window

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window

by emotionsandphenomena

Summary

Ilya moves closer, inside Shane's space. It's not a big kitchen. Shane sat on this floor in diapers. He made protein shakes before practice on this counter, the one Ilya is backing him up into, pretty much every week of his teen years. He signed his first brand deal at the dining table. This brief, affectionate kiss felt more important than all of that, though.

moments at the cottage.

Notes

this fic owes an enormous debt to tall tales to tell in the dark, one of my favorite written dialogue exchanges of all time, and the poem asking about you by eloise klein healy. title is from window by flipturn. thank you conrad for the song rec and the read-through. i wish id known you when you were eight, too.

See the end of the work for more notes

I.

“Do you have any photos?” Shane asks, trying for casual. Should be easy, while doing dishes. It’s not.

It takes Ilya a moment to answer. Maybe this was too out of the blue.

“Photos of what?” he says eventually.

“Of, um, you as a kid, I guess,” Shane ducks his face into the dishwasher. Convenience for shyness, and what a weird wonder that he still *can* be shy. “I saw you were looking at mine, and…”

This was an understatement. Shane watched from the couch as Ilya methodically looked at every photo of Shane as a kid scattered around his parents' living room. His mom was trying to tell him something about an update to his deal with Reebok, but all Shane could think about was getting up, crossing the room, explaining in detail which Junior Hockey award he’d won here, who his cousins were, how much he hated this school picture.

“Ah, yes. Extremely cute,” Ilya leans forward for a peck. They’re still at Shane’s parents’ house. He is still hyperconscious of them watching. But it also feels nice, even if he is nervous about it. That this is Allowed.

“Do you? Have pictures of you as a kid?” Shane realizes Ilya dodged the question with the kiss.

“I didn’t think to pack them when I left. But not like this, anyway. They are all posed.”

“Oh.” Shane tries not to sound too disappointed. Of course Ilya’s family situation is more complicated. But he so badly wants to see… something of Ilya, before.

“I will ask Sveta. Maybe she has some, on an old phone.”

“Okay. I’m sure you were really cute.”

“Yes, I was like, how do you call the baby angels? With the curls and the butts?”

“Um? What? Are you talking about?”

“There is a name for this, I know there is. Yuna, what is the baby angels with the butts?” He raises his voice to be heard in the next room, and Shane cringes at the word *butts*. Not everything feels Allowed.

“A cherub, Ilya.” Somehow there is no surprise in her voice, carrying from the couch.

Ah. Shane cannot help his grin, thinking of Ilya with plush little wings. “Okay, I can picture it. Did you go around shooting people with arrows to fall in love?”

“Only one.” Ilya moves closer, inside Shane’s space. It’s not a big kitchen. Shane sat on this floor in diapers. He made protein shakes before practice on this counter, the one Ilya is backing him up into, pretty much every week of his teen years. He signed his first brand deal at the dining table. This brief, affectionate kiss feels more important than all of that, though. This being Allowed. Even if it is only while his parents are in the other room.

II.

“You know, I think I like this car after all,” Ilya says, without opening his eyes.

Shane makes a surprised noise. Difficult to tell if it is genuine. “What a change of heart.”

Ilya is sunning himself in the passenger seat on the way home in the early evening. He loves his sports cars. But he is coming to love Shane’s steady hand on the wheel and the relaxing rumble of the country road, too.

“Well, it is kind of sexy,” Ilya says.

“Sexy is really not where I thought you were going.”

“Why not? I obviously find boring very hot.”

Shane makes another noise, this time sort of a clucking disapproval. Ilya cracks one eye to see his face, and it is indeed that adorable frustration.

“What? Is true! And you are benefiting from my fetish!”

Shane shakes his head. “You are so…”

Ilya leans over the console to press a wet kiss to Shane’s ear. Reward: a hand in his hair.

“Do you think my cars are sexy?” Innocent, fishing.

“Ha, yes, obviously. Your cars are loud and bright and expensive. They’re like, sold to be sexy.”

“But do *you* think they are?” Ilya pushes. If he had the Spyder here, he could race it down these windy roads with a hand on Shane’s thigh. “I will show you. You will think they are sexy.”

“I’d like that.”

“We can go on road trip. Leaf-peeping.”

“I don’t think those cars have much storage for bags. Wait, you know about leaf-peeping?”

