

tell me i've got it wrong somehow

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/91420826) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/91420826>.

Rating:	Not Rated
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Heated Rivalry (TV) , Game Changers Heated Rivalry - All Media Types , heated - Fandom
Relationships:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov , Shane Hollander & Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov
Additional Tags:	POV Ilya Rozanov , Spoilers for Book 6: The Long Game (Game Changers) , Hurt Shane Hollander , Angst with a Happy Ending , Anxious Shane Hollander , Shane Hollander Needs a Hug , Shane Hollander Loves Ilya Rozanov , Ilya Rozanov Loves Shane Hollander , Depressed Ilya Rozanov , Ilya Rozanov Critical , ilya rozanov lashings , Safeword Use , Implied/Referenced Eating Disorders , Let Shane Hollander Crash Out , The Long Game Critical , RR critical , if these tags bother you , keep it pushing my friend , dont like dont read , Character Study , implied racism , Implied/Referenced Homophobia , Ilya Rozanov Character Study , Emotional Hurt/Comfort , Angst and Hurt/Comfort
Language:	English
Series:	Part 7 of hollanov one-shots & shorties
Stats:	Published: 2026-08-27 Words: 9,287 Chapters: 1/1

tell me i've got it wrong somehow

by [hollidayparty](#)

Summary

Ilya smiled down at Shane and his eyes gleamed with mischief.

"You know, Troy is just a few doors down. We could call him over, make it a little party."

Shane's eyes snapped open only to narrow again as he glared up at Ilya.

"Would you like that?"

"No, I wouldn't," Shane snarled.

But his face was screwed up in frustrated pleasure. Ilya hummed thoughtfully and pretended to consider.

"Perhaps we could make it a competition then."

Shane made an irritated noise and turned his face away. Ilya leaned closer and let his teeth drag down the length of Shane's clenched jaw.

"You want Troy to see how well you take it, or do you want to see if he's better at riding my cock than you are?"

He had been teasing him, pushing at the jealousy that usually made Shane squirm and glare and tell him to shut the fuck up while his traitorous cock twitched and throbbed at how much he secretly liked it.

So when Shane did squirm away from him, Ilya followed automatically, pressing their chests flush together. He thought Shane was playing.

"Get the fuck off me," Shane spat.

-

Shane safewords out of Ilya's teasing about Troy.

Notes

TW/CW: Use of a safeword/coloring out during sex, discussions of racism and homophobia,

depression/mental illness,
and disordered eating/eating disorders

If you start reading this and think, "Um, Ilya would never say/do that!" please go reread TLG ch 27 and ch 22 and then come back and argue with me lol

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

- Inspired by [I already chose you, Ilya](#) by [khadijasafespace](#)

Ilya had thought Shane would like the teasing the same way he pretended not to have a secret theoretical exhibitionist kink. He was pretty sure Shane would never actually want to have sex in front of anyone else, but sometimes, if he was in the right mood, Ilya could *talk* about it and it would drive Shane wild.

He'd thought this would be another of those times.

Ilya's hands gripped Shane's hips, fingers digging in as he thrust deep, his cock sliding against Shane's prostate with each powerful stroke. Shane's back arched, his eyes rolling back in pleasure as he gasped.

"Fuck, Ilya," he groaned. "So fucking good."

Ilya smiled down at him and his eyes gleamed with mischief.

"You know, Troy is just a few doors down. We could call him over, make it a little party."

Shane's eyes snapped open only to narrow again as he glared up at Ilya. He thrust his own hips back and down against Ilya's. Ilya chuckled, and leaned down to let his breath tickle against Shane's ear.

"Maybe he could fuck your pretty face while I fuck this perfect ass." He punctuated his words with particularly hard thrusts. "Would you like that?"

"No, I wouldn't," Shane snarled.

But his face was screwed up in frustrated pleasure as Ilya slid his hand around to cup his balls and roll them gently as he continued to pump into him. Ilya hummed thoughtfully and pretended to consider.

"Perhaps we could make it a competition then."

Shane made an irritated noise and turned his face away. Ilya leaned closer and let his teeth drag down the length of Shane's clenched jaw.

"You could take turns gagging on my dick. Let me judge who does better, hm?"

Shane let out a low groan and wriggled but Ilya was relentless, pinning him down and smirking into his face. His fingers trailed up Shane's chest to pinch a nipple hard.

"I'll fuck the winner while the *loser* watches. You want Troy to see how well you take it, or do you want to see if he's better at riding my cock than you are?"

He had been teasing him, pushing at the jealousy that usually made Shane squirm and glare and tell him to shut the fuck up while Ilya laughed. He had years of Shane in his head telling him what that looked like. How Shane would get huffy or scowl or even squirm away when Ilya embarrassed him. How he would even say *shut up* or *fuck off* or *you're an asshole* while

his face went red and his traitorous cock twitched and throbbed at how much he secretly *liked* it.

So when Shane *did* squirm away from him, Ilya followed automatically, pressing their chests flush together. He thought Shane was playing.

“Get the fuck off me,” Shane spat.

Ilya froze. There was something in Shane's voice he had never heard before, not during sex. On the ice, maybe. But like this? Then Shane forced his eyes open and turned to look at him. The betrayal and fury and hurt in his gaze stole the breath from Ilya's lungs.

Ilya stared at him. He was too shocked, still trying to understand what had changed and how he'd somehow missed it, and the moment of hesitation grated even further on Shane's frayed nerves.

“Just, fuck, Ilya.” Shane shoved hard at his shoulders. “Red. Please. Red.”

Even as Ilya's blood turned to ice in his veins, he moved immediately, slipping out of Shane's body and hunching his back so he wasn't caging him in anymore.

“Okay. Okay.”

Shane was already scrambling away from him, nearly tangling himself in the sheets in his hurry to get off the bed. Ilya stayed frozen where he was.

They had used the color system for years. Green for good, yellow for wait or slow down, red for stop. Shane had said yellow before, only a handful of times when something hurt or became too much or simply stopped feeling good. Hell, even Ilya had said yellow a few times.

Neither of them had *ever* said red. Never. Not once, in all these years.

Shane stumbled toward his underwear on the chair by the bed and yanked it on with shaking hands.

“Shane, are you okay?” Ilya asked.

“No.”

Ilya's stomach dropped. He reached for him without thinking. Shane jerked his arm out of reach.

“Please don't touch me right now.”

Ilya yanked his hand back as if he'd been burned. He leaned forward a little to get a glimpse of Shane's face.

Oh fuck. He was crying.

