

There's no truth in the legs

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There's no truth in the legs

by [gsmaxwell](#)

Summary

Ilya had stripped down to a tank top, his curls flat on his face until he shoved them back. He was shivering uncontrollably despite the heat Pike blasted into the backseat.

“Tell me where it hurts,” Ilya’s voice was ragged. His hands were chilly as he ran them over Shane’s bare chest, under Ilya’s wool jacket.

Ilya was soaking wet; his hair dripped ice onto Shane’s face.

“Hollander—”

“There should be another blanket—”

“Just fucking drive,” Ilya snapped.

He blew into his hands, warming them as best he could before cupping Shane’s icy cheeks and turning his face toward him.

“Shane,” Ilya said, his voice cracking. “Open your eyes. Please.”

Or: Ilya just needs Shane to not die.

Missing scene from *There have been threats* between chapter 7 and 8.

Notes

As requested from Krista and Georledeedew <3

When the missing scene is as long as three chapters of the source fic, lol

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“Shane,” Ilya said, his voice cracking. “Open your eyes. Please.”

Shane looked so, so grey. His lashes, long and dark against his pallor, fluttered, and his eyes opened a sliver. The little Ilya could see was bloodshot and irritated, and in his daze seemed like he was looking through Ilya. He was wearing Ilya’s jacket but still shivering slightly.

“*Yes, my love,*” he said in Russian, feeling faint. “You are safe.”

“Is he—”

“Shut up!” Ilya barked. He ran his thumb over a swollen jaw, a cut on his cheek too cold to bleed, smeared with whatever dirt and oil had polluted the river.

“*Please speak to me,*” he begged. “*Please hold on. Please don’t die.*”

Ilya slid one hand down to press his finger along Shane’s neck, and he had to press hard to finally find a thready pulse.

“Ilya,” Shane’s voice was so very quiet. Ilya coughed out a sob before it could suffocate him.

“*Please, love, keep your eyes on me. Please.*”

But Shane closed his eyes again and relaxed his head against Ilya’s hands. The faint shivering stopped.

“Shane? *Shane!*”

Ilya, who hadn’t bothered with a seat belt, slammed into the back of the passenger seat as the van swerved.

“Fucking fuck, Pike!” Ilya cursed. “What the fuck are you doing?”

Pike had turned into the parking lot of a closed industrial building and was opening his door.

“We don’t have time,” Ilya’s voice was ragged as he knelt on the car floor, trying to hold Shane upright. “Hey, love, please—”

“Take off his pants,” Pike opened the back door, the van dinging as he went digging through the pile of crap accumulated in the back seat.

“What—“

“Take off his fucking pants, Rozanov!” Pike shouted this time. “Wet clothes, bad!”

Ilya wanted to deck him, but he scrambled to obey, peeling the wet, icy track pants off along with the one remaining shoe. Shane’s legs were mottled with bruises and off-white patches, and his toes were bluish. One foot had thick rock salt embedded in it.

The van door opened, letting in a blast of cold air. Ilya practically threw himself over Shane as if he could block it.

“Here,” Pike tossed dry sweatpants and socks.

“Shut the fucking door,” Ilya growled, but Pike had already climbed into the back seat, door shut.

“You take the bottom, I’ll take the top,” Pike said. His face pinched, but a no-nonsense tone made Ilya obey without thinking. It took far too long to dress Shane in the dry clothes, and Pike produced two fleece Disney princess blankets.

“You too, Rozanov, strip.”

“You should be *fucking driving*,” Ilya wrestled with the rest of his wet clothes as Pike wrapped the blankets around Shane’s shoulders, struggling to lay him down on the middle row of the van.

Shane didn’t move or seem to react. His lips had gone bluish, his freckles, which were fainter in the winter, stark now.

No, no, no, no...

It was a constant background wail Ilya heard in his head as he finished dressing in Pike’s sweaty gym clothes.

“Shut up,” Pike said with gritted teeth, and Ilya thought maybe the wail was actually coming from him. But Pike seemed almost to be speaking to himself. “Shut up! This is the right thing to do.”

