

A Full Night's Rest

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/63667252) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/63667252>.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov , Anyu , Ilya Rozanov's Dog , Original Child Character(s) , Yuna Hollander , David Hollander
Additional Tags:	Post-Canon , Established Relationship , Married Couple , Married Life , Fluff , Tooth-Rotting Fluff , Slice of Life , Parenthood , this is mushy ooey gooeey self indulgent fluff down to its very core , POV Alternating , Domestic Fluff , no drama no plot just vibes , Spoilers for Book 6: The Long Game (Game Changers) , Written Before Heated Rivalry (TV)
Language:	English
Series:	Part 7 of they say that the world was built for two
Collections:	Broc's Hollanov Oneshots
Stats:	Published: 2025-03-08 Words: 10,472 Chapters: 1/1

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by [broccolicheddarchicken](#)

Summary

Shane wasn't looking back at him. He assumed that Ilya would be paying attention to the game, not its spectators. Sofia was sat upright in his lap. He was moving her back and forth to follow the puck. Ilya could see his mouth moving, even at this distance- no doubt he was explaining the rules to her infant ears. Hockey would be her first language.

Sofia was more interested in the person holding her than the game. She tipped her little head back, back, *back* until she was looking up at her dad. The two of them smiled, and then Shane leaned down ever so slightly.

He was brushing their noses together in the softest little nuzzle Ilya had ever seen. When he was done, Shane pressed a kiss onto her forehead.

At twenty-three, Shane Hollander was convinced that life after hockey would be empty. He couldn't imagine a world where he'd be completely happy without the focus and drive that came with playing a professional sport.

By thirty-seven, Shane was convinced that life after hockey was *better*. Who needed skates and sticks when your daughter was looking up at you with such a perfect, tiny smile, and your husband was winning games for all three of you?

Notes

I wasn't planning on writing anything else for a while on account of having literally just posted a 20k+ word fic like 2 days ago, but y'all loved it so much and I kept daydreaming about Shane and Ilya starting a family, so here's a little dessert for after your dinner. bon appétit!

once again no beta because who needs those anyway

as always: I hope you enjoy reading this at least half as much as I enjoyed writing it :)

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

October

Shane had a problem.

It had gotten out of hand. He knew it had, even as he continued to feed into it. Ilya certainly didn't seem to mind this particular issue. Now, looking in their five-month-old daughter's closet, Shane realized he needed to learn restraint.

Sofia had more outfits than any baby could ever possibly need.

It wasn't Shane's fault. Not really. He'd gone crazy in the months between applying to adopt and having this sweet little girl in his life. So maybe he'd bought far more outfits, for a variety of ages and developmental stages, than was strictly considered necessary.

"Do you want to pick your own outfit?" Shane asked. He had Sofia cradled against his chest. He leaned forward so she could pull at her own clothes, if she so chose. She babbled her reply and looked at all the colorful fabric offered before her.

Sofia tugged at a blue onesie with a dinosaur print. Shane thought that was a good choice. He grabbed a navy pair of little baby pants to put over it and some socks to keep her feet from getting cold. Then he took her over to the table to change her. Such was their morning routine. Ilya would go downstairs, feed Anya, let her into the yard, and get coffee and breakfast started. Shane would get their daughter ready for the day.

Shane was so grateful to have a daughter. For a while there, he'd been unsure if it was actually going to happen.

Adoption had taken much longer than either of them had anticipated. They'd started the process in March, when Shane informed management he'd be retiring after the season ended. Then they talked to an adoption agency. Provincial law apparently required that they take all the same classes as foster parents before they could be placed in the match pool. They simply wouldn't have the time until summer, so hockey became Shane's sole focus again. After winning his last Stanley Cup final with Ilya against Chicago—a high they were both still riding, two years later—Shane swiftly announced his retirement to the public. Come July, they were running charity camps in the afternoon and attending night parenting classes.

It was kind of fun. Not all of the information was relevant to them, since they didn't want to actually foster, but they still learned a lot of useful things that Shane wouldn't have thought about otherwise. It also made it incredibly easy to daydream about their eventual family.

The *hope* had been to maybe bring a baby home by October or November, so Shane wouldn't have to spend too much time alone at home with nothing to do, but that was before they knew about the classes. So they put a nursery together, they daydreamed about names and bottles and onesies, and they waited.

And waited. And *waited*.

The agency didn't do pre-birth matching, because it was apparently more ethical that way, but it meant Shane didn't even have hope to cling to. He couldn't wait out the months knowing there'd be a family at the end of them. They'd be randomly called one day, informed they'd been selected, and have a newborn in their arms a day or two later.

It took an entire fucking season. His first season off the ice. His first season as not a hockey player. An entire season spent watching Ilya on TV and throwing himself into the foundation and practicing shots on the plastic indoor rink at the cottage. He went skating at the community rink twice a day. He coached at the fall break, winter break, and spring break camps, which Ilya and Shane usually left in the care of some very talented college players since anyone in the NHL would be busy. He was still terrible at coaching, but fuck, it was something to do. He read parenting books, practiced his cooking skills, and completely redecorated the living room. Twice. He spent so much time in the gym that he might, funny enough, have gotten into better shape than ever. He studied Russian like he was about to be airdropped into Moscow as a fucking spy.

He very nearly went insane. By Ilya's final road trip of the season, Shane was on the brink of calling him and screaming *no, nevermind, you have to retire too or else I'm going to tear my own throat out*.

Maybe he couldn't say that. But it was April, and he didn't want to go for a run because of the slushy snow outside, and he couldn't call Ilya because he was currently kicking Boston's ass on their TV. Shane thought maybe he would just call anyway and leave a voicemail for Ilya to listen to later.

Instead, his phone lit up with the contact information of their social worker. His hands trembled when he picked up.

It was the call he'd been dreaming of. Literally. He'd had this dream before.

A healthy newborn girl had been delivered three days prior, and the mother wanted Ilya and Shane to adopt her.

Shane barely remembered the call, but he remembered texting Ilya some variant of *call me the second you get to the hotel*. When his phone rang again, he struggled to get the words out. They had a baby. They'd been matched. She was three days old. Ilya was right at the start of his road trip, so it would be a little while before he could meet her, but Shane was going to pick her up from the hospital tomorrow and do all the paperwork he could by himself—

Ilya cut him off.

You think I am not flying home for this? If Ottawa wants to fire me for skipping Buffalo and New Jersey, that is their problem.

Ottawa had not cared at all. They'd posted a congratulatory tweet about it.

