midnight rides (to see you)

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midnight rides (to see you)

by Anonymous

Summary

He's in his bed in Montreal, tangled in sheets that are damp with sweat, his heart hammering so hard it hurts. The room is dark and quiet and wrong, because Ilya isn't here, Ilya is in Ottawa, two hours away, and Shane's hands are shaking as he grabs for his phone on the nightstand.

His fingers fumble with the screen. It's 3:17 AM. He should... he shouldn't do this. Ilya has practice tomorrow. *Today.* In the morning. Shane knows this because they'd texted about it yesterday, before the Bears-Centaurs game, before Ilya had taken that nasty check in the second period that Shane had watched on his laptop with his stomach in knots, before Shane had gone to bed alone like he does most nights, before his subconscious decided to torture him with the worst thing it could conjure.

He stares at Ilya's contact. The photo is from months ago, Ilya grinning at something off-camera, eyes bright, so impossibly *alive* that Shane's throat closes up.

He needs to hear his voice. Just. Just to know he's okay. Just for a second.

When Shane has a nightmare about Ilya getting injured, he phones his boyfriend. Ilya returns the call, and so much more.

Notes

this is set during ilya's final season playing for the bears! about 4-5 months post-cottage ep6

See the end of the work for more notes

The dream starts the way it always does: with ice.

Shane can hear the roar of the crowd, feel the familiar bite of cold air against his face, see the blur of bodies moving across the rink. It's a game, just another game, except it's not. His chest is tight with a formless dread, the kind that lives in nightmares where you know something terrible is coming but can't stop it.

He sees Ilya. Number 81, Bears jersey, that familiar powerful stride. Cutting across the ice toward the boards. Shane's moving too, but it's like skating through honey, everything slow and wrong. He's shouting, trying to warn him, but no sound comes out.

The hit comes from nowhere.

Ilya goes down hard, wrong, his head snapping back against the ice with a sound that shouldn't exist. The world goes silent. Ilya doesn't get up. He's not moving. There's blood. Too much blood. Spreading dark against the white ice, and Shane is screaming now, screaming as he tries to reach him, but the ice stretches between them like miles, like oceans, like forever.

No, no, no, please—

Ilya's eyes are open but empty, staring at nothing, and Shane can't breathe, can't think, can't—

Shane jolts awake with a gasp that sounds like a sob.

He's in his bed in Montreal, tangled in sheets that are damp with sweat, his heart hammering so hard it hurts. The room is dark and quiet and wrong, because Ilya isn't here, Ilya is in Ottawa, two hours away, and Shane's hands are shaking as he grabs for his phone on the nightstand.

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He needs to hear his voice. Just. Just to know he's okay. Just for a second.

His thumb hits the call button before he can talk himself out of it.

It rings once. Twice. Shane's holding his breath. Three rings, and panic starts creeping in again because what if Ilya doesn't answer, what if something's actually wrong, what if—

"Shane?"

The sound of Ilya's voice—rough with sleep but immediate, alert—breaks something in Shane's chest.

"I—" Shane tries to speak but his voice comes out strangled. He presses his free hand against his eyes. "Sorry. Fuck. I'm sorry, I shouldn't have—"

"Shh, sweetheart." Ilya's tone sharpens with concern. *"What is wrong? Are you hurt?"*

"No, I'm—I'm fine, I just—" Shane's breath hitches. He's not fine. He can still see it, Ilya's body motionless on the ice, blood spreading. "Bad dream. It's stupid. Go back to sleep, I'm —"

"Not stupid." There's rustling on Ilya's end, like he's sitting up. *"Tell me."*

"Ilya, it's three in the morning—"

"Tell me what you dream," Ilya says, gentler now but firm. Immovable. *"Please."*

Shane's eyes are burning. He squeezes them shut. "You got hit. In the dream. Really bad. And you—you didn't get up. There was blood and you weren't moving and I couldn't—" His voice breaks. "I couldn't get to you. I couldn't help."

The silence on the other end is heavy.

"Was it..." Ilya's voice is careful. *"Was it like when you got hurt? In real life?"*

Shane makes a sound that's half-laugh, half-sob. Of course Ilya would understand immediately. "Yeah. But it was you instead. And it was worse because I—I just watched it happen over and over. It wouldn't stop."

More rustling. The sound of footsteps, a door opening. *"Where are you right now?"*

"Home. In bed. Ilya, I'm okay, I just needed to—I don't know. Hear your voice. Know you're —"

"I am getting dressed."

Shane's eyes snap open. "What? No—Ilya, what are you—"

"I am coming to you."

