I hate accidents (except when we went from rivals to this)

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I hate accidents (except when we went from rivals to this)

by blonndiec

Summary

Summer at the cottage was supposed to be relaxing. It turns into everything but—when Ilya drops “I could marry Svetlana” for an american visa like it’s a grocery list item. Shane’s face says over my dead body while Ilya, delighted, teases him for looking ready to commit “murder-suicide.” (He’s not wrong.)

Shane Hollander has one big problem: he can’t let Ilya Rozanov marry anyone else. Not now. Not ever. So he does the unthinkable and proposes the most boring solution imaginable almost by accident.

/ Canon-Divergence /

Notes

Hi there!

Blame the memes for this one: the second I saw the “I could marry Svetlana” spiral + the “murder-suicide” joke, my brain went oh, I need to write this.

I’ll be posting updates of my next ideas for this series in my tumblr @hollaroz or X account @hollarozy ✍️ — if you want yo know more, you can follow me there✨

✨ Thank you for reading✨

Shane's eyes were burning.

He could feel it happening—the stupid prickling at the edges of his vision, the tight band pulling across his chest like someone had cinched his ribs a notch too far. It was the same thing that had happened earlier, when Ilya had sat there on the other end of the couch and, in the same tone he used to complain about hotel pillows, explained that his "very annoying problem" was that every beautiful woman on earth kept turning into a short Canadian with freckles and a terrible car in his head.

Shane had barely managed not to cry *then*.

Now, the room felt even smaller. The only light was the lamp by Ilya's head and the soft blue from their phones. The cottage living room was all warm wood and big windows reflecting back their shapes instead of the forest outside. Ilya was half-wrapped in the green blanket Shane kept out here, bare legs stretched along the cushions, feet nudged against Shane's shins like that was just what they did now.

He had been sweating since the words *I could marry Svetlana* left Ilya's mouth ten minutes ago. His phone lay forgotten on his stomach, screen gone dark. His heart was still beating too fast. He had swallowed down approximately six different emotional responses and heard himself say, *Don't marry Svetlana. Just don't. We'll figure something else out, okay?*

"Okay." Ilya said it like it was nothing.

Like he hadn't just walked over and rearranged Shane's insides with a few stupid sentences and one blunt, devastating truth. Like he hadn't just blurted out *don't* with the kind of urgency that came from somewhere below language. Shane held very still after that. He kept his posture calm on the outside because that was what he did when things got too loud in his head. His hands stayed where they were—one loosely wrapped around his phone, the other resting on his thigh—like he wasn't about to snap the thing in half just to feel something solid.

His breathing stayed even.

It wasn't meditation.

It was damage control.

The problem was his eyes.

His eyes didn't understand control the way the rest of him did. They had gone glossy without asking his permission, and now he could feel the sting building at the corners like a threat. He blinked once, slow, and stared at the dark reflection of the cottage windows behind Ilya as if the glass could teach him how to be normal.

In the warm light, Ilya looked infuriatingly comfortable. Shane's flannel hung open on him, sleeves pushed up, collar crooked like he'd been tugged there. Bare feet on the couch cushion. One ankle resting lazily against Shane's calf as if this was just what they did now—touching like they belonged in each other's space. His brain tried to file that under **domestic** and **dangerous** at the same time. Shane dragged a hand through his hair. He could feel how everything inside him was getting packed tighter and tighter. Sounds got sharper. Light got warmer. His shirt collar suddenly felt too close.

Ilya's *"Okay"* sat between them like a match set down on dry paper.

Shane swallowed. He could taste the sharp edge of the emotion he was refusing to name. He kept his jaw tight enough to hold it in place. Ilya watched him. Not with his usual smug, amused look. Not with the grin he used as a shield and a weapon. His face had gone careful in a way that always threw Shane off, because it was rare and because it meant Ilya was choosing not to be an asshole. Which, frankly, was sometimes scarier. More like he was waiting to see if Shane was going to finally break and admit the thing they both pretended didn't exist.

"You say this," Ilya said, voice casual, almost bored. "We find another way."

