

Isn't Supposed to Look Like This

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Isn't Supposed to Look Like This

by Anonymous

Summary

In a world which Shane's been hiding his rut from Ilya, he finally agrees to entertain his lover and invites him to spend it with him. Only Shane doesn't react at all how he imagined.

Notes

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

Shane knows something is wrong the moment he wakes up.

It's not the standard pre-rut warning signs—the restlessness, the irritability, the way his scent goes sharper. Those, he's learned to manage over the years with suppressants and careful scheduling. No, this is different. This is *worse*.

He's in Boston. In Ilya's bed. And every single instinct in his body is screaming at him to stay exactly where he is.

"Fuck," he mutters, pressing his face into the pillow that smells like Ilya's shampoo and laundry detergent and *Ilya*. His suppressants were supposed to last another week. He'd timed this carefully—he always times it carefully. But his body has other ideas, apparently.

The sheets rustle beside him. "You are awake?"

Shane's entire nervous system lights up at the sound of Ilya's voice. It takes every ounce of willpower not to roll over and bury his face in Ilya's neck. Instead, he stays frozen, face-down, trying to get his shit together.

"Yeah," he manages. His voice comes out rougher than intended.

"Is early still." Ilya's hand lands on Shane's bare shoulder, warm and grounding. Shane has to bite back a whine. "Come back to sleep."

"Can't." Shane finally forces himself to sit up, immediately regretting it when the movement causes Ilya's scent to wash over him more intensely. Ilya's pre-rut too, he realizes with growing horror. Not in it yet, but close. Close enough that Shane's instincts are responding to it, demanding he stay, demanding he—

No. Absolutely not.

"I need to go," Shane says abruptly, swinging his legs out of bed.

"Now?" Ilya props himself up on one elbow, looking adorably sleep-rumpled and confused. His hair is a disaster. Shane wants to run his fingers through it. He wants to crawl back into bed and wrap himself around Ilya and not let go for approximately three days. "Is only six in the morning."

"Yeah, I—" Shane stands, looking around for his clothes. They're scattered across Ilya's bedroom floor from last night. Last night, when everything had been normal. When Shane had been in control. "I have a thing. Team thing."

It's a terrible lie. The Metros don't have a game today, and Ilya knows it.

"What thing?" Ilya sits up fully now, the sheet pooling around his waist. Shane can see the bite mark he left on Ilya's shoulder last night, and something possessive and deeply unhelpful surges through him.

"Just a thing," Shane repeats, grabbing his jeans. "I'll text you."

He's pulling on his clothes with jerky, too-fast movements. He needs to get out of here before —

"Shane." Ilya's voice has gone softer. Careful. "What is wrong?"

"Nothing's wrong," Shane says, which is such an obvious lie that even he winces. "I just need to go."

He's got his jeans on, his shirt half-buttoned when Ilya gets out of bed. Shane makes the mistake of looking at him—bare-chested, sleep-warm, concerned—and his resolve nearly crumbles.

"You are acting strange," Ilya says, taking a step closer. "Did I do something—"

"No." The word comes out too sharp, too desperate. Shane takes a step back, putting space between them even though every instinct is screaming at him to close that distance. "You didn't do anything. I just—I have to go."

Ilya's eyes narrow. Then Shane watches as realization dawns across his face. "Oh. Oh, is your—you are going into rut."

Shane's jaw clenches. "I'm fine."

"You are terrible liar, Hollander." Ilya crosses his arms. "And is stupid to leave now. Where will you go? Hotel room? Your apartment in Montreal is five hours away."

"I'll figure it out," Shane says, shoving his feet into his shoes. He's not doing the laces. He doesn't have time for laces.

"Shane." Ilya's voice has dropped lower. "Stay."

The single word hits Shane like a physical blow. His hands still on his shoes.

"I can't," he says quietly.

"Why not?"

Because Shane has read the studies. Has been told since he presented at fifteen that alpha/alpha relationships during rut are *dangerous*. That two alphas in rut together will fight, will hurt each other, will destroy whatever space they're sharing. Because the one time Shane tried to ride out a rut near another alpha—his college roommate, who'd been in the apartment down the hall—he'd nearly broken down the door trying to get to him. They'd had to sedate Shane and move his roommate to a hotel.

Because Shane has never, not once, had a rut that didn't make him aggressive and territorial and *dangerous*.

"Because it's not safe," Shane finally says. "For either of us."

Ilya's expression does something complicated. "You think I cannot handle you?"

