Invincible (Not)

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Invincible (Not)

by mansikka

Summary

Ilya gets a cold. Shane is there to take care of him.

Notes

Oh am I rusty 😅

Hi, I'm here, dragged not so kicking and screaming back to the hallowed halls of AO3, drawn in by the joy that is Hollanov. I don't know if there will be more fics, but this one walked into my head last night and plonked itself down, so, here we are!

Set sometime before All Stars, sometime after they're engaged, entirely (probably) not possible given NHL scheduling and things. Hey, who cares? Sometimes I just like to imagine soft things 😊

Lieselsart is why I'm here, so, my lovely, this fic is here for you! 🧡

Of course, when he's feeling the absolute best he's felt in fucking months, the universe knocks Ilya on his ass. Of course it does; why wouldn't it? How can he be even more in love than ever, newly engaged, and his team actually winning games, without some cosmic kind of consequences? There is no questioning it. This just had to happen.

Sighing, frowning at the crackle that effort produces in his throat, and then half-heartedly punching the pillow when he starts to cough again, Ilya rolls on his back, stretching out wide on the bed. Why not? Shane is a million miles away in… a place his foggy brain won't let Ilya remember right now, so he can take up all the space he wants. In doing so, though, his left shin brushes against the growing pile of tissues he's been accumulating over the past few hours, sending them tumbling to the floor.

"Is snowing," Ilya mumbles out loud into his empty bedroom, then raises his head and glares out of the window. Of course it is snowing, it's the end of January in Ottawa, though he did actually mean his pile of snot-filled tissues. Either way, he doesn't like it.

He's sick. Pathetically so. A stupid little cold that started tickling at his throat right after his therapy session yesterday has turned into a great, green monster that has taken up residence in his chest and won't fuck off. Literally green. Gross. Because he is right now, Ilya knows it, every pore of his skin clogged with something and not one bone in his body willing to drag him to the shower to do anything about it.

His hair, which Shane often toys with so fondly when it's extra curly with sweat, is plastered over him as though he dunked his whole head in a vat of poutine. Not the fries; Ilya can't even think of fries right now. No, the gravy stuff that goes on the fries, with the cheese curls. Cuffs? Something. He has no interest in remembering even on better days than this one. Nasty, either way. Ilya much prefers David's chicken parmesan to poutine, in fact he prefers David's chicken parmesan to many things he eats, but right now, even the thought of his beloved parmesan turns Ilya's stomach.

That's how sick he is. Since when does anything ever stop him from wanting to eat?

"Five more minutes," he grumbles to himself, because he is going to get out of this bed even if he has to roll out of it and drag himself across the floor, and he is going to get himself to practice somehow. Somehow. Though, it is optional today. He is captain, however, and his team is so pumped from their recent success that he can't bring himself to let them all down. Not that they won't do just fine without him, it's just that for the first time in a really long time he is excited to play. Hockey is exciting. Everything is, actually, in this minute anyway, because if he can hold on to nothing else, it's that fact that he and Shane are going to be married.

If that thought alone doesn't cure him of all ills, Ilya thinks nothing will.

So. Five more minutes. Five more minutes of this disgusting feeling and this moping he may or may not be doing, and then he's going to practice, sick or not. Ilya swallows carefully, wincing for the shards of glass it feels like are digging in his throat, then pinches his engagement ring between his fingers against his chest for comfort, and promptly falls asleep.

“What the hell?”

Hmm?

He must be mistaken, or dreaming, or something, because Ilya swears he just heard Shane’s voice in his room.

That would be nice.

If he keeps his eyes shut tight, and doesn’t breathe too deeply—not that he can—then maybe he can stay where he is in this dream, keep Shane with him longer.

Yes. He’ll do that.

Something presses against his forehead. Fingers, maybe? Ilya frowns for this, because that didn’t feel very dreamlike, and neither does the sudden dip of the bed by his hip. The soft brush against his cheek that follows, though, that does feel familiar, familiar enough for Ilya to smile to himself a little. Whatever this dream is about, he can tell it’s going to be a good one.

“Ilya.”

“Not so loud…” Ilya croaks out, wishing dream-Shane could turn down his volume a touch.

“Hey. Look at me.”

Well, that sounded outside of his head. Maybe he’s delirious. He’s something, for sure, because gentle fingers just tangled through his own, and squeezed.

When he bargains with his eyes to open, the first thing he sees is Shane’s worried little frown. Ilya can’t help smiling for it, closing his eyes again. What a happy little hallucination this cold is giving him. It almost makes it worth feeling so disgusting.

