

in sickness and in health (the unofficial version)

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in sickness and in health (the unofficial version)

by [roxykris](#)

Summary

Shane tears his rotator cuff badly enough to need surgery. His parents help at first, but Ilya comes as soon as he can. Shane needs help with everything: dressing, eating, using the bathroom, etc. He's mortified. Ilya is gentle and matter-of-fact and makes sure Shane knows he's still wanted, still desired, even when he can't do anything for himself.

Notes

thanks to @Boopafat18 for the request!

shane learning to let ilya take care of him. lots of physical caretaking detail. some explicit sexual content. soft and tender and a little sassy. you're welcome!

The surgery was supposed to be routine.

Arthroscopic rotator cuff repair. The surgeon had shown Shane the MRI: a complete tear of the supraspinatus tendon, fraying of the infraspinatus, bone spurs that needed shaving. In and out in three hours. Six weeks recovery, then back to the ice.

"You'll be fine," the surgeon had said. "We do these all the time."

But Shane woke up in the recovery room with his entire right arm immobilized in a sling that kept his elbow bent at ninety degrees and his hand strapped across his stomach. The whole apparatus was rigid, unforgiving, preventing any movement from fingertips to shoulder blade.

"Remember," the nurse said as she went over discharge instructions, "absolutely no movement at first. The tendons need time to reattach to the bone. After that, we'll start gentle physical therapy. But for now - nothing."

Shane nodded, still foggy from anesthesia. It didn't really hit him until his mother drove him home to Ottawa and he realized he couldn't open the car door by himself.

Couldn't reach for his seatbelt. Couldn't brace himself when the car turned. Just sat there, right arm completely useless, dependent on his mother for everything.

They pulled into the driveway of his childhood home. Shane stared at the front door and tried to calculate how many steps, how many obstacles, how many things that required two hands.

"Ready?" Yuna asked gently.

"Yeah."

She came around to his side, opened his door, helped him out. Shane stood on shaking legs, the anesthesia still making him unsteady, and let his mother guide him up the walkway.

His father held the door open. "How are you feeling, son?"

"Tired. Sore." Shane's voice was rough from the breathing tube. "Really sore."

David helped him to the couch while Yuna went to get ice packs and medication. Shane sat carefully, trying to find a position that didn't pull on his shoulder. Everything pulled on his shoulder.

"Pain scale?" Yuna asked, returning with pills and water.

"Seven. Maybe eight."

She handed him the pills. Shane reached for them with his left hand - his non-dominant, clumsy and uncertain. Managed to get them to his mouth but fumbled the water glass.

Yuna caught it before it spilled, held it to his lips while he swallowed.

Shane's face burned. His mother was holding a cup for him like he was five years old.

This was going to be a long six weeks.

The first day was mostly sleeping. The pain medication knocked Shane out for hours at a time. He'd wake up disoriented, his shoulder throbbing, needing more pills or ice or the bathroom.

Every time, his mother was there. Adjusting his sling, bringing supplies, helping him stand.

The second day was when the reality fully set in.

Shane woke up at 6 AM needing to pee desperately. He swung his legs over the side of the bed carefully, his right arm completely immobile in its sling. Stood up. Made it to the bathroom.

Looking down at his pants - button-fly, impossible to manage one-handed.

He tried. Got his left hand on the top button, tried to work it through the buttonhole while holding the other side of the fly with... what? His immobilized right hand was strapped across his stomach, useless.

After three minutes of struggling, his bladder screaming, Shane gave up.

"Mom?" His voice came out quiet and mortified.

Footsteps in the hall. Yuna appeared in the doorway, already dressed for the day. "What do you need?"

I can't—" Shane gestured at his pants. "I can't get them open. And I really need to—"

"Oh. Of course." She moved forward without hesitation, unbuttoned his fly with the same efficiency she'd probably used when he was being potty-trained. Pushed his pants and boxers down, eyes fixed on the wall. "There you go. Call me when you're done."

She left, closing the door behind her.

Shane stood there, pants around his thighs, and tried to process that his mother had just undressed him so he could pee.

He could pee one-handed, but then came the next problem - pulling his clothes back up. He got his boxers halfway up before they got stuck. Got his pants to his knees before they wouldn't go any farther.

"Mom? I'm—I need help."

Yuna came back in, pulled his clothes up, buttoned his pants, didn't comment on his burning face.

"We'll get you into better sweatpants. Easier to manage."

"Okay. Thanks."

Shane made it through breakfast - toast that his mother cut into strips so he could eat it with his left hand, scrambled eggs that he could scoop with a fork. The eggs kept falling off because his left hand couldn't coordinate the fine motor control. His mother ended up feeding him the last few bites.

By 10 AM, Shane was exhausted and his shoulder was screaming. More pain medication. More ice. More sleeping.

He woke up at 2 PM needing the bathroom again. This time worse. Not just peeing.

Shane sat on the edge of his bed and tried to figure out if he could manage this himself. Decided probably not. Felt his entire body flush with humiliation.

"Mom?"

Yuna appeared. "What's wrong?"

"I need to—" Shane couldn't say it. "I need the bathroom. For—for more than just peeing. And I don't think I can—"

He didn't have to finish. Yuna nodded. "Okay. Let's get you in there."

