

the longer way home

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the longer way home

by [boxysmiles](#)

Summary

The plane—Ilya's plane—is diverting to the closest airport.

Shane's next breath doesn't quite make it to his lungs. Suddenly, he is a few years in the past, hearing J.J's voice: *"Woah. The Centaurs' plane had to make an emergency landing."*

It's not the same. It's *not*.

Ilya's way home is full of delays, and Shane doesn't deal with it so well.

Notes

two weeks ago i was like "no way that gay hockey tv show is real". one day later i read heated rivalry. and then, belatedly, got absolutely slammed by my new fixation. idk. love these two guys !!

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

Ilya texts him until the last moment possible.

They stick to texting as the in-flight Wi-Fi isn't working yet, Ilya tells him. He keeps disappearing for a couple of moments to check, just to be sure, but not a single Instagram notification from Ilya has appeared.

Sometimes the Wi-Fi simply doesn't work, not until they're level in the sky, around the same time the seatbelt sign switches off for the first time. That's just how it goes, sometimes. They've dealt with it plenty of times before.

At the last possible moment, Ilya sends his next text.

Ilya [11:27AM]: okay, have to go. love you

Shane [11:27AM]: safe flight, love you

They'll message each other again within, at the very most, half an hour. It might be that long at this rate, because flight conditions are windy and there's a storm that's grounded a couple of other flights nearby. But Ilya's flight has managed to make it out, thank *god*, but it might just be a shaky start to the flight that takes a little longer to stabilise.

A little longer for the Wi-Fi to start working.

Half an hour feels too long, though.

They used to go weeks without seeing each other. Months, even. Now, it's only been a little over a week apart, with Ilya attending the All-Stars game this year while Shane stayed behind, and Shane misses him so fucking *badly*. They've had a couple of video calls, plenty of calls, and a whole lot of texts.

Still, it doesn't feel like enough. Until Ilya is back in the car, until he's back *home*, until Shane can put his hands on him again — it isn't enough. A week is too long. Half an hour is too fucking long.

He opens up the Instagram app, tapping his fingers on the side of the phone as he waits. But no new messages from Ilya appear.

Of course nothing's come through yet, he tells himself. *Just wait.*

He waits. Impatiently. Fingers still tapping at the side of his phone, the rhythm getting faster the more seconds go by without any new notifications. He switches out of the app for a moment, then immediately switches back to it, like he's missed anything in the single second he hasn't been on it. Does it again, then a third time.

Anya's head pokes up from where she's been lying, staring at Shane with wide eyes. She's been sleepy since coming back from her walk, content with lying lazily on her bed, and this

is the first time in an hour she's moved.

It snaps Shane out of it, just a little, just enough. He realises how anxious he's becoming, frantically checking and *waiting*, and knows he needs to relax.

"Yeah," he forces himself to breathe out. "Yeah, I know."

Ilya will message the second he's able to. He's probably cursing under his breath as he tries to refresh the Wi-Fi page endlessly, just as impatient as Shane to get connected again.

It won't do Shane any good to just sit on the couch and wait for it. He'll have his phone on him the entire time — the very same second that Ilya messages him will be the same second that Shane replies.

"Christ," he mutters to himself. It's only been a week. Just a *week*, just half an hour, and this is apparently what he's reduced to.

He'll see Ilya in a little over six hours. Even with a connecting flight to make between Toronto and Ottawa, Ilya is *close*. Only a few more hours to go, now, until Shane is in the pick-up bays at the airport, waiting to drive him back home.

Not long to go now. He tells himself that, over and over again, until he figures he can probably believe in it.

He swings his legs over the couch and lets out a breath. Stares down at Instagram for a few more moments, *daring* it to give him a new notification from Ilya, before he lets out a sigh. Anya's head tilts at him.

He turns up the sounds of his notifications, just to make sure he doesn't miss anything. Keeps the phone clutched in his hand as he gets to his feet.

He's restless, he knows. Anxious for these next six hours to be over with. And now, without being able to message Ilya as he waits, each second feels a whole lot longer than it should.