“Okay,” Ilya said soothingly. “I won’t.”

Shane put both hands on top of his head and paced toward the window, then back again. He dragged in a breath through his nose. Let it out slowly through his mouth. Then another one, in through his nose, out through his mouth.

Ilya knew what he was doing. Shane was trying to regulate his breathing, trying to force his body to understand that whatever had happened was over.

It wasn’t working. Another breath splintered halfway in.

Shane made a small, furious sound, spun on his heel and sagged back against the wall. He slid down until he was sitting on the floor, then drew his knees against his chest and folded himself around them.

Ilya’s heart was pounding. He wanted to go to him. He wanted to wrap Shane in his arms and tell him he was safe, that he was sorry, that whatever he’d done, he would never do it again.

But Shane had said not to touch him. Shane had said *red*. So Ilya stayed where he was.

“Shane, I...”

“I can’t keep fucking doing this, Ilya.”

Cold dread went through him. For a second, Ilya couldn’t breathe either. What did “this” mean? Being together?

“Doing what?” he asked cautiously.

Shane pressed his forehead harder against his knees.

“Hearing you talk about how much you want to fuck Barrett.”

For one dizzying second, relief cut through Ilya. Shane wasn’t saying he wanted to leave him. Then he processed what Shane had actually said, and the relief curdled at once.

“Shane, lyubimyy, I’m only joking. It’s not...”

Shane shook his head roughly.

“I need you to talk to me like we’re at the cottage,” he said, though the words came out strangled around half a sob. “I can’t...”

Honest, he meant he needed Ilya to be unflinchingly honest. Not just reassuring or saying whatever would make Shane feel better. Not smoothing it over with another joke because Ilya couldn’t stand seeing him cry.

He needed the truth. Exactly the truth, no matter what it was.

Ilya swallowed hard.

“Okay. We will talk like we’re at the cottage.”

Shane exhaled sharply then slowly he lifted his head.

His eyes were red and streaming. His cheeks were wet. He looked so frightened that Ilya's guts twisted painfully. Shane looked directly at him.

“Do you want to be with Barrett instead of me?” he asked. His face crumpled on the last word, but he held Ilya’s gaze anyway.

Jesus fucking *Christ*. Ilya was pretty sure it would have hurt less if Shane had fucking shot him.

“Of course not,” he said at once.

Shane's mouth trembled.

“No. Shane. Of course I don't. How can you think that?”

Shane made an exasperated noise and roughly scrubbed a hand over his face.

“How can I *not*?”

Ilya stared at him.

“You joke about it all the fucking time, Ilya.”

“I joke about everything,” he hedged.

“Yeah, well, it's not fucking funny anymore.”

Ilya opened his mouth, but Shane was already going. “And it's not like I don't know he could give you everything I can't.”

“What the fuck are you talking about?”

Shane laughed once, cold and flat. Then he lifted one shaking hand and started counting on his fingers.

“He's out. You wouldn't have to hide with him. You could just be with him. Nobody would fucking care.”

“Shane...”

“And nobody would wonder if he's ever thrown games for you.”

Ilya felt a sick twist in his stomach.

“They wouldn't look at every fucking game you've ever played against each other and wonder if one of you cheated. You wouldn't have to worry about what it did to your career or his

career or whether people think everything you've ever accomplished is bullshit because you were fucking each other.”

Was that really what Shane thought would happen when they came out one day?

That people would go back through years of games looking for evidence? That every win, every loss, every bad play between them would become suspicious? That their integrity, their entire careers, would be dissected by people trying to decide whether any of it had been real?

It had never even occurred to Ilya.

He knew Shane was scared. He had spent so much time being frustrated by how fucking scared Shane was. Apparently he'd never bothered to ask what, exactly, Shane was scared *of*.

“And you're on the same team,” Shane continued. “He doesn't even have to worry about getting fucking *hate-crimed* in his own fucking locker room, because *you're* there.”

Hate-crimed? What the fuck? Was Shane saying he thought Montreal would be that dangerous for him?

Or was he saying it already was?

Ilya wanted to interrupt and ask him what the fuck that meant, who had done something, whether someone had threatened him. But Shane was still going, the words tumbling out now like he'd been holding them behind his teeth for years, and Ilya was suddenly afraid that if he stopped him, Shane might never start again.

Shane ticked another finger.

“You get to travel together. You fucking room together on roadies. You sit together on the plane. You watch movies. You hang out all the time. You don't have to spend months figuring out when you can get one fucking night together without somebody noticing.”

Ilya couldn't speak; his tongue felt like lead in his mouth.

“And he's fun, apparently,” Shane added miserably. He wiped angrily at his face again. “He likes going to bars. He likes parties. He likes going out with you. He's funny and he's normal and he can just fucking hang out with people without making everything weird. He's not a fucking loser like I am.”

Ilya stared at him. For several seconds, he genuinely couldn't make sense of the last sentence.

A loser? Is that really how he thinks Ilya sees him?

Shane folded his arms tighter around his knees. Ilya felt as though the floor had fallen out from underneath him.

“Shane.”

Shane didn't answer. He curled in on himself again, forehead pressed to his knees, and for the next minute there was nothing but the sound of him crying.

Ilya sat frozen on the edge of the bed.

Every instinct told him to go to Shane, to touch him and fix it. But Shane had told him not to, and the way he'd flinched away from Ilya's hand still made his chest hurt.

"Shane," Ilya said finally. "I don't... I love you. I want you. It's..." He swallowed. "Don't be jealous, okay? Troy is my friend, yes, but is not... I'm kidding around when I say stuff like that."

"I can't..." Shane sucked in a ragged breath. "I can't even fucking *think* about you with anyone else, Ilya."

He looked up when he said it, and the expression on his face made it seem like a confession. Like it was something shameful or something he expected Ilya to judge him for.

"I could barely stand it when we weren't..." he gestured impatiently with one hand, apparently unable to find a word for whatever they had been all those years. "... anything." His hand dropped. "I don't want to fucking picture it or think about it or joke about it. It's not..."

He pressed his forehead into his knees again.

"I told you before," Ilya said softly, "the last day of summer. When you asked about how many men? No one but you matters. Just you."

He wasn't arguing. He only wanted Shane to remember. He wanted desperately to give him something solid to hold onto.

Shane was quiet for a second.

"You mean when I asked and you started making fun of me and talking about missing Sasha's dick and how it was bigger than mine?"

Ilya opened his mouth. Then closed it again.

Oh.

