

Ilya's Good Boy

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Ilya's Good Boy

by [Zlr1al](#)

Summary

Ilya dug deeper into the bag and pulled out a sturdy, leather dog collar, dark brown and buckled. Quick as a wink, he held it up, dangling it directly at Shane's neck. "You make cute puppy. Shchenok Shane."

Shane glared, his face heating up instantly, and slapped Ilya's hand away. "Stop it!"

Ilya advanced closer, his stance casual, yet dominating. "I am serious. Consider this gift. It says, 'I belong to Ilya Rozanov.'... Come on. Put it on. Be my good boy."

Chapter 1: Shchenok Shane

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The microphone felt huge, a dark metallic cylinder suddenly thrust directly into Shane's field of vision. He flinched back instantly, a sharp, involuntary jerk of his head and shoulders.

His breathing hitched, spiking rapidly from a steady inhale to short, ragged gasps. The reporter's voice was a buzzing in his ears, the words blurring into an incomprehensible wash of sound. He couldn't grasp the question, couldn't form a thought beyond the overwhelming, immediate need to escape the sudden intrusion.

A solid presence materialized beside him. Dykstra smoothly leaned in. "He's here somewhere," Dykstra chuckled. He gave a casual, dismissive wave. "Probably trying to steal a bunch of puppies."

Ilya. That was it. The reporter must have asked Shane where Ilya was.

Shane forced his head into a jerky nod, tugging the corners of his mouth up in a desperate imitation of Dykstra's easy smile. He tried to laugh, but his tongue felt like sandpaper, thick and useless against the roof of his mouth.

The reporter, satisfied, shifted his attention, angling the mic toward the other Centaurs players clustered around him. Shane's entire body sagged in relief. Dykstra gave him a brotherly clap on the shoulder, a non-verbal message of *You're okay, I got it.*

Shane took a deep breath and tried to refocus on the event. He was a Centaur now. An Ottawa Centaur. The press interest hadn't just died down since he and Ilya were outed and since they had announced they were married. In fact, it had reached a deafening, relentless frenzy, and the season hadn't even started.

This volunteer day at the Humane Society was Shane's first community event with his new team. He and Ilya had agreed on a strategy: they would spend some time apart during the summer press and community events. It was meant to give Shane a chance to stand on his own two feet, to prove himself as an individual member of the Centaurs, not just "Ilya's husband."

Shane rubbed his palms on the thighs of his jeans, trying to discreetly wipe away the sudden clamminess. Farah had been giving both him and Ilya coaching on how to handle the media, but Shane hadn't expected to actually need the coaching. He was normally fine with interviews.

Ilya, on the other hand, treated every press conference like a stand-up routine, turning questions into witty sound bites and outlandish promises, which, of course, the press absolutely *loved* and ate up with a spoon.

Shane's nerves surrounding press events had spiked to an almost crippling level lately. He knew how to talk about zones, power plays, rivalries, and his own game. He had a decade of experience answering those questions. But now, it was a constant, invasive barrage of questions about Ilya and their relationship: *How's married life? What's it like playing on the same team? Are you going to be roommates on the road?*

This wasn't hockey press. He didn't know how to do *this*. How to put his most private, fiercely protected part of his life on public display. It felt like being asked to strip bare in front of a stadium full of strangers.

Shane knew exactly what Ilya wanted: to show the world how happy they were. And they *were* happy. Intensely, unequivocally happy. A quiet, fierce joy that anchored Shane every single day. He was so pleased that Ilya was proud of them, proud to share their relationship. Shane was proud too, somewhere deep beneath the layers of anxiety.

But pride didn't quell the sense of being utterly out of control and unsettled.

It was jarring because everything else was going so well. He genuinely liked the Centaurs; the guys were great, and he was adjusting smoothly. Learning their system, clicking with his new line, and even settling into the bizarre, new dynamic of having Ilya as his captain. Things had been excellent on the ice and in the locker room. Shane felt confident about his pre-season performance and his game.

Yet, as the regular season loomed, it wasn't the pressure of a new team that made his stomach clench. It was the inevitable moment the cameras turned on and the microphones were thrust forward. That was what he dreaded the most. It felt like the only place left where he hadn't figured out the rules yet.

Shane slipped away from the cameras and headed towards a low-key-looking donation tent. Troy and Harris were there stacking bags of kibble and blankets.

"Hey, Holly," Troy greeted him with a grin.

"Hey," Shane managed, sliding in beside them. "Mind if I hang out? Need a breather."

Harris pointed toward a stack of cardboard boxes behind the table, already half-filled with various supplies.

"We need this stuff sorted before it can go into the truck," Harris instructed, all business when it came to wrangling hockey players and dogs. "Think you can handle it?"

"Definitely," Shane said, relief washing over him.

He immediately ducked behind the large, folding table that served as the booth. The tabletop provided a solid, physical barrier between him and the rest of the world.

Sinking onto his knees beside the pile of donated items, Shane began to work. The rhythmic, repetitive motion of handling and separating the items brought an immediate, quiet sense of

calm. He wasn't being looked at, he wasn't being asked questions, and he wasn't being analyzed. For a few minutes, he was just a volunteer sorting boxes.

Shane was just setting a box of kitty litter aside when the familiar, commanding sound of Russian cut through the noise.

"Smotri, shchenok," Ilya's voice boomed, rich and theatrical. *Look, puppy.*

Shane looked up, and the sight immediately drew a fond, weary smile from him. Ilya was standing over the booth, filling the space with his presence. In one of his giant hands, he carefully cradled a ridiculously tiny, squirming puppy.

Ilya lowered his head, making exaggerated, sad eyes at Shane. "Annushka is very lonely, dorogoy," he whispered conspiratorially, nodding toward the puppy. "I got her sister."

Shane rolled his eyes. "Go put her back from wherever you stole her"

Ilya's lip stuck out in a spectacular, theatrical pout. "You want me to abandon our daughter?"

"Yes," Shane deadpanned, shaking his head. "Now go."

Ilya sighed dramatically, but the smile never left his eyes. "Fine, fine." He addressed the tiny puppy directly, his voice dropping into a fake, sorrowful tone. "Daddy does not want you."

Shane made a sharp, offended sound and Ilya grinned triumphantly at the reaction.

"I return and help you with... whatever this is," Ilya promised. He leaned over the stack of boxes and planted a quick, soft kiss right on the tip of Shane's nose.

As Ilya swaggered off with the puppy cradled carefully in his hand, Shane couldn't stop the immediate, nervous instinct to scan the area. *Did anyone see that?*

Ilya returned a few minutes later, having successfully, and probably mournfully, handed the puppy back to a shelter volunteer. Troy and Harris had taken the opportunity to escape the sorting duty and announced they were heading to grab refreshments.

After a few minutes of silent, efficient organizing, Shane asked, "Were you serious about wanting another dog?"

Ilya paused, holding up a mangled stuffed dinosaur. He shrugged easily. "Nyet. Three is lot to handle." He tossed the dinosaur into the toys bin.

Shane frowned in confusion. "Three?"

Ilya grinned. "There is already shchenok Anya and shchenok Shane. Hands are very full with two puppies."

Shane snorted, nudged Ilya's shoulder with his own, and called him what he was. "Jerk."

"What?" Ilya protested, feigning innocence. He dug deeper into the bag and pulled out a sturdy, leather dog collar, dark brown and buckled. Quick as a wink, he held it up, dangling it directly at Shane's neck. "You make cute puppy. Shchenok Shane."

Shane glared, his face heating up instantly, and he slapped Ilya's hand away from his neck. "Stop it!"

But even as he pushed Ilya away and pretended to be annoyed, a strange, tight knot formed in Shane's stomach. He didn't understand why the sight of the collar in Ilya's massive, familiar hand, held close to his neck, had affected him that way.

Ilya advanced closer holding the loop open. His stance was casual, yet dominating. "No, no. I am serious. Consider this gift. From me. It is statement, yes? It says, 'I belong to Ilya Rozanov.'" He paused, his voice dropping to a smooth, teasing purr. "I want another puppy, Shane. You are strong, loyal, and your hair is floofy. Come on. Put it on. Be my good boy."

The suggestion, phrased so crudely and possessively, was pure, unfiltered Ilya. The usual cocky, unbothered attitude that antagonized others, was always a twisted form of flirtation when it was directed at Shane.

Shane forced out a laugh that felt a little breathless. "You're insane. Get that thing away from me before Harris sees us and thinks we've completely lost the plot."

He pushed the collar back towards Ilya, but Ilya didn't drop it; he just let his hand fall, his lazy smile stretching into something that was equal parts amused and expectant.

"Shame," Ilya sighed dramatically. He tossed the expensive collar into the 'new supplies' bin, where it landed with a soft, weighted *thump*.

As Shane turned back to his sorting, he was no longer thinking about cameras or microphones, or donations. He was thinking about the smooth, expensive leather and the weight of the brass. He was thinking about the way Ilya had invaded his space, the frank look in his hazel eyes, and the purred command: *Be my good boy*.

It was a joke. A stupid, typical Ilya joke. Yet, a strange, nervous energy was buzzing deep in Shane's belly. He hated that the utterly ridiculous, purely hypothetical idea of being Ilya's "good boy" had sent a ridiculous, purely inconvenient flip through his stomach. He was drawn to the danger of Ilya's lack of care, his willingness to say and do anything.

Shane gripped a bag of kibble tighter, his knuckles white, and deliberately didn't look at Ilya. He hated that for a split second, he had almost wanted to say, *Okay*.

Get a grip, he told himself fiercely, hauling the bag toward the back of the truck. *It's a dog collar. It's a joke. It means nothing. Don't be weird.*

But as he walked, he could still feel the phantom weight of that dark, heavy leather on his neck, and the playful, demanding pull of Ilya's gaze, which he knew, without looking, was still fixed on him.

Shane sat on the bench, his gym bag resting between his skates. He was meticulous, as always, carefully coiling his tape and making sure his gear was neatly tucked away. But the usual soothing rhythm of his routine was ruined by a relentlessly looping image: the dark, glossy leather of the collar, studded with brass, and Ilya's lazy, knowing smile.

He had tried everything to dislodge the image, reciting all the stats of every Centaur, mentally calculating his caloric intake for the past twenty-four hours, and even running through drills in his head. Nothing worked. Every mental pathway seemed to curve back to that collar.

I want another puppy, Shane. You are strong, loyal, and your hair is floofy. Come on. Put it on. Be my good boy.

Shane ran a hand over his neck. The exact spot where the collar would have rested. It was stupid. It was ridiculous. He felt his cheeks grow hot.

What does this mean? Shane thought, gripping the laces of his skates so hard his fingers ached. *It means I'm a creep who gets off on dog collars. It means I'm seriously messed up.*

The rest of the Centaurs had already left for the day, but Shane was stuck waiting for Ilya to finish his ridiculously long shower. Shane could practically picture him in there, the messy hair plastered wet to his head, the strong jaw, and the arrogant tilt of his chin.

He was joking, Shane argued with himself. It was chirping. He was trying to get a rise out of me.

But the look in Ilya's eyes hadn't been entirely dismissive. There was a genuine, intense focus there, like a challenge. Shane stood up abruptly, needing movement. He walked to the water fountain and took a long, cold drink.

When he looked up, Ilya was leaning against the shower doorway, a towel slung low around his waist. He was clean, fragrant, and his expression was that typical, lazy mix of boredom and amusement.

"I hear you think from showers," Ilya drawled, stepping easily into the room. "Practice is over. You stop now."

Shane's chest felt tight. He forced himself to meet Ilya's gaze, trying to project total, serene indifference. "I was just thinking about the power play strategy. It needs work."

Ilya just shrugged, picking up a jar of hair mousse. "Always work, always serious with you. Relax, yes?"

He paused, running the mousse through his damp, curly hair, his eyes connecting with Shane's in the reflection of the locker mirror.

"Or maybe," Ilya continued, his voice dropping slightly, "you are thinking about collar." He didn't smile, not the full, cocky grin. Just a small, knowing upturn of his lips. "Was nice, no? You looked very interested for someone who is not interested."

Shane felt the blush creep from his neck all the way to his hairline.

"I wasn't," Shane snapped.

Ilya just chuckled as he dressed, not pressing the issue further, his purpose seemingly accomplished.

"Relax, Hollander," Ilya said, exaggerating the Russian pronunciation of his surname, a mix of affection and slight derision. "Was a joke. But if you want to think about it all night, who am I to stop you?" He winked, grabbed his car keys and bag, and sauntered toward the locker room door. Just as he reached the threshold, he stopped, turned his head slightly, and his voice dropped to a low, commanding register, a voice meant only for Shane.

"Ko mnye." *Come.*

Shane's body instantly responded. His spine straightened, and he took a sharp, involuntary step forward, his feet moving before his brain registered it. He stopped himself only by planting his heels hard on the floor, freezing him mid-stride.

Ilya gave a knowing smirk at Shane's reaction, and then disappeared through the door, leaving behind a thick cloud of expensive cologne and the overwhelming, lingering feeling of unsettled desire.

Shane slid into the passenger seat of the Lamborghini Urus, a visible thundercloud on his face. It was the most sensible car he'd been able to talk Ilya into buying, yet even the sight of this "practical" SUV sent a flare of annoyance through Shane's. He clipped his seatbelt with a sharp *clack* and crossed his arms, his scowl firmly in place.

"A normal person would have bought a Land Rover," Shane huffed as he glared through the windshield. "But no. God forbid we go to the grocery store without the aerodynamics of a plane."

Ilya didn't answer immediately. He didn't even look offended. Instead, he reached out and increased the heat on Shane's seat warmer.

"It has four doors," Ilya said smoothly, his tone infuriatingly reasonable.

"It's loud and it's pretentious," Shane hissed, turning in his seat to find a target for all the jagged energy vibrating under his skin. "It's a miracle we haven't been carjacked for the rims alone. It's a ridiculous purchase, Ilya. Even for you."

Ilya glanced over then, but there was no defensive comeback. Instead, Ilya's lips were hitched in a faint, incredulous smile.

"You love the heated seats," Ilya noted, his voice humming with suppressed amusement. He didn't rise to the bait; he didn't even nibble at it. He just kept his hands relaxed on the steering wheel, his eyes dancing with a knowing light. "And you are currently shouting at a car because you don't want to shout at me about whatever else is bothering you."

Shane didn't reply.

Ilya pulled to a stop at a red light and finally turned his head fully, his expression soft, but smug.

"That's strange," Ilya murmured, his voice laced with a teasing, melodic edge. "I thought puppies like going for rides in the car. Why the growling, Shchenocheck?" *Little puppy.*

Shane's jaw clenched so hard a muscle jumped in his cheek and he snapped his gaze away, staring fixedly out the window.

Ilya reached across the console, laying his large, warm hand over Shane's rigid, crossed arms. "I am sorry," Ilya murmured. His voice was laced with genuine regret now, though a hint of residual amusement still lingered in his eyes. "I tease too much today." He paused, squeezing Shane's arm gently, his thumb tracing a slow circle over the fabric of Shane's jacket. "I make it up to you when we get home. Dinner, good movie, sex, massage, whatever you want."

Shane didn't move at first. He kept his shoulders bunched, his eyes still fixed on the window as he fought the urge to lean into the touch. He wanted to stay mad; it felt safer than admitting Ilya had read him so easily. But the heat from the seat was seeping into his lower back, and the pressure of Ilya's hand made his anger feel increasingly exhausting to maintain.

Slowly, the rigid line of his shoulders began to drop. He let out a sharp exhale.

"You're an asshole," Shane muttered.

He finally uncrossed his arms, the movement slow and heavy, and laid his hand flat on Ilya's thigh, just above the knee. Ilya immediately shifted his hand to cover Shane's, their fingers interlocking.

Shane leaned his head back against the rest, letting out one more long, slow breath that seemed to carry the last of his stress with it. This was the good stuff. Playing hockey with his husband. Driving home in a ridiculous car with his husband. No matter how much of an arrogant, teasing asshole Ilya could be sometimes... he was Shane's asshole.

"How are you really feeling about the team?" Ilya asked after a few quiet moments. He kept his hand resting lightly over Shane's on his thigh, a continuous point of connection.

"Good, actually. Really good. Things with Troy and Luca are clicking well."

Shane liked their dynamic. It was straightforward, physical, and smart.

"I see it," Ilya confirmed, pride coloring his tone. "You look fast out there. You and Troy. You read each other well." A slight, possessive frown touched his face. "I am sad we cannot be on the same line, though."

Shane squeezed Ilya's hand and snorted softly. "Please. There is enough ego with you already. There wouldn't be any room for me."

Ilya laughed, the sound deep and genuine. After a moment he added, "You like it here?" He glanced over, his dark eyes serious and searching. "Things are good, yes? Happy?"

Shane's heart warmed. He smiled fondly at his husband and gave a shy, genuine nod.

"Yes," Shane confirmed. "Very happy."

Chapter End Notes

Oh you thought Ilya was going to let it go, Shane? Well I have news for you next chapter...TBC

Every comment makes Shane come untouchable. You want him to get off, don't you? 😏

Chapter 2: Ilya's

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

The post-game press conference felt less like an interview and more like a public shaming. Ilya sat next to Shane, but his focus wasn't on the reporters; it was laser-focused on his husband. He could see the brittle, paper-thin mask Shane was desperately trying to hold in place.

"Shane, let's talk about the production. You are currently on pace for the lowest scoring total of your entire professional career, and the team is visibly struggling. Are you finding that the sheer, escalating intensity of the public spotlight, specifically on your relationship, is simply too much of a distraction to maintain your focus on the ice?"

Ilya saw the familiar, internal collapse happen in real-time. Shane's jaw tightened, the blood draining from his face, and his eyes suddenly looked vacant and panicked. He saw the subtle tremor in Shane's hand resting just beside his own knee, and he knew: Shane was seizing up. That look of being utterly marooned and unable to speak meant the official "no comment" script was never going to make it out.

"Shane is professional," Ilya retorted, his voice low but razor-sharp. He didn't raise his voice, which somehow made the aggression more palpable. He slid his foot over and found Shane's, pressing down firmly and reassuringly.

Ilya could feel the rush of blood and heat behind his own eyes, a wave of fury that made his thoughts race faster than he could translate them.

"But since you want talk about numbers and averages so badly, let's talk about yours, hmm? As you sit here accusing player, which production you clearly not appreciate... perhaps you could tell us: What, precisely, is *your* scoring average? What your 'professional career' look like, outside of trying generate clickbait?"

He finished his official defense, pointing out Shane's league ranking, before delivering the final, proprietary barb. "And, for record," Ilya added, his tone suddenly shifting to dry mockery, "Shane is highest goal-scorer in the franchise, yes. Second only to me, of course. We cannot forget that part." The glare he directed at the reporter made it clear that while this was a joke, it was one only *he* was permitted to make

No one laughed.

A reporter pushed past Ilya's posturing. "Mr. Rozanov, is your defense coming from Captain Ilya or Husband Ilya? Could that conflict of interest be dividing the locker room?"

Ilya's control snapped.

"This stupid question! Shane plays great hockey! He fights hard! We are losing because we must work harder! Stop looking for easy story!" He slammed the mic down and grabbed Shane. They were leaving. *Now.*

Ilya pulled Shane from the press scrum, marching them both down the hallway toward the relative sanctuary of the locker room tunnel.

Shane, still reeling from the adrenaline and the humiliating public interrogation, felt the pressure of the grip too keenly on his already-strained muscles. He leaned close to Ilya's ear and whispered, his voice thin and shaky, "Ilya, you're hurting me."

Ilya stopped dead. Ilya's eyes flashed with pain and shame, immediately releasing his grip as if Shane's arm were a live wire.

"Prosti, moy dusha," Ilya stammered, his earlier fury instantly replaced by self-reproach and agitation. He reached out and gently thumbed the spot on Shane's arm, rubbing the skin as if he could prevent the impending bruises from forming.

"I am... I'm sorry. I'm sorry, lyubimyy," he murmured. Ilya ran a shaking hand through his hair, his eyes filled with self-reproach.

He took three sharp, rapid steps away from Shane, then three back. He began to pace the hallway, his eyes flicking from the floor to the ceiling tiles, unable to look at his husband.

Shane stood still, letting his adrenaline levels slowly drop. He didn't move to comfort Ilya, sensing the need for space, and he consciously resisted the urge to rub the slight twinge blooming in his upper arm. He simply watched the frantic, caged energy of his husband.

Shane let him complete another full lap of pacing before finally speaking.

"You shouldn't have done that, Ilya," Shane finally said, his voice flat with exhaustion. "You just gave them exactly what they want. Now the articles won't be about my low production; they'll be about your bad temper and how our marriage is dividing the team."

Ilya stopped, turning toward Shane with blazing eyes. "I am tired of watching them attack you! Why you don't fight back? Fuck!"

"Because I'm not you!" Shane snapped. "I can't just joke away my private life. When you jump in like that, it feels like I can't even stand on my own two feet to answer a simple question!"

The air crackled between them. Ilya's fury slowly deflated, replaced by weary regret. He walked over, his large hands reaching out to hold Shane's shoulders gently.