Less than twenty-four hours later, Shane and Ilya were bringing home their baby girl. The mental image of it was still burned in Shane's mind—the way Ilya had cried when he held her

for the first time, the impossibly tiny curve of her body against his broad frame, how his hand shook when he filled out the naming paperwork.

Sofia, they decided. It was lovely, it existed in Russian, but it was also a perfectly common name in Canada. It had a diminutive form Ilya was particularly fond of, *Sonya*. It was perfect.

They brought her home that night, put her in the bassinet they'd had stored in their closet for months, and watched her sleep for almost two hours. Marveling that something so perfect was now theirs.

She looked equally perfect now—five months older, double her birth weight, and soft and snuggly in her dinosaur onesie. Shane decided to bring her to Ilya for some father-daughter time. He'd finish cooking breakfast himself. Ilya was dreading this trip, perhaps it would help him feel better.

They'd both known this would happen eventually. It was the life of a professional athlete. Still, Shane understood that Ilya was nervous about being separated from Sofia for so long.

The least Shane could do was give them some extra time together.

Shane came down the stairs with Sofia on his hip. He spotted Ilya behind the stove and playfully pushed him away.

"What are you doing?" Ilya asked with a frown. "I am trying to make that nasty spinach egg tart thing you like."

Shane laughed. "Don't worry about it. I'll finish it myself. You take the baby."

Ilya looked at Shane. Then he looked at the baby.

"Is something wrong?"

"Nothing's wrong, Ilya. I just know you're going to miss her, that's all. Take some extra time while you can."

Ilya exhaled heavily, as if something worrisome had just come off his mind. He took Sofia from Shane, walked off with her, and started cooing to her in soft, sweet Russian.

Shane had frankly been expecting a bigger fight. Perhaps their morning rituals were actually just his.

"You are so strong," Ilya said when Sofia grabbed his hair. "How do you manage it? I need to know for my conditioning."

Shane smiled as he watched Ilya snuggle their baby girl in his arms. He took to fatherhood like a duck to water. Shane often felt like he was just trying to catch up.

Shane hoped he'd be able to handle the next two weeks without him.

Ilya had a loose grip on his dream. Something warm. Something about his mother.

He was sitting up, suddenly, waking with a start. Then the dream disappeared. Sofia was crying. Almost without thought, Ilya scooped her up and took her to the nursery. It was instinct. He had a lot of practice in this role. Shane, bless him, was to stay in bed while Ilya handled her. That was their deal, at Ilya's insistence.

By the way she was crying, Ilya was pretty certain she just wanted attention, but he went down his mental checklist anyway. Not hungry. Didn't need to be changed. Ilya crossed a few more things off, and none of them were right. So this truly was an "I want to be held" cry.

With a tired blink, Ilya checked the time. It was just past three. His flight was in twelve hours.

Ilya sighed, kissed Sofia's temple, and began to rock with her, carefully swaying on his feet. He hummed to her, some old pop song his mother loved that he'd nearly forgotten about.

The soothing was mindless, so Ilya's thoughts wandered to the immediate future. The next day, Ilya would be leaving for a two-week road trip along the west coast, starting in L.A. and ending in Vancouver. They had four games scheduled. Were it the Before Times, his worries would focus on how to outskate the San Jose Sea Lion's All-Star defenseman, Peter Wright. He was ten years younger than Ilya and truly a force of nature.

But it was not the Before Times. And that meant that his worries *actually* focused on his daughter and husband. He was terrified to be away from Sonya for that long. He was terrified to leave Shane alone with her—not because he didn't trust him, but because he hated to think of him having to endure all the struggles of caring for a baby alone. Ilya felt like he was abandoning his post. Had all his teammates with families felt like this when they were away?

Perhaps he wouldn't be so worried if Sofia had better sleep habits. But his current position proved that wasn't the case. She was still crying. Ilya started humming a different song.

Ilya loved his daughter, more than he thought it was possible to love anything, but the third month of her life had been a living hell. She'd had severe colic and would scream as if she were being boiled alive for hours on end at all times of day and night. The noise, the pain of her agony, the desperation to help her feel better and the helplessness of knowing they couldn't—that would've been terrible by itself. However, it also kept both Shane and Ilya from getting anything close to enough sleep for several weeks in a row. The sleep deprivation and the emotional rawness meant they set each other off *constantly*. The fights weren't ever that bad and apologies swiftly followed, but it was still difficult.

Yuna and David came over one afternoon during that period and magically sensed that the happy new parents were about to kill each other. When they suggested taking care of Sofia themselves for twenty-four hours, Shane was reluctant. Ilya talked him into it. He tried his best to be patient when Shane was worried about something, but they *needed* a full night's rest. And the Hollanders had done great with their own son, right?

When Ilya's in-laws went home that night, they took Sofia with them.

Facing a full day free to do whatever they liked, Ilya and Shane slept in each other's arms for fourteen hours straight, watched a movie, ordered Uber Eats, showered, and picked the baby up a couple hours early because they missed her. Sex hadn't even been a *consideration* in either of their minds, they were so wrung out.

Yeah, becoming parents had changed them.

Things were better now that Sofia was older. Better, but not great. She was still waking them up several times a night. The pediatrician said that most babies her age either slept through the night or only woke up once. Ilya often had to remind Shane that all babies were different, that she wasn't *behind*, that it didn't mean anything. He wasn't sure the reminders were effective. Ilya had once woken up at three in the morning to find Sofia asleep and Shane awake, Googling *five month old won't sleep through night* on his phone.

The pediatrician had warned them that it would only get worse when she started teething, which would be any day now. Ilya was terrified for that, too.

Sofia didn't look like such a little hellraiser right then, though. Having finally succumbed to Ilya's rocking and humming, she was beginning to doze off. Soon, Ilya would put her down, and then he'd be able to catch at least another hour or two of rest before she woke him again.

He smiled when her tiny eyes slipped shut, smiled when her breaths evened and she relaxed fully into him. He pressed one kiss, two, then three to her forehead as he walked down the hallway. He wasn't sure how he'd manage two full weeks away from her.

In just a few months, it felt as though Sofia had become the center of his entire existence.

After a week and a half spent at home, Shane decided he needed to go *do* something other than watch Ilya's games and wait for him to come back. There were some new reports for some of the Irina Foundation's initiatives, so he decided to go down to the office and review them.