"That's not—" Shane drags a hand through his hair, frustration mounting. "It's not about that. It's about—alphas in rut together are supposed to be—"

"Supposed to," Ilya interrupts. "I am getting sick of hearing what things are supposed to be like."

Shane doesn't have an answer for that. He finishes with his shoes and grabs his phone from the nightstand.

"I'll call you when it's over," he says, already moving toward the door.

"Shane, wait—"

But Shane is already out of the bedroom, down the hall, out the front door. He makes it to his rental car before the trembling starts.

His hands shake as he tries to get the key in the ignition. Everything in him is screaming to go back. Go back, go back, go back. Ilya is *right there*, just inside, and Shane's rut-addled brain can't understand why he's leaving.

He finally gets the car started and pulls out of Ilya's driveway, white-knuckling the steering wheel the entire way.

The hotel room is a mistake.

Shane realizes this approximately forty minutes after checking in, when he's curled up on the bed, shaking and miserable, every instinct in his body staging a full revolt against his decision to leave.

This isn't how it's supposed to go. He's supposed to be aggressive, restless, wanting to fight or fuck anything that moves. Instead, he feels *hollow*. Empty. Wrong.

He tries to sleep. Manages maybe an hour before he wakes up reaching for someone who isn't there.

His phone buzzes. He shouldn't look at it, but he does anyway.

Ilya: you are okay?

Shane stares at the message for a long time. Then he types out a lie.

Shane: Fine. Just riding it out.

The response comes immediately.

Ilya: this is why you are terrible liar. you never use periods when you text me. you are not fine.

Despite everything, Shane almost laughs. Then the hollow feeling comes back worse than before.

Shane: I'm managing

Ilya: i do not believe you

Shane: Don't worry about it

Ilya: too late. am already worrying. you should come back.

Shane closes his eyes. God, he wants to. His entire body is screaming at him to get back in the car and drive back to Ilya's place and crawl back into that bed and not leave until the rut is over.

But he can't. Because he knows what happens to alphas in rut around other alphas. He knows what he'll become—aggressive, possessive, violent. And the thought of hurting Ilya, even accidentally, makes him feel sick.

Shane: I can't

Ilya: yes you can. door is unlocked. I will be here.

Shane doesn't respond. He turns his phone face-down on the nightstand and tries to ignore the way his chest aches.

He makes it another six hours.

Six hours of tossing and turning on hotel sheets that smell like bleach and strangers. Six hours of feeling like his skin is too tight and his bones are trying to crawl out of his body. Six hours of checking his phone every ten minutes even though he knows Ilya hasn't texted again.

When he finally breaks, it's not dramatic. He just sits up in bed, looks around the impersonal hotel room, and thinks: *This is stupid.*

The drive back to Ilya's place takes twenty-three minutes. Shane doesn't remember most of it. He's operating on pure instinct now, his conscious mind taking a backseat to the overwhelming need to get *back* to Ilya.

The front door is unlocked, like Ilya promised. Shane steps inside and immediately sags against the doorframe as Ilya's scent washes over him. It's stronger now—Ilya's definitely gone into pre-rut properly. Shane should turn around. He should leave while he still can.

Instead, he locks the door behind him.

"Ilya?" His voice comes out hoarse.

"Bedroom," comes the response.

Shane follows the sound like a homing beacon. He finds Ilya sitting on the edge of the bed, wearing just sweatpants, looking tired but unsurprised.

"Knew you would come back," Ilya says simply.

"I shouldn't be here," Shane says, but he's already moving closer. "This is a bad idea."

"Probably," Ilya agrees. "But here you are anyway."

Shane stops a few feet away, every muscle in his body coiled tight. He's waiting for it—the surge of aggression, the territorial rage, all the things he's been taught to expect.

But it doesn't come. Instead, looking at Ilya sitting there calm and steady and *present*, all Shane feels is an overwhelming wave of *relief*.

"I don't—" Shane's voice cracks. "I don't understand what's happening to me."

Ilya stands slowly, telegraphing his movements. "What do you mean?"

"This isn't—" Shane gestures helplessly at himself. "I'm not supposed to feel like this. During rut, I'm supposed to be—"

"Supposed to again," Ilya interrupts, but his voice is gentle. "What are you supposed to be?"

"Aggressive," Shane gets out. "Territorial. Dangerous. I'm supposed to want to fight you or —" He cuts himself off, flushing.

"Or?" Ilya prompts, taking a step closer.

"Or fuck you," Shane admits, the words barely audible. "And not in a—not like normal. It's supposed to be rough and—and I'm supposed to be out of control."

