

there's nowhere to go but on

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there's nowhere to go but on

by [wishbones](#)

Summary

Shane picks up almost instantly. “Ilya?” His voice is sharp, already awake. “What’s wrong?”

Ilya clears his throat. His voice comes out quiet, reserved, almost childlike. “You were right,” he admits. “I... I have been throwing up.”

There is silence from Shane and Ilya feels a wave of panic run through him.

“I feel very terrible,” Ilya adds, blinking fast as his eyes burn. “Could you please just come?”

or, Shane and Ilya's first food poisoning adventure as husbands.

Notes

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

Shane and Ilya are married for five months and teammates for six weeks when the Centaurs land in San Jose with a rare gift from the schedule gods: a full day off with clear blue skies and temperatures above 20 degrees celsius.

No media, no morning skate, no obligations beyond a light optional practice that Shane, annoyingly, insists is not optional to him.

“You do not have to go,” Ilya says from the hotel bed, sprawled on his stomach, chin propped in his hands. “We are allowed to rest. Coach said so, and I am Captain.”

Shane is already dressed, tying his shoes with the focused intensity of a man who has never missed a practice in his life. “Optional doesn’t mean *skip*,” he says, like this is obvious. “It means *don’t be late*, Ilya. I’m still new to the team and I want to make sure they know they’ve made the right decision in signing me.”

Ilya squints at him before his eyes turn fond. “You are the most boring husband I have ever had.”

Shane grins, unfazed. “You married me anyway.”

That part is still wild to Ilya. Sometimes it hits him out of nowhere that Shane Hollander was his husband. Matching rings on their fingers, his name on Shane’s phone with a stupid heart emoji that Shane pretends not to know how to remove after they finally changed their phone contact names from Lily and Jane.

They end up going to practise together, because of course they do. Shane does his reps like a man possessed by consistency, and Ilya skates loose and happy, humming under his breath, showing off just a little because Shane is watching.

Afterwards, they shower and change and wander out into the California sunshine. “So,” Ilya says, sliding his sunglasses on. “Day date?”

Shane’s mouth twitches, biting back a smile. “Day Date.”

“I want sushi.”

Shane hesitates, mind already swirling with macros and calories. “Okay.”

“But,” Ilya continues, already smiling like a menace, “not fancy sushi.”

Shane stops walking. “What does that even mean.”

“I heard,” Ilya says, leaning in conspiratorially, “about this place. Very small, very local, hole in wall. Best sushi you will ever eat.”

Shane’s expression shifts from cautiously anxious to deeply suspicious. “I don’t like where this is going.”

“You never like where things are going,” Ilya says cheerfully. “You liked me anyway.”

“That was different,” Shane mutters, but he lets Ilya drag him down the street, past clean storefronts and cafés, until they’re standing in front of a narrow building with a flickering sign and a window so fogged up that Shane can’t see inside.

There’s a handwritten *OPEN* sign taped crookedly to the door. Shane stares and Ilya beams.

“This,” Shane says slowly, “looks fucking dodgy.”

“It looks authentic.”

“It looks like I’m going to get food poisoning and miss tomorrow’s game.”

Ilya tugs on Shane’s sleeve. “Come on. Trust me.”

“I trust *you*,” Shane says to his husband. “I do not trust this establishment.”

Inside, the place is tiny. Four tables, a counter, an older man behind it who barely glances up when they enter. The air smells like rice and vinegar and something sharp and clean.

Shane sits stiffly, scanning the room like he’s assessing defensive coverage.

Ilya, on the other hand, looks delighted. “This is perfect,” he says.

Shane lowers his voice. “Ilya.”

“Yes, sweetheart?”

“The fish is raw.”

Ilya stares at Shane, looking confused. “That is... what sushi is.”

“It’s raw fish from a place that looks like it might also sell cigarettes under the counter.”

Ilya laughs, bright and unbothered. “Perfect! Even better.” When Shane doesn’t move or respond, Ilya says softly, “You worry too much, moya lyubov’.”

Ilya places their orders with practised ease, and soon the chef begins setting plate after plate in front of them. Sushi with thick slices of tuna, salmon sashimi, and something Shane doesn’t immediately recognize.

Shane pokes at it with his chopsticks. “You go first.”

Ilya doesn’t hesitate. He takes a piece, dips it lightly in soy sauce and wasabi, and eats it with a soft sound of appreciation.

“Oh,” he says. “Oh, Shane,” he gasps, tilting his head back in delight.

Shane narrows his eyes. “Don’t.”

“This is incredible.”

“Stop it, Ilya,” he grits out.

“Like, life changing, yes. You are missing out,” he teases Shane softly.

Shane watches him chew, swallow, reach for another piece without a shred of fear. “You’re insane.”

Ilya hums happily and takes a second bite. “You do not have to eat it.”

“Good, because I’m not. I don’t want to get sick,” Shane replies. It had been a long road trip, and he was hoping their game against the Sharks tomorrow night would be an easy 2 points to take home back to Ottawa.

“I will eat yours too.”

Shane opens his mouth to protest, then closes it. He sighs exasperatedly at his husband. “You’re going to regret this, Ilya.”

Ilya only smiles and keeps eating, utterly content with his choices.

Ilya absolutely eats both portions. Shane watches it happen in slow motion: his own plate nudged aside, Ilya’s chopsticks deft and unapologetic as he claims every last piece like it was always his plan. Shane lifts his cup of green tea to his mouth, trying very hard to look relaxed and normal, not married to a man who has no fear of sketchy raw fish, and then Ilya eats a third piece of unagi right in front of his eyes.

Shane chokes on his green tea. He splutters into his cup, coughing hard enough that the chef finally looks over to them, eyebrow raised in judgement.

“Jesus,” Shane wheezes, setting the tea down. “Ilya.”

Ilya pauses mid-chew, eyes bright and innocent. “Yes, Shane?”

“That’s...three,” Shane says weakly. “That’s the third one of the eel sushi that you’ve eaten.”