Ilya felt as helpless and unsure as Pike sounded.

“What if he—” Ilya choked on the words.

“He fucking won’t,” Pike said. “Keep him flat. He needs blood to his head. I think.”

“You *think*?”

“It’s been a fucking while since I took first aid!” Pike shot back. “Just hold him, okay?”

But for a moment, Ilya felt afraid. One of Shane’s hands had slipped from the blanket as Pike adjusted him, pale and wrist up as it dangled in the air.

It would be cold, like hers.

“Rozanov!”

He blinked, looking at Pike. For a moment, he was twelve years old again, sitting on the bathroom floor.

“Fucking *hold him*.”

Ilya scrambled forward, wedging himself half over Shane and bracing with one knee on the ground in the narrow space between the front cab and the back seat.

“He’s going to be okay,” Pike covered them with Ilya’s wool coat.

Ilya didn’t respond. He tucked Shane’s stray hand between their chests as Pike went back to the driver’s seat and the van practically spun out as it pulled back onto the road.

“*Otche nash, izhe yesi na nebesekh...da svyatitsya imya Tvoye....*”

Ilya didn’t believe the words, but he remembered his mother reciting them.

Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name.

His voice dropped lower. “*Otche nash... izhe yesi...*”

There was more. Other lines... why couldn’t he remember?

His cross dangled, hitting Shane in the chin, and Ilya cursed when he realised his tears were falling on Shane’s grey lips.

He buried his face in the crook of Shane’s neck, hoping his breath was warm enough.

“*Gospodi, pomogi*,” he whispered, closing his eyes tight.

Lord... help.

“*Gospodi, pomogi...*” he repeated, his breath shuddering. “*Mama, pomogi...*”

“Ilya is he breathing?” Pike broke through the rattling echo.

Ilya sniffed hard. The rumble of the van made it impossible to tell if Shane’s chest was rising and falling., but Ilya could still feel the erratic pulse when he tried.

“I... I don’t know,” his voice was tight and frightened. “He has pulse.”

“Good. That’s good,” Pike’s voice was unexpectedly soothing. “Ten minutes and we’ll be there.”

“He won’t—” Ilya let out a broken sob.

“Don’t you fucking say that!” Pike sounded like he was going to reach into the back seat and smack the crap out of him. “He fucking *will*, Rozanov! *Keep* him here! For fuck’s sake, do *not* give up right now!”

Ilya took a deep breath, and then another. By the third, he had gathered himself. Pike, of all people, was right.

“Shane,” he said, his voice thick. “Shane, wake up. Shane.”

He didn’t dare shake him. Instead, he took Shane’s head between his hands again and rubbed his thumbs over his cheekbones, hoping to stimulate some kind of reaction.

“Wake up, sweetheart. Open your eyes again. I am here; I need to see that you are awake. Shane,” he kept his voice steady, commanding, reaching into the depths of his empty, exhausted chest to pull out strength he didn’t know he had.

Shane’s eyes twitched again, and his lips, still bluish, curled into a grimace.

“Yes,” Ilya coaxed, his own gaze locked into every micro-movement he could see, real or imagined. “Yes, love, just like that.”

“--mm.”

It was the faintest sound, and the pathetically thin veneer of wherewithal he had left nearly cracked at the first hint of hope.

The van lurched, and Ilya braced himself and Shane.

“Here,” Pike threw the car in park. “Ilya, we’re here.”

“What?” Ilya looked up, his vision blurry, and saw the bright lights of a building. That had not been ten minutes. He was sure.

Pike was suddenly at the side door, the cold air blasting in again. This time Shane moaned in protest.

“Help me,” Pike ordered, and they lifted Shane between them. Despite being shorter, Pike took most of Shane’s weight as they stumbled through the emergency room doors.

They must have looked dramatic, because it only took a few minutes for the triage nurses to bring out a wheelchair.

“Stay with him,” Pike said firmly, pushing Ilya in the direction they were carting Shane off into. “I have to go park the car.”

Ilya nodded numbly and followed to where they were bringing Shane through swinging doors.