He needs to find something to do and he knows it. Needs to get his mind off things for time to go back to its regular speed.

A workout might help, but he'll be distracted the moment Ilya messages him, and he doesn't want to commit to one only to let it fall through when he's midway through it. Besides, he's already done his morning routine, and he probably shouldn't overdo it. Which he will, if Ilya doesn't message him.

He needs *something* to do, though, as he waits for Ilya. Probably needs something to do even once Ilya comes back online. He can and probably *should* multitask. It's not like he can spend the *entire* time, the entire six hours, messaging Ilya.

Well, he could. Probably. The conversation might just devolve into describing each and every little sound that Anya makes. Ilya's end of the conversation might just be about every little detail on the flight, if they were to talk non-stop for the time he's flying. Ilya will hold onto

the better gossip that he has from the All-Stars game, waiting until he's in person with Shane to be able to embellish the stories with his stupid, endearing smile and laughter.

Shane's heart clenches. Fuck. He misses his husband.

It'll be worth it; when Ilya's back in their house, when Shane's able to reach out and properly see him, hear him, *feel* him. It'll be worth the wait, he knows it.

Six hours. Not long at all. Shane can absolutely, *definitely*, resist the urge to message his husband for every single second of that.

Ilya will probably want to watch a movie or two on this flight, anyway. Or listen to one of his strange podcasts, which he's taken an absurd liking to lately. Anything, too, to distract himself from the next six hours that they're still going to be apart for.

Six hours. That's all.

The layover between Toronto and Ottawa will be ridiculously quick. Not enough for a video call in the airport: Ilya intentionally kept the flights close, after all. *Way* too close. Shane would've been sitting in anxiety about missing the next flight for the entirety of the first flight if he were the one who booked it.

But Ilya had just shrugged when Shane brought it up and said, *I'll make it. Because it'll get me quicker to you.*

Shane probably would have booked the same flight for the same reasons, anyway. Even if it caused him a whole lot of unnecessary and needless stress about making it to the next flight in time. He would've done the same thing. Anything to get home—to Ilya—faster.

Just six hours.

Shane breathes out again. Anya slowly gets to her feet too, then lazily pads over to him, brushing her nose up against his legs before she decides to get on her back legs so she can reach up. He scratches behind her ears, sighing at her indulgence.

Ilya spoils her.

Shane does, too. He eventually gets her to sit back down, and they stare at each other for a few moments.

Shane's phone does not ring with a notification. Ilya isn't connected yet.

"Okay," he tells her. "Maybe we should clean the house, hm? Just a little."

There isn't much to clean. Shane's had plenty of time to himself this week. It's been lonely, but *also*, sometimes it's simply easier to get things cleaned up when his husband isn't pressed up at his back. Or singing along loudly to whatever songs they've got playing. Or, simply, bending over to clean things up. Not even anything sexual about it. But *Christ*. Shane can always appreciate the muscle rippling below his husband's comfortable clothes, the softness he really only lets show when they're home.

Shane gets... Well. A little distracted. He really can't be blamed for it.

Anya happily walks alongside him as he heads into the kitchen to put some of the smaller things away. He scrubs down the tabletop, then the sink, then, for good measure, cleans up some of the cabinets. The doors of the fridge.

He's contemplating the microwave, and that's when he knows he's starting to really get worried.

He chews at his lip as he looks at the time.

12:15PM.

It's been longer than half an hour.

He rinses off the sponge. Tells himself to breathe. *Breathe.*

He's got alerts set up for Ilya's flight. If anything—

No.

His hands clutch at the side of the sink. He won't imagine it. He won't think about it.

Anya butts up against the back of his legs, and he realises he's been breathing a little too fast. He forcefully exhales, keeping count with a voice that sounds like Ilya's in the back of his head. *One, two, three, keep going. Keep going. Hold. Wait. Wait. Breathe in. Slowly. One, two*
—

Fuck it.

His fingers tear for the phone in his pocket.

