

Tidal Wave

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by [abeachonsaturn](#)

Summary

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"No?" Ilya mumbled against Shane's skin.

"Not good," Shane said petulantly.

Ilya pulled his face away from Shane's shoulders and opened his eyes, though he couldn't make out much. Some horrible realization was building in his chest, and he wasn't sure he wanted to see it clearly. Still, he asked, "You're not good?"

Shane sighed like he was in pain. "Not good enough."

Or

Ilya reminds Shane how good he is.

Playing with Shane was electric.

Ilya had gotten a taste for it during their All-Stars game in Florida, when they'd finally been put on the same team for the first time in their competitive careers, but that was nothing compared to playing for the Ottawa Centaurs together. Ilya was the captain, but sometimes it felt like they shared the position. Their other teammates certainly treated Shane with enough reverence that he may as well have been their co-captain.

"Assistant captain at best," said Ilya when he and Shane talked about it.

Shane threw his head back in laughter in that way that showed off the long expanse of his neck. Ilya wanted to bite him.

"Fuck you," said Shane through another laugh.

Ilya grinned, all teeth like a shark, and gave into his base desires to sink his teeth into Shane's skin, just hard enough to make him yelp.

"I don't really think of myself like that, you know that, right?" Shane asked him sometime later, when they were naked and sweaty, and Ilya was already thinking about how much they needed to change their sheets.

"Like what?" Ilya asked distantly, his thoughts were still sluggish from sex.

"Like a co-captain or an assistant captain or whatever. We all think of you as the captain." Shane pulled him close. "Me included."

Ilya's thoughts cleared just enough for him to tease. "Is lie. Otherwise, you would call me captain in bed."

Shane's cheeks turned red, his whole face turned red, all the way down his neck. He scrunched up his face like a kitten. "Gross," laughed Shane. "I don't want to think about you like that when I'm on the ice."

"Gross?" gasped Ilya, offended.

Shane laughed again, this time louder than before.

See? Electric. Ilya had never felt anything like it.

They played together and practiced together—except when Coach Wiebe separated them because they were being annoying—and went home together every night. They didn't win all their games, which Shane said he expected, but Ilya found annoying, but they won most of them, and every time Ilya was off the ice, he would have to fight the urge to pin Shane down in the showers and fuck him.

For the first time, Ilya's life was *full*. He played for Ottawa with his husband and went home to his husband's family. He spent time with Yuna and David and let himself pretend that they

were his parents too. They certainly liked to refer to themselves as such, which Ilya loved and also found unnerving.

He'd never realized how scary it was to have something to lose.

Things went from the empty to the grey of winter to the bright, stinging heat of summer after Shane joined his team, after they got married, after they moved in together and didn't have to sleep in separate beds. Every day, even in the frigid Canadian cold that came late in the year, felt like that first summer at the cottage to Ilya.

But it wasn't all sunshine, as much as Ilya had hoped it would be.

It was pretty close, almost perfect, but there was something that Ilya couldn't ignore.

"Fuck Montreal," Tanner said, a sneer in his words. They trashed Montreal more than they did any other team, which was to be expected from Ottawa, but had only gotten worse following Shane's leaving the team.

"They're not all bad," Shane said with a sigh, needlessly diplomatic.

"Oh?" Tanner asked with a raised eyebrow and a smirk. "Should we let them win then?"

Shane shook his head. He looked like he was smiling indulgently, but Ilya didn't miss the way the muscles in his neck strained slightly. He hadn't slept much leading up to this game, and Ilya could see the dark circles under Shane's dark freckles. He didn't like them.

"Fuck no," Shane said with a soft laugh.

They won their game against Montreal, unsurprisingly. They were a better team. Shane had carried Montreal for years, and they were finally learning what it meant to be without their star player.

Especially considering that Hayden was across the ice looking at Shane like a kicked puppy.

Ilya left the rink with vindication clinging to his teeth like blood. He slapped Bood on the back roughly, and the two of them grinned at each other. The other players were congratulating Shane, who was smiling politely at each of them. Not one of the smiles touched his eyes, and something unnerved grew in Ilya's stomach.

"Going out tonight?" Luca asked with that chipper grin that made every like him.

"Sure," Shane agreed first, which was more worrying than the lack of sleep.

Ilya's eyebrows furrowed, but when Luca turned to look at him, he nodded enthusiastically. "You heard him," Ilya said with the brightest grin he could manage.

The bar they went to felt more like a club for how packed it was, and despite Ilya's latent desires to be out among people, loud music blasting in his ears as he swallowed down a few shots of Vodka, he'd never wanted to head home more. He nearly told Shane as much, nearly pulled him aside, and pressed his lips to Shane's collarbone to get what he wanted.

