

crawling back to you

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by [LunarMoonstone](#)

Summary

“The arena is just buzzing with nervous energy after that hit, ladies and gentlemen at home. And down on the ice, it looks like we have-...hold on...is that-...

Ilya Rozanov...crawling to Shane Hollander?”

In which instead of Marleau, it is Ilya who crashes into Shane.

The way they choose to deal with the fallout surprises them both.

Notes

aaaand another one...you might think, how are they uploading all these so close together? Let me tell you, it's not ai or anything but the strongest motivation there is for an Ao3 author; the procrastination of the most important academic achievement of their life.

That, paired w a job where i just sit around for 8h and several half finished drafts are giving me my currentt run on ao3

so fuck AI, put on hozier enjoy!

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

“Nothing better than a fierce Rozanov-Hollander face-off to start a game, don’t you agree, Dan?”

“Certainly, Roy These kids know how to make it exciting!”

“They’re already fighting for it when the ref hasn’t even dropped the puck yet.”

“That’s Hollander and Rozanov for you. I’m already on the edge of my seat, ha!”

“...And Hollander wins the face-off!”

“Rozanov certainly is his equal but no one can match that incredible speed.”

“That’s right, Hollander is already flying over on the ice!”

“Rozanov is quick on his heels, however.”

“These two seem to be in their own little world, the defense line can barely keep up!”

“Hollander seems to be looking back to check for Rozanov, who is still hot on his tail.”

“What a close miss by Marleau! Rozanov is slowing down so he doesn’t run into his own defense line, giving the opportunity for Hollander to....Yes! Hollander scores the first goal! Incredibly, only 30 seconds into the game!”

“Do you hear that crowd? We’re in for a treat tonight!”

“Hollander is rounding the goal.”

“Boston sure is fired up now, they will want that goal back!”

“Rozanov is already approaching Hollander, but Montreal’s offence is just waiting for him and-”

“OH!”

“Ouch!”

“Oh my, did you see that, Roy?”

“I certainly did, Dan. Whoof. That looked rough.”

“A multi-player collision! That is certainly rare for two such experienced teams.”

“We have players from both Montreal and Boston down, everyone.”

“It seems like a Boston player blocked Hollander’s path, causing him to swerve at the last second and for Captain Ilya Rozanov, who was heading for that puck, to crash right into him!”

"The other players fell like dominoes right after."

"The game has stopped as the refs and players are assessing the situation."

"I see people getting up and-"

"Seems like there is a fight is breaking out."

"Certainly no time wasted after getting back on their feet."

"I'd be upset too if someone just crashed into my teammates."

"We still have two bodies on the ground."

"Jeez, Roy. No need to say it like that!"

"It is hard to say who exactly is potentially injured with the commotion happening down there. The refs are still working on breaking up the several fights on the ice."

"The refs are finally getting between them, moving the fight away from the players, who seem to be-...oh my."

"That'd be Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov. Both appear to be unconscious for now."

"Seems like the only thing that can knock these two talented kids off their horses are each other, Roy."

"An unfortunate accident, ladies and gentlemen, no doubt about that. You certainly don't want to see that, especially with two such great players, Dan."

"Definitely not, Roy."

"Finally, movement from Rozanov! Hollander still appears to be unconscious, however."

"The refs are beginning to pull the players back to their benches, so we are getting a clearer shot of Rozanov and-...Yikes!"

"That is not how a leg should be bent. We can't say anything for certain yet, but we might be looking at a clean break!"

"The medics are trying to get to them, but the players keep engaging in fighting, making it hard for them to get through."

"You can't call it unsportsmanlike behavior, though. I mean, we are looking at both team captains down. That is bound to spike up the already bad blood between famous rivals Montreal and Boston."

"At this point, it looks like every player on the ice might need to take a trip to the ER later today."

"Hopefully to different hospitals or the squabble will just continue in the waiting room."

“Ha! I would hope not. Though I’m sure our Boston nurses know how t...Helmet off from Rozanov! It looks like he’s shouting something?”

“Probably for the medics. My, that leg has to hurt. More concerning is Hollander, however, still being unresponsive.”

“The crowd seems torn between shouting at the players to let the medics get through and encouraging the fighting on.”

“Well, we know Boston loves a good on-ice fight. Even without collisions, a Montreal game is sure to fire up hockey fans expecting a show!”

“The fans are still shouting. This whole arena is buzzing with ferocious energy tonight, folks at home. Of course, you don’t get to see this often. Several fights after a multi-player collision, which of course means we’re looking at-...hold on....is that...”

“It looks like Ilya Rozanov...crawling to Shane Hollander?”

Every pull, every twist, every ripple on the ice was a new jolt. His leg was fucking *throbbing*, and he could *feel* the break. Could feel where something had split inside of him.

It was all-consuming, and yet it still came second.

Because *Shane wouldn’t wake up*.

Ilya had felt that impending sense of dread, and then his entire body slammed against something hard. It’s how he always imagined it would feel if he crashed his car into something if he wasn’t looking out - that insane impact of an indomitable force colliding with something immovable.

It fucking *rattles* you before it just wipes you out.

Honestly, Ilya was glad it had. That at least his head had hit the ice first before his leg must have undoubtedly followed, landing in whatever natural angle it was now positioned in. Because by the time he regained his blurry consciousness, the pain only slowly crept up on him, giving him an onset time to get adjusted to it. Of course, he didn’t. He instantly felt the *wrongness* of his body being bent in a way it shouldn’t be, along with the instant panic that came with that. But he would still argue that it was better than being fully conscious *while* it happened to you. A small blessing in disguise, perhaps.

