**i'm out of my head**

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# i'm out of my head

by princebutt

Summary

When Ilya had asked about making the reservation, Shane had insisted it was fine, because why wouldn't it be? They've been together for years, and now Shane can finally hold Ilya's hand in public. He doesn't have to think of some convoluted excuse if they get caught together, because the world knows now. They don't have to keep lying and sneaking around. No more late night rendezvous, no more deleting selfies from their text threads, no more acting like Ilya's just a friend. They can lay it all on the line now. They can be themselves, out and proud and…

And that's a lot. And Shane feels guilty about feeling that way. They've waited for this moment, planned for it, and now he's going against all the habits he's built, he's ruffling the feathers of his life, going against the grain so to speak. He shouldn't think anything of it – he's sure Ilya doesn't. But his brain won't stop working overtime.

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OR, Shane and Ilya go out publicly for the first time since being outed. Shane has a hard time with it.

Notes

Hello my loves! This guy is short and sweet, but I hope you enjoy it! Thank you forever and always to Anna for betaing, you are the best of my days.

See the end of the work for more notes

It's *just* dinner.

Shane takes a deep breath as he reminds himself that it's *only* dinner. It's dinner out at a nice restaurant in Ottawa with his *fiance*, to celebrate the end of the season, to… to celebrate them. For once.

Together.

In public.

When Ilya had asked about making the reservation, Shane had insisted it was fine, because why *wouldn't* it be? They've been together for years, and now Shane can finally hold Ilya's hand in public. He doesn't have to think of some convoluted excuse if they get caught together, because the world knows now. They don't have to keep lying and sneaking around. No more late night rendezvous, no more deleting selfies from their text threads, no more acting like Ilya's *just* a friend. They can lay it all on the line now. They can be themselves, out and proud and…

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The Centaurs lost to the Admirals in the playoffs, but they fought a good fight. Ilya had come home to find Shane already in his house, in his *bed*, waiting to comfort him. He'd held Ilya all night long, and they'd slept so soundly knowing the season is over and they can just be for the summer.

And now they're going to go to dinner. A perfectly normal dinner, the first of many average, not exciting, boring dinners they will have.

So why is Shane's heart beating out of his chest? Why is he fighting off all of the symptoms he feels before a big game? It isn't difficult – but why does his brain seem to think it is?

"Ready, Shane?" Ilya calls from the kitchen. Shane is still in the bedroom, looking at his reflection in the mirror, completely dissociating. He's got on black slacks and a boxy but cozy cable knit sweater over a collared shirt, comfy but still a little bit more than a casual look. He'd watched Ilya put on his jeans and a button down with a blazer over, and of course Ilya had looked devastatingly handsome in his casual date night attire. They'd gotten ready together, but then Shane had insisted he needed a minute, and now he's here, staring at himself in the mirror, panicking slightly, trying to catch his breath and convince himself there's nothing to worry about. It's all going to be ok.

And he knows that, logically. But it's not that easy. His mind has always been one to run away on him, following the threads of anxiety until he's picked all the knots free. Today is no exception; today, his brain is short circuiting over *dinner*.

And maybe it's because they didn't get to do this on their own time. Maybe it's because they were forced out, and it wasn't their choice, and now he has to live with the consequences of someone else's actions. Not that he blames Hayden – it could have happened plenty of other ways. It just feels jarring, how far they diverged from Shane's initial plan to come out.

Taking a deep breath, Shane fixes a few strands of his hair and heads out of the bedroom and downstairs. Ilya is waiting for him by the garage door, Shane's wool coat in hand, and he holds it out, helping Shane into the jacket then pressing the softest of kisses to Shane's temple. It's April, and the chill is still present in Ottawa. The first signs of spring are blooming, but it's still too cold to go out without their coats. Ilya shrugs his on, then opens the garage door for Shane, who steps through and makes his way over to the passenger side of Ilya's SUV. Ilya joins him and starts the car, then leans over to turn Shane's seat heater on and press a tender kiss to Shane's lips.

"Are you ok, moya lyubov?" Ilya's voice is gentle, and his fingers skim over Shane's cheekbone, then cup his cheek as their eyes meet. "You are quiet."

Worrying his lip between his teeth, Shane sighs and leans into the warmth of Ilya's palm pressed to his skin. It's grounding, and he feels the anxiety that had a vice grip on his chest start to loosen. He has nothing to worry about. Ilya loves him. They're going to get married this summer, and spend the rest of their lives together. This is just the first step.