"I am sorry," Ilya murmured, his voice softening. "I just see the stress on your face, and I want to destroy the cause of it. I am sorry I make it worse."

Shane leaned into his husband's touch, letting the sincerity calm the frantic buzzing in his head. "I know you were trying to help. Thank you." He sighed. "I just need to break this slump. If I score, they shut up."

Ilya simply pulled Shane forward, closing the small gap between them. His arms wrapped tightly around his husband, cradling him against his broad chest.

Shane muttered something low and muffled into the side of Ilya's neck, the words swallowed by the fabric of his suit jacket.

"Chto?" Ilya asked. *What?*

Shane pulled back just enough to look his husband in the eye, a spark of defiance replacing the earlier exhaustion. "I might be second to your scoring average, sure," Shane said, his voice regaining its strength. "But it's because I lead you in assists. Who do you think is setting up all of those goals for you?"

Ilya felt a flash of annoyed affection. Shane, always keeping score, always ready to fight back for himself once he felt safe. Ilya let out a sharp laugh, and abruptly pushed Shane away from his chest.

Shane stumbled back only a single step before Ilya had him pinned. Ilya's hand was around Shane's throat, a devastating pressure that should have inspired pure terror, yet somehow, in Ilya's grip, it felt utterly safe. He backed Shane into the cool concrete wall of the tunnel and crushed his mouth with a kiss.

Breaking the kiss, Ilya leaned his forehead against Shane's, breathing heavily. He looked deep into Shane's surprised, glittering eyes and murmured, "Ya podnimu tvoyu srednyuyu, kak tol'ko my priyedem domoy." *I'll increase your scoring average as soon as we get home.*

Shane would have definitely smirked, but his mouth was suddenly and very thoroughly occupied once again.

The final horn sounded, a blaring end to the road trip and another game lost. The collective slump of the Centaurs was heavy and Shane felt its full weight as he doubled over, his gloves resting on his knees. His lungs burned, his chest heaving with deep, disappointing breaths.

He had zero goals on the night, two shots ringing uselessly off the posts. He closed his eyes for a moment, trying to burn off the metallic taste of failure.

When he straightened, his eyes instinctively found Ilya across the ice. The Captain was leaning against the boards, his stick held loosely, his own breathing ragged. He wasn't talking to anyone; he was just watching Shane, his expression a complicated mix of frustration and fierce concern. The look said, *Are you okay? Do you need me to come over?*

Shane knew exactly what Ilya wanted. He wanted to skate over and put a hand on his back. But Shane didn't want the shelter right now. He needed to feel the chill of the failure. He gave Ilya a slight, weary shake of the head and turned his back before Ilya could start moving. *Please, just let me be alone for five minutes.*

In the showers, Shane stepped under the water, turning the knob until the spray was near-scalding. He didn't move for what felt like an hour, letting the hot water sluice the sweat and

the humiliation off his skin.

As the steam filled the small room, his mind drifted uncontrollably forward, four days ahead to the looming dread: Montreal.

Shane sighed, running his hand over the tiles. He had known most of those guys for years. They had been his hockey family. Yet, when he needed their basic loyalty, they had vanished. Only JJ and Hayden had shown up to his wedding. Not a single person from Montreal had sent so much as a text message.

He was facing down a ghost ship of people he used to trust, and he was terrified of letting his anger, or his pain, destroy his focus entirely. He just needed to find a way to score and silence them all.

“Hey, good. You are home,” Ilya said, smiling, holding up a stick of butter that was visibly diminished. “I make Pirozhki”

Shane felt the floor tilt. His mind, already stretched thin by stress, snapped.

“How much of that did you use?” Shane asked, his voice sharp and tight, completely disproportionate to the question.

Ilya frowned, sensing the sudden, dangerous change in atmosphere. “Uh, maybe half a stick? Why?”

“Half a stick? Ilya, seriously?” Shane felt the familiar rush of heat and panic. “I’ve been tracking my macros! I have a plan! You just dumped three hundred calories of useless fat into it!”

He didn't mean to shout, but the words felt like they were being squeezed out of him. He turned away from the stove, his hands fluttering in small, agitated circles. "I can't eat that. It's wrong. The numbers are all wrong now. I just... I can't."

Ilya instantly dropped the spatula. He didn't argue or defend the food. He crossed the kitchen in three large strides and stopped Shane's agitated movements by placing his hands gently on his shoulders. Ilya steered Shane away from the overwhelming smells of the stove and into the dining room, sitting him down on the bench. Ilya sat beside him, holding Shane's hands in his own, applying a firm, consistent pressure that helped Shane find the edges of his own body again.

The silence stretched. Shane's chest hitched, his breath coming in shallow bursts. He wanted to explain the butter, but his brain felt like a skipped gear, spinning and catching on nothing.

“It is not about the butter, moy khoroshiy,” Ilya said softly, his thumb tracing the back of Shane's knuckles. “The butter is just... the thing you can see. What is the thing you cannot see?”

The question was too direct. Shane's jaw worked, but no words came out. Instead, the pressure behind his eyes simply gave way. The tears were abrupt. Not a slow build, but a sudden, silent overflow that drenched his cheeks. He didn't sob yet; he just sat there, leaking, his face frozen in a mask of frustration.

"Shane," Ilya prompted gently, leaning in so their shoulders touched. "Talk to me. In your head, where are you?"

"I'm nowhere," Shane finally choked out, the words sounding mangled. He looked down at their joined hands, focusing on the contrast of skin tones until his vision blurred completely. "I don't... I don't know where my place is. I'm not a Voyageur anymore, and I don't deserve to be a Centaur yet. I'm playing like garbage, and I'm just... I'm just a guy in a jersey who doesn't belong anywhere."

The admission broke the last of his levee. The deep, shuddering sobs finally came, and Shane leaned forward until his forehead hit Ilya's chest, hiding from the world while the fear finally ran its course.

"I am so sorry," Shane whispered. The words were thick, mangled by the tightness in his throat. "I'm sorry I yelled about the butter. It was... it was irrational. It was cruel. I just couldn't make the numbers stop spinning, and I took it out on you. You were just trying to do something nice."

He hunched his shoulders, his body feeling heavy and uncoordinated as the adrenaline ebbed away, leaving only a hollow, stinging shame. "I'm scared. I'm so scared I'm going to fail against Montreal, and I can't handle them being right. I can't handle the noise. I'm letting it break me, and I'm sorry. I'm sorry for everything."

"Shh. Slushay menya, Shane. Listen to me." Ilya's voice was a low vibration, steady as a heartbeat. "There is no 'deserve' in this. You are not a guest in that locker room. You are there because we need you. You are there because you are the best. You do not have to earn place that already has your name on it."

He shifted, lifting Shane's chin with a gentle finger. He waited until Shane's red-rimmed eyes met his just for a second to ensure the message landed. "And you are right. You do not belong to Montreal. You do not belong to Ottawa."

Ilya leaned forward, pressing his lips to the center of Shane's forehead, lingering there until he felt the tremor in Shane's frame begin to subside.

"You belong to me," Ilya whispered, the words carrying a sheer, immovable finality that Shane's logical brain couldn't argue with. "And I belong to you."

The simplicity of it cut through Shane's anxiety and he let out a broken, shuddering sound and buried his face in Ilya's neck.

After a long moment, Ilya shifted, resting his chin on top of Shane's head. His hand moved to the back of Shane's neck, his fingers tangling in the hair there, massaging the tension out of

the bone. When he spoke again, his voice was very soft, almost contemplative, like he was sharing a secret.

"That need for control," Ilya began, "Is bad for you now. Is eating you. And when you cannot manage it, you break."

He pulled back slightly to look Shane in the eyes, a knowing, warm gaze. "At charity thing I make stupid joke. About dog collar."

Shane flinched, his cheeks immediately coloring. He tried to pull away, but Ilya's hands remained firm.

"No, wait," Ilya insisted gently. "I saw your face then. Embarrassed, yes. But I also saw... something else. Your body was not saying *no*."

Shane couldn't meet his eyes. "That's ridiculous. I was just... I was surprised. I don't know what you're talking about."

"Liar," Ilya murmured. "You want someone to take care of that need sometimes. Take the control from you. Because when you must be strong all the time, you have no space to be safe." Ilya rubbed his thumbs soothingly over Shane's tense shoulder muscles. "I noticed this for months. I just waited for moment when you would hear it."

Shane stayed quiet, chewing his lip. The thought was terrifying, humiliating, and, he realized with a fresh wave of heat, intensely desirable.

"So what are you saying?" Shane finally managed.

Ilya leaned in, his voice dropping to a low, commanding register that thrilled Shane to the core. "I am saying you need a release."

He held up a warning finger. "I am not asking you to wear it in the locker room. But if I happened to... go shopping. And if I happened to buy something. Something small, something to signify that when you are mine and you belong here."

Shane looked at the floor, then at the wall, then finally back at Ilya. The idea was insane. But the thought of not having to choose, not having to decide, of simply being told what to do and having all responsibility lifted, was the most intoxicating promise he'd heard all season.

He swallowed hard. "I would... I might wear it."

Ilya's triumphant, possessive smile was the first genuine light Shane had seen in days. "Good. Then you leave the rest to me. And today you forget Montreal, you eat one pirozhok for me, and we go to bed."

Ilya led Shane by the hand. The pirozhki were cooling on a plate near the small kitchen table. Shane sat down stiffly, eyes fixed on the perfectly baked, golden pastries. The sight made his stomach clench.

"Just one, moy dusha," Ilya repeated, his voice dropping to a low, comforting register. He didn't push the plate toward Shane. Instead, he took the chair opposite and rested his chin lightly on his palm, just watching.

"I don't know," Shane started "I'm fine."

"I know you are fine. And I know you are strong. But you are no machine, lyubimyy. I want you to be kind to the body that carries...serdtse, kotoroye ya lyublyu." *The heart I love*. He gently nudged the plate a fraction of an inch closer.

Shane took a deep breath and raised the pastry slowly and took a tentative bite. It was warm and soft. Ilya's thumb stroked a steady, soothing rhythm across the back of his hand. Shane took a few more bites, finishing nearly half of the pastry before he paused. The effort felt monumental, but the warmth of the food settled reassuringly in his stomach.

"How you doing, lyubimyy?" Ilya asked, his gaze gentle and searching.

Shane swallowed, forcing himself to chew thoroughly before he answered. "I'm fine, Ilya. I promise. I'm happy." He managed a weak smile. "We're here. We're finally out in the open," he insisted. His brow furrowed then, and his eyes lost focus, drifting to the wall behind Ilya. "I just... I don't know why I'm suddenly playing so poorly."

Ilya gently squeezed Shane's hand, his eyes full of understanding, not judgment.

"Lyubimyy, you tell me you are happy, and I see it, in your eyes, in your smile. But this is not switch. It is no 'on' and 'off' happy. The anxiety, the worry, it is like muscle memory. You are happy, yes, but your body still remembers how to be stressed. It still wants control, yes? Control of food, control of body, control of game."

He leaned closer, his voice soft. "Your head is full of so much noise. New city, new home, new team, new... us. How you expect your body to be fast and light and free when your mind is heavy?"

Ilya brought his free hand up to touch his own temple. "When you worry, Shane, you hold too tight. Too tight on the stick, too tight on the puck, too tight in your legs. You try to force the play, because you try to control the feeling. You play poorly *because* you are worried about playing poorly."

He picked up a crumb from the pirozhok plate. "You think of this game, this career... it is like this small crumb. But you put all the pressure of your happiness, of your control, of your whole life, onto this crumb. Of course you are going to crush it. Is too much weight."

Ilya's gaze was unwavering, utterly sincere. "You are good player. The best. But you forget how to trust your body because you do not trust your mind. You do not have to bear all on shoulder by yourself."

He paused, then shifted the conversation gently. "You know how much Galina helped me. Being happy did not make darkness go away, but she gave me flashlight. And I want you to

have one too. You can be happy *and* still need help to control the worry. It is no weakness; it is a kindness for yourself, you give."

Shane stared into Ilya's eyes. He took another small bite of the pirozhok. It was true. Being with Ilya felt like winning the biggest game of his life, but the old mechanisms of control, the fear of failure, the compulsion to restrict, the urge to run *faster* and play *harder* until he was empty, were still humming beneath the surface. He *was* happy, but happiness wasn't a suit of armor against his own mind. Ilya was right; he was trying to use the game to control his life, and that was why he felt slow, why he was choking on the puck. He wasn't trusting his body because he didn't trust his mind to stop shouting.

He looked down at his hand, still nestled securely beneath Ilya's. The thumb stroking his skin was an apology, a reassurance, and a silent promise of support. *We fix the shouting in my mind, and my body will follow.*

"Okay," Shane whispered, the word barely audible. He finished the rest of the pirozhok in three quick bites, a sudden, decisive action. Shane curled into Ilya's chest when he was finished, tucking his head right under Ilya's chin, the familiar scent and warmth a perfect, immediate sedative.

"Okay," Shane repeated against the soft cotton of Ilya's t-shirt.

He shifted, kissing the spot where Ilya's neck met his shoulder, and spoke the one thing he felt with absolute certainty.

"Ya tebya lyublyu," Shane whispered.

Ilya squeezed him tightly, burrowing his face into Shane's hair. "I ya tebya" he replied instantly. *And I love you.*

The night before the game against Montreal, Shane was clinging to Ilya's shoulders, his back arched, a strangled moan trapped in his throat. He was utterly pinned down, his hips violently bucking in a feverish, pleading rhythm against the frustrating, grinding denial.

"Please," Shane gasped, his voice ragged, thick with need and wet with the heat pooling between them. "I can't take this! Fuck me! I need you inside me right now! I need you to make me stop thinking, please, just put it in!"

Ilya's grip on Shane's hips was like steel bands, driving his own body down in an insistent, teasing motion that fiercely denied penetration. He leaned down, his breath a scorching promise against Shane's ear.

"No, my greedy boy," Ilya's low tone allowed no argument. "You will not be sore for the game tomorrow. That pleasure is earned, and it is for later. I decide when you get fucked." He scraped his thumb lightly over Shane's nipple, eliciting a sharp, helpless cry from Shane.

Shane whimpered, his need turning desperate and ugly in his mouth. He strained against Ilya, trying to force the issue, trying to guide him. "Please, please, stop teasing me," he begged,

tears of frustration leaking from the corners of his eyes.

Ilya silenced him with a brief, possessive kiss. He broke away, but kept Shane trapped beneath him, using his body weight to crush him into the mattress.

"You are going to be a good boy, are you not?" Ilya murmured, dragging the tip of his erection slowly, *cruelly*, from Shane's frantic hole all the way up, past his cock, up to his naval, and then back down again. "Yes. You listen. You stay right there. You are so perfect beneath me when you obey." His eyes, dark with absolute control, held Shane pinned, demanding total surrender.

Ilya lifted Shane's hips just enough to settle himself between his legs. Shane gasped as Ilya took him in, the hot, wet pressure instant and overwhelming. The sensation, combined with the absolute control Ilya exerted, made Shane's muscles seize.

Ilya started slow, a deep, practiced stroke that made Shane's vision white out. But Shane couldn't stay still. The pent-up anxiety and desperate need made his hips buck uncontrollably, smashing his cock down hard against Ilya's throat.

Ilya broke the suction with a sharp, ragged sound, pulling back just enough to gasp for air.

"Stop!" Ilya growled. "You choke me. You are bad boy, yes? You cannot follow simple instruction. Stay. Still."

He shifted his weight and his hand lashed out, landing a sharp, stinging smack against Shane's inner thigh. It wasn't truly punitive, but the sudden, hard jolt to his overstimulated body was catastrophic.

The shame of being disciplined while so vulnerable, coupled with the sheer, unbearable noise of his own brain, broke the last of his composure. He immediately stopped moving, but his entire body began to tremble. Tears sprang instantly to his eyes, scalding trails running back into his hair. He literally couldn't calm himself down; the adrenaline of his anxiety crashed directly into the sexual intensity, leaving him shaking and sobbing, unable to speak or move.

Ilya pulled Shane into his chest, holding him tight, rocking him while pressing soft, reassuring kisses to his hair. He didn't try to silence the sobs, just waited them out, absorbing the desperate tremors.

"Shh, shh, it's okay, lyubimyy," Ilya murmured, his voice now a steady, deep rumble against Shane's ear. "You are not bad. You are just so full of worry, yes? I know. You need help to empty it out."

Ilya gripped Shane's hips again, not with steel, but with a gentle, grounding firmness. He pressed their bodies together, chest to chest, their heat melding.

"I have what you need," Ilya promised. He pressed a soft kiss to Shane's temple before slowly easing his weight off the bed.

The sudden loss of the warmth and the grounding pressure of Ilya's body made Shane emit a tight, panicked whimper.

Ilya stopped instantly, pivoting back to the bed. He immediately leaned over Shane, brushing the damp hair off his forehead with one hand and using the pad of his thumb to gently wipe away a tear that had escaped from beneath Shane's eye.

He pressed a lingering, warm kiss to Shane's forehead. "Shh. Just one second. I am here."

Ilya then turned toward the nightstand, but ensured he kept a warm, gentle hand firmly resting on Shane's stomach. When Ilya settled back onto the bed beside Shane a moment later, he pulled Shane up gently so he was half-leaning against Ilya's chest. The contact was immediately soothing. Ilya lifted a long black box and placed it carefully into Shane's lap.

Shane sniffled, his breath still catching with residual tears and slowly untied the sleek black silk ribbon adorning the box. He lifted the lid. The sight inside instantly dissolved the lingering anxiety into a sharp, thrilling spike of longing.

Inside was a thin black leather collar with a red interior. The exterior was detailed with expensive-looking brass studs, gleaming softly. There was a small, functional brass hook on the front. Shane's mind instantly conjured the image of Ilya's strong, warm finger hooked into that brass loop. His mouth went instantly dry.

Then Shane noticed the small detail embossed into the red leather interior. It was a piece of Cyrillic text.

"It says '*Ilya's*'," Ilya murmured, his voice low against Shane's ear, confirming the possessive meaning. "So you never forget who you belong to."

The combination of the beautiful, physical symbol of surrender and Ilya's quiet declaration was too much. "Yes, please," Shane whimpered, his throat tight with a mixture of shame and acute longing.

Ilya's hand was already moving. He took the collar from the box and held it up, the thin strip of black leather catching the light. Ilya slowly draped the leather around Shane's neck. Shane inhaled sharply, his heart pounding frantically. The slight scratchiness of the embossed Cyrillic text—*Ilya's*—pressed against the sensitive skin on the right side of his throat.

Ilya's large fingers moved to the back, settling the collar precisely before he fastened the small brass buckle. His knuckles and fingertips pressed warmly, firmly, into the sides of Shane's throat, checking the fit.

"Good boy," Ilya murmured, his voice thick and low with satisfaction.

Then, with an elegant finality that made Shane's stomach clench, Ilya slipped his forefinger into the brass hook at the front of the collar.

He pulled Shane into a searing kiss, his finger flexing in the hook as he instantly licked his way into Shane's mouth. Without breaking the fierce contact, Ilya used the subtle leverage of

the hook to guide Shane's head and neck as he pushed him firmly back down onto the bed, covering his body with his own heavy weight.

Ilya broke the kiss, shifting his weight just enough to hold Shane's gaze for a breathless moment, his eyes dark with the satisfaction of absolute control. Then, with a possessive tug on the brass hook, he settled back down, burying his face in Shane's lap.

The contrast was immediate and overwhelming. Where the previous attempt had been chaos, Shane's body thrashing against a suffocating internal noise, this was grounding, focused, and deep. Shane felt the warmth, the wet, demanding suction, and for the first time in weeks, his mind was quiet. He didn't feel like he was going to vibrate out of his skin; he felt solid, tethered to the bed by the sheer force of Ilya's mouth.

"Oh... uhhh! Ilya!" Shane gasped, his fingers digging into the sheets beside his head. He felt every ripple of Ilya's tongue, every demanding pull.

Ilya lifted his head just an inch, his mouth glistening, and his dark eyes locked onto Shane's. "Yes. You belong here. Focus only on me," he commanded.

He didn't wait for a response, driving the pace faster, deeper. Shane's entire world narrowed down to the sharp, exhilarating contrast: the heavy control of the collar around his neck, and the sublime freedom he was feeling everywhere else.

"God, yes... Please, don't stop," Shane pleaded.

The pleasure intensified, making Shane's back arch against the sheets. Ilya's hands moved back up. He grasped the collar, hooking his fingers into the black leather. He began to pull, steadily and firmly, restricting Shane's airway just enough to make his gasps short, strangled sounds.

The physical pressure around his throat intensified the orgasm, turning the pleasure into something desperate, dangerous, and utterly consuming. Shane couldn't beg, couldn't speak, could only feel the absolute dominance of the leather, the absolute, exquisite focus of Ilya, and the complete, beautiful freedom of having nothing left to control.

With a final, desperate tremor that seized his entire body, Shane cried out and orgasmed violently, completely, burying himself deep into Ilya's throat.