Ilya was always good at keeping himself in control, contrary to what many liked to believe. It didn’t take him long to grasp the situation and be able to choke down his fear of what his injury meant for him and for his career. Really, with the way Ilya had been living since he was a teenager, always chasing the next thrill, the next danger, the next *forbidden thing*, he always half expected something like this to happen sooner or later.

What Ilya *hadn’t* expected, what he *couldn’t* control, however, was the absolute terror coursing through him when his eyes finally found Shane lying lifeless across from him -

close, yet still out of reach, as always -

Because, *oh god*, his sweet, sweet Hollander. Who only moments before had been more radiant than the fucking sun, making Ilya chase him with a radiant smile.

His Shane.

Ilya hadn't been able to control that possessive pronoun ever since Tampa. Maybe even since Vegas, though he always denied that to anybody else, mostly to himself. It just placed itself before Shane's name every time Ilya thought about him, which was constantly. He had typed it before the contact name "Jane" about 50 times, only stopping whenever he thought of the reactions from those prying people in his life if they ever came across it.

Sometimes, it was even there without the name. Like this morning, when Hollander had lain so stunningly beneath him, writhing and taking Ilya as if he were meant to be, which Ilya was always certain he *was*, and then laughing so beautifully and unashamedly around him.

He was *his*. *Ilya's*.

A part of his heart that he had lost a long, long time ago.

And maybe that was why he had always felt so empty. Something of him had been missing this entire time.

It's how he knew now that something was wrong. Because he had tugged at it, that string of his own heart, by calling out for Hollander's name across the ice, and there had been no tug back. No response.

Ilya knew what no response could mean. Had felt that cold sense of dread once before.

So it didn't matter that everything felt woozy and out of balance when he had taken off his helmet to be able to see him better. It didn't matter that he was supposed to be concerned about *himself*.

What mattered was Shane *getting the fuck back up* because Ilya was now starting to grow truly, utterly terrified.

He thought he knew fear. Opening that bedroom door to his mother's that night.

His father. His brother. Russia. Just living and breathing there with who he was.

A Tampa hotel room.

Starting something there he couldn't possibly finish. Craving, *yearning* for something so sweet it sometimes made his teeth ache. Not in a painful way, but with the primal urge to *bite* into it and never let it go. Something that promised him everything and which he could never deserve.

It was all so blasé in comparison to seeing the light of his life, which had always shone more brilliantly than everything else, his one glowing spot in the darkness that encompassed him,

start to dim right in front of him.

And no one was *doing* anything to help him.

So he ripped his glove off with his teeth and clutched his hand to his thigh like that could do anything. Like it could hold his leg together, keep it attached to his body.

(Though he knew, deep down, that he'd leave it behind, if need be.)

With his other hand, he placed the palm flat onto the ice, digging the fingers into it like he could bend it with his will and strength alone.

The grasp was loose, but it didn't matter. There was only one thing on his mind; a persistent need to *just get to him*. His light. His heart.

So he pressed the heel of his hand into the ice and started to *pull*.

It was fucking agonizing. And probably fucking stupid as well. He could pull something and make his injury even worse.

So entirely irrational, driven by a probable concussion and a nearly decade-old passion kept hidden from the world he was now recklessly exposing it to.

But he just needed to make sure that Shane was *okay*.

His purgatory lasted until he reached him. That is, until he was close enough to touch him. He would have continued, *wanted* to continue, but the pain had told him in that moment that it was close *enough*.

It felt almost like a betrayal. If anything, his body knew that nothing with Shane was ever enough. He always craved more.

Especially with the way he was only close enough to grasp Shane's hand instead of taking his beautiful face in his hand and brush his fingers over those freckles with the foolish hope they'd blossom alive under his touch like they had done for him time and time again.

"Shane. Shane. Shane." he murmured underneath his breath like a prayer.

Please wake up. You're scaring me. I need you too.

The screams of the arena had been thrumming against his skull when he had woken up, eventually lowering into a dull noise that stung a bit amid his single-minded focus to get to Shane. And when he felt him finally, *finally* respond with a low groan and the twitch of his fingers, a weak attempt to squeeze back, any sound faded completely.

The relief he felt was so visceral it shook his entire body - or maybe that was the sob he let out - jostling his leg again in a new explosion of pain, so much more prominent than before since he was finally lying still enough to really feel it.

He was forced to stop looking at Shane, to stop his examination of the other's injuries, as his eyes automatically shut as the pain passed through him. His head sank low with it, and the ice that thunked against his forehead almost a cooling relief.

"Ilya..."

As soon as he heard his voice, his head snapped back up, leaving only the unshed tears clinging to his lashes as remnants of his pain.

Oh, thank god.

Shane was lying on his side, and Ilya could see him struggling to open his eyes under the visor. God, he was so glad Shane still had his helmet on, it seemed to have cushioned his fall.

Shane's eyes scrunched up in pain as he kept trying to blink them open, a hue of red forming underneath his beautiful freckles which made Ilya feel sick. Or maybe that was his own concussion.

"Sha-"

"We got you, guys!"

It all happened so quickly then.

Multiple medics rushed onto the scene. If he were more alert, Ilya would have wondered if that many were even customary for a normal game or if he'd been trying to crawl to Shane for long enough for the actual paramedics to arrive.

Then fear choked him up again, brutally so, as he watched all these hands reach for Shane, pulling him *away* from Ilya, their fingers brushing over each other while Ilya desperately tried to *hold on*.

But the hands on Shane were gentle, slowly taking off his helmet and putting on a brace that helped stabilize him.

"Rozanov! I need you to lie very, very still and-"

The edges of his vision were blending even more together now. White specks in the center, like the flickering of those old movies he put on to soothe Papa near the end.

"Shane, can you hear us?"

"I'm alright. Tell him I'm fine."

A flicker of a smile crossed his face at hearing his sweetheart's response. Then, like a string had been cut, his body relaxed before his vision finally whitened out completely, his consciousness fading in the knowledge that whatever happened with him, at least Shane was alright.

