow.

It was rough, hard and painful. Tears were spilling down Shane’s cheeks as Ethan forced himself down his throat repeatedly. There was once a time when Shane loved this. When they first started dating, Shane loved the way Ethan dominated him in bed. Shane always got anxious pretty quickly, he would overthink everything and which made him really insecure. But when Ethan took away his decisions for him, especially in the bedroom, Shane’s mind would quiet down a little. He loved the feeling it gave him, the peace. Lately though, he started to, well, not *hate* it, but he definitely didn’t *love* it as much anymore. It didn’t do the trick like it used to, he didn’t feel less anxious. Maybe Ethan taking away Shane’s decisions had become too common.

Ethan set a harsh tempo. Shane knew it wouldn’t take long for Ethan to finish this way, they had done this multiple times already. So he knew he could take it and he would, without complaining.

Like Shane predicted, not much later he felt warm spurts of cum shoot down his throat. Shane made sure to swallow it all down and make a show of showing his empty mouth to please his boyfriend.

Ethan leaned forward towards Shane and grabbed his jaw with his hand, not firm, just holding his head upright, forcing him to meet his eyes.

“I forgive you, baby,” he said.

Shane closed his eyes in relief. “Thank you.” He knew he needed to say it, to please Ethan. Part of him meant it, too. He didn’t mean to upset him by hiding his friends. He knew Ethan was enough for him, Shane didn’t need to spend all his time texting his friends. He should stop doubting Ethan’s actions and accept the fact that his boyfriend loved him and that that was enough.

Right?

Later that night, Shane and Ethan were cuddling in bed. Most nights, Ethan wouldn’t hold him. So tonight, Shane tried to relish the fact that he did hold him. He tried to enjoy it, but he still couldn’t quite seem to shut his brain off. Ethan was already softly snoring beside him, but Shane felt too restless to sleep. His skin was itchy, Ethan’s arm resting on his waist seemed too heavy, even though it was just an arm. Shane sighed deeply, getting ready for another shit night of sleep.

-

A couple of days later, Shane was back at work. It was a little awkward at first, he had to explain why he left group chat. He told them it was just because he didn't like going out for drinks, so it would be easier if he was just not in the group chat. Hayden wanted to argue about the point of a group chat if it was just him and Rose and that it wasn't just about planning drinks. It was about having people to talk to. Rose seemed to stop him with one of their looks. Shane hated it. He knew it sounded like he didn't want to be their friend and that was really shitty of him, but they wouldn't understand the real reason. They wouldn't understand he did it for Ethan, because he loves him and he wouldn't do anything to upset the man he loves. Well, not on purpose, at least. Eventually Rose and Hayden dropped it. Shane was afraid that now it would feel off between them, but it never really did.

-

Shane was unpacking new arrivals behind the counter, listening to Rose and Hayden bicker about whether or not Fleetwood Mac was considered 'dad music'.

"Seriously, Rose, you own a record shop and you'd disgrace one of the greatest bands of all time like that?" Hayden said in mock-offense. Maybe it wasn't even mock-offense.

"I didn't say the band is *bad*. When did you hear me say that? I only said it's quite literally the definition of dad music."

Hayden rolled his eyes. "Well, it might be my favorite band."

Rose chuckled. "Point proven."

Shane grinned from behind the counter.

"What does that mean?" Hayden said.

"Well, you *are* going to be a dad in about eight months," Shane butted in.

Hayden huffed. "Well, thanks for your support, Shane."

Shane laughed him off. The little bell above the door jingled, announcing the entrance of a new customer. Shane looked up and locked eyes with the customer and whatever snarky comeback to Hayden he had died in his throat.

It was Ilya.

Ilya seemed to notice Shane too and a big smile broke out on his face. "Ah, good afternoon. Shane, *da*?" Ilya said.

Shane's heart skipped a beat. "Y—yes, hi, Ilya," Shane stammered.

"You work in record store," Ilya said as he skimmed over the different vinyls. He seemed completely unbothered, whereas Shane was unable to form basic words.

“I do, uhm—can I help you? Look? You know, for specific records?” Shane cringed at how he sounded and hoped the floor underneath him would just break open and swallow him whole.

“Ah, no, I am just looking. Big music fan,” Ilya said.

“Same. What uhm—what kind of music do you like?”

Ilya looked up. “A lot. I like rock, but I also like rap music. Sometimes, I even like jazz.”

Shane nodded. “Wow, your English has gotten better.”

Ilya smiled at him. “*Da*, I have job now. Helps me speak better English.”

“Oh, that’s great! Where do you work?” Shane had been wondering that ever since he first saw him, he didn’t really know why.

“I work at Tire Centre,” Ilya said. Shane’s jaw dropped.

“Oh my god, no way! I love hockey!” Shane exclaimed, forgetting about his awkwardness for a second.

“You play?” Ilya asked.

“Used to. In college,” Shane answered.

“Ah, why did you stop?” Ilya asked.

The question made Shane’s stomach twist weirdly. He stopped because Ethan asked him to. Ethan, who didn’t want him talking to Ilya anymore. And here he was, being a shitty boyfriend and doing the exact opposite of what was asked of him.

Ilya seemed to notice his change of mood. “I also play back in Russia. But I just do maintenance there. Nothing too uhm—fancy? Is word, *da*?”

Shane nodded, thankful for Ilya diverting the question. “That’s still great. Good for you,” Shane said genuinely.

Ilya walked up to the counter with a record in his hand. “I want this one,” he said and put it down so that Shane could scan the barcode. It was Nirvana. “Good choice,” Shane said as he scanned the code. Ilya paid for the record and looked Shane in the eyes. Shane, unable to hold eye-contact for more than one second, immediately looked away. “Thank you, Shane. I will uhm—see you around,” Ilya said and made his way towards the exit.

“Yes, uh—bye,” he said, back to his awkward self.

When the door closed behind them again, Shane caught Rose and Hayden staring at him with their eyebrows raised. “What?” Shane snapped.

“Who is the hot guy?” Rose asked.

“There is no hot guy,” he replied.

“Oh, c’mon dude, you couldn’t even speak.” Hayden said.

Was he really that obvious? A new pang of guilt hit him immediately. He needed to clear this up, he needed to let his friends know he wasn’t a bad boyfriend. *God*, what would they think of him?

“It’s nothing, really. Just my new neighbor. I didn’t even really notice that he was hot or whatever,” Shane was pretty proud at how convincing he sounded, until Rose raised her eyebrows at him.

“Uh-huh, sure Shane,” she said.

Shane rolled his eyes. “Can we just drop it? I am in a perfectly happy relationship. As you all know,” Shane replied.

He saw Hayden and Rose share a look. And, even with his trouble deciphering certain looks, Shane could see that look obviously meant that they did not believe a word he said. But that didn’t matter, as long as he believed them, they were true.

“Are you, though?” Rose asked carefully.

Shane looked away. “Of course I am,” he snapped. He didn’t mean to snap at Rose, but who was she to assume anything different?

Rose raised her hands in surrender. “Okay, sorry, Shane. I will drop it,” she sighed.

“Thank you.” He went back to sorting the new arrivals.

Chapter 4: 4

Chapter Notes

Hi everyone! I know I always say that I love reading your comments, but I will say it again! I really fucking love reading them, it's my first story where people actually give me in depth comments and they really make me feel warm inside. I feel proud and I am so happy that some people are actually enjoying this fic <3.

Reading comments that tell me I've portrayed what abuse can be like well, means a lot to me. I am lucky to have never been through anything even remotely like this before, so I am basing this on what I think it could be like, which is always tricky with such a heavy subject. So, if I do ever get it wrong, please don't hesitate to let me know (kindly). Again: thankyouthankyouthankyou!

TWs: physical abuse/violence

Ilya's first week at the Tire Centre had been nothing short of amazing. Sure, it was hard work and weird hours, but everyone was so nice to him. Even the players were kind, they didn't treat them any differently. That would be really different in Russia. He knew the dynamics were much more old-fashioned. Back there, everybody knew their place, their rank. Ilya hadn't really thought anything of it when he was younger, but the longer he was in Canada, the more he started to appreciate their way of living. Ilya couldn't believe how kind everyone had been, after just a week of working there. He would have never thought hockey teams could be like that. So open and accepting. It was really like one big family.

Harris, the guy he had almost bumped into that day, had kind of taken him under his wing. He introduced him to a lot of other coworkers, even introduced him to the team. Ilya had felt a little bit like a fanboy, recognizing some players from watching games on tv, but he always knew how to act normal in social situations, so Ilya thinks they liked him enough. Their captain, Zane Boodram, was especially kind. He had invited him to their biweekly BBQ. Apparently, they started out as a team-thing, but over the years more and more coworkers attended.

Ilya was feeling a bit nervous about it, but he was also really excited. He had dressed up a bit, though still casual, and was waiting for Harris to come pick him up. Ilya nearly jumped out of his seat when Harris texted him he was outside.

-

"You like Barrett." Ilya said to Harris on their way back from the BBQ.

Harris' face snapped to Ilya's, his eyes wide. Ilya just grinned, happy to be right. "How—I—what?" Harris stammered.

Ilya chuckled. "You were, how you say, undressing him with your eyes. Was cute."

Harris groaned beside him. "Was it that obvious?"

Ilya waved his hand dismissively. "Nah, I am expert with this. I think he likes you too."

Harris laughed at that. "Yeah, right. Big strong hockey player has a thing for the social media guy who can barely bench the bar."

Ilya smiled at him. "You are catch, Harris. Do not say stupid thing about yourself."

"What makes you say that? That Troy likes me too?" Harris asked, his voice a tad small as if he felt insecure just saying the words out loud.

Ilya shrugged. "He is looking at you all night. When you don't look, he looks. When he does not look, you look. Was like high school crush."

Harris blushed. "I just can't wrap my mind around the fact that a hockey player might be gay, let alone into me."

Ilya glared at him. "I had good chance at going pro, I am bisexual," Ilya stated, but he was secretly proud that he could just say that without having to think twice. Without having to be scared of someone's reaction. It felt so freeing.

"You are bisexual? Wow, big win for everyone, I guess," Harris said in disbelief.

When they arrived back at Ilya's building, Ilya thanked him for driving. "Oh, and Harris? Talk to him. To Barrett," Ilya said with a firm look in his eyes.

Harris nodded. "I will try, thanks Ilya. Good night!"

Ilya smiled to himself as he walked the three flights of stairs to his apartment. He really started to like it here.

Ilya was pulled out of his thoughts by a loud bang on the other side of the hallway. Ilya frowned. *Someone probably dropped something*, he thought. Until he heard yelling. Ilya's eyes widened when he caught some grasps of what was being yelled.

"You fucking watch your tone with me, Shane."

Followed by another loud bang.

Shane. Ilya suddenly felt a wave of protectiveness wash over him and before he could think twice, he rang their doorbell. The door never opened, but at least the yelling stopped. Ilya, who didn't know what else he could do, went back to his own apartment. He sighed defeatedly as he closed the door behind him.

He knew he didn't like that guy for a reason. At first, he thought he just disliked him, because he was with Shane and Shane was, quite literally, the most beautiful person Ilya had ever laid his eyes on. He thought he was just jealous. But Ilya had always been great at reading people,

though he wasn't glad to see he was right once again. Not like he was right about Harris and Troy earlier that day.

-

Ilya hadn't slept well that night. He couldn't shake this weird need to protect Shane. Shane wasn't his to protect. He shouldn't feel like that. But he couldn't help it. He hated it when partners yelled at each other. His parents used to do that. Especially his father. And look where that got them. His mother was dead and his father became a raging alcoholic. Ilya shivered as he thought back on those memories.

"Everything alright with you?" Harris said from beside him.

Ilya was fixing one of the boards on the rink and Harris waited for the team to come out for practice, so that he could shoot some photos.

Ilya sighed. "Yes. Is fine. Couldn't sleep." Ilya knew his voice sounded much too snappy, it wasn't Harris' fault, but he just couldn't shake the thoughts from his brain.

Harris raised his eyebrows at him "Any specific reason?"

Ilya gritted his teeth. He shouldn't say anything, right? He didn't even know Shane that well.

As if Harris could read his mind, he added, "You can talk to me, Ilya. I won't judge. And I am great at keeping secrets."

Ilya smiled at that. Maybe he could just tell him, get it off his chest. Ilya sighed deeply before he spoke. "I think, maybe, my neighbor is being uhm—how you say? Hurt? By partner? I don't know."

Harris eyes grew soft with understanding. "You mean abused?"

"*Da*, abused," Ilya hated how the word sounded.

"What makes you think that?" Harris asked.

Ilya waved his hand dismissively again, something he seemed to be doing a lot lately. Maybe because it was difficult finding the right words in English sometimes. He should try, though. "I hear—uhm—yelling. Often. I just can not hear good enough when I am in my apartment. But last night, after I came home from BBQ, I was in hallway and I heard loud bang and someone said *watch your fucking tone with me* or something like that and I heard other bang. I uhh—tried ringing doorbell, but nobody opened. The yelling stopped, so that was good, I guess."

Harris' face turned a little angry. "Jesus, that sounds bad."

Ilya nodded. "*Da*, is bad I think. I met him twice, Shane, my neighbor. He uh—is really nice. Shy, sweet, does not deserve this."

Harris raised his eyebrows at him. "Are you blushing?"

“Ah no, Russians do not do this,” Ilya said immediately.

“Sure, Rozanov,” Harris said as he playfully shoved his shoulder.

Ilya sighed again. “I want to help, but I do not want to, ah stupid fucking language, I do not know word—,”

“Overstep?” Harris offered.

“*Da*, overstep. I do not want to overstep. I am not even sure if it is true.”

Harris’ face turned serious again. “Just try. Show him he can trust you.”

-

Show him he can trust you. Harris’ words kept flying through Ilya’s head. He made a plan. It was a stupid plan, really, but he wanted to do something. His shift ended early and Ilya thought he could stop by the record shop, give Shane his number. He had scribbled it on a piece of paper and added a little note:

My door is always open if you want to talk. No pressure.

He had gone over it with Harris and he had assured Ilya it was a good idea. But now, standing just outside the store, Ilya was feeling really fucking nervous. He tried to shake it off and entered the store.

He noticed the girl that also worked there, he’d seen her the other day when he first came in, wiggling her eyebrows at Shane before retreating to the back of the store. Then he looked at Shane and his heart shattered into a million little pieces at the sight of him. It wasn’t anything too obvious, if you hadn’t heard the yelling last night, you would just think he bumped into a wall or something, but Shane’s lower lip was split and a little swollen. *Motherfucker*. Ilya lost all his nerves about his plan when he saw Shane looking like that.

“Hello Shane,” Ilya said as he made his way over to the counter.

Shane seemed a little taken aback, Ilya couldn’t blame him. As long as he didn’t think Ilya was stalking him, it was fine. “Ilya, hi. You uhm—want to buy another record?” Shane said and noticeably swallowed.

Ilya smiled at that. “Ah no, I uhh—wanted to give you this,” he said and handed the little paper over to Shane who accepted it with a noticeable frown on his face.

Ilya didn’t give Shane a chance to respond or, let alone, give him back the little note and quickly turned around, leaving Shane stunned.

-

Shane was really glad for the slow Monday afternoon at the store, because after what had just happened, Shane had been frozen in place for God knows how long, he had lost complete

essence of time. It wasn't until Shane felt a hand on his shoulder that he got startled back into reality.

"Shane, what just happened?" Rose asked, eyeing the little piece of paper in his hand.

Shane didn't speak yet, he hadn't managed to translate his thoughts into actual words, so he just handed Rose the note. She immediately folded it open and her eyes widened. Shane hadn't looked at it yet, but he was pretty sure he knew what was on that piece of paper.

"Oh my god, Shane. Your hot neighbor just gave you his number," Rose shrieked. *Why was she so excited?* Shane already had a boyfriend.

Shane, still at a loss for words, just shrugged.

"My door is always open if you want to talk. No pressure," Rose said.

Shane, confused, had found the ability to speak again. "What? I know that, Rose. What is there to ta—,"

Shane was cut off by Rose. "No, you idiot. I mean—of course, you can always talk to me, but that's not what I meant. I was reading it. The note. He wrote that on the note."

Shane was stunned again and lifted his hand mindlessly to his bruised lip. They were loud last night, him and Ethan. Ethan kept yelling at him and he threw shit against the wall. They were loud.

He knows. Ilya knows.

Shane didn't notice the tears forming behind his eyes.

Shane watched in confusion as Rose walked over towards the door, flipping the *open* sign to *closed*. "What are you doing?"

Rose didn't say anything as she pulled him into a tight hug.

Shane didn't know how long they hugged for, but eventually Rose let go. He also didn't know that the tears had escaped from behind his eyes, until Rose wiped them away. "For how long?" She asked.

She didn't clarify what she meant, she didn't need to. Shane knew what she meant. He still wasn't ready to talk about this, though. "I don't know what you mean," he said, stubbornly as he pulled his face away from Rose.

He needed to get out of here.

He reached for his bag and jacket that lay under the counter. "I need to uhm—."

"Shane," Rose pleaded from behind.

"I need to go."

“Shane, please.”

“Sorry, for uhm—leaving. Early. I just, am not feeling well,” Shane stammered as he made his way out the front door, leaving Rose confused and alone. He’d feel bad about that later.

-

Shane had been in a weird state of mind. He had been walking endlessly, crying in silence until he didn’t have any tears left and his cheeks were burning from the continuous rubbing. His legs were tired and the sun was already setting. *Fuck*. He needed to get home. Now.

As Shane entered their apartment, it was silent. Eerily so.

Cautiously, Shane called out for his boyfriend. “Ethan? I’m home.”

Shane entered the kitchen. “Etha—,” He was cut off by door slamming closed behind him. Shane jumped out of his skin when he turned around and looked right into Ethan’s angry eyes.

“You’re so fucking late, Shane. *Again!*” He yelled.

Shane backed up on instinct. “I am sorry, I was walking I lost tr—,”

“I don’t fucking care! The fuck is going on with you? You keep fucking misbehaving,” Ethan stepped closer and crowded Shane against the wall, he had nowhere to go. Shane knew what would happen next. He knew saying sorry didn’t help. After last night, Shane felt like he lost a tiny part of himself. Ethan had been angry with him so many times now, that Shane had grown a little numb. He kept up the script, though.

“I’m sorry.”

Shane winced when Ethan punched him in his side, hitting the bruise, that formed overnight, again. Shane hunched down, trying to protect himself, but Ethan grabbed a fistful of his hair, pulling him back up. He kicked his knee into Shane’s groin and Shane couldn’t stop the scream escaping his throat.

“Shut up, you fucking pussy. Or that stupid fucking Russian is going to ring the fucking doorbell again.” Ethan spat, pulling his hair tighter.

Shane groaned at shut his eyes tight as his scalp burned from the hard pulling. “Please,” he begged.

“*Please?* Come on, you deserve it. Don’t act like you don’t,” Ethan said, landing another blow to his stomach before he let go of Shane’s hair, making him drop to the cold floor.

“Think about your fucking actions and attitude for a while and then make me fucking dinner.” Ethan said and left the kitchen. Shane faintly heard him turn on the tv and sink into the couch.

It took Shane at least ten minutes to get back into his body and gather enough strength to push himself up. He stared at his reflection in the glass of the oven door. He looked fucking miserable. Other than his red eyes, there was not a single expression on Shane's face. He looked completely numb. His brain felt like that, too. His body, however, felt tired and heavy, his ribs aching with every small movement. *Definitely bruised this time.* Shane thought to himself. At least Ethan had been smart enough to not punch him in his face again. Shane felt himself give in to that numb feeling more and more often. It was kind of like he was disassociating, though not completely. He just moved on autopilot, his mind blank aside from putting his body into action to cook dinner. Maybe it was a way of protecting himself. Some form of survival instinct that had evolved in his brain over the past year.

-

The rest of the day, Shane had felt the little note Ilya gave him burn in his pocket. He had felt guilty for not having thrown it away when Ilya gave it to him, but he just couldn't. His mind was so messed up lately and he didn't know what to do about it. He had always been sure that Ethan loved him and that he loved Ethan. He had been *so sure*. So sure, that Ethan was the only thing he cared about for so long. So sure, that he hadn't made any efforts to maintain contact with other people, with his parents. So sure, that he even thought the abuse inflicted on him was some weird, twisted form of love, of discipline. That he deserved it because he had somehow fucked up.

But he was also tired. So fucking tired. Of trying to please him *every. single. day.*

That night, when Ethan was already asleep, Shane had saved Ilya's number to his contacts. Just to be sure. He wouldn't text him, though. Maybe someday, when he was feeling better.

Chapter 5: 5

Chapter Notes

As you may have noticed, I upped the chaptercount a little. Whilst writing I noticed I was in no way going to be able to finish this in ten chapters. So, yay!

Again, thank you for all the lovely comments, you guys are amazing! <3

TWs: short sex scene. Not very dubious consent, but Shane still isn't enjoying it.

It had been a little over a week since Ilya gave Shane his phone number and he still hadn't heard anything from him. It wasn't like Ilya expected Shane to text him, this was exactly what he'd thought would happen. It still hurt, though. A little because of the fact that he liked Shane and wanted to get to know him better. But mostly because Ilya had heard yelling nearly every night of the week and he felt like a coward for not doing anything, for just lying in his bed trying to block the sounds. But what more could he do?

Ilya's mind kept pulling him between two options: leave Shane alone, he'll come to you when he's ready to. And try harder, show him he can be your friend.

Both sounded good and wrong at the same time.

So, Ilya tried to distract himself with other things. Things he could actually help with. He had called it 'Mission Brover'. As in Troy Barrett and Harris Dover. Ilya was pretty proud of himself for that one.

Thus far, he had managed to get Harris to interview Troy for their socials, since he was a rather new player and he needed to show the world that he wasn't actually a total dickhead, but that he was a really nice guy. Ilya had glanced at Harris' office a couple times during the interview and every time he looked, Troy seemed more relaxed. By the end of the interview, he was even full-on smiling, which Ilya hadn't seen Troy do that often.

Later that week, when he was fixing a hallway light right outside of Harris' office, he noticed that Troy was sitting there with Harris, talking and laughing while Harris was working. So, at least that was going well.

Maybe he should push Shane a little more, just like he did with Harris and Troy. Ilya was aware that these were two completely different situations, but it seemed to work with them. Ilya decided to at least swing by the record shop after his shift. He knew Shane worked on Mondays.

God, maybe he was a bit of a stalker.

-

Ilya opened the door to the store, immediately locking eyes with Shane. Despite his nerves, Ilya planted on that 'sexy grin' Svetlana always used to praise him about and made his way towards the row of vinyls Shane was currently stacking.

"Hey," Ilya said, casually flipping through some vinyls next to Shane.

"Ilya, hi," Shane said. Ilya noticed that he blushed a little, it made his cute freckles pop out even more. He also noticed that Shane was wearing a scarf inside and tried not to think about that for too long.

"You have not texted me yet," Ilya said.

He smiled when he saw Shane turn even more red than before. "Is okay, just really hoped you would," Ilya added.

Shane's eyes lit up at that as he finally chanced a look at Ilya. "Yeah?"

Ilya nodded.

"Why?"

*Because I like you. Because I think you're the most beautiful man I ever laid eyes on.
Because I don't want you to hurt anymore.*

"Because I want to make new friends here. Need good English teacher," Ilya said instead, hoping that that would ease Shane into actually talking to him.

