

Pain Has a Memory

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Pain Has a Memory

by [orphan_account](#)

Summary

After a sudden, crippling migraine causes Shane to collapse at home, Ilya returns to find him unconscious and surrounded by scattered pills, spurred by Anya's urgent warnings.

The scene plunges Ilya into old fears as paramedics rush Shane to the hospital. With Yuna and David at their side, Shane slowly regains consciousness to help the family weave comfort, reassurance, and unspoken love through the quiet moments between fear and recovery.

Notes

Omg, I am OBSESSEDDDD with Heated Rivalry. I've probably watched the series at least four times already and it has completely taken over my brain. I haven't read the books yet, so please feel free to let me know if I've gotten anything wrong!

As always, I don't own these characters — this is just a fan fiction written out of pure love for the story 

Hope you can enjoy! 

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

Shane sucked in a careful breath as pain bloomed behind his eyes, sudden and sharp enough to make the room dim at the edges. He froze, instinctively pressing his fingers to the base of his skull, heart jumping as he checked for something obvious—blood, swelling, the dull ache of an impact he didn't remember.

Nothing.

His scalp felt normal beneath his fingertips. No tenderness. No sticky warmth. Just the headache, just like earlier—deep and pulsing, like a heartbeat lodged behind his eyes, relentless and unmoved by his concern.

“Great,” he muttered under his breath.

He tried to keep reading anyway, because Shane had always been the kind of person who pushed through discomfort. He *had* to be in control. The book rested heavy in his hands, familiar and comforting, but the words began to slide out of focus, lines blurring into one another no matter how hard he blinked. He reread the same paragraph three times before admitting defeat.

With a quiet sigh, he shut the book and leaned back against the couch, rubbing slow circles into his temples. He hated headaches. Not because they hurt—pain was something he understood—but because they made him feel off, disconnected from his body, like his balance and timing were suddenly unreliable. Like his brain had quietly opted out without asking permission.

“I’ll just take something,” he said to the empty house, already pushing himself to his feet.

The stairs felt steeper than usual. Shane took them slowly, one step at a time, fingers trailing along the banister for balance. Halfway up, the world tilted sharply to the side, his stomach swooping as if he’d missed a step that wasn’t there. He stopped, gripping the railing tightly, eyes squeezed shut.

Just dizzy, he told himself. Stand still. Breathe.

He waited for it to pass.

It didn’t.

By the time he reached the bathroom, the pain surged again, bright and unforgiving, sending a wave of nausea through him. His knees buckled, and he caught himself on the counter with a shaky exhale.

“Okay. Okay,” he murmured, more to ground himself than anything else.

The fluorescent light felt too harsh as he opened the medicine cabinet. His depth perception felt off, like his hands weren’t quite where he expected them to be. The Tylenol bottle slipped

from his fingers, clattering loudly into the sink before he managed to grab it. The sound echoed unpleasantly in his skull.

His hands were shaking now. That, more than the pain, made unease curl in his chest.

He twisted the cap open with clumsy fingers, dry-swallowed the pills out of impatience, then bent to drink from the tap. The cold water helped—briefly.

Then the room lurched.

Not a slow sway this time, but a violent, sudden pull to the left, as if gravity itself had shifted direction. Shane's vision tunneled, dark creeping in from the edges, and a sharp spike of alarm finally cut through the fog.

That's not good—

The thought didn't finish.

Everything went black.

—

Ilya came home laughing, breath fogging the air as he wrestled Anya's leash off with numb fingers. Snow clung stubbornly to her fur, melting in dark spots across the entryway rug as she shook herself violently.

"Papa missed you," he told her fondly, crouching to scratch behind her ears. "Such a good girl. You keep me warm, da?"

Anya wagged her tail, then abruptly stilled.

She lifted her head, ears pricking forward, and let out a soft, questioning whine.

Ilya followed her gaze into the living room. The lights were off. Too quiet. Shane's book lay face-down on the couch, his bookmark sticking out crookedly like he'd dropped it mid-thought.

That was... strange.

"Shane?" Ilya called, still light, still teasing. "Did boring hockey book finally win?"

No answer.

Anya whined again, louder this time, nails clicking anxiously against the floor as she trotted a few steps forward—then stopped, turning back to look at Ilya expectantly.

Something tight coiled low in Ilya's stomach.

He straightened slowly. “He is probably upstairs,” he told himself, told Anya. “Nap. You know your papa.”

But Anya wasn’t convinced. She sniffed the air, then turned decisively toward the stairs, tail low now, movements sharp with unease. She paused at the first step and looked back again, eyes dark and intent.

Ilya’s chest tightened.

“Okay,” he murmured, suddenly careful. “Okay, I am coming.”

Each step upstairs felt heavier than the last. The house creaked softly around him, familiar sounds turning ominous in the silence. Halfway up, Anya broke into a hurried trot, nails scrambling, a soft, distressed noise pulling from her throat.

“No, no,” Ilya whispered, dread blooming fast and cold. “Slow down, solnyshko.”