“Whoa, *attendez là, vous pouvez pas entrer ici*—” a short nurse blocked him for a moment, then took in his wet, shoeless appearance. “Actually, come on.”

They stopped in a hallway and lifted Shane’s still limp body onto a gurney lining the wall. The nurse held Ilya’s arm tightly, though he wasn’t sure if she was keeping him from getting too close or steadying him.

The Disney princess blanket was pushed aside, and someone neatly cut the Voyageur t-shirt from his chest. For the first time, Ilya tried to pull away in protest.

“No, he is cold!”

“What happened?” The nurse held him fast in place.

“He was in the river. I swam and— I think he was hurt before, too. Please, is he okay?”

The two nurses (or doctors? Ilya wasn’t sure) were speaking rapid-fire French, checking Shane over, touching his face and forehead, and pulling out tools or equipment or something.

“How long was he in the water?”

Someone called out, and the nurses started moving Shane’s gurney to a room. Ilya went to follow, but the grip on him kept him by the doorway. There were more voices, more French, as they moved Shane around like a slab of meat.

“Sir, how long was he in the water?” the nurse repeated, louder.

“Uh, I don’t know,” Ilya couldn’t tear his eyes away as they attached something to Shane’s chest. “I saw... They threw him in like he was—” *garbage*, the word stuck in his chest. “I had to wait for them to be not looking. Then... It was hard to find... and he was heavy.” Ilya sucked in air, and it felt like it was being forced up a straw. “Five, ten minutes?”

“Was he breathing when you brought him out? Conscious or speaking?”

“Yes,” Ilya blinked to clear his vision. “Yes, he was... arguing. With me.”

“That’s great news,” she said. “You said he was injured before. Do you know how?”

“No,” Ilya shook his head, finally unable to look as they cut away the sweatpants. He looked down at the nurse. She was short, coming only to his shoulder. “I don’t know anything.”

“What’s his name?”

“Shane Hollander,” Ilya said. Then, his knees gave out on him. She caught him as he slumped and propped him up against the wall. A few moments later, he was being guided into a chair in the hallway. He could still hear sounds from the room, all in French, not that he was capable of deciphering complex English right now. He rested his head in his hands and tried to breathe as the nurse rubbed a hand between his shoulders.

“You were in the river too?” She picked up Ilya’s wrist and pressed her fingers on it. Ilya nodded numbly. She turned his hands back over, and Ilya noticed his hands were red and raw against the knuckles. “The team’s working on him now. Let’s get you looked at too, okay?”

Ilya didn’t respond and he didn’t know how long he sat there. Someone brought socks and a pair of slippers. There was a blanket over him. They asked his name and other questions he answered automatically. He stared at his feet for most of it, trying to hold on to the noise in the room. The beeping was Shane’s heart. The lower voices of the nurses and doctors were unpanicked.

A set of sneakers appeared in his vision and he looked up to see Pike standing in front of him.

“Rozanov,” Pike crouched down, putting a hand on Ilya’s shoulder. “How are you doing?”

“I don’t care about me,” Ilya glared at Pike. “How is Shane?”

Pike glanced into the room behind Ilya, his lips in a tight line. “I don’t know. My French is mostly limited to hockey talk and ped appointments.”

“Useless,” Ilya bit out, but there was no fire behind it.

Someone came out of Shane’s room, and both Pike and Ilya stood.

“*On va l’emmener... examens...*,” The woman said briskly, her accent thick; Ilya assumed she was a doctor from her white jacket. “*Après... soins intensifs... température lente... saignements internes possibles... commotion...*”

Ilya tried to guess at some of the terms, but couldn’t make sense of anything. He glanced at Pike.

“He’s still too cold. They’re going to take him for some tests then the ICU,” Pike said quickly. “They’re thinking there is some internal bleeding or concussion.” Then, Pike asked Ilya’s next silent question. “Can we go with him?”

The doctor shook her head, and switched to English. “Not until he is admitted upstairs. For now, Mr. Rozanov should be looked at.” She glanced at Ilya, who started at the sound of his name.

“I am fine,” he said.

