

shed some light, shed some light on me please

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by [smittenstar](#)

Summary

Something's up with Ilya and he's doing his best to hide it.
A concussion makes it all come crumbling down on him.

AKA, the Ilya depression & insomnia fic, because the Long Game wasn't nearly angsty enough for me.

Notes

Written during my own bout of insomnia and one of the worst christmases of my life.
Thank god for Yaoi.

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

After a night spent at his parents without Ilya, Shane comes home to a quiet house. It's early morning on a Saturday. Ilya must still be asleep. Shane quietly clicks the door shut behind him and toes off his sneakers. He leaves his rucksack by the door.

He's already anticipating slipping into bed with his no doubt warm and sleep rumpled boyfriend. His thoughts stuck on nothing but that as he gets himself a glass of water from the kitchen. They have a few days together before Ilya drives back to Ottawa. Shane's already aching at the thought of being away from him, again.

It's only as he's standing by the sink looking out into their backyard that he sees him. Ilya is illuminated by nothing but the breaking dawn. Shane slips outside and the as-of-yet unidentifiable dark blob of fluff next to Ilya raises its head. Jumping up and breaking into a run when she recognises her other Dad.

He crouches to greet an excitedly wriggling Anya, but his eyes stay fixed to the figure a few paces off from him. "Hey girl. Yeah," he chuckles when she jumps up at him, wagging her tail, "I missed you too."

All done greeting Anya, Shane comes up behind Ilya, sitting himself on the cold grass and wrapping his arms around Ilya's waist. He kisses the back of his head. "Hi," Shane muffles into his neck. Hands wrap around his own. Ilya sighs and relaxes into Shane's hold. Soft hair tickles his neck. Ilya hadn't been expecting Shane to arrive home for another few hours.

"What are you doing out here?"

"Sitting," Ilya rumbles.

"Couldn't sleep?"

Ilya humms.

"Miss me that much?"

Ilya humms again. "And you could not wait until a normal hour to drive back?"

"Missed you," Shane admits, forehead between Ilya's shoulder blades.

Ilya's head tips down, nose now buried in Shane's hoodie. "You smell good."

Shane's heart melts. "And you smell like smoke."

"Come on. Let's go to bed." He pulls Ilya up and ushers him and Anya inside. Ilya goes easily.

—

Ilya sleeps for a long while. Shane walks Anya. Feeds and brushes her and when that's completed, Shane goes back upstairs to the bedroom and lays near a still sleeping Ilya. He

looks beautiful, like this. Lips parted, curls mussed, face smushed into a pillow— Shane couldn't have dreamt someone more perfect.

He finally does wake, well into the afternoon. Ilya grumbles, instinctively pushing groggily closer to his boyfriend. Shane bookmarks his page and places his most recently bought book, *Call me Indian: From the Trauma of Residential School to Becoming the NHL's First Treaty Indigenous Player*, on his nightstand.

"Good morning," Shane smiles down at him. "Or good afternoon, I guess," he adds taking a peek at the clock.

Ilya props himself up with his forearm. "Morning," he husks, drinking Shane in, looking up at him.

Then he's pulling Shane in and kissing him thoroughly. Shane is easily distracted from everything but the man under him. By Ilya's bedhead. By Ilya's tired eyes and the sleep clinging to them. By Ilya's gravelly morning voice. Ilya's plush mouth and his very, very skilled hands.

Shane gasps as Ilya makes contact with his cock through his sweats. Featherlight teasing until Ilya's palming him.

Ilya pulls away from the kiss. Fire in his gaze. "Not fair."

Shane makes a protesting sound, "what is it now?"

"Not fair. This." Ilya's thumb brushes across his cheek, just under his glasses. "You know what this does to me." Shane is pinned under Ilya now. "What you do to me." He surges down to kiss him again, rocking firmly against Shane.

"I do?" Shane says stupidly. Happily.

"Yes." Ilya moans and pushes Shane's shirt up. Ilya slides down between Shane's spread legs. Confident hands kneading his pecs. He mouths at Shane through his sweats. Shane always misses this—Ilya's hands all over him—when they're apart.

He gets Shane off by slowly teasing him, at which point Shane is so on edge he almost comes the second Ilya's silken tongue licks a path up his thigh to his cock. He could spend every day like this.

Ilya then, finally, takes Shane in his mouth. He takes him deep, swallows around his cock and just holds him there for a while in the heat of his mouth. Shane begins whining and squirming so Ilya takes pity on him and tries to suck his brain out through his cock.

Shane is shaking a little, orgasm-drunk. Ilya is looking down at him. A predatory glint laced with so much affection. His hands are still intently rubbing and squeezing Shane's pecs.

"Do you want to.." Shane falls off, a brilliant blush high on his cheeks.

"Do I want to what?"

"Um. To, um—"

"Tell me, *Мой милый* ." *My sweet boy*.

Shane's flush spreads down his neck. "To fuck my chest."

Ilya smirks. He pushes them together. "More like tits, no?"

Shane whines. "Ilya."

Ilya takes pity on him and kisses him sweetly. He pulls back and straddles Shane's waist.

"I would love to," he grips himself and rubs his cock across Shane's chest, "fuck your tits."

Shane is gripping Ilya's thighs. He's not hard, too spent to get hard again, but he's holding on for dear life nonetheless. Could never be unaffected by Ilya like this. Ilya fists his cock. His hands run warm trails all over Shane's upper body. He's reverent. Shane's pinned. In that moment, there is nothing but Ilya.

"Spit," Ilya commands. And god help him, Shane could never do anything but obey.

Ilya groans and pushes Shane's pecs together, he shuffles closer. Shane watches his eyelashes flutter and fall as he begins to fuck his chest. Uncoordinated and luxurious.

"Push them together for me, yes, just like that. " The next thrust is tighter, and Shane spits again, easing the way.

Wide eyes stare down at him. "Fuck. Shane."

His cock hits Shane's chin on the next thrust. Shane automatically drops his jaw, allowing Ilya to wet the tip of his cock on the next slide.

"Shit." Ilya groans. "You are perfect." Ilya sticks two fingers in Shane's mouth, hooking and tugging a little.

"So good for me," he praises.

Shane's eyes go glassy.

Ilya can't take it. *Fuck*, he mouths wordlessly.

"Can I cum on your face?"

"Yes, but—" He moves to take his glasses off but Ilya pushes his hands away.

"No," Ilya breathes heavily, "with."

Shane rolls his eyes but leaves them on. Ilya curls his body over and kisses his brow. Shane feels wholly debased as Ilya's hips begin to stutter, tingly from head to toe.

"Want to come on your face. Want to mark you. Yes?" He growls.

Shanes fingers are digging into Ilya's ass. "Come on then, come on me," he encourages.

Ilyas mouth hangs open as he pumps himself, he smears his cockhead on Shane's bottom lip. His fingers find their way back into Shane's mouth.