The foundation had a free, on-site daycare for its employees. It was Yuna's idea and was extremely popular. If Shane had learned one thing from founding a non-profit, it was that taking care of your employees would pay back tenfold. Happy, well-paid workers made the office pleasant and were more productive. Shane had no doubt that the generous compensation and benefits package was a major reason they were able to attract so much great talent.

It was also just the right thing to do.

Shane could've checked Sofia into the daycare. She had little friends there- other babies she liked to play with. Were he doing something hands-on or in public he definitely would've. But he was just in his office, calmly reviewing some expense data. He liked having her nearby when he could. Logically, he knew that she was perfectly safe and happy even when she wasn't in his sight.

Emotionally, Shane felt like he couldn't ever fully relax unless she was wrapped up in his arms.

Shane narrowed his eyes at one of the spreadsheets in front of him. He wasn't a financial expert, despite his mother working for the Bank of Canada for his entire life. He only looked at these things so he had a vague idea of how much money the foundation was raising and spending. But something about this one looked off. He made a note to himself to ask his mother to look at it.

His phone dinged. He'd sent Ilya a quick selfie of himself and Sofia earlier. Now he was getting a reply.

Ilya <3: She is adorable. Are you at the office?

Shane: Yep. Technically I could've done this from home, but I wanted to get out.

Ilya <3: I'm glad. Everyone at the foundation deserves to meet the cutest baby ever born.

Ilya <3: I have to go. Practice starts in twenty minutes.

Shane: I love you

Shane heard some fussing and turned his head—was something wrong?

Nope. Sofia was napping just fine in her pack-and-play. Shane loved that thing. He could set it up basically anywhere, toss in some toys, and *boom*, she was good to go, but also contained. It was especially useful when he was trying to work out or do housework. For all the issues Sofia gave them with sleep, she was very good at keeping herself entertained. She needed lots of love and attention, of course—every baby did—but she was also perfectly content to spend a while playing by herself most days.

It was nice. Shane would've made things work if they'd had a velcro baby, but this way was much easier.

He checked his phone to see if Ilya had replied. No, so he must've literally been getting on the ice the moment he sent that goodbye text. No biggie. He'd send it eventually.

Shane yawned. He hadn't gotten enough sleep the previous night. He almost never got enough sleep, nowadays.

Ilya was doing his best to be supportive of Shane, since he had the majority of the childcare duties for the time being. He knew it wasn't fair that he got to enjoy full nights of sleep when he was away, so he took on most of the nighttime responsibility when he was home. Shane

would still wake up when she cried—nothing to be done about that—but Ilya would scoop her up and take her to a different room as quickly as he could, leaving Shane to fall back asleep.

Shane still insisted on handling *some* overnight wakeups, especially when Ilya had an early captain's meeting or a six-thirty team workout. But Ilya took the lion's share.

It helped a lot, honestly, getting even a few nights where he got something close to a full night's rest. But on these longer road trips, there was no help. Any time Sofia cried, there was exactly one person there to soothe her. Over the course of the more-than-a-week Ilya had been gone so far, it had added up.

Shane risked a peek at Sofia. He was so tired of being tired. She was asleep, he had a comfortable couch in his office. Maybe he could just...

Yeah. This was a good idea. Sleep when the baby sleeps, right?

Shane laid down on the couch. His eyelids felt so heavy as they fluttered shut—they nearly burned. It took nothing for him to fall asleep.

After a hard practice that left Ilya confident in his team and worried about his hip, he sat on the bench in the locker room and checked his phone.

Jane: I love you

Ilya felt a little sorry—Shane had sent that a few hours ago. He sent back his "I love you too" with a few extra heart emojis to make up for it.

When he swiped back to the main screen of his Messages app, he noticed that his group chat with Shane and his parents (titled "Rozander-Hollanov Inner Circle") had notifications.

Yuna: Look what I found in Shane's office.

Ilya immediately made the picture she'd sent his lock screen. Shane was laying on the couch in his office, knees slightly bent, hand tucked under his cheek, lips slightly parted. He was asleep. Two feet away, in her portable baby jail thing, Sofia was sleeping in the exact same position. Her mouth was even open to the same degree. The photo was taken from directly above to highlight how identical they were laying.

It was impossibly sweet. Everything Ilya loved most, neatly contained in one little screen. He could barely believe it. He never thought he'd have this—he'd always liked the sound of a family in abstract, but the reality of it was so much more overwhelming than he could've imagined. He'd lay down his life for either of them, with no hesitation. He was entirely sure of it. He was so sure of it it almost scared him.

But of course he would. That was his husband. That was his baby. He loved them. Ilya could see his own smile in the reflection of the screen as he typed his reply.

Ilya: Something, something, apples and trees?

Ilya was so, so incredibly ready to be home. The shuttle that should've taken the team directly from the plane to ground-level transportation was malfunctioning. Another had to be brought over.

Ilya chose to walk instead of accept the fifteen-minute delay.

Ottawa International Airport was not a particularly confusing place. Even if it was, Ilya had been there enough times to know it like the back of his hand. However, it was *big*, and that meant the walk from the gate to the exit was rather long. Which meant it made perfect sense to call Shane and chat during it.

"How's she been doing?" Ilya asked.

Sofia was making noise on the other side of the phone. She sounded okay—content, distracted maybe. Shane put her on FaceTime most nights when they were apart, so it wasn't like it had been weeks since he'd seen her, but it wasn't the same as actually being present to hear her delightful little sounds and kiss her cute little nose. The only person who could possibly rival her in adorableness was Shane, and it had been just as long since he'd seen him face-to-face. Ilya was going a little crazy.

"She's been good," Shane said. "She had a really good time visiting my parents a couple days ago. Dad refused to put her down, and you know how much she loves attention."

Ilya smiled. "And your mother?"

"Mom kept trying to teach her French," Shane said on a laugh. "And when I helpfully pointed out that she doesn't even speak English yet, she told me I didn't know what I was talking about. She also said that if you were teaching her Russian, I should be teaching her French, which she might have a point about, to be fair."

"She might," Ilya agreed. "We'd have a trilingual baby genius."

Shane didn't say anything, but Ilya was sure he was smiling.

"What are you two doing right now?" It felt silly to be asking all these things, but Ilya hated to feel like he was missing a single second. Shane always sent him, like, forty pictures a day when he was on a road trip, yet it still felt like not even close to enough.

"Right now? I'm feeding her. We're trying pureed green beans and pear." *Certainly organic and preservative-free*, Ilya didn't say. Shane read the back of baby food labels like he was

trying to defuse a bomb. Ilya could tease him for it if he weren't almost equally paranoid when it came to Sofia.