There are no notifications from Ilya. No alerts for his flight. Shane looks it up anyway, fingers feeling too tight as he types in the number. Fucks it up as he does, a digit off, and his frustration swells hot and angrily.

He's fine, he's fine. It's fine.

Gets the right flight in. The tracker appears immediately.

On time. In the air. Forty minutes into the journey. The little plane icon is almost a quarter of the way through its little line.

He opens Instagram anyway, despite the lack of notifications. Maybe they stopped working, he tells himself. Maybe it's just a glitch.

Or not. Maybe there's just none for him. There's nothing waiting from Ilya. He opens up their conversation anyway, mouth twisting as he sees the last one they had. It'd been another flight, but one they'd been on together. They'd been sitting right next to each other.

They'd been, probably, two more messages away from joining the mile-high club. One more drink away for Shane, if he accepted the offer as the flight attendant came back around. He'd managed to claw his self-control back in, mostly because the flight had been close to descent, and because Shane would have really rather fucked his husband on their bed back home than in some squashy, small airplane bathroom.

And also, their entire team had been with them. *Everyone* would have known what they'd be up to.

Admittedly, that thought probably didn't dead-stop his desires as much as he probably should have wanted them to.

Forty minutes turns to fifty. Still, there's nothing from Ilya.

He holds his phone for a little while longer. Then, when he can't take it anymore, he sends a message.

ShaneHollanderOfficialHockeyPlayer [12:32PM]: No wifi huh :(

He shakes his head the moment he sends it. What a stupid thing to say. Ilya's not even going to be able to see it. It's pointless.

Still, he waits for a response. Waits for Ilya to see it.

He doesn't, of course.

He exits the app. Double-checks the flight. Nothing changes except the plane icon moving the slightest bit to the right. Still on time.

If the Wi-Fi doesn't come on at all, at least Ilya will get a few moments down on the ground between flights. Shane will just have to catch him then, is all. And then for the entirety of the next flight, for as long as he can message before he drives up to the airport to go pick him up.

Soon. He breathes out forcefully. *Soon*. Closer to five hours, now.

He starts cleaning the microwave. Then starts reorganising the fridge. Then some of the pantry.

Closer to three hours, now. No messages from Ilya.

The flight is still on time. Getting closer to Toronto. Only a little over an hour and a half before Ilya is off this flight.

He moves to cleaning down the dining table. Anya settles back down on her bed.

His phone rings out with a notification just as he's heading towards the vacuum cleaner. He whips it out so fast it almost flies right from his hands.

Not a message from Ilya. But an alert.

The plane—Ilya's plane—is diverting to the closest airport.

Shane's next breath doesn't quite make it to his lungs. Suddenly, he is a few years in the past, hearing J.J's voice: *"Woah. The Centaurs' plane had to make an emergency landing."*

It's not the same. It's *not*.

This is— this is just a diversion in the flight path. The plane is *knowingly* heading for another airport, for reasons that haven't been detailed. This isn't an engine failure, this isn't an engine on *fire*, this isn't—

"Oh, God," he says, clutching his phone in his hands before pressing it to his forehead. The wall is at his back, and he slides down it, putting his head between his knees.

Breathe, Hollander. Is alright. You're alright. I'm alright.

Is he? *Is he?*

There are so many reasons for a plane to divert. They'd made it mostly over the stormy regions, though. A medical emergency, perhaps.

No one has posted anything about it. There are no reports, no information coming from anyone else on the flight. There's no fucking *Wi-Fi*.

A medical emergency is likely, isn't it? That happens all the time.

But what if it's Ilya? What if—

What if it's not a medical emergency? What if, what if, what *if*.

"No," he snaps at himself. "No, no, no. Don't."

Anya's wet nose brushes against his hands. Her tongue, a moment later. He jolts, head snapping up. She whines softly, head bumping into his hands.

He holds tight to the phone with one hand, but lets the other card through her fur.

"He's alright," he tells her. "He's fine. I am just..."

Freaking out. Remembering what it'd been like, all those years ago. Too fucking far from Ilya, and the knowledge that Ilya had just given him what might have been his very last fucking words.

