

why is it so hard to exist without you?

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why is it so hard to exist without you?

by [alexiscgrt](#)

Summary

Ilya left for a three-day trip with his friend Svetlana. When he comes home he expects his boyfriend Shane to greet him, but instead he finds him crying in bed.

Ilya stepped inside their shared house after three days away. It shouldn't have felt like such a long time, as three days wasn't all that much, but now that he and Shane were officially boyfriends, every time one of them left the house, it felt like an eternity before they returned.

Ilya fully expected Shane to come running up to him, as he always did. But he didn't. In fact, the house was completely still. The kitchen was quiet, and there wasn't a sound coming from the living room, either.

"Shane, I'm home."

No response.

He kicked off his shoes, dropped his bags by the door, and immediately went looking for his boyfriend. He checked every room in the house until he reached the last one: their shared bedroom upstairs.

The door creaked as Ilya pushed it open. Shane was lying in bed, and Ilya immediately felt a wave of relief wash over him. At least he was there. But then he noticed that Shane wasn't sleeping, as he'd initially thought. Instead, he was quietly sobbing into his pillow.

Ilya froze for a moment before slowly approaching the bed and sitting down beside him. He gently cupped Shane's face in his hand.

"Hey... hey, what's wrong?" he asked softly.

Shane buried his face deeper into the pillow, his body trembling with each sob.

"Baby..." Ilya whispered, genuine concern evident in his voice.

At that, Shane took a shaky breath and slowly turned his head over his shoulder.

"You're back," he murmured. Something inside Ilya shattered.

He gently turned Shane onto his back and leaned over him, his gaze fixed on his boyfriend's tear-streaked face. Seeing Shane like this, so overwhelmed by something Ilya didn't yet understand, made his chest ache in a way he couldn't put into words.

Without another thought, Ilya pressed his lips firmly against Shane's, pouring all the worry and relief he'd been holding inside into the kiss.

Shane's fingers began to tangle in Ilya's curls as an attempt to pull him even closer, even though there wasn't any space between them now.

Ilya pulled away after a while, just enough to look at him, his hand resting against Shane's cheek.

"Baby, talk to me. What happened?"

Shane shook his head, his eyes squeezing shut as another tear slipped down his cheek.

“Nothing.”

“Nothing?” Ilya repeated softly, brushing the tear away with his thumb. “You’re crying, sweetheart.”

“I know.”

“Then tell me why.”

“I don’t know.” The answer came out so quietly that Ilya almost didn’t hear it.

For a moment, he simply looked at him. Shane seemed just as frustrated with himself as Ilya was worried about him, his brows drawn together and his lips pressed into a thin line as he tried to get his breathing under control.

“Okay,” Ilya murmured, leaning down to press a kiss to his forehead. “Okay, that’s fine. You don’t have to know.”

Shane reached for him almost immediately, grabbing a fistful of his shirt and pulling him closer.

Ilya let himself be pulled down until their chests were pressed together. He wrapped his arms around his boyfriend, one hand settling at the back of his head, and waited.

For a while, neither of them said anything. Then Shane whispered, “I missed you.”

A small, almost disbelieving smile tugged at Ilya’s lips.

“I missed you, too, malysh.”

“No, but” Shane stopped. Ilya felt him take a shaky breath against his neck. “I don’t think you understand.”

“Then help me understand.”

“I tried.” Shane’s voice cracked. “I tried to be normal about it.”

Ilya’s smile faded. “What do you mean?”

“It was only three days. I knew it was only three days. You told me when you were coming back, and I knew you were coming back, and I kept telling myself that.” Shane swallowed hard, his fingers tightening around Ilya’s shirt. “But the house was so quiet.”

Ilya closed his eyes briefly.

“Oh, sweetheart.”

“And everything felt wrong.”

Shane sounded almost angry now, although Ilya knew the anger wasn't directed at him.

It was in the way he struggled to find the words, in the way his breathing kept catching whenever he tried to explain something he didn't entirely understand himself.

"I couldn't sleep properly. I couldn't concentrate on anything. I kept thinking I heard you coming downstairs, and then I'd realize it wasn't you." He paused, visibly struggling to continue. "And I knew you weren't here, obviously. I knew that. But I kept expecting you to be."

Ilya held him a little tighter.

"Baby..."

"And I hated it." That made Ilya pull back slightly.

"You hated missing me?"