“Still, let our staff check you over. Hypothermia isn’t something to be taken lightly.”

There was a flurry of motion as the gurney rolled out of the room. He didn't realise he was clutching Pike's arm until Pike put his hand over Ilya's. At first, Ilya couldn't even tell Shane was on it because there was a voluminous blanket cocooning him. But then he saw his stupid hair poking out. His eyes were closed and he looked more grey against the white bedsheets.

"He looks—"

"Don't say it," Pike said sharply.

Pike stayed with Ilya as someone came over to check his temperature again, check his pupils and pulse, asking him the same stupid questions. Eventually, they deemed him stable, apart from a prescription for some antibiotics because of the river water and some bandages on cuts he didn't realise he had. They found themselves sitting in the family room on the ICU floor, waiting for news.

The room was quiet with dimmed lights the hummed faintly. A muted television with captions was hooked into a corner. Ilya found himself lying on one of the couches. It was as hard as a rock and his feet dangled off the end, but every muscle in his body ached like he had been hit by a truck.

He was still wearing Pike's old gym clothes, the sleeves and pants a couple inches too short, and the hospital slippers but he didn't care.

He could hear Pike's voice in and out on the phone on the other side of the room, but he didn't care to listen. Finally, he hung up and sighed heavily.

"I called his parents. They'll be on the first flight back from Mexico."

Ilya felt an irrational spike of anger at the thought of how fucking easy this would have been if he had been able to talk to someone like Pike when Shane first went missing. How much time and shit would have been avoided if he and Shane were...

Friends? Lovers? Anything but fucking rivals?

He pressed the heel of his hands into his eyes.

"So," Pike said carefully. "Just to be absolutely clear. You two are... dating?"

Ilya didn't open his eyes. "No."

"Ah. So, the whole... dick-sucking, river-diving, Terminator energy you've been giving off is because..."

"We are fucking. That is all."

There was a long silence. The ventilation system kicked in with a soft rush of air.

"How long?"

Ilya uncovered his face and looked over, trying to gauge just how much damage control he had to do.

“Does it matter?” Ilya asked. Pike’s face was lined with exhaustion, confusion and worry, but he didn’t look angry, exactly.

“Kind of,” Pike gave him a weathered look. “I mean, like, maybe, if you were both drunk and, I dunno, Shane doesn’t really pick up a lot of girls, so I can see, maybe in a moment of weakness or something...”

Ilya snorted, the sound rough in his throat. “Have you thought about this much? What it would take for you to fuck a man?”

“No!” Pike said a little too quickly, then immediately grimaced. “I’m not homophobic.”

“Yeah, sure.”

Pike was quiet for a long time.

Ilya found himself struggling to stay awake. His eyes closed despite himself. Somewhere he could hear the squeak of sneakers and voices as the medical staff went about their work. He tried to force himself to stay awake, but he was fighting a losing battle. The effort it was taking to keep from slipping under was burning through the last scraps of energy he had left.

He would never forgive himself if he was sleeping while Shane died.

“It’s just...” Pike said finally.

Ilya’s eyes forced his eyes open and he took a sharp, clarifying breath. It felt like an hour had passed, but Ilya was pretty sure it was just seconds.

“Tonight was a fucking lot to go through for a guy you’re just sleeping with.”

Ilya dragged his body upright, every joint, every bruise muscle protesting.

“I am a nice guy,” he said hollowly.

“Nice guys call the police and then go back to Boston with their teams,” Pike said.

“Psychopaths track down their obsession like a fucking bloodhound. Which one are you?”

He gave it some thought. “Maybe... in between.”

“That’s something,” Pike muttered to himself. “And how does Shane feel about you?”

“Besides the fact he says he wants to blow me?”

“Rozanov, I’m being fucking serious!”

Ilya knew that he shouldn’t be flippant. “I don’t know, okay? It is true, we fuck. Have been for a while. But that is all. We have never discussed it more.”

“Can you please define ‘a while’?” Pike asked with gritted teeth.

Ilya was tired of lying. “Rookie season.”

“*Rookie season?*”

“Please, say it louder,” Ilya hissed. “Coma patients have not heard you yet.”

