

a kind of emptiness

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by [sugaslesbianbestie](#)

Summary

"Montreal is much closer to Ottawa than to Boston, of course. Yet somehow Shane feels farther away than ever before. Ilya doesn't think it's Shane's fault. Ilya knows what he agreed to.

Ilya used to be used to not being touched.

Now, it makes him feel like he's dying."

Started as a fic abt ilya being touch starved and how casual sex used to be very convenient and then I decided he deserves essentially an emotional support animal lol.

Notes

this isn't as emotionally heavy as I intended tbh and I do plan on revisiting ilya and physical touch/affection in another fic

I am once again projecting on ilya what can u do !

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

Ilya misses touch.

For years, he was used to not being touched.

After his mother died, there was no one for Ilya to get physical affection from. His father was far from affectionate, emotionally volatile and incredibly hard to please. Ilya cannot remember the man ever hugging him.

Ilya and his brother had never been close.

Even as kids, he was at best apathetic towards Ilya, and at worst? At his worst, Alexei is a mirror image of their father.

As he got older, Ilya used sex to meet his seemingly bone deep need to be touched. It was easy, usually, no strings attached. It was the most efficient option; allowing him the emotional distance needed to keep from becoming attached while still receiving the touch he needs.

Casual sex is no longer an option. Ilya loves Shane, loves being with him, hopes to be with him for the rest of his life, he doesn't *want* anyone else.

But Shane is all the way in Montreal.

Montreal is much closer to Ottawa than to Boston, of course. Yet somehow Shane feels farther away than ever before.

Ilya doesn't think it's Shane's fault. Ilya knows what he agreed to.

Ilya used to be used to not being touched.

Now, it makes him feel like he's dying.

Of course there's the occasional contact with his teammates; a high-five or fist bump here, an arm slung over a shoulder, a pat on the back. It's always fleeting, never enough.

It's not what he needs. Or wants. What he *craves*.

He really misses how easy it was with strangers. It was empty, but it was something. He'd gotten so used to it.

Ilya hates that he misses it.

He misses Shane. Misses summer that always ends far too quickly, never enough time in their little bubble.

Ilya finds, confusingly enough, that he misses the casual physical intimacy more than sex.

He doesn't want to think about how he knows it's because sex, while fun and meaning more to Ilya now with Shane than anyone else, is a tool. A tool that he also uses to prove his worth, how he's worth giving time and attention to.

He doesn't have another tool, skill, outside of sex to get touch. He'd never considered how hard it would be, losing it. It was fine when he got to be around Shane, spend time with him. But when they're apart, he inevitably ends up here again.

Ilya misses Shane. Wishes they were together. Ilya wants to lay his head in Shane's lap, feel the other run his hands along Ilya's arms.

Non-sexual touch feels less transactional, contact for the sake of contact. When Shane presses their thighs together whenever they sit side by side. Sometimes, if he's feeling brave, when they're in public or around other people Shane will place his hand on the small of Ilya's back.

That is Ilya's favorite. Yes, he would prefer to be able to hold Shane's hand, or put his arm around him. But the hand on his back always makes him feel steady, present. Safe. A constant reminder that Shane is there, with him.

Ilya loves to hold Shane's hand while the other drives, pulling him further into his space by placing their connected hands in his lap. He's always surprised that Shane even lets him do it.

The first time he did it, needing some kind of contact and knowing he wouldn't survive a two hour drive to the cottage without touching Shane, Ilya had expected Shane to pull his hand back. For Shane to tell him that it wasn't safe, he needed both hands in case 'something' happened.

But Shane didn't. Instead he looked at Ilya so softly, with such fondness. He'd even let Ilya bring their hands up, press a kiss to the back of Shane's.

Shane doesn't know that that constant physical contact helped Ilya ease his anxiety around the whole situation, that it settled something in him.

Ilya wants to touch him now, desperately. He wants to feel how warm and steady and /present/ Shane is. Needs him to feel grounded.

But he can't touch Shane right now.

The closest he can get to what he needs is at least hearing Shane's voice.

Ilya doesn't think twice about calling Shane.

He doesn't know if he'll pick up. If Shane was able to follow his normal routine, he should be able to talk. Ilya knows if Shane for some reason isn't able to answer, he'll get a call back.

But Ilya wants to talk to him *now*.

He breathes a sigh of relief when Shane accepts the call.

When Shane speaks, Ilya knows he is trying to sound casual. They do call more often than before, but texting is their usual means of communication unless it's been discussed. "Hey, what's up?"

