

I Always Knew It Was You

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I Always Knew It Was You

by [calistoga](#)

Summary

Shane and Ilya re-watch their first press conference together, and Ilya is more than delighted to see that Shane had been ogling him basically the entire time. No real plot - all just fluff and banter and reminiscing.

Today's theme is "I Always Knew" by The Vaccines.

Notes

This text makes references to Heated Rivalry by Rachel Reid, specifically chapter 6. Some sentences are taken from the book verbatim for the fic characters to react to. Any copied text is italicized and written in quotation marks for clarity, and I am not claiming the text as my own at all. I give full credit to the original author.

When Russian is spoken, the [EN: _] afterwards is the English translation.

Today's theme is "I Always Knew" by The Vaccines.

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

"So how do we do this? Biggest leaf pile wins?"

"Actually I was thinking we could work together on this one. For once," Shane said, gently knocking his shoulder into Ilya's own.

"We could call it Centaur team building. I have been thinking that I need to be more active as captain. I need to set a good example for my new teammates," Ilya said.

"Even when those new teammates come with enough experience and awards to have their own trophy room?" Shane joked back, naively thinking that he'd decently held up his own against his husband. He should have known that Ilya would have a comeback. He always did. Thinking back over all the years of teasing, chirping, and joking at Shane's expense, Shane did always admire how quickly Ilya could come up with biting, clever comebacks. Ilya could cause 200 pound men to sputter and crumple with only a few words. There was no surviving or winning this one.

"Keep that up, and I will take you back to the trophy room," he said threateningly and seductively all at once, stepping closer. "Except I will have you facing *my* wall of trophies instead, *moi dorogoi*." [EN: My dear.]

"No! *Nonono*. You're not about to start that at my parents' house," Shane said, backing away and arming himself with the rake, pointing it at Ilya in defense. "We have a job to do."

"Fine, fine. Later, then," Ilya replied with a wink, planting a seed of anticipation in Shane's brain, the fun of it being that Shane won't know where or when Ilya intends to make good on his promise of "*later*".

They both got to work, clearing the leaves from Yuna and David's yard, making piles, collecting them on an old bed sheet, and dumping them into a hidden spot at the back to break down over winter. Halfway through the job, Ilya let Anya out of the house so she could run through the piles and roll in the fresh crunchy leaves. Ilya ran with her, chasing her and throwing leaves for her to jump and chomp at. Shane took a short "standing break" with his rake to watch his two favorite people play together, admiring how beautiful Ilya looked in a cozy, emerald green sweater. How the sweater made the flecks of green in Ilya's eyes stand out. How adorable he was with bits of orange and yellow leaves stuck in his curly hair. How Ilya could make his native language sound so goddamn cute by saying nonsense diminutives at her, like *chereshenka*, or little tiny cherry. How calm, happy, and relaxed Ilya looked with his very own puppy, at his surrogate parents' house, doing a menial household chore with his husband. Shane smiled and pulled out his phone to take a few photos. He loved that he and his parents could help provide a sense of peace that had so rarely been present in Ilya's life. Ilya deserved peace.

By the time the last bed sheet-load was taken away, the autumn sun had come out and warmed them up, which, combined with yard work and playing with Anya, had made it comfortable enough to just wear their t-shirts. Shane ran inside to get them some water and they sat at a little two-person patio table to rest, Anya panting at their feet. Shane had also

brought his iPad to read a few pages of the latest boring hockey book that Ilya would surely tease him about.

Ilya slumped back in the chair, relaxing with his eyes closed. Anya's demeanor matched his as she laid out on her side next to Ilya, who reached a hand down to lazily scratch her belly and pick out any scraps of leaves and twigs that had gotten stuck in her fur. He quietly clinked his wedding ring against his glass of water and took a moment to breathe everything in and appreciate how life had worked out. He'd been talking about mindfulness with Galina recently, and it seemed to have been helping. He made mental notes of the sun's heat, the feel of soft puppy fur, the comfort provided by the weight of his ring, the crisp smell of dried leaves in the changing season, and the sound of gentle wind in the trees that periodically mixed with Shane's soft breathing.

