

windup keys

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windup keys

by [the_wolves](#)

Summary

He is out of breath when he reaches the lockers' floor, eyes sweeping the corridor ahead with the frenzy of small animals, their twitchy hearts racing as if constantly hunted down. Shane lets out a loud, shaky exhale when he finally sees him.

Ilya is standing on the other side of the dim hallway, the crude light of his phone on his face making him stand out, almost ghastly in the dark. He is leaning against the wall by the green exit sign, frowning, and biting his lips.

Shane doesn't call his name. He flies to him like a moth to a flame.

Notes

You should have seen my face when my wife told me she absolutely wanted to watch that show about these two guys playing hockey. I really didn't want to. Look at me now.

Look at me now.

Okay, so, two nights ago, I had a dream about that specific scenario, and since then, I couldn't stop thinking about it. It's way shorter than what I would have liked, but I unfortunately have a lot of work lately, so I can't do much more. I still hope you like it! I honestly have no idea where that could fit in the timeline, but I'm sure our collective delusional brain can figure something out.

Slight warning for:

- Shane being impliedly hurt, and mention of blood/wound
- Explicit/sexual content

English is not my first language, and I don't have any betas anymore, so yeah. Let me know if there's something weird or some big typos in there.

Enjoy! I hope you like it! ♥

“Shit, shit, shit—”

It’s too dark in the alleyway to really see anything, but Shane can feel the warm drip of blood along his arm, soaking the fabric of his sweater. He probes at his pockets for his phone—not in his coat, not in his jeans. He must have dropped it, or maybe the guy found a way to steal it in the confusion. For a second, he is oddly aware of the thick, fibrous darkness of the night, as though it is suddenly shrinking around him.

“Shit.” He rubs his face and hates that he is shaking; *it’s just the adrenaline*, his fingers digging at the soft part of his eyes. “Okay. Focus. You know the way. Just—”

Shane shakes his head. It’s snowing, and the cold’s vaporous fog makes him scattered, aside from the red, throbbing constant of his heartbeat. A car drives past where Shane is standing, brisk flashlight spilling across the alleyway; Shane quickly glances at the spot where the broken glass—*or was it a knife? Don’t be stupid, Shane, it wasn’t a knife*—slashed through his coat. *It’s ruined*, he thinks, and feels like an idiot to even care. Ilya would probably make fun of him.

“Okay,” Shane says, nodding. A pause, a half-second to collect himself. “Okay.”

He knows he shouldn’t, but he still starts running.

*

“Shane Hollander!”

Shane knows the reception guy; could probably say that he knows him well by now. Still, for a moment, he’s somehow completely lost his name. Shane stares at him like it is the strangest thing that he would be here, as though it isn’t his job to stand behind this counter and talk to people. He blinks at him and suddenly remembers he is allowed to speak. That he probably should.

“Uh, yeah, hi.”

“You won’t believe this. Your archenemy came in like, forty minutes ago.”

Shane is tired, a sudden weight pulling at his shoulders. *He’s still here. He hasn’t left. I made it on time.*

“Wow, you’re okay?” the receptionist asks, frowning as he circles the counter. “You’re like—really pale, man.”

Shane watches him watching him, notices the moment the guy’s eyes catch the red tearing on his coat, along his forearm.

“Shit, dude, what happened to you?”

A light bulb is flickering above their heads. *Someone needs to fix that.*

“Uh, no, I’m okay, I just—” Shane gestures at himself, vaguely. “Just some guy who tried to jump me, and I guess he just kind of—yeah. It’s not—you know what? I forgot something important. I need to get it from the lockers. I will be—I will be right back, yeah?”

He doesn’t quite run, but moves in a rush, and it feels like pushing through a dizzy solidness. He is heavy; the sensation in his legs is the same as if they were articulated and needed to be activated by pulling some kind of lever. He thinks of windup toys, performing the same acts, and dancing the same dances over and over again. There must be something of a windup mechanism about running toward Ilya Rozanov.

“Wait! Shane! You want me to call a doctor?”

Shane doesn’t reply and climbs the stairs two at a time. There’s a pulse at the back of his throat, tasting like copper, and the salt he so rarely gets to harvest from Ilya’s skin.

Thank God, thank God, I didn’t miss him. Thank God he didn’t leave.

He is out of breath when he reaches the lockers’ floor, eyes sweeping the corridor ahead with the frenzy of small animals, their twitchy hearts racing as if constantly hunted down. Shane lets out a loud, shaky exhale when he finally sees him.

