of human bondage

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# of human bondage

by blossominribcage

Summary

Ilya's brother gives him a call to congratulate him on his wedding. He might need some reassurance from Shane after he's unwise enough to take it.

Notes

• mixing show canon and book canon a little here— apart from being incapable of visualizing anyone but connor and hudson now, i'm also working more closely off of the show's version of ilya's brother and their family dynamic— but this is set after the long game, so spoilers for that

• not a psychiatrist or any kind of mental health professional, am not offering any personal opinions on the effectiveness of any pills here, please don't take your medical advice from this work of pornography

• ilya's not bottoming-bottoming here exactly in terms of penetrative sex, this is more in line with what he's into in book canon, but that's discussed as a possibility; did want to flag that ahead of time because i know that can squick people

okay disclaimers over apart from that have fun!!

When his phone's persistent vibration woke him up, and he saw ALEXEI DO NOT ANSWER 💀 flash across the screen, he wondered, stupidly, if his father had somehow managed to die twice. Then he pressed the red 'hang up' button and tried to go back to sleep, nuzzling his face into the crook of Shane's neck. The third time, he was irritated enough to swing his legs over the side of the bed and finally give this *mudak* a piece of his mind. "Do you understand what a fucking time zone is," Ilya said in Russian as he stepped out into the hall, "because I know I've explained it to you more than once." A brief pause. "Not that I want you calling me in the morning, either."

Alexei couldn't have cared less about him unless he was wiring a fat sum via Western Union, and he'd thought he'd gotten the message across that the First Bank of Ilya Rozanov was closed to international business. He had a dog and a husband to provide for now, for fuck's sake. Was he looking to be bailed out of jail? Were the bribes he collected and the drugs he resold out of the evidence locker finally catching up to him? *Had* Father managed to rise from the dead and then die all over again? "This can't wait," Alexei said, in the tone he used before he kicked people's heads in.

"I've gone broke, Lyosha," Ilya said, as dry as kindling that was about to catch. How had he forgotten to block his number? Probably because they'd had no reason to speak for the past several years. "Sorry. Between the hookers, the blow, and my last shitty crypto investment, I just don't have endless amounts of cash to throw at you anymore, so—"

"Thank God Mom and Dad both died before they had to see this." The scoff from the back of Alexei's throat made it clear that if they were speaking in person, he'd be hocking a wad of spit into his face next. "Do you have any idea what they're saying about you on TV? Any fucking clue at all?"

Ilya had tried not to go looking. *Champion hockey player queens out and gives finger to the NHL* was probably all over Channel 1, and being used as justification for yet another crackdown on the queer community. He was also trying not to blame himself for knocking over that particular row of dominoes, with varying degrees of success; at this point, he was settling for being grateful that he'd at least yet to see a headline where Putin was blaming him personally for the metastatic spread of globohomo.

"Like it's not bad enough you humiliated Mom with that fucking foundation— airing that out to everybody— can't even let her rest in peace—"

"Right," Ilya said, rocking back on his heels like Alexei had grabbed him by the shoulders and shoved, "I guess I forgot that talking about mental health was the most embarrassing thing about this family. Silly me. Not Dad marrying a woman half his age and torturing her until she killed herself."

"What the fuck is *mental health*? What the fuck are you ever even talking about anymore?"

Ilya tried to imagine Alexei's face if he knew that he was seeing a therapist— he'd probably shit himself and die. An entertaining thought. Then he remembered Mom parking them in

front of the TV to watch *Three Wishes for Cinderella* before New Years, pressing kisses to the tops of their heads, and wanted to throw up all over his feet instead.

“I had to tell Katya about your… degeneracy.” That kind of polysyllabic word was something he’d thought beyond his brother’s intellectual capacity, he was grudgingly impressed he’d managed to get it out. “She doesn’t understand why you’d do something like this. All the other kids make fun of her at school; the moms in her class groupchat won’t stop running their mouths, either, Zhenya had to leave it. Not that you’ve ever given a shit about her, or anyone in this family.”

