Roommates and Lovers

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Roommates and Lovers

by bearyberry

Summary

"Ilya!" Rose smiled when she found him stirring a pot on the stove.

"Rose," Ilya was smiling himself and was ready to tell her about his newest Idiot Classmate story. The words died on his tongue when he saw Rose was with someone.

This was an unusual development for many reasons, but Ilya couldn't focus on any of them when all he could see was the most beautiful man he'd ever seen in his life.

"Ah.... hello," he said instead, and shot Rose a confused looked before turning to the man again.

"Hi," he said.

or: Ilya, Rose, and Svetlana are roommates and Rose brings Shane home one day. Ilya yearns.

Notes

this is my 1 year anniversary for when i started soup saturdays with my housemate and i am missing it. i thought i would let you guys know.

See the end of the work for more notes

Ilya hated Mondays.

Maybe not *hate*, that was a strong word. He feared Mondays. That felt more appropriate.

He had classes all day. He had to wake up extra early to shower before Svetlana dominated the bathroom for eternity. His longest break was 25 minutes which was NOT enough time to eat lunch, which is what really scared him.

Constant self-care routines were the reason his depression had not completely consumed him. He needed a routine to avoid falling too hard and fast when a bad day inevitably came, and having 3 meals a day was on his list of basic self care along with a shower and staying hydrated. Yeah it was only one meal, once a week. But it could be enough of a fault for a depressive episode to capitalize on and ruin him.

So yeah, he didn't hate Mondays, he feared them.

Ilya also loved Mondays though.

It meant it was Soup Monday.

After being stuck on campus, running back and forth between the same two buildings from the hours of 10:30am to 4:30pm, he got to go back to the apartment and start making soup while watching the hockey highlights from the night before. He finished an hour before Rose and they had created a routine for themselves years ago when Rose invited Ilya to try her new years resolution with her. Rose didn't like soup and knew Ilya only really ate stews so she had decided he would be the perfect partner for her "try more soups" resolution.

After 2 years of Soup Mondays, Ilya's soup spreadsheet (titled SOUPS) was one of his greatest achievements. He had gotten in physical fights before when people had insulted it. It was a beloved tradition. One they'd had for such a long time, it came so naturally to Ilya. It was something constant and reliable when he'd had so little of it in his life, let alone constant, reliable, and *good.*

Which is why he had to fight back a spark of irritation and indignation when Rose came back to the apartment with a stranger.

This was *not* a part of the tradition.

"Ilya!" Rose smiled when she found him stirring a pot on the stove.

"Rose," Ilya was smiling himself and was ready to tell her about his newest Idiot Classmate story. The words died on his tongue when he saw Rose was with someone.

This was an unusual development for many reasons, but Ilya couldn't focus on any of them when all he could see was the most beautiful man he'd ever seen in his life.

"Ah.... hello," he said instead, and shot Rose a confused looked before turning to the man again.

"Hi," he said.

Ilya nodded and was about to speak again when Rose beat him to it. "I met Shane just today! He sat in my booth thinking it was empty."

"Ah," Ilya nodded again. Rose was the most charismatic person he'd ever met in his life. He was not surprised she had made friends with someone so quickly, maybe a little surprised she'd brought him back with no warning, but Ilya loved and trusted Rose so he would go along with her and invite the man into his favorite day of the week. "And you invited him over so we could teach him what real hockey looks like."

Ilya gave Shane's Montreal hoodie a disdainful look he hoped came across as teasing because he truly did not want to ruin Soup Monday with a full-on yelling match with a Metros fan.

Shane scoffed and rolled his eyes as he looked down at Ilya's Boston shirt. "If I had been warned this is what I was walking into I would have brought my whiteboard so I could explain your own stupidity to yourself."

Ilya smiled. "Since you forgot, then we must have to settle for watching ballet."

He'd clearly caught Shane off guard. His mouth dropped open into a near perfect 'o' and Ilya felt a pool of warmth spread through his body at the action. Rose noticed, took pity on Shane and explained. "Ilya and Svetlana are the hockey fans here, and while I'm no dummy, I certainly can't keep up with them so we watch ballet on Mondays."

"Today we are watching Coppelia," Ilya confirmed. "I criticize storyline, Rose criticizes dance."

"Oh," Shane turned from Ilya to Rose. "I don't know anything about ballet."

"That's ok! We don't have to watch anything. We need to finish making the soup anyway, so don't worry," Rose led Shane to sit at one of the barstools on the other side of the kitchen island as she talked and then turned to the kitchen to help with dinner.

Ilya added the last of his spices to the pot, put the lid back on and moved out of Rose's way as she took a couple of pans out of the fridge to make some bread to accompany the meal. He smiled when he recognized Svetlana's favorite flatbread recipe.

"So, *Shane*," Ilya made his way over to the barstool next to him and looked at him and thought: *He has freckles*. "What do you study?"

Shane looked him up and down with a narrowed eyes. Ilya could not blame his hesitation when he had basically been kidnapped by one of the most wonderful women in the world.

He eventually answered, "Applied math."

"Oh, gross," Ilya cringed.

Shane raised an eyebrow at him. "Oh, sorry. I must not have gotten the memo that tonight was 'Asshole reacts to everything I do or say' night."

Rose snorted somewhere beside them, but Ilya could only stare at Shane with a small smile on his face. "That is Rose Landry's mistake, it's always asshole reacts night with me."

This time Shane was the one snorting. He shook his head to look at Rose who had made her way to the island to roll out her dough. Shane suddenly tensed and rushed to ask, "Can I help?"

He was already moving out of his stool when Ilya shot out a hand to put on his shoulder and tug him back into his chair. Beneath his hoodie Ilya felt strong muscles and forced himself to take his hand off of him. "You do not want to do that. Rose is a tyrant in the kitchen."

Shane frowned and looked at Rose who looked back at him with a cheery smile. "I like you Shane, leave me be so our relationship can survive past day one, yeah?"

"I would feel a lot better if I could lend a hand after being invited to your home."

Ilya cleared his throat and put on a high pitched voice that made him wonder if Rose was going to throw the rolling pin she was using at him. "You useless hunk of meat! I told you to slice the garlic not fucking mince it! Do you need to go back to the fucking elementary school you worked at as a student this time? Get the fuck out!" Ilya turned to Shane with wide eyes, for dramatic effect. "She said that to me."