Shane swallowed. "We will."

Ilya's mouth twitched. He leaned his head back against the couch, staring at the ceiling like he was considering the architecture of Shane's denial. "Tell me…" Ilya said.

Shane blinked. "Tell you what."

"The other way," Ilya said. "Because you say it like you have plan already."

“I don’t have a plan,” Shane said automatically, because admitting he didn’t have a plan felt like stepping onto ice without skates. “I just—”

Ilya lifted his eyebrows. He hated that expression. He hated how Ilya could get him to confess things without saying anything at all. Shane’s brain did it for him, filling in the silence, trying to fix the gap, trying to make the social moment make sense.

“I just mean there are options,” Shane finished, forcing the words into a clean, calm line. “You don’t have to—” He couldn’t make himself say *marry her* again. It felt like swallowing glass. “You don’t have to do that.”

“Ah.” Ilya turned his head, eyes bright in that warm light, amused in the way that usually made Shane want to throw something. “So you tell me do not marry her… and plan is… vibes.”

Shane’s hand tightened around his phone. “Don’t—” He stopped, because his voice wanted to jump an octave and he refused. He tried again. “Don’t be an asshole.”

“Is not asshole. Is logic.” Ilya hummed, like he was enjoying the fact that Shane had called him an asshole instead of saying *please*. Then he shifted, lifting his feet to rest them closer to Shane’s legs, like he was deliberately crowding him. “You say, ‘We will figure something else,’ but you look like man who is planning murder-suicide. Is not reassuring.”

Shane stared at him.

Ilya lifted his brows, like *see?* like he’d just delivered the most reasonable conclusion in the world. “Is dramatic, but I respect drama. Russians, we are also dramatic.”

“That’s not—” Shane choked on a hysterical laugh. “I’m not—Jesus. I’m not planning a murder-suicide.”

“Mm.” Ilya raised an eyebrow. “Maybe you would make schedule first. ‘7:00—murder. 7:15—shower. 7:30—suicide.’”

Shane made a strangled noise. “Oh my god.”

The words *murder-suicide* hit his nervous system like someone snapped a rubber band against his skin. He understood it was a joke. He understood it was Ilya trying to keep things from getting too real, because if things got too real, Ilya might bolt. Shane understood nuance. Shane just had to translate it manually, like a second language he’d learned by force. He stared at Ilya’s face and saw it: the challenge, the teasing, and underneath it the flicker of fear. Because Ilya had said Svetlana’s name like it meant nothing, but his eyes had said *this is what men like me do when there isn’t another option.*

“What? I am only saying.” He tugged the blanket higher over his lap like a dramatic grandmother. “You make death glare. I tell you stupid idea about Svetlana and your eyes go very dark, like you are thinking, *I will burn down all of Boston you cannot get married there*.”

“That’s not—” Shane shut his mouth, because it was kind of exactly that, just expanded to include Boston and any courthouse within three thousand miles.

Shane felt something in him go cold.

“Stop,” Shane said, and he didn’t raise his voice, which made it worse.

Ilya’s grin softened at the edges. “Stop what.”

Shane’s fingers flexed around his phone. The screen had dimmed, gone dark. Good. One less thing moving. One less thing to process.

“Stop talking like about that… normal. Like it’s a joke. Like it won’t—” *Like it won’t kill me.* He didn’t say that. He couldn’t say that. Not out loud. Not when Ilya was sitting there wearing his clothes like he belonged to Shane and Shane didn’t even have the right to claim him.

Ilya watched him, the amusement fading into something sharper.

“It is normal. People do this.”

He rubbed a hand over his face, pressing the heels of his palms into his eye sockets until the pressure steadied him. He knew he was overreacting. On paper, it was a simple, almost clinical idea: friend marries friend for citizenship. People did it all the time. It made sense.

On paper.

“People do lots of stupid shit.” Shane snapped, and the edge in his voice surprised him. He hated surprises. He hates accidents. “That doesn’t make it okay.”

