

i love you, ya tebya lyublyu, je t'aime

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i love you, ya tebya lyublyu, je t'aime

by [moonlightdances](#)

Summary

“Because I can’t fucking do this, Ilya. I’m going to my parents’, I- I need a break, alright? Shit.” Shane’s gaze locked onto his keys and he picked them up, stalking towards the door. He needed a break from the arguing and he needed to go somewhere he could breathe and collect his thoughts, so he could process this correctly and talk about it with Ilya civilly. Everything was still suffocating and overwhelming and Shane needed out, needed to go sit in his car and drive in silence to his parents’ place.

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Ilya had seen enough breakups to know what one looked like. Shane ignored him, and looked irritated, and said he couldn’t do this (*this*, like everything between them could be reduced to a single word other than love), and said he needed a break (his confidence in Ilya’s English was comforting up until Ilya realised it meant Shane didn’t feel the need to say the dramatic *I’m breaking up with you* that characterised the ends of relationships).

or, hollanov fight and misunderstandings resulting in an injury ensue

Notes

tw: this will discuss a car accident and the subsequent injuries and pain resulting from it, as well as a discussion of suicidal thoughts. if that's something that might not be best for you to read, i would suggest leaving this alone. take care of yourself!

there is still a happy ending and everyone lives because i can't write anything other than that, so take that as you will. just some good old fashioned angst here. set vaguely after ilya joins the centaurs but before they're outed!

as always, any english errors do not exist to me. enjoy!

- Translation into 中文-普通话 國語 available: [【授权翻译】我爱你，以你的语言，以我的语言](#) by [Shiny_Park](#)

Shane knew that a real fight between them was inevitable.

The first years of their *whatevership* were based in fighting, and rivalries, and contrasting opposites. The aggression and competition that characterised them evolved, just as they did, but Shane knew that it still lingered in the air, ready to make a surprise appearance. Shane knew this, but he still hated every second of his argument with Ilya.

“I’m just saying,” he said through gritted teeth, so extremely frustrated that he felt like he was about to start crying, “that it shouldn’t be a big fucking ask for you to care about how I feel, Ilya.”

“When did I say I did not care? Of course I fucking care, Hollander,” Ilya snapped back, Shane’s last name like a blade into his heart. Worse than that, though, was the way Ilya wouldn’t even *look at him*, instead focusing on washing dishes of all things instead of having this conversation properly. “But I am not going to tell famous singer that I will not do music video with her because...why? What reason do you want me to give her? Because my secret lover who will not let me share his name is jealous?”

Shane felt a bit like he was on the verge of exploding. His anger was making him hot, and his sweatshirt wasn’t helping, and the harshness of the lights felt like he was being heated externally as well. Every clink of a dish felt like a timer ticking down on the bomb that was Shane Hollander, and Ilya’s inability to be quiet at the moment when Shane desperately needed him to was the cutting of the red wire.

“I don’t fucking care about how you say it!” Shane shouted, closing his eyes tightly to push away the lighting and to hold back the tears stinging his eyes. He hated that he teared up so easily, and he hated that Ilya was the cause of it. He took in a shaky breath, shifting in place and *fuck*, he could feel his socks and it sounded insane but it *hurt*, like he needed to remove all his layers of clothing so that he wasn’t as overwhelmed as he was at the moment.

Shane clenched and unclenched his hands, grounding himself, and said carefully, “I just want you to listen to me. I’m glad you got this opportunity – really, it’s a great thing. But I can’t say I want you to fly to a different country to spend a week with a famous woman and pretend to be her boyfriend for a fucking *music video*. Do you know how many people will catch wind of that? How many paparazzi will take photos of you two and circulate it?”

“It doesn’t matter, Shane, fuck!” Ilya cursed as he angrily set a dish on the rack to dry, the ceramic jostling the others and creating a cacophony of sounds. “It’s not *real*.”

“But it *could be*. You like women, Ilya. I’m supposed to, what, hope? Wish? Fucking *pray* that you’ll spend a week with one of the most attractive women in the world and then still want to come back to me?”

Ilya turned off the sink and hunched over it, his knuckles white as he gripped the counter. The roaring noise in Shane’s ears quieted a bit, but the longer Ilya stayed silent and refused to look at him, the more Shane felt like he couldn’t breathe.

Then, finally, Ilya asked, “At least you get to fucking know it’s not real.”

“What’s that supposed to mean?” Shane scoffed. His heart raced in his chest and his gut churned, like his body knew something was going horribly wrong before his mind could catch onto it.

Ilya sniffed and shook his head. “Doesn’t matter.”

“Clearly, it does. Say it, Ilya.”

Ilya turned around slowly and crossed his arms, his eyes dark as he leaned back against the counter. “I stand here and tell you I love you and that I will do a business deal with *yes*, a hot woman. And I tell you it will not be real, and that it is for *business*, and you act like it is the same as when you dated Rose Landry. Were okay with paparazzi then, but not now? Hmm?”

Shane jolted backwards. He had always been the one more prone to jealousy between him and Ilya, and he’d thought that Ilya had moved on from that after such extensive conversation about that relationship and their own. Ilya throwing Shane’s desperate attempt at a relationship with someone other than Ilya, though, *stung*.

“Fuck you,” Shane practically hissed. It hurt, not because of the reminder of the relationship, but because Ilya clearly held some personal reservations about it that Shane had thought he’d moved on from. The lack of communication – when he’d thought they’d worked it out – had all of Shane’s walls rising again. He felt dual anger and disappointment take over his chest and it was almost suffocating, how strong he felt it, and he needed to find somewhere he could breathe before the timer hit zero and he said something he didn’t mean.

Shane let out a sharp breath and turned on his heel, leaving the kitchen and ignoring the way Ilya called after him. He swiped his phone off the sofa and stuffed it into his pocket, stalking through the living room and looking for his car keys that Ilya had last.

“What are you doing?” Ilya asked, far closer than before, and sounding almost choked.

“Looking for my keys.”

“Looking- *why*? What are you doing?”

“Because I can’t fucking do this, Ilya. I’m going to my parents’, I- I need a break, alright? Shit.” Shane’s gaze locked onto his keys and he picked them up, stalking towards the door. He needed a break from the arguing and he needed to go somewhere he could breathe and collect his thoughts, so he could process this correctly and talk about it with Ilya civilly. Everything was still suffocating and overwhelming and Shane needed *out*, needed to go sit in his car and drive in silence to his parents’ place.