If he scrolls far enough on their Instagram conversation, he'll find them again. Knows they wouldn't have changed. Ilya will tell him the same thing, even now. Even after all this time.

I am thinking about only you right now. A million memories. Thank you for those.

Whatever happens, I am with you. Safe in your heart. I believe it.

There's a thickness in his throat he can't swallow past, now.

"Ah, God," he chokes out. His nails press in a little to Anya's fur, though she enjoys it, as she tilts her head right into it. He huffs at her and oblingingly scratches as she likes.

It's a good distraction, at least. He makes an awful, ragged sound as he tries to squash down the sobs that want to rise. He pushes it down, down, down.

It's not like that. It's not, this time.

"He's okay," he tells Anya. "He's okay."

When his heart doesn't feel like it's about to come up through his throat, he searches for any information on the flight. They're diverting close, at least. A flight that will only be a couple of hours out, straight to Ottawa, once Ilya is on it.

But the next flight isn't for just over two hours. Shane tilts his head back, knocking it against the wall gently.

Fuck.

But thinking about *that* problem is, at least, better than thinking about anything else. About the fact that the first flight still hasn't landed, that there's still no Wi-Fi, and Shane doesn't know what's gone wrong. Doesn't know *how* Ilya is. Doesn't know if he's okay.

"He is," he tells himself. *He is*. He has to be. There's simply no other option. Shane won't be able to live with any other option.

He sits on the floor for a while, watching the flight path change. No longer green, now, showing *on time*. Red. Delayed. Diverted. The plane icon gets closer to landing, at least. Even if it's at the wrong airport. Even if Ilya *is* going to miss the connecting flight. Even if he's going to be home later.

Ilya will land, and he will be fine. He will come home. He will come back to Shane.

Closer, closer.

A minute until landing, now. Shane still feels like he's holding his breath.

Anya paws at his knees until he slowly drops them. She curls up in his lap, too big to do it but uncaring, and rests her head on his knee. He keeps himself still, letting her weight keep him grounded.

The plane is okay. *Ilya* has to be okay. Has to be, has to be, *has to be*—

It must be as *soon* as the plane lands that he gets a text.

His heart trips and restarts in his chest.

It has to be, it *has to*—

Ilya [4:15PM]: just landed. flight from hell. wifi wasn't working to talk to you.

Ilya [4:15PM]: i think someone fainted. collapsed? they called for a doctor. had to land

Ilya [4:15PM]: they're making us get off this plane

Ilya [4:15PM]: will be on the next flight to Ottawa

Ilya [4:16PM]: will call you when im off this stupid plane

Shane sends back a heart. The quickest thing he can do to show Ilya he's been waiting. The only thing he can do without his hands shaking too much to try anything else.

He keeps his phone clutched in his hands as he waits. It helps, partially, as he imagines Ilya's impatience as he stands up on the flight, waiting to disembark, eager to try and hurry through this next part. He knows Ilya will head straight for the desk with a charming and all-too-friendly grin, but his hat will be tipped back, making it clear who he is. Whatever it takes to get home faster.

Ilya sends him updates. We're moving. Doors are open. About to leave. Getting off this stupid plane.

The moment he is, Shane's phone rings. He sucks in a deep breath.

He will *not* have Ilya worry. Not when he's fine. Not when Ilya needs to deal with the stress of trying to figure out the next flight.

"Hey," he says into the phone, the second the call connects.

"Hi," Ilya says. It's loud; the voice of plenty of other travellers frantically trying to figure out their plans now that their plans have been disrupted. He can tell Ilya is walking through the jet bridge, pace fast as he tries to squeeze past as many people as possible to get to the help desk as soon as possible. "Will be on the next flight. Fuck Toronto. Straight to you."

Shane laughs, glad that it doesn't shake, even if something in his chest seems to collapse.

"Good," he says. "The next flight is in two hours."

"You've looked," Ilya hums, but he isn't surprised. He quickly makes a noise of annoyance, which Shane knows is directed at the thought of a further delay. But then he lets out another breath, calm. "That's fine. I'll make sure I'm on it."