“It is very good,” Ilya replies honestly. “Why would I stop when it tastes good?”

Shane stares at him like he’s witnessing a crime. He grabs his phone, fingers moving fast, clearly trying to ground himself in something more logical. His hunger was slowly dissipating with every sushi roll Ilya ate.

“There,” he says, turning the screen toward Ilya. “Two blocks away there’s a Poke place with 4.7 stars,” Shane pitches, anxiety growing in his chest. “Multiple reviews mention ‘fresh’ and ‘safe.’”

Ilya opens his mouth, already primed with something teasing, but then he catches it: Shane's jaw is tight, his knee bouncing under the table, the careful way he's pretending this is just a preference and not a low-level spiral.

He just nods. "Okay," Ilya says softly, lifting his sake cup instead. He takes a slow sip, eyes warm on Shane. "Okay, moy soyevyy sous." The Russian rolls out gentle and fond, not mocking at all.

Shane tilts his head, brow furrowing as he works through it. "My... something... sauce?" He squints. "I didn't quite get that one."

Ilya chuckles, low and affectionate, and taps his foot lightly against Shane's under the table. "My soy sauce," he corrects.

He reaches forward, calm now, dipping a piece of salmon nigiri into the small dish between them with exaggerated care, like he's making a point of being sensible with his food choices. Shane exhales, shoulders loosening despite himself. "You're doing that on purpose."

"Maybe," Ilya admits, smiling. "But I am also listening."

Shane's lips twitch. He reaches over, squeezes Ilya's knee. "Thank you."

Ilya hums, eats the salmon, and leans in just a little closer. "You are still boring," he says fondly.

Shane snorts. "You married me anyway."

Ilya grins. "Best decision I ever made."

Ilya eats everything he had ordered.

Every last piece of sushi he'd ordered for himself and for Shane, disappears with unapologetic efficiency. When there's nothing left but empty plates and Shane's abandoned green tea, Ilya stands, stretches, and wanders back to the counter.

He pays in cash and tips generously, and through the front window, he can see Shane outside.

Shane is standing a little off to the side of the door, phone in his hand but not really looking at it, gaze drifting down the street instead. The mid-afternoon San Jose sun hits him just right; softens the lines of his face, catches in his hair, turns him golden in a way that still, somehow, takes Ilya's breath away.

My husband, he thinks, absurd and proud and a little stunned all at once.

Ilya finishes up quickly and pushes back out into the warmth. The moment Shane notices him, he straightens.

Ilya doesn't say anything. He just reaches out, takes Shane's hand, and presses a kiss to his knuckles before lacing their fingers together like it's the most natural thing in the world.

Shane freezes for half a second, then relaxes into the hold. His cheeks go pink and the tips of his ears turn red, making Ilya grin.

"Take me to this poke restaurant, Hollander," he says.

Shane rolls his eyes, huffing softly. "You're unbelievable," but he doesn't let go.

They walk hand in hand down the street, fingers fitting together easily, and it still feels surreal to Shane, that this quiet, ordinary intimacy that he had longed for, was out in the open.

The poke place is bright and clean and exactly as advertised. Shane sighs in relief and orders first.

"Teriyaki chicken bowl, please" he says.

"Make it two," Ilya adds immediately, holding up two fingers.

Shane turns. "You don't even like teriyaki..."

"But I like yours," Ilya replies sweetly, turning back to smile at the cashier.

Shane sighs, swiping his credit card through the payment terminal. "I knew it."

They take their bowls outside and sit at one of the small sidewalk tables. Shane rubs his eyes with the sleeve of his hoodie, fatigue slipping through now that the day has slowed. His wedding ring flashes in the sunlight as his hand drops back to the table.

Ilya notices. He reaches across the table and gently closes his hand over Shane's, thumb brushing the inside of his wrist over his pulse point.

"Hey," he says softly. "What is wrong?"

Shane exhales, long and quiet. He stares at their joined hands for a moment before lifting his eyes.

"Nothing," he says automatically, then shakes his head. "I don't know. Just... tired. And thinking too much."

Ilya squeezes his fingers, trying to be grounding and steady for his husband. "About what?"

Shane glances down the street, then back at Ilya. His voice is low yet honest.

"About how weird it still feels," he admits. "How good, how normal this all is now. And how I keep waiting for something to go wrong."

Ilya's expression softens. He shifts his chair closer, knee brushing Shane's.

“Nothing is wrong right now,” he says gently. “We are eating poke. You are boring. I am stealing your food. Just like normal.”

Shane snorts despite himself as Ilya continues.

“And,” Ilya adds, quieter now, “we are here, together. That is enough for today.”

Shane nods, throat tight. He turns his hand over so their fingers interlace properly, his wedding ring warm against Ilya’s skin.

“Yeah,” he murmurs. “It is.”

Ilya grins and immediately steals a forkful of Shane’s bowl. “Hey!” Shane exclaims, swatting Ilya’s hand away.

“Told you,” Ilya says, smug and affectionate.

Ilya notices it before Shane does.

The tapping; soft, rhythmic, just the tips of Shane’s fingers against the metal table between bites. The way his smile keeps showing up out of habit, not because it quite reaches his eyes. The way he keeps scanning the street like he’s waiting for something to jump out at them.

Anxiety, creeping and familiar. So Ilya does what he always does when Shane gets like this: he distracts.

He steals another bite. And another.

Shane protests half-heartedly at first, then gives up entirely as Ilya keeps reaching over, chopsticks dipping into his bowl until Shane finally has to slide the second one closer.

“You are impossible,” Shane mutters.

Ilya just hums, content, and when he’s had his fill he leans back in his chair, hands crossing over his belly, posture loose and satisfied. He looks at Shane with such open affection it almost hurts.

Shane squints at him. “Are you feeling okay?”

Ilya blinks at his husband. “Yes?”

“You’re very... relaxed.”

Ilya’s smile softens, nods slowly. “I feel less sad when I am with you.”

Shane’s breath stutters, caught off guard at Ilya’s openness.