The flood of release was immense, hot, and utterly consuming. Ilya didn't flinch; he simply hooked his finger tighter into the leather and, with a final dominating pull of the collar, swallowed around Shane's release, milking the final drops of the climax.

Ilya held the suction for a long, sustained moment, as he savored the shuddering, exhausted ruin of the man above him. He slowly released the tension on the collar, allowing Shane to gulp in a shaky, deep breath of air and relief.

"Good boy," Ilya purred, "You were so...so good."

Ilya gently released the tension on the collar and pulled back slightly, looking down at Shane.

Shane lay still for a moment, chest heaving, the raw, beautiful exhaustion settling over him. He was completely boneless, and a faint, slightly dazed smile spread across his face. The noise was gone. The world was quiet.

The bed was a mess, damp and sticky from sweat, but Shane, whose usual fastidiousness bordered on compulsion, didn't stir, didn't complain, and didn't immediately worry about the cleanup.

Ilya shifted and carefully maneuvered himself up the bed, gathering Shane easily into his arms. He pulled Shane tightly against his sweat-slicked chest, tucking his chin over the top of Shane's head.

"Good, my brave one," Ilya finally murmured, his voice rumbling through Shane's ear. He kissed the crown of Shane's head repeatedly, tenderly. "You let go. You let me take it. You were so good for me."

Shane managed a weak, happy sigh, his hand weakly exploring the newly placed leather collar.

Ilya reached down and gently removed the damp collar, placing it carefully back in the black box on the nightstand. "For later. Not now. Now we just rest, lyubimyy."

He pulled the duvet up over both of them, his large, warm body entirely cocooning Shane. He began running a slow, rhythmic hand up and down Shane's spine.

"You see? It is okay to let go of control sometimes. It is safe with me. We quiet the bad noise together, yes?" Ilya waited until Shane settled fully, his earlier shaking replaced by soft, even breathing.

Ilya held Shane close, the calm breaths against his neck a victory far sweeter than any goal.

Montreal. The name hung like a thundercloud over the next day. The team they hated, the fans who hated them, the pressure that felt insurmountable. Whatever the outcome, Shane would be scrutinized, judged, and perhaps, fail.

Ilya tightened his arms around the man he held. *It doesn't matter,* Ilya thought, pressing a final, fierce kiss into Shane's hair. *The game, the losses, the whole stupid circus. I've got the most important win right here.*

Chapter End Notes

Comment if you want Ilya to call you a good boy. 🤔

Chapter 3: So Well Trained

Chapter Summary

Things get a little too real for Shane

Chapter Notes

Shane: asks for "normal" sex.

Also Shane: Gets off on Ilya dominating him.

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

Shane coasted to a stop just outside center ice, the puck resting on the tip of his stick. He saw Drapeau, the Voyageurs' colossal netminder, looming in the distance, filling the net like a fortified wall.

Shane didn't look at the crowd. He didn't look at the benches. He focused on the three-inch gap between Drapeau's pad and the post, the target that demanded impossible precision.

He took a breath. The cold air rushed into his lungs, sharp and invigorating. This was it. Game 6. Shootout. And he hadn't scored all season.

He couldn't stop the surge of shock that still thrummed beneath his skin. Ilya chose *him* for the shootout. Shane leaned over his stick, the grip slick with sweat and nerves, trying to coax his mind into the focused, blank slate it needed to be.

Beyond the blue line, the sea of fans was a dizzying mix of blue and white Voyageurs jerseys and the red and black of the Centaurs. HOLLANDER stitched across the shoulders of both, a bizarre, disorienting sight.

You do not belong to Montreal. You do not belong to Ottawa. You belong to me.

As he leaned further, the starched collar of his jersey brushed against the right side of his neck. There was a faint friction mark there. The embossed words from the collar hadn't all bruised. Only the first three cyrillic characters were faintly visible: "Иль." *Ily*

Shane looked down at the ice, and a small, genuine smile touched his lips. *Ily*. It was ridiculous, perfect, and utterly, blissfully distracting.

When he looked up, the tension was gone. His mind was a quiet, empty room, centered only on the net.

The whistle blew. He skated.

The shot was clean, a flick of the wrist he hadn't known he still possessed. It rocketed past Drapeau's outstretched pad.

It went in.

A sudden, impossible silence descended over the crowded arena. Then, the roar hit him; a deafening, tidal wave of sound from the Centaur fans that shook the glass surrounding the rink.

He took a deep breath, letting the sound wash over him, then turned his head to look at Ilya. Ilya was already watching him. As their eyes met, Ilya gave him that wink Shane found so endearing. It was never just his eye, always accompanied by that same small, mischievous curve of his mouth, a subtle facial synkinesis that tied the two movements together. It was a neurological rule of his face, Shane thought. Never one force, always two movements inextricably linked, much like the constant reaction between himself and Ilya.

Shane let out the breath he'd been holding.

Now, the others. The ice was cut up, the air thick, and the tension ratcheted up with every agonizing attempt.

Hayden was the next up for Montreal, his expression grim. He skated out, matching Shane's opening marker by sliding the puck five-hole. Score.

Ilya was next. He moved with a frightening, singular focus, the silence broken only by the sharp scrape of his blades. He pulled the goalie out, made no mistakes, and slotted a backhand under the blocker. The glass seemed to vibrate with the sheer volume of the Centaur roar.

Comeau drove toward the net next, attempting a quick, desperate deke, but the puck snagged, lost on his backhand before he could even get the shot off. Missed. The relief on the Centaur bench was audible even over the noise.

Troy had a chance to end the entire game. He sped in, but his usually reliable shot, the one built on precision and power, sailed wide of the net. Missed.

This brought out the Voyageurs' third shooter: the young rookie, the one who had taken Shane's spot in the lineup. His nerves were a visible thing; his hands were shaking so badly the stick chattered against the ice. He tried to lift the puck, but it rolled harmlessly off his blade, becoming an easy, almost insultingly simple glove save for Wyatt. Missed.

The tie held. The tension didn't just double, it stretched taut, agonizingly thin, as they went into the sudden-death round. Ilya pointed again, directly at Shane, a silent, absolute command.

It was up to Shane. Break the tie. Win Game 6.

He skated out slowly as he thumbed the spot on his neck, his collar grazing the "ily," and glanced at Ilya, who met his eyes with that same small, resolute nod of pure faith.

Shane took a deep, steadying breath, then looked at Drapeau. The giant goalie, arrogant and unflappable, was waiting.

Shane charged hard. He sold a convincing deke to his forehand, a feint that made Drapeau commit a fraction early, dropping his blocker side just enough. It was the slightest opening, a window that would vanish in a heartbeat. At the last possible second, Shane pulled the puck back, letting his stick blade travel impossibly far behind his body, loading up the wood for the perfect, impossible backhand angle.

Time seemed to bend. His focus narrowed to the tiny, exposed space above Drapeau's shoulder. Shane unleashed a blistering, textbook Ilya Rozanov backhand shot, a flash of black streaking toward the mesh. Every single person in the arena seemed to inhale simultaneously. The puck screamed past Drapeau's ear, a sound like tearing silk, and hammered into the top corner of the net, inches from the goalie's head. The net bulged.

Game. Centaurs Win.

Shane slammed into the boards, enveloped in the sudden, frenzied mass of his teammates. He didn't need to hear the goal horn; he knew the sound of victory.

"Hollander! You maniac!" Bood grabbed Shane's shoulders. He was shaking him so hard in his excitement that Shane's head was starting to flop from side to side. "Fuck yes, man!"

Ilya was there in an instant, his large hand coming up to gently cup the back of Shane's head, stopping the bobbing motion. He caught Zane's eye, a soft, warning look passing between them. "Watch his head," Ilya murmured, making the soft reprimand clear even over the noise. Bood immediately loosened his grip. Shane's smile widened, a quiet thank you just for Ilya.

"Oi! Listen up!" Troy climbed up onto a sturdy velvet chair, a drink precariously balanced in his hand. The room quieted down, eyes turning to the winger. "To the fresh meat and the Swiss precision! The duo of the night!" He raised his glass high, grinning wildly. "To Holly and Haas!"

"Holly and Haas!" the room roared back in unison, glasses clinking together. Shane found himself grinning, bumping shoulders with Luca, who had appeared beside him looking equally flushed with victory.

"Tonight's victory belongs to you!" Troy grinned. "Haas dragged us into overtime all by himself. To Haas! The savior of the third!"

A wave of cheering swept the room. Troy waited impatiently for it to die down, then pointed his glass at Shane, who was currently being aggressively hugged by Ilya.

“And who steps up in the shootout? Holly!” Troy announced, looking at Shane. “He does it with pure Rozanov technique. In fact,” Troy leaned in conspiratorially, lowering his voice just enough to make everyone strain to hear, “he steals Roz’s *best* move and executes it better!”

Ilya’s mouth, which had been set in a cocky, proud smirk while Troy praised Shane, twisted into a look of mock indignation. He instantly shoved the glass in his hand toward Troy, dipping his fingers into the liquid and flicking a spray of cold beer right at the winger. Troy grinned and ducked out of the way of the cold drops.

“Durák!” Ilya retorted. *Idiot*. Shane could barely find it in himself to be annoyed by the cold, wet fingers that had just flicked beer now wrapped around his bicep, tightening their hold as Ilya immediately pulled Shane in even tighter, affectionately nuzzling his chin into the top of Shane’s head.

Troy wiped the beer off his face, laughing. “To Holly and Haas! And to the team! We fight! We win! The Voyageurs can go cry themselves to sleep!”

Everybody cheered, the noise becoming a deafening, unified roar of relief and victory.

Shane, feeling the raw, proud warmth radiating off the body pressed against his own, grinned up at Ilya. Ilya’s eyes, still sparkling with mirth and pride, lowered, and he rewarded Shane with a hard kiss to his mouth that was quick and completely unapologetic in front of the entire team.

He broke the kiss, then roughly buffed Shane’s cheek with the knuckles of his free hand and murmured low against his ear, “Khoroshiy mal’chik.” *Good boy*. The deep rumble of the phrase instantly made Shane blush hot all the way to his collarbone. Ilya, utterly satisfied with the reaction, gave Shane’s bicep one final squeeze, released him, and strolled away to buy the rookies some drinks, leaving Shane to stand there, blushing fiercely into his beer.

Shane was on a high after their game and their first win of the season, enjoying the camaraderie of his new team, but his gaze kept drifting across the room to his husband. Ilya’s smile deepened, a slow, knowing curl of the lip that promised a private continuation of the celebration.

An agonizing hour later, Ilya made his way directly through the throng, maneuvering around a beaming Chouinard. When he reached Shane, he stopped, placing his large, warm hand on the back of Shane’s neck. Shane leaned into the touch.

Ilya spoke loudly enough for the surrounding players to hear, his voice carrying the calm authority that only the Captain possessed.

“Gentlemen! Hollander here has done enough scoring for one night.” He paused, his thumb rubbing a small circle just below Shane’s hairline. The warmth of the room seemed to concentrate just between them. Shane felt his cheeks heat up. “Is my turn now to ensure star player gets proper rest. A full night’s sleep. I must perform my captain’s duty.”

A collective wave of laughter and whoops erupted from the group. The support was immediate, unconditional, and utterly familial.

Shane felt a mix of intense heat and giddy affection. The embarrassment was there, a sharp spike of color in his cheeks, but it was overshadowed by the fierce, protective presence of his husband behind him. Ilya's touch was doing things to his composure, dissolving any lingering mortification.

Ilya didn't move his hand; he merely applied the slightest pressure, guiding Shane like a prize toward the nearest exit. The way Ilya held him was utterly lacking in subtlety, exactly how a champion would hold a trophy, ensuring its safety and making sure everyone knew exactly who it belonged to. Shane didn't resist. He drained the last of his beer and let his husband steer him out of the bar and toward home.

The front door of their house burst inward, hitting the wall with a soft thud as Shane and Ilya stumbled across the threshold, already halfway through a desperate kiss.

A joyful bark and the *thump-thump-thump* of a tail against the hardwood announced their welcome committee: Anya, who met them with a frenzy of excited leaps and happy barks.

Ilya broke the kiss with a sharp nip to Shane's lower lip. He leaned back just enough to slide one hand down, giving Shane's ass a firm squeeze right through the fabric of his suit pants.

"Bedroom," Ilya commanded. He pointed toward the stairs. "Go. Strip. Wait on the bed for your reward."

Shane grinned, adrenaline still humming under his skin, and immediately turned to race up the stairs.

As Shane reached the landing, he slowly began to shed his suit jacket, neatly folding it over his arm. The rich, buttery sound of Ilya's voice drifted up from the kitchen. Shane paused, smiling, listening to the soft ritual below.

"Da, da, moya krasivaya devochka," Ilya crooned. *Yes, yes, my beautiful girl.* Shane heard the clink of a bowl being set down. "Piy vodu, khorosho." *Drink water, good.* Then a crunching sound of a treat being given.

In the bedroom, Shane slipped his shoes off and began unbuttoning his shirt, listening to the final, loving instructions.

"Now, bed, sweetheart. Sidet." *Sit.* A brief pause, followed by the soft sound of paw pads settling onto a dog bed. "Derzhis." *Stay.* A final, definitive kissy-noise. "Papa and Daddy need alone time. You stay. Good girl."

Shane was down to his boxers, his suit pants creased and draped over the chair in the corner, a silly, endearing smile fixed on his face. Shane realized that Anya's bedtime ritual was coming to a close; the comforting sounds of sweet Russian commands and happy dog sighs

had gone quiet. He knew Ilya wouldn't be long. A low hum of anticipation started in his stomach, heating his skin.

Shane quickly kicked off his boxers and crawled into the center of the bed, splaying his naked form out in a silent, expectant invitation for Ilya.

Ilya entered the bedroom moments later, walking with the slow, confident stride of a man who knew exactly what awaited him. But he simply smiled, a slow, knowing curve of his mouth, and confused Shane when he didn't stop at the bed. Ilya paused only long enough to run his hand through Shane's hair in a quick, careless gesture of affection, then continued straight toward the ensuite bathroom and disappeared inside.

Shane lay still for a moment, then shifted, fidgeting impatiently against the cool sheets as he listened to the distinct sound of the faucet running. He needed a distraction.

His gaze snagged on the bedside table. Shane occupied himself by staring longly at the sleek black box resting on Ilya's nightstand. It was the focus of his attention until he reached up a hand and absently ran his fingers over the faint mark on his neck.

The sound of running water stopped, and Shane startled slightly when the bathroom door opened. Ilya stepped out, his lower half still clad in suit trousers, but his torso bare. Ilya's gaze, heavy and assessing, traveled slowly over Shane's exposed body on the bed. When he reached the bed, Ilya placed one knee on the mattress beside Shane's hip.

"Byl khoroshiy, lyubimyy?" Ilya asked, his voice a low, gravelly invitation. *Have you been good, beloved?*

Shane, his eyes fixed on the powerful curve of Ilya's chest, swallowed hard. "Yes."

"I tvoya ruka?" *And your hand?* Ilya's fingers, still slightly cool from the water, ghosted over Shane's ribs. "You touch yourself, waiting for me?"

"No," Shane breathed, shaking his head. "I waited."

A satisfied smile widened Ilya's mouth. "Khoroshiy mal'chik," he murmured, the praise sinking into Shane like liquid heat. *Good boy.* Ilya shifted his weight, pressing his body further onto the bed without bothering to take off his suit pants. His huge, warm palm ran a slow path down Shane's naked chest and stomach, finally splaying wide right over Shane's belly button.

Ilya then lowered himself fully, his torso heavy and hot over Shane's, and kissed Shane. As their mouths met and Ilya dominated the kiss, Shane responded with a soft hum of pure happiness. His fingers tightened reflexively in the muscles of Ilya's back, and his hips instinctively arched up into Ilya, chasing the contact, desperate to deepen the connection between their lips and bodies.

Ilya intensified the kiss, his body heavy and commanding, until Shane squirmed restlessly under him, his hands pawing desperately at the front of Ilya's suit pants.

Ilya chuckled low against Shane's mouth, the sound vibrating into Shane's chest. He pulled back just an inch, his eyes dark with teasing intent.

“Chto ty khochesh', lyubimyy?” Ilya asked, his breath hot. *What do you want, beloved?* He watched Shane's hands fumble uselessly with the button of his trousers. “You want this off? You want to see my cock?”

Shane whimpered, unable to articulate the demand past the thick need in his throat.

Ilya's smile vanished, replaced by a sudden, sharp edge. “Say it,” he commanded, the authority absolute.

When Shane still didn't answer, Ilya twisted his hand firmly into the hair at the base of Shane's skull, tugging sharply enough to make Shane arch his neck.

“Govori.” *Speak.*

Shane instantly squeezed his eyes shut and gasped out the words, “Take them off! Please, Ilya, take your pants off! Show me your cock!”

A satisfied laugh rumbled in Ilya's chest. The tension in Shane's hair eased as Ilya released the grasp, but the hand immediately returned to cup Shane's jaw, tilting his face up.

“Khoroshiy mal'chik,” Ilya repeated. *Good boy.* He brought his mouth down for a hard, demanding kiss, a reward that both thrilled and silenced Shane. Ilya broke the kiss just long enough to slide his hand from Shane's face down to the waistband of his own suit pants. “Since you ask so nicely...”

Ilya shucked his pants down, followed instantly by his briefs. His cock sprang free, massive and eager. Shane let out a desperate moan at the sight, his eyes widening. He immediately tried to reach out a hand, fingers twitching, but Ilya's free hand came down, batting Shane's hand away with a sharp slap against his wrist.

“Blyad,” Ilya chastised. *Slut.* “I did not say you can touch yet.” He ran his warm, heavy hand back up Shane's stomach and chest, pausing at his collarbone.

“You won game for us. Good boys get rewards.”

He leaned closer, his breath hot against Shane's ear. “Tell me what you want. Not just my pants off, but *what* you want from me. For your reward. Say it, and you can have whatever you ask for.”

Shane's eyes, dilated with need, locked onto Ilya's.

“I want you, Ilya,” Shane whispered, the simple phrase ragged with yearning.

Ilya's hand left Shane's chest, running through the air just inches above his skin, tracing a phantom line of anticipation. “I know, lyubimyy,” he murmured, his voice dangerously soft. “But 'you' is so vague. I am million things. Game is over, victory secured. Now, you ask for

your spoils. Give me more. What does Shane Hollander need from me for this victory to feel complete?"

Shane's breath hitched. His gaze flickered back to the nightstand, to the black box. He swallowed.

"The collar," Shane breathed, the single word a plea. "I want the collar."

A slow, utterly satisfied smile spread across Ilya's face, the kind of smile reserved only for moments of absolute surrender. He pulled himself off Shane and reached across the bed to retrieve the black box. The sound of the lid opening was a sharp, delicate click in the quiet room.

Ilya lifted the collar and knelt over Shane. His eyes, dark and focused, held Shane's as he wrapped the cool material around Shane's throat. The click of the buckle settling into place was a resounding period on the moment of command.

"Now," Ilya said, his voice dropping to a gravelly, demanding tone, "tell me what else you want." His thumb pressed lightly against Shane's windpipe.

Shane nodded frantically, his voice hushed and hurried, the slight restriction around his throat intensifying the sensation of obedience.

"I want you." Shane choked out.

"What else?" Ilya pressed.

Shane's breath hitched. He bit down hard on his lip, the shame and the desire battling inside him until the pressure was too much. The words spilled out, fast and filthy, carrying the sharp sting of honesty he usually held back.

"I want to taste you," Shane rushed out. "I want to run my tongue all over your cock." Shane let out a frustrated gasp. "Bury your fucking dick right at the back of my throat! I'll keep going until you make me gag!"

Shane didn't even pause to breathe after the torrent of demands, the honesty ripping the final filter away. The words came faster, driven by an almost frantic need to just get the truth out.

"And I want you to fuck me so hard I won't be able to tell what I'm sore from, you, or the game!" Shane admitted, his voice cracking. He reached up, his fingers trembling as they hooked into the leather around his neck. He gave it a sharp, desperate tug. "I want you to use the collar, Ilya. Choke me with it. Pull it tight while you're inside me. I don't want to be prepped that much. Just hold me down and fuck me, and then... and then just kiss me. And... cuddle me."

The room went silent for a heartbeat. Ilya's gaze darkened, his thumb tracing Shane's lips with a sudden, intense reverence.

"And you will get everything you ask for," Ilya promised. He leaned in, his forehead resting against Shane's. "Good boy, Shane. I'm proud of you for telling me what you need. You did

so well asking for that." Then, he sealed the praise with a hard, demanding kiss.

Ilya didn't waste another second. He gripped Shane's hips and dragged him off the bed and onto the rug. Shane landed on his hands and knees with a surprised grunt.

"Na koleni." *Kneel.*

Shane obeyed instantly, dropping his weight back onto his heels.

Ilya stepped closer, his shadow falling over Shane. He didn't offer his cock, instead, he pressed his thumb, wet and rough, into Shane's already waiting mouth, pushing past his lips.

