

the ground is spinning still

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the ground is spinning still

by [chagrinocturne](#)

Summary

The plane is falling.

The plane is falling and Ilya is on it and Shane watches it fall.

The plane is falling and Ilya is dead.

Or, Shane Hollander has a hard time dealing with Ilya's brush with death.

Notes

yoooo i cant believe heated rivalry got me back into writing. i read the books in 2022 and i can't believe how big it's becoming. I love my babies to death. enjoy!! might edit it a bit it's not betaed ;(

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

The plane is falling.

The plane is falling and Ilya is on it and Shane watches it fall. He's frozen. He tries to move, tries to scream, but his limbs won't answer. The plane is falling. The plane is falling and it's reaching the ground and Ilya is -

Shane jolts awake, gasping.

He reaches around instinctively, looking for Ilya, but his hand only meets cold sheets. *Empty. Wrong.* Panic floods him, sharp and gutting. His breath starts hitching as he fumbles blindly for his phone.

It's 3AM. It's 3AM and Ilya is dead.

Or - no. That's what his traitorous brain is trying to convince him of. Shane knows the truth, somewhere in the back of his mind. Ilya is in Ottawa, alive, asleep in a hotel room with his teammates. Safe. Whole. Breathing. Not dead. But no. *Ilya is dead* and if he doesn't hear from him he's going to die too.

He squeezes his eyes shut, trying to shake clarity back into himself. He *knows* Ilya is fine. He can't wake him up for every stupid thing, every little fear. Ilya's the one who survived the actual trauma, and Shane has to stop making everything about himself – he's done enough of that. And he already hurt Ilya.

Hand pressed to his chest, he tries to slow his breathing. He used to be so good at this: self-soothing, placating his nerves before games or speeches or late-night encounters. Now it feels like his body has forgotten how.

He drops back onto the mattress and pulls close the pillow his lover - his *fiancé!* - usually uses when he stays over. Shane buries his face in it, desperate for even a trace of Ilya's scent, but it's been days. The last time he saw Ilya was the proposal. When Shane decided a life without Ilya wasn't one worth living. And Ilya, his beautiful, sensitive, sweet Ilya, had said yes. There were things to work through still. But they were good.

So why can't Shane let this go?

Ever since the accident, every night alone ends the same way: he falls asleep, and the plane falls with him. And Ilya dies. He hasn't slept through the night by himself in what feels like forever. When he sleeps with Ilya - when he's holding him, feeling his breath against his chest - he's okay. Ilya is safe and warm and breathing. The moment he's away, everything collapses.

Shane doesn't want to pile this on him. Not in the middle of the season, not when Ilya's still fighting his own mental health, not when he's the one who nearly died. Shane wants to hog all the attention, like always. He can do this alone.

He checks the clock: 4AM now - lets out a long, exhausted sigh, and lies back down. He closes his eyes, hoping that this time, exhaustion will take him out.

-

Shane's phone pings.

He's halfway through his usual routine, locker room alive around him: tape ripping, sticks clacking against the floor, the low *thunk* of someone testing a new blade on the wall. He smiles, looking down at the screen. Everything else fades a little.

Ilya: moya lyubov

Ilya: i miss you very much

Ilya: one more night

Ilya: play well

Shane exhales, shoulders dropping, the tightness behind his ribs easing for the first time since he woke up from the nightmare. He scrolls back up, reading the messages again like they're big, warm hands cupping his face. He can't wait to have Ilya safe and alive in front of him.

Shane: I can't wait

Shane: Miss you always. Ya tebya lyublyu

A heart pops up almost immediately. It makes him grin like an idiot. He tucks the phone into his bag and keeps getting dressed. His hands feel clumsy on his pads, and when he straightens, the room tilts just a bit: not enough to worry anyone, just enough to make him blink twice. It's nothing he can't manage - he practiced in way worse conditions. Hayden drops onto the bench beside him, rambling about some new game his kids are torturing him with. Shane nods, tries to follow, but the words smear together. He offers a smile anyway, laughs along, hoping it lands in the right place. Hayden doesn't seem to notice anything off.

By the time they spill out of the tunnel for warm-ups, the cold air of the rink hits him like a slap. Shane steps onto the ice and immediately a wave of nausea rolls through him, sharp and sudden. His stomach flips. The two hours of sleep are heavy on his shoulders. The rink sways under him like he's on a boat. He sucks in slow, careful breaths, waiting for it to pass.