Ilya's phone buzzed on the table and brought him out of the moment. He unlocked it to check the notification and absolutely exploded with laughter. Shane could only look at him incredulously while Ilya sputtered out laughs, burying his face in his hands.

"So... something you wanna share with the rest of us?" Shane asked.

Ilya's breathing finally slowed down enough for him to be able to speak. "Oh my god. This is the best." A few more "*ha's*" escaped him, then he finally ended his heavy breathing with, "Whew..."

Shane kept looking at him, his eyebrows raised up high, expectantly.

"Okay, okay. So, Harris is making a video about you for the start of the season. He wanted to include some old clips of you, like interviews and things early in your career, and he... oh god." He broke into another fit and pressed his fingertips into his eyes. "Ah, this is amazing. I want this printed and framed. Okay fine, here you go." Ilya slid the phone across the table to Shane, and although Shane thought it was adorable how hard Ilya was laughing, he correctly braced himself to see something embarrassing.

What Shane saw on the screen was a photo of a nineteen year old kid, one that still had a bit of baby fat on his freckled cheeks. One that was just at the beginning of what would become a highly accomplished career yet still struggled with baseless self-doubt. A kid that, in hindsight, was *so obviously* ogling the other nineteen year old kid sitting next to him, so obviously staring at his rival not out of hatred, nor competitiveness, nor discomposure.

In the photo, a young Shane had been sitting at a press conference, and had his gaze locked on Ilya like you would a museum piece, as if trying to memorize every feature and detail before it disappeared.

Current Shane stared at the photo of his younger self, who had been sitting back in his seat while Ilya'd leaned forward to speak into the microphones. He also couldn't help but smile. Who was he kidding? It had always been Ilya. Even in just the first year of their... *relationship* ..., Shane had always known something was special about him. A part of Shane had always been drawn to him.

The phone pinged again, yanking Shane back to the present. "*Harris sent a photo*" was all Shane could see before Ilya excitedly grabbed the phone back, apparently hoping for more content he could tease Shane with.

"Great, what now?" Shane asked dryly after another bark of laughter from Ilya. This time Ilya pointed the phone at Shane straightaway to show him the next photo: a quickly-made meme of two astronauts looking at Earth with the captions, "*Hollander thirsty for Rozanov?*" and "*Always has been.*"

"Oh my god," Shane said in a "*yeah right*" tone of voice. "As if it was only me. *You* were the one who invited me up to your room that night," he added with a laugh.

"Yeah, but I was so much better at being cool about it. Here you are the one with heart eyes, not me. Or maybe not heart eyes, more like..." He paused to zoom in on Shane's face in the first photo. "... Eggplant emoji eyes."

"For fucks sake, I did not have..." Shane started to say more exasperatedly, but stopped mid-sentence when Ilya showed him the photo again. Honestly, it was difficult to deny there was something *else* in his expression at that moment, but Shane wasn't about to admit it. "There has to be more context to this, because I bet you just said something really annoying. Let's find the full video." Shane's eyebrows furrowed together as he grabbed his iPad and started to search for the evidence.

"Why, so you can see someone dying of dehydration? Like weird first aid training?" He scooted his chair closer to Shane's left side to have a better view of the tablet.

"*No*, so we can see how there's no way it's actually that bad." Shane tapped on the tablet screen to look for the video. "Jeez, when was this again? During our first season?"

"Yes. Before the All-Star Game. 2011," Ilya said, a little too quickly, a lot like Luca Haas reciting quick hockey facts that he had memorized.

Shane stared off into the trees to try to piece the timeline together. "So at this point, we had only... met up... after we filmed the ad, right?" he said, then looked back at Ilya a bit shyly and set the tablet up on the table.

