

soaring, flying

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by [summerwithout_u](#)

Summary

Accidents happened. Shane knew this. It was just hard to come to terms with the fact he couldn't speak.

Or,

What if Shane's injury in Heated Rivalry was more serious?

Notes

Holy shit. This ship is genuinely all I think about. It made me write fanfiction and FINISH my one-shot in mere hours. This hasn't happened since RWRB and back then I was a terrrribllee writer. I have so many unfinished fics in my Google Drive it's stupid. I've been reading fanfiction for 9 fucking years and I can't even write one full fic.

Anyways! I'm so glad because I love writing I just struggle because I'm always so busy, but I'm sick rn and what better way to spend time than release this damn fic. I read the book back when the first episodes had come out and man... I love that Game Changers was originally Stucky. I love them so much, but Ilya and Shane have a special place in my heart. I literally went to sleep for surgery thinking about them.

I originally locked this fic to only registered users because I really don't want my work scraped with AI again but apparently that's useless. ugh. Happened to my other one and it made me so fucking mad. I'm sorry people without accounts.

My idea for the aphasia is from one of my fave Stony fics, Words by missbecky (the goat). Very loosely inspired, but I really wanted to mention it because it is soooo good.

Okay now that I'm rereading this it is so damn cringy and short but YOLO!

Well! Please enjoy and I'm sorry in advance.

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

Shane always felt exhilarated playing against Ilya.

There was something about competing with someone who could match each of your plays and counter them perfectly that pushed him to compete at one hundred ten percent. He was in the corner with him now, battling for the puck, and this was his favorite part of any game.

Shane won, and skated away with his prize. He smiled as Ilya raced after him with a smirk he knew meant Ilya was enjoying this as much as Shane was. Shane was a better stick handler, but Ilya was a faster skater, and he caught up with him and poked the puck off his blade from behind. Ilya had the puck for all of three seconds before Shane forced him into the boards and stole it back. Shane couldn't help the teasing glance he threw back at Ilya. The ice felt like air, and his skates like wings as he soared across the ice, nearing the goal quickly. With none of his own teammates being relatively close to him while he flew forward, Shane closed in on the Boston goalie, still smiling as Ilya fell behind him—

There was no way to anticipate the destabilizing brunt of the force plowing into Shane. His body wasn't even able to brace at all before he was flung fully to the side. The speed he had been skating at was a regret in the back of Shane's mind as he saw the boards approach his face so rapidly that his only other thought was how this was not how he had wanted to go out.

For a long time, there was nothing.

Then there were hues of black, a haze between one bout of consciousness and another. There was no thought, just drifting silently between one sea of quiet to the next.

When the haze became more vivid, he thought there were sounds that breached the silence, but there was no way to decipher what they meant. They were garbled and confusing and he did not try to understand. He flew in clouds on skates that were wings and he imagined a tall man with curled brown hair smirking at him.

Eventually, the haze waned into something he recognized. There were clinical lights and he vaguely recognized a blob of color that moved around and made sounds, perhaps to communicate to someone. He hoped the female voice knew he did not speak that language. Wow, did his head fucking *hurt*.

His constant confusion was frustrating now, and all he wanted was the lucidity he knew was just within his grasp. Shapes and sounds melted into faces and voices that he felt like he should understand. His mother Yuna smiled with wet eyes when he met her gaze with the best smile he could muster. It reminded him of the man in his dreams. He wondered if it was possible to fly in ice skates. He still couldn't figure out what she was saying, though.

His father walked in with two small white blobs (cups?) and scoffed as if he knew he would be alright all along. His eyes were undoubtedly shiny and warm. Sounds he recognized but couldn't quite place kept coming from their mouths and a weird feeling took place in his gut. He felt afraid and stupidly stared at their lips, thinking the noises would take shape into things he could comprehend.

The sounds morphed horrifyingly into insects that climbed from his parents lips and crawled onto the floor and towards his bed. They writhed pityingly around him and blurred like poor imitations of reality. There was another anguished sound, steadily increasing in volume. His parents came towards him with strange, frantic expressions while the insects continued to crawl over them, onto him. His hands shot out to claw at them and stop them from covering him and climbing into his own mouth. He imagined their slime and clicking noises and glimmering eyes even while he could not touch them. The sound muted when he closed his mouth to keep the bugs out.

It did not end until the prick at his arm invited him back to unconsciousness and clouds and smiling men with dark curls.

Speaking and words were not right. They glided through his brain and flew, flew far over his head, the messed up one that he now understood he had. Something happened to do this, but it hurt too much to recall.

There was always fear, knowledge that there was something wrong, but somewhere inside him he was now *terrified*.

Their mouths all moved quickly, and he chased them to the point of exhaustion. The insects had gone, but he was still just as afraid and utterly vulnerable. It was solving a puzzle with no pieces and no idea what the original image had looked like. He was beginning to realize it was not his own thoughts that were the problem, really; he remembered what a puzzle was, and a cup, and his parents. There was a nagging image of the man from the clouds with the wings on his feet, but it was not tangible enough to focus on.

