

## Learning to take care

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# Learning to take care

by [nerd\\_herd808](#)

## Summary

"What happened?"

"I missed the edge of the table." Shane curled inward a little more, tense.

"No shit," Ilya said, unimpressed. "How did Montreal's number one scorer miss this big table?"

Now Shane cracked an eye at him. "Fuck off, Rozanov."

"Shane."

He sighed. "I can't really see right now."

Shane gets a migraine at the cottage. Ilya learns how to help.

Shane returned to wakefulness slowly in the late afternoon sun, lake water long since having evaporated from his swim trunks as he napped in the lounge chair. Content to remain in the blurry, quiet space between sleep and alertness, he kept his eyes closed and just breathed.

His towel was soft and sun-warmed where he had tossed it over his bare chest and arms for sun protection before sliding on his sunglasses and conking out. Romping and splashing in the lake with Ilya like Hayden's twin children had tired them both out. He shifted slightly, wincing at the stiff pull of his neck after sleeping too long in the outdoor chair and cracked one eye open.

His boyfriend was sprawled, loose-limbed, in the chair beside Shane's, but turned the wrong way around. Ilya lay on his stomach, head pillowed on his towel at the foot of the long chair, his strong back curving appealingly over the wooden slats. One arm was bent around his head, flattening half of Ilya's fluffy wet-then-dried curls. The other was draped across the distance between their chairs, his big hand resting warm and possessive on Shane's ankle. Shane huffed lightly, amused. He pried the other eye open and rolled his head to the left to admire the expanse of warm, golden skin as Ilya basked in the warmth of the afternoon. (He was only a man, after all.)

Then, because he was also a little shit sometimes (and he wanted to see Ilya's eyes when he woke up), he flexed one leg and wiggled the ankle that Ilya's fingers loosely cradled, jostling him. "Ilya. You're going to burn."

"Nyet," his boyfriend replied, not opening his eyes. He squeezed once, tightly, thumb rolling over the knobby bone of Shane's ankle.

"You need sunscreen. Or a shirt," Shane said, wobbling his ankle again. This time, Ilya inhaled deeply with annoyance and aimed a sleepy, slitted glare at Shane. Shane couldn't help but smile at him.

"You just want me covered because I am too beautiful to look at," Ilya lamented, releasing Shane's ankle and rolling dramatically to his side. "Is ok, Hollander. Many people tell me this."

Shane blinked a few times to try and clear away the blurriness of sleep. He really shouldn't have allowed himself to nap - he always feels like he woke up in another dimension. Ilya swung his feet to the ground and stood, stretching until his spine popped. "I'm hungry. Ready to go in?"

Shane nodded, regretting that he hadn't brought a water bottle out to the chairs. His mouth felt cottony. "Yeah. Let's go."

He toed on his slides and trailed behind Ilya up the stairs to the cottage, still feeling blurry around the edges, but content with the prospect of the evening ahead. They had plenty of easy options for dinner, and they were slowly working through the catalog of terrible action movies on Netflix. Though Ilya had asked on the way to the cottage, eyes sharp and laughing, if their plan was really to relax, they had been taking the chance to just spend time in each

other's presence without rushing. Now, Shane knew that Ilya got short-tempered and nonverbal if he didn't have coffee within 30 minutes of waking, and Ilya had learned that Shane had a visceral, full-body reaction to stepping in a puddle on the bathroom floor if Ilya forgot to use a shower mat. They were learning each others' orbits.

Ilya opened the back door and stepped aside, brushing a hand lightly on Shane's lower back as he stepped in. "Sandwiches ok? I will shower, then we eat?"

"Sure," Shane said. "I got the pickles you like. I'll start getting things out in a minute. He slipped off his dark glasses and rubbed his eyes roughly, internally cursing the sun's afterimage still lingering in his vision. "I just need to grab some water."

