

When the canary sings

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When the canary sings

by [gsmaxwell](#)

Summary

“Promise me one thing, okay?”

“Anything,” Ilya replied, squeezed reassuringly.

“Don’t beat yourself up over these things, okay? It’s not your job to fix it.”

Ilya wanted to argue. Of course it was his job to fix it. It was what he did. It was what he was good at. That was what he was good for.

Or: Ilya visits Shane, and they're both still going through it.

Companion piece to *There have been threats* and *If you're afraid of wolves*. June 2014.

Notes

Definitely read "There have been threats" and "If you're afraid of wolves" before this, or it's not going to make a lot of sense!

I couldn't leave my boys alone apparently.

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

June 2014, en route to Hollanov Penthouse, Boston

Ilya tapped the wheel of his car, impatient for the cars ahead to start moving. A cooler sat on the leather passenger seat with homemade food from David, and the air conditioning was blasting for Mishka, who was conked out in the back, safe in his doggy seatbelt bed after the six-hour drive, which was still more convenient than taking the puppy on a plane.

He had been in the process of closing on a condo in Ottawa, deeming a high-end building with 24-hour security safer than a house in the suburbs like most of his teammates, when a Boston publication begged him for an interview and photoshoot. It was an appealing escape from Ottawa for the weekend.

It was even better when he factored in spending the weekend with his fiancé, who was already in training camp for the summer.

But just because he'd brought Shane's comfort foods for dinner didn't stop him from getting a sneaky McDonald's fix for himself.

He finished off the fries and nuggets, sneaking one (only one!) to Mishka.

Finally, he got to the building, driving to his spot on instinct and parking when he saw Shane's car wasn't there. It wasn't unusual for the Bears' practice to go long, but he quickly checked the tracking app and saw Shane was still at the arena. He gave Mishka a short walk on the grass, then brought all his stuff upstairs.

Shane had made himself at home in Ilya's penthouse in a way that made Ilya's chest warm. He was selling his Montreal place, and a moving company had already brought down boxes upon boxes of his personal belongings. Shane had already unpacked some boxes, English books now mixed in with Ilya's on the shelves. He saw Shane's Rookie of the Year award there as well.

Other things were stacked neatly around the penthouse: cushions and blankets that clashed, photos of Shane's parents waiting to be hung up. He glanced in the bedroom and saw more boxes of clothes half-unpacked. The second bedroom, turned into a workout room, had yoga mats and more weights piled in there.

The corner where Ilya usually put Mishka's travel kennel now had a permanent one with a new bed and toys. Ilya felt a lump in his throat.

He brought Mishka over and filled the water dish, introducing him to all the things his second daddy had bought for him when he heard the door open.

"You parked in my spot!" Shane called out, but Ilya knew he wasn't that upset. He shut Mishka in the play area with a toy and turned around as he saw his boyfriend – *fiancé* – leaning on the wall across the living room, a heated expression on his face.

Ilya let his eyes roam – a tank top showed off where Shane was bulking up, thanks to working out with Price, and loose shorts did nothing to contain his thick, powerful thighs.

He finally met Shane's eyes, which had been doing their own appreciative survey.

Three weeks had somehow become far too long.

"I brought dinner," Ilya turned to face him, placing his thumbs in his waistband, watching with a smirk as Shane swallowed visibly while his eyes locked onto Ilya's hips. "Do you want to eat first or..." he tilted his head towards the bedroom, and Shane's jaw tightened.

"You're so fucking—" Shane couldn't finish his sentence as Ilya made his way around the room, a lion closing in on his prey. Ilya didn't even have to touch him, just corner him against the kitchen island as Shane's eyelashes fluttered across his cheeks.

He slid his hands up Shane's sides, pushing his tank top out of the way to expose Shane's toned stomach.

He pressed their hips together, feeling Shane already half hard against him. "So fucking what? Extraordinary? Perfect? *Tvoy lyubímyy*?"

Shane's eyebrows knit together. "*Lyubímyy*? That's not love, is it?"

"Close." Ilya felt something inside him tighten sharply. "*Lyubóv* means love. *Lyubímyy* is... favourite? But more."

"*Tvoy lyubímyy*," Shane repeated, and Ilya's hands gripped harder.

"*Da, ty moy*," Ilya said and kissed him.

Shane's arms were around him, gripping the back of his head, his shirt. Ilya's hands slid to grab his ass, the hours spent in traffic burning away with each slick, wet slide of Shane's tongue on his. Everything fell away as arousal overtook him, demanding more skin, more touch, more contact, more, more.

It took a few moments for Ilya to realize the eager, hot grip had gone still.

At first, Ilya thought Shane was teasing him. Maybe he was about to bring up the stupid tally, trying to one-up Ilya like he always did.

