It lingers on my tongue

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It lingers on my tongue

by soapbubbles44

Summary

He tries to hold it in, he really does, but something about the gentleness of Ilya's touch, which is like nothing Shane's ever experienced before, causes a sob to escape his lips and before he knows it there are tears streaming down his cheeks, and Ilya looks at him with shocked eyes. .

Or: Shane struggles with expectations, introspection, and wanting to tell Ilya everything and nothing at the same time.

Notes

TW for discussions of self harm, but there's no graphic/actual self harming going on in the fic. Also TW for eating disorders/disordered eating/body image issues. And for descriptions of a panic attack.

I love Shane and Ilya too much and some of this is projection, I think the ending is hopeful. Also this takes place somewhere in 2014-2016. I'm not exactly sure, don't think about it too much<3

See the end of the work for more notes

There are two burn marks on the inside of Shane's right thigh. They don't take up much space in his mind - or on his body, not anymore. They're the consequences of stupid teenage angst, that's what he tells himself, and plans to tell anyone who ever asks, but so far nobody has. Most of the time he forgets they're even there.

And the thing is, he knows Ilya has noticed, felt the way he stopped in his tracks the first time he had his face between Shane's thighs, but he didn't say a word. It makes sense, they barely knew each other, and Shane supposed Ilya possessed *some* decorum.

So it does come as a shock one evening, when they're lying in bed and the room smells like sweat and sex, that Ilya asks, "those marks on your thigh, what happened?"

Shane looks down at his naked body on top of the sheets and immediately feels the need to cover himself up, his perfectly planned defense of an answer long forgotten, "just- nothing."

Ilya looks like he doesn't want to pry, but still says "looks like it hurt."

"It did," Shane mumbles, trying to pull the comforter on top of him, but it's hard when Ilya's still lying on it, "but it was a long time ago."

"When?"

"I was fifteen."

"Not long before we met."

"I just-" Shane wants to spill it all out, wants to trust Ilya with this, but it feels like his heart is going to beat out of his chest- or stop beating altogether.

"You don't have to tell me," Ilya kisses his shoulder, Shane stares into nothingness, his vision's started to blur and he doesn't know why he thought this conversation would be so easy when it's proven to be *so so* difficult.

"I don't want you to think I'm weird, or weak," he doesn't want *anyone* to think that, but if Ilya were to think so it would somehow be even worse.

"Hm, I think you are weird, Hollander," Ilya kisses his cheek and Shane can't help but lean into the touch, "but this is not weird."

Shane wants to roll on top of Ilya and kiss him hard on the mouth, to end this conversation, to go for a second round and by the end of it this will be forgotten, but finally confiding in someone also feels so good there's a part of him that doesn't want to stop talking. "I was just, I felt so lost, so wrong and I didn't know why. And then my team lost a really important game and I stole one of my dad's lighters."

"You did this with lighter?" Ilya sounds sad and it makes Shane feel like throwing up.

"Yes," his voice is barely a whisper. "But it was ten years ago and only that one time…"

Ilya is silent for a while as he runs his fingers through Shane's hair, "if you feel like doing this again you tell me."

Shane almost wants to laugh, "I promise, I haven't felt like doing it since." It's not the whole truth, but not a complete lie either. He thinks for now it'll do. "Can we go to sleep now?" He turns his head and watches Ilya intently, he opens his mouth as if to say something, then closes it again and nods.

"Yes Hollander, we sleep now."

It opens the floodgates, somehow. Not for what he tells Ilya because they're both still as secretive as ever, still clearly have their guards up, but for a kind of introspection Shane *really* doesn't have the time for.

When he tries to sleep at night, and that night with Ilya was no exception, he thinks of being fifteen and knowing hockey's all he wants to do, for as long as possible, and being the only Asian kid on the team, and the weird feeling he'd get in his chest when he watched his teammate Jeremy change in the locker room.

And deciding to go all-in on his dream, his parents being on board, his coaches being on board. Diet, exercise regiments, constantly missing school, not being invited to parties because his classmates knew he wasn't going to come anyway.

But it'd been alright, because he was really fucking good at hockey, everyone could see it. Everyone thinking he was great, however, also led to huge expectations, which was awesome a lot of the time but did make him feel like shit when he didn't play well.

And then he'd fetched the lighter. And regretted it instantly, not because it hurt too much or made him feel guilty but because it'd scratched an itch that he knew he could under no circumstances afford to scratch again.

Is he allergic to chocolate? Caramel? Nuts? Shane doesn't think so, at least he didn't until five seconds ago when he ate a Snickers bar so fast he barely got to taste it.

Because now his chest is constricting and it feels like someone's put rubber bands around his lungs that keep him from taking proper breaths, all he can hear is the sound of his head pounding and the wheezing that erupts from his throat every time he tries to breathe.

