

always an angel, never a god

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by [flamesbegin](#)

Summary

“you know what?” shane starts, half terrified, voice filled with bravado he doesn’t yet feel, “there’s a place nearby that makes the *best* chicken parmesan. i’ve always wanted to take you.”

he wants to take the words back as soon as he speaks them, but the smile that blossoms in ilya’s face feels monumental. shane feels his heartbeat quicken, and hopes his face shows a confidence he’s not sure he possesses.

or: shane tries to be brave. ilya just loves him.

Notes

this is a scene from chapter thirty five of "the long game" re-imagined. i am not the biggest fan of how shane's arc was dealt with and how his anxieties were addressed (could talk about it for hours) so this stems from that. the dialogue for the first section is taken directly from the book (credits to rachel reid). any errors are my own - i wrote this at 3am and it's not beta'd.

warning for shane being generally very anxious through this. if there's any tags i missed feel free to let me know :)

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

“so,” shane says as they walk across the lobby to the exit, “you’re not mad then?”

ilya snorts, and shakes his head in disbelief.

“not at you. i’m fucking furious at crowell.”

“yeah,” shane says, allowing a smirk to break on his face, “well. i recorded the meeting. so.”

ilya does a double take, mouth dropping open. he steps ahead of shane and turns, walking the rest of the way backwards, directing his incredulous stare and smile at shane.

“holy shit, hollander. good job.”

“it was mom’s idea,” shane admits, almost sheepishly, “just in case we’d need it. but i think we’re both going to be playing soon.”

shane raises both eyebrows and smiles back at ilya. together, they push through the front doors and walk into the chilly late-morning sunshine. ilya lets out a crazed laugh and shane can’t help but shake his head fondly. they walk, side-by-side, towards where the car was parked.

wouldn’t it be nice to just let go, for once?

the thought comes to shane, unbidden. *fuck, it would.* he glances at ilya from the corner of his eye and thinks, *it can be.*

he stops walking. ilya stops with him, and glances over inquisitively.

“you know what?” shane starts, half terrified, voice filled with bravado he doesn’t yet feel, “there’s a place nearby that makes the *best* chicken parmesan. i’ve always wanted to take you.”

he wants to take the words back as soon as he speaks them, but the smile that blossoms in ilya’s face feels monumental. shane feels his heartbeat quicken, and hopes his face shows a confidence he’s not sure he possesses.

“if hayden does not mind watching anya for a bit longer.”

it startles a laugh out of shane. “i’ll check to make sure, but,” he drags out the word, teasingly, “he *was* pretty excited about doing us a favor. we should probably take advantage of that while we can.”

he forces himself to take a step, and then another. he pictures the restaurant in his mind, and tells himself that he will stop feeling guilty when they get there. ilya steps in time with him.

“hayden is a good guy,” ilya says.

shane nudges him. “are you gonna tell him that?”

ilya shakes his head, still smiling. he mimics zipping his mouth shut and throwing away the key. shane laughs, and almost forgets the dread building beneath his skin.

“hm, maybe. someday,” ilya replies.

shane murmurs an “unbelievable,” underneath his breath. truth is, he feels full of love when he sees ilya and hayden interact, feels like his two carefully separated worlds are colliding. or. well. *they have fully collided now*, his brain supplies helpfully. *to the point of no return*.

and it's not as though he wants to return to how it was. he would choose proudly loving ilya above it all. he would have it happen all over again, if the choice was between *this* and *not having ilya anymore*. if only the pit in his stomach could get the memo, it would be fantastic. if only his brain could be quieter, less obnoxious in its opinions pertaining to the future, it would be amazing.

fuck. don't spiral. not now.

ilya nudges him, and the world comes rushing back in. shane forces his feet to move quicker, prompting ilya to do the same, competitiveness triggered. their norm.

the smile on his face comes a little more naturally at that.

—

“fuck, hollander, i can already *smell* it.”

the excitement in ilya's voice is overwhelming. the huge and genuine smile on his face, almost a rare sight as of late, turns shane's stomachs into knots. his eyes crinkle around the corners, a light shining through so bright that shane feels the delirious urge to find a way of capturing it in a bottle.

their hands are intertwined, swaying slightly as they walk through the busy streets of downtown montreal. shane can't recall who reached out first as they fell in step together - maybe they both did, unable to stop the gravity that pulls them to each other, unable to deny themselves any longer. as they come to a halt in front of the restaurant, ilya squeezes shane's hand.

for a second, it feels as though ilya's tight grasp on him is the only thing tethering him to earth.

before shane can squeeze it back, ilya separates them and steps forward towards the establishment's front door, gazing back at shane playfully with a slightly raised eyebrow and a tilt of his head. shane feels the edges of his vision blurring against his will. glancing at the restaurant's sign, he is barely able to discern that there are words staring back at him.

fuck.

