to be known the way you should is to put yourself through hell

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to be known the way you should is to put yourself through hell

by bluerosebouquet

Summary

Shane had been looking at Ilya.

He couldn't stop thinking about it, like a pinball in his head, banging from corner to corner, and he couldn't slow it down, even as he tried to focus on the game still taking place in front of him.

"Rozanov!" he heard his name distantly. He was staring at the place where Shane had been, unconscious on the ice. He saw him when he closed his eyes, his crumpled figure, his stick clattering away from him.

Him looking back at Ilya, not seeing Marly coming.

Time slowing down, Ilya being too slow. He couldn't get to him, couldn't make a noise. He could only watch, watch the collision, watch Shane hit the ice like a ton of bricks.

Or, Shane is looking at Ilya when he gets injured. And all Ilya can do is feel guilty.

Notes

Episode 5 really was the episode of all time huh?

This one is mostly based on the show, since we do get Ilya's POV of a lot of this in the books. I just felt like he looked so sad when he was talking to Shane in the hospital, and wanted to explore that lol

Title comes from this song

See the end of the work for more notes

Shane had been looking at Ilya.

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Watch him not move.

Watch him laid out on a stretcher.

Watch him be taken away.

He had been looking at Ilya. Why hadn't he been looking ahead of him? Why had he been looking at Ilya with that big bright smile on his face?

Why had he been looking at Ilya?

"Rozanov, you're up," he felt pressure on his shoulder, and he moved automatically, swinging his leg over the barrier and skating to center ice. But he felt a million miles away.

Or however many miles away Shane was right now.

He had to be okay, right?

He had to be okay.

Ilya didn't know what he would do with himself if he wasn't. He didn't know how he'd ever be able to face himself in the mirror again if he wasn't okay.

He had been looking at Ilya.

He was facing off with Hayden Pike. They met in the center of the rink, but there was none of the quiet grinning and playful smiles he had shared with Shane earlier. Pike looked at him with murder in his eyes.

"Your buddy is dead," he snarled, his face drained of color, so that he looked ghostly in the bright light of the arena, "Dirty fucking Boston. Fuck Marleau and fuck you, Rozanov."

Ilya said nothing. He was staring over Pike's shoulder.

He could still see the place where Shane had fallen.

He lost the face off, and Boston lost the game.

Afterward, the visiting locker room was particularly subdued. Marly was sitting by his locker on the bench, not seeming to hear the words of consolation of the teammates around him, and Ilya felt like he was glued to the floor, a rock in a stream, barely feeling the movement of the room sinewing past him.

"We'll get 'em next time," Connors slapped him on the back, and looked around at him slowly, taking him in in pieces, like his brain couldn't get the full picture of him all at once.

"Right," he said absently, feeling detached from everything around him.

"You still thinking about Hollander?"

The sound of Shane's name made him blink.

"What?"

"It just seems- Like you took the Hollander hit pretty hard."

"It-" he wanted to deflect, but he was so tired, and he felt so fucking guilty that he wanted to break down and cry in front of everyone, "It- Yeah."

Connors' head tilted to the side, clearly concerned about him. And Ilya didn't know what to say, he didn't have a cover for this, didn't have a lie.

Shane had been looking back at him, away from the puck and the game, eyes on him and him alone. A secret smile and a promise of *later* behind his face shield.

And Marly had hit him.

Because he hadn't seen it coming.

Because he had been looking at Ilya.

"Are you okay?"

He shook his head slightly; he had been listing to the side, threatening to collapse, his eyes unfocused and distant.

"Yeah," he righted himself at once, drawing up, trying to summon the good captain that he was supposed to be after a hard loss, "Yeah. Fine."

Ilya went straight back to his hotel room the moment they were dismissed, and shut himself in the bathroom before Connors had even set down his bag. He pulled out his phone, his hands shaking so badly that he could barely hold it, and managed to get to ESPN after several attempts. Immediately, he was bombarded by headlines on all sides, flashing like neon signs in front of his face:

BREAKING: Metros Captain Shane Hollander Takes Hit from Raiders' Cliff Marleau

SCORES: BOS 2 MTL 5 FINAL

Montreal Metros vs. Boston Raiders: Game Highlights

Was Cliff Marleau's Hit Clean? MLH Rules Expert Weighs In

VIDEO: Rozanov stands stunned after Hollander injury

Ilya Rozanov and Shane Hollander Rivalry: Full Timeline

LIVE UPDATES: Shane Hollander Transported to Hospital After On Ice Injury

He tapped on the last headline, hoping against hope that maybe they would mention which hospital Shane had been taken to. If not, he would just try as many as he could before he had to get on his flight with the rest of the team.