"Well, I am pretty good at English," Shane said with a small smile. That small smile made Ilya's heart flutter. He couldn't wait to see it more often.

"Maybe we go see a game at Tire Centre this weekend? I can get free ticket," Ilya said.

Shane's smile immediately disappeared from his face, *fuck*, making place for that blank stare Shane seems to carry a lot. "Uh, no, I don't think I can do that. Sorry."

Ilya frowned. He knew why, he just didn't want Shane to see that.

"I just—I always spend the weekends with my uhm—boyfriend, he would be sad that I will be gone for the entire evening," Shane quickly added.

Yeah, I bet he would, Ilya thought to himself, but he didn't say that.

"Ah, that is shame. Maybe other time then, yes?" Ilya asked instead.

Shane seemed to think about that for a while, then he nodded. "Sure, yeah, maybe another time."

Ilya didn't believe he meant it.

-

Shane couldn't stop thinking about Ilya's offer. He really wanted to. He used to love watching the Centaurs play, even though they weren't that good. But he hadn't really kept up with them. Watching hockey made him miss playing.

Besides, he really wouldn't be able to convince Ethan to let him go. It would only result in another fight and Shane felt sick just thinking about that.

Everything you do seems to end in another fight. Shane quietly thought to himself.

When he was walking back home, Shane had pulled out his phone, staring at Ilya's contact for a while. Maybe he could at least text him. He just needed a friend, right? That wouldn't be so bad.

Hi Ilya

His thumb hovered over the send button for a minute and then Shane quickly tapped it, his heart skipping a beat when the message was delivered. Okay, he had done it now. No taking it back.

Not even a minute later, Shane felt his phone buzz in his pocket.

Hi, Shane?

How stupid, he hadn't even told Ilya his name. Shane was already embarrassed, but he'd come so far now.

Yes, sorry should have said that.

Is okay, hi Shane 😊

Hi Ilya 😊

I thought maybe, because I can't go to the game with you, we can at least text?

Okay, yes. I like that.

Tell me something about yourself.

What do you want to know?

Anything, I want to get to know you.

Shane couldn't help smiling at his phone. He thought about it for a while. What could possibly be interesting enough to tell Ilya? Shane didn't do anything in his life. He had no goals, no hobbies, no friends. Shane felt his phone buzz again.

You are thinking too much. I will start.

I almost played professional hockey in Russia.

Wow, really? Why did you quit?

Ah, is not really nice story. But I will tell you because then you have to tell me something about you.

Deal.

I quit when my dad found out I was bisexual. He did not approve. He did not want to pay for hockey anymore. I could not afford it myself.

Shane's heart hurt a little at that. He had heard a little about what Russia was like for people that weren't straight. It really sucked that Ilya had to lose so much because he just wanted to be himself.

Wow, Ilya. I am so sorry. That sucks.

Is that why you moved to Canada?

Da.

Now your turn.

Okay, okay.

I used to have a big shot at the NHL in college.

Because you told me basically same fact I will ask same question.

Why did you quit?

Shane knew that question was coming. Ilya had asked it a while ago in the store as well. He hadn't been able to form an answer back then, but after hearing Ilya being so open and honest, he could try the same as well.

Because me and Ethan, my boyfriend, wanted to spend more time together. Hockey was kind of in the way of that.

So I quit.

I do not like Ethan.

Damn, Ilya that is kind of rude.

Sorry, Russian people are really direct.

But is big sacrifice, no? To make for him.

I guess that's true.

Do you miss playing?

Every day.

Me too.

Okay, something else about me: I really suck at cooking.

Shane laughed at that.

I'd say I'm pretty good at that.

I always cook for my boyfriend.

Ah, you can teach me then.

Maybe.



-

The following days, Ilya and Shane texted each other quite a lot. Shane had really liked getting to know Ilya, he seemed very kind and funny. Texting Ilya had become kind of natural for him very quickly. And it wasn't like he was doing anything wrong, he was just making new friends.

Except he kept it a secret from his boyfriend.

Which was, arguably, very wrong. So, it was safe to say Shane's mind was still pulling him in two directions all the time. It was exhausting, really.

The last few days, Ethan had been okay-ish, which was good. Shane's lip was practically healed, but the bruising on his ribs was still there. The colors were now more yellow and green rather than purple and blue and they still hurt when he made a wrong movement. But it was getting better and there hadn't been any new ones.

Shane was sitting on the couch, ready to watch the hockey game that Ilya had invited him to when Ethan walked in.

"Babe, I am heading out with friends. Might not be home until tomorrow."

Shane looked up. Ethan looked nice. He had shaved, and he was wearing a nice blouse. He looked handsome. Shane felt a pang of hurt. Ethan hadn't dressed up for him in months, but he would dress up for his friends. Not that Shane had done that either, so maybe it shouldn't hurt him.

"Oh okay, you look nice," Shane said anyway.

“Thanks. I expect you to just stay in, right?” Ethan asked. It wasn’t a question, not really. It was more a demand disguised as showing interest.

Shane nodded. “Y—yeah, of course.”

Ethan smiled at that and even planted a little kiss on his forehead. “Good boy,” he said.

A shiver ran down Shane’s spine. Ethan called him that a lot, at first Shane thought it was sweet, kind of sexy, even. Especially when he used that phrase in the bedroom. But lately, it had turned into something more degrading. Controlling. He didn’t like it so much anymore.

A few minutes after Ethan left, Shane felt his phone buzz. It was Ilya.

I thought you said you were spending the weekend with your boyfriend?

Shane frowned. Had he seen Ethan walk out the door? Shane felt a wave of guilt wash over him. Ilya knew he lied to him. Ilya had been nothing but kind to Shane and Shane lied to him. Lying is wrong. Lying means getting hurt. He was sure Ilya wouldn’t want anything to do with him anymore now.

But that thought hurt even more than fists ever would, so he texted back anyway.

I did say that, yeah.

Why?

Saw your boyfriend leave house, looking all fancy pants.

Who taught you that phrase?

Ah, your mother.

Not funny.

Anyway, yeah, sorry. He made last minute plans. I’m sorry we couldn’t go to the game, I guess it’s too late now.

Shane thought he made a pretty good save there. He said he was sorry and that he didn’t know Ethan wasn’t going to be here. Which wasn’t even a lie, because he really didn’t know. Maybe Ilya wouldn’t be mad at him anymore.

Hm, is strange, no?

What is strange?

You can not make plans, but he can.

It was just a miscommunication. No big deal.

Shane hated that Ilya picked through everything, even via text. He felt exposed and it made his heart beat faster in his chest.

But when the next text message came, Shane felt like it stopped beating at all.

Come over? Watch game together on my couch?

Shane couldn't do that. How the hell was he going to explain that he couldn't do that? That he had to stay home, because Ethan doesn't want him to leave the house, unless it's for work? He had already lied to Ilya once, so that wasn't option either, he didn't want Ilya to be angry with him.

Shane realized he had been staring at his screen for a full three minutes without replying, when he felt his phone buzz again.

Is really comfy couch, Shane.

Okay.

Be there in 5.

Okay 😊

-

Ilya couldn't believe what he read. He had never expected Shane to take him up on his offer. He suddenly realized that he looked like shit. He rushed to his bedroom, taking out his grey, *nice*, sweatpants instead of his black ripped ones. He also grabbed his black compression top instead of staying bare chested.

These clothes were all chosen very carefully. He didn't want to look like he made too much of an effort, but the grey sweatpants, well, everybody knows what grey sweatpants do to a man's body. And the compression shirt hugged his broad chest and biceps *just* right. A little spray of his favorite cologne also never hurt anybody.

Ilya wasn't stupid, he knew Shane had a boyfriend, albeit a shitty one, but he still wanted to try. He wanted to show Shane what he could have instead. *Who* he could have instead. He wouldn't try anything, he wouldn't make a move, not unless Shane showed him that he wanted Ilya to. But he still wanted to try.

Ilya jumped up when he heard the knock on the door. When he opened the door, he saw a very anxious, but oh so pretty, face staring back at him. Shane was also wearing sweatpants, unfortunately they weren't grey, but whatever. He wore a white sweater with some band logo. He looked amazing.

Ilya wasn't sure he was glad that Shane's sweater was pretty high on his neck. He kind of wanted to see why he had been wearing a scarf inside the other day and he kind of really didn't. Because seeing Shane hurt, hurt Ilya.

"Hi," Ilya said, a big grin on his face.

Shane, who still found it difficult to look Ilya in the eyes, smiled back. "Hey."

Ilya opened the door further for him, letting Shane step inside. Ilya saw Shane look around, taking in Ilya's interior. "Is not much, but is enough," Ilya shrugged, leading Shane towards his living room, where the game was about to start.

"Want a beer?" Ilya asked.

Shane shook his head. "Uhm, no, thanks. I shouldn't be drinking, I guess."

Ilya frowned, but let it go. He had already pressured Shane a lot into coming over, he didn't want to overdo it. "Okay. I have coke, coffee, water, not much else, sorry."

Shane smiled at him politely. "Water is fine, thanks."

Ilya went to his kitchen and poured Shane a glass of water and grabbed a can of coke for himself. He would also not drink if Shane wasn't going to.

"You can have a beer if you want, I don't mind," Shane said as Ilya re-entered the living room.

"Ah no, is fine."

Ilya sat down next to Shane, not too close, but also not at the other end of the couch. He could smell Shane's perfume now, it was nice. Ilya wanted to bury his nose in Shane's neck, but he refrained himself.

"I can't believe you work at the Tire Centre," Shane said, loosening up a bit, "have you actually met the team?"

Ilya nodded. "*Da*, I can not believe it either. I just walked in did not expect much, but they offered me job."

Shane smiled. "That's so cool, I'm happy for you."

Ilya knew his eyes probably went soft at Shane's words, but he couldn't help himself. "I have met Harris, he is uh—social media guy. He introduced me to team. Team is very nice, invited me to BBQ twice now."

Shane's eyes widened. "Oh my god really?"

Ilya nodded.

"What are they like?"

Ilya chuckled. "What do you want to know?"

Shane seemed to really consider this question, like he was taking it extremely seriously. "Barrett, is he really a dick? I mean, Kent is a dick and they used to be friends."

Ilya shook his head. "Nah, Barrett is good guy. He just wasn't in, how you say? Right place for him? Ottawa is better. More accepting."

Shane frowned at him. “More accepting how?”

Oops, Ilya was already oversharing some not confirmed things he knew. “Is secret.”

Shane playfully rolled his eyes. “Ah, Ilya, come one.”

Ilya grinned. “Okay, don’t tell anyone! Promise me, Shane.”

“Promise,” Shane immediately replied.

“I think Troy and Harris like each other. A lot,” Ilya said as he wiggled his eyebrows.

“No way, Barrett’s gay?” Shane’s voice was laced with disbelief.

“What? You don’t think hockey players can be gay? Very homophobic of you, Shane,” Ilya said jokingly.

Shane shoved Ilya’s shoulder, which sent all kinds of sparks through Ilya’s body that he tried very hard to ignore.

“Of course they can. I just didn’t think Barrett would be one of them, considering his past in Toronto.”

“I think he was scared. Maybe still is. I understand, I think I wouldn’t be as open about my sexuality as I am now,” Ilya said, proud of the perfect sentence he’d just formed.

Shane nodded. “Yeah, I get that. I was not very open in college as well.”

“When did you meet your boyfriend?” Ilya asked, he didn’t *want* to bring him up, but he wanted to know more about him.

Shane’s smile disappeared a little, though. “During my second year. Apparently, I wasn’t as good as hiding my sexuality as I thought. Ethan said he immediately clocked that I was gay.”

“Clocked?”

“Oh, like, it’s sort of slang for immediately noticing something about someone.”

“Ah, yes, I clocked you too, immediately.”

Shane looked offended in the cutest way possible, his nose crinkled a little like an angry kitten. “I’m not that obvious.

Ilya smiled at him. “You kind of are a bit, but I have also really good gaydar.”

-

Shane had a lot of fun at Ilya’s. The first few minutes he’d been tense, but after a while Shane was feeling really comfortable and really enjoyed getting to know Ilya. They had also commented on the game every now and then and Shane could tell Ilya really knew what he was talking about. Which made sense, considering he used to play really well.

It was strange how much they had in common about hockey, but Shane loved it. Ilya understood what it was like to have to give up something as big as a potential professional career. Though his was more forced than Shane's.

After the game ended, Shane checked his phone for Ethan's location and saw that he was on his way back. He had secretly hoped he really wouldn't be home until tomorrow. It would still take him at least 30 minutes to get back home, but Shane didn't want to take any chances.

"I should go," Shane said.

Shane saw Ilya glancing at his phone screen then back to him with a serious look on his face. "He does not know you are here." It wasn't a question.

Shane shook his head, the anxiety he hadn't felt for the past two hours slowly crept back into his body.

"Why not?" Ilya asked. He didn't sound like he accused Shane of something, on the contrary. He sounded so soft. It only confirmed for Shane that Ilya knew what had been happening on the other side of the hallway.

Shane swallowed. Ilya felt safe. He felt like he could just tell him so easily. Like he could help him get out of there.

What?

Shane surprised himself with those thoughts and quickly put them away. He shouldn't want to get out of there, what the hell was he thinking?

"Shane?" Ilya asked.

Shane stood up. "Thank you for inviting me, Ilya. It was really nice to get to know you." He said politely as he walked out of the apartment, back to his own. He left Ilya confused on the couch, but it was better that way. If he started talking now, he didn't trust himself to stop.

-

Shane had just finished cleaning the kitchen when he heard Ethan come home. He felt anxious again immediately. It had been so nice with Ilya and he couldn't help but wonder where he and Ethan went wrong. It had been stupid of him to go to Ilya. Now he couldn't turn off his brain spiraling about what that feeling in his chest meant when he sat next to him on the couch, laughing and talking.

Ethan came up behind him and hugged him. He reeked of alcohol.

Ethan started kissing his neck and he pressed his hips to Shane's ass. He was already hard. Shane swallowed, but figured he could at least pretend to want it. He owed Ethan that much after sneaking out tonight. Even though he didn't know.

Shane turned around and kissed Ethan, shivering at the bitter taste of beer on his tongue. He briefly thought back on the fact that Ilya didn't grab a beer for himself, because Shane didn't want to drink. Ethan would never even consider that.

"Hm I missed you, babe," Ethan muttered against Shane's lips.

Shane smiled despite himself. At least he was being kind. He could do this.

"I am right here, baby."

"Mhm, yes, you are."

Ethan continued kissing him, the kiss getting more heated as he pushed Shane back towards the couch. "I want to fuck you," Ethan purred and was already fumbling with Shane's sweats.

Shane helped him get them off by lifting his hips.

"Turn around for me baby," Ethan ordered and Shane did.

Ethan made quick work of opening Shane up. Much too quick considering he wouldn't let Shane get the lube from their bedroom. Shane was used to it, he'd feel it tonight and tomorrow, but it would be fine. Shane felt the head of Ethan's cock press against his hole, a little too dry, but Ethan at least used some spit. Shane groaned as Ethan pushed in, Ethan took the noise as encouragement to go faster, but the groan was not from pleasure, it was actually from the slightly painful and overwhelming burn. It was fine, he would be fine. He knew what Ethan liked and did just that. He whimpered and moaned and pushed his ass back against Ethan's thrusts until he felt Ethan's cum spurt inside him. Ethan took a minute to catch his breath and then pulled out.

"I am going to bed, can you turn off the lights and shit when you go?" He said, the softness in his voice was replaced by his usual indifferent tone.

"Y—yeah, sure. Good night," Shane said. Ethan didn't reply.

Shane sighed into his elbow. His ass hurt and he felt cum dripping out of his hole. His own cock didn't even make it to full mast and was now fully soft again. He dragged himself towards the bathroom to clean up, wincing as the washcloth rubbed over his sensitive area.

When he was in bed a few minutes later, his mind wandered to imagining what Ilya would be like in bed. After tonight, he figured he would take care of him. He seemed like he would. He seemed like he would take his time with him, open him up properly and clean him up after. Maybe he would even cuddle him. Ilya had worn a compression shirt tonight, hugging his tight muscles perfectly and the grey sweatpants? Shane felt his cock swell at the thought of what was behind those sweats and glanced over at Ethan who was fast asleep. He slipped out of bed and back into the bathroom. He figured he would just get it out of his system and then never think about it again.

Ever.

Chapter 6: 6

Chapter Notes

Thank you all for the love on the last chapter! <3

TWs: Mentions of ED.

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

Ilya couldn't help but be mad about the way Shane had just left the other night. He knew why Shane did it, he wasn't mad *at* Shane. He was mad *for* Shane. It was stupid to say what Ilya had said, but he just couldn't help himself. He needed Shane to understand that he could trust him, but maybe he'd pushed it too far. Maybe he pushed him away instead of pulling him closer. It had been fun, though. Sure, at first Shane had been really shy and a little awkward but he loosened up so quickly, which made Ilya feel really proud of himself. That he could make Shane relax like that. Shane deserved that. To not be so fidgety, so on edge all the time.

Ilya had just finished his shift at the Tire Centre and hung back for a while to watch practice with Harris.

"So, you finally get a night off when there is a home game and you don't even use your free ticket," Harris pointed out.

Ilya smiled despite his spiraling thoughts. "I had company."

Harris raised his eyebrows. "Oh? What kind of company?"

Ilya grinned. "Shane came over, we watched game together."

Harris clapped his hands together once excitedly. "So, you did actually stick with our plan? Gave him your number?"

Ilya nodded. "Yeah, took him a while to text, but he did."

"That's great, Ilya. Sounds like he could use a friend. So, how did it go?"

"It went good. We watched game and talked," Ilya said, though his smile disappeared a bit.

"But?" Harris asked, having noticed the change in Ilya's expression.

"But I pushed it a little too far and then he left," Ilya sighed.

Harris smacked his arm. "You did not try to kiss him, Ilya. That is too fast."

"No! No, I did not do that. Jesus Harris, you think I am monster?" Ilya said in mock offense.

“Okay, good. How did you push too far then?”

“I asked stupid thing about his boyfriend. I think reminder of him made him feel scared.”

Harris nodded. “That makes sense. I think it’s still good that you did though.”

Ilya frowned. “How is that good thing?”

“Well, it may take a while, but you’re showing Shane that he can talk to you. Just keep trying, he will open up eventually.”

Ilya looked up at Harris. “You really think that?”

“Yes, I do Ilya. I really do.”

“Rozanov! Put on some gear, skate with us!” Bood yelled as he skated up at him.

“What—really? You have practice,” Ilya said. He couldn’t believe his ears.

“We’re done man, still have some energy left, want to do a little game. Get in here, there is extra gear in the locker room!”

Ilya was startled for a second until Harris shook him out of it. “Go!” he laughed at Ilya.

Five minutes later, Ilya was in full gear on the ice. It had been a few months, but it felt like coming home. He skated to the team in long, strong strides, like he never left the ice at all.

They had played a short game, they even put Ilya as a center, constantly setting him up for goals, he missed most, but he managed to get one past Hayes, which he was really fucking proud of. Hayes, on the other hand, was now constantly being mocked. Which was a little funny.

“Damn Rozanov, I know you said you played, but you’re really fucking good,” Barrett said at the end of their game.

Ilya smiled. “Ah, thank you. You are not bad yourself, could be little stronger on the backhand,” Ilya joked, which was partially true.

Barrett laughed as he flipped him off.

“Rozy is right, maybe we should trade you for him!” Dykstra yelled from a few feet away.

Ilya had a lot of fun and he wondered if he would be able to bring Shane around one day. It was a stupid thought, because Shane would never agree to it, but he couldn’t help but wonder what it would be like to skate alongside him, see what he got. If they maybe could’ve been a match, hadn’t they both quit.

Ilya had sent Shane a few texts over the past few days, Shane barely responded to any of them. So, Ilya was really fucking surprised to open the door to Shane, standing in front of his door as awkward as ever.

“Shane?”

“Uh—hi,” Shane said.

“What are you doing here?” Ilya asked, he hoped he didn’t sound harsh or anything like that.

“You uhm—you said that, uh—on your note you had said that your door was always open? So, I thought I could maybe come over?” Shane stammered.

Ilya immediately opened the door wider. “Yes, *da*, come in. Did something happen?” Ilya asked as he led the way to the couch again.

They both sat down before Shane started to talk. “Not really no, I just, wanted to see you? I guess, I’m sorry if I’m being too much, I don’t wan—,”

“Shane, is okay. I like that you are here, yes?” Ilya said reassuringly.

Shane eased a little at that. “Yeah, okay.”

“So, you game?” Ilya said as he grabbed the second controller. He had just started up NHL on his PlayStation.

“Used to, haven’t played in a while though,” Shane said as he grabbed the controller Ilya handed him.

“Ah good, I will beat your ass then,” he grinned.

Shane huffed out a laugh. “In your dreams, Rozanov.”

Ilya couldn’t help but notice that Ilya had never actually told him his last name. He must’ve looked him up. “Ah, you look me up on Google now?”

Shane turned red immediately, Ilya found it adorable. “I—uh—,”

“Is okay, Hollander,” Ilya winked. Obviously, he had looked Shane up as well.

The corners of Shane’s mouth lifted into a smile again. Good.

They played for a little over an hour. Ilya had beaten him the first two times, but then Shane finally won. He had been so happy that he slapped his hand on Ilya’s knee. The touch sent tingles up Ilya’s spine, and he couldn’t help but stare at Shane’s hand on his knee. When Shane noticed, he immediately pulled back, which was a shame.

“I uhm—I should go, Ethan will be home soon. Have to cook dinner,” Shane said, avoiding Ilya’s gaze.

Ilya, still a little stunned, knew better than to push him again. He nodded and walked Shane to the front door. "I had fun, Shane," he said with a smile.

Shane gave him a short smile back. "Me too, *Rozanov*," Shane said, his tone a little flirty, before he disappeared back into his own home.

God, Ilya was more and more gone for him every day.

-

Shane had gone over to Ilya's at least once a week for the past three weeks now. They either played on his PlayStation or watched a hockey game. Shane loved how he felt when he was with Ilya. Ilya made him feel at ease, he made him forget all the things he normally couldn't stop thinking about.

It was dangerous, really.

Because Shane also couldn't help but notice the way Ilya's smile was *just* a little crooked, but still perfect. The way he lifted one hand to his mouth when he was giggling. The fact *that* he giggled. The way he smelled, the way his skin was always perfectly warm when they accidentally brushed their arms or knees together. The way Shane did not want to move back when that happened.

It was dangerous. And very wrong. But he liked it too much to stop.

So, that's how he found himself having lunch with Ilya on his break from work. It had been over a year since Shane went out to eat somewhere and he was feeling a little nervous, even if it was just a casual lunch. Ilya had gone all out, he ordered a big burger with a side of fries and frowned a little when Shane ordered a simple sandwich with tuna salad. Shane noticed the frown, but he didn't think anything of it.

However, when Shane left nearly half of his sandwich out of habit, Ilya started asking questions.

"Are you not hungry?" Ilya asked, eyeing the leftover half of his sandwich.

Shane shrugged. "I just don't eat that much."

Ilya frowned again. "Why not?"

It had become more and more difficult to deflect Ilya's questions. Maybe he should've just said that he wasn't hungry, but it was too late for that now. So, Shane shrugged again.