Ilya relaxes back into the couch, already feeling better hearing Shane's voice. He can hear the sound of a knife hitting a cutting board and knows Shane is meal prepping. "Nothing, I just wanted to call you," Ilya tells him earnestly.

"What kind of call?" Shane asks, almost hesitantly. The sound of chopping stops.

Despite himself, Ilya grins. "Not *that* kind of call. An 'I miss you' call. Wanted to hear your voice."

Shane's breath hitches on the other line before he laughs softly. "You saw me a few weeks ago," he tells Ilya.

Ilya sighs mournfully. "Yes, weeks."

"We'll see each other at the end of the month."

"Feels very far away. Should be sooner."

Shane sighs softly. "I know," he tells Ilya. "I wish it wasn't so far away, too. I miss you."

It makes Ilya feel good to hear Shane confirm it. "I want to see you," Ilya says.

"Should we FaceTime?" Shane offers quickly.

Ilya smiles again. "Later," he starts. "But that's not what I mean. I want to *see* you, I want you to be here." Even to his own ears, Ilya knows he sounds whiney. "I want to touch you."

"I thought you said this wasn't that kind of call?"

"Again, not what I mean. Get your head out of the gutter, Hollander."

"What do you mean?"

"I want to hold your hand, cuddle on the couch, I just be close with you," Ilya admits. He wonders if Shane will laugh at him, call him sappy.

"Fuck, you're so cute," Shane says instead. "I love you." And then softer he adds, "I want to be close with you, too. I like when you hold me."

Ilya *loves* holding Shane. He gets to keep him close, feel how solid and warm Shane is.

"I like holding you, too," Shane continues to Ilya's surprise.

"You do?" Ilya asks, almost tentatively.

"Yeah, you like, melt," Shane says with another small laugh. "You get all soft and relaxed. You're like a big puppy, it's cute."

If Russian's *did* blush, Ilya would be.

"Am not a *puppy*," he grumbles, flustered.

That earns him another beautiful laugh from Shane. “You can call me an angry kitten but I can’t call you a cute puppy?” Shane tsks. “Talk about double standards.”

“Those are the rules,” Ilya says, getting a scoff from Shane in return.

“I like when you hold me,” Ilya admits quickly, before Shane can tease back and he loses his nerves. “Makes me very happy.”

They’ve been dating for *years*, been ..something.. for longer. It shouldn’t be embarrassing, or scary, to admit. But it feels like it is.

“Yeah?” Shane asks softly and Ilya nods before he remembers Shane can’t see him.

“Yes,” Ilya confirms. “I like it a lot. I am not .. I do not know.” He sighs, tipping his head back and trying to find the right words. “My mother used to hold me.”

It’s easier for Ilya to just blurt it out than try and find the perfect way to word it. “She would let me lay my head in her lap. She gave me hugs.”

“When she died,” Ilya had to clear his throat before continuing. “After she died, I lost that. I got used to not being hugged, held.”

Shane makes a sad noise but doesn’t interrupt, so Ilya continues.

“Then as a teenager, I realized I could get it through sex.” Ilya again wonders if Shane judges him for that, but Shane hasn’t and doesn’t say anything.

Ilya knows he hasn’t always used or viewed sex in the healthiest of ways, but it’s not the current point. “That’s still how my head works, I guess. Except when it comes to *you*.”

Shane is always the exception. “I can just touch you and be touched by you and it doesn’t have to be about sex,” Ilya continues.

“I didn’t know physical affection meant so much to you,” Shane says softly. “I have always been kind of weird with physical contact, and I don’t really crave it like that.”

Shane pauses before amending, “Well, aside from anyone but you.” Ilya can’t help but smile. “But I feel bad that there’s nothing I can really do to help unless we’re together.”

Leave it to Shane to immediately try and help Ilya. He is a mini Yuna Hollander when he puts his mind to something.

“It’s okay,” Ilya says quickly. “It’s not that big of a deal.”

That earns him another sigh from Shane. “You know you can have needs, right? It’s okay to want or need something and ask for it.”

Ilya logically knows that, of course. But illogically, he absolutely does not agree. He has learned not to expect anything from anyone and better yet, don’t give them the opportunity to fail by even asking.

“It feels useless,” Ilya admits softly. “Not because I don’t think you would follow through if you could,” he adds to avoid a misunderstanding.

“But we’re not in the same place enough.” It’s a harsh reality, but it’s their reality. “Our schedules do not allow us to spend more time together. I do not know what I could ask for to change that.” They already spent as much time together as they could manage to.

