Learning to Fly

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Learning to Fly

by WriteSmart

Summary

Yuna has let go of a lot in her life, including her own dream to play professional hockey. But that's alright; she has Shane and David and they have built a storybook legacy together. Then Ilya Rozanov gets hurt and suddenly Shane's calling her asking if they'll go pick up his archrival from the hospital.

Notes

I've taken liberties from both the show and the book on Yuna's character. I just want to learn more about her so I hope you enjoy! This is also written after reading both Heated Rivalry and the Long Game but before seeing episode 4 of the show.

See the end of the work for more notes

Yuna watches more hockey than anyone she knows. Including her son. Although that stat might be influenced by the fact that her son is *in* a lot of the hockey that she watches. But nevertheless, she's addicted, as David might say.

And why shouldn't she be?

She was five when her dad strapped skates to her feet and pushed her out onto the frozen lake a mile down the road from their house. She wobbled like a little deer, knocked kneed and trembling as she slid further from the shore with no way to stop. Her breath curled up into clouds of mist as she panted, quads and calves aching from the effort to stay upright.

Her dad came to join her in what was seconds but felt like minutes later. Yuna, alone in the middle of the ice, heart pounding and hands cold. When he caught up to her, he took one of her gloved hands in his, warming it up as he ensnared her tiny fingers in his big, calloused palms. Then he let go and pushed off, legs steady and powerful.

"It's like flying, Yuna," he told her, coaxing her to shuffle towards him.

The ice was hard and unforgiving that day as she fell, knocking bony elbows and bruised knees onto the frozen surface. But when Yuna is given a task, she never lets it go. She got pulled in by her mother yelling about hot chocolate that first day, but she was back out on the ice the next day. And the next. And the next.

By the end of that winter season, when the frost started to relent, and tiny pinpricks of green began to force their way through the freezing crust, she was skating faster than the older kids and the adults that would come join them on the lake. It was like flying. She could push off on one foot and cover so much distance, gliding on a knife's edge, the wind whipping past her face and making her eyes tear up. She was weightless on the ice. She was powerful on the ice.

Her mom loved that she loved something. They upgraded their cable package to watch the full coverage of the winter Olympics next year; Japan was even hosting. Everyone kept putting on figure skating for Yuna, talking about getting her into lessons and "did she want to twirl like that?"

Fuck no. In between figure skating and downhill skiing, Yuna's father puts on ice hockey for the first time. And Yuna is hooked. The ferocity, the hunger in the players' eyes, Yuna wanted that. Her family tittered about Canada not sending a team that year over the controversy of the NHL not allowing professional players in the Olympics, but Yuna let that all wash over her. She was hypnotized by the men slammed into boards and the puck skittering across the ice.

From that day on, Yuna wanted to play hockey. The twirling and the jumping in figure skating was beautiful, but that's not how Yuna flew. She streaked across the ice in her hockey skates with the wind howling at her ears, screaming at her to go faster, faster. She could picture herself in the arena, the crowd just louder than the wind, hungry for her flight. Hungry for her to win.

But there wasn't hockey for Yuna.

She got figure skates the next year. Grown-up skates everyone called them because the ratty hockey skates she learned in were just a temporary measure until she grew into the real deal for girls her age. She face-planted each time the toe pick caught on the ice and felt like she was five years old again watching her dad sail away from her as she was stuck in the middle of the ice.

But figure skating was what the girls did. Sure, there were hockey leagues where rich women got to putter around without pads on, but none of it paid. None of it had the same hunger the men's teams did.

In the 80s, Yuna watched the first ever women's ice hockey championship in Ottawa. It wasn't until the late 90s that women were allowed to play in the Olympics. And Yuna, sensible, determined, responsible, had long let that dream go by the time the women lined up in, coincidentally, Japan. Even after they reached the Olympics, ice hockey for women was a second-class promise compared to what the men got, and Yuna couldn't give up everything for it. There was no money, no glory, no fame in women's hockey, at least when she was young enough to still dream about playing. So, Yuna keeps the feeling of flying buried in her heart and puts her fight towards something else.

She learns to take comfort in the fact that the closest she will ever be to playing hockey is in being a mom.