"Oh fuck." Ilya purses his lips and comes, covering Shane's glasses and cheeks and lips with his spend. Panting, he doesn't move from where he is, transfixed by the vision of Shane underneath him. He slowly pulls his fingers out, spit-slick. He pushes on his bottom lip.

"Should keep you like this all time, so everyone will know Shane Hollander is mine."

Shane smiles, "I dont think the NHL would like that. Or our neighbours. Or my parents," Shane grimaces, "or anyone"

Ilya shrugs. "So hot". Ilya devours his mouth, comes back up for air and clarifies, "hottest thing I've ever seen."

Reaching up, Shane takes off his glasses, his mouth downturned at the state of them. "Gross. I'm never letting you do that again"

Ilya laughs, kisses him again. Yes, he will. "I will clean them for you," and then he's disappearing into the bathroom.

—

"My mom made some more of those cookies you like, I put them on the counter."

"Thank you, Yuna Hollander." He eats one immediately as he watches Shane scramble them eggs.

Shane raises an eyebrow at the cookie.

"What? Is breakfast of champions."

"A single cookie?"

Tired yet playful eyes pin him down. A teasing smirk emerges on Ilya's face. "A single cookie and my boyfriends cum."

Their earlier activities flit through Shane's head, making him feel fuzzy. Still, Shane grimaces. "You're disgusting."

"You like it."

Shane rolls his eyes, doesn't fight him. He plates up their food.

—

"Are you coming to bed?"

Ilya hardly looks up from his phone. "Yes."

When Shane is still idling in the doorway several moments later, Ilya looks up at him, "soon. I will come."

Shane is awoken by Ilya crawling under the duvet with him, followed by Anya jumping up to join them. He groans, blinks angrily at the clock on his nightstand. It blinks 02:40AM back at him.

Ilya presses his forehead between Shane's shoulder blades and sighs. Anya makes a spot for herself at the end of the bed, curling into a tight ball.

Shane murmurs unintelligibly, pulls Ilya's arms around his middle. Ilya's heart slows to beat with his. The last thing Shane hears before falling asleep is Anya's content little canine sigh.

—

That morning, Shane wakes up alone. Ilya's side of the bed is cold.

Shane shuffles into the kitchen. Ilya's back is to him. Shane takes in the kitchen. The table is set and the dishwasher is running. "Morning", Shane croaks.

Ilya turns to him with a slight smile on his beautiful face. He's wearing Shane's dressing gown. It hangs open. His red briefs don't cover much.

Shane stares.

"Sit." Ilya points.

Shane sits.

"I am juicing this," he holds up a mangled orange, Shane can see several of them strewn across the counter, "and then we eat. I made breakfast wraps." Shane opens his mouth and Ilya holds up a finger, "do not worry. I used disgusting protein ones for yours."

A fond smile blooms across Shane's lips. "Come here."

Ilya's still holding the stupid mangled orange as he leans down to kiss his sleep-soft boyfriend.

Shane hugs his middle for a while, head resting against Ilya's stomach. Suddenly he's overcome with a flood of emotion. Love and comfort swirling in his chest like leaves lifted and twirled in a courtyard. "I love this. Love you cooking for me, us sharing meals. Love waking up to you."

Ilya's hand slides through his hair. He tips Shane's head up and looks adoringly down at him. His thumb at the knob of his jaw.

"Жизнь моя. мой сердце." *My life. My love.* "I love you."

Shane's on the phone to his parents, his mum interrogating him for a play by play of his last game when she says out of the blue, "I was wondering, have you spoken to Ilya recently?"

Tension grabs him. Has something happened? Oh god what if— No, no. They'd facetimed that morning. Texted before the game. He would have heard.

"Earlier today. Why?" Shane would have heard if something happened during the game. Right?

"Oh okay. Good," she sighs, "maybe it's nothing but don't you think he's been looking tired recently? I caught some of his game the other week and thought something seemed off."

"What do you mean off?" Shane asks, too quickly.

"I'm sorry, love. I didn't want to stress you. I'm sure it's nothing."

Shane says nothing, replaying what he remembered of the game. The Ottawa Centaurs hadn't won but that was hardly surprising. Regardless, Ilya remained their star player and that hadn't been any different that day, to Shane's memory at least. Ilya had *seemed* okay, hadn't he? Tired, yes, sure. But not seemingly any more so than usual.

"Yeah— uh. I know, Mom. It's okay," *I think*. Shane chews at his lip. "What did you mean about Ilya's game? What did you notice?"

"He just seemed a little slower than usual. Slower reflexes, I mean. But only a little. Probably just a bad nights sleep. It wasn't very obvious, I doubt anyone else even noticed. Maybe I imagined it! Anyway, I've got to head off now before your Dad leaves without me. Say *hello* for me when you talk to Ilya next."

"Will do. Talk soon, bye."

Shane worries his phone between his hands. Yuna Hollander *does not imagine things* about hockey. He pulls up his text thread to Ilya.

Lily

My mom says hi (del. 4.06 pm)

Shane types another message, deletes it. Tries again. Backspaces. He settles on:

How was the game? (del. 4.12pm)

(attchmt.x) (del. 4.15pm)

Shane clicks on the video.

It's from Ilya's game against Washington. It takes Shane a moment to spot Ilya but when he does he has to laugh. On screen, Ilya is getting in the opposing team Captains face. Clearly

irritating him. It's hard to see exactly what's going on but Shane can imagine. They've known that Captain since they were rookies. Silva Sarkees was always known for being easy to rile.

On screen, Ilya's throwing taunts. Sarkees whips around, Shane sees him square up. For a horrible moment Shane worries that Ilya's about to get decked but then suddenly Silva's tripping, like a fledgling on ice, tripping over his own skates. *Oh, that's embarrassing.* Shane almost feels bad, but it's too funny. If he's honest, he'd never really cared for the guy.

Good game then

What did you say to him? (del. 4.17pm)

was so funny I forgot

best game

Menace

Video call later?

sorry. going out with team

shitty bar they love. they say is disgrace I have not been (del. 7.30pm)

have fun!

Shane's heart aches. He misses him. But it's not too long now. Another week and they'll have an entire long weekend to spend wrapped up in each other.

—

Lily.

(img.556)

look! is us (del. 3.29AM)

(img.560) (del. 4.11AM)

Shane slides on his glasses as he squints down at his phone.

The first image is of a gingerbeer next to a bottle of vodka. (Arranged so the ginger beer is on its side, base pressed to the upright vodka bottle).

The second is a barely lit picture of a sleepy Ilya burrowed in a hoodie. Shane recognises it as one of his own.

Indecent.

You have a better body than that bottle

To the hoodie selfie: <3 (del. 7AM)

offense to your modesty?

you have better ass

fuck. i miss it (del. 7.02AM)

Soon.