“You need medicine,” dream-Shane says, to which Ilya tries to wave a dismissive hand, but can’t lift his arm.

Not only because dream-Shane is still clutching his fingers. His arm weighs a ton. His whole body does, actually. How much longer before he falls through the bed?

“*Ilya*.”

For the more insistent tone he hears, Ilya opens his eyes once more, finding Shane’s frown to be even deeper.

“You are a nice dream.”

Shane’s mouth twitches. Oh, that’s nice, too, Ilya loves watching Shane’s face when he’s trying not to smile. When he smiles also, of course, in fact when his face is doing anything, especially when they are—

“And *you* are a hot mess.”

Mess? That doesn’t sound so nice.

“At least you think I’m hot,” Ilya says, stopped from closing his eyes for a third time because Shane again squeezes his hand.

“Yes. You are. And not in a good way right now. I think you have a fever. Your thermometer says your temperature is almost 40 degrees.”

“...almost?”

He might not be at his best currently, but Ilya can still feel Shane’s eye roll despite not looking at him.

“38.9. That’s pretty close,” Shane says, holding up a thermometer for Ilya to see for himself.

It takes Ilya a moment to focus his eyes on the thing Shane is waving.

“...I have a thermometer?”

Shane’s cheeks flush a touch, as he gestures to Ilya’s side. It’s hard work, but Ilya turns his head, snorting for the three full-looking paper bags with Pharmasave emblazoned on their sides. An action that his throat, nose, and entire body, actually, doesn't appreciate, fully letting Ilya know about it.

“You do now,” Shane says, wincing as Ilya coughs and grumbles.

“I have an everything, apparently.”

Shane’s flush deepens. “I didn’t know what you needed.”

“So… you bought the whole drugstore?”

Ilya is so invested in this idea, imagining Shane stalking down the aisles of a pharmacy with his cap down low over his eyes, body hunched over as though that might disguise him.

He went to a drugstore for him? A big name one, instead of the little family-run one he insists on for everything that isn’t sex-related, with the promise of privacy? Wow.

“Yes,” Shane insists. “So, help me out, here. What do you need first?”

“I am okay.”

“Oh, sure. That’s why you’re—you know what?” Shane says, standing suddenly, though still holding on to Ilya’s hand.

“What?”

“Just… stay there.”

Ilya watches his hand fall to the bed when Shane eventually lets go of it, closes his eyes to the sound of footsteps fading away. A strange dream, then. Not the worst.

“You’re going to eat something,” Shane says, suddenly, close enough to Ilya’s ear to startle him. He presses a hand against his shoulder in apology, frowning the moment he touches him.

Too warm? Even there? Maybe.

“No thank you. Not hungry.”

“Tough. You’re eating something so you can take some medicine. Hi, by the way,” Shane says then, and when Ilya forces his eyes open once more, rewards him with a soft smile.

“Hello.”

“I’ll be back in five minutes.”

“Okay.”

“Hi,” Shane whispers, and leans in to kiss him on the forehead before leaving the room.

Yes, a very strange dream, Ilya thinks, stretching out and no doubt dislodging some of Shane’s purchases as he does. Not that it matters, much. Shane isn’t really here. He’s probably in practice right now, preparing for the game tonight. Which game? Ilya honestly couldn’t say right now, but as he drifts off to sleep, it’s to the thought of his fiance being right in the room with him, instead of however many hundreds of miles away.

Shane is not, in fact, hundreds of miles way. He is perched on the edge of Ilya’s bed precariously balancing a packed tray across his lap while trying to wake him up.

“I can spoon-feed you, if you don’t want to move. If that’s easier. I mean, it might be easier to —“

“It’s okay. I’m moving,” Ilya says, giving his arms lectures about lacking strength and then hoisting himself up.

Upright, at least, or at least, mostly upright. It’s hard work, this moving thing, and Ilya is exhausted from it. So exhausted he can’t even rearrange the pillows now uncomfortably wedged behind his back.

“Here. You hold on to this, and I’ll do that,” Shane says, getting the tray balanced across Ilya’s bare thighs.

He’s only wearing boxers right now because it’s so, so hot, but even they feel like too much, and the heat emanating from the tray, is—

“You made me soup?”

Carefully on one knee while getting Ilya's pillows arranged more comfortably, Shane huffs a little, mostly to himself.

"I don't think heating a can of soup is the same as making it, but, I wanted to get some food into you now. Real soup can come later."

It's chicken soup. Specifically chicken noodle soup. One of Ilya's favourite soups in the whole world. Of course, his mom's shchi would be preferable to anything, but first, she isn't here to make it, and second, admitting he wants his mom's shchi would mean admitting he is actually feeling pretty sick.