She helped him stand, walked him to the bathroom, helped him with his sweatpants - he'd changed into them after breakfast, elastic waistband much easier than buttons.

"Can you manage the rest?"

"I think so. I'll try."

"Okay. I'll be right outside. Call if you need help."

Shane managed to sit down, but then came the real problem. When he was finished, he needed to wipe himself. That required reaching with his right hand - his dominant hand, currently strapped immobile across his stomach.

He tried with his left hand. The angle was wrong. He couldn't reach properly. Kept missing, awkward and ineffective.

After five minutes of struggling, pain shooting through his shoulder every time he twisted wrong, Shane gave up.

"Mom? I—I need help."

The door opened. Yuna came in, her expression completely neutral.

"Can't reach?"

"No. I'm sorry. This is—this is so embarrassing—"

"It's fine. Let me help."

She helped him clean up with the same matter-of-fact efficiency she'd shown all day. Shane kept his eyes closed, his face burning, wishing he could disappear.

When it was done, Yuna helped him with his sweatpants, washed her hands, turned to him.

"Better?"

"Physically, yeah. Mentally, I want to die."

"You're recovering from surgery. This is normal. Don't be embarrassed."

"How can I not be embarrassed? You just had to wipe me like I'm a toddler."

"You're injured and you need help. That's all." Yuna's voice was gentle but firm. "Now come on. Back to the couch. You need to ice your shoulder."

Over the next two days, Shane discovered exactly how many things required two hands.

Showering was a nightmare. The surgical dressing on his shoulder couldn't get wet, which meant his entire upper arm and shoulder needed to be wrapped in plastic. He couldn't do it himself. His father helped - wrapping the plastic carefully, taping it in place, then standing outside the shower stall in case Shane lost his balance.

Shane couldn't wash his hair properly with his left hand. Couldn't reach his back. Couldn't dry off without struggling and pulling on his shoulder. His father had to help with all of it.

Getting dressed was impossible. Shane couldn't pull a shirt over his immobilized right arm. His mother brought him button-up shirts that they could slide his right arm into first, then pull around his back and thread his left arm through.

Eating was exhausting. His left hand was clumsy, uncoordinated. He dropped food constantly. Couldn't cut anything. Couldn't open containers. His mother had to cut everything into small pieces, open bottles for him, hold cups when he got too tired.

And the bathroom - the bathroom continued to be a source of endless humiliation. He needed help every single time. His mother helped him with his clothes, helped him clean up afterward, never commented on how mortifying it was.

By day four, Shane had accepted that dignity was a thing of the past. His parents had seen and helped with every bodily function imaginable. There was nothing left to be embarrassed about because there was nothing left to hide.

On day five, Ilya called.

Shane was on the couch, his mother adjusting his ice pack, when his phone rang. She handed it to him - he still couldn't reach it himself if it was more than a foot away.

"Hello?"

"How are you doing?" Ilya's voice, warm and familiar and so far away.

Shane looked at his mother, who was currently rearranging the pillows around him so he could lie down without putting pressure on his shoulder. "Fine. Recovery is going okay."

"You sound tired."

"The pain medication makes me drowsy. I'm sleeping a lot."

"That's good. You need rest." A pause. "When can I come see you?"

Shane's heart jumped. "You don't need to come. I know you have games—"

"We have a three-day break next week. I can fly out. Stay for two days."

"Ilya, really, I'm fine. My parents are taking care of me and you don't need to—"

"I want to see you. Make sure you're okay." Ilya's voice dropped lower. "And I miss you."

Shane's throat tightened. He missed Ilya so much it was a physical ache. But the thought of Ilya seeing him like this - helpless, dependent, needing his mother to help him pee - made his stomach twist with dread.

"Okay. Yeah. Come whenever you can."

"I'll fly out Friday. Stay through Sunday."

"Okay. I'll—I'll see you Friday."

After he hung up, Yuna gave him a knowing look. "Ilya's coming?"

"Yeah. Friday."

"Good. You'll feel better when he's here."

"I don't know. He's going to see me like this. See how much I can't do."

"So? He's your boyfriend. That's what boyfriends do. They help when you're hurt."

"But I can't do anything. Can't even wipe myself." Shane's voice was bitter. "He's going to think I'm pathetic."

"He's going to think you're recovering from surgery. Because you are." Yuna adjusted the ice pack one more time. "Now rest. You have physical therapy in an hour."

Physical therapy was its own special torture. The therapist came to the house - Shane couldn't drive, couldn't even ride in a car comfortably. She put Shane through gentle range-of-motion exercises that made him grit his teeth and sweat.

"Just pendulum swings today," she said. "Lean forward, let your arm hang, swing it gently. Don't use your muscles, just let gravity do the work."

Shane bent forward and let his immobilized arm hang. Even that small movement sent pain shooting through his shoulder. He swung his arm in tiny circles, his left hand braced on a chair for balance.

Ten minutes of that and he was exhausted, sweating, his shoulder screaming.

"Good," the therapist said. "Same thing tomorrow. We'll add more as you heal."

After she left, Shane collapsed on the couch. His mother brought more pain medication, more ice, cut-up fruit because he was supposed to be eating healthy.