What are you doing awake?

troy snores

so loud

i feel bad for harris

Maybe it doesn't bother him?

bothers me

maybe. when you snore I dont mind

I do not snore.

you do. Like Anya.

No

little snuffles

yes

is cute

That's embarrassing

Got to get ready for practice now

send me pictures

after ;)

You wish.

i wish and i receive

Yeah, right, Shane types out and sends, knowing full well he'll be contorting himself for the best angle in a few hours time.

Shane's still buzzing from the game earlier, trying to wind down in his hotel room. They hadn't won but it had been *so close*. Most of the team is holed up a floor below him, watching a film. Shane hadn't felt like joining in.

His phone lights up next to him.

Lily

your goalkeeper is shit

Shane's surprised to get a text from him at this time. They're several timezones apart right now, whilst for Shane it's barely ten in the evening, for Ilya Shane estimates it must already be the middle of the night.

Injured but yeah, it wasn't pretty

you looked good

good goal in end of second period

Thanks

You should be asleep.

you should have won

can not have everything

at least you are making it easier for me to win cup

Shane huffs a laugh. Misses him. It's been too long but then, it always does feel that way. Even when they've just spent weeks holed up together, hidden from the world.

I still scored more goals than you today

(img.604)

Ilya has sent him a picture of his middle finger. Only.. is he outside? Shane sits up a little.

Where are you?

outside

Shane calls him. It only rings twice before he picks up.

"Hollander," Ilya's voice trickles down Shane's spine.

"What are you doing out? What time is it even for you?"

"Late. Early. Whatever. I wanted to see," he pauses as he searches for the right words, "the sights."

"In the dark?"

"We are not here long. I wanted to explore."

"I'm sure there's loads to see in the pitch dark. Really safe, too. Walking around at night by yourself."

"Fuck off. Who are you, my mother? Is beautiful," Ilya turns his back camera on to show a glittering view over black water, "look."

Shane has to admit it's not bad.

Ilya walks to a bench and flips to his front camera. His elbows propped on his knees and his phone held between.

"You look tired."

"Thanks," Ilya deadpans.

Shane turns his own front camera on. His reclining form softly illuminated against a stack of crisp white hotel issue pillows.

"No glasses." Ilya pulls a frown.

Shane squints at the screen, "I don't even know where they are right now."

"Too bad."

"Have you not been sleeping well?"

Ilya's eyes slide to peer off into the distance. A beat passes. Shane wonders what he's looking at so intently.

"Troy snores. Team is bad. Not so bad anymore but still bad. Has been too long since I saw you."

"I miss you too."

"That wasn't my question though..." Shane trails off.

A long and silent moment passes. Ilya sighs down the other end. "It has been.. more difficult to sleep, yes. Once we settle into season it will be better."

"I hope so. Sleep's important." Shane looks at Ilya. Tired, beautiful, sexy Ilya. His heart clenches. "Can't wait to sleep next to you again."

"Me too," Ilya breathes.

"I was thinking we could walk Anya through the woods today? The longer trail where we almost lost her last time." Shane's crouched down petting Anya. "You escape artist," he teases and ruffles her floppy ears.

"You go."

"Don't you want to come?" Shane asks, a little caught off guard. It's not like they have to do everything together but well. Usually they do. They get too little time alone together as it is.

Except recently, Shane feels like Ilya's been pulling back. When they're together things seem good. As they have been, only better. More affectionate and cuddly than they'd let themselves be with one another for so many years. But the other week Ilya had found an excuse to skip out on visiting Shane's parents with him. Which was *fine*. Ilya didn't *have to* come with him.

Only, Ilya loved his parents. Shane knew that for a fact. *Something isn't quite right here*, a voice niggles at Shane's brain.

With his laptop open in front of him, Ilya is sat at the counter, eyebrows pulled together, staring into his e-mail inbox.

Ilya flicks his screen, "have to deal with bullshit. But you should go."

Shane doesn't want to come off clingy. He's also not sure how to tell Ilya that he knows he's not doing much more than staring at the screen. Shane had spied him like that.

Over an hour ago.

"Okay." Shane says, disappointed. Everything's okay, isn't it? He loves Ilya, Ilya loves him. They're better than they've ever been. Shane knows he worries too much over nothing, sometimes. "We'll see you in a bit." He drops a kiss to Ilya's temple.

As soon as the door clicks shut, Ilya closes his laptop and slumps down over it.

Anya's excited barking wakes him an hour later. He'd migrated to the sofa when sitting had become too draining. Sleep clings as paws click-clacking on tile break through his dreamless rest.

Shane cuddles up to him. Ilya must say something because then Shane's talking about making dinner, "-we could split it. If it's alright, I'll prepare the fish and the glaze whilst you chop the veg."

Which is how Ilya finds himself stood at the kitchen counter with a chef's knife in hand. Shane's flitting around collecting ingredients on the counter. Ilya's staring down at the knife. His head hurts.

"-ya? Hey." Shane brushes his fingers against his side lightly. "Ilya?"

Ilya doesn't move. His mind is a million miles away.

Suddenly he's dropping the knife on the cutting board like it's shocked him. He abruptly steps back.

"Hey. Are you okay?" Shane's voice trickles into Ilya's panic.

"Yes." He clears his throat and keeps the knife pointedly out of his line of sight. "Can we order in?"

Shane's brow ruffles, "sure. Yeah. Um, that organic place from last time?"

"Ok." Ilya walks out of the kitchen and belatedly calls back, "I will shower."

Shane is left pondering his own reflection in the knife's reflective blade. When Ilya comes back downstairs, errant beads of water dripping from his curls and rolling down his chest, their food has already arrived.

Ilya seems fine. Entirely normal. He's joking around and flirting. Shane doesn't know what happened. He's not even really sure anything did.

—

Shane blinks awake. Soft morning light filters through the shades of their hotel room. Ilya has his head pillowed on his arms. Eyelids low and on Shane.

Shane reaches out to him. His fingers brush Ilya's cheek and his eyelids flutter closed. He keeps it there, Ilya nudges his hand until Shane cradles his face.

"Been awake long?"

Ilya nods, once, into his palm.

"Did you sleep at all?"

"A bit," Ilya's voice comes out rough.

Shane delicately traces the dark shadows under his eyes.

"A bit as in a few hours or a bit as in not really at all?"

Ilya rubs at his face and opens his eyes. "Go clean your teeth so I can kiss you."

God, he looks so tired, Shane thinks.

"Then you sleep."

Ilya's eyes go skyward. "If I could not sleep earlier, I cannot sleep now. I will sleep later."

Toothbrush in hand, Shane asks through a mouthful of toothpaste, "is.. is there something going on? Are you okay?"

"Yes, Hollander. Am fine. Promise."

He walks back to the sink, washes out his mouth. Shane doesn't want to think Ilya would lie to him but he's not an idiot.

