

helium

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by Anonymous

Summary

“You are offending an invalid.”

“You’re not an invalid,” Shane replies, slight exasperation bleeding into his voice. There’s probably panic in it, too. He elects not to think about it. “You’ll be fine. You’ll go to rehab, you’ll play, and the plan will stay intact. Okay? Charity, Ottawa, and us.”

“Charity, Ottawa, and us,” Ilya repeats dutifully, head lolling on the pillow so he can get a better look at Shane’s face. The repetition soothes something in him. They are words that Shane has repeated enough that the edges have been smoothed into something blunt. Charity, Ottawa, and us. “Sit, Shane.”

or: early into the year where they both still play for their respective teams, ilya suffers a crash on the ice

Notes

heated rivalry bug got us all sick and ill huh... please do not focus too intense on the sport stuff here! the only sport i was ever active in was synchroized swimming which is like Worlds apart from hockey. i do not follow any sport ever if there is anything glaringly wrong shhhh suspend your disbelief

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

When Shane had been concussed, when he had invited Ilya to his cottage with his words tripping together and morphine gone heavy in his blood, he had not looked at the actual *footage* for weeks.

Shane is used to seeing footage of himself— cannot *not* be used to it when his career hinges on it. Hinges on the approval from the cameras chasing after the ice spitting from his skates; hinges on the approval from Shane himself when he sits in his dark room in Montreal and loops the goal he could have made that night over and over and over again until his fingers burn.

But when it came to the concussion, he hadn't been able to. Had relied on Ilya's explanation, – even when he'd just been so ridiculously high he'd looked into Ilya's own eyes and felt his tongue too big for his mouth – on his mom's, on his dad, who had consistently squeezed Shane's kneecap in silent support.

Watching the actual footage had been a spur of the moment decision when he'd been able to look at screens again without wanting to die— it had been right there, an article on the home page on whatever navigator he'd clicked:

Shane Hollander Out of Play With Concussion and Fractured Collarbone: What Does Marleau Have to Say?

Shane hadn't even read the article, he'd clicked on the headline and it had led him straight into the video.

Shane, chasing the puck with his teeth gritted and helmet reflecting the light of a camera's shutter.

Shane, glancing back at Ilya in some moment of weakness, a smile curving on his face because he was going to make the goal, that was *his* goal and *his* puck and *his* night—

Shane, sprawled out on the ice with his fingers twitching around his stick.

And the most damning thing, really, had been seeing Ilya skate a wide circle around him with his gloves clenched so tight on his stick that it'd splintered slightly down the edge. Skating a circle around Shane and almost crashing into the medics when it had been clear that Shane wasn't getting *up*, Ilya Ilya and always Ilya even in his desperation to make sure Shane was okay even when they weren't anything then.

Or, well, that's not true. They'd always been *something*, right from when they were seventeen and Shane's mouth had gone dry at the sight of Ilya's throat. They'd just never been *this*, precisely, in front of cameras and a wild, screeching crowd. Shane had always taken great care to make sure that they weren't— all it had taken was one nasty spill on the ice for it to crack Ilya's front straight through the middle.

He tries not to think about his concussion when he can. Tries not to think about the footage aired to thousands and perhaps millions, when Shane has no recollection of it in his own head.

And he's done rather well thinking about it; has perfected the art of not thinking about anything else *but* the ice when he's on it. Is practically immune to Ilya's swagger when they meet for the face-off. Can stop himself from turning red when Ilya drags his tongue across his teeth, teeth that Shane has dragged his tongue across more times than he can possibly fathom, and *winks*.

The puck drops, their sticks clatter, and Shane skates away, smiling, with the puck against his own stick.

He really, truly, isn't thinking about anything else. Has his entire focus set on the way Johansson bites out a curse when Shane slams the puck toward toward Pike, the way the wind whips past his ears when a Boston jersey swings in out of buttfuck nowhere to collide with Pike right as he shoots the puck right back toward Shane, the way *Ilya* takes it from Shane and skates away so fast that sweat drips into Shane's eyes when he tears after him.