"Green beans and pears? These baby food companies come up with strange combinations."

"Yeah, well, they know what they're doing, because she is *loving* it." As if punctuating Shane's statement, Sofia chose that exact moment to express her happiness with a babble. It put a bandage over every crack that had ever formed in Ilya's heart.

"We'll have to buy more of this flavor," Ilya said. As he passed by the airport's Panda Express, he realized he had no clue whether or not he needed to feed himself. It was seven—maybe Shane was waiting for him, maybe Shane had already cooked.

Orange chicken did sound really good.

"Have you eaten already?" Ilya asked. "Should I get something at the airport?"

"No, I'm cooking," Shane said. "You'll like it, too. One of your favorites."

"What are you making?"

"Come home and find out."

Ilya smiled and kept walking towards the parking garage. He'd left one of his cars in long-term. "Are you telling me that I will come home from work to a homemade dinner from my lovely spouse? How traditional."

Shane laughed on the other end of the line. It was beautiful. "Yeah, we're the epitome of the conservative family," he said flatly.

Ilya laughed, too. He'd been upset about something on the plane, and now he couldn't remember what it was. Shane and Sofia had that effect on him a lot. He was getting in the elevator now, and then he'd be in his car. Just a few minutes longer.

"I will see you in a little while, moy lyubimyy."

"Okay. Hurry up. We miss you," Shane said. "But don't speed or anything," he added in a rush.

The use of *we* instead of *I* was still not something Ilya was entirely used to, but he absolutely adored it. And reminding him not to die in a high-speed crash in his rush to get home was so very Shane.

"I miss you too. Both of you," Ilya said. "And also Anya."

"Of course. I've been spoiling the hell out of her while you were away, don't worry."

There was a long silence. It had always been that way with the two of them—when it was time to end the call, neither of them wanted to do it. But this time wasn't so bad. He'd have Shane in his arms soon.

Shane and his little one.

They swapped *I love yous* and said goodbye before Ilya hung up. The elevator dinged at the garage level. He pocketed his phone, lowered his hat over his eyes, and kept walking.

Just a little longer, and he'd be home.

Shane had this little habit. It was a stupid thing, he knew, but it was still important to him. It made him feel good about himself. Happy, confident.

The habit was simple: when Ilya was coming back from a road trip, he liked to doll up a little bit more than he would for just a typical night together at home. Nothing crazy, but Shane wanted to look good for him.

Ilya loved him. Ilya would love him if he was in stained sweatpants and a hoodie and his hair was greasy. Sometimes, when Sofia was screaming all day and Shane was particularly exhausted, that's exactly what he came home to, and he'd take Shane in his arms and kiss him all the same. But when Shane had the time and the energy, he liked to remind Ilya of how right he'd been to choose him the moment he came through the door.

In service of that goal, Shane cleaned himself up a bit after getting off the phone with Ilya. He brushed his teeth and his hair, even if he'd done it that morning. He put on dark jeans that made his ass look great and a shirt he knew Ilya liked. He put on a belt and a watch and his glasses. He applied a fresh spritz of cologne.

Shane inspected himself in the mirror, decided he approved of what he saw, and checked "look pretty" off his mental to-do list.

And then there was Sofia. She should be ready to greet her papochka, too. She'd had a bath earlier in the day, so all Shane had to do was pick out an outfit for her. He checked on her—she was happily playing in her pack-and-play just outside the kitchen—then quickly went upstairs to the nursery. He ended up selecting a white long-sleeved onesie and a pair of pink overalls to go over it. The overalls had a bear embroidered on the chest, which Shane found downright hilarious. He wouldn't put it on her for another little while. Ilya was still at the airport, meaning it would be a good hour or so before he was back. Plenty of time for her to spit up on herself or something.

Instead, Shane went back into the kitchen to check on the food (after checking on Sofia again). He'd bought a rotisserie chicken at Costco the day prior, which he'd had a bit of for lunch. He was now turning the rest of it into white chicken chili. For whatever reason, Ilya was absolutely fucking obsessed with it. It was originally Mom's recipe, and Ilya ate three bowls of it the last time they'd visited his parents. Shane thought it would be a nice "you're back!" dinner, so he asked his mom to teach him to make it. He admitted the pre-bought chicken was a bit of a shortcut, but hey—baby steps.

The chili was coming along well. He grated some white cheddar and chopped some jalapenos that they could use as toppings. He triple checked that they had sour cream (yes, it hadn't vaporized in the last hour). He put two cans of Coke in the fridge in case Ilya would want one with dinner.

It was weird. Shane spent his entire life with a single-minded focus for athletics, and now half the time he felt like a nesting mother bird. He liked it, though. Ilya had given so much up for him. He felt like these days spent taking care of him were sort of his way of saying "thank you", and besides—he certainly didn't mind being a stay at home dad and husband for a little while. Ilya would retire soon. If Shane was itching for something to do, the foundation kept him more than busy. There was always work to be done, appearances and fundraising and volunteering events. He never *had* to stay in the house when he didn't want to.

Shane checked on Sofia again. She was still fine. He considered scooping her up to play, but he didn't want to tire her out before Ilya got home. With nothing left to do, Shane replied to texts on his phone and checked his social media accounts. He put a post from NHL Updates about Ilya breaking some niche scoring record on his story. Then he checked the time, and Ilya would be home in about fifteen minutes, so he took Sofia upstairs to change her.

"Guess what?" Shane asked. The pediatrician emphasized how important it was to talk to her as much as possible, so Shane often told her stories or narrated his day to her. She was his favorite little gossip buddy. He took off her current onesie, just a plain forest green one. He checked her diaper, just to be safe—clean. Then he grabbed the white onesie.

"Hmm. Not gonna guess? Well, here's the answer: your papa's gonna be home soon. Any minute now, he'll be here." The word "papa" caught her attention—her eyes widened and her face snapped onto his the moment he said it.

"Yes! Papa's coming home," Shane said with a big smile. Sofia was smiling now, too. It was rare to have her fuss so little when he was changing her clothes. "And he won *all four* games on his road trip, so we are very, very proud of him." He did the snaps on the onesie, then grabbed the overalls.

"When you see him, make sure you tell him, yeah? Say 'oh my goodness, papa, you won! That's so cool!'" Shane finished getting them on. "That'll make him really happy. And then tell him that even though he won all his games, daddy is still better at hockey than him."

On a whim, Shane grabbed a pink headband from the nursery and put it around his daughter's head. He kissed one of her chubby cheeks.