"Shane," Ilya said softly as he put his hand on Shane's arm. Shane flinched a little at the sudden touch, but eased immediately when Ilya just let his hand rest there. He looked up at Ilya a little reluctantly. He felt caught, like he was a little kid that had done something wrong.

"Shane," Ilya said again. "I know you do not like talking about yourself, but when you not eat at least one full sandwich, I get worried."

Shane sighed. “I don’t know what to tell you, I just don’t want to eat any more.” Shane felt trapped underneath Ilya’s gaze, but it somehow didn’t feel suffocating. He was scared, of course, and he didn’t *want* to tell Ilya the real reason why his appetite had decreased so severely, but when he looked at Ilya, he could see genuine care. Something he had only seen from Rose and Hayden every now and then.

“I just don’t want to get too fat, I guess.” Shane said instead, it wasn’t a lie, not at all. It just wasn’t the full truth. Not yet.

“Do you think I am too fat?” Ilya asked.

Shane’s eyes immediately widened. He hadn’t even thought about how that would sound to someone who had just finished their plate. “N—no, of course not Ilya, you’re perfect!” The word slipped out before Shane could stop himself.

Ilya’s frown turned into a small smirk. “Perfect, huh? *Da*, I know,” he said.

Shane felt himself blush. “Uh—I, sorry, I don’t know why I said that.”

Ilya’s soft look returned. “Shane, I do not think I am fat, I also think you are not fat, so why do you say this?”

Shane fumbled with the tablecloth, his other hand felt hot where Ilya’s arm was still resting. He felt Ilya squeeze a little.

“What is real reason you do not finish sandwich?”

“I,” Shane had trouble finding the words, but Ilya’s patience calmed him. “Ethan doesn’t like bigger guys, so I guess I do it for him?” Shane said carefully.

Ilya was quiet for a while. Shane felt the urge to fill the silence. “Which is not that weird, right? I mean, we all have our preferences.” Shane didn’t even know why he was still defending him. He knew it was wrong. And somewhere deep in his mind he knew wanted to finish the sandwich. He just couldn’t anymore, he’d probably throw it right back up.

“Preference is fine, Shane. Not eating because of it is not.” Ilya said calmly.

“It’s just, I don’t need it, right? I quit hockey, I don’t need so much food.” Shane kept up the defense, even though he knew it was a lost cause.

“For him,” Ilya muttered.

“What?” Shane asked.

“You quit hockey for him. You eat too little for him. I worry, Shane,” Ilya said.

Shane’s breathing picked up. This was wrong. He didn’t like this, he couldn’t say these bad things about Ethan, that wasn’t right. Shane felt like he was about to have a panic attack. He needed to leave.

“I have to get back to work,” Shane said and pulled his arm from under Ilya’s lingering touch.

Ilya looked hurt, but he didn’t stop him, so Shane walked out and ran back to work.

It wasn’t better at work. Rose and Hayden obviously noticed something was wrong and kept trying to find out what happened. Shane knew it came from a place of love, but he couldn’t take it anymore. He was happy that his shift ended and immediately went back home. Back to Ethan. He didn’t text Ilya again.

-

Ilya could smack himself in the face. Shane had opened up a little and Ilya kept pushing for more. He was fucking stupid and selfish. It had been days since they had lunch together and Ilya hadn’t heard from Shane anymore. He’d sent one text that evening. Just to check in, but when Shane ignored him, he took it as a sign to back off a little. Maybe he just wasn’t ready, maybe he didn’t even want to be friends with Ilya.

Ilya was feeling like shit and most of the time when that happened, Svetlana called him, like she sensed he was off or something, even though she was in Boston.

“Ilyusha! How is my favorite man?” She asked in her beautiful, sultry voice.

“Fine,” Ilya said.

He heard Svetlana scoff on the other side of the line. *“Doesn’t sound fine. What is going on? Is it not nice in Canada?”*

Ilya sighed. *“Is nice, I just miss you,”* he said, which was true, but also not the reason why he wasn’t fine.

“I miss you too, Ilya. I will come visit in a few weeks, okay?”

Ilya felt himself turning a little less sad at those words. *“That would be amazing, I will show you Tire Centre.”*

“Mediocre Canadian hockey rink? Jeez, great!” She joked, Ilya laughed. *“Tell me what is bothering you.”*

So, Ilya did. He told her everything and she listened carefully, like she always does. Svetlana assured him that he did nothing wrong. She said the same thing Harris told him once. That he needed time and that Ilya kept showing him that Shane could trust him. Ilya found it difficult to believe, but he did see the point. He knows how difficult it is to open up about this to someone. He also knows what happens when you don’t. That night he dreamed of his *mama*, it was a good dream, but he still woke up in tears.

He decides to send one more text to Shane. He needs him to know that he still is there for him. That he still has someone to open up to. When he is ready.

I am sorry, Shanya.

Is difficult topic and I pushed too much. I will not do this again.

If you want to get your ass beat in NHL, my door is still always open.

Ilya hadn't expected an answer, but when he returned home from work that day, he felt his phone buzz.

Shanya?

Is like Russian nickname for Shane.

Oh, I like it.

Okay

Shanya 😊

Chapter End Notes

It's quite a short chapter, sorry! To make up for that, shit's about to go down in the next chapter. So, be warned :)

Chapter 7: 7

Chapter Notes

I couldn't wait any longer to post this chapter, so here you guys!

Like I mentioned in the previous chapter: shit's about to go down in this one. Be warned, it's not very nice.

TWs: Basically all the terrible tags apply to this one. There is violence, there is non-con, there is verbal abuse, there is mental struggles. I will add a more descriptive explanation in the notes at the end if you want to know what you're going to read before you actually read.

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

Shane couldn't stop the smile that was spreading across his face when he looked at Ilya's text. *Shanya*. He had no clue on how he should pronounce it, but all the different pronunciations he could think of sounded perfect in his head. So, whatever the right one was, Shane would love it. He really wanted to hear Ilya say it to him, though.

Maybe he could go over tomorrow, if Ilya wasn't working. Shane had a day off and Ethan still had to work, so he could maybe spend some time with Ilya. Maybe he should apologize then for leaving so abruptly all the time. He owed Ilya that. Shane continued making up plans about visiting Ilya in his head and what to say to him when Ethan's angry voice shook him right out of his thoughts.

"Shane what the fuck is this?"

Reluctantly, Shane walked into the bedroom where he'd heard Ethan's voice come from. Ethan was holding a little note in his hand and Shane felt his chest crack open and his heart fall out onto the floor.

Fuck.

It was Ilya's note. How could he have been so careless to have kept that?

"I asked you a fucking question, Shane!" Ethan continued when Shane was too stunned to form a single word.

"I—," he managed to get out.

Ethan walked up to him. Shane swallowed.

"Are you fucking retarded? Answer me!"

Shane's eyes felt watery. He blinked harshly against the tears.

"Oh, you're crying now? That's fucking rich, Shane."

Shane never cried a lot when Ethan was angry with him, at least he didn't think he did. Right now, though, Shane knew he had fucked up badly. He feared what was to come.

Shane still couldn't speak, he just stared at the note in Ethan's hand. There wasn't anything he could say that would save him from getting his ass beaten.

"Give me your phone," Ethan demanded and held out his hand.

Shane shook his head, the tears were coming on too fast to blink away.

"No?" Ethan grabbed Shane's wrist hard, pushing it against the wall. Shane winced. "Give me the fucking phone, Shane," Ethan said, his voice thick with rage.

Shane was cornered against the wall now, Ethan's grip tight around his wrist. With his free hand he reached for his pocket, trembling all over as he handed Ethan his phone.

Ethan snatched it from his hand and immediately scrolled through his chat with Ilya. The irises in Ethan's eyes were completely gone, replaced by the black from his pupils that were blown wide in anger. He threw Shane's phone against the wall, which shattered at the impact.

"You're fucking cheating on me, Shane?" Ethan yelled.

Shane frantically shook his head. "No—no, I am not cheating," Shane said through sobs.

"Then why are you fucking crying, huh? Why are you hiding this from me!?" Ethan pushed him against the wall one more time, his head clattered back hard. Shane was full on sobbing now.

"After all I fucking did for you! Get you a house, pay your damn rent and groceries. *Love* you?! And this is what I get? You're a fucking ungrateful slut, Shane!" Ethan punched him in the face so hard that Shane could see stars.

"I'm sorry!" Shane cried out. "I didn't cheat. Ilya is just a friend!"

I don't fucking believe you."

Ethan dragged Shane towards the kitchen. Shane tried to fight him, but he had lost so much strength over the past two years, he was useless against Ethan. Ethan threw him on the kitchen floor and kicked his ribs once, Shane groaned as his already weakened ribs had to take another blow. He might've even heard a crack.

"You're fucking staying here, I can't fucking look at you right now." Ethan said as he stood over him.

"For how long?" Shane managed to ask in between sobs. *Not a good question*, Shane thought when Ethan kicked him again.

“Until I forgive you, you better start begging for it now, Shane.”

Shane wasn't above that; he'd begged Ethan so many times now that the words practically rolled off his lips. “P—please, Ethan, please believe me,” Shane begged.

Ethan shook his head. “Not yet.” He grabbed the collar of Shane's shirt to lift him off the floor and punched him in the face one more time before he turned around and locked the door, leaving Shane on the cold, hard floor.

Shane's hands trembled when he lifted them to his face and they came away red and sticky. Blood was seeping out of the small cut Ethan's ring caused on his forehead. Shane couldn't stop his hysteric cries for so long that he eventually tired himself out and fell into a restless sleep on the floor.

-

When Shane woke up again and turned on his back, his ribs were screaming at him. Shane groaned in pain as he tried to lift himself off the floor. He was in the kitchen, he could get some Tylenol for his ribs and the throbbing pain in his head. He was still shaking vigorously as he reached for the little bottle of pills.

There was a fleeting thought in his head that told him to just swallow them all, the entire bottle. At least it would be over then, but Shane wasn't so far gone yet. So, he took only two, swallowing them down with a full glass of water.

Then he heard the drilling on the other side of the wall. Shane frowned, but he couldn't check. The door was still locked.

He needed to use the bathroom badly. Shane went over to the door, if he'd keep his voice down, sound submissive enough, maybe Ethan would let him out.

“Ethan, I'm so sorry. Please, forgive me. You have to forgive me, please,” Shane begged.

“I never meant to hurt you, I just—I thought I could make a friend. But I see it now, I don't need more friends. Not when I have you,” Shane continued. The drilling stopped and Shane heard the door unlock. He quickly took a step back when it opened, showing Ethan with a tearstained face. Somehow, after everything he'd done, Shane still felt his heart break at the sight. He still felt guilty, even though he knew that none of this was right. That none of this was normal.

“That's what I've been trying to tell you for years, baby. You're just not listening to me,” Ethan said. The anger was gone, it was replaced by exhaustion.

Shane shook his head. “No, but I know it now. Please, Ethan. I love you, I really do. Only you,” Shane said and reluctantly reached out his hand. He felt kind of mad at himself that telling Ethan this wasn't even really a lie. He *did* still love him, he just couldn't understand why.

“Really?” Ethan said. Shane nodded and Ethan pulled him into a tight hug. Shane couldn’t stop the whimper coming out of his mouth when Ethan hugged him so tightly that his hurt chest felt like it was breaking even further. Ethan ignored it.

Ethan took him to the bathroom and Shane was quick to relieve himself. “Thank you, baby. For letting me out.” Shane said.

Ethan kissed his forehead. “I’m not.”

Shane frowned. “What?”

“You’re staying here, Shane. I can’t trust you yet, I need some time.”

Shane froze when he looked at the bedroom door. That was what the drilling was for. Ethan altered the locks, so that it could also lock from the outside. Just like he did with the kitchen door once. “B—but, Ethan, I have to work. Tomorrow. They will miss me,” Shane stammered, eyes locked on the door.

“I texted Rose for you, said you’d be home sick the next few days. It’ll be fine. You just have to stay here, okay babe?” Ethan said as he dragged him to bed, locking the door behind him and putting the key on his necklace, next to the charm Shane once got him for Valentine’s.

Shane was too stunned to speak and let Ethan drag him along. The Tylenol was kicking in and he just wanted to close his eyes, block everything out, make his mind shut down. But Ethan had different plans. He pulled Shane towards him, kissing him wildly. Shane didn’t return the kiss, but Ethan didn’t even seem to notice. Or maybe he didn’t care. He worked his mouth on Shane’s neck, sucking and biting, Shane never responded.

Then Ethan pulled down his jeans and underwear. He slicked himself up and pressed against Shane’s hole. “I need you too bad, okay. I don’t want to finger you first, is that okay with you?” Ethan asked.

Shane was still unable to speak or even move his head, so Ethan took it as approval.

He pushed his cock all the way inside, making Shane cry out. Not in a good way, but Ethan didn’t need to know that. The burn and impossible stretch made Shane tear up again. He thought he wouldn’t have any more tears left after crying for hours on the kitchen floor. He supposed he was wrong.

Ethan’s pace was messy as he stroked Shane’s cheek which was covered in tears. “You look so pretty when you cry for me, baby.” Shane shivered at the touch, so soft compared to the brutal force with which he fucked Shane.

“You feel so good around my cock, does it feel good for you too, babe?” Ethan panted above him.

Shane’s cock had never been softer. No, it did not feel good for him too. It hurt. But he couldn’t tell Ethan that. It would only get worse if he did. So, he pushed his mind out of that empty place and forced himself to respond, to *lie*. Shane nodded. “Y—yes,” he whispered.

It didn't take long for Ethan to come close to an orgasm. He picked his pace up and put his hand on Shane's throat, squeezing tight. "I promise you, you will never find anyone that's better at this than me, babe. Especially not him," Ethan said in between thrusts. Shane felt something besides guilt flow through him when he heard Ethan speak about him. About Ilya. Shane couldn't quite name it, it felt a little like longing.

Ethan came with a loud grunt, emptying his load inside Shane's oversensitive, hurting hole and let go of his throat. Shane tried to get up, wanting to clean himself badly, but Ethan pulled him flush against his chest. "No, stay," he murmured against Shane's hair.

So, Shane stayed. Blood still dripping out of his forehead and cum drying on the skin around his ass and on the inside of his thighs, sticking and pulling on the little hairs. He felt gross and disgusting. And not just because of the bodily fluids seeping out of him. For the first time since he'd been with Ethan, he felt truly used. Shane supposed he'd deserved that, he had been foolish to think he could be friends with someone like Ilya. It was a stupid, dumb mistake and now he had to pay the prize. Maybe it was only fair this way.

Shane felt like he wanted to cry. He wanted to curl up in a corner and never leave there again, but he couldn't. So, he didn't. He stayed in bed with his boyfriend, trying to block all the bad thoughts away. So much, Shane had started to really disassociate. He didn't even know if he'd fallen asleep at all that night. He didn't notice the light coming in through the curtains and he didn't notice Ethan leaving the bedroom. The front door falling shut was what finally shook Shane back to reality. Shane felt like he'd only blinked since the assault last night and now it was morning again.

Because that's what it was right?

Assault.

Ethan had assaulted him. And Shane let him.

Was it really assault if you didn't fight back?

No, he didn't assault him.

Shane wasn't assaulted.

Right?

He had no clue anymore. He hadn't wanted it last night, not like that. But he never told him that. Ethan would've stopped if he had told him to, but he didn't. So, it wasn't Ethan's fault, it was his own. And he hated himself for that.

Shane lifted his body out of bed. His body felt heavier than usual, his ribs were aching, his head was throbbing and he was pretty sure that he wouldn't be able to sit normally today. He dragged himself towards the bathroom that was connected to the bedroom.

He didn't look in the mirror. He didn't want to.

He knew what reflection would stare back at him. Bloody cuts, black bruises and an empty, dead stare.

He didn't need to see that. So, Shane went straight into the shower. Letting the water turn so hot that he could only focus on the steam and the slight burn of the hot water. He stayed there until his skin was red from the heat, only then did he turn off the water.

After Shane had dried himself and thrown on some clothes, he reached for the doorknob that led into the hallway. He needed more Tylenol. When he turned the knob, the door didn't open.

Shane had forgotten that Ethan altered the locks, but he remembered now. He remembered how much he'd fucked up and, though he knew it was not right at all, he understood why Ethan locked him in here. He wouldn't trust himself right now either.

Because part of what Ethan said was right, wasn't it? No, Shane didn't *cheat* on him, but he would be lying if he said he hadn't thought about it before. About leaving Ethan and being with Ilya instead.

And wasn't that so much worse than cheating?

Shane sank his body towards the floor, leaning back against the door as he stared into nothing. His stomach growled angrily. Ethan wouldn't be home for nine hours.

-

It had been three days since Ethan locked Shane into the bedroom. Ethan let him out when he was home, so that Shane could cook for them. But when he left for work, he had put Shane back into the bedroom. Shane's phone was broken and he'd already read the books that were inside the bedroom.

Not that he had the mental capacity to focus on a book right now.

He had spent the majority of each day disassociating. The only thing to break him out of that was Ethan coming home. Every evening he tried to remember what had happened during the day and he just didn't know. Every day melted together into one big gooey memory. It was better that way.

"You can go back to work tomorrow." Ethan suddenly said when Shane left bathroom, ready to go to bed.

"Really?" Shane asked. He wasn't even surprised by his own lack of enthusiasm. He didn't really care anymore. Not caring was easier.

Ethan nodded. "Yeah, I think you learned your lesson, right? You won't speak to that guy ever again. I trust you."

The words that left Ethan's mouth should have caused a wave of relief to wash over Shane, but instead he felt nothing. He knew what to say in this situation, though. So, Shane replied on autopilot. "Thank you, I promise."

“But, what about my face?” Shane asked. He had made the mistake of looking in the mirror just now. He still had a nasty cut on his forehead and the left side of his face showed a plethora of different colors varying from purple to yellow with hints of blue and green in there.

Ethan shrugged. “When I texted Rose you were staying home, I told her that you got ran over by a scooter.”

“Okay, that works, I guess.” Shane said.

Shane slipped into bed with Ethan. His body still hurt, but at least he had a good excuse to use at work when he couldn’t hide the pain.

“I also have a small present for you,” Ethan said and slipped out a little box. Shane felt a little relief when he noticed it was too big for a ring. It might have been the first thing he felt in three days besides his bruised, or maybe broken, ribs.

“It’s a watch. I can’t afford a new phone for you, but at least you’ll know the time now, right?”

Shane grabbed the box and turned it over in his hand. It was a nice watch. “Wow, thank you. You didn’t have to do that.”

Ethan shrugged. “I think you deserve a little present after everything we’ve been through the past few days.”

Chapter End Notes

Spoilers ahead!!!

More descriptive TWs: Ethan finds out Shane is messaging Ilya. As expected, he gets really upset and territorial over it. He beats Shane up, calls him a cheater and a slut and locks him up. Eventually he rapes Shane. In the aftermath Shane is mentally struggling, he doesn't know if it's rape or not, he doesn't know if he'd deserved it or not and eventually he disassociates. There is also one minor mention of suicidal thoughts.

So, this is the beginning of the turning point guys, Shane's gonna go through it for a couple more chapter before everything ends well.

Chapter 8: 8

Chapter Notes

Wow, guys. The love on the last chapter made me really happy, thank you so much for that <3 Like I mentioned before, I have been lucky enough to not have experienced anything remotely similar to what is happening in this story, so reading your comments about how I have written it well, means so much. I would hate to take on such a big topic and not do it justice. So, I'm glad that I have at least done it a tiny little bit of justice.

Your comments also almost made me want to rewrite my entire story haha. No, the watch is not a tracker. I intended it as a way for Ethan to be manipulative towards Shane; win him back over by doing something kind.

We have a little flashback to the last chapter at the beginning of this one, just so you won't be confused by the timeline.

Also upped the chapter count again, oops.

TWs: mentions of DV. Nothing big.

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

Ilya had been pacing up and down his apartment the entire night. He knew what he heard, but what could he do? Shane would never forgive him if he'd call the cops. He had already rung the doorbell, it didn't work anymore, they just ignored it.

Ilya couldn't make out what was being said, but he was sure he heard Shane crying and he was sure he heard one loud bang. Like something was being thrown against the wall. And now he heard drilling. Who the fuck is drilling in an apartment complex at midnight?

Ilya was going crazy. He had typed 9-1-1 in his phone about ten times now, but he couldn't do it. Instead, he called Sveta. She'd pick up.

"Ilya, this better be fucking important." Svetlana said with a sleepy, grumpy voice.

"Sveta, I don't know what do," Ilya said. He sounded frantic. He felt frantic, too.

Svetlana immediately heard the fear in Ilya's voice. *"Okay, guess it's important. What is wrong, Ilyusha?"*

"He hurt Shane. I am sure of it. Shane has been crying for like an hour, now I hear drilling. It is weird, Sveta, why would you be drilling at midnight?" Ilya was rambling into the phone.

“Okay, okay, calm down, Ilyusha. You said you heard Shane crying, why do you think he hurt Shane? He could just be crying?”

Ilya scoffed. *“We both now that’s bullshit. But I heard yelling, too and a loud bang.”*

“Yeah, okay. He probably did hurt him. But Ilya, as much as I know you care. There isn’t much you can do right now.”

Ilya sighed. *“Shouldn’t I call the cops or something?”*

“I wouldn’t do that.”

“Because Shane would never forgive me.”

“No, he might not. But also, because he isn’t ready. After everything you told me about him, I think Shane is not fully aware of how bad his boyfriend is to him. He’d deny, nothing would happen and Shane wouldn’t trust you anymore. Don’t jump the gun here, Ilyusha.”

Svetlana always thought ten steps ahead. Ilya really appreciated that about her. She was just so smart.

Ilya dragged his hand over his face in defeat. *“Yeah, you’re right. It would be a bad idea.”*

“Just keep showing up, Ilya. Safely.”

“Thank you, Sveta. Sorry for waking you up.”

“No problem, I will always answer.”

-

Ilya slept horribly that night. Even after the noise died down, his dreams kept waking him up. Every time he slipped into some form of sleep, Ilya saw Shane crying. Or he saw Shane bruised and bloody. It was horrible and Ilya decided, by 5 a.m., that he didn’t need to see that again. So, he got up out of bed and dragged himself towards the shower, letting the hot water help him get back to life.

His shift was horrible. People kept talking to him and he didn’t have the energy to be nice. He just wanted to focus on his tasks and then get the hell out of there and stop by the record store. He needed to see him, lay eyes on him. Just to see if he’s okay.

Ilya noticed Barrett walking in with two cups of coffee and a box from Starbucks. Normally, he’d gush over the fact that he was most definitely bringing that up to Harris, but today Ilya couldn’t be bothered.

“Rozanov, you look like shit,” Troy said.

Ilya put down the mop, looking up at Troy. “Your mother said something else last night,” he chirped back.

Troy grinned, probably glad to see that Ilya was still Ilya.

“What’s wrong?”

Ilya sighed. “Eh, bad night. Could not sleep.”

Troy nodded. “Any specific reason?”

“You sound like Harris,” Ilya grinned as Troy blushed. “How is that going by the way?”

“I uh—I was just getting him coffee. Maybe you need it more, here, take this,” Troy said as he offered Ilya one of the two cups. Ilya gladly accepted.

“I asked you a question first by the way, don’t deflect it on me.” Troy said.