MONTREAL – Metros captain and star center Shane Hollander suffered an on-ice injury during the second period of Friday's 5-2 victory against the Boston Raiders.

Hollander had one goal and one face off in the game. He is currently leading the goal race in the league with 24 goals scored. Boston Raiders' Center Ilya Rozanov is in second with 22.

Metros head coach Andy Davidson spoke about Hollander after the game, "We have no updates right now. But Shane was conscious and talking when he was taken off the ice, which is obviously a relief. I know he'd be proud of how we played after, looking forward to going over there and seeing him. I spoke to his parents and they're already with him."

Hollander was transported to Montreal General Hospital for further evaluation.

This is a developing story.

Montreal General Hospital. Ilya wanted to go now, right this second, walking out of the hotel room without pausing to speak to Connors or anyone else. He wanted to sprint there, feel the burning in his lungs as the cool spring air pushed through them, he wanted to burst through the doors, yell Shane's name, find him, tell him-

He knew he couldn't do that. Shane wouldn't want him to, anyway.

But Ilya was in agony, torn apart by being away from him, not knowing how he was.

Was he thinking about Ilya? Was he angry at him? Did he blame him for what happened the same way that Ilya blamed himself?

Did he miss him?

He gave his head a little shake when this thought floated across his mind. Shane was not his, even if every part of Ilya's cracked and broken heart wanted to believe that he was.

He didn't sleep that night. Every time he tried to close his eyes, tossing and turning in the soft hotel bed as Connors snored blissfully beside him, he saw Shane.

His smile.

His eyes.

His head cracking against the ice.

At three o'clock, he finally gave up, yanking on a pair of sweatpants and a t shirt, and making his way down to the tiny hotel gym. It was empty, as he had expected it to be, and he climbed onto an exercise bike, music loud in his ears.

It was easier to control how he was feeling if his muscles were aching and he was breaking into a sweat. Like the volume turned down on the radio, he was able to compartmentalize how he felt.

He looked at the empty bike directly next to him, thinking about Shane, and the way they had raced each other on exercise bikes in a hotel gym more than eight years ago now.

Ilya had wanted him then, but he had never imagined it would turn into this. This all-consuming thing that made him feel like he was going to die, like he couldn't draw a full breath until they were together.

Ilya broke everything he touched, and Shane was no different.

He should put an end to it, save Shane the heartbreak of being loved by him.

But Ilya was selfish, as his father and brother had always told him, and he couldn't let him go, even when he knew Shane would be better off.

It was nearly dawn by the time Ilya swung his leg off the bike, wiping it down meticulously before going back up to his room and taking a scalding shower, trying to will feeling back into his chest with the burning water. It didn't work, and Ilya called an Uber to Montreal General Hospital as he toweled his hair dry.

It was stupid to go. Reckless. Shane would probably be angry.

But Ilya couldn't…he couldn't stay away.

Selfish, a voice that sounded like his father echoed in his head, and he pressed the heels of his hands to his eyes so hard that little stars popped in front of the blackness.

Montreal was just waking up, the city blinking slowly in the minty glow of dawn, and the streets were nearly deserted. Ilya leaned his head against the glass of the car window, staring out at the people on the street, walking their dogs or going for a morning run.

None of them seemed concerned that Shane Hollander was laid up in a hospital bed right now, all because of Ilya.

He made up his mind during the short drive. He had to stop being weak, he had to break it off. For Shane. He had to do it for Shane.

Even though just thinking about it for too long made him want to disappear into thin air, never to be seen again.

All too soon, the car pulled smoothly up to the front doors of the hospital, and Ilya walked inside, trying to act natural. He wasn't sure if Shane was in the emergency room, so resolved to try the general desk first, even if it was just based on his own deluded hope.