"And you don't feel like this?" Ilya asks carefully.

Shane shakes his head. "I feel—" He has to stop, swallow hard. "I just want to be *near* you. I want—" God, this is humiliating. "In the hotel, all I could think about was getting back here. Not because I wanted to fuck or fight, just because being away from you felt *wrong*."

Ilya's expression has gone very soft. "And this bothers you?"

"Yes!" Shane bursts out. "Because it's not—it's not how it's supposed to work! I've read the studies, I've talked to doctors, I've—everyone says alpha/alpha is dangerous during rut. That we'll hurt each other. But I don't want to hurt you, I just want—"

His voice breaks. He ducks his head, unable to keep looking at Ilya while admitting this.

"I don't feel like an alpha right now," he says quietly. "I feel—I don't know what I feel."

Ilya closes the remaining distance between them. His hand comes up to cup Shane's jaw, tilting his face up.

"You feel like yourself," Ilya says simply. "And that is okay."

"It's not supposed to be like this," Shane repeats, but there's no conviction left in it.

"Good," Ilya says, and kisses him.

Shane makes a sound that's embarrassingly close to a whimper. His hands come up to grip Ilya's shoulders, not to push him away but to pull him *closer*. The kiss is gentle at first, almost careful, until Shane presses forward desperately and Ilya opens his mouth to him.

When they break apart, Shane is shaking. "I don't want to hurt you," he says against Ilya's lips.

"You won't," Ilya promises. "And if you do by accident, I will tell you. But Shane—you won't. I know you."

"You don't know what I'm like during rut," Shane argues weakly, even as he's pressing closer, his face finding the curve of Ilya's neck. God, he smells *good*. Perfect. Like safety and home and everything Shane's been craving.

"No," Ilya agrees. "But I know you. And I know that even in rut, you are still you. You are still Shane Hollander who worries too much and overthinks everything and would cut off his own hand before deliberately hurting someone he cares about."

Shane wants to protest, but Ilya's hands are sliding up his back, and coherent thought is becoming difficult.

"Stay," Ilya says again, softer this time. "Please. Let me take care of you."

That's what breaks him. Shane has spent his entire adult life being told that alphas in rut need to be isolated, contained, controlled. The idea that someone might *want* to take care of him during rut, that Ilya might actually *want* him here...it's overwhelming.

"Okay," Shane breathes. "Okay, I'll stay."

It's nothing like what Shane expected.

He ends up curled around Ilya on the bed, his face pressed to the back of Ilya's neck, arms wrapped tight around his waist. Ilya's hand rests over Shane's where it's splayed across his stomach, fingers intertwined.

They haven't had sex. Shane keeps waiting for that urgent, desperate *need* to hit, but it doesn't come. Instead, he just wants this; Ilya in his arms, close enough that Shane can feel every breath he takes.

"This is weird," Shane mumbles against Ilya's skin.

"Mm." Ilya sounds half-asleep. "What is weird?"

"All of it." Shane tightens his hold slightly. "I'm supposed to want—I should be—"

"Supposed to again," Ilya says, but there's no heat in it. "Shane. Stop telling me what you should be feeling and tell me what you *are* feeling."

Shane is quiet for a long moment. Then: "Safe. I feel safe."

Ilya makes a pleased noise and squeezes Shane's hand. "Good. This is good."

"I've been taught my whole life that this—us, together like this during rut—is dangerous," Shane says quietly. "That two alphas can't—that we'd fight or worse."

"Maybe some do," Ilya says. "But we are not them. We are us."

"I know, but—" Shane struggles to articulate what he's feeling. "It's hard to undo all that conditioning, you know? I keep waiting for something to go wrong. For me to suddenly want to hurt you or dominate you or—"

"Shane." Ilya rolls over in his arms so they're face-to-face. His expression is serious. "Do you want to hurt me?"

"No," Shane says immediately.

"Do you want to fight me?"

"No."

"Then stop waiting for it to happen." Ilya's hand comes up to cup Shane's face. "Maybe your rut is not like what the books say. Maybe you are different. Maybe *we* are different together. This is okay."

Shane swallows hard. "I don't feel like myself," he admits. "I feel—clingy. Needy. Like I can't stand the thought of being away from you even for a minute. It's—"

"Hot," Ilya interrupts. "Is very hot actually."

Despite everything, Shane huffs out a laugh. "You're ridiculous."

"You are ridiculous for thinking there is something wrong with wanting to be close to someone you care about," Ilya counters. He shifts closer, until their foreheads are touching. "Shane. You have been alone for every rut since you presented, yes?"