“Shane,” Ilya said weakly, his voice strained. It was the kind of tone that usually made Shane want to collapse against his boyfriend and hug him, but he knew he couldn’t do that, not when his skin was crawling beneath his layers and he was still overheating. Shane walked to the door and only paused when his hand hit the doorknob.

“*Shane*,” Ilya repeated behind him, this time closer to either a desperate prayer or a terrified plea. “It’s not a big deal. I can-”

Shane shook his head and opened the door, closing it behind him quickly before Ilya minimized it more and started sobbing on the floor. The door slamming behind him felt far too final and Shane wanted to go back, to beg for Ilya to understand where he was coming from, but he forced one foot in front of the other and let the cool afternoon air carry him to his car. The second he was inside and went to put his key in the ignition, he paused.

“Fuck,” he exhaled, dropping his head back against the headrest and pinching the bridge of his nose to keep tears at bay. Usually, Ilya would press gentle kisses to his cheeks and forehead and wipe away the tears before they could fall, holding Shane like he was something precious and fragile and *God*, Shane loved him so much. He wanted that, desperately, but knew that they would just keep arguing if he went back before they could calm down. So, he put on his seatbelt and started the car, pulling away from Ilya’s house and pretending like it didn’t feel like he was leaving his heart there as well.

He drove silently, nothing but the sounds of the car moving and the wind rushing past outside; it felt like he blinked and he was pulling up to his childhood home. Instantly, he felt like a child again, desperate for a hug from his dad or a head pat from his mom for comfort. He hadn’t come home without Ilya since they’d come out to his parents, and the short walk from his car to the front door was far more solitary than he’d remembered it being. The door was unlocked, and he pushed it open easily.

“Mom, Dad? It’s me, Shane,” he called into the house. A few moments later, his father peeked around the corner, a small smile instantly settling onto his face.

“Hey, kid,” David greeted, walking over and bringing Shane into his arms. “This is a nice surprise.”

Shane sank into his hold, taking in a deep breath and feeling a sense of calm begin to settle over him almost instantly. “Sorry I didn’t call first.”

“You never need to call, Shane. The door’s always open.” His dad reassured. He held Shane until Shane pulled away first, his dad looking over Shane’s shoulder before back at him with a confused expression. “Where’s Ilya?”

Shane winced and his father seemed to take in his distress for the first time. “We’re, uh, fighting.”

“He kicked you out?” David asked, a foreign anger in his eyes. Shane never really saw his dad get angry, and a part of him was warmed by the idea that his dad would fight for him, that his frustration was simply held in reserve until he needed it.

“No, not at all,” Shane corrected quickly. “I kicked myself out, really. I just needed a break, needed somewhere to breathe and think before we talk it through.”

His dad patted Shane on the shoulder. “Whatever you need, Shane. Your mom’s at the store but should be back any minute. I’m doing some work in the study right now, but you’re

welcome to come sit with me.”

Shane felt his smile before he knew he was doing it. “Didn’t Mom tell you to leave your work at the office?”

David huffed and shot him a look. “The queen of bringing work home asked me not to bring work home. When she can take a day off, I will too. Until then, these spreadsheets won’t sort themselves.”

Shane laughed lightly, his shoulders dropping from where they’d been tensed by his ears for the last forty-five minutes. He took a deep breath and shook his head when his dad gestured towards where he’d come from. “I think I’ll just lay down for a minute. Try to calm down, try to think.”

His dad patted his cheek in understanding. “I’ll be at my desk if you need me.”

Shane practically collapsed onto the sofa, exhaling long and deep as he pulled off his hoodie and finally felt like his temperature had equalized itself. He laid down and threw his forearm over his eyes. Finally, he wasn’t overheating and the lights weren’t blinding. It was quiet other than his dad’s computer mouse clicking every few seconds, and Shane felt like he could *breathe*. He laid there and focused on his breathing, his body slowly relaxing as he thought about the good moments with Ilya rather than the fight that just occurred. He wished Ilya was there, was the crazy thing. They were fighting and Ilya probably wanted to be anywhere except cuddled up with Shane, but it was all Shane could think about. He wanted to be relaxed in their bed with Ilya sprawled across him or behind him, and he wanted to be comfortable beneath a blanket with the man he loved; instead, he went crying to his parents like a lovesick teenager.

Shane scrubbed his face with his hands and forced himself to continue trying to relax. As minutes passed, he felt himself get more and more tired – the exhaustion from the fight was slowly setting in, and Shane was dozing off before he could stop himself.

When he woke up, it was to his mom gently shaking his shoulder. “Shane,” she whispered.

Shane blinked awake, taking in the silhouettes of both of his parents. “Hey,” he responded, his voice thick with sleep. He felt rejuvenated, like the nap had disconnected the explosive from the wire and the idea of breaking apart wasn’t even possible anymore.

“We let you sleep for a while, but dinner’s ready. I made some soup, if you want any.”

“Yeah, thanks, Mom.” Shane answered, pushing himself upright.

“Maybe you want to talk over some food?” His dad added. Shane paused and asked himself if he did want to talk about this with them; his parents had a good relationship, though, so Shane resigned himself to the mortifying ordeal of asking them for advice and nodded.

The moment they sat down, the floodgates opened. Shane explained how Ilya had been offered the amazing opportunity to star in a music video, and how Shane was uncomfortable with it. He explained his own insecurities, how he doubted Ilya would want to go back to *him*

if he spent a week surrounded by glitz and glamour and a famous, attractive woman. He explained the fight, and how he'd left, and how all he wanted was to go back. He felt tears turn his throat into barbed wire as he talked about how proud he was for Ilya, but how scared he was at the same time. He talked about how the press would capitalise on the situation and run endless tabloids about Ilya and his famous girlfriend because the world didn't know about *them*; he talked about how unfair it all was, but that he didn't think he could handle seeing Ilya and the singer on every social media site he turned to for the next month or so.

Shane took in a sharp breath when he finished catastrophizing. "I'm done," he said, just in case his parents hadn't realised it.

Yuna set down her spoon and looked at her husband for a long moment before looking back at Shane. "Alright. I have some comforting things to say, and some harsh things you need to hear. Which do you want first?"