Shane is quiet for so long Ilya almost wonders if he’d ended the call. “Tell me what you need when we are together,” he says eventually. “And if there’s anything I can do from here for you.”

Ilya smiles warmly. “Okay, I will.” Then he sighs again, “If only it was possible to cuddle from a distance.”

“If only.” Shane then heaves a bigger sigh. “I can’t believe I’m about to say this, but maybe you *should* get a dog.”

Ilya’s eyebrows shoot up. “You said dogs are gross,” he says, somewhat incredulously.

“I never said they’re gross! You make me sound evil. I said they’re *dirty*.”

“What is the difference?”

“Shut up,” Shane huffs. “It’s not about how I feel about dogs. I think one would be good for you, actually.”

Ilya has said that for at *least* a year now. He knew Shane would see the light eventually. “You said it was a bad idea when I wanted to get one last year. What made you change your mind so suddenly?”

Shane hesitates for just a second before answering. “I think you’d be less lonely.” Ilya can’t even argue that he’s not lonely, but he still doesn’t like it being pointed out. “You could get yourself a cuddly little puppy.”

“I travel too much,” Ilya sighs.

“Ask Mom if they’d help,” Shane suggests almost immediately. “Dad tried to convince her to get a dog for years. I bet they’d be willing to help when you’re away.”

He hadn’t considered that to even be an option. Ilya is still getting used to having a supportive family.

“And,” Shane continues, “if they say no, we can look into professional boarding or whatever. Or even a dog sitter.” Ilya knows he’s already working through the logistics of it all in his head. “We make enough, we can afford a good one.”

We. It’s been years and Ilya still feels giddy at any acknowledgment of them being a unit, team, *couple*.

“We?” He can’t help but latch on to it.

He knows Shane is flustered by his tone of voice. “I mean you. You know what I mean.”

Ilya grins. “You were right the first time. What’s mine is yours.”

Shane clears his throat awkwardly. “Anyway, I think you could make having a dog work.”

“You would be okay with it?” Ilya asks Shane eventually.

“Yeah, I said it’s not about me anyway.”

“But I want *you* to be comfortable here. Would that change if I had a dog?”

“No,” Shane tells him after reflecting. “It wouldn’t change. It will be an adjustment for sure, and I am definitely going to spend more time cleaning at your place, but I can get used to it.”

Ilya knows his smile is goofy and giddy now and he’s glad Shane can’t see it. “You must really love me,” he sing-songs. “If you’d live with a dog for me.”

“Duh,” Shane says. “This is what proves it?”

Ilya hums. “Yes, one of many things. But I like this one.” He is already thinking of where he wants to look, what breeds would be good. He’s excited to ask Harris the next time he sees him.

“Are you feeling better now?” Shane asks.

“Yes, thank you,” Ilya confirms. “I am very happy you are pro dog now.”

Shane laughs softly again and Ilya hears the sound of chopping start back up. “I am pro /you/ getting a dog if it helps. And I really think it actually would help for you to have some company and it’s not the same as cuddling with me, but it would probably still help.”

Ilya wonders if Shane is right. At the very least, he will be happy just to have a cute little animal around. Anything else would be a bonus. “Maybe it will,” he concedes. “How can I not be happy with a puppy?”

“Well, keep me updated on the dog situation,” Shane tells him. “And make sure to talk to Mom and Dad next time you’re over there about if they’d be willing to help when you travel.”

“Yes, sir,” Ilya replies teasingly and he can practically hear Shane’s eye roll. “I love you, sweetheart.” Ilya’s smile is so wide it hurts his cheeks.

“I love you, too. I will call you tomorrow, okay? We can FaceTime.”

“Can’t wait.”

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Ilya only has Anya for a few days before he decides Shane was, unfortunately, right once again. Not only is it fun to have a pet, he does feel less lonely with Anya. And it's nice to be able to take her on his morning runs.

It's nice to be able to cuddle on the couch with her, even if Shane thinks she shouldn't be allowed up there. It's nice to come home from practice and be greeted by the world's cutest dog.

For the first time since moving to Ottawa, Ilya rarely feels lonely or isolated. He's even able to bring her to dinner at the Hollander's sometimes.

It's nice.

End Notes

thank u sm for reading I hope u enjoyed it and tysm to anyone who gives kudos/comments/all that its wild to me that anyone reads my writing at all let alone likes it lol

my next fic that I post will most likely be my hayden and ilya focused one, but we'll see if that changes !

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