The bathroom door was open.

Anya reached it first.

She stopped abruptly, whining sharply, then backed up as if unsure, circling once before planting herself in the doorway and barking—a short, sharp sound Ilya had only ever heard when she was frightened.

Ilya saw Shane then.

Not all at once. Not properly. Just *pieces*—a leg stretched wrong across the tile, an arm pinned beneath his body, the unmistakable shape of his husband unmoving on the floor.

Time fractured.

Ilya’s brain screamed *no* even as his body lurched forward.

“Shane,” he said, too quietly. Then, louder, breaking, “Shane!”

He fell to his knees beside him, hands hovering uselessly for a split second before grabbing on—Shane’s shoulder, his jaw, anywhere solid. His skin was warm. Too warm to be gone. Had to be.

“Okh, chert! lyubov’ moya, pozhaluysta,” Ilya choked, voice collapsing into Russian without his permission. “Moya lyubov, please. Please, wake up.”

Anya pressed against his side, trembling, nose nudging insistently at Shane’s hand, whining in panicked little bursts.

Ilya forced himself to breathe. Forced himself to remember what to do. His fingers shook violently as he pressed them to Shane’s neck, searching desperately for a pulse.

There.

Fast. Uneven. But there.

A sob tore out of him, harsh and humiliating, as he leaned forward and pressed his forehead to Shane's shoulder.

"Thank you," he whispered to no one, to everyone. "Thank you."

Shane didn't move.

Didn't respond when Ilya called his name again. Didn't flinch when Ilya brushed hair back from his face, when he cupped Shane's cheek, when his voice cracked completely.

Ilya's eyes finally took in the rest of the scene—the tipped bottle near the sink, white pills scattered across the tile, stark and accusing.

His stomach dropped through the floor.

"No," he breathed. "No, no, no—"

The room tilted, memory slamming into him without mercy: another room, years ago. Another body that didn't wake. Pills. Silence. The way the world had ended quietly while he was still breathing.

He couldn't—he wouldn't—do this again.

Anya barked once more, sharp and urgent, snapping Ilya back to the present.

"Okay," he told her hoarsely. "Okay. Papa needs help. We get help."

His hands fumbled uselessly for his phone, fingers numb and clumsy as if they didn't belong to him anymore. It took three tries to unlock it.

He dialed.

"911, what's your emergency?"

The operator's voice was calm, unmistakably Canadian, steady in a way that would have made Ilya's knees finally give out if he hadn't already been on the floor.

"My husband," Ilya gasped, his accent slipping, thicker than normal. "He—he is on the floor. He is unconscious. Please. Please help us."

"Okay, sir. I need you to stay with me. Is he breathing?"

"Yes," Ilya said immediately, dropping his ear to Shane's chest to be sure. The rise and fall was shallow but real. "Yes, he is breathing."

Relief flooded him.

"Good. Stay with him. Do not move him unless he's in danger. Is there any bleeding?"

Ilya scanned frantically. “No blood. He— I don’t know. There’s pills everywhere.”

“Can you tell me about the medications or substances nearby?”

Ilya swallowed hard, eyes burning as he glanced again at the pills scattered across the floor. “There is... medicine. Pain medicine. I don’t know—”

“That’s okay,” the operator said gently. “You’re doing great. Help is on the way.”

Help is on the way.

Ilya clutched Shane’s hand in both of his, holding on like it was the only thing keeping him tethered to the world.

“I am here,” he whispered fiercely, bending low so only Shane could hear. “You stay. You hear me? I already lost one person this way. I am not losing you.”

Anya pressed closer—*when had she moved the other side?*—her head resting against Shane’s shoulder now, tail tucked, eyes fixed anxiously on his face as if willing him awake.

The sirens came at last—distant at first, then growing louder, real, undeniable.

Ilya won’t let go of Shane for a second—except when the paramedics will come to gently but surely take control of them, and even then he’ll hover nearby, shaking, watching Shane’s every breath as if it might disappear if he just blinks.

—

It felt like an eternity before Ilya could force himself to stand—much to Anya’s obvious distress—to unlock the front door. She whined sharply, nails skittering across the tile as she paced in tight, frantic circles before finally planting herself beside Shane again, shoulder pressed to his arm as if sheer proximity might keep him tethered to the world.

“I’ll be right back,” Ilya promised her, voice shaking despite his effort to keep it steady. “I promise. Don’t move.”

The paramedics were already there when he wrenched the door open, their presence immediate and overwhelming in the narrow entryway. Bright jackets cut through the dimness of the house. Calm, efficient voices layered over one another. The sharp bite of cold air rushed in, carrying the sterile tang of disinfectant with it, and Ilya’s knees nearly buckled with relief.

“Where is he?” one of them asked.

“Upstairs,” Ilya said, stepping aside and gesturing wildly. “Bathroom.”

They took the stairs two at a time, boots thudding heavily, equipment clattering softly against the walls. Ilya followed, slower, heart hammering so hard he was sure they could hear it.