he feels rooted on the spot, as though vines grew from the ground and wrapped around his ankles. time slips from his mind, and the people moving past them appear too slow and too fast, all at once.

fuck. not this.

he forces his eyes back to ilya. the smile is already dimmer. with his back now turned to the restaurant, his calculating gaze dances through shane's body. shane feels naked, exposed, laid bare. like his guts are out on the pavement, somehow, and all he wants to do is shove them back into his body where they belong. ilya should be smiling. should be *beaming*. he should go inside and eat his favorite food, and have a good impromptu date with his fiancée.

and *fuck*, shane wants it so bad. he can't quantify how many times he has passed through this exact street and wondered, almost absentmindedly, how much ilya would enjoy this place. he can't begin to explain how many times the picture was painted vividly in the back of his mind. him and ilya. him, ilya and his parents. him and ilya, on a double date - with the pikes, with max and leah, with harris and troy, with *anyone*. holding hands above the table, sharing biting remarks, letting themselves be seen. shane wants it more than anything.

almost more than anything.

ilya steps into focus. he is closer to shane now, is the slow realization that hits in waves. stepping into his personal space, ilya carefully holds shane's unseeing gaze.

“shane?”

fuck. fuck.

ilya sounds gentle, and so loving. shane wants to vomit.

“i— i don’t...”

“hey,” ilya immediately replies, when shane trails off helplessly, “is okay.”

“we— i— *fuck.*”

shane stares at the ground. he can feel his throat closing. he fucking *hates* this. he wants to reassure ilya, tell him that everything is okay, that they can just step inside the fucking restaurant and it’ll be fine. the words don’t come to him, even as he attempts to scream them over the static inside of his brain. his breath quickens, almost imperceptibly, but enough to make him angrier at himself.

why is this happening now?

why now, that shane has gotten ilya so hopeful? why now, when they should be enjoying their time together and letting go of their worries? *shit, why?*

“sweetheart,” shane snaps his eyes back to ilya. *fucking focus when he’s talking to you. get a grip.* ilya raises one hand, slowly, deliberately, “can i touch you?”

shane doesn’t even attempt to open his mouth. he knows that his voice won’t be able to crawl out of his throat to reply with a singular affirmative. he nods, and tries not to melt when ilya cups his face firmly.

“big day for us, huh?”

gentle. so gentle, and soothing. shane tries to nod again, and can't tell if he succeeds. he can tell ilya is searching for answers on his face, and he hopes he can find them. he hopes ilya can understand what shane isn't able to.

"i'm thinking," ilya's voice sounds thick with emotion. shane makes a distressed noise, but is quickly drowned out by ilya, "i'm *thinking*, we could come here another day. i think david would enjoy it too, no? for now, i'm thinking we can go back home. we can share one of your dinners, maybe. have a lazy day."

god. shane wants to say no. he wants to scream it, grab ilya by the neck and drag him down the street and continue with their plans.

but more than that - he wants to say yes, *so* badly. his mind latches at the possibility of picking one of his frozen meals. the familiar texture, the quietness of his brain as he eats it. the feeling he has grown accustomed to over the last year. the routine he craves, the one he *needs*. feeling like he has done a good job, like he has *one* aspect of his life under his grasp.

"sweetheart, breathe."

shane forces himself back to the present. the street noises are too loud around him, and too distracting. he focuses on ilya. his smile is dimmed, yes, but not gone. shane can map out the worry on his face, but from this close he can also see the *heart eyes* that were once mentioned to him. it makes his chest tighten.

he feels foolish as he nods, but ilya just looks fond.

"i'm—," shane tries to say, but all that comes out is a puff of air. he brings his hands up to ilya's elbows and squeezes, frustrated. he would rip his own hair out, if he could.

"don't force yourself," ilya attempts to sound stern, "i understand."

shane drops his head and tilts forward, swaying into his fiancée. ilya drags his hand away from shane's face to loop behind his back, tightly squeezing shane against his own body. holding him together. he murmurs quiet reassurances, in english and russian, as shane tries to collect himself. he can't tell how much time passes before he feels ready to step out of ilya's embrace.

as they separate, ilya keeps his hands on shane. he links their fingers together again. turns them both to where they came from, and walks with purpose. shane doesn't remember commanding his legs to follow, but they do so anyways. he thinks they'd follow ilya anywhere.

he knows he'd follow ilya anywhere.

—

hours later finds them tangled on shane's bed, ilya's chest as shane's pillow, the setting sun streaming through the window. ilya had insisted, after picking up anya from hayden's house and sharing a late lunch on shane's couch, that a nap was in order for them. he had laid down on top of shane, the added weight granting almost dizzying relief, and played with his fingers until they both drifted off.

now, shane feels marginally better. mostly only exhaustion remains, deep in his bones. and shame.

overwhelming shame.