Rose threw the tea towel she had over her shoulder at him. "You knew what you were doing you fucking dick."

"I was trying to help my stressed friend!" These were well worn arguments at this point, but neither of them would give up. They'd learned not to bicker about this incident when Svetlana was out of earshot (thank you laxatives incident for not only successfully showing Rose how much of a mastermind Svetlana was, but also getting Ilya and Rose to shut up for a couple of weeks), but Shane had served him the perfect opportunity to bring it up again.

Rose flipped him off and turned to Shane. "Ignore him and don't let him scare you away. That said, he's right please don't help me."

"I do like not being torn apart verbally," Shane looked like he was measuring his words carefully. "I will stay away, but I owe you one."

"If you talk to Ilya for me that'll be more than enough. I'll owe you back tenfold."

Ilya threw the tea towel back at her with such precision and speed, he managed to catch her off guard. She squeaked as the towel hit her and Ilya smiled innocently at Shane who looked more and more likely to run away with each passing second. "Ignore her. It will be hard, but doable. What are your thoughts on Shrek 2 as cinema?"

The next time Ilya saw Shane, he was sitting at a table in the library scribbling in a notebook with a pair of fucking *glasses* sitting on the edge of his nose.

Glasses.

Shane wore glasses.

Ilya took a deep breath and then slowly let it out before approaching his table and sitting directly next to him.

Was it absolutely insane behavior on his part to sit next to him instead of across from him especially when there were 5 other empty tables in the room? Well, Ilya wasn't a doctor he wasn't allowed to diagnose people.

"Oh, ex-" Shane cut himself off when he saw who was sitting down next to him and glared at him, suspicion clear on his face. "Ilya."

Ilya fought to keep a smile off of his face as Shane said his name. That was *his name.*

Shane had said his name and it hit Ilya like a fucking freight train how it sounded coming from him. How he pronounced "-ya" at the end like the American sports bros would say "Ya, bro" before saying the stupidest fucking shit you've ever heard in your life. Except, Shane said it definitively. Not as the start of something, but the end. *Ilya*. Like there was no room for argument after he said it.

That was his name. Shane had said it.

"You are looking at how to get into wizarding school?" Ilya gestured to the symbols on Shane's computer instead of letting him know how besotted he was with the way Shane said his name. Like it belonged to him and Shane was the only one allowed to say it.

"Wha- no. What are you talking about?" Shane frowned at him after looking back at his computer.

"These are not words, they look like ancient curses."

"Oh!" Shane smiled as he looked back at his screen and shrugged. "It's just a differential equation, not even a super complicated one. You should have seen me two weeks ago when we did FFT's, that was a fucking nightmare. Our professor wanted us to reverse engineer the same system Cooley and Tukey discovered to really appreciate the beauty of them and I never genuinely considered murder more."

Ilya stared and tried to figure out what to respond. "Those are not words," he repeated. "You are being racist and using fake language to make me feel bad."

"That's not racism!" Shane looked so offended Ilya wanted to take a picture. "And I'm not lying!"

"Shhh, Shane we are in a library."

He glared at Ilya. "There's no one else in the fucking room."

"Shhh, Shane, shhh." Ilya shook his head and put a finger up to his lips to prove his point.

"You're such an asshole," he scoffed, but Ilya saw the smile playing at his lips. "You're the one who sat next to me."

"It's cold." Ilya shrugged and pulled out his own computer.

"So you're a liar as well as an asshole?"

"Yes."

Shane let out a laugh at the bluntness and Ilya felt a flutter of pride that he had been the had be the one to do it.

How do I do that again?

"Whatever," Shane turned back to his notes and Ilya started on his own work.

Not even halfway through annotating his article, however, he realized he actually did not want to be doing work and only wanted to make Shane laugh again. He lolled his head to the side to peer over at him and saw him making a frustrated face at his notebook and kept scrolling back to one part of his computer. Ilya wanted to guess what he was doing, but there weren't even numbers on Shane's screen. It was all symbols he assumed were Greek because while he had been absolute shit at math and physics, he *had* taken the classes anyway.

Ilya decided to take a risk and make a bid for Shane's full attention the only way he knew how. Poking and being infuriating.

Let it be know that Ilya Rozanov knew his worth.

Ilya slowly raised his hand towards Shane's face, slow and deliberate that Shane had enough time to see him coming. Shane turned at him slowly and Ilya carefully poked his cheek for a full 3 seconds before dropping his hand to his lap.

"What the fuck."

"That didn't sound like a question," Ilya responded with a grin.

"Can I help you, Ilya?" Shane fluttered his eyes at him with such disdain and sarcasm that Ilya felt like if he kissed this man senseless it could fix him immediately and he would need nothing else in life.

Antidepressants who?

"Why did you not eat my soup yesterday? I know you were lying about being allergic to garlic." Ilya hadn't been able to think of anything else but his stutter and blush while trying to come up with an excuse so as to not eat the soup. On *Soup Mondays* of all days too.

A blush spread over Shane's cheeks and Ilya couldn't help staring at his rosy cheeks and how his freckles stood out at the contrast. Ilya was so fucked. He was thinking these things. He

wasn't saying the out loud, sure, but he was *thinking* them out loud in his head and that was probably worse.

"How? How did you know?" Shane looked actually flustered and embarrassed and this was *so* much better than what Ilya had expected. Shane thought he'd gotten away with his stupid excuse for rejecting a free homemade meal.

They were grad students.

The only acceptable reasons you turned down free meals were: blood feud and hospital.

"You are the worst liar I've met in my entire life." Ilya deadpanned to see Shane's reaction aggravate, and oh he was not disappointed.

Shane actually *spluttered and coughed.*

Ilya thought that only happened in movies when someone was offended. "No one is allergic to garlic, Shane. Would have been more believable if you said you didn't like garlic."

"Everyone likes garlic," Shane muttered angrily under his breath

"Proves what a bad liar you are."

"Fuck you."

"Is that an offer?"

And, *oh,* if that wasn't the most alluring blush spreading over his cheeks.

"No! You're such a fucking shit-stirrer."

Ilya had never heard the term before but honestly felt like it fit, so didn't say anything and just stared at him. "I'm still waiting for an answer."

"Why do you care?" Shane challenged, the edge of his cheeks dusted pink.

"You will be at more Soup Mondays. I need to look for recipes that you will actually eat."

"I didn't agree to this."

"Rose will have her way, don't fight it."

