

When the Ice Melts

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When the Ice Melts

by [RivalHeart](#)

Summary

Shane knows something is wrong the moment he steps onto the ice against Boston. For a split second, he considers admitting he's sick but after weeks without seeing Ilya, there's no way he's canceling tonight. Only the fever hits harder than expected and instead of sex, he gets something else. Something softer.

Notes

Hey! So, this isn't my first fanfic ever, but it is my first one in this fandom – so please be gentle with me :D

I fell head over heels for these characters back in November and kind of... hyperfixated a little. Since I've been sick myself lately, I figured a bit of fluff wouldn't hurt.

This story takes place after the All-Star Game where Ilya and Shane play together. The whole Rose thing is already behind them at this point. I don't have an exact timeline beyond that, but I hope it still works!

Mostly, I just hope you enjoy the read! ♡

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

Shane wasn't sick. He was just tired. Jet-lagged and overtrained. *Maybe* dehydrated.

He'd told himself all of that and more as he laced up in the locker room, even while his hands trembled a little more than usual. He ignored the way his jersey stuck to his back before he'd even stepped onto the ice. The cold air in the tunnel should've felt good. Instead, he felt himself shivering.

Maybe it was just the nerves. That had to be it. Boston as their opponent meant Rozanov, and Rozanov meant... well. It meant a lot more now than it used to. Tonight was the first time they were facing off again. And all Shane had to do was get through three periods. Piece of cake.

He swallowed hard, blinked the burn out of his eyes, and stood up too fast. The world tilted.

Okay. Maybe not just tired.

But it didn't matter. He'd waited too long for this. It was the first time they were facing off again since the All-Star Game. The one where they'd been on the same team, and Rozanov had kissed his helmet in front of everyone after a goal Shane had scored... thanks to Rozanov's perfect setup.

Shane wasn't with Rose anymore. He'd finally admitted to himself that no matter how hard he'd tried, he just wasn't into women. No one knew he was gay, not yet. No one except Rozanov. And for now, that was enough.

It didn't even surprise him anymore, the way his heart sped up when Rozanov looked at him like that. That stupid ache in his chest, the one that showed up every time he saw that messy golden hair and those hazel eyes, was just there now.

It had only gotten worse since then. Somehow their texts turned longer. Phone calls happened late at night. One time Rozanov had FaceTimed him, and Shane hadn't even pretended to be annoyed. And now he was in Montreal. Shane had been counting the days.

So yeah. Shane *wasn't* sick.

He shoved his helmet down over his head and made it through the tunnel and somehow the warmups. But within the first few minutes of the game, he could tell something was seriously off. The puck felt heavy on his stick, and his balance was weird, like his skates didn't fit right. His head ached in this slow, deep throb every time the stadium lights hit him just right. His legs burned after every shift, and he was sweating like it was July, not a climate-controlled rink in February.

Still, he held the line. He even managed to score once. His teammates high-fived him like always, luckily not noticing how hard he was breathing. His hair was damp inside his helmet. The collar of his jersey stuck to his neck, clinging wetly to his skin.

The sensation made him want to crawl out of his body. The sticky fabric, dripping hair, and the weight of gear that suddenly felt wrong - it was all *too much*. And no matter how hard he

tried to focus, his brain kept stuttering on those small things.

"You good, Hollander?" one of the defensemen asked during the second intermission.

"Peachy," Shane lied.

He turned around and, of course, looked right at Rozanov. Just like always. The way he moved still got under Shane's skin. He was chirping every time he passed the Montreal bench, and Shane kept catching his eyes. Or maybe Rozanov was the one catching his.

It was stupid how aware he was of him. How the whole game felt like background noise to the fact that *Ilya Rozanov was watching him fail*. Not that he was doing it on purpose. Probably. But every time Shane fumbled a puck or missed an open lane, he could feel Rozanov's gaze like a fucking searchlight.

He nearly tripped over his own skates during a line change, and when he glanced toward the boards, there he was again. Rozanov, helmet pushed up slightly, was watching him. And from the twitch in his mouth, it looked like he was trying not to laugh.

Shane wanted to crawl into the ice and disappear.

By the end of the third period, he was freezing. Not the good kind of chill that came from adrenaline, but the bone-deep cold of a body shutting down. Still, he didn't collapse or puke. He didn't even cause a scene, and honestly, that felt like a win.

His hands were shaking by the time he unlaced his gloves. His shoulders ached, his skin prickled like he'd spent hours in the sun, and the second he sat down on the cold bench - fully dressed, soaked in sweat, cold air biting through his gear - his whole body screamed to stay there.

He didn't look at the scoreboard. He didn't want to know.

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The locker room was louder than it needed to be. Shane hated it.

He didn't say much, just shoved off his jersey and peeled himself out of his pads like they were glued to his skin. The air hit his sweat-soaked undershirt and made him shiver. He blinked hard and finally sat down again.

His phone was in his duffel. He reached for it before even thinking about a shower. It felt like an instinct by now. It took too many tries to get his phone to recognize his thumbprint. By the time he opened their chat, his vision was swimming again. But there was a message already there, sent two minutes ago.

Lily : *you were slow tonight*

Lily: *you dying or saving energy for me?*

Shane huffed a soft laugh. The sound hurt. He squinted at the keyboard and managed a reply.

Jane: *Meet you in an hour.*

The dots appeared immediately.

Lily: *Can't wait.*

Shane didn't respond. He tossed the phone back into his bag and stood up way too fast. The world tilted. He caught himself on the edge of the locker, palms clammy, stomach churning. Shit. His knees wobbled, but he forced his feet toward the showers.

He kept one hand on the wall the whole time just to be sure. The water didn't help. It stung. His skin felt too sensitive, his face was flushed, and his vision blurred more than once when he blinked. Shane didn't have time for that, though. He rinsed off fast and grabbed a towel. The edges of the room were bending slightly. He wrapped the towel around his waist and stepped out of the shower.

"Jesus, Shane!" Hayden caught him by the arm before he could completely fall against the doorway.

"I'm good," Shane mumbled, heart pounding. His breath dragged through his lungs like it had to claw its way out.

"You almost faceplanted."

"Didn't though." It came out more defensive than intended and somehow less convincing.

Hayden didn't look satisfied. "You sure you're okay? You're kinda... pale. And clammy."

Shane swallowed hard. He wanted to snap something back, make a joke, shift the focus away like he always did, but even sarcasm felt like too much effort. "Just tired."

"You sure?"