He managed to stop himself. Sure, the rest of the team might know they were married, but he did *try* to keep his hands to himself. For Shane's sake, of course.

Besides, Shane was already halfway across the room, squeezing between two burly men so he could get to the bar, and three other players circled around him. He'd played well tonight, but Ilya knew he'd been nervous. There'd been a few passes he'd missed, a few goals that didn't go the way he was edging them to. He was always an adept player, better than almost everyone in the League (second to Ilya, of course), but tonight he'd been shakier than usual.

Ilya wondered if anyone else noticed.

They'd still won, and Shane had scored twice. Maybe that was enough to fool the rest of them.

Ilya never missed the details, though. He'd spent so long starved for details about Shane Hollander that he'd learned to pick up on every single one.

Like now, when Shane was bent over the bar ordering Tequila shots, which he never drank except when he was sad.

"Fuck," Ilya hissed, hyper aware of the fact that he couldn't do a damn thing about it here. He couldn't drag Shane home, not like he wanted to. He'd just have to wait it out.

By the time they got home that night, Shane was pleasantly drunk. The kind of drunk where everything was fuzzy, and his thoughts were quiet. His thoughts were so rarely quiet. Always exacting, always repetitive, again and again and again.

Now they were flowing like the liquor from every glass he'd downed that night. A few too many, he knew, because the backseat of the Uber was spinning, and when he tried to get out of the car at his house, he stumbled so badly that he nearly face-planted into the grass. Ilya's strong hands caught him.

"Are you trying to take advantage of me?" Shane asked—slurred, more accurately. Ilya didn't laugh, but Shane hardly noticed.

"Let's go," Ilya said gruffly and dragged Shane into the house.

Shane's vision blurred as Ilya undressed him. He giggled when he realized he was naked and then pouted when Ilya forced a loose shirt over his head and a pair of pajama pants onto his legs.

"No, I want to sleep naked," Shane said and tried to waggle his eyebrows at his husband. Ilya gave him a grim look.

"You will sleep like this," Ilya instructed.

"Yes, sir," Shane said and fell back into the pillows.

Despite his heavy drinking, Shane wasn't hungover the next morning. He was lucky like that. Shane said it was because he ate 'right' the rest of the time, but Ilya thought he just had it easier than most. Regardless, he was in top shape by the time they went to practice, and by the time they went home that night, he seemed back to normal.

Ilya had been watching him closely all day, expecting to see one of the cracks he'd seen the night before, but Shane seemed like his usual self. It was a relief, and oddly, a disappointment. He didn't feel like he could ask about it unless he had a foothold to use, and if Shane was acting normally, then how could Ilya help at all?

They had an early flight to San Francisco the next morning, which meant they were in bed by 9 pm, far too early in Ilya's opinion, since he knew neither of them would be tired enough to sleep yet, but Shane always insisted.

Ilya, being the man that he was, took advantage of the situation. He fingered open his husband with slow, languid strokes until Shane was begging for it and then let Shane ride him until he was crying out, his head tipped back as he came between them.

"I needed that," Shane panted when they were done, Ilya cleaning them both with a wet washcloth.

"I always know what you need," Ilya replied, his accent heavier than usual as sleep started to tug at his eyes.

Shane smiled fondly at him, his eyes barely open a sliver. He looked exhausted and so, so handsome. He opened his mouth to say something, but a yawn took its place, and before Ilya realized it, they were both slipping off to sleep.

He wasn't sure what woke him sometime later, but it was dark in their bedroom, the sky still pitch black outside, and the flashing clock on Shane's bedside table read 2:28. Ilya lifted his heavy head and looked around the room, trying to remember what he was dreaming about. He only ever woke in the middle of the night if he was having a nightmare.

Nothing came to mind, and despite his confusion, he started drifting again. A moment later, Shane shifted next to him.

He was curled away from Ilya, his arms tucked under his pillow as he moved restlessly. Ilya watched him silently, waiting for something—anything to happen.

"Good," Shane murmured. A soft smile crossed Ilya's face. Shane didn't talk in his sleep very often, but once in a while...

Ilya moved forward and wrapped an arm around Shane's strong midsection, placing a kiss on the back of his neck.

"Good?" he muttered back, the smile evident in his voice.

Shane nodded slowly, his hair fanning out on the pillow as he did so. "M good."

Ilya chuckled, closing his eyes and breathing a heavy sigh. "Yeah, you're good."

Shane huffed, his shoulders moving slightly like he was trying to stress, and then he said, "No," as clearly as if he were awake.

Ilya didn't respond this time. Shane would only ever say a few things in his sleep before falling back asleep, and Ilya desperately wanted a few more hours of rest before they had to head to the airport.