"Are you still too embarrassed to just say that we hooked up to exchange blowjobs?" Ilya replied playfully, his right hand rubbing back and forth across Shane's shoulders.

Shane rolled his eyes, and despite the fact that it happened over a decade ago, his face still heated a bit at the quick memory of their first ever encounter. "Good god. Fine, so we swapped blowjobs. Then we played a few games against each other, and then this?"

"Right." Ilya smiled. He was a little too entertained by hearing Shane actually say "*swap blowjobs*" out loud.

"God, I felt so nervous even with just the phone call, you know? When they told me they'd planned this. I was so nervous about having to sit next to you in front of all those people, trying not to think about... *that*."

“Honestly? So was I,” Ilya admitted.

“You? No way. You were nervous? You’re never nervous about that stuff.”

“I’m just better at playing it cool,” he said again. “Is easier to do when you actually know *how* to be cool, but you know.” He playfully poked Shane in the arm.

Shane responded with a light punch to Ilya’s arm and said “Oh fuck off,” with a laugh. He pressed play on the video and they watched their previous selves get settled at a raised table while technicians made final adjustments to the microphone setup.

“I am glad I wore that ball cap though,” Ilya said quietly.

A “Ha!” burst out of Shane. “What, to hide how *cool* you were? I fucking knew it, you felt weird being up there with me too.”

“It maybe was difficult to focus on the questions,” Ilya added softly, brushing Shane’s thigh with the back of his hand.

“Well, they were stupid questions anyway,” Shane replied, and he grabbed Ilya’s hand, quickly kissed his knuckles, then set their joined hands down in his lap. He steeled himself to relive a moment that would definitely be embarrassing for him to look back on now, but was important in the timeline of *them*. It reminded him of how incredible it was that he and Ilya had done the impossible, that against all fucking odds, they had made their relationship work.

“Ilya, you announced at the beginning of the season that you would score fifty goals by the end of February,” the first reporter had said in the video. “You’ve scored thirty-eight so far. Do you think you’ll keep your promise?”

“Yes,” the young Ilya added, with no elaboration or further comment. This caused both of them to crack up laughing.

“Only you could get away with answering like that. You were so fucking cocky, I hated it,” Shane said.

“I dunno. I don’t think you really hated it. I think these are things you always wanted to say, but you are too polite to say it,” Ilya replied, causing Shane to huff dismissively.

Ilya laughed at himself, both present and past versions. “I still hated talking to the press at that point. My English was still so bad.”

Shane paused the video. “Wait. Is that why you’d always give weirdly short, mysterious answers? It was a language thing? Not just... being cryptic and cocky and annoying?”

Ilya shrugged. “Sometimes yes. But sometimes the questions were just bullshit, like that one, so it was fun just to fuck with them.”

“And it was so on-brand for you too. You couldn’t just be the best, you had to let everyone know about it.”

Shane was about to press play with his free hand, but Ilya intercepted it with his own. He brought Shane's fingers to his lips and softly kissed his knuckles, then briefly squeezed his fingers. "I never told you how thankful I was. You were always so sweet to me about my English. When I lost what I wanted to say, or I forgot my words, you were always so kind," he said quietly.

Shane gave a quick squeeze to the hand he still held in his lap and noticed Ilya was rubbing Shane's wedding ring with his thumb. Ilya had been making great strides in expressing himself more often. Shane appreciated how Ilya took the moment to say this, even in the middle of joking, and wanted to make sure Ilya knew that he didn't take it lightly.

"It was just the right thing to do. I mean, it wasn't your fault you had to learn a whole new language just to keep doing what you loved and playing hockey. It's not fair to judge you for that."

