

before those hands pulled me from the earth

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before those hands pulled me from the earth

by [byulelle](#)

Summary

It was a start, Shane knew that. And no matter what happened, he'd help Ilya. Always, as promised forever.

They were going to win a hundred more Stanleys, retire, have children, and grow old together.

The soil was damp, cold, and suffocating as the other digs into the earth with bare hands, with a single-minded intensity to free each ragged and stifled breath from the clutches of the loam. And with a new dawning of the sun, Ilya would find himself feeling its rays. Tonight wasn't a good night, but tomorrow was a new day.

; 5 tells and signs Ilya is going through a depressive episode, and the ways Shane tries to help him through it.

Notes

hi! if this finds you, just know you aren't alone, and you are loved by more people than you could ever know. please feel free to sit this one out if you aren't in a good headspace.

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

It was a slow crawl, it always had been.

What he thought would come like a huge explosion, the distant boom and warning that blared in his head didn't come. It never did. It was a slow, agonizing crawl. Like quicksand he didn't know he was wriggling out until it had been chest-deep and suffocating.

He didn't even know it was happening until he was caught in its clutches.

Depression was something tricky for Ilya. Galina had explained that for him, until they managed to try and reasonably balance out the chemicals in his brain that were going haywire, it was going to be a recurring thing. She'd promised it wouldn't be comfortable, *thrilling*. But she had promised it would also pass.

Especially now that his husband was ten toes down into helping him.

"You should answer that," Shane's stern yet gentle voice makes Ilya blink, looking up at him like he was startled. His phone had pinged again as Ilya glances down, "Is probably just Instagram notification from Harris, *moya lyubov*,"

"Sure?" Shane hums, wiping his hands down after wiping down their kitchen counter after dinner dishes.

"Yes. I will answer later,"

It was a *tell* of sorts. Shane didn't know if Ilya knew it himself, but he had desperately and secretly tried to monitor and observe his husband. He knew he was bad at subtext – but what he was good at was careful planning and loving Ilya, to some extent where he could keep an eye on habits and cycles.

And Shane decides he'd give Ilya a day. Maybe he would really answer later, whatever it was, Shane did not have enough to hypothesize on anything yet. He seemed clinical about it, but he had loved Ilya too much to not try and meet him in the middle and reach out. He'd already made that mistake once, and god forbid he'd do it again.

When Yuna texts him the next day, asking where Ilya had been and why he wasn't responding to her texts, it was a greenlight.

Standing from his leather chair, he closes the laptop, opting to respond to emails later. Padding out, he sees Ilya quietly lounging on the couch, on his phone, scrolling through something. Squinting to try and parse what it was, it was in Cyrillic. Probably an e-book.

"Ilya," he calls out, voice steady and normal. "Mom texted you,"

A grunt greets him, his voice rough and unused. "Did she? I'll respond later,"

"It would be better if you did it now, *moya lyubov*,"

That makes Ilya peer over at him from the couch, seeing Shane leaning against the entryway of the living room, arms crossed and calm. “I think it’s best to check your inbox, just at least reply to mom,” he says, pushing off the cased opening and approaching his husband. “You know she’s gonna be all naggy about it again,”

Ilya presses his lips together, eyes a little distant. “I’ll– I’ll respond when I feel a little…” and he pauses, as if realizing where Shane had been going with it. He furrows his brows, and then looks up at Shane. Relief floods his chest when there is no pitiful or patronizing look on his face. Just a gentle curiosity, as if daring him to continue his sentence.

“When I feel a little better,” Ilya weakly appeals.

Shane reaches out and squeezes the base of Ilya’s neck and shoulder, “My love, people would appreciate it if you replied, just at least one word,” he cajoles, not forcing anything. If Ilya were to say no again, he wouldn’t push. “May make mom feel a little better,” he hums.

Ilya nods, first a little apprehensive but eventually steers himself to grab his phone. “Just to mom,”

“Yeah,” Shane nods and presses a gentle kiss on his forehead before giving Ilya space, not trying to pry. He’d ask Yuna later if Ilya really did.