The kissing became uneven, and Shane turned his head, breaking the kiss and breathing heavily.

He was panting erratically. Too erratically.

For a split second, Ilya thought Shane was going to faint.

"Shane," Ilya moved from his ass to his side again, putting space, as Shane swallowed hard, his gaze distant and panicked. "Shane, what is it?"

Shane shook his head, and stepped sideways, holding the counter. Ilya hovered close as Shane made it to the sink and violently threw up.

“Shane,” Ilya pleaded, repeating Shane’s name as if saying it enough was going to fix whatever the hell was going on. “Are you okay? Are you sick? What has happened?”

Shane just groaned, lowering his forehead to his forearms resting on the sink. Ilya rubbed his back, trying to chase out whatever was wrecking Shane’s body.

It took an agonizingly long amount of time for Shane to get his shuddering breathing under control. Mishka was barking, but Ilya couldn’t focus on that. Everything in him was oriented to Shane.

Finally, Shane straightened. He spat in the sink, reaching for a glass. Ilya intercepted, filling it with water that Shane swilled and spat back out.

Ilya turned on the sink, rinsing down the mess as Shane’s hollowed body seemed to fill with awareness again.

“Sorry,” he said, his voice slightly raspy. “That was... sudden.”

“Are you sick?” Ilya placed a hand on his shoulder, not feeling any heat that would point to a fever. “Dehydrated?”

Shane shook his head. “No. It was, uh,” he took a gulping breath and looked at Ilya, a flash of guilt in his eyes. “You didn’t... grab food on the road did you?”

“Yes,” Ilya said, confused. “It was a long drive.”

“McDonald’s, or, like fast food or something?”

Ilya nodded, unsure what Shane was getting at. “I know you hate it, so I ate before coming. I brought better food,” he waved to the cooler on the table.

Shane nodded and rubbed the space between his eyebrows. Ilya couldn’t help it; he rubbed his hands on Shane’s shoulders and neck, trying to banish the headache before it started.

“Why?”

Shane opened his eyes, tense and apprehensive.

“Uh... It was right before they brought me out of the warehouse. I was hungry and, I guess the guy thought he was, like, giving me a last meal or something. But it was stale fries, probably from the bottom of his car,” Shane looked like he was going to be sick again, and Ilya leaned closer in case he needed support to lean over the sink again. “Pretty sure they were McDonald’s.”

Ilya felt like it was his turn to vomit, his stomach churning in anger and guilt.

“Anyway,” Shane took a deep breath, waved his hand as if he were dismissing the devastating words from the air. “Just caught me off guard.”

Mishka was barking still. Shane looked at Ilya, his eyes softening. “Go see what’s wrong with the dog, okay. I’m going to... lie down.”

There was a vacuum of silence as Shane left the kitchen, heading to the bedroom still rubbing his temples.

Ilya walked to the dog playpen and picked up Mishka, who was rapidly getting too big to carry easily.

The dog whined and licked Ilya's chin, only squirming a little as Ilya scratched behind his ears as his heart calmed.

One second, things were fine and the next –

The next he had done something to remind Shane of the worst day of his life.

It felt like no matter how carefully he tried to love him, he still found ways to hurt him.

Mishka whined. Ilya blinked and patted the dog again. He put him back in the play area and went to the bedroom. The lights were off, and Shane was lying on his back, the blackout curtains closed and a dark cloth over his eyes.

He must have sensed Ilya, because he lifted one side and sighed. “Sorry, I just have to... like, lie here for a bit.”

“Of course,” Ilya hated that Shane was apologizing and wanted to climb in next to him and hold him. But first, he went into the en suite bathroom and brushed his teeth as hard as he could stand. He gargled a few times until his throat felt stripped raw with menthol, and then went back.

Shane was still lying in the darkened room, but he started to sit up.

“Stay,” Ilya scolded gently and laid down beside him, his head propped up on his hand.

He watched as Shane set the cloth aside, and turned so they were facing each other. The panicked look was gone, replaced by a fond and slightly exacerbad furrow.

“It wasn’t your fault.”

Ilya took Shane’s hand and kissed his knuckles, feeling the warm metal of Shane’s ring under his lips. Shane glared harder.

“Stop it, I can hear your guilty conscience from here.”

“No,” Ilya lied. “I am not.”

“Rozanov,” Shane rolled his eyes. “You should never play poker. I can see everything you’re thinking all over your face.”

Ilya scowled. “No.”

“Yes.”

“No.” Ilya turned to press his face into Shane’s neck, hating that this stupid, perfect man could somehow see everything he was trying to hide. “Fuck you.”

“That’s my line.” Shane carded his fingers through Ilya’s hair for a moment. They were quiet for a while, even the squeaks from Mishka’s toys in the living room not lifting the heaviness that had settled over them.