Ilya’s eyes narrowed slightly, and Shane could almost see the part of him that wanted to push —wanted to poke at Shane until Shane finally admitted the thing he was obviously feeling. The thing Shane had been feeling for years like a bruise he kept pressing to make sure it was still there. He’d spent almost ten years not saying the things running circles in his head right now. Ten years of shoving them down, reorganising them into acceptable categories: *teammate, rival, fuck-buddy, friend*. Not aloud, never aloud, because once they escaped they would be real, and real things could break in ways he didn’t know how to fix.

But his brain hated problems without solutions, and the problem of *Ilya marrying someone else* had just pressed every single emergency button he had.

“But…” Ilya said after a moment, softer, “there is also the option where you keep playing for Montreal. I keep…doing whatever. We continue as we are. You send me stupid texts. Sometimes we…” He rolled his wrist in a gesture that somehow managed to be both vague and obscene. “You know. Have good time. Nobody has to marry anyone.”

The idea made Shane’s stomach roll. Of all the things, *that* felt the least bearable now that he’d let himself picture anything else.

He sat up straighter, the blanket slipping down his thighs. “No,” he said, and heard the stubborn, flat edge in his own voice. “That’s not an option.”

Ilya’s eyebrows climbed. “No?”

“No.” Shane’s fingers dug into the cushion between them. He couldn’t seem to unclench. “I’m not—I’m not going back to pretending this is…nothing. That you’re just some guy I hook up with a few times a year. That I don’t care what happens to you once the season’s over. I can’t do that anymore, Ilya. I can’t.”

There it was, out loud. His chest felt cracked open.

Ilya stared at him, the humour gone. The lines around his mouth were soft now, the way they got after a win when he was tired and happy.

“Okay…” Ilya said, slower now. “So. Tell me boring way.”

Shane swallowed. The word *boring* always did something to him when it came from Ilya. It was stupid. It shouldn’t matter. It was just a word. But Ilya said it like it meant something. Like it was a private joke and a compliment and a dare all at once. And his brain did what it always did when he got cornered: it tried to solve the problem so he wouldn’t have to talk about the feeling. *Boring way. Solution. Steps. Timeline.*

Shane’s brain, bless it, heard that as an invitation to present a PowerPoint.

His head filled with a memory he hadn’t thought about in months—Hayden on FaceTime, swearing, half-laughing while he asked Shane to look up information because his brother was getting serious with his girlfriend from Korea and they were talking about Montreal and *“what’s the process like?”* Shane remembered sitting at his kitchen table with his laptop, multiple tabs open, reading government pages until his eyes hurt. He remembered how structured it all was. Requirements, forms, processing times, stages. He remembered thinking, *this is actually straightforward, if you’re willing to wait.*

Shane’s chest tightened, not with panic this time, but with the sensation of a lever clicking into place. Marriage license: fast. Days. Sometimes same day, depending where. Two witnesses. Officiant. Then the long part: **sponsorship.** *Permanent residency.* A year-ish, give or take. Faster if you stay on top of requests. No magic button. No “marry a Canadian, become Canadian.” It didn’t work like that.

But.

If Ilya was a free agent after next season… if he moved to a Canadian team… if he lived in Canada, played in Canada, built the paper trail of being *here*… Shane’s mind sprinted ahead, laying track. Ottawa. Two hours. Close. Manageable. A place where they could exist without the whole league breathing down their necks every day. A place where Shane could see him without getting on a plane. A place where Shane could actually, practically, have him.

He realized he’d gone quiet because Ilya shifted and nudged Shane’s calf with his foot again, impatient now.

“Hello?” Ilya said. “Hollander? Your brain is making too much noise. ”

Shane’s cheeks went hot. He hated when people noticed the way his brain latched onto tasks. He hated it because it was true, and because he could hear how it sounded—possessive, intense, like he was trying to control Ilya. Which he was. In this. Because the alternative was watching Ilya make himself unavailable in the most final way possible.

He looked at the russian man—really looked. Ilya’s hair was a little messy, damp from a shower earlier. His face was open in that dangerous way it only got when the joking stopped working. He was still wearing Shane’s flannel. The cuff was folded back wrong. His brain noticed it and wanted to fix it and also wanted to rip the entire shirt off him. Shane’s mouth went dry. He didn’t plan the sentence. That was the problem.