“Yes. Almost ten years I have been in Massachusetts, I know about the leaves. No one ever shuts up about the leaves.”

“We have some great Fall leaves here in Ottawa too, you know.”

“Oh my god you are so lucky that I have this fetish for boring.”

III.

“Do you think we would have met if you didn’t play hockey?”

Shane hadn’t moved or opened his eyes. Did Ilya imagine the question? Except it didn’t make any sense, so it had to be real.

“Why would we not play hockey? What?”

“Not *we*.” Some indignance. Eyes still closed. “There’s no world where I didn’t play hockey. But if you hadn’t… I don’t know.”

“Ah, because of what I said to Yuna before.” Ilya finally catches up. “You are thinking of this and creating some situation in your mind.”

Shane rotates, so he is no longer speaking directly into Ilya’s chest. They are laid out on the lawn, a cool breeze passing. It is, in a word, peaceful. It is nothing and everything like what Ilya could’ve imagined even a month ago.

“I’m just thinking,” Shane starts.

“Dangerous.” Ilya puts his hand down the back of Shane’s shirt to feel his warmth.

“I’m just thinking, you know, if we hadn’t met at that draft, everything might be different.” Shane doesn’t sound *worried*, particularly, but there is a note of tension in his voice.

“It might be,” Ilya allows. “It might not.”

Shane’s eyebrows draw close together. Ilya wonders often if he will get a wrinkle there. If it will be cute. Shane says, “If we hadn’t been one and two picks, we wouldn’t have had any reason to know each other. I mean, do you even remember the other rookies from our year?”

“Well, that is different question. I am playing hockey or not? If I am playing hockey, I am number one pick. In this imaginary situation.”

Shane rolls his eyes. “Okay, not. You told my mom that you only started in hockey because you weren’t doing well in school. So what happens if you were doing well?”
Ilya thinks about it. He started skipping school to stay home with his mom, when she was… worse. They played pretend together. “My mother always wanted me to be an actor, on stage.” He’d forgotten that.

Shane nods. “You are very handsome, and dramatic.”

“Oooohh, Mister Hollander,” Ilya coos, “You think I am handsome?”

“Yes. And dramatic.”

“What is this? Drama? I am not drama.”

“You *are*. It’s like... when you played that game in the pool. At the All Stars Game, with the kids. That was dramatic. I could see that version of you as an actor.”

Ilya works his jaw side to side to keep from smiling. He likes that Shane was paying attention.

“Okay, so I am famous Russian actor. How do I meet you? You never go anywhere.” Ilya’s fingers work little circles into Shane’s back.

“Maybe through Rose.”

“Maybe in this world I have passionate love affair with Rose Landry first,” Ilya suggests, weighting his words seductively.

“You are not her type.”

“Mmm, is true, I am not gay.” Shane halfheartedly kicks his leg. “Okay, we meet because I work with Rose on one of her kidnapping movies. Maybe I am Russian thug number 2, and we hang out after, and I steal her boyfriend. Yes?”

“I wouldn’t want to hurt her feelings.”

“She understood when I stole her boyfriend in real world,” Ilya reminds him.

“Yeah.” Shane is quiet for a moment. Ilya moves his hand to his neck, pulls him in closer. It is so unbearably nice to lie here, no time constraints, no risk of being discovered. “What about if we met earlier? Before the Internationals?”

“How?” Ilya had never been outside Russia before 2007.

“I knew a kid at a skills camp, when I was 14. He was Russian. Did you ever do something like that?’

“No, my father thought it was stupid to learn hockey from anyone but Russians.” Ilya longed to go abroad, though, for as long as he could remember.

“What were you like? Then?” Somehow, this is his most vulnerable question so far, his voice small.

Ilya has to hold back a laugh, thinking of himself at 14. “I was annoying. Everything is about me, always I am the best, bullying other kids off ice time. I was sad, from my mother, but I could not… I could not be. So I did the opposite. Too big, too loud, all the time.”

“I wouldn’t have liked that.” Shane droops with it. “They always made me captain of teams because I was good, but I sucked at dealing with that stuff. Being a role model.”

“What is role model? Everyone always says this to you. Yuna. Press. What does it mean?”

Shane, stumped. Ilya did not realize it was a hard question. “I guess for me it means that little Asian kids have someone to look up to. Someone who looks like them. But it can also be, like, good behavior. Leading by example.”

“Ah. No one ever asks me for this.”