"Yeah," Shane said, with all the confidence of a guy about to faint inside their locker room. "I'm going home."

Hayden watched him for a second longer. "You gonna make it home?"

Shane opened his mouth to say of course, to wave it off, but he stopped. His stomach turned at the thought of sitting behind the wheel. He wasn't sure he could even hold his arms steady long enough to turn the ignition.

"...No," he admitted.

Hayden clapped a hand on his shoulder. "Come on. I'll drive you."

Shane groaned but didn't fight it. He changed into the softest hoodie and let Hayden take his bag for him. He hated it. Hated being seen like this. But he didn't have the energy to care.

The drive was quiet.

Hayden didn't ask questions, didn't make small talk, and didn't even say, I told you so. For that, Shane was grateful. He stared out the passenger-side window, watching the city blur past. He hated how much his skin crawled.

Hayden pulled up in front of Shane's condo - at least the official one. The one with his name on the buzzer and his jersey in the hallway. The one everyone knew.

"Text me if you need anything, alright?" Hayden said, shifting into park.

"Thanks," Shane mumbled, grabbing his bag. "I'm good."

He stepped out, closed the door, and waved half-heartedly as Hayden pulled away. Only when the car turned the corner did he straighten, exhale, and glance down the street. He made his way to his other apartment. The one he used to meet Rozanov.

A few minutes later Shane dropped his gear by the front door and collapsed onto the couch in nothing but sweats and a hoodie. Every movement sent a new wave of heat and chills down his spine.

He let the phone slip to his chest and stared up at the ceiling. Shane's ears were ringing faintly, and his heart was going a little too fast. He knew this feeling. He'd had the flu once in his rookie season. Shane had played through that, too. Ended up in urgent care with an IV. But he was older now and better conditioned.

Shane knew he should've texted Rozanov that he wasn't feeling well, but he didn't. Instead, he pushed himself upright with great effort, only to stagger toward the bathroom. He splashed cold water on his face, which did nothing. Shane looked in the mirror and saw pink cheeks, glassy eyes, and his hair stuck to his forehead.

"Fuck," he whispered.

Back on the couch, he pulled the nearest blanket over his shoulders and curled into himself. The room was swaying just slightly. He let his eyes drift shut. Just for a second. Just until Rozanov got there. He'd hear the knock. He wouldn't miss it.

Shane just had to make it through tonight. After all, it was just a cold, and he had missed Ilya so much.

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It took Shane way too long to open the door.

Ilya stood there for a solid thirty seconds, hood up, hands in his coat pockets, one foot bouncing restlessly while he tried not to feel like a complete idiot. He'd come straight from the hotel, hadn't even changed out of his jacket, hadn't stopped for food like he'd planned. He wasn't sure why. Maybe because Hollander always made something stupidly warm twist low in Ilya's stomach.

But now the hallway was quiet, the door still closed, and the longer he waited, the more he wondered if Hollander had changed his mind.

Then the handle moved. Slowly.

The door finally cracked open, just enough to reveal a sliver of Shane's face. He looked awful. His cheeks were flushed, and his hair was messy for his standards. Even his eyes seemed glassy and heady-lidded, like he'd just woken up. Ilya couldn't help but worry.

But this was still Hollander, and Ilya was still him, so instead of saying any of that, Ilya just smirked and pushed his way inside.

"Finally," he muttered, dropping his bag by the wall. "Thought maybe you died. Or passed out in the shower trying to cry about your horrible stats. You look like you cried."

Hollander huffed a laugh, voice rough around the edges. "Fuck you. You took so long, I almost fell asleep waiting for you."

"Yeah? Been waiting for me, Hollander?" Ilya didn't wait for an answer. He grabbed him by the front of his hoodie and kissed him like he hadn't been thinking about doing exactly that for the last six weeks.

Hollander melted into it, in the way he always did. His hands curled into the front of Ilya's jacket, gripping just enough to hold him close. He tasted like his stupid ginger ale, but Ilya didn't care. He kissed him harder, pressed him back against the nearest wall, let their hips brush just enough to remind them both what he was here for.

But then Hollander swayed.

It wasn't dramatic. Just a subtle shift, his balance tipping and his grip going a little slack. Ilya caught him by the waist without thinking, steadied him, pulled back just enough to see his face.

"Woah," Ilya muttered. "You drunk or just still embarrassed about that game?"

Hollander rolled his eyes, but even that looked like an effort. "Pretty sure you weren't exactly killing it out there either," he said. "Didn't see you doing much better."

"I scored twice." Ilya would never admit he'd played badly. And he sure as hell wouldn't admit it was because he'd been distracted. He'd noticed on the ice that Hollander seemed off. It wasn't anything new. Watching Hollander had become a habit he didn't care to break, and tonight, it had been nearly impossible to look away.

It didn't matter, really. Boston had crushed them anyway. But the truth was, he'd played like shit because he'd been worried about Shane. Not that anyone would ever hear him say that out loud.

"Right. How could I forget? Rozanov, savior of Boston, destroyer of Hollander's pride."

"Exactly." Ilya grinned, but it faded fast. Shane's skin was still too pink, his breath a little too shallow. Up close, he could see the sweat glistening at his temples and the way his shoulders were slumped like he could barely keep himself upright.

Ilya frowned. "You seriously okay?"

Shane blinked slowly, then gave him a crooked smile. "Are you worried about me?"

"Nope," Ilya said flatly. "Just don't want you puking on my shoes. Were expensive."

"Mm." Shane's head tilted slightly, like the wall behind him was the only thing keeping him standing. "How thoughtful."

"I mean it, though. You look like shit."

"Gee, thanks."

He didn't mean to touch him, but Shane looked like even breathing took effort, and Ilya was actually very worried about him. He wasn't even sure how Shane managed to look too hot and pale at the same time. So he leaned forward, hand out before he even realized what Ilya was doing, and pressed the back of his fingers lightly to Shane's forehead.

Fuck.

Shane's skin wasn't warm, it was *burning*. He jerked back instinctively, like he'd touched a stove, then reached again, palm flat this time, pressing to Shane's temple, his brow, the damp hair stuck there. Definitely a fever. Not mild, either.

He swore softly under his breath.

Shane looked up at him, glassy-eyed and blinking like he was struggling to focus. His lips parted, like he was going to make another shitty joke, but instead he just whispered, "Ilya. I'm not feeling good."