Rose. Ilya. What's the difference?

"Whatever." Shane turned back to his notes, pointedly ignoring Ilya.

Ilya shrugged and took out his phone and texted Rose.

Ilya: do you have shanes number from the other night?

Rose: yeah!

Rose: [contact] Shane Hollander

Shane Hollander

It sounded right to Ilya.

He quickly added the number to his contacts and shot off a quick text.

Ilya: Hollander pay attention to me :(

The notification popped up on Shane's computer and he immediately turned to glare at Ilya who smiled innocently at him.

"I don't give up easy," he said with a shrug.

Shane muttered something under his breath that sounded something like "For fucks sake," before closing his laptop and turning to fully face Ilya.

"Fine, what do you want?"

Ilya: what is acceptable soup for you

Ilya: if my homemade gnocchi and chicken soup was such an offense

Shane: im lactose intolerant i told you

Ilya: did i ask?

Shane: i can feel your hurt coming through the screen

Ilya: its special soup

Ilya: first one we ever made together

Shane: im sorry

Shane: i didnt wnat to meet new people and then have explosive diarreah in their bathroom all within the same hour

Ilya: wnat

Shane: delete my number

Ilya: pozole

Shane: i dont eat pork

Ilya i am going to smother you in your sleep one feather at a time

Ilya: police will be so impressed with my patience they wont even arrest me

Shane: why is it that you know threats in English like it's your one purpose on Earth

Ilya: i like people knowing what i really think

Shane: you told Hayden he was proof evolution is real because he is everything species are trying to leave behind and you were surprised natural selection hasn't come for him yet

Ilya: who is hayden

Shane: r u serious right now

Ilya: I cooked

Ilya: and speaking of

Ilya: 67

Shane: am i supposed to know what that means

Shane: ????

Ilya: ur the numbers guy, figure it out

Shane: isnt it supposed to be 69?

Shane: why are you just sending me random numbers

Ilya: getting evidence you don't know how numbers work so u get kicked out of school

Shane: im deleting your number

Ilya: sorry cant talk right now im emailing student admissions about your lack of knowledge

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Ilya: slut

Shane: it costs 0 dollars to say good morning like a normal person

Ilya: i dont have that kind of money

Ilya: i am a simple, broke nyu student

Shane: literally look at your apartment you are not broke

Ilya: whore

Shane: lentil

Ilya: it costs 0 dollars to have good taste in soups

Shane: THIS ONE ISN'T BORING DO YOU KNOW HOW GOOD LENTILS ARE

Ilya: "isn't boring" he says,

Ilya: as if it isn't the textbook description of worlds lamest soup

Shane: asshole

Ilya: piss baby bitch

Shane: im going to win one of these soon

Ilya: mhm

"*Sveta!*" Ilya yelled as he opened the cupboard. *"Fucking wash my mug already!"*

He heard an indignant scoff from Svetlana's room and saw Rose look up from where she was reading on the couch. "Honestly, you two need to come up with a custody plan for that mug if even I was able to understand what you just said."

Before Ilya could respond, Svetlana stormed into the living room. Ilya noticed her hands were *not* carrying the best mug in the household and he raised an eyebrow at her.

"It is not *your* mug," she said angrily and Ilya knew he was in trouble if she was talking to him in English. She was going to drag Rose into the argument.

You didn't fight against an angry Svetlana Vetrova, and yet Ilya felt like it was written into his DNA to do just that.

"I *made* it!" Ilya crossed his arms and leveled a look at her. It was a pretty air-tight argument he thought.

"We all live in this house!" Svetlana shrieked.

"Svetlana!" Ilya couldn't stop the slip of her name. She wasn't even trying to win an argument, she was just trying to be annoying. She never gave up this quickly when she wanted to annoy Ilya. She was an expert at ragebaiting him and this was decidedly *not* the way to do it. "What is wrong with you?"

"Why haven't I met Shane?" Svetlana crossed her arms and pinned him in place with a glare that bordered on the edge between angry and hurt.

What the fuck?

This is what she was mad about? That Rose had brought a guest over and she hadn't been here? It wasn't even him who had invited Shane back to the house.

"Sveta, what are you talking about?"

"You've spent the past three days with him and I don't even know who he is!" Svetlana threw her arms up in exasperation. "You had a boy here who likes hockey and I don't even know him!"

Ilya looked to Rose for help but she pinned him with a look that said: *If you make her cry I will kill you, but she's not in the right here, so tread carefully*. He scoffed and pulled out his phone while staring directly at Svetlana. The phone rang 4 times before he heard Shane's voice say "Ah.... Hello?"

"Bring your whiteboard this weekend for the game. I will make your food and hope Svetlana does not win the war between you two."

There was silence as Shane took a moment to process his words. "Are you asking me to come over for the Montreal vs. Boston game on Saturday?"

"Yes."

"And you want me to fight your other roommate in your house where she has the home advantage?"

Ilya's mouth twitched as he fought back a smile. He was still staring down Svetlana, there could be no chinks in his armor. Shane Hollander was going to be the death of him. "You would not win anyway."

"I'm pretty skilled when it comes to talking about hockey, I'm in. I'm not scared of her."

"You will be. Goodbye." Ilya hung up and put his phone back in his pocket. "He will be here on Saturday. I will cook."

Svetlana smiled. "*You have not talked about anything but him for the past three days*."

Ilya rolled his eyes to avoid looking down at his feet. "*You're lying. I know I told you about what Henry Giroux article I chose for my presentation.*"

"*You like him*."

"Enough, you are lying and I still don't have my mug yet." Ilya was not going to admit to thinking about nothing but Shane since he walked into their apartment with his appalling hoodie and dazzling freckles. "It has been 5 days, Sveta. It is the best mug and you don't even use it more than once. Just leave it in your room collecting dust."

Svetlana smirked and walked back to her room without a word.

"Do I need to take sides?" Rose asked as she walked away. "Or can I tell you both you're idiots and move on without problems?"

"No problems, unless she keeps holding my child hostage."

Shane: how is it possible to be so afraid of someone yet so in awe of the at the same time

Ilya: its the svetlana special

Ilya: no one else can

Shane: can i steal her from you

Ilya: no

Ilya: you already stole rose, I have to keep one of them at least

Shane: thank you for inviting me

Ilya: of course

Ilya: im glad you came

Ilya: was even more fun than usual to see the metros lose

Shane: r u going to Marleau's party tomorrow?