"Sosat," Ilya ordered. *Suck*

Shane's eyes locked on Ilya's, the intense visual connection unwavering as he started to suck vigorously on Ilya's thumb. He was completely focused, compliant, and kneeling at attention.

Ilya abruptly withdrew his thumb, only to immediately push two fingers deep onto Shane's tongue, pressing down. Shane let out a muffled moan of surprise and nearly gagged on the depth and pressure. Without pause, Ilya slowly slid his fingers further back until they brushed Shane's throat. Shane's obedience won out; he forced himself to relax, swallowing around the intruding fingers with a sharp, ragged inhale.

Ilya's expression softened with pride. "Takoye khorosheye gorlo. Tak khorosho natrenirovano." *Such a good throat. So well trained.* Ilya withdrew his fingers with a slow, wet sound, leaving Shane breathless and eager on the floor and then reached down, gripping Shane's hair and tilting his head back to expose his throat before pulling him firmly toward his cock.

"Otkroy," Ilya commanded. *Open.*

Shane needed no further instruction. He shifted instantly, eagerly, his hands flying to cup the hard weight of Ilya's base. His lips parted, his tongue darting out to taste the slick, promising tip before he took the entire length into his mouth.

Shane worked with a primal focus, his eyes tracking Ilya's face for any sign of approval or command. He tightened the suction, driving his head down and back up with the rhythm he had promised, the sound wet and fervent in the silent room.

Suddenly, Ilya's hand tightened in his hair, locking Shane's head in place. He drove deep, holding Shane firmly against his pelvis, pinning him there. Shane's eyes went wide, his throat stretching to accommodate the intrusion. He couldn't move, couldn't breathe, his body reacting to the intense pressure until his eyes began to water and tears escaped, tracking a hot line down his cheeks.

When Ilya pulled Shane back off his cock, Shane slumped forward slightly, his hands gripping Ilya's thighs for balance as he gasped a loud, shuddering inhale. His chest heaved, his lungs burning with the sudden rush of air, and he let out a small, involuntary whimper that was lost in his ragged breathing.

“Color,” Ilya murmured, his voice a low, steady beacon in the haze of Shane's sensory overload.

Shane coughed, a harsh, wet sound that rattled in his abused throat. He blinked rapidly to clear his vision, his voice coming out as a raspy, broken thread. “Green.”

Ilya pressed his calloused thumb firmly into the dampness on Shane’s cheek, smearing the salt and heat of the tears directly into the skin, rubbing them deep into the bridge of Shane's nose and over his freckles.

As he watched, a fresh, heavy tear welled up and escaped, sliding slowly down the curve of Shane’s cheek. Ilya’s gaze tracked its path with terrifying focus. He leaned down, his shadow falling over Shane, and pressed his lips to the wet trail. He kissed the tear away, his mouth lingering against Shane’s skin for a heartbeat too long.

Shane’s breath stuttered. The sheer intimacy of the gesture, sent a jolt of arousal through him so intense it made his toes curl against the floor.

“Take a breath,” Ilya told him softly, his lips still brushing Shane’s cheek.

Ilya waited with a predator’s patience, his hand resting lightly on the back of Shane’s neck, the leather of the collar cool against his palm. He watched Shane intently, monitoring the rise and fall of his shoulders. He waited until the frantic, panicked edge left Shane’s frame and his muscles finally began to relax.

Once Shane looked up, his eyes glassy but filled with an unwavering, eager heat, Ilya’s grip tightened in his hair once more.

“Good boy,” Ilya growled, the pride evident in the vibration of his voice. He tilted Shane’s head to the perfect angle and beginning to fuck his throat with a relentless, punishing pace.

Shane’s hands clenched onto Ilya’s hips. Deep, muffled moans vibrated against Ilya’s length, sounding thick and distorted. Every time Ilya hit the back of his throat, a broken whimper escaped Shane’s nose.

They didn't look away from each other. Ilya stared down with a dark, burning intensity, watching the way Shane’s eyes stayed locked on his, blown wide and glazed with tears.

“Look at you,” Ilya growled. “Taking it all so perfectly.”

Another thrust forced a wet, choking sound from Shane.

“You’re doing so well for me,” Ilya murmured, his hand adjusting on the collar to tilt Shane’s head back just a fraction more. “I’m so proud of you for asking for this. Do you hear me? I love how much you want this. I love how you look when you are being used like this.”

Shane let out a long, keening moan, the sound trapped and vibrating in the small space between them. He leaned into the pace, his eyes never wavering from Ilya’s, even as fresh moisture gathered at the corners.

Ilya's hand tightened one last time in Shane's hair, delivering a final, deep thrust that drew a muffled, frantic cry from the back of Shane's throat. Then, with a slow pull, Ilya withdrew.

The absence of the heat was jarring. Shane slumped forward instantly, his forehead nearly touching Ilya's thighs as he buckled. He was gasping, his chest heaving as he fought to pull oxygen back into his lungs. Strands of damp hair clung to his forehead, and his throat felt tight, raw, and pulse-pounding.

Ilya reached down, his fingers hooking under the edge of the leather collar to steady Shane, his thumb tracing the racing pulse in Shane's neck. He didn't rush him. He let Shane heave, let him find his equilibrium in the heavy silence of the room, punctuated only by the sound of Shane's desperate breathing.

"There he is," Ilya murmured. "Catch your breath, lyubimyy. We're only just getting started on your list."

Ilya sank back onto the edge of the mattress, his strength flagging, and hauled Shane with him until Shane was straddling his lap. For a long moment, Ilya just leaned heavily against him, his breathing harsh and ragged against Shane's neck. Then, he hooked one finger through the loop of Shane's collar, dragging his head down to claim his mouth in a deep, tongue-tangling kiss. The subtle restriction of the leather against Shane's throat made the kiss feel desperate and overwhelming.

As the kiss broke, the heavy fog of adrenaline in Shane's mind began to lift. His lungs finally pulled in a full, cooling breath, and his head started to clear. The frantic pulse in his ears faded, leaving a sharp, sudden silence in the room.

"Sidet," Ilya murmured. *Sit*

Shane's body obeyed instantly, his weight settling firmly onto Ilya's thighs, but the moment the movement finished, the word finally registered. It was the exact command, the exact inflection, even the same affectionate, dominant tone, that Ilya had used downstairs for Anya.

Panic pierced through the red heat of arousal, immediately replacing the pleasure with a horrific clarity. In the sudden silence of his own mind, the last hour began to play back, the Russian words he hadn't fully processed now translating with brutal precision.

He heard Ilya's voice again, low and demanding: "Otkroy," and remembered how he had opened up without a second thought. He felt the phantom pressure on his hips as Ilya whispered "Na koleni," and he had dropped to his knees as if born for it. "Govori," Ilya had breathed, and Shane had babbled whatever he was told to say.

The worst of it, the part that made his stomach turn, was the praise. "Khoroshiy mal'chik." *Good boy*. And that purred observation: "Tak khorosho natrenirovano." *So well trained*.

The realization that Ilya had been treating him like a dog hit Shane like ice water. But even more gut-wrenching than Ilya's behavior was the sickening wave of shame that followed: he had *liked* it. He had thrived under the commands, his body responding with a terrifying, mindless hunger to be mastered.

Shane stiffened in Ilya's lap, his eyes wide with a sudden, frantic revulsion at both of them. Shane whimpered and tried to push himself off Ilya's thigh, the closeness suddenly unbearable. As Shane twisted away, his neglected cock dragged across the coarse hair on Ilya's thigh, eliciting a pathetic, involuntary keen.

Before Shane could scramble off his lap, Ilya's hands shot out, catching him by the hips and dragging him back firmly until Shane was once again locked against him.

"Derzhis," Ilya commanded. *Stay.*

Shane flinched. Ilya's expression softened instantly as he felt the frantic thud of Shane's heart. He saw the genuine, physical distress and the panicked recoil in Shane's eyes, but he couldn't ignore the involuntary twitch of Shane's body against his own thigh. Ilya understood the conflict immediately: Shane was into this, he just wouldn't let himself have it.

"Shh, tishe, Shane," Ilya murmured as he tried to quiet his husband's mounting hysteria. *Hush.*

Ilya released Shane's hips only to cup his face, his thumbs stroking over Shane's cheekbones. He forced Shane to look directly into his eyes, refusing to let him hide in the dark or retreat into his own shame.

"Ilya, stop," Shane choked out. He felt the walls closing in. He needed the world to stop turning. He needed the game to end.

"Red," Shane gasped. "Red!"

The moment the safeword left Shane's lips, the atmosphere shattered. Ilya went perfectly still.

"I stop. I stop. I promise. I'm so sorry," Ilya said, his voice urgent and stripped of all its previous dominance. He immediately shifted his weight, giving Shane space while staying close enough to offer comfort if it was accepted.

Shane sat there, trembling. He couldn't even look up, his face burning with a humiliation so hot it felt like a fever.

"I am so sorry, lyubimiy," Ilya said, his tone low and sincere. He reached out, his touch hesitant until he gently began to stroke Shane's cheek, which was tight and flushed with shame. "Was not right. I thought, because you like collar, you like words too. I was wrong to assume. I apologize for springing this on you."

Ilya leaned in to rest his forehead against Shane's, his eyes searching Shane's downcast face. "I did not mean to make you feel... I do not know. I thought words would make it more. But I see now, I went too far."

Shane let out a shaky breath and scrambled up slightly, trying to cover his face with his arms.

"Hey. Hey, look at me," Ilya murmured, gently pulling Shane's hands away from his face. "I know that spooked you. I'm sorry. I should have talk to you about words first."

Shane didn't meet his eyes, twisting his head away. "I did...like it." The admission was so quiet it was barely audible.

Ilya waited a beat, then smiled gently. "What was that? Say again, lyubimiy."

Shane squeezed his eyes shut, frustrated by his body's honesty. "I said I did like it," he repeated, louder this time.

"Okay. Then what is with face? Why do you hide?"

Shane finally looked at him, his dark eyes brimming with frustration. "It's weird. It feels weird."

"Why is weird?"

"Because I'm not a dog," Shane whispered, the shame making his voice small.

Ilya reached out and gently stroked the line of Shane's collared neck. "Yeah, Shane. Obviously, you are not dog."

"Then I don't want you to talk to me like I am one!" Shane said, turning away sharply, his shame reaching a boiling point. He swung his legs off Ilya's lap.

"Are you sure?" Ilya asked, his voice firm but tender. "Because your body tells me something different."

The blunt, irrefutable proof of his arousal was too much. Shane tried to launch himself away from the edge of the bed, aiming for the bathroom door. He shoved at Ilya's shoulder, desperate to escape the evidence.

Ilya caught Shane's wrist and pulled him onto the bed with a powerful, smooth motion, preventing any escape. He didn't stop until Shane was safely on his back in the center of the sheets, and then Ilya quickly maneuvered himself to lay directly on top of him, pinning him down with his full weight.

"Stay," Ilya commanded, his voice firm. He locked his eyes onto Shane's, refusing to let him retreat. "I need you to listen to me now."

Shane's breath hitched, but he was pinned, and he gave up the fight instantly.

Ilya softened his expression, running a hand gently through Shane's damp hair. "Tell me honestly: What part feels bad?"

"Shame," Shane admitted, his voice muffled against Ilya's neck. "The feeling that it's bad and wrong."

"And what part feels good?"

"The quiet," Shane whispered. "The quiet in my head. And the praise. That I'm being good just for you."

Ilya smiled gently. "Shane. We are grown men, married, who love each other. We are in our private room. Anything...*anything*...that you like, that you want, that you ask for, that makes your brain quiet and your body feel safe, is not bad."

Shane went quiet, contemplating the staggering simplicity of that permission.

Ilya rolled them over, pulling Shane onto his chest, and began to slowly stroke his hand up and down Shane's back, a repetitive, soothing motion.

Shane tried to squirm away again, resisting the physical position and the comforting stroke.

Ilya held him tightly, refusing to let him retreat into his anxiety. "Stay for a minute. Breathe."

Shane let out a shaky, deep inhale, then a long, ragged exhale. The resistance drained out of his muscles, and he finally sagged onto Ilya's chest, the tension melting away. Ilya continued the rhythmic, soothing strokes until Shane's breathing deepened, whispering soft praises

Shane's face was still buried in the warm curve of Ilya's shoulder. His voice was muffled, small and painfully vulnerable when he finally spoke again.

"Ilya," Shane whispered, barely moving. "Can we... can we just have normal sex now?"

Ilya's rhythmic stroking paused for only a fraction of a second before continuing, slow and steady.

"Is no such thing as normal sex," Ilya said. "And is no such thing as not-normal sex. Is just sex. Is just two of us, married, celebrating win, celebrating each other. Is all it is."

He pulled Shane's head back slightly, forcing Shane to look at him, his gaze full of tenderness and absolute acceptance. "You need time to process. Is fine. We have all the time in the world."

Ilya didn't push the conversation further. Instead, he pulled Shane into a series of long, deep, open-mouthed kisses, wordlessly pouring comfort and passion into him until Shane's shoulders began to relax.

Seeing the tension drain from his husband's body, Ilya softened his hold and slid Shane off of him, moving just enough to sit on the edge of the bed.

He reached over, silently grabbing the lube from the bedside drawer. Ilya then turned back to Shane, who remained compliant on his back, and gently spread his legs open, resting a large, warm hand on the inside of one thigh.

"Do you want collar off, lyubimyy?" Ilya asked.

Shane shook his head no, his eyes wide with honesty. He wanted to keep it on.

Ilya gave a slow, understanding nod. He squirted a generous dollop of lube onto his palm. As he worked his fingers toward Shane's entrance, Ilya shifted his position, pressing his other

warm, soothing palm intimately against Shane's belly button, grounding him with that constant, comforting pressure as he began to gently open Shane for him.

Ilya worked patiently, his slick fingers easing Shane open with a steady, rhythmic pressure. When he reached three fingers, fully buried inside, Shane's hips were already tilting upward into the touch, his mouth slack and his breath hitching. Ilya didn't make him wait long; he withdrew his fingers with a wet *schlick* and abruptly shifted his weight.

The sudden change in tempo caused Shane to scramble back slightly, his eyes wide and darting. Everything had been slow, honey-thick and gentle, and the suddenness of Ilya's movement, the looming weight of him as he climbed over, made Shane's heart hammer against his ribs.

"Wait," Shane choked out, his hands coming up instinctively to press against Ilya's chest. "Wait, I—you're... it's too..."

He let out a few aborted, breathless gasps, his mind momentarily snagging on the fear of being overwhelmed. "Ilya, I can't—just wait a second, I need to—"

"Hey," Ilya murmured, instantly halting his forward motion. He stayed settled between Shane's spread legs, but he kept his weight back, his hands moving to capture Shane's wrists with a feather-light touch. "Shh. Look at me. Is okay, yes?"

Ilya leaned in until their noses brushed. "I promise you, from here, is very vanilla. Very boring. Just us, Shane. No tricks."

Shane let out a shaky, frustrated huff, the sound caught somewhere between a laugh and a sob. He forced his hands to relax, his fingers curling into the sheets instead of Ilya's skin.

Ilya rewarded the trust with a sweet, lingering kiss, a deep, romantic press of lips that tasted of pure devotion. "I love you," Ilya whispered against his mouth, his eyes soft and honest.

Only then, with the reassurance hanging in the air, did Ilya slowly press his cock against Shane's entrance. He gave Shane a moment to feel the heavy, blunt heat of him before he began to sink inside.

Then, just as quickly, all of a sudden, everything was okay. Shane exhaled the breath he had caught in his throat and let out a shuddering moan as he felt Ilya give one final, measured push and slide to the hilt, filling him completely.

"This is yours, lyubimyy," Ilya murmured against Shane's mouth. "Your reward."

He began to move, slowly and deeply, the rhythm measured and deliberate, each withdrawal agonizingly slow before the powerful, full return. Ilya kept his movements contained, using his hands to cradle Shane's hips, ensuring every thrust was perfect. Even though they were in a simple missionary position, sex with Ilya could never be boring. He turned the mundane into the masterful.

"Look at me, my clever husband," Ilya said. "Just look at me."

Shane obeyed, his eyes swimming with pleasure. The deliberate slowness was exquisite, building a rich, heavy pressure deep inside him.

Then, just as Shane settled completely into the comfortable pace, Ilya suddenly, without warning, drove a single, surprisingly fast thrust to the absolute hilt, striking that perfect, vulnerable point inside.

Shane cried out, his back arching. His breath hitched, and his calm shattered into frantic, delighted gasps.

Ilya immediately pulled the pace back, returning to the slow, heavy rhythm, his eyes radiating affection. "Easy, moya radost. You are safe." *My joy.*

He moved slowly for ten more strokes, his lips trailing soft, open-mouthed kisses along Shane's collarbone, whispering praises in Russian. Just as Shane's eyes began to close, sinking back into the pleasure, Ilya suddenly lifted Shane's thighs and pulled his weight back, grinding his hips up into Shane in a rough, unexpected circle before driving back in with a sudden, deep slam.

Shane gasped and trembled, his grip on his own control completely lost to Ilya's unpredictable control of the rhythm.

"You are mine, Shane," Ilya stated. His large hand curled firmly around Shane's cock, and at the same moment, he leaned over to sink his teeth into the leather of the collar around Shane's neck. He didn't bite Shane's skin, but the tug on the leather sent a sharp vibration straight to Shane's throat.

"This is mine," Ilya growled against the collar.

Shane had no idea if Ilya was referring to the collar or his body, and he was too far gone to care. All of him was Ilya's. Every nerve ending was saturated by the man above him.

"Oh god... Ilya, fuck... so good," Shane babbled, the words trailing off into incoherent whimpers as his head fell back.

His throat was bared and vulnerable, his fingers digging into Ilya's shoulders. Every rough movement of Ilya's hips drove Shane closer to a ledge he couldn't wait to fall from.

With a final, shattering gasp, Shane came hard, the force of the climax racking his entire body as he spilled across his abdomen.

Ilya froze for a heartbeat, his eyes dark as he watched the evidence of Shane's uncontrolled release. As the peak began to subside, Shane sagged back onto the bed, his limbs heavy and his mind drifting in a hazy, pleasure-drunk delirium.

But even through the fog, he couldn't stand the thought of Ilya being unfinished. Shane's eyes were glassy and rimmed with tears of pure overstimulation as he looked up, his voice breaking into desperate, needy pleas.

“Don’t... don’t stop,” Shane pleaded, his chest heaving as he tried to catch his breath. “Please, Ilya. Use me. Keep going... I want you to... please, don’t stop until you come.”

Ilya’s expression softened into something fiercely romantic, his heart thudding against Shane’s ribs. Even though Shane was clearly sensitive and trembling, he couldn’t deny the raw, selfless demand.

“Anything you ask for,” Ilya promised.

He resumed a powerful, steady rhythm. Every thrust was a tidal wave against Shane’s overstimulated nerves; the friction felt almost like too much, a sharp, white-hot intensity that made Shane’s breath hitch and his toes curl. He was on the verge of shattering again, his body twitching with every movement, but he clamped his jaw shut, forcing himself to stay open, to stay still, to be *good* for Ilya. He wanted to be the perfect vessel for Ilya’s pleasure, even as his mind began to fray at the edges from the sheer sensory overload.

Ilya leaned down, catching Shane’s mouth in a deep, bruising kiss that tasted of salt and heat. He could feel Shane shaking under him, feel the small, desperate whimpers Shane was trying to swallow, and it only drove him harder. Ilya’s breath hitched, his movements becoming more urgent, more desperate.

Finally, with a groan, Ilya reached his limit. With a final, shuddering surge, he released himself deep inside, his forehead dropping to rest against Shane’s shoulder as he shook with the force of it, his breath coming in hot bursts against Shane’s damp skin.

As the aftershocks faded, the overload hit Shane. He lay there, pinned by Ilya’s weight, a dazed, looping smile fixed on his face even as hot, silent tears began to track down into his hair.

Ilya immediately pulled himself out, moving only far enough to check Shane over. He reached down and gently cupped Shane’s chin, forcing their eyes to meet.

“Are you hurt, my heart?” Ilya asked, his voice immediate and deeply concerned, ignoring the wetness and the tears.

Shane shook his head, unable to speak, the cries already easing into hiccupping gasps.

Ilya settled himself beside Shane, pulling him immediately into a strong, warm cuddle against his chest. He gently stroked his hand through Shane’s damp hair.

“Good, good. Let it out, lyubimyy,” Ilya murmured into his ear. “You won the game, Shane. You played with your whole heart.” He kissed the top of Shane’s head. “And you are worthy. Always. You are good boy for me, always. I would do this for you, and love you, and crave you, even if you never scored another goal.”

Ilya paused. “You could be worst hockey player in league, I would still be completely obsessed with you.”

A shaky laugh finally bubbled out of Shane, wet and broken, chasing the last of the tears away. He reached up a hand and stroked the solid warmth of Ilya's bare shoulder.

"Thank you," Shane whispered "Thank you for taking care of... of us."

Ilya didn't answer with words; he simply tightened his arms around Shane, pulling him in even closer, before pressing a long, deep, comforting kiss against Shane's temple.