Maybe it was wrong of him, but Shane was relieved that his parents wouldn't be arriving until tomorrow to take him back home, and that his team had had to leave for the next game.

It was just a small pocket of time, barely even a full day, but Ilya and him had lived on much less before.

Ilya had visited him yesterday, right after Hayden had left, and Shane had barely any recollection of it, other than being extremely upset by the sight of him in a wheelchair. But then Ilya had started to gently shush him and brush his hands over his face, and *well*, the medication made it easy to melt into it and momentarily forget everything else.

He has since come down from whatever...floaty hell that was. Not the good kind he got when he was with Ilya, where he was able to willingly let go of his control and give himself over to gentle hands, but one where he had to bite his tongue even harder than usual not to ask any nurse or doctor he saw *How is he? Is he okay? Can I see him? Can you just put my bed into the room next to his?*

It was even worse because they had gotten into a private wing, usually left for VIPs, which made Ilya *so* close, just a few doors down. He guessed Ilya was a VIP the way he would be in Montreal, though he doubted an entire hospital cared about hockey. Probably to keep persistent fans off or something. Shane hadn't questioned it much when he woke up in it.

They had both "gotten lucky," apparently. It had looked worse on TV, not that anyone would let Shane see with his strict no-screen rule despite having a *minor* concussion alongside his broken collarbone.

He still didn't know the entire extent of Ilya's injuries. He had a strong suspicion that Ilya had downplayed it all at seeing Shane so upset, even if Ilya wasn't one to lie to him. He knew the other felt guilty, had said something yesterday about how he had hurt Shane, being the one who had crashed into him, but Shane had quickly shut that down, even in his loopy state.

And now he was itching out of his skin to finally get these goddamn tests over with and sneak off to him. He couldn't text Ilya to check in since Hayden had locked his phone away upon his mother's request like he was a goddamn child.

After an X-ray that took forever, he was finally wheeled back to his room, and he gave himself and any lingering nurses a good 15 minutes before he got up, ignoring the pain in his shoulder and skull and using his IV drip to stabilize himself.

Would Ilya laugh when he told him how he stuck his head out and looked left to right to see if the coast was clear before realizing they weren't in a hotel room surrounded by their peers, about to sneak out of each other's room in the middle of the night like they usually did?

Shane thought it was kind of funny, but Ilya hadn't seemed much in a joking mood yesterday, and Shane supposed he couldn't blame him. Shane and Ilya were both out for the season, but the latter was likely looking at some long, tedious physical therapy. In Russia, probably.

Damn it, Shane had had a plan. He *was going to ask-*

Wait.

Oh god. He had, hadn't he?

Shane stopped dead in his tracks right in front of Ilya's door, the memory of yesterday coming back to him in pieces.

Fuck.

He *had* asked Ilya to his cottage. And worse, Ilya hadn't agreed to come. He hadn't *disagreed*, citing a wobbling "maybe," which Shane remembered had made him so blissfully, *stupidly* happy.

He took a small step back, already ready to turn and head back towards his room to spiral think thi through when the door suddenly opened.

Shane was met with a beautiful woman with glowing dark skin and curly hair. Her eyes widened slightly when she saw him standing there, in contrast to the way Shane was most likely staring at her like a deer caught in headlights before something else took over her face. A bemused and terrifying look of *knowing*.

His heart began to race, and he was relieved he wasn't hooked up to that heart monitor anymore, or she would have known about his panic. Though with the way her eyes turned softer and her smile more genuine, a look he would never forget from Rose, she had probably already seen it in his face.

"Um, I was just-...I wanted to-..." he began uselessly, the words lagging in his brain. What had Ilya had said to get one of the nurses roll him into Shane's room yesterday? A "captain's honor code" kind of thing...a "captain's kindness" thing...a "common decency" for your rival or...

"Hm, he's been beating himself up over you, *Shane* Hollander."

Something about the way she said his first name, the intentional emphasis on it, made his entire body lock into place.

She promptly reached her well-manicured hand out, still with that kind smile on her face.

"Svetlana," she said and-

"*Oh*," Shane said at the same time he realized, his face falling flat, his panic momentarily replaced by petty, ugly jealousy.

Svetlana huffed a laugh through her nose, and Shane tried not to look at her lovely face while shaking her hand with his free hand because it was the polite thing to do. Tried to ignore the flooding images that came of imaging her with-

"I've been wanting to meet you for a long, long time," she said, cutting into his thoughts.

He just hummed at the statement, knowing he was verging on rude but unable to help it.

Because she was allowed to be here. This was Ilya's city, after all, and no one would wonder who the beautiful woman Rozanov "liked very much" was, stepping out of his hospital room, while Shane had to sneak around like a criminal and wishing he could Google the extent of the Hippocratic Oath nurses had to take in case anyone saw him.

"Years, in fact," she added, not letting go of his hand, which he desperately wanted to yet was unable to pull away from since it was too impolite.

Shane just hummed again, staring past her at Rozanov's door and rethinking his entire choices up until this point.

"You're a big hockey fan," he finally said when she still didn't let go, letting the awkward shaking continue, and though he had tried to make it sound like one of those usual questions he kept in reserve for people approaching him, it came out flat and emotionless again, since he already knew this when Ilya had rubbed her existence under his nose before confusing the hell out of him with his affection next.

"Yes, but a Boston one, of course, so that's not why I wanted to meet you. I didn't want to meet *Shane Hollander*, in fact, but the person who has had Ilya glued to his phone all these years."

He slowly realized what she meant, why she had pronounced his first name like that. He was sure his heart monitor would have alarmed the goddamn chief medical officer by now had he still been on it.

A range of emotions rushed through him, so quickly it made his head and chest hurt.