Then any lingering anger seemed to bleed out of Shane all at once. His shoulders sagged.

"Sometimes..." he began tremulously, "I feel like you don't even *like* me."

Ilya reeled. Because that made no fucking sense. It was like Shane had informed him that the sky was red. That dogs could talk. That a triangle has four sides.

Ilya shifted carefully off the bed and onto the floor. He moved only a little closer, but Shane's eyes still flicked up, wary and sad, before immediately finding the floor again.

The look on his face hurt so badly that Ilya stopped moving.

“Shane, I *love* you,” he said. “So much. More than anything.”

Shane nodded. “I know that.”

Ilya stared at him, even more confused now.

“I know you love me. But it's just...” Shane wiped his face on his forearm. “You can love me and still not like me.”

“What?”

“My mom would say that sometimes. When I was little and I was, um...” Shane sniffed. “Like, crying and stuff. Or being difficult. She'd say, ‘I love you, but I don't like you very much right now.’”

Ilya didn't know what to say. He had always thought of David and Yuna as perfect parents.

Not actually perfect, obviously, but as close as people got. They loved Shane openly. They supported him. They were interested in his life. They showed up to games and called him when they missed him and brought him soup when he was sick.

There had been times, especially lately, when Ilya had thought Shane didn't even understand how good he had it, how Ilya would *kill* to have had parents like his.

But then he inexplicably thought of Arthur, who had lost his absolute mind the last time Ilya saw him because his sisters weren't playing a game correctly. Screaming and crying and insisting everyone had ruined everything, so overwhelmed he'd barely been able to explain what was wrong or catch his breath. Shane had helped him calm down.

Ilya imagined Jackie or Hayden or Shane or *himself* looking at Arthur in that moment and telling him that they loved him, but didn't like him very much.

He felt like he might throw up.

Then, against his will, Arthur became a tiny Shane: his little shoulders curling inward. his face sad and brows pinched with confusion.

“I know I'm difficult,” Shane said, pulling Ilya from his thoughts. “And annoying. And weird. And I'm asking *so* much of you, to wait this long, and you could have anyone, and I just...”

His breath caught sharply around another sob.

Ilya couldn't stand it anymore. He inched closer, awkwardly scuttling across the carpet to close the last few feet between them. He reached out very slowly and rested his hand on Shane's knee.

By a small miracle, Shane didn't pull away.

“Shane,” Ilya said softly. “I *do* like you. You're... you're my favorite person. I like you *so* much.”

Shane searched his face. It was almost unbearable, watching him look for any sign that Ilya was only saying it because he was crying and sad.

“I don’t understand why you’re so... mean to me, then,” Shane whispered.

Then he winced like he heard how childish it sounded the second it left his mouth and hated it. His face crumpled, and he buried it against his knees again. The crying got worse.

Ilya's hand moved from Shane's knee to the back of his head. When Shane didn’t flinch away or shake him off, Ilya began gently stroking his hair.

“I’m mean to you?” Ilya asked sheepishly after a moment.

Shane shrugged, head still down.

“I just...” He sniffed hard. “I’m fucking anxious all the time.”

Ilya's hand stopped for half a second before continuing.

“That I’m gonna be annoying or say the wrong thing or do the wrong thing, and it's just...” Shane dragged in another shaky breath. “I feel like when we're together, and we're not having sex, you're... upset with me. And I can't do anything right, and I just...”

His voice dissolved into fresh tears.

“Moy lyubimyy,” Ilya coaxed.

Shane shook his head. The next thing he said was mumbled into his knees. Ilya frowned because it sounded like... cupcakes? That could not possibly be right.

“What was that, solnyshko?”

Shane lifted his head. “I hate that you bought Barrett gluten-free cupcakes.”

Ilya stared at him. “What?”

“I hate it.”

Ilya's brain scrambled desperately to catch up. He'd been on the phone with Shane the other day when he'd stopped at Whole Foods for gluten-free cupcakes to bring to practice because Troy had scored a *beautiful* goal the night before.

But Ilya did things like that for his teammates all the time. Just the weekend before, he'd bought Wyatt some absurdly expensive bourbon as a reward for a game full of gravity-defying saves. Shane had even helped him find the fancy liquor store that carried it.

So why the fuck did he care about the cupcakes? Was this about Shane's intense diet rules somehow?

“Because of the sugar?” he tried.

Shane glared at him through his tears. “No, asshole.”

“Okay?”

“Because you were...” Shane's face twisted again. “You were sweet about it. To him.”

“But... he just doesn't want to eat gluten when we have a game the next day?”

“I fucking know that.”

Ilya's mouth snapped shut.

“I know why you bought them. That's not the fucking point.” Shane wiped furiously at his face. “Why the fuck does *he* get to have special diet rules and you don't even make fun of him? You don't say anything mean, you just fucking buy him the stupid cupcakes, and when *I* do it, you fucking...”

The rest disappeared into sobs. Ilya only caught fragments.

“You and my mom both,” Shane choked out. “And it's just...”

He couldn't finish. His shoulders were shaking so hard now that Ilya wanted to crawl out of his own skin. Shane sucked in a breath that didn't seem to go anywhere.

“I just want you to be nice to me,” he mumbled, sounding about five years old. “You can be nice to Barrett but not me? Like, fucking of course I feel like you want him instead.”

“I *don't*, Shane. Just you.”

“And now you're right here and literally *inside me* and you can't stop talking about wanting to fuck Barrett and making me watch, and I just - what else am I supposed to think, Ilya?” He was starting to hyperventilate. “I can't. I can't...”

“Okay, it's okay, Shane. I'm right here, okay?”

Ilya wanted to wrap him up against his chest so badly his arms ached with it. But he wouldn't assume. Not now. Not after he'd upset Shane so bad he'd made him say *red*.

“Can I please hold you, lyubimmy?”

Shane moved before Ilya had even finished asking. He unfolded himself and practically fell into Ilya. He wrapped around him like ivy on brick, arms around Ilya's body, face buried against his neck, knees tucked against Ilya's hips. Ilya gathered him closer carefully, one hand cradling the back of his head, the other splayed over the side of his abdomen.

Having Shane in his arms again felt like such sweet relief after the last quarter of an hour. But it also made him feel worse.

Because what the fuck was wrong with him? Shane had every reason to stay far, far away from him right now. Instead, he was *clinging* to Ilya for comfort.

Ilya pressed his face into Shane's hair and shut his eyes.