Ilya: of course

Ilya: thats ma boi

Ilya: are you????

Shane: hayden is dragging me

Shane: i ahte parties

Ilya: ahte

Shane: do you want me to jump off a building

Shane: is that what you want

Ilya: not sorry

Ilya: if you dont want to, then dont go

Shane: nah

Shane: ive been saving up social energy so maybe it will be good to see my friends

Ilya: call Rose before you go

Ilya: you don't know how to dress yourself

Shane: i appreciate how you didnt say i should call you for fashion advice

Ilya: you would wear the complete opposite just to piss me off

Shane: correct

Ilya walked into the apartment and Rose lifted her head up from the couch to look at him. "Ilyaaaaaa!" she said happily, as if it could have been anyone else.

Ilya took off his shoes and padded over to the couch to lay on top of her. Rose smiled and wrestled her arms out from under him to wrap him in a loose hug. "Rose," he returned the greeting.

"I didn't see you at all today," Rose whispered as she started threading her hands through his hair. Ilya could smell the wine on her breath from being so close to her

"Busy day," he whispered back. "Not bad, just busy."

Rose hummed in acknowledgement and kept her hands tangled in his hair. Ilya closed his eyes and sighed. He couldn't stop thinking about Shane. How he had immediately spotted Ilya in the crowd. How he lit up and smiled at him. How his next step was towards him.

Him.

Ilya.

Of all the people there, Shane had chosen him. Shane Hollander had looked at him and decided he was important enough. He'd decided he would smile at him and stay close to him. Ilya couldn't erase how perfectly he'd fit between his legs.

Ilya thought he looked perfect there.

Ilya wasn't sure if it was his imagination, but Shane seemed comfortable. Shane seemed to relax when he'd stepped into Ilya's space. If all else, Ilya relaxed when Shane was close.

Even when Shane had gone to the bar and Ilya was staring at him, looking at how the light threaded through his hair and how fucking *pretty* he was, Ilya felt a little discomfort. A little uncomfortable at how the space next to him was empty because it was Shane who had left it. Had left it as an open invitation for everyone at the party, as if anyone could take his place next to Ilya and it wouldn't matter.

It fucking mattered.

He only wanted Shane Hollander next to him.

Only Shane.

At this stupid fucking bar. At the library. At the gym. On the couch. In his bed.

He wanted Shane to be next to him wherever he was.

Only Shane.

But all he could do was stare at his profile and think about how he wanted to tell everyone he knew that Shane Hollander was the most beautiful man in the entire world. That he would move hell and earth for him if he ever wanted. As he watched Shane smile and laugh at something the bartended said all he could think about was reaching out to him and saying: *It should be me. It should be me who makes you laugh in this space. This space you hate and only came to because you love your friends. Please, it should be me who gets to hear all the pretty sounds you have to make. Please, Shane, it should be me.*

"I have a crush."

Ilya was surprised at the words he spoke into the comfortable silence.

Rose paused and moved to look at him. Ilya closed his eyes. He didn't want to look at her while he said this. He didn't want to feel like this. He hated the uncertainty and the stupid fucking flutter of excitement whenever he saw Shane that made him doubt everything he said. He just wanted Shane to like him. To want him.

To want him like he did.

"Ilya," Rose said slowly, clearly waiting for him to look at her. "Ilya, it's ok."

Ilya kept his eyes firmly closed. Rose's arms came around him and pulled him into her in a tight hug. "Tell me about him. Tell me about him through your eyes."

He opened his eyes to look at Rose smiling at him with pure, unfiltered joy and sincerity. He felt a surge of affection for her. His Rose, who always knew what he needed before he did. Before he could decide what he wanted to share, Svetlana came into the living room and looked at them with a dopey smile. "My babes."

"Hmpgh," Ilya turned back into Rose with a pout.

Rose laughed and pushed him a little, which he took as his queue to climb off of her. Ilya sat up on the couch, head on Rose's shoulder as she spoke to Svetlana. "Ilya has a crush."

Svetlana raised an eyebrow at Ilya. "Sounds like you'll need cookies to get through it."

Ilya couldn't fight his smile as he lifted himself off of the couch with a quick kiss to Rose's forehead and made his way to the kitchen to line the baking trays for Svetlana.

It was *so* over once he was with Sveta. With the 4 empty bottles of wine on the counter he assumed were shared with Rose, the image of Shane so fresh in his mind, and Ilya having been unable to walk back home in a straight line, there was nothing that could stop him from waxing rhapsodic about Shane. Ilya was lying on the floor of his kitchen with his legs up against the wall and his head in Svetlana's lap within two minutes. He didn't even feel bad about speaking Russian and keeping Rose out of the loop; he was happy to do it again as many times as he needed to.

The thing about The Revelation, was that Ilya was going to do nothing about it.

Absolutely jack shit and that's why it hurt so much. Why he'd been so morose. Other than the fact it was embarrassing as hell for him to have a pep in his step if he so little as *waved* at Shane, not even have a conversation with him. He was so fucked that the smallest glance of Shane Hollander made him giggle and kick his feet like a fucking idiot. So yeah, he'd been sad because of the embarrassment, but more because of the realization.

The realization that Ilya wanted Shane in his life and the best and safest way to do was was by being his friend. Which was easy to do if Rose was quickly becoming Shane's best friend and bringing him to group activities at the house as much as she could.

So Ilya couldn't tell him.

Because if he scared Shane with his confession then not only would walk out of Ilya's life for good, but maybe Rose's life as well, and Ilya couldn't do that to Rose. Ilya would rather peel off his own eyelids and dip his face in a bucket of lime juice before he hurt Rose.

So, he had to live for the small moments he saw Shane and never wish for anything more. Which was hard because he wanted so much fucking more. It was starting to eat him alive whenever he was with Shane, the desperation and hunger to kiss, hug, and love him. Ilya could feel his heart straining against his chest whenever he was with Shane, reaching out to him even when Ilya's brain told it to back off. Every part of Ilya wanted to reach for him. To caress his face, to kiss his lips, to play with his hair, to hold his hand. Every part of him wanted Shane Hollander.

It felt like he was being choked from inside his body when he stopped himself from wanting him. Ilya felt like he was dying, so he did the only thing he could and worked himself to death to avoid thinking thoughts or feel feelings.