"You are loved, Shane," Ilya murmured, his voice a deep, resonant vibration that settled into Shane's ear and heart. "So deeply loved. Never doubt that. My heart is yours, always."

He kept stroking Shane's hair, letting the quiet assurance of his presence do the rest of the work.

"Sleep now, my champion," Ilya commanded softly. "We are home. We are safe."

Just as he slipped into the quiet darkness, Shane's hand drifted up to his neck. He registered the presence of the cool, slightly heavy leather. The collar was still on.

Chapter End Notes

Ilya promised it would be "very vanilla, very boring." Obviously, he's a liar.

If you enjoyed this chapter, drop a line and let me know your favorite part. Don't make me use a command to get your feedback...

...Okay, fine. Govori! Speak!

Be a khoroshiy mal'chik and leave a comment. 🙄

Chapter 4: Amber & Ice

Chapter Notes

This was supposed to be the last chapter, but I had to split it up. I don't think you little freaks are gonna mind one more chapter.

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

"Before we wrap, let's check in on the medication," Antonio said as he grabbed his pen and notebook from the small table beside him. It was a routine Shane had grown used to over the last two months, though the sight of his therapist's notebook still made Shane want to squirm in his seat.

"Any new side effects?"

Shane shook his head. "Not bad ones anyway. The jitters have leveled off. I'm sleeping better too."

"Wonderful," Antonio noted, jotting a quick line in his notebook. "And what about eating?"

"It's actually been a lot better these last couple of weeks. Ilya's been teaching me how to make Russian food his mom used to make. It's weird, but when we're sharing stuff like that, it's easier."

"That's huge, Shane," Antonio said, his voice warm. "Keep leaning into that. Before our next session, I want you to try something: the next time you feel that urge to restrict or over-exercise, I want you to go to Ilya and tell him exactly what the voice in your head is saying. Give him the whistle and see how it feels to let him tell you to rest instead."

Shane nodded. "I can do that. I think... I think he'd actually like that."

"I have a feeling he would," Antonio reached out, giving Shane's shoulder a brief, supportive squeeze. "I'll see you next Tuesday."

Shane walked out of the office and into the crisp afternoon air, his phone buzzing in his pocket. He pulled it out to see a text from Ilya—or Lily, rather. He still hadn't changed the name in his contacts; he wasn't sure why, only that doing so didn't feel quite right. Instead, he'd added a red heart and a photo of Ilya grinning too close to the lens, his face happy and bright.

Lily: *Are you coming home for dinner, lyubimiy?*

Shane stopped on the sidewalk, the cold air stinging his cheeks, and typed back a single word: *Da*.

After a beat, he added: *Stopping for groceries before we head to the cottage tomorrow. Do you need anything special?*

The three dots appeared almost instantly. Shane watched them dance, his heart doing a strange, frantic rhythm against his ribs until the message popped up.

Lily: *Just you.*

Shane smiled dumbly down at the glowing screen. He looked like an idiot, he knew, but he couldn't help it.

The cottage was quiet save for the occasional crackle of the wood-burning stove and the muffled hush of snow piling against the floor-to-ceiling windows.

Shane was tucked firmly against Ilya's side on the oversized sofa, a thick wool blanket draped over them both. He felt heavy and warm, the kind of bone-deep relaxation that usually eluded him.

Ilya reached for the small plate on the coffee table, picking up a delicate, peach-colored nerikiri. He held it to Shane's lips. "Eat, shchenok," Ilya murmured. "Your mom worked hard on these."

Shane took a bite without hesitation. The wagashi was soft, dissolving on his tongue with a subtle sweetness. He swallowed, leaning his head back against Ilya's shoulder.

"I talked to Antonio about us yesterday," Shane whispered, his eyes fixed on the falling snow. "About the collar. And the...the other stuff."

Ilya's hand paused, his thumb brushing Shane's cheek. "And? Did he tell you your husband is monster for treating you like puppy?"

"No," Shane let out a shaky breath. "He actually asked how you treat Anya. I told him you spoil her. That she's the priority. He said... he said that a 'pet' isn't lesser. They're the ones being watched over and kept safe."

Ilya popped the rest of the nerikiri into Shane's mouth, watching him chew before speaking. "He is smart man, this therapist. I do not want you small, Shane. I want you cared for."

"I told him I felt gross because I liked it so much," Shane admitted, his voice dropping. "He said it's because my 'system' is broken. That I'm my own captain 24/7 and that I'm exhausted from being in charge of myself. He thinks my brain is looking for a way to outsource some of the control to someone I trust."

Ilya shifted, pulling Shane closer until there was no space between them. "To take the 'C' for a while?"

"Yeah," Shane smiled weakly. "He said that if you tell me I've worked out enough, or that it's time to eat... I'm not failing my impossible high standards. I'm just being a 'good boy' for you. And that might make it easier."

Ilya's expression softened into something fierce and protective. He held a camellia-shaped sweet to Shane's mouth.

"Then I am captain now," Ilya said firmly. "And I am telling you: the hockey player is on a break. My Shane is here, and he is hungry, and he is going to listen to his captain."

Shane opened his mouth, accepting the food. The sweetness was better this time.

"Is it easier?" Ilya asked, brushing a stray crumb from Shane's lip. "If I am the one who says 'enough'?"

"So much easier," Shane sighed, closing his eyes and sinking into the warmth of the blanket. "I don't have to meet my standards. I just have to meet yours."

Ilya let out a soft huff of a laugh. "I have low standards, then?"

Shane opened his eyes just enough to look at him, a tired but genuine smile tugging at his lips. He shook his head slowly. "No. Your standards are nice."

"Must be," Ilya murmured, his expression softening as he reached out. He took Shane's hand, his thumb brushing over the knuckles before he brought it to his lips. "Considering they got me you."

A sharp sting prickled behind his eyes, and before he could blink it away, a warmth welled up that had nothing to do with the blankets. It was the beautiful realization of how lucky he was to be loved by someone who saw his best and worst as equal parts of a whole.

Ilya hummed low in his throat, a sound of approval as he fed Shane the last bite of the confection. "I like this idea from Antonio," Ilya said, his voice thoughtful. "If I am the one who says how much to eat or to rest, you do not have to fight yourself. But... do you not fear you will disappear? I do not want doll. I want the man who is brave enough to fight his captain for first-line center every practice."

Shane shook his head against Ilya's shoulder, feeling surprisingly sure of himself. "I won't disappear. And I certainly won't ever stop competing with you to be first line." He pulled back just enough to catch Ilya's eye. "In fact, I've been winning. I've been first-line for the last eight games, in case you lost count."

Ilya let out a mock-offended scoff, his eyes narrowing. "Do not get comfortable, Malen'kiy. I am coming for your spot next week. You will be on second line before the first intermission."

"Oh?" Shane grinned, seeing his opening. "So you admit it's *mine* to take?"

Ilya flicked his hand dismissively between them, the universal gesture for 'don't be ridiculous.' "I am merely letting you borrow. Is an act of charity."

Shane laughed, the sound bright and easy. "Liar. You'd rather drink Grey Goose than ever let me beat you at anything."

The reaction was instantaneous. Ilya's face contorted into disgust at the mention of the brand.

"Frantsuzskiye pomoi," Ilya spat. *French dishwasher*. Ilya dramatically shivered, looking as though he could actually taste the vodka on his tongue. "To even say the name in this house is a sin, Shane."

He leaned in then, his hand cupping Shane's jaw to tilt his head back. "Now I must kiss you," Ilya murmured against his lips, "to chase taste of filth from my mouth."

He followed through, his kiss deep and lingering. Shane tried to melt into it, but he found himself smiling too hard against Ilya's lips to keep the kiss going for very long.

Ilya pulled back just an inch, his thumb grazing over Shane's cheek to rub at his freckles. His expression had shifted, the playfulness replaced by a quiet, searching gravity.

"You are sure about this?" Ilya asked softly.

Shane nodded, his gaze steady. "I am. Antonio asked me if I ever ignore a play you or Wiebe call on the ice. I told him yeah—if I see a lane you can't see, I take the shot."

He leaned his forehead against Ilya's. "He said this is the same. My own system of self-punishment is broken, Ilya. It's a bad play. Following yours doesn't mean I lose myself; it just means I'm trusting my captain's vision until I see a reason to improvise. I can always say no. I'm still the one on the ice."

Ilya's posture visibly relaxed. "Okay. I can be captain for this. I make sure you are fed well and rested."

"And... the other part," Shane started, his voice suddenly small. "The bedroom stuff. The puppy play. The collar."

As he spoke the words out loud, the memory of the leather tightening around his throat hit him. His pulse began to hammer against his ribs. The voice in his head, which had been quiet up to this point, reared its ugly head: *You want to be a pet. You want to be owned. What's wrong with you?*

His fingers began to pick restlessly at the edge of the blanket, his eyes darting toward the floor-to-ceiling windows as if the vast snowscape could swallow the embarrassment.

Ilya noticed instantly. He shifted from Shane's side, hovering over him until Shane was pinned gently against the sofa cushions. Ilya settled his full body weight over Shane. He captured Shane's fidgeting hands, pinning them softly but firmly beside his head.

"Breathe, shchenok," Ilya murmured, pressing his forehead against Shane's. "Look at me. You are good here."

"I'm okay," Shane whispered, his breath leveling out. He looked up into Ilya's steady eyes. "I want to keep doing it. When the collar goes on, I don't have to be 'Shane the Hockey Player.' I can just belong to you. It's the only place the noise actually stops."

"You are sure?" Ilya asked. "You do not feel... less than? Because I used the words I use for Anya?"

"No," Shane said as he leaned into Ilya's weight. "I realized that the way you treat Anya is the way you treat things you love most. You spoil her. You protect her. I don't feel degraded. I feel like the most important thing in the room. I feel like someone is finally taking care of me because they want to, not because I earned it with a goal."

Ilya kissed the tip of Shane's nose before tucking his head into the crook of Shane's neck, staying right where he was, heavy and protective.

"But I do feel shame," Shane admitted, his voice dropping to a whisper against Ilya's curls. "There's a part of me that screams it's pathetic. That I shouldn't want to be led. I've spent my whole life trying to be perfect, and needing this feels like failing."

Ilya shifted, but Shane held him tight, needing to finish.

"I'm working through it with Antonio. But I need you to know that stopping isn't going to stop the shame. What I need is to work *through* it, with *you*."

Ilya leaned in and pressed a kiss to Shane's forehead. "Takoy smelly," Ilya whispered against his skin. His voice was so reverent it made Shane's eyes well up again. It was the way a man spoke of a hero or a saint.

"So brave," Ilya repeated softly in English, his hand cradling the back of Shane's head. "To face the monsters in your own head, lyubimyy. We will work through it. Together. I will be captain, but if you see better play, Shane... you take the shot. Always."

Shane exhaled, a long sigh of pure relief, and closed his eyes as the snow continued to bury the world outside.

Shane stepped off the porch, his boots crunching rhythmically in the deep powder. In his hands, he held a small pot of maple syrup he'd been boiling on the stove until it reached the soft-ball stage—a trick his grandmother had taught him.

Behind him, a blur of fur exploded into the snow. Anya was having the time of her life. She looked like a cloud with a wagging tail, diving nose-first into the drifts and surfacing with a snow-beard. She circled the cedar stump, barking a happy, muffled "woof" before performing a celebratory zoomie around Ilya.

Ilya was clearing a flat table of snow off the top of the stump. He looked up, his nose pink from the cold, and a soft smile tugged at his lips when he saw Shane.

"Like this?" Ilya asked, stepping back to make room.

Shane moved into Ilya's space, leaning his hip against Ilya's thigh as he knelt. "It's perfect."

Shane poured the syrup in slow spirals. Anya stopped her frolicking for a moment, sitting back on her haunches and tilting her head as she watched the golden liquid sit on top of the

crystalline white snow, thickening instantly.

"Okay," Shane murmured, straightening up to wrap his arms around Ilya and pressing a popsicle stick into his palm. "You have to be quick but gentle. Like you're coaxing it."

Ilya paused, the wooden stick hovering over a golden ribbon of maple. He tilted his head back against Shane's shoulder, looking up at him with a slight, puzzled furrow in his brow. "Coaxing? What is this word?"

"It means to gently persuade someone or something to do what you want. Like how I have to coax you out of bed for early practices with the promise of extra-strong coffee."

Ilya's eyes softened as the definition landed. "Ah. Persuasion with... softness." He turned slightly in Shane's arms, the snow crunching under their boots as they shifted. "In Russian, we say *ugovarivat*."

Shane blinked, his mental gears turning as he tried to catch the sounds. "Ugo... var-i-vat?"

Ilya shook his head, a small, teasing smirk playing on his lips. "Almost. Is softer. *U-go-va-ri-vat*." He emphasized the slight roll of the 'r' and the softness of the 'v'.

Shane took a breath, concentrating as hard as he did when he was checking the temperature of the maple. "Okay. *Ugovarivat*."

Ilya's grin widened. "Better." He cupped Shane's face with one cold, damp wool mitten, and pulled him in for a kiss. "I am excellent at coaxing. I coaxed you into marrying me, didn't I?"

Shane laughed. He reached up, his gloved thumb brushing a stray flake of snow off Ilya's eyelash. "I think it was the other way around. Now, roll. Before it freezes to the wood."

They leaned over the stump together, shoulders pressed tight for warmth. Shane placed his hand over Ilya's, guiding the wooden stick. Anya, sensing the excitement, let out a joyful yip and began digging a frantic, meaningless hole in the snow nearby, sending white powder flying over their boots.

Once the maple had formed a thick, chewy glob on the end of the stick, Shane held it up to Ilya's lips. "First bite is yours. Traditional Canadian law."

Ilya's eyes twinkled with a dry, mischievous light. "Oh, well, if it is law, I must comply," Ilya said, his voice dropping into a solemn, deadpan tone. "You know me. I am most boring law-follower. I have never even crossed the street in the wrong place."

Shane snorted, leaning his forehead against Ilya's temple. "Is that right? The man who once tried to bribe a park ranger let us fuck in the woods?"

"That was misunderstanding of local customs," Ilya insisted, a grin finally breaking through his mask. "But now, I am to be Canadian citizen. I cannot have criminal record for theft of first maple bite."

Shane laughed, the sound echoing off the quiet, snowy woods as Ilya finally leaned forward, catching the edge of the maple with his teeth, pulling the chewy sweetness off the stick.

He chewed with a look of pure bliss, his eyes fluttering shut for a second. He hummed in approval, but a bit of the sticky amber ended up on the corner of his mouth.

"Is it good?" Shane asked, his voice dropping an octave as he watched Ilya.

"Is very sweet...like you," Ilya said before he leaned in and pressed his sticky cheek against Shane's, rubbing the tacky maple onto his husband's face.

"Ilya!" Shane barked out a laugh, trying to pull away, but Ilya hooked an arm around Shane's waist, pulling him flush against his heavy winter coat.

"Now we are both stuck," Ilya said playfully. "We have to stay like this until spring. Is boring Canadian law."

Shane groaned, though he didn't pull back. He wrapped his arms around Ilya's neck, the maple-pot forgotten on the stump. "There are worse ways to spend a winter," Shane admitted. He leaned in, kissing the syrup off the corner of Ilya's mouth.

"Now, I make one for my teacher," Ilya announced with grand importance.

He pulled away from the embrace, his tongue poking out the corner of his mouth in concentration as he carefully wound the thickening maple onto a stick for Shane.

As Shane watched, the warmth in his chest was suddenly replaced by a sharp knot of dread. *Too much*. He thought back to the nerikiri that was already sitting like lead in his stomach. He'd already failed today. He'd already been weak.

Why had he even suggested snow taffy? It was pure, concentrated sugar. He'd only wanted to share this piece of home with Ilya. He knew how much Ilya loved these little traditions, and seeing his husband happy was usually worth anything.

You're so stupid, he scolded himself, his pulse beginning to thrum in his ears. *You're just piling it on. You have no self-control*.

When Ilya finally held the stick up, offering it with a proud, expectant grin, Shane didn't look impressed. He looked hunted. His mind was screaming, a frantic loop of *too much, too much, too much*.

Then, he actually looked at the shape.

The anxiety hit a sudden, jarring snag. Shane squinted, his brow furrowing as he leaned in closer. The lopsided, elongated bulb of maple featured two very distinct, rounded mounds at the base.

"Ilya," Shane said, his eyes flickering into sheer disbelief. "Is that... supposed to be a heart?"

"Yes! Look at the curves," Ilya defended, gesturing grandly at the glistening mess.

"It looks like a dick. You made me a maple-penis."

The dark spiraling was momentarily drowned out by the hilarity of his husband's failed craftsmanship.

Ilya let out a wounded gasp, his lip curling into a theatrical pout. "Fine," he huffed, starting to pull the stick away with a flourish of dramatic rejection. "If you do not want my heart, I will eat it."

"Hey, wait," Shane laughed, catching Ilya's wrist. The heavy, panicked feeling didn't vanish entirely. It was still a shadow in the back of his mind, but it softened under Ilya's playful expression. He couldn't let the man eat his own heart in a sulk.

Shane leaned in, taking a small chewy bite of the 'heart,' intending to just taste it to be polite. The frozen maple syrup was rich and floral, melting against the heat of his tongue. As he tried to pull back, his mind already calculating the damage, Ilya's hand moved to the back of Shane's neck. His grip was firm and entirely non-negotiable.

"More," Ilya whispered, his voice suddenly dropping into that low, gravelly register that always made Shane's pulse skip.

It wasn't a suggestion. Ilya held the stick steady, his gaze boring into Shane's.

Shane hesitated, but Ilya didn't budge. He stepped closer, crowding into Shane's space until their chests brushed, his eyes dark. He held the stick to Shane's lips, a silent command for him to open up.

"Syesh," Ilya murmured, his thumb rubbing the nape of Shane's neck in a way that demanded total surrender. *Eat.* "All of it."

Shane didn't argue. The command gave him permission to stop the abusive self-talk. He finished the rest of the maple off the stick, his eyes locked on Ilya's. He ate every bit of it, the sweetness overwhelming and thick, accepted only because Ilya demanded it of him. The playfulness of the afternoon shifted instantly into something heavier, a familiar fire blooming between them despite the sub-zero air.

When the stick was finally bare, Shane's breathing was shallow, his heart hammering from the intensity of Ilya's focus. Ilya didn't let go. He reached up, his thumb catching a small, crystallized crumb of maple at the corner of Shane's mouth. He wiped it away slowly, his gaze softening into something fiercely protective.

"Good boy," Ilya praised softly, his voice soothing. "See? You are okay. I have you."

Ilya rewarded him with a deep, possessive kiss that tasted entirely of sugar. They were lost in it for a moment, swaying together, until a sixty-pound blur of fur decided the silence had lasted far too long.

"Oof!" Shane gasped as Anya barreled into the back of his knees at top speed.

The couple went down in a heap, tumbling into the snow. Anya barked triumphantly while they struggled to sit up, breathless and covered in white.

Once the laughter faded into happy sighs, Ilya propped himself up on one elbow, looking down at Shane. Anya, sensing the shift in energy, took off toward the cottage.

Ilya pulled back just enough to look Shane in the eye. "Are you okay, *malys*h?" he asked, his voice low and searching. "The thoughts... they are quiet now?"

"Quiet enough," Shane whispered.

"Do you want to keep going?"

"Yes," Shane said, the word coming out as a desperate, needy breath. He tilted his chin up, offering his throat. His eyes were lidded and dazed, his body humming with a heat, despite the snow.

"Please," Shane whispered, his fingers curling into the heavy fabric of Ilya's jeans seeking more.

Ilya's gaze darkened, but he didn't give in to the touch immediately; instead, he tightened his grip slightly.

"Then listen to me," Ilya commanded. "Take Anya inside. You will stay by the fire and warm your skin. I will finish cleaning this up."

Shane blinked, a little dazed by the sudden instruction, but he didn't pull away.

"Go inside," Ilya continued, his voice dropping into that gravelly, authoritative register. "Sit on the rug by Anya. I will come to you when I have finished. And Shane?"

"Yes?"

Ilya leaned in, his lips brushing against the shell of Shane's ear, sending a fresh shiver down his spine. "Bring the collar."

He found the leather collar in Ilya's bag, the weight of it in his palm no longer feeling like a shameful secret, but like a tool, a piece of equipment, no different than his skates or his pads.

He returned to the living room as he'd been told. Anya was already sprawled out on the rug in front of the fireplace, her tail giving a lazy, rhythmic *thump-thump* against the floor when she saw him. Shane sat down beside her, his back against the sofa, his fingers mindlessly carding through the dog's thick fur.

The back door creaked open, followed by the heavy thud of boots being kicked off in the mudroom. Shane stiffened slightly, his grip on the collar tightening as he heard Ilya move.

Ilya appeared in the doorway, looking wind-swept and ruddy-faced from the cold. He was carrying the empty pot and the sticky, discarded sticks from their afternoon. As Ilya passed

the rug on his way to the kitchen, he reached down with his free hand and gave Shane's head a firm, affectionate pat.