He thought about every stupid joke. Every time Shane had been particular about something and Ilya had teased him because making Shane huff and glare was funny. Every time he'd poked and poked because Shane's irritation was cute to him. Every time he'd assumed Shane knew that was what he was doing.

He thought about gluten-free cupcakes. And the stupid threesome jokes about Barrett. He thought about a little boy being told that the person who loved him most in the world didn't particularly like him when he was difficult.

And underneath all of it, over and over, in Shane's wrecked little voice: *I just want you to be nice to me.*

Ilya clutched him tighter, thankful for the contact, even though he felt like a fucking monster.

At some point, Ilya realized he was crying too. He didn't know exactly when it had started. His face was wet, his throat aching, but Shane was still tucked against him, and that mattered more. Ilya kept one hand buried in Shane's hair. The other moved slowly over his back.

"I'm sorry," he whispered. "I'm so sorry, Shane."

Shane's fingers curled into claws against the bare skin of his back.

"I believe you. Okay? I understand why you feel this way. I get it."

He didn't tell Shane he'd misunderstood Ilya's words. He didn't tell him the jokes didn't mean anything, or that Shane should have known better, or that Ilya teased everyone.

Because none of that fucking mattered.

Shane had told him it hurt. Worse, Shane had told him it had been hurting for a long time.

"I shouldn't say those things to you," Ilya murmured. He pressed his mouth against Shane's hair. "I love you. I like you. I want you. I want you around me all the time. I'm sorry I made you feel like I don't."

Shane shuddered against him. Ilya closed his eyes and thought about what it would be like if this whole thing was flipped around. The thought was almost unbearable.

Because *what if* Shane did this to him?

What if Shane constantly joked about wanting someone else? What if there were a man Shane traveled with, roomed with, sat beside on planes, and Shane kept "joking" about how

badly he wanted to fuck him?

What if Ilya brushed it off or even confessed it made him feel insecure and Shane immediately found the exact weak spot and poked at it because his reaction was funny?

What if Shane was endlessly patient and considerate and sweet with everyone else, then rolled his eyes at Ilya's rules and habits and anxieties?

What if Shane made Ilya wonder whether he even fucking *liked* him?

Ilya wouldn't survive one tenth of it. He knew that absolutely. It would be agony.

So why the fuck did he do it to Shane?

Ilya stared at the wall over Shane's shoulder, still stroking his hair.

Why was he like this? Why did he say these things? He tried to find a reason that didn't make him hate himself, but he couldn't.

Sometimes he wanted a reaction. Shane was so composed, so careful, so fucking controlled, and Ilya wanted to crack through it. Wanted proof that Shane wanted him badly enough to lose that control.

Sometimes, when they had to separate again, when Shane went back to his life and Ilya went back to his, there was an ugly little part of Ilya that wanted to see Shane hurting too.

He wanted to know Shane missed him. Wanted Shane to be jealous. Wanted Shane aching for him. Wanted to see evidence that those weeks apart were as unbearable for Shane as they were for Ilya.

It didn't even make fucking sense. Shane was hurting, too. Ilya knew that. They talked about how much they missed each other all the time. Why had he needed to make it worse?

What was that saying from all the anti-bullying stuff the Foundation did?

Hurt people hurt people.

Well. Mission fucking accomplished. *So* fucking accomplished, his Shane didn't know if he *liked* him. His Shane had been genuinely wondering whether he *would* rather be with Troy.

And what had Ilya done with that insecurity? Taunted him about fucking Barrett over and over until he'd done it while Shane was extremely vulnerable and Shane had finally broken.

Fuck.

Ilya buried his face against Shane's hair and cried silently.

"I'm sorry," he whispered again. "I'm sorry. I'm sorry."

Eventually Shane's breathing began to even out a little. Every few breaths still hitched strangely, and occasionally another shiver went through him, but the sobbing stopped. He was heavy and wrung out in Ilya's arms, but Ilya kept holding him.

After a long time, he said quietly, "I understand if you don't want to stay here tonight."

Shane's shoulders tensed, and Ilya immediately hated how the sentence had come out.

Shane pulled back just enough to look at him. His eyes were swollen and his face was blotchy. He bit his lip as his gaze darted over Ilya's face, quick and searching and unsure.

"Do you want me to go?" he whispered.

Ilya cringed at himself. Of course. *Of fucking course* that was what Shane heard. Because Ilya made things sound optional and casual sometimes.

If you want. If you feel like it. Sure, I guess so.

He was only trying to protect himself.

He thought if he never said *please don't leave me*, then Shane could never know how pathetic he was. How every goodbye scraped him hollow. How sometimes he lay awake after Shane left and felt physically sick with wanting him back.

Apparently he'd hidden it too fucking well because now Shane genuinely didn't know.

"No," Ilya choked out. He cupped the back of Shane's head. "Shane, no. I never want you to go."

Shane stared at him, still searching his face for the catch.

"Ever," Ilya said fiercely. "I would sew our skin together if I could."

Shane's nose wrinkled automatically. "Gross."

A tiny, watery laugh escaped Ilya. "Okay. Yes. Maybe gross."

For one terrifying second, Ilya wondered if he'd said too much, but then Shane tucked himself back against him and buried his face in Ilya's neck.

"I want that too," Shane whispered.

Ilya stopped breathing for a second as a wave of relief flooded through him.

"I hate being away from you all the time," Shane murmured against his skin, his voice cracking. "It's killing me."

Ilya squeezed him so tightly Shane grunted.

"Me too," Ilya whispered. "Please stay. Need you right here."

Shane made a tiny sound and nodded against his neck. Ilya could hardly form sentences anymore.

“Need you,” he said again. “So much.”

It made him uncomfortable, letting Shane see this ugly, naked amount of need inside him. He had spent years wrapping that need in jokes and arrogance and sex and teasing. Anything that made it less humiliating to admit that Shane could ruin him simply by walking out a door.

Ilya wanted him every second.

Wanted him beside him on planes and in hotel rooms and at breakfast and in bed. Wanted Shane's running commentary about anything and everything. Wanted his rigid routines. Wanted to watch him line things up exactly where he wanted them and listen to him explain why some tiny detail mattered. Wanted Shane reading beside him without speaking for an hour, warm and solid and there. Wanted the little crease between his eyebrows when he concentrated. Wanted the huffs and eye rolls Ilya had spent years deliberately provoking without ever stopping to consider how much he simply loved being there to witness them.

He wanted all the ordinary, particular pieces of Shane that made up a life.

Every fucking second of it.

He wanted so much that sometimes it frightened him.