Shane felt his stomach twist. "I don't know. The comforting things?"

Yuna took a deep breath before beginning. "I understand your fears, honey. It was good for you to take a moment to collect yourself – seriously, it's very mature to know you need to take a step back so that you don't say something you don't mean. Even if he doesn't realise it now, Ilya will realise that eventually, and he'll be happier for it. He's head over heels for you, Shane, too. That man is so in love with you that I finally feel some peace, knowing there's someone other than your father and I who cares for you so deeply. I think he could spend a year surrounded by all the hottest people in the world and he would still come back to you."

Shane nodded, wiping quickly at his eyes. "And the harsh ones?" He asked, mentally preparing himself.

"Your problem here isn't with the singer or with Ilya, Shane. It's with your insecurities."

Shane flinched like he'd been struck. "Wow, you're just jumping into it."

"I told you it'd be harsh," his mother reminded. "You're worried that Ilya will pick someone else – you're pretty much telling us that you don't think you're enough for him to stay, Shane, which is the stupidest thing I've ever heard."

"*Mom.*"

"It's the truth! You're a great person, honey, and I know I'm your mother so I'm biased but anyone else can see that, too. You're talented, and smart, and handsome, and I'm so proud of you, but you can't use your own insecurities as ammunition against someone you love. Tell me: did you tell Ilya you're proud of him?"

"Yes," Shane said instantly. Then, when thinking about what happened, he corrected with a bit of horror, "No."

Yuna nodded like she already knew the answer. "Your boyfriend has a great opportunity and you didn't congratulate him – that has to hurt. To top it all off, Ilya thinks you don't trust him now; I mean, that's what I would think if I was in his position."

David stood up abruptly and Shane's gaze flicked over to him. "Dad?"

"Your mom's got this with you," his dad said. "But who's comforting Ilya? He doesn't have someone he can run to for advice or a hug or dinner."

Shane felt his heart *drop*. He'd run off and slept for hours before getting amazing comfort from people he loved, and he'd left Ilya alone in their house with no one to turn to. "I'm an awful boyfriend," he said aloud, trying not to cry again while Dad grabbed his car keys.

His dad came over and squeezed Shane's shoulder. "No, you're just still learning. I'll go check on him, alright?"

Shane nodded weakly and watched David leave before dropping his forehead to his arms on the table, hunching in on himself. He heard his mom stand before a warm hand connected with his back, Yuna rubbing small circles as Shane reminded himself to breathe, reminded himself that Ilya would forgive him for his oversight.

The fight felt stupid, all of a sudden. Both of them were hurting, and for what? Because Shane couldn't keep his own anxious, insecure thoughts to himself? *No*, Shane realised. It was because he *had* kept it to himself – he hadn't said what he was feeling or shared how overstimulated he was. Instead, he'd been accusatory and danced around what he really wanted to say. Ilya hadn't been perfect either – he knew that Shane's doomed relationship was a sore subject and he'd brought it up anyway – but Shane was, ultimately, in the wrong.

"Do you think he'll forgive me?" Shane mumbled.

"Of course, he will." His mom reassured. "But you'll need to talk about it, Shane. And I mean really, really talk about it. He's more sensitive than you believe him to be, I think."

Shane nodded, closing his eyes tightly. He knew what he wanted to say, now, and he hadn't realised how hungry he'd been before in addition to being so warm and overwhelmed; Shane knew how to do this correctly, how to start this conversation in a way that would heal what had cracked between them a bit, but he still hesitated to leave. Not only because his dad was going to comfort Ilya, but because Shane was terrified that Ilya wouldn't want comfort from Shane. Shane had walked out because he needed space – what if Ilya wasn't ready for him to come back? What if he wanted Shane to stay away for a little while?

Shane stopped himself quickly. It was stupid to even consider – Ilya hadn't pushed Shane away in *years*, since long before they were what they were now. Shane had been the one to walk away every time, and, every time, Ilya was waiting for him to come back. Even now, Ilya was probably sitting against their headboard and staring at a wall or scrolling on his phone, pretending like he wasn't waiting for the front door to swing open and for Shane to announce himself. Shane had told him he'd only needed a break and that he was going to his parents'; usually, when it got dark out, Shane would drive back so he could curl up with Ilya and hold the dearest person in the world as tight as he could.

Shane lifted his head, staring out the window. It was dark, for sure, but Shane hesitated. This time not out of any fear or anxiety, but because his dad had only just left and Ilya deserved to have someone take care of him for a little bit before Shane showed up.

“Feeling better?” Yuna asked softly. Shane looked up at her and nodded.

“I think Dad should get to talk with Ilya for a little bit before I go back. Want to watch a movie?” Shane asked.

A small, familiar smile split Yuna’s mouth. “Of course, honey. Let me clean up here while you start it up.”

Shane nodded again and took a deep breath before standing and moving to the sofa again, shooting a quick text to his dad. *Let me know when you’re done talking, please.* Then, because it felt important, *Thank you for loving Ilya too.* Shane swallowed around the sheer amount of affection bubbling up from his chest and grabbed the remote instead, turning on the television to find a movie to watch with his mom.

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When Ilya moved to Canada, he hadn’t thought about just how many preserves and parks there were north of Ottawa. He hadn’t thought about how that meant he could just drive a couple hours and be surrounded by endless amounts of nature, birds and trees and ponds and absolutely nothing that knew who he was.

Ilya’s hand clenched and loosened against the steering wheel as he drove. A glance at the clock told him he was two hours outside of Ottawa, and Ilya had no idea where he was. He’d sat on the sofa for an hour, blankly staring and crying, before realising he needed to be *out* and *gone* because the room still smelled and felt like Shane. Ilya needed to go and he did, and he had *no idea where he was*. It didn’t matter, really, because he wasn’t sure if he was going back.

Not when every part of his life was so deeply intertwined with Shane Hollander that Ilya couldn’t breathe in his house.

Not when Shane broke up with him and left Ilya standing alone, aimless and entirely without meaning.

Ilya had *pleaded* – the business deal wasn’t even a particularly good one and he tried to tell Shane this, tried to say that he’d just refuse it if it meant Shane would *stay* – but Shane had left anyway. For the second time in his life, Shane had left him while Ilya’s heart broke and he begged Shane to wait a minute, begged him to let Ilya fix it. The first time, in his place in Boston years ago, Ilya had thought Shane was walking out of his life forever. This time, Ilya knew it was true because Shane had said it himself.

