

i want you warm as a loaf of bread

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i want you warm as a loaf of bread

by [cafecliche](#)

Summary

“I'm not worried about it.”

“Me neither,” Shane declares. And if that's true, the drugs must be pretty good, because Shane worries about everything.

(Or: the second time Ilya Rozavov sees Shane Hollander high.)

Notes

Hello everyone! Like many of us, I have been bitten by the Heated Rivalry bug. And about a week after deciding that the hospital scene needed to be eight hours long, I come bearing a little belated holiday stocking stuffer.

I have not read The Long Game yet, so I am being very nebulous about the timeline here, except that it's after season one and they're not public yet. I hope you all enjoy!

Title is from Feist's 'Hiding Out in the Open.'

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

“There we are.” The nurse pushes the wheelchair up to the curb, and takes a full step back to survey her handiwork. “You all set, Mr. Hollander? Do you have everything you need?”

“Uh-huh.” Shane responds without glancing once at his surroundings, which is the first sign that he's still stoned as hell. Shane Hollander, who has never once bought a piece of fruit without quality-checking it at least three times. He's the one who head-counts their wallets and keys wherever they go, who writes out to-do lists for their summers even when the only bullet point is ‘go swimming.’ They both do the cooking, with mixed success, but Shane is the one who meal plans with all the diligence of—well. All the diligence of the captain of the Montreal Metros.

But Ilya Rozanov didn't get where he is by being any kind of fucking slouch, either. So he handles the tally: the crutches are with Shane's wallet in the back. Shane's phone is in one of the cupholders, and a steaming thermos of mint tea is tucked into the other. Shane himself is safely buckled into the passenger seat, his stare unfocused but seemingly content. There's not much room for him to stretch out his leg in the car, but that's okay. It's not a long drive back to his apartment. And ideally Ilya can get him into bed before he remembers that he has legs.

“We're all set,” Ilya says. The nurse's eyes flicker to him. It's hard to tell if that look is recognition or curiosity. He makes himself smile either way. The sunglasses and beanie have a way of making a person look intimidating. “Thank you.”

She looks him over a moment longer, then seems to lose interest. “Sure thing,” she says. “You rest up, Mr. Hollander.”

She gently closes the passenger door. Shane, a clear beat too late, shifts in his seat to call back to her. “It was nice to meet you!”

Ilya eases the car out of the hospital entryway and onto the road. “Stop twisting. You'll put stress on the knee.”

“It's *so* not stressed. Couldn't move it if I wanted to.” Shane pats the padding around his right knee with a bit more force than Ilya would prefer. “Dr. Collins said it's gonna heal well. She said if you have to tear your meniscus, you'd wanna do it exactly like this.”

“Yes, yes,” Ilya says, without any heat. “Perfect Shane Hollander and his perfect injury.”

“Shut up.” Shane has a few smiles that Ilya has committed to memory. The tight, controlled one. The loose and easy one, when he's had time to unwind. This one is messy and full, like an overfilled glass of water. He is definitely stoned. “You're just jealous.”

“Oh, yes,” Ilya drawls. “Would have loved to have surgery today.”

He turns his attention back to the road, moving the car gingerly through the slush and salt. There'd been heavy snow a few weeks ago on April Fool's Day, and it's been slow to melt. It looks more like the middle of the season out there than the end of it. But with Shane out for

the playoffs and the Centaurs out of contention, it's the end for both of them. At least for this year.

"You think she recognized you?" Shane says.

Ilya had been hoping he wouldn't ask that. But he answers honestly. "Maybe," he says. He's very recognizable, after all. "I'm not worried about it."

"Me neither," Shane declares. And if that's true, the drugs must be pretty good, because Shane worries about everything. The only time he's not worried is when he's sleeping – and even then, he's always crinkling his brow in his dreams, occasionally muttering things like *keys* or *trash tomorrow* or *Ilya, c'mere*. Ideally, it's the third option.

Ilya doesn't worry at all anymore, about them being seen together. Not for months now. It's strange. He knows it used to matter to him. But when he catches someone watching them, he no longer feels the chill of unease. It feels more like anticipation. Curiosity, maybe, about whether today will be the day the other shoe drops.

That's not how it is for Shane, though. So just in case he decides to start worrying again sometime in the next few minutes, Ilya says, "We have a cover story, remember? I was in town, decided to be a good friend and drive you home."

"Ohh. That's right." Shane nods slowly, his smile spilling wider. "She's gonna tell everyone that you're nice."

Ilya snorts softly. "You would love that, I assume."

"What would you do if she told everyone you were nice?" Shane says.

The roads are much clearer up here. It means Ilya can take a hand off the wheel and rest it across the back of Shane's neck. "I would have to fix my reputation," Ilya says. "This would mean being very rude, very boorish. I'd wear a fur coat to buy milk. Play music without headphones on the bus. Release all the snakes from the zoo."

Shane gasps in obvious delight. "Not the snakes."

"The snakes will be fine," Ilya says. "I'll take them all with me, send them someplace nicer than this. It's too fucking cold for snakes in Canada."

Ilya pulls carefully around a shallow pothole. The front right wheel catches the edge of it, but it doesn't jostle the cab of the car. The SUV is brand new, nearly a month old, and the road feels smooth as fresh ice underneath it. That was what he'd paid for, after all.

He must be at least a little recognizable these days, driving this functional, nondescript car. It's easily the plainest thing he's ever purchased: navy blue, a fucking tragedy, but less likely to stain in these Canadian winters. And Shane liked the sound of it, when Ilya showed him the specs. He never likes the sound of any of Ilya's cars.