His instinct was to pull some of the neediness back, but then Shane whimpered a tiny, barely there sound. He pressed closer, as though even the tiny space between their bodies was intolerable.

And Ilya realized that *this* was what Shane needed.

Not another joke. Not Ilya pretending he could take or leave things that mattered so much they terrified him. Not Ilya needling him for reactions he didn't even really want.

Shane needed *proof* now. So Ilya gave it to him.

He curled around Shane until there was nowhere left between them, tangled their legs together, buried his face against Shane's hair and let himself cling.

He stopped trying to make his breathing quiet. Stopped swallowing the little broken sounds in his throat. Stopped pretending he wasn't desperate.

“Don't want anyone else,” he whispered against the crown of Shane's head. “I just want you.”

Shane's arms tightened around him as another shuddering breath left him, and Shane pressed his face harder against Ilya's neck.

They held each other like they were trying to undo the last hour. Like they could press close enough to erase every stupid thing either of them had ever said. Like they could crawl inside

each other somehow, fuse themselves together, and share atoms until neither of them could remember where Shane ended and Ilya began.

Ilya wasn't sure how long they lay like that. Long enough for the hotel carpet to leave an impression on the cheek of his ass and for the tear tracks on Shane's face to dry salty and flaky against his skin.

Eventually, Ilya kissed Shane's temple. Shane's eyes were closed, but his head lolled toward him immediately, chasing the contact when Ilya pulled away. Ilya's chest ached. He kissed Shane's temple again and held his lips there this time.

“Bath?” he murmured.

Shane nodded.

They stayed on the floor another minute anyway.

Eventually Ilya coaxed them both upright, and they climbed into the tub together. The water was almost too hot, exactly how Shane liked it. Ilya settled behind him, and Shane sank back against his chest.

They stayed there until the water cooled. Then Ilya drained some of it and added more hot water. Then they stayed longer.

Shane's head tipped back to rest in the cradle of Ilya's shoulder. Ilya kept touching him, slowly and gently now that Shane was okay to be touched again. His palms drifted over Shane's arms and stomach. Every so often Shane found one of his hands beneath the water and threaded their fingers together.

Ilya braced himself for the things he needed to say. It was cowardly, but it was easier like this, when Shane couldn't see his face.

“I've been seeing a therapist.”

Shane shifted a little and Ilya fought the urge to immediately take it back.

“Really?”

Ilya nodded against his shoulder.

“Does it help?”

“A little.” Ilya swallowed. “She speaks Russian, so.”

Shane was quiet for a moment. Then, in careful, clumsy Russian, he said, *“I'm sorry I haven't been learning faster. I'm trying.”*

Ilya's eyes burned.

Shane's grammar was right, mostly. His pronunciation was *not*. The words were slow and overly deliberate, each one pulled carefully from wherever Shane had been storing them.

Ilya squeezed his eyes shut.

Fuck.

He didn't deserve him.

"Is good," he whispered.

Shane snorted softly. "It's terrible."

"Is terrible," Ilya admitted. "But I understand."

Shane hummed. Ilya kissed his shoulder.

"I decided I needed to, um... try therapy after Halloween."

"Why then?" Shane asked. "I thought we had, uh. A good night."

"We did." Ilya stared at their tangled fingers beneath the water. "After you left the next morning, I... I cried for a long time."

Shane turned his head as far as he could to look at him, his face immediately creasing with concern. Ilya looked away.

"I know I was mean when you brought it up a few months ago, me going to therapy or talking to someone."

"You weren't *that* mean."

"I was."

Shane didn't argue further.

"I think..." Ilya struggled for the words. "I don't think I would have been brave enough to try if you didn't put the idea in my head first. And the idea that you would be... okay with it."

Shane exhaled slowly.

"Of course I'm okay with it, Ilya."

The vicious little voice in Ilya's head supplied the rest immediately.

No shit. He wants you to get your shit together. He wants you to stop being so fucking broken.

"I founded a fucking mental health charity with you and named it after your mother as, like, the first step toward us having a public life together."

Ilya blinked, startled at himself for not considering that.

Shane paused and blinked rapidly a few times himself, then looked down at their hands beneath the water.

“But I also...” His voice wavered. “I just want you to be *okay*.”

The way Shane's voice broke on *okay* felt like a knife to his heart.

“Even if it's not...” Shane swallowed. “If we're not... Even if I'm not making you happy.”

Ilya's arms tightened around him so fiercely it was probably painful, but Shane didn't complain.

“You *do* make me happy,” Ilya said.

Shane didn't reply right away, so Ilya went on.

“You make me so happy. Sometimes it feels like you are the only thing that does.” Ilya pressed his face against Shane's shoulder. “I don't know why I treat you like you don't.”

Shane sighed deeply and was quiet for a long time.

Ilya let him sort through his thoughts. He counted the freckles scattered over the top of Shane's collarbone while he waited.

Eventually, Shane's head lolled backward until it rested fully against Ilya, his eyes turned toward the ceiling.

“I want you to, like, have friends,” Shane said. “You know that, right?”

Ilya said nothing.

“And people you can talk to about us. Like I have Rose and Hayd and Jacks.”

Still Ilya waited. Because no, some part of him hadn't known that.

He had decided Shane's jealousy meant Shane didn't want him close to Troy. He had decided the bitchy comments, the tension, Shane's obvious dislike of their friendship were possessive and unreasonable.

He had decided a lot of things about Shane, apparently.

“I know this isn't fair,” Shane said quietly. He bit his lip before continuing. “But sometimes I *do* wish it was anyone but Barrett.”

Ilya studied his profile. “Because of my mean jokes?”

Shane shook his head, then grimaced.

“Well. I mean, that doesn't help.”

“I won't make them again.”

Shane glanced toward him.

“Ever,” Ilya said. “I promise, moy lyubimmy.”

Shane nodded and poked at a bruise on his knee beneath the water.

“People say fucked-up shit to me on the ice all the time, you know? And I can't even really fight back without people writing fucking think pieces about whether my *'background'* makes me suitable for hockey.”

Ilya's blood ran cold again. No, he hadn't known. He knew Shane rarely fought. He knew Shane would take a shove or a slash or some asshole running his mouth and skate away from it more often than anyone else in the league. He thought Shane just... didn't like fighting.

On his worst, most resentful days, he'd even convinced himself Shane thought he was above it. That he was too disciplined, too respectable. Too fucking *good* to drop his gloves like everyone else.

Apparently Shane had been weighing optics Ilya had never even thought to consider.