"You are as cute as can be, did you know that?" Shane asked. "He is gonna just die when he sees you."

Once again, Shane was out of things to do. He went downstairs, baby in his arms, and more or less waited. Sofia put her tiny head on his shoulder and closed her eyes. It was getting close to her bedtime.

"I know, sweetheart. Just a little longer," Shane murmured into her hair.

The first sign was Anya bounding down the stairs at a speed that would suggest she was being chased by a demon, at least to the unqualified observer. She started running in little circles and scratching at the front door, wiggling her entire body in pure excitement. The hum of a car engine approaching, the headlights coming through the front windows. Then Shane heard the distinct beeping of the Mercedes being locked. When keys jangled in the front door, he couldn't help the little smile that tugged the corners of his lips up. He hadn't seen Ilya in *two weeks*. He missed him.

It felt ridiculous, given how long they'd gone without seeing each other in the past, but things were so different now.

When the door opened, Ilya looked tired. He was smiling softly down at Anya, who was immediately jumping up on his legs. His rolling suitcase was in his hand. Anya waggled as Ilya pet her—he hadn't seemed to notice who was standing in front of the door. He must've caught sight, though, because he looked up, and—

There it was. That big smile Shane had been hoping for.

"Hi," Shane said shyly.

Ilya tugged his bag through the door, shut it behind him, and immediately put his arms around both of them, pressing his face into the curve of Shane's neck. Shane felt, rather than heard Ilya take a deep breath.

"Hi," Ilya said. "I missed you so much," he added as he slid his hands over Shane's back.

"I missed you too. A lot." Shane wished he could return the embrace, but both his arms were holding Sofia at the moment, so he kissed Ilya's head instead.

Ilya took another breath. "You smell incredible," he murmured.

Shane blushed, suddenly feeling bashful. Like maybe putting in the effort he had was silly. "Thank you."

Ilya, having apparently fulfilled some immediate primal requirement upon laying eyes on Shane for the first time in a fortnight, allowed himself to straighten up. Sofia had opened her eyes and lifted her head from Shane. The noise and the realization of who was here gave her a second wind—she was holding out her little arms, clearly begging Ilya to hold her.

"I think someone else missed you too, huh?"

Shane carefully handed Sofia off to Ilya, who was more than grateful to have her. She was smiling massively up at him. Ilya was smiling back, and then he was kissing her forehead, her eyebrows, her nose, her cheeks, saying something about how sweet she looked in her headband, and then Sofia was *laughing*, and Shane burned this moment into his mind. He tucked it away somewhere next to his World Juniors gold medal and the way Ilya had kissed him on their wedding day. He didn't ever want to forget.

Ilya finished his kisses, tucked Sofia securely into his arms, and smiled brightly at Shane.

"I like this outfit," Ilya said. "The little overalls are very sweet."

"I picked it with you in mind, actually."

Ilya's eyes went soft at that. He leaned in and kissed Shane, their first kiss in two weeks, and it was so knee-weakeningly perfect that Shane thought he might collapse right in their foyer. He was breathless when Ilya pulled away.

"I love you," Ilya said.

"I love you too."

"You look really nice." Ilya's gaze traveled from Shane's head to his toes, with an expression that seemed appreciative. "Did you do that just for me?"

"No," Shane said, but the heat on his cheeks betrayed him. Desperate to change the subject, he ran his hand over Ilya's bicep gently. "How's your shoulder?"

Ilya, adorably, frowned at him. "I didn't tell you I hurt my shoulder."

Shane snorted. "Don't be stupid. You think I can't tell when you're injured just by watching you play?"

Sofia grabbed on to Ilya's nose, pinching it shut, which made his voice sound funny when he spoke. "My shoulder is okay, just bruised. Took a weird tumble after Graham checked me in the Vancouver game, that's all."

"And your hip?"

"Fine," Ilya said quickly.

Ilya did *not* like acknowledging that his hip gave him issues. According to the Ottawa Centaurs' medical department, years of excessive wear and tear as a professional athlete meant he'd all but worn through the cartilage on both sides. On his left, he was practically bone on bone, which gave him a lot of stiffness and pain. He'd been in physical therapy for it for over a year and a half. It was mostly ineffective. The last time Ilya had gone to the team orthopedist, he'd been told that the lack of improvement meant he'd need surgery. He'd broken that news to Shane in quite a huff.

Ilya was thirty-seven years old. In the hockey world, that was geriatric. Surgery now would mean being benched for the rest of the year as he recovered, and he'd almost certainly never get his conditioning back to a good enough place to compete. He was too old, he didn't heal like the rookies did. It would be the death knell of his career.

Despite Shane's protests, Ilya refused the surgery. When Shane asked when exactly he was planning on tending to his health, Ilya said he wanted to at least finish the season. He promised Shane he'd get the surgery in the summer.

So, with his decision made, Ilya was, to put it simply, playing through the pain. If the relatively noninvasive surgery he needed now became a total hip replacement after seven

more months of abuse, that was just how it was gonna have to be.

If Shane was honest with himself, he did not particularly approve of this plan, but it wasn't his decision to make. When Shane had retired, he'd promised Ilya he could play up to five more seasons with Shane's blessing. He was only on his second. If Ilya wanted to wring his body out for all it was worth, it wasn't Shane's place to tell him he wasn't allowed.

Shane would hardly feel okay asking Ilya to give up his thriving career *again*.

Still, Shane expected honesty about his husband's condition. "Ilya, I'm serious," he said.

"I am too," Ilya replied. "It's fine. The normal amount of problems, but I am used to it."

Shane nodded. "Okay." It was hard to stay annoyed when he was watching Sofia run her chubby hand along her dad's jaw. She seemed to like the rough texture of Ilya's stubble just as much as Shane—any time Ilya held her for long enough she'd start touching it.

"She missed you a lot this time," Shane said. "One night, the only way I could get her to sleep was giving her one of your dirty t-shirts to hold. Then she went down like a sack of potatoes."

Ilya smiled, but there was something a little sad in it, too. Shane only realized then how that story might have come off. Ilya apologized to their daughter in Russian, then said something about tiny poplar blossom toes. Shane's spoken Russian was pretty good nowadays—far better than Ilya's English had been when they first met—but he still occasionally failed to keep up with the absolute babbling Ilya would melt into when he was holding Sofia.

"Yes, Sonya," Ilya said, still in his mother tongue. "I did bring you something! Do you wanna see it? I think you do."