“Do you like being the bad boy?”

“Is fun sometimes. Other times people make… assumptions. Like I am still that 14 year old. I am nice now.”

Shane smiles at him. “You are nice. I think you’re a good captain.” Ilya preens a little; he’s not above it. “Maybe you would’ve been nice to me. If we had met then.”

Ilya studies Shane’s face; his eyes closed again, relaxed into Ilya’s side. He looks so sure. *You would’ve been nice to me.* It was true that meeting Shane had not felt like anything else. The overwhelming cocktail of attraction, competitiveness and curiosity ensured that he would never have treated Shane the way he treated anyone else. And maybe that would’ve been true if they’d met earlier. Maybe not. But he likes that Shane is so sure. He likes that he believes the best of him.

“Maybe, Shane. Maybe.”

IV.

“Nice tight turn there, and up the walk – Oh, a miss on the poles, that’ll cost –”

“Fuck!” The TV announcers are briefly drowned out by Shane’s exclamation as the dog onscreen, a medium sized brown one, knocks through the weave poles unevenly. Ilya grins at his boyfriend, animated to profanity over a dog show.

But it is *riveting*. The dogs are crazy fast. After watching the obstacle course through a few times, they felt like experts. It is past midnight and they have probably been here for an hour.

Shane is so focused, though, with his game face on, watching the dogs and handlers for their tiny adjustments. Just like with any other sport they turn on, he is immediately obsessed. Ilya suspects this would happen with anything from a pickup baseball game to a sailing regatta.

Ilya likes the dogs. They are all different; the show progressed through several size categories, with the course adjusting each time. He laughed at the staff adjusting the hoop for the littlest dogs to be mere inches off the ground, said the League should take notes. A wider goal for Pike, maybe, to make up for his poor aim.

He also likes the relationship between dog and handler, how it seems that they genuinely loved doing this together. That is how he felt, passing pucks in the game room with Shane.

They are in what is obviously the Grand Finale category now, with medium size dogs who move like bullets. They are mostly border collies, black and white and brown dogs that don't have any particularly fancy looks. But their speed and focus is impossible to deny. The first one they watched shaved a full ten seconds off the fastest dog in the previous category.

Shane is fully sitting up, clutching Ilya's leg where it's wrapped around him. He is fixed on the television as the current dog speeds through the course, and groans aloud as it dismounts early off the seesaw. Who comes up with this stuff, Ilya wonders. Do they make these for humans? What was that thing Marly was always watching videos of? Parking? That can't be right.

Shane finally exhales as the dog meets its handler at the end of the course. Ilya rubs his back, but he doesn't even seem to notice.

"You would be good at this," he says. Eager for Shane's attention once he notices it being denied.

"What," Shane says. Mostly flat. Attention still on the next dog coming up. "If I was a dog?"

"Well, I meant as the person, but, sure. You are like this dog." He points at the sleek black and white collie on screen, who strains politely at the Handler's hold at the start of the course. Shane starts to make a noise in response, but then the dog releases and he tenses up again.

They watch it run the course, the way it communicates perfectly with the handler at every moment, eye contact and hand signals. It really isn't so different from a complex play lead in hockey.

The trial finishes. Shane finally turns to Ilya. "Wait, what? Did you compare me to that dog?"

"Yes."

"Because I'm… fast?" Shane's brow does that cute furrow again, and Ilya has to resist the pull to rub at it.

"You are fast, but also smart, reliable. Like this dog. Well-trained." He winks.

Shane seems completely baffled by this assessment. He turns back to the TV, watches the next dog run the course. Carves two seconds off its PB. Shane gives a little nod. At first Ilya thinks he is silently encouraging the dog and handler. Conferring across time and space the approval of a hockey all-star on a sport he discovered an hour ago. But then he says, "Okay, I see what you mean."

"Ha! Yes." Ilya thumps Shane on the back, then moves his hand up to scratch right behind his ear. He is seconds away from trying something to do with calling Shane *puppy* when Shane grabs the remote and starts rewinding.

"Hey!" Ilya protests. "What about the last dogs?"

But Shane finds what he was looking for and unpauses. A small white dog runs the course, the curls on its coat bouncing. “This one is you, then,” Shane said, confident.

Ilya’s hand freezes on Shane’s neck, holding him in place. Ilya leans in much closer, and Shane *giggles*. “What the fuck,” he says in his scariest low voice, “does that mean?”