"I'm ok," Shane promises, voice soft as he turns to kiss Ilya's palm to reassure him. "I'm just in my own head, is all," he offers with a sheepish grin.

With his pointer finger, Ilya taps Shane's temple. "Get out of there for tonight. We are going to have dinner and it will be fun. Then maybe drinks. Like a normal couple does." Ilya's grin is brilliant, and Shane melts a little, being the target of its shine. He feels buoyed by love, and it makes the panic melt away.

As Ilya backs the car out of the garage, Shane intertwines their fingers on the console. It's a normal dinner. It's going to be *great*. He's not going to panic anymore.

And he's fine, for the drive. He doesn't think about anything but the feeling of Ilya's fingers twined through his, the warmth that radiates between them, the excitement that buzzes off of Ilya like electricity. He's practically bouncing in his seat with it, and Shane can't help but chuckle as Ilya sings along to some upbeat pop song on the radio. He watches as the familiar city zooms past them, lets himself become enamoured by the lights, gets swept up in the moment and forgets his worries with Ilya beside him and the city in front of him.

They arrive at the restaurant, an upscale steakhouse that opened only a few months ago, and Ilya pulls around to the valet line. Shane watches as people step into the building and out of it, takes in all of the people there who will see them together and he just… flatlines. The panic floods back like a dam breaking, and he winces as the iron vice claps back around his chest. Taking in a gasping breath, Shane braces himself against the dashboard and lets his head fall, chin to chest, eyes screwing shut. It shouldn't be a big deal. It should be nothing. It should be an easy dinner with his fiance, the man he loves, the man he's going to marry.

And it isn't that he's ashamed of Ilya. It's not that he's uncomfortable being his true self to the public – it's just that he's worked and worked for this relationship to survive, and that survival has hinged on keeping this quiet and underwraps. Going against that sets off the alarm bells he's so carefully created — a system he put in place to keep them safe. It's like his mind knows something his body doesn't, and despite trying to remain calm, Shane is backsliding down a slippery slope with no place to catch him as he falls.

But then Ilya is there, tugging open the passenger side door, concern etched deeply onto his face as his brow furrows and the corners of his mouth tilt down into a small frown. He uses the levers on the seat to push Shane's seat as far back as it will go, then crawls – *crawls*! – into the space between Shane's seat and the dashboard, parting Shane's knees so he can fit there, kneeling on the floor of the car just so he can be closer to Shane.

"Shane." Ilya says Shane's name like he's calling him back from the distant place his brain has pulled him, and Shane feels like he's breaking above the surface of water as he takes in a gulping breath and grips Ilya's shoulders. He hadn't realized how far he'd spiraled, but his hands tremble slightly, and his knees grip Ilya's torso, and he tries to blink away the brain fog but can only manage so much.

"Breathe with me, Shane," Ilya instructs, and he taps on Shane's knee with his fingers, one tap to breathe in, one tap as Ilya exaggeratedly breathes out. Despite the panic clawing its way up his chest, Shane manages deep breaths, and leans his head back against the seat of the car, eyes closed as he just focuses on Ilya's hand on his knee tapping out a rhythm. His other hand is wrapped around Shane's wrist, Ilya's thumb at his pulse point and gently rubbing circles against his sensitive skin. It's not often he gets this bad – Shane has gotten incredibly good at maintaining it, at not letting the monster that is his anxiety win out, but tonight somehow had been a breaking point, tipping him over the edge, sending him spiraling, and he loathes that being seen in public with Ilya is what did it this time.

"We don't have to go to dinner if you do not want," Ilya says, his words soft, his accent lilting. "I am happy to do whatever you want to do."

"I *want* to go to dinner," Shane says, eyes finally fluttering back open as his heart settles into a more natural rhythm. He takes a deep, shuddering breath and carefully fixes one of Ilya's curls, gently threading it back into place. "I just…"

For a moment, Shane fishes for words like he's looking for lucky pennies in a well. He doesn't know how to encompass what overcame him, but he *tries*. "We've built a secret life together, and that's not fair. But I've gotten so used to… to holding this," he gestures between the two of them, "close to my chest. It feels… terrifying, to break this sanctuary we've made."