More than Ilya hated the idea of his niece being bullied because of him, he hated that he was angry about it in the same way he would be if it had happened to one of Hayden and Jackie’s kids, a protective layer between him and his outrage. He hadn’t spoken to her since Father’s funeral, years ago; she wasn’t old enough to have a phone yet, and so contacting her would either involve going through Alexei, an obvious nonstarter, or his wife Evgenia, who he’d never heard express a single opinion before that contradicted Alexei’s. (Or any opinion at all, for that matter.) “The massive trust fund I set up for her might let her know she’s still in my thoughts.”

It was truly lovely that just like a magpie, Alexei could never, at any moment, turn down an opportunity to root around for cash. “Maybe if you let me use it, I can—“

“Put it straight up your nose to kill the pain of knowing that somewhere across the ocean, your brother’s sharing his bed with another man?”

He didn’t have to imagine the sharp, disgusted shake of Alexei’s head before he spoke again; he saw it every time he blinked, like a flipbook animation. “You still wear Mom’s cross?”

“Of course,” Ilya said, and before he could think better of it: “I’m the one she wanted to have it, remember?”

If only he’d known just how soon he’d wind up getting it. Or why Mom had been in such a bizarre hurry to start parceling out her things.

“So pretty— it’s like it’s for the daughter she never had.” Alexei was as dumb as a *probka*, sure, but he did have a sort of animal cunning when it came to being cruel, and he could always suckerpunch Ilya right beneath the ribs. “Now just imagine what she’d have to say if she knew her son was a—“

Ilya longed for the old days of landlines, when he could slam a phone back down on the hook; he had to settle for jabbing the screen hard enough he almost dislocated a joint. He wanted to throw it against the wall for the pleasure of watching it break, he had more than enough cash on hand to replace it the next day, but he’d feel like his dad throwing plates at the dinner table a decade ago, and wake Shane up besides. “And this is why I fucked your girlfriend,” he settled for muttering under his breath, still in Russian, “and made her come for the first time in a *very* long time. *Oh, Ilyushenka, I never knew it could feel this goooood*—“

Father, long past the prime of his life by the time Ilya came around, had never cared enough about him to notice any of his extracurricular activities outside the rink; even Ilya’s hockey

career had only ever earned him praise in the public eye, never when just Ilya could hear. Alexei had always suspected, though, even if Ilya was never quite reckless enough to let him confirm; a hard grip around his bicep as he was getting out of the shower, toweling off his hair, *don't you think you've been spending enough time with Sasha lately?* It didn't stop him, though, because nobody could ever stop Ilya from doing anything unless he was tied down first, regardless of the consequences. More than his *degeneracy*, it was the refusal to obey or yield that had always driven Alexei, a perfect cop by nature, to distraction.

He'd known that his brother loathed him for a long, long time by now, and the feeling was more than mutual; it was the confirmation that his country had rejected him as thoroughly as he'd rejected it that stung most. Ilya loved Canada and he loved his team and he loved his man. He also missed eating *grechka* and *cirniki* his mom had cooked and not having a certain *somebody* chirp him about trying to eat sour cream with every meal, 'because that's disgusting, Ilya, God, get that away from the soup right now.' He missed being around other people who believed in the civilizational value of keeping your feelings to yourself, and did not want to *talk everything out* in the way that Shane insisted was the hallmark of a healthy relationship. He even missed the atrocity called 'Russian rap' that he used to blast in his car to pump himself up before games. Sometimes— no matter how much he adored his new life, as much as it fulfilled him more than staying in Russia ever could have— he woke up and all he could think was *I'm not allowed to go home anymore*. Odysseus in exile, forever.

Feeling like a gutted Halloween pumpkin on the first of November, he headed back to bed, where Shane was sitting up and fumbling with the lamp. "I heard raised voices," he said, blearily. "In Russian. Was that your brother?"

Ilya gave him a short, military-grade nod. "I am quite the topic on state TV lately. Something about *spreading homosexual propaganda* and *corrupting the nation's youth*. He felt that I should be made aware of this in the middle of the night." Climbing back into his side of the bed, he mummified himself in the covers. "See, apparently the biggest problem facing our country is not the ethnonationalism. It's not abusing and trafficking women. It's not oligarchs stripping the place down for parts. It's two male hockey players having sex with each other."