Everything after that blurred into fragments.

Blue-gloved hands replaced his own, steady and practiced. Someone guided him gently but firmly out of the way, a hand on his shoulder that lingered just long enough to keep him upright. Shane was assessed with swift efficiency—airway, breathing, circulation—each step called out quietly, methodically, like a language Ilya didn't speak but desperately wanted to understand.

A blood pressure cuff cinched around Shane's arm. Oxygen tubing was slipped beneath his nose. Cold adhesive pads were pressed to his chest, wires trailing like lifelines.

Then the cervical collar—white, rigid, unforgiving—was fitted around Shane's neck, locking his head in place. The sight of it made something in Ilya's chest seize painfully—the same way it did when Shane had his accident a long time ago.

"He collapsed?" one of the paramedics asked without looking up.

"Yes," Ilya said hoarsely. "He had headache earlier. I came home and found him like this."

It felt like an important thing to say.

"Did he hit his head?"

"I think—" Ilya swallowed hard. "I don't know. He was on the floor."

"Did he say anything before you found him?"

"No."

"Any medical history? Migraines? Fainting spells?"

"Headaches sometimes," Ilya said. "Nothing like this."

"And the pills?" another paramedic asked gently, eyes flicking to the white shapes scattered across the tile.

Ilya's stomach dropped so hard he thought he might be sick.

"I—I don't know," he said quickly, shaking his head as if that might erase them. "I didn't see him take anything. I found him."

The paramedic nodded and wrote it down, face carefully neutral. Professional. Nonjudgmental.

Still, the word *pills* echoed far too loudly in Ilya's head.

Too familiar. Too close to memories he kept locked away for a reason.

He hovered uselessly at the edge of the bathroom, arms wrapped tightly around himself as if that might hold him together. His whole body trembled now, a fine, uncontrollable shake he couldn't stop. Anya stayed close, eyes wide and glossy, letting out a low, anxious growl when they lifted Shane onto the stretcher.

"It's okay," Ilya whispered to her, dropping to one knee long enough to press his forehead briefly against hers. "They're helping him. See? They're helping."

The stretcher rolled forward, wheels clicking softly over the threshold. Shane looked impossibly still against the stark white of it, swallowed by straps and wires and equipment.

Ilya followed numbly, heart lodged somewhere high in his throat, each step away from the bathroom feeling like he was leaving part of himself behind.

The ambulance doors slammed shut with a hollow, final sound.

Ilya flinched.

The space was narrow and too bright, the air sharp with antiseptic and cold metal. Shane lay strapped to the stretcher, collar still locked around his neck, wires and tubing crisscrossing his chest in a way that made Ilya's throat tighten painfully. The rhythmic beep of the monitor filled the silence, steady and indifferent.

Alive, the sound said. *Alive*.

Ilya clung to that.

One of the paramedics gestured him closer, guiding him to a narrow bench along the wall. "You can sit there," she said kindly. "Try to stay seated while we're moving."

The doors hadn't even fully latched before the ambulance lurched forward. Ilya grabbed the edge of the bench instinctively, stomach dropping as the vehicle swayed. Anya wasn't there—she'd been left with a neighbor, someone kind and concerned and ultimately irrelevant in the face of this—and the absence of her warm weight pressed painfully against his side.

"How old is your husband?" the paramedic asked, checking Shane's vitals again.

"Thirty-one," Ilya said automatically.

"Any known conditions? Medications?"

"No," he said, hesitated.

"Has he fainted before?"

"No."

The word felt brittle in his mouth.

The paramedic nodded, making notes, then shone a light briefly into Shane's eyes. Ilya looked away before the memory could settle too deeply—the bright arena lights, the way Shane had gone down wrong that night years ago, Marlow colliding with him in a way that made the entire rink go silent.

Shane not moving.

Shane not getting up.

Ilya swallowed hard and focused instead on the monitor, counting beeps like they were something he could hold onto.

The siren wailed, rising and falling, and suddenly he wasn't here anymore.

He was twelve again, sitting very still in a hallway that smelled like old carpet and boiled cabbage, hands folded neatly in his lap because someone had told him to be good. To wait. To not go into the bedroom again.

He squeezed his eyes shut.

Not now. Not now.

A hand touched his arm, grounding and real. "We're almost there," the paramedic said gently.

Ilya nodded, though he wasn't sure he'd heard her.

—

The emergency department swallowed them whole.

The stretcher rolled fast, wheels rattling over tile as voices overlapped—nurses, doctors, clipped questions fired into the air and answered just as quickly. Shane was transferred seamlessly to another bed, the collar checked, monitors reattached.

Ilya struggled to keep up, his brain lagging several seconds behind everything happening in front of him.

"Name?"

"Shane Hollander."

"Date of birth?"

He rattled it off without thinking.

"And you are?"

“Husband,” Ilya said, the word automatic, urgent. As if it mattered. As if it could anchor Shane here.