"i'm so sorry," shane chokes out, throat scratchy after hours of disuse. ilya carried all of their conversations since arriving home, relying on nods and head shakes as responses.

"nothing to be sorry for," ilya replies readily.

“yes,” shane says forcefully, blinking away the moisture on his lower lash line, “there *is*. i wanted us to have a nice day. i’m sorry i fucking ruined it.”

ilya sighs heavily. he rearranges them until they are both laying on the pillows, staring at each other. shane wants to shy away from it, but refrains. he stares at ilya’s mouth instead. it’s turned downward.

“we had a nice day. you told crowell to fuck off, we spent time with anya. cuddled, slept. will probably fuck later. perfect day, no notes.”

shane makes a frustrated noise. ilya sounds genuine, he *is* genuine.

“i—,” his throat feels tight again, but this time with emotion, “i *do* want to take you to that restaurant. i want us to sit down and eat together. i really fucking want that, really badly. but today— shit, i just.”

ilya doesn’t interrupt him when he loses his words. he just stares at shane, waiting. shane takes a breath and reassesses.

“it was a *lot*. it’s *been* a lot. but today, especially, after— fuck, the last time crowell and i had a meeting, that fucked me up. i felt sick for days, ilya. i don’t know, my brain, it’s all mixed up. and i’m sorry,” shane basically spat out. then added hastily, “and i’m sorry for making you eat my stupid fucking food.”

ilya stares at him for a long while. then, he reaches out and drags his hand through shane’s hair, scratching at the base of his neck.

“shane,” ilya slowly pronounces every sound of his name, “sweetheart. it is okay. i know. it is a lot for you, and all at once. there is no need to be sorry.”

he pauses, as if pondering something. his eyebrows furrow.

“*i’m* sorry,” ilya starts again, as slow as the first time he spoke, “for the... jokes. i know that the diet is more than just being worried. i know your brain is very loud. and i liked our lunch together. i don’t mind, eating what you eat, sharing this. i still think you should let yourself enjoy more of life, yes, but i want to enjoy it *with* you.”

“i don’t *want* to diet anymore,” shane confesses, ripping off the bandaid, “but i can’t just—let go. right now. i *want* to, but i don’t think i can, right now.”

“it’s okay,” ilya stresses the word out, tugging at shane’s hair for emphasis, “we will work on it, yes? maybe chicken parmesan only at home, for now,” his tone is gentle, and the words are teasing.

shane smiles in relief. if ilya can joke about this, maybe it will be okay. he sobers quickly when he remembers something else.

“i’m sorry i couldn’t speak,” his voice comes out as a whisper, “i still don’t know *why* that happens. i’m sorry you had to deal with that, outside.”

it’s not the first time ilya had seen this happen, but if they are at home it can be managed. they usually communicate through text until shane feels ready to speak again. ilya has never *complained* about it, but shane can’t help the embarrassment he feels.

“it’s okay, hollander. i can ready you like a book,” ilya jokes, and moves his hand to the side of shane’s face. he draws circles with his thumb near shane’s eye, “you see all your thoughts, through here. you just have to be looking for it.”

“yeah?” shane tries to tease back, imbuing a forced nonchalant tone in his voice, “and you’re looking for it?”

“always,” ilya replies, earnest. serious, “i am always looking for it.”

shane can't help it. he reaches out, clumsily, and brings ilya's face to him, crashing their mouths together. he kisses ilya, again and again and *again*, breaking apart and coming back together, translating unspeakable and unmeasurable feelings into actions. ilya kisses back just as fiercely, gripping shane's chin and stopping them from separating again.

shane loses track of time. the world is limited to this room, this bed, as he runs his fingers through ilya's curls and sighs into their kiss. ilya starts to pull back and shane chases after him, only to be stopped by ilya's hold on his face. shane makes a noise in protest, blinking the haze out of his eyes.

what could be more important than what we were doing?

"we have a statement to post," ilya says, "to tell the world we are happy and in love."

fuck. yeah. that would be important.

"yeah?" shane rolls over on top of ilya, straddling him. he braces his arms on either side of his fiancée, and grins down at him, "you wanna do that now? right now?"

he leans down and kisses ilya's neck, slowly, purposefully. small, fleeting kisses that turn into drawn out bites. he drags one hand underneath his ilya's shirt, featherlight touches leaving goosebumps. shane can *feel* ilya's resolve slipping away.

ilya moans and puts one hand on shane's ass, his touch firm but gentle. he tilts his head up, encouraging shane.

"no," he replies and shane presses his winning smirk into ilya's neck, "not right now."

their joint instagram post goes live at almost midnight, with five carefully curated pictures and farah's approved statement. it gains a million likes in just under seventy two hours.

End Notes

i hope that wasn't too terribly out of character, it is my first attempt at writing for them.
comments and kudos make my day! you can find me on [twitter](#).

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