It came out because the alternative—letting Ilya marry someone else—was unbearable.

“Marry me.” Shane said.

The words hit the room like a puck off the post. Loud in a way that made everything else go silent. Ilya froze. Actually froze. Not the pretend stillness he did when he was thinking. The real kind. Like Shane had just stepped off a cliff and grabbed Ilya by the wrist on the way down. Shane felt his entire body heat with embarrassment and adrenaline. He tried to backpedal and couldn’t. His throat locked.

“What.” Ilya blinked once, slow.

Shane’s heart hammered so hard he could feel it in his fingertips. His brain screamed *repair the social error, repair it now*, but the only repair that existed was truth, and Shane had been avoiding truth for almost ten years.

He forced the words out anyway, voice rougher than he wanted. “You asked for a solution.”

Ilya stared at him, mouth slightly open, and Shane hated that too—hated that he could see the shock. Hated that he’d done this without preparation. He loved preparation. He lived inside preparation.

Shane swallowed. “That’s… a solution. On paper.”

Ilya’s eyes flicked over Shane’s face like he was reading him, like he was suddenly trying to calculate whether this was a trap. “Shane…”

Shane’s laugh came out sharp and humorless. “Don’t.”

“Don’t what?”

“Don’t act like you don’t understand.” Shane’s voice cracked on the last word, and he felt it like a physical injury. He pressed his lips together hard, trying to regain control. “You understand. You’re just… you’re just—”

Just terrified.

Just as Shane was.

Shane closed his eyes for half a second, because sensory input was getting too loud: the lamp hum, the lake darkness behind the glass, the texture of the couch under his skin, Ilya's foot still touching him like a dare. He opened his eyes and spoke carefully, like he was placing something fragile down between them.

"I looked this up before," Shane said. "For Hayden. When his brother was doing the whole thing before proposing to his Korean girlfriend. Marriage is fast. The immigration part isn't. It takes time. Like… about a year, sometimes more. There's no instant citizenship. It's stages."

Ilya's face shifted—confusion, then understanding creeping in. "You are… you are serious."

Shane's mouth tightened. "Yes."

Ilya made a small sound, almost a laugh, but it died halfway. He leaned forward, forearms on his knees, looking at Shane like Shane had become a new person in front of him.

"This is not boring, Hollander."

"It is," Shane insisted, too fast. "It's paperwork. It's legal. It's—"

"It is you asking me to marry you." Ilya's voice went low, rough. "That is not boring in any universe."

Shane swallowed hard. He could feel tears threatening again, and now he was angry at them, because this wasn't supposed to be emotional. It was supposed to be functional. Functional kept you safe.

"I don't want you marrying her," Shane said, blunt. "I can't—" He shook his head once, sharp. "I can't watch that. I can't know you're… someone else's husband. Even if it's fake." Shane flinched. "That's not what—"

"It is what," Ilya cut in, but he didn't sound cruel. He sounded tired. "So you tell me: why is this different."

Because this is the line where I lose you.

Because if you marry someone else, it means you can live without me.

Because I can't.

Shane's throat tightened so hard it almost hurt. He forced himself to say the part that mattered. Ilya stared at him for a long moment. Then his mouth twisted, like he was fighting the urge to make a joke and realizing it would land like a slap. He exhaled slowly through his nose.

He could feel himself getting overwhelmed, the way it always happened when too many variables stacked up at once. The room felt too warm. The lamp felt too bright. The sound of

the lake outside felt too loud. His brain kept circling the same image like a shark: Ilya in a suit next to a woman, ring on his hand, smiling for cameras, Shane watching from somewhere across the world pretending it didn't kill him. He didn't want to be rational anymore. He didn't want to be careful and there was *no fucking way* he wanted to keep swallowing this for the rest of his life.

"I can't—" Shane said, and his voice cracked, humiliating. He swallowed it down and tried again. "I can't watch you do that, Ilya. I can't. I won't."