Ilya taps his fingers against his thigh. He had been feeling a little off as of late, like a slow crawl to some sort of madness again. Unlocking his phone, he sees a text from Troy, asking him something and another from Wyatt who sent him a picture, probably a meme. And then Yuna, saved as **Mom**.

Mom

Ilya darling, would you want chicken parm this weekend? David has been asking

Just wanted to know what you’d prefer

We can have dad cook something new

Maybe some soup? Autumn has gotten quite chilly already.

She had sent it a day and a half ago, and normally Ilya would’ve replied faster. But he simply couldn’t. But he tries to be brave. Just a few words, like Shane had suggested.

Ilya

Anything is fine

It was simple, just three words. But it had been a little lighter, a small weight chipped off from his boulderous burden. And somehow, his brain tells him maybe he didn't want just anything. So, he types again.

Ilya

Maybe dad's meat pie.

Tourtiere was hard to spell, but he knew Yuna got it.

Ilya puts his phone down again, taking in a deep breath, laying back down on the couch. It didn't make him magically feel better, but nonetheless, he did appreciate that Shane had pushed him to reply. He knew, that once this tremendous, difficult cycle had ended, and he had shed things out with Galina—he wouldn't regret replying to Yuna.

And before he knew it, he was replying to Troy too.

Troy

Hey cap, was wondering if you and Shane wanted to head out with Harris and I for dinner this Wednesday? New gay pub that one of his friends own, soft opening. Could be good.

Ilya

Thanks for invite but will see.

And he hadn't checked his phone after that. But it was a sign of his still beating heart, those thirteen words, a reminder his body needed, and that his mind had to reconcile.

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“-ya. Ilya,”

Ilya has to physically shake his head and blink, noticing he'd been staring at the wall for the past...god, how long had it been? His thoughts had reached their flow state, or rather the lack

thereof. He'd always been so disconcerted how his brain could be so *empty*, and only realizing it when he had to be actually snapped out of it.

It terrified Shane too. Just seeing his usually jovial, chirping, boisterous husband suddenly so quiet but the family visit they made to Galina said that it was just Ilya's brain trying to process things. Depression was new in his stream of consciousness and subconsciously or not, he could *drown* in his own thoughts.

It was more of a precedent if anything, Shane would recognize. This had always been the start to a depressive cycle. First the brain fog, progressing to isolation, and then the rest follow before Ilya goes back to Galina.

Shane steers himself, putting on a neutral expression. During his more aware and 'okay' dispositions, Ilya had made him promise to never coddle him, it made him feel like a burden and had vulnerably and nervously expressed it does make it worse. So Shane, with a gallant effort, tries not to scoop his husband into his arms and tries to hurry to save him.

If Ilya needed slow, Ilya would get slow *and steady*.

"Did you hear what I said?" Shane asks casually, even if he knew that Ilya hadn't probably even hear him enter the room thirty minutes ago. He sees Ilya shake his head, "I- Sorry, I did not,"

"That's okay. I was asking what you wanted for dinner later, we have to go grocery shopping," Shane suggests even if he internally winces. It felt *wrong* to put Ilya up to tasks when he wasn't feeling well, but his therapist had explained that the more Ilya moved and worked around his normal routine, could help. "The fridge was ransacked the last time the team visited," Shane tries with a more lighter tone, "Just realized now that there isn't anything substantial to eat,"

Ilya blinks up at him, "You could not go grocery alone?"

"No," Shane smiles at him. They both know he could. But both also knew that Ilya needed it.

"Let's go then," Ilya says while standing up with a heavy, encumbered sigh. Shane truly tried not to take it personally. "Anya, come on. Me and papa are going shopping," he whistles at their girl who excitedly wags her tail it might actually send her propelling up their ceiling.