Shane is not thinking when he watches Ilya skate harder, faster, watches Ilya turn back toward him with a wild glint in his eye when he's about to score—

And anything Shane could have possibly thought freezes because he blinks, once, *hard*, and Ilya is splayed out on the ice, legs bent where they shouldn't be and fingers twitching.

Shane is acutely aware of the cameras on them. Cannot *not* be aware because he has felt the weight of them pressed against his spine for what feels like most of his life. It probably *is* most of his life.

It does not stop the panic from eating him whole; skating toward Ilya, close enough to seem concerned but not close enough to give away that he knows, with experience bordering on ten years, how Ilya feels inside of him.

Shane stops a reasonable distance away, and pretends that his world has not imploded.

It hasn't. It *hasn't*, because Ilya is shakily getting to his hands and knees on the ice, spit trailing past his chin and medics rushing toward him, ungloved hands at his pulse and another with a tiny little flashlight shining in Ilya's pupils.

Everything is fine. Ilya has to be fine. There is no other universe in which Ilya is *not* fine, because Shane does not *get* to have him in any universe but this one. They have fought so hard for this chance— a chance that Shane wasn't ever sure he'd get, even when they were young and seventeen and stupid.

"Ilya," he whispers, only to feel the sweetness of the name in his mouth. He swallows it down. It curls sour in his stomach.

Ilya looks at Shane for a brief second; still on his hands and knees and shaking so much that

Shane can see it even with the wide, wide loop he's skating around them, Ilya dead and dying and fallen on the ice and Shane can't— Shane can't *go* to him because then everyone will *know* and nobody can know because that means no more hockey— and no more hockey means no more Shane, because Shane and hockey are intrinsically locked together right down to the filament of his bones—

And Shane *wants*. He wants to be the one kneeling next to Ilya and pressing a hand against his cheek to make sure he breathes, wants to be the one helping him up and off the rink, wants to be the one to hold his hand because Ilya is—

"Tough fall," J.J says, too close and so unexpected that Shane flinches. J.J look at him, eyes narrowed, before turning back to where they're pulling Ilya onto a stretcher.

He'd been unable to get up. Shane had heard his protests even from the other side of the rink, *no, am fine, stop*, but Ilya *wasn't*. They'd let him find that out for himself, when he was still on his hands and knees. Ilya's arms had given out from under him when he was still looking at Shane, and even through his helmet Shane had seen, *heard*, the near soundless gasp torn from his mouth when he'd fallen back onto the ice, betrayed by himself.

"Yeah," Shane replies, belated. His voice has gone all hoarse and sticky. J.J looks at him again, and Shane can't bring himself to care.

"Get to the box, Cap. The medics look fierce enough to bite."

J.J skates away with a final tug on the fabric of Shane's jersey. And logically, Shane knows he should follow. Has to follow, because if he stares at Ilya ragdolled on the stretcher any longer he will do something stupid like fall to his knees, press his forehead to the ice, and try to remember how to breathe.

He can't do that. He *can't* do that. He and Ilya have a plan— the Irina Foundation, Ottawa, and *then* they can be something in the public eye. This is still the public eye. If Shane falls to his knees now, it means something. God, of course it will mean something, because he and Ilya are supposed to hate each other.

Shane cannot bring himself to move until Ilya is carted away entirely, out of the boards and past the gate and down into the cavernous dark of the tunnel down into the medbay.

Shane turns away from Ilya's limp body and skates back to his own box.

They win the rest of the game. It is the worst game Shane has ever played, and he knows that he should not be letting this affect him, because to everyone else, there is nothing to be affected *by*. This is a bonus for Shane. This is a bonus for the Voyageurs. This is a chance to snatch the win as the team unspools without Rozanov at its head.

They win.

The victory tastes like ash in Shane's mouth.

He goes to the locker room, withstands the pounding on his back from his teammates, who are rightfully as overjoyed as they should be. All Shane can think about, all Shane can *hear* is the crack of Ilya's helmet against the ice. *Cra-crack crack crack*. He blinks, shakes his head, and has somehow finished showering. *Crack*. He holds his phone in his hand, has his fingers poised over Lily's contact, and it's not even— *god*. Ilya isn't even going to reply, because he's probably lying knocked out on a hospital bed that Shane can't even see.