Sometimes the noises would pause, as if wondering if he would answer. He would always flex his fingers tensely, annoyed that they expected him to do anything. He missed his dreams of soaring in the skies.

He began to hear the words in the mess that stumbled from his parents' mouths, and the ones of others around him. It was harder to understand the ones from other faces, but he tried to put his finger on who they were—*Hayden...J.J...*

...what...

...not...

He...out.

The tidbits he started to cobble together into real phrases. Ones that should have come natural to him, but only felt like small, useless things.

He feels bad.

...want to visit.

There were inflections too, ones that indicated tone and intention. Those were harder to get around because they made him confuse a question with a statement, a joke with an exclamation.

One brief period between drifts that had become less frequent and more like real rest, he heard something he knew had been said before. It seemed important, the word, but not until the new face appeared in the space next to his bed.

Shane.

The man breathed the word deeply like it was the most precious thing to him. For once, he, *Shane his name was Shane*, knew the way he had said it meant something good, like love and hotel rooms. There was something about this face that he *knew* was important. It was on the tip of his tongue, in his useless mouth that had failed to speak since he had awoken. It was a sensation he had become well acquainted with.

Shane felt the strangest, most uncontrollable urge at that moment to smile and reassure the familiar face that he was alright, and a stranger urge to kiss him. He only had faint wisps of memory from the weird dreams he'd had before he remembered waking up, but he recalled this same man smiling, laughing as they raced amongst clouds.

This time, the man was not smiling. He stood awkwardly, although there were open chairs, and Shane noticed the other occupants of the room staring at him like he was insane. Shane giggled silently to himself. He was the insane one!

The jumbled speech Shane had come to know picked up immediately, as Shane's parents and Hayden looked at the man with contempt and open distrust. This time, he decided to pay rapt attention. Maybe he would talk to Shane too. There was a strange way this man chose his words, like he had trouble with them too. They curved in his mouth differently than the others.

...so sorry for...

Shane and I...

...never told you...

The room's occupants listening to the man talk slowly grew less wary and more incredulous. Reading expressions was something Shane was glad had stuck with him, even if language often evaded him. Hayden especially seemed extremely baffled, and partially miffed. Shane itched to know what they were talking about, and then they all looked at *him*.

Their collective eye contact made Shane want to melt into a puddle in his bed. Their expressions ranged from shocked to hurt to sympathetic. The tall man with brown curls seemed to demand his gaze most intently, and as he shifted, he saw the edge of a golden chain beneath his black shirt with a familiar image, and a letter...what letter was that? He began speaking again, less bold and more shaky, while the others replied with less heat than before.

...wrong with him?

...damaged in the collision.

Hard to understand...

Shane fought the urge to hide under the covers and scream. He knew this interaction was significant, but the reason evaded him *again*. Not only were words hiding somewhere in the corners of his brain (some dark part of Shane figured they had just completely leaked out forever), but he didn't know the year, peoples' names, or even what had fucking happened to him.

Since rookie year...love with him.

Those particular words struck something within him more than the usual random phrases. *Rookie year...* that shirt was from Boston, Shane deduced, the team this man had been drafted to. He was sure of it. He pursed his lips and concentrated despite the raw throbbing of his head.

Boston... He saw flashes of points in time with the curly haired brunet man, being served a tuna melt and ginger ale, the noises he made when he was inside Shane, and the slow curve of his mouth as he teased him for being *boring*.

Ilya was the name that came so suddenly into his mind it was all-consuming and he felt the room disappearing as tears blurred his sight. What kind of person was Shane? Why did he ever for a moment not remember him? *Ilya*, oh *Ilya*, he was in front of him quickly, and he felt tender hands caress his cheeks, wiping away his tears. The hole, the largest puzzle piece missing was there and it was slotted into place next to the other remnants of his life he had.

He wanted so fucking badly to tell *Ilya* everything like how frustrated he was and how infuriatingly beautiful *Ilya* was and the disgusting pudding he had just eaten. His mouth made sounds unlike any real language in existence, when it made noise at all. His consonants hissed and crackled and sometimes he would exhale some sound like a grunt, and. All it did was give *Ilya* the saddest expression. Shane wanted to scream if not for the knowledge it was useless.

He knew how to speak because he had done it before. He knew he had because he remembers speaking with no hesitation, in multiple languages. *Ilya*, he repeats and it never makes it out of his mind. Instead, he says, "Bear." What a fucking joke.

He walked into his parents' house feeling slightly better. Here there was no nurse passively aggressively inquiring him to stop fiddling with the machines, or bad hospital food. Instead, he could wallow in his own pain and misery alone while his mouth stayed glued shut for fear of embarrassing himself with the ugly sounds he made. His parents encouraged him to speak often, but he knew it was painful for them to hear too. It was better to keep silent.

There was a therapist, though. With none of his family around, without *Ilya* seeing him and making that face, he tried so hard. Eventually he started making sounds, curving his tongue

around words that weren't just gibberish. He said "had" and "give" and meant what he said. It was different with phrases. He would say "need white" when he was thinking of milk, and "feel air" when he meant dizzy.