"It's three AM!" Shane sits up fully now, running a hand through his hair. "You have practice in the morning, you can't—"

"I can," Ilya says simply. Shane hears the jingle of car keys. *"I am already in car."*

"Ilya—"

"You called me at three in the morning, Shane. Crying." Ilya's voice is steady but there's something underneath it, something fierce. *"You think I can go back to sleep? You think I will*

let you be alone right now?"

Shane's throat is too tight to speak. He presses his palm against his eyes again.

"I will be there in two hours, less if traffic is good," Ilya continues. *"You will leave door unlocked for me, yes? Or I will break it down. I have done it before in video games."*

That startles a wet laugh out of Shane. "You can't break down my door."

"Try me." There's the sound of an engine starting. *"Do not hang up. Talk to me while I drive."*

"You shouldn't be on the phone while driving—"

"Shane." Ilya's voice is impossibly fond despite the exasperation. *"You are worse than old lady sometimes, you know this? I have Bluetooth. Now stop arguing with me and tell me about your day yesterday. The boring details. All of it."*

Shane sinks back against his pillows, phone clutched to his ear, and feels something in his chest loosen just slightly. "You're ridiculous."

"Yes. And you love it. Now talk to me."

So Shane does. He tells Ilya about his workout that morning, about the annoying interview he'd done for TSN where they kept trying to get him to talk about his "rivalry" with Ilya, about the new coffee place he'd tried that had good ginger ale. Stupid, mundane things that have nothing to do with nightmares or injuries or fear.

Ilya listens, making little noises of acknowledgment, occasionally interjecting with commentary. When Shane runs out of things to say about his own day, Ilya fills the silence with stories about Boston, about Marlow being an idiot at practice, about the new socks he bought that have bears on them.

"Bears," Shane says, something like fondness bleeding into his voice. "Of course."

"Is my brand now, yes? I am committed." Ilya's tone is light, but Shane can hear the undercurrent of focus. He's trying to keep Shane distracted, keep him talking, keep him anchored. *"Next I will get bear tattoo."*

"You already have a bear tattoo."

"Another bear tattoo. Bigger. Better bear."

"You're an idiot."

"Your idiot," Ilya says softly, and Shane's heart clenches.

They fall into comfortable silence for a bit. Shane can hear the sound of the highway, the hum of Ilya's car. It's weirdly soothing, knowing Ilya is out there, getting closer with every minute.

"I'm sorry," Shane says quietly. "For waking you up. For making you drive all this way."

"Ty uzhe izvinialsya." Ilya switches to Russian, voice dropping lower. *"And I already told you is not necessary. You think I would not do this for you? You think there is anything I would not do?"*

Shane swallows hard. "You have practice at eight."

"I will call Coach. I will tell him I am sick, or car trouble, or—what is word—explosive diarrhea."

"Oh my god." Shane can't help the laugh that escapes. "Please don't tell your coach you have explosive diarrhea."

"Why not? Is very believable. Very terrible. He will not ask questions."

"He'll ask so many questions. Mostly about why you decided to tell him that specifically."

Ilya's laugh is warm in Shane's ear. *"Maybe you are right. I will think of something better. Food poisoning. Very dramatic. I ate bad fish."*

"You didn't eat bad fish."

"Coach does not know this."

Shane shakes his head, smiling despite everything. "You're going to get in trouble."

"I am Ilya Rozanov. I am always in trouble." A pause. *"Is worth it for you."*

Shane doesn't know what to say to that. The nightmare feels further away now, pushed back by the reality of Ilya's voice, his presence even through the phone. But there's still something heavy in Shane's chest, something he can't quite name.

"I hate this," Shane admits quietly. "Being scared like this. It's stupid. You're fine. Nothing happened."

"Is not stupid." Ilya's voice is gentle. *"You know this feeling, Shane. Real version. You remember it, yes? When you got hurt. How scared I was."*

Shane does remember. He remembers waking up in the hospital, confused and in pain, and seeing Ilya's face. Red-rimmed eyes, jaw tight, looking like he hadn't slept. Remembers Ilya telling him later, much later, how he'd thought he might never get the chance to tell Shane how he really felt. How terrifying that had been.

"I remember," Shane says.

"So you understand. The fear does not care about logic. It just... is." Ilya makes a frustrated sound. *"I wish I could... How do I say? Take it away. Make it so you never have this dream again."*

"You can't do that."

"I know. Is very annoying." Ilya sighs, a puff of breath that softens Shane's heart. *"But I can be here. So you do not have to be alone with it."*

Shane's eyes are stinging again. He doesn't cry. He hasn't since he woke up, aside from that first moment of panic. But his throat is tight and his chest aches. "You drove two hours in the middle of the night."

"Yes." Ilya says it like it's the simplest thing in the world. *"You called. I come. Is simple."*

It should be simple, Shane thinks. But nothing about them has ever been simple. The years of hiding, of careful distance in public, of stolen moments and coded language. And yet here's Ilya, driving through the night without a second thought, because Shane needed him.