Fear. Utter, indescribable fear. Heartache. A brief second of relief.

Betrayal.

The final one must have been the most obvious, based on the way his gaze shifted from her to Ilya's door once more, as she simply remarked calmly, "He didn't tell me."

Shane wanted to scoff at that, but he was too frozen in place to do much else but to finally look back at her devastatingly beautiful, heartachingly stunning, *kind* face.

"You both did. Over the years. Yesterday, on the ice. And your face, just now," she explained, and Shane was happy she wasn't laughing, only smiling sweetly in a way that didn't feel like it had any intentions behind it. He didn't think he could take it if this was something amusing for her. This was his life, his career...his heart, after all.

Even though he had been upset about having to be close to her just moments before, Shane was suddenly relieved to have an anchor other than the icy metal of the IV drip as she squeezed his hand and engulfed it with her other, holding onto it with both of her hands.

He supposed he still should be. She had just unraveled the biggest secret of his life and-

But well, the way she was holding his hand and looking into his eyes just reminded him *so* much of the kindness Rose had offered him. His chest still felt tight, but something loosened

in it as she gave him the time to calm himself, whispering a reassuring “It’s safe with me,” as the final confirmation he needed.

“Has he-...” Shane began, looking at the ground to avoid her gaze and unable to finish the question, to admit his own desperation for the man behind that door to any outsider, no matter if they already knew all about it.

Has he ever talked about me then? Has he talked about Jane?

“Never explicitly. He always kept you very close to his heart, which is why I was always curious,” she said and Shane had to process that.

Because while he and Ilya had gotten more open in Tampa, and while Shane had gotten him to finally admit that he felt whatever it was between them too, so much was still uncertain for them. And Ilya’s affection for him, outside of sex at least, was something he had always been prone to doubt over the years. The mere existence of it, as he had spent days, weeks, and *months* looking at his phone, waiting for just a glimpse of the other.

“Could you do me a favor? Not even for me, but for him in there?” she asked suddenly, tilting her head towards the door with an exasperated smile.

Shane frowned, wondering where this would go. Would she...ask him to leave him alone? She and Ilya were involved after all. Who knows if she had come here to kiss him better, stake some kind of claim, *oh god what if-*

“Don’t let him push you away,” she spoke softly, looking down at their conjoined hands with a soft smile.

Shane's mouth dropped open in surprise, as he had not expected that request.

“He denies himself what he thinks he does not deserve. It’s stupid and only ever causes him pain. But he doesn’t listen to me on anything, so I thought maybe he’ll listen to his Jane,” she said sweetly, her eyes finding his again.*His Jane.*

His.

God, how badly Shane wanted to be.

Her words and the lingering kiss she had pressed to his cheek carried him into Ilya’s room.

Ilya was clearly expecting to see her again after she said something in Russian while holding the door open for Shane, responding to her in Russian with something that sounded like a question.

Yet it was Shane who stepped in, his mind whirling with thoughts.

Don’t let him push you away.

Did Ilya want to...break up with him?

Could it even be called a breakup for what they were? That uncertain something.

He felt his heart in his throat, the thoughts in his fractured skull running a marathon and crashing against the tethered edges.

He squared himself up, the way he had done in Tampa.

He had fought once to get back what he wanted; he could do it again.

“Hi,” he managed on the exhale as he finally rounded the corner.

He took in Ilya’s surprise only for a moment until he averted his gaze, not wishing to see any resolution in the others’ eyes.

“Hi,” he heard Ilya’s deep voice, with surprise and something else in it. Something wary, perhaps.

“I met Svetlana,” he then said uselessly, his eyes focusing on some candy on Ilya’s bedside table. He frowned at it. Ilya shouldn’t be eating such junk when his body was recovering.

“Yes. She was just vi-“

“She knows.”

Shane hadn’t wanted to say it like that. But maybe this was the reason Ilya wanted to push him away, because someone had found out.

It was bound to happen at some, he told himself. Maybe he could tell Ilya that as well.

She didn’t seem like someone who’d go around and tell. Not to mention how Rose had all but figured out it was another player as well, though she’d probably never be able to guess who.

So Shane could state his argument, tell Ilya whatever happened between last morning and now didn’t change anything, that Svetlana’s knowing wasn’t enough reason to-

However, as soon as his gaze passed over the brace on Ilya’s leg, which was exposed by his blanket, all the racing thoughts in his mind came to a halt.

Distantly, he was aware that Ilya was speaking to him. From the frequency of it, he might even be rambling, which Ilya only ever did in moments of complete ecstasy, otherwise always so in tune with his words and how to use them to get Shane disarmed.

He wasn’t really hearing him, however. Technically, he had known Ilya had been hurt, had even seen that exact same brace yesterday, but as he was now back in full possession of his mental faculties, the gravity of it finally registered.

Tears instantly came to his eyes, welling up until it was hard to see. Not that it mattered much; his only goal was the chair next to Ilya’s bed, already pulled out from where Svetlana had probably just sat in. He moved towards it as if in a trance, his eyes focused on the brace,

logging every detail of Ilya's injury, racking his eyes over his body over and over again to see if there were any other injuries.

He ignored his own pain and the awkwardness of the IV drip as he settled into the chair. And he continued to ignore the sting as he leaned forward until he had his head pressed firmly into Ilya's lap, the only place he could allow his tears to fall.

He only noticed after a while of silent crying how Ilya's ramblings had stopped. That he had instead placed his hand on top of Shane's head, his fingers running through his hair soothingly. It instantly calmed him. Ilya's touch always did.

When he eventually raised his head once more, he continued to avoid looking at Ilya and instead used his free hand to pull up the hospital gown until it reached the brace's edge.

Ilya's fingers in his hair paused for a moment before continuing their soothing, and Shane hummed softly with contentment.