Ilya's eyes are closed again. He's spread out on his back on the white linen of the bed.

"Something's bothering you."

Ilya huffs. "Yes."

Shane has one hand on his hip. "So..," he prompts.

"Problem is you are still not kissing me. Come here. I am suffering..," Ilya whines dramatically as he reaches out his hands to Shane.

Shane slides onto the bed, throwing one leg over Ilya's waist. He looks down at Ilya, with his angelic curls and his beautiful lips.

Ilya pushes himself up with one arm to capture Shane's mouth. They lose themselves in one another for precious minutes.

A single hand to the center of his chest pushes Ilya back down, he looks down at him seriously. Shane's lips are puffy.

"You know you can tell me anything?"

"Okay," Ilya drawls.

"Really. I want you to know you can trust me."

Softly, "I know."

Shane smiles.

Ilya tries to smile back.

They wrap themselves together without an inch of space between them. Shane gathers as much of his boyfriend as he can in his arms. Something isn't right and Shane is done letting Ilya brush him off. He tells himself the next time they have proper time off, they'll have a long and *honest* conversation about all of this.

It's the same evening. They've spent the day lounging around their hotel room, ordered room service. Svetlana calls but Ilya quickly passes the phone off to Shane. Shane and her end up talking hockey for a good two hours. Ilya stays quiet except for the occasional sardonic comment, comfortable with his head in Shane's lap.

It's been dark for a few hours when Shane yawns and suggests it's time for bed.

They're kissing soft and slow when Shane moves to initiate more by sliding his hand down and over Ilya to feel him through his cotton shorts.

Ilya grabs his wrist. Effectively putting a stop to it.

"No?" Shane asks gently once it's clear Ilya isn't going to say anything.

Ilya turns them over. He pins Shane below him. He slides down his body.

But something's still not right.

"Hey," Shane calls, hands on his shoulders he attempts to pull him up. "Come back up here."

Ilya shuffles up but stops short.

Carding fingers through his hair, Shane reassures, "we don't have to."

Ilya makes a protesting sound.

"We're all good. Let's just kiss a bit and then sleep, ok?" Once he's flicked off the bedside lamp and plunged the room into darkness, Ilya lets himself be pulled up.

They're lying side by side.

Shane can't stop himself running reassuring hands all over Ilya. He falls asleep an indefinite amount of time later, cradled in Ilya's strong arms. His own hand curled over one of Ilya's.

Morning breaks in. Shane wakes slowly and then all at once. The spot next to his in bed is cold. He finds Ilya on one of the chaise lounges spread through the rooms of their hotel.

Ilya's bright smile can't hide how drained he looks. "Good morning, I got your smoothie."

Shane sits down beside him and takes a sip. Green and disgusting, just the way he pretends to like it.

Shane considers the man next to him. The shadows under his eyes look even worse today. "Jesus, Ilya. Did you get any sleep? Will you be okay to play?"

"Could play with my eyes closed and still win against New Jersey."

Shane nudges him. "Be serious."

"It will be okay. I'll sleep more on flight."

Shane wants to continue their conversation but they really don't have much time. Their teams are already where they're supposed to be and both Ilya and Shane are catching early flights to meet up with them. They've only got an hour to get ready, pack up and head off. *When we have more time*, Shane promises himself, *we'll talk*.

Sleep well <3 (del. yesterday at 12:20AM)

Terrible game.

but you played beautiful (del. yesterday 7AM)

Thanks

not long til I beat you too

probably yes

but I will score more goals

than you (del. yesterday 12.26AM)

4 more days (del. 6.30AM)

!!!

Can't wait

My dad'll be there

no yuna?

Nope. Someone has to watch Anya

anyaaa

I miss her

this

(img.436)

On his screen a picture of Anya and himself pops up. Shane remembers that day. The heated looks they shared as Ilya took him in the morning. Ilya's soft smile behind the camera mirrored by his own. In the picture, Anya has a ribbed pink elephant gripped between her teeth. It was the first toy they'd gotten her and she'd carried it around with her from room to room the first weeks after they'd adopted her. Hardly letting it out of her site.

and I will do that thing again

that you like

?

There are a lot of things you do that I like

your reward after game.

if you win

A warm tingle flushes through Shane. He quotes the picture of him and Anya and types out,

That thing you did that morning?

Yes.

Only they hadn't had sex in weeks. Not even phone sex. Which was fine, Shane told himself. because it is fine. Why wouldn't it be fine? They've been busy. Hockey. Full time thing, you know? And then there was whatever was up with Ilya. Sure, they'd always had a lot of sex but Shane was mostly concerned with making sure that the nights they did spend together, Ilya actually spent *in bed, asleep*.

driving to practice now

Я тебя люблю (*i love you*)

Drive safe. I love you (del. 7.10AM)

—

It was Shane's favourite type of game day today. A game against the Ottawa Centaurs.

A game against *Ilya*.

Lily

good luck

you will need it

As if. We'll wipe the floor with you.

oo big talk

we will see

See you after the game?

yes.

405?

Yup. (del. 9.18AM)

Adrenhaline pumping. 3-1 for the Montreal Metros. They're just approaching half-time.

Ilya was going for another goal, passing the puck and pumping himself forward, closer to the net.

Ilya narrowly dodges the Metros defence and makes his shot. It ricochets into the goal. For a few moments, everything is brilliant. The crowd cheering and booing Ilya in almost equal measure even at a Montreal home game.

Then all hell breaks loose. In the days after, Shane replays it in his head over and over. He remembers someone chirping at Ilya. Remembers the puck coming into play again.

It all happened in a split second.

Shane's watched the videos. It's over as quickly as it starts.

Ilya being crushed into the sideboards by a two man pile-on of hockey players. Time hangs as Ilya's body is hidden from view.

It lasts a fraction of a second and it stretches for a lifetime.

Time rushes forth. Players scatter from the crash. The Montreal player who first knocked into Ilya—the same guy who'd gotten two steps away from Ilya before an Ottawa player came barrelling into him from a funny angle, torpedoing them both into Ilya— pushes himself and the Ottawa guy away from the wall. Their gear is tangled but Shane doesn't know that until later.

His eyes are on the space now made visible.

Shane watches Ilya's body as it crumples and smashes to the ice. Limp.

Shane sees himself on the other side of the rink, as if from above. Doesn't think he's ever been as terrified as he was in that moment.

He remembers rushing over. Sees it all as if in a film.

You can't hear the sound of his and Ilya's teammates calling for a medic on the videos Shane's seen reposted.

You don't see the blood Ilya tries to blink out of his eyes on the videos either, as he's carried away on a stretcher.

And then Shane had to finish playing the game.

Whilst his heart was being rushed to hospital.

He wasn't out long, he'll be okay, Shane's frantic mantra went on throughout the entire second half of the game. *He wasn't out long. He'll be okay.*

Shane scores a goal he doesn't remember.

