They Needed Me

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They Needed Me

by Lilyofthevolume

Summary

The missing conversation between Ilya and David where David shares some things and Ilya starts to think that there might just be a space in this family for him.

Notes

This is my first time writing for this fandom! I love me some Ilya and want nothing more than for David and Yuna to love him like there own. I took some liberties with David's life experiences but nothing in the books or show contradicts it so...

Thanks to W_M_N for alphaing and Jo | Coeur_de_Coeurs for betaing.

Glad we can be in the chokehold of this series together.

See the end of the work for more notes

Ilya and David sat across from one another drinking their vodkas. Shane had gone after his mother only a few minutes ago, leaving the two most important men in his life to awkwardly stare at each other. It took a lot to make Ilya feel truly uncomfortable, but the silence stretching across the Hollander's dining room table was enough to make his skin crawl. He took another sip of vodka before David took pity on them both.

"So…" he said

"So…" echoed Ilya. He could see the myriad of questions that warred in David's eyes, each vying to be the first out of his mouth. He tried to maintain eye contact, showing he wasn't intimidated. Finally, David opened his mouth.

"Have you told your family?" Before he even finished processing the question, a pang of grief Ilya had only recently unearthed speared into his chest. The question shouldn't have surprised him. It was perhaps the most logical thing to ask in the midst of the chaos of the last few hours. Even though it wasn't a surprise it still cut Ilya deeply and he had to look away.

"No," He said, probably a bit too sharply but David didn't seem put out by it. "We did not have that kind of relationship," Ilya amended in a softer voice.

"I see," David replied kindly, "Your father passed away a few months ago right?" Ilya could only nod, mutely. "And your mother?"

"Also dead," Ilya said, staring into the glass in his hands, empty now.

"I'm so sorry, Ilya."

"Is okay," he replied automatically; like he always did, like he probably always would. There was a pause, Ilya couldn't bring himself to look back at the man across from him even as the moments stretched on.

"I doubt that very much." David's voice was soft and gentle. Ilya couldn't remember the last time anyone had spoken to him in that tone of voice. The tenderness in it brought tears to his eyes unbidden. He swallowed, desperately wishing for more vodka, for anything he could drink to wash away the tightness in his esophagus.

"Was a long time ago," he managed to mumble after clearing his throat. David didn't reply immediately and Ilya thought, perhaps, that would be the end of it. He closed his eyes, trying to will the tears away, the storm of feelings that had no place here, at Shane's childhood cottage; while his boyfriend tried to salvage his relationship with his parents. Parents that loved their son, who supported him, who would, when the shock wore off, go back to an easy closeness that Ilya had never and would never know from any of his blood relations.

Suddenly he felt warm palms cover the fingers that were practically strangling his vodka glass. He opened his eyes to find two tan, wrinkled hands wrapped around his own. He glanced up at David who was watching him with an emotion the younger man could not possibly name.

“Ilya,” David said a little gruffly. “Has Shane ever told you about my parents?” the younger man shook his head. Unwilling to admit that Shane had barely talked about his own parents until this week. “They died young,” David began, “A car accident when I was in college.” Ilya blinked, surprised. That was not at all what he thought David would say, but he was still talking, softly, and a little wistfully, “I was the oldest and my family needed me to come home. I was suddenly responsible for not only the funeral plans and will, but making sure my younger siblings were taken care of. It took a while for the dust to settle. I ended up moving home, transferring schools, and-” David paused and Ilya suddenly remembered what Shane had said about him playing hockey in college.

“You had to quit hockey,” Ilya supplied. David nodded ruefully and Ilya could see that the memories of that time still pained the older man.