"No," Shane said again, a minute or so later.

"No?" Ilya mumbled against Shane's skin.

"Not good," Shane said petulantly.

Ilya pulled his face away from Shane's shoulders and opened his eyes, though he couldn't make out much. Some horrible realization was building in his chest, and he wasn't sure he wanted to see it clearly. Still, he asked, "You're not good?"

Shane sighed like he was in pain. "Not good enough."

Dread burrowed into Ilya's ribcage the next day when he woke up, and the bed was empty. They had to leave for the airport in less than an hour, but Shane still forced himself to get up and work out before they had to fly for hours. It was the responsible thing to do, Ilya tried to remind himself, and Shane *loved* being responsible.

But it didn't click for him, not in the way all the other truths about Shane did.

Something was wrong with Shane, with *his* Shane, and all Ilya could think was that the words 'Not good enough' should have never left Shane's lips.

They landed in San Francisco with just enough time to drop off their bags at the hotel and head to the stadium. The game was a shit show, but they managed to win by a slim margin. When they got back, Shane kissed Ilya tenderly and then went to sleep, mumbling about getting up early to head to the airport. He was gone again in the morning, working out in the hotel gym.

Days passed like that, longer than Ilya wanted, but he couldn't convince Shane to slow down. He kept working himself to the bone, pushing harder at practice and getting fiercer at games. Ilya wanted to fix it, but he didn't know how.

The night they lost to Boston, it all came crashing down. Ilya had to stick around the locker room talking to the other teammates, but Shane showered quickly and headed to Ilya's car. He was already sitting in the passenger seat when Ilya came outside.

Shane didn't speak the entire way back to their home, his lips tucked between his teeth like he was a child holding in a bad word. When they pulled into the driveway, Shane went to open the door without saying anything, but Ilya quickly locked it.

Shane glanced at him, needlessly irritated. It was dark, only the faint lights from the front porch illuminating them, but Ilya swore the light was catching the unshed tears forming in

Shane's eyes every couple of seconds, and that *just wouldn't do*.

"Tell me problem," Ilya said angrily, then shook his head furiously. "Tell me your problem."

Shane's face did something very odd. "It was just one game," Shane said softly.

It wasn't what Ilya was talking about—some stupid game—but the fact that even with that, Shane didn't sound nearly as defensive as he should have made Ilya furious.

"Fuck the game," Ilya said through gritted teeth.

Shane scoffed. "Then what?"

Ilya felt like he was cracking open, like he was watching another person in his life succumb to some torturous self-punishment that he couldn't stop. Frustration made his fingers buzz, and he had to grip the steering wheel to keep his head on straight.

"Let's go inside," Ilya grumbled, unlocking the doors and heading straight for the house.

"No, hey, come back," Shane yelled as he followed him inside. Once the door was shut behind them both and Ilya had started flipping on the lights, Shane said, "You think I fucked up the game?"

Ilya spun around. "Don't," he said warningly. "Do not put sayings in my mouth."

"Then what is it?"

"I heard you," Ilya said, then gripped tightly at his hair. English slipped away from him when he was this anxious, and Shane, despite the spiraling self-hatred in his head, seemed to realize that. Shane's face softened, and he stepped forward like a lost baby duckling, looking tender and confused.

"You heard me when?" Shane asked softly.

Ilya sighed and held out his hand, which Shane quickly took. Ilya pulled him in close.

"I heard what you said in your sleep," Ilya said carefully, plucking each word from his thoughts intentionally.

Shane laughed. "What?" he asked incredulously.

Ilya smiled despite himself, then said, "You said you're not good enough."

"In my sleep?" Shane asked.

Ilya nodded.

Shane waited a moment, then said, "Oh, okay." He coughed. "Sorry, I'm confused."

"You think you're not good enough."

Shane looked stricken, just for a second, for barely a blink of an eye, but Ilya caught it. Shane opened his mouth to deny it, Ilya could already tell it was coming, so Ilya kissed him quickly, silencing the unspoken words.

"Come to bed," Ilya said, a request phrased like a demand.

"Okay," Shane said gently.

Ilya led them to the bedroom and, with soft worshiping hands, undressed Shane. He pulled his own clothes off with far less care, and when they were both naked, pulled Shane into him so they were skin to skin, Shane's warm lips on his. Kissing Shane used to make his heart pound; it was like breaking the rules. Now it felt like coming home.

He needed it tonight, especially.

"Lie down," said Ilya.

"Bossy," Shane said with a grin, lowering himself onto the bed and lying back against the pillows.

He was already hard between his slightly spread legs, his abs twitching with each anticipatory breath. Shane looked hungry and nervous at the same time, he looked like he didn't know what to expect.

