

Hit The Ground

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Hit The Ground

by [freakshaped](#)

Summary

Shane was looking down. His eyes were squeezed shut, his brow furrowed in intense, painful concentration. His lips were moving, silently shaping the words. Good. Night. Forming them slowly, carefully, in the secret space of his own mouth.

Ilya's breath hitched. He'd never seen this. Why would he have? Shane had never been sad around him. Never hurt. Never in this kind of quiet, defeated pain. Around Ilya, Shane had been pleased and angry and frustrated and gloriously competitive. But never this. Never shattered.

(or, everything is same but Shane has a slight stutter that gets bad when he's sad. Ilya has never heard it because Shane has never been sad around him. Until their night in Vegas.)

Notes

Happy Valentine's day hollanov fic! This is a Vegas scene canon divergence and there isn't any specific tag I'm covering in this (I'm doing a thing of covering one tag in every hollanov fic, you can check my other works for it!), this is a mostly a very self-indulgent emotion dump. Which means that I have taken quite a few liberties with how they behaved in earlier years and hollanov might be a bit OOC (I'll also be describing Ilya's eyes as blue from now on).

This is pretty emotional for valentine's day but hey, you wouldn't be here if you didn't like pain ;)

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

“G-g-g-good—*fuck*.”

The sound was a jagged piece of glass dragged down Ilya’s spine. His grip tightened in the bedsheets, knuckles bleaching white against the dark cotton. Something cold and hard and bitter expanded in his stomach, a leaden weight that had nothing to do with the alcohol.

Shane Hollander had a stutter.

It was a simple fact, like any other. Shane Hollander had freckles. Shane Hollander had back dimples. Shane Hollander had a stutter.

Ilya first heard it during their draft, a lifetime ago in a too crowded room. An older man in a black suit, with a voice like gravel and a fake smile had clapped a hand on Shane’s shoulder and said, “A real shame, son. So unfortunate you were placed second. Still, a hell of an achievement.”

And the boy—just a boy then, all sharp angles and nervous grace, with whom Ilya had exchanged maybe four competitive, wary lines—had flushed, the pink rising spectacularly under his constellation of freckles. His reply had been polite, but it tripped. Just once.

“S-s-still, thank you, sir.”

It was just a slight catch on the ‘s’. It was just a tiny fracture in the perfect Canadian golden boy composure. And it had lit a kind of rage in Ilya that he still couldn’t explain. A protective, possessive fury that this man had caused that flicker of shame on Shane’s face.

There was a time, deep in their two-year-long dance of taunts and tension that Ilya privately called Virtual Foreplay, when he had been almost curious to hear Shane stutter. He’d wanted to be the one to unravel him. Once, texting late at night, the buzz of a win still in his veins, Ilya had typed, “*Will you stutter when I kiss your asshole?*”

It had been a crude, casual comment, as casual as it could be while Ilya's mind painted a vivid, hungry picture of Shane coming apart under his mouth. He didn't get a reply for an hour. Finally, his phone lit up: *"Why will I stutter?"*

Ilya had taken it as a challenge then.

"I'll eat you so good. Little Hollander will forget English."

He'd sent it with a smirk, waiting for the flustered, angry retort. Silence again. For twenty long minutes, his screen stayed dark. And for no reason at all, a cold drip of unease had seeped into Ilya's gut. He'd felt, stupidly, like he'd kicked something precious.

When the reply came, it was four devastating words: "But I sound stupid."

Ilya had called him then. They didn't do calls. Voice was too intimate, too revealing. But he'd dialed, and Shane had picked up on the first ring, not saying anything, just breathing softly into the line.

"You can never sound stupid," Ilya had said, the words leaving him in a rush. They felt too big, too true. So he'd cheapened them, covered them up. "You can only sound boring. Never stupid."

A soft, nervous chuckle had come through the phone, and Ilya had felt his lungs unlock. Shane had started talking about a stupid play from that night's game, and Ilya had let him, steering them back to safer, painless ground. He never brought it up again.

The second time had been after a devastating loss Montreal suffered. Ilya had called to tease him, to poke the bear, to hear Shane's voice crack with anger directed at him—because that was so much better than the hollow, self-directed fury he knew Shane would be drowning in.

But when Shane answered, his voice thick and raw, and muttered, "S-s-shut up, Rozanov," the rage Ilya felt wasn't playful. It was a white-hot, blinding thing, followed by a wave of

protectiveness so intense it stole his breath. He'd spaced out, staring at his hotel wall, until Shane's voice, clearer now, had called his name through the phone. Shane hadn't stuttered again during that call. Ilya had let himself smile, relieved.