The way Shane said his name did something to Ilya. Shane hadn't even said it loud. It had been barely audible, really. But *fuck*. Shane never said his name like that. He sounded so needy. The vowels weren't quite right, but it didn't matter. He wanted to hear it again. Wanted to record it and play it back on loop until his brain short-circuited.

"You're a mess, Hollander," he said, but the words came out softer than he meant them to.

When Shane shivered again, Ilya slipped an arm around Shane's waist and guided him toward the couch. Shane didn't resist, but he leaned into him more than he probably realized, steps slow and unsteady.

By the time they reached the edge, Shane let out a soft, exaggerated groan and dropped onto the cushions like he'd just completed an Olympic marathon. He dragged a pillow into his lap and sighed dramatically.

"Everything hurts," he muttered.

Ilya rolled his eyes but said nothing. He grabbed the blanket draped over the back of the couch, shook it out once, and gently laid it over Shane's legs.

"Big baby," he murmured. But he tucked the edges in anyway. Shane smiled faintly, then groaned and buried his face in the pillow.

Ilya stood up abruptly, trying to shake the ache twisting low in his chest. "Tea," he muttered. "You're getting tea. And you probably need sleep too."

The kitchen was too clean, because of course it was. Shane probably hired someone to wipe his countertops while he was on road trips. Ilya dug around until he found a dusty box of ginger tea that looked like it had been bought ages ago. It still seemed good enough, though.

He boiled water, fixed the tea, and added honey even though Shane hadn't asked for it. Then he padded back into the living room.

Shane was still there, half-asleep and visibly more miserable than before. His nose was pink, his eyes watery, and he let out a pitiful little sound as he flopped onto his back and muttered, "I'm sorry for being boring again."

Ilya snorted. "What's the difference today? You're always boring."

Shane blinked up at him, eyes droopy. He looked sad. Ilya hated it when Shane looked like that. He was someone who deserved to always look happy. "I didn't imagine it like this."

"Imagine what?"

"You. Here." His bottom lip stuck out just slightly. Ilya had a hard time looking away. Shane's lips were so pretty. "Was gonna kiss you on the couch and then maybe let you do other things to me."

Ilya's heart might've exploded. He chose survival through sarcasm. "Wow. Still can't say it, huh? Maybe next time I'll let you tell me in detail what you want me to do to you."

Shane pouted harder. "Shut up."

"Nope." Ilya leaned down and offered him the mug. "Drink this before you actually cry."

Shane accepted the mug with a sigh and a dramatic flail of his blanket. Ilya tried not to grin too much. "You always like this when you're sick?" he asked, watching Shane sip.

"I don't get sick," Shane mumbled.

"Clearly."

After the tea, he coaxed Shane toward the bedroom. It wasn't far, but it felt like it took years. Shane shuffled along in oversized sweats, but he had to stop a few times to catch his breath because he had started to cough now as well.

"You know," Ilya said as he helped him sit on the edge of the bed, "if your parents were here, they could-"

"They're in Argentina."

"What?"

"They're, like... wine tasting or some shit." Shane's voice was muffled against Ilya's shoulder. "I'm not calling them. Mom would send me a doctor or a nurse. It'd be a *whole thing*."

Ilya rolled his eyes. "Wine tasting. Sounds boring. Makes sense you're their son."

"You're an asshole," Shane muttered. He let Ilya pull back the covers, then slid under them with a groan and immediately buried his face in the pillow. "This sucks."

"You suck."

Shane didn't respond. Just flopped onto his side and blinked up at him, voice barely a whisper now. "Are you gonna leave?"

Ilya hesitated. He wanted nothing more than to stay here with Shane, but he wasn't sure if he was allowed to. They were just fucking. This... felt like so much more. Ilya wanted more. He'd known that for years at this point, but... "I mean... shouldn't you call your friend? Pike? If you're gonna get worse-"

"Nooo," Shane whined. "Don't want Hayden."

"You sure?"

Shane nodded and then pouted, the blanket pulled halfway up his chest, eyes wide and pleading in a way that was clearly meant to guilt Ilya into caving. "Just want you."

And that... That *wrecked* Ilya.

He didn't answer for a moment. Just stood there, watching Shane blink slowly and heavily, lashes brushing flushed cheeks, lips parted with a faint hitch in every breath. Vulnerable in a way he'd never seen. Trusting him, without saying it.

So Ilya sat down on the edge of the bed and tugged the blanket a little higher. "Okay. I'm staying." Ilya said, and he meant it.

Shane looked up at him like he was seeing him for the first time. "Didn't know you could be so nice."

"I'm not." Ilya took another deep breath. "This is just today. Tomorrow I'm back to being asshole."

"Promise?"

Ilya smiled, just barely. "Cross my heart, Hollander."

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Half an hour later, Ilya was standing in line at the 24-hour pharmacy down the street, arms full of meds, cold packs, soft tissues with lotion in them (he'd almost grabbed the regular kind but then remembered Shane had annoyingly nice skin), plus two instant ramen cups and a can of chicken soup, just in case.

The walk back was cold. Montreal winter wind that bit straight through his jacket. But he didn't feel it. Not really. His brain was still stuck in that bedroom. On the way Shane had said his name, on the soft pout, the flushed cheeks, the whispery *just want you* that had absolutely no business being that tender.

And now Shane was up there, alone in bed and miserable. Waiting for him. Ilya jogged the last block.

He opened the door quietly, in case Shane had managed to fall asleep, but the moment he stepped inside, he heard it. A soft, congested groan from down the hall, followed by a pitiful cough, and then, faintly, "Ilya?"

He felt it in his spine. The way Shane said his name, like he wasn't sure Ilya would answer. "I'm back," he called, kicking off his boots and setting the bag down on the counter. "I have drugs and soup."

There was a rustle of blankets, another pathetic cough, and then, dramatically, "I think I'm dying."

Ilya rolled his eyes and filled a glass of water. "You're not dying. You're just baby."

"I'm not!"

Ilya didn't answer. Instead, he took the glass of water and the medication and brought them over to the bedroom. Shane was curled into a pathetic ball, hair sticking to his forehead, hoodie collar bunched around his neck. His eyes were glassy again, but they lit up just a little when he saw Ilya.

"You really came back," he mumbled.

"Obviously." Ilya sat on the edge of the bed and poured the thick green syrup into the plastic measuring spoon. "Now take this."

Shane groaned. "It tastes like poison." He tried to push Ilya's hand away, but the movement was sluggish. The smell alone made Shane wrinkle his nose.