I can’t fucking do this, Ilya.

I need a break, alright?

Ilya had seen enough breakups to know what one looked like. Shane ignored him, and looked irritated, and said he couldn’t do this (*this*, like everything between them could be reduced to a single word other than *love*), and said he needed a break (his confidence in Ilya’s English was comforting up until Ilya realised it meant Shane didn’t feel the need to say the dramatic

I'm breaking up with you that characterised the ends of relationships). Shane said this and did this and then he left, even as tears streamed down Ilya's cheeks and he begged Shane to stay. Shane didn't know about the tears, because he hadn't looked at Ilya, desperately avoiding eye contact like it carried the plague, but they had been there all the same.

Ilya heard the rev of his engine before he realised he'd pressed harder on the gas; he let off quickly, the rev dying instantly as he decelerated. He'd promised Shane he'd be careful when driving, that he'd care more about road safety and his own safety. Ilya was good about caring about it when there were others on the road; no one else deserved to be hurt or killed because of his own stupidity. It was harder to care when there was nothing except Ilya's own headlights in his view for as far as he could see. Now, the only thing that accompanied him were endless trees and the occasional animal sound.

He'd never felt more alone.

Not because of the darkness, or because of the physical isolation, but because Shane had left him. Ilya had spent a long time convincing himself that he deserved their relationship and that he was good enough for Shane; even then, there were countless nights he spent waiting for the other shoe to drop.

It dropped, and it fucking hurt.

Ilya was *alone*. He didn't have Svetlana in the same city anymore because he'd left it all behind for Shane. He didn't have Moscow to return to because nowhere else felt like home other than his place in Ottawa that was curated with Shane in mind from start to finish. He'd bet it all on Shane, and he'd forgotten that Shane hadn't bet it all on him in the process.

"You have such a big heart, darling," his mother said, brushing away a curl that had fallen across his forehead as Ilya cried on her shoulder. Ilya was ten and terrified because this one boy at school was so very mean and his father had been more upset with Ilya's tears than the bullying.

"I don't want a big heart," Ilya cried in argument, sniffing against her shirt and tucking his face into his mother's neck, the only place he ever truly felt safe and secure. "Mama, I don't want to be sad."

His mother's breathing hitched for just a second before she readjusted him and held him, shushing Ilya and petting the back of his head to calm him. "Never feel bad for your heart, Ilyusha. It's just so big that it's bound to hurt sometimes. You care so much and so deeply, and it's a beautiful thing."

Ilya sniffled again, his tears slowing down the longer his mother comforted him. "Papa said it's bad to care. He said I need to be like Andrei."

"You do not," his mother said firmly. "Your father says this because Andrei is like him. You are like me, my darling, and that is more than enough. Never change your heart, understand?"

Ilya wished he'd changed his heart. He wished the *thump-thump-thump-thump* didn't beat to the syllables of *Shane-Hol-lan-der*. He wished he'd learned to protect his heart better instead of just distracting himself with sex over the years, because sex meant nothing when Shane had taken himself out of Ilya's life. It couldn't distract him now, in the middle of fucking nowhere, and it wouldn't be able to distract him even if he went back to his house. Nothing could.

Ilya swerved as his vision blurred. He blinked rapidly and lifted one hand to swipe away the hot tears in his eyes. "Fuck," he exhaled, his voice catching around a sob in his throat. His tears wouldn't help him now; they hadn't helped him earlier either, when he'd tried to keep Shane. *Keep Shane*, like he was a thing Ilya had authority over. Shane was the one with the proverbial leash, and always had been; Ilya was weak to him, weak *for* him. Now, without him, Ilya was just *weak, weak, weak*. He swiped at his tears as they came, and he felt like his heart had been carved out of his chest, and he didn't notice the way his foot was pushing on the acceleration until he was colliding with the metal barrier on the side of the road.

In movies, car crashes are always filmed in slow-motion for dramatic effect.

In reality, they felt the same.

Ilya tried to turn out of it but it was like he was moving too slowly to catch up; his airbag deployed and Ilya slammed into it, pain shooting down his spine even with the adrenaline as he jerked forward and backwards, his car dragging along the barrier. A horrible screeching sound accompanied the movement and Ilya's entire body hurt, his legs pinching closer as the front of his car crumpled and everything seemed to shake around him. The car stopped, and Ilya couldn't breathe. His ears rang and his lungs screamed and his body *hurt*, and it took a few seconds for him to take a gasping breath. It was ragged, not quite correct, and fucking painful. Ilya tried to move, to reach for his phone that had landed on the floor on the passenger side, but found himself completely unable to move most of his body. Ilya blinked and lifted a shaky, strained arm to his temple, his stomach threatening to upheave his lunch when it came back red.

"Fuck," Ilya cursed, immediately gasping and coughing as a result. His lungs felt immeasurably tight and Ilya's head felt heavy, his eyelids falling closed against his own volition. He forced them open – he'd had enough head injuries to know that falling asleep was the worst possible option at the moment – and his vision swam in response, everything swirling around him. He tried to move for his phone again but, again, was stopped by his seatbelt and the airbag and a strange tightness around his legs. The entire front of the car had folded in on itself, cracking the windshield and trapping Ilya's legs in the process.

Ilya was fairly certain he was dying, and there was something almost peaceful about it. He was pinned and there was absolutely nothing he could do; instead of fear lacing his veins like he'd expected, he was almost relieved to know that he was helpless against the inevitable. He hadn't meant to crash his car – honest to God, he hadn't – but it had happened and, in the end, that was it. Ilya didn't have anything to return to without Shane, and now he wouldn't need to worry about it.

Ilya blinked long and hard, pushing his eyes open again and immediately wincing in pain. *Shane wouldn't want you to give up*, something in his mind protested. Shane had never wanted Ilya to give up, or surrender; he challenged Ilya more than anyone else, dared him to do the impossible and then some.

Shane hadn't left you then, though, the other part of his mind argued. Ilya felt a tear slip down his cheek, colliding with the trickle of blood going down from his head wound. He sank his head against the headrest, his breath staggering in his chest as he tried to take in a deep breath. He sat there, fighting off sleep and trying his best to ignore the pain radiating throughout his entire body, and waited.