He talks to the reporters, fields the same questions he has fielded for the past decade of his life. Smiles and nods politely when one of them questions his reaction to Ilya's fall— *Mr. Hollander, you seemed awfully concerned when Rozanov was lying on the ice. A gallant show of sportsmanship, truly! Are there any words you'd like to say about it?*

I... hope that Rozanov is alright, and that it was nothing serious. We're beating Boston in the playoffs, anyway, so he needs to be in top shape if he even wants a chance at scoring more goals than we will. Thank you.

He doesn't even remember the rest of the night, not really. Cannot go see Ilya until the morning, because the rest of the Bruins are *at* the hospital now with him, and would probably knock Shane's head clean off his neck if he showed up now.

Shane sits in the car with his mother and his father, his father who drives to the radio and hums along with whatever pop song is on, and his mother who stares at him in the rearview mirror with concern making her eyelashes heavy.

He refreshes every single news outlet he can with a desperation bordering on manic. Most of them agree it wasn't anything bad. Concussion and shoulder dislocation. Concussion and shoulder dislocation. Concussion and— *crack* goes Ilya on the ice again when Shane watches the footage through squinted, blurry eyes, *crack* he goes in Shane's own head as he watches himself skate a wide circle around Ilya on the screen, mouth parted around the syllables of his name, *crack crack crack* when they load him onto the stretcher and the camera pans to Shane and his wide, wet eyes because he can't fucking manage to move from the ice.

God.

Concussion and shoulder dislocation. Okay. Okay. Okay— no screens, rest, shoulder in a sling for three weeks maybe four, rehabilitation for a month, maybe two. Okay. *Okay*.

When Shane crawls into bed that night, four articles open in separate tabs, he does not sleep until two.

In his dreams, Ilya hits the ice again.

When Shane stands before the hospital door where Ilya is – Shane can *see* him, nose tipped up to the sky and mouth in a sticky-sweet smile that cannot be anything but the high– he almost does not want to go in.

It is stupid. It is senseless, because he can see that Ilya is fine. Arm in a sling, bruises on his face, and bandages peeking out from beneath the sheets. Ilya is okay, is breathing, is smiling up at the roof despite laying catatonic in a hospital bed.

It does not make going inside any easier. He's hungry to see Ilya, to touch him again, get his hands on Ilya's skin and know that he is well. It does not make any sense to be standing outside of the door like this. Shane's hand is sweating on the doorknob. It creaks once under the weight of his palm, and slowly, languidly, Ilya's head moves to look, eyes catching on Shane's from the little paneled window.

Shane can't *hear* it, not really, but he knows the exact shape of Ilya's mouth when he calls out, halfway through a smile: *Shane!*

Shane opens the door and lets it swing shut behind him with a neat click.

Ilya's smiling in the sunlight, the curtains are open and it highlights the nasty bruising on his cheek but it also highlights the way he laughs once, bright and happy and all for Shane. Because of Shane. Because of *Shane*.

"Hi-iii," Ilya sings, voice wonderfully scratchy. He's lifting a hand up toward Shane, the one with the pulse oximeter on the index. Shane goes, because he always goes. There is no universe in which Ilya calls and Shane does not reply.

"Ilya."

"Sha-aane. Shane! Hello."

"Hi," Shane replies, fondness welling up in his chest and spilling into his voice. He grabs at Ilya's hand still in the air, tangles their fingers together. Ilya hums a little satisfied noise. His eyes have not left Shane's face, his eyes, his hair, his mouth.

He looks— he looks bad. Not necessarily *sick*, but bad. Bruises cover most of his left cheek from where the helmet straps had bitten into it with the force of his impact. There's a spray of them around his eye, close enough to the eye itself to worry. His hair is a rat's nest, fucked to hell and back. His lips are chapped, dried blood painting the sides of them crimson. His eyes are a little hazy, a little gone with how high he seems to float.

He is still the most beautiful person Shane has ever seen. The most beautiful person Shane will *ever* see.

"Concussion and shoulder dislocation, right?"

"Yes. I am out for, ah, three months."

“You’ll need rehab for the shoulder, and rest.”

“Yes, doctor. You’d make a very sexy doctor.”

