

golden-rayed lily

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by [marigoldens](#)

Summary

“We’ll crush you next time.”

“Mm, you won’t,” Ilya retorts, along with kisses down Shane’s chest. “But don’t worry. I’ll send you flowers.”

Shane’s fingers go into Ilya’s hair, and Ilya hears a mumbled, “I don’t need flowers,” before a moan drowns it out.

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or: Ilya and Shane sending each other flowers starts out as a joke, and then becomes like a confession.

Notes

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

Ilya doesn't know if it's the fire inside him to win that pushes him to score four points, or if it is because he knows it pisses off Shane, and the more pissed off he is, the harder he kisses Ilya.

Partially, it's just because he's that fucking good. But he can't lie and say Shane's frustration throughout the game isn't helping him out.

Despite the embarrassing loss, Shane knocks on his door at the end of the night, and he doesn't even *talk* about Ilya's win, he just jumps Ilya as soon as he's closed the door (which, Ilya guesses, is his way of saying *your win doesn't phase me.*)

Still, Ilya taunts him, when they're in bed. And when Shane is at the edge of both wanting to leave and wanting to stay, Ilya stops. He hates there's a line he knows, but it's good in these times, when Ilya's imagined him underneath his hands for months and he finally gets it realized.

"Keep going, it doesn't bother me," Shane says, about his insults that hide their true meaning.

"Shane Hollander, famously unbothered."

"We'll crush you next time."

"Mm, you won't," Ilya retorts, along with kisses down Shane's chest. "But don't worry. I'll send you flowers."

Shane's fingers go into Ilya's hair, and Ilya hears a mumbled, "I don't need flowers," before a moan drowns it out.

—

The asshole actually sends him flowers. Shane is fuming.

He regrets sending Ilya his address. He should've sent him from one down the street and told him to walk.

Okay. Shane wouldn't actually do that. Even to him. But, like, still. He's abusing his power of knowing Shane's address by sending him *flowers*. Aggressive flowers. *Passive* aggressive flowers, in a bunch of clashing colors at that, bursting out of the vase with how many there are.

Shane stares at them, sitting them on the counter. They're an insult to injury. If only Shane could send them to Ilya, but he doesn't know where he lives, and the hotel Ilya is staying at wouldn't get them soon enough for Ilya to even see them.

Asshole, asshole, asshole.

Shane takes a picture of them quickly, and sends it to Ilya. He responds a few minutes later.

Lily

Wow wow.

Didn't know you are a flower guy. I respect it

Shane rolls his eyes.

Shane

Fuck you

Lily

You didn't even read the card.

Shane places his phone down, and picks the small card out of the middle of the bouquet. In the middle is one word, written in black pen.

Aw.

That's it. That's it, just *Aw*. Fucking *Aw*.

Shane

You suck at picking flowers.

Lily

Want to talk about what you suck at?

Fuck. Fuck him. Shane goes into his living room so he doesn't have to look at the flowers.

This should push him. To stop whatever the hell it is that's happening between them. But Shane doesn't want rid of this feeling, this *energy*, he's going to see Ilya at their next game, go to his room, he's probably going to follow everything Ilya tells him to do.

He'll try to hold back just a little, though.

—

The Boston Raiders *lose*, and Shane spends his night pressed underneath Ilya. The thing is, he's no less enthused about a hook-up than he would be if he won. In fact, he carries *more* stamina, it seems, and Shane does his best to keep up with it.

He barely keeps his lips off of Shane's, barely talks. Hours can pass with him where Shane realizes they haven't spoken. And it isn't because they don't need to, or don't want to, at least on Shane's end. It's more that they don't have to, not about this. Ilya knows what he likes, Shane knows what he does. He communicates his needs through his gestures.

Shane knows him in here, in a hotel room. It's a scary thought. Subconsciously, he'd been learning Ilya, and Ilya's been learning him. They can't leave marks, and Shane needs *something* to hold onto so he doesn't scratch his back, so without a word, when Shane leaves his hands near his head, palms up, Ilya holds them.

And that's everything to Shane, when the most they can have between each other is nothing. At least they don't have to lie here. They don't have to say much at all.

—

Ilya's coach says there's a gift waiting for him when he gets into the locker room, and Ilya thinks it's probably another gift from annoying fucking sponsors that want him to sell their products, but it's nothing like that.

It's a vase of flowers, in the colors of the Montreal Metros.

On the card reads:

Congratulations.

He didn't know Shane had it in him.