What would happen if he swung first. What the commentators would call him. What photographs they'd run the next morning. Whether the same aggression that made a white player passionate or tough would make Shane something else entirely.

“Kent is one of the worst,” Shane said bitterly. “But Barrett would always jump in too. And I know you said he's different now. And that's great. I mean that.”

Shane's fingers kept worrying at his knee.

“But it still fucking sucks that the person you chose for your best friend, who could so easily figure it out about us, who...” He swallowed. “Who makes me feel so unsafe about us sometimes, used to ask me if my mom's pussy was slanted.”

Ilya went completely still. Shane kept staring at the ceiling.

“Or he'd pull his eyes back at me to make Kent laugh. Or ask if my parents fed me dog or cat meat when I went home. Tell me to go back to China when he knew perfectly fucking well I'm from Ottawa and half-Japanese.”

His voice had gone strangely flat, like he was reciting things he'd heard so many times that the words had lost their sting.

“Sometimes he'd just talk in this fake fucking accent at me. Kent would start it and Barrett would laugh, or Barrett would say something and Kent would make it worse. Whatever. Same shit as everyone else.”

Ilya felt like he'd been hit by a truck, only for the fucking thing to reverse over him and run him down all over again. And again.

“Troy said this to you?” he managed at last.

“Yeah.”

“When?”

“I don't know. More than once. Years ago.”

Ilya stared at Shane's profile.

He had known hockey players were cruel. He'd heard every version of Russian joke imaginable. He'd heard homophobic shit thrown around locker rooms, hell, even his own home, since he was a child. He'd built entire pieces of himself around surviving that world.

Somehow, though, he'd constructed a version of Shane who existed outside of it.

Shane, the golden boy. Shane, whom everyone respected. Shane, who captained his team to *three fucking cups* and smiled brilliantly for cameras and gave perfect interviews and seemed so fucking untouchable.

Shane, who Ilya had somehow decided was blissfully ignorant of the uglier parts of the sport they'd both spent their entire lives playing.

How stupid could Ilya possibly be?

Shane was one of the only players of color in most of the rooms he walked into. The first Asian captain in MLH history. The first and only Asian player to achieve nearly everything he'd achieved. Add Shane being gay on top of everything else, and wouldn't that make every part of it worse?

And Ilya had convinced himself Shane didn't know how ugly hockey could be.

“I'm sorry,” Ilya whispered.

Shane shrugged.

“No.” Ilya tightened his arms around him. “I'm sorry.”

“I'm sorry I snapped at you when you told me about coming out to Troy. It just...” Shane took a breath. “It really freaked me out, okay?”

“You don't have to apologize for that.”

“I know he was young and stupid,” Shane added quickly. “I know you've told me he's grown up a lot. People change. I'm not saying he can't change.”

Ilya felt sick. Shane was sitting here explaining years of racist abuse from Troy and somehow already trying to soften it. Trying to make sure Ilya knew he wasn't asking him to choose. Trying to be fair to the person who had hurt him.

“You don't have to defend him to me.”

Shane fell quiet.

“I just...” His fingers dug harder at the bruise on his knee. “You trust him. And I trust *you*. But those aren't automatically the same thing for me.”

Of course they weren't. Ilya had treated his own trust in Troy like it should have been enough. As though Shane should simply inherit it because Ilya had decided Troy was safe now.

“I shouldn't have decided why you were upset without asking,” Ilya said quietly.

They were both silent for several minutes. Ilya found himself going back and picking through one wrong assumption after another.

He'd written whole fucking novels about Shane's inner life.

Shane was jealous because he was possessive. Shane was bitchy because he didn't like Troy. Shane didn't understand what Ilya sacrificed for them because Shane's life was easier. Shane didn't miss him as badly. Shane didn't need him as badly. Shane didn't want Ilya to have anyone else in his corner.

Over and over, Ilya had filled in the spaces Shane hadn't explained, and somehow he always filled them with the version that hurt him most.

Then he'd gotten angry at Shane for things Shane had never fucking said.

He'd been so consumed by his own fear that he'd barely stopped to wonder what Shane was afraid of.

“The team nutritionist wants me to see a therapist, too.”

It was the last thing Ilya expected Shane to say. It also made no fucking sense.

“The nutritionist?”

Shane huffed. “He thinks I might have an eating disorder.”

“What the fuck?”

“I told him it's bullshit.” Shane shifted uncomfortably against him. “I'm not trying to lose weight. I don't eat a bunch of junk and throw it up after. It's not like that.”

“Then why does he think this?”

“Because I fucked up and said the same thing I said to Rose a few weeks ago.”

“Which is?”

“She asked if the diet made me feel better.”

Ilya waited.

“And I said the discipline and control make me feel better, not really the food,” Shane continued. “Actually, I fucking hate the food most of the time.”

Ilya closed his eyes.

“But I can't...” Shane rubbed his thumb against his knee. “I don't feel like I can slip up. Like, just eat whatever I want because I want it. I know technically I can, but it doesn't feel like I can.”

He shrugged.

“Apparently that's a marker for ‘other concerning diagnoses.’ So. Now I have to talk to a therapist.”

Ilya let his head fall backward until it thunked against the edge of the tub.

“Careful,” Shane chided automatically.

Ilya almost laughed. Of course Shane was worried about him hurting himself, after everything. He stared at the ceiling and let the thoughts cascade over him.

Gluten-free cupcakes. *Why are you nice to Barrett but not me?* All the times he'd mocked Shane's food. Goaded him with cookies and eggnog and lemonade and McDonald's. Complained about his diet to his face *and* to people eating with them. Deliberately tried to tempt him into breaking his rules, then acted personally offended when Shane wouldn't.

He hadn't thought it could be related to an illness.

But Jesus fucking Christ.

How many times had Shane been struggling directly in front of him while Ilya decided he already understood what was happening?

Ilya sat up and wrapped both arms tightly around him again, making the water slosh over the sides of the tub.

“I'm sorry.”

Shane sighed. “Ilya.”

“No. Let me say it.”

Shane went quiet.

“I am so fucking sorry.” Ilya kissed his shoulder. “I should be nicer to you about what you eat.”

Shane's face pinched. “I shouldn't have said that.”

“Why?”

“Because it sounds stupid.”

“No, it doesn't.”

“I was butt-hurt over cupcakes.”

“Wasn't really about the cupcakes, though, was it?”

Shane didn't reply. Ilya pressed another kiss to his temple.

“You can tell me when I hurt you.”

“I know.”

“No.” Ilya rubbed his arms. “I don't think you do.”

Shane's mouth tightened.