So yes, there was once a time Ilya had been curious to hear Shane Hollander stutter. He'd flirted with the idea, a dark fantasy of being the one to make that flawless control shatter for reasons of pleasure, to feel those hitches and breaks against his own skin, in the heat of a gasp. But that had been before Ilya knew, truly knew, what thing made Shane stutter.

And Ilya never wanted to be that thing.

Until now.

The broken word hung in the air between them. Ilya couldn't see Shane but he knew how he looked, how he probably felt, how *Ilya* had made him feel. He got and moved without sound, pushing back the sheets and planting his feet on the cool floor. The cold, hard thing in his stomach was now a grinding pain.

Shane was looking down. His eyes were squeezed shut, his brow furrowed in intense, painful concentration. His lips were moving, silently shaping the words. *Good. Night.* Forming them slowly, carefully, in the secret space of his own mouth.

Ilya's breath hitched. He'd never seen this. Why would he have? Shane had never been sad around him. Never hurt. Never in this kind of quiet, defeated pain. Around Ilya, Shane had been pleased, and angry, and frustrated, and gloriously competitive. But never this. Never shattered.

Maybe Ilya made a noise. Maybe Shane could hear the frantic, guilty hammering of Ilya's heart against his ribs. Shane's eyes snapped open, and he looked up.

Ilya saw it then, fully. The defeat. It drowned the warm brown of Shane's eyes, turning them liquid and lost. They were still so beautiful, always so fucking beautiful to Ilya, but now they were pools of a sadness so profound it felt like a physical blow. Shane Hollander. The most talented, hard-working, infuriatingly sweet man Ilya had ever known. The man who gave

everything, on the ice and off, with a heartbreaking honesty. He was standing here, defeated, because of *Ilya*. Because Ilya was too much of a coward to properly cut him off and too much of a selfish bastard to properly embrace him. He'd offered this twisted, hidden middle ground, and it had broken something in Shane.

Shane's lips parted. He tried again, to speak, to maybe explain or just finally get the words out. "Ro-ro-ro—" It was a soft, aborted attempt at Ilya's name, crumbling into nothing.

Something in Ilya's chest cracked open, raw and bleeding.

He didn't think. He just moved.

He kissed Shane.

It was not a good kiss. It was all desperate, clumsy motion. It was off-center, it had too much spit and their teeth were clicking awkwardly. It was messy and raw and the single best thing Ilya had felt all goddamn day. All of the past six empty, lonely months.

Shane gasped into his mouth—a shock of sound that melted almost instantly into a shuddering sigh of relief. Ilya understood, with nauseating clarity, what was the thing that had made Shane sad. The guilt was a live wire in his throat, choking him.

But then Shane was kissing him back. A tiny, hesitant press of lips that quickly bloomed into something real. He breathed against Ilya's mouth, a small, broken, beautiful thing, and when he pulled back just an inch, his eyes were no longer sad. Just wide and wondering.

"Thank you," Shane breathed, the words clear as a bell.

Ilya couldn't let his own tears fall. That would be too much, a floodgate he'd never be able to close. But that also meant he couldn't let his mouth quirk up into the smile that was threatening to break through the pain. So he did the next best thing. He kissed Shane again.

He put everything into it. All the things he couldn't say, the feelings he couldn't name, the fear, the want, the desperate, clawing need. He wrapped his arms around Shane, pulling him in so tightly he felt the air leave Shane's lungs in a soft *oof*. He held him hard enough to feel the frantic beat of Shane's heart against his own bare chest, lifting Shane slightly onto his toes. Ilya knew he should loosen his grip, let him breathe, but then Shane's hands were fisting in his hair, pulling him closer, and Shane's body was leaning into his, all warm, solid surrender.

And Ilya let himself fall.

He wasn't strong enough to resist this. He knew that now with cruel certainty. But maybe, a desperate, treacherous voice whispered inside him, maybe he could be strong enough to protect it. To protect him. It didn't matter that one day, inevitably, he would break Shane's sweet, honest, giving heart. The logic was fucked, but it was all he had. Right now, in this too big, too dark Vegas hotel room, he wasn't strong enough to let him go.

They stumbled backwards, a tangle of limbs, and fell onto the low couch. Shane landed half on top of him, the smooth, cool buttons of his dress shirt digging into Ilya's bare chest. Shane's trousers slipped against Ilya's thighs. The hard, hot line of Shane's erection, confined in his formal pants, brushed against the growing bulge in Ilya's boxers. The friction was electric, a sharp jolt of pure want cutting through the emotional storm.