It *does*, mostly. Enough to let him push forward.

The game starts.

He leans in for the opening faceoff, eyes on the puck, and wins it clean. Muscle memory takes over: skate, pivot, pass, chase, score. For the first few minutes he even lets himself believe it. *See? You can do it, Shane. You can handle this. You can manage things alone.*

A player barrels toward him - not even hard, just a routine bodycheck- and Shane braces, expecting the usual jolt. Instead, the impact blasts the air out of him like someone punched straight through his ribs. His vision fuzzes around the edges. The puck slips away from his stick.

His skates stutter. He reaches out blindly and catches the glass to steady himself. The ice tilts.

And then everything goes black.

-

Shane opens his eyes to the blurry, worried faces of the team doctor and Hayden leaning over him. The medical room lights are too bright, stabbing through his skull, and his limbs won't stop trembling - small, useless jitters he can't control.

At least the plane didn't fall this time.

"...Is the game over?" he asks, voice rough.

Hayden exhales like he's been holding his breath for ages, resting a steady hand on Shane's shoulder. "Yeah, buddy. It's over. We won. You're good."

Shane nods in satisfaction, and closes his eyes again.

The team doctor clears his throat. "Mr. Hollander, you were unconscious for over half an hour. We ran preliminary tests. Your heart rate is irregular, your energy levels are extremely low, and you're experiencing tremors. Have you been sleeping well?"

That snaps Shane awake. His entire body goes rigid. "Yes?" he blatantly lies.

Hayden steps closer, folding his arms, giving Shane an icy look. "Shane, come on. You look like hell. You've got eyebags the size of Canada. Why haven't you been sleeping?"

Shane swallows hard and tries to fight it. He can do it alone. This is just temporary. *It has to be.* "I have been sleeping, Hayden. I went to bed too late yesterday, that's all."

The doctor doesn't buy it for a second. Shane can feel the skepticism radiating off him. "Mr. Hollander, chronic sleep deprivation is extremely dangerous for an athlete. For anyone, frankly. We can prescribe a short-term sleep aid to help stabilize your circadian rhythm until-"

"No." Shane shakes his head sharply. "I don't need that. I just need to go home and lie down on my bed."

Without Ilya, he thinks sadly.

The thought hits him so suddenly, so violently, that he bolts upright.

Hayden panics. "Whoa- Shane! Easy!"

Ilya.

Ilya, who definitely watched the game.

Ilya, who definitely saw him collapse like a ragdoll on national television.

Ilya, who is probably already speeding through Canadian highways at god-awful winter-road speeds, ready to show up at his door whether Shane wants him to or not.

Hayden watches Shane's eyes go wide and distant, panic rising like a tide. It takes him about half a second to put the pieces together.

"Oh," Hayden mutters. "Oh, *shit*."

He reaches into his pocket, pulls out Shane's phone, and hands it over without a word.

The screen lights up. 93 missed calls. 43 messages. Some from his parents, but most from Ilya.

The doctor, sensing a shift in the room, finishes checking Shane's vitals one last time, gives Hayden a pointed look, and snaps his medical bag shut.

"I'll leave you in the care of your teammate, Mr. Hollander. But you *need* rest. No exceptions." Then he's gone, the door clicking shut behind him.

Half a second passes, and Shane is pressing the call button. It connects instantly.

"Shane? *Shane!*" Ilya's voice bursts through the speaker, thick with panic. "Sweetheart, are you okay? I saw you fall and then you didn't move and they cut the feed--"

"I'm okay," Shane blurts. "Ilya, baby, I'm okay. I'm awake. I'm talking. I'm fine. Just lost consciousness."

"You are not fine," Ilya fires back, voice trembling. "I am twenty minutes from your house. I don't care. I need to see you. If I don't see you in half an hour, I am going to die, you understand?"

Shane squeezes his eyes shut. "Please slow down. Please. You know I hate when you're speeding. I don't want you getting hurt because of me."

"I am slowing," Ilya insists, but the faint skid of tires says otherwise.

Hayden gently takes the phone from Shane's hands. "Hey, Ilya. It's Hayden. He's okay, I promise. I'm driving him home now. See you there."