"Can you manage the fruit yourself?"

Shane looked at the bowl - strawberries, already hulled and quartered. He could probably stab them with a fork. "Yeah. I can do it."

He spent twenty minutes eating strawberries with his left hand, dropping half of them, making a mess of the couch. His mother cleaned it up without comment.

By the time Friday arrived, Shane was both desperately excited and deeply anxious about seeing Ilya.

Ilya arrived at 2 PM with flowers for Yuna and a careful, gentle hug for Shane that didn't jostle his immobilized arm.

"You look terrible," Ilya said.

"Thanks. That's exactly what I wanted to hear."

"I'm serious. You're pale. Dark circles under your eyes. Are you sleeping?"

"Hard to sleep when you can't move your arm. Can't get comfortable." Shane was sitting on the couch in sweatpants and a button-up shirt that hung off his right shoulder oddly because of the sling underneath. "The sling digs into my neck. And I can only sleep on my left side. And even then I keep waking up because I try to roll over in my sleep."

Ilya studied him with a frown. Then turned to Yuna. "I can take over. For the weekend. Give you and David a break."

"You don't have to—"

"Please. I want to help. You've been doing everything for almost a week. You need a break." Ilya's voice was firm. "I can do whatever he needs."

Yuna looked at Shane, who was staring at Ilya with an expression somewhere between hope and horror.

"You sure?" Yuna asked. "It's a lot. He needs help with everything. Showering, getting dressed, eating, using the bathroom—"

"I'm sure. I can handle it."

"Ilya, you really don't have to—" Shane started.

"I want to." Ilya's eyes met Shane's. "Let me do this."

Something in his tone made Shane's protests die in his throat. Yuna nodded slowly.

"Okay. Let me show you where everything is."

For the next hour, Yuna gave Ilya a comprehensive tutorial. Showed him the medication schedule: pain pills every four hours, anti-inflammatory twice a day, a muscle relaxant at night. Showed him how to adjust the sling, how to position the ice packs, how to help Shane change shirts without pulling on his shoulder.

"For the bathroom, he'll need help with his pants every time. Going down and coming back up. He can't button or unbutton with one hand."

Shane wanted to sink through the couch cushions.

"And for—for the other stuff," Yuna continued, her voice matter-of-fact, "he can't reach to wipe himself with his left hand. The angle doesn't work. So he'll need help with that too."

Ilya just nodded, taking notes on his phone. "Got it."

"Showering is tricky. The dressing on his shoulder can't get wet, so you have to wrap plastic around his whole upper arm and shoulder. Tape it in place. Then help him wash his hair because he can't do it well with his left hand."

"Okay. Show me how you wrap the plastic."

Yuna demonstrated on Shane - wrapping plastic wrap around his shoulder and upper arm, securing it with medical tape. Shane sat there, face burning, while Ilya watched intently and asked clarifying questions.

"And he can't dry himself very well either. Can't reach his back. Gets tired trying to do everything with his left hand."

"I can help with that."

"Physical therapy is twice a day. Pendulum swings. The therapist left instructions." Yuna handed Ilya a sheet of paper. "Just ten minutes, twice a day. Don't let him skip it even if he's tired."

"I won't."

By the time Yuna finished, Ilya had pages of notes and Shane was thoroughly mortified.

"Any questions?" Yuna asked.

"I don't think so. If I need help, I'll call."

"Good." Yuna turned to Shane. "I think your father and I are might go to my sister's for the weekend. We'll be back Sunday evening but if you need us before then, just call. You'll be okay?"

"Yeah. I'll be fine."

After his parents left - Yuna giving Shane a kiss on the forehead, David squeezing his good shoulder - the house fell quiet.

Ilya

sat beside Shane on the couch, not quite touching. The careful distance you kept from someone who was injured.

Shane's stomach twisted with anxiety. His parents had a system, had gotten used to the routine. But Ilya - Ilya was going to see every humiliating detail. Was going to have to help with things that boyfriends shouldn't have to help with.

Ilya seemed to sense his thoughts. Reached over and took Shane's left hand, threading their fingers together. Brought Shane's knuckles to his lips and pressed a kiss there - soft and reassuring.

"Stop thinking so loud. I can hear you worrying from here."

"I'm not—"

"You are. I can see it on your face." Ilya's thumb brushed across Shane's knuckles. "We're going to be fine. I've got this."

"You say that now. Wait until you have to help me in the bathroom."

"I've seen worse. Once had to help Peters when he was so drunk he couldn't find his own dick to piss. At least you're sober."

Despite everything, Shane huffed a laugh. "That's a low bar."

"Is very low bar. You've already cleared it. Congratulations." Ilya kissed Shane's knuckles again, then his wrist, working his way up Shane's forearm. "See? You're doing great already."

Shane watched Ilya's lips on his skin and felt some of the tension ease. This was still Ilya. Still the person who knew him, wanted him, cared about him.

"What time is physical therapy?" Ilya asked against Shane's skin.

"4 PM."

"Okay. So we have—" Ilya checked his phone. "One hour. What do you want to do?"

"Nothing. Just sit here. If that's okay."

"Is perfect."

