

novices

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novices

by [galehautstomb](#)

Summary

It wasn't fair, because Shane didn't even do it on purpose. His ignorance was a product of years of repression. They've been together for more than a decade, and they've fucked, fought, and everything in between — but somehow Shane was still oblivious to the warning signs of his heat. In the days before it came, Shane would pace about the house in a huff; sweat on his brow, gnawing on a candy bar, complaining about a headache, befuddled as to his own state of dysfunction.

He always smelled like absolute fucking sin too. It took all Ilya had not to drop to Shane's feet, mouth open, tongue at the ready, and offer his enthusiastic services. Ilya tried to do so, early on in their relationship, but Shane kicked him away like he was a nosy terrier, tsked at and scolded for its eagerness to serve.

Finicky little omega. Ilya would die for him, truly.

(Or, the trials and tribulations of Shane Hollander's heat cycle).

Notes

Look, am I playing with gender here in a meaningful way? Absolutely not. I mostly just wanted to write about Ilya pampering Shane - what better way to do that than make it omegaverse?

Very loosely structured around a 5+1, even I don't really know what each of them are lol.

This is un-betaed! Enjoy!

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

Ilya knew that Shane's heat was a sensitive topic.

Frankly, he'd like to be given a little more grace about the whole thing. Did Ilya not spend over a decade sneaking into suspiciously empty apartment buildings in Montreal, or ill-placed Boston hotel rooms just to get a single night's taste of Shane Hollander's *mesmerising* scent? Ilya knew when and when to not be subtle about something.

Years ago Shane's scent had been faint. Ilya could catch only a hint of it on the ice, smothered by the other players' overwhelming alpha air of *fight* and *competitiveness*. Dulled even more so by the heavy suppressants Shane had been on since puberty. Still, it caught Ilya's eye, or rather his nose, in the private moments of a hotel gym, a Las Vegas rooftop, and his heart followed surely after.

It took literal years for Ilya to get a full taste of it. Shane's unfiltered scent was full-bodied and smoky, an underlying sweetness that strangely reminded him of roasting marshmallows over a woodfire. It was a scent that bloomed slowly, and eventually matured into a healthy rich thrum under the guidance of the Centaurs' medical team. Ilya will remember the appalled bug-eyed look on the doctor's face until he died, when Shane told her about the industrial strength suppressants Montreal insisted their captain take to play "proper" Voyagers hockey.

"Suppressants keep the alphas away," was Shane's typical party line whenever Ilya asked. They both knew that was bullshit. Anyone with working eyes and a brain knew Shane was an omega. He was the most famous omega in all of hockey. The suppressants certainly didn't stop bull-headed alpha idiots from cross-checking Shane, snarling unwanted filth in his ear, leering all slow-smiled and predatory when Shane skated by during warmups.

Ilya shouldn't have expected Shane to just be *over* all the suppression once he was under the care of a considerate medical team and a liberal hockey club. Shane definitely got better, more willing to discuss his cycles and his more typical "omega" traits, but then again, Shane wasn't typical.

Shane was Shane. He liked canoeing on the lake, intricate yoga routines, Snickers bars, too ripe blackberries, sea-salt handsoaps, and closet organizers from IKEA. Did all of those things translate to "omega"? Occasionally, but any knot-head who thought their omega would smell like Skittles or some shit because that's what they craved when they were hormonal was a moron.

A few of Shane's ticks and preferences transferred to his designation, but they were slight. The first time they shared his heat together Ilya found Shane in their walk-in-closet, sweat-dampened and cross-legged on the floor sorting his socks by color. A strange, if endearing nesting trait. Shane liked sweet-treats more than he'd ever fully admit, and Ilya suspected his previous strict dieting fads were an internalized form of self-flagellation for his baser instincts. So yeah, Ilya made sure their grocery orders had *both* Shane's weird saw-dust tasting granola bars and king-sized packs of Snickers for his cravings. Balance, and all that.