"Okay," Shane says. Then falls quiet as he hears Ilya apologising for brushing a little too harshly past someone. A moment later, he mutters to himself in Russian. *Move out the way of the gate, you idiot. Why did you stop there.*

Ilya's usually not so impatient.

"You okay?" He asks.

Ilya takes a moment. "Yeah. Okay. Just... Long trip."

"Yeah," Shane agrees. "You'll be home soon."

"Not soon enough," Ilya huffs, then lets out a breath. "Sorry. Tired. Want to be home with you."

"I know," Shane says quietly. "Me too."

Ilya mutters to himself as he looks for the help desk. *Where, where, come on. Why is it so far? This is a stupid fucking airport. Where is it.*

"There's a small line," Ilya tells him, once he seems to find it. "Stay with me a little longer."

"Of course," Shane says. Hears Ilya breathe out a sigh of relief as he settles in line, though he can imagine that he's pretty much rocking impatiently on his heels, eager to get to the front. At least he gets higher priority with their status points with the airline. At least, at *least*.

But Shane's been looking: a few flights have been diverted from the storms today. A few flights have been thrown into chaos. Unfortunately, Ilya's caught up in the midst of it. It might be a while yet before his next flight can be sorted out.

Shane puts him on speaker as he starts to look up the next flight to Ottawa. There are still a couple of available seats. He relays this to Ilya, who hums along as he listens.

"Small plane," Shane says. "High price."

Doesn't matter. Ilya doesn't care about the size of the seat as long as it's the first flight back. And the airline has to shift the cost, anyway. Even if they don't, it's not a price Ilya or Shane will blink at with their income.

"So slow," Ilya mutters to himself, voice so low that no one else will possibly be able to pick it up.

"Still got two hours," Shane says. Refreshes the page and logs the flight details back in, just so he can see if anything's changed.

Two seats get taken. Shane keeps that information to himself. There are still three seats left.

"How many people are in front of you?" He asks instead.

Ilya counts almost silently to himself in Russian, then answers back in English, "Twelve. But six, I think, if I am grouping them correctly."

"Okay," Shane says, heart thudding in his chest.

They're probably not all going to Ottawa. And if they are, they'll probably want to be paired together. An odd number of remaining seats are more favourable for solo travellers. Ilya also got off the plane *fast*, he has to be near the front of the line for his flight that just came in. Chances are still good for Ilya to get on the next flight to Ottawa.

Please, let his chances be good. Surely, *surely*, Shane has already gone through enough today, stuck and unable to do anything but watch that stupid little plane icon move.

He doesn't say anything it. Not a single thing about the last few hours he's spent as an anxious mess. Ilya doesn't need to worry about it.

"It'll probably be a middle seat," Shane says, after a few moments of quiet.

"Don't care," Ilya replies. Then, a small *ah*.

"Ah?"

"Someone has recognised me," Ilya says. "And they're— okay. Well. Joining the line."

"Tell them to go away," Shane mutters grumpily. They have to be careful of their conversations whenever there's a chance of being overheard. They're always more alert, more wary, words quieter and filtered. Especially when they know they've been recognised. And right now, Shane wants Ilya all to himself. Wholly, entirely, unfiltered and whole and *his*.

But it seems Shane's own frustration seems to amuse Ilya, as he lets out a little laugh. The sound makes Shane's own lips tug up, with a sharp and reliable sense of relief.

"That's not very nice," Ilya hums, all too amused.

Shane grumbles at him, which he knows just makes Ilya's smile grow on the other end of the call.

He stops looking up flight information and puts the phone back on regular volume before pressing it to his ear. He closes his eyes and holds the phone tighter.

"I miss you," he says quietly.

He hears Ilya breathe. Pretends, for a moment, that he is right here beside Shane.

"*I miss you*," Ilya repeats in Russian. Then switches back to say, "Almost home."

"Almost home," Shane echoes.