"Good," Ilya murmured, his voice trailing off as he disappeared into the kitchen. The sound of water running and the clink of the pot hitting the sink echoed into the living room.

Shane stayed exactly where he was, the collar resting against his thigh, waiting for the kitchen light to flick off and for the man who had claimed him to return.

A few minutes later, the clinking of dishes in the kitchen stopped. The lights dimmed, and Ilya stepped into the room. He stood over Shane, his shadow stretching long across the rug, dark and imposing against the flickering orange light of the fire.

Shane looked up, his face flushed from the hearth's heat, holding the leather collar out in his open palm.

Ilya took it, the metal buckle clinking softly. He knelt between Shane's legs, his larger frame dwarfing Shane's.

"You fed your body because I told you to," Ilya murmured. He reached out, and Shane gasped as Ilya's fingers brushed against his throat. Ilya's hands were freezing. The touch felt like a brand of ice against Shane's feverish skin, a shock that sent a violent shiver straight down his spine. "You rested because I commanded it. You were very good, Shane."

He settled the leather in place. Ilya's palms were like blocks of ice cupping the burning heat of Shane's jaw.

The moment the buckle clicked shut, the last of the static in Shane's head went silent. There was only the weight of the collar and the freezing, steady hands of the man holding him.

"Sit up," Ilya commanded softly.

Shane obeyed instantly, his back straightening as he moved closer to Ilya's cold-soaked clothes. The damp chill of Ilya's sweater seeped through Shane's shirt, clashing with the heat of the fire behind him. He felt trapped between the two extremes.

Ilya reached out, his hand sliding behind Shane's head to pull him forward. Shane let his eyes flutter shut. He felt Ilya's hand move to the front of the collar, his fingers hooking into the loop, gently tugging Shane closer.

"Closer," Ilya whispered.

Shane leaned into him, his head resting against Ilya's chest, listening to the slow, even beat of a heart.

Ilya's gaze shifted to the dog, who was still lazily thumping her tail against the rug. "Anya, mesto," he pointed toward the stairs. "Go downstairs."

Anya let out a huff, but she stood and trotted away, her nails clicking against the hardwood until the sound faded. Now, the only sound was the crackle of the fire.

"Razdevaysya," Ilya commanded. *Get undressed.*

Shane's fingers were slightly clumsy from the cold and the adrenaline, but he stripped off his layers until he was naked in front of the roaring hearth. The fire toasted his back, but his front felt the draft of the room, leaving his skin hypersensitive. He knelt back down on the rug, the leather collar the only thing left on his body.

Ilya reached behind him, bringing a frozen snow taffy stick forward. He didn't say a word as he pressed the amber against Shane's right nipple. Shane gasped, his entire body jolting at the shock. The heat of his skin immediately began to melt the frost, turning the maple into a thick, golden liquid that ran down his ribs.

Ilya leaned in, his own face still chilled from the outdoors. He pressed his mouth to Shane's chest, sucking the melting maple syrup directly off his skin. His tongue was warm, but his lips were cool, creating a dizzying friction that made Shane's head roll back. Ilya moved lower, lapping up the sticky trails from Shane's stomach.

"Bud' khoroshim mal'chikom i ne dvigaysya," Ilya muttered against his skin. *Be a good boy and don't move.*

Shane felt the sweat beginning to bead at his temples, his skin flushed a deep, burning pink from the proximity of the fire. Ilya didn't rush. He took the slowly-melting maple stick and dragged it in a torturous line from the hollow of Shane's throat down to his navel. Shane's breath came in jagged, broken hitches; the ice-cold sugar was a shock to his overheated system, leaving a trail of goosebumps in its wake.

"Smotri na menya," Ilya commanded. *Look at me.*

Shane forced his heavy lids open, his gaze locking onto Ilya's dark, blown-out pupils. Ilya pressed the softening amber above Shane's belly button, pinning it there until the golden syrup began to weep, liquefying instantly against Shane's scorching skin.

Ilya swirled his tongue around the sensitive dip, catching every drop of the floral syrup. He used his teeth with a gentle, punishing pressure, tugging at the skin until Shane let out a high, needy whine.

"Pozhaluysta," Shane sobbed out, his back arching off the rug, his hips beginning to roll in a desperate, uncoordinated rhythm. *Please*

"Tyshe, malysh," Ilya murmured against his skin, his hands coming up to pin Shane's wrists to the rug above his head. *Quieter, baby.*

Ilya buried his face in the center of Shane's chest, as he sucked remnants of the syrup from his skin. He worked his way back down, his tongue flicking into the dip of Shane's belly button again, lapping up the liquid gold that had gathered there. Shane was squirming now, his legs tangling with Ilya's as he tried to find friction, his head thrashing from side to side on the rug. He was overwhelmed, restless under the onslaught of cold hands, hot fire, and Ilya's mouth.

Ilya pulled back, his lips glistening with syrup and saliva. He stood and stripped his clothes away. He stood over Shane, a towering god of muscle, coated in the amber glow of the fire. He took the remainder of the maple stick—now soft and pliable—and slid it over the head of his own cock, letting the thick syrup coat the length of him.

"Lizhi eto do chista," Ilya ordered, his hand reaching down to grip the front of Shane's collar, tugging him upward. *Lick this until it is clean*

Shane stared up at him, his mind a haze of white noise. "Lizhi... Ilya, I... I don't know that one."

Ilya's grip on the leather tightened, his knuckles brushing against Shane's heated throat. He leaned down, his eyes burning with a possessive fire. "It means: Lick it until it is clean. Every drop, Shane. I want to feel your tongue take every bit of sweetness from me."

Shane lunged forward, his hands grasping at Ilya's thighs for balance as he buried his face between Ilya's legs. The taste was a dizzying, carnal mix of woodsy maple and the sharp, salt-heavy scent of Ilya's arousal. He worked with a feverish intensity, his tongue sweeping long and firm up the underside of the shaft, lapping at the sticky sweetness until his jaw ached.

Shane's tongue swirled around the crown of Ilya's cock to ensure every lingering trace of the maple was gone before he took him deep. He pumped his head back and forth, his throat working around the thick length, his eyes squeezed shut as he focused entirely on the friction and the low sounds vibrating in Ilya's chest.

Ilya's hands buried into Shane's hair, his fingers curling tight as he panted. He let out a final, commanding groan, his hips bucking forward as he spent himself.

Shane didn't pull away. He took every drop, his throat pulsing as he swallowed the heavy heat of Ilya's release. When he finally pulled back, he was dazed and breathless, a thin string of silver connecting them in the firelight.

"Pokazhi mne yazyk," Ilya rasped, his hand returning to the leather collar to tilt Shane's head back. *Show me your tongue*

Shane opened his mouth, presenting his tongue to prove he'd obeyed. Ilya inspected him with a dark, satisfied pride before brushing a thumb over Shane's bottom lip.

"Good boy," Ilya whispered. He let out a long, cooling breath, the post-orgasm haze softening his features for just a second. "What tastes better?"

Shane looked up at him, a mischievous, daring glint flickering through the daze in his eyes. He let out a soft, breathless laugh. "The maple syrup, definitely. Much better."

Ilya's eyes widened in theatrical, wounded offense. "Oh? My heart is broken. You prefer the tree spit to your husband?" Before Shane could retort, Ilya moved, wrestling Shane down and flipping him onto his stomach on the plush rug.

"Ruki za spinu. Na koleni," Ilya commanded, his weight pinning Shane's lower back down. *Hands behind your back. On your knees.*

Shane obeyed, pressing his shoulders firmly into the rug and arching his back, his heart hammering against his ribs in anticipation. He squeezed his eyes shut, bracing for Ilya to prep him.

Instead, a liquid landed on his tailbone that felt entirely wrong. It wasn't the lukewarm, viscous weight of saliva or the cool slide of lube. Instead it was thin, running like water but carrying a heavy, searing heat that made Shane's breath catch in a sharp sob. It didn't sit on the skin; it raced down the curve of his backside, the fluid movement so fast and hot it felt like a brand.

As the scent of scorched sugar and floral clover hit his nose, Shane realized what was happening. Ilya had held the remaining crystalized maple directly over the licking flames of the hearth. He had waited until the solid broke down, losing its chewy thickness and melting into a shimmering, scalding oil.

"Ilya," Shane gasped, his body trembling as a second drop—even hotter and thinner than the first—splashed against his sensitive crease and chased the first drop down toward his balls. The temperature was high enough to sting and the texture was so slick it felt like liquid silk.

"Tyshe," Ilya murmured, the word vibrating through the air as he tipped the stick again, letting the fire-thinned syrup map out Shane's surrender in lines of liquid heat. *Hush.*

Shane let out a wanton, broken moan as more drops slid down the crease of his ass.

"Do you still prefer the syrup now?" Ilya murmured, his voice a dark caress as he watched another drop fall, leaving a glistening, sticky mark on Shane's trembling ass. "Or should I make you taste it again?"

The heat of the syrup was a sharp, stinging pleasure that made Shane's toes curl into the fibers of the rug. Ilya didn't wait for the liquid to cool; he used two fingers to sweep the golden trail downward, pressing the viscous, hot sweetness directly against the puckered heat of Shane's entrance.

"Ti takoy goryachiy," Ilya growled, his voice vibrating through Shane's spine as he pushed one sugar-slicked finger inside. *You are so hot.*

Shane's breath left him in a jagged, high-pitched wail. The sensation of the thick, maple-oil being worked deep into his body was overwhelming. It felt heavy, slick, and impossibly sweet. Ilya didn't stop at one finger; he added a second, stretching Shane open as the syrup acted as a warm, fragrant lubricant.

Then, Ilya lowered his head.

The first touch of Ilya's tongue against his rim made Shane's entire body convulse. He let out a loud, uninhibited cry that echoed off the wooden beams of the ceiling. He was always like this when Ilya put his mouth there—completely undone, his dignity melting away faster than

the sugar. Ilya was relentless, rimming him with deep, swirling strokes to clean away the melted syrup, his tongue pushing past the entrance to find the sweetness hidden inside.

"Ilya! Oh god, Ilya, *please*," Shane sobbed, his fingers clawing at the rug, his hips bucking wildly against Ilya's face. He was making so much noise, his voice raw and wanton, but he couldn't stop. The friction of Ilya's tongue combined with the internal pressure of his fingers was too much.

Ilya's fingers began to hook and curl inside him, hitting the sensitive spot that turned Shane's moans into a steady, rhythmic chant of his husband's name.

"Konchay dlya menya," Ilya commanded, his voice muffled against Shane's skin but the authority still crystal clear. *Come for me.*

Shane didn't even have to touch himself. His internal muscles clamped tight around Ilya's fingers as he came hard, his body jerking in a series of violent, beautiful spasms. He cried out one last time, before collapsing into the rug, his skin slick with sweat and sugar.

Ilya stayed there for a long moment, making sure he caught every last drop of the syrup and the scent of Shane's climax before finally pulling back. He sat back on his heels, looking down at the shivering, wrecked masterpiece for a moment before he hooked his arms under Shane's pits, hauling his limp, trembling body up and back until Shane was tucked firmly between Ilya's thighs, his back pressed against Ilya's chest.

They sat there in the orange glow of the dying fire, the only sound the crackle of wood and the heavy, ragged syncopation of their breathing. Ilya wrapped his arms around Shane's middle, his large hands splayed over Shane's ribs, and began to rock him with a slow, hypnotic rhythm.

"Takoy sládkii," Ilya whispered, his lips pressing a soft, lingering kiss to the crown of Shane's head. *So sweet.* "Is quiet now, yes?"

"Mmmm," Shane affirmed with a long, shuddering breath, his head falling back against Ilya's shoulder. The intense high of the orgasm was fading, leaving a hollow, vulnerable space in its wake, but Ilya was there to fill it. The voices about the sugar and the shame were completely, blissfully silent.

"I'm sticky," Shane eventually mumbled, the reality of the dried maple syrup and sweat finally registering. He felt tacky against the rug, his skin pulling uncomfortably whenever he moved.

Ilya let out a low, amused huff. "It is the price of being my heart," he teased, though his touch remained incredibly gentle.

He reached for a bowl of warm water and a soft cloth he'd prepared earlier, likely knowing exactly how this would end. He began to wipe the remnants of the golden syrup from Shane's skin. He was meticulous, his touch clinical yet deeply affectionate, ensuring every crystal of sugar was dissolved.

"Ti budesh' chistym skoro," Ilya promised, as he finished cleaning the last of the syrup from Shane's hip. *You will be clean soon.* "I will carry you upstairs," Ilya murmured, his fingers trailing over the buckle of the collar. "A hot bath, and then sleep. No more thinking today, vozlyublennyy. Just rest."

Shane closed his eyes. He was clean, he was fed, and most importantly, he was entirely Ilya's.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for the praise! It truly makes my day! I promise I will get around to replying to all of them. Seriously, I've never had a fandom more open to commenting and it fuels me! so thank you from the bottom of my heart-shaped maple stick! <3

PSA

The previous stunts are performed by (non) professionals. In thanks to Nico13, I urge you not to attempt these maneuvers at home.

Specifically: Do not put hot sugar (or any sugar, for that matter) anywhere near your genitals. Please keep the confectionery in the kitchen and out of your pants.

Chapter 5: Shenok, Kotyonok, Husband

Chapter Summary

Fin.

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for [notes](#)

Shane moved quietly through the kitchen as prepared tomato soup and grilled cheese. As he sliced a thick piece of cheddar, his hand hovered. The familiar, compulsive itch to reach for the food scale prickled at his skin.

"When you look at a plate of food lately, or when you're pushing for that extra hour in the gym after practice, what's the internal conversation?"

Antonio's voice drifted through his mind, cool and clinical yet kind. In the memory, Shane had merely shrugged. *"I don't know. It's just... I have to. It's a habit. I just feel restless if I don't."*

"If you ate a full meal tonight without restrictions and went to bed without a workout, what would happen in your head?"

Shane went still, the knife resting against the cutting board as he remembered his response. *"I'd feel... heavy. Not physically. Just... like I'm getting away with something."*

"Getting away with what?"

"Being happy," Shane had muttered.

He looked down at the bread now. For years he had been punishing his body to pay for the secrets he'd made Ilya keep. He had let himself be blind to Ilya's drowning because Ilya was so good at hiding it for him. Or, as he'd admitted to Antonio through gritted teeth, because he hadn't wanted to see it.

"If the plane incident hadn't happened," Antonio had asked, *"how long would you have kept your relationship a secret?"*

"Until retirement. I would have kept him hidden for another decade if it meant I didn't have to face the noise. I was selfish."

Shane watched the cheese begin to sweat and melt in the pan. He remembered telling Antonio about the hit on the ice, the terrifying numbness in his legs, and the brief terror that his identity was gone. He'd thought that by being more disciplined and less distracted, he

could keep hockey longer. He hadn't realized that the more he tried to control his body and hide his life, the more he was breaking the person who made the game worth playing. Shane's body *couldn't* be starved into submission and Ilya *wasn't* a distraction.

"And now that the secret is out," Antonio's voice prompted, "the diet is still strict, the exercise is still obsessive. If hockey ended tomorrow, who are you?"

He hadn't been able to speak for a long time until finally, through tears, he whispered, *"I used to think I was just number 24. I thought if you took away the goals and the accolades, there was just an empty jersey and an empty stall. But I'm not just that... I'm a role model to kids who don't get to see very many people that look like them in hockey. I'm a good son. I'm a good friend. I'm a husband..."*

"A husband?" Antonio had picked up on the omission. "You didn't say 'good' husband. Do you not think you're a good husband?"

"I....No....I think I'm a good husband...I mean....I am a good husband... and...and... one day I know I'll be a good dad. And if I retire tomorrow and I have Ilya, I'll be okay. If I played for 10 more years, broke every record, and won every medal, but I lost him because I was too scared to be seen? I'd have nothing. I would be nothing to myself. Hockey is what I do, not who I am. And Ilya is why I'm glad I'm alive to do it."

Shane shook himself back to the present. He loaded the food onto a tray and carried it into the dark living room.

Ilya was a motionless shadow on the sofa, buried under a wool blanket. He'd missed the last four games for the Centaurs, the official report citing 'personal reasons.'

The truth was a series of small, failed steps: first, Ilya couldn't find the focus to stay in the play on the ice. Then, Shane would find him sitting in front of his stall, staring at his skates because he couldn't force his hands to pull the laces tight. Finally, he stopped making it to the arena at all, unable to even get out of bed.

Anya was stretched out entirely on top of Ilya, her head resting directly on his chest, pinning him to the cushions in the most loving way possible.

"Ilya," Shane murmured, setting the tray on the coffee table. "Ya prigotovil uzhin." *I made dinner.*

Ilya stirred, his hand moving mindlessly to card through Anya's fur. His eyes were bleary and hollow. Ilya looked at the steaming bowls, then at Shane. "You made this?" Ilya rasped, his voice sandpaper-dry. "For us?"

"For us," Shane affirmed.

"When Ilya is having a bad day, how do you treat him?" Antonio had asked.

"I take care of him," Shane had replied defensively. "I make sure he eats. I don't care if he misses a workout or practice. I just want him to feel okay."

"So," Antonio said, *"Why does Ilya deserve nourishment and rest, but you don't?"*

Shane had looked away in shame. *"I'm the one who messed up. I'm the one who hurt him."*

"If you're hurting yourself to pay for hurting him, who does that actually benefit? Does it make him feel 'repaid' when he sees you punishing the person he loves? When you won't eat the food he makes or you lie to him about how much you've exercised?"

"No," Shane had whispered tearfully. *"He hates it."*

"So, by punishing yourself, you're actually continuing to hurt him."

Sitting on the edge of the sofa near Ilya's feet, Shane realized he was finally extending the same grace he gave Ilya to himself. He wasn't skipping the meal, he was sitting down to lead the way.

"A win," he remembered telling Antonio once, *"would be admitting to Ilya that I'm scared, but sitting down at the table with him anyway."*

Ilya sat up slowly. "You should be in Italy. The opening ceremony is tonight. Not sitting in the dark with a man who cannot even open curtains."

The hockey world was currently reeling from Shane's decision. While Ilya sat in paperwork limbo—unable to play for Russia for obvious reasons and not yet eligible for Canada—Shane had been the first name on Team Canada's roster.

But Shane had refused.

Shane thought of his answer to Antonio: *"If hockey ended tomorrow, who are you?"*

"I told you," Shane said, his voice fierce. "Hockey is only fun when it's with or against you. I'm not chasing a gold medal I can't share with my husband. I'd rather have three weeks of this."

Ilya looked at him, his eyes swimming. "Dazhe esli ya takoy?" *Even if I am like this?*

"Especially then," Shane said, reaching out to cup Ilya's jaw. "I want you in all your forms, Solnyshko moyo. Even when it's cloudy." *My sunshine.*

Ilya leaned into the touch, a small spark of life returning to his gaze. He took a shaky breath and picked up a spoon. "Ti takoy sil'nyy." *You are so strong.*

Shane felt the truth of it. "We both are," Shane replied. He took a bite of his own food without a second thought for the calories. He looked Ilya in the eye, his voice steady, reclaiming the dominance he once used as a crutch and turning it into a gift of care to Ilya. "Now Kushay. That's a command." *Eat.*

A flicker of recognition lit up Ilya's eyes. The ghost of a smile touched his lips. Ilya didn't have to carry the responsibility. Shane didn't *need* him to do that anymore. Ilya just had to eat

his soup.

Shane pulled into the parking lot of Ilya's therapy center, his fingers tapping against the steering wheel. He wasn't nervous, exactly; he was just eager.

When Ilya finally stepped out, he looked... lighter. He was wearing a dark wool overcoat and a scarf Yuna had bought him, his posture regaining that natural confidence that usually commanded every room he entered. He spotted the car and a genuine, easy smile broke across his face, not the fragile ghost of a smile from weeks ago, but the real thing.

"Hi," Ilya said as he climbed into the passenger seat, the scent of the cold air and his familiar cologne filling the cabin.

"Hello," Shane teased in an exaggerated Russian accent, leaning over the console. Ilya wrinkled his nose in amusement before he met Shane halfway, catching Shane's neck in a firm, warm hand and pulling him into a deep kiss.

"How was it?" Shane asked softly as they pulled back.

Ilya let out a long breath, adjusting his seatbelt. "Heavy. We talk about Moscow. But... is good to move the dirt around, I think. Stop it from becoming stone." He looked at Shane, his eyes appreciative. "And I have date to look forward to. This helps."

"Good," Shane smiled, shifting the car into gear. "Because I made reservations at that place by the harbor. The one with the overly expensive wine."

"You will drink wine?" Ilya asked, a playful spark returning to his eyes.

"The season doesn't restart for another three days," Shane reminded him. "Plenty of time to be hungover. And I have a very handsome husband to drive me home."

Ilya reached out, his large hand resting on Shane's thigh. "Then take me there, husband. I want to be seen with you. I want everyone to see who you choose over gold medal."