They sat in comfortable silence, Ilya's thumb tracing circles on Shane's hand. After a few minutes, Ilya shifted closer, careful not to jostle Shane's arm, and pressed a kiss to Shane's temple.

"You smell like the good soap. The expensive kind."

"She said I couldn't use my usual body wash. Too harsh for post-surgical skin or something."

"Mm. So now you smell fancy." Another kiss, this time to Shane's cheekbone. "I like it."

Shane turned his head slightly, seeking Ilya's mouth. Ilya met him halfway, the kiss gentle and unhurried. No urgency, no demand. Just connection.

When they broke apart, Shane's eyes were closed, his breathing slightly uneven.

"Better?" Ilya asked.

"Yeah."

"Good. Because you were starting to look like someone going to execution. Was very dramatic."

"I was not—"

"You were. Very tragic. Like Romeo before he drinks the poison." Ilya's hand cupped Shane's face. "Except less romantic and more constipated-looking."

"Jesus, Ilya."

"What? I'm just saying, you need to relax. Is just me. I've had your dick in my mouth. I think I can handle helping you in the bathroom."

Shane's face went red. "That's—that's completely different—"

"Why? Both have involved dicks and bathrooms, technically."

"Oh my god, shut up."

Ilya grinned, looking pleased with himself. Leaned in and kissed Shane again, swallowing whatever protest Shane was about to make.

By the time 4 PM rolled around, Shane was marginally less anxious. Ilya had spent the hour touching him casually while they watched TV - fingers in his hair, hand on his thigh, lips against his temple. Small reminders that Shane was still wanted, still desirable, even immobilized and helpless.

"Okay," Ilya said, checking the time. "Workout time. Let's go."

He helped Shane to his feet - one hand under Shane's good elbow, the other on his waist. Guided him to the cleared space in the living room where the therapist had shown Shane how to do his exercises.

"So. You lean forward, let arm hang, swing in circles ten times each way. Yes?"

"Yeah. For ten minutes."

"Okay. Show me."

Shane bent forward, his immobilized arm hanging down. Even that small movement made his shoulder ache - a deep, grinding pain that radiated down to his fingertips.

"Now swing."

Shane let his arm swing in tiny circles, gravity doing most of the work. His shoulder immediately started screaming in protest.

Ilya's hand settled on Shane's good shoulder, steadying him. "How much does it hurt?"

"A lot. But it's supposed to. The therapist said if it doesn't hurt, I'm not doing it right."

"Sadist. I like her." Ilya started counting quietly in Russian. "Один, два, три..."

The counting was soothing somehow. Shane focused on Ilya's voice, on the warm pressure of his hand, instead of the pain radiating through his shoulder.

At five minutes, Ilya's other hand came up to Shane's lower back, rubbing small circles.

"Halfway. You're doing good."

"Doesn't feel good."

"I know." Ilya's hand moved higher on Shane's back, fingers pressing into the muscles there. "Breathe. You're holding your breath."

Shane forced himself to breathe. In through his nose, out through his mouth. His arm kept swinging in circles, the movement sending fresh waves of pain through his shoulder with each rotation.

By the time Ilya said "ten minutes" and Shane could straighten up, he was sweating and shaking.

"Good. Very good." Ilya helped him straighten, his hands immediately going to Shane's waist to steady him. "Now couch. Ice."

Ilya guided Shane to the couch, arranged the pillows around him, disappeared into the kitchen. Came back with an ice pack wrapped in a towel.

"Shirt up."

Shane tried to lift his shirt with his left hand but couldn't manage it. Ilya batted his hand away gently and did it himself, pushing Shane's shirt up to expose his right shoulder.

The shoulder was swollen and red, the surgical site still angry-looking even a week post-op. Ilya's expression tightened slightly when he saw it, but he just positioned the ice pack carefully and held it in place.

"That looks painful."

"It is."

"Then you did the exercises right." Ilya's free hand found Shane's, fingers linking. "Evil physical therapist would be proud."

They sat like that for twenty minutes, Ilya holding the ice pack, his thumb drawing patterns on Shane's hand. Every few minutes he'd lean over and press a kiss to Shane's forehead, his cheek, the corner of his mouth.

"Stop... squirming."

"I'm not squirming."

"You are. You keep shifting around like you need something. What?"

Shane's face heated. "I need—I need to use the bathroom."

"Okay. Let's go." Ilya removed the ice pack, helped Shane stand.

They walked to the bathroom together, Ilya's hand on Shane's lower back. Inside, Ilya closed the door and turned to Shane's waistband.

"Sweatpants are easier than the jeans, yes? Your mother was smart."

"Yeah. Elastic waistband. No buttons."

"Good." Ilya hooked his fingers in Shane's waistband. "But still need two hands to get them down without falling over."

He pulled down Shane's sweatpants and boxers in one smooth motion. Shane stood there, pants around his ankles, face burning.

Ilya caught his expression and rolled his eyes. "You're blushing like virgin. I've seen your dick."

"That's different."

"Yes, yes. Was sexy times, not bathroom times. Context is different, dick is the same." Ilya gestured at the toilet. "Go. Pee. I'll wait outside."

