December 31st

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by streetsofmercy

Summary

Ilya is going through a depressive episode alone on New Year's Eve. Shane, who knows him better than he thinks, realizes something is up.

Notes

I was feeling really anxious this NYE so decided to work it out through my dear friend Ilya Rozanov. Any mistakes are on me, will hopefully edit tomorrow. Thanks!

See the end of the work for more notes

December 31st, 2016

Ilya was awakened from his nap by a phone call from his brother. It had taken him a second to recognize the voice, which didn't take long to begin screaming, asking for money.

"It's New Year's Eve, Ilya" his brother had said through gritted teeth. "Don't be an asshole."

It was the expectation of money that made Ilya want to be even more of an asshole. There was no hello, no how are you? just the request, no — demand, of money.

"So what, you need more coke to shove up your nose at midnight?" His brother stayed quiet. "No, not that?" Ilya responded to the silence. "Is it hookers? What do I need to pay for, Andrei?"

The response was "I have a family, Ilya."

As if that meant anything to him. Yes, Andrei had a wife and daughter. But you know who was also his family? Ilya. And he'd never given a single shit about him. He could play the family man card as much as he wanted with others, but Ilya knew better than that.

"Just fucking send me the money, Ilya, *you*—"

"You what?" Ilya yelled back. "What am I?"

His brother didn't reply.

Ilya knew that in his family, words were often not so much said, as implied.

He remembered the first time he'd learned that.

> "Mama," he had asked her late one night when he was just a boy. "How come Dad never says 'I love you' to me, but you always do?"
>
> That was one of the first times he remembered seeing that sad smile on his mother's face. Her lips would curve the way they did when he brought home a good grade or when he'd score a goal during a match, but her eyes had that same glassy look as when he'd see her wipe away tears in the kitchen that she swore were from the onions, but he knew had to do with his father's stomping around the house.
>
> "My darling," his mother had whispered, pulling her son closer against her on the couch. "Sometimes, people express their emotions not through words, but through actions, you know?" Ilya faintly nodded, he understood the concept, but he wasn't sure how it applied. "Your dad loves you very much, even if he doesn't say it as much as I do. Okay?"
>
> "Okay, mama." Ilya had replied, snuggling up closer to her as she stroked his hair.

It would only take a few more years for him to realize that wasn't true. As his father didn't show love for him in any way, let alone through words.

But he understood that not everything needed to be said.

When his brother, Andrei, growled at him over the phone, practically spitting out the word "you" he knew that he truly meant. He wanted to say "you *degenerate*, you *faggot*, you *piece of fucking shit.*"

But he didn't, just how he didn't elaborate on what he needed the money for. His family was in the room, and he needed to put on an act that Ilya could see right through. Nevertheless, the guilt got to him and after settling on a much lower amount, Ilya hung up and wired him the money.

He threw his phone across the bed and went to take out his frustration onto his home gym.

Shane didn't lie. That had always been his thing.

Even as a kid, he'd never stolen money from his mother's purse or lied to his dad about his whereabouts. Yuna and David trusted him, and raised him to trust them back. There was always open, two-sided communication between them and Shane was thankful for it.

That was, of course, until he started sleeping with his rival. His male rival.

Luckily for him, he'd gotten away with not so much lying as omitting the truth. He would simply say "fine" if they asked him how his night was, he'd sparkle in some other, legitimate activities he had done.

The concealing was a lie of itself, but he didn't feel as bad about it if he went about it like that.

That's why he was really fucking stressed about his mother's questions regarding his New Year's Eve Plans.

Although initially he said he'd spend it with them, he had decided the day before he was going to trust his intuition.

To avoid any complications, he'd texted them he was spending it with a friend instead. Which was technically not untrue, they were somewhat friends, right?

Except his mother had replied to that asking "With Hayden?" which had put Shane into a situation where lying was the only way out.

He thought of just not replying, he hadn't done so for a few hours, but he knew he'd have to say something eventually or they might text again, and then they would see that he wasn't receiving anything because he was on a fucking plane on New Year's Eve which would only lead to more questions.

He zipped up his backpack, put on some sunglasses and a ball cap, walked out the door and lied.

He was still catching his breath from the treadmill when he opened his phone to a message from Svetlana. “С Новым годом, Илья”

It was already the New Year in Moscow, and though he was glad he didn’t have to see family, he was kind of sad he didn’t get to ring in the new year with Svetlana. He thought of the years they had counted down to midnight together, often in some sweaty club, and drunkenly kissed as the people around them cheered.

