

deep blue (but you painted me golden)

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deep blue (but you painted me golden)

by [1031](#)

Summary

Touches leave impressions—some more than others.

Notes

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

I.

Marks are rare; they didn't appear for crushes, one-night-stands, casual affection— they signified something deeper, stronger, bigger. Science called them a 'neurological anomaly', romantics said they were proof of soulmates. Most people never got one.

II.

The first mark appears after five years. Shane doesn't even notice it right away; it wasn't dramatic—no color, no clear shape, just a faint warmth beneath the skin at the base of his thumb, like he'd been holding something for so long it'd left an impression.

He dismisses it—he has to dismiss it, can't, won't let his mind go there. It's easy, after five years of dismissing everything else. Five years of heated glances and stolen touches, of covert messages and firm denial. Five years of learning the exact cadence of Ilya's laugh, the way he looked away when things got too intense, the way his hands felt like they belonged, were made to fit perfectly on Shane's hips.

But marks weren't born from nothing. Marks didn't come from strangers or crushes or one-night-stands. They didn't come from accidents. They came from recognition.

It darkens—just slightly—into the impression of a curve over the next few months, not a hand or knuckle, not a palm, the suggestion of a fingerprint.

He stars at it until his chest hurts.

He wears long sleeves, gloves.

He doesn't tell Ilya and Ilya doesn't ask.

III.

The people that do have marks wear them openly—hands intertwined on subway platforms, glowing fingerprints along wrists and throats, handprints overlapping, lips on cheeks and foreheads and noses. A riot of colors and shapes and feelings on display for the world to see.

IV.

Ilya learns early on where marks are allowed to exist— on faces, on hands and fingers and forearms, places that can be explained, understood, romanticized— uncomplicated and easy to read.

When his first mark appears, undeniable and new, five years into knowing Shane, it chooses a place that felt like a betrayal: just beneath his collarbone. Left side, close to his heart. It's not a fear of being marked that haunts him, not really, it is a fear of being seen; marks invite questions, assumptions, expectations: a story, a happy ending—and Ilya has none of those to give.

He can only press his palm to his chest and whisper Shane's name like a confession.

V.

Their bodies keep the records that they refuse to acknowledge.

The marks grow—not quickly, not boldly, they accumulate the way memory does: in fragments, in snippets of time, flashes of brilliance: the slow growth and awakening of something new—tender and quiet. They stay soft, undefined, unacknowledged.

They both wear gloves now, but it doesn't stop new marks from appearing. A conversation leaves a soft brown line at Shane's ankle, the color of toasted bread. Shared smiles at a hotel bar etches warmth along both their ribs. A late-night phone call across time and space and continents traces something steady and dark along Ilya's spine—proof that being held emotionally still counts in all of the ways that matter.

They never compare. They haven't kissed in years.

VI.

Shane pulls back, exhaling. “Do you ever think,” he says carefully, hearing each word as they land between them, in the tiny space between their bodies, honest and raw and so, so, tired, “that some things don't happen because we're... very good at avoiding them?”

Ilya stares up at him, at the sunshine in his hair and marvels at the sight. At being allowed to see him like this, in his home, his oasis away from the world. He doesn't hesitate: “All the time.”

Silence. Then, finally, inevitably, perfectly--scared but certain, Shane sits up and strips off his shirt, his gloves, "Ilya," he says, voice steady but eyes wet and searching, "can I tell you about my marks?"

"Yes, tell me. Rasskazhi mne nashu istoriyu."

The marks were everywhere. Mostly subtle, still, but all unmistakable—lines, impressions, warm beneath the skin. A history written in restraint—written over muscle and bone, onto miles of skin—a map, a timeline, an adventure waiting to be told.

Ilya's hands tell the same story, a key, a legend for the shapes and stories written on Shane's shoulders.

They sit there, marveling, unlocked wonder written across their faces, seven years of denial between them.

“I was afraid,” Shane admits quietly, “that if we acknowledged it... it would demand something I wasn’t ready to give.”

A nod, an understanding, a confirmation and an absolution.

When Shane tips forward, his forehead against Ilya's shoulder, the mark that blooms across his chest isn't bright or hesitant. It's deep—settled, knit into his soul, a pure sunbeam of right and good and true— like something that had always known right where it belonged.

VII.

They choose a place that does not allow for hesitation. A press event—full, bright lights, cameras and notepads, a wall of reporters.

Ilya stood at the edge of the crowd, blazer buttoned high, throat tight. The mark beneath his collarbone, his first, the one that changed everything, pulsed with warmth—not visibly yet, but insistently, like it knew what was coming. Across the room, Shane met his eyes. They didn't smile—this wasn't softness, this was a decision.