Luckily Ilya loved his field of study and working with kids was genuinely the only thing that made him feel fulfilled in life. It truly wasn't out of the ordinary for Ilya to lose himself in his work. Rose and Svetlana didn't even bat an eye when he spent the week pouring over his gardening lesson plans for the non-profit he was working with. He wrote new lessons, rewrote old ones, and went out of his way to make questionnaires for the teachers of the school so he could properly accommodate the lessons to each grade.

They asked questions when he spent all weekend at the community center he usually only worked at during winter and spring break, but it was only if he had remembered to pack his lunch and fill his water bottle before he left. Ilya had been working with them for years and had been oh so conveniently called in to substitute a variety of classes since one of the youth instructors had an emergency come up.

Ilya wanted to die.

No, not really. He had to stop saying that.

Ilya wanted to scream until his throat was raw, cry for 5 hours, sleep for 24 hours, and then sit outside in a thunderstorms as the rain soaked him through until his feeling washed out of him. Maybe that would fix him, because kissing Shane was not an option so that would have to come in close second because it was much more doable than anything else.

His stupid fucking crush was running his life.

He'd started thinking in English when he was around Shane just in case he was a mind reader he could understand Ilya's thoughts. Maybe that way Ilya could be put out of his fucking misery. It hadn't worked so far, which is why Ilya was staring down at 7 year-old trying to bribe him.

"Ilya, you promised," Harper looked up at him with the most adorable pout he'd ever seen. Honestly he wanted to throw his job rules out of the fucking window sometimes and shower all his kids with all the affection he could muster.

Ilya scoffed in mock offense. "Harper, you are lying. I never promise anything, you know this."

"But, Ilya, *pleaseeeeeeeee,*" Thatcher looked up at him with the widest eyes and the half smile that seemed to be his default face. Ilya thought he was trying to pout but the kid was just so happy he was always smiling.

Ilya knew he was going to do it. Of course Ilya was going to play sharks and minnows with the kids. It was his favorite game and he lost respect for anyone who said it was old and boring. Ilya, however, did still have a job to do, so he put a finger up to his chin and thoughtfully said. "I don't know. I don't think I saw you guys do your tumble turns in that last lap."

The kids broke out in screams and arguments.

"ILYA WE DID IT-"

"YOU DIDN'T TELL US TO DO IT-"

"ILYA PLEASE, CLASS IS ALMOST OVER-"

"ILYA IF WE DO IT AGAIN-"

"Ok, ok ok, everyone! Shhh," Ilya yelled over all the voices to get their attention, before continuing to regular volume. "We are going to do the last combination again, and I am going to be at the other end making sure you do your tumble turns. And if all of you do it," Ilya paused to look at every kid in the eye before continuing. "Then we will play, ok?"

Ilya expected nothing less than the chorus of agreement that broke out immediately as he stopped talking. He swam over to the deep end and smiled at the lifeguard on duty, Christie, who, as expected, did not respond and continued scanning the water.

"Okay!" Ilya yelled to the kids. "Remember the rules?"

"One at a time!" The five kids answered in unison.

"We go in alphabetical order this time!"

Ilya heard Corrin's groan from across the pool and smiled. He was about to give her the go ahead when he heard his name from the viewing deck and turned to see Rose waving maniacally next to a smiling Shane and Ilya's brain short circuited for a second.

He's here.

Ilya paused, deciding what would be the most normal, and waved back with a smile and yelled out to the kids "Look it's my friends Rose and Shane! Say hello!"

"Hello Rose and Shane!" The five kids waved at them. Rose giggled and replied with her own greeting, while Shane waved back, so incredibly shy that Ilya wanted to dive straight into the deep end towards the center of the Earth and never have to face his life again. Instead, Ilya ran a self-conscious hand over his hair and turned back to the matter at hand. "Okay, Corrin," the girl turned her attention back to Ilya and he could see her bite her lip in determination from across the pool. Ilya smiled again and gave her the countdown they'd decided on for the day.

After all the kids finished, they dragged him to the middle of the pool and Ilya let himself get lost in the game. He was dragged out of his stupor when he heard a sharp whistle and cringed as the lifeguard shouted, "No roughhousing!"

"Sorry Christie!" Ilya threw over his shoulder and stuck out his tongue at Rose whose snort at Ilya getting yelled at reverberated throughout the space. Ilya didn't do anything worse than that because he was a fucking professional and had never sworn in front of a kid and was not about to start now.

"Okay," Ilya stood properly on the floor of the pool. "Squid Nation!" Ilya said seriously and the five kids snapped his attention to him. "Our last task is to go over to the deep end and we are going to treat water for two minutes." The kids all groaned and Ilya stopped himself from laughing. "I know, I know. I am evil. But a lot of summer camps have this rule for the good swimming zone so I am just preparing you for something important, yes?"

"But Ilya it's *winter*," George groaned.

"George this is not the mindset of a winner. I am training you for fun?" He looked at the kids expectantly and waited for them to answer.

"Yeah!" Thatcher smiled up at him and Ilya's heart exploded in joy. He heard an aww from the viewing deck and Ilya couldn't help but agree. "You are right," Ilya gave up on his inspiring 'never give up' speech he'd been planning. "I train you for fun. And we have had fun, but we also need to get strong with doing boring exercises so we can play sneaky sharks and minnows soon, yes? Are you all with me?"

The children all nodded enthusiastically and Ilya herded them over to the deep end and started counting the two minutes in increasingly ridiculous voices to make them laugh. He got a couple of angry children yelling at him to let them focus and a couple of splashes that Christie whistled at them for, but they were all laughing after the two minutes were up.

The class came to an end, and if Ilya flexed his abs more than he would have any other day as he pulled himself out of the pool, no one knew but him. Ilya might bee in the depths of despair with his crush, but he knew what he looked like. He knew Shane was gay. Maybe be wanted to make him look. No one had to know. As the kids wrapped themselves up in their towels, Ilya gave them all high fives on the way to their adults and a 'good work, you were amazing' that made Thatcher give him a hug, so careful and precious that Ilya heard another aww from the viewing deck and looked up to see Rose and Shane with their hands over their face looking at him.

After all the kids had been taken care of, he thanked Christie and changed quickly to make his way over to Shane and Rose. He found them in the lobby right outside the locker rooms and kissed Rose on the forehead and wrapped her in the biggest hug he could give. Ilya hoped it said 'I'm sorry I've been gone, I'm not running away from you, I promise. I love you.'