"Yeah, well, it's either this or you keep sounding like dying frog," Ilya replied coolly, the spoon still hovering.

"You're always so mean." Shane squinted at the spoon suspiciously. Then he tilted his head and looked up at Ilya, lip sticking out just slightly, cheeks flushed, eyes watery in a way that was far too effective for someone this sick. "Can I at least get a kiss first?"

Ilya blinked. "Are you *bribing* me for taking drugs like good boy?"

"Maybe."

"And people say you are boring."

Shane smiled, slow and lazy. "Only *you* are saying that!"

Ilya rolled his eyes and pressed the spoon closer to his lips. "Take your meds, Hollander."

Shane sighed like he was being asked to sacrifice his dignity. Still, he opened his mouth and swallowed the liquid in one go. His face twisted immediately, brows scrunched, tongue sticking out in a quiet, horrified whimper. "Ugh. That's disgusting."

Ilya bit down on a grin. "Want me to hold your hand next time?"

"Maybe." Shane sniffled, already curling deeper into the blanket again. His voice dropped to something softer, almost uncertain. "Wouldn't hate it."

Ilya busied himself with unpacking tissues and putting a cold pack on Shane's pillow, because if he looked too long, he might do something stupid. Like crawl under the covers and kiss his stupid feverish face until he forgot everything else.

But then Shane opened his mouth again. "Ilya?"

He turned, trying to keep his tone neutral. "What."

Shane's lip wobbled slightly. "I'm sorry, I ruined it."

Ilya frowned. "Ruined what?"

"This night." His voice broke on it. "You were gonna stay over, and we were gonna hang out, and you were gonna kiss me, and I waited so many weeks to feel you again. Wanted you to fuck me so badly. And I messed it up. I got sick, and I look like shit. I even *played* like shit!"

"Whoa, Hollander-"

"I played through it," Shane said, voice rising. "I knew I was sick. But I didn't want to miss it. I just wanted you so badly. Our next game is three months away, and I couldn't wait that long to feel you again, and now I'm sick and-"

"Shane."

"I'm sorry." His eyes were full of tears, and he looked so furious at himself, like he couldn't stand being weak, even now. And Ilya... couldn't take it. So he leaned in and kissed him.

It wasn't careful, not at first, but the second their lips touched, Shane made this soft, heart-wrenching whimper, and Ilya melted. He kissed him slower after that, gentler, cupping the side of his face like he might fall apart.

Shane leaned into it, trembling slightly, his hand fisting in Ilya's sleeve like he didn't want to let go. When Ilya pulled back, Shane's lashes were wet and stuck together. His lips were red. His breath caught on something unspoken.

Ilya rested their foreheads together. "You didn't ruin anything."

Shane sniffled. "Promise?"

"Promise." A beat. Ilya rolled his eyes. "Though I'm probably getting sick now too."

"Good." Shane smiled weakly. "Then you'll have to stay more than just tonight so I can play your nurse."

Ilya rolled his eyes and laid him gently back onto the pillow, tucking the blanket up to his chin. "You're the worst patient in the world."

"But the cutest?"

"Not even close."

"Liar."

And Ilya didn't deny it.

After another pouting session of Shane, Ilya found himself in his kitchen, trying to prepare him something to eat.

The soup was the canned kind. Salt-heavy, mass-produced, with weird little pasta shapes pretending to be letters. Ilya found a pot, dumped it in, and stirred it with the kind of care he usually reserved for pre-game rituals and hangover coffee. The apartment was quiet behind him, just the occasional cough or groan could be heard from the bedroom.

Every few minutes, he glanced over his shoulder like Shane might disappear if he looked away too long. It was stupid. Shane was just sick. It wasn't like he was dying.

But still, Ilya moved softer than usual. He found a tray and a clean bowl and even grabbed a spoon that wasn't metal, because he remembered Shane hated the clink of silverware when he had a headache. Ilya remembered too many things about Shane. It used to annoy him, but it didn't anymore.

When he came back in, Shane had shifted onto his side, half-buried in the blankets, eyes glazed but open. Ilya set the tray on the nightstand and sat down again on the edge of the bed. "You're lucky I like you," he muttered.

Shane gave him a dopey little smile. He looked so adorable that Ilya leaned in and brushed his fingers gently over Shane's cheek, his thumb tracing lightly across the freckles. "Is that what this is?"

"No. This is just pity," Ilya said and rolled his eyes. He pinched Shane's cheek, then smoothed his thumb over the same spot again in an unspoken apology.

"Mm. Feels like affection." Shane even leaned into the touch, eyes fluttering a little.

"You're crazy," Ilya muttered, but his hand didn't move. It was hard to focus on anything else when Shane was literally nuzzling into his palm.

"Probably." Shane tried to sit up, failed, and groaned dramatically. "My body's broken."

Ilya snorted and lifted the bowl. "Okay, you baby. Open."

"I can feed myself!"

"You almost passed out trying to sit up. Let me do this." Shane rolled his eyes but parted his lips obediently when Ilya lifted the spoon. He took the first sip with a pleased hum and leaned his head back against the pillow like he was being worshiped.

"You are so needy," Ilya said.

"It's 'cause I trust you."

Ilya ignored that. Mostly. His hand trembled just a little when he brought the next spoonful up, but Shane didn't seem to notice. He ate slowly, pausing between sips, breathing shallowly and unevenly. Ilya waited, patient in a way that surprised even himself. When the bowl was half empty, Shane let his eyes drift shut.

"This is good," he murmured. "Like... really good."

"It's literally canned soup, Hollander."

"Still. You made it. So it means a lot to me," Shane whispered, a small smile on his lips.

Ilya didn't know what to say to that. So he didn't say anything.

After a long silence, Shane opened his eyes again. They were soft and glassy and somehow impossibly wide. Big brown eyes that looked right at him, like Ilya was the only one who mattered. It was ridiculous how much they did to him. Eyes weren't supposed to make your chest hurt. But Shane's had this weight to them.

"You remember that tuna melt you made me?" Shane asked, voice scratchy.

Ilya blinked. "What?"

"Back in Boston. When I stayed over at your place. You made me a tuna melt." Shane looked over to him.

Of course Ilya knew what he meant. He'd planned that day for weeks. Had even gone grocery shopping just to make Shane the tuna melt. Had carefully cooked and packed it away in neat little Tupperware containers like an idiot.

"Oh. Yeah. You said it was okay." Ilya tried to sound neutral, as if it hadn't mattered. But that day had ended horribly, after the first time he'd ever said Shane's first name out loud. He didn't like remembering it. Even now, he wasn't sure what they were.