The place was brightly lit, with all the trappings of trying to make a miserable place more welcoming. Bright decorations adorned the front of the desk, where four or five nurses were sitting, clacking away at their computers.

Ilya felt sick.

"Can I help you?" one of the nurses at the desk was looking at him appraisingly. He approached her slowly, trying to clear his head from the image of Shane on the ice that was still stuck there like it had been tattooed on the inside of his eyelids.

"I'm here to see- Hollander. Shane Hollander."

"Name?"

"Ilya Rozanov."

She looked him up and down, her eyes narrowed, and he held his breath.

"Yes, he can take visitors right now. You'll need to wear this," she held out a visitor pass that he pinned to the front of his jacket, "Room 1542, I'll buzz the doors for you."

"Thank you," he hoped she didn't notice the palpable relief in his voice that she hadn't recognized him, and he stepped forward, past the doors that had swung open to admit him.

Ilya hated hospitals. They smelled like antiseptic and dead flowers and filled him with a dread that he couldn't name.

He felt pulled taut, stretched thin as he picked his way down the hall, dodging nurses with clipboards and doctors with stethoscopes around their necks.

Nausea was rising in his throat, as the realization that every step he took was one closer to a life without Shane in it hit him like a steel to the carotid.

It was better this way, he reminded himself, forcing his feet forward, it was better for Shane.

He didn't want to ever be the reason Shane was hurt again. He would rather Shane hate him.

He would understand one day. He would move on, maybe get married quietly after he retired. Maybe he would have a couple of kids. Maybe he would have a dog.

He would forget about Ilya and the pain he had caused him.

And as for Ilya? Well, Ilya would spend every night and every day thinking about him. He would carry this torch for him forever.

But he couldn't be selfish, not like he usually was. This was about Shane. He had to do what was best for Shane.

And what was best for Shane was to cut this off once and for all, to make it so that Shane never looked over his shoulder for Ilya again.

He kept his head low, not wanting to be recognized, but no one seemed to pay him any mind, even as he found room 1542 and knocked gently, slipping inside before he heard an answer.

Immediately upon stepping into the room, Ilya realized that Shane was high.

He was propped up in his hospital bed, with tubes and wires wrapped around his arms, connected to machines. The bruising on his face was already more pronounced than it had been the night before. He was awake, conscious, looking at Ilya.

Just like he had before-

Ilya had intended to stay across the room, a respectable distance that wouldn't be suspicious.

It would be easier for Ilya to leave when he had to.

Because he *had* to.

But Shane was insistent, holding out his hand, asking for Ilya so happily. Ilya couldn't deny him this.

And he couldn't deny himself a light touch of Shane's freckles either. Just to remember how beautiful they were, committing them to memory, something secret that he could hold in his chest later on.

He had never seen him like this, dopily placid and staring at Ilya like he hung the moon. He didn't look away from him when he spoke, but gazed at him intently, like he couldn't get enough.

Ilya felt a pressure in his chest and behind his eyes. He could tell Shane was going to ask him something, something that he couldn't say yes to, something that was going to make leaving him a million times harder.

He had to end it before he asked. He couldn't let him say it, because if the words were out in the open, Ilya didn't think he'd be strong enough to deny himself.

Shane was too quick, speaking over him even as Ilya tried to protest. He was openly asking for something more, inviting Ilya in to his life, to the place he said he loved best.

He wanted to say yes with everything he had.

He knew he couldn't.

But *god*, he wanted to.

Shane was looking at him with wide open eyes, so trusting and happy to see him. He couldn't say no. So he settled on the ever nebulous "maybe," hoping that that would be enough.

He needed to do it now, before he lost his nerve. He took a deep breath, taking in Shane like it was the last time he was ever going to look at him, and opened his mouth-

Just as a nurse walked in.

He stepped back, playing along with her joke about them, even as he backtracked towards the door.

He had missed his chance to end things with him, and he hated how relieved he felt about that.

Ilya continued faking a smile for the nurse, but his eyes were locked on Shane, who was still grinning at him, like nothing could be better than seeing Ilya's face. Like he was going to tell anyone who would listen exactly who Ilya was and who he was to Shane.