"I love you," Shane says. The words feel inadequate for what's in his chest, but they're all he has.

"Ya tozhe tebya lyublyu," Ilya replies, his voice warm and sure. *"I am almost there. Twenty minutes more. You should sleep."*

"I'm not going to sleep until you get here."

"Stubborn."

"Yes."

Ilya huffs a laugh. *"Okay. Then we will talk more. Tell me something."*

"Like what?"

"Anything. Your favorite thing about playing hockey. When you were kid."

Shane thinks back, lets himself drift to safer memories. "The sound," he says after a moment. "My dad took me to my first game when I was five, and I just remember—the sound of the skates on the ice. The way it echoed in the arena. I thought it was the coolest thing I'd ever heard."

"You wanted to make that sound."

"Yeah." Shane smiles at the memory. "I begged for skates for Christmas that year. Drove my parents crazy practicing in the basement on this little plastic rink setup they got me."

"This is very cute mental image. Tiny Shane Hollander, very serious about his skating."

"Shut up."

"I am serious! I bet you were adorable. Big eyes, very focused face."

Shane's about to respond when he hears a car door close through the phone. His heart skips.

"I am here," Ilya says. *"Outside your building. You unlock door for me, yes?"*

"Yeah." Shane's already out of bed, crossing to the apartment door. "Doors are unlocked. Third floor."

"I know where you live, sweetheart. I have been here before."

"Right. Sorry. I'm—"

"You are nervous. Is okay. I am coming up now."

Shane hovers in his doorway, phone still pressed to his ear even though it's ridiculous now. He hears the building's main door open, footsteps on the stairs, getting closer.

Then Ilya rounds the corner, and Shane's breath catches.

He's in sweatpants and a rumpled Bears hoodie, hair messy like he just tumbled out of bed (which he did). His face is tired but his eyes are bright and concerned, locked on Shane like nothing else in the world exists.

They both lower their phones at the same time.

"Hi," Shane says stupidly.

Ilya crosses the distance between them in three strides and pulls Shane into his arms.

Shane goes easily, pressing his face into Ilya's shoulder, breathing in the familiar scent of him. Some combination of aftershave and laundry detergent and just *Ilya.* The solidness of him, warm and real and *here,* finally makes Shane's racing heart begin to slow.

"I am here," Ilya murmurs into Shane's hair. "I am okay. You are okay. Everything is okay."

Shane's hands fist in the back of Ilya's hoodie. He doesn't trust himself to speak yet.

Ilya doesn't push. He just holds Shane, one hand coming up to cradle the back of his head, fingers threading through Shane's hair. They stand like that in the doorway for a long moment before Ilya gently maneuvers them inside and closes the door.

"Come," Ilya says softly, guiding Shane toward the bedroom. "We sleep now, yes?"

Shane nods. He feels wrung out, exhausted in a way that has nothing to do with the time and everything to do with the emotional whiplash of the last hour.

They climb into bed together, and Ilya immediately pulls Shane against his chest, arranging them so Shane's head is pillowed on his shoulder, one of Ilya's arms wrapped around him, the other hand finding Shane's to lace their fingers together.

"Your practice," Shane mumbles, even though he's already melting into Ilya's warmth.

"I will text Coach in morning. Is fine."

"You'll get in trouble."

"Shane." Ilya presses a kiss to the top of Shane's head. "If Coach has problem with me taking care of my—" he pauses, and Shane can hear the smile in his voice—"my boyfriend, then he can say it to my face and I will ignore him."

Shane huffs a quiet laugh against Ilya's chest. "Boyfriend."

"Yes. Is what you are, no? We have had this conversation."

They have. Multiple times. Usually when one of them is feeling particularly possessive or sappy. But it still makes something warm curl in Shane's stomach every time Ilya says it so matter-of-factly.

"I had a nightmare about you dying," Shane says, voice muffled against Ilya's hoodie. "And you drove here in the middle of the night. I think that qualifies as boyfriend behavior."

"Very good boyfriend behavior," Ilya agrees solemnly. "Best boyfriend in NHL."

"Definitely not."

"Excuse me, I am amazing boyfriend. I bring you ginger ale when you are sad. I let you win at video games."

"You don't let me win—"

"I let you win," Ilya insists. "Because I love you and I am generous." His tone softens. "And because when you smile after winning, I like to see it."

Shane tilts his head up to look at Ilya properly. In the dim light from the window, he can make out the lines of Ilya's face. The sharp jaw, the soft curve of his mouth, the eyes that are looking at Shane like he's something precious.

"Thank you," Shane says quietly. "For coming. For—for this."