Ilya nodded, eyes lingering briefly as Shane made his way around the kitchen to grab a glass, hand trailing on the island countertop. "You ok?"

"What? Yeah, fine. Just didn't drink enough today, I guess." Shane selected a glass and turned on the tap, watching the water slowly fill. It really was good water.

Ilya padded over behind him to press a smacking kiss to the back of Shane's bare shoulder, squeezing his hip. "You sit, I will be gourmet sandwich chef after I shower."

Shane laughed. "Okay." He turned and kissed Ilya back, reveling in the ease which has come with familiarity and time. "Go shower."

Ilya smacked him lightly on the ass, eyes fond and warm and maybe anticipating what would likely happen when they got bored of the movie (Shane would never admit that watching a movie on the couch with Ilya in his soft sweatpants and long sleeves made him unspeakably handsy.) Grabbing his towel, he headed for the shower.

Shane made his way down to the living room and dropped onto the couch with a sigh, water still in his hand. He tipped his head back until it rested on the cushion. He also should shower the lake water off, but he couldn't quite blink the sun spots from his eyes from their long afternoon outside. And he really needed to hydrate. He raised the glass to his lips and drained half of it, eyes still squeezed shut, and focused on breathing slowly to abate the vague nausea that was rising.

Shane heard the shower turn off in the master bathroom. He needed to get moving before Ilya came out and saw him sitting in the living room with the lights off like a lunatic. He opened his bleary eyes and leaned forward to place the glass on the coffee table so that he could make his way to the shower, starting to lever to his feet when—

*CRASH.*

Shane flinched and leapt to his feet, startled by the noise of his glass shattering on the floor. *Shit.* Cold water splashed onto his bare feet and shins, but his vision was still weird, hazy around the edges and a little wavy like sun on concrete in the summer and where was the edge of the coffee table and—

The sound of bare footsteps in the hall, quick. "—what—Shane—*fuck*—no, do not move—"

Shane was trying to move out from behind the coffee table to find towels and a broom from the kitchen. "It's okay, it's just water—"

"Shane! Wait—"

"Towels—"

"*Hollander!*" Ilya snapped, closer than expected. Shane jumped and bashed his shin on the unseen coffee table, almost overbalancing. "Ow, shit—"

Ilya snagged the pocket of Shane's shorts from behind, unceremoniously yanking Shane backwards until he collapsed back onto the couch, head swimming and shin throbbing. For a second it was quiet. Shane blinked hard, but the dark spot in his vision remained and the rest shimmered sickeningly.

"You want to walk on broken glass so I carry you everywhere, Hollander?" Ilya's words were sarcastic, but pinched with caution. Shane turned his face toward his boyfriend's voice, wishing he could read the expression on Ilya's face. He was pretty sure he could picture it anyway: eyebrows furrowed, jaw tense, eyes sharp. Ilya had left the bathroom in a hurry; Shane could see the white blur of a towel slung around his hips. He was probably dripping on the floor.

"Are you ok? Did you cut yourself?"

"No," Shane answered the second question honestly, ignoring the first for now. "Banged my shin, though."

"Don't move, I get the broom."

"—and—"

"Da, and towels. Stay."

Shane stayed, annoyed with himself. Annoyed with the hot press of irritated tears he could feel building behind his tightly-clenched eyelids. Annoyed with the water that was seeping against his feet, and what he is pretty sure is a trickle of blood from his shin. He pulled his feet up onto the couch. Shane catalogued his body quickly, and realized that he wasn't going to be able to ignore what was happening. And it was going to happen while Ilya was here, in the short two weeks that they had to enjoy together. There was no avoiding it, so Shane filed that disappointment away in a mental box and switched to the next task, which was mitigating all-out disaster.

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Ilya returned to the living room with a broom, trash bag, and paper towels, bath towel hastily replaced with sweats. He rounded the couch to see Shane where Ilya had left him, knees drawn up on the couch and head tipped back, eyes closed. He looked pale. Ilya noted blood seeping from the scrape on his shin.