Ilya knew he didn't want it to be like this. He didn't want to make them public like this.

Or at all.

Probably ever.

Shane was still staring at him as he made to leave the room, and Ilya felt like he was leaving half of himself behind. He tried to tell him, wordlessly, when the nurse wasn't looking, to keep his mouth shut, not say anything about them to anyone, especially not the nice nurse who was taking his vitals.

But Shane just kept smiling, looking at Ilya so soft and unafraid, and Ilya wanted to live in that look, away from the rest of the world with Shane.

He was a fucking coward.

He smoked a cigarette outside the hospital while he waited for his Uber back to the hotel, the buzz of the nicotine filling up his lungs, trying not to think about what he hadn't been able to do.

He should have just done it, ripped the band aid off.

Shane deserved to live a life that was free of him.

"Fuck," he swore, stubbing out his cigarette as his car pulled up.

On the drive back, he resolved to tell Shane the next time he spoke to him. Maybe when he was recovering.

It would be easier if they did it over the phone, anyway.

Maybe Ilya would be strong enough to follow through with it that way.

Most of the team was already in the hotel lobby when he arrived. Several of them looked at him curiously, and he could feel eyes following him as he went upstairs to collect his bag.

He was unsteady on his feet, so tired that he almost felt drunk, and he leaned against the cold metal of the elevator, rubbing his eyes vigorously with his knuckles.

He wanted to cry, he could feel it at the corners of his eyes.

Instead, he drew in a deep breath, and grabbed his bag from the hotel room, before hurrying back down to the rest of the team.

Somehow, the news of his visit to Shane had already spread, and Marly cornered him when they got to the airport,

“You went and saw Hollander?” he looked ragged, like he hadn’t slept at all the night before, just like Ilya, “Is he- How is he?”

“Drugged out of his mind,” Ilya said. He didn’t blame Marly, not nearly the way he blamed himself.

If Shane hadn’t been looking at him-

“But he’s- He’s okay?”

“He will be fine, I think.”

“Okay,” he sagged in relief, “I just- I didn’t mean to-”

“He knows that,” he clapped him on the shoulder, trying to be the bracing captain he knew he should be. But he didn’t feel like a leader, he just felt hollow and empty instead, a cloth wrung dry, nothing of note left, “Is okay. He’s fine.”

Marly nodded, more to himself than to Ilya, and made his way onto the team plane, with Ilya trailing behind him.

They flew straight to Dallas, and he tried to sleep. But even though his eyes burned, every time he dozed off his mind wandered back to Shane’s injury. Or, even worse, that wide happy smile on his face that morning, even as Ilya tried to work up the courage to break both of their hearts.

He was always going to hurt Shane either way, he had just never thought it would turn into this.

That Ilya would fall in love with him.

It had always been so easy for him to not get attached, to hook up casually and move on to the next when the situation warranted before he met Shane. He had a roster of people for years, picking and choosing who and what he wanted on any given night.

That was what he told himself it was with Shane at first, that he was just being persistent because he liked the chase, liked the danger of it all. But when Shane had begun burrowing his way into Ilya's heart, he found that he couldn't manage to let him go. He had told himself to end it a thousand times, but every time they were set to play one another, Ilya was reaching out or responding to Shane's text.

And now here he was, so in love with him it felt like the universe began and ended with Shane Hollander, and too afraid that he would never feel something like this again to do what he knew he had to do.

As the days turned into weeks, Ilya did not hear from Shane. Not that he had really expected to, according to ESPN (which Ilya scoured every day), he was resting at home and recovering from his concussion.

But Ilya had thought, maybe-

It didn't matter.

His game was suffering, and Boston's championship hopes were hanging by a thread, and Ilya felt like he was going to lose it in any given second.

He missed Shane the way he thought you would a missing limb; an ache that he couldn't shake, something bone deep.

Maybe it was better this way, he reasoned with himself, even as he watched the blank screen of his phone when he laid in bed at night; they didn't have to have a big argument, and he didn't have to try to stop Shane fighting for him.

He seemed to be doing that on his own.

Ilya was playing distracted, which was probably why he had taken a shot directly to the ribs in their last game.

He had lied to the team doctor, who his coach had forced him to see, told him it was fine when he pressed on the area, and had a good enough poker face to make it believable.