Ilya is standing on the other side of the dim hallway, the crude light of his phone on his face making him stand out, almost ghastly in the dark. He is leaning against the wall by the green exit sign, frowning, and biting his lips. Shane doesn’t call his name. He flies to him like a moth to a flame.

Ilya looks up when he hears the ringing urgency of his footsteps, and Shane catches how he smiles at him, briefly, although *Russians don’t do that*; glancing right and left for witnesses, then.

The moment they meet is suspended, held on thinning strings as they stop themselves from touching each other, but Ilya grabbing Shane’s shoulder and pushing him into a hidden corner. Shane’s back slams against the wall, a dash of pain, a fleeting spark along his spine before he slides his fingers through Ilya’s curls, tugging until there is nothing left in the world aside from the possibility of kissing him. Ilya’s lips all over him, their wet warmth, a prayer against the cold that nipped at his skin all day.

Shane forgets why he had to run to get here and why there’s a sanguine, stubborn dampness beneath his right sleeve. Ilya cups his face, prying Shane’s mouth open with his thumb to coax soft whines out of him; relief—a carnal, desperate kind, Shane pulling at Ilya’s face, testing its softness with harsher kisses. Shane bruises his lips against his jawline, the cutting arch of his cheekbones, buries his senses in the folds of Ilya’s sweater until he is drunk, and stupid with it. He drinks Ilya’s low chuckle directly from his throat, pressing his mouth to a deep, ripe blush there, and thinks of falling to his knees religiously, of dissolving into the hot, living salvation that Ilya is.

“So eager, yes?” Ilya says, and Shane can only nod. *God. God, oh my God. He’s right here. And I almost missed him.* “This is not good place. Come.”

Shane doesn’t startle when Ilya’s fingers wrap around his arm, and barely feels any pain—he hardly remembers the drunk who threatened him, or slashed his skin, or stole his phone. *This is too important.* But he senses the way Ilya freezes, then steps back to bring Shane’s arm to the faint, greenish glow of the sign.

“What the fuck is that?” Ilya’s thick, severe accent cuts across the quiet, and Shane blinks at him, dazzled, in the half-light. *Ah, yes. I forgot.* “You’re bleeding?” Ilya’s skin is dappled red where he touched him.

Shane grows aware of the raw, almost feral smell of blood, suddenly pungent in the narrow space they’re hiding in. He doesn’t think it’s much to worry about. *It’s nothing.*

“What the fuck, Hollander?”

“Just some drunk guy in the street,” Shane manages, and tries to pull Ilya closer again, but Ilya is rigid, stricken, like he’s turned to stone. Shane almost implores him to hold him. “It’s okay. I’m okay. He’s just—I think he stole my phone. That’s why I’m late. Why I couldn’t text you.”

Shane can make out Ilya’s face, his eyes widening; a somber glint, bright blue sinking into an underwater concern. The image is fitting. Some kind of shipwreck dragged under the surface. *What am I—talking about?*

Shane slowly realizes how cottony his limbs are. Soft and pliant and blissfully sagging, his windup key coming to a halt.

“Hollander, you are about to pass out—”

Shane shakes his head. *It’s absurd.* He feels himself slipping. “No, I’m not—”

It sways, and keels over all at once. Ice splintering through cold water.

*

“You should have called the hospital.” The doctor clicks his tongue as he finishes wrapping the piece of gauze around the wound, and Shane doesn’t know what to say. The doctor glances at Ilya pointedly, from above his glasses.

“What?” Ilya throws his hands up in frustration, his mouth dropping open. “He comes here and faints in front of me like that. What do you want me to do?”

The guy from the reception is standing on the infirmary doorstep, biting his nails and picking at the dead skin on his fingers nervously.

“His mother would kill me if anything happened to him,” he mumbles, then nods at Ilya. “Thank you for not letting him bleed to death, Rozanov. I bet it’d have made things easier for you if he did.”

“I don’t compete against dead guys. Better to kick his ass if he’s alive,” Ilya retorts, and Shane can’t help but laugh, a thin, strangled sound as he sits up on the examination table.

“Oh, it’s funny?” Ilya scoffs, eyebrows shooting up.

“I’m laughing because you’re an asshole.”

“Well, it’s a good thing he was around,” the doctor muses, taking off his gloves and starting to pack up. “It did need stitches. And if I were you, I’d keep an eye on that wound and schedule a follow-up appointment as soon as possible. I would also consider being a bit more careful.”

“Thanks,” Shane snorts. “Will think of not being attacked in the street next time.”

“You know exactly what I mean.” The doctor slips on his coat and picks up his bag. “Is there someone who can take you back to your hotel?”