No one knew better than Ilya how long it took for Shane to accept even these small indulgences. If Ilya could, he'd go back in time and beat the ever-living shit out of whatever minor league hockey coach first turned-up his nose at a freshly presented Shane. Nevermind that Shane was a generational player of generational players. Nevermind that if Shane didn't have even an ounce of hockey IQ in his whole body, he didn't deserve the treatment he suffered.

In a way, the fucking part of Shane's heats were easier. Ilya, a proud and self-professed giver in all things sex-related, was more than eager to give it to Shane whichever way he wanted. On the floor. In the nest. In the damn closet in front of the socks. Ilya did not care either way.

It was a great honor. Shane, after all, had not shared that privilege with any other alpha. No one else. Ever. Still, an honor came with great caveats. Shane was catching up on all the "omega" things he's denied himself. He hadn't had regular heat cycles since he was fourteen. This meant he didn't know jack shit about his cycle sometimes. Ilya, more experienced (he'd been called to be a heat partner to maybe half a dozen omegas in his time) caught Shane's symptoms often before he did.

It wasn't fair, because Shane didn't even do it on purpose. His ignorance was a product of years of repression. They've been together for more than a decade, and they've fucked, fought, and everything in between — but somehow Shane was still oblivious to the warning signs of his heat. In the days before it came, Shane would pace about the house in a huff; sweat on his brow, gnawing on a candy bar, complaining about a headache, befuddled as to his own state of dysfunction.

He always smelled like absolute fucking *sin* too. It took all Ilya had not to drop to Shane's feet, mouth open, tongue at the ready, and offer his enthusiastic services. Ilya tried to do so, early on in their relationship, but Shane kicked him away like he was a nosy terrier, tsked at and scolded for its eagerness to serve.

Finicky little omega. Ilya would die for him, truly.

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(1)

Shock and awe! Shane Hollander (and Ilya Rozanov by extension) would not be attending this year's All-Star game due to, gasp, league-mandated medical leave.

It was a heat. Everyone knew it was a heat. A goat-herder in the mountains with no access to the internet would know it's because of a heat.

The Shane Hollander of two years ago, captain of the Montreal Voyageurs, would never have skipped a hockey-related event to tend to his heat-cycle. Not anymore, and it didn't take a genius to figure out there were few opportunities during an 82-game season to squeeze in four to five off days. Measures had to be taken.

It was no skin off Ilya's back to tend to his mate. For all that he liked pestering his fellow players and showing off at the All-Star game, he'd rather bunk up in their cottage on the lake

and tend to Shane's each and every desire.

Ilya wasn't dumb enough to say that to the reporters though, even the kinder ones who threw him softball questions. So he, begrudgingly, stuck to the boring party lines. *Yes, this break has been recommended by our medical team. No, I have no other comments. We'll be refreshed and ready to play when we return.*

Regardless of this supposed "scandal" in the hockey media, the Centaurs' last day in the locker room before the break was pretty nice. Everyone was buzzing about their upcoming vacations; many Caribbean and Mexican rendezvous, a few mountain getaways, some stay-cations with gaggles of adorable children. Troy was the only one headed to the All-Stars in New York, and he was doing a piss-poor job of pretending to be bothered by it. Especially, with Harris bounding about the room, smelling like apples and happy omega, telling anyone who would listen about their sight-seeing plans.

"—and on Thursday we're going to this awesome queer club in Bushwick. They do drag show versions of Broadway musicals. Honestly, it's not too far removed from the main-stage stuff. Alexander Hamilton in drag? Like, duh, the founding fathers already wore wigs."

Luca Haas nodded at him, open-mouthed, *totally* not getting it, but he offered an enthusiastic, "Sounds like fun!"

Ilya couldn't resist poking the bear a little bit. "Not visiting Kingfisher?" he shouted from across the room. "Hunter will be sad. He could use money. Bar is boring. His face is ugly."