And despite the fact that things had changed between them, he missed her company. All things aside, they always found something to talk or laugh about.

It was New Year in Moscow and once again, Ilya couldn’t stop thinking about his mother. He wanted so badly to turn back time and have one more New Year with her. He would do anything to see her again.

She had been on his mind so much those last few months, but not in the way her presence often was, looking over him, supporting him. It was her pain, the way he couldn’t have saved her that loomed heavy on his conscience.

He knew he had to snap out of it, no matter how hard it was.

He could reply to one of the multiple teammates that had invited him to a party that night and within hours he’d be in a room full of people desperate to impress him. But he didn’t want to. Some time before he would have gone and let them feed his ego, but not anymore, their adoration meant nothing to him.

The only adoration he wanted was from someone he couldn’t have.

His phone buzzed.

“Still no plans for tonight?” the message from *Jane* read.

They hadn’t normally done that. The whole texting and checking in on each other. But something had changed in recent months that had led to Shane checking in more often.

It wasn’t just the fact they were hooking up more often, that he’d been to Ilya’s house, or that they were spending the night instead of running away as soon as they’d finished. It wasn’t about the muddled romantic feelings Shane was actively pushing down.

Something had changed within Ilya.

There was a darkness that Shane didn’t recognize.

Ilya fucking Rozanov, with his quick remarks and neverending banter, wasn’t the same.

The last few times they'd seen each other, he hadn't even sexted Shane before a game. The inappropriate comments at the worst times had been less and less.

This was something positive, Shane thought at first, until it wasn't.

Ilya's eyes, always daring, full of fire, were dulled. There was a glassy look to them that he hadn't seen before and, quite frankly, bothered him.

He had only seen it when Ilya would speak to or about his father and brother, but it had started appearing in normal conversations too.

Shane called him late one night, when he received a weird text past Ilya's usual bedtime. It was kinda cryptic, but not in a drunken text kind of way. More in an 'I am trying to say something without saying it' kind of way.

So he'd FaceTimed him from bed, and kept his glasses on because he knew Ilya liked how they looked.

And even though they chatted about everything and nothing, and eventually got each other off, Shane couldn't unsee that darkness in his eyes.

He knew Ilya had said that he was staying home that night because he "wasn't in the mood to hang out with boring Canadians or stupid Americans" but he needed to make sure before arriving at the airport.

"Maybe I will look at that picture of you in your sexy glasses and make myself cum exactly at midnight" Ilya texted back.

It wasn't his finest work, a bit sloppy and uninspired. He wasn't even particularly horny, which he usually was after such a workout.

This was, obviously, not a good sign. But also not surprising.

He knew that something wasn't entirely right. He had even been ignoring some of Shane's messages, especially dirty ones that were so incredibly unexpected.

He had been the one to always initiate those, but sometimes, he just couldn't bring himself to care. It had nothing to do with Shane, he hadn't been able to bring himself to care about anyone, not even himself.

His habits had bordered on harmful, what with the smoking and excessive drinking some nights.

But none of that tonight. Just some harmful sulking and self-pitying.

He wondered what Shane would be doing that night. He could imagine him in one of his beautifully boring sweaters, that perfect smile plastered on his face, sitting around his perfect

family and friends. He wondered if they played board games after dinner, or if they gathered around the television and told stories.

He wondered what it was like to have a picture perfect life and found himself getting more frustrated by the second.

He headed for the stationary bike instead.

He was usually paranoid, but especially that evening in the airport. He knew he looked like a complete douchebag in his massive sunglasses and cap, but he just didn't want anyone to recognize him.

He could have planned it better if he'd actually planned it at all.

But his gut had told him something was wrong with Ilya, and the only way to find out what was to go see it for himself.

Driving was an option, but he didn't trust he'd make it over the border in time, plus, traffic in Boston was a nightmare and it wasn't like he was very familiar with the place.

So, he booked a first-class seat on a last-minute flight that would get him there just past 9 PM, plenty of time to get a cab and make it to Ilya's in time.

Except, that he didn't count on the airport being an absolute nightmare. Why the hell were all these people flying on New Year's Eve? And the subsequent delaying of most flights.

It was 10PM by the time Ilya let himself fall onto his bed, his body still aching from the long workout, despite the hot shower he'd taken immediately after.

He wondered if he should just fall asleep again, but he wasn't tired. He considered jerking off but he was too goddamn sad to even do that.

What a great fucking end to the year.

He felt ridiculous. He was hot, rich, famous, had practically everything he or anyone else could dream of yet he couldn't stop tears from pooling in his eyes every time he thought about it. He felt his chest aching with every breath, and his vision was so blurry he couldn't blink the tears away any more.