There was nothing he could do but wait, really, for either sleep or death or someone to pass by and call in his car crash. Two of the three felt much more likely than the other, Ilya's breath coming in shallower and shallower and his head throbbing. He couldn't even feel his legs. Ilya felt cold, too, which didn't make much sense when compared to the amount of layers he was wearing.

A buzzing sound interrupted Ilya's resignation. Slowly, painfully, he dragged his gaze to his phone. *David Hollander*, the ID said. Ilya's heart lurched; did Shane not tell them he'd left Ilya? Why would David call him? Ilya knew that Yuna and David had liked him – he wasn't stupid, he knew they did – but he wasn't with Shane anymore. There was no reason for them to reach out to him, or try to say anything to him. They had no obligation anymore. Ilya stared at the phone until it went to voicemail and turned off. Immediately, it turned on again, David calling another time.

Ilya watched as the phone rang three times in total before a long minute passed. Ilya's eyes threatened to droop closed again, only stopped when the caller ID showed *Yuna Hollander* across the screen. She called twice in quick succession and Ilya wanted to cry, but he already was. David and Yuna were some of the best people he'd ever met, and he hadn't even been broken up with Shane long enough to miss them. He would miss them, if he made it through this somehow. Ilya hadn't had a parent care about for most of his life, since his mother died, and a desperate part of him had wished David and Yuna could be that. It was a desperate, naive part who had thought his forever with Shane was guaranteed, and it was the part of him that ached with each missed call from them that came through. He wished he could have said goodbye to them, and thanked them for making Shane the person he was, and told them how much their care for him had meant.

A few minutes passed before Ilya's phone rang again.

Jane.

A sob bubbled out of Ilya's throat, followed by a wet cough that tasted more metallic than it should have. *Shane*, Ilya had called as Shane walked out on him; Ilya desperately wished he could reach his phone so that he could tell Shane he loved him one last time, so that their last words to each other didn't have to be Shane leaving him and Ilya saying his name like a prayer. He didn't think he could talk, not with the pressure in his chest, but he wished he could reach his phone just to type out a message.

Jane, the screen said as Shane called again. *Jane, Jane, Jane*, it said, as Shane called endlessly. For the first time in a long time, Shane was the one reaching out first. For the first time in a long time, Ilya wasn't reaching back. He wanted to – *fuck*, he wanted to – but his body was starting to feel heavy and his head hurt too bad to keep his eyes open. The buzzing was fading a bit in his ears, even though the screen was still flashing with Shane's calls every time Ilya managed to crack his eyes open. He wondered, though, why Shane was even calling. Was that something people did, usually? Call their exes? Ilya hadn't ever had a serious relationship or broken up with someone – he'd never made it to the point where a breakup would be necessary. What would he say to Shane, if he could reach his phone?

Shane, he thought, knowing he would breathe it like absolution.

You are everything to me. Thank you for loving me, even if you can't anymore. It's a treasure I'll keep forever. I'm sorry I pushed too hard, and I'm sorry I wasn't enough. I should have been better. I wish I had more to give you, Shane. All I had was my love. Because I love you. I love you. I love you, Shane Hollander, more than anything else. I'll see you on the other side, yes? Play hard and love harder with someone who can take better care of you. I'll wait as long as it takes, if you want to see me again.

Ilya tried to look at his phone, delusionally wishing he could telepathically send his last message to Shane, but found himself unable to open his eyes. Ilya took in a shuddering breath, his chest tight and stabbing, and then didn't feel much of anything.

He didn't feel anything, up until he did. He felt a cool sensation throughout his body, and maybe some pressure around it, but most of the pain was gone. Ilya blinked, his head held in place, and closed his eyes tightly again when harsh lighting met his eyes.

"Hey! Hey, Ilya? Ilya Rozanov? Can you hear me?"

Ilya tried to nod but he couldn't move his head much. However, whoever was talking to him seemed to catch it. "Ilya, you had a pretty bad crash. You're in an ambulance right now and we're trying to get you where you need to be. Just hang on, alright? You're pretty banged up."

Ilya was sure he was, but everything felt a bit confusing and blurred together in his head.

"Do you have someone we can call to meet us at the hospital? An emergency contact?"

Ilya forced an eye open and realised it was a very concerned paramedic that was talking to him. Then, the question registered. "No," he said aloud, his voice barely audible. He had no *emergency contact* – he hadn't had one since signing with Boston all those years ago. His father and brother had been timezones away, and the only other person he had was Svetlana, who was just as likely to be out of the city and across the country as Ilya was. Even once he'd moved to Ottawa, he didn't have one. It's not like he could put Yuna or David, the only people he knew in Ottawa, without getting a ton of questions in response. Shane wasn't an option either, not without outing them in the process. Now, he wasn't even a consideration. It was just Ilya, like it'd always been.

“Are you sure, Ilya? You’ve got a lot of missed calls on here. Want the hospital to call one of them?”

“No,” Ilya repeated, even weaker, his eyelids falling shut again.

When he opened his eyes again, there was no pain. There was no cold creeping throughout his body or a paramedic asking him questions. There was an absence of pain, really, and only a steady beeping sound. It took him a second to register the fact that he was in a hospital room and that the beeping was his heart monitor. It took him even longer to notice the nurse at the foot of his bed filling out information on a clipboard. He opened his mouth to greet her, to let her know he was awake, but only managed a quiet gasping sound instead.

Her gaze darted up instantly, a trained professional used to noticing even the smallest things. Her smile was almost blinding. “Mr. Rozanov! It’s great to see you awake. How are you feeling?”

Tired, he tried to say, but his throat felt so dry he couldn’t speak. She crossed over quickly and poured a small cup of water, dropping a bright purple straw into it and bending it, carefully guiding it to Ily’s mouth so he could take a miniscule sip of it. It was completely average and room temperature but it was one of the best things he’d ever tasted. She helped him take another sip before pulling the cup away and setting it down, pressing a button next to Ilya’s bed and looking at him.

“Any pain?” She asked. Ilya shook his head lightly. He was tired, but he wasn’t in pain; whatever they had him on was *strong*, and Ilya was grateful for it. The window told him it was daylight – he’d been out for at least overnight, then.

“How-” he started before clearing his throat. “How long?”

“How long have you been here?” The nurse filled in. Ilya nodded carefully.