Shane nods.

"And they told you that you must be alone. That you are dangerous. That you will hurt people." Ilya's thumb strokes across Shane's cheekbone. "But here, now, with me—you are not dangerous. You are not violent. You are just *you*. Maybe they were wrong about what your rut is like. Or maybe—" He pauses. "Maybe you are different with someone you trust."

The words hit Shane like a physical blow. Trust. Of course. He's never trusted anyone enough to let them see him like this—vulnerable, needy, stripped of all his carefully constructed control.

But he trusts Ilya. Despite everything, despite all his fears and conditioning and the voice in his head saying this is wrong—he trusts Ilya.

"I don't know what I'm doing," Shane confesses quietly.

"Me neither," Ilya says. "But we will figure it out together, yes?"

Shane feels something tight in his chest finally loosen. "Yeah," he breathes. "Yeah, okay."

Ilya kisses him again, slow and careful. Shane melts into it, all the tension draining from his body. When Ilya pulls back, there's a mischievous glint in his eye.

"Besides," he says. "I like clingy Shane. Is adorable."

"I'm not adorable," Shane protests, but he's already pressing closer, tucking his face back into Ilya's neck.

"Very adorable," Ilya insists, wrapping his arms around Shane. "Like big puppy who thinks he is wolf."

"Fuck off."

"Cannot. You will not let me move."

It's true. Shane has wrapped himself around Ilya like an octopus, and the thought of loosening his hold even slightly makes his chest ache.

"Sorry," he mutters.

"Don't be sorry." Ilya's hand slides into Shane's hair, scratching lightly at his scalp. Shane practically purrs. "I like this. I like that you want to be close. Is nice to be wanted like this."

Shane makes a distressed noise. "I always want you like this," he admits. "I just—I don't usually let myself."

"Why not?"

"Because—" Shane struggles with the words. "Because alphas aren't supposed to be the ones who need. We're supposed to be the ones who provide, who protect, who—"

"Bullshit," Ilya says bluntly. "Everyone needs sometimes. Even alphas. Especially alphas who think they have to be strong all the time and never ask for help."

"I'm not—"

"You are. You absolutely are." Ilya pulls back enough to look Shane in the eye. "Shane. You do so much for everyone else. Your team, your family, the foundation, me—you are always giving. Let me give to you for once. Let me take care of you."

Shane feels dangerously close to tears. "I don't know how," he admits.

"Then we will learn together," Ilya says simply. "But first—you need to stop fighting what you are feeling. Stop trying to be what you think you should be and just *be*."

It sounds so simple when Ilya says it like that. Like it's the easiest thing in the world to just let go of a lifetime of expectations and conditioning.

But looking at Ilya now—patient, steady, completely unafraid—Shane thinks maybe he can try.

"Okay," he says quietly. "I'll try."

"Good." Ilya kisses his forehead. "Now. You have not eaten in hours. I will make us food."

He starts to pull away, but Shane's arms tighten around him automatically. The thought of Ilya leaving, even just to go to the kitchen, makes panic flutter in his chest.

"Shane," Ilya says gently. "I am just going to kitchen. Will be back in ten minutes."

"I know," Shane says, but he can't seem to make his arms cooperate. "I know, I just—"

"Come with me then," Ilya suggests. "You can sit at counter while I cook."

Relief floods through Shane. "Yeah. Yeah, okay."

They make their way to the kitchen, Shane trailing behind Ilya like a shadow. True to his word, Ilya sets him up at the kitchen counter while he starts pulling things out of the fridge.

"What do you want to eat?" Ilya asks.

"Don't care," Shane says, watching Ilya move around the kitchen. "Whatever you want."

Ilya shoots him an amused look. "Very helpful. I will make eggs. And bacon. You need protein."

Shane just nods, content to sit and watch. This is nice, he realizes. Domestic in a way they've never really been before. They've had sex in this kitchen—against the counter, bent over the table—but they've never just *existed* in it like this.

"How do you feel?" Ilya asks as he cracks eggs into a pan.

"Okay," Shane says, then corrects himself, remembering Ilya's earlier words. "Good, actually. Better than in the hotel."

"Because you stopped fighting it," Ilya points out. "Your body knew what it needed. You just would not listen."

"I was scared," Shane admits quietly. "I've never—no one has ever wanted to be around me during rut before. I didn't know if—"

He trails off, but Ilya seems to understand. "I want to be here," he says firmly. "I want to be with you like this. All of you, Shane. Not just the parts you think are acceptable."