Finally, Hayden helps Shane off the table, supporting him when his legs wobble. The world tilts, but Hayden's grip doesn't. The medical room is silent now, everyone else long gone. Hayden guides him through the hallway, out toward the players' exit, and into the cold night air.

The drive home is quiet - Shane dazed, Hayden stealing worried glances every time they hit a stoplight. When they pull into Shane's driveway, Ilya is already there - car crooked, engine running, door flung open. He's pacing in the snow like a man fueled entirely by fear and adrenaline.

The second Hayden helps Shane out of the passenger seat, Ilya is there - hands cupping Shane's face, checking his pulse, brushing hair off his forehead, touching him like he expected him to vanish.

"Here," Hayden says quietly. "He's all yours." He says, before ruffling Shane's hair, slipping into the driver's seat, and pulling his car back onto the road.

Shane finally forces his eyes to focus - and there's Ilya. Real. Solid. Breathing. Snowflakes melting in his beautiful wavy hair, worry carved into every inch of his face.

Something in Shane breaks.

He steps forward and buries his face in Ilya's chest without a word. Ilya wraps his arms around him instantly, pulling him in tight, one hand cradling the back of Shane's head like he's afraid he'll shatter.

"Come, sweetheart," Ilya murmurs, kissing his temple. "Let's get you inside."

They move slowly into the house, Ilya keeping a steady arm around him, guiding him gently but firmly, like he's steering someone half-asleep - or half-conscious. When the door shuts behind them, the quiet settles. Ilya tilts Shane's chin up with two fingers.

"Okay. Tell me what happened. Why did you faint? It is unusual for you." He kisses Shane's cheek. "What is wrong, moya lyubov?"

Shane tries to breathe through the embarrassment, through the exhaustion. "Ilya, I'm really okay--"

"No." Ilya studies him, gaze soft and sad, running his fingers under his eyes. "Have you not been sleeping?"

Shane tries for humor, even manages a weak smile. "Your grammar has gotten really good."

But Ilya doesn't crack. His expression doesn't even twitch. "Shane."

The joke dies in Shane's throat.

"I'm having... trouble staying asleep," he admits. "I'm not sleeping well." He stops there. He doesn't say *every night you're gone, I watch you die*.

Ilya exhales, gentle, almost heartbreakingly so, and smooths his thumb over Shane's cheekbone. "We are going to bed. Right now. You look like hell, baby."

Shane snorts faintly. "Is this how my fiancé treats me?"

"Yes," Ilya says simply, but his eyes are so worried, and so unbearably tender, that Shane can't even pretend to argue. He just reaches out, finds Ilya's hand, and lets himself be led.

In the bedroom, the moment Shane's head touches the pillow beside Ilya, something unclenches inside him. Ilya slides in close, pressing warmth and safety against Shane's spine.

He drops a featherlight kiss on Shane's nape.

Shane doesn't even last three seconds. He's out cold, breathing steady for the first time in weeks, held tightly in Ilya's arms.

-

For the first time in weeks, Shane falls asleep instantly.

And for the first time ever, the plane is still falling - even with Ilya right there, warm and solid, arms wrapped around him like a shield.

The plane is falling. Dropping out of the sky, metal screaming, fire licking the windows. Shane reaches for Ilya, screaming his name, but no sound leaves his throat. He's trying, he's begging, he's -

The sound finally tears free.

A raw, strangled yell rips out of him as he shoots upright in bed, drenched in sweat, chest heaving. Ilya jerks awake beside him, eyes wide with shock.

"Shane, baby - hey." Ilya sits up quickly, hands hovering before settling gently on Shane's shoulders. "What is happening? Talk to me."

Shane can't. He can't breathe, can't speak, can't pretend anymore. His body moves before his mind does: he folds into Ilya, burying his face in his chest, the sobs coming fast and violent. Ilya's arms close around him, firm and grounding, holding him in place.

He's warm. He's alive. He's *right here*. So why can't Shane's brain understand that?

Ilya presses his cheek to the top of Shane's head, voice a soft, worried murmur. "Moya lyubov... what did you dream? What is hurting you so much?"

Shane tries to inhale but it breaks on the way out. He wipes at his eyes, but he can't bring himself to look up - shame curling through him like a fist.