Not on the diet plan, too many empty calories, too many carbs, you have a game tonight an important game tonight and then you do this-

Shane crouches down and leans against the wall for support. If this is how he's going to die- a victim to an allergy he didn't even know he had, it's a really sad way to go.

He doesn't know what's happening to him, doesn't know why his fingertips feel funny why his head is spinning or why he can't fucking breathe.

He wants to call his mom, wishes she was here, but his phone's so far away. Maybe he should call 911, let them know he's going into anaphylactic shock and desperately needs someone to come and save him.

But all he has is himself.

Shane lies down on the floor and braces himself for the end he thinks is to come, except nothing happens. He keeps wheezing and when he closes his eyes it feels like he's on a rollercoaster.

And then it stops. Who knows after how long, but he can faintly hear his phone buzzing in the background, so he forces himself to get up and answer it. His legs are shaky, his mouth is dry, but he's alive. Somehow.

"Dude where are you?" *Hayden*.

Shane squeezes his eyes shut, "I- what?"

"The game?"

It takes him a moment to register what's being said, then he looks down at his phone screen and groans when he sees the time, "I'm on my way, sorry."

He feels heavy and wonders if he's fit for driving, if he should call a cab, or maybe let his coach know he's not fit for playing at all. But he gets his ass up and goes, because what else is he supposed to do?

Are you okay?

Shane stares at the text from Ilya and wants to laugh. Then a follow-up message ticks in.

Game was bad, why did you play so horribly?

He sighs. His body still feels heavy from whatever the hell went down after he ate the Snickers bar, and he can't help but feel like he's let his team down because of it. He couldn't concentrate properly, spent most of the game benched, they lost. It happens, he tries to tell himself, you can't win every single time.

Fuck off. He texts back and puts his phone on silent before heading for the showers.

Shane tells his dietician about his presumed allergies, she lifts an eyebrow when he lets her know what happened, somehow the most embarrassing thing is that he ate candy in the first place when he really shouldn't.

She says there are no chocolates, caramels, or nuts in his diet plan, but that he might want to get it checked with a doctor anyway. He nods but has no plans of doing so. He'll be more

careful, no more cheating. If anything, this is proof that sticking to a plan always gets you the best results.

He doesn't get to spend more than a few seconds at Ilya's place before he's being lifted off the ground. Shane crosses his legs around Ilya's waist and kisses him as hard as he can. Ilya places him on the kitchen counter and Shane wants to say that it's unhygienic because the kitchen is for cooking, but Ilya speaks first.

"You lost weight."

Shane snaps out of whatever make-out induced haze he was in, eyes widening, "huh?"

"You are lighter," Ilya says, matter-of-factly, "feel like nothing in my arms."

"Maybe you just got stronger," Shane retorts, trying his best to sound playful, but he knows Ilya's right. He weighs himself every morning, tracks everything he eats, has only been more strict since the Snickers-incident. He knows the scale doesn't lie, yet when he looks in the mirror he doesn't think anything's changed. He definitely didn't expect Ilya to pick up on it.

"Of course," Ilya smiles, "maybe both is true?"

"I'm leaning out," Shane says defensively, "on a cut, you know."

"Who asked you to do this?"

Shane frowns, "my coach, my dietician," he lies, "and myself." He feels weirdly self-conscious all of a sudden, something he hasn't felt since he was an insecure teenager. Since he made those marks on his inner thigh. He doesn't want Ilya to notice, doesn't want him to look at him with anything but desire. So he kisses Ilya again to shut him up.

But Ilya pulls away, "are you sad?"

"What? No I'm not sad."

"You look sad."

"Because you're not kissing me," Shane tries, desperate for this conversation to end, "isn't that what I came here for?"

Ilya finally seems to accept defeat, "you come for more than just kissing, no?"

Shane answers by closing the gap between them. He kisses Ilya like his life depended on it, like he needs the contact to survive, and maybe he does.

Ilya carries him to the bedroom and somewhere in the back of Shane's mind there's a thought he desperately tries to push away, *he carries you a lot more effortlessly now than he used to*.

Shane freezes for a second, Ilya looks at him curiously, "everything okay?"

“Yeah, sorry.”

He sucks Ilya’s dick before he lets him fuck him into the mattress, desperately asks for *more more more* because it feels good and because it makes him forget.

“I wish you could see yourself,” Ilya says between thrusts, and Shane buries his head in the pillow, “you’re so fucking sexy Hollander.” He doesn’t know if he believes him, not that it matters right now. He wants to say something back, let Ilya know how good he feels, but he can’t think of what to say, feels like it all sounds too awkward coming from him.

“I cook dinner for us now, okay?” Ilya says after they’ve showered, Shane stares at his folded clothes on the bed and wonders if it makes sense to put on a shirt.