Shane's throat feels tight. "Even the clingy, needy parts?"

"*Especially* the clingy, needy parts," Ilya says, turning to look at him with soft eyes. "You are always so controlled, so careful. I like seeing you like this. Relaxed. Open."

"I don't feel relaxed," Shane says. "I feel like I'm crawling out of my skin half the time."

"But you are not fighting it anymore," Ilya points out. "You are letting yourself feel it. Is different."

Maybe he's right. Shane does feel different now than he did in the hotel room. Less like he's at war with his own body and more like he's just... existing in it. Accepting what it needs.

Ilya finishes cooking and slides a plate in front of Shane. "Eat."

Shane does, realizing halfway through that he's *starving*. He can't remember the last time he ate properly before a rut. Usually, he just holes up with protein bars and water and waits for it to be over.

"Better?" Ilya asks when Shane's plate is clean.

"Yeah." Shane pushes the plate away and immediately reaches for Ilya. "Come here."

Ilya comes around the counter willingly, letting Shane pull him close. Shane buries his face in Ilya's stomach, arms wrapped around his waist.

"Thank you," Shane mumbles against Ilya's shirt.

"For what?"

"For not making me feel like a freak for being like this."

Ilya's hand slides into Shane's hair. "You are not a freak. You are just Shane. My Shane."

The possessive makes Shane shiver. "Say it again."

"My Shane," Ilya repeats, voice dropping lower. "Mine."

Shane groans, pressing closer. His rut-brain loves that, loves the claim in Ilya's voice even though he's supposed to be the one making claims, not receiving them.

"Yeah," he breathes. "Yours."

Ilya's scent spikes with arousal. "Shane," he says, voice rough. "My rut is starting. Soon I will not be so patient."

"Good," Shane says. "I don't want you to be patient."

"You are sure?" Ilya's grip tightens in Shane's hair. "Because once I start, I will not stop until —"

"I'm sure," Shane interrupts. He pulls back to look up at Ilya, letting all his want show on his face. "I need you. Have needed you since I woke up this morning."

Something in Ilya's expression shifts. His eyes go darker, his scent thickening with alpha pheromones that make Shane's mouth water.

"Bedroom," Ilya says. "Now."

This time, Shane doesn't hesitate.

They barely make it to the bed.

Ilya's on him the moment they cross the threshold, crowding Shane against the doorframe with his body, one hand fisted in Shane's hair and the other sliding under his shirt. Shane gasps into Ilya's mouth, already hard, already desperate.

"Fuck," Shane breathes when Ilya's teeth find his neck. Not biting—not yet—just the threat of it, the sharp edge of canines against sensitive skin. "Ilya, please—"

"Please what?" Ilya pulls back to look at him, eyes dark and pupils blown. "Tell me what you want, Shane."

Shane's brain short-circuits. He doesn't know how to ask for what he wants, doesn't even know if he can articulate it. He just knows he needs Ilya closer, needs him *everywhere*, needs —

"You," Shane manages. "Just—you. Everything."

Ilya makes a low, pleased sound in the back of his throat. "Everything?" he repeats, and there's something dangerous in his voice now, something that makes Shane's knees weak. "You want me to take you apart? Make you forget your own name?"

Shane nods frantically. "Yes. *God*, yes."

"Good." Ilya kisses him again, deeper this time, licking into Shane's mouth like he owns it. When he pulls back, his lips are spit-slick and red. "Because I am not going to be gentle."

"Don't want gentle," Shane says, surprising himself with how steady his voice is. "Want—I want you to—"

He can't finish the sentence, too embarrassed even now, but Ilya seems to understand.

"Want me to fuck you?" Ilya supplies, and Shane's whole body shudders. "Want me to hold you down and take what I want? Make you scream?"

"Yes," Shane hisses. "Fuck, yes."

Ilya's answering grin is feral. "Strip," he orders, stepping back to give Shane room. "Now."

Shane scrambles to obey, fingers fumbling with buttons and zippers. He's clumsy with it, too desperate to be graceful, but Ilya watches him with rapt attention, like Shane taking off his clothes is the most fascinating thing he's ever seen.

When Shane is finally naked, Ilya circles him slowly, appraising. Shane feels exposed under that gaze, vulnerable in a way that should make him uncomfortable but instead just makes him harder.

"Beautiful," Ilya murmurs, running a hand down Shane's spine. Shane shivers. "Always so beautiful. I have been wanting this all morning, you know. Watching you panic and run away like scared little rabbit. I wanted to chase you. Pin you down. Show you that you cannot hide from me."