His team needed him. They couldn't win without him.

But it was looking like they couldn't win with him either.

They were down 5-2 at the start of the third period, and Ilya tried to rile the bench into action, but they all stared back at him almost blankly. He knew what that meant, and it was never a good sign.

Ten minutes later, Ilya's season ended with a whimper, not with a bang, and he skated off the ice for the last time, just wanting to go the fuck home and lay in bed sulking for the rest of

the night.

He didn't even check his phone until he had keyed the code into his house and let himself in.

He was sore, tired, and angry at himself. It had been one of his worst playoff performances in his entire career, and his ribs didn't feel like a good enough excuse for them to be knocked out in the second round.

He set down his backpack against the kitchen island and leaned against it, eyes closed and head tilted up.

His phone buzzed in his hand, and he looked around, sucking in a breath as pain zinged up his side.

Jane: *How are your ribs?*

"What the fuck," he muttered, pacing up and down the kitchen. No one knew about his ribs, how had Hollander-

His hands shook as he typed back:

Killing me. How's your head?

And so it started up again. Shane would text him during every playoff game, as Ilya reclined on his couch, trying to get comfortable, and he would respond immediately.

It was mostly about hockey, only a little flirty, and Ilya deluded himself in these moments into thinking that maybe it would be fine if they could just be friends.

But then he would have a nightmare about Shane's injury, and he would begin the cycle again, convincing himself to stop responding to him the next time he texted.

Only to text back within thirty seconds when his phone buzzed.

On the day of the first game of the championship series between San Francisco and New York, Ilya was talking idly to Svetlana in the living room, who was back from Russia to make good on their yearly tradition to watch the series together if Ilya wasn't playing in it.

His phone buzzed beside him, and he flipped it over, only half paying attention to the notification on the screen,

Can I call you?

It was like everything in the world stilled, and Ilya's head was filled with an incomprehensible buzzing.

He shouldn't.

He really really shouldn't.

Yeah.

He waited with baited breath, until *Jane* was popping up on the screen.

Ilya answered immediately, not even pretending to be nonchalant. He was desperate to hear Shane's voice, even just one more time.

"Hi," Shane sounded nervous, and Ilya felt himself relaxing by degrees, his shoulders slumping as he took in Shane's voice. He stood up from the couch, leaving Svetlana midsentence, which he knew he would pay for later, and stepped out onto the patio, soaking in the rays of the sun on his face.

"Hi Hollander," his mouth curved up into a smile just saying his name, "How's recovery?"

"I'm so fucking bored," Shane complained at once, and Ilya imagined that scrunched expression he would get on his face, "I wish I was playing."

"Me too," Ilya couldn't help but sound a little bitter, the sting of his own loss still too fresh.

"Sorry," Shane murmured, "I shouldn't-"

"Is okay, at least I got to play in the playoffs."

"Ouch," Shane laughed, then paused before he spoke again, and his voice was softer, "How are your ribs doing?"

Ilya's heart constricted at the tone of his voice.

"Is nothing."

"It didn't look like nothing a few weeks ago."

"I don't even know how you noticed anything-"

"So there *was* something wrong with them!"

Ilya huffed loudly, but he was grinning. It felt so *good* to talk to Shane.

"Like I said, is nothing. I played, didn't I?"

"You would play even if your arm got chopped off."

"I would still score even with one arm, so yes."

Shane laughed, and the sound was so pretty that Ilya felt his throat tighten with an emotion that he couldn't define.

"What are you doing this summer?" Shane asked, and he sounded nervous again, and Ilya knew immediately what was coming.

“Not sure,” he said evasively. He didn’t want to do this now. Not now, not yet. He cast around, eager to change the subject, “Are you alone?”

“Yeah, why?”

“Are you wearing your glasses?” Ilya asked, making his voice low and seductive in just the way he knew drive Shane crazy.

He heard him suck in a breath.

“I’m at my parents’ house!” he hissed, and Ilya laughed again, ignoring the slight ache in his ribs.

“So?”

“So I can’t do- That right now.”

“Do what?”

“Fuck off!”

“Alright, whatever you say.”