Harris snorted and skipped over to Ilya just to smack him on the arm. He practically oozed joy and contentment, more so than usual, which was saying something for Harris.

"Don't be an ass. I know you and Shane were there the last time we played the Admirals. You were all over Kip's Instagram. *Shirtless*, mind you."

Damn. He wasn't wrong. Maybe Ilya had too many tequila shots on their last visit to Kingfisher. One minute he'd been snug in a booth with Shane, the next he was shirtless on the bartop arm-in-arm with Eric Bennet's blonde omega bartender singing drunkly to Lady Gaga. Sue him, who the fuck didn't like a Lady Gaga song? He and Shane went to one of her concert's last summer and had the best fucking time. Shane even let Ilya blow him in the car afterward.

"You cannot say you did not enjoy it," Ilya purred at Harris. He was in a good mood, and harmless flirting was second nature to him — besides, no one took him seriously nowadays, not with Shane's mating mark on his neck, and vice versa.

Apparently Shane didn't feel the same way.

The growl from across the room was *loud*. Shane's shoulders were hunched, his teeth bared, and he was glaring daggers at Harris who, smart man, took a big step away from Ilya. Troy, who had been talking to one of the trainers by the door, straightened up, instinctively responding to a threat to his own omega.

Luckily, the reporters were long gone, it was just teammates and staff, but the general air of shock around the room was apparent. Shane wasn't one to draw attention to himself on a normal day. Forget for a possessive, romantic, *omega*, reason. He'd done just that. A warning growl from a mate, meant to curb competition, and temper a wily alpha.

Shane was quick to realize what he'd done. His cheeks flushed tomato-red, and he slapped a hand over his mouth. Ilya found it cute.

"Oh my god," Shane squeaked, half muffled by his fingers. "I can't believe I did that. Harris, I'm so sorry. Troy, you too. Geez, I don't know what came over me."

Harris waved him off, unphased. Bless him. "Please, you're totally fine! A little growling is good for the soul! It's instinctual. I swear, some days all I want to do is run circles around Troy and bite at anyone who comes close."

Troy came over to his mate. He was still tense, but it didn't look like he was going to start anything. He kissed Harris' temple.

"Well, that wouldn't be very productive," Troy mumbled. A few laughs echoed him, and the tension broke. It didn't go unnoticed how quickly Shane dressed, and made a beeline for the door. Ilya sighed, and went after him.

He found Shane scrunched up in the passenger seat of their car, knees to his chest and head in his hands.

"That was so fucking embarrassing, what the hell," he moaned when Ilya came in to sit on the driver's side.

The car stank of sour pissy omega. Ilya locked the doors, cracked the windows, and pushed his seat back so he had room to pull Shane over the console and into his lap. Only once Shane settled with his head tucked under Ilya's chin, nose positioned right over Ilya's scent glands where he *hoped* he smelled calm and soothing, did Shane relax.

Of course, the first thing Ilya did was crack a joke.

"Well, I am good lucking guy. Very hard to keep attention away. You did a good job, *moy lyubimyy*. I feel very protected."

"Stop it," Shane whined and slapped him on the chest. "I've never acted like that before. It's weird."

"Not weird. Normal. We are mated. We can be possessive."

"No, we can't," Shane grumbled, just to be contrary, and snuggled closer. He was acting a bit strange. Shane was pretty cuddly at home, but not so much in public. They kept their locker room PDA to a limit, they didn't *restrain* themselves, but nothing crazy. The fact that Shane was allowing himself to be cuddled in a public parking lot was honestly a little dumbfounding.

Then, Ilya tucked his head down to nuzzle at Shane's neck. Under the strong, but dissipating, smell of embarrassed omega was something richly sweet.

Ilya grinned. Ah, well, they may have to go shopping sooner than they thought. Shane's heat was almost here.

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(2)

"This isn't a practical amount of ice cream," Shane complained, crouched over the kitchen counter and glaring at three pints of Hagen Daas' cherry-vanilla crunch.