Shane's breath catches. "Why didn't you?"

"Because you needed to come back on your own," Ilya says simply. His hand slides lower, cupping Shane's ass possessively. "Needed to choose this. Choose me."

"I did," Shane says, turning his head to look at Ilya over his shoulder. "I chose you. I'll always choose you."

Something in Ilya's expression softens for just a moment before the heat returns. "Good," he says, then smacks Shane's ass hard enough to make him yelp. "On the bed. Hands and knees."

Shane's body moves before his brain catches up, scrambling onto the mattress and getting into position. He can feel Ilya's eyes on him, tracking every movement.

"Spread your legs wider," Ilya commands. Shane does, feeling himself flush at how exposed he is like this. "Perfect. Stay just like that."

Shane hears Ilya moving behind him, the rustle of clothing being removed. Then the bed dips as Ilya climbs on, settling between Shane's spread thighs.

"I have been thinking about this," Ilya says conversationally, like he's not currently running his hands up the backs of Shane's thighs, spreading him open. "About how you would look like this. All needy and desperate for me."

Shane makes a choked sound. "*Ilya—*"

"Shhh." Ilya's thumb presses against Shane's hole, not pushing in, just pressure. "I am not done talking. You know what I realized? In all the years we have been doing this, I have never seen you in rut. You have always hidden it from me."

"I told you why—"

"I know what you told me," Ilya interrupts. "But I think there is more to it. I think you were scared of letting me see you like this. Scared of what it would mean."

He's right, Shane realizes. It wasn't just about the danger—it was about the vulnerability. The loss of control. The fact that during rut, Shane can't hide what he feels, can't pretend this is just sex, just convenient, just two alphas blowing off steam between games.

"Maybe," Shane admits quietly.

"No maybe." Ilya leans forward, his chest pressing against Shane's back, his lips at Shane's ear. "You were scared because in rut, you cannot lie. Cannot pretend you do not feel what you feel. And what you feel—" He pauses, nips at Shane's earlobe. "—is that you want to be mine. Want me to own you. Want to submit."

Shane's whole body trembles. "I'm not—I can't—"

"Submission is not weakness," Ilya says firmly. "Is not about being less alpha. Is about trust. About choosing to give yourself to someone because you know they will take care of you."

"I don't know how," Shane confesses, voice breaking.

"Then let me show you." Ilya pulls back, and Shane hears the snap of a lube cap. "I will take care of you, Shane. Will give you everything you need. But you have to let me. Have to trust me."

"I do," Shane says immediately. "I trust you."

"Good." Two slick fingers press against Shane's entrance. "Relax. Let me in."

Shane takes a deep breath and forces his body to relax. Ilya's fingers slide in easily—they'd had sex the night before, so Shane is still a little open—and Shane moans at the stretch.

"That's it," Ilya murmurs, working his fingers deeper. "So good for me. Taking me so well."

The praise makes Shane dizzy. He pushes back against Ilya's hand, wanting more, but Ilya holds him still with a hand on his hip.

"Patience," Ilya says, but there's strain in his voice now. His rut is hitting harder, Shane can smell it, can feel it in the slight tremor of Ilya's hands. "Want to make sure you are ready."

"I'm ready," Shane pants. "Please, Ilya, I need—"

A third finger pushes in alongside the other two and Shane cries out, overwhelmed by the stretch. It's not enough to hurt but it's intense, right on that edge between pleasure and pain that makes his brain go fuzzy.

"Need what?" Ilya asks, fingers curling to press against Shane's prostate. Shane sees stars. "Need me to fuck you? Fill you up? Make you scream?"

"Yes," Shane gasps. "All of it. Everything."

Ilya pulls his fingers out and Shane whines at the loss. Then he feels the blunt press of Ilya's cock, hot and hard, against his entrance.

"Going to take such good care of you," Ilya promises, voice rough. "Going to fuck you until you cannot remember your own name. Until you cannot remember anyone but me."

He pushes in, slow but relentless, and Shane's mouth falls open on a silent scream. It's so much, Ilya is so big, and Shane's body stretches to accommodate him, that edge between pleasure and pain sharper now.

"Breathe," Ilya commands, stilling once he's fully seated. "Just breathe, sweetheart."

Shane does, gasping in air, trying to adjust. After a moment, the burn fades and all that's left is fullness, perfection, Ilya exactly where Shane needs him.