Ilya was really proud of whipping out *ethnonationalism* like that. Reading the New York Times every morning was definitely paying off.

"And married to each other," Shane said with a kiss to the inside of his wrist, once he'd managed to yank his arm out of his blanket coccoon, like Ilya was somehow in danger of forgetting that little detail. "Sweetheart— I'm so sorry. He's a fucking dick. They're all fucking dicks. I hate that you got stuck with the worst family in the world— I don't know what else to say."

The characterization of the entire nation of Russia made his mouth twitch into a smile, but not for long. "He told me to imagine how our mother would feel. If she knew about… what I was."

"Oh, Ilya—"

"And the thing is, he's right. I don't know how my mother would have felt about it," he said, absently rubbing the crucifix between his thumb and forefinger as Shane coaxed him into his

arms. “I never will.”

He wanted to believe she’d love him no matter what, but then again, so many queer people believed that right until they got thrown out of the house. He’d never heard her say anything on the topic, one way or another, but she’d been religious enough to walk around with a massive crucifix around her neck, too. Ilya didn’t want to abandon the comfort of her memory the same way he’d abandoned, for the sake of his own sanity, the question of whether or not God still loved him.

“I don’t think that’s something you’re ever going to be able to answer,” Shane said gently, which he appreciated far more than a quick *of course she would’ve accepted you, of course she would’ve loved me*. Ilya hated the Canadian tendency to sugarcoat hard truths. “I really hope she would’ve. But if she didn’t, it would’ve been her loss— not yours.”

He brushed some of the hair out of Ilya’s eyes, an attentive and husbandly thing to do, and Ilya went in for a kiss so that he wouldn’t start crying instead— he wasn’t supposed to be using sex as a coping mechanism to avoid addressing his feelings, blah blah blah, but he figured this kind of warranted a bit of a return to form. Shane pulled back before he could slip his tongue inside his mouth, though. “Tell me what you need,” he panted, playing with the hem of Ilya’s oversized Centaurs shirt as he straddled his thighs.

“Just make me forget about it,” Ilya muttered, a tall order but one that he knew Shane was up for. “Do not want to go to sleep with that playing in my head over and over.” When Shane had managed to get his pajama pants off past his hips, Ilya looked down and let out a breath he hadn’t known he was holding. “Thank God. *Somebody* decided to come to work today.”

Ilya had been having a bit of a tough time on his medication journey. Namely, his shrink had forgotten to warn him that Lexapro *might start making his dick malfunction*. This, obviously, was unacceptable on every level. So was the way he’d blown him off after Ilya stormed back into his office, pointing finger at the ready. *Is a minor side effect more important than alleviating the rest of your symptoms, Ilya? Is it something you can try adjusting to, maybe?*

Well, keeping an erection was pretty fucking important to Ilya. They didn’t have sex every night, but it came close, and he wasn’t sure what else he was supposed to be filling his time with while he and Shane were still busy honeymooning: crosswords? Scrapbooking? Rewatching *Schitt’s Creek* on the Netflix they were stealing from Yuna and David? That sounded boring as hell, and one thing about sleeping with Shane was that it’d gotten no less exciting even after more than a decade of it.

He’d been cracking a joke, but it was always 50/50 on whether or not one of those would land with his beloved wet blanket. “You know I don’t just love you for your dick, right,” Shane said very seriously, in a CBC radio voice, as he rolled over and reclined on his elbow. “Like, I’ll spell it out: I’d rather have to fuck myself with a dildo forever than have to find your body somewhere, okay. And I don’t want you to have gone off a medication that works because you think I’m not… getting satisfied.”

“You will never find a remotely comparable dildo to me, Hollander. Anything close to my size would be a health hazard. Too dangerous to sell.”

Shane whacked him with one of the ‘decorative’ pillows on their bed, hard enough to leave a slight sting. “Be serious!”

“No,” Ilya said, trying to find the right English words, “I didn’t feel right on it, either. I like the Wellbutrin better, so far. Is less… everything feels less… numb. Empty. Something like that.”