—

Shane knows it doesn't mean much. He also knows people get knocked out on the ice all the time and they're fine. And sometimes they're really not fine. And Shane knows this, he knows this and it isn't helping. He meets his father post-game in a daze. Blood is rushing in his ears. All he can think about is Ilya.

His heart fluttering unevenly in his chest, Shane cuts right to the chase. "Can you take me to the hospital?" He holds up his hands and it's all so fucking scary and absurd that he laughs at how they're shaking. His voice trembles on it. "I don't think I can drive."

—

Rushing to his hospital room in a fog, Shane steels himself for a moment. His Dad loitering somewhere behind him.

He pushes the door open and is confronted with the sobering sight of Ilya lying in a hospital bed. He looks pale even against the stark white of the hospital's interior. Ilya's left arm is in a sling and there's an irritated red cut stretching from the middle of his eyebrow to his nose.

Ilya's eyes land on Shane.

"Hey," Shane says stepping up to the bed.

Ilya's speaking, but Shane can't understand a word.

"You do remember I don't speak Russian, don't you?"

Ilya looks confused. He reaches out a hand to Shane. Shane takes it immediately, throwing a nervous glance towards the door.

"You won?" Ilya slurs.

"Yeah, it was a lot easier without their best player on the ice."

"Hmm," Ilya responds. His eyes are sliding around the room. It's terrifying Shane.

He says something in Russian again.

A nurse comes in and Shane lets go of Ilya's hand. It hurts and he hates himself for it.

"Hello, Mr. Rozanov. Just here to check in on you. How are you feeling?"

Ilya responds in Russian.

The nurse looks at Shane and explains, "he's been doing that a lot, sometimes he answers in English. I think his languages are a bit mixed up at the moment." She inclines her head at him, "and you are?"

"A friend." It sounds fake to Shane. Hollow. Ilya says something in Russian again. Shane wonders if Ilya was objecting to his answer. Shane looks at Ilya and then back to the nurse, "is that normal?"

"He's on quite a lot of painkillers right now. That and the concussion can be very disorientating. He'll most likely be confused for the rest of the day and maybe tomorrow, but it shouldn't persist longer than that," she explains.

"Could you give me a run down of what other injuries he has?"

"Let me see, okay. So, when Mr. Rozanov was admitted he had a dislocated shoulder. We took care of that. His scapula is fractured," she gestures, "that's the side with the sling. Other than that he's got bruised ribs and a few cuts and scrapes."

"Okay," Shane breathes out. He's relieved Ilya's not too banged up but there's one thing still worrying him. No one knows if Ilya had blacked out when he hit the boards or when he hit the ice. No one knows exactly how long he was out for. "And the concussion?"

"We've already done a scan and ruled out any bleeds. We're still keeping an eye on him, of course. I understand he's an athlete?"

Shane nods.

"So he'll have thorough follow-ups, then. And some very good doctors," she smiles reassuringly.

Shane thanks her and she makes her exit after making a quick note in Ilya's chart.

—

The next day Shane visits Ilya in the early Afternoon, nearly missing some of Ilya's teammates. He hides around the corner until he's sure they've left.

This second day in hospital, Ilya is in agony, that much is clear as soon as Shane sees him. The anti-emetics have stopped working and the new ones they're trying haven't had an effect yet. Every time his stomach rolls he dreads the pain that will follow as acid burns up his throat, his ribs spiking with hot pain as his stomach convulses despite the painkillers. He'd taken a look at them earlier, blooming pink and purple against pale skin.

He complains a lot about the lights to Shane. In English, mostly.

Ilya's just fallen asleep after throwing up, again, when an alarm starts blaring out from down the hall. Ilya immediately clutches his head. Shane moves to comfort him but when his hand lands on Ilya's shoulder, it gets pushed off immediately.

"Don't," Ilya says harshly. Then starts crying as the alarm continues. Shane stays by his side, entirely unsure of what to do, watching tears roll down his cheeks. Ilya clutches at the sick bowl but doesn't throw up. He doesn't stop crying until the infernal noise stops several agonising minutes later. Shane stays until he falls asleep again.

—

At some point, a floaty Ilya says, entirely out of the blue, "I can not see" and refuses to elaborate. Shane and a very friendly nurse breathe in muted panic until it becomes clear Ilya's

vision is blurred, not gone. A side effect of the concussion. Shane has to leave the room after to have a panic attack by himself in an empty waiting room.

Worry grabs a hold of Shane and sinks its teeth in deeper with every day that passes. Ilya is in a bad mood every time he visits him.

—

In hospital, the bland food is semi-tolerable and Ilya eats a little of each meal that is given to him. He's finally released after four agonising nights. Ilya is endlessly frustrated by it. He knows it isn't fair, but he's also sure they'd kept him for an extra night after he'd stumbled in front of the nurses on his way to the bathroom and almost faceplanted into a wall.

His ribs had tweaked, is all, and he was so, so tired. Sure, his head was rattled but he was going to be fine. He's a hockey player. He knows what he's dealing with. Everyone around him does as well, intimately—the concussion pamphlets handed out to hockey players, coaches, parents and anyone else who was even mildly involved in the sport were surely enough to fill a stadium several times over. This was his worst concussion by far.

All Ilya wants is to get home. To simply lay in a quiet, dark room for a few days, away from prodding nurses and constantly interrupted sleep.

Fuck. He just wants to be left alone.

Plus, he hadn't even fucking smashed into the wall, They'd all overreacted. Ilya had caught himself at the last moment, bracing himself with his good arm.

As soon as Ilya is cleared to go, he doesn't waste any time and books a taxi to Shane's Montreal house.

Feeling too unwell to even text Shane he's on his way, Ilya simply closes his eyes and waits to be somewhere else. The rolling of the car makes him nauseous and he tries not to think about what this drive could have been like if Shane had been there to hold his hand.

The keys fumble against the lock in tandem with Ilya's shaking hand. Finally inside, Ilya swings the door shut behind him. He drops his bag and toes off his trainers.

"Hey. What are you doing back?"

"They," Ilya gestures with his uninjured hand, searches for the words, "released me."

Ilya shuffles into the living room, steals a fluffy blanket and sits down on the large L shaped sofa. He's favouring his uninjured leg.

"You should have called, I would have picked you up."

Ilya waves him off. He groans as he relaxes his weight into the pillows. His eyes shut.

Shane pulls the curtains closed for him.

"*милый человек.*" *sweet man.*

"Can I get you anything? Water?"

"Stop worrying," Ilya pulls the blanket up around him and Shane figures that's that for now. He fetches a glass of water anyway and sets it down on the coffee table.

—

Since getting home from the hospital, Ilya's been irritable. Some days he sleeps more than Shane thinks he's seen him sleep all year and other times he worries Ilya is going to collapse from exhaustion. He's never sure exactly how little Ilya is sleeping. He won't give Shane a straight answer and generally avoids the topic as best he can.