“It’s a graceful dog! And spirited!” Shane tries to defend his assessment, but Ilya is judge, jury and executioner. He tackles Shane down to the couch cushions, getting over the top of him as only an expert in the spread and movement of Shane Hollander’s leg muscles could. “It was the only one with curly hair,” Shane protests. “And fast!!”

“I am not some little French dainty,” Ilya says, pressing his body weight into Shane. “Tell me, Hollander,” he nuzzles into Shane’s neck, catches teeth around his earlobe, enjoys his sigh, “do I seem dainty to you?”

Shane’s breathing is quick, his skin getting hot. Probably somewhere miles away from this all-important stretch of neck, his dick is getting hard. Ilya doesn’t care. He wants an answer. “Well?”

“Not– not right now.” Shane manages. Ilya feels the bass of his voice in his jaw. “Sometimes…”

“Sometimes! Sometimes! I am fucking wolf, Hollander!” He rears back, howls for effect. “Not like your stupid bird. Real wolf.” Shane is laughing now, folding in on himself with it.

“I thought –” he is struggling to even speak, and Ilya finds that all he wants is to keep him laughing, hold on to this silly giggling version of Shane. “I thought you were a bear,” he finally gets out. Shane reaches up to palm Ilya’s pectoral.

“Huh, good point,” Ilya concedes. He flops forward onto Shane, triggering another bout of giggles. “Maybe am both. Very powerful, wolf-bear.”

Shane breathes deep as his laughter fades. He stares at Ilya in that open, ridiculous way: *I’m so happy you exist* written plain on his face. “No,” he says, “I still think you’re a cuddly, beautiful little lap dog.” And he pulls Ilya into himself, tucks his head against his chest. What else can Ilya do but melt into him?

V.

Shane, already finished with most of his morning routine (stretching, protein shake, perfunctory email check), finds Ilya still asleep. He is mostly bundled in a blanket cocoon, his hair poking out, with, inexplicably, one leg extended out of the warmth. Shane slides onto the bed and closes a hand around that vulnerable ankle. Ilya twitches but doesn’t wake.

Shane loves this, loves Ilya’s comfort in his bed. Loves drinking his fill of his gorgeous body, even when most of it is wrapped up in quilts. He loves that Ilya gets cold.

Bravely, he runs a hand up Ilya's perfect calf, feeling the tug of leg hair against his palm. He watches carefully for any movement. He feels like a careful scavenger, stealing food out of the bear's den, hoping not to wake him. Half hoping he *will* wake, chase, catch. Shane traces the tendons surrounding Ilya's kneecap, picturing the illustrated poster on every PT office wall. If he tries hard enough, maybe his fingers will develop x-ray vision.

"Am I interrupting something between you and my leg?" Ilya's sleepy voice, further muffled by the layers of blanket. Shane looks up guiltily, but Ilya makes no effort to hide his smile. "Don't let me stop you. Explore your knee fetish."

"Fuck you." No heat. All tenderness, a pressed kiss to the inside of said fetish object. It is true that he loves these knees. "You cozy?"

"Yes." No shame about being in bed past sunrise. Shane has so much to learn. "Come be cozy with me."

Shane goes, powerless to resist a command. He loves being so. Ilya kisses the top of his head, pulls him in close. Shane cannot remember the last time he'd gotten back in bed in the morning.

"Sometimes I know everything about you and nothing." Ilya's words are quiet as he kisses from Shane's head to his ear, his neck. Slow, no intentions. Relaxing.

"Well, there's only so much you can learn from ESPN media clips."

"Funny, Hollander. Very funny."

"What do you want to know? You can ask."

"Mmmmm. I know. Not something I can ask, though. Like how you wanted to see pictures of me as the baby angel."

"Cherub."

"Cherub. I want to know… I want to read your mind. Be inside your head."

"Sometimes I think you can. I don't know how you knew I wanted you when I didn't even know, back then."

"Ha. Lucky guess."

"Very lucky."

Maybe it doesn't matter, for Ilya to be able to read Shane's mind. If Ilya can reduce him to this puddle when it isn't even nine A.M., maybe he doesn't need to. Everything he needs to know, he already does.

End Notes

watch trick's record-breaking run at the 2017 masters. he is truly the shane hollander of dogs.
im on tumblr @sexcromancy
thank you for reading!

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