It's funny, when they get interviewed, David always gets all the questions about hockey. Or, at least, Yuna tells herself it's funny.

They ask David about the first time Shane was out on the ice, the first time he held a stick, the first time he watched a hockey game. When really, David was inside making the hot chocolate while Yuna was coaxing Shane across the ice as he trembled and shook from the cold and the fear. It was Yuna who showed him how to tape his stick. Yuna who set up obstacles to make him practice his stick handling. Yuna who shed layers as she got hot flying back and forth across the ice, doing bagskates with him to build his endurance. Yuna who watched hours upon hours of hockey with him and only cried once about having to live out her dream through someone else when she had too strong of a drink in a hotel bar, creeping out of the room she was sharing with Shane during an elite tournament.

And it was fine. Yuna loved being a mom. She loved watching her child fly. She loved seeing him laugh. Seeing him win. Seeing him learn how to lose. She loved every second of it. She wouldn't trade Shane for anything in the world, she thinks.

That's not to say, though, that being a hockey mom is easy. There are early mornings and long car rides to contend with. And Shane is the perfect child, but even the perfect child cries at 6 and 7 and 8 because he doesn't want to sleep in another new hotel, and his best friend back home is having a birthday party that he's missing, and his routine is all messed up. There are bumps and bruises and frustration and yelling. Shane and Yuna have their first fight over hockey. Shane wanted to play through a fractured wrist and Yuna told him he couldn't, and he yelled at her. Proper yelled. He snapped his mouth shut after his voice rose, embarrassed and worried. She just shook her head and pointed to his room. He went.

So, Shane could be difficult, and there was the stress, and the worry, and the disruption to daily life. But the other part that made hockey hard was the other moms. Hockey is a white sport. It drips in privilege and microaggressions. It's moms on the sidelines at a pro camp talking about the private schools they send their kids to named after colonizers, bragging but pretending they're not. It's the moms wondering what in the world Yuna could possibly be bringing to the team potluck after the last game of the season. It's dads asking David where Yuna is really from.

Fuck them all. Her kid was better than those boys would ever be. He was brought up by Yuna and Yuna knew how to fly.

All her work with Shane does pay off. Yuna cries tears of happiness and frustration for him when he's the second pick overall in the NHL draft. She even pretends she doesn't hear him curse Ilya Rozanov's name to hell and back for being the first pick. Instead, she tells him not to worry. He'll become better than Rozanov and make Boston rue the day they didn't pick him first. He had to become better. She trained him herself.

Shane's career builds like a swelling wave, picking up steam and prestige as it goes and washing away the teams that play the Voyageurs. And yet, he cannot shake Ilya Rozanov who continues to lap at the edges of Shane's history making. They're pitted against each other. They're spoken about in the same breath, one right after the other. Shane speaks of Rozanov like he's an annoying gnat buzzing in his ear all the time, but Yuna can see the burbling anxiety swirling in him.

She doesn't know what to do with that anxiety. She doesn't know where the superstitions came from – the order of the socks and skates, the habitual, repeating patterns, the control over his eating and health. Yuna can watch 100 hours of film with him and fix his backhand and make him the fastest skater on the ice, but she feels out of her depth when she finds him trembling on solid ground, off his skates. He reminds her too much of herself in those moments.

That's where David, blessed David, comes in. He talks them both away from ledges, makes them go out to do non-hockey activities, makes sure there's somewhere warm to come home to after they've both been out on the lake or at the rink.

They're a team. The best functioning family team in the NHL. Yuna is proud of that and is proud that the teamwork means Shane becomes a diamond for the Voyageurs, exploding on the hockey scene and catapulting towards his well-deserved captaincy and even more deserved Stanley Cups. That's her boy. That's their dream.

And Ilya Rozanov, she thinks, is the villain to their storybook career right up until the moment that she watches him go down hard in a game against Toronto and her phone rings with a call from Shane.

The game was exciting. Toronto sort of ebbs and flows in terms of ability depending on the day – nowhere near consistent enough for a successful cup run. But today they're playing well against the Bears. The defense has held Ilya to just one goal and it's going into the second period 0-1. It's in these tight, low scoring games that players tend to get scrappy, hoping that sheer violence will magically transform into goals.