Ilya ignored the curl of worry in his stomach and knelt, carefully collecting the biggest shards of glass.

"Sorry." Shane's voice was quiet.

"Is just a glass, Hollander. You can get more." Ilya waited. Shane was quiet. He gave in.

"What happened?"

"I missed the edge of the table." Shane curled inward a little more, tense.

"No shit," Ilya said, unimpressed. "How did Montreal's number one scorer miss this big table?"

Now Shane cracked an eye at him. "Fuck off, Rozanov."

"*Shane.*"

He sighed. "I can't really see right now."

Ilya's hands froze in the middle of sweeping up the last bits of the broken glass. "You what." He knew his voice was flat.

"Don't freak out—"

"I'm not *freaking out*—"

"Ilya."

His jaw snapped shut. Shane sighed again. "I'm getting a migraine. I was trying to ignore it. I get ones that mess with your eyes. I've got a few blind spots right now and the rest is..." He waved one hand around wearily. "Shimmery."

"Shimmery." Ilya tried to stop grinding his teeth. His dentist was tired of seeing him. "I do not know this word."

"Like. Wavy. Shiny?" He wobbled his hand around in the air again. "Blurry."

"You cannot see?" He tried to hide the alarm in his voice, but was sure he was not doing a good job.

"Not much. General shapes. I'm fine."

Ilya ignored that. He mopped up the last bit of water and tossed the paper towel in the trash bag, tying the top closed. Floor clear, he grabbed a new paper towel and scooted forward until he could reach Shane. He rocked back on his heels, blotting gently at the bloody scrape on his leg. "You get migraines?"

"Sometimes. Rarely." Shane flinched a little at the first touch of the towel, and Ilya grabbed his leg to hold it still.

"Stop, you big baby. You will get blood on this nice couch."

Shane let him wipe up the blood, looking like he was trying to hold perfectly still, just talking quietly with his eyes closed. "I don't know what triggered this one. Can you take my pillow to one of the guest rooms, please? I have a few things to grab then I should lay down. You could play a game or—"

Ilya smacked his thigh lightly, then wedged a hand under Shane's knee gently, needing to touch. "What? No, dumbass. Tell me what you need, I help. You rest in your own room."

"I'm going to be boring and maybe gross for a few hours at the least, if I take meds in the next five minutes," Shane said, glassy eyes open and looking in Ilya's general direction.

Ilya a little bit like a fish that had jumped out of its tank and was flopping around helplessly on the table gasping for oxygen, but also determined to help. They hadn't been around each other when they were sick or hurt, other than Ilya's brief visit to the hospital and some general hockey bumps and bruises. Ilya didn't know what Shane liked when he didn't feel well, and Ilya didn't have recent memories of being cared for to rely on. He'd have to learn.

"Tell me what you need," he said quietly. He raised his other hand and brushed a thumb roughly across Shane's cheekbone. "Please?"

Shane nodded.

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Shane's list of tasks was easy enough for Ilya to be helpful with. He found the blister pack of migraine medicine in the bathroom cabinet, watched carefully as Shane swallowed two and bitched at him until he drank the full glass of water. Shane said no, flatly, to the banana Ilya offered. He guided Shane—warm and grouchy and depending on Ilya—with an arm securely around his waist, out of the living room and carefully up the stairs and into the bathroom.

He parked Shane on the closed toilet lid, flipped off the lights and cracked the door so that they could see by the remaining sunlight through the windows. Shane hadn't asked for a shower, but Ilya knew that the thought of getting into his clean bed with lake water dried on his skin would eat his boyfriend alive, and his brain or eyeballs really might just spontaneously combust. Ilya couldn't have that. He liked both Shane's weird brain and his big brown eyes.