It hurt, to be in that position, leaning over Ilya's leg and then lowering to press his lips to the exposed skin, but he didn't let that stop him. Continued to press small kisses until he reached the edge of the brace, then kissed up again, pausing where he had shoved the gown up to press his face into the warm skin and simply breathe him in.

It was unbearable, the thought of Ilya in pain. Greater than any pain, emotional or physical, Shane had ever experienced for himself.

With his cheek still against Ilya's upper thigh, he eventually turned his head to look at him.

"Are you okay?" he asked miserably.

And Ilya, for some reason, looked full of wonder. More cracked open than Shane had ever seen him, even in Tampa, even after he had left him on that sofa.

His mouth fell open, his eyes looking at Shane like he couldn't believe he was real.

"You are asking me that? After I hurt you?" he asked disbelievingly, his voice cracking on the last syllable.

Shane frowned at him. "You didn't mean to," he said, repeating himself from yesterday, grumbling, "It's part of the game."

He had to blink a tear away before being able to meet Ilya's eyes again.

"I just want to know if you're in a lot of pain," he whispered helplessly.

Ilya's face did something complicated then. So many emotions rushing over it which Shane was barely able to make out. Anger, frustration, misery, pain, *relief*.

Then it settled, slowly, quietly. His mouth closing, pressing into a helpless smile, his eyes shining with something new. Something Shane had witnessed in those sweet moments after sex over the years, though he had always warned himself not to take it too seriously.

"Not anymore," Ilya said softly, lowering his hand in Shane's hair and running a thumb gently over his freckles.

Shane closed his eyes in relief, trusting that Ilya wouldn't lie to him. It caused a final tear to slip from his eye, which Ilya's thumb instantly caught, wiping it away before shushing him.

"Don't cry, I'm alright. It's all good, moy lyubimyy."

Shane would have asked what that meant in different circumstances, but he had learned over the years that Ilya's translations were rarely reliable, or that he didn't really want to know.

When he eventually opened his eyes, they instantly locked gazes, and something settled in Shane's chest at the sight.

Ilya frowned at him while his thumb continued to run over his freckles, and then he let out a long sigh at whatever sorrow he saw in Shane's eyes.

"Come here," he whispered, and Shane moved up without hesitation, despite the pull in his injury.

"Slow," Ilya commanded softly, placing a hand flat to Shane's chest to stop him. Right over his heart, where he kept it as they finally, *finally* met for a kiss.

The touch there felt right, so absolutely right. Shane had stopped kidding himself a long time ago, after all. His heart belonged to Ilya, he was its keeper, and the reassuring hand over it felt like a piece inside of himself finally slotting back into place.

It was a miracle no one had come by in so long, Shane thought as he traced the idle patterns across Ilya's forearm. He should be relieved, he reasoned, since there weren't many explanations for why Shane Hollander was pressed up against his well-known rival in Ilya Rozanov's hospital bed.

It felt natural to climb into the space Ilya had created for him after Shane was forced to withdraw from their kiss due to the pain. He would have been content to simply rest his head against Ilya's shoulder, falling asleep under the kisses the other kept pressing into his hair, but Ilya broke their carefully crafted peaceful silence.

"About Svetlana..."

Shane sighed but leaned further into Ilya's side, mumbling a small "It's okay if you trust her," under his breath and willing himself to mean it.

He was still anxious about someone knowing after all these years, but Ilya, lying next to him, warm and alive and *okay*, took precedence over any worries. Maybe the headache he got from thinking too hard with his concussion also allowed him to put things into perspective.

Ilya took in a deep breath, like he was bracing himself.

“It might...not just be Svetlana,” he said slowly, carefully.

Shane frowned, craning his neck to look up at him, but Ilya’s gaze was focused on Shane’s hand on his forearm.

Shane lowered it to take Ilya’s hand in his, and the Russian visibly relaxed, releasing a shrugging exhale before he finally met Shane’s eyes.

“What do you mean?” he asked.

Ilya bit his lower lip, turning his head off to the side. Shane was reminded of Tampa, his heart beginning to ache at the thought of anything causing Ilya to cry again.

“Hey, it’s okay,” he said softly, trying to inch even closer to Ilya without throwing him off the bed completely. It was already a tight fight, part of Shane’s leg dangling over the edge.

Ilya nodded to himself, taking in another steadying breath before looking back down at their joined hands again, avoiding Shane’s eyes.

“On the ice. After the accident. I...did something. It might tip people off...about us,” he said gravely before cutting himself off with a choked-up laugh that didn’t sound amused.

“Is how Sveta finally figured it out,” he said.

“What...did you do?” Shane asked carefully, so confused. He had no memory of the game past the face-off.

Ilya had been injured himself; so what could he possibly have done? Kissed Shane’s lifeless body in front of thousands? But from Hayden’s retelling, Ilya had been down across from him while he fought Marleau.

Then again, Hayden had been rather tight-lipped about the whole thing after the crash. Mostly furious, but attempting to maintain composure for Shane, who had whined childishly about Hayden's threat to “simply go a few rooms down and teach Rozanov a lesson,” as well as his indignation at having them on the same floor.

Ilya shifted uneasily, his hand loosening in Shane's hold as though he wanted to release it, but Shane refused, holding on tighter.

He tried to scour his expression, with little luck from his position still leaning on Ilya’s shoulder.

He must be afraid, Shane realized. That same terror Shane carried for years about someone finding out. Was this the part where he would try to push Shane away, like Shane had done to him before?

He braced himself for the next words Ilya was squaring himself up to say, the grip on his hand tightening before it would inevitably let go.

“I’m so sorry, sweetheart. I really am.” Ilya finally cried, lifting their joined hands up to his mouth to press a lingering kiss to the back of Shane’s hand.