Shane's hand comes up to rest against Ilya's chin. His thumb grazes across the stubble there as Ilya leans into the touch and nods in understanding. "It is still sanctuary, Shane. We don't lose our…" Ilya's hand waves as he tries to think of the right word, like maybe he can pluck it out of thin air, "safety, now. We are out, and we do not have to hide. Is safe for us."

Those words feel brittle between them, because as safe as they are, there's still the fans. Plenty of them reacted poorly to the news, and Shane can only imagine they're feeding the

fire, being seen out in public like this. *But they don't matter*, Shane says, this voice louder than the panic and the doubts he harbors in his head.

Taking another deep breath, Shane nods. "I want to go to dinner." He says it with finality, because he's not going to let them win. He's not going to let his love be tarnished by anyone's hate, and fighting for Ilya is the only way through.

He wouldn't have it any other way.

"They can't force me back into the closet." And it's maybe not clear, who they are, but Shane is determined to fight against anyone who wants to say anything bad about what he and Ilya have.

Ilya chucks Shane's chin with his knuckles and leans in, pressing a warm, soft kiss on his lips. The fondness Shane feels in that moment, folded up in the passenger seat of their car, valet attendants trying to pretend like they aren't watching, restaurant goers peering with interest in at them – it's overwhelming. He doesn't care who is watching when Ilya loves him so wholly and plainly. It doesn't matter who approves or who doesn't, because Ilya will always be *his*.

"Fuck them," Ilya says with a small laugh. "Can I get up from the floor now?" He asks as his fingers squeeze Shane's knee.

With a sheepish laugh, Shane nods. Ilya unfolds himself from the floor of the car and helps Shane out, then closes the door and tosses his keys to one of the attendants, a kid who looks starstruck when he realizes who's stepped out of the car.

As they walk towards the restaurant, Ilya weaves their fingers together again and squeezes. Shane *knows* this will be ok. He *knows* they are going to make this work and win this battle, because Ilya will always be there to catch him when he falls.

"Hey." Shane stops walking as they get to the entrance of the restaurant and pulls Ilya aside so other diners can pass them by. He doesn't hesitate, or think about who might see. He only focuses on Ilya and his bright hazel eyes, Ilya with a soft halo of curls that glisten in the dim streetlight, Ilya who holds him through everything like he's precious, yet still treats him with nothing but respect, love, and understanding.

"I love you," Shane murmurs it softly, and his grin is wide and uninhibited as he leans in to kiss Ilya here, in front of passersby, because he's not *ashamed*, and he refuses to be.

"Da, I love you, too." Ilya says sweetly against Shane's lips. And they're words Shane is sure he will never be tired of hearing.

"Now can we go inside and eat? Is cold out here."

With a laugh, Shane nods and releases Ilya from where Shane's arms had wrapped around his waist.

“Yeah, let's go,” Shane agrees. Stepping into the restaurant is like shedding an old skin. He promises himself that the shadows may still be there, but his only focus from now on will be on the light.

They make it through dinner without a hitch – they get recognized a few times, and one woman makes a point to stop and tell them how much she loves how brave they are. Shane flushes and takes the compliment, but slinks into his seat and fiddles with his fork. Ilya reaches for his hand and hushes his movements as his head tilts.

“What is it?”

With a shrug of his shoulders, Shane huffs out a little sigh. “I don’t feel… *brave*. I mean, I appreciate it but. I’m just living my life. I’m just trying my hardest to love you, and that’s not special. It *shouldn’t* be special.” He stops and takes a breath, then takes a sip of his red wine and shakes his head. “It’s fucked up. I should be able to go out with you without having a panic attack. It shouldn’t be an act of bravery to show up for dinner with my fiance, you know?”

Ilya’s smile is fond as he rubs his thumb along Shane’s knuckles and nods. “Da. I agree. But the world has a lot of work to do. They’ll catch up.”

As their eyes meet, Shane grins, a soft thing that crinkles at the edges. He loves that this is what the rest of his life will look like.

“Now, should we have dessert?” Ilya asks as he looks over the small dessert menu. “They have crème brûlée…”

“We can have dessert, if you want it,” Shane says with a little shrug of his shoulders.

“We will have dessert, Shane Hollander, and you *will* enjoy it,” Ilya says it casually as he peruses the menu.

“I think I’ll enjoy anything if I’m doing it with you,” Shane admits, his smile fond and his eyes bright with it.

End Notes

Kudos and comments fill my belly and make me happy :D

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