Ilya brings their joined hands up to his mouth and kisses Shane's knuckles. "Always. You will call me at three in morning, or three in afternoon, or three in evening, and I will come. Every time."

"That's not sustainable."

"I do not care about sustainable. I care about you." Ilya's thumb traces circles on the back of Shane's hand. "You are scared of losing me. I am scared of—" He pauses, clearly searching for words. "Of not being able to protect you. Of something happening to you and I am not there. Of you being alone when you are hurting and I cannot fix it."

"You can't fix everything," Shane says gently.

"I know. Is very annoying." Ilya sighs, a puff of breath that ruffles Shane's hair. "But I can be here. I can hold you. I can remind you that I am fine, you are fine, we are fine. This I can do."

Shane closes his eyes. "That's enough."

"Yes?"

"Yeah." Shane shifts closer, pressing his forehead against Ilya's jaw. "This is enough."

They're quiet for a while. Shane can hear Ilya's heartbeat, steady and sure, under his ear. Outside, Montreal is silent in the pre-dawn hours. Inside this room, they're wrapped up in each other, a small pocket of safety against everything else.

Shane's exhaustion is catching up to him now, the adrenaline finally draining away. His eyes are heavy.

"You will sleep now," Ilya says, less a question than a statement.

"Mm. Probably." Shane yawns. "What about you?"

"I will sleep when you sleep. I am watching you first."

"That's creepy, Rozanov."

"Is romantic. I am romantic boyfriend, remember?" But Shane can hear the smile. "Sleep, Shane. I am here. I will still be here when you wake up."

That's what does it—that promise. Shane lets himself sink into sleep with Ilya wrapped around him, solid and warm and real. Not injured. Not bleeding on the ice. Just here, breathing steadily, fingers still laced with Shane's.

When Shane's breathing evens out, Ilya allows himself to relax slightly. But he doesn't close his own eyes, not yet. He studies Shane's face in the darkness. The freckles scattered across his cheeks, the flutter of his eyelashes, the slight part of his lips. Peaceful now. Safe.

Ilya thinks about the fear in Shane's voice on the phone, the way he'd tried to apologize for calling, like needing comfort was something to be ashamed of. Thinks about how many times Shane has probably swallowed down his fears, his worries, trying to be strong, to not be a burden.

It makes Ilya's chest ache.

"Ty ne obyazan byt' silnym vsegda," Ilya whispers in Russian, soft enough not to wake him. *You don't have to be strong all the time.* "Not with me. Never with me."

He presses a gentle kiss to Shane's forehead, then another to his temple. Shane makes a small sound and burrows closer, and Ilya holds him tighter.

Outside, the sky is just starting to lighten with the first hints of dawn. Ilya should probably text his coach soon, come up with some excuse for missing practice. But that can wait. For now, this is more important. Shane is more important.

Shane mumbles something unintelligible in his sleep, his hand tightening on Ilya's.

"I am here," Ilya murmurs. "I am not going anywhere."

He means it. Whatever nightmares Shane has, whatever fears haunt him in the dark, Ilya will be there. He'll drive through the night, he'll miss practice, he'll do whatever it takes.

Because Shane called, and Ilya came.

It really is that simple.

Eventually, when the sun is just beginning to peek through the curtains and Shane is deeply, peacefully asleep, Ilya allows himself to drift off too. His last conscious thought is contentment. The weight of Shane in his arms, the rhythm of his breathing, the knowledge that this, at least, is something he can give. Something he can do.

He can be here. And he will be. Always.

In the morning, when Shane wakes up to find Ilya still there (hair mussed, face soft with sleep, arms still wrapped around him), the nightmare will feel like it happened to someone else. A bad dream, nothing more. Because Ilya is here, solid and real and alive, and Shane can press his palm over Ilya's heart and feel it beating steady and strong.

"Good morning, Hollander," Ilya will mumble, blinking awake with a slow smile. "You snore."

"I don't snore," Shane will protest, but he'll be smiling too, feeling lighter than he has in hours.

"You do. Is very cute. Like little bear."

"You're obsessed with bears."

"Yes. I contain multitudes." Ilya will pull him closer, pressing a kiss to his nose. "How do you feel?"

"Better," Shane will say, and mean it. "Thank you. For—"

"If you say sorry one more time, I will tickle you."

"You wouldn't."

Ilya's grin will be wicked. "Try me."

But that's later. For now, they sleep, wrapped up in each other as the world slowly wakes around them. Two hockey players, supposedly rivals, supposedly straight, supposedly nothing to each other except names on opposing jerseys.

The truth is so much simpler, and so much more complicated.

The truth is this: Shane called, and Ilya came.

The truth is love.

End Notes

thanks for reading! let me know what else you'd like to see in the future

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!