After Ilya left, Shane managed to pee one-handed, bracing himself against the wall with his left hand. But then came the problem of getting his clothes back up.

He got his boxers halfway up his thighs before they stuck. Got his sweatpants to his knees before he couldn't pull them any higher without losing his balance.

"Ilya? I'm done."

Ilya came back in, took in Shane's situation, and pulled his pants up without comment. When Shane's sweatpants were back in place, Ilya reached out and tucked a strand of Shane's hair behind his ear—such a tender gesture that Shane's throat tightened.

"See? Not so bad."

"Wait until I need to—to do more than just pee."

"Then I help with that too. Is fine." Ilya's hand cupped Shane's face. "Stop worrying so much. You're going to give yourself wrinkles."

He pressed a kiss to Shane's forehead, then his nose, then his lips. Soft and sweet and grounding.

"Now come. Is almost dinner time. I'm going to make something and you're going to eat it and not complain about my cooking."

"Your cooking is terrible."

"Which is why you're not allowed to complain. Would be rude."

Ilya made chicken and rice - simple, cut into small pieces, easy to eat with a fork. He sat beside Shane on the couch and fed him piece by piece, patient and unhurried.

Every few bites, Ilya would lean in and kiss Shane's cheek, his temple, behind his ear. Casual affection that made Shane's chest ache.

"Open."

Shane opened his mouth. Ilya fed him a piece of chicken, his thumb brushing Shane's lower lip as he withdrew the fork.

"You're being weird," Shane said after swallowing.

"How am I being weird?"

"You keep—you keep touching me. Kissing me."

"And? I'm not allowed to kiss my boyfriend?"

"No, it's just—my parents don't do that. They just feed me and that's it."

"Well, I am glad they do not do that, that *would* be weird. And I'm not your parents. I'm your devastatingly handsome Russian boyfriend who hasn't seen you in weeks. I'm going to kiss you." Ilya held up another forkful. "Open."

Shane opened. Ilya fed him, then immediately leaned in and kissed the corner of his mouth.

"See? Is nice. You should enjoy instead of questioning it."

By the time the plate was empty, Shane was feeling warm and cared for despite the constant low-grade pain in his shoulder.

Ilya took the plate to the kitchen, came back with Shane's medication and water.

"Drugs time."

He held out the pills and Shane took them with his left hand. Got them to his mouth but fumbled again when reaching for the water glass.

Ilya caught the glass, held it to Shane's lips while he swallowed. The gesture was intimate and careful, Ilya's fingers gentle under Shane's chin.

When Shane was done, Ilya set the glass aside and kissed him properly - deep and thorough and full of everything they couldn't say out loud.

"Better?" Ilya asked when they broke apart.

"Yeah."

"Good. Now—you need shower before bed, yes?"

Shane's stomach flipped. "Yeah."

"Okay. Shirt."

Ilya unbuttoned Shane's shirt slowly - each button a deliberate action, his knuckles brushing Shane's chest as he worked his way down. When the shirt was fully open, he slid it off Shane's left arm first, then carefully eased it off his right, mindful of the sling.

"Okay. Now let me get the plastic wrap."

In the bathroom, Shane sat on the closed toilet lid while Ilya wrapped his shoulder and upper arm in plastic. Ilya's hands were gentle and sure, his movements practiced from watching Yuna do it earlier.

"Too tight?"

"No. It's good."

Shane sat there shirtless, his right arm still immobilized across his stomach, while Ilya looked at him.

Not clinically. Not like a caregiver. Like Ilya always looked at him - with heat and appreciation and want.

"You're staring again."

"Can't help it. You're very pretty when you're helpless."

"I'm not pretty. I'm injured and useless."

"Pretty, injured. Can be two things at once." Ilya's hand traced down Shane's chest, fingers splaying across his ribs. "And you're not useless. You're healing. Is different."

His hand continued lower, stopping at Shane's waistband. "Ready?"

Shane nodded.

Ilya pulled down Shane's sweatpants and boxers, helped him step out of them. Shane stood there completely naked except for the sling, vulnerable and exposed.

Ilya's eyes traveled over him slowly. Then he stepped closer, his hands settling on Shane's hips, and kissed him - deep and possessive and grounding.

"Still beautiful," Ilya murmured against Shane's mouth.

He pulled back, started the shower, tested the temperature. "Hot enough?"

"Yeah."

"Okay. Get in. I'll help in a minute."

Shane stepped into the shower, hot water sluicing over his body. He tried to wash himself with his left hand - managed his chest and stomach, couldn't reach his back, couldn't coordinate shampooing his hair.

"Ilya? I need help."

The shower door opened. Ilya stepped in, fully clothed in jeans and a t-shirt.

"You're getting wet."

"Don't care." Ilya grabbed the shampoo. "Lean your head back."

Shane leaned back and Ilya worked shampoo through his hair. His fingers were firm and gentle, massaging Shane's scalp in slow circles. Shane's eyes fell closed, a soft sound escaping his throat.

"Feel good?"

"Yeah."

Ilya took his time, working the shampoo into a lather, his fingers digging into all the tight spots. Then he rinsed carefully, making sure no soap got in Shane's eyes.

"Conditioner?"

"Please."