Sure, he’d stopped wanting to kill himself anymore, but that was because every day was like waking up inside a bowl of matzo ball soup instead: bland and pointless. He didn’t want to spend the rest of his life struggling to get it up, either. Sue him, call him a hopelessly slutty bisexual, whatever— he already hated being this miserable, exhausted shadow of himself, without losing even more of his ability to feel anything. The new one was more like… well, kind of like one of those ridiculous commercials for antidepressants that he couldn’t skip on Youtube, actually, where the lady was clutching a fistful of tissues in grayscale, popped a pill with a Tolkien elf name, and then started playing tennis and riding jet skis in technicolor. Like the bad thoughts were still with him, because they always would be, but infinitely easier to bat away.

“And you’d tell me if that changed,” Shane said, cupping the side of his face and giving him a stern enough look to rival Yuna Hollander at her finest. “No matter how much you hate talking about your feelings, because this is way too important to keep to yourself. We’re not doing any more secrets.”

“Promise.” Ilya put a hand over Shane’s and guided it to the tented front of his boxers; Shane instinctively squeezed. Good boy. “Look, he’s ready for you, he wants to say hello. Come on. I do not tease *you* like this.”

“Like hell you don’t,” Shane muttered, but he was too busy taking care of Ilya’s underwear and getting naked himself to push it any further. Ilya let out an audible sigh of relief as Shane collapsed on top of him, their cocks rubbing together; fucking finally, he was falling asleep here. Shane had gotten him onto his back and started kissing him all over, but when Ilya tried to wrap his arms around his neck and pull him in closer, Shane batted his hands away. An exciting new development?

“Nuh-uh,” Shane said, before he pinned Ilya’s wrists above his head and stared him down with liquid dark eyes; if Ilya squinted, he swore he could see his reflection in them. He tried to squirm in his hold, just for the thrill of Shane’s grip tightening on him like manacles. “*I’ll* touch *you*. When I feel like it. I’m not done kissing my husband yet, though, so you’re just going to have to be patient.”

Ninety-nine percent of the time, Ilya liked being the shotcaller, in bed. Correction: he fucking *loved* being the shotcaller, regardless of gender. And that usually worked out perfect for them, because he’d never met anyone more thrilled to be told what to do than Shane Hollander. There was just the one— okay, maybe two or three— percent of the time where he needed to turn his malfunctioning brain off and let Shane reduce him to a writhing, begging mess, which he also fucking loved. Sometimes he needed a little hands-on reassurance that Shane wasn’t disgusted or permanently turned off on the rare occasion he got needy and vulnerable. Sometimes watching Shane apply all of his single-minded focus and dedication to trying really, really hard to top was pretty hot, too.

Satisfied by the way he'd gone limp like a trapped rabbit, Shane tried to flip him over, but Ilya jerked his head sharply and fell onto his back again. "Face to face," he muttered into the crook of Shane's neck, licking the slightly salty skin there, "want to look at you. Do I at least get to do that?"

"I don't think I can control your eyes without a blindfold or something," Shane said thoughtfully, "so. Knock yourself out." When he finally reached one of his nipples and started to flick it with his tongue, Ilya couldn't stop his legs from falling open for him; Shane pried them apart even further with his knee, and Ilya shivered, though the room was warm from the midsummer heat. "You want my dick in here?" he asked, tracing Ilya's hole with the tip of his finger as he bracketed Ilya's thighs with his arms.

It wasn't a sultry call-and-response; Shane sounded like he was taking his coffee order at the Tim Horton's drive-thru, his brow slightly furrowed as he looked up at him. Ilya loved this man so much it felt like a nuclear bomb going off inside his chest. "Not right this second," he said, after giving it a moment's genuine thought. "Maybe not. No."