Ilya set Sofia against his hip, supporting her with one arm, then rolled his bag to the living room. He set it on the couch and unzipped it. Shane followed curiously. He chose not to say anything about how Ilya was getting airport dirt from the wheels onto their couch.

"What did you get her?"

"Nothing too crazy," Ilya said. "Relax." He reached into one corner of his bag and pulled out a stuffed otter toy. It was brown and soft and holding a little orange starfish. Sofia's tiny mouth fell open in excitement, then she was snatching the toy out of his hands and hugging it to her body. It was nearly as big as she was.

Shane was beaming. "Ilya, where did you even get that?"

"The team took a trip to the Vancouver Aquarium," Ilya said in English. He hadn't taken his eyes off of Sofia's overjoyed expression. Shane vaguely remembered seeing pictures of that on the Centaurs official Instagram. "It was nice, but I couldn't even really enjoy it, because the whole time I was thinking about how happy she would be if she were there."

Ilya was far too sweet for his own good. Shane wrapped him up in his arms and kissed his cheek. "We can take her someday. We can take her five times a year, for all I care."

Ilya pouted. "I know, but she would like it so much right now. You know how much she loves watching your parents' fish tank."

It was true. The Hollanders had a saltwater tank in their living room—a relatively new hobby of David's—and Sonya loved it. Even when she was screaming her little head off, they could just carry her over to look at it and she'd calm down within moments. More than once, Shane had sat near the tank and let her fall asleep in his arms, watching the fish float by.

An idea was forming in Shane's head. "Well, you're not playing in All-Stars this year, right?"

Ilya shook his head. He wanted to avoid anything unnecessary on account of his hip. The Centaurs had plenty of All-Star level players.

"Okay," Shane said. "Why don't we go to Vancouver for the break?"

Ilya gave Shane his most skeptical look. "You would feel okay traveling across the country with Sofia?"

Shane laughed humorlessly. "It'll be rough," he said. "But I know I fret too much. I know I need to get used to the idea of living life *with* her, not around her. This will be good practice—a nice, simple trip with both of us there. And she deserves to see those goddamn fish."

Sofia was currently biting the ear of her new best friend, soaking it in baby spit. Ilya's expression as he watched her was impossibly fond. "Yes, she does."

Shane kissed his cheek again. "Then let's take her in February."

"Okay," Ilya said. He gently took the toy away, then continued with more of his nonsense Russian. Shane was pretty sure he'd just referred to their daughter as a tiny cherry cream tart.

Sofia's face scrunched up as soon as the otter was out of her arms, so Ilya returned it. "Oh dear," he said. "I may have created a problem."

Shane laughed. "Probably. Come on, let's eat."

Ilya followed Shane as they walked to the kitchen. "What did you make?"

"White chicken chili," Shane said triumphantly. He was trying not to sound *too* proud of himself.

When Sofia finally fell asleep, it was in Ilya's arms. Well, his *arm*—he was keeping one hand free to eat the delicious chili Shane had made him. He realized halfway through the meal that she was out cold, and considering it was already past her bedtime, he decided to temporarily get up from dinner to put her down.

Ilya turned his head to his husband. "I'm going to..."

He trailed off and gestured to their sleeping daughter, knowing Shane would understand.

Shane looked at him hesitantly, for some reason. Ilya wasn't sure why.

It became clearer when he spoke. "Do you want to put her down in the nursery?"

Ilya immediately recognized that for what it was—a veiled way of asking *do you want to fuck?*

Putting her down in the nursery was a pain. It meant they'd have to move her from the crib to the bedside cot, since she hadn't yet crossed the six-month mark that indicated it was safe to have her sleep in her own room. Even if she had, Ilya suspected that Shane would want to keep her close for a little while longer. Moving her as she slept meant possibly *waking* her, and that was their shared greatest fear. She slept in her crib for naps sometimes, but there was no reason to put her there for overnights.

Unless Shane wanted the bedroom empty and available for something else.

Ilya shot Shane his flirtiest grin. "What do you think, Hollander?"

Shane rolled his eyes and turned back down to his food. "Go be a dad, or whatever. Wipe that look off your face."

As Ilya put Sofia down, he thought about how weird it must be to live a life where annoyance and arousal were so closely linked. It seemed like Shane hardly ever felt one without the other.

The rest of dinner was a rushed affair, as was the cleanup. They knew they might not have much time. Ilya was rinsing dishes, Shane was shoving them into the dishwasher, and then Ilya half-assed wiping the counters while Shane put the leftovers away.

They held hands and rushed up the stairs together, not stopping to make out three times along the way like they might've in the Before Times. Yes, they wanted to enjoy each other, but this had to be efficient.

Once they were in the bedroom, Ilya couldn't stop himself anymore. He wrapped his hands around Shane's narrow waist and pulled him into a bruising kiss. It had been *two weeks*, he needed this.

Shane was so gorgeous. The dark curtain of his hair, his sharp, warm eyes—the way his freckles only highlighted the smooth perfection of his skin. And here was a laugh line starting to form, and a little crease at the corner of his eye that Ilya couldn't resist pressing a kiss to. He looked at Shane and saw every version of him he'd ever lain eyes upon, twenty years of stunning beauty and panted moans and sweet smiles.

Shane was perfect. Ilya knew that he was attractive and people often found him charming, but he still sometimes struggled to connect the dots on how he'd convinced a knockout like *Shane Hollander* to give him the time of day.

Who cared? He had him, that was what mattered. He had Shane, putty between his hands. Pink lips parted, gasping, open, *wanting*. Shane was staring up at him desperately, silently begging for more than a kiss. Ilya liked to tease, but he had no choice right then. Not when it had been two weeks. Not when Shane was pleading like that.

Ilya slid one hand down, squeezing Shane's right ass cheek firmly, which earned him an appreciative whine. He moved it around, running his warm palm over Shane's cock. It wouldn't be enough through two layers of fabric, but Shane keened anyway, pressing his face into Ilya's shoulder.

"I missed you so fucking much," Ilya said. "I've been thinking about this all week."

"Me too," Shane panted. "I kept remembering that time when—"

It was then that they were cut off by an unfortunately familiar sound. Sofia, in her crib, wailing.

Ilya was not sure he'd ever seen Shane look so devastated. Like he'd been robbed at knifepoint.

"Nooooo... we were so fast in the kitchen," Shane whined.

Ilya was equally disappointed, but also saw a whisper of something like humor in this situation. It was so ridiculous. Cockblocked by a baby.