The nick on his face is healing and his ribs have started shifting through to new colours. Shane traced the outline of the bruises delicately the other night, mesmerised by Ilya's skin and the fragile watercolour of blues and purples.

But the headache's have remained, so far. Shane always knows it's bad when Ilya's particularly short with him. Knows to be extra gentle on the days where Ilya is dizzy and slow to process the world around him. They mostly spend those kinds of days in bed. Sometimes Ilya banishes himself to the guestroom, alone in the dark for long hours.

When Shane gets back from practice, he often finds Ilya in the enclosed back garden wearing a pair of shades and smelling of smoke. He tells him off but knows it's futile— Ilya will do, what Ilya will do.

Shane feels utterly useless, which is why when he's unpacking Ilya's rucksack that had sat untouched by the door now for days, he confronts him with what he finds hidden at the very bottom of the bag.

Ilya is under the covers in their bed, he's been there all day. Shane stands in the door.

"Where did you get these?" Shane's holding the melatonin Ilya was given upon leaving the hospital.

"Why?"

"Did they give it to you at the hospital? Have you been taking it?"

"Why are you..," Ilya snaps his fingers frustratedly.

"Asking you questions?" Shane fills in.

Ilya snaps his finger at him. "No, like I am criminal."

"Interrogating you?"

"Yes. That."

Shane's face is open when he say, "I'm not interrogating you."

"Feels like it."

"I'm not," Shane argues, "look, I'll just leave them here," he places the packet on the bedside table, "it's stupid not to take them, we both know you aren't sleeping. Maybe just try the melatonin and if it doesn't work then we'll find something else. But it can't go on like this, Ilya. I worry about you."

When Ilya says nothing, Shane throws out an, "are you okay?"

"Go away." Ilya turns his head to face away. "I can not stand you looking at me like I am dying all the time."

"Okay," Shane feels a little more heartbroken each time.

—

In the quiet, Shane begins out of nowhere. The words he's been holding back for days now. "You know what you kept saying, as they were taking you off the ice? What you kept repeating- over and over?"

"What, Shane?" Ilya's head hurts. Doesn't want to be having this conversation.

"You kept saying: *I'm Ok, I'm Ok, Don't worry.*"

Ilya presses cold fingertips to his temples. "I thought you would be close. I did not want you to worry. What is wrong with that?" The words come slower than usual.

"What's *wrong* with that? Y-you. You *weren't* okay." Shane really tries not sound too accusing with what he says next. "You're not okay."

"Better," Ilya argues.

"Look at me." Shane squeezes his hand when he does.

"Ilya?"

"Da."

"Please stop lying to me."

Ilya looks away. He really doesn't want to cry right now. His head's throbbing and he's cold and he really just can't take anything being worse than it already is right now. He doesn't look at Shane but he doesn't let go of his hand either.

"Can we not talk about this now? Everything hurts." His voice cracks on the last word. Shane crumbles.

"Not now, okay— can I get you anything or do you just want to sleep?"

"Sleep." Shane gets pulled down onto the mattress. Ilya grabs the duvet and curls up on his less bruised side. He pulls at Shane until he gets the point and spoons him.

His boyfriends curls tickle his nose but Shane's not going to complain about that right now.

They're wrapped together. Ilya exhales, tension bleeds out of him. "Better."

Shane kisses his bandaged shoulder.

—

"You have games to play soon, I would like to be home. Would you drive me?"

"Yeah, sure. Tonight?"

"Yes."

—

Troy

Roz are you fucking dead???

answer us

we're all starting to worry

Harris

let us know if you need anything! we can always drop something by yours. anytime!

He hearts the last message and figures that's good enough for a sign of life. Ilya closes the text thread. He's got a dozen or two more unopened messages just like that from the rest of his team, too.

He's not been in contact with them much, except for a few persistent callers who'd annoyed Ilya so much he'd actually answered. He locks his phone, then lobbs it across the room, landing on a carpet. He sleeps for 15 hours.

—

Shane is busy playing hockey whilst Ilya recovers in Ottawa.

Shane's parents bring him Anya unannounced on what Ilya is mostly sure is a Friday. He tires himself out so much pretending to be fine for them, and then Shane when he drives down for

a night that weekend, that afterwards he's entirely drained. Shane has been so worried and Ilya hates himself for worrying him.

That's why it's extra important that he continue to play the part of Ilya Rozanov, injured but not damned hockey player, affectionate and playful partner, dog dad.

They take Anya on a long walk, scenic walk. Ilya distracts Shane with talk of hockey and spontaneous sex, as best he can, while not particularly caring for either. It's been nice having Anya by his side, the only witness to his late nights, secret cigarettes and growing lethargy.

And then suddenly he can hardly drag himself out of bed. He's starting to scare himself. Spends most of every day worrying he will end up like his mother, trying to think his way out of the hole he finds himself in.

All he does is tire himself.

The straw that breaks the camels back is Anya pissing on the floor because even her high pitched barking hadn't woken Ilya from the sticky black pit of sleep. He keeps apologising to her, takes her for an extra long walk later that day, heaps praise on her. None of it makes him feel any less awful about himself.

—

Ilya has his sunglasses on, he doesn't strictly need them anymore, not nearly as sensitive to the light as he was, but he likes the protection they offer. How they hide him.

He raises his hand and knocks on the door.

The door swings open and there's Yuna, long black hair in a relaxed braid.

"Ilya! We weren't expecting you. Come in, come in," she ushers. Anya is pulling on the lead, trying to reach Yuna. "Oh, hello Anya," she greets, petting her floppy ears.

Ilya comes inside but doesn't move further into the house. He clears his throat, "I can't stay. I have something to ask."

"Go on."

"I would not be asking, if I did not think it best. I am still not one hundred percent. My head," he points at it, "I sleep too much. My shoulder, Anya pulls," he shakes the leash lightly, "I do not feel I can give her everything she deserves. When I am better, yes," he says, not believing himself, "but now, is not good. Can she stay with you until I am better or Shane is back in Montreal?"

"Of course we can take her, we don't mind at all. We love having you, don't we?" she says to Anya. Considering Ilya, she asks, "how are you feeling? Is it still very bad? You know we're here if you need anything."

"I have been better but the worst is over."

God, he wished that was true.

He leaves them with a bag of Yuna's favourite toys, her dog bed and a good few treats.

—

A trilling sound breaks through Ilya's staring match with the ceiling. It's his phone. He turns his head, sees the caller ID, and feels, really, really tired. He makes it a point to answer Hollanders calls and texts, not wanting to worry him more than he already is. Ilya wonders sometimes if it's because he's afraid of Shane turning up out of the blue, finding his boyfriend despondent in a messy house. Nothing but rotten food in the fridge. He doesn't want to imagine what that could look like.