“You can tell me I'm being asshole. You can tell me a joke isn't funny. You can tell me you hate something. You can say yellow. You can say red.”

Shane's eyes filled again. He nodded.

“And I will ask,” Ilya said. “I won't decide what you're thinking and then punish you for it.”

Shane's breath hitched. “I do that, too, though.”

“Okay. Then we both stop.”

A tiny laugh spilled from Shane's mouth. It was barely anything, just one wet little puff of air, but Ilya felt it against his chest. He squeezed him. After a moment, Shane found Ilya's hand beneath the water again.

“I'll go.”

“To a therapist?”

“Yeah. Even though I don't think I have an eating disorder.”

“I know.”

“But I'll talk to somebody.”

Ilya stroked the hair at his temple with his free hand. “Okay. Good.”

Shane tilted his head back. “And you're going to keep going, too?”

Ilya knew what he meant. “Yes.”

“Even if it sucks?”

“Yes.”

“Even if you start feeling better?”

“Yes, Shane.”

Shane nodded firmly. “Okay.”

Ilya looked down at him for a moment.

“I’m going because... I’m unhappy. Sometimes. But *you* do not make me unhappy. You know that, yes?”

Shane's eyes flicked toward him. “I know.”

“You are the best thing in my life, Shane.” Ilya said simply.

Shane's face crumpled slightly. “You're the best thing in mine, too.”

“I don't deserve that.”

Shane frowned. “Don't say that.”

Ilya opened his mouth to protest but Shane cut him off.

“You don't get to decide that for me.”

That shut Ilya up. After a moment, he nodded.

“Okay.”

Shane settled against him again and squeezed his hand beneath the water.

Maybe there were a thousand things they thought they knew about each other that they'd never actually said. They weren't going to solve all of them tonight.

For now, Ilya just held Shane and Shane held his hand. And every so often, one of them murmured another apology or reassurance, until the bathwater cooled around them again.

Ilya drained the tub and refilled it with hot water for the second time.

Shane was quiet against him, his thumb moving absently over Ilya's knuckles beneath the water. Despite everything they'd talked about, Ilya's mind kept dragging back to his mother.

There were things he understood now that he hadn't understood as a child: depression and its symptoms, the way getting out of bed could become impossible, how ordinary things could become enormous. Exhaustion that sleep didn't fix. Forgetting things and losing interest in things you loved and crying for reasons you couldn't explain.

His mother had been sick. He knew that now.

As a child, he'd only known that sometimes Mama stayed in bed. Sometimes dinner didn't happen or she forgot something she'd promised. Sometimes she cried in the bathroom and ran the water so nobody could hear.

And his father had been so fucking cruel about it. He could hear his voice in his head as if his ghost was in the room with them.

Lazy. Useless. Dramatic. Ungrateful.

Gregori could take something she already hated herself for being unable to do and press directly into the wound, as though humiliation might cure her. As though, if he was cruel enough, she could be bullied into being well.

Ilya's stomach turned.

How many times had he done that to Shane?

His mind immediately recoiled from the comparison. It wasn't the same. He wasn't his father. He didn't treat Shane the way Gregori had treated his mother.

Fine. It wasn't the same.

But there was enough of a resemblance that Ilya couldn't look away from it.

Shane had rules around food that Ilya didn't understand. Rules he found frustrating and excessive and, sometimes, completely fucking ridiculous.

And now someone who actually knew what the fuck they were talking about had looked at those same behaviors and said they might be symptoms of an illness.

Ilya closed his eyes.

Maybe Shane didn't have an eating disorder. Maybe the therapist would tell him he didn't. Maybe there was some other explanation for all of it. That wasn't really the point.

Shane had just told him it was the discipline and control that made him feel better, made him feel safe, and Ilya had been poking at that because it annoyed him.

Just like Gregori had been annoyed by the things his mother couldn't seem to control.

The thought came swift and vicious.

Maybe this is what you inherited from him.

Ilya tightened his arms around Shane.

“You okay?” Shane murmured.

Of course. Of fucking course Shane was asking if *he* was okay.

“Yeah,” Ilya whispered, and kissed his shoulder.

But the thought wouldn't leave him. Maybe he was like his father.

There were pieces of Gregori in him. He knew his own temper. His pride. He knew the vicious instinct to find the softest place and stick a knife into it when he was hurting, and the horrible little flicker of satisfaction that sometimes came from making someone else hurt when he felt powerless.

He hated knowing that about himself. Hated it enough that his eyes started burning again.

But recognizing those things didn't mean he had to surrender to them. He did not have to be this way.

It wasn't an absolution. Knowing where the uglier pieces of himself came from didn't make anything he'd done tonight disappear. It didn't erase Shane's swollen eyes or take back every joke that had landed somewhere Ilya hadn't seen was already bruised.

But he wasn't fucking trapped either.

His father had spent his entire life acting as though cruelty was something other people extracted from him. If his wife weren't so difficult, if his sons weren't so disappointing, if everyone would simply behave correctly, Gregori wouldn't have to punish them. There was always someone else responsible for whatever he did.

Ilya didn't have to live that way.

He could ask instead of deciding he already knew what Shane was thinking. He could apologize without defending himself. He could go back to his therapist next week and tell her every humiliating detail of what had happened tonight, even the parts that made him sound fucking awful.

He could stop making the Barrett jokes. He could leave Shane's food alone. He could learn the difference between teasing that made Shane roll his eyes and teasing that actually made him feel small. And when he got it wrong, because of course sometimes he would get it wrong, he could listen when Shane told him and do something different the next time.

Maybe there would always be pieces of Gregori inside him. Ilya couldn't do anything about where he'd come from.

He could decide what he carried forward.

His father had been cruel to a sick woman because the symptoms of her illness inconvenienced him. Whatever was happening with Shane and food and hockey, Ilya refused to do the same thing to him.

He looked down at Shane resting against his chest.

They would figure it out. Shane and the nutritionist and whatever therapist he saw. Ilya didn't need to diagnose him or fix him. He didn't even need to understand every rule inside Shane's head. What he *did* need to do was make damn sure Shane knew he loved him, liked him, wanted him, and had no interest in replacing him with anyone else.

And he needed to stop being a dick about the rest of it.

That was quite literally the least he could do.

Ilya pressed his lips to Shane's damp hair.

"I love you," he whispered.

Shane wriggled backwards into his chest. "I love you too."

Ilya closed his eyes and held him a little tighter.