“I will do it,” Ilya says levelly, shrugging.

“I thought you were supposed to leave tonight?” Shane frowns.

“I’m leaving right after. You’re in charge of schedule now?”

“You have a good evening, gentlemen.” The doctor gives them a light, amused bow before heading for the door.

“I don’t know if that’s a good idea, Rozanov.” The receptionist grimaces. “Again, his mom would—”

Ilya pivots toward him, glaring. “I’m taking him.”

The receptionist—*Jake*, Shane recalls suddenly, then immediately forgets—considers Ilya for a beat, his face twitching fleetingly, a pause that could be funny if Ilya wasn’t so tall and massive in the stark infirmary. There’s that same greenish, submarine light about the room that Shane is just sick of, and yes, *please, take me back to my hotel*.

“Okay! Alright. Sure. No problem.”

“Good,” Ilya says, offering Shane his hand to slowly help him back on his feet. “Is okay?”

“Yeah.” Shane nods, inhaling deeply. “Yes. Let’s go.”

“Easy, easy,” Ilya says, and Shane almost startles at the softness of his tone. Neither of them bothers checking the hotel’s corridor for someone who could see them—Shane guesses they get a pass for him almost getting murdered, some kind of acceptable, believable truce when it comes to surviving a tough night. Ilya tuts at him when he tries to break free of his hold, impatient to move, to shake what happened off his shoulders.

“Stop—doing that,” Shane groans.

“What?” Ilya guides him inside the bedroom, locking the door behind them. Shane glances at him over his shoulder before carefully taking off his coat. He studies the slash on the sleeve and feels stupid for caring about something so futile.

But it's the coat I was wearing when I met him.

“Clicking your tongue at me, and talking like I'm a horse or something,” Shane replies, noticing Ilya staring.

“Maybe you need the leash. So you stop getting in trouble.”

“It's called a halter, not a leash.”

Ilya raises an eyebrow at him. “Okay. I will let the New Yorker know about the new word.” He takes a few steps toward Shane. Ilya looks irritated, and Shane can't help but wonder if that means he is worried. “What happened?”

“I thought you had a flight to catch?”

“I told you. I'm taking the next one.”

“Since when?”

“Since you got stabbed.”

Shane sits down on the bed, and only then does he feel the nagging pain radiating up his arm, all the way to his shoulder. A headache is pushing against his skull, cramming its flaring colors deep into the nerves behind his eyes.

“You're hurt, and first thing you do is look for me?”

Shane shrugs.

“I guess,” he says, tasting what he means to say on his tongue, and mulls over it, the residue of adrenaline still coating his perception. “I was scared I would—not see you before you left.”

Ilya approaches him, pushing Shane’s thighs apart with his knee until he is standing between them. Shane feels thin and watery as he splays his hand across the back of his neck, the

whole width of it cupping the top of his spine as if to rearrange his bones, but finding them loose and decalcified, like there is something deeply wrong with him that Ilya alone can fix.

“You saw me,” Ilya says. “You’re seeing me now.”

Shane hums, leaning forward to rest his face against Ilya’s stomach. He can feel the warmth of his skin radiating through the fabric of his sweater and wishes he could stay here forever.

He has to leave in a couple of hours.

“Let’s put you to bed,” Ilya whispers, and Shane frowns, wrapping his arms around Ilya’s waist; a deep sound of protest, childish and moody.

“No. That’s not what we were supposed to do. I don’t want to go to bed.”

Shane’s skin prickles at the way Ilya rakes his fingers through his hair, a hard, grounding pressure there, until he tilts his head back, looking at him in the fuzzy orange light. Ilya seems molded in gold: blond curls worthy of mythology, the bright, delicate blue of his eyes, like frost settling over a lake. Shane mourns—often mourns—that he can’t tell what Ilya is thinking.

“Okay,” Ilya says quietly, granting something and knowing he probably shouldn’t. He eases Shane down onto the bed, careful as he helps him out of his gray, red-mottled sweater, then of his t-shirt underneath. He stops to study Shane’s bandage for a brief moment, holding his arm up to inspect the doctor’s work; slowly placing it on the pillow above Shane’s head when he seems satisfied.

“Don’t move,” Ilya orders, and kisses him, seizing his chin between his thumb and forefinger to angle his face.

Shane offers himself for the taking, limp and pliant, swimming through the haze of his shock. He is tired of letting Ilya go, of grappling with the shedding of what they do, but can never allow to last. Shane whines against Ilya’s lips, welcomes the silken touch of his tongue inside his mouth, and holds him, encircling his neck, shifting expectantly beneath Ilya’s solid weight; chasing after his hips, the sure, slow grinding of his erection.