And, oh. *Oh*.

Ilya was concerned for *Shane*, rather than himself.

He called me sweetheart.

Was this... what had Svetlana had meant? About Ilya “not believing he deserved the things he wanted”?

Shane had never considered the possibility that she might have meant Ilya pushing him away because he felt *guilty* towards Shane rather than wanting to end their developing relationship after witnessing each other get hurt and feeling too much about it. Shane certainly felt like his own heart was living out of his chest, a fragile thing lying there with a brace on holding it together.

“Hey, shh, it’s okay,” Shane instantly soothed, trying his best to lift himself but groaning with the effort.

Ilya instantly pressed him back into the mattresses, turning his upper body so he was slightly leaning over Shane as best as he could with his braced leg between them.

Shane sighed, looking up at Ilya with wet eyes again.

“Please don’t cry. I have to cry when you cry,” he pleaded, letting go of Ilya’s hand to cup his cheek and wipe away the tears.

Ilya blinked at him for a moment before his face scrunched up again, wailing a miserable “*Fucking hell, Hollander,*” before he hid his face in the crook of Shane’s neck.

He did his best to hold Ilya through it, with the hand that wasn't in a sling grasping his hair.

He calmed down eventually, whispering small apologies into Shane’s neck before kissing the skin.

Shane knew he was supposed to have his major freak out about the potential of the *world* figuring them out because of whatever Ilya had or hadn’t done on the ice after seeing Shane get hit. Maybe it would come when he was back in his room or in Canada, away from Ilya, but for now, he was preoccupied with soothing the man who had finally trusted him enough to be vulnerable with him.

Shane had fallen asleep on his shoulder soon after Ilya had shown him the video.

The one coursing around social media right now full of comments confused about whether to call Ilya a fucking asshole for crashing into golden boy Shane Hollander or praise him for trying to get to him. Among the many, many comments wondering if he had lost his mind. *At least that ran in the family*, Ilya thought darkly to himself.

Shane had taken it well. So surprisingly well.

But then again, Shane always managed to surprise him.

Maybe he'd freak out later, when he wasn't worn down from a concussion and the multiple meds they had pumped through him that were still making their way out of his usually perfectly clean system.

Scratch the 'maybe'; he definitely would. And then perhaps he'd do what Ilya had been too weak to do all this time - end this wretchedly beautiful thing between them once and for all.

He had been so determined that he'd managed today, when Shane would be more lucid. Had even told Svetlana not to bother peeking her head into Shane's room after she had confronted Ilya about her realization before *praising* him for his devotion.

Like he hadn't needed to crawl to Shane after fucking knocking him out in the first place. After *hurting* him. His sweetheart.

And on top of that, put him at fucking risk with his stupid, stupid irrational actions.

But then Shane entered his room and looked so heartbroken for Ilya, mirroring Ilya's own feelings about him, that the words became stuck in his throat. Instead, only apologies and hushed confessions in Russian escaped him. It was becoming a habit, apparently.

So for now, they were okay.

And so at least until Hollander was taken away from him and hadn't yet come to his senses about *them*, Ilya might as well soak up everything he could from the other.

He had spent months, after all, regretting that day Shane had left his house over and over again. More than his actions, more than saying Shane's name and causing him to flee, he had spent those weeks regretting not enjoying it *more*. Not lingering in bed with him, stupidly getting out of it in the first place. Not taking more time to just *look* at him, to hold him.

So he resolved himself to just lie in this hospital bed, soaking up the light that was Shane Hollander like a plant needing it to function.

When he heard the knock, he barely managed to free his hand from Shane's grip. By the time the door had opened and closed, he had hastily reached for his phone, his other arm slinging across his middle in the perfect posture of nonchalance while his pulse thrummed in his neck.

It was a nurse. The same one that had wheeled him into Shane's hospital room yesterday with the joking warning not to get out of his wheelchair to smother Shane with a pillow. He had laughed at it, though the fact that people, online and in real life, thought he would ever willingly hurt the love of his life -because he couldn't kid himself about that anymore, not after yesterday - felt fucking *awful*.

Still, it was preferable to his teammates walking in on them like this.

They had come to see Ilya after surgery, and everyone looked too fucking wrecked to say much about what had happened, except Marleu, who couldn't stop apologizing for blocking Hollander's path, causing him to redirect directly into Ilya.

“Mr. Rozanov, I am just here to check your vita-...*oh*.”

Ilya had no idea how much of a hockey fan she was, but she knew who he was, and anyone who knew Ilya Rozanov was bound to be familiar with Shane Hollander and their alleged rivalry. It was something that had always been satisfying to Ilya, deep down, how intertwined their lives were, even in that twisted sense. A kind of claim upon each other given by the outside world, the only one they were allowed.

She quickly masked her surprise, though she couldn't contain the sly smile as she lifted his chart.

“Visiting hours are long over, Mr. Rozanov,” she reprimanded.

Ilya relaxed at her bemused tone. There was no shock or realization on her face, only amusement and surprise at seeing two famous people pitted against each other, practically cuddling.

“He did not realize visiting hours when he fell asleep. He is inconsiderate like that,” Ilya explained, purposefully making his accent thicker.

She laughed because the joke that Shane Hollander, who had crawled into his rival's bed to make sure he was okay, was anything other than considerate was truly hilarious.

“Tell you what, Mr. Rozanov. I haven't had a break in...8 hours, and I am *starving*. So how about I go down to get some lunch, and when I get back, your bed will be empty again, alright?” she stated, surprising Ilya. He tried his best to contain his smile, though she must be able to see the joy in his eyes as he nodded at her.

She put the chart back down carefully before flickering her gaze up again.

