

the law of loving others

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the law of loving others

by [xiaomaomii](#)

Summary

There are footsteps outside, a nurse probably, so Ilya readies himself for goodbye. It's too soon. Too soon. How am I meant to leave him here? Bruised, without wrapping him up in that navy weighted blanket he likes. Without feeding him his stupid, regimented rabbit diet and his ginger ale? Without teasing him about his neatness habits and about the singular pass he missed in that game we played against each other years ago? Without kissing him all over—his cheeks, his lips, his eyelids, across his chest, and the curve of his spine. His scapula, where his wings must be hiding. Angel Hollander. Boring Hollander. Beautiful Hollander. That's all he is, beautiful. Ilya's chest feels full to bursting. If his heart were a machine, it would destroy him, and then the world, with love.

OR, Shane gets hurt on the ice. Ilya does not take it well. He thinks, and thinks, and thinks.

Notes

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

When Shane's head hits the ice, he thinks, suddenly, of Moscow.

Russia was like that. He always felt hollow there, a mannequin posed by all the people who swore they needed him. Posed by his father's airy voice. Posed by his brother's rage for which there was no ending, posed by the snow and the rain and the dirty water. The best part was Svetlana, when she was there. They would put their arms round each other and dance, and dance, and dance—but there was an emptiness to that too.

A particular certainty. An emptiness that wasn't filled by the cars the drugs and the alcohol, hot and spilling—when he would finally black out, because there was no peace in Russia, (just as there was no love), he would open his bedroom window and imagine the stars were freckles, the biting wind velvety skin. In Moscow, in Boston, everywhere, anywhere. Those days dragged, so he dreamt of Hollander. Of Shane.

Mother, he thinks. Mama. There has been a cavern in my chest since you left. Inside is a portrait of a boy in the shape of your hand, reaching out, grasping at something I could not see. And now I fear it will be left empty again, because the one who has filled it is—

And this snaps him out of whatever underwater trance he's been in for at least five seconds, standing shellshocked on the ice. He wants to do a million things right now—shake his gloves free, hit Marlow, hit the ground, hit himself—but what he does first is skate, breath coming in desperate pants, to Shane's side. The sickening thud of his helmet as it hit the ground plays over and over in Ilya's mind—a traitorous mantra. What if he can't play anymore? What if he doesn't wake? *What if? What if? What if?*

Hollander, he says. Hollander. Hollander. Hollander. *What he really means is my love, my heart. Please get up. What would I do without you?* He had spent minutes, or maybe hours, as a child waiting for the sun to rise in Moscow. When it finally, shyly, showed itself, he'd shut his eyes, squinting, because it was too bright, too warm, too much. Shane was like that. Ilya tried to look away, at award shows, on the ice, after being entangled in each other and locked together in the deepest possible way, but he still saw Shane, blinding, in his great and terrible beauty.

After twelve, for Ilya, love has consistently been about reason. We are family, so we must love each other. We are family, so you must help me. Transactional. And it's a simple thing. Ilya, you cannot love without pain. *To save a drowning man, you must crack the ribs to pump the heart.* Ilya, we need money. Call me and get it to me by morning. Ilya, I want you in bed. Here, have a cigarette and take off your shirt. Ilya, love is participation.

This is what it means to be loved—chained together. This is what it means for a son to love his father, even if it pains him. Follow me down, a bad animal, katabasis-like—and we'll both be devils in hell. It's not true, but it is. It's not love, but it has to be.

He's distinctly aware of someone pulling him away from Shane. There's this rushing in his ears, like the tide, and he shakes violently to try and dislodge it. A medic tells him to stand back with an arm across his chest, and he is helpless watching, as one of his teammates—or a

referee- pulls him back to their bench. The rest happens in a flurry of steps, going through the motions.

Goes back to the locker room. Says something—*good game. Way to fucking go.* Or something like that. It must be acceptable because his team goes right back to chattering about post-game plans to get drunk and celebrate their win. Marlow comes up to him as Ilya is ripping off his gear to apologize, and he gives him a terse nod. He gets the address of the hospital from his coach—because, “Is good sportsmanship to visit hurt players, even if he is my rival”. The words hide how fast and hard his heart is thumping, how he doesn’t bother with the shower before skirting his teammates’ invitations, how he races to his car and screeches out of the player lot.