He was a little curious about what it'd be like, they both were, but their experiments were not a rousing success— and it did always feel more like a science experiment than something that came natural. They'd tried with a dildo and he had not been a huge fan; it'd hurt, even with a lot of lube, and Shane anxiously telling him that he *really needed to relax already* just made him feel like he was at the dentist rather than getting fucked. He was probably just better suited to being the peg rather than the hole, at the end of the day, and that was Shane's happy place too— and if he did decide to pull trig on that again, he didn't want to be in this kind of vulnerable headspace when he did it. But that didn't mean he didn't sometimes—

"What do you want, then?" Shane asked, his breath warm against the flat plane of Ilya's stomach, a question he already knew the answer to. "Use your words."

Ilya hadn't been shy about sex since he was about fourteen years old. At all. In fact, he got quite a bit of perverse delight out of saying dirty words in front of his good little Canadian boy— and making him say them, too. But sometimes What Do *You* Want got stuck in the back of his throat and stayed there, in bed and in life. "Your mouth," he managed to get out. (He made sure to add a reluctant 'please' to the end, in case Shane wanted to keep pushing it.)

Shane dipped his head and started kissing the insides of his thighs, first, sucking hard enough to leave marks— and Ilya was definitely going to have to jerk himself off tomorrow morning when he saw those. Then he hiked Ilya's hips up and started to tongue at his hole, light, tentative kitten licks that made Ilya want to grab him by the hair. Actually, rules be damned, that sounded like a fantastic idea.

The slap to the inside of his thigh as he got a grip on it— a half-assed one, but still— sent a jolt of lightning straight down his spine. "It's cute that you think you're calling the shots right now," Shane said, and this couldn't be the same guy who color-coded the laundry loads ('this is why my whites are so much brighter than yours, okay!') and had Ilya come kill a 'really fucking huge' spider in the shower last week. "Keep your hands to yourself like I told you, Rozanov, unless you need some help with that."

“Is that a promise?”

The more he thought about it, though, as hot as getting Shane to tie him up or pin him down again might be… that was starting to sound like admitting defeat to him. And Shane always did such a good job (at least to start off) at listening to what Ilya told him in bed; he wasn’t about to throw a competition that easy. Even if he desperately wanted to start stroking his cock while Shane slowly, meticulously opened him up, clenching a fistful of the duvet to try to maintain some semblance of self-control.

His tongue finally darted inside, and Ilya let out a strangled moan that made him sound like he’d been stepped on. He’d forgotten just how good that felt, and maybe closed mouths that didn’t want to be burdens didn’t get fed, because he knew Shane would rim him every night if he asked for it; Shane always tried to make him happy. And right now he was thinking he maybe wanted to keep Shane in bed, rimming him, for the rest of his life.

Shane looked up and actually grinned at him, smug like he’d just kicked his ass at an All-Star Skills Competition again. Let that little shit get one taste of power… “That’s good, huh?”

“We have this saying, in Russian— let me think of how to translate— *if you don’t praise yourself, it’s like the whole day is wasted.* That’s you. All the time.”

“Well, if you’re still being obnoxious— which you are, *all the time*— maybe I could be doing a better job.” Shane gave his hole one last kiss, then pulled back to rifle through the dresser drawer and get out a bottle of lube. His eyes softened, and he ran his hand down Ilya’s flank, like he was trying to soothe a startled horse. They weren’t playing around anymore. “Are you ready? You feel open enough?”

Shane was a little bad at parsing subtext and ambiguity, which was fine, because Ilya was a straight-to-the-point guy whose English didn’t always leave a lot of room for finesse. “Please just fuck me already.”

He rubbed the lube between his fingertips for a second, making sure to warm it up— so he *had* been paying attention the million times Ilya had prepped him— and the thoughtfulness soothed the mental flinch Ilya always had before being penetrated, even when he really wanted it and his body was taking a moment to catch up. It was just Shane, his Shane, who loved him, and remembering that let one finger slip in easily through the ring of muscle; when Shane found his prostate, his whole body jerked with the force of it, like Shane had just pushed him up against an electric fence. “Right there?” Shane asked lowly, but the question was redundant. He’d already added a second one to join the first, and Ilya realized he could, in fact, get his legs even wider as Shane curled them inside.