"It's ok," she whispered and Ilya wanted to cry at how he was lucky enough to have her in his life. When they pulled away Rose smiled at him. "You love this, of course it's important."

Ilya didn't know what to say so he turned to Shane who was already looking at him and Ilya's heart skipped at beat when he saw him. Shane was looking at him with the kindest, most

genuine smile he'd ever seen. Kinder and softer than Thatcher's even, and that was saying something.

Ilya kissed him obnoxiously on the cheek because he wanted to, and to keep his cover, threw an arm over Shane and said, "Thanks for coming it's been a long day."

Ilya expected Rose to answer and was ready for the subtle 'What the fuck was that' prodding, but Shane spoke first. "It was Rose's idea, and I'm glad we made it." Shane smiled at him with the same fucking look from before and Ilya's heart started thudding in his chest. "I gotta admit, it's more fun to see you do your work than it is to watch me do math."

I love watching you do everything. The thought was unbidden and Ilya smacked it out of his brain as hard as he could.

"Yeah," Rose turned from them and started making her way toward the exit. "It's been a while since I've seen you with them. It makes me happy because it makes you happy, but also makes me sad because you're never that nice to me."

Ilya scoffed and rolled his eyes at her tone and was going to tell her to fuck off, but locked eyes with Shane who had a curious look and *still* had that fucking look and smile that Ilya would call infatuation on anyone else. Ilya felt his heartbeat throbbing inside his head by how loud and fast it started beating.

He needed to kiss him.

But he couldn't. So Ilya pulled his arm off of Shane to make a grab for Rose's cheeks with it and threw his free arm around her shoulders too. "Aww, little Rosie is sad I don't treat her like a child?" He shook her face with his hand grabbing on to her face and she batted him away and tried to bite him. Ilya pulled away just in time, laughing.

He kept his arm around Rose and put his other hand in his pocket as they made their way to one of Ilya's favorite cafés for dinner.

They laughed and had the best night Ilya's had in weeks, even if his heart stuttered in his chest every time he looked at Shane.

Shane: i somehow ran into one of your kids

Shane: the city is fucking huge how did this happen

Shane: but even more importantly how did he remember me????

Ilya: kids are magic didnt you know

Shane: do u believe in magic?

Ilya: no

Ilya: had too many teachers tell me about folklore in school

Ilya: not even as part of a lesson, just as a 'life lesson'

Ilya: ok i guess

Shane: i believe in magic

Ilya: tell me more

Shane: you know when you feel like such shit and the world sucks and that you feel like the personification of anger?

Shane: and then you talk to a friend or something and it kinda all melts away and it happens in an instant?

Shane: like just by existing they make you feel whole and real when you were feeling the worst you ever have

Shane: that's magic to me idk

Ilya: *[draft] you are magic to me*

Ilya banged on the door, and only because he was afraid to have the policed called on him, he, very thoughtfully, did not throw himself against the door to forcibly make his way inside.

The door opened carefully to a man Ilya never wanted to see ever again. Once had been too many times already. "Where is he?" Ilya spat out as he took a step towards the door to make his way inside Shane's apartment.

"What the fuck?" Hayden jumped out of the way as Ilya bulldozed his way inside. "Rozanov what the hell are you doing here?"

"Where is Shane?" Ilya asked again. "He hasn't been answering his phone, I know something is wrong."

"Jeez, dude, calm down," Hayden closed the door and gestured to the closed door that led to Shane's room. "He's got a cold, or the flu or something. He's been sleeping for most of the day for the past couple of days."

"Is he okay?"

"I mean, he's sick, so no. But he's not dying."

Ilya huffed and looked at the closed door before turning to Hayden. "You can go, Pike. I'll take care of him."

Hayden's eyes widened comically. "You're going to take care of him? You have the worst bedside manner of anyone I've ever met."

"For you," Ilya didn't deny it. "You suck. Shane does not."

"Fuck you man," Hayden looked like he wanted to punch Ilya. It was his default look so Ilya didn't worry and just raised an eyebrow at him.

"Goodbye, Pike. Go back to your family. No one needs you here." Ilya turned to Shane's room without looking back and heard Hayden mutter some impressive curses he didn't bother

to respond to. Instead, he knocked carefully on the door to Shane's room and waited for a sound of recognition which came in the form of a muffled grunt.

Ilya smiled against the door and took a steadying breath before opening the door. He found Shane in a lump under the covers. Ilya knew as soon as he went into the room how shitty Shane must have been feeling. It wasn't because of the eye boogers crusted to the inside of his eyes, or how his face was puffed red with sleep, or how his nose was irritated with how much he'd been blowing it. It was the state of his room that made Ilya pause.

There were tissues littered all over the floor, the sheets were coming off of two different corners of the bed, there were plates stacked on the table, and everything was a fucking *mess*. Shane Hollander was a lot of things, but a slob was not one of them. Ilya turned back to Shane on the bed and approached him slowly.

"Shane?" Ilya asked carefully as he pulled back the covers to look at him more fully.

"I feel bad." Shane moaned without opening his eyes.

"*Oh, sweetheart*," Ilya leaned down to put a hand to his forehead. "I know you do. But I'm going to help you ok?"

"You can't do shit," he moaned again. "I have to feel like this forever until my stupid fucking body gets rid of the germs."

Ilya was so gone for him. Shane was literally pouting and frowning and instead of calling him an asshole, Ilya wanted to wrap him up into a hug and kiss him until his fever went away. But Ilya was an expert at repressing his emotions for Shane at this point. "I can help a little, Shane," Ilya pulled the covers back all the way and kept back a smile at the grabby hands made at them as they made their way down the bed. "Come on, let's get you in the shower."

"Noooo, Ilya," Shane tried to turn away from him and Ilya rolled his eyes before making a decision. He swept his hands under Shane and bridal carried him towards the bathroom, ignoring the noises of half-hearted protest coming from Shane. He also tried to ignore the way Shane instinctively curled into him and *nuzzled* his head into the crook of his shoulder.

He failed at that.

Luckily, they arrived at the bathroom quickly and Ilya carefully set him down on the ground. He expected Shane to finally take the hint that Ilya was not messing around about making him shower and make his way to the shower on his own. Instead, once Shane was on the ground he leaned his whole weight on Ilya and kept his face tucked into his necks and said. "Ilya, I feel bad. Don't make me."