"Babe, hand me her leash please," Shane asks, already placing the harness against Anya's fluffy body, squatted to one knee. And Ilya wordlessly goes to grab one amongst her array of leashes hung up on the foyer wall. It makes him give pause, she had so many. One with strawberries, one with daisies linked to one another, one solidly red, then black, and then striped red and black, then a rainbow one. Jesus, how many leashes does a singular dog need.

But it still makes Ilya stop to think about it, which in his book, was a win. He tries desperately not to space out, and Anya is his saving grace from slipping into a more destructive headspace after so lovingly trying to pick something out. He grabs the strawberry one, and finally clips it on.

Shane decides he'd do the driving today. Safer that way.

The car ride to the grocery was silent. If Shane was being honest himself, he was ashamed he didn't know if he should or shouldn't put on some music, and Ilya was spacing out again. In navigating the delicate space between them during these moments, Shane was scared he'd do something wrong. But he was never scared that it was a constant reminder of how much he was fueled by his love for Ilya.

"Penny for your thoughts?" Shane quietly asks. Ilya blinks, and it takes a moment for him to respond, "Just...занятый," *Busy. His brain was busy.* At least that much Shane could tell. "I've been feeling unwell lately, sweetheart," Ilya bravely admits as Shane nods.

"Do you want an emergency session with Galina?"

"No, no need. I have an appointment next week anyway,"

"Anything else I could help with?"

Ilya pauses, looking down at the hands resting on his lap. "...I don't know,"

Which Shane finds is an answer that frustrates him. But not directed at Ilya, god, *never* directed at Ilya. He just didn't like being unable to do something, or at least to parse how he could make it better. He was trying, they both were, and in navigating it blindly he could only stand by him and wait. Waiting was excruciating to Ilya, to not know how much longer it would last and in turn it breaks Shane's heart.

"You still hadn't told me what you wanted to eat," Shane reminds kindly, "You have to eat,"

How the tables have turned.

"What do you think you'd like?"

"Chocolate cake,"

Shane doesn't know whether to take this request at face value, if Ilya had found it in himself to joke around, or if he'd completely turned off his brain. But he simply says, "Okay then,"

And by the time they find themselves inside the grocery store, Shane looks down at the list he had made, letting Ilya push the cart as he reads off, "Can you get the cereal up there? I checked and you were out," he says pragmatically. He himself didn't indulge on Ilya's sugary box of morning treats but it was a staple in their household regardless. Especially now that Shane was off-season and wasn't on a diet.

Every bend and stretch Ilya had done, he could feel a tiny trickle of normalcy. That he wasn't all that useless, even if Galina had insisted it was *not* a matter of laziness or use for Shane, it was clinical depression. Still, Ilya liked being useful.

"Oh, and we're out of protein bars,"

"Can we get the chocolate ones this time, not the gross oat ones?"

Shane stifles a giddy smile, “Alright fine. Just this off-season,” he easily concedes, a gentle hand on Ilya’s back, a firm and steady presence.



“Ilya,” Shane says calmly, not truly able to just suddenly feel the shift of their home gym.
“The 40kgs are out again,”

“*What* do you want?!” Ilya snaps at Shane which makes his husband recoil more in shock than anger as he furrows his brows. These were the hardest to navigate when it came to Ilya’s depression.

The anger, the sudden shifts, the sadness that was kept under a difficult veneer of snapping because Shane was a largely defensive guy as well.

He’d snap at Anya earlier too, when their girl bumped against the coffee table and knock Ilya’s water off the glass, spilling it all over the carpet. Normally, Ilya was a level-headed guy, even with his bravado and arrogance on ice.

He wasn’t a cruel man. But Galina had always reminded the both of them that his depression was not an immediate avenue for making such behaviors permissible. Anger, sadness, emptiness were emotions hard to juggle and live with at a constant cycle, but were not an excuse to inflict harm.