He'd asked Svetlana's opinion before he bought it, too. She agreed that it was a solid purchase. That hadn't stopped her from laughing at him until she cried. *Oh, no*, she'd said,

when she could speak without breaking. *You really are domesticated now, aren't you?*

I am self-domesticated, Ilya had informed her with great dignity. *Like a cat*. There's no shame, he often told himself, in knowing when it's time to come in from the cold.

Shane is starting to list to the side, his weight a bit heavier against Ilya's hand. It snaps Ilya back to the present. This is why he lets Shane handle the worrying. It makes his thoughts wander. Makes him snappy and nauseous and maudlin. He shouldn't have worried so much to begin with. It was a quick surgery. And it isn't like he would have been any more help, sitting in some stiff, tiny chair in the hospital.

Might have been nicer, though. Nicer, at least, than sitting in his car for two hours in the donut shop parking lot behind the hospital. Waiting to get the call to come pick Shane up. Waiting to pretend that he'd been somewhere across town, comfortable and unconcerned.

"Are you tired?" Ilya says.

"Yeahh," Shane says. "And, um... I need to tell you something."

It's so grave, so strangely mournful, that Ilya has to remind himself to keep his attention on the road. He glances over quickly to the passenger's seat. Shane doesn't look like he's hurting, not yet. But he does look troubled.

Adrenaline floods Ilya's throat. He swallows it back down. "Tell me what?" he says. "Are you okay?"

"I'm okay," Shane says. He folds his hands neatly in his lap. "But I think I'm really high."

Somehow, whether by sheer force of will or the actual power of love, Ilya does not crash the car laughing. He barely even jiggles the steering wheel, which is basically heroic, all things considered. God. He's so on edge it's exhausting. It's a wonder that Shane does this all fucking day. "Yes, Shane," he says, as gently as he's capable of at the moment. "I noticed this."

"Oh man. Oh no." Shane rubs hard at his eyes, as if he can massage sobriety right back into his head. "Have I been really annoying?"

"You have been tremendously entertaining," Ilya says. "Who needs podcasts when you have stoned Shane Hollander."

They're finally at the apartment. Thank Christ. Shane needs something to eat, some sleep, and his first dose of pain meds in a few hours. And Ilya needs to lie down next to him until the jitteriness of the morning passes.

There's a space right near the stairwell entrance, which Ilya pulls into. He lets his hand drop from the back of Shane's neck. Now that they're parked, they're in public again. Time to play friendly acquaintances until they're safely inside.

Shane is still making tiny, chagrined noises to himself, so Ilya nudges him. A nudge is safe enough. "We should get you high more often," he says. "It's good for you to relax like this."

Brand new sensation for you, I imagine.”

“Maybe.” Shane’s quiet for a moment, after that. Quiet enough that Ilya has already started gathering all his scattered things from around the car. But then he adds, “You deserve to relax, too.”

Ilya, in the midst of fishing Shane’s jacket from the backseat, pauses. Maybe he’s just saying that. Shane’s on another planet right now. There’s no way he noticed Ilya acting odd. “I’m always relaxed,” he says. “You know me. Life is a beach.”

He picked up the idiom from a magazine story last week, waiting to get a tooth fixed. It had a nice sound to it. Like a perpetual summer vacation. And by the time he realized a few hours later that it was some cheeky play on ‘life’s a bitch,’ it was too late—it had already entered his vocabulary, in all sincerity. A sober Shane would have teased him for it. But the current, stoned Shane looks thoughtful.

“Then you deserve to have a nice beach,” he says. “With white sand and lounge chairs. And volleyball.”

Ilya turns, leans back in his seat to get a better look. He thinks Shane’s joking, at first. But there’s a resolute set to his mouth. If they were inside, if no one could walk by and see them, he would take Shane’s jaw and give it a little shake.

“What are you being so serious for?” Ilya says softly.

Shane’s return stare is still faintly unfocused. But it’s unblinking. “I’m always serious about you,” he says.

Ilya laughs once. Or maybe it’s more of a little puff of air, the kind you make when you’ve just taken a hard hit to the gut. This, here, is the problem with Shane Hollander. Sometimes it takes him three tries to say exactly what he means. And sometimes he says something so devastatingly straightforward that Ilya could not possibly know what to do with it.

There is one thing he can do about it. He is suddenly, violently done with being in public. “Let’s get you upstairs.”

Shane’s determination shifts into something a little sly. “Okay.”

“To put you to bed,” Ilya says loudly. “I am not so horny that I will ignore doctor’s orders.”

Ilya swings himself out into the cold, fetching Shane’s new crutches from the backseat as he circles the car to the passenger’s side. By the time he opens the door, a faint frown has crossed Shane’s face. “We didn’t think about how to get me up the stairs.”

This, at least, is something Ilya’s not worried about. That’s another problem about Shane Hollander, after all. If you look for too long into his big, brown eyes, you could convince yourself that you’re capable of a lot of things. Ilya can carry him. Ilya can carry the whole car if he needs to. “That’s okay,” he says. “We’ll improvise.”

Shane winces as Ilya pulls him up. “I hate improvising,” he mutters.

It takes a moment for Shane to feel steady on his feet. Even then, Ilya treats himself to a few extra seconds before he lets go. “I know you do.”

End Notes

By the way, Shane had a partial meniscectomy, so he should be rehabbed within like eight weeks or so. (And I'll bet he's going to be a cranky menace THE WHOLE TIME.)

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