Finally, Ilya breathed in Shane’s scent – sweat, faint musk from the protective gear, the sickly lemon scent from the soap in the Bear’s locker room – and sat up, leaning over Shane. The dark room was casting long shadows, but the light caught Shane’s eyes, making the concern in them brighter.

“You should not be taking care of me,” Ilya said, his voice feeling thick. “It should be me.”

“I’m pretty sure we both take care of each other at the same time,” Shane said. Ilya couldn’t stop himself from kissing Shane like this, with his heart so bare it felt like it was bleeding. He kissed his jaw, down his neck until Shane was squirming.

“I will never eat McDonald’s again,” he said against Shane’s collarbone.

Shane snorted. “Well, that’s a bit dramatic.”

“It is not!” Ilya insisted, settling down on Shane’s chest, grounding himself on the heat radiating from him. “You hate McDonald’s. You tell me it is garbage all the time!”

“It is,” Shane fought back. “But you like it for some reason, so you shouldn’t let me stop you from having it.”

“I don’t *like* it that much,” Ilya said darkly. “Not if it is going to cause you pain.”

Shane raised an eyebrow. “I know you didn’t mean it.”

Ilya doubled down, his voice intense. “Now I know that every time I eat there it will remind you of– of *that*. It will also remind me of *this*. So, never again.”

Shane sighed and dragged a hand down his face.

“What?” Ilya kissed his nipple through his shirt. “This is simple. It is a bad thing, so I will stop doing it.”

“That’s not how it works.”

“It is *exactly* how it works.”

Shane gave him a long, tired look. “This is exactly the kind of conversation I’m going to have to bring up in therapy.”

Ilya felt his heart skip a beat, a bolt of irrational fear at the mention of the word. “What? Why?”

Shane shifted so he was sitting up more, Ilya still lying over his stomach and lap, and they could fully face each other.

“Because that’s what I’m supposed to talk about,” he held the back of Ilya’s neck firmly, like he was afraid Ilya was going to leave. “Triggers. Things that... set off the memories.”

“Well, you can tell him that we fixed this one.”

“I’m not supposed to fix them.” Shane’s thumb ran under Ilya’s jaw, which he realized was very tense. “The goal isn’t to just get rid of them all.”

Ilya scowled. He was glad Shane was getting help, finally, and by all accounts it had been helping. Shane had said he was sleeping better, that there were fewer... episodes. But, he had thought it was because that’s what the therapy was doing. *Fixing things*.

“That sounds very stupid,” Ilya said before he could stop himself.

Shane huffed a laugh. “Yeah, I kind of thought so too. At first.”

“You need a new therapist.”

The hand on Ilya’s neck tightened like a warning. “It makes sense, Ilya. I’m never going to be able to avoid things like *McDonald’s* for the rest of my life.”

Ilya wondered how much money and a smear campaign from a professional hockey superstar it would take to shut down the entire corporation. “I will punch that stupid clown in the face.”

“And then what?” Shane said. “Warehouses? Rivers? Being in a fucking parking lot? There’s always going to be something, and eventually I’m just hiding. From everything.”

Well. When he put it like that.

“I don’t like it.”

“Trust me, it’s no picnic for me either,” Shane sighed. “Instead of getting rid of them, I’m supposed to be learning how to... cope. I have to just notice what my dumbass brain does, then I remind myself that I’m okay. And, eventually, it’s supposed to get better.”

Ilya sat with that for a moment, mulling it over.

“I still think removing McDonald’s is a good idea,” he said finally.

Shane pinched his ear. “You’re unbelievable.”

“I am logical,” Ilya frowned.

“No, you’re not,” he tugged Ilya’s head closer to his, but Ilya resisted before their lips could meet. “You’re in protective boyfriend mode.”

“Protective *fiance* mode.”

“Protective husband mode, soon.” That word terrified Ilya as much as it excited him.

Their faces were close, Shane’s eyes narrowed in a challenge. “You can’t protect me from everything.”

“No,” Ilya felt his resolve wavering. “But I can try.”

He wanted to kiss him, push him on the bed and make him forget all the bad things, but he couldn’t bring himself to do it. It was like he was standing on a cliff. Any other day he could jump, but today he couldn’t. He couldn’t bear to jump alone.

Shane laughed, quietly, and closed the gap between them that Ilya didn’t care to cross again. Ilya knew he was stiff and cold at first, but Shane pushed against him, coaxing his mouth open and warming him up. It was intoxicating, a weakness he couldn’t protect himself against.

It went from Shane kissing him, to him kissing Shane, to them battling each other as to who was comforting who.

Shane tugged Ilya’s shirt off, and they both pulled at their clothes until Ilya could get both their cocks in his hand. He spat in his palm as he gripped them, not so slick they couldn’t feel the rough, tightness.