—

So it continues. After every loss, Shane gets a truly over-the-top, visually harmful bouquet of flowers delivered to his door, all with varying stupid notes that Shane *should* throw away, and instead traces his fingers over the letters and wonders if it's Ilya's handwriting.

The most recent reads:

Too bad, so sad.

This is a new phrase I learned. I think it is something you probably hear often. Sorry. ˘ ˇ

And the one Shane doesn't *not* think about over and over when he should be sleeping—

Should give them to your team. But you are more fun to annoy.

Which means . . . and Shane isn't delusional—which means Ilya thinks Shane's team is at fault, *not Shane*. Which means he thinks Shane is good. Which means he's sending him flowers for . . .

Well, Shane hasn't gotten that far. But the frustration the note holds, that Ilya was disappointed the Metros weren't *more* competitive, is interesting.

He wonders if Ilya thinks of it, too. No one in the crowd, and no one on the ice but them. Shane could play against him, one-on-one like that for hours. He wouldn't get tired, and if he did, he'd push past it. Shane imagines this more than he does Ilya in compromising positions, down on his knees and pressed to Shane's back.

He closes his eyes, he tries to think of any other player who has challenged him the way Ilya can, but it's impossible. It is always Ilya, circling around him, and the worst part is, Shane isn't keeping score. It's not a career when it's him against Ilya. It's just *fun*. Doing what he loves with who he—

Ilya's been looking forward to this for six months. Drafting what to tell Shane, along with what flowers to get him. (It's a huge thing of lilies.)

He doesn't think it's cursing the Raiders. It's just confidence.

"Oh, shit," Marlow says, looking down at his phone. Ilya looks over, waits for him to explain. He hates when they do this, say, *oh, no, oh, shit, oh my God*, and then just *nothing else? And* before a game. Ilya swears they do it just to fuck with him, because most of what their huge problems are is they forgot a second pair of socks.

Even though he doesn't really want to, Ilya asks, "What?"

"Hollander isn't playing tonight."

The team comes together in a joint, *what? Why?* And Ilya's no different this time, this time he actually wants, *needs* an answer.

"Too scared?" Ilya jokes, even though what's playing in his mind is, *is something wrong with him? His parents? Is he injured?*

"Says he's sick. He'll be out for the next three games."

"*Three?*"

"Fuck." And Ilya expects to see—he doesn't know why, of course they wouldn't be frowning and running to text Shane the way Ilya's about to—but they are *fucking smiling*.

Smiling about Shane being so sick he can't play his next three games. *Smiling* that Shane, *Shane Hollander*, who has never missed a game in his fucking life, is missing games. And he wouldn't ever do that unless he was physically incapable of getting onto the ice.

"Hey," Ilya near shouts, pressing anger down. They don't get it. Why would they? If Ilya didn't know him, he'd be thinking of the benefits, too. But all he has is worry for Shane. There's not a drop of hate in his feelings for him. And Ilya can't explain exactly *what* those feelings are, but he knows what they aren't. "So sick he cannot play, and you all cheer?"

"He'll probably be fine," someone says from the back.

"Yes, probably. Probably fine. But is he fine now?"

Marlow turns off his phone. “No?”

“No.”

Ilya stares at all of them, *glares*, really, with an unexplainable anger. Eventually, they all say some form of *sorry*, *Rozy*, and get on the ice. It’s way less interesting without Shane.

—

Ilya leaves, his skin buzzing. He hasn’t been able to relax all night. Shane’s stupid fucking team scored one point. How much weight must Shane carry until they start to pull their own? Is teamwork not a thing without him around? Fuck, does no one in this entire fucking sport respect how much Shane puts into his work *other* than Ilya? Do they even know what he sacrifices?

Before he can continue with that horrible train of thought, he sends Shane a text.

Ilya

If I can guess what you are sick with, you will let me come over.

It takes Shane a minute to answer, plus Ilya’s shitty service.

Jane

And do wht

Ilya’s heart squeezes. That’s the first time Shane has ever made a typo, probably in his entire life.

Ilya

Dirty mind you have

Flu?

Jane

Close

Ilya

Hm

Cold?

Jane

Worse

Ilya

Pneumonia?

Jane

Yea

Texting hard

Ilya actually becomes worried, he'll admit it, and he can't control it. *Fuck it.* He presses call. He's in the back of the bus, and most of the guys are half-asleep, or in talks of their own about the win.

Shane picks up after three rings. "Hi," Ilya starts with. They don't call each other. It's a little . . . weird. And Ilya didn't really think about that before deciding it. He just saw a problem, and wanted to immediately fix it for Shane.