But Pike just looked stunned. Ilya could practically see him replaying the last five years of Shane’s time on the Voyageurs. Ilya knew that Pike was a year older than Shane and the two had been inseparable since Shane had been drafted. He waited for Pike to get angry.

Pike finally seemed to settle, shaking his head. “If you had told me Shane was gay, I would have been surprised, but, you know, not *that* surprised. He barely hooked up, but I always thought it was because he is just kind of awkward. But with *you*? He fucking hates you.”

“Yes,” Ilya agreed, a bitterness seeping into his voice. “He hates me so much he buys an apartment in a dangerous neighbourhood to fuck so no one knows.”

“Rozanov—”

“I am going to get coffee,” Ilya stood abruptly and left the room.

A walk and a friendly conversation later, and Ilya found himself in a small consultation room. He had asked the nurse at the station for somewhere he could rest until Shane came back, and she had taken pity on him, promising it would be quiet here for a few hours.

The chairs were even more uncomfortable, and the hum from the lights louder. There were posters in French showing diagrams of breathing tubes, anatomy, and other things he was sure were meant to explain complex procedures to shocked, traumatized loved ones.

The coffee was hot but smelled burned, and sat untouched in his hands.

He couldn’t make himself drink it. His hands were still raw from the river, and the skin was tight and split across his knuckles. The dark liquid inside trembled slightly as he held the paper cup.

Shane was alive.

They had said so. He was with people who could help him in the ways Ilya couldn’t.

Internal bleeding and a concussion. Those were serious, but Ilya knew they were fixable. But they also said he wasn’t warming up.

Ilya hunched over the table, his hands shaking so bad the coffee spilled over the rim. He barely noticed the burn on his sensitive skin, but shoved the cup away, knocking the rest of it across the table.

He pressed his hands into his eyes again, hard enough to see stars as he tried to breathe deep and slow. It didn’t help.

It felt like something was squeezing his throat without warning. He tried to swallow it down, like he had been for the last few hours. He had kept it all at bay because he'd had one fucking goal.

Find Shane.

Now, Shane was found. And he still might die.

The quiet of the room was pressing in on him, heavy and suffocating.

"F-fuck," he muttered under his breath.

His body felt locked in a rigor, his jaw so tight he could almost feel his teeth cracking. He tried to take a breath, but it hitched, hitting wrong in his chest as it came in too hard and too fast.

Something cracked, and then everything broke.

His head rested on his forearms as he collapsed forward. His breath was ragged, his lungs like bellows tearing him up from the inside.

Everything washed over him.

Hiding, like a coward, as those men threw Shane away like trash.

Waiting, frozen, as they walked away.

Not seeing Shane at all in the dark water, certain that he would never see him again at all.

In the water, feeling blind and numb, ready to die because he didn't know how he could live anymore.

He sucked in a breath, almost tasting the acidic pollution in the river.

The weight of Shane as he pulled him out, somehow climbing that rigging and knowing that any missed handheld would be death all over again.

And then Shane, still and grey. Like she had been.

A harsh sound tore through him, halfway between a cry and laugh. He clamped his hand over his mouth, but it didn't work.

Breathing through his nose felt suffocating, and another breath escaped his hand, then another. His shoulders started to shake, and he curled into his chest even more.

"Idiot," he whispered hoarsely to himself. "Stupid fucking idiot."

He wasn't sure if he meant it for Shane or himself.

He was crying, hot and humiliating, the sleeves of Pike's sweater turning dark grey as the tears soaked through. He tried wiping them away, but they didn't stop. They kept coming

until he finally realised there was nothing he could do, and pressed his face in his elbows.

He didn't cry like this.

Only cowards and weak men cry, he heard his father yelling at him when Ilya sobbed as they took his mother away.

The sobbing was violent now, his chest heaving as if his body was done taking orders from him. He tried his best to muffle the sounds in the safe hollow of his arms on the table, riding out the uncontrollable tremors that wrecked him.

It felt like it was never going to stop.