“Okay,” the nurse said, already moving. “We’re going to take him for imaging.”

The double doors swung open and shut with brutal efficiency, and Shane was gone.

Just—gone.

Ilya stopped short, the absence hitting him like a physical blow. He stood there stupidly, staring at the blank space where Shane had been seconds before, chest tight and empty all at once.

A different nurse appeared at his side, voice soft but professional. “Sir? Let’s get you seated.”

He let himself be guided without resistance into a more private room. The chair they put him in was hard plastic, molded wrong for any human body. Someone handed him a cup of water that sloshed against the rim as his hands shook. He didn’t drink it. He couldn’t imagine his throat cooperating.

A clipboard appeared.

Forms. Consent. Emergency contact.

The words blurred together.

Possible head injury.

Loss of consciousness.

Unknown ingestion.

Unknown.

The word lodged itself deep, sharp and familiar.

Ilya signed where they pointed, letters crooked and uneven. His phone buzzed in his pocket—missed calls, messages stacking up unnoticed. He didn’t check them. He couldn’t look away from the floor, from the scuffed linoleum that anchored him firmly in the present.

Don’t be twelve again, he told himself fiercely. Don’t be waiting while adults whisper behind doors you’re not allowed to open.

You should have known, a cruel voice whispered. *You live with him. You sleep next to him. If something was wrong—*

But Shane wasn’t like that. Shane talked. Shane asked questions. Shane worried out loud. Sometimes he struggled—with food, with anxiety, with reading people—but he tried so hard. He worked at being okay like it was a job he took seriously.

Ilya would have noticed.

He had to have noticed.

Time stretched and warped. The clock on the wall ticked far too loudly, each second dragging into something shapeless and unbearable.

When Yuna and David arrived, Ilya barely registered hearing his name before Yuna's arms were around him, warm and solid and achingly real.

"Oh, Ilya," she murmured, holding him tightly. "Oh, sweetheart."

Something in his chest finally cracked. He clutched at her without thinking, breath hitching violently as the tension he'd been holding back surged up all at once. David stood close, his hand steady on Ilya's shoulder—firm, grounding, familiar.

"They're taking care of him," David said quietly. "They'll do everything they can."

"I found him," Ilya whispered, the words tearing free before he could stop them. "I should have been home. I should—"

Yuna pulled back just enough to look at him, eyes wet but fierce. "No," she said, voice gentle and unyielding. "You did exactly what you were supposed to do. You saved him."

Saved.

The word felt dangerous. Fragile. Too big to hold.

Then another thought crashed in, sharp and sudden. "Oh—I forgot," Ilya muttered in Russian.

Yuna tilted her head. "Hmm?"

"You came early for dinner. I—" He broke off, English slipping away now that there was nothing left to do but wait. "Anya. Fuck. How is Anya?"

"She's okay with the neighbours," Yuna said quickly, smoothing a hand over his arm. "She's safe. Don't worry."

They sat together, the three of them forming a small, fragile island amid the chaos of the waiting room. Nurses passed occasionally, offering updates that were careful and measured.

"They're doing imaging."

"They're monitoring him."

"We'll know more soon."

Soon stretched on.

Ilya watched every door like it might open and give him back his entire world—or take it away for good.

He kept seeing the pills on the floor. Kept hearing his own scream echo off tile. Kept remembering another still body, another silence that had swallowed everything after.

He pressed his palms together hard, nails biting into skin, and prayed—to anyone listening—that this story would end differently.

That this time, someone he loved would wake up.

—

The doctor finds them a little while later.

She doesn't rush, but she doesn't linger either—moving with the quiet confidence of someone who knows exactly what she's walking into. She pulls a stool closer instead of standing over them, deliberately bringing herself to eye level.

"I'm Dr. Beaumont," she says. "I'm one of the emergency physicians looking after Ms Hollander."

Ilya's hands clench together before he realizes he's done it, fingers digging into his palms.

"His CT scan is back," she continues evenly. "There's no bleeding in his brain. No swelling. No fracture."

For a second, Ilya doesn't process the words—then they land all at once.

The air leaves his lungs in a shaky, uneven rush. He drops his head briefly, pressing his thumb into his knuckle like he needs the pain to keep himself upright.

"That's... very good news," Dr. Beaumont says gently. "However—"

There it is.

"—he did lose consciousness, and he did hit his head. So we're treating this as a concussion and keeping him under close observation."

"Observation how?" Yuna asks quietly.

"He's stable," Dr. Beaumont reassures her. "His vital signs are good. Right now he's drowsy, partly from the concussion itself and partly because we've given him antiemetic to help with nausea and pain. He's not deeply sedated—we're keeping him responsive so we can continue neurological checks."

Antiemetic? *Oh*—medication.

Ilya lifts his head. "Sed—sedation?" he asks, the word catching. "That is... safe?"

Dr. Beaumont turns fully toward him. “Yes. We’re being careful. Based on what we know so far, there’s nothing to suggest a dangerous amount of medication in his system. The medication we’re using won’t interfere with our ability to monitor him.”