"Stay on the line," Ilya tells him quietly. In the background, Shane hears someone cheerily say *Rozanov! You've been caught up with the delays too, huh? Sucks, doesn't it?*

Shane threads his fingers through Anya's fur. Breathes in and out as he hears Ilya apologise. *Am on phone*, he says sheepishly, then hears a sharp tap as Ilya demonstrates his point by apparently slapping his hand a little too close to the microphone.

"Ah, of course!" He hears the person in the background say, still all too damn loudly. "Sorry, sorry!"

Hushed, though still loud, he hears *I wonder if he's on the phone to Hollander—*

Ilya sighs quietly. The next word is almost a breath with how silently he says it. *Sorry.*

"It's okay," Shane reassures. Though they both have to be even more careful now, because the crowd have obviously recognised Ilya and have fallen quiet, and they're probably trying to listen in.

"Three more people," Ilya tells him.

Hopefully not taking up the last three seats of the Ottawa flight.

"Okay."

"How is Anya?"

"In my lap," Shane tells him, smiling as he pets her. "She's been following me around all day. Keeping me company."

"What a good girl," Ilya coos.

"Mhm," Shane agrees. Anya huffs in her sleep. "She's missed you."

"Of course she has," Ilya says. "My clever little girl. I can't wait to see her."

"And me, right," he says it mostly to be joking, he thinks, but his tone misses it by a mile. He's never been that funny, he supposes.

He expects Ilya to play it off, anyway. To give Shane the grace of pretending like it's just a joke. *No. I have only missed my darling girl. I don't know who else I would miss, Hollander.*

And then Ilya surprises him by saying, in Russian, *"Of course, you. So much."*

Shane swallows down the thickness that's reappeared in his throat.

"Two more," Ilya says. Then, a moment later. "One."

One seat is still open.

"Close," Shane says, voice quiet so that he can keep it steadier.

"Yes," Ilya replies. They wait together quietly until finally, Ilya says, "My turn."

"Let me know how it goes," Shane says.

"Of course," Ilya replies. "Will call."

It *could* be sent as a text. It could be.

Shane is too glad that he won't.

They hang up the call, and Shane waits, and waits. Five minutes, ten.

Ilya calls again. Shane's hands are starting to shake too much, so he puts the call on speaker and puts his phone on his thigh, away from Anya's ears.

"How'd it go?" Shane asks.

"On the next flight," Ilya tells him. "Last seat. Right at the back. They were mortified by that. Wanted to upgrade me for the flight *after* that. I told them no, of course."

"The flight after that is only a couple of hours later," Shane says, because of course he looked at that, too, just in case Ilya couldn't make the next one out. And the one after that, which would be the last one for the night.

"And I am not waiting for it," Ilya tells him.

"Thank god," Shane says.

Ilya makes a noise of amusement, but it's undercut by how desperate they both are: they just want these flights to be over, for Ilya to be back home with Shane.

"Did you watch a movie on that flight, at least?" Shane asks, eager to keep Ilya on the line.

"It was a bad one," Ilya says.

"That's alright," Shane replies. "Tell me about it."

And he does. And about the podcast he'd switched to listening to. About the woman across from him who offered him her small bottle of wine. The frustration they both shared about not being able to reach their loved ones.

It fills up the time until Ilya boards for his next flight.

"This Wi-Fi better work," Ilya mutters.

"I hope so," Shane sighs. "But it's okay if it doesn't. I'll watch the flight path. I'll be there to pick you up. Let me know as soon as you land."

"Of course," Ilya replies.

"Only a little longer. Two hours," Shane says.

"Two hours," Ilya repeats. "I will see you then."

"*I love you*," Shane says. *Ya lyublyu tyebya*.

Ya lyublyu tyebya, Ilya replies.

The beeping of the ending call echoes in the hallway. Shane hangs his head, and with relief strong enough to drown in, his eyes water. His chest heaves.

Ilya is okay. Will be okay. Will be home.

He stopped crying an hour ago.

Still, his eyes feel sensitive. His throat is a little too tight. He clenches the steering wheel hard under his fingers as he drives to the airport.