But he was exhausted, and even his rebellious body couldn't punish him forever. Eventually the flood of emotions and stress and pain that broke through died down to a steady stream of aching grief.

He didn't know how long he sat there, his head resting on his hands with the room smelling like coffee. But finally, he sat up, his eyes feeling swollen and gritty.

There was a box of tissues nearby and he methodically cleaned up the table, throwing the trash out as the door to the room opened.

Ilya's head snapped up as Pike stood uncomfortably in the doorway.

He scrubbed his hands over his face, humiliated. "What?"

"You look like shit." Pike's eyes flicked from the wet sleeves and Ilya's face.

Ilya glared, and Pike held his hands up and surrendered. He looked looser, almost bouncing on his heels.

"They're bringing Shane up now."

Ilya knocked the chair over as he stood.

"He is okay?"

"The bleeding wasn't as bad as they thought, and his CT looks good." Pike and Ilya didn't waste time, and Pike led Ilya down the hall. "He's warming up too. They said something about shock or after drop syndrome or something. But it's going in the right direction."

Ilya's step faltered as his knees almost gave out in relief. He steeled himself though, not wanting Pike to see more weakness.

"He looks fucking awful still," Pike warned him. "Don't freak out."

"I am fine."

"You've said that, like, twenty times. I don't think I believe you."

They reached a door, but before Ilya could go in, Pike grabbed his arm. “I’m serious, Rozanov. Brace yourself.”

He shook off Pike’s hand and stepped in the room.

For a moment, Ilya didn’t know what he was looking at. There was the same voluminous blanket, puffed up on the bed like a cocoon. He could hear the whurring sound from a machine next to the bed, pushing air through it through plastic tubing, making the blanket rise and fall.

Shane looked impossibly small under it. His hair was damp and pushed back from his forehead. Ilya could see wires and adhesive pads stuck on the skin poking out attached to a monitor that was thankfully beeping rhythmically. An IV ran out as well, adding to the web of wires and equipment that suddenly made Ilya nervous to approach.

But he still wasn’t moving, and Ilya’s chest tightened painfully.

A nurse was adjusting something by the bed. “Only one at a time, gentlemen,” she said.

There was a moment of hesitation, then Pike nudged Ilya forward. “Go. Jackie just dropped the girls off, so she’s going to be here soon.”

Ilya stepped into the room slowly.

Up close, Shane looked worse, but also somehow better.

His skin had more colour than before but was still too pale, bruises now deep under his eyes and jaw, the cut on his cheek held with butterfly stitches. His lips weren’t blue anymore, though they were dry and slightly parted. Ilya could see his breathing was shallow, but present and steady.

He stopped by the bed and glanced at the nurse. “You can touch him, just don’t disturb the equipment,” she said kindly.

His hands felt useless at his sides, but he eventually lifted one to brush Shane’s unblemished cheek with a feather light touch.

He was warm.

Relief punched through him so hard he had to grab the bedrail to steady himself. “You should sit,” the nurse gestured to the nearby chair. “Stay for a while. I’ll be back to check something in a while, okay?”

Ilya nodded and pulled the chair closer as she left. He reached out again, touching the spot on his cheek more deliberately.

“Ty menya tak napugál, rodnóy” Ilya rubbed his thumb across the smooth, dry skin. *You scared me so much.*

Shane's heartbeat was steady and slow. Ilya found a space on the bed free of the tangle of wires and rested his head.

"Ya dumal, chto smogu eto vyderzhat," he whispered and he really had thought he could endure it. Enduring, whatever this thing was that brought him back to Hollander's side like a magnet, had felt like the only thing keeping him going. But now...

"Ya tak bolshe ne mogu."

I can't go on like this anymore.

Ilya stayed like that, his back cramping but unwilling to move now that he had said the words. Once he did, then the only next step was to act on them, and he wasn't ready.

At least an hour must have passed before the decision was thankfully taken out of his hands.

A new shift of the staff politely kicked him out. He stood in the hallway, dazed, now that he suddenly had to go live the rest of his life.

He found his way back to the first waiting area he and Pike had been in, but paused when he turned the corner.