"Okay," Shane manages. "Okay, you can—"

Ilya doesn't wait for him to finish. He pulls out almost completely before slamming back in, and Shane's arms give out. He collapses onto his forearms, face pressed into the mattress, as Ilya sets a punishing pace.

"This what you needed?" Ilya growls, hands gripping Shane's hips hard enough to bruise. "To be fucked hard? To be taken?"

Shane can't form words anymore. All he can do is moan brokenly, pushing back to meet each thrust. It's overwhelming, perfect, exactly what his body has been craving.

"Answer me," Ilya demands, and one hand comes down hard on Shane's ass. The sharp sting makes Shane cry out.

"Yes!" Shane gasps. "Yes, need this, need *you*—"

"Mine," Ilya snarls, and there's something possessive, something claiming in his voice that makes Shane's entire body light up. "You are mine, Shane. Say it."

"Yours," Shane moans. "I'm yours, all yours—"

Ilya makes a satisfied sound and adjusts his angle, hitting Shane's prostate dead-on with each thrust. Shane's vision whites out, pleasure so intense it's almost painful coursing through him.

"Not going to last," Shane warns, voice wrecked. "Ilya, I'm going to—"

"Come," Ilya orders. "Come for me. Show me how good I make you feel."

Shane does, untouched, his body seizing up as he spills across the sheets below him. He's distantly aware that he's making noise—loud, desperate sounds that he'd be embarrassed about if he had any brain cells left—but he can't stop.

Ilya fucks him through it, prolonging Shane's orgasm until it borders on overstimulation. Just when Shane thinks he can't take anymore, Ilya pulls him up, back against his chest, and bites down on Shane's shoulder as he comes.

The bite sends Shane over the edge again, impossible as it seems. He comes dry this time, body shaking apart in Ilya's arms, completely overwhelmed.

They collapse together onto the mattress, Ilya's arms wrapped tight around Shane from behind. They're both panting, covered in sweat, and Shane can feel Ilya's come leaking out of him. He should probably care about the mess, but he can't bring himself to move.

"Holy fuck," Shane finally manages.

Ilya laughs breathlessly against the back of his neck. "Da. Holy fuck."

They lay there for a while, catching their breath. Shane's rut is far from over—he can already feel arousal starting to build again—but for now, he's sated. Content. Happy.

"Thank you," Shane says quietly.

"For what? For fucking you until you could not speak?" Ilya sounds amused. "You are welcome."

"For—" Shane pauses, trying to find the words. "For showing me that it doesn't have to be what I thought. That I can be... this. With you."

Ilya's arms tighten around him. "You can be anything with me," he says seriously. "Anything you need to be. I will not judge. Will not think less of you. I promise."

Shane believes him. For the first time in his adult life, he actually believes that he doesn't have to be the perfect alpha. That he can need things, want things, submit to someone without it making him weak or broken or wrong.

"I love you," Shane says quietly.

He feels Ilya still behind him. Then: "Say it again."

Shane pulls back enough to look at him over his shoulder. Ilya's expression is open, vulnerable in a way Shane rarely sees.

"I love you," Shane repeats, clearer this time. "I'm in love with you. Have been for—"

"I love you too," Ilya interrupts, pulling Shane around so they're face-to-face. His eyes are bright. "I love you so much, Shane Hollander. All of you. Even the parts you think are wrong or broken or strange. I love all of it."

Shane has to close his eyes against the sudden sting of tears. "I don't deserve you," he says.

"That is stupid thing to say," Ilya responds. "You deserve everything good. And I will spend however long it takes convincing you of that."

"Might take a while," Shane warns.

"Is okay. I am very patient. And very stubborn."

Shane laughs wetly. "Yeah, you are."

They settle back down, Shane tucked against Ilya's chest. The rut is still there, simmering under his skin, but for now it's manageable. Comfortable.

"Thank you," Shane says again. "For not letting me run. For making me stay."

"Always," Ilya promises, his hand resuming its gentle path up and down Shane's back. "I will always make you stay. You are stuck with me now, Hollander."

"Good," Shane says.

And for the first time in his life, Shane lets himself believe it.

They doze for a while, tangled together. Shane wakes up first, feeling the rut building again, stronger this time. He can feel Ilya against his back, already hard, and realizes Ilya's rut has fully hit too.

"Ilya," Shane breathes, pressing back against him.

"Mm. Awake?" Ilya's voice is rough with sleep and desire. His arm tightens around Shane's waist.

"Yeah." Shane grinds back deliberately. "Need you again."

"Already?" Ilya sounds amused, but Shane can feel him responding, his cock twitching against Shane's ass. "Greedy."