He leaned in, a smirk tugging at his mouth as he continued. "And then *I* drive *you* home in terrible Jeep. You will spend all dinner being handsy and making promises you cannot keep, only to pass out second we are home. You are ambitious drunk, but you will be snoring before I even get your pants off."

Shane huffed, rolling his eyes. "I don't snore."

"No, not a snore," Ilya conceded, his grin widening. "Is small noise. Like kitten." He winked, reaching up to playfully tweak Shane's cheek. Shane snapped his teeth, pretending to bite at Ilya's fingers, but Ilya just laughed and pulled back.

"I thought I was a puppy?" Shane retorted. "Now I'm a kitten?"

Ilya shrugged, his expression settling into a lazy, satisfied grin. "Shenok... kotyonok. Bezrazlichno." *Puppy...kitten. One in the same.*

"You are like tiny puppy" Ilya continued to tease. "Basically kitten. Like... chihuahua." He chuckled, leaning back to look Shane over. "I could carry you in bag like Paris Hilton."

"Fuck off," Shane muttered, though the words were completely betrayed by the grin he couldn't suppress.

When they arrived at the harbor, Ilya held Shane's door open, his eyes dancing with mischief as Shane stepped out of the car.

"Poshli, kotik," Ilya said. *Come, kitten.* He reached out, snagging Shane's hand and lacing their fingers together. As they walked towards the entrance, his free hand wandered, giving Shane's ass a firm squeeze right through his back pocket.

Shane jumped, slapping the hand away with a laugh. "Watch it. You have to get me tipsy first if you want that kind of access."

"Is that challenge?" Ilya asked, pulling Shane closer until their shoulders bumped. He leaned in, whispering, "Because if I buy most expensive wine for my little Paris Hilton dog, I expect very high return on investment."

Shane shoved him playfully as they reached the door. "Most expensive, huh? Mr. Big Spender."

"Only best for kitten who snores," Ilya teased, smiling at the hostess as they walked into the warmth of the restaurant.

The restaurant in question was the kind of place where waiters wore white gloves and waistcoats. As the sommelier began his ritual, Shane nodded dutifully, trying to look like a man who actually understood words like *tannins* and *terroir*. He thought he was doing a semi-decent job of it until the sommelier took a deep sniff of the air and proudly announced "distinct notes of leather."

Shane shot a look of pure disgust at Ilya, mouthing the word 'leather?' with a horrified twist of his mouth.

Ilya didn't even try to help; he just suppressed a laugh, finding Shane's mannerisms entirely too adorable. He schooled his expression into a smirk, narrowing his eyes at Shane before leaning in slightly behind the sommelier's back and mouthing: 'I will give you leather.'

A hot flush crawled up Shane's neck. He looked away instantly, snapping his attention back to the sommelier with wide eyes while Ilya watched him with a heated, lingering gaze. Shane performed the rest of the uncorking ritual with a strained smile, nodding as if he were enjoying the finest nectar on earth.

The moment the sommelier finally retreated, Ilya descended into a fit of laughter.

"You don't like it," Ilya teased, his eyes dancing.

Shane didn't answer with words. He chugged the entire pour in one go, and let out a violent shudder. "This is fucking awful," he whispered, his face scrunched in misery. "Why is it so

expensive?"

Ilya just laughed, leaning back in his chair. "Is French."

True to his word, Shane was well on his way to tipsy halfway through their meal. He'd polished off three glasses of stupidly expensive red with enthusiastic speed, his cheeks flushed and his eyes heavy with the handsy affection Ilya had predicted. Shane's foot was currently hooked behind Ilya's ankle under the table.

A man in a vintage Montreal jersey approached their table, likely in town for the Voyageurs' upcoming home game against Ottawa. He was a few too many drinks in, his eyes bright with a sense of entitlement. He loomed over their candlelight, breaking the spell of their date.

"Shane Hollander," the man said, his voice loud enough to make a few nearby tables turn their heads. "Must be nice, sitting here drinking five-hundred-dollar wine while your countrymen are winning silver and you're too busy playing house to care. We could have won gold, man."

Ilya's hand, which had been idly tracing circles on Shane's palm, withdrew. The lazy smirk was gone, replaced by the blank, impenetrable mask.

"I'm just kidding. Canada loves you!" the man slurred, pulling out a crumpled napkin and a pen. "Huge fan! Can I get an autograph? And maybe a picture? My buddies won't believe it."

Shane forced a polite, tight smile. "Sure, no problem." He took the napkin and quickly scribbled his name.

"Awesome!" the man grinned, then turned to Ilya. "Hey, Rozanov! Can you snap a pic?"

Ilya took the offered phone from the man, his expression carefully neutral.

As the man leaned in beside Shane, he nudged him conspiratorially, his voice dripping with an ugly sort of confidence. "Honestly, Hollander, you're too good for this. Wasting your career with Ottawa? Give me a break. A bunch of soft pussies who wouldn't know how to win the cup if it was handed to them."

The fake smile fell from Shane's face so fast it was like ice forming on glass. The man's voice began to drone, the words blurring into a senseless, vibrating noise. Shane's mind drifted until he felt like a ghost hovering somewhere above his own shoulder, watching a stranger in his skin.

He knew he was supposed to be posing for the photo.

Instead, Shane's eyes were glued to Ilya's.

"And on this washed-up Orc too no less? I mean, what were those 'personal reasons', huh?" Suddenly, the man pitched his voice into a loud, mocking caricature of a Russian accent, thick, harsh, and loud enough for the neighboring tables to hear. "Probably too busy crying into hees pee-low over Mudder Russia, eh?"

Ilya was still holding the man's phone, but he hadn't taken the shot. Shane searched Ilya's face for a spark of anger, but there was nothing, just a terrifyingly blank expression. The shutter didn't click. The flash didn't go off. There was just the silence of Ilya's stillness set against the man's cruel babbling.

As the man continued his mocking performance, Shane saw a tiny, fractured flicker of pain in Ilya's eyes. Shane felt himself get slammed back into his body with the force of a high-speed collision. The numbness was gone, replaced by a white-hot anger.

"We needed you in Italy," the man continued, oblivious to the shift in atmosphere, "not here playing nursemaid to a fairy who can't even show up for his own te—."

"Give me the pen," Shane growled, cutting him off.

Ilya blinked, still rigid, and slowly handed him the pen.

Shane snatched the napkin off the table, crossing out his signature with a harsh, violent line that tore the paper. He crumbled the napkin in his fist and reached across the table to slide the phone from Ilya's limp hands. "Get the hell away from us," Shane barked as he shoved the phone back at the man's chest.

The man stumbled back a step as Shane stood, his frame dwarfing the fan. "I didn't 'waste' my career. I chose my husband. If you have a problem with us being 'soft,' why don't we step outside and see how soft the pavement is when I put you through it?"

The fan's bravado evaporated instantly. He looked at Shane's bared teeth, then at the dark, murderous glint in Ilya's eyes, and realized he had made a catastrophic mistake. He stammered an excuse, turning tail and retreating to the bar without looking back.

Shane slowly sat back down, his chest heaving, his hands still shaking with adrenaline. He reached across the table, grabbing Ilya's hand and squeezing it hard.

"Ilya," Shane whispered, his eyes searching his husband's face. "Don't listen to him. He doesn't know anything."

Ilya didn't look sad though. He looked awed. A slow, deeply humbled smile spread across his face, and he brought Shane's hand to his lips, kissing the palm.

"Ya v poryadke, lyubimyy," Ilya whispered. *I am okay, beloved.* "Because I have you. Let them think I am soft. I know who keeps me standing."

Shane leaned forward, his eyes dark and dilated as they locked onto Ilya's. "Take me home," Shane rasped, his voice dropping, heavy with a sudden, desperate hunger. "Right now, Ilya. I need you to get me home before I lose my mind."

Ilya's smile sharpened. He stood up, tossing a few large bills onto the table without counting them, his eyes never leaving Shane's.

"Vedi," Ilya commanded, his hand sliding to the back of Shane's neck, his thumb grazing his hair with a promise of exactly how he intended to reward that loyalty. *Lead the way.*

"You were very brave at dinner," Ilya murmured. "My fierce little protector." Ilya's thumb traced Shane's jawline, his eyes searching.

"You want to be my puppy tonight?" Ilya continued, his Russian accent thickening as it always did when he was turned on.

Shane looked Ilya dead in the eye, his breathing shallow but his gaze unwavering. "Please. Ilya. Put it on me."

Ilya reached out, his fingers catching the black leather collar from the nightstand. He stepped into Shane's space, his large hand coming up to wrap firmly around the front of Shane's throat. He pushed Shane's head back, his fingers squeezing the sides of his neck just enough to make the air feel thin and precious.

"Khoroshiy mal'chik," Ilya purred, his eyes scanning Shane's exposed throat. *Good boy.*

Shane was practically panting, his pulse thrumming against Ilya's palm.

Ilya brought the collar around, the embossed interior biting into Shane's skin with a sharp, slightly itchy friction, as the buckle was fastened.

Ilya leaned in, his teeth nipping sharply at Shane's bottom lip, a playful but stinging. As Shane's head drifted back further, Ilya's hands dropped, his fingers catching Shane's nipple and giving it a sharp, demanding tweak.

Shane's mouth fell open in a silent gasp of shock and pleasure. Ilya immediately took advantage, his mouth crashing down onto Shane's, his tongue sweeping inside.

When Ilya pulled back, he sat heavily in the armchair, spreading his legs.

"Razdevaysya," he commanded, sounding like a threat and a promise all at once. *Strip.*
"Snimay vsyo. Puppies do not wear designer clothes." *Take it all off.*

Without a word of objection, Shane began to pull his clothes off piece by piece. But as the first layer came off, his ingrained habits took over. Even trembling, Shane couldn't simply let his clothes fall to the floor in a heap.

He shed his shirt, but instead of dropping it, he paused. With meticulous, shaky hands, he aligned the seams and folded it into a neat square, placing it carefully on the edge of the padded bench they kept in front of the bed. Then came the trousers. He stepped out of them, his breath hitching as the cool air hit his skin, but he immediately reached down to smooth the fabric and fold them along the crease.

Ilya watched the display, the rogue twitch of a smile at the corner of his mouth, threatening to break through his stern mask. It was so quintessentially *Shane*. The puppy was trying so hard to be obedient, but Shane couldn't stand a messy room. It was the most endearing thing Ilya had ever seen, and it took every ounce of his willpower to stay in character.

Finally, Shane stood bare and shivering in front of the chair. He kept his head low, shoulders hunched, looking for all the world like a puppy with its tail tucked between its legs, waiting for the next command.

Ilya leaned forward, his gaze sweeping over Shane's pale, exposed skin. "So tidy," Ilya murmured, his voice losing some of its edge, softening into something more intimate. "Even when you're being ruined, you're perfect."

Ilya reached out, his large hand cupping Shane's jaw to tilt his head down until their eyes locked. "Come here, lapochka," he murmured, the term of endearment sounding like a soft prayer. *Little Paw*. "Let me see."

Shane stepped closer, his knees nearly brushing Ilya's as he stood between his spread legs. Ilya didn't immediately pull him into a kiss; instead, he began a slow, reverent inspection. He leaned back slightly in the chair, his dark eyes tracking every inch of Shane's exposed body.

He trailed his knuckles down the center of Shane's chest, tracing the line of his sternum before dragging them slowly over the ridges of his abs. Shane's stomach muscles fluttered under the touch. When Ilya's hand drifted lower, grazing the hair at the top of his thighs, Shane's dick gave a sharp, involuntary twitch.

A faint smile touched Ilya's lips. "Look at that," he whispered. "So responsive for me."

He leaned forward, pressing a soft, lingering kiss to the center of Shane's sternum. He stayed there for a moment, breathing in the scent of Shane's skin. Shane's hands came up to rest on Ilya's shoulders, his fingers curling into the fabric of Ilya's wool coat as he let out a shaky, desperate hum.

"Krutis', shenok," Ilya commanded softly. "Slowly."

Shane stayed rooted to the spot, his head tilted in slight confusion. Ilya pointed a single finger at the floor and made a slow circular motion in the air, flashing Shane an expectant expression, eyebrows raised impatiently.

Understanding clicked. Shane's face flushed as he realized he was being asked to show himself off like a prize. He didn't hesitate a second time.

As he turned, Ilya's fingertips ghosted across the narrow curve of his waist and the flare of his hips. The touch was light, but it made Shane squirm, his skin breaking out in goosebumps.

When Shane finally completed the circle, facing Ilya once more, he was breathless. Ilya's hand moved to the back of Shane's thigh, his thumb grazing the sensitive skin near the crease of his seat.

Ilya leaned back on his elbows and down at Shane. "You want a treat?"

"Ilya, please," Shane moaned.

"Then show me. Na koleni." *On your knees*.

Shane sank to his knees between Ilya's spread thighs. He felt no shame, only a soaring sense of liberation.

"Golos," Ilya prompted. *Bark.*

Shane let out a low, needy whine, his head tilting back to expose the leather around his throat.

Ilya's hand came down firmly, tunneling into Shane's hair and tugging just enough to make Shane gasp. The sharp pull forced his chin up, making the line of his throat taut and vulnerable.

"Let me hear how much you want it," Ilya growled, his thumb tracing the edge of the collar.

Shane let out a series of short, broken huffs. He leaned his weight forward, his chest pressing against Ilya's knee, and began to nuzzle into Ilya's palm.

Ilya watched him for a beat, his eyes softening with a flicker of understanding. He saw the line where play became too much. He let his fingers slide from Shane's hair to cup his cheek, tilting his head to the side.

"Such a needy little thing," Ilya teased, his tone a perfect blend of affection and playful degradation. "Spent all dinner barking at that man to protect me. Now look at you. So quiet."

Ilya's thumb traced the line of Shane's lower lip, pushing it down slightly to see the pink of his gums.

"Since you won't bark for me now, you'll have to beg with your body," Ilya murmured. He gripped Shane's waist and pulled him flush against his leg.

"Work for it. Hump for me, kotik." *Kitten.*

Shane gripped Ilya's sturdy thigh, his fingers digging into the muscle. He began to rub himself against the front of Ilya's leg.

"Da, just like that," Ilya encouraged, his hand moving to the back of his neck, squeezing the scruff. "You want it so bad, don't you? Such a dirty little puppy, making a mess on me."

He watched, transfixed, as Shane humped and rutted against his leg. He could see the thick, flushed head of Shane's cock as it smeared against the dark, coarse fabric of his trousers.

"Look at you," Ilya rasped, his eyes tracking the way Shane's hips bucked. "Just a little animal looking for a place to spill, hmm?"

The words should have stung, but in this room, under Ilya's heated, worshipful gaze, they were fuel. Shane's pace increased, his breath escaping as rhythmic huffs of pleasure. He felt completely seen, completely safe.

"Ilya... oh god, Ilya, *please*," Shane choked out, his eyes fluttering shut.

"So worked up," Ilya cooed. His hand traveled down Shane's spine to bury his fingers into the meat of Shane's ass, forcing Shane to stop. "You want to be good? You want to please me?"

Shane nodded frantically at the floor, his tongue darting out to wet lips that had gone bone-dry.

Ilya's hand came down, hooking a thumb roughly into Shane's mouth and jerking his head up to face him. Shane let out a muffled moan, his eyes blown wide.

"Color?" Ilya demanded.

Shane, tongue swirling around Ilya's thumb, groaned out the words, "Green... please... green... so fucking green."

Ilya's eyes darkened with approval. He withdrew his thumb and gestured to his lap. "Good. Then come. Crawl up. Sit on my lap."

Shane scrambled up, straddling Ilya's thick thigh.

"Now," Ilya whispered, his large hands coming up to rest on Shane's hips, "show me how much you want to be mine. Rub for me."

Shane let out a loud, broken moan, his head falling back as he started to gyrate his hips, seeking the pressure he needed.

"That's it," Ilya encouraged, his voice dripping with a sexy, degrading edge. "Look at you. My big, famous hockey star, naked and humping my leg like a common mutt."

Ilya felt a momentary flicker of worry that he had finally pushed the line too far. But as he looked down, he saw the way Shane's pupils widened and his thighs trembled, riding Ilya's leg with frantic, rhythmic thrusts.

"You're so pathetic for me, aren't you?" Ilya pressed on, his voice dropping to a gravelly, dangerous whisper. "Just a needy little bitch-dog."

Shane didn't flinch. In fact, his pace increased, his hips snapping forward with a renewed, frantic energy. He *loved* it.

"Yes," Shane gasped, his hands clutching at the lapels of Ilya's wool coat. "It feels—oh god, Ilya, it feels so good, I'm—I'm so close already—"

"Tsk," Ilya cut him off. His hand slid to the back of Shane's neck, fingers tangling deep into his hair. "Puppies do not use words. If you won't bark, then no more talking."

Shane swallowed his words instantly, replacing them with a high, desperate whine that vibrated against Ilya's shoulder. He buried his face in the wool, increasing the pace until his body was slick with sweat.

Seeking friction, Shane reached down to touch himself, but Ilya caught his wrist and pinned it to the arm of the chair. Shane let out a whine.

“Show me,” Ilya commanded. “No hands. Bez ruk.”

Shane rut harder into Ilya’s thigh, his face flushing. His cock ground against the bunched-up fabric of Ilya’s trouser pocket; the friction was blunt and agonizingly perfect.

“Khoroshiy mal'chik,” Ilya crooned. *Good boy*. He began smoothing his hand down the length of Shane’s spine in long, firm strokes, exactly like he was petting a prized animal. “Such a good, obedient puppy. Just keep grinding. That’s all you’re good for right now, isn’t it? Just making yourself feel good on my leg.”

Shane’s whimpers turned into frantic huffs against Ilya’s neck. He was unraveled, totally Ilya’s. But as the friction failed to push him over the edge, exhaustion took hold. He collapsed against Ilya’s shoulder, his breath hitching in defeat.

“Khorosho, khorosho,” Ilya whispered soothingly. *It’s okay. It’s okay*. “Don’t stop. Finish for me. Be a good boy and take what you want.”

Shane shook his head against Ilya’s neck, a pout forming as he whined. He was stuck; he couldn’t reach the end like this, but the ‘no talking’ rule kept him silent. In a desperate bid for the contact he needed, Shane bit at the column of Ilya’s throat.

Ilya got the hint. He hooked his finger into the loop of Shane’s collar, pulling it forward to expose his throat before leaning in to press his mouth against Shane’s Adam’s apple. The slight restriction of his airway, combined with the heat of Ilya’s tongue, was the final spark.

Shane’s back arched violently, fingers digging into Ilya’s shoulders as the orgasm crashed over him. He let out a long, keening cry into the wool coat, his body shuddering as he spent himself against Ilya’s thigh.

He stayed there for a long time, panting. He buried his face into the warm crook of Ilya’s neck, the tip of his cold nose grazing Ilya’s heated skin with a damp, animal snuffle. With a shaky breath, Shane dragged his tongue in a slow, ghosting lick against Ilya’s hammering pulse in a silent, salt-flavored thank you.

A lopsided smile tugged at Ilya’s mouth. He gathered Shane fully into his lap, pulling him close until their centers of gravity merged, rocking him in a slow, hypnotic rhythm.

“My puppy,” Ilya whispered, peppering Shane’s face with soft, lingering kisses. He reached up, his thumb wiping a stray tear of overstimulation from Shane’s cheek. “My perfect, beautiful husband.”

Shane leaned into the touch, a lazy, satisfied smile spreading across his face.

“Best in show.”

The comment caught Shane off guard. A startled, wet laugh bubbled up from his chest, breaking the heavy, submissive spell. He pulled back slightly, face flushed and hair a mess,

looking down at Ilya with bright, affectionate eyes.

Ilya didn't mind the break in character; he just grinned, a genuine, wolfish smile. He cupped Shane's face, pulling him into a slow kiss. "You are so hot, Shane," Ilya whispered against his lips. "You almost made me hard just watching you."

Shane let out a low hum, his body going slack.

"Rest," Ilya whispered, his thumb continuing its soothing path across his freckles. "I've got you."

For a long moment, Shane simply breathed him in, letting the scent of Ilya wash over him. Then, he let out a stubborn huff and shifted, fingers hooking weakly but insistently into Ilya's coat once more.

"No," Shane whispered. "I'm not done with you."

Ilya let out a breath that was half-sigh, half-shudder. He pulled back just enough to look Shane in the eye, his expression uncharacteristically vulnerable. "Moy lyubimiy... I do not know if I can. The medication—it makes everything so far away today." He gestured vaguely toward his own body, a flicker of frustration crossing his face. "If I did not finish watching you just now, I am not sure I will be able to at all."

Shane's expression softened, then hardened into something fiercely determined. "Will you try? For me?"

"Always," Ilya breathed, his thumb tracing Shane's lower lip. "I just do not want to disappoint you."

"You could never," Shane snapped, the sheer conviction in his voice silencing any further protest.

Ilya conceded with a slow nod, a spark of curiosity returning to his dark eyes. "Okay. Then how do you want me?"

Shane didn't answer with words. With a spark of bratty defiance, he pushed himself off of Ilya's lap. He didn't reach for the buckle of his collar; instead, he leaned over to the bedside drawer and pulled out a sleek, black toy.