Pike was there, with his wife. Neither had noticed because Pike had his head buried in her neck, crying.

Ilya turned away, his body feeling heated with shame. Instead, he found the coffee cart again and got two cups and a pocket full of sugar packets, this time making more noise on his approach.

By the time he turned the corner, they were just sitting next to each other, though they were holding hands.

"Here," Ilya handed each of them a paper cup. If Pike's wife was shocked to see Ilya Rozanov dressed in her husband's Voyageur workout gear in a Montreal hospital, she didn't show it. "They are doing something, but they said you can go see him soon." Ilya stood there awkwardly.

"Thanks," Pike sniffed and fiddled with the coffee. "Oh, um, here are the keys to the van," he pulled them out. "Your clothes and phone and stuff are in there."

Ilya grunted. His rental car was also still parked downstairs, though he was sure it was ticketed by now. He gratefully took the key, and left.

* * *

He decided to go back to his hotel as his check out was in a few hours. It felt like another person, showering, dressing in clean clothes, eating toast in the lobby. By the time he checked his phone, there was already an alert for pre-flight check-in.

This was it. Back to Boston for barely more than a day, then back to Russia. Like nothing had happened.

Fuck. it.

What was twelve more hours?

He opened the app and cancelled the flight.

By the time he made it back to the hospital, the Hollanders had arrived.

Shane's mother was inside the room, and Pike was talking quietly with a man Ilya could only assume was *the* David Hollander he had been desperately trying to reach twenty-four hours ago. Ilya hoped the man hadn't checked his voicemail yet. He paused, not sure if he should intrude.

Pike waved him over.

"I thought you had a flight."

"Delayed," Ilya lied. "I thought... I wanted to see if he had woken up."

He saw the way Mr. Hollander's eyes moved over Ilya, lingering on his cold-burnt hands and exhaustion he probably wasn't hiding well.

Pike shook his head. "In and out. They said that's better than nothing. Nothing coherent yet, though. Uh, Mr. Hollander, this is Rozanov. Ilya Roza—"

But the last of the unnecessary introduction died in Pike's mouth as the man stepped forward and pulled Ilya into a firm embrace.

"Hayden told me what you did," Mr. Hollander's voice was rough. "Thank you."

Ilya's hands dangled uselessly at his sides. He glanced at Pike for help, but the man just stepped back.

"It was..." Ilya didn't know what to say. 'You're welcome' felt inappropriate. 'No problem', way too casual. 'I would die for you son because I love him', now that would probably give the man a heart attack.

Mr. Hollander pulled away but kept his hand firmly on Ilya's shoulder. "You've been public enemy number one for years now." His eyes were bright with moisture. "I can't say I ever expected you to save my son's life."

"Yes, it is confusing," Ilya tried to deflect.

“How are you doing? You were in the river too, are you hurt?”

That caught Ilya even more off guard.

“Ah, no, not really. Just some bruises, cuts.” He shrugged. “Is nothing.”

Before Mr. Hollander could say more, Shane’s mother stepped out of the room, her eyes red from crying. Ilya froze when they locked on him. He took a step back as she seemed to rush at him, and then he was in yet another confusing, almost painfully tight hug.

“I can’t—” she seemed to struggle to speak, so she just squeezed harder. Ilya felt a lump in his throat. This was dangerous – one more hug and he might have to leave before embarrassing himself.

He patted her on the back, and she finally released him. “I am glad he is waking up.”

She wiped her eyes quickly. “Yes, they’re still worried about full functionality in his hands, but they said you pulled him out so quickly—” she looked overwhelmed again and glanced away to compose herself.

Ilya swallowed hard until he felt safe to talk again. “He is strong. He will be okay.”

She took a shaky breath and turned to her husband. “Your turn, sweetheart.”

As Mr. Hollander left, and Ilya's phone started to ring. He cursed under his breath as he saw Morozov’s number flash on the screen. Turner had been the junior defense coach Ilya had bullied into letting him stay longer in Montreal; Morozov was his boss, who had always been a thorn in Ilya’s side. As the only Russian-speaking coach on the Bears’s team, he was difficult to work with. “Sorry, I must take this.”