Ilya sighed and wrapped one of his arms around Shane's waist and brought the other to Shane's head. He resisted the urge to tangle his fingers in his hair and instead rubbed slow circles at the nape of his neck. "I know Shane. It's not fun, but you will feel better afterwards. I promise."

"But I feel fine now," he whined.

Ilya let out a laugh. "You're still an awful liar."

"Fuck you."

Ilya moved to grab his face in both his hands, forcing Shane to look at him in the eyes. "You are going to shower. Hot water to loosen up all the gross shit inside you, okay?"

Shane stared at him, mouth slightly open from how Ilya was grabbing his cheeks and all Ilya could think was how this was still the most beautiful person he'd ever seen in his life. Ilya was mesmerized by him.

So mesmerized he wanted to imagine Shane was staring at him for the same reasons, and not planning his slow death after forcing him out of bed.

"Okay?" Ilya asked again softly.

Shane finally nodded and made his way towards the shower. Ilya let himself out of the bathroom and went back to Shane's bedroom. Once inside Ilya started ripping off the sheets from the bed and rummaging through the closet to find new ones. As he was throwing the old sheets in the laundry basket, he saw Shane's phone fall out of the mess that was his bed and saw a couple of messages from his mom on the screen.

Ilya huffed and picked up the phone. Shane would want his mom to know how he was feeling. it blew Ilya's mind that Hayden hadn't already alerted her. Shane was supposed to be going back home in a few days for winter break, what if he got worse and couldn't fly? Ilya didn't let himself groan as he unlocked Shane's phone and clicked the 'call' button on his mom's contact.

He hated talking to parents. But this was Shane's mom, he had to.

The phone rang twice before she answered.

"Shane!" the woman on the other side of the phone exclaimed happily. "I'm just at the store, stocking up on all your favorite things. We're so excited so see you!"

"Ahhhhh," Ilya said gracefully. "Sorry, Yuna Hollander? This is not Shane. He is sick."

The silence was so devastating Ilya started to panic, trying to find something to say. *Fuck* this is why he never talked to parents. Svetlana's were an odd exception, but fucking hell what was he supposed to say now?

There was a pause and Ilya looked at the phone to make sure he hadn't accidentally hung up."Is- is he okay?" Ilya was shocked to find the happy voice he'd talked to 2 seconds ago was gone and had been replaced by a gasping near-sobbing woman.

Ilya then realized what he said.

"*Fuck*," Ilya gasped sharply. "No, no, Mrs. Hollander he only has the flu or something. I called to tell you so you would know, but also because maybe if he doesn't get better he might not be able to fly home. He is not dying I'm sorry. This is Ilya Rozanov. I'm Shane's- I'm taking care of Shane."

"Oh my God!" Ilya cringed at the relieved sob Shane's mom let out. He was so fucking stupid why did anyone ever let him do this. "Oh my God, you can't just drop that on a woman in the middle of the grocery store."

"I am so sorry. I see know how that sounded. He's just been uh... tired and hasn't showered in days and there is a lot of sneezing, coughing, and green shit-" *fuck don't fucking swear in front of his mom what the fuck are you doing* "-I got him in the shower, but I know he flies home soon and he would want you to know regardless."

Ilya heard her take a deep breath and Ilya fought the urge to dunk his head underwater until the bubbles stopped. "Il-Ilya right? Thank you for calling. Tell Shane to give me a call when he can so I can find other flights that could work. Since his first year we always get changeable tickets because the weather can be so finicky."

"I will tell him to call you, he has not been responding for days so I wanted to give you heads up."

"Thank you, for calling but also thank you for taking care of him. He's so stubborn and such a brat when he's sick, it's not fun to deal with."

"Ah," Ilya waved a dismissive hand in the air even though she couldn't see. "He is stubborn and a brat anyway, nothing new, except he sleeps more."

Yuna laughed and Ilya smiled. "You're not wrong, I suppose, but really, thank you. I really do appreciate it."

Ilya opened his mouth to respond when he heard Shane call him from the bathroom. "Sorry one second," he said to the phone and then yelled towards the bathroom. "Shane? Are you ok?"

"I don't have any clothes!" Ilya rolled his eyes at the response. He was such a fucking diva and Ilya wanted to kiss him senseless.

"You're in the bathroom! There are towels!"

"I don't like changing in my room! It's too drafty and I get cold!" Shane was literally groaning and moaning in the most pathetic voice Ilya had ever heard in his life, and Ilya worked with *children.* Shane was going to be the death of him.

"Oh my God, Hollander," Ilya shook his head and only allowed himself to do it fondly because there was no one else in the room. "What clothes do you want? No, it cannot be the Metros hoodie, you have been wearing that for 3 days straight it is full of germs and boogers. Also, you are not walking into my house with that *thing* on ever again."

Ilya heard some muffled muttering which he assumed were colorful curses in his direction and smiled. Again, there was no one in the room, who would know? "Mathletes shirt, blue hoodie, and black sweatpants."

"Okay, Shane, I am coming." Ilya said a little *too* fondly for still being on the phone with him mom, and cleared his throat before he addressed her again. "Sorry, I have to be a butler now, apparently. I will tell Shane to call you as soon as he can."

Yuna paused before answering and in the kindest voice Ilya had ever heard said, "Thank you Ilya."

"Oh, uh," her tone caught Ilya off guard. "Of course, what are friends for? Uh, goodbye."

He hurried off the call and found the clothes Shane had asked for. He dropped them off at the bathroom, before going back to Shane's bedroom and finishing cleaning up. By the time Shane found him, all the tissues were in the trash can, the bed had clean sheets, and all the dirty dishes had been rinsed and placed in the sink.

"Oh, wow," Shane looked around the room. "Thank you. You don't have to do this you know."

"No one tells me what to do," Ilya jumped up from the bed he was sitting on and looked at Shane. He looked as beautiful as he always did and Ilya wanted to cradle his face and kiss his until their lips fused together and they started becoming one person and grew to the size of the apartment, the city, and then the entire world and be united for all of eternity. But Ilya was *normal*, so instead he said, "Grab a bag and pack your stuff Hollander you're moving in until you feel better. I've fired Pike as your nurse."

"No, Ilya, I'm really fine, go back to Rose and Svetlana and enjoy you're break." Shane walked over to him and tried to push him out of his room, but Ilya simply raised an eyebrow at him until Shane became uncomfortable enough to stop his efforts and look at him in the eyes again.