He couldn't change the fact that there were pieces of his father in him. Pretending otherwise wouldn't make them disappear. But he could recognize them for what they were, drag them out into the light with his therapist, and choose not to let them dictate how he treated the person he loved most in the world.

A little while later, by the time the water started cooling again, Shane was nearly asleep. His whole body had gone heavy against Ilya, his head slipping lower on Ilya's shoulder before jerking up slightly whenever he caught himself.

Ilya kissed his temple.

"Come on."

Shane made a noise that meant absolutely nothing.

"Bed."

Another unintelligible noise.

"You're falling asleep in the bath."

Shane didn't argue, which proved Ilya's point.

Ilya coaxed him upright and out of the tub. They dried off without really separating, Shane drifting after him through the bathroom like he might simply tip over if Ilya got too far away.

At the sink, Shane squinted blearily at his reflection while they brushed their teeth. Ilya watched him in the mirror. His hair was damp and sticking up strangely, his eyes still swollen from crying. He looked completely exhausted, and Ilya had to resist the urge to gather him up again before they'd even finished.

They climbed into bed and immediately turned toward each other.

For a minute, neither of them spoke. They just looked at each other, though Shane's eyes were so heavy he could barely keep them open.

Ilya brushed the backs of his fingers over Shane's cheek, and Shane leaned into the touch.

"Sorry we didn't finish having sex," he mumbled.

Ilya frowned. "You don't have to apologize for that."

"Eh." Shane's eyes slipped closed. "Still feel bad."

"Why?"

Shane gave another tiny shrug.

Ilya cupped his face. "Shane."

He reluctantly opened his eyes.

"You did exactly right."

Shane blinked at him.

"I was hurting you," Ilya said softly. "You told me to stop. You're allowed to do that."

Shane's eyes searched his face. "You're not mad?"

Ilya's heart sank. "Mad?"

"That I, um..." Shane swallowed. "Used red."

"No."

"We weren't even, like..." His brow pinched. "Playing. Or doing anything."

"Doesn't matter."

"I just freaked out."

"That doesn't matter either."

Shane still looked unconvinced, so Ilya stroked his thumb beneath his eye.

"I could never, ever be mad at you for telling me you need to stop. I don't care what we're doing or why. You say red, we stop."

Shane's mouth tightened slightly.

"You don't have to decide if your reason is good enough first."

His eyes filled again.

Fuck.

Ilya moved closer until their foreheads touched.

"You don't have to convince me. You don't have to explain. You don't have to apologize."

Shane went quiet, but Ilya could practically see the gears moving in his head. He was trying to make what had happened fair. Trying to make sure Ilya understood that he wasn't accusing him of something worse. Trying to distribute the blame until Shane had taken his portion back.

Ilya kissed his forehead.

“I thought it was okay,” he said. “Then you told me it was not, and we stopped. That is what is supposed to happen.”

Shane's eyelashes fluttered. After a moment, he gave a tiny nod and breathed out, some of the remaining tension leaving his shoulders with it.

“You did everything right,” Ilya whispered.

Shane looked at him for a few seconds, then scooted forward.

There was barely any room between them already, but apparently Shane found some and resolved to eliminate it. He tucked his face beneath Ilya's chin and hooked one leg between Ilya's.

Ilya wrapped around him immediately.

“Okay,” Shane murmured.

Ilya kissed the top of his head. “Okay.”

They fell quiet again. Ilya ran his hand slowly through Shane's hair as his breathing deepened, and Shane pressed closer, fingers curled loosely against Ilya's skin.

Little by little, the last of the tension left his body.

Just before he fell asleep, Ilya felt Shane's lips move against his chest.

“Love you.”

Ilya shut his eyes.

“Love you too, solnyshko.”

Shane was asleep within seconds.

Ilya stayed awake a little longer with one hand cradling the back of his head, listening to him breathe. He smiled indulgently when Shane began making the soft, delicate snores he vehemently insisted he did not make.

He wished Shane had never needed to say red tonight. He wished he'd done so many things differently. More than anything, he wished he'd never given Shane a reason to wonder whether Ilya liked him, wanted him, whether all that love came tangled up with resentment.

There were things in Ilya's head he couldn't entirely control. Fear and anger that came too fast, ugly instincts he was only beginning to understand. He couldn't hate himself out of having them.

But understanding where they came from didn't mean he had to keep acting on them. It wasn't Ilya's fault they were there, lurking around the corners of his mind. But they weren't Shane's fault either.

Hating himself wasn't going to fix anything. He needed to do better. For Shane, yes, but for himself, too.

Ilya pressed one last kiss into Shane's hair and closed his eyes.

He could do better. He *would* do better, from now on.

End Notes

I'm 85% done with ch 6 of my current WIP but I have literally lost sleep the last three nights over discourse on twitter about the "maybe i'll be too busy having sex with troy barrett" and basically, my ocd won't let me work on anything else until i purged this from my brain and got it just right

also, i realize that ilya comes off a touch clueless at first, but like, RR can MISS ME with that "ilya is emotionally intelligent, shane is NOT" bullshit

my mom really did say that shit to me as a kid about i love you but i don't like you right now. i get a little tired of all the portrayals of david and yuna as perfectly understanding parents of a ND kid. you're telling me two boomer/gen x parents of an autistic kid in the 90s are wonderfully woke and patient and model gentle parenting?? nah fam, no way

i have said some of the exact same things shane says in this to the most evil of my ex boyfriends. who i dated when i was 19 and he was 26 lol. except, he didn't have the epiphanies ilya had and just kinda shrugged me off and was like well yeah you're kind of annoying. and I STAYED and dated him for another 8 months before he dumped me. so this was very cathartic for me lmao

also, before you come for me with Ilya is depressed!! agoo it's not his fault his mean to shane!

i have anxiety, ocd and depression. i have taken several different SSRIs. i had an abusive and neglectful childhood, i have childhood trauma and poor mental health out the wazoo.

none of that is my fault. but it is my job to reduce the harm *my* mental illness may cause to the people i love most. and if i do harm someone i love, it is *my* job to repair that hurt

and yes, ilya starts therapy in tlg. which is wonderful! however the narrative and RR herself insists that Shane is the problem, shane is the reason Ilya acts this way. If Shane's diet weren't so ridiculous, Ilya wouldn't have to make fun of him. If Shane weren't so worried about his career, Ilya wouldn't have to lash out because he's depressed. you see where i'm going?

and i'm not saying ilya is a bad person! i'm saying the fandom and RR tend to give him a free pass to treat shane like fucking garbage and it's extremely annoying to me

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!