Shane has good enforcers on the Voyageurs, and Yuna has instilled in him for years that the best way to fuck with someone is to let your playing do all the talking. Rozanov is the exact opposite. The Bears might have decent enforcers, but Rozanov doesn't want them. He wants to talk shit while smiling and win the ensuing fist fight. He spends minutes in the sin bin, and he grins the whole time doing it. He's a little shit on the ice.

This game is no different. Yuna can tell even a thousand miles away and through a TV screen that he's being a menace. He gets this look on his face when he's chirping successfully and it's riling Toronto up. The second period descends into bone crunching hits that even make Yuna wince. But Rozanov just laughs his way through it.

He gets a good pass out of the back from one of the Bear's defensemen and flies up the ice. The puck sticks with Rozanov like glue even as he weaves through players and tackles. Yuna will never say this to Shane for fear of watching his head explode, but Rozanov really is that good. Shane's the best, of course, but Rozanov is a good match for him. The NHL loves him because he's got the shit talking to start the fights that bring the crowds, and the skills to back up being an asshole.

On screen, Rozanov barrels down towards the goal. There's a pass open to his right and a defender in front of him. Yuna sits up to watch what decision he'll make. It'll be good for Shane to know if he's making more assists this year.

But he doesn't get the chance to do either.

The hit comes from behind him and to the left, one of the players Rozanov humiliated a little early taking his vengeance. It's a total blindside hit that sends Rozanov flying. Yuna winces at the sound she can hear even through the TV as his body hits the ice, rattling and bouncing against the hard frozen surface.

She knows it's not possible, but Yuna thinks that after a bad hit, the whole stadium goes quiet. Frozen, still. She's been in enough arenas to hear it happen, the collective intake of a breath. The silent anticipation as thousands of people stop to stare. Rozanov doesn't get up off the ice. His body is slack and unmoving against the ground. Teammates rush over to him while the bench clears to try to beat the shit out of the guy that hit him. It's utter chaos, but Yuna can't take her eyes off the unmoving figure on the ice.

As a mom, some of Yuna's worst moments have been watching Shane get hurt. He's been lucky. His worst injury was that broken wrist and then a broken collarbone before he turned pro, but even those injuries had Yuna nauseous and shaking for the whole drive to the hospital following the ambulance from the rink.

She wonders if Rozanov‘s family is watching. With the time difference between here and Russia, maybe they won't see it until the morning. Maybe that's better than watching the back board come out onto the ice and Rozanov's unconscious body hauled up onto it and secured. Maybe that's better than crying in the car as David swears his head off and prays that their son is alright.

The game ends 3-1 for Toronto. Insult to injury. Bad injuries are a part of hockey, but it's hard to watch a team, clearly rattled, unable to pick themselves back up after a teammate is

rushed off to a hospital. Especially when the teammate doesn't come back to consciousness before being peeled off the ice.

Shane's game starts soon. He's down in Florida, bemoaning the heat and humidity in their family group chat. Yuna pulls out her phone and idly trolls through Twitter and some hockey news sites to see if she can get word on Rozanov. Boston will be fucked if he's out for that long. Good for the Voyageurs at least, but Yuna doesn't like beating a team that's been crippled by injury. There's no glory without a challenge to success.

She's reading a long ass Twitter thread about the worst hockey injuries – haunting, not something a mother should be reading – when her phone screen switches over to an incoming call from Shane.

She checks the clock on the mantle. It's way too close to start time for Shane to be on the phone. Her heart catches in her throat as she rushes to answer it.

"Shane, honey. Are you okay?"

"Hey mom. I just –" he hesitates. Yuna lets him pause. "I wanted to ask you a huge favor?"

"What is it?" She mutes the TV so she can focus on Shane.

"Could you, if you're not busy at all, and please feel free to say no, could you maybe go to Toronto tonight?"

"Why would I go to Toronto tonight?"

David pokes his head into the living room doorway, having eavesdropped on her. *Toronto?* He mouths at her in question. Yuna shrugs.

"Yeah. It's just, there's no one to get Ilya out of the hospital and so I was wondering if maybe you could go see him?"