He's worse at pretending with Shane but he still does his best, fitting oddly into the shape of Ilya Rozanov.

"Hi."

"Hi. It's nice to hear your voice," Shane says.

"How are play-offs?"

"You know," Shane says vaguely, "play-offs."

"Amazing," Ilya doesn't have to put on the flat affect.

He's becoming increasingly apathetic. Struggling to eat. In bed for days or not at all. Ilya wonder if anyone else can tell there's something blank about him. A grumpier and more off kilter version of himself. He feels superimposed over himself, a translucent copy.

"How are you?" Shane asks.

"Fine, you?"

"Yeah, I'm good. Um. Are you sure you're fine?"

Instantly, he's annoyed. Ilya wishes he were a better person.

"Because I was just talking to my parents... And they mentioned Anya? So I thought maybe you were there, or something. But no, you, uh, you gave her to them?"

"Yes."

"Why?"

"Did they not say? Your parents?"

"I'd like to hear it from you."

Ilya sighs, "I am tired, sleep too much. She is so young. Has so much energy. I can not keep up, injured like this."

"Okay," he can practically hear Shane thinking on the other end, "so it's just a bit much right now? Why didn't you tell me?"

"No point in bothering you. You are away, we are here."

"I wish I wasn't."

Ilya gentles. He misses Shane so much. "I know, me too."

"I mean, I could come down for a few hours in two days, maybe."

"You don't have to. Should focus on hockey. Win for me."

Shane laughs quietly, "yeah, I don't think it would work but I wish I could."

"Is okay."

"Mm."

"What are you wearing?"

"Ilya!"

—

Shane is away, this time for near two whole weeks. Ilya had promised he would be okay. He isn't. He really isn't. Time passes slowly for him. Sometimes he blinks and days are gone. Ilya begins feeling hopeless.

On a particularly bad night he calls Shane in the early hours. He feels bad for waking him. Ilya'd almost called him last night, worrying not only about waking Shane but whoever he was rooming with as well. Ilya needs to hear his voice. Needs to remember that someone in this world loves him. He stares at his phone, clutched in his hand, for two whole hours before he manages to press call.

he remembers to text shane back, most of the time. he forces himself to do a few workouts and to eat enough most of the time, too, so he doesn't feel like he's going to collapse.

"-ello?" sheets rustling on the other end, a groggy voice.

Guilt sinks heavy like a stone in Ilya's gut.

More rustling.

"Ilya?"

"Yes." His voice sounds weak to his own ears. It's been a few days since he spoke.

"Is something wrong?"

"I don't know," Ilya lies. "I'm sorry for waking you."

"Don't be. Feeling dizzy, headache?"

"A little." He can breathe easier, just having Shane on the other end. Ilya lets the silence stretch.

"Do you want to talk?" Shane asks.

"No." *I'm sick of hearing my own thoughts.*

"Do you want me to talk? You can just listen, if you want?"

Ilya makes an affirming noise.

Shane's voice fills his head, turns down all the other channels.

—

Jane

Sorry I had to hang up,

let me know if you slept okay. (del. 5.30AM)

Text me when you wake up (del. 1.55PM)

awake

How are you feeling?

ok, not so tired

Good. Were you asleep until now?

yes

Good

—

He's gotten good at crying secretly at night but he prefers to seek out a quiet corner of the house rather than to risk Shane noticing. He doesn't know what he'd do if he did. Ilya doesn't think he could begin to explain. He doesn't really understand it himself.

Ilya seems worse in new ways every time Shane sees him and this time he really can't ignore it.

Puffy face, bloodshot eyes. He shuffles more than he walks. Ilya barely smiles.

The first night, they fall asleep together, or Shane thinks they do, until he wakes in the middle of the night to an empty bed. Shane goes looking for him. He thinks he's checked everywhere when he hears Anya's paws on the floorboards, coming from the other bedroom.

With a soft click, the door opens.

Ilya has his back to the wall, sitting with his legs pulled to his chest. There's a blanket wrapped around him. Anya is fervently licking his arm.

Ilya's crying.

A deer in headlights, Ilya's cornered and his mind chants, *not this, not this, please not this.*

"Ilya..." Shane is suddenly sitting next to him. "Can I hug you?"

Ilya cries harder and nods. Shane envelopes him in his arms.

"What's wrong, baby?"

Ilya shakes his head.

"Come on," Shane rubs his back, "please talk to me. I know you're not okay and it's killing me not to know what's going on in your head."

"I don't know how," Ilya sobs harder, as if the thought itself hurts him. His sobs are near silent and the thought that this has happened more than once solidifies in Shane's view.

Shane shushes him and decides talking will be for later, when Ilya doesn't have to choke out words between sobs. For now, there's nothing more important than holding Ilya in his arms. Shane kisses his cheek. "I love you. So much."

Ilya hides his face.

Shane leans his head against Ilya's. "I do. I really really do."

—

The second night it happens again. Only, Shane stays awake, he wants to know if Ilya gets up again. Doesn't want to be peacefully asleep whilst his boyfriend breaks apart alone in another room.

After an hour, Ilya starts shifting around. Half an hour after that, he's near soundlessly padding out of the room.

Shane sits up, he rubs at his eyes. "Don't go."

Ilya freezes, turns around. "You are awake,"

"Come back to bed."

He doesn't move so Shane gets up, clicking on the lamp.

Ilya's face is bathed in deep shadows. His eyes are glassy. Shane takes both his hands, careful not to tug his injured shoulder and shuffles them onto the bed saying, "talk to me."

"Has something happened?"

"No." Ilya covers his face with his hands. It looks like he's crying.

"Hey, it's okay. It's okay. Whatever it is, okay?"

Shaking his head no is all Ilya does in response.

"It could be the concussion, right? You got hit pretty bad, that can mess with your emotions pretty bad. You've been off since then. It'll take time but you'll be okay. I promise, okay?"

In a flurry of movement, Ilya drops his hands from his face, and does a tiny jump back. His hands are all over the place "You do not get it! It is not okay! It... I- I am sick Hollander," his voice cracks, "like my mother."

"Sick?" When Ilya simply keeps shaking his head Shane goes on, "Did you speak to her? What do you m—," Shane stops abruptly. Ilya's gone freakily still.

"Ilya?" More delicately this time.

Ilya's staring ahead. Shane notes his unfocused stare.

"She killed herself."

Shane sinks. *Oh god. What the fuck does he say?*

Wait, sick, like, depressed, so Ilya's saying that he, that his mother, and that means that— Shane stops himself spiralling. One step at a time, *one step at a time.*

"I'm so sorry, I had no idea."

Ilya nods, tears welling in his eyes. Shane gathers him in his arms.

"How long ago?"

"Long time," Ilya lets out a short and miserable laugh. Shane's heart breaks at the sound.

"I was 12."