Ilya managed to get Shane out of his swim shorts and under the spray of the warm water with a mixture of firm but gentle touch and being irritating as hell (a combination he happened to know made Shane as gooey and pliant as putty). He hesitated for a second between getting in the shower with Shane, or finishing getting the bedroom ready. Decision made, he pressed the soap into Shane's hands and ducked out of the bathroom with strict instructions not to slip and die.

While Shane washed quickly, eyes mostly closed, Ilya clicked the button to close the blinds, grabbed some soft sweats and an old hoodie for Shane, and dipped back to the kitchen for a glass of water and a packet of crackers.

When he heard the water shut off, he methodically but gently towed off his boyfriend. He couldn't help giving his ass an affectionate squeeze, and felt more than heard Shane's huffed laugh. He smiled a little, to himself and bullied Shane into the clean clothes and under the covers in the dark room.

Shane went boneless more than laid down on the bed, even more pale and jaw tight with pain. He threw one arm over his eyes and breathed deeply, like he was nauseous.

"Hurts?" Ilya asked quietly. He sat cautiously on the other side of the bed, leaning against the headrest.

"Yeah." Shane's voice sounded hollow. "The eye thing's almost gone now. It's just at the beginning. But the headache gets—" he waved a hand loosely around his head and swallowed like his tongue was dry. "Bad."

He must have heard Ilya's extremely loud panic sirens radiating into the quiet beside him, because Shane's free hand flopped over until it landed on Ilya's thigh. "Don' worry," he said, smeary with pain and tiredness.

"I worry that your big brain cannot take this extra pressure, it will implode," Ilya grumped, taking Shane's hand and feeling marginally better. "I did not know you get migraines."

"I don't, really."

Ilya snorted. "Yes, I see this."

"Once or twice a year. Usually can head them off. With meds." His speech was slowing down—probably the heavy duty painkiller kicking in. "Might throw up."

Ilya jumped. "Now?"

Shane huffed. "No. Hour or so? Maybe. Dunno. Happens sometimes." He was quiet for a second. "Sorry."

"I play hockey, Hollander. Body fluids do not scare me."

Ilya knew that Shane really must be hurting, because he didn't even get an eye roll or an unimpressed glare. He just tangled his fingers tightly with Ilya's, other arm still covering his eyes. Ilya's heart clenched with love—*ugh, gross*—and uncertainty and determination to help take away some of Shane's pain.

"Sleep now," he said. "Okay if I touch you?"

"Yes." Shane was fading. "Please. Thank you. ...Sorry."

Ilya smiled in the privacy of the dark, fond and pleased to see some of Shane's tension easing into sleep. Some of the gut-clenching horror he had felt when he heard the crash and saw Shane about to step into the broken glass started to relax. He slid down onto his left side, pushing one hand under Shane's neck to gently palm the base of his aching skull. The other hand he untangled from Shane's, gently knuckling away the single tear that had been escaped

Shane's closed eyelids. He clasped Shane's hand again and rested their entwined hands gently on Shane's chest. "No sorry. Rest, *dorogoy*. I will be here."

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Shane didn't throw up, but it was touch and go for a while. He lay flat on his back, pillow over his throbbing head, and tried to pretend he didn't exist. That he floated somewhere else, not inside his malfunctioning brain. That worked okay. Ilya sat next to him on the bed, tense and worried, ready to haul Shane to the bathroom if he so much as twitched. The nausea finally abated—thank God. Shane had done all sorts of things with Ilya that were objectively maybe more embarrassing, but he didn't think he was ready for Ilya to see him vomit two days after he admitted he loved Shane.

He napped again for a while, then when he opened his eyes again, the last rays of the sun had gone down and his head didn't feel like someone had put it into a vice and *twisted*. He could hear Ilya's voice in the room, murmuring quietly. He blinked a few times, confirming that the grinding, sickening pain had dissipated, then tilted his head to the side.

Ilya leaned against the doorframe, absently scratching one leg with the other raised foot, phone to his ear. "Yes, I think so." A pause. "That sounds good. I will tell him. Thank you, Yuna."