Ilya kissed the back of his hand again. "*Spasibo, moi krasavchik...* And then there was you with your perfect stupid English and your perfect stupid French. Disgusting. *Terrible*," Ilya said with a laugh and rather poor French pronunciation on the last word. [EN: Thank you, my beautiful man (but this word is also used like "cool guy" in Russian)]

Shane cracked up, his smile reaching his eyes. "*No u tebya ochen' krasivyi aktsent byl*," he tried, with his less than perfect Russian pronunciation that he was still self-conscious about. [EN: But you had a very nice/beautiful accent...]

A huge grin broke out on Ilya's face. He put his hand on the back of Shane's head to bring his face closer to kiss his forehead. "I love you so much. And that sounded great, by the way, *ochen' krasivyi*. Ok, now let's get back to making fun of you," then he lightly pinched the end of Shane's nose. [EN: Very beautiful] Shane laughed, and Ilya's teasing was undercut by how he continued to play with Shane's wedding ring between the joined hands in Shane's lap, rotating it and rubbing it with his thumb. Shane reached out with his free hand to press play and the interview continued with a young Shane's reply to the same question.

"*This is a team sport, and I'm happy when my team is doing well. I just try to contribute*," Shane had answered. Young Ilya had ducked his head and hid his amusement behind his convenient ball cap, and current Ilya laughed and groaned all at once.

"How fucking *modest*," he said affectionately, squeezing Shane's hand. Shane just sighed and rolled his eyes.

They kept watching together, both of them particularly focused on past-Shane's reactions. Ilya actually *was* really good at playing it cool, as much as Shane hated to admit it (mostly because admitting that would probably mean Shane admitting that he *couldn't*). Their past selves in the video answered a few more boring questions, and present-Ilya focused on past-Shane's wandering eyes.

At the press conference, Shane had not-so-subtly scanned over Ilya's entire body there next to him, and current-Ilya felt a different kind of warmth bubble up inside him. He could tease Shane all day long about being "thirsty", about not being subtle or not ever being "cool", but the truth was he felt an overwhelming combination of proud and flattered at the idea that he'd

always “had” Shane. He had always had the attention of the beautiful man currently sitting next to him, who also happened to be one of the most talented hockey players of all time, the one person who could legitimately beat Ilya at his own game. Ilya had always revered Shane as one of the best people to ever exist, and to see clear evidence that he had always been special to Shane too made his heart clench. The thought made him ecstatic. He pushed away the ever-present voice of negativity in the back of his head that told him he didn’t deserve it.

Back in the video, young Shane had stared a little too long at Ilya’s masculine hands. He’d glanced over at his face a few too many times, at his curly hair under his cap, the lines of his neck accentuated by the gold chain. Shane’s eyes had darted back and forth between Ilya and the rest of the room. Current Ilya held his tongue for the time being, temporarily saving Shane from comments and excess embarrassment, that is until video-Shane leaned back in his chair: the setup for Harris’ photo that started this whole conversation.

Ilya couldn’t spare Shane any longer; he had to say something. He couldn’t stop the huge, giddy smile from creeping across his face. Shane saw Ilya’s expression in the reflection on the tablet screen, and glanced at him and groaned, covering his face with his right hand. There was no escaping this.

Ilya paused the video, freezing the frame at a moment very similar to Harris’ photo. His grin nearly split his face in half out of pure delight. He shook Shane’s shoulder next to him with his free hand, his words intercut with small bursts of loving laughter. “Oh my god, look at you leaning back. Your face. You could not stop looking at me. I do not blame you, of course, I mean... look at me, I was very good looking.”

Shane finally mustered up the courage to uncover his face and look at the screen. He couldn’t deny it, really. He had known then that he was wildly attracted to Ilya, and he certainly couldn’t deny that fact now. He finally cracked a smile of defeat and looked away at something far off in the garden, avoiding Ilya’s joyful expression.

“This is horrible,” he said, still smiling. “I’m gonna kill Harris. Maybe I should tell Troy about the ‘fuck/marry/kill’ game he played with Gen a while back, as revenge.”