“Oookay...” Shane raises his hand in surrender, trying to not react just as defensively and turn this into a bigger fight than it had to be. “I was- I just saw the weights lying around, it can be a tripping hazard,”

“Then keep it yourself! Jesus, Hollander,”

Okay, enough was enough. Shane takes a beat, eyes spanning Ilya as he noted down the obvious. His husband had not been able to sleep as well last night due to night terrors, Ilya was probably terrified of every single intrusive thought that had entered his brain, and the exercise must’ve pumped a tad too much adrenaline and had fucked his system up.

“I get that you’re feeling like shit, Ilya,” Shane sternly says, hands balled up into stressed fists before catching himself in the mirror and flexing it open. “But please, you do not get to talk to me that way, my love. Please, hop off the bike and...tell me what’s wrong,”

“Nothing is wrong!” Ilya snarls and snaps at Shane but immediately stops when he just...sees his husband standing before him, body tense but eyes still kind. His legs give out as he grunts and whips his head to the side, only to come face the mirror which pisses him off even more so he shuts his eyes and rests his forehead on the power panel instead.

He vaguely hears the stray weights being racked back beside the others, and Shane hadn't said something to retort. Probably holding himself back from saying something stupid, which mildly placates Ilya.

He hears the shuffling of Shane's shoes, then a stop. He looks up to see Shane sitting on the bench of the seated dip machine across the bike, head tilted to the side, patient but not taking any of the shit Ilya is doling out.

And it had been an ineffective coping mechanism as of late, all the lashing out because it made him feel worse than when he'd started. Before Ilya knows it, tears are flowing down his cheeks as he shakes his head. "I'm sorry,"

Shane immediately stands and opens his arms in which Ilya runs into, sobbing as Shane helps them down the rubberized floor, "Hey, hey, it's okay. I understand," Shane whispers, rubbing Ilya's sweaty back. Wet tears pelt down Shane's skin, nearly audible as it lands as he sighs and squeezes his husband closer.

"What are we feeling right now,"

"Is...Is bad," Ilya whispers, helpless to his own mind, "I- I cannot..." he hiccups and crumbles into Shane's arms.

"Мне просто надоело не понимать, что со мной не так. Я ненавижу это чувство, будто у меня постоянно тяжелое, но пустое сердце. Мне надоело так себя чувствовать, и я бы хотела, чтобы это просто прекратилось." he speaks in rapid succession as Shane tries desperately to cling onto some of the words. *I'm just tired of not knowing what's wrong with me. I hate feeling like I always have a heavy yet empty heart. I'm tired of feeling this way and I wish it just stops.*

He can deduce 'tired', and 'hate', and 'feeling', and 'stop', but the defeat settles unpleasantly on his chest.

"I don't feel well," Ilya tries to say, mortified at the thought. It had its brief flashes of the intrusive and borderline harmful and he was scared.

"I know, my love,"

"I feel like...I am going to fail,"

Shane shakes his head, "You aren't, Ilya. You're doing so well. *This* is hard, and unpleasant, but it will pass. You and I both know it would, because you are a very brave man, Ilya," Shane whispers soothingly against his damp hair. "You've been doing so well, my love. It's normal to be scared, I'm right here,"

"What if I- I cannot be brave anymore? *Я сейчас поскользнусь, Шейн.*" *I'm going to slip.*

"I'm going to catch you," Shane whispers against Ilya's temple. "*Я тебя поймаю. Обещаю.*" the pronunciation is a little off, but it seems to somehow work as his desperate sobs slowly taper into quiet sniffles and tears.

Deep down, Shane was always terrified he hadn't done enough to help Ilya. But he could only imagine just how twice frightening this was all to Ilya. To be so engulfed by your own brain to the point you cannot even get out of bed on the worst days.

Shane couldn't begin to imagine, but he understands. He had to.

“Hey, hey, Ilya,” he straightens his husband, “Ilya, breathe with me, my love. Just like how Galina said,” he holds Ilya by the shoulders firmly, realizing his husband was on the brink of actually hyperventilating.

“Breath in, hold to five for me. One, two, three...” he counts down, watching Ilya closely like it had been a pre-hockey ritual he couldn't just do half heartedly, “Breath out, hold five. One, two, three...”