Ilya repeated the process with conditioner, his touch even more gentle this time. When he was done rinsing, he pressed a kiss to Shane's wet forehead.

"Now turn around. I'll do your back."

Shane turned. Ilya soaped up a washcloth and washed Shane's back in long, careful strokes. Down his spine, across his shoulder blades - carefully avoiding the immobilized right side. Down to his lower back, his ass, his thighs.

Every touch was purposeful but not clinical. Caring but not pitying. Ilya's hands on him like Shane was something precious that needed gentle handling.

"Okay. You can do the front yourself, yes?"

"Yeah. I can manage."

Ilya stepped out of the shower, his clothes soaked through and clinging to his body. Shane finished washing himself, his left hand clumsy but functional.

When he turned off the water and stepped out, Ilya was waiting with a towel. He dried Shane methodically - chest, stomach, arms, legs. Helped him turn around to dry his back.

"Hair."

Shane bent forward while Ilya toweled his hair dry, squeezing out the excess water. Then Ilya wrapped the towel around Shane's waist and kissed the top of his head.

"You're being very gentle with me," Shane said quietly.

"You need gentle right now. When you're better, I can be less gentle." Ilya's hand settled on Shane's hip, thumb rubbing small circles. "But right now, you get gentle."

"I don't feel like I deserve it."

"Too bad. You're getting it anyway." Ilya kissed Shane's shoulder, just beside the plastic wrap.
"Now. Clean clothes. Then bed."

He left to change out of his wet clothes and came back with Shane's sweatpants and a soft t-shirt. Helped Shane dress with the same careful attention he'd shown all evening.

When Shane was dressed, Ilya guided him to the bedroom. Shane climbed into bed on his left side - the only position that didn't put pressure on his shoulder.

Ilya arranged pillows around him, adjusted his arm to the right angle, pulled the blanket up to his chest.

"Comfortable?"

"As comfortable as I can be."

"Good." Ilya started to move toward the door.

"Where are you going?"

"To get changed for bed. Why? You need something?"

"No, I just—" Shane paused. "You can sleep here. If you want. I mean, you don't have to sleep in the guest room."

Ilya's expression softened. "Okay. I'll be right back."

He left and returned in sleep pants and a t-shirt. Climbed into bed on Shane's left side carefully, leaving space.

Shane immediately shifted closer, seeking warmth. His head ended up on Ilya's chest, his left hand curled against Ilya's side.

"This okay?" Shane asked.

"Is perfect."

Ilya's arm came around Shane's shoulders, his hand settling in Shane's hair. His fingers started moving in slow, soothing strokes.

"Thank you," Shane said quietly. "For coming. For helping with everything. For not making me feel like a burden."

Ilya pressed a kiss to the top of Shane's head. "You're not a burden. You're just Shane who needs help right now. That is all."

"Still. Thank you."

"You're welcome. Now sleep. You're exhausted."

Shane closed his eyes and focused on the feeling of Ilya's fingers in his hair, the steady rhythm of his heartbeat, the warmth of his body.

He was asleep in minutes.

Shane woke at 2 AM in pain, his shoulder throbbing hot and angry. He shifted carefully, trying not to disturb Ilya, but a gasp escaped when the movement sent a spike of pain through his shoulder.

Ilya was awake immediately, his hand moving to Shane's face in the dark. "What's wrong?"

"Shoulder. Hurts bad."

"Okay." Ilya was already moving, getting out of bed. "Pain medication. Hold on."

He came back with pills and water, helped Shane sit up enough to swallow them.

"How bad? Scale of one to ten."

"Eight. Maybe eight and a half."

"Fuck. Okay. Ice pack too." Ilya disappeared again, came back with an ice pack wrapped in a towel. Positioned it carefully against Shane's shoulder.

Shane hissed at the cold but it helped. The numbing sensation was a relief.

Ilya climbed back into bed beside him, holding the ice pack in place with one hand. His other hand found Shane's, fingers linking.

"Better?"

"A little. But it's going to take a while for the pills to kick in."

"Okay. I will stay awake with you."

They sat in the dark, Ilya adjusting the ice pack every few minutes. After about ten minutes, Ilya leaned over and pressed a kiss to Shane's temple.

"Talk to me. Tell me what you are thinking."

"I'm thinking this sucks. I'm thinking I hate being helpless. I'm thinking—" Shane paused. "I'm thinking I'm really glad you're here."

"Me too." Another kiss, this time to Shane's cheek. "What else?"

"I'm thinking about how much I miss playing. Miss being on the ice. Miss being able to do things without help."

"You'll get back there. Just takes time."

"I know. Doesn't make waiting easier."

Ilya's thumb traced circles on Shane's hand. "What's the first thing you want to do when you can use your arm again?"

"Touch you. Properly. With both hands."

Ilya's breath caught. "Yeah?"

"Yeah. I want—" Shane's voice dropped. "I want to touch you the way you've been touching me. Want to make you feel good. Want to show you how much all of this means to me."

Ilya was quiet for a moment. Then he shifted closer, his lips finding Shane's in the dark. The kiss was deep and unhurried, full of promise.

"You can show me later. When you're healed. For now—" He pulled back, pressed his forehead to Shane's. "For now, you just let me take care of you."

