

the hardest part, is who we are

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the hardest part, is who we are

by [goldenish](#)

Summary

“Ilya?” Shane’s hand crept into his hair gently, soft and searching. Ilya bit his lip, trying not to make a sound. It was almost impossible not to melt into the hair running soothingly through his curls, to turn his head to take in his Shane’s beautiful face in person after almost a month apart.

Almost.

Shane’s hand pulled away after a beat. Ilya heard him sigh, and then blessedly, his weight on the bed behind him rose up. He didn’t say anything as he left the room. Ilya had succeeded in pretending. He wished he could feel anything at all about it.

Notes

Got this idea stuck in my head, thinking about Shane comforting Ilya!! This takes place during The Long Game, after the proposal, and Shane and Ilya talking about him going to therapy.

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

Ilya heard the door open and shut downstairs.

He'd left the door to their bedroom open, so he could also clearly hear as Shane walked in and dropped what he assumed were his bags for the weekend on the floor. He clunked around on the first floor for a while before Ilya heard him make his way up the stairs.

Ilya's stomach churned.

"Ilyaaa," Shane's voice singsonged through the house. Ilya turned his head to face away from the door.

Shane's footsteps stopped before entering the door or getting closer to Ilya's side of the bed on the far side of the room. He heard a quiet murmured *oh*, before the footsteps moved more slowly and closer. Finally, the bed dipped from the weight of another body, sitting behind him.

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Earlier this week, he'd been feeling this heaviness. As he did every now and then. But it had been manageable. Ilya could still pull out a smile at Bood's chirps. He could still listen intently to Wyatt's bizarre words when Ilya asked what he thought about the new power play. He could find the feeling of pride when Luca came to him, hesitantly asking for help with his backhand.

But each day, it became heavier and heavier.

Ilya hated most that when he was sad. Sometimes he did not feel sad at all. He just felt nothing.

His mind became foggy. English became harder. *Words* became harder. And with Shane living in Montreal still, until the end of the season, it became easier and easier to go the majority of the day without speaking a single word out loud. Leaving Ilya with plenty of time to fly away in his thoughts, pulled away by every negative breeze that crossed it.

Sometimes, there was a common thread. Of the thoughts that were plaguing him, creating this dullness of heart, he could not escape for even a single breath. Galina said that finding the thread was important. It would help him think through them, come out the other side.

On these days, it felt incomprehensible.

Today, Ilya felt it was everything and nothing at all. He was happy. His life was good. He was safe in Canada. He loved his team. He liked his job. He had Shane's family. He had *Shane*. Everything he had ever wanted and more for so long.

But Ilya could not stop thinking about all of the bad.

The words were tossed out at him on the ice. Spit out too at his wonderful, kind, Shane. The way he had lost yet another game for his team, who were waiting for him to lead them to the cup. He could not stop picturing the disappointment on each of their faces as he gave his post-game speech in the locker room. The mirrored look of pity on Yuna and David's faces when he greeted them for dinner after the game. Wondering how much they put up with him for Shane's sake. How often they thought about whether Ilya was good enough for him? If Shane ever thought about that. If Shane ever wondered... now that he knew about Ilya. Knew about these days. Ilya knew he must wonder whether it was worth it to-

"Do you think you can come eat dinner with me downstairs?"

Lost in thought completely, Ilya did not notice Shane coming back into the room, kneeling down beside the bed next to him. When Ilya opens his eyes, stinging from salty tears, Shane is right in front of him. Nothing but love and concern in his eyes. Ilya finally lets out that gasping, shuddering breath that has been caught up in his chest since he heard the door open.

Shane rises immediately and smoothly slides into the bed, moving Ilya just enough to get underneath him, and pulls his head onto his lap. He can't help how his body slackens, shoving his face down into Shane's thighs, nearly suffocating himself. He starts to really sob then.

"You're okay. We're okay." Shane says softly, and then repeats a few times, when Ilya's tears don't stop coming.

Crying with someone to hold him through it is infinitely better than doing so alone. Which mostly leaves him feeling worse, lonelier, and missing Shane like an incurable ache sitting in the center of his chest.

Shane keeps stroking his back with one hand, the other resting solidly around his head, not quite pulling him in, but making Ilya feel completely protected. Like Shane is trying to shield him from his own feelings.