“I did,” he confirmed. “It was the hardest decision I ever made. I never doubted the choice to come home. It was clear from the moment I returned that my siblings needed me, but even knowing I had done the right thing didn’t erase the bitterness I carried from giving up my hockey dream, which of course filled me with guilt and shame for being angry with my parents who had done nothing wrong or allowing my frustrations with our family situation come out at my siblings.” Ilya nodded, every word was so familiar, so true to his own experience. David continued as if he wasn’t pressing his finger on bruises that he had tried to forget existed. “When I think back on that time I get a little overwhelmed. It was hard, impossible even, I still don’t know how I did it except that I didn’t really have a choice.” David finally paused long enough that Ilya thought maybe he was waiting for the Russian to say something,

“Oh,” was all Ilya could manage. Because really, what was there to say when your boyfriend of less than a week’s father said the words out loud that had lived in his own mind for the last six months? David didn’t seem to mind his truncated response. He gave Ilya a small, sad smile and Ilya suddenly realized he had forgotten David’s hands were wrapped around his own. It should have been awkward and uncomfortable. He hadn’t been touched in this sort of gentle, parental way since he was a child, since his mother had held him as a child. But the palms covering his fingers didn’t feel strange. They were dry and warm and- it took him a moment to find the right word- comforting. Ilya sniffed, desperately ignoring the way his eyes were watering even more than before.

“I know it isn’t the same,” David said softly, “But I wanted to tell you. Because sometimes I still miss them, still get overwhelmed by the emotions of that time in my life. Even now, all these years later, I think about the things I wish I could tell them, show them. I wonder what they would think of how my life turned out, the person I became. I grieve that they didn’t get to see me get married or meet their grandson. My love for them didn’t disappear just because they died and my relationship with them didn’t end just because they were gone.” Ilya swallowed rapidly and shook his head, desperately trying to ignore how deeply David’s words settled in him. “So,” the older man continued, “Even if it’s not the exact same, I will still tell you, it’s okay, if you’re not okay. If you have complicated and hard feelings about your parents today or tomorrow or in fifty years.”

A moment passed and then another, until finally Ilya was forced to look at the man across the table from him. He found David smiling at him. The expression was nearly identical to the

way Shane looked at him when he was trying to convey just how much he cared about Ilya without actually saying the words. The younger man tried to think of something to say. Some way to acknowledge this huge thing that David had just shared, to say thank you for articulating experiences Ilya couldn't express in Russian, much less English. Shane's dad must have seen the struggle in his face because he squeezed his fingers once before saying;

"I may have only just found out about your relationship with my son, but I can see you have been a part of each other's lives in a very important way for a long time, probably longer than either of you even realize." Ilya nodded, because well, David was absolutely right. They had been integral to each other's lives even when they were circling one another from a distance. "so, for as long as you are with Shane, and," he paused to make sure that Ilya was focused on him, that his words hit home, "even if you aren't, I'm here. If you want to talk about your parents or anything else, or just sit and not talk at all. I'm here."

For a long moment Ilya just stared at the man in front of him. Someone he had never imagined meeting in person much less having anything in common with. Here David was offering support and understanding mere hours after he discovered Ilya and Shane's secret.

"Thank you," he said at last. He meant it too, because somehow he knew that David's offer was sincere. That he would never judge Ilya for his guilt over his mother's death or his rage at the way his father lived or how he had cut out his brother. That knowledge, that someone in this world might understand even a fraction of what he had experienced, It made him feel less alone. Had it only been a day ago that he had told Shane that his mother would love him and now, he thought perhaps the reverse was also true. Perhaps, Shane wasn't the only Hollander who could love him, even if it was a very different kind of love.

David nodded just as the front door opened. He squeezed Ilya's hand one more time before moving to stand. Ilya stood as well and turned around. Tension eased in his shoulders when he saw that both Shane and his mother seemed more relaxed. Their conversation must have gone well. He would ask Shane for the details later, for now he was just grateful that they had talked, that the most important people in Shane's life knew the truth and that it had, by all accounts, gone about as well as it could. Ilya caught David's eye and the older man smiled warmly, clearly seeing the same change as Ilya.

"Alright," David said, eyes dancing merrily from one person to the next, "who wants chicken parmesan?"

End Notes

Thanks for reading. I love those comments and kudos!

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