With a light sigh, Ilya kissed his forehead. "Shane, how long has it been?"

He didn't have to clarify for Shane to know what he meant. "Week and a half," he said under his breath.

Ilya laughed quietly. "How about I handle Sofia and you take care of yourself? I think you need it."

"It's not the same." Shane crossed his arms and scowled like a moody teenager.

"I know, sweetheart. It's not. But you'll feel better." Ilya kissed Shane's forehead. Sofia was still crying. He needed to go.

"Fine," Shane huffed. And then, as an afterthought: "Thank you."

"Literally signed up for it," Ilya said, and then he turned for the nursery.

When Ilya took Sofia into his arms, her face was bright red and streaked with tears. She was clearly in quite a mood, even for her.

It was going to be a long night.

When Ilya's eyes fluttered open, he saw the sunlight peeking through the windows of his home.

Wait, what?

For the first time in five months, Ilya opened his eyes for the first time since falling asleep and found sunlight in his own bedroom. He hadn't been woken up once. He turned his head over to Shane, who was still asleep.

Huh.

Ilya remembered soothing Sofia the previous night—it had taken nearly an hour to get her back to sleep, after changing her, holding her, rocking with her, and singing to her. By the time he'd finally succeeded, Shane was sated, cleaned-up, and dead asleep in their bed. Ilya had dumped Sofia in her cot and practically passed out beside his husband, the toll of a day spent traveling and soothing a teething, fussy infant taking its toll.

And now... it was morning, And he was waking up for the first time since then.

Ilya sat up slowly, peeking at Sofia in her cot. She was asleep, too. Happily. Peacefully. When he turned his head back to the bed, Shane's eyes were open. He seemed equally bewildered to have woken up with the sun.

Ilya allowed a quiet, tentative joy to rise in his chest. Maybe it was true. Shane usually let him do the overnights when he was home—that was their deal—so he couldn't imagine why he'd have handled it instead. But Ilya couldn't know until he asked.

"Did... did Sonya wake you up last night?" Ilya turned his head to look at their daughter again, unsure if it was a trick of the light.

Shane shook his head. "No. Did she wake *you* up?"

"No." Ilya could feel the grin splitting his face.

They both let that sink in.

"Holy shit," Shane said. "Our baby just slept through the night."

"Our baby just slept through the night," Ilya repeated. No championship trophy could have compared with the sense of victory he felt in that moment.

"Fuck yes!" Shane leaned in for a high five, which Ilya indulged him in, and then Shane threw himself on top of him. Ilya stretched up, Shane leaned down, and they met in the middle for a victory kiss. Shane didn't even complain that they hadn't brushed their teeth.

When the crying started, Ilya collapsed back into the pillows, laughing to himself. Of course. They'd made too much noise and woken the baby.

Shane was laughing, too. Even as he got up and pulled their little one into his arms.

"Hello, sweetheart," Shane cooed. His voice was soft, gentle, loving—even more so than when he spoke sweetly to Ilya. It was a tone reserved for Sofia alone. Ilya loved when he got to hear it, to hear her make her little baby noises in response.

She was not making little baby noises right then. She was screaming her head off. Still, Shane soldiered on. "I'm so proud of you! Sleeping all through the night."

Ilya got out of bed and stretched, taking a few steps towards his little family. He kissed Shane's head, slowly shaking off sleep. "I'll go make her a bottle," he murmured into his husband's hair. Shane nodded gratefully.

As he heated up the water and mixed the formula in the kitchen, Ilya couldn't help but beam. He didn't care how loud Sonya wanted to cry in the morning. She could scream loud enough for her grandparents to hear and Ilya wouldn't mind, as long as it was *in the morning*.

He couldn't believe it. A full night's rest. Things were looking up.

December

Shane was doing something that could only be described as fretting. How else was he meant to react, though? Yes, they had the pediatrician's blessing to bring her. Yes, she was seven months old, now. Yes, he'd brought sound-blocking ear muffs. Yes, she was warm and well-fed and safe in his arms.

But he was still worried. What if the noise was overstimulating? What if she got sick? The game hadn't even started, and it was already so crowded in the arena.

He felt his mother put a hand on his leg, which made him realize he had been bouncing it. "Stop," she said. "Sofia is fine. See?"

It was then that he looked in his lap to see his daughter, and—yes. She was more than fine. She was all bundled up to fight off the cold arena. Her ear muffs were protecting her. She was smiling in a Centaurs 81 jersey, but instead of reading "Rozanov" on the back, it said "Papochka".

Shane, on the other hand, was wearing a regular Rozanov jersey. As in, one of Ilya's other jerseys that he wasn't currently using. He may have gotten Tony Barrett to snipe it for him. It was way too big, but Shane didn't care. That wasn't the point. The point was for Ilya to feel like he had his family cheering him on.

Shane wanted to make *damn* sure that Ilya knew how much he was loved and supported. It wasn't every day you got to bring your infant daughter to watch your husband play in the NHL. In fact, in all likelihood it wouldn't happen at all after June.

Wasn't that a weird thought? Ilya Rozanov and Shane Hollander, both retired. No more hockey.

Ten years ago, it would've been terrifying. Now Shane was *excited*.

Shane turned his head to look at his parents. They'd missed on the whole "we're here for Ilya" memo. They'd cheer for him, no doubt, but you'd have to pry their number 24 jerseys from their cold dead hands.

When Shane had asked if his parents wanted Rozanov jerseys to wear to Centaurs games after he retired, they'd scoffed. How could he even suggest such a thing? They were willing to accept that evil Boston Bear marrying their son and raising their grandchildren, but wearing a shirt with his name on it for a few hours was one step too far.

Immediately after declining them, Yuna had brought Ilya an entire tray of pumpkin cookies she'd made for him, simply because Ilya had offhandedly mentioned they were his favorite at a family gathering once.

Shane didn't mind—his career was theirs as much as it was his. He never would've gotten anywhere close to as far as he did without his parents' support. They were always there for him emotionally and always backed his dreams with their time and their money.

If they wanted to wear their Hollander jerseys, they'd earned that right.

It was nice to actually sit with his parents and watch a hockey game that wasn't on TV. That had happened less than a dozen times since Shane got drafted. He could simply drink a beer, enjoy his mother's commentary, fuss over his cute baby, and watch Ilya play. He was going all in on this whole WAG thing, except he was neither a wife nor a girlfriend. Still, he had the spirit of it, if his showing today was any indication. They needed to come up with a more inclusive acronym. Right now, the group chat was called "WAGs & Harris & Shane". It used to be even longer, but Ilya had been kicked out after Shane retired.