Shane had told him that he and Rose weren't compatible. But what did that mean for them?

"I lied," Shane murmured, voice hoarse but sweet, slurring just a little around the edges. His eyes were barely open now, heavy-lidded with sleep and warmth. But the smile he gave Ilya was real, like he didn't have the energy to pretend anymore. "It was the best thing I'd eaten in months."

Ilya blinked down at him. His hands stilled around the bowl, spoon still halfway raised. He hadn't expected that. Not after Shane had walked out on him. Sure, since then they had made a little progress, but...

"I just made a sandwich," he said quietly, like saying anything more would ruin it.

Shane gave a slow blink, head resting back against the pillow. "Yeah. But you made it for me. And..." He paused to sniff, eyes slipping closed for a moment. "You brought me ginger ale. I didn't even ask. You just... knew."

Ilya looked away, focusing too intently on the spoon as he scooped another small bite of soup. His voice, when it came, was gruff. "It's what people do," he said. "When they care."

He didn't mean for it to come out that way. So defensive. So exposed. But Shane didn't tease him for it. Didn't laugh. He just gave a tiny nod, lashes brushing his cheeks as his eyes fluttered lower again.

"No one else remembers shit like that," he whispered, almost too quiet to hear.

Ilya's chest ached. He wanted to say something - *anything* - but nothing came out. Not a joke. Not a reassurance. And especially not the truth. So he didn't answer. He just... kept going.

He lifted the spoon again, more carefully now. Let Shane take slow sips between breaths. The soup was still warm, and Shane still looked like he might fall asleep between every bite. But he didn't complain. He let Ilya feed him, like it was the most natural thing in the world. And Ilya tried not to stare at the way his throat moved when he swallowed, at the way his fingers twitched softly under the blanket with every touch.

Eventually, Shane shook his head. Just a small motion, barely there. "No more," he breathed.

"Okay." Ilya set the bowl down gently on the nightstand and wiped the corner of Shane's mouth with a tissue, fingers steady despite the way his heart was pounding.

"You did good," he said quietly, like a secret.

"Thanks, Coach." The smirk was barely there, but it made Ilya snort anyway.

"Shut up," he muttered, but his voice was soft. Warm, even.

Shane barely stirred. His hand twitched once against the sheets, like he wanted to reach for something. For someone.

Ilya didn't let himself think too hard about it. Just sat there a little longer than he needed to, watching the slow rise and fall of Shane's chest, the way his lashes stuck together from fever sweat, and his cheeks flushed pink like he'd spent the day in the sun, making those cute freckles stand out even more.

The ginger ale was still in the fridge. Ilya would grab it later. Maybe bring it with the meds in a few hours, if Shane woke up again.

For now, he just stayed.

Because someone had to stay. And maybe because he *wanted* to stay.

.....◆◆♥◆◆.....

Ilya woke up with a kink in his neck and a growing sense of dread in his chest. He'd dragged a chair into the bedroom and apparently fallen asleep in it. Ilya paused, taking in the sight. Shane curled up awkwardly, the blanket half-slipped from his shoulders.

For a brief second, his mind flashed back to Vegas. To that night when he had pulled a chair up beside the bed for very different reasons. Ilya shook his head quickly. No point in thinking about that now. No matter how hot it had been.

The chair was about as comfortable as a bus seat on a pothole-ridden road, and his body was reminding him that he had played hockey just a few hours ago. But it wasn't the ache in his spine that jolted him upright, it was a sound.

A soft, broken noise. Not quite a moan. Not quite a gasp. Just something wrong.

He blinked, disoriented, and glanced back over to the bed.

Shane was soaked.

Not just sweaty, but soaked, like he'd gone swimming in his sleep. The sheets were damp, clinging to his skin. His hair was plastered to his forehead, and his lips were parted, breathing unevenly, heat rolling off him in waves. Even in the dim light, Ilya could see the sheen on his skin, the flush in his cheeks deepening into something almost purple.

"Shit," Ilya muttered, sitting up fully. "Shane."

Shane didn't respond at first, just shifted weakly, groaning as he tried to move, then flinching at the wet fabric clinging to him.

"Okay, okay," Ilya murmured, already halfway to the bathroom. "You need to cool down." He came back with a bowl of cold water and a towel. Sat on the edge of the bed, dampened the towel, started wiping gently at Shane's neck and arms. The heat steamed up instantly.

"I'm doing cold wraps," he explained, even though Shane probably wasn't coherent enough to register it. "It'll help."

Shane stirred, breath shallow. "No," he mumbled, barely audible. "Shower."

Ilya stilled. His fingers paused mid-motion, the towel half-folded in his hand. "You want a cold shower?" he echoed, incredulous.

"Please," Shane whispered, eyes not quite focusing.

Ilya sighed. He sat back, towel in his lap, and studied Shane's face. The heat radiating off him was practically visible, a feverish glow that made his cheeks blotchy and his eyes hazy. It was reckless. It was dumb.

"You can't even stand up."

"I can," Shane insisted, but it came out cracked and uncertain.

"Let me help you," Ilya offered, already reaching toward him. He wouldn't survive it if Shane got hurt on top of all of this.

Shane blinked, slow and glassy-eyed. "I c-can do it."

Ilya raised an eyebrow, not even bothering to hide his disbelief. "Seriously? I don't think you can even sit, let alone stand."

Shane flushed deeper, which was impressive considering how red he already was. "It's just... I don't want you to see me like this."

That made Ilya pause.

He tilted his head slightly, the edge of his mouth quirking, but it wasn't quite a smile. He was too worried for that. "You think there's *anything* I haven't seen at this point?"

Shane didn't answer. He tried to sit up, made it about two inches off the mattress, then slumped back with a miserable noise. "Still."

"You're an idiot," Ilya said, but the edge in his voice was gone, replaced by something softer. Fondness, maybe. Resignation, definitely. But he didn't push. Didn't argue. Just sighed and stood up, stretching slightly as he moved toward the end of the bed. "Fine. But don't lock the door."

Shane gave him a suspicious look over his shoulder, brows furrowed in a tired squint. "You're gonna spy on me?"

"No," Ilya said, grabbing one of the pillows off the bed and tossing it toward the hallway. "I'm gonna sit outside the door so I can hear if you collapse and die."

"Oh."

"Yeah. So don't die. And don't fall."

"Okay."

"And keep the water cool," Ilya added, holding up a warning finger. "Not ice cold. I mean it."