For the next minute, Ilya tries to follow along. His chest has gotten so tight, Shane has to actually push his palm up his chest just to get some momentum going, but when they both succeed, Ilya slumps back down against Shane's chest.

“I just want to sleep,” Ilya tiredly whispers as Shane's heart breaks at how small he sounded. “Okay, Ilya. Let's go,” he nods, helping his husband off the floor.



Ilya did not anticipate his body to follow suit. In his earlier, more rudimentary knowledge of depression, it just stayed a *mental* illness with no somatic presentations of pain.

Yet there he was, nauseous again. With a brain splitting headache barreling into what could turn into vertigo. It's so bad the cup he was holding slips his grasp and he's glad it's one of their wooden ones.

Hearing the commotion, Shane peers inside the kitchen to see Ilya hunched over, cleaning up the mess. “All good here?” he asks. And the tension in Ilya's shoulders was hard to hide.

“Do we still have...what was that, um, vertigo medicine,” Ilya says, feeling like his mouth was stuffed with cotton as he tosses the tissue paper he'd use to wipe off the spilled water and deposits the cup down the sink.

“You're not feeling well?” Shane frowns and approaches the medicine cabinet, a little higher up their food pantry. He always kept a stock of meclizine, finding that it worked well for Ilya without other side effects that would otherwise make things worse for his husband.

Ilya gives him a grunt, not trusting himself to not throw up on their kitchen floor. Shane heads back to Ilya, handing him half a pill and smoothing his curls out his face, “Let's get you to the couch,”

And Ilya feels like he's truly gonna die. *Physically* die. His world is spinning and it only stops when he's supine on the couch, feeling his husband's soothing touch on his forehead. "Were you not going...to Pike's?"

"I'm not going to leave you here when you're ill, Ilya," Shane immediately responds, and deep down Ilya wishes he'd be left alone. But *if* he was left alone, he knew he'd be worse, but the desire for isolation was definitely there,

"I am fine. Do not make me stop you,"

"Just shut up and rest," Shane scoffs, a little amused at how petulant his husband sounds. "You've been getting these headaches and vertigo for a while,"

"Galina says is normal," as normal as he could get, really. Says its somewhat like growing pains when he's working on trying to manage his depression.

Ilya shuts his eyes, sighing out deeply as the nausea tapers off into discomfort in his stomach, heavy and queasy but somewhat better. He hated feeling sick, he was a hockey player for fucks sake, he'd delt with slams of hockey sticks to the ribs, and slams against boards on the head. No way vertigo was going to snipe him now.

But against Shane's thigh, his head cradled so lovingly, fingers pressing on his forehead and massaging his temple, he couldn't deny being cared for felt quite nice. Or maybe the helpful pressure against his head was making him lucid.

Shane quietly tangles Ilya's curls around his fingers, gently caressing and smoothing them out almost in a trance-like state, heart still throbbing with worry. He traces Ilya's brows, and he could feel the weight of his husband get slightly heavier. And when he looks down, Ilya's mouth is slightly parted, breathing softly.

"I hope you feel better when you wake up," Shane mumbles, caressing Ilya's sleeping face. Gentle. Tender. "I hope you slowly start feeling better. I love you, and I want you to get through this," Shane whispers, feeling his tears prick his eyes.

He brushes a thumb over his brows, then his jaw, then nose. He loves him so much, when has he gotten this gaunt and thin? "You deserve the world, Ilya. Everything nice, and calming, and gentle," he wishes, "It hurts to see you unhappy and unwell, and I know it hurts you most too,"

He takes a deep breath, "Your mother would've been so proud. You're such a trooper, and I love you so much,"

And with that, he stretches over to grab the blanket hanging over the couch, draping it over his husband and snugly tucking him in before Anya quietly pads towards the couch, joining Ilya by his feet. Shane smiles caressing her ears. "You'll keep papa company for me would you?" he asks. "Let's make him some soup,"



Shane looks up at the clock, 3:04 PM.