“My pills are working,” Ilya continues easily. “And I play hockey with my husband, on the same team.” His eyes shine. “It is... very good.”

Shane laughs, rubbing the back of his neck. “I didn’t mean it like that, but I’m glad, really.”

Ilya tilts his head. “Then what did you mean?”

Shane gestures vaguely at the table. “You’ve eaten your weight in extremely questionable sushi. And now, like... a quarter of my *two* poke bowls.”

Ilya watches it click together in front of him; the worry tightening Shane’s shoulders, the spiral pulling him inward. He doesn’t tease this time.

He reaches across the table and takes Shane’s hand, squeezing firmly, trying to ground him.

“Shane,” he says quietly. “I will be okay.”

Shane’s eyes flick up to his, searching for the truth..

“I have eaten much worse,” Ilya adds gently. “And the sushi tasted normal. Please do not worry, sweetheart.”

The word lands soft and sure in Shane’s chest.

He exhales, tension easing just a little. He laces their fingers together, thumb brushing over Ilya’s knuckles.

“Okay,” he murmurs. “Okay.”

Ilya smiles, warm and steady, and steals *one more* bite, just to prove he can.

Shane huffs in response, but this time his smile meets his eyes.

They walk hand in hand along the bay, the water catching the late afternoon light in broken silver. The air smells like salt and sunscreen and something fried from a cart nearby. It’s peaceful and quiet enough that Shane almost forgets the noise going on inside his head.

Shane feels it instantly, their joined hands tugging back as Ilya reaches into his pocket. The familiar flick of a lighter follows.

Shane frowns at Ilya. “Really?”

Ilya glances at him, cigarette already burning between his fingers. He doesn’t argue or tease. He just takes a slow drag and exhales out toward the water.

Shane huffs, shaking his head, but lets it go. He’d known Ilya long enough to know what battles to pick and which ones to leave untouched.

“What do you want to do tonight?” Ilya asks instead, tone easy, like he hasn’t noticed the tension at all.

Shane shrugs, gaze drifting out over the bay. “I don’t know. Just... spend time with you, I guess. Maybe watch a movie?”

Ilya smiles, soft and fond, and leans in to press a quick kiss to Shane’s cheek. “That sounds nice.”

When Shane had signed with Ottawa, they’d mutually agreed not to share hotel rooms on the road. Not when their teammates couldn’t do the same with their own loved ones, and not when they were trying so hard to keep things as quiet and normal as they could.

But all Ilya can think about right now is curling up with Shane after mutual orgasms, maybe sex if they could be bothered, hands warm and heavy, bodies loose and spent, not moving for eight uninterrupted hours.

He grins, eyes glinting. “There are a few things I want to do with you before the movie.”

Shane snorts. “I figured.”

They don’t rush back to the hotel, but they don’t dawdle either. The elevator ride is quiet, charged in that familiar way with their shoulders brushing just enough to make Shane’s pulse tick faster.

Round one happens in Shane’s room, hurried and laughing and breathless. Round two happens in the shower, steam fogging the mirror, Shane braced against cool tile while Ilya murmurs things in Russian that Shane doesn’t quite understand but feels everywhere anyway.

By the time they finally collapse into bed, it’s dark outside.

They’re both in underwear, sheets tangled, the room lit only by the TV glow as Ilya flicks through channels with lazy concentration. Shane curls instinctively into Ilya’s side, cheek pressed to his chest, one leg hooked over his thigh.

Ilya’s arm wraps around him, scratching slow, familiar lines up and down Shane’s arm. Shane sighs, muscles finally unclenching, his breathing evening out.

“Found anything?” Shane murmurs.

“Not yet,” Ilya says, absently. “Everything looks bad.”

Shane hums, eyes half-lidded. “That’s okay.”

Ilya glances down at him. “Why?”

“Because I’m comfortable,” Shane says quietly. “And you’re here.”

Ilya’s thumb pauses for just a second before resuming its steady path. He presses a kiss to the top of Shane’s head, lingering, hiding his smile.

Shane dozes against Ilya's chest, the weight of him warm and familiar, breath puffing softly against Ilya's skin. One of Ilya's hands keeps tracing lazy lines up and down Shane's arm, muscle memory more than intention now. But his stomach won't settle.

It rolls and gurgles in slow, traitorous waves, unease building under the calm that Ilya had felt earlier in the evening. He shifts carefully, trying not to wake Shane, one hand pressing lightly to his belly as if that might convince it to behave.

He flicks the channel again, feeling restless and uncomfortable.

The opening minutes of the Toronto-New Jersey game fill the screen with familiar voices, familiar jerseys, something steady and grounding for Ilya to focus on.

"Your stomach is too noisy."

Ilya jumps.

His whole body jolts, heart leaping straight into his throat. "Jesus fuck," He gasps, looking down at Shane. "You are awake?"

Shane cracks one eye open, mouth twitching. "Barely. But yeah." He shifts slightly, ear pressing back against Ilya's chest. "It keeps making weird sounds. It woke me up."

Ilya winces. "Sorry."

Shane lifts his head enough to look at him, brows knitting together. "Hey. You okay?"

Ilya hesitates, then shrugs, trying for a casual approach. "My stomach," he mutters. "Is... is not pleased with me."

Shane exhales a quiet laugh, then sobers. He slides his hand over Ilya's stomach, palm warm and gentle against the tender skin. "Does it hurt?"

"Not yet," Ilya admits. "Just uncomfortable."

Shane hums thoughtfully, fully awake now. He shifts so he's half on his side, still tucked into Ilya but close enough to see his face. "We can turn the TV off. Or on. Or I can get you water. Or, um..."

Ilya smiles despite himself. "You are doing the thing."

"The worrying thing?" Shane asks.

"Yes."

Shane sighs, forehead dropping lightly to Ilya's shoulder. "I know. I just..." He trails off, fingers curling into the fabric at Ilya's side.

Ilya brings his hand up, cups the back of Shane's neck, thumb rubbing slow circles there. "I will tell you if it gets bad," he says softly. "Right now, I am okay."