"I ordered extra."

Ilya was busy re-arranging the fridge. An extra large container of blackberries. Two cartons of eggs. Six bottles of yellow gatorade (literally the worst flavor, ugh, what the fuck, Shane) snug tight in the freezer. There were still another two bags of groceries on the counter to unpack. A gentle breeze could have toppled over the poor DoorDasher who delivered the bags to their doorstep, but Ilya hadn't dared suggest Shane go to the grocery store with his heat coming on so fast. Ilya thought about going by himself, but since they arrived home Shane had glared at him, squinty-eyed, practically vibrating with unsettled energy, every time Ilya stepped out of sight. Clearly, that possessive streak wasn't ending anytime soon.

"I'm not going to eat all of it. We don't need to spend that much money," Shane added.

Ilya took a deep breath in, trying not to topple over a jar of bread and butter pickles. They were millionaires for god's sake. Patience, patience.

"Maybe is for me. Must have a lot of energy to keep up with needy omega."

Ilya was right on the money. Shane was blushing. "I'm not *that* needy."

Fuck the groceries, Shane was too cute not to kiss. Ilya went right on over and nuzzled at Shane's neck, intentionally obnoxious, making loud exaggerated rumbling alpha sounds that Shane pretended to be perturbed by — but he smelled pleased and *heavenly*.

Ilya ended his barrage with a kiss on that perfect little nose. He held up his hand and made a pinching motion with his fingers. "Just *little* bit needy, but easy fix. Ice cream and blow jobs."

Shane eyed the three melting pints on the counter like one did a spider crawling on the bedroom wall. "Maybe," he conceded.

Oh, Ilya *loved* being right.

"Blow job first," he said, and sank to his knees.

~

(3)

The next morning the scent of heat hung around their house in a tease. Shane wasn't full-blown yet, but Ilya guessed by the end of the day they'd be hunkered up in the bedroom with a six pack of gatorade and a prayer.

Ilya busied himself with sorting through the hallway closet, packed quite literally to the top with dozens of blankets, pillows, and other various soft nesting materials. Ilya would have bought out the entire furniture store even if Shane only used one measly pillow for his nest, but Shane, who was usually not one to indulge in excess, during his *heat*, oh, he was a full on bona fide nesting *fanatic*. It was like The Bachelor, but for blankets.

Already, Shane had set up the base of his nest on their bed, mapped out with large blocky pillows stacked three high. He liked his nest big, better for cuddling and a sleepy-clumsy midnight fuck. Sometimes he liked a blanket over the top, for a dark and cozy vibe, but usually tossed it off in an overstimulated sweaty fit halfway through his heat. Regardless of Shane's preferences, which were easy to predict *at least* by Ilya, his omega deserved nothing less than as many options as he'd like. Hence, the hallway closet, stuffed to the absolute brim.

Ilya came back to their bedroom with an armful of fuzzy blankets and a fuzzy red heart-shaped throw pillow Shane pretended was too tacky, but often tugged to his chest in the night.

"Shane?" Ilya called. Shane wasn't in the bedroom, or the bathroom.

He tossed the blankets and pillow on the bed, gently, so as not to disturb the nest and went to their large walk-in-closet where he found Shane sitting on the floor, criss-crossed, glaring at a tray of socks like they insulted his mother.

Like clockwork. Ilya just couldn't help himself, even though he knew asking would do him no good.

"Shane, what are you doing?"

Shane didn't even look up. He glared at the tray of socks like they'd insulted his mother. There was a little tense wrinkle between his eyebrows he only got when he was truly focused. Locked in, as they say. Over a sock organizer. Ilya was tickled fucking pink.

Eventually Shane pointed at a pair of soft-brown socks the color of a fawn. "They don't match."

The two socks looked completely identical. Ilya told him so.

Shane threw his hands up exasperated. "They're fucking not! The one on the left is darker, and I swear to God I put both socks in the laundry a week ago, and I don't know where it went."