Which he is. Sick enough to think the normally-delicious soup in front of him might actually kill him if he puts it in his mouth. But with Shane looking at him with an encouraging smile Ilya makes himself try it, shakily lifting a spoonful to his mouth.

Missing, of course, because that's when his cough returns. Disgusting.

"No, you're not. You're not well. But, maybe let's try with some bread first, huh?" Shane says, casually wiping up the soup Ilya just splattered everywhere as though he isn't disgusted by him in the slightest.

Ilya continues to watch in fascination as Shane then rearranges all of his drugstore bags to make room so he can better sit beside him on the bed. Ilya remains transfixed as Shane next takes the thick slice of white bread from his tray and breaks it up into pieces, one of which he dunks in the soup and holds up for Ilya to try.

Urgh. His throat is protesting just for looking at it. Time for some stalling.

"Who says I'm not well?"

"Your face. That thermometer. The fact that you actually told me you weren't feeling well, when normally, you pretend you're invincible?" Shane says, raising an eyebrow.

"I am. Sometimes."

"No. You aren't."

No. He isn't. But Ilya still has a tiny bit of fight in him, even if it's only because he likes the way it makes Shane's face scrunch in exasperation.

"Maybe… vodka can help?"

"No. No vodka. Vodka is not a cure-all, even if you try to tell me it is. Don't argue with me. Besides," Shane adds—Ilya is momentarily lost, trying to focus on the way Shane is jabbing his finger at him—"I would never get the vodka you think is good enough. We both know that."

Still fairly confused, by a lot of things, actually, Ilya finally opens his mouth for his food.

The bread is nice. The soup is good. He can't taste either, but he knows these things anyway. It is a fight to chew, and then a battle to swallow, but he manages both things eventually eventually, rewarded for his efforts by Shane's triumphant smile.

He can't win everything. Ilya won't let him. He thinks, really hard, about some clever retort.

Nope. There is nothing in his head at all.

"I didn't tell you I was ill," Ilya settles for saying, never taking his eyes off Shane's face.

He has such a beautiful face. Ilya could get lost in his freckles forever and never complain.

"Yes, you did," Shane says, dunking another chunk of bread. "You told me you had a headache, and your throat was sore, and you sneezed three times."

"...could just be a bad day?"

Snorting, Shane gestures again with the bread still between his fingers, nodding in approval when Ilya takes it. "Since when do you ever admit when you're feeling under the weather, with anything?"

"How do you get *over* the weather?"

"Huh?"

"If you are sick if you are under the weather, then you must be recovered if you are over it, yes? I need to be that."

Shane's eyes do that twinkling thing that Ilya likes so much, and dunks bread for a third time. For a third time, Ilya lets him put the soup-soaked bread into his mouth, not a single protest formed.

"So. Tell me how you're feeling. How you're really feeling. Symptoms, I mean."

"Symptoms?"

"All the things that don't feel right."

Oh. Well, there is a long, long list.

"Somebody replaced my brain with… marshmallow," Ilya says, to start with, getting a grip on his spoon and slowly but surely, starting to feed himself.

"Mm. Could be the fever."

"Not a fever."

"Could be."

"I am just hot."

“And what else?” Shane says, smiling at him in that adoringly frustrated way he does.

“...my nose itches. And my throat is like knives. My chest is like… when we made popcorn.”

Shane’s smile gets bigger. Is he picturing what Ilya is, too? The kitchen at the cottage surrounded by a million popcorn kernels because Shane had been far too distracted by his kisses to keep a lid on the pan of corn on the stove?

“So… it’s rattling?” Shane guesses, his smile dipping.

“I think so.”

“That could be a chest infection.”

“No, just a cold.”

“But—“

“I should be at practice,” Ilya says, remembering far too late, and attempting to move.

He’s not going anywhere. Firstly, his legs feel heavier than his arms did when he was on his back, and secondly, Shane has that determined look about him. The one that normally Ilya likes being on the receiving end of because it means very good things, but on this occasion means he’s in trouble—and not in any fun ways, either.

At least, he will be in trouble, if he doesn’t listen to him.

“I texted Wiebe. From your phone,” Shane adds, before Ilya can say anything or even have time to form a thought. “He says to rest up, and let him know how you’re feeling tomorrow. Judging by how you are now, you won’t be going anywhere for at least a couple of days.”

There is so much to do. So much he should be doing. Strangely, as Ilya slowly eats his soup, he can’t remember a single thing. He is beginning to realise that Shane is really here with him, though. Really sitting here on his bed with his hand resting on his thigh as he watches him eat.