"Don't tell me what to do, Hollander. Grab a bag, pack some clothes. I will make you lentil soup, make sure you call your mother, and put so much honey in your tea you won't even know you're drinking warm leaf water." Ilya kept his tone casual. If he did what he actually wanted to go and begged Shane to let Ilya take care of him because otherwise he will make himself sick with worry over how he's feeling, he knew Shane wouldn't even entertain the option of going with Ilya. When Shane looked at him, still unsure, Ilya said one more thing. "Please. Shane, let me take care of you."

Shane's eyes snapped to his and Ilya could see the indecision mix with something else he couldn't quite place, but didn't try to decipher it when Shane said, "Okay."

Ilya smiled. "Okay?"

"Yeah," Shane nodded and turned into his closet to look for a bag. "I feel like total shit."

Ilya shook the stupid, loving smile off of his face and nodded, even though Shane wasn't looking at him. "I know, you look like it."

Shane snorted and flipped him the middle finger without turning around and packed a bag to go home with Ilya

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Ilya: i can hear your 3blue1brown video playing

Ilya: go to fucking sleep

Shane: what the fuck

Shane: how did you even know who it was

Ilya: i will tell you if you sleep and eat more than 1 saltine and 3 sips of gatorade

Shane: why are you so mean to me

Shane: i literally have the plague

Shane: i hear your footsteps fucking fine

Shane: im sleeping now

By the end of the first day, Ilya was willing to admit he had exaggerated and Shane was actually fine. He wasn't going to admit that, however, and risk Shane leaving when he'd barely just arrived. Not that Ilya was biased to think so, or anything, but Shane looked comfortable and relaxed at the house.

Ilya was too.

But that didn't matter. This was about taking care of Shane. Who was sick. Ill. Diseased. Yes, this was about Shane. Which is why Ilya was making him a tuna melt while he was napping on the couch. Tuna was one of the only sources of protein that Shane actually liked and ate, so Ilya thought it made sense. The bread was also a minimal part of the sandwich and that also worked great because Shane didn't like eating carbs a lot. All in all, Ilya thought it was a pretty good meal and only hoped Shane agreed.

I am anxious about giving Shane Hollander a tuna melt. What have I become.

Ilya mentally slapped himself and took both plates and a ginger ale to the couch and gently set them on the table so he could wake up Shane more slowly.

"Hey," Ilya sat next to Shane's hips on the edge of the couch and nudged him. "Wake up, it's lunchtime."

Shane groaned and blinked his eyes open. "You woke me up."

"It's lunchtime."

"Ugh, food."

"Don't be ungrateful," Ilya rolled his eyes. "I made it, even put the special ingredient in."

Shane frowned. "Love?"

"No. Red pepper flakes."

Shane snorted and sat up to make room for Ilya and grab his plate from the table. They ate mostly in silence, and Ilya felt his heart soar when Shane thanked him for the meal and said 'It was good.' After setting his plate on the table, Shane leaned back against the couch and closed his eyes. Ilya stood, ready to leave Shane to nap again when he felt Shane tug the back of his shirt. He turned to see Shane staring at him.

"Stay."

There really was no way Ilya was going to do anything else, so he nodded and sat down again. Shane smiled and closed his eyes again, letting his arm fall back to his side. Ilya turned to Shane and made a split second decision to pull Shane closer. Ilya felt vindicated in his decision when Shane turned into him and let his head rest on his chest. Ilya heard him let out a sigh and smiled. He was about to start threading his fingers through Shane's hair, when he started coughing violently and a wad of phlegm landed on Ilya's chest.

Shane's eyes widened as his coughing wound down. "Oh god, I'm so gross. I'm so sorry," Shane shuffled away from Ilya back to the other side of the couch and Ilya felt the absence of warmth from when he was pressed up next to him.

"No, it's okay," Ilya moved towards Shane, chasing the feeling of having him pressed up against him. "It's ok, you're sick. It's nothing."

Shane was hiding his face behind his hands, refusing to look at him, so Ilya moved Shane's hands and reached for him. Ilya held his chin between two fingers and, against his will, stared at his lips for too long of a second before meeting Shane's gaze again. Ilya swallowed heavily and opened his mouth to say something, anything, to save himself from the situation he'd put himself in when Shane let out a sigh and Ilya felt the breath puff on his cheeks.

"Shane," Ilya breathed softly. Hoping he felt the same warmth he'd just felt. Hoping he felt the same pit of hot and heavy want that sat in his stomach.

"Ilya," Shane whispered and Ilya's restraint almost broke right then and there.

God, he wanted to move in and finally, *finally*, get a taste for him. But he couldn't. He couldn't, but he never wanted anything more. He didn't remember the last time he felt desire as strong as this one.

But he couldn't. So he went to moved away.

"Ilya," Shane whispered again. "Are you going to kiss me ever?"

Ilya's breath hitched. "Are you sure that's what you want?"

"Yes, Ilya," Shane looked at him like he was stupid and maybe he was. "God, yes that's what I want."

Ilya wasn't going to ask again.

He leaned in to kiss him and was surprised to find Shane meet him halfway. When Ilya kissed him, he felt his body relax and melt into Shane, already searching for more even when his brain hadn't caught up to the idea that he was kissing Shane yet. Ilya's brain had turned off completely and was acting on its own. Because when Shane moaned, instead of pulling back and remembering that Shane was *sick* and needed his help and care, Ilya instinctively pulled him onto his lap, biting back a groan of his own. Ilya didn't think about anything except how much he wanted Shane and let his arms wander under his hoodie to hold on to his hips. Ilya started rubbing circles into his side and Shane pulled back to gasp and arch into his touch.

His eyes were closed as he leaned back into Ilya's touch and Ilya could do nothing but stare up at him and think: *beautiful*.

When Shane opened his eyes and looked down at him, Ilya was already smiling.

"I need to get sick more often," Shane smiled and went down to kiss him again.

Ilya couldn't help but agree and happily met him halfway. He was so happy to discover he was right about kissing Shane. It was even better than anything he pictured, even. He couldn't believe he waited so long to do it. Nothing was going to stop him now, though.

Except-

Ilya gasped and threw Shane off to the side, filing his indignant squawk away for later. "I'm telling Rose first!" he yelled over his shoulder as he ran to his phone.

"ILYA NO-"

End Notes

i miss my housemates and our green couch and our special tv room and everyone sorry for trauma dumping it on you xoxo love you all

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!