“And the pills?” David asks.

Dr. Beaumont nods. “Because medication was found at the scene and we don’t yet know the amount or timing, paramedics administered activated charcoal shortly after arrival as a precaution. We’ve also drawn blood for toxicology and liver function tests.”

Ilya’s stomach tightens painfully. “How... how long?” he asks. His English slips, vowels flattening under the weight of fear. “For results.”

“Some initial results within a few hours,” she says. “Others take longer—sometimes overnight. That’s normal.”

She pauses, choosing her words carefully.

“I want to be very clear,” she says. “At this point, we are not making assumptions about intent. People lose consciousness for many reasons—severe headaches, migraines, dehydration, sudden blood pressure changes, concussion from a fall. The presence of pills doesn’t automatically tell us why something happened.”

Ilya nods stiffly, though the word *automatically* echoes unpleasantly in his head.

“Our job,” Dr. Beaumont continues, “is to treat what’s in front of us and make sure Ms Hollander is safe. If there’s any indication later that this was intentional, we’ll address that with care and support, not judgment. But we’re not there right now.”

The word safe feels fragile. Temporary. Like something that could vanish if he breathes wrong.

“You can see him,” she says, standing. “Just one person at a time for now.”

Ilya is on his feet before Yuna or David can move, legs already carrying him forward like they’ve made the decision without him.

—

Shane is in a curtained bay, the lights dimmed to a low amber glow that softens the edges of everything. Machines hum around him—monitor beeps steady and patient, oxygen whispering quietly—and Ilya latches onto the sounds like they’re instructions. Proof. Rhythm. Evidence that Shane is still here.

He looks smaller like this.

Not fragile exactly—Shane has never been fragile—but subdued, stripped of motion and stubborn energy. Still unmistakably him: the familiar slope of his nose, the faint scar at his eyebrow, the mouth Ilya has kissed a thousand times in moments both ordinary and electric. His lashes are dark against pale skin, his hair pushed messily back by hands that aren't Ilya's, and that thought stings more than it should.

The cervical collar is gone now. In its place are practical, quiet things: an IV line taped carefully to his arm, a pulse oximeter blinking softly on his finger, monitoring leads secured to his chest beneath the thin hospital gown.

Still alive, the monitor insists. Ilya seeks it again and again.

He steps closer slowly, deliberately, like sudden movement might break the spell holding Shane here. He stops at the bedside, hands hovering uselessly for a moment before he lowers himself into the chair beside the bed.

He doesn't touch Shane right away.

Instead, he watches. Counts the rise and fall of Shane's chest. One breath. Two. Three. He matches his own breathing to it, forcing his body to remember how to inhale without panic. The shaking in his hands eases just a fraction.

This is the worst part.

Not the sirens. Not the questions. Not the fear sharp enough to make him dizzy.

This—waiting with nothing to *do*.

No forms to fill out. No answers to give. No doors to open or phones to call. Just stillness and the soft hum of machines and memory creeping in where it isn't wanted.

For the thousandth time today he thinks of his mother's hand, cool and unmoving beneath his fingers, the way he'd pressed harder as if warmth might return if he insisted enough. He remembers the room looking exactly the same afterward—light filtering in through curtains, dust motes drifting peacefully—like the world hadn't noticed something irreversible had happened.

He thinks of the rink in 2017. The sickening crack when Marlow clipped Shane the wrong way. The way Shane had gone down too fast, too loose. The silence that swallowed the arena whole.

Get up, Ilya had begged then, too. *Please get up*.

Shane does not get up now.

The thought twists painfully in his chest.

Ilya reaches out at last, careful, and presses his thumb lightly against the back of Shane's hand. Warm. Responsive. Real.

“You’re not doing this to me again,” he murmurs, barely audible, more plea than accusation. “I can’t—please.”

A nurse checks in quietly, adjusts the IV rate, glances at the monitor, makes a few notes on the chart. She offers Ilya a small, reassuring smile but doesn’t interrupt him. She doesn’t need to. This space isn’t hers.

Time stretches thin and strange.

Dr. Beaumont returns after a while, voice low, presence steady. “His vital signs are stable,” she says. “Neurologically, he’s responding appropriately when we stimulate him. That’s encouraging.”

Ilya nods, throat tight.

“And the toxicology?” he asks. The word comes out wrong—tohk-see-kah-LOH-jee—but she understands him anyway

Fucking toksikológiya.

“Still pending,” she says. “We’ll let you know as soon as we have results.”

Soon.

The word settles heavily between them like something fragile that shouldn’t be touched.

Ilya stays. He doesn’t even consider leaving. His thoughts circle endlessly, crashing into the same sharp edges.

What if I missed something?

What if this is my fault?

What if Shane wakes up angry?

What if he doesn’t—

A movement breaks through the noise.

A twitch. Subtle, unmistakable.

Ilya freezes.

Shane’s fingers curl faintly against the sheet, just enough to register as intentional. His breath catches painfully.