“You’re here,” he says, quietly, in case it is saying these words out loud that make him wake up, leave him here alone again.

Shane nods. “I am.”

“...because I’m sick?”

“Because you’re sick.”

“But you should be in—“

“Where I should be, is right here, with you. You won’t take care of you when you’re like this, will you?” Shane says with a sweet smile that, were Ilya feeling less terrible, he might accuse him of being patronising. Not that it is, at all. It’s just them, to get a little dig in, sometimes.

Not right now, though.

“Maybe?” Ilya says, playing with Shane’s fingers.

“Ilya. You aren’t invincible.”

“Nobody is that.”

“Well, sometimes you act like you think you are.”

Ilya lowers his spoon. “Is this when you tell me I am sick because I have a terrible diet, and I smoke sometimes, and—“

“This is me, telling you, you aren’t invincible,” Shane says, tapping his thumb against his thigh. “This is me, telling you, you can lean sometimes. On me. You can ask me for anything, Ilya.”

The quiet, earnest look on Shane’s face actually puts tears in Ilya’s eyes. That, or the slow realisation that he is here, he’s really here, and he’s come here specifically to take care of him when he has this stupid cold. There is a ring on the chain around his neck that says how much Shane loves him, and he’s shown and told him a thousand other ways before, but this, this wonderful surprise, that he is here, it is… it means everything to Ilya right now.

“You’re here,” Ilya says again, teary-eyed for watching the loving way Shane raises his hand to kiss the back of.

“I am.”

“For how long?”

“As long as you need me. As long as you need me here right now, to get better,” Shane amends, as if he can read Ilya’s mind when he thinks, *forever*.

Ilya knows he has him forever anyway. It’s still a nice thought that *forever* could mean *starting right now*.

Or… something like now. His brain really is very foggy today.

“How did you get here?” Ilya asks, picking up his spoon again when Shane gestures for him to, and belatedly noticing the glasses of juice and water balanced on his tray as well.

“I… flew?”

“I know. I mean, what did you say, so you could come here? To Theriault?”

Shane smiles at him, untangling their fingers and reaching out to toy with the ring against Ilya’s chest. “I told him I had a family emergency.”

Ilya’s eyes sting. Again. Shane must feel how his heart is thudding because he then flattens his hand over it, keeping that ring wedged in place with his thumb.

“Family,” Ilya repeats, croaking, but also possibly crying, because sometimes it really does hit him hard, how he gets to have all this.

“Family,” Shane agrees, reaching out to flatten Ilya’s curls with that same loving look he imagined earlier.

“I love you,” Ilya whispers, not trusting his voice for a second time.

“I love you, too. Germs and all. Now; how about you keep eating, and I start reading which of these you’re supposed to take first, and in what order?” Shane says, plucking one of the boxes of whatever medicine it might be from the pile formed from his bags.

“Shane.”

“Yes?”

“Where did you put that thermometer?”

Shane sorts through the pile, waving the blue and white stick for him to see. “It’s right here.”

“No. In me. Where did you put it?”

“Under your tongue?”

It is a bad idea to be laughing when his throat is so terrible, and it is impossible to try to smile. These things happen anyway. “I didn’t feel it,” Ilya says, proud of himself that he didn’t make himself choke on his soup.

Shane snorts in understanding. “Oh, would you have preferred me to put it elsewhere, so you could feel it?”

“We can play doctors… you need a coat and a… one of those things, for listening to your heart.”

“A stethoscope.”

“That. Only that and the coat. I think that would help me very much.”

“We need you to eat, and take some medicine, and get some rest. That will help more than anything else might.”

“...we should try that, too. Just to be sure.”

Laughing, Shane leans in again, rests his lips against his forehead before kissing him there.

“Maybe if you behave. Now. Eat. I’ll figure out what to do with all of these,” he says, gesturing at his purchases.

Yes, Ilya thinks, picturing Shane in just a white coat and nothing else, maybe he could behave himself for such a treat.

Later, though.

“Maybe… we can sleep a little? Together?” he asks, sure he can hear the hope in his own voice.

He’s convinced though, that falling asleep with Shane’s arms around him will probably fix just about anything.

Shane’s eyes grow soft. He nods, tilting his chin towards the tray. “As soon as you eat, as soon as you’ve taken something, we’ll sleep. I’m staying, okay?”

He’s staying. He loves him that much. Yes, Ilya thinks, doing his best to wink when what he’s really doing is fighting back another sneeze, and yet more tears. Everything really is okay now. Shane is here, his fiance is taking care of him. There is quite literally nothing else Ilya could ever want.

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