

anxious spirals

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anxious spirals

by [andipxndy](#)

Summary

prompt: anxious spiral

Shane had many fears.

He didn't show them. He never did. Showing his fears would be a sign of weakness, something that other people could exploit, and then once it was exploited... he was unsafe. What would he do? His world would change, everything would shift, and he'd have to make up whole new routines to go with this whole new reality of everything knowing his fears and anticipate who would use them against him, and who wouldn't (out of the goodness of their hearts). And then that special third category of those who could use his fears against him, but would instead hold it all against him like blackmail, ready to use against him the moment they wanted something from him.

No, it was much safer for Shane to hide his fears, to keep them all locked up in a little box in his chest so that no one could ever see them, so that they never saw the light of day. Then he was safe, then he couldn't be exploited, then he kept looking strong and people didn't come against him or use him for their own gain. It was what was best for him.

Notes

hello hello!! another fic here for you!! hollanov has my heart, or at least part of it. i love them so much. also i find shane very relatable in more ways than one but i'm not gonna examine that.

anyway, here's day 8!! again, it's late, but life is hard soooooo... enjoy!!

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

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Ilya Rozanov was one such fear. Not his skill as a player, not his competitiveness, not the fact that he was a rival. Not even the fact that he was the reason Shane realised he was gay.

Just... Ilya. Ilya Rozanov. Everything about him made Shane *afraid*.

Not in the typical "run for your life" sort of afraid. No, that wasn't the sort of fear Shane had for Ilya. It was more the... the "hide everything and protect it with your life" sort of afraid. The fear that someone would see, that all would be revealed, that his world would come crashing down and the fallout would burn up everything he'd worked so hard to make for himself because of Ilya. Because of *him*. Because of *that man*.

That was why, on a random Wednesday, he found himself sat on Ilya's kitchen floor, half-drunk ginger ale on the counter he sat with his back against, his hands scrabbling at his joggers to try and keep himself grounded. Was it working? Not exactly, but it was better than literally curling up on the floor and hyperventilating until he passed out.

The idea of the whole world knowing about him and Ilya, about the whole world knowing what Ilya *meant* to him, made him want to crawl under a rock and cry. Never mind that it would take a major fuck up for the world to find out, because he and Ilya were so careful and so few people knew. One slip up, and the news could end up all over the world. His parents had found out by walking in on him and Ilya when they were supposed to be having a private moment in his own house. What if something like that happened, except it wasn't someone who was willing to keep his secret? What if it was someone who would sell the story to the media? Someone who wanted to make a quick buck and then move on with their lives as if nothing had happened, when they just ruined his entire existence?

And what would happen afterwards? The media finds out, and then... it'll be everywhere. People from all walks of life, whether they watched hockey or not, would suddenly have their eyes on his relationship. Everyone would know.

Shane Hollander is gay. He could see it now, the news spreading everywhere — on newspapers, social media, news channels reporting it at every hour of the day. Journalists running after him, crowding him when all he wanted to do was get some ginger ale, shoving their microphones in his face for a soundbite, snapping photographs of him. *Shane Hollander out in public after his revelation. Shane Hollander: getting groceries for his boyfriend? Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov: meant to be or just a fling?*

Gossip shows talking about him. They would be fresh news on those reality TV shows Jackie watched and talked about. Everyone would have an opinion, everyone would want to share it, everyone would want him to know it and act based on what *they* thought he should do, regardless of what he really wanted to do.

And it wouldn't just be the general public finding out, would it? Anyone close to him that didn't know yet: his close friends, his extended family, his teammates. People who all thought that he hated Ilya, when the complete opposite was true. One time, when he was younger, he'd heard someone say that the line between love and hate was impossibly thin — both were intense feelings towards a person, separated by a razor wire. Would people think that was the case here? Would his teammates think that he'd tipped over the edge from hating Ilya into loving him because he'd played around the line for too long?

Would they even entertain that line of thought? What if they skipped from trying to understand him straight to hating him? Calling him a traitor, accusing him of sharing team secrets? Maybe even calling him something like... like a *whore*, letting himself be used by Ilya in exchange for wins. Like he's not a real captain, just a bargain-maker. Like they let the results of their games depends on what they did behind closed doors.

Like he was cheap and easily bought.

...*Was* he cheap and easily bought?

What if he was? What if the whole reason he ended up getting into this situation was because —

But that would make Ilya someone who liked people who were cheap and easily bought. No, no that wasn't Ilya. No, that was wrong.

But what if people *thought* that about him, and it ruined his reputation, and people didn't want him around anymore, and he got kicked from his team, and no one else wanted him, and he had to retire into hiding and never show his face in public ever again because he was simple and easy and he fell for Ilya Rozanov and the world thought he was cheap and easily bought and didn't deserve every single thing he had worked his ass off for for his whole life —

“—lander? Hollander?”

What if he lost every single friend he had in his life? What if everyone walked away from him? What if everyone decided that enough was enough, that they weren't going to deal with him anymore, that this was the one thing that stopped them from ever wanting to associate with him anymore?

“*Hollander.*”

Shane could hear a voice, Ilya’s voice, talking to him. He could see his outline in front of him, amongst the haze of anxious fuzz that had settled in his vision, but the thoughts were still louder. They were still telling him that someone was going to find out. That his world was going to end. That his worst nightmare was going to come true and he was going to be hated for the rest of eternity—

A calloused hand took his at the same time he heard, “*Shane,*” in that same, soft Russian accent that he had grown to love over the years. The sharpening was instantaneous, everything coming into focus immediately. His panicked, wheezing breaths echoed around the kitchen. He could hear the ticking of the clock in the living room from here. Ilya’s softer breaths were steadier, slower.