"But it's not fair. You're doing everything and I—"

"Shh." Ilya kissed him again, swallowing the protest. "Not about fair. Is about you needing help and me giving it. That's all."

The pain medication was starting to work, the sharp edge of the pain dulling to something more manageable. Shane felt himself relaxing, his body sinking into the mattress.

"Better now?" Ilya asked.

"Yeah. Much better."

"Good. Lie down. Try to sleep."

Ilya removed the ice pack and helped Shane settle back on his left side. Arranged the pillows around him again, made sure his arm was positioned correctly.

Then he climbed in beside Shane and pulled him close - carefully, mindful of the shoulder. His hand returned to Shane's hair, fingers moving in slow, soothing strokes.

"Sleep," Ilya murmured. "I've got you."

Shane closed his eyes and let himself drift, Ilya's heartbeat steady under his ear.

The next day followed the same pattern. Ilya helping Shane with everything, punctuating each task with casual touches and kisses that made Shane feel cared for instead of pitied.

Breakfast was eggs and toast, cut into manageable pieces. Ilya fed Shane patiently, but between every few bites, he'd lean in and kiss Shane's cheek, his jaw, the corner of his mouth.

"You're going to make me choke," Shane said.

"Then chew faster. I have a quota of kisses to meet."

"A quota?"

"Yes. Didn't kiss you for two whole weeks. Now I have to make up for lost time." Ilya held up another forkful of eggs. "Open."

Shane opened. Ilya fed him, then immediately kissed the corner of his mouth, licking away a crumb.

"That's—you didn't need to lick me."

"Didn't need to, wanted to. Is different." Ilya grinned. "Plus you taste like butter. Is nice."

By mid-morning, Shane needed the bathroom. Not just to pee.

He sat on the edge of the bed, feeling dread pool in his stomach. This was the part he'd been dreading most. The part that stripped away any remaining dignity.

"I need—I need the bathroom," Shane said quietly. "For—for more than just peeing."

Ilya looked up from his phone. "Okay. Let's go."

He helped Shane stand, walked him to the bathroom. Helped him with his sweatpants and boxers, got him situated on the toilet.

"You need me to stay or—"

"No. God, No, I can—I can sit down myself. But when I'm done, I'll need help. With—" Shane couldn't say it.

"With cleaning up. I know." Ilya's hand cupped Shane's face, thumb brushing his cheekbone. "Is fine. Call me when you're ready."

He left, closing the door behind him.

Shane managed to do what he needed to do, but then came the moment he'd been dreading. He tried with his left hand - reaching around, awkward angle, couldn't get it right. After five minutes of struggling, his shoulder starting to ache from the twisting, he gave up.

"Ilya?"

The door opened. Ilya came in, grabbed toilet paper, no hesitation.

"Lean forward."

Shane leaned forward, his face buried in his left hand, mortification burning through him. Ilya wiped him clean - gentle and thorough and completely matter-of-fact.

When he was done, he washed his hands thoroughly, helped Shane stand, helped him with his clothes. Then he turned Shane to face him, both hands cupping Shane's face.

"Look at me."

Shane forced himself to meet Ilya's eyes.

"You do not need to be embarrassed. You are hurt. You need help. I'm helping. That is all." Ilya leaned in and kissed him - soft and reassuring. "Okay?"

"Okay," Shane whispered.

"Good." Another kiss, this one lingering. "Now. Physical therapy time. Then lunch. Then maybe movie if you want."

The day passed in a blur of medication and ice packs and physical therapy. Every task required Ilya's help. Every moment reinforced how dependent Shane had become.

But Ilya never made him feel like a burden. Ilya's hand in Shane's hair while they watched a movie. Ilya's lips on Shane's forehead when he brought medication. Ilya's fingers tracing patterns on Shane's arm while they sat in comfortable silence.

Small reminders that Shane was still wanted. Still desirable. Still Shane.

That evening, after dinner - more patient feeding, more casual kisses between bites - they settled on the couch together. Shane's head was on Ilya's shoulder, Ilya's arm around him carefully.

"I've been thinking," Shane said quietly.

"About what?"

"About how much I miss—miss you."

"Shane, I am literally right here.

"No, I—I miss us. Miss being able to touch you properly. Miss not needing help for every single thing."

Ilya's arm tightened around Shane's shoulders. "Ah. I miss that too. But this—this is okay too. Taking care of you. Being close to you like this."

"Even when I can't do anything for you?"

"That is—" Ilya paused. "That's trust. Real trust. Means more than sex."

Shane was quiet for a moment. "I want to make you feel good. Want to give you something back for everything you're doing."

"Shane—"

"I know I can't use my hand. Can't touch you the way I want to."

Ilya pulled back to look at Shane's face. "But I can touch you."

Shane's voice dropped. "You want to?"

"Please."

"Okay. Bedroom?"

They moved to the bedroom, Ilya helping Shane every step of the way. Got him onto the bed, lying on his left side, his immobilized arm carefully positioned.

Ilya stretched out beside him, one hand settling on Shane's hip.

"Tell me if anything hurts."

Shane nodded.