“I said don’t move.”

“Shut up. We only get a few hours. And I almost died.”

Shane expects Ilya to laugh, but he doesn’t, only leans in for another kiss. Hunger peeking through his patience, resolve fraying into a passion Shane had hoped for, craved for, the second Ilya had told him he’d be around for a couple of hours.

I can’t believe someone almost stole what we already struggle to have.

They get rid of their clothes in a soft rush, not as clumsy as they sometimes are, an impatience that wills itself to commit to the moment. Shane has missed Ilya’s perfume, among many other things; the taste of his skin where he likes to kiss him the most, the saltiness of him on the flat of his tongue.

Nothing has bested lying in bed with Ilya Rozanov yet, and Shane believes nothing ever will—which is both sad and absurd. It leaves him haggard every time they part, having to pad his way back to his life through the insipid darkness.

Ilya kisses Shane through the swell, then the deluge of his desire, until they're both aching and panting into each other's mouths. He touches him slowly first, like they have all night, but Shane can sense the second Ilya grows impatient, the trembling of his hand, of his fingers as they wrap around both of them. Hard against their bellies, somehow shivering, even in the sultry air. Shane focuses on Ilya's face, watches him frown and bite his lips; he listens to the sighs of Ilya's muscles while he thrusts forward. He drinks each of his grunts, the moans spilling out of him when they both find their rhythm.

He is right here, Shane thinks distantly, and tries to ignore the flashes of snow-covered streets, the staccato surge of his fear when he got attacked. How the first thought he had was, *Ilya is waiting for me*.

Shane wants Ilya for the night, just as much as he wants to meet him over breakfast and menial things; early, tasteless airport coffee, barely awake and waiting for the next flight or train on uncomfortable seats in uncomfortable booths. Boarding the same planes, heading for the same side of the world, dozing off when they shouldn't and holding each other through jetlagged mornings.

He wants him now, and then, and it's painful, and a part of him thinks it might be killing him.

Shane bites back his frustration when Ilya lets go all at once as he's getting close. It's suddenly really cold for a second, goosebumps along his thighs; Ilya crawls down his body to kiss Shane where he's leaked against his stomach, smiling at the way he squirms and shudders. Ilya looks like he might want to say something, but decides to keep it safe behind the red plumpness of his mouth. *No, please, tell me—*

“Roz—” Shane outstretches his wounded arm to cup Ilya's face, but doesn't get to touch him, crying out as Ilya licks a trail of fire off his skin. Shane sinks back into the mattress, exhaling shakily, as though he's in pain.

“—okay?” Ilya asks.

“Yeah, yeah—”

It feels like something splitting and converging once more. A multitude of stars gather into one as Ilya takes him on his tongue. Shane hears himself begging Ilya not to stop, hears himself calling his name until his throat is raw and exhausted, and pleasure rushes toward him, like splinters of glass capturing car lights.

“Shane, I’m going.”

Shane blinks, startled, stirring under the covers. The spot next to him is still warm. He grows aware of Ilya’s hand against his cheek, of the kind, sunset hues of the bedside lamp spilling across the side of his face. Ilya is sitting on the edge of the bed, and Shane notices he is dressed and ready.

“Where?” Shane frowns. He is drowsy and wonders how long he’s slept.

“To the airport.”

Shane sighs. It is still dark outside, from what Shane can tell through the curtains. “What time is it?”

“Don’t worry about that.” Ilya’s thumb gently pulls at the corner of Shane’s lips. “You sleep now, okay? And you buy a new phone, later.”

Ah, yes. A new phone.

“Okay. I will.”

Ilya leans in and kisses him.

“You be careful, yeah?”

Shane nods slowly.

“I will try.”

“I’m serious.”

“I will be careful. I promise.”

“Okay.” Ilya seems to hesitate. “Text me. With your new phone.”

“Okay.”

Shane watches Ilya stand and walk backward as if something could come out of the night to hurt him, like Ilya must be sure no one will get in, and finds Shane tired and vulnerable.

“See you soon,” Ilya says quietly, almost a whisper. “Hollander.”

Shane wishes he could find the strength to leave the bed and kiss him goodbye a second time, but he feels heavy and scattered again.

“See you.”

Ilya leaves, and the click of the door as it shuts stays with Shane until he closes his eyes again. He is thankful they didn’t go to the hospital.

He sleeps, and dreams of windup toys running in the snow.

End Notes

I hope you liked it! Let me know what you think ♡

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