He went to a corner of the larger waiting room as Pike and Mrs. Hollander talked in lower voices.

“What?” he snapped in Russian.

“Don’t start with me, Rozanov. Where the fuck are you?”

“I couldn’t leave right now,” Ilya crossed his arms and tried to keep his voice low. “Tonight. I rebooked.”

“Do you realize what you’re risking?, ” he could hear the venom in Morozov’s voice. Ilya suspected he was at home because he reserved his tone for places where none of the other coach staff or management could hear him. Even non-Russian speakers could tell he was nasty. *“Your career? Your visa? Everything we’ve built over years? And all for what? A woman? What would your father say?”*

“I don’t care,” Ilya hissed. “I will be in Sochi in time. It has nothing to do with my contract with the Bears, so you can fuck off.”

“Oh, is that what you think?” Morozov laughed sharply. “Who do you think advocated for your captaincy on the Olympic roster? That fought for you to be on the team in the first place? LeClaire doesn’t want to risk injuries in a season when the Bears are so close to making the playoffs. You owe me everything.”

“Your dick doesn’t reach that far,” Ilya snorted, but he had to grip himself tighter.

“My dick reaches so far you’d choke on it from Sochi,” Morozov snarled. “You have two choices: you get on that plane now, or you watch everything you have worked for burn while I remind everyone how little you respect your responsibilities.”

“You don’t have that power.”

“Care to test me, boy?” Morozov was practically spitting. “You’ll be playing in the KHL until someone tires of your antics and takes you out for good. Then what? You’ll be a washed-up has-been with a coke-addled family and crazy father stuck in Russia.”

“Shevchenko—”

“If you think your fucking peasant agent will care about you if you aren’t earning your worth, or even has any power in Russia, you’ve even more of a child than I thought.”

“I already said I would fucking be there. What the fuck more do you want?”

“You’re weak, Rozanov, and I’m the only thing holding your little world together, even with your efforts to fight it. One more embarrassment for a woman, and you’re finished. No one will fight for you.”

Ilya rarely heard Morozov lose his cool like this. Something was going, and Ilya felt a stab of fear. He backed down.

“Yes, okay? Yes, I’m sorry. I will be there.”

There was a pause over the line. *“Not a fucking toe out of line, Rozanov.”*

Ilya closed his eyes. “Yes.”

Morozov hung up. Ilya rested the phone against his forehead for a moment to gather his composure. When he looked up, Mrs. Hollander and Pike were looking at him with a concerned look.

He straightened his shoulders and walked over. “It was the Bear’s management team. I have already stayed too long, they are worried about my health insurance. I—” his voice cracked. “I have to go.”

“Go? No, Rozanov. Shane hasn’t even woken up fully yet. The police will be here soon, they can talk to your management,” her voice was firm as she looked at him with genuine concern.

“Thank you,” he cut her off quickly. All the more reason to get out quickly before he had to explain anything to the police. “Please, tell Shane I hope he gets better soon.”

He left quickly after that before he had another breakdown.

The drive to the airport was uneventful, and he dropped the car off at the rental agency without issue. He moved mechanically, going through check in and security even though he was hours early. He found a bar near a quiet part of the terminal and claimed an isolated spot in a corner.

He couldn’t muster up a smile for the waitress, but she seemed used to the exhausted funk he was in. He kept his head down as he ordered shot after shot.

He closed his eyes and let the alcohol numb him. The dull burn was a small and welcome pain. It was a feeling he didn’t have to justify or apologize for. He must look so bedraggled and out of place, that no one dared approach him. He was grateful. The last thing he needed was for a fan to notice that the Ilya Rozanov was getting wasted before noon at an airport in Montreal.

A few more shots and his hands started to tremble. He let his head rest against the wall behind him. The images of Shane in the river, Morozov’s threats, and even the kindness of the Hollanders blur and fade away.

Tomorrow he would be back in Russia, dealing with his brother, his father, and the weighty expectations the team there would put on him. But, right now, all he had to do was sit here, and not feel anything.

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