The highlights of however long it had been since he returned to living with his parents were Ilya's visits. He would never speak, but Ilya did not either. Instead, they communicated in tender touches and soft kisses. Ilya never took it further, even though he knew he wanted to. Shane realized after a few visits how frequently he was coming by, despite his schedule. He did not know the exact date, but he was pretty sure it was playoffs for the NHL.

And yet another excruciating detail he had to deal with in his lucid and aware state: he was not playing hockey for the foreseeable future, at least on a team. A sharp, painful part of Shane was so hurt by it that whenever he remembered, he felt a pressure behind his eyes that he wiped away before it became something significant.

Sometimes his progress felt so slow, he would lay awake at night knowing deep down he would never be what he once was.

"Can I ask you something?" Ilya said something to Shane for the first time since he had seen him in the hospital bed. "If you want to answer."

Shane had only tried saying a few words to Ilya, and they had rarely come out as they had intended to. But that had been weeks ago. They were in Shane's yoga studio back at his house now that Boston had not made the playoffs. Ilya had come to Yuna and David and told them he would take care of Shane and live there with him. The TV he could hear but only kind of read said something about Rozanov playing a bad last few games, but Shane didn't want to mention it.

He hesitated for a few moments, but if he was going to speech therapy, he may as well have something to show for it.

"Y-Yes." Almost.

"I hear your first word after therapy was 'bear.'" Ilya's smirk was careful and not particularly teasing. "Why that?"

Shane flushed immediately. They had left any conversation about feelings before the accident in the past, like they had both mutually decided to pretend they didn't still need to talk about their issues. Yeah, right. Maybe when Shane could actually fucking speak.

It was hard because Ilya was so damn committed to taking care of Shane now, even though he didn't really need to be there anymore for anything besides driving him places and navigating the TV. They didn't talk, but Shane felt like something had shifted since Before. There had to be something else if Ilya was so determined to stay and take care of Shane and his stupid issues. But telling him he had been trying to say his name as the first word he had spoken felt too close to something dangerous.

“I don’t... do not...I know...do not know.” Speaking was harder when he was lying—not that he was the best liar before. Ilya’s face gave away how much he seemed to believe that statement.

“Liar, must mean *something*. That is not how it works.”

“Nooo...” He loved saying smaller words by themselves because they came easier. He almost felt normal for a second.

Ilya did not leave up, and leaped onto Shane’s back as he leaned into Upward Dog, planting himself on Shane, 230 pounds of muscle and smirk withstanding. “What were you saying?”

“Fine! I guess...guess I...” Shane was nervous and kind of annoyed at himself for it. “Trying to...say to...say your name.” He snorted and pretended like he didn’t just confess that Ilya’s name was the first word he wanted to learn.

Ilya was quiet for a second, and Shane couldn’t see his face because he was currently being crushed under the weight of an All-Star NHL player. He hoped he hadn’t just crossed a line. Although, if Ilya was here at all, he must think Shane is worth something.

“Shane, I...” He drifted off, his voice unsteady. “You don’t know how much I...”

Shane felt breathless even after Ilya climbed off of his back and sat silently next to him, something raw in his eyes. The morning sun poured through the floor-to-ceiling windows in droplets of light, cascading over Ilya’s face and Shane was lost for words again.

“I was so fucking scared when I saw you...thought you died.” Ilya’s voice was small and very unlike him. It was not lost on Shane the miniscule amount of people who had seen this side of him. “Have made so much progress since I first saw you after. Means a lot to me that...” He didn’t finish, but Shane felt his own face soften as he shifted closer to Ilya.

A thought crossed his mind that this was a good time to use his speaking sessions and say something stupid and impulsive that he had been practicing with his speech therapist for a while now. He had repeated it so many times he had probably been saying it in his sleep. Every time Ilya was next to him on the couch, or calling him boring, or provoking him lightheartedly, Shane had begun to have trouble keeping his mouth *shut*. It was so easy to want this man, he wanted to burst out and scream it.

“Ilya.” Fuck it. “Ilya. I...I love you.”

The look that crossed Ilya’s face was something between affection and shock. Shane didn’t really know how to take it, so he just waited as he laid sideways, facing him on the mat and waiting.

“Fuck. Fuck you Shane Hollander. I love you so fucking much.” Ilya replied passionately after a minute, and tilted Shane back so that he faced up, leaning over him with mirth in his eyes. “Ya tebya lyublyu.”

Shane quirked his lips up and fought a beaming grin because even though he still struggled so much with his English, he recognized what Ilya was saying in Russian. They tumbled on the ground together, alternating between kisses and grinning like idiots.

Shane found himself thinking about the dreams he had, the ones that stuck with him even after he had been released from the hospital. He and Ilya had flown elegantly, their skates taking them smoothly over clouds and their smiles bright and content. He had long since revered it as his favorite dream, for how carefree and light it had felt. Like the moment before his accident. He wondered if maybe this moment was better. He wondered if this was going to be the rest of his life. Ilya pulled back slowly and looked at him with an expression so gentle he thought there was no doubt it probably would.

End Notes

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