“Is nothing, nothing to worry about. Go see your boyfriend, Barrett.”

Troy’s cheeks turned even more red, but he let it go. “Okay man, if you do want to talk, you know where to find me.”

Ilya nodded. “Thank you. Give regards to Harris, yes?”

Troy flipped him off as he rounded the corner towards Harris’ office.

-

As soon as Ilya was done with his shift, he made his way towards the record shop. Shane usually worked Tuesdays, so he should be there. As soon as he opened the door, he noticed Shane was, in fact, not there. He looked around a little more frantically than he would’ve liked.

“Looking for Shane?” A female voice said suddenly, making Ilya startle.

“Ah yes, is he working today?” Ilya asked.

The girl shook her head. “He uhm—he said he was in an accident? He’d be home the next few days.”

Ilya balled his fists and he was clenching his jaw so tight that his teeth might shatter on impact. *Motherfucker*. He hurt him so bad he couldn’t even be seen outside.

“You don’t believe it either,” the girl suddenly said, eyeing Ilya’s enraged body.

Ilya looked up at her as she kept talking. “You’re his neighbor, right?”

Ilya nodded. “*Da*.”

“Have you ever, I mean, did you ever *hear* anything?” she asked carefully.

“Rose,” the other guy that worked here, hissed between his teeth.

“Shut up, Hayden. I’m worried.”

Ilya was ready to tell them everything. About the fights he overheard, the crying, the *drilling*, but he stopped himself. It wasn’t his story tell. Shane hadn’t told them, so he shouldn’t either. He shouldn’t take that choice away from Shane. That would be wrong. He needed to give Shane the opportunity to do that on his own terms.

“I do not hear anything. I do not know what you are talking about.” Ilya said instead. “Sorry to bother you, I have to go,” Ilya said and quickly left the store, hearing the little doorbell ring as the door fell closed behind him.

He had lied for Shane.

Ilya pulled out his phone, the least he could do is send a text.

Hey Shanya, are you OK? I heard you had an accident ☹

The text was never delivered. Ilya didn’t know what to do anymore. He couldn’t go to Shane’s apartment, not while Ethan might be there. Somehow Ilya supposed that Ethan wouldn’t like it if Ilya just showed up there, asking for Shane. Ethan seemed like the jealous type and Ilya didn’t want to make it worse for Shane. He wouldn’t be able to live with himself.

-

Rose and Hayden audibly gasped when Shane entered the record store.

“Shane, Jesus. What the fuck happened to you?” Hayden asked.

Shane frowned. “Thought Ethan had told Rose about the accident?”

Hayden scoffed. “That’s one hell of an accident,” he said sarcastically. Shane ignored him, but saw how Rose punched her elbow in his ribs and hissed something at him. He knew what they were thinking, but he couldn’t bring himself to react.

“Seriously, though. Are you okay? You’re walking all weird,” Rose said, eyeing him closely.

“Ribs still hurt a little, but I’ll be fine. Sorry I missed three days.” Shane replied.

“Don’t even worry about that, Shane.”

Shane smiled. It actually felt good to be back here. He did some light duty, Rose didn’t allow him to put away new arrivals. Shane argued her at first, but every time he turned too quickly or made some sort of wrong movement, pain rippled through his chest, so he took the loss and sat behind the counter. Listening to one of his favorite noises: Rose and Hayden bickering about nothing.

He felt more and more himself as the hours passed by. He needed this. He needed to get out of the bedroom for a while. He had no clue what big of an effect it could have on his mood. He would make sure to thank Ethan when he got back home again.

“Ilya came by the other day,” Hayden suddenly said when Rose was on her break.

Shane felt his heart skip a beat at the casual mention of Ilya’s name. “What?”

“He came by. He was looking for you.”

Shane hadn’t really thought about Ilya the past three days, well, he hadn’t really thought about anything honestly. But hearing this, made all the feelings he had about his neighbor crash back into his body, *hard*. “Why?” he managed to ask.

Hayden shrugged. “I don’t know man, I think he hadn’t heard from you?”

“What did you tell him?” Shane sounded a little frantic, he was aware of that. He also couldn’t help it at all.

“Rose told him you had an accident.”

For a minute, Shane was really confused. He had forgotten about the excuse for his injuries for a second. Hayden looked at him.

“Because that’s what happened, right?” He asked, cocking one eyebrow up as he looked at Shane’s face.

Shane, still a little in shock, needed a second before he nodded his head. “Y—yeah, of course.”

Hayden looked at him for a few more seconds and then dropped it. Shane took a relieved breath.

“So, what’s the deal with you two anyway?” Hayden asked, flipping through some boxes.

“What do you mean?”

“Well, you obviously lose your cool when he’s in the store or when one of us so much as mentions him and he asked about you.”

Shane shrugged. “It’s nothing.”

“I don’t believe you, but because you’re hurt, I will let it slide,” Hayden said with a wink.

Shane was glad, because he did not have an answer for him. Not anything that didn’t make him sound like a cheater. Or a slut. Or a bad boyfriend. And honestly, he wasn’t even sure what the answer was. He just knew that a warm feeling had nestled inside his chest for the first time in three days when he heard Ilya’s name. Maybe that said more than any words ever could.

But neither Hayden nor Rose seemed to be grossed out by him. Hayden had been his best friend long before they started working here. Sure, they hadn’t been as close as they used to be back in high school, but that was definitely not Hayden’s fault. Maybe he could open up a little. Just a little.

“Hayd,” Shane asked softly after a few minutes.

“Yeah?” He looked up at him, his eyes soft, just like Ilya’s eyes always were when they were together. Nothing like Ethan’s eyes.

But what was he going to ask? Asking anything made it more real. It made Shane a cheater.

“I—,” Shane struggled finding the words.

Hayden dropped the box that he was about to put away and took a step closer to Shane.

“Shane, you know you can always talk to me, right? I know we haven’t been talking as much as we used to and, maybe part of that is on me, but you *can* still talk to me, you know that, right?” Hayden said, reassuringly.

Shane had a fleeting thought that popped up into his head. He needed to get that out first. “You’re going to be an amazing father, Hayd.”

Hayden smiled at him. “Don’t change the subject.”

Shane took a deep breath. He could do this. “I was just wondering why you and Rose are so casual about the whole Ilya situation.”

Hayden frowned. “What do you mean?”

“Uh—well, you keep implying that I, I don’t know, *like* him or something,” Shane said.

Hayden shrugged his shoulders. “So? What would be wrong with that? Ilya seems like a good guy.”

Shane scoffed. “Well, I have a boyfriend? For example?”

Hayden put his hand on Shane’s arm and Shane looked at it in confusion. “You can’t help your feelings, Shane. They’re allowed to change.”

Shane was struck by Hayden’s wise words and didn’t know what to say, so he just said nothing.

-

Shane left work that day feeling a little better than he had been, but also insanely tired. His hurting body tired him out more than usual. He still needed to stop by the grocery store and get groceries for him and Ethan. He was already dreading the walk back with a heavy bag of groceries.

He strolled down the aisle, thinking about recipes that wouldn’t need too many different ingredients. Shane was thankful for the shopping cart. He could put his weight on it without people noticing he was hurt.

Shane was so lost in thought that he didn't see the man in front of him and bumped his cart right into him. Shane's cheeks flushed red. "I'm so—," Shane's words died in his throat when the man turned around. "Ilya."

Shane watched as several different expressions crossed Ilya's face in a matter of seconds. Surprise, relief, *worry*. Shane noticed him staring at his bruised face and the way he held himself up on the cart. Shane felt himself turn smaller under the attention.

"Shane," was all Ilya managed.

"I'm uh—sorry."

"For what?"

"Bumping into you, I uh—didn't see you."

A small smile broke through Ilya's worried gaze. "Is okay. I am only small guy."

Shane smiled back. "I thought you were a big, strong Russian, if I'm quoting you correctly," Shane said, thinking back on the first time they met in their apartment building.

Ilya shook his head, still smiling, but his eyes dropped to Shane's face again. The smile slowly disappeared. "I was worried about you."

Shane's heart fluttered. When was anybody ever worried about him? "Why?"

"You did not answer texts. Your colleague said you were in accident. What happened?"

Oh. Right. Shane had been in an accident. He kept forgetting that. "Oh, I'm fine. Sorry, my phone broke in the accident. I haven't had the chance to buy a new one. Sorry," Shane said.

"You say sorry a lot."

"Sorry."

Ilya grinned a little again. "Very Canadian of you, Shanya."

Shanya. Shane had pictured Ilya calling him that ever since that text, but he'd never expected it to sound so soft, so, *right*. Shane was pretty sure he was blushing and quickly looked away.

"You like it when I call you, Shanya?" Ilya asked, his voice a bit softer and lower.

Shane blinked. "I uh—,"

"Is okay, you can admit you like nickname."

Shane didn't understand why he felt so giddy and warm inside. Well, that wasn't completely true. He knew that Ilya's low, sultry voice calling him Shanya was the reason he felt like that. What he didn't understand was *why* Ilya's low, sultry voice calling him Shanya would make him feel like that.

Ethan was supposed to make him feel like that.

“Ilya.”

“Shanya.”

“D—don’t,” Shane stammered.

Ilya raised his eyebrows at him for just a second.

“Why are you doing groceries anyway?” Ilya asked, his voice back to normal.

Shane frowned. “What do you mean?”

Ilya waved his hand at Shane’s body. “You are hurt, yes? Why do you have to do groceries?”

“I always do groceries.”

“Why can’t your boyfriend do them?”

“Uhm—I don’t know? I always do it.” Shane said, he didn’t even think about that.

Ilya scoffed quietly. “Let me help you do groceries at least.”

Shane nodded immediately, even though he knew that spending more time with Ilya was the complete and total opposite of what he was supposed to do. He just couldn’t stop it, not when he was standing there right in front of him. It was kind of like Shane was a moth attracted to the flame that was Ilya.

Sue him, Rose put on a record of the Weeknd that day at work. Stupid song had been stuck in his head ever since.

-

As they approached their apartment building, Shane stopped walking. Ilya, who insisted on carrying all the bags, turned around. “Everything okay?”

Shane had a question on his mind. It was a dangerous question, but he needed to know the answer.

“Why are you helping me?” Shane asked, trying to look Ilya in the eye.

Ilya blinked. He looked a little confused.

“Not just now, with the groceries, but the past few weeks, you uhm—you’re always there. You text me, meet me, even though I am not that fun most of the time,” Shane said honestly.

“I think you are fun,” Ilya said lightly. Shane was quiet for a second, waiting for more.

Ilya sighed. “I know you are quiet and uhm—how you say? Introvert? But I like hanging out with you. So, I help you, yes?”

“But, *why*?” Shane pressed. He knew he was difficult. He barely responded most of the time, he left him alone sometimes when things became too difficult. Shane was well-aware that he wasn’t easy to be friends with. “I’m sure there are easier people to be friends with. I know I am not—easy.”

“Shane, easy is boring, *da*? I like hanging out with you, is simple.” Ilya said firmly.

Shane nodded slowly. “Okay.”

“Okay.”

Ilya picked the bags up again. “Is he home?”

Shane glanced at his watch. “I think so.”

“I bring groceries upstairs and put them around the corner. You come in a minute later, okay?”

Shane’s heart fluttered, stopped, did a backflip, whatever it was that hearts did when someone was being so considerate. It had always been obvious Ilya knew what his and Ethan’s relationship was like, sometimes he pushed, fishing for answers, but right now he just helped Shane again. He found a way to make this a little easier for Shane. Even though he didn’t need to.

At first, Shane wanted to argue that he could bring his own groceries up, but when he looked at Ilya’s soft, but determined expression, he nodded. “Thank you,” it came out softer than he had wanted, but the offer had made Shane a little emotional.

Shane had felt good at work and even better when he ran into Ilya and they walked home together, but now that he was back in the apartment, chopping vegetables again while Ethan was sitting in front of the TV, he felt the warmth from that afternoon turn into something else. Not *cold*, per se. Not anything really. He slipped away again, a little, having trouble holding on to that warmth Ilya had caused. He moved on autopilot again, his defense mechanism. Chopping, cooking, cleaning, and, especially, not thinking.

Chapter End Notes

SO to Hayden for being an amazing responsible friend and saying exactly what Shane needed to hear!

Chapter 9: 9

Chapter Notes

I've got quite a long chapter for you guys, I hope you enjoy!

For this chapter, all the warnings/tags apply as well. If you want know what you'll be reading, I will put a summary of the triggering content at the end.

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

Ilya had been doing a little better after seeing Shane a few days ago. Though Shane looked like shit and though Ilya knew that there had been no accident, he still felt better after seeing him. At least he *had* seen him. At least he had been standing there, talking to him.

He'd been by the record store yesterday as well, talking to Shane for a little while. The conversations between the two of them had become easier and more natural. Shane was still uptight and awkward most of the time, but that surface cracked a little more often. Shane smiled, made jokes and laughed when Ilya said something stupid. Which he often did. Ilya liked making him laugh. He'd gladly say the most stupid things if it caused Shane to laugh. He'd do anything to make Shane laugh.

God, he was completely gone for that man.

But, besides all these positive things, Ilya still worried about him. Constantly. Shane had still never told him anything about what was really happening behind his front door. Shane always checked the time. He always frantically checked his surroundings, he often apologized, made himself seem small. But most of all, he was hurt. Ilya saw the bruises, Ilya saw the way he favored one side of his body and he saw his face contorted in pain when he accidentally put his weight on the wrong side. And Ilya had heard, more than once, the yelling, the banging against walls, the crying, *the drilling*. Ilya still had no clue at all what the drilling was about.

Shane hadn't told him, but Ilya was sure that Shane knew Ilya had figured it out. Which was enough for now. Shane knew Ilya wasn't going anywhere. He could take his time. Ilya would still be there.

"You seem good," Harris said when the two of them were watching practice again.

Ilya smiled. "I feel good, *da*."

"What's changed? You've been silent and moody for two weeks now."

Ilya shrugged. "Saw you and Barrett kiss in office." Ilya deflected Harris's question.

Harris turned as red as the apple pin on his jacket. “You what? You saw that?”

Ilya grinned. “No.”

Harris blinked.

“But I had feeling that it happened and now I know.”

Harris scoffed. “You’re a fucking menace, Ilya.”

“That does not sound like ‘thank you, Ilya’.”

“You cannot tell anyone! Okay?”

“Of course not. Secret is safe with me.”

Harris’ face returned to its usual skin color. “Thanks. For pushing me.”

Ilya smiled. “Ah, I barely pushed. You two just really like each other.”

“Yeah, yeah. Okay.”

“So, are you together or?”

Harris smiled. “I think so, yeah. I mean, we haven’t said it out loud, but I really think so.”

“I am happy for you. You are good together.”

They watched in silence for a minute. Harris’ gaze fixed on one particular player most of the time.

“How is your neighbor?” Harris asked suddenly. “Shane?”

Ilya’s smile faded a little bit. “He’s good.”

Harris looked at him.

Ilya sighed. “Okay, maybe not good. But, better?”

“How so?”

“I saw him few days ago. At grocery store. He seemed a little lighter, we have been talking a bit more since.”

It was true. Even though Shane looked hurt, he composed himself a little differently that day. Like the tiniest bit of weight had fallen from his shoulders. Ilya had wanted to ask Shane about it, but he was afraid that it would have the opposite effect and that the weight would settle right back on his shoulders. So, he didn’t.

“That’s good.” Harris said. “Does he know?”

Ilya frowned. “Know what?”

“That you like him?”

It was now Ilya’s turn to turn a little red. “No.”

“Are you sure about that?”

“No.”

-

“Shane, we bought you something,” Rose said during their shift that day.

Shane looked up. “Oh?”

“It’s nothing special.” Hayden said as he handed Shane a box. Shane looked it over in his hands. It was a phone. An older one, probably second-hand. Definitely *not* nothing special.

“Guys, I—,”

Hayden cut him off. “We know your phone broke. In the uhm—in the accident.” Shane grimaced at how obviously Hayden didn’t believe that there ever had been an accident. “We figured we’d put some money together and get you a new one. We miss texting you and we bet you could use something to feel more connected to the outside world.”

Shane felt wetness prickle behind his eyes. He kept staring at the phone. He didn’t deserve this. The only thing he ever did to them was lie. He wasn’t a good friend, not really. He’d been told that multiple times. Sure, it was Ethan who told him, but Ethan knew him the best, right? Shane couldn’t accept this. He handed the phone back to Hayden.

“No, we don’t want it back. It’s for you, buddy.” Hayden said and pushed Shane’s hand back.

“I do not deserve this, I—,”

“Yes. You do, you really do.” Rose said as she squeezed his arm.

“Shane, you deserve a gift every now and then. Take it. It’s yours. Really.” Hayden added.

The tears that had gathered were too much to contain and Shane felt them tip over and roll down his cheeks. It was too much. They were too kind.

“Maybe you could keep it to yourself?” Rose carefully suggested.

Shane frowned. “What do you mean?”

Rose shrugged awkwardly. “Like, maybe you could not tell your boyfriend about this phone?”

Shane would normally scoff at that suggestion. He would normally be mad at her for implying something among the lines of Ethan not being good for him. This time, he just

nodded and shoved the phone in his pocket. Accepting their much too kind gift.

“Thank you. For the phone. Really, you didn’t have to,” Shane said, composing himself again.

“Of course, buddy. You deserve it.” Hayden said, giving him a friendly slap on the shoulder, careful not to hit him too hard.

-

By the time his shift ended, Ilya was outside again, waiting for him. They did that more often now, walking home together. They never went into their building at the same time. None of them ever mentioned it, Shane was thankful for that.

“Shanya,” Ilya smiled as Shane stepped outside.

Shane, still smitten with the nickname, smiled back. “Hi Ilya.”

They fell into a casual stroll next to each other, their shoulders brushing together every now and then, neither of them had the urge to create more space between them, happy with the few touches they could steal from each other.

Shane had a sudden thought that, now that he had a new phone, he needed to ask for Ilya’s number again. So that they could text each other. Shane pulled out his phone. Ilya’s eyes lit up immediately.

“You got new phone!”

Shane nodded. “Yeah, uh—Rose and Hayden gave it to me. I don’t know why, but I am very grateful.”

“Because you deserve phone, Shane.” Ilya said matter-of-factly.

“Now we can text each other again,” Shane said softly.

“Are you asking for my number?” Ilya teased.

Shane gave him a little shove, but Ilya immediately stepped back to be just as close to him as he had been before. “Give me phone, I will put my number in.” Shane handed him the phone.

A smile spread across Shane’s face when he saw the name Ilya had put in for himself.

Big Strong Russian Neighbor.

“Kinda full of yourself, huh?” Shane grinned as he sent Ilya a quick text so that he had his new number.

There were now three contacts in his phone. Hayden, Rose and Ilya. Shane was hit by a sudden wave of sadness when he realized that he hadn’t memorized his parents’ phone

numbers. With Shane's old phone gone, he had no way of reaching out anymore. Unless he drove by their house.

Shane hadn't had the urge to contact his parents in almost two years, not since Ethan. They had just kind of grown apart. Shane had no clue why now all of a sudden he felt the need to speak to his mother. He missed her. And his dad. He missed the both of them.

"What's wrong, Shane?" Ilya asked, noticing the change in his demeanor.

Shane shrugged. "It's nothing, sorry."

"Do not apologize. We have been over this before Shane. You say sorry too much." Ilya said, trying to lift the mood a little.

Shane smiled despite himself. "Sorry," he said intentionally.

Ilya smiled back at him, but he went serious again quite quickly. "But seriously Shane, if there is anything wrong you know you can talk to me, *da*?"

Shane looked at him, that had gotten easier too, looking at Ilya. He saw those soft, *safe*, blue eyes stare back at him and before Shane knew it, the words rolled out of his mouth. "I just miss my parents a lot."

Ilya immediately looked a little alarmed. "Oh, are they—"

"No, no," Shane cut him off. "They're not dead."

"Oh good, I thought..." Ilya didn't finish his sentence on purpose, letting Shane fill the silence with an explanation.

Shane sighed. "It's just, with the new phone. I realized there are now only three numbers saved in it. Rose, Hayden and you. I don't have my parents' numbers anymore."

"Ah, can you not just go to them?" Ilya asked, still a little confused as to why Shane missed them. Maybe they sucked. Like his dad did.

Shane shook his head. "It's not that easy."

"Are they not? Do they not like—accept you? Or something?" Ilya asked.

"No, it's not that. I—they accept me, when I told them I was gay they were like 'oh we knew that already', but I don't know they just," Shane fell quiet, unable to finish his sentence. But Ilya urged him on, gave him the space to put together the words. "They don't accept Ethan."

"Oh." Ilya said. "Well, I can understand that." Ilya regretted it the second he said it. Shane looked at him angrily. "No, I did not mean it that way." Ilya said, trying to smooth things over.

"How can you possibly mean that another way?" Shane asked, his voice sounded a little angrier than usual.

“I am sorry Shane. You are right I did not mean it other way.”

Shane scoffed.

“But,” Ilya continued, “I should have not said it. I am sorry.” Shane didn’t respond.

After a few minutes of silence, Ilya decided to press a bit. “Why are you so defensive about Ethan?”

Shane hadn’t expected that question, because it was obvious to him. “He is my boyfriend. I love him.”

“Okay,” was all Ilya said. Shane was thankful that he left it at that.

-

Shane was so grateful for the phone, he’d been texting Rose, Hayden and Ilya almost every day. Carefully, of course. When Ethan was in the shower or asleep or at work. Never when he was around. Shane wouldn’t make that mistake.

The texting made him feel so much better, so much lighter. He hadn’t realized how lonely he had felt since Ethan broke his phone, but now he was able to talk to other people again. Hayden had given them an update on Jackie’s pregnancy. They were having twins, so Hayden had another breakdown over that. It made Shane feel like a normal person again, distracting himself with other people’s issues rather than being constantly reminded of his own.

Ilya and him had been talking about so many different things. Music, mostly. Ilya had very strong opinions about almost everything Shane liked, which usually ended with Shane telling him he had terrible taste and Ilya sending him a list of songs to prove him wrong. Shane secretly thought that Ilya’s taste in music was amazing, better than his own. But he likes the banter too much, so he would never actually admit that. They talked about the Centaurs, about Ottawa, about stupid things they saw during the day.

Shane had started looking forward to those messages. That was probably because Ilya was funny. Or because they had become friends. That was all.

He told himself that every time he caught himself smiling at his phone.

There was something about talking to Ilya that made Shane forget how he needed to act around other people. It made him forget the rules and manners Ethan seemed to care about so much. Shane liked that he didn't have to think about whether he'd said the right thing. Ilya didn't seem to care if Shane was quiet or awkward. He just kept responding.

And Shane liked that. He liked Ilya.

As a friend.

Probably.

It still caused his stomach to twist uncomfortably sometimes. He knew Ilya was attractive. That wasn't exactly something he could argue with, it was just a fact. Everyone who had eyes could see that Ilya was attractive. He'd noticed it the first time they met. But noticing that someone was handsome didn't mean anything. Plenty of people were handsome.

It was just that Shane thought about Ilya more than he thought about other handsome men. Hayden, for example, is a handsome man, but he doesn't think about him the way he thinks about Ilya. He didn't know what that meant. He didn't *want* to know what that meant.

He had Ethan and he loved Ethan.

At least, that was what Shane kept telling himself.