He parks in the short-term parking. He has enough time to get inside, anyway. Enough time to get to the gate, where he'll greet Ilya right there. He's not going to wait a second longer than he has to. He's not going to wait for Ilya to get his checked-in baggage and then come out to the pick-up bays. That's a few minutes too long. He's already waited long enough tonight.

As he walks inside, he checks the status of the flight. On time. Five minutes out from touching down.

Makes his way through customs. Keeps his hat low, hoodie pulled up. He's still recognisable, he knows, but he hopes the intention is clear: *please do not stop me. Please do not try and talk to me. I have someone I need to see. I have someone I need to be with, and I can't wait a second longer than I have.*

A few gazes linger. No one comes up to him, though, even as he shuffles his way through the security checks with his hat off and the hood pulled down.

He makes his way to the gate. The plane has landed, and they're doing the final checks. Ilya texts him throughout it all, just as he'd done throughout the entire flight. There'd been Wi-Fi, working and all, and he played up the sufferings of sitting in a middle seat in economy. Shane still hung onto every single word, no matter how ridiculous it got.

Not much else got cleaned in the house with all the time he had left before heading up to the airport. Instead, he sat against the wall, Anya in his lap, with tears in his eyes for a good long while. He presses them shut together now just to check, but they're dry. He doesn't really have much else to cry; besides, he really doesn't want Ilya to worry.

Shane had overthought things. Panicked. Blew things *way* out of proportion. Ilya seemed impatient, but *calm* about the whole ordeal. Not panicked, not comparing it against all those years ago.

He doesn't want Ilya to realise just how *scared* he'd gotten. Over one medical emergency, over some shitty Wi-Fi, over one minor change of flight plans.

He is going to come out of this gate. Fine, alive, as annoyingly beautiful as ever. There was never anything to worry about.

He finds a wall to lean against, out of the way of most people who are also waiting to greet the arriving passengers. Ilya will probably walk right past him, too. He won't be looking around at the people, not when he has a bag to collect, not when he thinks he has a car to get to. Not when he thinks Shane isn't here, too impatient to wait even a second longer than he already has tonight.

They're usually one of the first people off the plane, but Ilya's so far in the back that it takes him a while. Most of the crowd has already cleared out, and most of their passengers are already off the plane and ready to get their luggage and leave. Slowly, Shane moves closer.

And finally—

There he is. Walking out the jet bridge, out of the gate's doors, with his headphones over his ears, cap over his head, eyes ducked low as he walks with a purpose. Projecting just as much as Shane has been: *please do not stop me. I have someone I need to see.*

His hair is ruffled, Shane distantly registers, when it usually sits perfectly whenever he's out in public. He's been tugging at it too much, or had the headphones sitting weirdly for the flight. Shane's not sure. He doesn't care. It's the best sight he's ever seen, regardless.

Just as he expects, Ilya's on a mission, which means he doesn't care for anyone standing around him. He's expecting Shane to be waiting in the pick-up area, sitting behind the driver's seat, tapping his fingers along the steering wheel as he looks out for Ilya's familiar figure. His gaze does not land on Shane, already waiting for him, already right in front of him.

He sticks out a hand, getting it in Ilya's line of sight. Ilya flicks up a narrowed gaze, heated and annoyed at whoever's dared to stop him.

And then he almost trips over his own feet.

"Shane?" He asks, eyes wide, tugging his headphones down quickly, face softening entirely, and then it's barely a moment later before he's pretty much *launching* himself at Shane, arms wrapping around Shane's neck as he hugs him.

It's like all of the worry, all of the tension inside of him, disappears with the single sound of his husband saying his name. With the feeling of his husband finally back in his arms.

"Hey, Ilya," Shane breathes out, hands coming up to curl into Ilya's back. He realises they're now the ones in the way, though he catches a few soft gazes being directed their way as people neatly step around them. Still, he tugs Ilya off to the side, so they're no longer in the path of the remaining few passengers.

They rock side to side for a couple of beats. And then, slowly, Ilya pulls back. Studies Shane's face, just as Shane does the same.

Here, here, here. Fine. Whole and in one piece.