Shane nods, trusting him even if it's hard to do so. "Okay."

He shifts against Ilya's chest, breath warm and even, but he doesn't quite drift all the way back under.

"If you throw up," Shane mumbles sleepily, voice rough with it, "I am *not* holding your hair back."

Ilya blinks down at him. "What?"

"My knees," Shane adds, eyes still closed. "They're too sore. You're on your own."

Ilya huffs a quiet laugh and dips his head to kiss Shane's hair. "Okay, asshole," he murmurs. "I won't need that anyway. I will be fine."

He pats his stomach once, light and reassuring. "Iron stomach," but he hopes that he's telling Shane the truth.

The game keeps playing in the background, crowd noise rising and falling, but neither of them is really watching. Shane sleeps straight through the entire second period, body heavy and trusting against Ilya's side. During the second intermission, Ilya finally reaches for the remote and turns the TV off, the room falling into a softer, deeper quiet.

He moves carefully after that, tidying the scattered clothes that line the hotel room floor. Sets Shane's phone on the charger, double-checking his alarms are set for the morning, thumb lingering over the screen a second longer than necessary.

Then he pulls on a clean pair of Shane's sweatpants and slips his phone and key into the pockets. He goes back to the bed and turns off the bedside light, the room settling into shadow.

He tucks the blankets higher over Shane's shoulders, smoothing them down gently, and presses a kiss to his temple.

Shane stirs, barely awake, a content sigh sinking into the pillow. "Mmhm," he murmurs, cracking an eye open to look at Ilya. "Love you."

Ilya smiles, warmth pooling in his chest. "Love you too, sweetheart," he whispers. "Sleep well."

He leaves the room guided by the faint glow of his phone, pauses, then quietly ducks into Shane's bathroom. He rummages through the toiletry bag on the counter until he finds what he's looking for, the travel-sized bottles of Tums and Tylenol that Shane always packed just in case.

Ilya grips both bottles in his hands, nodding to himself. Just in case.

He slips out of Shane's room and pads down the hall, the hotel carpet muffling his steps, telling himself this is only a precaution.

Ilya showers again once he's back in his own room.

He dry-swallows two Tylenol, chews a handful of Tums until the chalky taste coats his tongue, and steps under the hot water, hoping it will chase the chill from his bones. Steam fills the small bathroom, beads on the mirror, slicks his skin. He presses a hand to his stomach and breathes through the cramping, telling himself it's nothing, too much food, too much travel, a long road trip finally catching up to him.

Eventually, wrung out and shaky, he crawls into bed, setting his alarm for 7:45 a.m. He stares at the ceiling and tries to sleep.

It turns out Ilya doesn't need the alarm at all.

By the third time he throws up in a two hour window, his hands are trembling when he rinses his mouth out. His throat burns, and his stomach feels hollow and furious all at once. He leans over the sink, sweat dampening his curls, chest heaving.

He drags himself back to the bed and sits on the edge, elbows braced on his knees, pushing his hair back with shaking fingers. His phone feels heavy in his hand.

He calls Shane with no answer on the first ring. Ilya swallows, then dials again.

Shane picks up almost instantly. "Ilya?" His voice is sharp, already awake. "What's wrong?"

Ilya clears his throat. His voice comes out quiet, reserved, almost childlike. "You were right," he admits. "I... I have been throwing up."

There is silence from Shane and Ilya feels a wave of panic run through him.

"I feel very terrible," Ilya adds, blinking fast as his eyes burn. "Could you please just come?"

Shane exhales hard on the other end of the line. Anger flares hot and immediate, because he *knew* this would happen, because Ilya never listens when it comes to his own body, because he hates that his husband is sick and alone.

"I told you that place was a bad idea," Shane snaps. "Unbelievable." Ilya flinches, shoulders curling inward, glad Shane couldn't see what his words were doing to him.

"But I'm coming," Shane says immediately, already swinging his legs out of bed. "I'm coming right now."

He hangs up, grabs his phone and key, and pads down the hall, jaw tight, irritation buzzing under his skin. It's just after midnight, and the hotel is silent except for the muted hum of ice machines and distant traffic outside.

He knocks quietly on Ilya's door. Once, then again. It takes a moment for the door to finally open, and Shane's anger immediately stutters.

Ilya stands there pale and unsteady, one hand braced against the doorframe. His eyes are glassy with fever or tears, Shane can't quite tell, and his mouth trembles like he's holding himself together by sheer will.

Shane's chest tightens.

"You look like shit," he says, sharper than he means to.

"I feel like shit," Ilya whispers.

Shane steps inside without asking, closing the door behind him. He drops his key and phone on the dresser a little too hard, frustration still buzzing through him.

"I let you go wild with dinner for one night," Shane mutters, running a hand through his hair, "and you eat sketchy sushi, ignore your body, and end up like this."

"I did not mean..." Ilya starts, voice cracking.

This causes Shane to stop pacing, turning his head to look at him properly.

Ilya's shoulders are slumped. His hands are fisted at his sides like he's bracing for impact. He looks sad and embarrassed, small in a way that makes Shane's anger twist into something painful and sharp.

"I am sorry," Ilya says quietly. "I thought I would be okay."

Shane closes his eyes, exhales hard, then steps forward and cups Ilya's face, thumbs warm against his cheeks.

"I'm pissed," Shane says honestly. "But I'm here, okay?"

Ilya leans into the touch immediately, relief breaking through his expression. "Thank you."

Shane presses his forehead to Ilya's. "Next time," he says, voice low, "you listen to me."

Ilya nods, eyes shining. "Yes."

Shane pulls him gently toward the bed, sheets twisted and damp with sweat. "Come on," he says to Ilya, all business now. "Let's get you horizontal."

Shane's frustration keeps cutting through the room like a dull skate blade.

It's not loud or explosive. It's in the sighs he doesn't quite hide, the clipped way he reaches for a towel, the muttered '*Jesus, Ilya*' under his breath when the trash can is heavier than it should be. It's in the way his jaw tightens every time Ilya sways.

