

He Hit Him and it Felt like a Kiss

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He Hit Him and it Felt like a Kiss

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Summary

When Ilya throws a punch on the ice after a homophobic remark, Shane hates seeing Ilya hurt.

They don't argue and where Shane's tears finally stop the fight.

The locker room is a pressure cooker, but they don't crack.

Not there.

Shane keeps his face carefully neutral while he changes, answers a teammate's joke with the right tone, the right smile. Ilya can feel him watching anyway. Can feel the heat of it without ever looking up. His knuckles throb, split and swollen, but he keeps his hands busy, tapes them himself, jaw locked.

When their eyes meet, Shane gives the smallest nod. You good?

Ilya nods back. Later.

Later is a long drive home with the radio on low and neither of them speaking. Later is the apartment door clicking shut behind them, the quiet rushing in too fast.

Shane drops his bag by the door.

"I didn't like that you fought him."

Ilya exhales through his nose. Here we go. "You weren't supposed to."

"I saw it," Shane says. "I heard it. I didn't like it."

"He crossed a line."

"I know," Shane replies. "That doesn't mean you had to break your hand."

Ilya turns, irritation flaring. "It's hockey."

"That's not an answer."

"It is," Ilya snaps. "This happens every night."

"And every night I hate it," Shane shoots back. "I hate watching you get hurt."

Ilya scoffs. "I'm fine."

"You're bleeding," Shane says. "You're always bleeding."

Ilya bristles. "So what, you want me to just stand there?"

"No," Shane says, frustrated. "I want you to stop acting like violence is the only language you have."

That stings.

"I didn't fight because I don't know any better," Ilya says coldly. "I fought because someone said something about you."

“And I didn’t ask you to,” Shane fires back. “I don’t want to be the excuse you use to wreck yourself.”

“Don’t do that,” Ilya says. “Don’t make it sound like I regret it.”

“I’m not,” Shane says. “I’m saying I don’t like watching you pay the price.”

“You don’t get to decide how I play,” Ilya snaps.

“I’m not trying to,” Shane says. “I’m telling you how it feels to sit there and watch you throw your body into something that could cost you games, seasons, careers—”

“So now I’m irresponsible,” Ilya interrupts.

“No,” Shane says. “You’re reckless.”

Silence slams down between them.

Ilya’s voice drops. “You knew who I was.”

“And you knew who I was,” Shane shoots back. “Someone who worries. Someone who loves you enough to be scared.”

“That’s not my fault.”

“I didn’t say it was,” Shane says. “But it is my reality.”

Ilya runs a hand through his hair, pacing now. “You think the league is going to protect you? You think refs give a shit?”

“I think you getting suspended doesn’t help me,” Shane snaps. “I think you getting concussed doesn’t help me. I think you bleeding on the ice because someone wanted to get under your skin about me doesn’t help either of us.”

“So I should just let them say it,” Ilya says bitterly. “Let them think it’s okay.”

“I’m asking you to trust me to handle my own battles,” Shane says. “I don’t need you throwing punches for me like I’m made of glass.”

“I’m not protecting you because you’re weak,” Ilya says. “I’m protecting you because I love you.”

“And I love you,” Shane fires back, voice breaking just a little, “which is why I don’t want to watch you destroy yourself.”

“That’s dramatic,” Ilya snaps. “It was one fight.”

“It’s never one fight,” Shane says. “It’s always one more.”

“You don’t get to cherry-pick parts of me,” Ilya says. “Hockey is violent. You don’t get me without that.”

“I don’t want you without it,” Shane says. “I just don’t want you hurt because of me.”

“That’s not how it works,” Ilya says. “You’re in this whether you like it or not.”

“I know,” Shane says. “And I still hate it.”

“You don’t get to hate it and expect me to change,” Ilya snaps.

“I’m not asking you to change,” Shane says. “I’m asking you to care that it scares me.”

Ilya laughs, sharp and frustrated. “You’re being dramatic.”

The word lands like a slap.

Shane freezes.

His eyes glass over instantly, like his body has betrayed him. He blinks hard, jaw tightening, but the emotion is already there, burning and bright.

“I’m not,” he says, voice cracking. “I’m scared.”

A tear slips free, slow and unmistakable, tracing down his cheek.

Ilya folds immediately.

He crosses the room in two steps, hands gentle as they come up to frame Shane’s face. “Hey. Fuck. No. I’m sorry.”

“I didn’t mean to cry,” Shane says weakly, embarrassed even as another tear falls. “I just— I don’t like watching you bleed for me.”

“I know,” Ilya murmurs. “I know. I shouldn’t have said that. I hear you. I swear I hear you.”

Shane exhales shakily, leaning into him. “I don’t need you to fight everyone.”

Ilya presses his forehead to Shane’s. “I won’t. Not like that.”