“You don’t have to, I uh, recently discovered some allergies. It’ll be too complicated.” It sounded like a good defense in his head, but now that he says it out loud it seems kind of silly. Because now Ilya’s going to ask and he’ll have to explain, and what kind of dinner has chocolate and caramel anyway?

“Allergies? Okay I avoid those foods you cannot eat.”

“I’ll just- I-” Shane doesn’t know what to say, he knows he can’t eat *nothing*, that eating too little will affect his performance negatively as well, but he’s seen the contents of Ilya’s fridge and he knows whatever he wants to make won’t agree with his diet plan. “You know I don’t-”

“Yes, yes, diet plan,” Ilya says with a smile, “okay, we go grocery shopping. Find something you can eat.”

Shane has hated grocery stores since he was a little kid, there are too many people, too many noises, the overhead lights are so ridiculously bright and hurt his eyes and he always feels like he has a migraine when he leaves. “Maybe I should just go home.”

The expression on Ilya’s face makes Shane feel even worse, “okay, I have ingredients for protein shake, I also have broccoli and chicken.”

Shane supposes he could do with that, “what flavor is the protein powder?” He asks, biting at the skin by his fingernails, “I can’t have chocolate.”

“Is vanilla- since when?”

“I told you, allergies.”

“You are allergic to chocolate?”

“Among other things, yes.”

Ilya doesn’t look convinced but doesn’t question it either, “sit down, I make food for us.”

Shane takes a seat by the kitchen island and looks down. He wonders why his life has to be so complicated, wonders what it'd be like to say fuck it to the expectations and the pressure and the stupid diet plan but he's so scared of letting go, scared of feeling like his insecure 15-year-old self did. Scared of what will happen if he's not at the top of his game, if he suddenly doesn't have hockey anymore. He can't handle thinking about it. Being the best requires sacrifices, sacrifices Shane's willing to make.

He eats his food in silence and tries not to look at Ilya's plate for too long.

The next time they have sex Ilya kisses the burn marks on Shane's inner thigh and it has the opposite effect of what Shane supposes Ilya intended.

He tries to hold it in, he really does, but something about the gentleness of Ilya's touch, which is like nothing Shane's ever experienced before, causes a sob to escape his lips and before he knows it there are tears streaming down his cheeks, and Ilya looks at him with shocked eyes.

"Sorry," he blabbers, "I'm so sorry, I don't know-"

"Is alright," Ilya says, placing a comforting hand on Shane's leg, "did you not like it? I'm sorry."

"No," Shane shakes his head, he doesn't know what to say, doesn't trust himself to speak a sentence without his voice cracking, and there's another heartbreaking realization as the words *i love you* linger on his tongue. Not that he's going to say it, god, he's not going to say it. They're not together, not even exclusive, but this-

Ilya lies down next to him and wraps his arms around his waist, he doesn't say anything. Shane has a feeling he's at a loss for words too.

There's a part of him that wants to get up and run away, this has gotten intimate in a way he never intended it to. Ilya has seen parts of him he's never shown to anyone before. And now he's lying in his arms crying like a child who fell off their bike and none of this was ever supposed to happen.

"You're okay." Ilya then says, "you don't have to say more if you don't want to."

It's too big for Shane to put into words anyway.

"I get scared sometimes," Shane interlocks their fingers, "when the wrong things feel really good." He feels Ilya's body tense up and clarifies, "not *us*, I mean. Like eating something that's not on my plan and skipping a workout to watch tv on the couch and the fucking *lighter*." His voice finally breaks and Ilya's grip on him tightens.

"Eating what you want is not wrong, skipping a workout is not wrong. You must know this," Ilya says, "cannot be compared to the lighter."

“Okay,” Shane’s voice is shaky and sounds weird in his own ears, like someone’s filled his head with water, “okay.”

“Do you not want me to touch the scars?”

“I don’t want to-” he *can’t* “talk about it anymore.”

“Then we do not talk more about it.”

They don’t talk about it but Shane still thinks about it. About all those things. About being weird about food and bright lights and being boring and being ashamed of so many things, and about Ilya not caring.

He stares at the Snickers bars at the grocery stores and decides to get one. He doesn’t eat it. Forgets it in the bottom of a kitchen cabinet and religiously sticks to his performance diet.

Ilya pretends not to notice the burn marks, Shane pretends not to notice the heaviness in the air whenever his gaze lingers on them for too long anyway.

“Good game,” he says to his teammates even when they don’t play to their full potential.

And it’s alright. Because he has hockey and he’s *good* at hockey, and hockey has brought him Ilya and even if whatever’s going on between them makes him feel ill with want at times he’ll take it over nothing at all.

The sex is good, he has no complaints, and he doesn’t cry anymore.

End Notes

Comments are appreciated, I love to hear your thoughts!<3

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