Ilya knows where it comes from.

Worry, fear, that horrible, helpless lack of control Shane gets when something is wrong and he can't fix it fast enough. Worried that all the work they've done together as a couple, getting outed and getting married, Shane moving to Ottawa could all be taken away in an instant.

But knowing that doesn't stop it from hurting Ilya.

Each comment chips at him, small and precise, and something old and bruised stirs in Ilya's chest. It reminds him, unfairly, of his father's voice. Sharp and cold, slicing through the air when his mother couldn't get out of bed, when sadness hollowed her out until she barely existed.

It reminds him of the first time he got seriously hurt playing hockey after his mother died, his arm broken, pain blinding his vision, tears he couldn't stop. His father standing over him, disgust curling his lip.

Be a man, he'd said. *Stop crying*. Ilya had been thirteen.

He'd learned early that pain was something you swallowed; that care came with conditions. That needing help made you weak, made you a problem people didn't want to deal with.

He'd raised himself after that. Fed himself, got himself to practice, patched himself together again and again. He was used to battling through, alone and quiet and uncomplaining.

That's why calling Shane tonight had taken everything. Why his hands had shaken clicking on Shane's contact information, why his voice had gone small when he admitted Shane was right.

Because Shane isn't your father, Ilya thinks bitterly, *he is your husband*.

Because over the last few years, through therapy, love and patience, Ilya has been trying. Trying to open his mouth when he needs something. Trying to trust that care doesn't always come with cruelty attached.

And still, standing in the bathroom now, pale and shaky and ashamed, the old instincts scream at him to retreat, or to toughen up.

Shane sighs again, sharp, and says, "You should've told me sooner."

Something in Ilya cracks. "I did tell you," he says quietly.

Shane freezes. Ilya's eyes sting, but he keeps going, voice low and careful, like he's walking on thin ice. "I told you my stomach felt bad. I told you I would be okay because... because I wanted to be."

Shane turns slowly, anger flickering into confusion.

"Ilya..."

“I know you are worried,” Ilya says, shoulders curling inward. “But when you sound like that... it makes me feel like I did something wrong by needing you.”

The words hang there, fragile between them.

Shane’s face drains of heat. He looks at Ilya, really looks at him; the way he’s hugging himself, how his gaze is fixed on the floor like he’s bracing for impact.

“Oh,” Shane breathes. The anger drains out of him all at once, leaving only guilt and something sharp and aching in his chest.

“I’m not mad that you need me,” Shane says, softer now. “I’m mad because I was scared.”

Ilya nods, tears finally slipping free. “I know.”

Shane steps closer, slow and careful, and cups Ilya’s face again, gentler this time. “I’m sorry,” he says. “I shouldn’t have sounded like that.”

Ilya leans into his hands, exhausted. “I am trying,” he whispers. “I really am.”

“I know,” Shane says immediately. “I see it.”

He pulls Ilya into his chest, holding him tight but careful, like he might break. Ilya clings back, fingers fisting in Shane’s shirt, finally letting himself rest there.

For a moment, neither of them speaks.

Then Shane presses a kiss to Ilya’s hair. “Next time, you call me the first time you feel bad. No bargaining with yourself.”

Ilya nods against him, small and tired. “Okay.”

Shane presses another kiss to Ilya’s forehead, lingering this time, lips measuring heat the way his hands already know how to do.

Ilya’s breath shudders. Sad tears slip free, quiet and unstoppable. “My mother used to do that,” he admits softly. “When I was young.”

Shane doesn’t move away. He keeps his mouth there, warm and steady, one hand rubbing slow paths up and down Ilya’s back. His palm sweeps from the waistband of Ilya’s briefs up to the nape of his neck, fingers brushing through damp curls, grounding him, holding him together.

“Have you had any water?” Shane asks gently.

Ilya shakes his head against Shane’s chest.

“Okay,” Shane says, patting his side. “Come on, sit up, just a little.”

Ilya shakes his head again, smaller this time. “Every time I try, it makes me sick.”

Something sharp flashes across Shane's face. The fear snaps into frustration before he can catch it.

"I think it's the poisoned sushi you stuffed yourself with, Ilya," he says, too sharp, too fast. "Not the water."

The words land like a slap and Ilya stiffens in Shane's arms. Whatever strength he has left, he uses to push away from Shane's chest, shaking his head. He retreats into himself, shoulders folding inward.

"You can go," he says quietly.

Shane blinks. "What?"

"You can go," Ilya repeats, voice thin and tired. He stands unsteadily, and takes a few steps toward the bathroom. "I will be fine."

"Ilya..."

He doesn't listen to the rest of what Shane has to say. He disappears into the bathroom and slams the door.

Almost immediately, Shane hears it; the retch pulled straight from Ilya's chest, raw and helpless. The sound of him gagging over the trash can, body betraying him again.

Shane doesn't leave. He sits down hard on the edge of the bed instead, elbows on his knees, hands clasped tight. He forces his breathing to slow, to not make this worse, so he didn't sound like an asshole again.

When the sounds from the bathroom soften into miserable, shaky breaths, Shane stands.

He knocks once on the door. "I'm still here," he says quietly. "I'm not going anywhere."

Silence stretches. Then, faintly, through the door: "I did not mean..."

"I know," Shane cuts in softly. "You don't have to explain." He rests his forehead against the door, eyes closing. "You don't get rid of me that easily."

Shane takes another deep breath before opening the bathroom door and immediately walking towards Ilya. He takes the bin from Ilya's hands and sets it in the bathtub, putting his hands on Ilya's shoulders to steady him. Ilya presses his forehead to Shane's sternum, shaking arms wrapping around his waist and holding tight.

Shane rubs up and down Ilya's back, whispering "I'm sorry," over and over.

Ilya shakes his head, pressing a kiss over Shane's heart. "Is okay," he says, too exhausted to say anything else, allowing Shane to hold him up until the next wave of nausea hits.