They lapsed into a comfortable silence, and Ilya was content just to listen to the faint rustling on the other end of the phone and the steady sounds of Shane breathing.

“Do you think the Admirals could win it this year?” Shane asked, and Ilya nearly rolled his eyes. He didn’t want to talk about hockey, he wanted to talk about Shane and how Shane was and if he was comfortable and see him in his sexy glasses.

“I guess so, closest they’ve been since 2012.”

“Hunter’s a good guy, I’d be happy for him.”

“Even after that fight you got into with him?”

Shane made a funny little noise, and Ilya knew he was blushing. He closed his eyes, smiling up at the sky, picturing him.

What was he wearing, he wondered. Was he sitting on his parents’ couch? Was he in his childhood bedroom? Was the tv on? Was he talking to him with headphones in? Was he as heartbreakingly in love with Ilya as Ilya was with him?

“That was years ago, why do you even remember that?”

Ilya remembered everything about Shane.

“It was everywhere for like a month,” he said, lacing his tone with an impatience that he did not feel, “Plus, you never get in fights. Was hot.”

Shane spluttered in a very endearing way.

“It wasn’t hot!”

“Yes it was. Objectively it was very hot.”

“You only think that because-” he seemed to catch himself, and changed the subject, “Anyway, Hunter’s a good guy, I don’t hold grudges.”

“*You* don’t hold grudges?” Ilya asked, laughing, feeling lighter than he had in weeks. Probably since Shane’s injury. “You held a grudge on me for six months after Sochi.”

“That was different.”

“How is it different?”

Shane paused before he answered, and Ilya thought for a moment that he had won. But then,

“Because you’re an asshole.”

It was so unexpected that he snorted an undignified laugh.

“You do like that, though, don’t you?”

They spoke for a little while longer, and Ilya clung to each second, his resolve crumbling like chalk between his fingers. How could he possibly ruin this? When Shane was so happy and laughing so easily at his bad jokes? How could he say it now?

“Well, talk to you later,” Shane’s voice trailed off, and he sounded a little sad. Ilya wished he could be there, gather him in his arms and hold him and kiss him and scratch his scalp in that way that made him dissolve into a boneless puddle on Ilya’s lap, “Enjoy your summer.”

“Yeah,” he ignored the pit that was growing in his stomach, “Bye Hollander.”

The silence swelled, bubbling up between them, and Ilya couldn’t take it, he couldn’t leave it like this. fuck it, he wanted to be selfish again if Shane would let him,

“I miss you.”

Ilya blinked.

Shane had said the same thing at the exact same time.

An incredulous laugh bubbled out of Ilya’s mouth, which Shane also mirrored, until they were laughing so hard that tears were running down Ilya’s face, and he was bent double on his patio, clutching his ribs, which felt like they were about to poke through his skin.

Finally, gasping for breath, he righted himself, and he craved Shane like he was a cigarette.

“I have to go,” Shane said, and he could hear the regret there, “But- Text me?”

“Yeah,” Ilya agreed easily, still breathless with his own laughter, “I will.”

There was silence again, but it was less palpable, something easier. It was just them enjoying one another's company while they had it, for however long that was.

"Okay," Shane sighed, "Okay well- Yeah. I'll talk to you later."

"Bye Shane," Ilya felt like there was nothing sweeter in the world than the feeling of his first name on his tongue.

"Bye Ilya," he could hear the smile in his voice, and Ilya held his phone to his ear long after the tone had played, indicating that Shane had hung up.

He let his hand drop, looking out into the trees around his house, breathing in their smell and listening to the soft noise of the breeze through the leaves. And even though he had, once again, failed to do what he kept telling himself he had to do, he couldn't wipe the smile off his face.

Fuck, he loved him. He loved him so much he thought he was going to be consumed by it completely. And what a way to go, he wouldn't mind that at all.

He would do it next time, he promised himself, rubbing his hands down the goosebumps that had erupted up his arms during his conversation with Shane. Next time, he would end things between them.

Or kiss him, whichever felt right at that particular moment in time.

Ilya smiled to himself again as he went back into the house, ready to be told off by Svetlana.

Who the fuck was he kidding? He was definitely going to kiss him.

End Notes

Hope you enjoyed! Thank you for reading! <3

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!