"You are crazy," Ilya said, quiet. "You are insane."

Shane's stomach dropped. "Rozanov—"

Ilya lifted a hand, cutting him off. His fingers were trembling a little too, which felt like being punched. "No. Listen." He swallowed, Adam's apple bobbing. "I mean… you are crazy in… in good way."

"It's not insane," Shane snapped, voice shaking. "It's logical. It solves the citizenship issue. It keeps you safe. It keeps you—" His throat closed. "It keeps you here."

Ilya didn't move. His eyes were huge, like someone had cracked him open and he didn't know how to put himself back together.

Ilya huffed a laugh, brief and shaky.

"Okay. Then I say it different. Hollander." His voice went more serious, more careful. "If we do this… you understand what you offer me, yes?"

"I understand what I'm offering," Shane said, and his voice came out too hard because he needed Ilya to believe him. "I'm not saying it like it's nothing. I know it's not nothing."

Ilya looked down at his hands, still wearing Shane's flannel like he'd forgotten he had it on. His thumb rubbed at the edge of the cuff absentmindedly, and Shane's brain noted *wrong fold* again and wanted to fix it and also wanted to hold Ilya's hand so he would stop shaking.

"You said Ottawa before," Shane said, voice softer now, because he could feel himself tipping into overload and he needed an anchor. "You mentioned earlier your contract ends after next season. That lines up. If you sign with a Canadian team and we—" He swallowed. "If we do this soon, in the next weeks… it gives us a year to get through the worst of the processing. We get a lawyer. We do it properly. We protect ourselves and we prevent this come out to the public."

Ilya lifted his gaze. "Protect ourselves." he echoed, like the phrase tasted strange.

"Yes," Shane said. He felt himself slipping into the calm of logistics, the only calm he had. "We can keep it quiet. We can set boundaries. We can—" His voice faltered. "...and then, in less than a year you can have a Permanent Residency and if you are playing with Ottawa, we being married already could expedite your citizenship. Meaning, Canadian visa."

Ilya hummed, clearly amused now, which should've pissed Shane off, but instead it made him feel desperate. "Very boring, yes? Maybe I should just fuck you in immigration office, make them give me citizenship faster."

Shane's face went hot. "Ilya."

Ilya's smirk began to fade and stared at Hollander for a beat, then leaned back into the couch and dragged a hand down his face, like the universe had just tossed him the biggest UNO reverse shaped like a wedding ring.

"Fuck," Ilya muttered. "You make it sound like… like signing a lease."

"It's not a lease," Shane snapped automatically, then immediately regretted it. He closed his eyes for a second. "Sorry. I'm—"

"Feeling too much, yes?" Ilya finished, and there it was—no teasing, no cruelty. Just recognition. "You are… buzzing."

He swallowed. "There's also the public narrative issue," Shane said, clinging to structure. "If you leave Boston, the rivalry cools off. People forget. It becomes less of a story. Then some years pass by, we retire…"

Ilya's gaze softened. "And then we can exist."

Shane's stomach flipped. "Yes."

He stared at him for a long beat, like he was watching Shane build the future out loud and trying not to believe it because believing it would make it hurt more if it fell apart.

Shane's voice dropped. "We could… do something. Together. Publicly."

Ilya's eyebrow lifted. "Like what?"

Shane's brain moved faster now. "A charity. Something that makes sense for us. Something real. We don't fake it. We just… are seen working together." Shane's chest ached with the strange mix of affection and frustration that Ilya always pulled out of him. "We say we have mutual respect," Shane continued. "We say we've matured. We say we want to do something good."

Ilya's grin sharpened. "And also we are sucking each other's dicks."

He stared at him and Ilya shifted closer, slowly, like he was approaching a skittish animal. His foot slid along Shane's calf again, but gentler now, less taunting. More grounding.

"You really would do this." Ilya said again, quieter this time.

Shane looked at him. Really looked. "Yes."

Ilya's throat worked like he was swallowing down something big and painful and sweet all at once. Then, because he was Ilya, because he couldn't stand naked sincerity for too long, he

tilted his head and said, deadpan:

“And if we marry, you promise no murder-suicide.”