"Bossy," Shane muttered, but without real heat.

"Only when you're being stupid. Besides, you like me telling you what to do."

"Shut up," Shane muttered, cheeks still burning.

Ilya rolled his eyes and slipped an arm behind Shane's back. "Come on, drama queen."

It took effort - more than it should - to haul Shane upright. He leaned heavily on Ilya, breath catching like every step took all the focus he had left. His legs trembled with the effort, and Ilya could feel the fever heat radiating off him like a furnace.

They shuffled towards the bathroom together, Ilya supporting most of his weight. Once they reached the door, Shane put a hand on his chest.

"I can do it from here."

Ilya didn't push it. He nodded, backed up a step, and pulled the door almost shut - leaving it cracked, just in case. Then he sat down cross-legged on the hallway floor. Right there, outside the bathroom. Listening. The sound of the shower came a second later. Just a soft stream. So Shane was being careful.

Good.

He rested his head back, closed his eyes, tried not to think. Not about the sound of Shane saying his name. Or about how warm his skin had been. And especially not about how much it wrecked him to see him like this. Sick and tired and trying so hard to hold it together.

It didn't take long before Ilya heard the water shut off. He didn't even make it to ten in his head when Shane's voice called out quietly, "Ilya?"

He was on his feet instantly. "Yeah?" He knocked once. "You okay?"

"Can you come in?" Shane's voice sounded so small and miserable.

Shane sat on the edge of the tub, towel wrapped around his waist, dripping onto the floor. His skin looked paler now, but his eyes were still unfocused, and his hands trembled where they clutched the edge of the porcelain.

"I don't feel good," he whispered. "Everything's spinning."

Ilya exhaled through his nose. "Shocking."

"I-"

"Just shut up, Hollander."

He crossed the threshold, slid an arm behind Shane's back and the other under his knees, and lifted him without asking. Shane made a startled noise, half protest, half a breathless whine, but he didn't resist. Just curled closer, damp and shivering, head tucked against Ilya's chest.

"I can walk," he muttered.

"Sure. I totally believe you," Ilya muttered with an eye roll. He had to be the one with the fever, since he was the one stupid enough to fall in love with this idiot.

Shane didn't argue again. He just let himself be carried back to the bed, arms limp around Ilya's shoulders. Ilya set him down carefully, one hand bracing Shane's head before it could thump against the pillows.

"Where's your underwear?" he asked gently, grabbing a dry towel to rub down Shane's arms and chest.

"Drawer," Shane mumbled. "Top right. It's color-coded."

"Of course it is." Ilya found the drawer and opened it. Stared. Black, white, gray, and - what the hell, was that silk? He grabbed the softest, least ridiculous pair and turned back to see Shane shivering.

"Okay," Ilya said, crouching down. "We need to get you dressed."

Shane's eyes fluttered open, dazed and glassy. "I'm cold."

"No shit," Ilya murmured, rubbing a hand down his bare thigh to try and bring some warmth back. Shane was freezing to the touch.

"Like... really cold."

Ilya reached for the covers but paused. Shane was still half-naked and still wet. He was trembling now, full-body shivers that made his teeth chatter.

"You want what - Pajamas?" Ilya asked.

"Yeah." Big, soft eyes blinked up at him.

"Where?"

"Middle drawer."

Ilya opened it, expecting designer loungewear or some matching set from a brand that probably sponsored him. What he found instead made him pause.

He held it up. "What is this ugly thing?" It was a dark blue flannel pajama set that looked like something you'd buy for a six-year-old. Little stars were scattered across the fabric, faint but definitely there.

Shane squinted. "Oh. That's... that was a Christmas present. From my mom."

Ilya's chest pulled tight before he could stop it. The grin that touched his mouth was small and warm and not at all mocking, no matter how hard he tried to keep it neutral. "Of course it was," he said softly.

"You don't have to laugh," Shane mumbled, already pouting like he expected to be teased.

"I'm not laughing."

Shane gave a pitiful little huff, his brows scrunching. "They're soft."

"They are," Ilya agreed, because they really were - soft and old and clearly Shane's favorite. He walked back over and knelt beside the bed, setting the matching top aside for now. With careful hands, he helped Shane step into the pajama bottoms, working around limbs that barely moved and skin still a little too warm to the touch.

"You want the top too?" Ilya asked quietly, voice almost lost under the sound of Shane's breathing.

Shane nodded, slow and weak, and murmured, "Only if you help me put it on."

Ilya rolled his eyes, but he was already reaching for the shirt. "You're so needy when you're sick."

"Sorry," Shane whispered.

Ilya couldn't help but press a soft kiss to his forehead. "Don't be."

He slid the sleeves over Shane's arms, careful not to tug too hard, careful not to say anything that would make this worse. Shane was quiet now, more tired than embarrassed. He let Ilya dress him without protest, just a few snuffles here and there, eyes blinking slow and heavy.

Once he was fully covered, Ilya tucked him in, smoothing the blanket down to his chest.

"There," he said softly. "All warm."

"Thanks."

Ilya lingered for a second, just staring. Shane looked so small like this. Still pale and feverish, but warmer now. Safer.

"You're not allowed to die in those ugly pajamas," Ilya said.

Shane let out a soft laugh. "Deal."

Ilya stood to grab the ginger ale. Because if he didn't move, he might kiss him again. And if he kissed him again, he might not stop. And that... would be harder to explain in the morning.

After Shane obediently took a few sips of his ginger ale, his eyes fluttered shut again, and Ilya allowed himself to hope that this time, he'd actually sleep through the night. It wasn't even 3 a.m. yet.

On his way back from the kitchen, Ilya noticed something on the floor. A piece of fabric. One of Shane's shirts had slipped from the carefully folded pile on the table beside the bed. That was so unlike him. So Ilya bent down to pick it up, smoothing out the wrinkles before placing it back with the others. When he turned around, he caught Shane watching him with a sleepy little smile, his lashes heavy against flushed cheeks.

"You folded it," Shane mumbled, voice barely above a whisper.

"Someone has to keep up appearances while you're being a big baby." Ilya rolled his eyes. Embarrassed that Shane had seen that.

Shane chuckled faintly, and Ilya sat back down on the edge of the bed, reaching for the bundle of socks he'd pulled out earlier. Without a word, he gently lifted Shane's feet one by one and pulled the thick, fuzzy socks over them.

"You like socks in bed," Ilya murmured, almost to himself. "I remember."