Yuna pulls the phone away from her ear to make sure this is actually her son calling and not a very bizarre prank.

"Rozanov? You want me to drive five hours to pick up Ilya Rozanov?" she asks when she's certain it really is Shane. Or at least Shane's phone. Jury is still out if it's somehow an evil clone of her son using his phone.

"Yeah. I'm so sorry to ask you guys. He got hurt tonight, and I know this is sudden, but I just need to know he's okay."

There's a long pause. Shane is breathing hard on the other side of the call like he does after conditioning or before he puts his head between his knees in the midst of an anxiety attack.

Then he says, "he's special to me, mom."

What the fuck. Yuna is struck silent by that.

She wants to say *I know he got hurt.* Wants to say, *why the fuck do you care he got hurt outside of professional respect?* Wants to say, *Special how?* But she doesn't. Because Yuna hears that little warble in Shane's voice that gets when he's trying not to cry. It's the same sound he had when he called her from his first hockey sleepaway camp at ten and everyone was nasty to him. His voice cracked trying to tell her how happy he was and Yuna's heart shattered in kind. It was the same sound when he called her after his first NHL loss and then cried on the phone with her for an hour.

Ilya Rozanov is "special" to her son. God help them all.

So, Yuna says, "okay. We can go," and listens to Shane suck in a shaky breath on the other side of the line.

She wonders where he's standing right now. Probably hiding away from the team, tucked in some corner, half whispering into the phone so nobody knows that he's asking his mother to drive to another city to pick up his archrival.

"Thank you," he breathes. Then, "I have to go. Can you please text me when you see him? I won't be able to answer right away but I need to know."

"Of course, baby," she says. "Good luck tonight."

"Thanks, mom." And then he hangs up.

As Yuna holds the phone numbly in her hand, feeling like a freight train has just hit her, she mulls over three things she's learned in very short succession: her son thinks Ilya Rozanov is special. Her son might be sleeping with Ilya Rozanov, and thus is gay. Her son didn't think he could tell his parents either of those things.

No, not just sleeping with. You don't call your mother to pick up your secret fuck buddy from the hospital hours away out of some weird courtesy. You don't cry on the phone over him being injured. He's in love with him. For how long, she can't even begin to guess. He's had to keep this so hidden, so tight to his chest. This could ruin him. How many times has he sat on the couch as Yuna shit talked Rozanov? How many times has he had to listen to people bad mouth him as he willed away a secret so big it might consume him?

Maybe Yuna is the one who's going to cry tonight.

"Toronto?" David asks now that Yuna is off the phone.

"Yeah," Yuna says, pulling herself together, "we have to go pick up Rozanov."

"Ilya Rozanov?"

"You know many others?"

David snorts. He's got a towel hanging over his shoulder, no doubt, halfway through cooking them a nice dinner so they could eat during Shane's game. Yuna's sort of lost track of time.

"Why are we Ilya Rozanov's rescue crew?"

“Because I think our son might be in love with him.”

David’s eyebrows rocket to the top of his forehead. “Fuck,” he sums up.

Yuna nods. Fuck is right.

They get in the car in a whirlwind of activity – David packing up dinner as Yuna looks at hotels to book. It’s a bit more than a four and a half hour drive which will get them there a little after 10. Truthfully, she’s not even sure what she’s going to say when she gets there. *Excuse me. We are the parents of the boy who might be fucking, might be in love with, one of your patients and we would love to see him.*

God, Rozanov might not even be there by the time they arrive. Hopefully he’s not there. If the injuries are bad enough to keep someone like Rozanov in a hospital bed, it’s not looking good for Boston or Shane’s nerves.

David turns on Yuna’s playlist for the drive – 70s soft rock, mostly, sue her, Paul Simon rocks. David hums along to The Boxer as the lights from the highway wash over his face, lighting up the crook of his nose and the curve of his jaw.

He didn’t ask any questions when Yuna told him they were doing this, which reassures her at least that they are doing the right thing. He rarely questions her, so when he does, Yuna knows it’s time to reevaluate. She sometimes lets her stubbornness still win, but David has long since learned how to deal with her, the same way that Yuna has learned how to ease into his less than competitive spirit and fatal desire to make sure everyone is having fun no matter what.