“Shane?” Ilya whispers.

Shane’s eyes flutter, unfocused, lids heavy. A faint crease appears between his brows, like the light itself is offensive.

“—Ilya?” he murmurs, voice rough and distant, barely there.

Chert poberi.

Relief hits Ilya so hard he has to grip the edge of the bed to stay upright. His vision blurs.

“I’m here,” he says quickly, gently, afraid of overwhelming him. “You’re in hospital. You fainted.”

Shane swallows with effort. “Head... hurts.”

“I know,” Ilya says softly, brushing his thumb over Shane’s knuckles. “They’re helping you.”

Shane’s gaze drifts sluggishly around the bay, taking in the IV, the monitors, the unfamiliar ceiling. Confusion clouds his expression, but there’s no fear yet—just disorientation.

“I didn’t—” he starts, stops, frowns. “I just... took Tylenol.”

The words land quietly. Simply.

Ilya’s breath stutters.

Dr. Beaumont steps closer, unobtrusive, her voice calm. “That’s okay, Shane. Do you remember how much you took?”

“Two,” Shane says without hesitation, eyes closing briefly. “Just two. Head was killing me.”

Dr. Beaumont nods, making a note. “Thank you. That helps.”

She steps back out, glancing down at her tablet as it chimes softly.

When she comes back, her expression has eased, her tone lighter.

“The toxicology results are back,” she says. “They’re consistent with what Shane told us—two tablets of acetaminophen. No dangerous levels. His liver tests are normal.”

Ilya’s shoulders sag with relief so intense it’s almost painful.

“So... it was not—” He struggles for the word. “Not overdose.”

“No,” she says plainly. “It was not.”

She pauses, then continues carefully. “Because there was an initial concern about possible ingestion, our protocol includes offering a brief mental health check-in. This isn’t an accusation, and it doesn’t mean we think Shane intended to harm himself. It’s simply part of making sure we’re addressing the whole picture.”

Shane frowns faintly. “I didn’t—”

“I know,” Dr. Beaumont says gently. “And that’s okay. The consult is supportive, not punitive. You can ask questions. You can decline parts of it. You’re in control.”

Ilya swallows hard, nodding. “That... is okay,” he says. “If it keeps him safe.”

Dr. Beaumont smiles softly. “That’s exactly the goal.”

When she leaves, the room feels quieter.

Shane shifts slightly, wincing. “You look like hell,” he murmurs weakly.

Ilya laughs shakily, leaning closer until their foreheads nearly touch. “You scared me,” he whispers. “So much.”

Shane’s fingers tighten faintly around his. “Mne zhal'.” *I’m sorry.*

Ilya closes his eyes, pressing his forehead gently to Shane’s. “Just—don’t do that again,” he murmurs. “Please.”

Shane squeezes his hand once more, solid this time.

And for the first time since the bathroom floor, Ilya lets himself believe that this—this quiet, fragile moment—might actually be the beginning of everything settling back into place.

—

Dr. Beaumont comes back with a tablet tucked against her side, movements unhurried now. The kind of calm that only appears once the worst possibilities have been ruled out. She pauses just inside the curtain, eyes flicking briefly to the monitor, then settling on Shane.

“You’re doing well,” she says, addressing him directly—not to the room, not to Ilya hovering at his side. “Still with me?”

Shane cracks one eye open. Considers the question seriously, like it might be a trick. “Unfortunately,” he says. His voice is rough but steady. Very present.

“That’s what we like to hear,” she says, a hint of amusement there. She turns slightly to include Ilya. “I wanted to go over what we think happened.”

Ilya straightens immediately, shoulders pulling tight as if bracing for impact. He nods once.

“Based on the CT, blood work, cardiac monitoring, and what Shane’s told us,” Dr. Beaumont says, “this wasn’t medication toxicity. Two tablets of acetaminophen wouldn’t cause loss of consciousness.”

Shane frowns faintly. “Told you.”

Ilya shoots him a look—relief tangled with lingering anger and fear. Shane notices, pauses, then very deliberately closes his mouth again.

“What we’re seeing,” Dr. Beaumont continues, “is consistent with migraine—specifically migraine with neurological symptoms.”

She waits, giving Shane time to process. He’s staring at a fixed point on the ceiling, brow furrowed, clearly replaying the word *migraine* against his internal definition of it.

“Migraines aren’t just headaches,” she explains. “In some people, they can cause changes in blood flow in the brainstem. That can lead to severe pain, visual disturbance, dizziness, nausea—and in rarer cases, fainting.”

Shane turns his head slightly. “I’ve had migraines before.”

“Yes,” she agrees easily. “But they can evolve over time. Stress. Travel. Irregular sleep. Dehydration.”

Ilya exhales through his nose. Every single one lands like a direct hit. Shane treating discomfort like a solvable equation. If he ignores it long enough, it will stop being a problem.

“We also believe the fainting caused the concussion,” Dr. Beaumont adds. “Not the other way around.”