“He probably already knows about that one. But you could abuse the fact that he had a crush on you for a while too,” Ilya said with a knowing smirk.

Shane shot him an incredulous expression with furrowed eyebrows. “What the fuck are you talking about?”

“You should hang out with Harris’ family more often. His mom and sisters spill all kinds of terrible secrets, you would love it. Harris is an easy target,” Ilya said fondly. “It maybe happened that a young teenage Harris was figuring out he was gay right around the same time a sexy new hockey star from Ottawa was everywhere. You probably helped him confirm some suspicions.” While Harris was a total professional in the workplace, Ilya couldn’t resist giving him a hard time about his attraction to hockey players, especially considering Harris’ relationship with Troy. Fortunately, Harris was a good sport about any well-deserved dragging through the mud. “To be fair, your face was on billboards fucking everywhere in this city during Juniors, it was so annoying,” Ilya added lightheartedly.

Shane looked up at the sky for a moment, too amused to feel bothered by Ilya's comment. To an extent, he agreed with Ilya. There had been way too many ads around this town with his face on it; it felt ridiculous. He now filed away the fact that Harris had once had a celebrity crush on him, and planned to later brainstorm ways of using this to his advantage.

Ilya pressed play, and they both watched past-Shane blatantly ogling past-Ilya from his now leaned-back position in the chair. Shane's eyes had journeyed from Ilya's curls to the trim muscles of his shoulders and arms, to the defined strength of Ilya's back through his t-shirt. He'd noticed Ilya's strong, attractive hands and the gold chain under his t-shirt collar.

One reporter had asked something else and Shane, hilariously, hadn't been paying attention. The reporter had taken a second's pause, then asked "*Shane?*" and the *snap* of Shane having been yanked back into reality was tangible, practically audible. In a microsecond, Shane's expression had flipped from one admiring a living work of art, to being reminded that he was a famous athlete on camera on a global stage, trying so hard to cover up what he'd been blatantly doing.

Current-Ilya paused the video and burst out laughing. "You weren't even listening! Holy shit, you were crushing so hard. And you tried to casually drink that water bottle, too." He chuckled again, scrolling the video back about ten seconds to re-watch how adorable and needlessly insecure and unconfident Shane was, drinking water just to have something to do with his hands other than rip Ilya's shirt off, apparently. "Ah yes, so casual. Nothing to see here." Although Ilya was laughing at Shane's expense, Shane didn't feel like it was malicious. Instead, he felt the love in it. Ilya must be feeling a huge sense of relief. Back then, Ilya hadn't been sure of his feelings for Shane either, rather he'd been inexplicably drawn to him like a magnet.

Ilya was delighting in this a lot more than he should have been.

In the video, the reporter had to repeat the question: "*Would you like to play on an All-Star team with Ilya in the future?*"

Ilya paused it, smiling. "Hm, what do you say, Hollander? Can you even imagine what it would be like to play on a team with Ilya Rozanov? Is such a thing even possible? Could we ever possibly work together?" he asked sarcastically.

Shane suddenly remembered past-Ilya's response to the same question, only because he remembered it being particularly annoying. He put on a terrible Russian accent and said "Yes. Only if *I* am starting center."

Ilya jabbed him in the ribs and put on an exaggerated shocked face, making Shane giggle. "Unbelievable. The disrespect. I am texting Coach that he should put you on third line." He grabbed his phone. "I hope you like Dillon missing all your passes. You will never score again."

"Oh yeah? Is that how you get your scoring records, Captain? Bury all the real competition on the third line?"

“A ridiculous accusation. Out of line, Hollander. For that, I will tell Harris to make more memes about you.”

“No!” He stretched out to grab the phone, but Ilya's long limbs kept it just out of reach. “Okay, fine. *Prostituye, kapitan.*” [EN: Forgive me, captain.]

Ilya paused for a moment, blinked, then narrowed his eyes. “You know, you cannot just Russian your way out of all your problems with me.”