"Your fault," Shane accuses, but there's no heat in it. "You made me like this."

"And I will take responsibility," Ilya says, hand sliding down to grip Shane's hip. "Roll over. Want to see your face this time."

Shane does, turning onto his back. Ilya moves to cover him, settling between his thighs. The weight of him is perfect, grounding.

"Hi," Shane says stupidly.

"Hi," Ilya echoes, smiling. Then he kisses Shane, slow and deep, like they have all the time in the world.

Maybe they do, Shane thinks. Maybe they finally do.

When Ilya slides back into him, it's easier this time. Shane's body welcomes the intrusion, still loose from before. Ilya goes slow at first, rolling his hips in steady, measured thrusts that make Shane gasp.

"Can see you like this," Ilya murmurs, looking down at Shane with dark eyes. "Can watch you fall apart. So beautiful, Shane. So perfect."

Shane's cheeks heat. "Stop," he mumbles, but he doesn't really mean it.

"No." Ilya adjusts his angle, and Shane arches off the bed. "You need to hear it. Need to know how perfect you are. How good you take me. How much I love seeing you like this."

"Ilya," Shane whines, overwhelmed by the words as much as the physical sensations.

"What do you need?" Ilya asks. "Tell me and I will give it to you."

Shane doesn't have to think about it. "Closer," he says. "Need you closer."

Ilya understands. He drops down, pressing their chests together, eliminating any space between them. Shane wraps his arms and legs around Ilya, holding him tight.

"Like this?" Ilya asks against Shane's mouth.

"Yeah," Shane breathes. "Just like this."

They move together, slower now but no less intense. Shane can feel every inch of Ilya inside him, can feel Ilya's heartbeat against his chest, can taste Ilya's breath on his tongue.

This is what he needed, Shane realizes. Not the rough taking from before—though he'd needed that too—but this. Intimacy. Connection. Being as close to Ilya as physically possible.

"I love you," Shane says again, because he can. Because they've said it now and he doesn't have to hold it back anymore.

"I love you too," Ilya responds immediately, punctuating each word with a thrust. "Love you so much. My Shane. Mine."

"Yours," Shane agrees, and he's close, so close—

"Come for me," Ilya says. "Want to feel you."

Shane does, body clenching around Ilya as he spills between them. Ilya follows seconds later, groaning Shane's name as he comes.

They stay like that for a long time afterward, Ilya's weight pressing Shane into the mattress, neither of them willing to separate.

"We should shower," Ilya eventually says, but he makes no move to get up.

"Later," Shane mumbles. "Don't want to move."

"You will not let me move," Ilya corrects, amused.

"That too."

Ilya laughs softly and kisses Shane's temple. "Okay. Later then."

Shane hums contentedly and lets his eyes drift closed. He feels safe. Loved. Exactly where he's supposed to be.

"Shane?" Ilya says after a while.

"Mm?"

"Next time you feel your rut coming—you come straight to me. No hotel. No running. Promise me."

Shane opens his eyes to find Ilya looking at him seriously.

"I promise," Shane says. "Next time, I'll come to you."

"Good." Ilya settles back down, seemingly satisfied. "Because I like taking care of you. Like that you trust me enough to let me see you like this."

"I trust you," Shane says simply. "Even when I'm scared, I trust you."

"Then trust me now when I say you are okay," Ilya says. "We are okay. Everything else is just noise."

Shane closes his eyes again, letting Ilya's words and scent and presence wash over him. For the first time in his adult life, he lets himself truly relax during a rut. Lets himself accept that maybe he doesn't have to be what everyone told him an alpha should be.

Maybe he can just be Shane. Shane who gets clingy during rut. Shane who needs as much as he provides. Shane who trusts Ilya enough to show him all the parts he usually keeps hidden.

"Thank you," Shane murmurs against Ilya's shoulder.

"For what?"

"For showing me it could be like this. That I could be like this."

Ilya kisses his forehead. "Thank *you*. For trusting me. For staying. For being exactly who you are."

They drift off like that, wrapped around each other, the rut finally settling into something manageable. Something that doesn't feel like a curse or a burden but just another part of who Shane is.

And for the first time in his life, that feels like enough.

End Notes

Thank you for reading! I really prefer the idea of Hollanov being an Alpha/Alpha relationship bc if you want to keep the whole themes of having to hide and fear of scorn from others, a non-traditional relationship is really the only way to go.

(That being said Shane would easily agree to have Ilya bitch him, which would be a fic of its own one day.)

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