It doesn't hit him, until this, Shane's touch, how much he has been craving the closeness and intimacy they have. Ilya has always been an affectionate person, and yet with these unknowable episodes, some of that fades away. Especially with the people he isn't as close too.

He hasn't let anyone tackle him into a hug in a few days. And he has missed it. That most human version of connection he can think of. Perhaps it is one of the reasons, the heaviness gets so bad so suddenly. Something to bring up to Galina, he thinks absentmindedly.

And with that thought, Ilya can feel the hitching in his chest from the crying start to fade. He finds he can pull himself up a bit, letting his head turn to rest on the side, so he can breathe

properly. He grimaces, realizing Shane's shorts are wet with tears and disgusting nose goop.

"I am sorry." Ilya tries to pull away. Shane tugs him back down before he can get too far.

"You don't have anything to apologize for." He says sternly. Ilya smiles.

"Okay. You are fine with my nose stuff all over your shorts then?" He tries to lighten the atmosphere. Shane just looks at him intensely.

"You know that I don't care about that Ilya." Ilya shrugs and doesn't reply. Shane doesn't make him.

They readjust after Ilya finds the crick in his neck to be too painful to ignore in this position. This is when he realizes Shane's hair is damp, smelling of the berry shampoo Ilya uses more than he does. Something in his heart clicks back into place, realizing Shane had not left earlier. Only gone to take a shower.

He moves and mandhandles Shane to curl into his chest. Wrapping his arm around his shoulder, and making sure he's resting his head comfortably on Ilya's front. Shane runs his fingers up and down his sternum, not skirting close enough down that it's suggestive in any way. Just... soothing. A reminder that he is there. Present, and awake, and ready to give Ilya whatever he needs.

Something Shane had told him before. When they spoke about what to do when Ilya had these days. He had tried to explain as best he could to Shane that even he did not know exactly what he would need. Because he had never had that before. Never allowed himself this space.

Galina said it was normal for the sad feelings to be so overwhelming now, even though Ilya was happier than he had ever been in his life. It was simply his body recognizing he was safe enough to do this. To be able to let himself lie down, with no pressure to get up, no pressure that would put him in danger, whether it was physical or emotional.

And so this was new to Ilya. Not the ... sad. Or the emptiness. But how it took over sometimes. And he hated that it happened, but couldn't ignore that it also meant a good thing for him.

Stupid mental health and brain.

"I am sorry I ruined our weekend," Ilya whispers after nearly half an hour of just existing with Shane, holding each other. He tilts his head up and glares at him.

"You haven't." The words are unyielding. Ilya reaches down to smooth away the furrow between his brows with his thumb.

"Okay." He replies. No energy to argue with Shane. Not now. Shane's glare fades. His hand comes up to cup Ilya's cheek, question on his face. Ilya leans down to answer it, pressing their lips together. Light and tender, their lips barely parting. It still feels like coming home.

"Do you want to talk about anything?" Shane asks. Ilya shakes his head.

“No. Just- stay here. With me.” He requests. Voice still wobbly. Shane looks at him for a moment. He’s staring into his eyes, and Ilya can’t look away. He wonders if Shane can see the things Ilya isn’t ready to say yet.

Sometimes, Ilya thinks, Shane knows what he is thinking. Sometimes he definitely does not. But there are moments, usually in the moments, Ilya can’t even make his own thoughts clear enough to understand, that Shane just knows exactly what he needs. Like now.

Shane shifts, turning over, and lies directly on top of him, slightly lower, so that his head still rests on his chest. One leg bent, and hanging off the side of his body. His arms come up to envelop Ilya’s, grasping him at the shoulder. When he breathes, Ilya can feel it. He wraps his arms around him, letting himself hold tighter than he usually does. Letting Shane know exactly how much he needs him. How much this means to him.

Later, Ilya will tell Shane all the thoughts he can remember. That were swirling around, cruel and attacking. Some of them have already become blurry. Erased by the reaffirmation of the man he loves, trying to smother them away by covering him with his body. It will be good. To talk — later.

For now, he tries to remember that he is Ilya Rosanov. That he has a good home. A chosen family that actually cares for him. And a fiancée that loves him.

End Notes

I'm all-consumed by them.

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