Shane

He's been sleeping in too late now, like since a week ago

He couldn't show up to his appointment yesterday and I didn't have the heart to force him or anything

Galina

That's okay. Sometimes bad days really happen. Make him come in when he's feeling better

A shower would do him good, try to have him take one if you could Shane.

Shane

Okay, thank you.

He sighs, putting his phone down. Tapping his fingers against the counter, he presses his lips together and readies himself, grabbing a cold glass of water before heading up their room.

Ilya, on the other hand, had jolted awake from a terrible dream. Heart pounding against his chest for a vague, forgettable image. His nightmares have gotten more and more lucid, yet somehow less vivid. The heavy, general sense of foreboding just settles like a spit in his chest, weighing down his heart and body.

The room is dark, only a few rays of light streaming from a cloudy morning. It was cold, autumn had always been the mark of a hard season, especially before he has to prepare for a game. The cold, the frigidity, and lack of sun somehow made his depression worse.

It had been a cloudy, bleak day when Irina died. And he could only put in so much brain power to conclude it was a contributing factor to the seasonal aspect of his depression. He hated rainy, cloudy days, because it always followed him like a weight against his ankle. And he could only imagine how it felt to drown, body dragged at the deepest depths of water until his lungs fill up and give out. But Shane would be so sad if he disappeared into the ocean.

He would never want to make Shane sad.

The door creaks open, shaking Ilya out of his thoughts momentarily and pulling his blanket closer when he hears Shane pad towards their bed.

The blanket wriggles and Shane exhales a breath he didn't know he was holding while further into the room, feet quietly padding on the wooden floors. "Hey," Shane sits on his side of the bed, shaking Ilya, "Come drink some water, please," Shane tugs.

To his surprise, Ilya turns to face him, not needing much cajoling but it had been obvious he had just woken up, eyes heavy and distant as Shane smiles. "Good morning. Or, afternoon, actually," he holds out the glass of water for Ilya, "Up. Come drink."

Ilya felt *heavy*. And greasy, with not showering for three days, and the only reason the room wasn't a mess is because Shane had always fixed up. The contact of water against his parched throat is a relief he didn't know he'd needed. "Thank you," he rasps.

"...You wanna take a bath together?" Shane asks, gently taking Ilya's hand as his husband withdraws it, laying back down. "M' smelly. You can go first,"

"Ilya, you know I don't care if you're smelly," Shane scoffs and crawls closer to Ilya, tugging at his hand again and pressing a kiss to his knuckles. "C'mon, let's take a shower,"

Ilya looks up at Shane, eyes so hopeless and fatigued. "Can't,"

"You can," Shane places a hand over Ilya's beating heart, rubbing the spot, "I know you can,"

Ilya heavily sighs, closing his eyes to try and psych himself up, the steady weight of Shane's hand as he gives in, bones like lead but heart somewhat placated by the steady presence of his husband. "Okay, *moya lyubov*, okay."

Shane never lets go of Ilya's hand as they pad to the bathroom. He could tell his husband is dragging his feet, the fatigue probably getting to him. But the moment the warm water sprays over them, it loosens Ilya up just a little.

Perhaps the bath did help. Always did, but it just takes him so much sometimes to get out of bed.

Shane gently massages the shampoo into Ilya's hair, their foreheads pressed together with his husband's eyes closed. "You missed your appointment with Galina," Shane reminds, firm but loving.

"I know," Ilya mumbles. "I'm sorry,"

"That's okay," Shane smooths his hand down Ilya's nape, massaging the spot, "We're gonna be out of the woods by summer," he assures, knowing that the away games took some toll on Ilya.

"I will try, *moya lyubov*,"

“I know you will. And you actually are trying right now,” Shane presses a gentle kiss on Ilya’s lips, “I’m proud of you,”

Ilya opens his eyes and Shane rinses his hands off before caressing the apples of his cheeks, the water masking the sudden trail of Ilya’s tears. There were times he’d just suddenly cry, and there was a comfort in knowing Shane always took it in stride.