“*Ilya.*”

“What? Is truth. Shane Hollander. Sexy doctor. If you got a— a costume, you know, with the little hat and the skir—”

Shane slaps a quick hand over Ilya’s mouth, feeling himself go red enough that he’s probably popped about five blood vessels. A furtive glance behind him shows that they are still in private. Ilya licks the palm of Shane’s hand and Shane pulls it off his mouth with a *ew!*

“Bah. Nothing I have not done before.”

“Shut u—”

“You are offending an invalid.”

“You’re not an invalid,” Shane replies, slight exasperation bleeding into his voice. There’s probably panic in it, too. He elects not to think about it. “You’ll be fine. You’ll go to rehab, you’ll play, and the plan will stay intact. Okay? Charity, Ottawa, and us.”

“Charity, Ottawa, and us,” Ilya repeats dutifully, head lolling on the pillow so he can get a better look at Shane’s face. The repetition soothes something in him. They are words that Shane has repeated enough that the edges have been smoothed into something blunt. *Charity, Ottawa, and us.* “Sit, Shane.”

Shane sits. The mattress creaks beneath their combined weight. Ilya’s hand is still interlaced with his. It weighs more than the Stanley Cup ever has.

He looks at Ilya, into his eyes and across his eyelashes. Shane has never stopped looking at him from the very first moment he had him.

“You worried me,” pulls out of his mouth, almost without his permission. He remembers Ilya saying something like that too when it was *Shane* on the hospital bed, when it was Shane who had grabbed his hand and asked with all the earnestness in the world will you...
Cometomycottagehissummer?

Ilya’s face contorts; once in something Shane thinks is regret, and a second time in love.

He lets go of Shane’s hand and pulls it up instead to curl around Shane’s cheek. He misses twice, ends up patting Shane’s nose and mouth instead of his actual cheek. It’s so sweet Shane could cry. He really *shouldn’t* cry, because Ilya already looks emotional enough. Shane shouldn’t add to that. Ilya’s always the one taking care of Shane— tuna melts, pushing Shane so hard into the mattress a sob rips out of his mouth, cleaning his glasses with dainty little handkerchiefs. It is Shane’s job to take care of him now.

To care for Ilya has always been a job Shane thinks he would be good at. A neat little stitch to add onto his resume.

“Do not worry, dorogoy,” Ilya murmurs, words slipping together. He smiles again, and Shane is helpless to do anything but smile back. “I am okay.”

“Mm.”

Ilya stares at him a little longer, seemingly fascinated by his hand on Shane’s face. Shane lets him—the world is a little syrupy when as high as Ilya clearly is.

“You’re so pretty,” says Ilya, a little like a prayer and a lot like a revelation. “So-ooo pretty.”

Shane’s face has to be reaching unprecedented levels of redness. Is it possible to die because of this? There *have* to be studies done on it— if enough capillaries burst, there have to be, like, mortal effects on the body. Christ.

“Pretty enough to be a nurse?”

“Oh, yes. The prettiest, sexiest nurse.”

Shane snorts, once, and can’t help the way it folds over into a full laugh, incandescent with the sight of Ilya’s own joy.

“You’re concussed.”

“It does not mean I did not mean it. I meant it. So pretty. Prettiful.”

“That’s not a word.”

“It is now.”

“So you’re a linguist?”

“Mm-hmm. Always a linguist when it comes to the language of Hollander.”

“Fuck you,” Shane says, smiling so hard that it breaks the kiss before it really begins, because *Ilya* is also smiling and their teeth are clacking together and they shouldn’t even be kissing when Ilya is this hurt. Shane pulls away, relents and presses a final kiss to Ilya’s mouth when Ilya whines about it.

“You’re a brat, you know that?”

“I’m concussed,” Ilya replies, batting pretty, pretty eyes up at Shane, “you need to give concussed people what they want.”

“What do you want?”

“You.”

I want... you know.

Say it.

You.

“You have me, Ilya. You always have.”

“Chairty, Ottawa, and you,” Ilya says again, smile growing wider when Shane bends over to plant another kiss on his mouth. They really shouldn’t be doing this here. There are nurses and other players and anyone who could walk in and find Shane’s tongue tracing the seam of Ilya’s lips.