Ilya shrugged. "I can check laundry room."

Shane grumbled, just barely audible under his breath, “But that means you have to leave...”

“Sweetheart,” Ilya started, and trailed off, because there was teasing and there was setting himself up for a lonely night on the couch. Ilya had an anxious suspicion that if he made too much fun of Shane now, he would burst into tears.

He laid himself down on the floor next to his mate, stretching his legs out in a confident easy sprawl. He curled an arm around Shane, and with the surefire confidence of a long beloved mate leaned in for a slow, heated kiss. Shane melted into it, always so sweet, a choked sound of pleasure caught in the back of his throat. The air bloomed with the scent of satisfied omega.

Ilya, ever the multi-tasker, plied Shane with kisses, a firm hand keeping him close by the jaw, and meanwhile stretched out his foot toward the offending sock until he had it draped over his big toe. With a flourish Ilya tossed it away into the recesses of the closet, falling backward, Shane in tow, laughing, as he went.

“Ilya!” Shane squawked, pushing Ilya away. His lips were a beautiful bitten-red. “I was organizing that!”

Ilya threw up his hands, feigning innocence. “Organizing what? Now it is gone. No more problem.”

Shane swatted him on the chest, but it was more playful than anything. He looked lighter, less twitchy. After a moment, he settled back into the curve of Ilya’s outstretched arm.

“I don’t know why I do that,” Shane admitted after a few minutes of silence. “I just feel so restless. Everything has to be perfect. Even the fucking socks I haven’t worn in a week.”

Ilya pressed a kiss to the crown of his head. “Not a bad thing. It is your bedroom, your nest, you want it to be your way. A heat is a vulnerable time.”

He tipped Shane’s face up by the chin, and held his gaze. What he said next was a gamble, often met with resistance. At least, where such delicate matters were concerned.

“Let me take care of you,” Ilya whispered.

Shane’s eyes, beloved and warm, glistened. He didn’t let Ilya see him cry, but he allowed a kiss, and afterward frogmarched his mate into the bedroom to do some proper nest construction.

~

(4)

Shane hovered blank-faced in the bathroom doorway, just a towel around his waist, and favoring his left leg ever so slightly.

Anyone else would have missed the barest physical indication of his pain, but Ilya wasn’t just anyone.

“There, seaweed bomb!” Ilya declared, and dropped a dark green bath bomb in the steaming tub of water. A few candles (battery-powered, of course) littered the edges of the tub. Up near the faucet rested a fancy wooden bathtray with a glass of icy cucumber-lemon water, a tin of exfoliating scrub, a cup of almond-chocolate trail mix, and a sudoku book.

“Hurry, before it gets cold,” Ilya said, ushering Shane inside. His leg cramps must be bad, he was walking pretty gingerly. Most people assumed omegas were prone to backaches during heats, which wasn’t untrue and rather common, but the aches could spread *anywhere* on their body. Shane’s concentrated in his thighs and calves, and never the same leg, always unpredictable.

Shane dropped the towel and stepped into the water, but didn’t sit down. He held out a hand to Ilya and asked softly, “Come with me?”

“You sure?” It wasn’t abnormal for them to share a shower or a bath, but Shane described the aches and pains from his heat like “having fire ants crawling out of his pores”. This early-on, he was too sensitive to touch, and found reprieve only in a warm bath and a bit of alone time. Ilya wasn’t insulted by this at all, he just wished he could do more.

“Yeah. I want to be near you.”

Ilya loved him beyond words. He stripped faster than he ever has in his life.

While their bathtub was bigger than most, they were still two full grown hockey players. On his own, Ilya couldn’t stretch out fully in the tub, but it didn’t matter. Shane sighed as he settled against Ilya’s front stretching out to rest his head against Ilya’s shoulder. The bath fizzed with the bathbomb, tinted a dark green and smelling of sea salt. Ilya’s knees poked out of the surface of the water bracketing Shane’s flanks.