On route to the hospital, Ilya thinks. In his mind, there is a road—three bodies split from it. One road for his mother, one road for his father, and now, one road for his lover. *To save a bleeding man, you must cauterize the wound before dressing it.* Mother, mother. What path should I follow? A sad son. An angry son. And an unknown thing, too soft and uncertain to grasp yet. His filial devotion, and therefore, his anger, says it should be the second.

But god, he cannot stop thinking about it. About Shane, with his molten eyes and peeling laugh and stupid, boyish grin and soft hands and the easy, torturous way their bodies fall into bed with one another. In their years of meeting up, Ilya has learned that the cruelest thing in this world is a lover. He has learned friction, as in the way his hands, stuck, writing on top of another’s means we shouldn’t do this. *We shouldn’t do this, but we can’t stop.*

He bursts through the hospital doors and stalks right up to the receptionist.

“Am here to see Sh—Hollander. Hockey captain. He hit his head at our game. I am the Boston captain—”

“Mr. Rozonov, yes?” The receptionist smiles. “Unfortunately, it’s only family is allowed at this moment. Visiting hours start tomorrow at 8:00 AM. I’m not allowed to disclose much, but he should be stable.”

Ilya exhales, his body feeling momentarily weak. Stable. He can work with that. He’ll still be on edge until he can see Shane, but the relief is enough to take a bit of the worry off his shoulders. He thanks the receptionist and trudges back to his car, which is parked so hazhazardly he can hear neat freak Hollander’s voice nagging him to stay between the lines next time. The thought prompts an unwilling smile.

That night, he dreams of Moscow. That country, clinging to restlessness. And the sea. There’s drink, because there’s always drink—and there’s violence, because there must always be violence. Ilya is standing on a dance floor while everyone moves around him. Whether they’re fucking or fighting, he cannot tell the difference. Is there one? There’s a tongue in his mouth, hands around his neck. Think: ashtray. The oritifical pressure. The body’s mourning and senseless tossing. It’s a nice promise, cigarettes and vodka and pills for everyone, but it fits all wrong. There’s a hand up his shirt. There’s a body breathing in the dark. Wrong.

Sex, smoke, spirits are all tools to beat the bad dog inside himself into submission, for the illicit crime of wanting. God, all he wants is to sleep with someone and never touch them

again. He imagines a universe where he's happy. He imagines, no—believes, that if he were allowed, he would crawl into Shane's body and settle there, a dagger under his skin, forever. A terrible and beautiful future. And a profoundly unreasonable one.

At 3:00 AM, he wakes after just managing to drift off in a cold sweat. His head spins with how fast he lurches for his phone, typing into Google the only two English words he'll never lose—even in the midst of panic and post-nightmare haze. Shane Hollander. The recommended search is helpful because his hands are shaking so bad that he only manages to type the name—Shane Hollander injury. Shane Hollander hospital. Shane Hollander updates.

It's the dead of night, so nothing's new, just the same articles reporting that it was serious, the Metros captain is being treated at a nearby hospital, and it was a hit to the head. Nothing. Ilya's breath leaves him in a whoosh, and he buries his head into his pillow. He knows Shane hates it when he neglects his health—with his stupid, cute, nagging voice—*Rozanov*, don't eat that. *Rozanov*, stop smoking. *Rozanov*, go to bed early, so he tries his best to settle down and get some rest before visiting hours open at 8:00 AM.

Because his mind is unreasonable, Ilya thinks of his sin again. I want. I want. I want. His capital crime? A dream in a white house, with glass walls, and the clothes, shed like orange peels around the pale moonlight. They would kiss, because he knows Shane likes to kiss when in that floaty little headspace after sex. Ilya would wash him and feed him strawberries out of his palm and map his freckles with his mouth. And they would do yoga, or whatever boring Canadians do at a private cottage, but he would do it and like it because Shane likes it, and at night would dedicate himself to pulling his boy, his wonderful, beautiful boy, apart by the seams with pleasure and sewing him back together with his own hands so they can never be apart.

But Ilya's love is calamitous. Ilya's love is painful. Ilya's love is a bomb swallowed by a bad dog, tucked safely, deep in his body. And they will die together.

His alarm wakes him at seven. He spends ten minutes in a frenzy washing up, ignoring the texts from his teammates since he uncharacteristically skipped out on team dinner yesterday, and drives straight to the hospital. In the sterile waiting room, he can't stop his knee from bouncing up and down.