His hands balled up in the sheets as he began to let himself break down, tears streaming down his face as he sobbed. It felt like his heart was about to burst out of his chest, his breathing complicating with every second that went by.

Then, suddenly, his phone began to ring.

It was dark and freezing cold, and Shane hoped to God that Ilya hadn't changed his mind about staying home because he was now outside the gates, waiting for him to let him into the

house.

After about 20 seconds, he called the intercom again.

He knew Ilya had an app on his phone connected to the camera, why he wasn't replying was beyond him.

Shane began to doubt himself. What if he'd been misreading the signs all along?

What if, and he felt the anxiety bubbling in his chest, Ilya hadn't just been distant, but distant from *him*.

What if it wasn't about Ilya not doing well, but *them* not doing well.

Maybe this whole staying home thing was a lie because Ilya was with somebody else.

That would make sense, his mind began to connect dots that Shane didn't even know were there at all.

He was with somebody else, and he was embarrassing himself by showing up at his fucking house on New Year's Eve trying to somehow save his life, when there was nothing there to save.

Shane was about to let his anxiety win, was about to turn around and call a cab straight back to the airport when he heard a door open and saw a dark shadow running towards the gate.

And there, in nothing but pyjama bottoms and wet hair, stood Ilya Rozanov. The security app was open on his phone, and there were tears still falling down his cheeks as his bewildered eyes stared right into Shane's.

"Rozanov," Shane said softly, and before he knew it, the gate was swung open and he was throwing himself into the other man's arms.

He didn't remember the last time he had cried that much, let alone in front of someone else. He was a mess of tears, snot and rambling. But Shane just held him in his arms on the couch, softly brushing his fingers through Ilya's hair, handing him tissues from the box he'd grabbed and placed on the coffee table as Ilya had begun trying to explain what he'd been going through.

He knew he wasn't being coherent, and Shane had said he didn't expect him to, he just listened and held him like he had all the time in the world.

Like it meant something to him. *Ouch*. That feeling hurt.

"Why— How did you—? When—?" Ilya babbled "How did you know?"

Ilya looked up now, trying to meet Shane's eyes. "Tonight, how did you—?"

"I don't know," Shane sighed, gently cupping Ilya's face. "I mean, you have been distant."

“Distant?”

“You’ve not been yourself. Something felt off, you felt so far away.”

Ilya nodded. It was true, he had been distant. He had been building a wall, not just with Shane, but with everyone and everything. It had all culminated over the last few days, when he’d put physical distance between himself and everyone around him, leading to the breakdown he was currently experiencing in Shane Hollander’s arms.

“I care about you, Rozanov.”

That hit him harder than anything had that evening, but to his own surprise, it wasn’t painful. It was shocking, his head was spinning a million miles an hour but for once, it wasn’t out of control. He wasn’t spiralling, it was an adrenaline rush unlike anything he had felt.

It felt new and terrifying but *so* good. And yet, he felt the need to protect himself, to grab those bricks and start building a wall again.

“Hollander, I—”

“You don’t need to say anything. Not right now, ok? I know the deal,” Shane cleared his throat. “We meet, we fuck, it’s easy.” His imitation of Ilya had gotten better over the years.

“I just want you to know that I care.”

Ilya nodded, speechless. He pushed himself closer against Shane, burying his head fully under the other man’s chin, letting the rhythmic movement of his fingers against his scalp relax him.

“It’s—” he began, but Shane interrupted him again.

“It’s ok, we can talk tomorrow.”

It’s not just that, he wanted to say. Meeting, fucking, yes, sure that’s what they did. But it wasn’t just that. Not anymore. And it sure as fuck wasn’t easy.

But Shane was right, they could talk about it tomorrow.

As his breathing settled and his eyes dried, he could hear the TV he’d left on in the bedroom through the silent house. It was just noise at first, but then he distinguished the voices, counting down to midnight.

“5…”

He wrapped himself tighter against the other man.

“4…”

Looking up, he saw Shane looking back at him, his kind eyes glistening in the dim lights.

“3…”

For the first time that day, he managed to smile back.

“2…”

It was a real smile, one that he hadn’t shown anyone in a long time.

“1…”

He knew there was still a sadness behind it, but he wasn’t trying to hide it anymore.

“Happy new year, Shane.”

“Happy new year, Ilya.”

End Notes

Asking for help isn't always easy, and the holidays are especially tough for those without solid support systems. But it can get better, and I wanted to show that through Ilya Rozanov.

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