“Feels good?” Ilya asked.

Shane reached for the cup of trail mix, and sorted through the pieces until he came up with a chunk of chocolate. Then he offered it to Ilya, flushed, eyes sparkling. “Yeah. You spoil me.”

Ilya let his lips hover over Shane’s fingertips, lingering, savoring his skin, his smell, the casual intimacy he swore to God he would never take for granted. The chocolate was pretty damn good too.

“You deserve it,” Ilya murmured into a chocolate-flavored kiss, then with a long gangly arm plucked up the Sudoku book.

“Now, do Sudoku. I will be the best pillow,” he demanded, and settled himself in for a power nap. After all, he’d soon need his energy.

~

(5)

Just before dawn, Ilya awoke to the rustling of sheets, a strained muffled whine, and the scent of Shane in full heat.

He was up and moving almost instantly.

“Sweetheart,” Ilya crooned, reaching over to Shane’s side of the bed, where his mate was curled up on himself, temples flanked with sweat, his eyes squeezed shut.

Shane tipped his head back, like a flower stretching toward the sun. “Ilya,” he begged.

“Fuck,” Ilya swore. There was a damp spot on the bedding from Shane’s slick. Ilya was rock-hard, and the base of his cock throbbed. They were only *touching*, and already it felt like Ilya could blow his knot.

He slipped three fingers inside Shane, rougher than he might usually be, but he was so *wet*. Open and easy for it. Shane threw his head back onto Ilya’s shoulder, panting.

“Taste,” Ilya commanded, pulling out suddenly. He brought his damp fingers to Shane’s mouth. Shane didn’t question it, eyes half-lidded he lapped at Ilya’s fingertips, sloppy with it, all spit and slick and punch-drunk red lips. Ilya took Shane’s mouth, biting at him fiercely. He wanted Shane covered in his own arousal, and Ilya’s come. He wanted him plugged up.

“Ilya, please,” Shane gasped. He was rocking back into the cradle of Ilya’s hips, that round pert ass right over Ilya’s cock. He probably didn’t even realize he was doing it, pleased little squeaks falling from his lips when Ilya’s fat cock slipped between his cheeks. Shane was only this uninhibited when his heat came full on. Thank fuck they went to bed naked.

Ilya pulled Shane close. One hand at his hip, reaching for Shane’s cock. The other resting in a tease at the cradle of his throat.

Ilya slotted his face against Shane’s ear, nipping and sucking. Their hips rolled together in a steady roll, every so often the head of Ilya’s cock caught against Shane’s hole. If Ilya pushed, he would slide right in, and fuck he wanted to, and he *would*, but not yet. He had to drag it out now, before the rest of the heat sucked them in.

“You don’t have to beg, sweetheart, but you sound so sweet when you do,” Ilya whispered. He tightened his grip on Shane’s cock and thumbed at the head. His hand was dripping with pre-come.

Shane bucked against him, but Ilya kept him firmly pinned. Ilya knew it made Shane hot, the way Ilya could throw his strength around. So Ilya folded himself further over the curve of Shane’s body, until Shane was half on his belly and Ilya could rut hard against his ass.

“I want, I want,” Shane chanted, almost mindless, and Ilya dipped down to lick at the raised edge of Shane’s mating bite on the back of his neck.

“Remember when I took you, during your first heat, after you came to Ottawa?” Ilya purred in Russian. “We fucked like animals. I had to have you. You smelled so good, and all I wanted was my bite on your neck, your ass on my knot.”

Shane’s Russian comprehension was much improved these days. He studied so diligently, squinting at his language-learning app, that perfect face pursed with stress-lines while he

fumbled over strange consonants. So, he understood, most, if not all of what Ilya said.

Shane groaned. “I want it. Give it to me now.”

Ilya grinned. He wouldn’t last long enough to take Ilya’s cock. Shane was usually like this during his heats. Two or three orgasms to take the edge off before they got to actually fucking.