The receptionist—a different one from last night—might feel a bit bad for him, because she calls his name softly, “Mr. Rozanov?”

His head snaps up. “Shane—Hollander, I can see him now? Is okay? Awake?” The questions come out in a flurry, and for a brief moment, he's grateful he's in enough control of his emotions to speak fully formed sentences.

The woman, middle-aged, in pink floral-patterned scrubs, smiles, “I'll take you back early. It's awfully nice of you to come first thing. And no need to be afraid—he's on painkillers, but awake and talking. Quite sweet once he starts blurting out whatever's in that brain of his.”

“Thank you,” Ilya manages to give her a small smile to encapsulate the sheer relief he feels.

She gives him another once over. Her eyes are light blue, almost like his mother's. Perhaps it's the lack of sleep (probably), the lingering unease from the nightmare (definitely), and the raw desire he feels all the time when Shane is concerned (100%), his chest tightens.

“He's waiting for you. You'll be okay,” There's something knowing in her tone as she pats his arm gently. Another smile, and then she's already turning and making her way back down the hall.

Swallowing, Ilya pushes open the door. Sees him. Swallows again. Shane is slightly elevated on a bunch of pillows and covered in hospital blankets. Ilya frowns—feeling an urge to run back home to get the weighted comforter of his that he knows Shane likes. His eyes are closed—sleeping probably, from the rise and fall of his chest. His right arm sits in a sling—but there's no neck brace. Nothing wrapped around his head. He feels frozen by the door until Shane opens his eyes and breaks into the most breathtaking smile he's ever seen.

“Ilyaaa,” Shane calls.

Ilya has to suppress a laugh. God, he feels lighter already with Shane's loopy voice, the cute way he drags out the last syllable—like he's so excited to see him. Ilya approaches the bed and notices that this close, he can see the purple-red bruising around his eyes and nose bridge from the helmet, and underneath, Shane's star-freckles. Shane kicks up a fuss until Ilya holds his hand, and they talk.

He tells Shane he was scared. *The moment you hit the ice, I thought my heart stopped.*

Shane sighs about his concussion barring him from playoffs. *I've seen players completely done from a hit like that. Thank God it wasn't worse.*

Shane complains about how thin the hospital covers are, so Ilya grabs another few blankets and tucks him in how he likes, neatly and around his legs, so Shane can feel the weight of it. *I know you like the pressure. That's why I bought you that weighted comforter I only pull out when you're over; because I overheat at night.*

Then—

“Will you come to my cottage this summer?” Shane still sounds high, but there's an edge of excitement as he tells him not to go back to Russia. To stay comfortably for two weeks. It'll be so nice. And they'll have more time. *Haven't you ever wanted more time, Ilya?*

He knows, like Shane had muttered all those years ago, that this is a bad idea. Maybe he should just take it, the second path, the hairpin turn. Break the heart and mend it later. Retreat to lick your wounds, like the tortured creature you are. There is no world where he can be happy. But standing there, he can't help but release a breathless laugh.

Ilya strokes Shane's sun-warmed cheek gently. “Okay. Maybe.”

What he really means is, *do you know how much I adore you?* Is like looking at the sun, blinding but so beautiful you cannot look away. Shane's doe eyes blink up at him, and he realizes he's just said all of that out loud.

Shane pouts, rambling, “Really, really think about it, Ilya. Sometimes, I think I can see when you’re down. Thundercloud Ilya, like you’re some hollow tool that is just there to be used. Mm not the best at reading people, but I know you. I think. You should always be happy, I think. *I know* I want you to be happy. Don’t worry, I know you’re not a mannequin, because they’re soulless and have way less muscles and puck handling skills than you. So, don’t be a thundercloud.”

He finishes his surprisingly thoughtful rambling with a self-satisfied nod, like he’s shared with Ilya that secret of the universe in his warbly, loopy voice. It might as well be, because the burning in Ilya’s throat is warning him of incoming tears he really doesn’t want to shed right now.

“Ah, my little зайчик. *My little rabbit*. Shane crinkles his freckled nose at the unfamiliar endearment. “So clever. You are always right, hm?”