“So his head—” Ilya starts, then stops himself.

“Is structurally fine,” she says, reassuring without being dismissive. “No bleeding. No swelling. But a concussion is still a brain injury. That explains the light sensitivity, the slowed responses, and why the headache worsened afterward.”

Shane makes a soft, displeased sound. “That seems inefficient.”

Dr. Beaumont smiles faintly. “The human body often is.”

She scrolls on her tablet, then looks back up. “We’ll keep him overnight for observation. Neurological checks every few hours. IV fluids. Pain management that won’t interfere with concussion recovery.”

“And after?” Ilya asks, quietly now.

“After, he rests,” she says firmly. “No screens. No workouts. No skating. Gradual return under medical supervision.”

Shane opens his mouth.

Dr. Beaumont lifts a finger. “I know he’s a professional athlete.”

Shane closes his mouth, visibly recalibrating.

“We’ll also set up outpatient neurology follow-up,” she continues. “If these migraines are increasing in frequency or severity, we’ll want to manage them proactively. Preventative options exist.”

That word—*preventative*—settles in Ilya’s chest like a steady weight.

“Questions?” she asks.

Ilya shakes his head. He can’t quite trust his voice.

Shane murmurs, “Can I go home now?”

She smiles. “No.”

“Okay,” Shane says, immediately, because the answer is clear.

She leaves, the curtain swaying softly behind her.

The silence afterward is different. Not sharp. Not terrifying. Just fragile, like something that could still crack if handled wrong.

Shane exhales, then turns his head toward Ilya, studying him with careful attention. “Your eyes are red.”

“I have been crying,” Ilya says flatly.

“Huh.” Shane considers this. “That tracks.”

Ilya snorts despite himself, then leans forward, resting his forehead briefly against the mattress. Just to feel the warmth. The proof.

The curtain rustles again.

Yuna comes in first, already blotting at her eyes, David right behind her. They both stop short when they see Shane awake.

“Oh,” Yuna breathes, hand flying to her mouth.

“Hey, Mom,” Shane says, squinting. His voice softens without him quite meaning it to.

She crosses the room in two quick steps and cups his face carefully, like she’s holding something precious and breakable. “Don’t you ever do that again.”

“I didn’t mean to,” Shane says, earnest and literal. “I just wanted my head to stop exploding.”

Yuna lets out a shaky laugh that turns into a sob. “I know. I know.”

David steps closer more slowly, taking in the IV, the monitors, the way Ilya hasn’t moved more than an inch from the bed. He sets a steady hand on Ilya’s shoulder—grounding, deliberate.

“Good to see you awake,” he says. “You scared us.”

Shane’s gaze flicks between them, then back to Ilya. Something clicks into place, slow but thorough. “I scared everyone.”

“Yes,” Ilya says, not sugarcoating it.

Shane swallows. “I’m sorry.”

Yuna smooths his hair back gently. “We know.”

She glances at Ilya then, eyes softening. “You too,” she adds quietly. “You’ve been holding this together.”

Ilya blinks, caught off guard.

They stay for a while. Quiet reassurances. Yuna fussing until a nurse gently reminds her about overstimulation. David asking practical questions, making sure follow-ups are understood. Shane listening intently, asking for clarification when something doesn’t line up cleanly.

Eventually, visiting hours end.

When they leave, the room dims again.

Ilya stays.

Later, when the lights are low and the monitors hum softly, Shane murmurs, “I didn’t do anything stupid.”

“I know,” Ilya says instantly.

“I wasn’t trying to hurt myself.”

“I know.”

“I just—” Shane pauses, searching for the exact phrasing. “I thought if I ignored it long enough, it would stop being a problem.”

Ilya closes his eyes. Presses a careful kiss to Shane’s knuckles. “You don’t have to push through everything,” he says softly. “You’re allowed to stop.”

Shane’s fingers curl around his. Purposeful. Sure.

“Okay,” he says.

And Ilya believes him.

—

Shane is tired in a way that feels layered—bone-deep exhaustion stacked on top of the dull throb behind his eyes, stacked on top of the lingering echo of fear that doesn’t quite belong to

him but keeps brushing up against his ribs anyway.

The migraine is still there when they leave the hospital. It hasn't vanished like he keeps half-expecting it to. It's just... quieter. Less sharp. Like someone turned the volume knob down but didn't mute it completely.

He notes this clinically as Ilya helps him into his coat, fingers careful, hovering like Shane might tip over if the zipper snags. Shane doesn't say anything about it. Ilya needs the hovering. Shane can feel that the same way he can feel the ache in his temples—persistent, unavoidable.

The car ride home is quiet. Not awkward. Just measured. Shane keeps his eyes closed, tracking the familiar turns by muscle memory, counting breaths when the streetlights flicker too brightly through his lids. Ilya keeps one hand on the steering wheel and the other resting on Shane's knee, grounding himself there like an anchor.

Before they go inside, they stop at the neighbors' place.

Anya hears them before the door opens.