The night blurs into fragments. Cold tile, the hum of the bathroom fan, Shane's hand warm and steady between Ilya's shoulder blades as he dozes sitting upright, only to wake when Ilya lurches forward again, body folding in on itself over the toilet.

Some time after 5 am, when the dark outside the window has thinned to a sickly grey, Shane sinks down beside Ilya on the bathroom floor. His back rests against the tub, knees bent, one arm wrapped around Ilya's shoulders while the other rubs slow circles into his back.

Ilya's forehead presses briefly to the cool porcelain.

"I am not good at this," he admits hoarsely.

"At being sick?" Shane asks quietly.

"At being... a patient." Ilya swallows. His voice wobbles despite his effort to keep it steady. "My father was not kind to my mother when she was ill. Or to me, after she died. When I was hurt. Or injured. Or... weak."

Shane's chest tightens. He leans in, pressing his temple to Ilya's damp curls. "I know," he says softly. "And I'm so sorry, Ilya."

Ilya nods, leaning forward to spit into the toilet, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand. "You know I am not good at being sick," he murmurs. "Or asking for help." His shoulders hitch, his voice dropping an octave. "But I am trying."

"I know, Ilya," Shane says immediately, pressing a kiss to his shoulder. "I do."

When the nausea ebbs enough, Shane helps him stand, steady hands at his elbows. He holds the cup while Ilya swishes Listerine, grimacing, then spits and rinses again. Shane guides him back to bed like he's made of glass.

He tucks the blankets up, careful, then slides in behind him, spooning close. Shane's arm circles Ilya's waist instinctively and protectively, until Ilya's hand closes gently around his wrist.

"Careful," Ilya whispers. "Moya malen'kaya zvezdochka."

Shane freezes, then pulls his arm back at once. "Sorry," he murmurs, guilt flashing across his face. He resettles his hand instead on Ilya's bare hip, rubbing slowly and gently, tracing the strong V there with his thumb. "What did that mean?"

Ilya's breath shakes, sounds exhausted as he replies with, "My little star."

He reaches back, takes Shane's arm, and pulls it to his chest, holding it against his heart.

Ilya's eyes are burning, chest tight with everything he doesn't say. With how afraid he is of being seen as weak. With how sick he still feels; not just in his stomach, but everywhere else too.

He holds Shane's arm tighter, like if he lets go, the darkness might swallow him whole.

Shane rolls away slowly, carefully, like even the mattress shifting might pull Ilya back under the surface.

Ilya doesn't wake. He lies curled on his side, pale against the white sheets, lashes fluttering like he's chasing something unpleasant in his sleep. His curls are damp with sweat again, mouth parted, breath shallow and uneven.

Shane watches him for a long moment, and then he moves.

He has a quick shower, lukewarm and rushed, just enough to scrub the night off his skin. He throws on the clothes he'd come over in hours earlier, movements clipped and efficient, feeling robotic. His chest still feels tight and his jaw aches from how hard he's been clenching it.

Before he leaves the room, he goes back towards the bed.

He smooths the blanket up over Ilya's shoulder, brushing his knuckles lightly over Ilya's cheek, careful not to wake him. Ilya makes a small, unhappy sound in his sleep and curls in tighter.

Shane crosses to the desk in the corner and sits, phone heavy in his hands. The early morning light creeps in through the curtains, painting the room in washed-out grey.

He opens his messages, thumbing out a quick text to the team doctor.

Hey doc.

Ilya's been throwing up all night, pretty sure it's food poisoning. He's sweating, can't keep anything down.

Any chance you could come by his room to assess him? Please?

He stares at the screen after he sends it, leg bouncing under the desk, heart pounding with anxiety and exhaustion.

Shane leans back in the chair and drags a hand down his face, eyes burning with fatigue and worry. He hates that he has to step away, hates that the schedule doesn't care about Shane showing up for his husband. Hates that Ilya is sick and hurting and still trying so hard not to be a problem, even after all these years of being together. Shane most of all hates that his actions and words yesterday made Ilya feel terrible.

Across the room, Ilya shifts again, brow furrowing, lips pressing together like he's fighting nausea even in sleep.

Shane watches him, helpless and wired and furious at the universe, waiting for his phone to buzz. The reply comes quicker than Shane expects.

I can be there in about 30 minutes.

Shane exhales, the breath leaving him all at once like he's been holding it since midnight. He texts back a quick *thank you* and then just... stands there for a second, phone in his hand, brain buzzing with nowhere to put the relief.

He brushes his teeth like it's a task he can control. Paces the length of the room, counting steps without realizing he's doing it. Shane checks the clock, then checks it again. The quiet feels too loud inside his head.

Eventually he drops back into the desk chair and scrolls mindlessly, thumb jerking too fast. He's not really reading anything, just burning time until help arrives.

Then he gets an idea. It's not a *good* idea, but it's an idea that feels better than helplessness.

He pulls up Google Maps and finds the sushi place immediately; same flickering sign, same smug little storefront photo. His jaw tightens with anger.

Shane types furiously.

★ ***IF I COULD GIVE THIS 0 STARS, I WOULD.***

My husband ate here last night and now has the worst food poisoning I've ever seen. He spent HOURS throwing up and hasn't been able to keep anything down. We tipped well, we were polite customers, and something from your restaurant made him violently ill. Do better. This isn't "authentic," it's dangerous. He probably has to call in sick to work tonight because of this.

He reads it over twice, heart pounding in his throat, then hits post.

Shane sets his phone down and goes back to the bed. He sits carefully on the edge, mattress dipping just enough to stir Ilya, and rubs slow circles into Ilya's arm, coaxing him from sleep.

"Hey," he murmurs, "Ilya."

Ilya shifts, a faint groan slipping out. His eyes flutter open, unfocused and glassy, curls plastered to his forehead. He looks confused for a second, then remembers, his face tightening.

"Shane?"

"I'm here," Shane says immediately. "The doctor's going to come by in a few minutes, okay? Just to check you out."