Ilya grabbed him by the ankle and pulled his legs apart, watching as Shane's breath caught in his throat. Ilya knelt between them and crawled up the bed, placing kisses along Shane's thighs until he could lavish his tongue against Shane's balls. They were pulled up tight against his body like he was going to come any second now.

Shane gasped. "Yes," he hissed.

Ilya dragged one hand gently up the bottom of Shane's cock, enjoying the way Shane's thigh muscles tensed and released with pleasure.

"Tell me why you think that," Ilya pleaded.

Shane gasped again, his eyes hazy until Ilya removed his hand, then his eyebrows furrowed, and he said, "Think what?"

"Why do you think you're not good enough?"

"I—"

Shane's eyes were filled with uncertainty. He didn't know, maybe not consciously, but he was also making an effort not to lie to Ilya. Ilya could appreciate a good boy trying his best. He licked a stripe up Shane's cock and then sucked hard on the head, hard enough that Shane shouted in surprise.

Ilya pulled off a second later, using his hand again, just enough to keep Shane on edge.

"Tell me, please," Ilya said, his voice deep in his throat.

Shane's mouth hung open, but his eyes were already clouding as they did sometimes when Ilya was especially controlling. Shane fell deeper into his own head as Ilya worked him gently, and finally, *finally*, he answered.

"They didn't want me on the team anymore," Shane said, his voice already taking on that garbled quality. "If I were better, they would have wanted me."

"Montreal?" Ilya asked, though he already knew.

Shane pursed his lips, his eyes watering, and nodded.

Ilya hummed. So brave, he thought, Shane telling him that. He sucked him down again, swallowing him into his throat quickly enough that Shane's hips flew off the bed. Ilya pressed them down, pinned him to the mattress, and hollowed his cheeks.

"Oh, fuck, fuck, Ilya," Shane babbled. He sounded so lost. So soft. *So needy*.

Ilya pulled off the moment he noticed Shane's knees bending up, an obvious sign that he was about to come.

"That's not true," Ilya told him.

Shane shook his head, trying to clear it. He was too far down to do anything of the sort.

Ilya wrapped his hand tightly around Shane's cock and started jerking him harshly. "You were too good for them," Ilya said. "Best player on the team."

Mentally, as he watched Shane tip over the edge, his eyes locked on Ilya's face as Ilya spoke, Ilya started formulating a plan to take specific and cruel revenge on every member of the Montreal Metros that had made Shane feel worthless.

"You carried that team," Ilya said.

The tears in Shane's eyes had begun to spill over, especially now that Ilya was working Shane's spent cock. He was fighting the overstimulation that was wracking his body, but Ilya was far from done with him.

He crawled up the rest of his body, littering kisses along his hips, abs, chest, and neck until he could kiss him on the lips. He felt like he was devouring him, but Shane was hurting, and Ilya wanted to swallow it whole so it couldn't hurt him anymore.

"You are good, aren't you?" Ilya asked. "You are the best."

Shane was too far gone to catch the lack of a qualifier with that statement. Not that it mattered. Ilya would have said it anyway.

"Turn over."

Despite his shaking limbs, Shane did just that, turning on his stomach and pressing up onto all fours so he could present his ass for Ilya. Ilya groaned and reached into the bedside table to grab the lube. Shane was beyond words as Ilya worked him open, gasps and groans and whines spilling out of his plump lips.

"I'm going to fuck you now," Ilya said, lining himself up. Shane nodded fiercely, desperate now. "But first, tell me how good you are."

Shane made a noise like he was in pain and tried to push back onto Ilya's cock. Ilya held him still.

"No," Ilya said. Shane froze. He bent over Shane's back and kissed his ear lightly. "Tell me you're good."

Shane mumbled something between barely opened lips.

"Hm?" Ilya asked, pressing the head of his cock. Shane's eyes rolled back in his head, but Ilya knew it wasn't enough. "Tell me."

"I'm good," Shane said finally, as if he was admitting defeat. As if he wasn't perfect.

"Again."

"I'm good," Shane said obediently.

Ilya pushed in a little farther. "Again."

"I'm good," Shane said, louder this time. "Ilya, please."

"You are better than all of them," Ilya reminded him, and then bottomed out with a quick snap of his lips. Shane shouted, shivering as he took it perfectly. "Good boy."

"I'm good," Shane said again, though Ilya hadn't asked him to.

"You are," Ilya agreed.

"I'm the best."

"You are."

Ilya was strung tight, had been for what seemed like hours, so it didn't take him long to finish, thrusting deep enough in Shane that he felt like they would never be separated. Shane was near tears again, but Ilya was there, whispering in his ear, reminding him of who he was.

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