Shane blinked slowly. "You remembered that?"

Ilya nodded. "Of course I did. Remember everything from our first time."

Shane didn't answer, but the way his fingers curled softly in the blanket, the way he looked at Ilya like he was something worth holding on to... said more than words ever could. After a few minutes he finally closed his eyes.

But then, just as Ilya settled back into the chair, Shane whispered his name again, almost unsure, like he wasn't even sure he was awake. "Ilya?"

His head snapped up instantly. "Yeah?" he said, already halfway on his feet again.

Shane's voice was barely above a whisper. "Can you... can you come here?"

Ilya rose slowly, crossing the room with careful steps so the floorboards wouldn't creak too loud. His brows furrowed as he reached the bedside. "You okay? You need something else?"

Shane's lower lip trembled. "No," he murmured. "Just... can you lay down? Please?"

Ilya hesitated for a second. His eyes flicked to the bed, the mess of blankets, the glass of water on the nightstand, the way Shane's arms were still trembling even beneath the covers. "You want me to get in bed with you?"

Shane sniffled. "I'm cold. You're warm. That's... logical."

Ilya tried for a smile. "You have three blankets and way too many pillows from your overpriced designer."

"They're not you," Shane said, with a pout so soft and tired it knocked the breath right out of Ilya's chest. Before he could answer, Shane reached out. His fingers curled weakly around Ilya's wrist, tugging just slightly, barely enough to matter. But his grip said everything.

Ilya looked down at him. The mess of sweat-damp curls. The flushed cheeks. The soft, desperate way his eyes held his, like he was the only person in the world who could make this better.

It was pathetic. It was also breaking him apart. So he gave up pretending.

He peeled off his hoodie, toed off his socks, and carefully slipped under the covers, slow enough not to jostle the mattress. Shane immediately scooted closer, dragging himself across the sheets until he could press his face into Ilya's shoulder, arm flopping heavily across Ilya's chest like he'd been doing this for years.

The warmth was instant, but Ilya didn't complain. Not when Shane sighed like he could breathe again or when his hand splayed wide over Ilya's chest, fingers twitching like he was searching for something solid. Especially not when he murmured, "Thank you, Ilya," already half-asleep.

Ilya stayed still, every muscle tight, unsure what to do with any of it.

Shane's lashes fluttered against flushed cheeks. His lips were parted, breath slow and hitching. His whole body curved toward Ilya's like it was instinct. Like he needed this.

It wasn't fair.

Ilya stared at the ceiling. Tried not to feel everything. Shane Hollander was sleeping on his chest. Hand on his heart. Trusting him - *needing him* - in a way that made Ilya feel hollow.

He had no right to be here. To hold this boy like he was his. They were rivals. Enemies who just happened to fuck sometimes. No matter what Ilya wanted it to mean.

This wasn't supposed to happen.

Shane had a future. He had fans and sponsors and smiling parents and a five-year plan. He had a face that belonged on billboards and a voice that made people listen. Shane didn't belong tangled up in bed with a guy who barely knew how to stay. A guy who didn't deserve someone this beautiful.

And yet here they were.

Shane let out a soft breath. His fingers flexed again, pressing slightly deeper into Ilya's chest. Ilya placed his hand over Shane's gently, covering it without thinking. He wanted to fall asleep like this, but he knew he didn't deserve to.

The guilt crawled into his throat.

He'd ruined things before. No one had ever liked him... for who he really was. Not even his own family. Well, no one besides Svetlana or his mom. He had lost people before, but he couldn't bear losing Shane. He wished they could be more, but he didn't even know how to be a good boyfriend. And Shane deserved only the best.

What if he messed this up like everything else? What if this was just fever talking, and morning would bring clarity and regret? What if-

"Ilya..."

The whisper was soft. Slurred with sleep. Almost broken. But it said everything. Shane said his name like it meant something. Not Rozanov. Just Ilya. Like it was safe.

Ilya's heart cracked clean in two.

His hand moved slowly, up from Shane's, over his arm, to his shoulder, and finally to his face. He brushed soft fingers along Shane's cheek, pushed back the hair sticking to his forehead, and let his thumb graze the arch of his brow.

"You're okay," he whispered. "I've got you."

Shane didn't wake. Just curled closer, let out a soft sigh, and relaxed completely against him. And for the first time in what felt like forever, Ilya let himself believe it might be okay to stay.

.....◆◆ ♡ ◆◆.....

Ilya woke up feeling like he'd been run over by a Zamboni.

Everything hurt. His throat was raw, his head pounding, his limbs heavy with that deep, aching kind of fatigue that told him something was wrong. For a moment, he just lay there, eyes closed, trying to breathe through the fog in his skull.

Then Shane coughed beside him.

It was a harsh, broken sound and dragged Ilya the rest of the way to consciousness, along with the sound of shifting blankets and a choked whisper. "Shit. Sorry. Did I wake you?"

Ilya cracked an eye open. The room was too bright, and Shane was already half-sitting up in bed, pale and flushed, eyes puffy with sleep and fever. His short hair was sticking in all directions.

It would've been funny if it didn't tug at something in Ilya's chest. "You okay?" he rasped.

Shane winced. "Yeah. Yeah, I just... sorry. You were sleeping."

"You're coughing up your lungs," Ilya muttered. "Nobody can sleep through that." But then, as if fate wanted to punish him, Ilya started coughing too. Oh no.

Shane blinked, his heart lurching. "Oh my god. Are you- shit, Ilya, are you sick?" His voice cracked, but the panic was real.

Ilya gave a weak shrug. "Guess you were contagious."

Shane immediately tried to sit up, but the world spun, and he sank back down with a groan. "No, no, no, fuck! I'm so sorry. I didn't mean to. Shit, I didn't even think. You were taking care of me, and I just got you sick too."

"Hollander, you're having panic attack."

Shane didn't answer. His eyes were wide, unfocused, darting around like he wasn't sure where he was. His breathing came in short, panicked gasps, and his hands were trembling where they clutched the blanket.

Ilya moved instantly. He reached out, cupped Shane's face with both hands, thumbs resting gently on his cheeks. "Shane. Hey, look at me."

Shane blinked but didn't quite focus. His whole body was tensing, curling in on itself like it might implode. Ilya slid closer and wrapped his arms around him, anchoring him. One hand cradled the back of Shane's head, guiding it against his shoulder, the other pressed low against his spine.

"I'm here," Ilya whispered, steady and low. "I'm here, okay? Just breathe with me."