Maybe he liked it more than he should, the helplessness of being on his back, spread out with everything he had on display. He was making animal in heat sounds that a third finger was only amplifying, the stretch and the slight burn of it feeding into the pleasure. “It’s so much,” he babbled, embarrassingly, but he was past caring about anything at this point that wasn’t Shane fucking his ass with most of his hand and looking down at him like he wanted to devour him whole. His cock was already glistening at the top, leaving a wet mark behind on his stomach. “Just— don’t stop— it’s—“

“So good for me,” Shane said; he could only pull off being in charge for so long before his stupid sentimental mushiness started kicking in. The backs of Ilya’s eyes burned. He showed that he was desperately starved for praise at moments like these, and worse, Shane knew that and only let it motivate him. “Taking me so good— you’re perfect, Ilya, you’re fucking everything to me. I need you to know that.” If he actually made him cry during sex, Ilya was going to smother him with a pillow afterwards. “Are you gonna—“

“Can you suck my dick too,” Ilya said in a voice so choked, he sounded like he had a fist around his throat. He probably should’ve dropped an *I love you* right around then instead of getting straight to business, but he was so close to the edge he could feel the tension coiling at the base of his spine, in the pit of his stomach. He needed *something*, one last extra push, it was driving him insane—

Still ever obedient, Shane swallowed him down with the ease of many years of practice, and the second he felt the wet heat of his mouth, Ilya knew he was done for, before Shane’s head even started bobbing up and down in earnest. “Baby,” Shane said reverently as his cock popped out, tracing the vein running down it with his tongue, and when he twisted his fingers again Ilya came with a hard cry. The orgasm felt like it was spreading through his entire body, wave after wave arriving as his hips rocked, spurting all over Shane’s collarbone and splattering a little on his face; he needed a moment to catch his breath after, especially with Shane still inside him, wringing every last aftershock out of him. He always went off like a bottle rocket whenever Shane did this, and tonight was no exception.

It took him about five seconds of recovery time to realize that Shane was still hard, his cock jutting against the inside of Ilya’s thigh, and Shane saw him seeing it. “It’s fine,” he said quickly, “I can finish mys—“

“Do not even finish the sentence,” Ilya said, already taking him in hand and happy to re-establish their usual power dynamic— if Shane was touching himself in front of him, it was at his command. “You can jack off to the memory of this all you want tomorrow,” he added helpfully, rubbing his thumb over the sheen of precome at the head. “For now, you’re still all mine, Hollander.”

“I’m always all yours,” Shane said simply, and what was he supposed to do but give him a final few quick jerks before he came all over Ilya’s chest, stifling a loud moan into his shoulder. What snapped Ilya back into reality was Shane trying to wipe both of them off with Ilya’s discarded shirt, which was so utterly unhygienic it shocked Ilya more than anything else Shane had done tonight. “I’m sorry, okay, I didn’t want to get up— I’ll wash it in the morning, I promise—“

Ilya could only laugh as Shane tossed the shirt-turned-cum-rag onto the ground, then curled up against him, fucked-out and satisfied. Mostly because he was pretty sure he’d stolen it from Shane’s side of the closet to begin with. It was tough to tell all of their Centaurs merchandise apart anymore.

“Feeling better, Ilyusha?” Shane asked, carding his fingers through Ilya’s curls and managing to sound both comforting and smug. (He never should’ve let Svetlana call him that in Shane’s presence— or explain Russian diminutives to him at all. He wasn’t sure she was aware of the Pandora’s box she’d opened at the time.)

Ilya tugged the cord on the lamp, plunging the room into darkness again, and snuggled deeper into Shane's chest. He always got a little light-headed and shaky after this, prone to disappearing inside himself, and appreciated the anchoring weight of Shane's body against his; it kept him right here with him, where he wanted to be. "I feel like I've been sitting in a ninety degree sauna for five hours, so yes, is an improvement." More seriously: "I love you. Thank you."

Shane pressed a kiss to the top of his head in response, murmuring a soothing lot of nothing, and Ilya just soaked up the babying. No matter what had happened or would happen out there, he knew by now that he'd always have a home wherever Shane was. It was more than a lot of people ever got in their lifetimes, and certainly more than he ever figured he deserved. He let the sound of Shane's breathing pattern start to lull him to sleep.

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