“I can and I will. You love it.”

Ilya took a big breath and sighed, putting the phone back on the table. “I *do* love it. *Fuck*,” he cursed at the admission. It was game over in that regard, Shane had figured out the cheat codes. Shane had a huge, satisfied grin on his face while he rubbed Ilya's knuckles with his thumb.

“*Anyway*, I'm here trying to watch this thirsty guy try not to drool from just sitting next to me, so.” Ilya pressed play and they watched their past selves both lean forward toward the mics on the table, their elbows nearly touching.

“Did you intentionally keep your arm that close to me then? Because honestly, it wasn't helping my whole... situation.”

“Of course. It was so easy to make you panic with something so tiny. I wanted to see what would happen. It was fun.”

Shane exhaled quickly through his nose. “Thanks for that. Rude. And here I am, about to save your ass from this stupid question.”

“*Do you guys feel the pressure to restore your team's legacies, even this early in your careers?*” the reporter had asked. Past-Ilya had looked at Shane to take the lead and answer first.

“It really was a stupid question, those assholes. You were great though. You only gave polite answers all the time, so I knew I could just copy what you said.”

“Yeah, you're welcome. Remember that next time you threaten me with memes.”

Ilya laughed again. “I will remember it but I will not make promises-”

“And that fucking wink!” Shane interrupted, focusing back on the video. “You fucking knew what you were doing.”

“What Hollander said. Yes,” current-Ilya replied with an annoying smirk, quoting what his past self had just said in the video.

The press conference started to wrap up with final comments being made to thank everyone for being there. In the last few moments, the corner of past-Ilya's lips had quirked up ever so slightly. At the same time, past-Shane's eyebrows had raised by just a hair and his cheeks had turned a bit pink. These tiny actions were barely noticeable by themselves, but put together,

combined with the knowledge only they had about what was secretly going on under the table, made for an adorably sweet scene. Current-Shane tapped his own foot against Ilya's now, repeating the chaste action from before.

Ilya flipped his right hand over, out of Shane's grip and onto Shane's thigh to give it a quick squeeze. "Thank you again. For helping me then with the questions. You could have just left me to look stupid, but you didn't."

"You're welcome, *moya lyubov*.'" Shane replied and kissed him on the cheek. Then the last few seconds of the video caught his attention again. "And look, to show your appreciation, you had to give me *the* most sexually suggestive handshake ever at the end."

"What are you talking about?"

"There!" Shane pointed at their joined hands on the screen after they'd stood up at the end of the conference. "The way you touched my palm like that. And look at your face. You knew what you were doing."

"Maybe." Although honestly, now with video evidence and a new angle, it was pretty impossible to deny. Instead of saying anything else, Ilya drank some water and gave Shane's leg another quick pinch.

Anya heard a suspicious rustle in the bushes and went to investigate. Upon her return, Ilya picked her up and cuddled her in his lap. "What did you see, *solnyshka*? Did you scare away the monsters? *Molodets*, girlie." [EN: Sunshine; great job]

Then surprisingly, it was Shane's phone that buzzed this time.

Harris wrote, "Just so fair's fair, I found some ammunition for you too~~" which was followed by a gif that took a moment to load. Shane was already smiling in anticipation; he so seldom had a good comeback to Ilya's teasing, so it would be great to level out the playing field here.

And, god bless Harris, the gif was absolutely perfect.

"What is it?" Ilya asked, but Shane ignored him in favor of appreciating this gif, watching multiple loops of the clip so he could memorize it.

In the Skills Competition of the same first All-Star Weekend, the league had planned for Shane and Ilya to compete against each other in the shot accuracy contest. Shane had beaten Ilya by 1.3 seconds. Shane remembered getting a glimpse of Ilya's heated expression, but he'd quickly looked away to avoid revealing that Ilya's face had definitely roused something inside him. Seeing the true full extent of Ilya's reaction now, though, was a revelation.