"H'llo," Shane rasps. His voice is hoarse, and scratchy, and cutting out. "I'm sick."

And on top of everything, he's forgetting things he said two seconds ago. "I know that," Ilya says.

"Oh. Right. I have bronchitis."

"I thought pneumonia?"

Ilya looks around to see if someone's listening. He'll care about it more later.

"Yeah, no, that, too. I have both."

"That is . . ." Everything he wants to say gets stuck in his throat. *That's horrible. I'm sorry. You don't deserve that. I wish I could take it away. I hate that for you.*

"I know," Shane whispers, which seems better for his exhausted voice, letting it relax.

"I don't know if you saw. Your team scored." He hopes it'll lift Shane's spirits. Maybe it'll make him feel worse? Not being there? Ilya doesn't know. He's never done this kind of thing.

"Who did? Against you?"

"Mm, never. Was Pike. Start of game."

"I'm guessing you won."

"Yes," Ilya smiles. "Was easy."

"Fuck off."

"That was a compliment."

Silence. Then, "Oh."

Ilya shakes his head. *What am I doing*— "So someone is helping you, or you are too tough?"

"M alone. Mom's comin' . . uh, tomorrow—" he breaks off to cough, and it sounds—it sounds like it's *crackling*, and there's no way that's good. Ilya isn't a doctor, but he can recognize that, at least.

"Are you sitting up?" That's good for congestion, right? And a cough? "Sit up."

"Mmkay," Shane mumbles.

"Good." Ilya listens, as best he can, to Shane's breathing. It isn't labored, just interrupted by a stuffed up nose. "I—do you need medicine?"

"I'm fine."

"You are not. You are sick. Double sick. And alone."

"My mom—"

"Is coming tomorrow, yes, I know. But who will be there tonight?"

Ilya doesn't mean to come off as rude, he's just . . . worried, and *scared*. When his dad caught pneumonia, he was in the hospital for two weeks, on oxygen, and had a rough recovery.

Shane snuffles. “No one,” he whispers. And, *what the fuck*, is he crying?

“Hollander,” Ilya exclaims, in shock. This is—this is too much. He didn’t even know Shane *could* or that *Ilya* would be so affected by it.

“‘M sorry. ‘M sorry, I feel so horrible, my chest—“

“Okay, okay.” Ilya is first off the bus, and instead of going for the hotel, he goes for the convenience store on the corner for medicine and ginger ale.

“Sorry. You don’t wanna hear . . . I’ll just see you in Boston.”

“We had a deal,” Ilya says, distracted by the different bottles of cold medicine. “I will come now.”

“You’ll get sick.”

“I do not get sick. Impossible.”

“I forgot,” Shane says, his voice a little clearer now. “You’re, uh. Uhm. Extraterrestrial.”

Ilya’s English fails, but he’s pretty sure Shane just tried to make a joke. “What is this word?”

“Like, alien?”

“I’m alien?”

“Yeah. ‘Cause you can’t catch human sickness.”

Despite it being freezing outside, and Ilya’s hands full with a load of medicine, he laughs. “Bet you are wishing you were like me, then.”

Ilya hears the smile in Shane’s voice. “Not a chance.”

—

Ilya leaves at five in the morning. He stayed as long as he could, but with Shane in and out of sleep, he couldn’t exactly ask what time Yuna would be here.

They spent the night in bed, movie marathon on low volume. Shane took medicine, kept slumping to lay his head on Ilya’s shoulder, and Ilya had to adjust his pillows again and move him back. How he got through the first two days on his own is a miracle.

He went to the hospital on his own. Got a chest x-ray, bloodwork, tested for the flu, *drove himself*, got told he had *pneumonia* and *bronchitis* and proceeded to—not text his mother that he was sick first, but that he couldn’t play.

Something about that is off to Ilya. Shane's priorities are all mixed up. The only reason he even went was because his team doctor said he couldn't play without going to get further testing. What even *was* that? To not go for his own wellbeing, but for a team that didn't appreciate him half the way he appreciated them.

It pisses Ilya off. So much so that when he's waiting on the curb for his car, he cancels it and heads into a flower shop, and buys the prettiest (in Ilya's opinion) bouquet of flowers he can find. When he grabs a free card off the counter to write on it, he hesitates.

He can't. He can't put his name, or—he can't. *Feel better soon*, he writes. Then, —*your team*. Shane will think the WAGs sent it over or something. Because God knows that useless excuse for a team isn't going to send him anything other than a *Get better . . . so you can start carrying us through games!* shitty text.