"I..." His voice comes out small and shaking. "Every night. Since the emergency landing." He swallows, hard, throat burning. "I dream about the plane. The plane falls and you're on it and I can't do anything. I just watch it happen. Over and over." Shane's breath shudders, breaking on the way out. He wipes at his soaked cheeks with the heel of his hand, still refusing to lift his gaze. His entire body curls inward, ashamed and exhausted.

Ilya goes completely still.

"The plane...?" he echoes softly, hands tightening on Shane's shoulders. "The accident?" His voice trembles, just slightly. "Sweetheart - look at me. I am here. I am right here. Oh, lyubov moya... why did you not tell me?"

Shane just shakes his head helplessly, hair pulling forward to hide his face again. "Because I wasn't even in the plane," he chokes out. "*You* are the one who went through something

traumatic. Not me.”

“I... Shane...” Ilya tries to speak, but Shane keeps going, the confession tumbling out fast and broken, like something he’s been holding back for months.

“And you already have so much going on,” Shane hiccups, voice cracking. “Our relationship, being captain, your mental health, everything. And I always-” His breath stutters. “I always make everything about me.” He flinches, like the words physically hurt.

“I don’t want to be selfish again. I don’t want to hurt you.”

Ilya’s chest tightens painfully at that - an ache that presses deep, right under his ribs. He pulls Shane closer, sliding one arm around his back and the other into his hair, cradling him as if trying to physically shelter him from his own thoughts.

“Shane,” he whispers, voice thick and low, “moy solnyshko... no.” His hand cups the back of Shane’s skull, steady, grounding. “You are not selfish. You never were. I just never told.”

But Shane shakes his head again, small and miserable. “When we fought,” he whispers. “We said awful things. I hurt you and - you were hurting too, and you didn’t tell me. I didn’t even notice.” His voice breaks into rawness. “I’m a terrible partner. I asked you if you would choose me, Ilya. I was stupid and blind. I don’t even know if I deserve being your fiancé.”

The word *fiancé* hits Ilya with a pang of love and guilt all at once.

He closes his eyes, breathing in slow, steadying himself, because Shane isn’t wrong - there’s truth in what he’s saying. But he isn’t carrying the guilt alone. Ilya was wrong too. The fight still sits heavy between them, a bruise neither of them has fully touched since that night. And now Shane - his sweet, anxious, neurotic Shane - is drowning in fear alone because he thought he didn’t *deserve* to share it. He didn’t deserve being Ilya’s forever.

“Oh, my heart,” Ilya whispers, voice cracking for the first time. “You are suffering, and I did not see. I should have - I should have talked to you. I should have told you about it before.” *It.* The depression. Ilya’s heart cracks open. He can feel it - this sharp, aching pull in his chest as he realizes just how long Shane has been drowning under the weight of this fear. Fear of losing him. Of not being enough. Caused not only by the shock of the accident, but the aftermath of their fight - and the apologies left unsaid, forgotten behind the anxiety and fear of the accident.

And Ilya *knows* that he is at fault too. He kept his own nightmares quiet. He hid the shaking in his hands, the way he retreated into himself when he was alone, the way he stared at hotel ceilings and missed Shane like a phantom limb. He told himself he was protecting Shane.

But all he did was make Shane think he was alone.

Ilya cups Shane’s face gently, guiding his forehead back against his chest. “Shane,” he whispers, tender enough that it almost breaks his own voice. “You are the love of my life. If it was reversed - if I thought you were dying, if I watched *your* plane fall - I would be having nightmares for the rest of my life. You cannot control this.”

The sweetness, the sincerity in his tone hits something fragile inside Shane. He lets out another broken sob and snakes his arms around Ilya's neck, clinging like Ilya is the only solid thing left in the world. And Ilya holds him, tight and secure, one palm splayed over Shane's spine as if shielding him from anything else that might hurt him.

Shane cries harder. He can't seem to stop. "The plane didn't even fall. It was an emergency landing," he wails.

Ilya presses a soft kiss into Shane's hair, carding his fingers through the damp strands. "You think caring about me this much means you are making it about yourself?" he murmurs. "You think this is selfish?"

He shakes his head, rubbing slow circles between Shane's shoulder blades. "If I suffer, that does not mean you cannot suffer too. I hate that you have been carrying this alone."