Ilya adjusted them, his hands firm on Shane's hips, maneuvering him until Shane was straddling his lap, knees sinking into the cushions on either side of Ilya's thighs. He kissed him again, deep and consuming, pouring every ounce of that chaotic, unmanageable feeling into it. He kissed him until the world narrowed to the slick heat of Shane's mouth, the soft sounds he was making, the way his body was starting to move, slow and tentative, in Ilya's lap.

When Shane finally pulled away, it was to drag in a ragged gasp of air. His face was flushed, his lips kiss-swollen and wet, his eyes dazed. He was smiling, a real one this time, bright and a little wobbly.

"Fuck, Rozanov," he panted, his voice rough. "Are you planning to kill me?"

Ilya forced a smirk onto his face to stop the tenderness that was pulling at the corners of his lips. He leaned back against the couch, trying to look casual, trying to hide the fear that was still a cold knot under his ribs.

“Can’t let you go so quickly,” he said, his voice lower than he intended. There was too much truth in the statement, a confession wrapped in a joke.

Thankfully, Shane only huffed, a soft, breathless sound that did something dangerous to Ilya’s insides. Then he did something worse. He leaned forward, collapsing against Ilya and buried his face in the curve of Ilya’s neck and shoulder. He nuzzled there, a warm, damp press of skin, his breath ghosting over Ilya’s collarbone.

Ilya held him, one hand coming up to cradle the back of Shane’s head, his fingers tangling in the soft, sweaty strands of his hair. He stared over Shane’s shoulder at the garish abstract painting on the hotel wall. He held on and he fell, and he didn’t know how he was ever going to hit the ground.

Shane breathed against the mole on Ilya’s neck that he couldn’t see but knew was there.

The position let Shane hide. It let him hide the fear that might still be in his own eyes, the lingering tremble in his hands. It let him curl his fingers into fists against Ilya’s back, counting silently in his head, finding his center. It let him pretend, for just a moment, that everything was okay. That this was enough.

That Ilya kissed him because he cared, not because he... he pitied Shane.

He held on tighter, his face buried, breathing in the scent of Ilya’s skin. Ilya’s arms were strong around him, solid. But then they began to move. One hand slid down Shane’s spine, a slow, possessive stroke. Ilya’s lips left his hair and found the side of his neck. He kissed the skin there, just below his ear. Not a soft kiss. A hot, open-mouthed press, followed by the wet drag of his tongue. A shiver racked Shane’s body, but it was chased by a cold dread.

Ilya's mouth moved lower, kissing along the tense line of Shane's shoulder, his teeth grazing the fabric of Shane's shirt. His other hand came up to cup the back of Shane's head, holding him in place. It was familiar, so achingly familiar, but it felt wrong now.

"Stop," Shane whispered, the word muffled against Ilya's shoulder.

Ilya stilled, but didn't pull back. His breath was hot on Shane's damp skin. "What?"

"You don't... you don't have to do that." Shane's voice was flat, drained. He forced himself to lean back, putting a few inches of space between them. He couldn't look at Ilya, focusing instead on the rumpled collar of his own shirt. "The kiss was enough. You don't have to force yourself to do more."

For a second, there was only the hum of the air conditioner. Then Ilya's hands dropped from his body. Shane risked a glance up.

Ilya looked... wrecked. His blue eyes were wide, confused, and beneath that, something that looked like hurt. "Force myself?" The words were quiet, disbelieving. "Why will I force myself for you?"

The laugh that escaped Shane was bitter, hollow. "Isn't that what you did before?" He finally met Ilya's gaze, his own eyes burning. "Would you have kissed me at all if I hadn't..." He trailed off, his throat closing. He couldn't say it. The word was a lump of coal, burning and shameful in his mouth. *Stuttered*. He looked away again, his jaw clenched so tight it ached.

Silence.

It was an answer. A loud, screaming answer. Ilya didn't say anything. He just sat there, his expression going carefully, terribly blank. Shane watched the realization settle in Ilya's own eyes. No. No, he wouldn't have. He would have let Shane walk out that door without a single touch, without even looking him in the eye. The kiss, this whole thing, was a reaction to

Shane's own pathetic weakness that Ilya had never seen before. It was pity. It was guilt. It was everything Shane feared.

The cold in Shane's gut spread, icing over his veins. He nodded, once, as if confirming it to himself. "Right." He shifted, planting his hands on the couch to push himself up, to get off Ilya's lap, to leave this room and this humiliation behind. "I should go."