Ilya's hand slid under Shane's shirt, fingers splaying across his ribs. Moved higher, finding a nipple, circling it gently. Shane's breath hitched.

Ilya leaned in and kissed him - deep and slow and thorough. His hand continued its exploration, mapping Shane's chest, his stomach, relearning the terrain of his body.

When Ilya's hand reached Shane's waistband, he paused. "Still okay?"

"Yes. Please."

Ilya slid his hand into Shane's sweatpants, wrapping around him. Shane was already half-hard from the anticipation, from the intimacy of being touched after a week of only functional contact.

Ilya started moving - slow, steady strokes that built pleasure gradually. His lips never left Shane's, kissing him through it, swallowing every small sound Shane made.

Shane's left hand gripped the sheets because he couldn't reach for Ilya, couldn't touch him back. But Ilya's free hand found Shane's, linking their fingers, anchoring him.

"Just feel it," Ilya murmured against Shane's mouth. "Let me take care of you."

The combination of Ilya's hand and his words and the kisses pushed Shane closer to the edge. He was already so desperate for this - for proof that he was still wanted, still desirable, still himself.

"I'm close—"

"Good. Come for me."

Shane came with a gasp, his body tensing then relaxing, his shoulder twinging but not quite hurting. Ilya worked him through it, his hand gentling, his lips still on Shane's.

When Shane came down, Ilya pulled back and kissed his forehead, his cheeks, his eyelids. Soft kisses that made Shane's chest ache.

"Better?"

"So much better. Thank you." Shane's voice was rough. "But you didn't—don't you want—"

Ilya's hand cupped Shane's face. "This was about making you feel good."

"But I want to make you feel good too."

"You will." Ilya kissed him once more. "For now, this is enough. You're enough."

He got tissues, cleaned them both up, settled beside Shane again. Pulled Shane close, mindful of his shoulder, and pressed kisses into his hair.

"Sleep now. You're exhausted."

Shane fell asleep with Ilya's lips against his temple, feeling more cared for than he'd ever felt in his life.

Sunday morning arrived too quickly.

Ilya had to leave in a few hours, had to fly back to his team, back to their separate public lives. But for now, they had this - the quiet morning, the soft light filtering through the curtains, the warmth of each other's bodies.

Shane woke to Ilya's fingers in his hair, gentle and soothing.

"Morning," Ilya said quietly.

"Morning. What time is it?"

"Nine. You slept well?"

"Better than I have all week." Shane shifted closer, pressing his face against Ilya's neck. "I don't want you to go."

"I don't want to go either." Ilya's hand moved from Shane's hair to his back, rubbing slow circles. "But I will call. Every day. Check on you."

"Promise?"

"Promise." Ilya tilted Shane's face up and kissed him - deep and lingering. "And when you're better, we're going somewhere. Just us."

"Where?"

"Somewhere warm. Somewhere nice." Ilya's hand cupped Shane's face. "And somewhere you can show me everything you've been thinking about while I've been taking care of you."

"That could take a while."

"Good. I have time." Another kiss. "Now come on. Let's shower and eat before I have to leave."

The shower was bittersweet. Ilya washing Shane's hair for the last time this weekend, his fingers gentle and thorough. Washing Shane's back, his hands careful and loving. Every touch a reminder of what Shane would be missing when Ilya left.

When they were done, Ilya dried Shane with extra care, pressed kisses to his shoulder, his chest, his stomach. Like he was memorizing Shane's body all over again.

Getting dressed took longer than necessary because Ilya kept stopping to kiss Shane between each article of clothing. After the shirt, a kiss to Shane's collar bone. After the sweatpants, a kiss to his hip.

By the time Shane was fully dressed, he was aching with wanting to keep Ilya here, to not let him leave.

"Stop looking at me like that," Ilya said.

"Like what?"

"Like you are puppy and I am abandoning you. I'm coming back. Just have to go play hockey for a few days."

"I know. Doesn't make it easier."

Ilya pulled Shane close - carefully, always careful of the shoulder. Kissed him thoroughly, possessively, like he was staking a claim.

One more kiss. Then another. Then Ilya pulled away before they got too carried away.

"I have to go or I will miss my flight. Your parents will be home soon. Okay?"

He gathered his things while Shane sat on the couch, feeling the approaching absence like a weight in his chest.

At the door, Ilya turned back. Crossed the room in three strides and kissed Shane one more time - deep and desperate and full of everything they couldn't say.

"I'll call tonight. After my flight lands."

"Okay."

"And tomorrow. And every day after that."

"Okay."

"And in six weeks, when you're healed—" Ilya's thumb brushed Shane's lower lip. "You are mine. All mine. For as long as I want you."

"That could be a long time."

"Good. I'm counting on it."

One final kiss. Then Ilya was gone, and Shane was alone in his parents' house, his shoulder aching, his heart aching worse.

But he could still feel Ilya's hands on him. Could still taste his kisses. Could still remember every gentle touch, every moment of care, every reminder that he was wanted.

Six weeks. He could do six weeks.

And then he'd show Ilya exactly how much this weekend had meant.

How much every touch had been noticed and treasured.

How much he loved him.

For now, he'd heal. Get stronger. Count down the days.

And answer Ilya's calls every single night.

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