Ilya kisses the top of his forehead. Shane flushes red, knowing there are still *just* enough lingering eyes on them for this to be witnessed. Likely captured.

He doesn't really care, though. If the world can see Ilya's sweet side, if Ilya's *willing* to show it, then Shane is just fine with that.

"We need to get your bag," Shane says eventually, not wanting to draw away from Ilya but also wanting to just be in their house, where Shane can properly look at Ilya. *Feel* Ilya. In the back of his mind, he's thinking about the fact that Ilya's luggage is probably on priority to get out of the carousel earlier, too. It's probably already on it. All they have to do is grab it and get out of here.

So close. They're so close. Shane has settled plenty now, with Ilya finally in his grip, but he knows the last of today's anxiety won't entirely vanish — not until they're properly, finally, back home.

Ilya takes his hand in his own as they walk through the airport and to baggage claim. The carousel is already going, and Ilya only pulls away from Shane to jog up to it to get his bag as it comes around, one of the first bags out.

Within moments, he's back by Shane's side, then heading straight for the exit. Shane tries to take his carry-on off him, but Ilya tuts at him and just takes hold of his hand again.

"Let's go," Ilya says. "You are slowing me down."

He says it, Shane knows, just to watch the indignation pass Shane's face. Does it purposefully just to rile Shane up.

"Asshole," Shane says, but he can't keep the endearment out at *all*. Ilya squeezes his hand, and Shane doesn't have to look to know his husband is wearing a dazzling, shit-stirring grin. He looks anyway.

They get to the car, and Ilya throws his bags in the back. Before Shane can head for the driver's door, because he is not going to let Ilya drive after all the stress of flying, Ilya grabs his hand and pulls him back in.

He cups Shane's face in his hands. Brushes his thumbs under Shane's eyes.

"You've been crying," Ilya notes, lips tugging down in a frown. His concern is so easy to see, even in the darkened lighting. It's late, now. Night. A couple of hours past when Ilya should have been home and in Shane's arms already.

Internally, he sighs. He'd wanted to keep his worries hidden. He should've known better than to think Ilya doesn't know every single piece of him.

Shane circles his fingers around Ilya's wrists. "I'm okay."

Ilya is still frowning. Still brushing his thumbs under Shane's eyes.

"I'm sorry," Ilya says.

Shane immediately shakes his head. Tightens his hold on Ilya's wrists so he doesn't go anywhere.

"Not your fault," Shane says firmly. "Nothing to apologise for."

"I worried you."

"Not purposefully."

Ilya still seems guilty. Seems all too worried as he looks at Shane's features, cradling him so softly.

Shane lets go of Ilya's wrists, only so he can tug Ilya down for a kiss.

"You're alright," he says, between soft kisses on Ilya's lips. "So I'm alright."

He puts one hand on Ilya's chest. Underneath his palm, there is a strong, steady heartbeat.

Ilya covers his hand with his own. Then curls his fingers through Shane's own so he can tug at his hand, bringing Shane's wrist to his lips.

"My love," Ilya whispers. Presses a kiss to his wrist, right at the strongest point of his heartbeat. *"My heart. My life."*

"Mine," Shane says. With Ilya right before him, he can't resist kissing him again. He's here, in Shane's hands, warm and solid and fine and beautiful. But Shane cannot, will not, stand in the airport's parking lot for a moment longer when he is so ready for this entire ordeal to be done with. He is so ready for Ilya to be back in their house, in their bed, back by his side. "Let's go home."

"Yes," Ilya agrees, shoulders hunching with relief as a bright smile crosses his face. "Yes, please. Let's go home."

Finally, together, they go.

End Notes

got this idea at 2am this morn and the only note i left for myself was "plane - loses wifi, gets diverted, no contact" and then spent today writing it. didnt think id be joining the fandom so fast but. well. here i am !! in yet another sports based book fandom in which i dont know the rules of the sport or the country. god help me. shoutout to jay for dealing with my ass not knowing the flight plans i was making <3

i hope it was enjoyed aaaa!! <3 <3

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