"No." The word was a guttural sound. Ilya's hands shot out, not gentle this time, but viselike, clamping onto Shane's hips, holding him down. His grip was almost painful.

"Let me go, Rozanov."

"You should be angry." Ilya's voice was rough, strained, like the words were being torn from him.

Shane stopped struggling. He stared. "What?"

Ilya wasn't looking at him. He was staring at a point over Shane's shoulder, his eyes unfocused, his face pale.

"You should be angry at me. Say 'fuck off' to me. Call me coward. Go find some better man, maybe Canadian and polite. You should not..." He swallowed hard, his throat working. "You should not be hurt. Not be sad."

Shane's breath caught. He stopped trying to get up. The fight drained out of him, replaced by the intense need to hold this stupid, *stupid* man so close but he refrained. The silence stretched. Shane's mind, reeling, latched onto one thing. One terrible, necessary question. His voice was barely a whisper.

"Do you... do you want me to find a better man?"

Ilya flinched as if struck. He didn't answer. He just shut his eyes tight, a muscle ticking in his jaw. He bowed his head, hiding his face against Shane's chest, his shoulders tensing. It was the most vulnerable Shane had ever seen him. The silence was its own answer.

Yes. And no. And I don't know.

"I'm sorry," Ilya mumbled into Shane's shirt, the words thick and miserable.

And just like that, Shane's own hurt, his shame, his anger... it shifted. It didn't disappear, but it made room for something else. A painful, aching tenderness. He brought his hands up, one cupping the back of Ilya's head, the other wrapping around his broad back. He held him. He pressed a kiss into Ilya's messy dark hair.

It was all too complicated. The wanting, the pushing, the hurting. Shane got it. He hated it, but he got it. And he was so fucking tired. And so fucking greedy.

"Can I stay?" Shane asked, his voice small in the quiet room. "Just... stay tonight?"

Ilya's arms tightened around him convulsively. He nodded, a sharp, jerky motion against Shane's chest. "Yes."

They moved to the bed without speaking, shedding clothes not with passion but with almost a hungry need to feel each other's skin. They slid under the cool sheets. Ilya turned onto his side, and Shane curled into him, his back to Ilya's chest. Ilya's arm came around him, holding him close, his face buried in Shane's hair. Shane reached down, tangling their fingers together over his soft stomach.

But it wasn't enough. The words were still there, choking the air between them.

Shane turned in the circle of Ilya's arms, forcing him to loosen his grip. He faced him in the dim light. He cupped Ilya's cheek, making him look at him. Ilya's eyes were shadowed, guilty.

“Il-Rozanov,” Shane said, face flushing at the slip but his voice remained clear. “You are not responsible for my sadness.”

Ilya gulped. His mouth opened, then closed. He wanted to say so much, wanted to claim “*But I am responsible for your happiness*”. But he only stared at Shane and let the words sit heavy on his tongue. He eventually swallowed them down, his jaw clenching.

Ilya rolled Shane onto his back and leaned over him. He started to kiss him but not on the mouth. He kissed Shane’s forehead, his closed eyelids, the bridge of his nose, each freckle on his cheeks. He kissed his jaw, his throat, the hollow of his collarbone. He moved down, his lips worshiping every inch of skin he exposed—his chest, his stomach, the sharp cut of his hips.

Each kiss was soft, lingering, *reverent*. Each kiss was an apology, a promise, a confession, all the things Ilya couldn’t force past his own lips. He was mapping Shane with his mouth, trying to press his unspoken words into Shane’s very skin.

Shane lay still, his breath coming in shaky sighs, his hands buried in Ilya’s hair. He understood. He let himself be worshipped. He let the silent, desperate language of Ilya’s kisses wash over him, through him. They kissed each other’s shoulders, their arms, their hands. Slow, sleepy kisses that held more truth than any sentence ever could.

Eventually, exhausted and wrung out, they stilled. Ilya gathered Shane close again, their legs tangled, Shane’s head tucked under Ilya’s chin. In the dark, just before sleep took him, Shane felt the ghost of a kiss against his hair, and the whispered, broken sound that wasn’t quite a word, but felt like everything.

End Notes

Fun fact, I had a speech impediment before (its almost rare now) called Cluttering. But its much harder to explain so I gave Shane stutter instead. Also, I know I wasn't able to nail Ilya's speech here, according to the timeline he shouldn't be too fluent I think but also fluent enough but he's also emotional so... yeah, not the best but please roll with it.

And sorry for not updating Sticky Situation! I'm facing a bit of block with part of its final chapter, I'll have it up by Sunday hopefully.

I'm [freakshaped](#) on twitter ~

- lisa

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