Shane stared. Then—against his will—a laugh punched out of him. It was small, but it was real, and it loosened something in his chest. Ilya watched him for another long second, and the air felt thick with everything unsaid. Then he reached out—slow, deliberate—and set his phone down on the coffee table like he was making a decision to stop hiding behind it. He leaned in, close enough that Shane could feel his warmth, close enough that Shane’s brain screamed *too much, too much* and also went *finally.*

Shane swallowed hard. “Yes, I promise not murder-suicide or whatever...”

“You want me. For real.” Ilya’s eyes searched for his, and Shane noticed how open and vulnerably soft the Russian was looking at him.

“Yes.” Shane’s throat hurt. “I want you. And I want that with you.”

Something in Ilya’s face broke open—just a crack, but it was enough. He let out a breath that sounded like surrender and like relief. Ilya stared at him, and for a second Shane saw something raw in his eyes, something that made Shane’s chest hurt in a different way.

“You would do this,” Ilya said, softly, like he didn’t trust the words. “For me.”

Shane’s hands started to shake. He hated that too, so he tucked one under his thigh, pinned it down. “For you,” he said, and then because lying was pointless now, he added, “for… both of us.”

Ilya stared at him for a long beat. Something in his face cracked—just a little—like the armor shifted.

Then, so fast Shane barely had time to inhale, Ilya moved.

He rolled toward Shane, closing the space between them in one decisive motion. His hand caught Shane’s wrist—firm, anchoring—pinning it to the cushion not in a threatening way, but in a way that said *stay here, don’t disappear.*

“Ilya—” Shane started, but the rest of his words vanished because Ilya kissed him.

It wasn’t gentle at first. It was desperate. Hungry. Like Ilya had been holding his breath for years and Shane’s sentence finally gave him permission to breathe. Shane made a startled sound into Ilya’s mouth, half protest, half surrender. His other hand came up automatically, fingers grabbing at the flannel on Ilya’s back like it was the only solid thing in the world. Ilya kissed him again. And again. Quick, relentless, like he couldn’t stop. And under it—under the heat and the breath and the press of Ilya’s mouth—he was saying something. Russian, blurred by panic and need. Shane didn’t understand every word, but he recognized the rhythm, the insistence. A repeated phrase, like a prayer or a confession he couldn’t keep inside.

“*Ya tebya lyublyu,*” Ilya murmured against Shane’s mouth. “*ya tebya lyublyu, ya tebya lyublyu*…”

Shane's eyes squeezed shut. His whole body shook. He didn't know how to respond to this much. He didn't know where to put it. Ilya pulled back just enough to breathe, forehead pressed to Shane's, both of them panting like they'd been fighting. Ilya's eyes were wide and scared in a way Shane had never seen in public. Never.

"I love you." Ilya whispered in English, voice shaking. "I love you."

Shane's chest felt like it caved in and expanded at the same time.

His brain tried to seize up—tried to go blank, tried to protect him from the magnitude of it, and he froze. Not because he didn't want it. Because he did. God, he did. But because his brain—his stupid, stubborn, rule-following brain—had never fully allowed this as a possibility. It had lived in the realm of *nice thought, impossible reality.*

"Holly shit." Shane said automatically, and it was the worst line he could've chosen and also the most honest one.

Ilya went very still, fear flashing across his face like a shadow.

"I—" he started, like he was already trying to take it back before Shane could hurt him with it.

Shane swallowed, hard. He reached up—slowly, deliberately, so Ilya could see the choice—and touched Ilya's cheek. Ilya leaned into it immediately, like he'd been waiting years for permission.

"I love you too." Shane said, voice thick. "I do. I—" He blinked fast, because tears were stupid and he didn't want them. "I love you. So much."

Ilya let out a breath that sounded like a laugh and a sob had collided in his chest. Then his face did something Shane had never seen before—relief so intense it looked like pain. Like he'd been holding his breath for years and only now remembered how to exhale.

"*Thank Christ...*" Ilya whispered, and his smile looked like it might split his face.