"Jesus, Ilya." Gentle fingers soothe him.

"Will you tell me about it? About her?"

"One day I will tell you whole story. Not today. I can't." It comes out matter-of-fact and wobbly. "She was depressed. Different to me, maybe. I don't know. She did not sleep all day or not sleep like me. She was always rushing around the house."

"And you think, that what's happening with you is similar?"

"I know."

"My father said she was weak." Ilya hunches over himself.

"She wasn't."

"No, she wasn't. She was.." Ilya trails off. His face contorts. "It makes me nauseous. To talk. Think about."

Ilya falls asleep pillowed on Shane's chest, his whole body molded around him.

In the morning, Shane says, "I think you should see a psychologist."

Ilya's mouth thins but he nods.

Something has to give.

—

The question Ilya's been dreading finally pops, albeit softly-spoken, out of Shane's mouth several days later.

Ilya's appreciating Shane through the reflection in the mirror as he towels off. He'd slept like a normal person for the first time in months. Ilya's first prescription of anti-depressants sits on the counter. He'd watched Shane pouring over the warnings and side effects several times over the last few days.

"You don't want to.. die, do you?"

"No."

"No?"

"I don't know. Maybe, sometimes." Ilya pauses. "Not really."

Shane feels like he's being skewered. "So, what I think that means is: *yes*, sometimes."

"I do not want to scare you."

"Of course it scares me, Ilya."

"Sorry."

"It's not your fault."

"Whose then?" Ilya spits out, irritated at Shane for no reason.

"I don't think it's anyone's."

—

Gathering all the courage that Ilya has ever had in him, he walks up to Shane with his anti-depressants clutched tightly in his hand. The bottle rattles as he walks.

Shane has been so good to him. Tolerating never-ending tears and bad moods. He hates to do this, too. But he has to. Can't take the way his brain's been screaming at him.

He stops in front of Shane who's in the middle of preparing their dogs food. He holds the bottle in the air. He doesn't say what it is, Shane recognises it instantly.

"I think it is not a good idea I have these."

Perplexed, Shane looks back at him, at the bottle, back at him.

He returns to calmly and meticulously chopping up parsley. "Ilya you have to take them—"

"Not that, I will keep taking them. Do not worry." Ilya fidgets. "I... I do not think it's safe. You should... hold on. To them, for me." Ilya steps closer to him.

Panic grips Shane. He stares at the pill bottle and for a moment his world narrows to it.

His brain kicks in a moment later. Shane stays as outwardly calm as he possibly can as he takes the bottle from Ilya and slides it into the pocket of his dressing gown.

"Okay." Shane says very cautiously. "I can do that. We can do that. I'll keep them for you and give you your dose every day and you, you tell me when it's... when um, you feel.." Shane runs out of steam, chokes.

Ilya steps closer again. "Do not panic. It's okay." Ilya runs a hand across his shoulders, "it's okay."

Shane shakes his head, pins Ilya with a serious stare. "It isn't."

"No," Ilya concedes, "it isn't."

Shane swallows a nervous breath, "Thank you for telling me."

He makes sure Shane is looking into his eyes when he says, "I do not want to leave you, moya lyubov'." *My love.*

"You don't?" Shane hates how his voice shakes.

Ilya answers the question as best as he can without lying. "Sometimes we won't be able to trust," Ilya taps his temple, "what I am feeling about life or myself— like now. My feelings for you I trust. Always."

"I love you," Shane's eyes are misty.

Ilya holds his palm to his heart. Task accomplished, feeling guilty and knowing he should try reassure Shane more. But he doesn't have it in him. "I feel like shit. I am going to lie down. Join me when you are done?"

Twin strands of dark hair ghost Shane's brow as he nods. "Of course."

Ilya's been doing better. His anti-depressants are slowly having an affect. Shane is good. Anya is good. He's cleared for practice again. Will be playing his first games soon.

He's reaquired custody of his pill bottle, too.

Jane

(img.798)

thinking of you

oh my god

Ilya

You can't just send stuff like that

gets you hard though

no?

(img.222)

that's what I thought.

are you..?

jacking off to a picture of you hard in some

gross bar bathroom?

yes.

wish i was there

could have you on your knees sucking my dick

Such a romantic

I want that so bad

Soon it'll be summer and they'll have all the the time in the world to take each other apart.

Ilyas stomach twists. He's waiting for Hollander to get home from an away-game. Ilya had let himself in.

The book on the coffee table sits there in plain sight and mocks him.

What To Do When Someone You Love Is Depressed: A Practical, Compassionate, and Helpful Guide for Caregivers.

Ilya sits up straighter. Stares down at the thing.

He's startled out of his staring competition with the offending piece of literature by the sounds of Shane coming home. He should get up and go greet him. He doesn't.

"Ilya?" Shane calls.

"In here."

"Hi," Shane greets, straddling Ilya's lap and hugging him to his chest.

"Drive okay?" Ilya soothes a hand down his spine.

"Yeah not too bad. Traffic was fine but it still felt so long," Shane sighs, "was thinking of you the whole way."

"Impatient," Ilya chides.

Shane pulls back, arms slung around Ilya's neck. "Missed you."

Ilya smiles. "Of course." And kisses him.

Shane studies his face. He's not looking quite as tired as he had been. Shane figures that's good enough for today. Ilya's eyes keep flitting to something behind him so Shane turns. Shane's eyes land on the last book he'd been reading.

"Oh, uh, I picked that up a little bit ago."

Ilya looks away. "OK."

"I.. I thought it would be a good idea? To learn more. I want to help you."

"You do help." Ilya doesn't look happy.

"Does it bother you? That I'm reading it?"

"Yes."

"Okay." Shane sits back on Ilya's thighs. "Why?"

"I do not.." He sounds frustrated. "I do not want to be a problem for you to fix."

"Ilya.."

"You should not have to worry about me."

"I love you, of course I'm going to worry about you."

Ilya deflates. "Not like this," he mumbles into Shane's chest.

Shane runs gentle fingers through his curls. He wishes he knew the right thing to say.

"You're not a problem to fix." Shane tips his own head down, cocooned in warmth with Ilya.

"You're the love of my life." His arms slide back around him.

"It's you and me, okay? You're not alone. Through sickness and health, yeah?"

"We are not married."

"Not yet," Shane adds.

Ilya laughs. The sound a little wet.

"I do not deserve you."

"Yes, you do." Shane pinches him.

"Asshole."

"Never mind then."

And then the damm breaks. They're both laughing.

Ilya kisses him firmly, a smile still playing on his lips.

"ТЫ МОЙ СВЕТ." *You are my light.*

End Notes

title from My Moon My Man because that and Zombie by Yungblud are all I listened to as I wrote this.

There will likely be a part two where I make Shane's eating issues worse than canon :)

Kudos greatly appreciated !!

Comments too !!

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!