So, whenever the conversation with Ilya got a little too personal, or whenever Shane caught himself waiting for the little notification at the top of his screen, he'd put his phone away and do something else. Clean. Cook. Do laundry. Anything that gave his brain something else to focus on.

It usually worked.

-

After dinner, Shane carried the plates to the sink, flinching when he heard a piece of cutlery drop from the plate to the floor with a loud bang. He noticed Ethan's face scrunch up, a look he often had when he got angry.

"Can't you just be careful with the dishes for once. You've already broken so many things," Ethan said. It wasn't true, Shane had only broken one thing before, sure, it was one of Ethan's expensive wine glasses and he should've been more careful. But that was it, he had never broken anything else before. Shane had the sudden urge to talk back, but he bit his tongue.

When Shane bent down to grab the knife from the floor, something slipped out of his pocket.

The phone.

Shane felt all the color drain from his face as his heart rate picked up. He quickly glanced over at Ethan and reached for the phone, shoving it back in his pocket. But he was too late, he hadn't been fast enough. Ethan stood up, walking towards him.

"Was that what I think it was?" He asked, his voice sounded vicious.

Shane shook his head, trembling with fear. How could he be so stupid? Why hadn't he put it safely in his jacket?

"Show me." Ethan demanded.

Shane shook his head again.

"Fucking show me!" Ethan screamed as he grabbed Shane's wrist, his fingers still wrapped tightly around the phone.

When Ethan saw the phone, his pupils were blown. There wasn't a single trace of color left in his eyes. "Where the fuck did you get this?"

"I—," Shane wasn't able to finish his sentence.

"Shane! Where the fuck did you get this?!" Ethan screamed again.

Shane closed his eyes in an attempt to shut out everything that was happening at the moment. It was a useless attempt.

"I am asking you one more time," Ethan had calmed his voice down a little. "Where did you get this?"

"It was a gift." Shane said, his eyes were still squeezed shut.

"From who?" The grip Ethan had on Shane's wrist tightened.

"Rose and Hayden." Shane's voice was so small that it came out as a whisper.

"I'm going to fucking kill them." Ethan let go of Shane's wrist to drag his hand through his hair in frustration. "I am going to fucking kill them!" He repeated.

"N—no, they were just being nice. Please, don't. Please don't hurt them." Shane begged desperately. He wouldn't put it above Ethan to actually hurt his friends.

"Why did you keep it a secret from me, huh?"

"I—I didn't," Shane lied. It was a terrible lie, because he obviously had kept it from him.

"Bullshit. Show me the fucking phone," Ethan spat as he snatched it from Shane's hand, causing Shane to flinch back against the countertop.

Ethan furiously scrolled through the phone. "That fucking Russian," he muttered under his breath. "Is that why you kept it from me?" Ethan asked.

Shane could only shake his head.

"Because you're fucking him? Is that it?"

"N—no."

Ethan snapped. He grabbed Shane's collar and pushed him against the fridge. Shane's head snapped backwards against the hard surface. "Stop fucking lying to me, you fucking whore!" He screamed and smashed his fist against Shane's nose. Shane was pretty sure it broke on impact. Ethan wasn't done. He threw punch after punch at Shane's face and body. The only reason Shane was still standing up was because Ethan held him up by his throat, squeezing tightly which made it hard for him to breathe properly.

Shane was blinded with fear. This felt so much worse than anything that happened before this. Shane was often scared of Ethan, sure, but he had never been scared for his own life.

He couldn't fight back, he was too weak. Ethan had made sure of that over the past two years. Talking him out of hockey, making sure he didn't eat too much. Shane was *weak*. Weak and pathetic.

Shane barely heard the awful things Ethan was yelling at him, the ringing in his ears was getting too loud. Normally, Shane would believe him. He would believe every insult Ethan threw at him, because he knew they were right. Because he knew he'd somehow fucked something up.

But something had changed.

Shane didn't know when he realized it. That the people around him had been right. That his mother had been right all along. That Ethan was a terrible person and an even worse boyfriend. But he knew it now. Clear as day.

Shane wasn't sure if he was still squeezing his eyes shut or if Ethan had fucked his face up so bad that they had swollen shut. The only thing he knew was that he couldn't see anything. He could only feel the punches landing against his face, his ribs, his stomach. Everywhere. The ribs that hadn't even gotten a proper chance to heal, were probably even more broken than they had been.

Eventually, Ethan threw Shane over the table, clawing at his sweatpants and eventually pulling them down to his ankles.

No.

No!

Shane didn't even realize he was screaming the word out loud over and over again until he felt a cloth being pushed in his mouth. "Shut the fuck up, you fucking bitch!" Ethan hissed.

Shane was crying loudly. He didn't want this. He didn't deserve this. All he had wanted was to not feel so lonely. Was that so wrong?

How did he even end up here?

How could he have missed all the signs until it was too late?

How could he be so fucking stupid? So fucking naive?

Shane kept crying as Ethan had his way with him. The burn was insanely painful and his hole was so dry that he was sure Ethan would rip him open. He would tear him apart. Literally.

Ethan had his hand in Shane's hair, grabbing it tightly as he pushed his throbbing face against the table with every thrust.

Shane didn't know how long it took.

Shane felt himself grow tired, his body turned limp.

Eventually, it stopped.

Ethan placed the phone in front of Shane's face on the table and grabbed the meat mallet from the utensil rack. He made sure the phone was in Shane's line of sight when he smashed it into pieces.

For a few seconds, neither of them moved.

Shane stared at what was left of the phone. Or at least, he tried to. His vision was blurry and one of his eyes barely opened. The screen was completely shattered, pieces of it scattered across the table. Somewhere deep in his body, he felt guilty for breaking Rose and Hayden's present.

Ethan dropped the mallet back onto the counter.

"There," he said, breathing heavily. "Now maybe you'll fucking learn."

Shane wasn't able to respond.

He watched as Ethan moved towards the hallway, grabbing his jacket. "I need some air. Don't fucking move, Shane. I'm serious. Don't. I will find you and I will fucking kill you." Ethan said and left. The door slammed shut behind him.

Shane waited for the click of the lock to sound. But it never did.

Ethan hadn't locked the door.

Shane didn't know if it was because Ethan was so worked up that he forgot or because he knew he hurt Shane bad enough to even attempt to move. Or that he had scared him into full submission.

It didn't matter.

The door was unlocked and Shane needed to get out.

He needed to leave.

He should have ages ago.

Shane tried to push himself up, but his arms gave away immediately and he fell back down against the table. A loud sob broke out of him.

Shane tried again. He managed to push himself off the table, but the second he tried to twist his body, the pain he felt caused him to fall again. On the floor this time.

He couldn't do it.

He was too fucking weak.

Shane tried to reach for the corner of the fridge so that he could pull himself closer towards the hallway, but the pain in his ribs was too much. He screamed out, immediately followed by loud, uncontrollable sobs.

Shane gave in to them. He didn't care that it was late. He didn't care that people might hear him.

The crying distracted him enough from the pain to try again. Through tears and sobs, Shane pulled himself up, leaning his body against the wall completely. He dragged himself towards the front door. As Shane opened the door, his weight caused it to fling open, dragging Shane behind it. He landed with a dull thud. Back on the floor.

He didn't have a plan whatsoever, but when he glanced up towards the door across from his, he didn't need one anymore.

Ilya. He would go to Ilya.

Shane dragged his broken body towards Ilya's door. He couldn't manage to haul himself up completely and settled for sitting against his door, knocking as loud as he could. Shane waited and waited, nobody opened. Ilya wasn't home and Shane had nowhere to go.

He wouldn't make it outside. He wouldn't even make it to a different floor. He was forced to sit here and have Ethan find him waiting at Ilya's door. Ethan was going to kill him. This was it.

Chapter End Notes

Spoilers:

More in depth trigger warnings: Ethan gets very angry again (surprise) and threatens Shane and his friends. Then he beats him up, like really really really bad, Shane is barely conscious by the end. He also rapes Shane again, I am not describing it in detail, but it is definitely happening.

Chapter 10: 10

Chapter Notes

Sorry for the cliffhanger on the last chapter :) I figured I shouldn't leave you waiting too long for an update, so here you go. I hope you enjoy!

I've watched every 9-1-1 episode at least five times and I've also watched like twenty seasons of Grey's, so I'm basically a paramedic, right? Right? No, I don't know shit about medical/legal stuff, so Google was my best friend. There are probably many inaccuracies, but I did try to make it as realistic as possible.

TWs: medical/hospital stuff. Injuries. Police/legal stuff.

Ilya had been out with some of his coworkers and some guys from the team. They went for an evening skate and drank some beers at a bar. They invited Ilya over to skate more and more and Ilya had loved it. He hadn't realized how much he missed skating the past few years. He was really thankful that he had been given the opportunity to try again. The ice was where he felt most at home, it always had been.

Ilya was pretty tired when he reached his apartment building, not looking forward to ascending three flights of stairs. Ilya was so lost in thought when he reached his floor that he nearly jumped out of his skin when he saw someone sitting, or more lying, against his front door.

Then he noticed the shiny, black hair and the freckles he loved so much. *Shane.*

Ilya sprinted the last few meters, crouching down next to Shane. He looked terrible. His eyes were lidded behind huge swollen bruises. His face was painted red from several cuts and his breath came ragged.

"Shane!" Ilya's hand hovered above Shane's body, unsure where and if he could touch him. "What did he do to you?"

"H—hurts," Shane croaked.

Ilya's eyes raked over Shane's body and landed on his pants that were pooled around his ankles. "*Blyat, svoloch,*" He cursed under his breath. Ilya felt bile rising in his throat at the realization of what must've happened to Shane. But he couldn't break down right now, not when Shane needed him this much.

"I-inside?" Shane asked, probably unable to form a full sentence.

Ilya snapped out of it. "Yes, of course. I will help you."

Ilya tried his best to help Shane up and carry his weight, but Shane was panting and groaning beside him. It broke Ilya. As quickly as he could, without hurting Shane too badly, he helped him inside and carefully lowered him onto the couch. Shane was pretty out of it and probably didn't notice that Ilya pulled up his sweatpants. Nobody had to see him like that.

"Shane, what happened?"

Shane smacked his lips slowly as he tried to keep his eyes open. "E—than, found my phone."

Ilya tried his best to condemn his rage. "Where is he now?" Ilya was ready to barge in Shane's apartment and beat the motherfucker straight into an early grave. But he wouldn't. That's not what Shane needed from him right now.

"Went out for air," Shane breathed out.

There was some irony in that, since Shane seemed to have trouble breathing himself. His breaths became more and more erratic and he produced a high-pitched, wheezing sound.

"Shane, you need hospital."

Shane shook his head. "He will find me."

"I will not let him." Ilya said firmly.

He didn't wait for Shane's permission and dialed 9-1-1 immediately.

"9-1-1, what's your emergency?" A female voice on the other side of the line said.

"My neighbor he is," Ilya was suddenly unaware of what he could tell them. Shane didn't want him to call 9-1-1, what if he would never forgive him for telling them? What if Svetlana was right? What if he would deny everything and shut Ilya out completely? "He is hurt." Ilya said instead.

The operator asked for his address and Ilya gave it immediately.

"Okay, paramedics will be there within five minutes. Can you tell me more about the nature of his injuries?"

Ilya swallowed. "I am not sure. I did not see what happened."

"Describe to me what you see. Is he conscious?"

"Da, barely. He uh—he is not breathing very good."

"Okay, but he is breathing?"

"Yes."

"Okay, that's good enough for now. Can you tell me more? Is it just the breathing or are there more injuries?" The operator sounded kind and patient.

Ilya looked at Shane. There were so many more injuries that Ilya barely knew where to start. He pushed his little spiral to the back of his mind. Shane can be mad at him when he gets out of this, Ilya could take it. Right now, he needed to make sure Shane would actually be alive to be mad at him.

“He was beaten up. Bad.” Ilya said quickly, before he could change his mind. “I do not see what happened, but he came to me after.”

“Okay, is he bleeding?”

Ilya looked him over. Shane was bleeding from his nose and his face, but he couldn’t see more than that. “Just his face.”

“Okay, that’s good. Anything else?”

“His face is swollen. I think maybe his nose is broken.”

“I need you to check his torso for me. See if there are any bruises there.”

Ilya hesitated. He didn’t want to touch Shane without his permission, but Shane was so out of it, he probably wouldn’t even notice.

“Sir, can you do that for me? I need to know if he has a collapsed lung.”

“Y—yes, of course.” Ilya’s hands trembled as he carefully lifted Shane’s shirt. Shane winced a little underneath him, but he didn’t tell him to stop. Ilya was met with angry bruises scattered all over Shane’s upper body. Some didn’t look like they had just appeared today.

Ilya swallowed his anger.

“Yes, is lot of bruising.”

“Okay, he might have a broken rib that has punctured his lung. How is his breathing now?”

Shane was still breathing, but it was still coming in ragged. “Same I think.”

Ilya heard sirens stop nearby and two minutes later, a team of paramedics entered his house, immediately taking care of Shane.

As they were about to load Shane into the ambulance, Shane reached for Ilya’s hand. “I—I—lyla,” he croaked out.

“Can I—can I ride with him to hospital?” Ilya asked immediately.

The paramedic nodded and pointed him towards a chair in the back that faced Shane. The ride in the ambulance was all a blur for Ilya. He sat beside Shane, not letting go of his hand. The paramedic moved around him, but Ilya had no clue what he was doing. He couldn’t focus on anything else besides holding Shane’s hand. It was the most important task he’s ever had. He held his hand carefully. Afraid that if he squeezed too tightly, he would break it even further. But afraid that if he let go, he wouldn’t get him back.

-

Once they arrived at the hospital, they rushed Shane towards the doors, yelling several medical terms to the doctors waiting outside, none of which Ilya could comprehend. Once Shane was wheeled away, a nurse walked up to him, pointing him towards a waiting room.

Ilya had been sitting there for at least fifteen minutes when two officers walked up to him. “Are you Ilya Rozanov?” one of them asked.

Ilya looked up and nodded.

“Do you mind answering a few questions for us about Mr. Hollander?”

Ilya swallowed. “Of course,” he said, though his voice was trembling a little.

“Good, follow us, please.”

Ilya’s heart was racing as he followed the officers into a private room. He felt like the entire waiting room was watching him. Like he was some sort of criminal that had done this to Shane.

Once they were seated, one of the officers pulled out a recording device. “Do you mind if we record this conversation? Just in case Mr. Hollander wants to press charges.”

“Yes, is fine.”

Once the button on the recorder was pressed, Ilya felt sweat break out of him. He had never liked police. In Russia they were all bad, at least the once he encountered, which includes his father and brother. He knew Canadian police were fairer, but he was still scared.

“Please state your name for the record.”

“Ilya Rozanov.”

“Is it correct that you were the one to call 9-1-1?”

“Yes.”

“How did you find Mr. Hollander?”

“Shane is my neighbor. He was lying on hallway floor when I got home. I took him inside and called ambulance.”

“So you weren’t at home when the alleged assault took place?”

Ilya shook his head. *Alleged my ass.* He thought to himself.

“Please answer out loud for the record.”

“Oh, of course. Eh—no I was not home.”

“Where were you?”

Ilya felt himself turn more and more hot and tugged at the collar of his sweater. Why were they asking him these questions?

“You think I did this?” Ilya blurted out. Stupid, probably.

“Mr. Rozanov, we are just asking you a question.”

“*Da*, okay. I was at bar with friends.”

“Which bar?”

Ilya was bouncing his leg nervously, he was getting annoyed. They had it wrong! They should be asking stupid fucking Ethan these questions! Not him.

“The Old Mill. You can check, they have camera.”

They ignored Ilya’s comment.

“Okay. That’s enough for now. Thank you, Mr. Rozanov.”

Ilya sighed in relief.

Then the officer turned his attention to his partner. “Has anybody contacted Mr. Hollander’s emergency contact yet? Ethan Myers?”

“No!” Ilya said immediately. He regretted it as soon as the word left his mouth.

The officer eyed him. “Why are you saying ‘no’?”

“Uhm—I,” He wasn’t supposed to tell Shane’s story. He wasn’t supposed to take that away from him.

But he promised to keep him safe. To keep Ethan away. So, Ilya made a split-second decision.

“I am not sure. But I think Ethan might have done this to Shane.” He said softly, resenting himself for saying it anyway.

“What makes you say that Ilya? That’s quite the accusation.”

Ilya swallowed again. “He said, when I asked him what happened, he said Ethan found his phone.”

“Okay?” The officer urged him to tell them more.

“I do not know more. Okay? Shane should tell you himself.” Ilya said.

The officers nodded at that. “We can respect that. Thank you for telling us.”

“So you will not call him?” Ilya asked. He had to know.

The officers shared another look. “We have to.”

Before Ilya could protest, they were already gone.

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Shane noticed the pain everywhere. His head was throbbing, his chest was aching and he didn’t want to think about the pain he felt a little lower. He remembered everything. When he first woke up, Shane didn’t know how long ago that was, he wasn’t sure where he was or what had happened, just that he’d fallen back asleep again.

But now his brain had caught up with his body.

He was in the hospital. Ethan had put him there.

Shane coughed a little as he tried to swallow, but his throat was too dry.

“Here,” someone with a strong, familiar accent said from beside him as a cup of water appeared in front of him.

Shane slowly tilted his head sideways and was met with those beautiful, strikingly blue eyes. Even though they were filled with ten different emotions, they were still the most stunning eyes Shane had ever seen.

“Ilya, you’re still here.” Shane said so softly that it was barely audible.

He accepted the water cup and took a careful sip. It still burned his throat, but at the same time it felt like the best sip of water he’d ever had.

“Of course I am still here.” Ilya replied.

“Thank you.” Shane said, his voice a bit steadier now after some water.

“Do you remember what happened?” Ilya asked carefully.

Shane nodded slowly. “Wish I didn’t.”

Ilya gave him a weak, polite smile. “Shane, I—you, I know you want to uhm—protect him, Ethan, and I know you do not want to talk about it,” Ilya struggled his way towards a question Shane dreaded. “But is true that he did this, *da*?”

Shane had never said it out loud. He never thought that it was important to anyone else, he never thought it was necessary, but *now*? Well, now there was no place left to hide this.

Shane nodded.

There. He did it. He admitted for the first time ever that something was wrong with their relationship. That he was the victim of domestic violence.

Tears welled up in his eyes immediately, so fast that Shane couldn't blink them away.

Ilya reached for his hand immediately. "I am so sorry, Shanya." He said as he rubbed soothing circles on Shane's hand. It helped Shane calm down a little.

They stayed like that for a while, neither of them wanted to say more on the topic. They didn't have to, not right now. They just enjoyed each other's company, as much as they could given the circumstances.

Until the door opened and a doctor walked in.

"Hello, my name is Dr. Tremblay, I am here to ask you a bit more about the nature of your injuries. Are you okay with answering some questions?" Dr. Tremblay asked. He seemed kind, patient, exactly how you imagine a doctor should look like.

Shane, however, tensed immediately, holding on tighter to Ilya's hand.

"Do you want your friend to stay?" Dr. Tremblay asked as his eyes landed on their intertwined hands. Shane nodded and then looked at Ilya. "Please?" He asked softly. Ilya nodded. "Of course."

Dr. Tremblay grabbed a chair and pulled it a little closer to Shane's bed and sat down. "Okay, Mr. Hollander—,"

"Shane, please," Shane interrupted.

"Shane," Dr. Tremblay continued, "I want to start by telling you why we had to perform surgery."

Shane nodded.

"You had a pneumothorax, a punctured lung. We were able to fix the rupture without any complications and we believe you will regain full lung capacity."

"I had a punctured lung?" Shane asked in disbelief.

Dr. Tremblay nodded.

"How?"

"One of your broken ribs was angled towards your lung and that's how it got punctured."

Oh.

"How many broken ribs?"

"Four. They should heal on their own."

Shane nodded. "Anything else broken?"

“Your nose, but we set that right away, you probably won’t notice a difference. Other than that, you have a mild concussion and,” the doctor paused for a while, looking between Shane and Ilya, as if he was unsure if he could say this next part. “And we noticed some superficial tears and cuts around the anus.”

Shane stilled. He felt the color drain from his face as his vision became blurry. Stupid, fucking, tears. Shane wiped at them angrily. He felt Ilya squeeze his hand, but he couldn’t muster up the courage to look up at him, or at Dr. Tremblay.

“Shane. Some of your injuries are weeks old, one of your ribs broke at least a week ago.” The doctor continued.

“I—,” Shane’s words died in his mouth.

“Shane, you don’t *have* to tell me what happened. But know that, if you do, nothing will leave this room. I am not an officer, I am not taking your statement, I just want to make sure I get the full picture of what happened to you so that I can help you recover the best.” Dr. Tremblay said. It calmed Shane down, to know that there weren’t any consequences in sharing what happened to him.

“It will not leave this room?” Shane asked one more time, just to be sure.

Dr. Tremblay shook his head. “No, it will not.”

Shane took a deep breath. He could do this. He wanted to get better. “I uhm—my—,” He fell quiet again, a tiny bit of guilt was clawing its way up in his body. That tiny part that still thought Ethan loved him and that he loved Ethan and that he somehow deserved everything that had happened to him. Ilya squeezed his hand again, grounding him back to reality. He tried again. “My boyfriend did this to me.” He said.

For the first time.

Out loud.

To a stranger.

And to Ilya, even though he already knew.

Shane felt strangely proud of himself.

“Thank you for sharing that with me. With us. Shane, I want you to know that we can do a sexual assault forensic examination, often referred to as a rape kit.”

That tiny bit of pride Shane was feeling vanished in a split second. *A rape kit*. Shane’s breathing picked up, though it sounded more like pathetic wheezing. *A rape kit*. Shane wasn’t sure if he’d said no. He didn’t say no, he just thought about the word in his mind. Right? No, wait. He did. He said it out loud. That was why Ethan gagged him, because he was screaming too much. He was raped. Ethan raped him. For real this time.

“Shane,” he heard faintly beside him.

He couldn't really hear it over his pathetic squeaky breathing. He tried to slow it down, but he couldn't. He was *raped*. Shane never thought that that was something that could happen to him, let alone by the hands of his own boyfriend. Can you call it rape when it's your own boyfriend? Shane wasn't sure.

He felt a large warm hand squeeze his, rubbing softly across his skin.

"Shane, is okay. You are good here, yes?"

Ilya. He forgot he was here for a second. The reminder of him immediately calmed him down.

"*Da*, like that. You are okay, Shanya. Is your choice if you want it. Yours only."

Shane's breathing returned to somewhat normal.

"How can it be rape?" He asked softly.

Dr. Tremblay frowned. "What do you mean by that, Shane?"

"Ethan is my boyfriend. H—how can that be rape? I—he has the right to my body, right? That's what relationships are, right?" Shane asked. He knew how it sounded, but he somehow couldn't convince himself that his words were wrong.

"Shane, nobody has the right to your body, but you."

"B—but," Shane was cut off by the doctor.

"Shane, let me ask you something. Did you want Ethan to have sex with you last night?" His voice was so calm and grounding. Shane shook his head. "Then it was rape, Shane. Nobody has the right to do something to you if you don't want it. It does not matter that that person is your boyfriend."

"Ex-boyfriend," *Ilya* muttered grumpily from beside him. Shane almost laughed at that. Almost.

"What good would the uhm—the *examination* do?" Shane asked carefully.