Ilya pulled his hand away, and pushed Shane flat against the bed. He bullied himself between Shane’s legs to fuck those soft shapely thighs, while Shane rubbed off against the sheets. The air was so thick and sweet, Ilya was choking on it.

He kept going in Russian, a stream of filthy babble.

“You know, I have fucked a lot of people — but no one, not one soul, compares to you. You were made for this. Your sweet sighs. Your tight ass. God, you’re such a slut for me.”

Ilya knew Shane understood, because he moaned, high-pitched, and reached upward to grab Ilya by the nape, tugging him closer to bite at Shane’s mating scar. Shane came hard, from nothing but that, and Ilya’s cock and half-blown knot smearing a mess against his backside.

~

(+1)

Ilya was filthy. There was dried come in his chest-hair. His legs ached, his arms ached. His lips were puffy and buzzing from overuse. This was the same over-wrought feeling he got after a hard practice. Those days when the coaches had them running drill after drill, bag-skating until what felt like the end of time, and after he’d go home to shower, half-dead on his feet, then collapse into bed for twelve hours.

But he couldn’t give in yet, because Shane was dozing on his chest, sated, smiling, and caught in his throat, was the slight unpracticed purr of a happy omega. Ilya would have cut off his own arm before disturbing his mate.

When Shane stirred, he turned his head just so, chin propped up on Ilya’s sternum to look at him.

“I love you,” Shane plainly said.

Ilya was a bit thrown. Honestly, he was always thrown in some way when Shane said it. All these years, and he couldn’t believe Shane was his. His best friend, his husband, his mate. Of all the knot-headed idiots in the world, Shane chose him. From the very beginning, toe-to-toe in a hotel gym, his head cocked as he watched Shane’s shy low-lidded gaze, aroused and blushing, unsure of what to do with his own desire but feeling it nonetheless. Ilya would have knelt at his feet then, he would have certainly been less appreciative of Shane at the time, but the compulsion was there — like the moment Ilya stepped foot on the ice as a child, someone tied a string around his heart, and an ocean away, knotted it to Shane’s.

“Thank you, *solnyshko*,” Ilya said. “I love you.”

Shane kissed him. An affectionate little peck that he followed with his fingertips, running them over Ilya's lips, the bridge of his nose, before settling on his cheeks where he scratched at a three day old stubble.

"You treat me so well." Shane was blushing, but he kept Ilya's gaze. "I don't know how to thank you for it."

Ilya huffed, and tapped the tip of Shane's nose with his finger. "You don't. It is my pleasure, and my honor to put my mouth everywhere on your body."

"You're so crass," Shane scolded, but it lacked heat. "It's not just that. The other stuff too. Before, I mean. I know I'm particular, and it's not easy taking care of me when I'm like this, but, uh, I want you to know I appreciate it."

Of course, Shane would have more trouble talking about Ilya's pre-heat pampering than the filthy sex they just spent three days having. Shane never gave himself enough credit, always one to talk down about himself or dismiss any compliments thrown his way. He was the greatest fucking hockey player in the world for Christ's sake. Ilya had literally told him this.

Never mind that Shane woke up early twice a week to practice Russian on Zoom with a tutor. When Ilya's rut came along he swapped out the light gauzy window curtains in the living room for blackout ones, because he knew Ilya was sensitive to the light. He indulged in Ilya's occasional desire to throw a big blow-out party. Shane, who had never loved having a lot of people in his home. These things, and ten thousand other sacrifices, Shane was willing to sweep under the rug and instead praise Ilya for drawing him a damn bath. It was ridiculous enough to make Ilya a little mad, but well, Shane's self-esteem wasn't on the chopping block at the moment. It was Ilya's job to smother him with love until he damn near choked on it.

So he cuddled Shane up, growling a little, and flipped them over, blubbering obnoxious kisses into the curve of his neck and reveling in the sweet bloom of Shane's pleased scent, and his tinkling laughter.

End Notes

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