Later, when the adrenaline has finally drained and the apartment is quiet, Shane comes back from the bathroom with the first aid kit.

“Sit,” he says softly.

Ilya obeys without argument.

Shane takes his hand, turns it carefully, inspecting the damage with focused concern. He cleans each cut, tapes each knuckle, his touch reverent, apologetic.

“You’re icing these,” Shane mutters. “And you’re seeing the doctor.”

“Yes,” Ilya says quietly.

Shane finishes, then presses a gentle kiss to Ilya's knuckles without thinking.

Ilya's chest tightens.

"You cry," he murmurs, pulling Shane close, "and I forget how to fight."

Shane huffs, cheeks pink. "Good."

Shane sits back on his heels, inspecting his work like it's a test he's nervous about passing.

"There," he murmurs. "Try not to reopen them."

Ilya flexes his fingers carefully. "You should be a doctor."

Shane snorts. "You would be the world's worst patient."

"Only for you," Ilya says, fond.

Shane closes the first aid kit and sets it aside, then immediately reaches for the ice pack from the freezer. He wraps it in a dish towel, presses it gently into Ilya's palm.

"Hold it like this," he instructs, guiding Ilya's hand. "Not straight on. You'll numb the skin too fast."

Ilya watches him, quiet now. Watches the way Shane's brow is still furrowed, how his thumb keeps rubbing unconsciously at the edge of the tape like he's trying to smooth something invisible.

"You okay?" Ilya asks.

Shane hesitates. Just for a second. Then he nods. "Yeah. I am now."

That answer sits between them, heavy with everything it means.

They move to the couch without really deciding to. Shane curls in first, tucking himself into the corner, legs folded up, instinctively making space. Ilya settles beside him, careful of his hand, and Shane immediately reaches out, resting his head against Ilya's shoulder like gravity's finally allowed to do its job.

"I really wasn't trying to start a fight," Shane says quietly.

"I know," Ilya replies just as softly. "I started it."

Shane hums, neither agreeing nor disagreeing. After a moment, he slides his fingers into Ilya's uninjured hand, lacing them together.

"I don't want you to stop being you," Shane says. "I just want you to come home to me."

Ilya closes his eyes. "I always will."

Shane tilts his head up, studies him with those still-slightly-pink eyes. "Promise?"

“I promise,” Ilya says without hesitation.

Shane nods, satisfied, then yawns suddenly, the adrenaline crash hitting him all at once. He presses his face into Ilya’s neck, breathing him in.

“You smell like the rink,” Shane mutters.

“Sexy,” Ilya deadpans.

Shane laughs, quiet and real this time. “Go shower. I’ll make tea.”

Ilya raises an eyebrow. “You’re not making me pasta?”

“Not with those hands,” Shane says. “Sit. Heal. Be useless.”

Ilya grins. “Living the dream.”

When Ilya comes back, hair damp, hoodie swapped for something softer, Shane is already on the couch again, two mugs in hand. He hands one over carefully, then immediately checks the knuckles again like he can’t help himself.

“They’re swelling,” Shane notes.

“They’re fine,” Ilya says.

Shane narrows his eyes. “Don’t lie to me.”

Ilya sighs dramatically. “They hurt.”

“Thank you,” Shane says, deeply satisfied.

They drink in companionable silence for a while. Shane’s leg is draped over Ilya’s lap now, toes tucked under his thigh for warmth. At some point, Shane absently starts tracing circles on Ilya’s forearm, the motion slow and grounding.

“I hate that word,” Shane says suddenly.

“What word?”

“Dramatic,” Shane replies. “It makes it feel like I’m wrong for caring.”

Ilya sets his mug down immediately. “Hey.” He cups the back of Shane’s neck, thumb brushing his hairline. “You care. That’s the part I love. I’m the idiot who forgot that for a second.”

Shane exhales, tension easing out of him. “Okay.”

He leans in and presses a soft kiss to Ilya’s jaw, careful of the bruises there too. Then another, to his cheek.

“You still scare me,” Shane admits.

“I know,” Ilya says. “But I’m yours. Even when I’m stupid.”

Shane smiles faintly. “Especially then.”

Later, as they get ready for bed, Shane insists on setting an alarm so Ilya remembers to ice his hand again. He places the ice pack on the nightstand like it’s sacred.

“You wake me up if it hurts,” Shane says.

Ilya slides under the covers and tugs Shane in with him. “You’re already awake.”

Shane curls into his chest, warm and solid and here. He presses a kiss to Ilya’s collarbone, then settles, one hand splayed over Ilya’s heart.

“Next time,” Shane murmurs, half-asleep, “try words first.”

Ilya kisses the top of his head. “For you?”

“Yes.”

“Always.”

They fall asleep like that, tangled and quiet, the fight long gone, replaced by the steady certainty of being chosen again.

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