“Come here,” Shane whispers, pulling Ilya into his arms, their bodies intimately pressed against each other. And Shane tries not to wince at the thought of wasted water, not when Ilya is sobbing quietly against his shoulder while he rinses the shampoo off him.

He sways them slightly, rocking them back and forth to somehow soothe Ilya. He didn’t have to say much, sometimes Ilya just started crying from overwhelm, the intensity of his lethargy dawning on him in a way Shane couldn’t fathom for himself.

After nearly forty-five minutes in the shower, Ilya finds himself in one of his husband’s bigger hoodies, Anya’s head resting on his lap while Shane sets down a hot cup of tea in front of him.

“Let’s go to Galina in a week,” he says, not too diagnostically, but avoiding the croon threatening to spill from his heart. “And then we can go for a drive, head to Dows Lake. Have some lunch and a walk,” he suggests, and Ilya thinks he sounded like Yuna during moments like these.

Shane moves to step away to get the chopped fruits he had prepared for him, his wrist caught in his husband’s hand. “Hey,” Ilya softly says, “Shane, thank you. This must not...be easy for you,”

Shane looks back with a tender smile, taking a few steps back to him and immediately pressing a gentle, tender kiss on his lips. “I promised you, didn’t I?” he whispers, “I chose you, Ilya. Sickness and health, better or worse.” Shane flashes his wedding ring with a smile.

“I will always choose you. We will get through this together,” he assures and presses a kiss on his temple, “Now, let me get your fruits,”

Ilya looks down at his tea, the barley scent wafting in front of him. He had grown quite fond of the Japanese blend. “Can we...go on drive now

Shane whips his head so fast, heart pounding with excitement, immediately transferring the fruits to a tupperware container rather than a plate. “Of course! Of course, go get Anya’s leash and harness,” he beams excitedly.

He hears Ilya’s chair scrape against the floor, and Shane watches from the kitchen island as Ilya moves, still slow and a little heavier, but nonetheless had their girl in tow. It was a start, Shane knew that. And no matter what happened, he’d help Ilya. Always, as promised forever.

They were going to win a hundred more Stanleys, retire, have children, and grow old together.

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Shane slowly pads down the kitchen, smelling the eggs and bacon from the stairs as he hears Ilya's voice ringing through the space, Anya barking back at him.

"Okay, okay, just one," he beams at Anya, unable to say no to his sweet girl, "At least sit," he scolds lovingly. Anya wiggles her little bum before finally sitting down as Ilya drops a cooled piece of bacon right on her mouth.

"Do not tell your father," he whispers and squishes her lovely face with a grin, letting her lick up at him lovingly.

Shane leans against the doorway, arms crossed, soft and easy smile on his lips. "Good morning," he catches Ilya's attention. "Feeling better today?" he asks. He did notice that the past days, Ilya's episodes have tapered off into the calm after the storm. This one had lasted about a week.

Ilya beams at his husband, approaching Shane and tugging him by the waist, "Good morning," he pecks Shane's lips, "I am feeling better. I have appointment with Galina today. Is early so I made breakfast before I left,"

"Oh? Thank you then," Shane looks over Ilya's shoulder as his husband groans and rolls his eyes. "Is the healthy flour, I promise. Maybe with a few chocolate chips though,"

"I didn't say anything!" Shane scoffs defensively with hands raised.

"You were thinking it," Ilya pouts and Shane couldn't help but laugh, shaking his head. "I still would've ate it. Isn't that what you always tell me? To try to have some fun with my food,"

"And it makes me happy you are taking my suggestions,"

Shane nods, pressing a kiss against Ilya's temple. "Then that's enough for me," he mumbles and sniffs something out.

"I think the bacon is burning?"

"Oh fuck!"

End Notes

i would like to clarify that i am in no way pinning shane as ilya's savior and catch-all to curing his depression but company and support from a loved one is very helpful in recovering from a depressive cycle.

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