“Someone called it in what seems like an hour after your crash. You must have a guardian angel, Mr. Rozanov, because there’s rarely anyone on that road that late and you wouldn’t have made it if you were there much longer. You got here just before midnight, and it’s about,” she paused to look at her watch, “two in the afternoon.”

Ilya blinked, exhaustion spreading throughout his body. He’d been unconscious or asleep for hours, but he felt like he could sleep another week. “Can I sleep?”

“Sorry?”

“Head injury,” he said in explanation.

“Ah,” the nurse said, nodding in understanding. “Should have guessed a hockey boy like you would know about head injuries. Yes, Mr. Rozanov, you can sleep. We’re checking on you and taking care of you. Do you have someone else you’d like us to call to come visit you?”

Ilya was starting to hate this question. “No.”

“Alright. Rest up, then. A doctor will be by soon to check on you, but you can go back to sleep afterwards.”

Ilya nodded and felt himself drift off. He briefly woke up when the doctor checked on him before surrendering to sleep again. When he woke up again, actually awake and coherent this time, he was almost certain he’d died.

Shane was by his side, a chair pulled up to the edge of Ilya’s bed. His head was resting on one of his arms, folded beneath his cheek, and his other hand was intertwined with Ilya’s loosely. Across the room, Yuna and David spoke quietly while Yuna frantically texted someone. Ilya’s gaze dropped back down to Shane and he heard his heart monitor accelerate for a second before calming, the beeping exposing his heart racing.

“Ilya?”

Ilya’s gaze slid up to Yuna, who had tears in her eyes, and David, who looked pale and tired.

“Hi,” Ilya said weakly.

“Oh my God,” Yuna exhaled, crossing the room quickly and pressing a hurried kiss to Ilya’s forehead and each of his cheeks, minding the gauze on his head and the breathing tubes in his nose. “Ilya, honey.”

David was right behind her, his mouth drawn tight as he set his hand on Ilya’s shoulder and squeezed it lightly. “You scared us, son.”

“Sorry,” Ilya replied out of reflex. “You are here?”

“Of course we’re here,” Yuna answered, gently caressing the side of Ilya’s face.

“Why?”

“Why?” David echoed. “What the hell do you mean, why?”

“*David*,” Yuna scolded.

“Ilya, we had no idea where you were,” David continued, softer this time. “We were terrified. You weren’t answering.”

“I got in car crash,” Ilya explained.

David chuckled, shaking his head and swiping his hand over his face. “Yeah, we know that now. But we didn’t even know what hospital you were at once we guessed something had happened.”

“Ilya,” Yuna prompted, glancing at David before looking back at Ilya. “Why didn’t you call one of us?”

Ilya frowned, feeling the breathing tubes shift slightly at the movement. “Was I allowed?” He didn’t think that was an option – he’d lost Shane, so he’d lost them, too. Except, now they

were all there, even Shane, so it was clearly more complicated than he'd thought it was.

"Always." Yuna said firmly. "You don't need permission to call us, Ilya, but you always have it. Any time, any day. We're here for you."

"Oh," Ilya answered.

"Why would you think you couldn't?" David asked, clearly trying to approach it delicately but lacking subtlety, just like Shane. "Have we done something wrong? You have to tell us, Ilya, if we did, so we can fix it."

Ilya shook his head firmly, wincing slightly when the ache set in right after. "Not you. Me."

Yuna held his other hand. "You...?"

"Yes, me. I did something wrong."

"What did you do?" David asked, utterly confused.

Ilya felt dangerously close to tears. "I don't know," he confessed, because he really didn't know what he'd done for Shane to finally leave. Shane wasn't a quitter and wouldn't leave because of one thing, so there must have been things in the background that Ilya had done and Shane just hadn't brought up. "Did he tell you?"

"Did he- what are you talking about, Ilya? We're not following," David countered, looking at Yuna and getting a confused look in return.

"He broke up with me," Ilya whispered. Whatever drugs they had him on only helped with physical pain, apparently, as he still felt the emotional pain from it strike through him violently.

"I *what*?"

When Ilya looked at Shane and saw those teary, warm eyes that he loved so much blink up at him, he had never been more grateful to have a functioning heart. *There he is*, it seemed to say, like Shane was the thing that kept it going. Ilya had thought that he'd never see Shane this close again after he'd walked out, probably resigned to nothing more than face-offs and press conferences for the rest of their careers, and then nothing afterwards.

"We'll give you two a moment," Yuna said softly before she and David gave one last smile to Ilya and slipped out the door.

—

Shane felt his heart start up again for the first time in twelve hours when he saw Ilya talking with his parents. *Ilya, Oh my God, I love you, Ilya, Ilya, Ilya*, it said with each thump. Tears sprung up instantly, relief and heartache and nothing but pure love all at once. Then, he heard it. He heard the pain in Ilya's voice before he heard the words, really, and then the words rocked him to his core.

“I *what*?” He asked, almost strangled by the mere notion that he would break up with Ilya. It was unthinkable, really; Shane couldn’t imagine going a day without Ilya in some way, even just on his phone when they were apart for a game. He barely registered his parents leaving, too focused on Ilya.

“It is nice to see you,” Ilya said, his eyes so unimaginably soft even as he sounded seconds away from crying. Somehow, Shane recognised the look in his eyes; it was the same one he’d had when he looked at Shane again after finding out he found out Shane and Rose were over. It was tentative and hopeful, and Shane hated that it wasn’t sure and comforted.

“We’re not moving past what you said.” Shane insisted, sitting up and ignoring the crick in his neck after having been curled up by Ilya for an hour. The clarification fell from his lips before he could stop it, desperate to get it out. “I did *not* break up with you.”

Ilya visibly flinched and Shane’s heart broke a bit. “Don’t lie to me, Shane. It is not nice. You do not lie, not to me, so don’t start now,” Ilya argued. To anyone who knew Ilya less than he did, Ilya would look like he was detaching from the conversation. Shane saw the hurt, though, and the way Ilya was trying to protect himself from more of it.

Shane was fairly certain that he could become devoutly religious and never be forgiven for hurting Ilya like this. “I did not break up with you. I don’t know why you think that, or what gave you the idea that I’d *ever* want to leave you, but I don’t. I want you forever, Ilya. You’re right – I don’t lie to you, not anymore. So why do you think I’m lying now?”