Shane turned his attention back to the ice and watched the players finish warm ups. There he was, skating laps around the rink. There he was, staring at Shane's section of the seating and watching like his life depended on it. Like Shane and Sofia were all he wanted to see.

A few minutes before he had to go back in the locker room, Ilya skated right up to the glass and ripped his helmet off. He wanted to say "hello" to the guest of honor, Shane was sure.

He carried Sofia down in his arms. He'd never seen Ilya smile quite like that. There was something so warm and joyous in it, but also something proprietary.

Shane could feel his cheeks flushing when that look was turned on him, so he distracted Ilya with their baby instead. Sofia was reaching out towards her papa and became very confused when an invisible barrier stopped her from touching him. She started to get upset, but Ilya recovered the situation by making a silly face. Sofia laughed. Shane let out a weird giggle at the sight, which immediately prompted him to cover his mouth.

"Turn around," Dad said from behind him. "I want to take a picture."

Shane did as he was told, turning around and smiling, Sofia in his arms. It took a few seconds to take the picture. Dad gave a thumbs up and Shane turned back around. He smiled at his husband.

Shane knew he'd have to speak up to be heard on account of the glass. "How does it feel to have your whole family at a game for the first time?"

"Not my whole family," Ilya said. "Unless you've brought Anya?"

Shane laughed. "You're ridiculous."

"It feels incredible," Ilya said, more honesty in his tone. "It feels... it is one of the best feelings I have ever felt, Shane. To know you and Sofia will be here for me. And your parents, too."

Shane knew Ilya had never had never had this kind of support—everyone in his family rooting him on. He deserved it. He was incredible.

"Good. That's what you deserve. What you've always deserved."

Ilya was smiling at Sofia again, lost to the world. He probably hadn't heard a word of what Shane had said. Shane couldn't hold it against him; Sofia was absolutely enchanting.

"Is she okay?" Ilya asked, looking back up. "Warm?"

Shane nodded. "I'd let you touch her to feel it for yourself if I could. I promise, she's toasty. And you can hardly hear a thing through those headphones. She napped in the car, so I think she'll be able to get through the game alright energy-wise."

"I don't need to touch her," Ilya said. "I trust you if you say she is warm. You're her dad."

Oh, and how that statement made his chest float.

"She's very warm."

"Good." Ilya looked back. Everyone was going back into the locker room. "I have to go, the team—"

Shane cut him off. "Ilya. Did you just start to explain how playing on an NHL team works to me?"

Ilya was embarrassed when he realized his mistake. Shane savored it.

"Go," Shane said. "I love you. Good luck. Sofia loves you too."

Ilya grinned. "I love you both," he said. "Wait—is that my actual jersey?"

"Maybe. Go."

Ilya laughed before he skated off, blades gleaming in the bright arena lights.

Shane couldn't wait to watch introductions. When that announcer said Ilya's name, he was going to scream until his voice went hoarse.

The game started and Ilya hardly cared. For the first time in his life, he preferred being on the bench.

Hockey was a rush, there was no other way to put it, but it was a rush played in shifts. And that meant a whole lot of waiting your turn. Usually, when Ilya was waiting, he felt like a chained up tiger. A beacon of power, holding out for the very first opportunity to snap. The moment he was given permission, he'd bite.

But that was before pretty boys with long dark hair came to watch him play in his jersey. Before they brought tiny baby girls in "Papochka" jerseys with giant smiles on their faces and adorable protective muffs over their ears.

Before they sat in the stands, screamed Ilya's name, and were so openly loving it made his heart ache.

Ilya, sitting on the bench, waiting for his shift, was watching his family.

Shane wasn't even looking at him. He undoubtedly assumed that Ilya would be paying attention to the game, not its spectators. Sofia was sat upright in his lap. He was helping her watch the game, gently moving her back and forth to follow the puck. Ilya could see his mouth moving, even at this distance—no doubt he was explaining the rules to her infant ears. Hockey would be her first language.

Sofia was more interested in the person holding her than the game. She tipped her little head back, *back, back, back* until she was looking up at her dad. The two of them smiled, and then Shane leaned down ever so slightly—

Ilya wasn't sure what he was doing. It just looked like he was slowly shaking his head at her. Then he caught a different angle and realized.

Shane was brushing their noses together. It was the softest little nuzzle Ilya had ever seen. When he was done, he pressed a kiss onto her forehead. Sofia laughed and Shane joined her, dark hair falling to shield her little face. Ilya would've given anything to be able to hear it over the noise of the arena.

If Ilya dropped dead right there, it would've been without complaint. He was young, yes, but nobody could feel shortchanged by life after seeing that display with their own eyes.

Did Shane know how gentle he looked to the outside observer? That his love for his daughter was clear in his every movement? Did he know that he'd already proven himself as by far the best person Ilya could have ever hoped to co-parent with?

That was *Shane fucking Hollander*. Shane Hollander, the greatest hockey player of a generation. Shane Hollander, who still held the all-time record for assists, two years after retirement. Shane Hollander, who'd led Canada to World Juniors gold and Olympic silver, who'd taken the dumpy Montreal Voyageurs and turned them into a dynasty.

Shane Hollander, wearing Ilya's wedding ring. Shane Hollander, with Ilya's name on his back. Shane Hollander, holding Ilya's baby.

Shane kissed her forehead again. It was too much. It was not enough, and it was far too much. Ilya was afraid he might break into tears, right there in the middle of the game. He blinked a few times to hold them back.

"Rozanov," Haas said from behind him. "I think you are going out now?"

Ilya gasped, jerked his head back to the ice, and grabbed his stick. "Fuck, Haas—thank you. Sorry." He jumped over the boards and got to where he needed to be. He did still have a job to do, other than watching his husband be perfect.

Ilya did not want that stupid hip surgery. Not until summer. He had no interest in his career ending with such a pathetic fizzle, especially when Shane had been sent home with a goddamn Stanley Cup.

But Ilya would get the surgery eventually. And he would retire after this season. He knew those things as facts.

Watching Shane lay affection on their baby reminded him exactly how much he was going to love it.

End Notes

You guys leaving nice comments is basically what fueled me to get this out so much quicker than I originally thought, lol :)

them going to the aquarium was originally going to be the final scene of this fic, but then I realized I had enough ideas for it to make it its own oneshot, so maybe i'll write that someday.

Thank you so much for reading! Every single kudos and comment is so so very appreciated :)

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