Ilya swallows hard. "I did not..." His voice catches in his throat. "I did not mean to make this a thing. I just wanted sushi"

Shane's chest aches. He rubs his arm again, steady, grounding. "I know. You didn't do anything wrong."

Ilya turns his face slightly into the pillow, eyes burning, shame creeping in anyway. "I hate this," he whispers. "I hate being weak like this."

“I know,” Shane says softly. He leans down, presses his forehead to Ilya’s temple. “You don’t have to be anything right now. You’re sick, that’s it.”

Ilya nods, barely, breathing shallow and uneven. He looks smaller like this, stripped of his armor, exhausted and weak. A shell of the man who took his hand on the streets of San Jose twelve hours prior and kissed it like they were the only people in the world.

Shane stays right there, hand warm on Ilya’s arm, listening to his breathing, waiting for the knock on the door like it’s their lifeline.

The knock comes softly. Shane opens the door immediately, stepping aside to let the team doctor in like he’s been holding it open in his head for half an hour already.

Ilya barely stirs as the doctor approaches the bed. His skin looks washed out against the sheets, eyes too bright, lashes clumped slightly from sweat and tears.

The doctor pinches the skin on the back of Ilya’s hand.

Shane watches, jaw locked tight, as the skin peaks and stays there, like a small, awful tent, before slowly sinking back down.

“Very dehydrated,” the doctor says mildly. Shane swallows.

The doctor palpates Ilya’s abdomen next, methodical and careful. Ilya flinches anyway, face scrunching, a low sound escaping him before he can stop it.

Shane is suddenly right there, hovering behind the doctor like a coiled spring, fists clenched at his sides, every instinct screaming *don’t hurt him*, and then he catches himself.

What am I doing, he thinks, exhausted and wired. *I’m not going to fight a doctor.*

The assessment finishes quickly after that, and Shane breathes a sigh of relief. The doctor washes his hands and turns back to them.

“I want to give you an injection for the nausea,” he says to Ilya. “Then we’ll run an IV for fluids and electrolytes. We’ll reassess after the bag finishes and see how you’re feeling.”

Ilya nods immediately. Then, hoarse but earnest, he asks, “Can I still play tonight?”

Shane’s head snaps up. “What the *fuck*, Ilya?”

The doctor laughs under his breath, surprised and amused.

“I am serious,” Ilya insists, brows knitting together. “I can do it.”

“Probably not,” the doctor cuts in gently. “Maybe, but likely not.” He glances between them. “I’ll update your coach after we see how you respond to fluids and if you can tolerate some food.”

Shane lets out a sharp breath, scrubbing a hand down his face.

Ilya looks vaguely disappointed, like he'd been expecting worse news and doesn't know what to do with this half-answer.

Shane's phone goes off suddenly, his pre-set alarm, loud and jarring in the quiet room. He silences it instantly, mortified at the interruption.

The doctor glances at him, amused. "Go get some breakfast, Hollander," he says. "And pick up something bland for Rozanov."

Shane nods automatically. "Yeah. Yeah, okay."

The doctor turns back to set up the IV, while Shane stands there for a second too long, torn.

Ilya looks at him, eyes glassy and sad. Shane leans down, presses a firm kiss to his forehead before the words can spiral further. "Stop," he says quietly. "I'll be back."

Ilya nods, fingers curling weakly into the sheets as Shane grabs his phone and Ilya's hotel key.

As Shane heads for the door, anger and fear twist tight in his chest; not at Ilya, not really, but at how close he came to breaking, how easily this could have gone worse.

Breakfast is loud in the way it always is on game day; chairs scraping, cutlery clinking, guys half-awake and starving all at once.

Shane barely makes it three steps into the room before someone clocks his empty seat.

"Where's Rozy?" someone calls.

Before Shane can answer, Bood, already mid-coffee and too energetic, slaps him hard on the back. "Heard he's sick," Bood says. "Tell him to get well soon."

Shane huffs out a breath. "Will do."

Troy is quieter. He waits until Shane's got a plate in front of him before asking, voice low and careful, "You guys need anything?"

Shane shakes his head as he sits across from him. "Thanks, though. Team doc's with him now."

Troy nods. "He gonna play tonight?"

Shane lets out a short, incredulous laugh. "He wants to, but I don't think so." He stabs at his eggs, then grimaces. "I've never seen that much puke come out of a person. It was like The Exorcist."

Troy recoils dramatically, hands flying up to his ears. “Fuck, man. I’m trying to eat breakfast.”

Shane flushes, wincing. “Sorry.”

“It’s all good,” Troy says quickly, waving him off. “Give my love to Rozy.”

Shane eats fast after that, barely tasting anything. When he’s done, he grabs two apples, two bananas, and four pieces of dry toast, stacking them carefully on a plate and shoving the apples into his pockets before heading upstairs.

When Shane pushes the door open, Ilya’s sitting up in bed, eyes closed, an IV taped into the crook of his elbow. The bag of fluids drips steadily, rhythmic and reassuring in a way Shane hadn’t known he needed.

The doctor is at the desk, phone pressed to his ear, speaking quietly.

Shane sets the plate down and moves straight to the bed. “Hey.”

Ilya opens his eyes and smiles; small and tired, but real. “I feel better already,” he says. “The nausea is much less.”

Shane studies his face, searching for the lie. “Yeah?”

The doctor murmurs something into the phone behind them.

“He is telling Coach I can play tonight,” Ilya adds, like it’s casual.

Shane rolls his eyes so hard it almost hurts. “You are not,” he says flatly. “Liar.”

Ilya’s smile wobbles. “Maybe just a few shifts...”

“No.”

“I have played through worse.”

Shane leans in, voice low and fierce. “You threw up all night, Ilya. You were dehydrated. You’re literally attached to a bag of fluids as we speak,” Shane hisses, gesturing at the half empty IV bag.

Ilya looks away, jaw tightening. “I do not want to let anyone down when it was my own fault.”

Shane’s chest aches at that. He softens his voice but not his stance. “You’re not letting anyone down, you’re sick.”