“And, say, if I happened to walk by the gift shop on my way back from my extended lunch break and just so *happened* to get one of those bears wearing a Raiders shirt for my little nephew who is absolutely *obsessed* with hockey...”

Ilya had to laugh out loud at her gall, though he did his best not to be too loud. Shane whined a bit in his sleep nonetheless, Ilya's eyes immediately snapping to him to make sure he wouldn't rouse awake, but Shane simply shuffled closer to him.

When he looked back at the nurse, her eyebrows were raised.

“I sign bear for your nephew. Shirt too, anything,” Ilya quickly said.

She schooled her expression back into a relaxed smile, which eased him.

“Well then. Keep that leg elevated,” she chuckled.

Ilya watched her turn around when his gaze landed on the phone, which had lain uselessly as a prop in his hand. A thought occurred to him then. A stupid, extremely selfish thought.

Well, here was to no regrets.

“Would you do me a favor?” he called after her, abashedly adding, “Another one,” when she turned back around with a meaningful look.

He held out his phone and watched her brow rise in understanding, her gaze flicking to Shane.

“For memory. He will be fine with it. We are actually good...friends. Rivalry is just media thing,” Ilya said, the word ‘friend’ feeling strange in his mouth, even if the lie made something hum in his chest.

He could tell she didn't really buy it, but her desire to get a world's best aunt mug must have won over her doubts as she walked up to Ilya and took the phone from him without saying anything.

When Shane woke up and had to leave him, he just stared at the photo.

The next day, he was still staring at it until *Shane's mother* suddenly entered his room, an assessing expression on her face that was both terrifying and exciting. Because Shane had *talked* to her about him, and now she was here to *thank him*, something that felt fucking big to Ilya.

She looked like it cost her great effort to do so, but Ilya understood that. After all, he had gotten Shane into the hospital in the first place, even if she agreed it had been an accident. She even complimented his "honorable" behavior for trying to get to her son, even if she called the action "irresponsible" in regard to his own well-being, to which Ilya could only agree with a huffed “Yes, Ma'am," his eyes stinging at having a mother's concern directed at him after so many years without one.

When she thanked him for paying for Shane's private room, his heart briefly dropped to his ass. He had been back to consciousness before his surgery, when Shane was still being examined in one of those horrible machines that scan your brain, and had arranged for it. He just didn't think anyone would find out, due to some hospital confidentiality policy or something. But well, if anyone could get past it, it was the beautiful woman who had the same ferocity in her eyes that he always adored in Shane on the ice.

He could tell she wanted to press on that, but in that moment, the rest of the Hollander family walked into the room, Shane's dad hovering behind his son like he was ready to step in at any point in case he'd fall or just needed support. Ilya had always wondered what that felt like.

They exchanged awkward greetings until Shane asked his parents to "give them a second," which surprised his parents just as much as Ilya, though they quickly agreed upon Shane's puppy eyes. Ilya felt a sort of companionship in that moment, knowing he wasn't the only person on this earth weak for that face.

He was even more surprised when Shane walked up to kiss him almost as soon as the door closed behind them, with such vigor that Ilya wondered if he was trying to breathe life back into him. Ilya thought it worked when Shane pulled back, eyes sparkling and mouth spitting, as if he were a goddamn angel leaning over his hospital bed.

Unfortunately, Ilya learned quickly that the nurse had snitched on him, asking Shane if “Mr. Rozanov had sent over the photo just yet”.

And that after Ilya had signed enough merchandise for her nephew, dad, *and* uncle.

Предатель

When Ilya showed him, Shane spoke in a thick voice “That’s...” and Ilya understood exactly how he felt.

Ten years of what they were, and this was the only real thing they had to show for it. No promotional shot where they were supposed to glare at each other, no awkward selfies at an awards ceremony where Shane was smiling like he was forced to be there.

It’s something Ilya had sat with up until the exhaustion and pain medication wiped him out. The fact that if anything ever happened to one of them, or both of them again, no one would ever know what they had been. No proof of this thing that had accompanied them both their entire adult lives, their entire high profile careers.

In a way, he was glad Svetlana now knew, even if she wasn’t aware just how deep it had always gone, at least for Ilya.

“You will send that to me?” Ilya felt a knot come loose inside Shane as he asked sweetly, sounding choked. He was expecting Shane to make him delete that.

After they said their goodbyes with a kiss, Ilya became fixated on his phone once more. He started to get anxious from the time Shane had boarded the plane and had then just stopped responding, not even with a simple “I’m home.”

Before Shane finally called again later that night, Ilya had seriously been considering asking the nurse if he could come to her nephew's birthday party in exchange for some anxiety medication.

“I have been thinking,” he had declared as soon as Ilya picked up on the first ring, with no greetings or explanations.

“Congratulations,” was his immediate response, grinning at the indignant but fond scoff that he liked to think Hollander reserved only for him.

“I thought that maybe we could...share it. Post it. If you’re cool with that. The picture from the hospital,” Shane then said, and Ilya had to pull his phone back from his ear to blink at it in confusion.

“Have you hit your head harder than they said? Maybe you should not have been flying,” Ilya said, genuinely concerned.

“Fuck off,” Shane laughed fondly until he got quieter again. Ilya patiently waited for him to find the words while nervously drumming his fingers against his thigh.

“I know it may be...incriminating. But I just kept thinking about how you said the nurse believed you when you said we’ve actually been friend. So I...I showed my parents and yeah, they were surprised, but they weren’t...*shocked* or suspected anything. They laughed as well and even said it’s a nice gesture. My mom was actually the one to suggest that we post it. She also saw the...stuff they’re saying about you online and thought it was unfair. And it all just got me thinking...if we change the narrative about us to something else, like that we’re at least cordial with each other, we wouldn’t have to be so fucking terrified to be with each other. We could start slow, and then build up to something so maybe, *one day*-“

“Post it.”