The announcer calls their names and they step forward, measured, composed, every inch the leaders they'd become over the years. Shane barely heard the first round of questions, answers rote and automatic, waiting for the one that would change everything, watches Ilya's hands—still, controlled, empty.

There's silence when he tunes back in, finds Ilya looking at him with absolute adoration in his eyes, and it's a silence that invites movement, that dares you to act. He reaches out, every breath loud in the quiet room. He can feel the eyes on him, tracking his movement, curiosity sharpening into stunned recognition. For a heartbeat, no one moves—then, sure as the sun shines, shooting Ilya's curls through with gold, he reaches back, not a brush, not an accident, nothing that could be explained away—he reaches out and places his hand over Shane's wrist.

Their marks ignite immediately—reacting to the touch of the one person that knows their soul above all others.

Shane's sleeve couldn't hide it—the faint line on his wrist flared bright, color deepening, spreading upward like ink in water. Ilya's own mark bloomed in response, warmth surging beneath his collar, visible now to anyone looking closely enough.

Someone gasps. A camera shutter clicks.

Then, just as deliberately, Ilya turns his hand over and laces their fingers together.

Fully. Publicly.

Marks bloom everywhere they touched—interlocking rings of light around their hands, steady and undeniable, a promise to each other and a statement to the world; this wasn't a claim made in passion—this was certainty made visible

Shane's heart pounded, but his grip didn't falter. Ilya's thumb pressed once, twice, three times, firm and anchoring. "I am here," he said quietly—not to the room, but to Shane.

A nod. "Me too."

The announcer clears her throat. Someone whispers. Someone else looks away.

They didn't let go. There would be consequences, later, they knew. Meetings, headlines, opinions—people who said it was unprofessional, irresponsible, overdue, beautiful, disruptive. But in the moment, all they feel is relief. Not because they world knew and approved, but because they had finally stopped asking it for permission.

VIII.

They don't speak until the door closes. Ilya's apartment is dim, the city's noise muffled by height and glass— Shane stands just inside the entryway, pulse still racing, hands tingling where Ilya's had been for the past hour.

The marks haven't faded. If anything, they're brighter—settled now, no longer flaring, but deep and sure, a beacon of soft light to help guide their way into the home. Ilya can feel his beneath the fabric of his shirt, warm and heavy, like it's finally allowed to exist.

Shane exhales, long and shaky and Ilya turns back, really looks at him. Up close, the composure is gone— eyes too bright, shoulders tight like he's bracing for an impact that hasn't yet come.

"You didn't hesitate," Ilya says quietly, "I. I was ready for you to."

Shane swallows, "I almost did. Then I realized if I stopped myself again, I'd never forgive it." He lifts a hand halfway towards Ilya—then stops, a habit not old enough to have broken yet. Ilya reaches out and closes the distance himself, wrapping his fingers around Shane's wrist, grounding them both. The mark there responds instantly, a low heat blooming under his palm.

"It is okay," Ilya says softly, "You can touch me."

Shane's breath stutters in his chest—carefully, like something fragile, like something sacred, he rests his other hand on Ilya's waist. Not pulling or claiming, just there, a presence— strong and gentle all at once. A new mark spills across Ilya's skin underneath his hand, a warmth that spreads and settles, a glow like muted sunlight spilling through Shane's fingers.

They lean in as one, foreheads touching, shared breath and shared weight.

"I was so tired," Ilya murmurs, "of being careful."

Shane nods, eyes closed. "Me too." His thumb moves once—small, grounding—against Ilya's side. The mark there pulses, a quiet acknowledgment.

They stay like that for a long time.

IX.

They fall asleep tangled around each other on the couch, the television playing something neither of them watches. The marks stay warm through the dark, steady as a second pulse.

Ilya wakes first. Sunlight cuts across the living room, catching the faint glow of Shane's wrist where it rests on his chest. The mark there is different now. Not brighter, but calmer, as if it's no longer straining toward something just out of reach.

Shane wakes a moment later, smiling softly without ever opening his eyes. "Good morning."

And Ilya's breath catches in his throat. "Good morning, moya lyubov".

Later, they will make breakfast, stand too close at the counter, passing one mug back and forth.

Later, they will check their phones, see the messages waiting, the missed calls, the notifications stacked like threats and ignore all but the most important.

Later, they will have long overdue conversations that circle carefully around fear, acknowledging everything they spent avoiding and denying—admitting—out loud—just how much it cost.

But now, now—Ilya cups his jaw with reverent care, a mark blossoming immediately, soft and sweet and deep along Shane's cheekbone—he cups his jaw and kisses him, gentle, unhurried, a sweetness wrapped in sunlight. And when he pulls back, just barely, the mark that blooms across Shane's mouth isn't dramatic or bold.

It's a soft gold.

End Notes

hand-wavy soulmate magic is the best

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