If Shane's expression in the first photo had been *thirst*, then Ilya's face in the gif had certainly been *hunger*. To most viewers, it had probably seemed like he was annoyed or enraged by his then-rival beating his already impressive time, but now the truth was obvious: Ilya had wanted to devour him.

Ilya could freely admit now that Shane's prowess on the ice was what caught his attention early on. Up until World Junior's, Ilya had never met a comparable player; he had simply always been the best. After he'd caught wind of a talented Canadian superstar on the rise, with records and stats almost identical to Ilya's, he became laser-focused on destroying him. Until they met, that is, then he was laser-focused on... something else. Definitely his annoying politeness, his ridiculous determination, his stupid nice compliments. Definitely not his cute nose, or unfairly warm handshake... or adorable freckles on rosy cheeks...

No.

Shane turned the phone to Ilya. "You say you were so much better at hiding it, huh? Better at being cool? Really? Not when you look like this," Shane laughed. "It looks like you're trying to stop yourself from tearing my gear off right there in front of everyone."

Ilya watched a few loops of the clip himself, trying to keep his current expression neutral while his past expression decidedly was *not*. "What do you mean? I was just angry staring at the annoying guy who ruined my amazing shot accuracy time." Ilya's face tried to form a faux serious expression, but was betrayed by the slight crinkles at the corners of his eyes.

Shane paused a beat before prompting, "And?"

"And planning how to get you into my hotel room so I could fuck your brains out. Obviously," he said flatly, seriously.

Shane laughed. "Oh really? Was I so impossible to resist?" he said, knowingly using one of Ilya's favorite English phrases.

Ilya paused for a split second to look at Shane very seriously. "I am at a point now where I'm not playing fucking games about this, Hollander. You were fucking gorgeous and I wanted you. I wanted to fuck the most beautiful, most talented player who has ever lived. And by some crazy fucking miracle it turned out he wanted me, too."

Shane's face turned pink and his heart started to beat faster. "It's a crazy fucking miracle any of this worked out. But I'm so glad it did."

Ilya couldn't keep up the serious facade anymore. He grabbed Shane's face and kissed him slowly and lovingly. "Me, too," he said when he broke away for air. They stopped for a moment with their eyes closed and their foreheads pressed together.

Both of their phones buzzed at once, and they each shot a look of confusion at the phones, then at each other.

"What, did Harris find a photo of us on that roof in Vegas or something?" Shane said as he opened the message. He hoped the fuck not, but deep down he worried it might actually be possible. Harris was skilled.

It was a text from Mom in their group chat. "When you guys are done smooching on the porch, lunch is ready. Sandwich ingredients are out. 😊"

They both burst out laughing. Ilya gently placed Anya on the ground. "Sorry Yuna, I can't help it, your son is so kissable and impossible to resist, I must smooch him," he said facetiously, to Shane only. They both stood up and Ilya stretched his arms up above his head, revealing a little bit of his stomach where his t-shirt slid up a few inches. This time, Shane openly admired him. He looked up and down his husband's body, now without any fear or shame at all, just because he could.

Ilya brought him in for a big hug, wrapping his arms tightly around Shane's shoulders. He kissed the top of Shane's head and then turned to rest his cheek on it. They breathed each other in for a quiet moment, reflecting. They both thought about where they started, and the fucking inconceivable journey it took to get to where they are now. "*Ya tebya lyublyu* ," Ilya finally said. "I always loved you."

"*Je t'aime aussi*. Always," Shane replied.

It had taken their brains years to catch up, but their hearts had known. They had always known.

End Notes

Thank you to everyone who's read this. This is the first fanfic I have ever written ever, so I am open to literally any feedback at all. I can't get these silly hockey dudes out of my head so I just wanted to see more cuteness.

Special thanks to [@gringle](#) for proofreading and teaching me how this website works. 💕 luv u

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