Ilya hadn’t understood everything, words like “cordial” and “narrative” bouncing in the back of his mind, which he’d have to look up later. What he *had* understood was the resounding, astonishing “*We*” and “*Us*” Shane had used in every sentence.

Like he believed they could really be something. *One day*.

Ilya was still torn between what he wanted and what he probably should do.

Ending things with Shane to never put him at risk of being hurt by Ilya in any way ever again, or continuing what they have since they both so desperately need.

Going to Shane’s cottage or returning to his family back home. If they could still be called that. If they ever were.

It was all confusing, terrifying, and so unsure.

It started to dawn on Ilya, however, that Shane, much like on the ice, would probably always win.

After all, if a broken leg and an arena full of people hadn’t held him back from him, what really stood a chance?

“Really? You’re not just saying that beca-”

“I would never disregard your manager's advice, Hollander. I hear she is very good. Gets many brand deals for you. Maybe she can take me on as a client one day; I might switch to the Canadian team just to get managed by her,” Ilya joked with his heart pounding. It was always easier to hide his deepest desires in a joke.

In a better world, or in just a different world, I would move to Canada in a heartbeat to be with you. I want your mom to take me on, not as a client but as a son. Look at me as someone who protects you. Because your family is already protecting me.

Shane sucked in a harsh breath, holding it before he released it in such a sweet laugh that Ilya wished he had pressed record on the call so he could listen to it over and over again.

Shane posted the photo a few hours later, with a caption that Ilya just knew him and his mother had spent hours thinking about, which made him chuckle.

ShaneHollander ✓

[A photo of the two of them banged up as they were, barely fitting into a hospital bed together, pressed side by side. Shane - not *Shane Hollander*; just Ilya's sweet, beautiful Shane - seemed utterly at ease, fast asleep against Ilya's shoulder, whose cast leg was elevated on a pillow. He was smiling brightly into the camera while holding up a peace sign with his right arm, the other pressing firmly against Shane's on the bed, the backs of their hands against each other]

liked by ScottHunter and 7,310,264,900 others

ShaneHollander ✓: No Hard Feelings ❤️ Sincerely appreciate all of the well wishes.

It becomes viral almost instantly.

(Even more viral than when Shane had started dating Rose Landry, a deeply satisfying fact to Ilya.)

He and Shane spent the next few weeks exchanging the funniest comments and tweets, ignoring the fact that a terrifying number of people suspected or accused them of being exactly what they were.

Shane was most amused by the trend that had started of boyfriends trying to explain to their girlfriends in pop culture terms why that "pic was such a big deal," using the movie characters or even singers and actors who've had "famous beefs." When he sent Ilya his favorites, he was surprised to learn that he knew anything about pop culture, to which Shane complained, "What else was there to do during a flight?" (Apparently, his baby experienced vertigo while flying and was unable to read his boring hockey books, which Ilya was relieved about because those reading glasses he had seen should only be worn behind closed doors). Not to mention that he was "friends" with a literal movie star. Ilya had pouted about that comment, purposefully sending him another load of the various pictures where people had photoshopped Shane sleeping against anything other than Ilya.

The invitation to Shane's cottage still hung between them. Shane didn't pry, but he was also terrible about being subtle, mentioning the place time and time again during their nightly secretive phone calls, where Shane snuck out of his parents' house to be able to call and ask Ilya how his physical therapy was going.

Until one day, Scott Hunter created a different world.

The morning after they told Shane's parents everything, Ilya awoke to his phone buzzing once, barely able to blink his eyes open, the emotional toll of the previous day weighing him

down more than his injury. He squinted at the preview, seeing it was some kind of picture and deciding he'd look at it later when he was fully awake, putting it on silent and turning back over to pull Shane closer to his chest. He only remembered again during breakfast outside on the deck, scoffing when he clicked on his chat with Svetlana to see what she had sent him.

"What is it?" Shane had asked curiously before stealing a tomato from Ilya's plate.

"A friend sent me a *poem*. In *English*." Ilya snorted, using the word "friend" deliberately since he feared Svetlana's name would still be a sensitive subject after he had brought Shane close to tears a few days ago with the idea of marrying her for a passport.

Shane chuckled at his visible disdain, leaning over to peek at Ilya's phone.

"Should I help you with it?" he asked, so genuine that it made Ilya smile. He leaned forward to steal a kiss from him, mumbling something against his lips about him being a nerd.

When he returned to his phone, he closed the picture without reading the poem to send a simple "?" to Svetlana, wondering what had gotten into her when he saw the message she had sent right after, provocatively in English.

Do not ignore it. Look at the last verse.

With a roll of his eyes, he clicked the picture open again, skimming over the poem until he reached the final lines.

When my time comes around

Lay me gently in the cold, dark earth

No grave can hold my body down

I'll crawl home to her

It hit something in his chest. A particular feeling of being *exposed* that just a week ago probably would've made him run in the other direction. But when he looked up from the poem to see Shane smiling at him, the sun reflecting off his beautiful face, that feeling vanished, replaced by a sense of being *seen*.

After that summer, he got the third line tattooed onto his biceps. His teammates, old and new alike, as well as several reporters, assumed it was some kind of tough guy statement. A sentiment on how he overcame his leg injury, no matter that it hadn't been that serious to begin with.

Only years later, when the relationship he had spent his entire adult life protecting gets revealed to the world, do the people make the connection with the help of a documentary about the two of them airs around the same time, showing a clip of that fateful day he crawled across the ice to the love of his life. To his future. His sun.

End Notes

can you....tell i've been listening to a lot of hozier?

ive had this in the drafts since that trend of edits with his "Do I wanna know?" cover which is just, magical, and then work song came on shuffle while i was writing my last hurt/comfort story gave me the push to write this out

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