Ilya uses the spare key to get inside, and sets the flowers on the counter. Before he goes, he picks up the trash from all the medicines and the soup he'd left on the counter, and throws it away. Even cleans the surface off. He's disappointed in himself in the first place for not doing it before. If Shane had seen it he would've definitely become more stressed out.

Ilya desires to go to his room a last time, to see him sleeping. *He shouldn't*. He hopes that he is sitting up, centers the flowers on the counter, and then goes to his hotel.

—

Shane has never been so sick in his entire life. At some point, Ilya had left in the night, and Shane wonders if it was some fever dream. But he thinks he remembers his head in Ilya's lap, Ilya humming, and then telling Shane to sit back up? He thinks—he *knows* that happened. He can smell Ilya's body wash, fresh after the game. He was here. Too bad Shane can't recall most of it.

He isn't alone for too long. His mom gets to his apartment at eight, and starts talking to him from the kitchen. Shane makes no effort to get up, but listens to her voice as it gets louder.

"Hey," she says, all soft, cupping Shane's cheek in her hand. "I'm here. You okay?"

Shane shakes his head. "Not really."

"Oh," she breathes, and cuddles Shane up into a hug. "I'm sorry. It'll be okay, honey. We'll get you all better."

And Shane is not above crying, not when he feels so terrible. It comes from—not just being sick, but from her saying, *it'll be okay*, because she already knows that Shane has been worrying, as sick as he is.

"I'm so tired," he sobs, his face hot with embarrassment, but his guards are down, he hasn't felt this weak in—*ever*.

“Oh, Shane. It’s okay. I know.”

I know. Everyone knows he’s tired, and no one lets him rest. Not even he does. He’s worked himself right into the ground.

“There’s flowers out there, did you know? Jackie must’ve come by.”

Shane’s voice quivers when he asks, “There are?” Thinking of Ilya, thinking of lovely whispered Russian words in his ear that led him right to sleep.

“I’ll go get them. Maybe they’ll make you feel better, okay?”

“Okay,” Shane agrees.

Maybe it *was* Jackie. Maybe a bunch of people have been over, knocking on the door, maybe they sent cards and Shane will get them by the end of the week.

“Here,” she says when she’s back.

Shane takes them in his hands. They look like they’re from Jackie. Beautiful bright sunflowers, pink peonies, little purple and green ones Shane doesn’t know the names of but are just as nice.

It’s so different from what Ilya usually gets him. *So different.*

But then Shane reads the note.

Feel better soon.

—*your team.*

Shane smooths the pad of his thumb over the scrawled letters. The t’s crossed with one line. The first line of the F extending over the L. *This is Ilya’s handwriting.* Not Jackie’s.

Shane covers his face in his mom’s shirt once again, and sobs. It’s not his team, it’s not his team. It’s just Ilya, it’s always just Ilya that sends him flowers, and he can’t even tell his mom that it was him, that he’s kind, not cruel, that he’s generous, not selfish, that he’s caring, and observant, that he sends Shane flowers under the guise of his team because they have to hide, because it’s what he wants for Shane, a team that *loves him* the way that Ilya . . . the way that Ilya—

“Fuck,” Shane mutters.

June, 2014

Ilya wins the cup, and arrives home to more Metros flowers. He doesn't expect them, sitting on his front porch, but—there they are, unmistakably Shane's typical arrangement he'd send him. Blue cornflowers, daisies, and roses, all in a glass vase, left for Ilya by his closest flower shop, ordered by Shane all the way from Vegas, probably, and before what had happened between them *happened*.

Ilya can see him, sneaking away once more at the party, unable to stop thinking of Ilya's promise of their night together, overwhelmed and wanting to share something with him sooner.

These words are not from Shane's hand, but are from his lips, into a phone, whispering in a vacant hallway before he went back to the party.

Don't get cocky.

See you next season.

—SH

He puts them underneath the glow of the sunlight, in the middle of the kitchen island. Shane would like them there, probably, Ilya bets he grew up with fresh flowers *always* in the kitchen, clipped and preened neatly by his mom, if she was as exact as Shane was.

June, 2015

And when Shane wins the cup, he expects two words on the note. Maybe less. Maybe nothing but a winking face. Shane is comforted by Ilya's humor, because he knows what lies

underneath it, and every joke is a show of vulnerability.

Ilya's praise is different from what anyone's been this week. Shane is glad to be alone to read it, because he is sure he's blushing, imagining Ilya saying this to him the next time they see each other.

You look good on top of the world.

—IR

—

January, 2017

Shane's dad tells him to buy Rose flowers, as a romantic gesture. And, sure, that would be okay if it didn't feel like cheating, and it *isn't*, but Shane is . . .