"First of all, it's important to check for any damages besides the superficial ones we've already seen. It's important to get some bloodwork done in case of STIs—,"

"He wouldn't have an STI, he wouldn't cheat on me," Shane interrupted immediately, still rushing to Ethan's defense.

"Okay, probably not." Dr. Tremblay agreed.

"What else?" Shane asked.

"*If* you decide to press charges, it will help build the case. It's the best evidence there is."

If you decide to press charges. Shane hadn't thought about that once. Never. He wasn't sure if he was capable of betrayal like that.

"When do I have to decide?" Shane asked.

"Well, the examination is more successful if we do it sooner rather than later, but you can decide to press charges whenever you want. We will store the evidence for you, it will be ready when or *if* you decide to use it." Dr. Trembly explained.

"I will do the examination." Shane said, surprising even himself.

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They told Ilya the examination could take up to an hour, or more if they find more damage that needs to be taken care of, and that after that Shane would need some rest. So, Ilya decided to go home, grab some stuff so that Shane didn't have to sleep in an uncomfortable hospital gown again.

As Ilya fumbled with the keys in his pocket, the door behind him suddenly opened. Ilya turned around and locked eyes with *him*. With Ethan. He just stood there, unbothered, unharmed, aside from his bruised knuckles. Ilya's hands tightened around the keys he was still holding and the metal dug harshly into his skin. He clenched his jaw so hard that it hurt and his heart was beating out of his chest.

"Where is Shane?" He asked, his voice was clipped, like he was holding on to one last shred of sanity.

Ilya wanted to hurt him.

He imagined himself beating Ethan until there was nothing left of him, just so that he could feel a fraction of what Shane had felt these past years. He imagined himself hitting him over and over and *over and over* again.

Instinctively, he took one step forward.

Ethan, who tried his best not to show any emotion, took one step back.

Fucking coward.

"Where," Ethan breathed out, "is Shane?"

Ilya pushed him against the wall and as soon as he raised his fist to hit the guy, Shane flashed through his brain. He couldn't hurt Ethan. It would only confirm for Shane that violence was the only answer to anything.

He couldn't do that. Ilya lowered his fist.

"None of your fucking business," he said instead and turned around disappearing inside his own apartment.

He was pretty sure he could hear Ethan laughing pathetically behind him, calling him a coward, but Ilya didn't care. He was better than this.

Chapter 11: 11

Chapter Notes

Not really any extra TWs for this one! I hope you enjoy this chapter as much as I did writing it, it might be one of my favs :)

Shane woke up a few hours later, still feeling a little groggy. After the examination, which wasn't as bad as Shane had expected it to be, he fell fast asleep. When he woke up, Ilya was there again. Shane felt oddly calm whenever Ilya was around. Calm wasn't a feeling he was very familiar with. It felt nice, to not be in a constant state of panic. Maybe the pain meds were helping with that too. They upped his dose after the examination, since he was still in so much pain. It helped him sleep better, which was good. He didn't know how much he needed that.

Shane turned his head towards Ilya, who was reading something on his phone.

"Hey, you came back," Shane said, his voice was still a little raspy.

Ilya looked up, that crooked smile Shane liked so much was on full display. "Hey Shanya, of course I am back."

Shane smiled back, still blinking a bit from the tiredness. Ilya reached for his bag. "I brought you some clothes."

"Really? You didn't have to, I'm f—,"

"Shane, I wanted to. Hospital dress is not comfortable." Ilya interrupted.

Shane loved how thick his accent was when he said 'comfortable'. "Thanks, Ilya."

The door opened and Dr. Tremblay walked in again. "Good afternoon, Shane. Have you slept well?"

"Hi, yes, I think I haven't slept this well in ages," Shane joked, but he could see Ilya purse his lips at that, not finding it funny at all. Shane supposed it wasn't.

"That's good, you need all the rest you can get. I was coming to tell you that you are allowed to be discharged."

Shane's smile fell. It should be good news, not having to stay in the hospital for another night. But all Shane could think about was that he was afraid to go home. Ethan would be there.

Ilya, who immediately saw the worry in Shane's face, quickly spoke up. "You can stay with me, is fine. I can help you, take care of you."

"That might be a good idea, Shane. You're probably going to have some trouble doing basic tasks in the coming weeks. Any help would be great."

Ilya looked at him, that warm smile, those perfect blue eyes. Shane wanted to accept Ilya's offer, he really did. But two things held him back. One, he didn't want to burden Ilya with his helplessness, afraid that Ilya might get bored of him really fast. And two, the one that scared him the most, the fact that Ethan would still be across the hall.

"Shane, I really do not mind. I can take a few days off, I want to help you," Ilya offered again.

"But, he will still be there." Shane said softly, fidgeting with his blanket.

"I know it is none of my business Shane, but I can call the police department and someone would come and take your statement right away, you can press charges. We have all the evidence we need." Dr. Tremblay said.

It sounded so easy, to do just that. But how could he do that? How could he put the man he loved behind bars? The man that provided for him for over two years? That loved him? He was the only person in Shane's life that actually loved him. Sure, Hayden, Rose and his parents were there, but that was different. They didn't love him like Ethan did. Shane looked at Ilya again.

"I saw him, when I went home to get you clothes."

"Oh?"

"He asked me where the fuck you were, Shane."

"Oh."

"He seemed really angry, Shane. I do not feel good about him walking around."

"But he, he *loves* me," Shane tried.

"Maybe, but not in good way."

Ilya shuffled his chair closer and grabbed Shane's hand in both his hands, squeezing tightly. "Shanya, I know you love him and I know he loves you, but he *hurt* you. So much Shane. It is not good for you. You deserve safe place."

Dr. Tremblay was quiet and looked at the two of them with a fond expression on his face.

"Shane, you are scared of him, no?" Ilya asked.

Shane, reluctantly, nodded.

“Then he is bad person.”

Shane nodded again.

“Shane, if you did not come to me last night, you could have died. That is not love, no?”

“I think you’re right.” Shane sighed. “Call the police department, please?” Shane asked Dr. Tremblay before he could change his mind. Dr. Tremblay nodded and left right away.

“I am proud of you, Shane. So proud,” Ilya said and pressed a kiss to Shane’s hand that was still in his.

Shane felt tears prick behind his eyes. “What if he doesn’t get arrested? What if he wins?”

Ilya shook his head. “He will not.”

“But what if?” Shane asked again, a single tear slipping over cheek. Ilya wiped it away, his fingers lingering a little longer than necessary.

“Then I will keep you safe. I am big, strong, Russian, remember?” He said with a wink.

Shane smiled at that. “Okay,”

“Okey.”

-

A nurse had helped Shane shower and change into the clothes Ilya had brought for him. Shane had asked Ilya to wait outside. Ilya could understand that. Shane had no clue Ilya had already seen all of him the other night and he was not going to remind him of that. Not that he needed to in any way, but Shane was probably so ashamed and he didn’t want Ilya to see him struggle with something as benign as a shower. Ilya would probably be the same.

Shane had wanted Ilya to be there when the police came to take his statement. And Ilya wouldn’t have had it any other way. He sat beside Shane’s bed again, took his hand in his again, and circled his finger soothingly over the top of Shane’s hand. It had seemed to calm him down before, so he would do it again. He would do it forever if Shane asked him to.

The same two officers that interviewed Ilya yesterday had come in. They greeted him a lot more politely now.

They asked Shane to talk about what happened. To start from the beginning. It took Shane a few tries to get the right words out and he had to pause every now and then to contain his emotions, but he said his piece.

Ilya was horrified. On the inside. On the outside, Ilya remained calm, tracing circles on Shane’s hand. Shane told them about the first time Ethan had hurt him and about all the times after. What really angered Ilya, was when he finally found out why the fuck Ethan had been drilling in the middle of the night. When Shane told them that Ethan had locked him up, with

no access to food or whatsoever, Ilya really regretted not beating the shit out of him that morning.

Everything clicked into place the more Shane told them.

“I think that’s it,” Shane finally said, his free hand fumbling with his blanket again. He seemed to be doing that a lot when he was anxious.

“Okay, Mr. Hollander. That was a lot, thank you for sharing that with us. We have one final question,” One of the officers said. “Do you want to press charges against Mr. Myers?”

Shane was still for a moment. Ilya looked at him, but didn’t pressure him. This was Shane’s choice to make and if he decided not to, then Ilya would still keep him safe.

“I do.” Shane said eventually.

“Then we’ll get a warrant out for his arrest.”

The officers stood up and shook their hands. “We’ll let you know when we have him. Do you have anywhere else you could go?”

Shane looked at Ilya and smiled, which made Ilya feel all warm and giddy inside. “I do.”

“Okay, good, we’ll keep in touch.”

“Thank you.”

-

Later that day, Shane went home with Ilya. *Home*. Shane hoped it would feel like that. If he was being honest, nothing had felt quite like home as when Ilya had sat next to him, holding his hand and tracing soft, little circles on it.

Ilya had insisted on carrying the bag that contained Shane’s clothes and meds as well as supporting Shane with every step he took. Shane didn’t even get a chance to argue him on that. Not that he could have done it himself right now, every muscle in his body hurt and screamed and ached and what not.

After Ilya had helped him out of the cab and onto the sidewalk in front of their apartment building, Shane noticed two police cars. His heart stopped in his throat.

“What’s wro—oh,” Ilya said as he noticed the cars as well.

Then the front door went open and Ethan stepped outside. His hands cuffed behind his back and one officer on each side of him, guiding him outside.

Shane’s entire body stilled as they locked eyes.

Shane had imagined this moment before. He imagined Ethan yelling at him, threatening him. He imagined himself being terrified, hiding away and watching from a distance.

He didn't imagine this.

There was anger in his face, confusion too. But underneath that, Shane could make out another expression. Fear.

Ethan looked *scared*. That was new to Shane. Ethan had never seemed scared before, not like Shane did.

"Shane," Ethan said.

Ilya stepped closer to Shane, but he didn't speak for him. Shane was thankful for that. Because there was nothing left to say.

"Shane, did you do this?" Ethan asked as he stepped towards him, trying to pull himself loose from the officers' grips.

"Keep walking," one of them said firmly.

Shane didn't respond. He just stared at him. Shane didn't feel the fear he felt when he imagined this. He didn't need to. He was safe now.

Shane kept his eyes locked on Ethan's until he disappeared into the back of the police car, the door slamming shut, kind of symbolizing the end of an era.

"Are you okay?" Ilya asked when the police car had disappeared behind a corner.

"Yes," it wasn't even a lie. "Can we go inside?"

-

Ilya had set Shane up on his couch with everything he needed within reach; water, tea, extra blankets and pillows.

"You don't have to do this, Ilya," Shane said when Ilya was done tugging him in like he was the most precious thing on earth. *He was*. Especially looking all cozy and adorable in Ilya's way too big clothes.

"I want to."

"I don't want to ruin your evening, I have already ruined your entire day. I will be fine by myself, really." Shane looked hurt when he said that, like he didn't mean a thing of it all.

"Shanya, I *want* to. You are my friend, yes? Friends take care of each other," Ilya said as he sat down next to Shane, a little closer than necessary, but he couldn't help himself.

"Okay, then I want to do something too," Shane said.

"Like what?"

"Anything, really. I can cook us dinner, I can clean up in here, do your laund—,"

“Shane, no. Stop.” Ilya’s voice was firm, but not in cold in any way. It still startled Shane a little, so Ilya quickly continued. “I do not expect you to do any of those things, *da*? You do not owe me. You are hurt, you have broken ribs and your lung is not working, you will not do chores.”

Shane, still a little reluctant, smiled at him. “Thank you, Ilya. You are so kind to me.”

Ilya smiled and leaned a little closer. “You do not deserve anything less, my Shanya.”

They stared into each other’s eyes a bit and Ilya noticed Shane’s gaze flicker towards his lips and back up to his eyes. When Shane noticed he got caught, he turned a little red and quickly turned his head away. Ilya grabbed his chin softly, turning his head back.

“Can I kiss you?” Ilya asked, staring at Shane’s perfect lips.

Shane nodded and Ilya leaned in, pressing his lips against Shane’s. His lips were warm and soft against his. He felt Shane lean into the kiss more and more and he carefully, almost shyly, parted his lips, inviting Ilya in.

Ilya had imagined kissing Shane probably about a hundred times by now. Each time was different, most of the time it was much more heated than this. Now it was careful, exploring and so much better than every scenario Ilya had ever imagined.

Shane’s kisses were a little reluctant and awkward, an exact representation of how Shane composed himself most of the time. Ilya thought it was likely that he hadn’t been properly kissed in a while. So, Ilya made sure to worship him. Make it the best damn kiss he’d ever had.

Their tongues danced for a while, Ilya’s teeth softly sinking into that plump lower lip he liked so much. When he sucked it into his mouth, Shane let out the cutest little whimper Ilya had ever heard.

Eventually, Ilya pulled back, grinning when Shane almost tipped over trying to chase Ilya’s mouth. He looked Shane in the eyes, they had gone all soft and warm and his lips were even more red than usual, glistening in their spit. He looked so soft, it was a stark contrast to the angry bruises plastered on his beautifully freckled face.

“W—was that okay?” Shane asked softly.

Ilya smiled, unable to resist the urge to steal one more tiny, little kiss. “More than okay. Was it okay for you, *sozvezdiye*?”

Shane got this cute little frown in his eyebrows at the Russian nickname. “What does that mean?”

Ilya lifted his hand slowly, caressing the little freckled on Shane’s cheek. “Is like stars in sky, I do not know English word.”

Shane blushed. “Like constellation?”

Ilya shrugged. He'd never heard that word before. "Probably. Sounds better in Russian."

"Because of my freckles?"

"*Da*, is like stars in clear night sky. I love them."

They stared into each other's eyes for a while, Ilya's fingers still gently caressing Shane's cheek.

"It might have been the best kiss I ever had," Shane admitted quietly.

Ilya smiled at that, even though the reason for that made him sad.

"Can we do that again?"

The question startled Ilya a little, but he would never, *ever*, decline his Shanya of another kiss, ever.

-

"Do you want to take another shower before you go to bed?" Ilya asked after they had dinner and finished watching some movie.

Shane wanted to, he really did. He hated the smell of the soap they had in the hospital and even though technically he was clean, he didn't feel like it. He felt disgusting. But he wasn't sure he could manage it by himself. The shower in the hospital had railings and a stool so that he didn't have to keep himself upright the entire time. He knew the showers in these apartments didn't have that. Besides, there was no way he would be able to lift his shirt over his head.

That meant that Ilya had to see his body.

He had asked Ilya to step out when he took a shower in the hospital, he didn't want Ilya to see him like that. Shane knew the bruises were bad, they were even worse than the ones on his face, because Ethan always went for his ribs. Besides the bruises, Shane was also insecure about his own body. Ever since he quit hockey, started eating less, his body had changed. He was *skinny*, like really fucking skinny. And Ilya was a literal God. Shane was so scared that if Ilya saw what he really looked like, he would be disgusted.

"I know what to do, the nurse told me." Ilya said.

Shane couldn't meet his eyes for a second, but when he looked back up, they looked so sincere, so *kind*.

"Can you tell me what you're thinking so I can help you?" Ilya asked.

"I—uhm, I don't want you to see. Me." Shane said softly.

Ilya grabbed his hand, slowly placing a soft kiss on his knuckles. "Why not? Because of bruises?"

“That too, a little, but no.”

“Then why?”

“I do not look like you.”

Ilya’s face did something Shane couldn’t quite follow. He still wasn’t the best at reading facial expressions. But then Shane saw that familiar smirk tug on his lips.

“I know that. I am blonde Russian guy, you are what? Japanese? Or something? Is very different look, Shane.”

Shane, despite himself, laughed a little. “You know that’s not what I mean, asshole.”

“Oh, I am asshole?” Ilya said in mock-offense.

“Yes,” Shane grinned. “A very nice asshole.”

“Ah, now you are flattering me, Shane. My asshole is indeed very nice.”

Shane giggled. “Shut up.”

“Okay, okay. I think I know what you mean. But I think you are very beautiful. I only kiss very beautiful people.”

Shane was so thankful for Ilya. He always knew exactly what to say and how to lighten up the situation. How to make Shane comfortable.

“Shane, I can tell you want shower, yes? Let me help you.”

“Okay.”

“Okey.”

Shane threw the blanket off himself and put his feet on the ground, the minor movements already sending waves of pain through his body. Ilya was at his side within a second, offering his arms so that Shane could hold on to him as he got up off the couch. Ilya watched him closely. It was obvious to him that Shane was trying to be big about this, but his face couldn’t hide the pain. Ilya, on the other hand, did keep his face neutral. He didn’t want to show Shane any pity, he was a hundred percent sure that Shane didn’t want to be pitied, they were similar in that way. Shane leaned some of his weight on Ilya as he guided him towards the bathroom.

When they arrived, he helped Shane lower down on the toilet, just so he had a place to sit on. He handed Shane his bottle of pain medication and a glass. “Here, if you take now they should work when you are going to sleep, okay?”

Shane mumbled a thanks as he accepted the pills and the water, he was visibly out of breath from those few meters. The doctor told them that that could last weeks, maybe even months, for it to turn to normal again.

“Ilya?” Shane asked. “Could you uhm—could you maybe go to our apartment and get me some of my clothes?”

“Your,” Ilya corrected. “Your apartment. Not his anymore.”

Shane smiled weakly. “It’s the right side of the closet in the bedroom. The key should be somewhere in my bag of stuff.”

Ilya nodded. “Of course, you will be good here?”

“Yes, I need to catch my breath anyway. Thank you, Ilya.”

-

When Ilya entered the apartment, he found it probably the same as when Shane had fled. There was some blood on the floor, pieces of Shane’s shattered phone lay across the counter and the floor. Ilya also noticed locks were there shouldn’t be any locks. What kitchen had a lock on the outside? He obviously knew about the bedroom one, but it still made him sick just thinking about Shane hurt and locked up. He would’ve probably been so scared. Or maybe it happened so regularly that he wasn’t scared anymore. Ilya wondered how often Shane had to have fallen asleep on the cold kitchen floor. It sent shivers down his spine and Ilya had to literally shake them off.

Ilya quickly made his way towards the closet, fishing out some comfy looking clothes and underwear. It would be a tiny little loss for Ilya to not see Shane in his clothes anymore, but he could understand that Shane wanted something familiar.

When he returned, Shane looked even more out of breath and he wasn’t sitting on the toilet anymore. “Shane, you are bad listener.” Ilya said.

“Yeah, yeah, I thought I could try and get undressed by myself.” Shane said. He was still fully clothed. “I can’t.”

Ilya grinned. Shane looked like a kitten when he was upset or grumpy. “Is okay, *kotenok*. I can help, yes?”

“Kotenok?”

“Is nothing.” Ilya didn’t think Shane could yet appreciate another Russian nickname, especially not when the nickname was just Russian for kitten.

Ilya carefully helped Shane step out of his sweats, letting him rest on his back when he had to lift his feet. It happened without too much of a fuss. Shane’s hoodie, however, was a bigger problem. When Shane had to lift his arms, he couldn’t contain the pain. The groans and the winces were heartbreaking.

“I know, Shane. I know. You got this.” Ilya tried to encourage him.

“Just do it,” Shane replied with tears in his eyes.

Ilya did. He pulled the hoodie off and threw it to the side. Shane eyed it wearily, Ilya didn't understand why, but he didn't feel like pressing him even further. Ilya carefully watched Shane's body. He understood even better why Shane didn't want him to see. It was obvious that a lot of bruises were old. The faded, yellowish colors that spread over most of his side and stomach, can't be from yesterday.

"Please, don't look at me, Ilya." Shane said as he caught Ilya looking. "I look disgusting."

"No, Shanya. You look beautiful," Ilya said in full honesty, cupping Shane's cheek with his hand.

Shane didn't understand why Ilya would say that other than just being kind. But everything about him screamed honesty. The tone of his voice, the look in his eyes... But Shane had been naïve before. Still, he leaned into the touch.

"You know what I thought the first time I saw you?"

Shane shook his head.

"I thought you were the prettiest man I had ever seen in my life. Ever."

"Pretty?"

"*Da.*"

"I'm not a girl, Ilya."

"No, but you are pretty."

Shane had never been called pretty before, he didn't know he would like it so much. It made him feel all soft and gooey inside. He could just be naïve for a little while longer, right? What was the harm in that? "Will you wash my hair for me?"

Ilya smile grew big. "I would love to."

Ilya helped him with everything in the shower. He kept his boxers on, even though they got soaking wet. Shane appreciated the gesture. It told him that Ilya wasn't just looking for an easy fuck. It told him that Shane meant more to him than that. It made him feel safe.

And besides, there was enough to look at already.

Shane figured Ilya's body looked amazing, but he hadn't been expecting *this*. Ilya had to spend at least half of the week in a gym somewhere. He looked incredible.

It also made Shane a little jealous. His physique was close to Ilya's not even three years ago. He'd been missing his old body more and more lately. When Shane thought back on it, that might have been the beginning of his turning point. The way he avoided mirrors, just so that he wasn't reminded of how he failed his own body. Shane wanted to try and get it back someday.

But for now, Shane just closed his eyes and let Ilya take care of him.

Chapter 12: 12

Chapter Notes

Another chapter for you guys! This one took slightly longer for me to upload as usual, I had pretty busy week.

Also, we're nearing the end! After this one there is one more regular chapter and I want to write an epilogue. I can't believe I have finished a whole ass story (sure it wasn't thaaaaat long, but still). Thank you guys for sticking with my story and showing so much support <3

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TWs: Mentions of past abuse. Minor panic attack. Conversations about sex.

Shane slept very well last night. Ilya had to wake him up once, though, because of his concussion. But after that, he had fallen fast asleep again. Ilya let him sleep in his bed while he took the couch. Shane, of course, told him that he was fine with sleeping on the couch, that he didn't want to take Ilya's bed from him, but Ilya didn't want to hear any of it, so Shane accepted eventually. Ilya's pillow smelled faintly of his cologne and Shane loved it. Smelling Ilya, even if he wasn't in the room with him, made him feel safe. Shane had been scared that he wouldn't be able to fall asleep. Scared that Ethan would be allowed bail and go looking for him after what he had done, getting him arrested. But the safety of being in Ilya's home, mixed with the painkillers made for the perfect recipe to fall asleep.

However, yesterday, his brain wasn't really working the way it should've been. He was tired, his brain was a little foggy from the meds. Today, though, everything seemed to have caught up with him. The surgery (although that was now almost two days ago), the police taking his statement, seeing Ethan being taken away by two police officers, *the kiss*.

Was it wrong for Shane to be thinking about that the most?

Shane had never been kissed like that before. Ilya's lips were insanely soft and they fitted into his perfectly. Like their mouths were made just to be kissing each other. Ilya had been patient, careful not to spook him. It was never like that with Ethan. Ethan just took and never gave. When they first got together, Shane thought it was hot. He liked being bossed around, being used every now and then. But now he thinks that maybe that was because he didn't know any better. Shane hadn't really had any boyfriends or girlfriends before Ethan. Sure, he'd kissed a girl or two, but he'd felt nothing for them. Ilya was different. Ilya doesn't just take, Ilya gives.

Shane just couldn't help but wonder if Ilya just saw him as some sort of lost puppy that he took pity on. Some sort of project to fix.

He did know that he needed it again. Badly.