Shane's heart was beating so hard it hurt. Ilya stared at him, scanning his face like he was memorizing him. Like Shane was the only thing in the room worth looking at.

"Does it…" Shane swallowed, and the vulnerability tasted like blood in his mouth. "Does it feel like agony for you too?"

For a second, Ilya looked like he might nod. Like he might admit it had been killing him. Then Ilya shook his head slowly.

"Not anymore," he said, voice low and certain.

Shane's lungs forgot how to work.

Ilya smiled—small, disbelieving, almost split open by happiness—and Shane didn't know what to do with it. He felt like he'd been waiting his whole life for a smile like that from Ilya,

and now that he had it, he didn't know where to put his hands. Ilya solved that for him by kissing him again—slower this time, like he wasn't trying to prove anything, like he was just… *here*. Shane made a helpless sound into the kiss, and Ilya's mouth curved against his.

"How could we let this happen?" Ilya asked, voice shaking again, almost offended by the fact of love like it had snuck in through a cracked window.

Shane huffed a shaky laugh. "We're stupid," he said, because humor was the only thing keeping him from falling apart. "We're… very stupid and irresponsible."

Ilya nodded solemnly like he was agreeing to a medical diagnosis. "Very dumb, yes."

Then—because he couldn't hold a tender moment without balancing it—his gaze slid down Shane's body and his mouth curved into something wicked.

"But…" Ilya murmured, leaning closer, "you propose to me in sweatpants. On couch. While I wear your flannel. This is… very romantic."

"Shut up," Shane whispered, and it came out like a laugh and a plea at the same time.

Ilya's eyes gleamed. "Is okay. I like when you tell me shut up. It's foreplay."

Shane made a choked noise. "Jesus—"

Ilya kissed the corner of his mouth. "Also, you cry a little. Is very hot."

"Fuck you," Shane said automatically, because the instinct to deflect was deep, but his voice was shaking.

Ilya hummed. "Later."

Shane's fingers curled into the flannel at Ilya's side, gripping the fabric like he needed something physical to hold onto. He couldn't stop looking at Ilya's face. The way his eyes were bright. The way his mouth kept twitching like he couldn't believe this was happening.

"This is real, yes?" Ilya asked softly, and the question wasn't teasing. It was fear. It was hope. It was Ilya needing certainty in the only way he knew how: asking for it outright.

Shane's chest ached.

"It's real," Shane said.

"Okay," Ilya said.

Shane's heart stopped. "Okay?"

Ilya nodded once, sharp, like if he didn't do it quickly he'd lose nerve. "Okay. We do boring solution."

Shane's vision went slightly blurry. "You—"

“No, I meant…” Shane insisted, voice firm now, because he could feel the old terror trying to claw in. “…not just for paperwork. Not just— not just a solution.”

Ilya’s gaze flicked down to Shane’s mouth again. He kissed him once, quick.

“Hollander. You are my problem,” Ilya said, like it was the simplest fact in the world. “You will not go away. I do not want you to.” He said, and then because he couldn’t resist, he added, “You will be very boring husband.”

Shane exhaled a laugh that turned into something suspiciously close to a sob. He blinked hard. Ilya’s fingers came up, quick, and wiped under Shane’s eye like it annoyed him to see the shine there. Shane’s eyes burned again.

Ilya groaned softly, like he was annoyed by Shane’s emotions only because they made him feel too much too. “God. You make it hard to be cool.”

“You’re not cool,” Shane managed, voice thick. “You wear my clothes and act like it’s yours.”

Ilya brightened instantly. “Yes. Because it is mine now. Like you.”

Shane’s brain shorted out again. “That’s not—”

“It is. You propose, you cry, you love me. This is legally binding.”

Shane huffed a laugh, half-sobbing again. “That’s not how—”

“Shh... Hollander. Let me have this.”

And Shane, still shaking, still overwhelmed, still trying to make sense of the fact that the thing he’d wanted for a decade had just landed in his lap, closed his eyes and let Ilya have it.

And then Ilya leaned in and kissed him.

This—this was the opposite of being in agony.

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