Shane is standing in the middle of the flower shop, sunglasses and hoodie on, and his eyes keep darting between the lilies and the roses. Both are great. Both are beautiful, loved flowers.

Both make Shane happy. In different ways, but. Happy. Red roses are romantic, and red lilies are romantic. Lilies last longer, but roses are the more popular choice.

Shane likes sunset roses. But he thinks he might love golden-rayed lilies. Which shouldn't be an issue. Except, once on a card that was stuck in the middle of golden-rayed lilies said, *the dots are like your freckles*. And it's what makes him love them. The only thing that makes him like the sunset roses are that the chances of them being correct, of them being liked are high.

There's just no risk. There's just no passion with them, for Shane.

He leaves the flower shop empty-handed.

—

January, 2017

Ilya wakes up to a vase of flowers on his hotel desk, the curtains open to give them some sunlight. This time, there's a sticky note instead of a card. It reads:

Ilya,

I dream of playing on the ice with you all the time. Thank you for being better than I ever imagined.

Don't make that dirty.

—SH

—

April, 2017

Shane wakes up in the hospital, his mind finally clear, and the first thing he sees are golden-rayed lilies. *Ilya, my Ilya*, he thinks, so maybe he's still high, but he was here, and he left a trace. The note reads,

Shane.

For some reason, Shane tears up. He holds the note close to his heart.

—

April, 2017

For Ilya, romantic gestures were never something he gave too much thought about. He's never really had an ongoing thing long enough for that.

But flowers, if he had an opinion at all before Shane and him started their little tradition, were unoriginal. Boring and unoriginal and in all honesty, hard to keep alive and take care of.

It's the last bouquet Ilya will have from Shane until the season starts again. And the rest of them, when they died, he'd spread them in the yard and put the vase on a shelf and the card in his nightstand.

But . . . he kind of wants these to stick around longer than a week. So he does everything he's supposed to, careful not to mess up any pedals, and when he's done and looking at them, he just thinks, *I am a stupid man, and this is a stupid way to spend a free day.*

Ilya, Shane had written along with them, a copy of Ilya's simple *Shane* when he did not know anything else he could say when Shane was in a hospital bed, and Ilya had just witnessed hours ago how it'd happened.

His name was enough. And after so many years, Shane would know it, Ilya was sure. It was a bit like a secret code. To understand him so intimately, Ilya was taken by it, thought if it was the end there on the ice, he'd be grateful for how Shane made it feel like eternity between them, but all he'd be able to think afterwards would just be *Shane*.

And Ilya's in shock, his hand shaking, and Shane was alright, he would come back to him, but he couldn't stop thinking, what if he hadn't? So *Shane*, he wrote, to remind the both of them that Shane was alive, and what they had, too, was still there.

—

July, 2017

A vase of flowers survives their whole two weeks at the cottage, filled with lilies and peonies and dahlias and orchids. Ilya dotes on them every evening, compliments Shane on his picks, and smiles privately to himself while he watches them, when Shane is in the shower or doing yoga in the backyard.

"I wish they did not die," he tells Shane, a week in.

"I wish we had more time here," Shane says.

"Yes. More time with you, more time with the flowers. Always no more time. I'm sick of it."

"I know," Shane whispers, kissing his cheek. "Me, too."

Ilya's holding Shane's hand, and picturing how it will be without him. Darker days, longer nights. And just like their flowers inside, something centered in Ilya's chest will wilt, only to come back with the light of reunion. It's what makes flowers special anyway. Hard truth is that they die, hard truth is that they wouldn't have as much value if they didn't, hard truth is that Ilya surrendered his heart long ago and it was with the first bouquet sent to Shane's house.

So maybe Ilya carries this, then. The worry and the fear. And Shane can shine. For as long as possible. To make him happy has been Ilya's wish for a long, long time. And no one has made that sacrifice for him, but Ilya will. To move closer to him, to change teams, to have as much time as the world will allow.

(And it's a little selfish, too, but Ilya has never denied that he is when it comes to Shane, that he is wishing it was him to score a goal against him instead of someone else, that it was him to hold Shane's hand and get the front cover on a magazine.)

He sees how Shane is special, he sees how a bit of him is like a flower, too, with the speckles on his face and the way he glows in the sun and how gentle yet striking and resilient he is.

If he's learned anything at all about Shane in nearly ten years, it's that he is someone worth taking a risk for.

End Notes

did not know i would spend like 20 mins of my night looking at flowers that were like my dear shane hollander but im not complaining

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