Still, though, he kept feeling like Ethan would come back to him, bring him home again and get angry with him for doing something he wasn't supposed to do. Shane definitely wasn't supposed to do *this*. He wasn't supposed to kiss someone else the same day that his boyfriend, well, *ex*-boyfriend, had been arrested. It was just wrong and it only proved to Shane that Ethan had been right all along. Shane was a useless boyfriend and maybe even a slut.

Fortunately, Shane also had a different, more rational part to his brain.

That part knew that Ethan was the useless boyfriend, not him. It also knew that Ilya had been nothing but kind and fair to Shane. Shane tried to listen to that part more, even though it was very difficult and it would probably remain difficult over the next few years. Maybe even for the rest of his life.

-

"Shane?" Ilya asked after he'd put away the dishes from their lunch. Shane felt bad about not being able to help with anything. He wasn't used to doing nothing, it made him feel ungrateful, uneasy. Ilya had assured him that it was fine.

"Yeah?"

"Do you have anybody that could take care of you?"

The question startled Shane, though it didn't surprise him. Of course he couldn't stay here. Ilya had helped him and Shane would be forever grateful for that, but Ilya had a life to get back to and Shane didn't belong in that.

He didn't think it would happen this soon, though.

"Just for today, of course. I really have to work, there is home game tonight." Ilya quickly clarified.

The tension in Shane's shoulders immediately disappeared. Okay, good. It was the unrational part of his brain talking. He freaked out over nothing. He does that.

But as quickly as the tension had disappeared, a new kind appeared.

Who would take care of him?

"It's fine, Ilya. I can be alone for a few hours."

Ilya shook his head. "No, Shane. You can not and that is okay. What about your friends from record shop?"

Shane sighed. He knew they would do it, in a heartbeat. He just didn't know if he was ready for them to see him like this.

“I don’t have anybody’s number,” Shane shrugged.

“I can call the shop?” Ilya suggested.

Shane was a bit hesitant. It probably showed on his face.

“I think it might be good for you, Shane. They seemed to care much about you. If it helps, I will call for you.”

“You’d do that?”

Ilya nodded. “Of course.”

Shane thought about it for a while. He didn’t think he’d be able to deal with Rose’s sad eyes right now. She was amazing and Shane loved her a lot, but she could also be a lot. He needed to be a bit less tired for that.

“Ask for Hayden, please.”

Ilya squeezed his knee reassuringly and got up to call Hayden.

-

A few hours later, the doorbell rang. Ilya had already left a few minutes ago. Shane could tell he didn’t want to leave him alone, but Hayden had to drive Jacki home from the hospital after a check-up and Ilya really had to leave for work. Shane knew it was Hayden ringing the doorbell, but it still startled him. Like Ethan was just going to show up, take him back across the hallway.

“Shane, it’s me! Is the door unlocked?” Hayden’s voice, clear as day, sounded from outside the apartment.

“Yeah, you can come in!”

The door unlocked and a few seconds later, Hayden appeared in the living room, carrying a huge bag of *something*.

“So, before we do the ‘how are you’s’, Rose went shopping for you and insisted I gave it to you as soon as I arrived,” Hayden said as he sat down on the armchair that faced the couch Ilya had installed Shane on.

“Of course she did,” Shane smiled.

Hayden opened the bag and the first thing that came out of it was a huge teddy bear. Hayden handed it to Shane. “I don’t even know dude, but it is really fucking soft.”

Shane grinned, since laughing was not really happening with the broken ribs. “I love it.”
Shane carefully placed the teddy bear next to him on the couch. It was indeed really fucking soft.

Hayden pulled the other stuff out of the bag. Rose had gotten him a new book they once talked about and some snacks Shane hadn't had in forever. He couldn't deny the fact that he teared up a little.

"Make sure she knows how grateful I am, Hayd," Shane said as they finished going through all the stuff Rose got him.

"Of course," Hayden assured him. "Can I get you anything? Some water or tea or whatever?"

Shane shook his head. "I'm fine, really. Just finished my mandatory bottle of water," Shane said as he pointed at the now empty Stanley up Ilya let him borrow.

"So," Hayden started, a little awkwardly.

"So," Shane repeated, leveling his awkwardness.

"Do you feel comfortable telling me what happened? Ilya was very vague over the phone."

Shane had already spent the last hour working up towards this moment. He wanted to tell him, he wanted his best friend back. That meant being honest with each other.

"Yeah," Shane said, "I want to tell you."

Hayden smiled at him. "Well, then I'm making myself a coffee and then I will be listening."

Shane told him, well, not *everything*, but enough. He told Hayden about the beatings, the locks, the broken phones. He let the rest in the middle. Hayden could guess when Shane had told him about his injuries.

"Well, it's a good thing he's been arrested, because I have two daughters that I need to meet in a few months. I'm pretty sure murder means a lifetime in jail."

Shane laughed a little at that.

Then it hit him.

"Wait, you're having girls?"

Hayden's smile grew from ear to ear. "Yeah, we just found out!"

"That's amazing, congratulations!"

"Thank you, Jackie was so happy, it might've been one of the best moments of my life. By the way, she really wants to meet you and Rose, so when you're feeling up for it, I'm inviting you all over for drinks!"

"I would love to meet her, Hayden, really."

It had been nice with Hayden. It felt familiar, kind of like they were back in high school when they used to hang out all the time. They watched the Centaurs game together which ended in a rare win for the home team, so Ilya would probably be in a great mood when he returned home. Hayden had ordered them some food and around nine p.m., Shane had fallen asleep on the couch, so Hayden had carefully woken him up and helped him brush his teeth and get into bed.

“Want a bedtime story? I could use the practice,” Hayden joked after literally tugging him in.

Shane laughed and flipped him off.

Hayden assured him that he’d wait for Ilya to come home before leaving, so that Shane wouldn’t be alone. That made Shane feel safe enough to drift off to sleep.

-

Shane was standing in the kitchen. Something was wrong. He didn’t remember being here, in this apartment. Why was he here?

Everything looked the same. The same stove, the same cupboards, the same floor—

The floor wasn’t the same.

Sputters of blood scattered all over it. The deep red a stark contrast to the otherwise pristine white, ugly tiles.

Shane’s head suddenly started throbbing. He lifted one hand towards it. It came away red and sticky.

“Shane.”

Shane turned around.

Ethan?

Why was Ethan here? Wasn’t he supposed to be in ja—

“Shane. Why didn’t you clean the fucking floor?”

Ethan stepped closer.

Shane needed to get away. He didn’t want to be here.

Ethan reached out, grabbing Shane’s arm tightly.

“No,” Shane said, his voice sounded weak and pathetic.

Shane looked behind Ethan. The door, it was open, unlocked. Shane could see Ilya’s door through it. Also open, unlocked.

Ethan pulled his wrist, forcing him closer.

“No!”

“Shane, why are you so fucking difficult?”

“No! Please!”

Shane looked past Ethan again. The door seemed further away, like it moved half a mile back.

“Let me go, please.”

“You’re pathetic.”

Shane tried to yank his arm free. He needed to leave. He didn’t want to be here. Ilya’s door was open. He wanted to go there. To Ilya.

“Ilya!”

“Shane,” a different voice said.

Ilya. Ilya was here.

“Shane, wake up.”

Shane’s body was trembling. It didn’t cooperate, the grip on his wrist was too strong.

“Ilya, help me, please.”

“Shane!” He felt his body being pulled away. “Shane, you need to open your eyes.”

“You’re not leaving again. I won’t let you.”

Ethan.

“No!”

“Shane, wake up!”

Shane opened his eyes and gasped for air. He seemed unable to fill his lungs properly. He frantically looked around the room. He wasn’t in his kitchen anymore. This room was dark, aside from a tiny bedside lamp casting a soft glow over—over Ilya.

“Shane, are you okay?” Ilya asked.

Shane blinked, still out of breath. His mind started to catch up with his body. He felt his chest pull together in pain. He had a nightmare.

“I—,” Shane started, but he didn’t know what he wanted to say, words were hard to find.

“You had bad dream.”

Shane nodded, that much he could do.

“Do you want to talk about it?”

Shane shook his head.

“Okay, that’s fine. You do not have to.”

Shane’s breaths were still short and fast, not the way they should be. He didn’t know how to calm them down.

“Shane can you tell me what you see?”

Huh?

Why did he need to tell Ilya what he saw?

“I don—,” Shane couldn’t finish a sentence, he couldn’t stop the frantic breathing long enough to form one.

“Just tell me one thing you can see, Shane. You can do it.”

Shane tried to focus his vision. He saw Ilya. His blue eyes, his soft, golden curls. The shiny, golden cross around his neck.

“I see your necklace,” Shane breathed out.

“Good,” Ilya said. “What else?”

“Your eyes. They’re blue.”

Ilya huffed a little laugh. “Yeah, they are. Good. What else?”

“Your golden curls. I see you.”

Shane calmed down a little, his lungs filling themselves with enough air that he didn’t feel like he was choking anymore.

“Good, I see you too. You are here, Shane. Not there.”

There meaning his apartment. There meaning stuck with Ethan.

“I’m sorry,” Shane finally said.

“Do not be sorry. You had bad dream. Is okay, we all get them, yes?”

Shane nodded.

“Do you want me to stay?”

Shane blinked. He should say no, Ilya didn’t need to babysit him.

“Please,” he said instead.

So, Ilya crawled in bed next to him, careful not to touch his hurting body, but still getting as close as possible. Shane felt the warmth radiating off the body next to him, grounding him in safety. Ilya didn't say anything else, he just intertwined their hands, rubbing those soft circles into his palm again, like he did in the hospital. Eventually, Shane drifted off to a much more peaceful sleep.

-

Shane and Ilya spend the following days like that. Ilya helping Shane where he needed him to, Shane trying to fool Ilya into letting him help around the house, but failing miserably. Rose and/or Hayden staying over whenever Ilya had to work.

Shane and Ilya were growing closer as the days passed by. They stole kisses every time they could and Shane felt himself grow more and more confident. How could he not? Ilya showered him in compliments. He told Shane over and over how *pretty* he was, how kind he was and how lucky Ilya was to be in his life.

Shane started to want more. But at the same time he was *so* scared. Scared that Ethan would somehow be released from jail, scared that he was moving too fast, that Ilya would think the same thing as Ethan always did. That Shane was a *slut*.

But he was also scared that it wouldn't be any different. That sex with Ilya would be the same, mindless *chore* as it was Ethan. That he'd only chase his own pleasure, his own release, and completely neglect Shane's.

Seeing Ethan getting arrested, being literally dragged away from his life, has allowed Shane's head to make room for reflection. Even though the guilt still gnawed at him from time to time, he felt safe enough to think about everything Ethan did wrong.

Sex was definitely one of them.

It hurt more often than it did not, and it definitely wasn't *fun*.

Shane remembered learning once that sex is supposed to be fun.

So, yeah, he was scared. Because if sex with Ilya wouldn't be fun, then Shane thinks there was just nothing on this earth for him. Sex-wise, that is.

Maybe Shane was getting a bit bored, that could very much be a possibility too.

But it wasn't on the table, not yet. The pain in his body was still very prominently there, Shane, who didn't know sex besides the sex he had with Ethan, was pretty sure he couldn't survive it at the moment. His ribs were still broken and his lung was still healing, but the headaches were getting better. So was his breathing. Shane could manage the small distances from the couch to the bathroom and the bedroom without feeling like he just ran a marathon.

The bruises were starting to heal, which made them look arguably worse, a plethora of colors spread across his face and body.

But he was healing. Slowly.

And as much as he wanted *more*, he knew he couldn't do it. Letting his mind wander too far into the topic, resulted in Shane having to fight off a panic attack without someone noticing. He managed thus far and he liked to keep it that. It was just, every time he pictured it, it turned into the last time. With Ethan. And he couldn't handle that.

So, he could want all he wanted, but he couldn't possibly do it.

Which scared him in a whole different way.

What if Ilya gets bored of him? He's a good-looking guy, mid-twenties, the prime of his life, really. He must have desires, *needs*. Which Shane couldn't provide for him.

He couldn't provide anything for him.

"Shanya," Ilya's thought broke him out of his mental spiral.

Shane looked up, his eyes meeting Ilya's.

"I can hear your brain thinking from here."

"S—sorry," Shane stammered.

"No, is okay. Do you want to share what you are thinking?"

Ilya sat across from him on the couch, their feet touching, like they were playing footsies. Ilya didn't bother zipping up his hoodie. He was *right there*, his chest all muscly and *bare*.

"I—," Shane started, but couldn't finish.

Ilya must've noticed his gaze dropping lower than Ilya's face.

"Is my chest distracting you, *kotenok*?"

Shane flushed red. "N—no. I—sorry."

"Shane, tell me what you are thinking, please. Is only way I can help you," Ilya said, his voice patient and warm.

"You," Shane said. "I was thinking about you." He was still unable to tear his gaze away from Ilya's naked torso, he might've even licked his lips hungrily.

Ilya shifted closer, leaning his body over Shane's, careful not to let any of his weight rest on Shane. Shane finally looked up into Ilya's face, just inches above him and caught Ilya's eyes dropping to his mouth. Ilya leaned down, pressing a slow, soft kiss to Shane's lip.

It turned into more very fast.

"Ilya—I," Shane panted a little as Ilya leaned back to catch their breaths.

“Yes, Shane?” Ilya asked, kissing down his neck.

Shane stretched as much as he could without inflicting too much pain on himself, offering more of his skin for Ilya to plant kisses on.

“I don’t know if I can,” Shane admitted quietly, though it came out rather pathetic, considering how badly he *did* want.

Ilya stopped. “Then we stop.”

Shane chased Ilya’s touch. “I don’t know if I can do that either,” he said, kissing Ilya’s jaw as it was the only part of his body that his mouth could reach.

“Then we talk.” Ilya said and suddenly pulled away completely, sitting back down.

Shane was a little stunned at the sudden loss of Ilya’s touch. “Talk?”

“*Da*, talk.”

“About what?”

“This. Kissing, all of it.”

“I’m sorry,” Shane said again. He couldn’t help, but feel guilty about withholding this from Ilya.

“No sorries, you are not allowed to be sorry anymore. You are excused for life,” Ilya joked.

Shane couldn’t help but smile. “It’s just,” he started, feeling a bit more at ease with the way Ilya calmed him down, “I don’t want to bore you.”

Ilya raised his eyebrow. “Bore me? You could never, ever bore me, Shanya.”

“But, I am, boring, I mean.”

“I like your boring.”

“How are you doing this?”

“Doing what?”

“Saying the most perfect things all the time? Why are you so good at this?” Shane asked, genuinely curious, because he had always been terrible at communicating feelings.

Ilya shrugged. “You make it easy.”

“I do?”

“Yes.”

They were quiet for a while, their feet back to playing footsies with each other.

“Shane,” Ilya broke the silence. “You have been through big trauma. It is okay to be scared to try again. I do not want you to ever feel like you have to. To please me, or whatever. Okay?” Ilya’s voice sounded different. Still soft and warm, but underneath it lingered a sad firmness.

Shane nodded. “Thank you, for saying that.”

Ilya smiled at him. “Do you want to talk about what scares you about it?”

Shane fumbled with the sleeve of his sweater. “I do, but I don’t really know how?” he admitted.

Ilya nodded slowly. “Would it help if I ask you questions?” He offered.

Shane thought about it. If Ilya asked him questions, he wouldn’t have to worry so much about saying the wrong thing, or saying too much. He nodded, “please.”

“Do you like making out with me?”

Shane nodded shyly. “Yes. So much.”

Ilya grinned. “Me too.”

“It was never like that with him, with Ethan.”

“What was it like with him?”

Shane’s face scrunched together a little. “I don’t know, he just never—uhm—tried to make it good? You know? For me,” Shane said.

Ilya made a noise of agreement. “He only cared about himself?”

“I never thought of it that way, because for me, it was the only thing I knew. But now, after *you*, I think so, yeah.”

“Did he ever make you cum?”

Shane was taken aback by the directness of Ilya’s question. His first instinct was to jump to his defense again. But he stopped himself. “I—no, not really to be honest.” Shane came often enough, just from the sex, but that was only in the beginning, never later in their relationship.

“Did he ever go down on you?”

Shane shook his head.

“Touch your dick?”

“Jesus, Ilya.” Shane scoffed, just out of embarrassment, really.

“Did he?” Ilya cocked an eyebrow.

Shane sighed. “No.”

“Maybe he was not gay?” Ilya joked.

“Probably not,” Shane huffed out.

“What do you think sex is, Shane?”

“Penetration?” Shane offered, unsure of what else was sex.

“Is part of it, yes, but sex is so, *so* much more.”

“Really?” Shane wasn’t oblivious, he knew blowjobs and handjobs existed, he just figured that was more of a porn thing.

“Have you ever sucked his dick?”

Shane was still having a bit of trouble with Ilya’s bluntness. “Of course.”

“So, you did for him, but he did not do for you?”

Shane never knew it was wrong, until just recently. Of course, those fucking tears welled up in his eyes again. “I was so stupid, wasn’t I?”

Ilya shook his head, shuffling closer to Shane again. “No, he is stupid one.” He said as he cupped Shane’s jaw, pulling him into a soft embrace, still so careful with his injuries. Shane melted into it. “You were just too sweet, too loving. He did not deserve your love.” Ilya continued.

Shane sniffled into his shoulder.

“Would you ever?” Shane started asking a question that he knew was silly, and a little awkward, but Ilya’s touch just turned his brain into mush, in a very, *very* good way.

“Ever what?”

“Suck my dick?”

Ilya started laughing. “I would really love to. Someday.”

Shane giggled. “Someday,” he agreed.

Chapter 13: 13

Chapter Notes

OH My GAAAWD the final chapter y'all! I can't believe we did it! I finished a story! I'm so proud of this one and I want to thank you all again for reading and leaving comments and kudos. Your comments always made my days a little bit better, so really, thank you <3

I will be posting an epilogue within the next few days, I am currently writing it, so it's not really the last chapter :)

-

TWs: mentions of past abuse. sexy time :)

"I think I want to visit my parents," Shane announced over breakfast.

Another few days had passed, which made it officially ten days since Ilya took Shane home. Shane had become a bit more mobile, his headaches were almost completely gone and he either got used to the pain in his ribs or that was getting better too. His face, though, looked pretty bad. Not *bad* bad, Ilya would never, *ever*, think Shane's face looked bad, but the bruises were obviously starting to heal, which meant that every part of his face now had a different color, spreading all the way down his jaw. Ilya wasn't sure how any parent would take that.

"Are you sure?" Ilya asked.

Shane nodded. "I uhm—I am scared, of course, but I figured it's time to tell them. With the court date coming up and stuff." Shane was quiet for a few seconds, Ilya saw a pained look flash across his face. Shane sniffled once. "And I just miss them," he added quietly. Ilya rested his hand on top of Shane's. Ilya had quickly figured out that soft, physical touches grounded him a little.

Shane had received a phone call yesterday, the case was being taken to court. They had asked him if he could either speak in court or write a letter, explaining everything that Ethan had done to him and how it had impacted his life. Shane was very quiet after that phone call. Ilya had watched him sit on the couch for almost an hour afterward, staring at nothing. He had asked once if Shane was okay, but Shane had only nodded and said he needed to think.

He hadn't decided yet, what he wanted to do. The court date wouldn't be for another couple of weeks, so he had the time, to think and decide.

"I was thinking, maybe I could go today." Shane said as he brought the last spoonful of his breakfast to his mouth.

Ilya watched him eat it.

He had been eating a little better too. Not much. The portions were still smaller than Ilya thought they should be, and Ilya had to stop himself from watching every bite Shane took. But at least he was finishing his meals now. Sometimes he even asked for something himself instead of waiting for Ilya to offer.

It made Ilya ridiculously proud.

“Would you like me to come with you?”

Shane looked up. “You would do that?”

Ilya placed his hand over Shane’s. “Of course,” he said as reassuringly possible. “We can take cab.”

Shane looked down at their hands, smiling to himself. His leg was bouncing, he seemed nervous but also determined. “Yeah, okay. Thank you, Ilya.”

-

“Are you ready?” Ilya asked as he helped Shane out of the cab. They were standing in front of a beautiful home, not big per se, but very cozy and warm with a small garden out front and flowers along the path leading to the front door. Ilya really liked it, he wondered if this is where they had always lived, where Shane grew up.

Ilya could see the anxiety all over Shane’s face. For a second, Ilya thought Shane would turn right back around and wave the cab back over, but Shane was already walking towards the door, determination winning from anxiety. Ilya was right behind, but stayed back a bit. This was his moment and he didn’t want to crowd him. He rang the doorbell.

Not much later, the door swung open, revealing a beautiful woman who resembled Shane so much. It was clear where he got his looks from. The same hair, though some grey was starting to peak through, the same eyes and even the same look on her face.

“Shane?” The woman, his mother, asked in disbelief.

“Hi mom,” Shane said shyly.

“David!” Shane’s mother called out. His dad, probably. And then she pulled him into a hug. Ilya was pretty sure she was hurting his ribs, but Shane didn’t seem to care. He melted right into her touch, sobs came instantly.

“Oh Shane,” his mother said, softly now.

A man appeared behind them, a look of shock and relief plastered on his face, before joining the other two in their embrace.

Ilya watched fondly, but he couldn’t deny the tiniest bit of jealousy that crawled through his body. His *mama* would hug him exactly like that, he was sure of it. He missed her so much,

seeing Shane's mother hug him so lovingly, hurt in a good way. Shane deserved this. All of it.

After a while, they let go of each other. Shane's mother cupped his face, carefully, her eyes raking over her bruised son. "Oh sweetheart," she said, sounding like she was holding back a stream of tears, "what happened to you?" Shane didn't respond, he just looked down, shaking his head a tiny bit.

Suddenly, David seemed to notice that they weren't alone, eyeing Ilya a little cautiously. He scraped his throat. "Why don't you and your friend come inside?"

Shane nodded. "Ilya?"

Ilya suddenly felt a little awkward. He'd never met anyone's parents, not the parents of people he was madly in love with at least. He tried to push it down and regain some of his posture as he made his way towards the door.

"This is Ilya," Shane said, also a bit awkwardly, "Rozanov."

"Hi," Ilya said, reaching out his hand. Shane's mother took it. "I'm Yuna." Then his father, "David."

His mother opened the door wider, urging the two of them inside. Ilya just caught a glimpse of the hurt in Yuna's face as she watched Shane stumble inside. Ilya looked around the hallway and was immediately in awe of all the family pictures that decorated the walls. Ilya's childhood home didn't have that. It was very clear that Shane had always been adorable. On one of the photos, it looked like Shane was holding some sort of hockey trophy. Ilya looked at it. "This is Shane?" He asked, a smile creeping through his nerves.

David stood beside him, also looking at the photo with a fond expression. "Yeah. He was eleven here, I think. His team won a regional trophy. He was a pretty good skater, you know?" There was something to David's voice that made Ilya's heart clench. It was obvious that Shane had thrown away a potential legacy.

"Dad," Shane said as he rolled his eyes.

They arrived at the kitchen table and Ilya sat down next to Shane. Shane already seemed more at ease, he grabbed his hand anyway. Maybe more for himself than for Shane. Ilya wondered though, how it could be that Shane's parents, who seemed so kind and full of love for their son, hadn't reached out to him these past months. It's not like Ilya *blamed* them, not at all, it just seemed a little strange to him.