His eyes stared straight into his.

“Can you breathe with me, Shane?”

Shane didn’t think he could even *talk* at that moment, but he gave a shaky nod. One of his hands was still scrabbling at his joggers. The other was holding on tightly to Ilya’s hand, Ilya’s gentle squeezes gradually grounding him in the present, away from his thoughts.

“Okay, in and out. Copy me.”

As Ilya took a deep breath in, Shane tried to copy. His chest felt tight, his lungs cramped, and it *hurt*. It hurt, it hurt it hurt. But then Ilya was letting out a slow breath and he almost did it. And then he was doing it again, and it was a little easier this time. His chest felt a little looser.

It felt like forever before he was breathing normally, everything in focus, and his head didn’t feel like it was going to explode from all the thoughts running wild. His head leaned back against the counter, bumping lightly on the surface, and he simply sat there, holding Ilya’s hand as his heartrate slowly came down.

Ilya was still crouched in front of him, and stayed there for a few moments before turning and sitting down on the floor next to him, still holding his hand. Still squeezing it every few moments to remind Shane that he was there. Still keeping Shane grounded and present.

There was a comfortable silence that hung between them as they sat there — a silence that was so full of meaning that Shane didn’t want to break it. But he knew it would break eventually, that one of them would speak and it would all be over and they’d continue on with their day. He didn’t think he had the voice to break the silence anytime soon — he didn’t *trust* his voice to be able to break the silence without breaking itself.

Ilya did it instead.

“What was in your head?” he asked, softly. “What were your thoughts?”

Shane swallowed. “I was...” He bit his lip. “I started thinking about people finding out. About us. Everything about us being together and...” He didn’t feel like he needed to finish

that. Ilya could guess from the rest of it.

Ilya squeezed his hand and said no more. *Continue.*

Shane took another deep breath. “I was thinking about how they would react. The media reacting to finding out about us, if we’re not careful. Spreading stories. Trying to figure out more. Digging into who we are and how we got together, trying to figure out when it happened.” He took another breath, swallowing. “And then I started thinking about how they would even find out. Because my parents found out. They found out without us saying a word, they caught us. All it would take is one slip up. And then...” He could feel himself starting to panic again, the thought of the whole situation beginning to run through his mind, but one squeeze from Ilya’s hand kept him *there*, on that kitchen floor. “And then I started thinking about our teammates, about them finding out. About how they’d react, getting angry and turning us away. Not... not wanting us anymore. Forcing me to give it up. All of it. My whole life—”

“Even Hayden?”

That made Shane’s brain slow to a stop. Hayden, his best friend. His closest teammate. That wonderful idiot of a man. Did he imagine him turning Shane away too?

Ilya’s voice was soft as he leaned closer to Shane, his blue eyes looking straight into Shane’s brown. “Hayden would not abandon you. Hayden is best friend. Best friends don’t leave.”

Those words alone seemed to unravel the majority of Shane’s train of thought, pointing out the irrationality of his anxious thinking bit by bit, pulling each thought apart and dismantling every single one. Showing him how it was all wrong. Showing him how it could possibly happen, but the likelihood of it was low. Because—

“We are careful,” Ilya pointed out softly, squeezing Shane’s hand again. “We are *always* careful.”

“But what if—”

“No.”

Shane pursed his lips at suddenly being cut off, but he was glad that Ilya did that. He was glad Ilya stopped that thought in its tracks. He was glad that Ilya *made him* stop, before it could get worse again.

Feeling a gentle hand on his cheek, Shane let his boyfriend turn his head gently, until he was facing him fully. He melted into the soft kiss Ilya planted on his lips, barely even moving as he pulled away.

“You are better now, yes?”

Shane swallowed again and took a mental check. His hands still felt sweaty. His heart didn’t feel like it was going to beat out of his chest. His head hurt in that way it usually did when he was having a panic or anxiety attack for too long, in that way that suggested he may be down

for the count for the rest of the day. There weren't tears on his face, not this time. His body felt shaky.

He was alive and present. At this point, that was enough for him. Everything else could be dealt with later.

He was present and with *Ilya*. That was more than enough.

"Better, yes." He took a shaky breath. "Good? Questionable."

Ilya looked him over, as if making the assessment for himself, before giving a small nod. "That is enough for now."

"Really?"

"Yes." Another soft kiss. "You will get better. I will make you food."

"I don't want—" Shane cut himself off when he noticed Ilya's gaze.

"You will eat." Ilya wasn't taking no for an answer. He then pushed himself to his feet, still holding onto Shane's hand. He tugged on it a little. "Get up."

Shane wanted to just sit there all day, but he was keenly aware that he was in the middle of the kitchen and, if Ilya was going to make him food, he was in the way. He slowly let himself get pulled to his feet, his legs feeling like jelly. He leaned heavily against the counter.

Ilya poked his can of ginger ale. "Sit on other side of counter and drink. I will make food."

Shane looked down briefly, a little embarrassed, before looking back up at him. At his boyfriend. At his Ilya.

"Thank you." The quiet words spilled from his lips before he could stop them.

The soft peck to his lips he got in response was sweet. "I love you."

There was a sudden rush of emotion in Shane at those words, the words he never tired of hearing, but he gave a soft smile in response. "I love you too."

End Notes

i hope you enjoyed!!

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