“I can’t fucking do this, Ilya,” Ilya said bitterly, his accent heavy and his tone sharp and lashing. “I need a break.”

“What?”

“That is what you said to me. You said this and then left so *yes*, Shane, please tell me how you did not break up with me when you said it yourself,” Ilya countered. He definitely meant to sound angry or intimidating – argumentative and volatile, maybe, even – but instead he just sounded *sad*. Desperate, almost, like Shane actually could explain it away and Ilya wouldn’t have to believe what he thought to be true.

Shane dropped his gaze from Ilya for a moment to take in a deep breath and he felt it go back into his lungs only when he realised Ilya hadn’t pushed his hand away. When Shane had finally found Ilya after hours of talking to hospitals and hours of terrified searching, he’d held Ilya’s hand and never let it go. Even now, despite the conflict, their fingers were intertwined, and Ilya was letting him have this. He was *clinging* to it, really, holding Shane just as tightly as Shane was holding him. It gave Shane the strength to continue and clarify what was, apparently, one massive misunderstanding.

“I was...overwhelmed. In the kitchen.” Shane began. “It was hot and loud and I was just, fuck, I don’t know. Feeling too many things? It was too much and I needed a break from *it*, Ilya, not a break from *you*. I just wanted a few hours to go to my parents’ place and to collect my thoughts before coming back and talking things through with you. I know I fucked up, now, and I’m sorry. I’m sorry, Ilya, and I love you. I didn’t break up with you – I just needed a few hours, a short break.”

Ilya watched him for a few seconds, his eyes scanning Shane's face, and Shane felt his heart ache from the distrust on Ilya's own. Then, Ilya said tentatively, hopefully, "Needing a break is not breaking up?"

"No," Shane agreed quickly. "Not to me, at least. To others who aren't as committed to their partner, maybe, but to me a break is just a few hours to breathe."

Horror set in on Shane's face when Ilya immediately let out a wet sobbing sound, slumping against his pillow like all of the fight had gone out of him at once. "Ilya?" Shane asked, scared. He glanced at the monitors hooked up to Ilya to make sure it was all still fine, and he carefully examined Ilya's body for any sign of pain.

"I fucking hate English." Ilya whined and *oh*, Shane thought, *not hurt*, a smile creeping onto his face. "Do you understand how confusing it is? *A break*, the noun, is entirely different from *to break up*, the verb. This is so stupid. Stupid fucking language."

Shane laughed before he could stop himself, dropping his forehead to the back of Ilya's hand, squeezing it tightly for a beat before lifting his head to scatter kisses across it. "I agree. Too much miscommunication."

Ilya wasn't crying, but tears still sat in his eyes. He looked exhausted and like he'd just been in a car accident, but there was a light in his eyes that Shane hadn't seen since Ilya woke up. "Ilya."

"Shane," Ilya exhaled in answer.

"*Ya tebya lyublyu*." Shane said, his heart skipping in his chest. "No miscommunication allowed about that. I'll say it in English, or Russian, or French, or learn it in any other language that you need me to."

Ilya's mouth pinched tightly the way it always did when he was trying not to be emotional. He slowly turned his hand in Shane's grip; Shane removed his hand and watched as Ilya raised his hand like he was going to bring it to Shane's cheek before a flash of discomfort raced across his face and Ilya stopped where his hand was, hovering in the air a bit and clearly unable to move it further with all of his bandages. Shane dropped his head, lowering it so that Ilya could still cup his cheek like he wanted. Emotions shone in Ilya's eyes as Shane let Ilya rub his thumb over Shane's cheekbone and freckles.

"I love you. *Ya tebya lyublyu*." Ilya said thickly. Then, cautiously, "*Je t'aime*?"

A grin broke out across Shane's face. "When did you learn that?"

"I thought I should know it. I can't let you win and know how to say it in more languages, can I?"

"Well, now I need to learn it in a fourth language."

"God, please, no," Ilya cut in, hating the idea. "I do not have enough space in my brain for another."

Shane felt his heart swell with just how endeared he was to Ilya; the comment did remind him of the gauze on Ilya's head, though, and he lifted a hand to lightly graze over it. "How's your head?" He asked softly.

"Five stars. Never had a complaint. You seem to like it fine."

"*Ilya.*"

Ilya smiled and dropped his hand from where he was still caressing Shane's face, instantly connecting their fingers again instead. "It's okay," he answered seriously. "I do not feel it, really. Mostly just tired."

Shane nodded, familiar with the feeling. "And your legs?"

"My legs?" Ilya questioned, looking at them, seemingly, for the first time. Both were wrapped up carefully and held in very specific positions, his right foot even more strongly bandaged.

"Fractures, somehow." Shane explained, realising Ilya had either forgotten what he'd been told about his injuries or not been told in the first place. "And your right foot is broken. Your right knee was dislocated, but they set that when dealing with the severe fractures. You broke a rib and had a punctured lung. Concussion, and whiplash. And-"

Shane felt his heart racing and his breath was coming in a little quicker than he wanted it to so he stopped, trying to calm himself down. When the doctor had first explained Ilya's injuries to him, Shane was terrified. Every single one sounded like Ilya had narrowly escaped death; it wasn't until he was an hour into sitting and watching Ilya that he realised this might be the end of Ilya's career. Ilya had never really looked *small*, not to Shane, at least, but he certainly did when he was all bandaged up and weak in a hospital bed. Even now, Shane wanted to cry because of just how much pain Ilya had to have been in before getting the treatment he needed.

"Shane?" Ilya prompted gently.

"I told you to drive slower," Shane scolded weakly instead.

"I know. I do. It was an accident, I think."

Shane felt everything in him stop. *I think*, Ilya had said, like there was a chance that maybe it *wasn't* an accident. Like, maybe, he'd meant to crash. "You think?" Shane asked, his stomach threatening to upheave the shitty hospital food his mother had forced into him earlier. Then, he was really at risk of it when he remembered how Ilya had described his mother's suicide to him at first. *By accident*, he'd said when Shane asked about the cause of death. Shane felt *sick*, now even more terrified of the fact that Ilya was being unclear about whether or not he'd intentionally pushed on the gas.

"I do not remember but, yes, I think it was an accident."