There are footsteps outside, a nurse probably, so Ilya readies himself for goodbye. It’s too soon. Too soon. *How am I meant to leave him here?* Bruised, without wrapping him up in that navy weighted blanket he likes. Without feeding him his stupid, regimented rabbit diet and his ginger ale? Without teasing him about his neatness habits and about the singular pass he missed in that game we played against each other years ago? Without kissing him all over—his cheeks, his lips, his eyelids, across his chest, and the curve of his spine. His scapula, where his wings must be hiding.

Angel Hollander. Boring Hollander. Beautiful Hollander. That’s all he is, beautiful. Ilya’s chest feels full to bursting. If his heart were a machine, it would destroy him, and then the world, with love.

“Ilya,” Shane faux whispers.

“Yes? What do you want, Hollander?” He replies. *I would give you anything you asked for, however unreasonable.*

“A kiss. We didn’t even kissss—”, Shane drawls out.

“Okay, okay. Shhh.” Ilya taps Shane’s arm gently to stop him from being too loud. “Okay. I give you kiss, then go, hm?”

“Okay.” Shane looks happy.

Ilya kisses him, and it feels like sunshine. Shane’s laugh after does too. The nurse slips in finally, and Ilya forces out some form of how he’s just about to leave and for Shane to get well soon. Before he can fully pull away, Shane grabs onto his sleeve.

“Remember, don’t be thundercloud Ilya. I’ll see you next season and maybe...?” The hopeful lilt in Shane’s tone nearly breaks him.

“Yes, Hollander. Of course, will remember you said.” But what he really wants to say is *yes, my love. My heart. My little rabbit. My солнышко. Anything for you. I want to kiss you now and never stop. You are the only person I want to touch, from now until the end of time.*

The other man beams, and Ilya leaves, Shane's little monologue ringing in his mind. There's a lightness that he hasn't felt in a long time, thanks to his beloved's dazed introspection.

Okay, Ilya thinks—no, promises. For you, I try. I'll try anything. For once, this cavern, this love, this explosive in his chest doesn't feel logical, or binding, or like a contract. It feels like love. Unreasonable, blinding love.

End Notes

hello hollanov truthers!!! i can never resist an injury recovery troupe so i felt compelled to write ilya's POV post shane's fall on the ice. i'm actually a competitive basketball player of 8+ years, and i've had my fair share of concussions and injuries. i think this may have happened in the book, but shane mentions putting on an audiobook since he's super bored not being able to do anything while concussed, but he ends up falling asleep super quickly. i did this so much when i was hurt too LOL, so maybe ill write something else about home recovery...

regardless, these 2 are my current hyperfixation! i wrote this in just under 2 hours bc they've wormed their way into my brain like lovely little parasites. here are some considerations and notes as always:

- did anyone notice the literary references i added here? they're all from anna karenina. i'm a big russian lit reader and forbidden love troupe seemed fitting.
- the title comes from this quote, "But the law of loving others could not be discovered by reason, because it is unreasonable." which also drives ilya's initial concept of love as the opposite, logical and transactional (aside from his mother)
- this ^ is just how i imagine it, so i wanted to explore how he's reforming his idea of it with shane. he's actually done so well for himself considering his upbringing, i think lol. i'm rooting for you ilya!
- ilya's comparison of shane to the sun, and usage of the dimitative nickname Солнышко (Solnishko) is a nod to this quote, where count vronsky likens anna to the sun -> "He stepped down, trying not to look long at her, as if she were the sun, yet he saw her, like the sun, even without looking."
- katabasis is a greek word meaning "descent into the underworld"
- i liked writing about the passage when he dreams of moscow. you can think of it as a call back to the club scene, but i wanted to explore how ilya engages in drink/smoke/sex not because he enjoys it, but as a form of self-punishment to take his mind off what he really wants, (but can't have) which is shane.
- i'm not actually sure if boston won the game...i can't remember if that was addressed so if ive messed that up feel free to lmk...
- finally, i made some fanart on my tiktok for HR LOL,,it's just a crossover doodle w/ jjk, but if you want to see it (and more of the actual characters soon!) click [here](#) :)

that's all! thank you again for tuning in and for reading my yapping <3 i'll come back soon with more of these 2. i don't speak russian, so if i've messed anything up pls let me know! lastly, as always, comments/feedback are so appreciated. i hope you enjoyed :)) ٩('⊂ *) ♡

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