He moved to the edge of the bed, spreading his legs in a challenging slow-motion that ensured Ilya had a front-row seat. Shane's cock was wet and glistening with his own cum, still semi-hard and pulsing from the orgasm he'd just dragged out of himself on Ilya's thigh.

"Watch me," Shane commanded.

His gaze was unshrinking as he slicked his fingers, the wet sound loud in the quiet room. He reached between his legs, his breath hitching as he pushed two fingers deep into himself, stretching the sensitive muscle open for Ilya to see. He worked himself with a blunt, honest hunger, the pink of his channel baring itself to the lamplight. He pulled his fingers out with a slick pop and grabbed the dildo.

Ilya leaned forward, his breath caught in his throat. "More," Ilya rasped. "Not yet. One more finger, Shane."

"Shut up," Shane snapped, his eyes flashing. He didn't want instructions; he wanted to provoke a riot. Shane pressed the broad, lubricated head of the toy directly against his entrance.

Ilya sat stunned, his pulse hammering in his ears as he watched the toy begin to disappear. Shane let out a guttural moan as he sank onto the silicone, his channel yielding and stretching to take the intrusive length.

Suddenly Ilya became hyper-aware of the sweat slicking his skin beneath his wool coat.

"Look at how much I want you. Look at how ready I am for my husband."

With a growl of pure frustration, Ilya surged to his feet. He ripped his coat from his shoulders, the heavy garment thudding onto the floor. His dick, which had felt miles away only moments ago, gave a sharp, insistent twitch. The sight of Shane filling himself, defying him while simultaneously offering himself up, was the only thing sharp enough to break the chemical wall.

"You like this?" Shane panted, his voice dropping into a low, filthy register as he began to slide the toy in and out faster. "Does it make you jealous, Ilya? Seeing me fill myself up because you're being too polite?"

He leaned back on his elbows, a taunting smirk playing on his lips. "Come take it from me. Come show me why this plastic piece of shit is nothing compared to you."

Ilya surged forward, the frustration of the last few weeks—the almos and the not-quites—boiled over into a violent need to reclaim his territory.

He reached out, his hand wrapping around the base of the dildo. With a sharp, commanding look, he ripped the toy out of Shane's body in one slick motion and tossed it over his shoulder. It hit the floor with a dull thud, forgotten.

The sudden removal forced a high, startled cry from Shane's throat. His back arched violently, his fingers digging into the mattress as he felt the heavy fullness vanish. His entrance stayed open for a long heartbeat. Then, as the overstimulated muscles began to react to the cold air, Shane's hole began to wink closed.

It looked empty. It looked lonely.

Ilya's eyes darkened as he watched the muscle quiver, his blood thrumming.

"Don't worry, shenok," Ilya cooed, his thumb tracing the very edge of that sensitive, fluttering heat. "I am going to fix that. I am going to fill you so deep you won't remember what that toy felt like."

Shane let out a breathy, mocking laugh, even as he shivered under Ilya's touch. He turned his head to the side, looking at Ilya through the mess of his dishevelled hair with eyes that were

sharp and defiant.

"Will you?" Shane challenged, his voice dripping with a calculated, bratty skepticism. "Or are you just going to pet me and tell me I'm a good boy until we both fall asleep?"

He bucked his hips slightly, a dismissive, jerky movement. "Maybe you should just put the collar away. You're being too nice."

The word hung in the air like a dare. Ilya's hand stilled on Shane's rim. The silence in the room became heavy, pressurized by the sudden, dark shift in Ilya's expression.

"You think I am being too nice, bezobraznik?" Ilya growled. *Brat*. The word was no longer a soft endearment; it was a low-frequency warning. He grabbed Shane by the waist, his fingers digging into the flesh where the bruises would surely form. "I was being patient. But the puppy wants to bite? Fine."

Ilya tore at the buttons of his shirt, the fabric straining against his broad shoulders before he shrugged it off. As his trousers and briefs pooled at his feet, Ilya felt a sensation he hadn't truly felt in weeks, a heavy, hot surge as his blood finally rushed south, flooding his cock with a pulsing, insistent throb.

Shane watched him, transfixed, his own breath coming in ragged gasps. He wrapped his hand around his cock, jerking himself with a desperate, slick rhythm. He was a mess of friction and want, his eyes locked on Ilya, watching the way his husband's body had finally, violently responded to his taunts.

Ilya slapped Shane's hand away from his cock. The sound of skin on skin was sharp, a stinging rebuke that made Shane's entire body jolt.

"Bez ruk," Ilya growled. *No hands*. "I told you. No more."

Ilya didn't wait for a response. He grabbed Shane's hips, his large fingers digging deep into the soft flesh, and roughly flipped him onto his stomach. The motion was sudden and dominant, knocking the air from Shane's lungs. Before Shane could even recover, Ilya hooked his hands under Shane's hip bones and dragged him backward toward the edge of the bed.

Shane let out a long, needy moan as his knees skidded across the duvet. Instead of fighting, he leaned into the movement, dropping his chest to the mattress and arching his back until his hips were high in the air. He was practically presenting himself, his entrance flushed and trembling from the toy he'd just used to bait his husband.

"Shlyukha," Ilya hissed. *Slut*. "You wanted to see me jealous? You wanted to see me take you?"

Before Shane could even draw breath to retort, Ilya's hand came down in a firm, resounding smack against the curve of Shane's ass.

"Fuck!" Shane barked out. But he didn't pull away; instead, he bucked his hips instinctively against the air, his fingers curling into the duvet. A long, low moan followed the curse, vibrating deep in his throat as he settled into the position Ilya had forced him into.

"Yes," Shane whimpered, his face pressed into the mattress, his voice muffled but desperate. "Again. Do it again."

Ilya didn't oblige with another strike; instead, he replaced the sting with the heavy weight of his body. He leaned over Shane, his chest a broad, warm furnace against Shane's back.

"You like that, don't you?" Ilya murmured. "You like being corrected."

He reached forward, gripping the leather collar and jerking Shane's head back until they were eye-to-eye in the reflection of the vanity mirror. He wanted Shane to see the flush on his own cheeks and the way his body was practically begging for the invasion to come.

"Tell me who you belong to while I break you open." Ilya entered him in one deep, punishing surge.

"Uuugh—aaaaah..."

The sound was punched out of Shane, a long, wrecked moan that vibrated against the mattress as the air was forced from his lungs. It was a blunt, heavy invasion that bottomed out immediately, the sheer force of it pinning Shane's chest flat against the sheets.

"Answer me," Ilya hissed, his hand snapping onto Shane's collar to tilt his head back again, forcing him to see their joined shadows in the mirror. "Who, Shane?"

"You," Shane gasped, the word fractured by his uneven breathing. "Yours. Always yours."

Ilya fucked into Shane impossibly harder, his hips snapping forward.

"That's it," Shane sobbed, his voice wrecked. "Yes, Ilya—*please*. Just like that. Break me open. God, you feel so big, so much better than—"

"Fuck," Ilya growled, the word a dark, guttural curse. The comparison to the toy—the reminder that Shane had been seeking a substitute for him—was the final strike.

He pulled back until he was nearly out, then slammed home again with everything he had.

"Hnh—aaaaah!" Shane's back arched until his vertebrae felt like they might snap, his fingers clawing at the duvet as he tried to find purchase

"Tell me," Ilya hissed against the shell of Shane's ear, his breath hot and ragged. "Tell me who is inside you. Tell me who you're begging for, shlyukha." *Slut*.

"You," Shane gasped, his eyes unfocused and glazed as he watched their blurred reflection in the mirror. He could see the dark shape of Ilya looming over him like a shadow and the pale line of his own throat flushed and vulnerable where the leather collar bit into his skin.

"Only you. My husband. Ilya, you're ruining me... please don't stop—"

As Ilya drove into him again, the force of the impact caused Shane's gaze to drop to the space between his own braced thighs. Because he was pulled so far back against the edge of the bed, the mirror offered a jarringly clear view of his own anatomy.

Shane could see his own cock, hanging hard and neglected between his legs. With every punishing thrust Ilya delivered into his ass, Shane's length bopped and swayed in a helpless arc. A thick line of pre-cum was dripping from the dark, purple head, glistening before falling onto the sheets. His balls were drawn up tight, a small, tense knot of heat at the base of his sex.

It was a startling, visceral sight. Shane let out a long, fractured moan at the sight of himself, his head falling to hang between his shoulders. The humiliation and the arousal spiked simultaneously, a toxic, beautiful mix that made his vision swim. He looked like exactly what Ilya had called him: a needy, used-up pet, marking the bed with his own hunger while Ilya took him apart.

Ilya's pace was no longer a rhythm; it was a demolition. He was bottoming out with every thrust, sliding so deep that Shane could feel the blunt pressure of it vibrating against his lower stomach. It was an invasive, terrifyingly intimate sensation that made his internal organs feel like they were being rearranged by the force of Ilya's desperation.

"You want to tell me how the toy felt?" Ilya hissed. "You want to compare?"

Ilya's hips slammed home again, the wet *thud* of the impact echoing.

"Ty takoy mokryy... kak suchka v techke," Ilya growled into his ear.

Shane's heard the words vibrating through his skull, and he had to struggle to translate them through the haze of the pounding. *Suchka...* he knew that one. *Bitch. Vechke... heat.*

The realization hit him. *A bitch in heat.*

"Nnh-ghhh!" Shane gasped, biting into the sheets to muffle the sound.

His lungs felt small and useless, unable to catch a full breath as Ilya crushed the air out of him with every relentless drive. He was taking shallow, frantic sips of oxygen, his chest heaving. His head felt terrifyingly floaty, the room spinning in the reflection of the mirror until the lamplight was nothing but a blurring streak of gold.

He was hovering on the edge, his nervous system so frayed that he couldn't tell if he was about to sob, lose consciousness, or simply lose control of his bladder entirely. The pressure in his gut and the sheer depth of Ilya's cock made him feel like he was being turned inside out.

"And so loud," Ilya continued, his voice dropping to a dark, mocking purr as he felt Shane's muscles clench in a state of near-tetany. Ilya leaned in, his lips grazing the leather of the collar. "My little kiska. My needy little pussy. Just a kitty in heat, screaming for his husband."

Shane's reply wasn't a word; it was a thin, broken wheeze.

"Hh—haaa... hhh..."

Shane was so breathless he couldn't even manage a proper moan. It was a high, airy sound, his head lulling to the side as his vision went dark at the edges. He felt like he was floating away from his own body, tethered to the earth only by the bruising grip of Ilya's hands on his hips and the slick, punishing slide of Ilya inside him.

"Look at me, Shane," Ilya commanded, sensing his husband drifting into that dangerous, beautiful headspace. He slowed just enough to let Shane catch a single, rattling breath before slamming home again. "Stay with me, moy kotyonok. Don't you dare pass out before I finish with you." *Kitten.*

"Yes," Shane sobbed, eyes rolling as he watched himself in the mirror, looking exactly as Ilya described: slick, exposed, and utterly ruined. "Yes, Ilya... so wet...Mphhh-nnnn! Please—fuck—fill me up. Mffff—nnn-gh!"

"Good boy," Ilya rasped, his voice breaking. "Take it all for me, moy lyubimiy. Take every fucking inch."

"I—Ilya... Mphhh..." Shane's forehead tossed wildly against the mattress. He tried to speak, but the words were caught in the back of a throat that was too tight, too breathless. "H-haah... m-more..."

He bit down hard on the corner of a pillow, his jaw clenching as he felt Ilya's cock bottom out again.

"P-please..." he wheezed, broken by a jagged, involuntary sob. "E-everything... want... hhh... all of it... mfff—Ilya!" He could feel Ilya's pulse against his own spine.

Shane was desperate to help him reach the end. He focused every ounce of his willpower on the internal friction, rhythmically squeezing his muscles around Ilya's thick length, milking him with a relentless, pulsing grip. He could feel Ilya's breath hitching, the cadence of his grunts changing from steady to fractured.

"You're so good, Shane," Ilya rasped. "Such a good, greedy puppy. Taking all of it."

Shane was babbling now, but the words were no longer coherent strings of filth. They were fractured shards of sound. Every time he thought he was at his limit, every time he thought his heart might actually stop from the sheer, unyielding pace, Ilya would shift, his weight would settle deeper, and the marathon would continue.

Shane felt as if he had died three times already tonight. He would drift into a dark, floaty void of sensory overload where the room vanished, only to be violently resurrected, snapped back into his skin by the heavy, wet *thud* of Ilya's hips slamming against his own.

He was sheathed so deeply, for so long, that he couldn't remember a time when he wasn't being filled.

"You're so tight," Ilya swore, a string of Russian curses falling from his lips as he increased the pace to a frantic, blurring speed, his body fighting the medication for the release he was so close to touching. "You're perfect. Fuck, Shane, I'm going to—"

"D-do... m-mfffff..." Shane tried to plead, but the request died in his throat. His jaw was hanging open, his breath coming in short, wet hitches that made his chest rattle.

He wanted to tell Ilya to finish. He wanted to tell him he was beautiful. But his brain was a mess. He could only manage a broken, rhythmic babble that synced with the movement of Ilya's cock.

"I-Ilya... p-pl... hhh..."

His head tossed wildly against the pillow, his eyes rolling back as he felt that phantom, animalistic panting take over. He was no longer a man; he was just a vessel, a breathless kotyonok who had been used so thoroughly he had forgotten how to be human.

"Mmm-ghhh... y-you... f-fuck... aaaaah..."

By the time Ilya's hand snapped onto the collar to pull him back for the final, staggering surge, Shane wasn't even babbling filth anymore. He was just making high, thin sounds of pure, shattered vibration

Ilya slammed home one last time, burying himself to the absolute hilt, and finally, the wall collapsed. A hot surge flooded Shane, a heavy, pulsing pressure that felt like the absolute end of the world.

As he felt Ilya finally let go, Shane's eyes rolled back into his head. The frantic tension that had held his body taut for the last hour vanished in a heartbeat. The mattress seemed to rise up to swallow him whole. His jaw went slack, and his limbs grew impossibly heavy, sinking deep into the sheets as the room faded into a soft, hazy grey.

He didn't fight it. He leaned into the darkness, letting his consciousness slip away as he drifted into a deep, boneless faint.

Shane's first conscious thought was the sensation of a large, warm hand moving in slow circles over his chest.

He blinked, his eyes feeling heavy and dry. He realized he was no longer on the edge of the bed; he'd been moved to the center, his limbs gently arranged against the cool pillows. The sticky, salt-and-sweat grit of the last few hours was gone, replaced by the clean, damp scent of a fresh washcloth.

Ilya was leaning over him, his expression soft and uncharacteristically open.

"There he is," Ilya whispered, his thumb grazing Shane's collarbone.

Shane blinked up at him, his brain feeling like it was stuffed with cotton wool. "What happened?"

Ilya let out a low, fond huff of a laugh. "I fucked you into oblivion, shenok."

Shane let out a weak, raspy laugh, the sound vibrating in his chest. He tried to shift, but his body felt like lead. "Mmm... feel weird."

Ilya's hand stilled, his eyes searching Shane's face with a flicker of concern. "Bad weird?"

"No," Shane murmured, a slow, dazed smile spreading across his face. "Good weird. Very good weird. Like my bones turned into jelly." He paused, a sudden, foggy realization hitting him. He looked down at his own lap and then back at Ilya. "Did I... did I come? I can't remember."

Ilya shook his head, his fingers moving to tangle in Shane's messy hair. "No. You passed out before you could get there." He leaned down, kissing Shane's forehead. "Do you want to? Do you want me to finish you?"

"Yeah," Shane breathed, his voice small and needy. "Please."

Ilya reached down under the duvet, his palm sliding over Shane's hip and toward his groin. But the second his fingers made the slightest contact with Shane's soft, overstimulated cock, Shane's entire body spasmed. He jumped as if he'd been electrocuted.

"Oh, god—no," Shane wheezed, his eyes watering instantly. "No, no, no."

Ilya pulled back immediately, his hands raised in a 'surrender' gesture. "Too much?"

"Ilya, what the fuck," Shane laughed, though it sounded half-delirious. He curled his knees toward his chest to protect himself, looking at Ilya with wide, blown-out eyes. "If you touch it again, I think I'm actually going to cry. I'm so sensitive I can feel the air touching me. It's... it's too much."

Ilya chuckled, a deep, warm sound that filled the space between them. He crawled up the bed, pulling Shane into his side and tucking his head under Shane's chin.

"Okay, okay. No touching," Ilya promised. "We will just stay like this."

Shane's arms came up slowly, his muscles aching, to cradle the back of Ilya's head. His fingers threaded through the mussed curls at the nape of Ilya's neck, scratching gently against his scalp. Shane leaned down just enough to press a soft lingering kisses to the crown of Ilya's head.

Ilya tightened his hold, his fingers ghosting over the marks he'd left on Shane's hips. "Stubborn puppy" Ilya smiled, his voice thick with a level of peace he hadn't felt in weeks.

A lazy, satisfied smile spread across Shane's face as he held Ilya tight. "Best in show," he whispered back.

Ilya laughed quietly into Shane's skin then drew back to press a warm kiss to Shane's nose, then his cheek, before settling his mouth over Shane's in a slow, deep kiss that tasted of salt and relief.

He pulled away just far enough to whisper against Shane's lips. "Okay?"

Shane hummed, the sound vibrating in his chest. "Mmm... better than a fucking gold medal."

Ilya let out a huff of a laugh, kissing him again, shorter this time, but no less intense. He shifted his weight, tucking his face back into the crook of Shane's neck, and for a moment, the only sound in the room was their synchronized breathing.

"You okay?" Shane murmured into Ilya's hair, his fingers continuing their rhythmic scratching at the base of Ilya's skull. He wanted to be sure the release had been as healing for Ilya as it had been for him.

"Mmmhmm... I told you," Ilya whispered, his eyes already drifting shut as the bone-deep exhaustion of the night finally took hold. "I am okay because I have you. "

"Jesus, Hollander," Dykstra barked, pointing a glove toward Shane's hip as Shane stepped out of his under armour. "Did you get into a fight with a fucking grizzly bear?"

Shane looked down at the dark, finger-shaped bruises scattered across his pale skin. He just let out a huff of a laugh, grabbing a change of clean clothes.

"Something like that, Dyks," Shane quipped, not missing a beat. "Turns out some people play a little rougher than you do in the corners."

"And the neck!" Troy piped up from three stalls down, grinning like a maniac. "Is that a hickey, Hollzy? It looks like... wait, is that writing?"

Bood leaned in, squinting at the bruised Cyrillic indentation still faintly visible on Shane's throat. "Looks like Russian to me. Roz, you marking your territory?"

Ilya, who was calmly unlacing his skates, didn't look up, but a slow, satisfied smirk spread across his face. "Is important to label things you do not want to lose," he said simply.

The surrounding players laughed good naturedly and Shane just grinned, pulling his shirt over his head. He felt great.

The locker room door creaked open and Harris poked his head in. "Shane, Ilya—media room in five. Let's go."

"Wait a moment," Shane said. He reached into his bag, grabbed a protein bar, tore the wrapper off, and shoved half of it into his mouth. He was hungry, he had worked hard, and his body deserved the fuel.

Ilya watched him, his chest tight with a sudden wave of pride. He saw the way Shane stood with his shoulders back, relaxed, no longer shrinking into himself as if trying to occupy the least amount of space possible. Shane was eating freely, laughing off the ribbing from his teammates.

Ilya knew they weren't 'cured.' He knew his own brain would still have days where the gravity felt too heavy to move, and that Shane would always have to quiet the voice telling him to earn his right to exist through hunger and sweat.

But sitting here, feeling the solid weight of his own feet on the ground, feeling good in his own skin, and watching Shane do the same, Ilya felt like the luckiest man in the world.

"Ready, Shanstye?" Ilya asked softly.

The nickname put an instant grin on Shane's face. It was a word Ilya had only started using recently—a blend of Shane's own name and schastye, the Russian word for happiness. Hearing it made Shane's heart ache in the best way; it was a reminder that he wasn't just a number 24 or a set of accolades. To Ilya, he was the very definition of the word. Shane wasn't just 'getting away' with being happy. He *was* happiness.

Shane swallowed the last of the protein bar and wiped his mouth. He looked up, catching Ilya's gaze and reached out, his hand lingering on Ilya's cheek. He didn't need a grand speech; he just needed Ilya to know that Shane was exactly *who* he wanted to be, exactly *where* he wanted to be, and exactly *who* he wanted to be *with*. He was looking at the man who had stayed through the secrets and the starving: the one who made the game worth it.

He leaned in closer, his forehead resting against Ilya's for a fleeting, sacred second.

Shane closed his eyes, pressing a soft kiss to Ilya's lips, a kiss that tasted like a promise kept.

"Gotov," Shane whispered. *Ready*. "Ya ves' tvoy. I'm all yours, Ilyusha."

Chapter End Notes

Phewww I am spent. Are you?

I got my degree at the Jacob Tierney School of Parallels. Please reimburse me for my tuition in the form of compliments.

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