Yuna arrived back at the table with some mugs of tea. And, as if she could hear Ilya's thoughts, spoke up. "Shane, we are so, *so*, sorry we haven't been in touch for so long."

"That's mainly my fault, though, isn't it?" Shane immediately replied.

David shook his head. "We should've done better, son."

"Do you," Yuna's voice sounded careful, "do you want to talk about what happened to you?"

Shane sighed, not an annoyed or tired sigh, more one that grounded him as he gathered the right words. “Yeah, I uhm—I do.”

“I left him. Ethan,” Shane started.

Yuna and David remained quiet, allowing Shane to continue at his own pace.

“You were right, all this time. He wasn’t uhm—good, for me. He was—he was bad, a bad person. He did this to me,” Shane broke on the last two words. Yuna’s hand immediately covered his, his other hand still held tightly by Ilya.

“Oh, my Shane, I am so, *so*, proud of you. That must’ve been really difficult.”

Shane looked up at Ilya, smiling through his tears. “It was, but I had Ilya.”

Yuna and David both looked at Ilya as well, making him feel a little awkward at all the attention. “Ah, I am his neighbor. I eh—I liked Shane, I wanted to help.” Ilya stammered.

-

Shane had told them everything they needed to know, everything he needed to get off his chest. From the abuse to the hospital and the court case. Ilya had seen so many emotions on everyone’s faces. David was mostly quiet, but his eyes spoke for him. He seemed a lot like Shane. Yuna, on the other hand, promised Shane to help him with everything he needed to get Ethan as far away from him as possible. She could be a scary woman, Yuna. Ilya was glad that she seemed to like him, he didn’t want to be in Ethan’s place right now. Or his lawyer’s.

They stayed for quite a long time. David eventually made dinner with the help of Ilya. He kindly bombarded Ilya with lots of questions. Maybe some would find it annoying, or rude, but Ilya happily answered every single one. After what their son had been through, Ilya could completely understand that they wanted to know everything about a potential new love interest.

Once they found out Shane’s phone had been smashed to bits, they had given them their spare phone. Apparently, they always bought one extra when they got a new one, just in case something happened to it. Pretty smart. Shane had been over the moon, he immediately put everyone’s number in it and Ilya’s heart melted at the genuine joy he saw on Shane’s face.

It was a good day.

And it hadn’t ended yet.

-

Shane and Ilya were on the bed, back in Ilya’s apartment, completely devouring each other. Ilya, still managing to be careful enough with Shane’s injuries, roamed his hands up and down his torso, his thighs, everywhere he could reach without breaking their kiss. Shane was a whimpering, hot mess underneath him. His hands were mimicking Ilya’s, grabbing and clawing at his naked upper body and slowly sinking lower, grabbing his ass and eventually cupping his rapidly hardening dick.

“C—can I?” Shane asked, *panted*.

They hadn’t come further than this yet. They had made out plenty over the past ten days, but either Shane or Ilya broke it off when it got too much. Thinking back on it, that might have been more Ilya than Shane. It was hard for him too. He felt some sort of pressure, the pressure to give Shane a *good* experience. To not add to the trauma. To not *hurt* him. He couldn’t handle it if he ever hurt Shane.

Ilya swallowed. Shane clearly wanted it, he had initiated three times now. Ilya just couldn’t figure out if Shane genuinely wanted it or if he felt like it was some sort of obligation, some form a repayment for Ilya letting him stay with him. But Shane’s eyes were full of hope and want, so he nodded. “Only if you want. You can stop any time, Shane.”

Shane didn’t respond and just reached for his belt. Ilya stopped him from unbuckling it. “Shane, tell me you know that. That you can stop at any time. I want to hear you say it.”

Shane swallowed. “I—I know. I know I can stop at any time.” Ilya smiled at him and placed a kiss on the top of his head before letting go of Shane’s hands, which eagerly went back to their task.

Shane undid his belt, helping Ilya out of his jeans. “I want, Ilya. I really want.” Shane said once more. Ilya nodded. Okay, they were going to do this. Ilya was going to make this good. He had to.

Shane carefully positioned himself lower, his face now angled with Ilya’s groin. Ilya heard Shane gasp a little and laughed softly. “Is big, huh?”

Shane licked his lips tentatively. “It really fucking is,” he breathed out.

“Take your time,” Ilya said as his hands found a home in Shane’s hair, not pushing or pulling, just resting, rubbing through his thick hair.

Shane didn’t take his time.

He swallowed him down, almost taking the entire thing in one go, barely choking on his length. Ilya tried not to think too much about how he’d learned to do that so seamlessly.

“Fuck,” Ilya moaned.

Shane bobbed his head up and down, sucking eagerly. Ilya probably wasn’t going to last very long. He hadn’t had his dick sucked in *months*. And it felt so good—

“You can use me. Fuck my throat,” Shane suddenly said as he came up for air.

Ilya stilled a little. That wasn’t the road he wanted to go down. He gently stroke his hand through Shane’s hair. “No baby,” he said softly.

“No? Do you not like it?” Shane sounded a bit insecure all of a sudden.

“I fucking love it, Shane. You’re doing so good for me, can you keep doing that? Just exactly the same,” Ilya said, trying to assure Shane that he was doing amazing, because, *fuck*, he was.

Shane frowned, but went to work anyway, giving it his all. Ilya felt that familiar heat in his gut, his orgasm nearing even sooner than he had first anticipated. “Shane, fuck. I’m close, *kotenok*,” Ilya panted.

Shane hummed around his cock, sending even more pleasurable vibrations through his body. “Wanna taste you,” he said quickly as he came up for a second, only to dive right back down. That did it for Ilya, one more second and he got pushed over the edge. Shane swallowed it eagerly.

-

Shane hadn’t expected to be so good at that without letting himself be used. He felt weirdly proud that he could make Ilya come so fast. His cum didn’t even taste bad, it even tasted *good*. Shane wasn’t used to it. Ethan’s was always bitter, probably because he drank so much. Shane might’ve already become addicted to Ilya’s taste.

Ilya pulled him up and crashed his mouth into his, kissing him eagerly. Shane wanted to protest, remind him that he had just had his dick in his mouth, his *sperm*. But Ilya didn’t seem to care in the slightest and Shane? Well, Shane was completely swooped away by Ilya.

Ilya guided him back down and placed gentle kisses down his jaw, his throat, lifting his shirt over his chest. He didn’t take it off, Shane appreciated it, he would hate to have this moment ruined, because of the pain of lifting his arms. Ilya kept making his way down, stopping to suck his nipple into his mouth. Shane gasped at the sensation. Eventually, Ilya reached his lower abdomen and looked up at Shane through his eyelashes, taking Shane’s breath away by the sheer beauty of him.

“Can I show you? Can I make *you* feel good?” Ilya asked in a sultry voice.

Shane, suddenly finding himself in uncharted territory, didn’t know how to respond. “Y—you don’t have to, I’m f—”

“I want to,” Ilya interrupted.

Shane looked him in his eyes, those trusting blue eyes he loved so much and all the fear he felt before, seeped out of his body. Shane nodded and Ilya lowered his jeans and underwear.

“God, you’re so beautiful, Shanya,” Ilya whispered as he softly kissed his upper thigh before grabbing his cock.

Shane, unsure of what to do with his hands, grabbed the sheets in need of some leverage. Once Ilya put his perfect lips around his cock and looked back up at him, Shane let out an embarrassing moan, throwing his head back against the pillows.

He had never felt this before. He had never felt this *good* before.

Ilya took his time, carefully sucking down more and more of it and Shane was *gone*. He barely recognized his orgasm sneaking up on him before it erupted out of him, Ilya took it all with grace, sucking him completely dry.

Shane was panting above him. He hadn't even realized he was crying, until Ilya was right next to him again, gently stroking the tears away from his eyes. "Are you okay?"

It took Shane a while to respond, but eventually he nodded.

"Feels good, yes?"

"Thank you," was all Shane could manage, still sobbing. *God*, he was so embarrassing. Who cried after getting his fucking dick sucked? Shane did, apparently.

"Is no problem. Prettiest cock I have ever sucked," Ilya said with a grin, giving him all the time and space Shane needed to come down from this weird high.

Shane didn't know how many minutes had passed, but eventually he came back to himself. Ilya had tucked him in and handed him his dose of pain medication, he only took them twice a day now, with a glass of water. Shane accepted, his hands shaking around the glass.

"It was not too soon?" Ilya asked suddenly, his voice laced in worry, and, guilt?

Shane quickly shook his head. "No, I'm okay. I'm sorry, I don't know why I was crying."

Ilya gave him a sheepish grin. "Was that good, huh? I am professional."

"You're cocky," Shane replied, grinning wide.

"You liked my cocky."

Shane nearly spat out his water. "Never say cocky in that context again, Ilya."

-

A month later

"Fucking hell, Ilya," Shane groaned completely out of breath. "I don't know how many more rounds I can go for."

Ilya grinned beside him, just as out of breath as Shane was. "You can do it, *malysh*, one more."

Shane rolled his eyes, but he wasn't annoyed in the slightest. He braced himself for another round and jumped to grab the bar, hauling himself up into a muscle up.

Shane had recently joined Ilya in the gym, he wanted to get some of that old strength back and the doctor had given him an all-clear. So, Ilya assigned himself the role of Shane's personal trainer, which he took *way* too seriously. He had set out a work-out that trained strength and endurance and Shane honestly felt like he was training for the fucking marines.

After five muscle ups, Ilya had him do thirty wall-balls and after that, twenty push-ups. To round it all off, he made Shane run a mile on the treadmill. During his first round, Shane thought that was it. Then Ilya made him do it again, and again, and again.

Shane was *wrecked*. In the best way possible. He knew, three years ago, he would do this with his eyes closed and somewhere deep inside his body, he felt disappointed in himself that it was taking him this much effort. But then he channeled into that more rational part of his body again, his therapist that he'd been going to for three weeks now helped him with that, and he knew that he should be insanely proud of himself for picking sports up again. And he was.

They went to the gym four times a week. Always together. They were Shane's favorite moments of the week. I felt great to try and get some of that power back. He already felt much more like himself. He'd been eating well, too. He was following a healthy, protein and fiber packed diet. He meal prepped for the two of them every week, Ilya was a little less happy with that, because now he wasn't allowed McDonald's as often as he'd like. But Shane could tell that was all an act. Ilya seemed to thrive under this new healthy lifestyle the two of them developed. His insanely toned body, was even more lean and throughout the day he didn't seem as tired as he sometimes was.

As for Shane: Shane felt great. He never expected to feel this good again, and not even eight weeks had passed since he left Ethan. His body healed, aside from the permanent scar above his eyebrow caused by Ethan's ring. His brain didn't betray him as often anymore. Shane slowly learned to let himself be Shane, to not constantly feel the need to please everyone around him. He was back at the record store, even though Hayden didn't work there anymore. He had landed a semi-big role on this new show about hockey, which was very exciting, but that also meant he had to quit working at the record shop and Jacki's pregnancy was going well. Shane's parents visited regularly, or they visited them. They loved Ilya and Ilya loved them.

Shane had also made a choice. Whether to speak in person, or write a letter. Shane had decided he never wanted to see Ethan's face ever again. His mother had consulted with lawyers she knew personally and they had advised them to do whatever it was that Shane would feel comfortable with, because there was no judge in the world that wouldn't convict him. Not with the evidence they had gathered over the past few weeks.

So, Shane had decided to write a letter. Say his piece once and for all and hope that, with whatever form or sense of a heart Ethan had left inside his body, he would rot in jail feeling guilty for life. If he was capable of that.

After Shane finished his last round of the work-out, Ilya threw him his towel. "Let's go, *sozvezdiye*. Or we will be late for apartment viewing."

Shane smiled. He was more than ready to take on this new chapter of his life. With Ilya.

Chapter 14: 14

Chapter Notes

The final part of this story!

TWs: sex (the fun one), mentions past abuse.

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

“Shane, Jesus Christ! This isn’t fair! How are you so good at this?” Evan Dykstra, the fucking *defensemen* of the fucking *Ottawa Centaurs*, groaned as Shane threw the pingpong ball into their final cup, causing them to lose pathetically. Shane and Ilya had all their cups, aside from one, still full.

Shane shrugged. “Good hand-eye coordination.”

“Don’t be pussy Dykstra, chug the cup!” Ilya yelled at him from across the table. Evan flipped him off as he did exactly that.

It was insane, really. Shane and Ilya had been together for nearly six months now. Shane just counts from the day Ilya took him in, even though they weren’t ‘a thing’ back then yet. They were to him; he doesn’t really care about the semantics.

They were currently celebrating Ilya’s 25th birthday inside their new apartment. One they picked out together and pay for together. It had been so nice to pick stuff out together, Ethan just brought his old stuff to their apartment, Shane didn’t really have a say in the interior design choices. Turns out, he really has an eye for it. The place is well put together, even on the tight budget they were working with. It’s not a big apartment, but it’s better than both of them had. The building is actually well-kept, they have a balcony now and the appliances in the kitchen and bathroom are pretty modern. Shane and Ilya both learned to love cooking even more.

So yeah, Shane was really fucking happy.

He plopped down on the couch beside Rose, Hayden and Jackie. The two seemed really glad to have a night off since Jackie’s parents were babysitting the twins. Jade and Ruby. Shane had seen them once. They were adorable and he couldn’t believe his best friend *made* them. It was insane to Shane. Once they were a little older, Shane and Ilya would gladly babysit for them.

“I’m so proud of you,” Rose said after a beat of silence.

Shane felt his cheeks grow a little red. He still wasn’t great at taking compliments.

“This apartment is amazing, Shane. And I can’t believe we’re just casually hanging out with some of the Centaurs.”

“I know right?” Shane huffed, sipping his beer.

Shane had never really liked alcohol. It always reminded him of the worst moments of his life, Ethan was horrible when he drank. However, being with Ilya and their friends? It showed him that getting a little buzzed can actually be fun. He was relearning so many things these past six months.

“No, but really Shane. I am proud of you. You seem so happy, so much more like the Shane I once met in college,” Rose was beaming with pride, she was never one to hide her expressions.

Shane smiled at her and pulled her into a side-hug. “Thank you, Rose. I couldn’t have done this without you guys, really,” Shane said as he eyed both her and Hayden. Hayden clapped him on the back to show his support.

Shane looked over his shoulder to see Ilya laughing with Troy and Harris and smiled to himself. Six months ago he was at the lowest point in his life and somehow he made it out, he literally crawled out of that deep-end and onto a better one. Held up by Ilya and their friends.

-

A few hours later, after most of their friends had left, aside their rookie, Luca, who was sprawled out on the couch, they lay in bed together. *Their* bed.

Shane was a mess of whimpers, purrs and groans as Ilya kissed and sucked his way down to Shane’s boxers, that were straining, trying to contain his extremely hard cock. Ilya skipped over it and resumed sucking marks in Shane’s thighs.

“Mhm, fuck baby, I love how strong you are getting. I think these thighs could choke me, no?” Ilya said in sultry voice.

“They might if you don’t touch me now,” Shane hissed.

Ilya chuckled. “So impatient. I am touching you, no?”

Shane threw his head back in frustration. “You know what I mean.”

Ilya did, in fact, know what Shane meant and palmed Shane’s bulge, rubbing the slightly damp fabric over his sensitive cock. Shane moaned in response.

“Ssh,” Ilya shushed him. “We cannot wake baby Luca, he is too young for this.”

Shane grinned. “He is an adult, Ilya, he is not a baby.”

“He will always be baby to me, so shhh,” Ilya demanded as he got rid of Shane’s boxers. The fresh air hitting his slightly wet dick caused him to whimper.

“You are terrible at being silent, Shanya,” Ilya sighed in mock frustration.

“Then make me,” Shane replied.

Ilya shoved his fingers into Shane’s mouth, who sucked eagerly. When Ilya *finally* put his lips around Shane’s cock, the noises he was producing were muffled by the fingers in Shane’s mouth. Ilya was greedy with it, sucking Shane’s dick like it was a hundred degrees outside and Shane’s dick was the only popsicle left on earth.

Eventually, his tongue traveled further south, lapping at Shane’s hole. Shane sucked harder on Ilya’s fingers in attempt to quiet himself, it wasn’t really working, but they didn’t seem to care much about Luca anymore.

“Fuck Ilya, more.”

“What do you need, *kotenok*?”

Shane panted. “You, I need you.”

Ilya was always gone when Shane expressed just how much he wanted Ilya. He snatched the lube from the nightstand and quickly squirted some on his fingers. Even when Ilya was desperate to be inside Shane as fast as possible, he was still thorough and patient when opening him up. Starting with one finger and gradually working towards three, sometimes even four. Only when Shane was completely relaxed and begging him to fuck him, did Ilya slowly press his cock inside Shane’s eager hole.

And, *God*, Ilya was big.

Shane threw his head back in pleasure when Ilya bottomed out, waiting a few seconds before thrusting into him at a slow pace. Shane could tell he wanted to go faster, harder, but Ilya was still a little hesitant with it every now and then Shane couldn’t blame him.

“Fuck you feel so good, Ilya,” Shane moaned underneath him.

Ilya smiled at him before leaning down to slam their mouths together as he picked up the pace, slamming into him in earnest now, hitting his prostate repeatedly. All he needed was a little affirmation.

Ilya grabbed Shane’s right leg, hoisting it so it was resting on Ilya’s shoulder, giving him much better access to really thrust deep. And apparently, Shane was being a little too loud again, because Ilya shoved his fingers past his lips again. Shane greedily sucked them into his mouth.

He felt the familiar heat of an orgasm quickly impending. “Fuck, Ilya, I’m so close,” Shane moaned around Ilya’s fingers.

“You’re gonna cum for me, *kotenok*? Gonna cum on my cock?” Ilya sounded like he wouldn’t be too far behind, his voice completely drunk in pleasure.

Shane nodded eagerly. “Y-yes, fuck, I’m gon—,” Shane didn’t get to finish his sentence, before he was coming, *hard*, making a mess on his own stomach and chest, some of it even landing on his chin.

Slightly overstimulated, but still so *good*, Ilya pounded into him, chasing his own orgasm. Shane clenched around him, dragging it out of him. Ilya stilled and Shane felt himself fill up with Ilya’s warm release.

“Fuck, Shane,” Ilya panted as he let himself drop down on Shane. Shane giggled, immediately burying his fingers in Ilya’s curls. “You killed me Shane, I am dead.”

They laid like that for a while, entangled in each other’s bodies, Ilya’s softening cock still buried deep inside him as the cum dried on Shane’s stomach. He didn’t even care about the feeling of it anymore, he *never* felt disgusted with himself after anymore, never. Ilya held him too lovingly for that.

Shane looked down at Ilya, whose head was still resting on his chest, staring back at him with a lazy, content smile. His beautiful blue eyes looked completely at ease, like he was exactly where he should be. Shane felt emotional all of a sudden. The overwhelming love he felt for this man, contained too tightly inside his heart. It needed to get out.

“Are you okay, Shanya?” Ilya asked softly.

Shane, as he often did, had no idea he was crying again. Silent tears falling down his cheeks. It needed to get out, he needed to say it, needed Ilya to hear it—

“I love you, Ilya.”

Ilya blinked, probably taken aback a little. He was quiet for a while. But Shane was never afraid that he wasn’t going to say it back. It was so incredibly obvious that Ilya loved Shane too. With Ethan, Shane was always scared that he didn’t love him back, he needed the confirmation repeatedly, but Shane was pretty sure he wouldn’t even mind it if Ilya didn’t say anyth—

“Fuck, Shane, I love you so much,”

-

Dear Ethan,

I decided to write a letter, instead of attending the trial in person. Because, Ethan, I do not want to see you again. Ever. In this letter I want to explain to you why I don’t.

When we met in college, I was intimidated by you. I had mistaken that intimidation for attraction. You had me completely wrapped around your finger from the very beginning. I can tell now that that was why you liked me so much. You liked how pathetic I was for you. How easily I fell into your submission.

I hadn’t seen it back then. I was insecure and quite unexperienced in my sexuality. I was eager to explore more. You took that curiosity and eagerness and twisted it into the perfect

little boyfriend for you to toy with. I didn't know any better.

Quickly after, you made sure that I didn't have anyone in my life anymore. Anyone to pick me up when I would, inevitably, fall down. Somehow you made me quit the one thing I loved: hockey, resulting in me not having a purpose anymore. Hockey had always been the plan. But you made sure that that was off the table.

You never let me speak to my friends anymore, not even my parents. Every time I did, you would get so upset and angry, that I felt like it wasn't worth the trouble. You made me feel like they weren't worth the trouble.

I was completely shut off from everyone. And that was even before you laid your hands on me for the first time.

I had broken one of his expensive wineglasses. You were very angry with me and you grabbed me. Hurt me.

You told me you were sorry after, that you were just upset and that it wouldn't happen again. I believed you. Stupid, I know.

Because after that first time, it happened so often that I couldn't keep track anymore. Eventually it had gotten so bad, that I needed to make up excuses to stay home from work. I couldn't show up with a black eye or a cut lip.

The abuse didn't stop with beatings.

No, you did some things that were even worse.

You talked me into an eating disorder. Did you know that, when I was admitted to the hospital, by your doing, that I was severely underweight? You probably did know that, because you didn't want me to fight back. You weakened me.

Sex was also really scary to me. If you can even call it sex. I was a virgin when I met you, you knew that. But the way you just took and took and took without asking or checking in with me, showed that you didn't care.

I never knew that our sex was bordering rape. Until you actually did rape me.

Right after you locked me up in the kitchen, when you bruised my ribs, you dragged me to bed. I went non-verbal. I couldn't speak. I was in so much pain, but you still took whatever you wanted from me. That evening marked an important change for me. I started to realize that you weren't a good person.

You kept me locked up after that night. You had altered the bedroom lock, making it so that it only locked from the outside. You left me in there for days, with no food. When you returned home from work every evening, you let me out. Only so that I could cook for you and clean your mess.

Eventually, you let me go back to work again. But I messed up, didn't I? I had a secret phone, which contained three contacts. I had three friends and you didn't even let me have that. You

even threatened to kill them. Then you beat me, badly. You broke so many bones, one of them even punctured my lung, almost killing me.

You raped me too that evening. I was broken, bloody and tired and you threw me over the table, ripping my pants off. I remember screaming 'no! I don't want this!', but you did it anyway. After you were done, you smashed my phone into pieces and left me there to, what? To die? Because I would have, hadn't I crawled out of there.

It took me two surgeries and months of physical therapy to heal, Ethan.

I want you to know that I am now enjoying my life again. I am talking to my parents, I have actual friends. And I have a boyfriend, one that treats me with respect. He showed me how amazing it can be to be loved by someone.

I still need therapy. I go every week. It helps me to separate all the good things from the bad things you implanted in my head. I am getting better at it, though.

Ethan, I think you deserve a life sentence in prison, because that's what you gave me, isn't it? I am stuck with traumas so big, inflicted by you, and they will stay with me for life. So, to me, it's only fair.

I really wish I never see you again.

- *Shane Hollander*

Ethan was ordered 25 years in prison. Shane really hoped he'd rot there.

Chapter End Notes

I want to thank you all so much for reading this story. It means the world to me to read your comments and see your kudos. Thankyouthankyouthankyou.

If any of you relate to this story, I really hope you find the same closure Shane found in the end. You are not alone <3

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