home is wherever i'm with you

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home is wherever i'm with you

by princebutt

Summary

Shane and Ilya return to Ottawa after winning gold at the Milan winter Olympics. It makes Ilya reminisce on what home is to him.

Flufftober day nine: coming home (part 2)

Notes

I know, I know, I gotta chill!!! But I had two lovey ideas tossed at me for this day by Anna and I couldn't resist! So you get two flufftobers today! Thank you as always to the lovely Anna and Mel for betaing this bad boy!!

See the end of the work for more notes

Winning always feels good.

But winning the gold against fucking *Russia* in the 2026 Milano Cortina Olympics? That feels *fucking incredible.*

It's not that Ilya hates Russia now, but he does hold a grudge. He holds a grudge for the father who he was never good enough for, and for the mother who didn't get the help she deserved. He is angry about a brother who doesn't love him enough to bother calling now that he's cut off his monetary aid, and who will never want to get to know this family Ilya has built for himself because the one that was provided would never, ever be good enough. Ilya doesn't *hate* Russia. He's just outgrown it, which was bound to happen sooner or later.

There's also plenty to be said about the fact that returning to that country with his husband would end in punishment. There's enough hatred towards people like him and Shane there that he feels vindicated in the soft, tender bruise Russia has left on his soul. Sometimes he pushes on it, presses one finger to the pulse of the welt and just feels the pain his homeland has left behind.

He doesn't hate Russia, but Russia doesn't love him, and this can't continue to be a one-sided relationship anymore.

So maybe Ilya plays that final game to determine who gets gold and who gets silver with a chip on his shoulder. He plays hard, with a determination he's proud of, because representing Canada was never a dream, but now it's a reality he loves. Playing in the Olympics with his husband, in Italy, with the whole nation of Canada and a lot of other nations cheering for them, too, felt surreal.

And getting up onto that podium, being crowned the victors with gold medals around their necks and pride in their hearts, holding Shane's hand, then kissing Shane senseless after – it's more than this hopeful little boy from Russia could have ever dreamt.

The plane ride home after the games is long, but Ilya has never been happier to land back on Canadian soil. As soon as they get through the door of their home, they're surprised by all of their friends and family occupying their living room with banners and balloons, all welcoming them back. Because something about this feels monumental, and it seems like everyone knows it.

Their medals get passed around, and champagne is brought out, and despite the jetlag and the hours of plane that still linger on their skin, they celebrate. These people love him; these people want to celebrate him. (Ilya tries not to be bitter about the fact that he'd not even gotten a congratulations text from his brother.)

Ilya drinks maybe too much champagne, and savors the way the bubbles fizzle through his bloodstream and light him up from within. Troy hugs him hard, whispers in his ear how proud of Ilya he is. Bood claps him on the back and makes a point to say he *isn't* jealous, and Dykstra rolls his eyes as he pointedly drinks his beer and gives Ilya a big, genuine smile with

his congratulations. Yuna and David have shirts with Ilya and Shane's faces on them, which makes Shane blush furiously but Ilya unashamedly loves.

His own father would never. His own father was sometimes ashamed to be seen with him. The canyon between who his father was and who his in-laws are is vast, and he feels lucky to have traversed it and made it to this side. He feels lucky that he's found a family here – a home in a place he never would have imagined.

After an hour or so of mingling, the crowd dissipates. Most of their teammates can read the exhaustion on Shane and Ilya's faces, and Yuna and David know better than to overstay their welcome – not that they're ever unwelcome, but Ilya is definitely ready to have the house (and his husband) to himself.

Coming home to Canada is a beautiful thing. It's freedom to love his husband, it's new beginnings that have blossomed into a wildflower bouquet, making every day glorious. It's a house and a dog and a team he's honored to represent, and it's all a little overwhelming (no thanks to the champagne coursing through him and going right to his head). Ilya perches on the edge of the sofa as Shane says good-bye to his parents, and he lets it all out. Hot tears spill from his eyes for the things he's left behind, the things he's outgrown, and the mother who isn't here to witness him grow into the man he was meant to be.

He cries for Russia, sobs for a country that he loves but can never love him, and he weeps for memories that are bitter as cyanide but core to who he is now. He thinks about a father who could never love him properly, and a mother who loved him with everything she had but was taken too soon, and it wracks sobs through his chest, tears at his heart and bursts through the dam he'd so carefully constructed.

The sofa dips beside him and Shane's hand rubs soothing circles across his back. He makes soft sounds of comfort as he pulls Ilya into him, and they adjust and shift so Ilya is in his lap, head on Shane's shoulder, tears staining Shane's team Canada shirt. The sobs are slowing now, but the tears still trickle out, and he sniffles, hating how snotty and absolutely unsexy he is.

"We should be fucking with our medals on right now," Ilya complains, as if his big emotions are the biggest cock-block of the century. (They are.)

Shane snorts.

"We can do that later. This is more important." His thumb brushes across Ilya's cheek and gathers tears, then Shane follows the touch up with light kisses across Ilya's salty skin. He lavishes in it, soaks up the attention he craves from Shane, is thankful for a husband who maybe doesn't fully understand, but never chastises or judges him for his emotions. They just lay on the couch like this, curled up in each other, and Ilya is so thankful to be home. Not in this house, not back on Canadian soil, but in Shane's arms.

That's his home.

End Notes

you know the drill -- comments and kudos are appreciated!

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