Shane gulps in a shaky breath, arms tightening around Ilya's neck. "When you slept here," he whispers, voice trembling, "I didn't have the nightmare. Not once. I thought maybe it would go away. That it was just... temporary. But tonight..." His voice wobbles, then breaks entirely.

Ilya hushes him, thumb brushing along the nape of his neck. "Because your body is tired, sweetheart," he murmurs. "It is too tired to fight anymore. Is telling you it needs rest. And you are safe with me. Understand? Safe. You are mine forever. You have always been."

His big, warm hand keeps rubbing circles over Shane's back, slow, steady, grounding - feeling the tremors in Shane's breath begin to ease, just slightly. Shane nods into his chest, exhaling shakily, letting Ilya hold him together piece by piece.

Shane finally leans back slightly, hands still clutching Ilya's shirt, and meets his eyes. Voice quiet, raw but steady. "I love you."

Ilya's chest tightens, and a playful smile tugs at his lips. "I love you too. And... I'm sorry you love me this much," he teases, nudging Shane gently, trying to coax a small smile.

Shane doesn't smile. He just stares at Ilya, serious, tender. "I'm not sorry," he says softly, shaking his head. "I... loving you is the best thing I've ever let myself do."

Ilya freezes for just a heartbeat, stunned, his heart threatening to burst. Then, as if he can't contain it, he starts peppering Shane's hair with tiny, frantic kisses. "Moya lyubov... moy pomidor," he murmurs, voice thick with love and awe.

Shane blushes, pouts a little, still clinging to him. "Moy kotenok," Ilya continues, teasing him despite the lingering tears.

"I am not a cat," Shane protests lightly, though there's warmth in his tone.

Ilya hums, brushing Shane's cheek with his thumb. "Mmmh. You are like little kitten. A little scared... but it's okay. I am here."

He keeps whispering - soft, protective, tender words - into Shane's ear, brushing fingers through his hair, lips ghosting over his temple. Each murmur and kiss is a tether, anchoring Shane back to the safety of this moment, this warmth. Shane breathes out slowly, the tension in his shoulders melting, eyelids heavy. Ilya's arms are still wrapped around him, solid and steady, holding him like he belongs to him.

And this time, when sleep comes, it is deep, peaceful, untroubled.

-

Shane wakes up to the weight of a boulder on his chest. A 6'3 Russian boulder, snoring softly, warm, impossibly heavy - his fiancé. He's almost suffocating, but for the first time in weeks, Shane has slept through the night. Maybe a human weighted blanket was exactly what he needed.

He threads his fingers through Ilya's soft, tangled curls. Ilya stirs, nuzzling Shane's chest and mumbling incoherently before lifting his head, eyes half-lidded. "Did you sleep, my love?"

Shane nods, a little choked up. He has everything he's ever wanted right here - in this room, in his arms - and he swears he'll never take it for granted again. Without thinking, he tugs Ilya up for a kiss. Ilya stops, just a centimeter from Shane's lips, eyes sparkling mischievously.

"No brushing teeth? Are you sick? Morning breath kiss?"

Shane sputters, cheeks heating. "Well, now no one is getting kissed." He tries to get up, but Ilya's arms snake around his waist, holding him firmly in place.

"Noooo, Hollander. Let me kiss my fiancé."

Shane rolls his eyes, but leans back into Ilya, letting him kiss him deeply, slowly, unhurriedly, every touch grounding him further.

"You feel okay, yes?" Ilya asks, checking for any discomfort on Shane's face.

Shane smiles, shaking his head slightly. "I feel better. Maybe talking about it was the right move."

Ilya hugs him a little tighter. "Of course it was. In sickness and in health, right?"

Shane blushes, heart racing. "We aren't even married yet."

"In my heart," Ilya says softly, serious, breathtakingly open, "you have been mine for a long time."

Shane cups Ilya's cheek, thumb brushing over his cheekbone. "You too." He bumps his forehead and nose against Ilya's in a tender, lingering gesture.

Ilya takes Shane's hand, squeezing it gently. "Now we go eat breakfast. Then you talk to me more. Then I make you forget about the plane with blowjob. Okay?"

Shane laughs, resting his head against Ilya's shoulder, warmth and love radiating from every nerve. "Deal."

The plane is falling.

The plane is - the plane has landed. Ilya is safe. They're together.

The plane no longer falls.

End Notes

pls leave a comment i havent written in so long aaaaaaaa
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much love <3

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