He hung up the phone and turned back to the room, wincing guiltily when he saw that Shane was awake. "Did I wake you?"

Shane shook his head, smiling a little. Ilya settled back on the bed next to him.

Ilya had clearly been up while Shane was sleeping—Shane's water was refilled and a bottle of ibuprofen replaced the migraine medications. Ilya ducked his eyes as Shane took in the room, pretending to check something on his phone, brightness turned all the way down. The light of the screen still glowed hazily on Ilya's sharp cheekbones and the tips of his curls. Shane adored him.

"Hi. I'm alive." He rolled to his side, reached over and fiddled with the hem of Ilya's hoodie.

Ilya looked back at him, eyes crinkling. "Yes, I know this. I checked." He smoothed rumpled hair back from Shane's forehead. "Feel better?"

Shane nodded. "Much. When it's gone, it's gone. I'll just be tired and maybe a little more light and noise sensitive the rest of the day." He was quiet a moment. "You called my mom?"

"Ah... yes." Ilya looked mildly embarrassed. "I wanted to be sure you were okay. That this was—not normal, but not emergency?" He sighed. "That I took care of you right. Yuna says to tell you to rest."

"Thanks. You were great. Perfect." Shane watched fondly as Ilya flushed, pleased. He dropped his eyes back to the bed and rolled the fabric of Ilya's sweater between his fingers. "Thank you. And sorry."

"Sorry why?" Ilya's voice was neutral. "You can prevent migraines?"

"Sorry that we wasted an evening together." Shane swallowed, checking another day off of the mental calendar he's been trying to ignore. Two weeks would never be enough.

Ilya hummed, absently petting Shane's hair then sliding his warm hand down Shane's back, under his sweater. He left it there. "Not your fault. And not wasted. I learned about you—how to make you feel better." He pressed lightly with his calloused fingers into the muscles of Shane's back, making Shane sigh with pleasure.

"You always know how to make me feel good," he said, with maybe too much plain honesty. He was too wiped out to care.

Ilya laughed, and ran the pad of his thumb gently over Shane's bottom lip. He crooked a suggestive eyebrow at Shane. "Yes, is true. We have ten years of this. But that is different—easy. I do not know how to care for you when your brain is imploding, or when the lights are too loud for your skin, or if you get the fucking flu."

Shane felt like he should be embarrassed by that, but couldn't find it in him. "Maybe. But you know *me*." *Shit*. He squashed his nose into the side of Ilya's leg. "You love me. That's enough."

Ilya was quiet for a moment, pulling his hand up Shane's back and scratching gently at the short hairs on the back of his head. "Yes. I do." His voice was a little rough.

He leaned down and tipped Shane's chin up with a gentle finger. Shane went willingly. Ilya kissed him, slowly. He pulled back and tapped Shane twice, gently, on the cheek with his palm. "Come, Hollander. Your mother says I must feed you your bird food now. You must get your energy back for tomorrow."

Ilya rolled out of the bed and came around to (gently) haul Shane to his feet and herd him out the door of the bedroom. Shane went willingly enough, yawning, and realized that he really was starting to feel hungry. One thought occurred.

"You turn them off."

Ilya looked at him, confused, and pushed him onto one of the stools in the kitchen. He opened the fridge. "Turn what off?"

Shane pulled the hood of his sweater up over his ears and tucked his hands into the pockets. "When the lights are too loud. Just turn them off." He shrugged. "That one's easy."

A surprised laugh burst out of Ilya. He looked at Shane, apparently delighted by his boyfriend's weirdness. "Okay, Hollander, yes. That is easy. Thank you."

Looking at Shane, cozy and barefoot in his cottage kitchen, smiling cheeks pink from his pillow and pain lines smoothed off of his forehead, Ilya thought that maybe learning to take care wouldn't be so hard after all.



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