"No." Shane shook his head quickly, looking almost distressed at the misunderstanding. "I hated that I couldn't make it stop. I hated that I knew there was nothing wrong, and I still felt like this." His voice broke on the last word. "I don't understand why I was so upset."

Ilya stared at him, his heart aching. Because Shane was right. There had been nothing wrong. Ilya had gone away for three days, and he had come home exactly when he said he would. It wasn't a tragedy. It wasn't even particularly unusual.

But Shane was crying as though those three days had shown him something he hadn't been prepared to see.

"I think," Ilya began carefully, "you missed me."

Shane gave him a miserable look.

"I know that."

"I know you know, baby."

"Then why are you saying it like that?"

A quiet laugh escaped Ilya before he could stop it. He kissed the tip of Shane's nose, earning himself a weak, offended frown.

"Because I don't think you realize how much."

Shane went still. Ilya brushed his thumb over his cheek.

"You spent so long pretending you didn't need me," he continued, his voice growing quieter. "And now I leave for three days, and you miss me so much that you don't know what to do with yourself."

“I wasn’t pretending.”

“No?”

Shane opened his mouth, then closed it again. Ilya smiled faintly, but there was something painfully tender in his expression.

“Okay, malysh. Maybe you weren’t.”

Shane looked down at the space between them.

“I just thought I’d be better at it.”

“At what?”

“Being your boyfriend.”

The words were so unexpected that Ilya forgot how to breathe for a second. Shane hurried to explain himself.

“I mean, I know how to be with you. I know how to...” He stopped, frustrated, and pressed his forehead against Ilya’s shoulder. “I know how we work. I know what to expect when you’re here. But when you’re gone, I don’t know what to do with myself anymore. And I didn’t used to be like this.”

That was the part that hurt. Because Shane was right. He hadn’t always been like this.

For more than ten years, they had managed to exist in the spaces between their lives.

They had learned how to leave each other behind, how to return to their separate worlds, how to pretend that a few stolen hours every couple of months were enough.

And somehow, somewhere along the way, Shane had stopped knowing how to leave Ilya behind.

“I think,” Shane whispered, “I feel better when you’re here.”

Ilya’s throat tightened.

“Yeah?”

Shane nodded against his shoulder.

“I feel better when I know where you are. When I can hear you moving around downstairs. When I know I can come find you if I need you.” He took another shaky breath. “And when you’re not here, I keep waiting for you to come back.”

He fell silent. Then, so quietly that Ilya almost missed it, he added, “I think I need you.”

For once in his life, Ilya had absolutely no idea what to say.

He had spent years wanting Shane to admit that what they had meant something. Years convincing himself that he could live with whatever Shane was willing to give him, even when it wasn't enough.

But this wasn't the confession he had imagined.

Shane wasn't telling him that he loved him. He wasn't making some grand declaration about their relationship or promising that he would never leave.

He was lying in their bed, crying into Ilya's shirt, trying to understand why three days without him had felt so unbearable.

And Ilya realized that Shane was trusting him with something far more vulnerable than a simple admission of love.

He was admitting that he felt safe with him.

That somewhere along the way, without either of them quite noticing, Ilya had become a part of the life Shane knew how to live.

Ilya pressed a kiss to his hair and pulled him close again.

"Then need me, malysh," he whispered. "Is okay."

Shane's arms tightened around him.

"Really?"

"Really."

"You won't think I'm being ridiculous?"

Ilya pulled back enough to look him in the eyes.

"I think you are the most ridiculous person I've ever met."

Shane's expression crumpled.

"That's not..."

"I know, I know." Ilya kissed his forehead, then each cheek, catching the tears before they could fall. "Listen to me. I'm not going anywhere just because you miss me. You're allowed to miss me. You're allowed to want me here. We can figure it out." Ilya rested his forehead against Shane's. "Together. Okay?"

Shane searched his face for a moment before nodding.

"Okay."

Ilya settled beside him and opened his arms. Shane moved into them without hesitation, fitting himself against Ilya's chest as though he'd been waiting three days to do exactly that.

Perhaps he had.

And as Ilya held him in the quiet of their bedroom, listening to his breathing slowly even out, he couldn't help thinking that, after all those years of finding each other in hotel rooms and leaving before morning could ask them any difficult questions, they had finally made it home.

Neither of them had any idea what to do with that yet.

But for now, Shane was here.

And so was Ilya.

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