The doctor hangs up and turns in his chair. “I told the coach we’ll reassess after fluids and food,” he says evenly. “Nothing is decided yet.”

Ilya nods, but his shoulders slump.

Shane picks up one of the bananas, peels it halfway, and holds it out. “Try,” he says gently.

Ilya hesitates, then takes a small bite, chewing slowly, eyes closed like he’s bracing for the consequences.

Ilya didn't play that night.

He sits in the press box instead, wrapped in a team hoodie over his suit, IV long gone but the dull aftertaste of sickness still clinging to him. He sips water carefully, like it still might betray him, and breaks crackers into neat halves he mostly just stares at before forcing himself to chew.

All he wants is to get on the plane and go home.

Yuna and David have already picked Anya up from the dog hotel; sent him photos of her in the car, ears flapping out the window, tail a blur. She’ll be at home when they land, and that thought settles something tight within his chest.

He watches Shane take his first shift and immediately starts texting.

Ilya (7:14 pm): *your skating looks slow*

Ilya (7:14 pm): *old man energy*

Ilya (7:21 pm): *you took that too many men penalty on purpose*

Ilya (7:22 pm): *missing me already?*

Shane *is* playing badly, Ilya knows it. The broken sleep from the night before, the long night on the cold bathroom floor, the way Shane’s jaw was clenched all morning like he was holding something back or holding himself together. It twists in Ilya’s chest, both guilt and fondness tangled together.

Ilya (8:07 pm): *for every point you get tonight i will give you 1 blow job when we get home*

Shane nearly chokes in his stall as he reads the texts Ilya had sent throughout the game. By the second intermission, Shane can’t keep ignoring the chirps and his replies come fast.

Shane (8:59 pm): *shut up*

Shane (8:59 pm): *i’m playing badly because of YOU, dickhead*

Ilya (9:02 pm): *excuses*

Ilya (9:03 pm): *you just do not want to earn it*

During the third period, Shane rings one off the post. Then on his next shift, during the power play, he hits the cross bar. Ilya winces, picking up his phone, thumbs flying across the screen.

Ilya (9:21pm): *for every crossbar or post*

Ilya (9:21pm): *i am deducting one day of sex*

Shane doesn't end up scoring, and the Centaurs lose by one despite their late power play and pulling their goalie with 2 minutes to go in the game. Ilya walks down to the locker rooms, slipping into the athletic training room so he can lay down and hopefully nap while the rest of the team do media, warm down and shower before their flight. He pulls his phone out of his pocket when he feels it vibrate against his thigh.

Shane (10:07 pm): *i hate you*

Ilya smiles to himself, fiddles with the gold band on his left hand before typing out a lazy reply. His exhaustion was creeping up on him again, nausea still ebbing away at his stomach, and he rubs his eyes with his sleeve to try and hide the tears that were suddenly welling. All he wanted to do was curl up next to Shane on the plane back to Ottawa, doze in the car back to their house, and be tucked into bed with his husband and his dog, tangling his fingers in Anya's soft fur and sleeping for the next 14 hours.

Ilya (10:09 pm): *liar*

Ilya (10:09 pm): *you love me*

Ilya locks his phone screen and rests his phone on his chest, breathing deeply, trying to steady himself before facing the rest of his team. He still feels strung out, shaky, but he knew he was going to be okay. Not because the last 24 hours had been easy, or because his body had bounced back relatively quickly, but because Shane was still his husband and loved him despite Ilya's cocky arrogance and being the worst sick person *ever*.

Ilya (10:17 pm): *come get me*

Ilya (10:17 pm): *i miss you*

The next time they're on the road, two weeks later in Edmonton, Shane rolls away from Ilya on the bed and moves to stand, pulling on his discarded athletic shorts and crumpled t-shirt. Ilya tracks him with his eyes, pouting stubbornly like a child who wasn't getting his way.

"What?" Shane asks, stuffing his feet into his sneakers. Ilya rubs a hand over his chest, sliding it over his belly and down to his crotch. Shane's body has an involuntary response, and he shakes his head at how even after all these years, Ilya still has that effect on him.

"I feel dizzy," Ilya says, bringing his other hand up to his head to run through his curls. "Sick, maybe. You need to stay tonight and make sure I will be okay."

Shane shakes his head, chuckling slightly. "You're fine, Ilya. Go to bed." Although the quiet thrum of anxiety still pulsed through his veins. The last time Ilya had asked him to stay, he was too sick to even shower himself, and to this day was still trying to gain back the 8 pounds he lost over the course of his 3-day illness.

Ilya pouts again, clambering up out of the bed to follow Shane to the hotel room door.

"Please stay," Ilya begs, kissing Shane's neck. They hadn't slept apart in almost two weeks, a rare luxury during the season, and Shane wonders how they both survived going months

without seeing each other for literal *years*.

Shane stays strong, putting a hand on Ilya's chest and looking him in the eyes. "You know the rules, Captain, no sleepovers on the road."

Ilya pouts and sighs again, nodding in agreement. "It was worth a shot, I suppose. But I will be very sad and lonely in here tonight," Ilya says, trying to crack Shane the best way he knew.

Shane kisses him once, twice, on the lips, patting his cheek fondly. "Call or text if you need anything, but I'll think you'll be okay."

Ilya nods, kissing his husband once more before watching him walk down the hallway to his room. Hip pressed against the door frame, Ilya stands with his arms crossed against his chest, blowing a kiss to Shane down the hall. He waits until he sees Shane blow a kiss back, head ducking to his chest to hide his blush, and doesn't retreat back into his room until Shane has closed the door to his own room down the hall first.

Heading back into his own room, Ilya picks up his phone and types out a text to Shane.

Ilya (10:47 pm): *goodnight, moya lyubov'*

Shane (10:49 pm): *goodnight, ilya* ❤️

End Notes

Title is from 'My Moon My Man' by Heist.

Loosely inspired by the Chicago Blackhawks' recent flu bug and my constant desire to wrap Ilya up in cottonwool. All Russian translations are thanks to Google, and all errors are my own.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!