“Ilya.” Shane started, trying to be as calm and supportive as he could despite how fucking stressed out he was. “When you say accident. Do you mean a mistake, or do you mean it like your mother’s accident?”

Shane was never good at being subtle, but this wasn’t a topic he wanted to conceal the truth on, either. He needed to know the truth so he knew how to support Ilya best. Each silent second was agonizing, and Shane barely caught Ilya’s answer.

“I don’t know,” Ilya said, sounding stricken. “I don’t think I meant to. I think...I was sad and not paying attention. But afterwards, it was okay.”

“It was okay?” Shane echoed, terrified and distraught but trying so very hard to keep it in.

Ilya looked away like Shane’s gaze was painful. “When I thought I was going to die. It was okay.”

Suddenly, the hand in his didn’t feel like enough. Shane stood quickly, ignoring the rush of feeling in his legs from moving them for the first time in hours, and sat on the edge of Ilya’s bed, lifting Ilya’s hand into his lap so that they were closer and touching at more points.

“It’s not okay,” Shane insisted immediately.

“Shane-”

“Ilya, I would never fucking move on if you died. Do you understand that? I wouldn’t be able to do that, I couldn’t-” Shane was cut off by a shaking sob that morphed into disbelieving laughter. “Did you know that I had to fight to get in here? I made them look up our foundation to prove that we knew each other, that we were *friends*. I was practically fist-fighting people in the lobby – how the fuck do you think I would have reacted if I found out you were dead? It would have *destroyed me*, so, no, it’s not fucking okay.”

Ilya looked at Shane and Shane wiped away the stray tear that went down Ilya’s cheek. “I’m sorry,” Ilya said quietly. “I did not think it would matter to you. I thought you had broken up with me, remember? And I did not think you would care, and I knew I could not do this without you, so it was okay.”

Shane felt his face break before his resolve did and he bent over, pressing his face to the only unbandaged part of Ilya’s shoulder he could reach as he cried. It took a while, likely from slow movement, but Ilya’s hand eventually made it to the back of Shane’s head and he just held him as Shane cried. It took even longer for the cries to die down; when they did, Shane whispered *I love you* and *ya tebya lyublyu* and *je t’aime* across Ilya’s skin, making sure Ilya knew it was true in any language he was familiar with.

“I care,” Shane said after a while.

Ilya laughed, a puff of air against Shane’s head. “It is obvious now, yes.”

“I care about you more than anything else, Ilya. I just want you to be safe and happy.” Shane remembered the conversation he had with his mother and forced his head up so he could look

at Ilya, one hand holding Ilya's face and stroking his thumb over Ilya's lips as he continued. "I'm really proud of you, by the way."

"Proud of me?" Ilya asked, looking confused.

"For the music video opportunity. I'm proud of you for that recognition and I think you should do it."

Ilya looked pained. "I do not need to. I will reject it."

"No," Shane countered, shaking his head. "I trust you. I don't trust myself, but that's even more reason I shouldn't listen to the stupid things my head says to me. It's a great opportunity and, when you're healed up, you should take it."

"Is not for a few months, anyway." Ilya explained, blinking long and hard. "Are you sure, Shane? I am happy to say no if it will make you uncomfortable."

"It will," he said honestly, because hiding the truth was what almost ruined everything. "But that's okay. Seriously. I need to learn how to deal with these things."

Ilya was quiet for a few moments and Shane's stomach twisted – he didn't like admitting he needed to learn how to deal with his jealousy and insecurity, but he didn't like Ilya's silence either. Ilya was loud, and warm, and boisterous, and having him quiet and laying in a hospital bed was unnerving.

"Come with me."

"What?"

"Come with me." Ilya repeated. "If I go. Come with me and- and I do not fucking care what the excuse is, Shane, but we can come up with one. When I am not filming with the singer, we can have vacation together."

It sounded like the best idea Shane had heard in a long time. "Really?"

"Yes, really."

Shane couldn't stop himself any longer; he'd held back from kissing Ilya because he just looked so exhausted and hurt, but it was a *really* big ask to try to keep him from kissing Ilya at all. He moved his thumb from Ilya's bottom lip and pressed a kiss to it, capturing his lips and holding Ilya's cheeks as he felt his heart start to work properly for the first time since he found out Ilya was missing. Shane realised, absolutely delighted, that the heart monitor behind them exposed Ilya's racing heart while they kissed. He laughed and Ilya groaned, clearly having caught on, and Shane pressed one last chaste kiss to his lips before drawing back.

"Stupid fucking heart machine."

"Monitor."

“Whatever the fuck it is called – it is *stupid*.”

“I think it’s cute,” Shane commented, sure he was smiling like an idiot. “I like that I can hear your heartbeat. Means it’s still beating.”

“Is beating,” Ilya reassured. His long, slow blinks from earlier were even worse now.

“Are you tired?”

“No,” Ilya lied.

“You’re falling asleep right now.”

“No, I am not.”

“*Ilya*.” Shane exhaled, amused and exasperated at the same time. “Go back to sleep. I’ll be here when you wake up.”

Ilya’s eyes were closed for a few seconds before he forced them open again. “No. I need to talk to Yuna and David.”

“They’ll be alright talking to you once you’ve rested a bit more.” Shane promised.

“They will be here, too?”

Shane’s heart clenched. “Yeah, of course. It’s not even three – visiting hours are until eight. If you’re not awake by then, we’ll wake you up for them to say goodbye.”

“Them?” Ilya asked almost nervously.

“Them. You can have one overnight visitor – I’m not going anywhere.”

The reassurance clearly seemed to be the last thing Ilya needed as he nodded against Shane’s palm and let his eyes drop. It felt like a matter of seconds before Ilya’s breathing stabilized and he was asleep, looking almost like an angel with a golden halo where his hair was spread out around him. Shane slowly slipped his hand away from Ilya’s cheek so that he could hold Ilya’s own again, maintaining his vigil by Ilya’s side.

“I love you,” Shane whispered. “*Ya tebya lyublyu. Je t’aime.*”

They had fixed the immediate problem, but there was way more that they needed to talk about. Shane’s flight during their fight, Ilya’s uncertainty about the cause of the car crash. Shane’s personal issues that started the argument, Ilya’s reliance on Shane to feel alright. Neither of them were perfect – far from it – but Shane had promised Ilya that he wasn’t going anywhere, and Shane never broke a promise.

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