Shane made a soft, broken noise in the back of his throat, and Ilya felt it vibrate against his chest.

"Match me," he murmured, starting to breathe deliberately. "In... two, three. Out... two, three." He repeated it. Again and again. Shane shuddered, but after a few seconds, his chest tried to follow. Still shaky, but slower than before.

"That's it," Ilya said softly, rocking them gently. "You're okay. I've got you."

Shane's fingers curled weakly into Ilya's shirt. He was still trembling, but his breath was starting to sync, piece by piece, with Ilya's rhythm.

"Nothing's gonna happen to you," Ilya whispered against his hair. "Not while I'm here."

Another minute passed before the tension in Shane's shoulders began to ease, his breathing no longer ragged but slow and heavy with exhaustion. His forehead stayed tucked under Ilya's chin. "I hate this," Shane rasped.

"I know," Ilya murmured. "But you're okay."

It took a few more minutes until Shane fully calmed down.

"I should make you something," Shane said, voice still breathless. "You took care of me all night. I should... tea. I'll make tea." And then, before Ilya could stop him, Shane was climbing out of bed, wobbling like a baby deer.

Ilya watched, too stunned to react, as Shane shuffled toward the kitchen, dragging the blanket behind him like a cape. There was a pause. Ilya could hear the faint sound of a kettle being filled.

Then a loud clatter and a splash. "Fuck!" Shane yelled.

Ilya sighed. "Are you dying?"

"No! I mean, it's fine. I just... might've spilled the tea. All of it."

"Jesus Christ, Hollander."

There was a beat of silence. Then Shane said, miserably, "I'm sorry."

Ilya dragged himself upright, every bone in his body aching. He stumbled to the doorway and leaned against it, arms crossed, watching Shane stand next to a small puddle of water, holding an empty mug and looking like someone had just kicked his puppy.

"I just wanted to help," Shane mumbled, voice hoarse and small, like it barely made it past his throat. His arms hung limply at his sides, his posture sagging under the weight of guilt and fever.

Ilya rubbed a hand down his face. "Just come back to bed."

Shane hesitated, eyes wide and full of guilt. "I ruined everything."

"You didn't." Ilya said it without hesitation, but Shane flinched like it was a lie.

"I did." His voice cracked, and he bit his lower lip hard before continuing. "I messed up our night, and now you're sick, and you had to see me like..." His hands lifted helplessly, then dropped again. "Like this."

Ilya blinked, taken aback. "Like what?"

Shane's mouth opened, but no words came out at first. Then, with a sniff and a miserable expression, he gestured vaguely toward himself. "I don't know. Sweaty. Disgusting. Hair like a mop. I'm a snot monster."

Ilya almost laughed, but it stuck in his throat. Shane was being serious. Dead serious.

"You think I care?"

Shane's shoulders curled inward, trying to make himself smaller. "I just-" Shane swallowed hard. "I wanted to be perfect for you."

That was enough.

Ilya stepped forward, closing the distance between them before Shane could spiral further. He lifted a hand and gently brushed a damp strand of hair away from Shane's forehead, fingers lingering for a second longer than necessary.

"What do you mean? You've never looked better."

"Haha, very funny, asshole," Shane muttered, but his voice wavered. Ilya could see the shimmer in his eyes, the way he blinked too quickly, like he was trying to keep the tears at bay. And fuck, his heart ached at the sight.

"I'm not joking," Ilya said, voice low and steady. "It's true. No one looks as beautiful as you do. Even sick."

"You're just saying that," Shane whispered. Then, softly, he reached up and placed the back of his hand against Ilya's forehead. Shane narrowed his eyes. "See, that's the fever talking."

"No." Ilya shook his head. "I mean it."

Shane stared at him, pink creeping into his cheeks. He looked at the floor, then at Ilya, then back again, like he didn't know what to do with the words. "You don't have to say stuff like that just because I'm pathetic right now," he murmured, eyes still not quite meeting Ilya's.

Ilya stepped closer, slow and careful, like Shane might bolt if he moved too fast. "I'm saying it because it's true. Sick or not. Messy hair, red cheeks, sniffles, and all-" He let out a breath. "You're still the most beautiful person I've ever seen."

Shane finally looked up. And this time, he didn't look away.

There was something fragile in his expression. Hope, maybe. Or fear. Or both. His mouth parted like he wanted to speak, but no sound came. Just another shaky exhale and the tiniest tilt of his head.

That was all the permission Ilya needed.

He leaned in slowly, letting Shane pull back if he wanted to, but he didn't. Their foreheads brushed first, warm skin against warm skin, and for a moment they just breathed, close enough to feel it.

Then, gently, Ilya closed the distance.

It wasn't a desperate kiss. Nothing heated or rushed. Just lips meeting softly, a warm, feather-light press that tasted like ginger ale and vulnerability. Shane sighed into it, hands fisting weakly in the front of Ilya's shirt, like he was afraid he'd disappear.

Ilya deepened it just slightly, just enough to say, *I'm here. I want this too.* Then he pulled back, resting their foreheads together again. When they broke apart, Shane's breath stuttered.

"Will you stay?" he asked, voice barely above a whisper. "A little longer?"

Ilya nudged him back toward the bedroom, guiding him with a hand on his lower back. "Yes, I think I will stay. I took care of you," he said. "Now it's your turn."

Shane grinned. "Deal."

They crawled back under the covers together, tangled and warm. Ilya coughed once, groaned, and let his head fall back against the pillow. Shane flopped beside him, already trying to tuck the blanket up to Ilya's chin.

Ilya turned his head. Looked at him. Really looked. Shane was still a mess, but his eyes were soft. And his smile was real. And he was here. Right next to him, like he belonged there.

"Shane," Ilya said quietly.

Shane blinked. "Yeah?"

Ilya didn't say anything at first. Just smiled. The smallest thing. Barely even there.

Shane's face softened. He leaned in again. This kiss was slower. Deeper. Almost like a promise.

When they pulled apart, Ilya stayed close. His voice was quiet, as bare as it had ever been. "I don't want this to end."

Shane gave him a lazy little smile. "You mean our shared misery and fever dreams?"

Ilya huffed a breath, almost a laugh. "No. This." He reached down and took Shane's hand, gently guiding it to rest over his chest.

Shane stilled and then smiled again, slower this time. Softer. Like he understood.

"I don't want it to end either," he whispered before leaning in and kissing him once more, just as gently.

End Notes

Thank you so much for reading ♡.ʹ

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