“Charity, Ottawa, and me,” Shane promises again, right against Ilya’s mouth. Ilya grins and swallows the words down with another kiss.

“Oh!” Ilya pulls back, Shane’s eyes still closed and mouth floundering. It takes a ridiculous amount of time to be able to look at Ilya properly again. Ilya’s mouth is curved in a smirk. Shane hates that he knows exactly what that means. What is new is Ilya’s free hand held up with his pinky finger lifted up toward Shane’s. “I do not... name in English. Forgot. But a promise, yes?”

“Pinky promise,” Shane manages, the ball in his throat growing. His words are choked.

“Yes. Pinky promise— you have me, and I have you.”

Ilya wags his finger in front of Shane’s face again, and Shane’s heart feels so full that it cleaves him right in two when he reaches up his own pinky finger and curls it around Ilya’s.

“Pinky promise,” Shane swears, solemnly, as if they are not grown men in their twenties with stellar careers behind and before them.

“Pinky promise,” Ilya swears back, as if *he* is not a grown man in his twenties with a stupidly impressive career. And as if he were not high as fuck on whatever drugs the doctors have him on.

Ilya breaks into laughter following that, head thumping back onto the pillow and the full expanse of his neck curving with it. Shane kind of wants to bite it, but that would be counterproductive to Ilya’s healing. Another bruise is not exactly what they need here.

“My mom texted earlier today, and she’s making miso.”

“Soup!”

“Ssh-hh. You’re so loud.”

“*Soup*,” whispers Ilya, theatrical.

“She’ll have you on a soup based diet for at least a week. Don’t be so happy when we go back home with thirty containers of miso.”

Ilya, to his credit, does not look as afraid as Shane thought he would. Determined, more like. He’s never liked wasting any of Yuna’s food. It’s one of his more endearing qualities, right up there with his ability to fuck Shane to tears and his love for the ice.

“Miso diet.”

“Miso diet,” Shane agrees, running a careful hand through Ilya’s hair. When he scratches soft fingers against his scalp, Ilya butts into the touch.

“I’m really glad you’re okay, Ilya.”

“Mm. Yes. Me too. Thank you for... coming.”

“I’d always come. You know that, right? I’ll alw—”

“Yes, Hollander. I know. I *know*.”

“Good. Don’t doubt that.”

“I won’t.”

Ilya’s mouth cracks on a yawn on the last syllable, and Shane cannot help but snort at how foolish he looks.

“Sleep, Ilya.”

“Stay?”

“If a nurse finds us here, they’ll think I drugged you to sleep.”

“I’m already drugged!”

“Ssh. I’ll stay until you sleep, you big baby.”

“Okay,” Ilya mumbles, face tipping further towards Shane’s hand. He already looks half asleep. Probably *is*.

Shane does not know if he can stay until Ilya is properly asleep. *Wants* to, more than anything. But they have— a plan. A plan that becomes harder and harder and harder to follow, because Shane loves Ilya. And the world should know that Shane loves Ilya; wants to broadcast it all the way to the moon.

They'll be able to have that one day, Shane thinks. They'll be able to walk around with matching rings on their fingers and step-in-step in the grocery aisle without it being revolutionary. They will be able to be Shane-and-Ilya, and not just Hollander-and-Rozanov. They will be good together. God, they'll be great together.

Ilya is Shane's, and Shane is Ilya's. Now, *here*, it does not need to be any more complicated than that.

End Notes

thank u so much for reading ♡

i wrote this mostly to get my footing w them and found that i rllyyy enjoy writing them so the couple of ideas i have for hollanov are probably going to be written! ilya's my favorite out of these two and well poor ilya bc now he'll be subjected to whump because of it. who cheered! storytime i was once on exchange to germany for a year and one of my best friends was named annalena & she was a great hockey player. she played as goalie as the only girl on an all-guys team n it was so inspiring ! she once invited me to a game of hers n it was so fun i tried to channel that energy here but lowkey failed BUT ITS OKAY! annalena if ur reading this hi ich liebe dich!!! regardless thank u truly for reading!! hollanov got us all bad

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