There's a sudden scramble of claws, a muffled bark, and then she's there—wiggling so hard her entire back half seems to be powered by pure relief. Shane barely has time to brace before she launches herself gently-but-not-that-gently into him, front paws on his chest, tail going a mile a minute.

"Hey," Shane says, startled into a small smile despite himself. "Hi."

Anya presses her forehead under his chin, snuffling insistently like she's checking him for missing pieces. She whines softly, then pulls back just enough to look at his face, ears high and eyes bright.

"I'm okay," Shane tells her, because that seems important. "See? I'm vertical."

She barks once, sharp and happy, then immediately decides that sitting directly on his feet is the correct course of action.

Ilya laughs, breathless and a little broken. "She was very worried."

"So were you," Shane says, because it's true, and because stating obvious things usually helps him make sense of them.

Ilya's mouth does something complicated. He just nods and scratches Anya behind the ears until she melts.

At home, getting Shane to the couch becomes a whole production.

Yuna hovers from the left. David hovers from the right. Ilya hovers everywhere at once, like if he looks away Shane might disappear.

"I can walk," Shane says, mildly bewildered, even as he lets them guide him.

“Yes, yes, we know,” Yuna says, adjusting a pillow that Shane has not yet sat on. “Just—slowly.”

David clears his throat. “Doctor said rest.”

“I am resting,” Shane points out. “I’m actively in the process of sitting.”

They finally settle him on the couch with his book—returned to his hands like a small, familiar weight that makes everything line up again. The room smells like home. Like laundry detergent and coffee and Anya’s fur. Shane exhales and lets his shoulders drop.

That’s when he notices Ilya hasn’t sat down.

Ilya’s hands are flexing. He’s pacing in a tight line between the kitchen and the hallway, eyes unfocused, breath shallow in a way Shane recognizes immediately.

Oh.

Shane shifts, preparing to stand. “Ilya—”

“I’m fine,” Ilya says too quickly. “I just—bathroom. I will clean.”

“That’s not—” Shane starts, because that doesn’t track, because the bathroom is already clean, because—

David’s hand settles gently but firmly on Shane’s shoulder.

“Let him,” David says quietly. “I’ll go with him.”

Shane frowns, confusion sparking, but David’s gaze is steady and kind and asking-for-trust without words. Shane stops moving.

David follows Ilya down the hall. Their voices drop too low for Shane to parse, which bothers him more than it probably should. He doesn’t like missing pieces.

Yuna immediately fills the space.

She tucks a blanket around Shane’s legs he didn’t ask for but doesn’t mind. She smooths his hair back once, then again, then seems to realize she’s doing it and still doesn’t stop.

“You scared us,” she says softly, not accusing. Just stating.

“I know,” Shane says. He means it. He understands it now in a way that feels heavier than the words themselves.

She watches his face carefully, like she’s reading something written in a language she’s learned fluently over years. “How does your head feel?”

“Still there,” Shane says. “But less… aggressive.”

She nods. “That’s good.”

They sit in comfortable quiet. Anya curls up at Shane's feet, pressed close like she's standing guard. The book rests open in his hands, though he hasn't started reading yet.

Eventually, footsteps return.

David comes back first. His eyes are red. Ilya follows a second later, clearly having lost the battle with composure somewhere between the bathroom sink and the hallway.

Shane doesn't think. He just opens his arms.

Ilya crosses the room in three unsteady steps and collapses into them, folding into Shane's chest like gravity finally remembered him. He clutches Shane's shirt with both hands, forehead tucked under Shane's chin, breath hitching hard.

Shane wraps his arms around him automatically, adjusting carefully so he doesn't jostle his own head. He presses his cheek against Ilya's hair and holds on.

It feels right. Necessary.

They stay like that for a while.

Yuna watches them with something like reverence. David rests a hand on her back. Neither of them interrupts.

Eventually, Yuna steps forward and kisses Shane's forehead, careful and lingering. Then she kisses Ilya's too, pressing her lips briefly into his hair.

"Both my boys," she murmurs.

David squeezes Shane's shoulder once, solid and grounding.

When they leave, the house settles into a quieter version of itself.

Shane adjusts the blanket, shifts the book, and clears his throat gently. "Do you want me to read?"

Ilya nods against his chest without lifting his head. Anya lifts hers, ears pricking.

Shane starts reading aloud, voice low and steady. The words come easily, familiar and predictable in the best way. His voice fills the room softly, wrapping around Ilya's breathing, around Anya's slow tail thump against the couch.

The migraine hums quietly in the background.

But for now, that's all it is.

Background noise.

And Shane keeps reading.

End Notes

I don't speak Russian, so I did my best with these translations. If anything is incorrect or awkward, please let me know — I'm very open to corrections!

“Okh, chert! lyubov' moya, pozhaluysta” = “Oh, fuck! My love, please.”

“Moya lyubov” = “My love.”

“Toksikologiya” = “Toxicology.”

“chert poberi” = “Damn it.”

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