“Fuck, Ilya, I’m not going to last long,” Shane muttered half into Ilya’s mouth as they kept kissing, their teeth catching clumsily and painfully.

“Is okay,” Ilya panted, gathering the leaking pre-cum from his dick with his thumb and focusing on a rhythm that made Shane throw his head back, moaning until he came all over his stomach and Ilya’s hand. Ilya wasn’t far behind, gripping Shane’s face hard as he kissed him, deep and messy.

“Shane,” he couldn’t help but cry out as he fucked his hand, adding to the mess on Shane’s stomach and up to his chest. Shane was gripping his sides, encouraging as much as he could in with a blissed, blown out expression on his face.

Ilya collapsed slowly, not caring that he was lying on the wet collection of jizz between them, relishing in the mess and smell and sweat as he kissed Shane until they were both breathless.

“This is so fucking gross,” Shane muttered a few minutes later, but he made no move to get up. “You’re literally in a pile... *ugh*.”

Ilya nuzzled Shane’s temple, breathing in the tang of post-sex, his chest rising and falling in ragged waves. “And yet, somehow, perfect.”

Shane tilted his head, offering him a crooked smile that was fond and annoyed. “You are disgusting.”

“I am not sorry for that,” Ilya chuckled. He did pull back, watching Shane wince as the cooling mess just felt grosser. Ilya grabbed a wet towel and they cleaned off quickly and got dressed again before they went to finally eat the dinner he’d brought.

But as they went into the kitchen, Shane grabbed Ilya’s hand with a firmness that left no room for argument.

“Promise me one thing, okay?”

“Anything,” Ilya replied, squeezed reassuringly.

“Don’t beat yourself up over these things, okay? The McDonald’s or therapy or whatever. It’s not your job to fix it.”

Ilya wanted to argue. Of course it was his job to fix it. It was what he did. It was what he was good at. That was what he was good for.

But Shane, the stubborn, angry bastard that he was, was looking at him and not taking no for an answer.

“Fine,” Ilya tugged him closer. He pressed his forehead on Shane’s for a brief moment, soaking in every second. “I won’t.”

Shane’s hand tightened, and he let out a soft exhale. “Good. I need you to at least try. I don’t know if I can feel okay about these things if you don’t feel okay about them.”

That, more than anything, wrapped Ilya’s chest in a vice. Of course Shane was right. The last of Ilya’s reservations felt like they were crumbling.

“I will do anything to make you feel okay,” Ilya said, trying to keep his voice steady.

“I need you next to me helping me fight these battles, not in front of me like a martyr.”

“Yes, *lyubóv*.”

“*Tvoy lyubímyy*.”

Ilya traced the line of Shane’s jaw with a fingertip, memorizing the angle, the warmth, and the strength there. For a moment, neither of them spoke, the quiet carrying more weight.

Then, Shane shifted and pressed a kiss to Ilya’s temple. “Food. I’m fucking starving.”

Ilya let out a slow breath as they broke apart. “Yes. I drove seven hours to bring you that.”

He let Mishka out to roam as Shane dug through for something to reheat. Shane had given up not letting Mishka in the kitchen, and he deftly moved around him as the puppy sniffed and followed his feet.

Ilya sat at the island, arms folded and unable to tear his eyes away. Every small gesture he made was making Ilya's chest tighten with something fierce and tender. Mishka bounced at Shane's feet, and Shane scolded him, trying to talk the puppy into playing with a toy across the room.

Ilya let out a slow, quiet breath, memorizing every line of Shane's face, every movement, every little imperfection. Watching him, so alive and oblivious to the depth of Ilya's gaze, made Ilya's heart ache, and he wouldn't have wanted to be anywhere else in the world.

His lips twitched into a grin, and under his breath he muttered, "*Ty ne znaesh', chto ty so mnoy delayesh'.*"

You don't know what you do to me.

Shane glanced up. "What was that?"

"There are some perogies in the bottom," Ilya said. "I vote those tonight."

He had this weekend, a few weeks more, and then through the season, small moments. And suddenly he realized what Shane had been trying to tell him: if he let that fucking day in February dictate his every move, he wasn't going to be living at all.

He had to learn how to be okay. He took a deep breath and let a little bit of the worry, the protectiveness, the anger, go. Not forever, not completely, but for right now.

Watching Shane read over the handwritten instructions from his dad, he felt something like peace wash over him, and the certainty that this moment, right now, was real, and he was okay.

End Notes

I wrote a McDonald's trigger scene at least three times and deleted all of them, so I had to put it somewhere!

Let me know if you have any idea of things you'd like to see in this 'verse. I've got a few ideas kicking around, but happy for any inspiration!

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