They’ve changed each other since they met in college. They’re better together than they were apart. David used to be too saccharine. Used to let people use him until he dried up. And Yuna knew she was too demanding. Too quick to anger. Together, they are a unit. David makes her laugh more than anyone else in her life, and Yuna pushes him to become more. They go on adventures together. They’ve been to every continent together. Train hopped and backpacked through Europe and Southeast Asia and South America when they were young. They’ve raised an amazing kid together.

She wants Shane to have that. She wants Shane to be with someone who makes him better. Who makes him feel loved. If it’s Rozanov, so be it. That’s what she’ll tell him the next time they see him.

But there’s still this anxiety that thrums under Yuna’s skin. Shane has had to fight for his spot in this sport; Yuna watched it first-hand. Yuna swore and cursed and cried over the racist shit he had to put up with. And now, here’s another thing his son is going to have to worry about in the locker room. She wants life to be easy and kind to him. She wants hockey to welcome him home in a way it never welcomed her.

The clock ticks over to the start time of Shane's game. Yuna pulls up the live score on her phone, the artificial glow illuminating the car as they zip down the highway.

"He never said anything to you, right?" she asks David as the game starts.

David shakes his head. "Never. I don't think I would have been able to keep that from you if he did. I mean Ilya Rozanov? I thought he hated him."

"Me too."

David is quiet for a second then says, "you really think they're together?"

"Well, I don't think we'd be driving to Toronto for a friend."

The live ticker tells her there's a power play for the Voyageurs. She tries to pull up the live feed, but the service isn't strong enough to get more than a grainy image that skips and pauses. She shuts it off and goes back to the written text, refreshing over and over again.

She looks back over at David. It's not like him to be this quiet. In the glare of the headlights rolling down the other side of the road, Yuna can see him worrying at the inside of his lip. He stares out at the road like he's a million miles away.

"You aren't upset by that are you?"

David jumps. "No, Jesus, Yuna, I'm not upset by that. Are you?"

"No!" she yells back, too quickly, too loudly. It rings out in the car over the music David put on.

Her phone buzzes; 1-0 to the Voyageurs, Shane's assist.

"I just –" David starts. Yuna sucks in a deep breath, the car feeling claustrophobic in the dark. It's like a confessional booth. Both of them staring out at the road in front of them hoping to find answers somewhere out on the road between Ottawa and Toronto. Between home and a hospital bed. "I'm just worried for him," he finishes lamely. Not exactly a stirring message to God.

"What do you mean?"

"God, Yuna, I want him to be happy."

"He is. At least, I thought he was."

"I want it to be easy for him to be happy. And if it was easy, he would have told us about Rosanov. We would have met him already and they'd be out on dates and complaining about living so far apart, and we both know why he hasn't told us while he's still playing hockey."

"He never liked doing easy things. He likes being challenged. I bet Rozanov challenges him."

But Yuna is just saying that to make herself feel better. She knows what David means. Of course she does. Is it months of secrets? Years? How long has Shane been tied up in this web of lies, forced into silence because of a game that Yuna was barred from, and Shane had to struggle into being the only Japanese kid on every team he played on.

Shane loves loudly. He loves hockey loudly. He loves the Voyageurs loudly. He loves Hayden and JJ and Yuna and David loudly. He gets that big grin on his face that crinkles the skin around his eyes and shows all of his still perfect teeth even after more than a decade of hockey. She's never seen him smile like that when talking about Rozanov. But does he go to his room late at night, look at secret pictures and hidden texts, and smile like that just for himself?

"God," Yuna mutters, "I've been trying to set him up with people."

David snorts. "Like two unsuccessful dates with girls whose parents we knew. To be honest, I'm not even sure he knew they were dates."

"Probably because he was in love with Rozanov the whole time and I didn't know."

"*We* didn't know."

"Yeah. We didn't."

Silence again. The signs above glitter in the light of the street lamps lining the highway. Their first sign for Toronto, getting closer to something. A revelation? A horror movie? Yuna prays Shane has told Rozanov they're coming so it's not a surprise to him. She still doesn't even know how badly he's injured. The hockey reporters have nothing, and with the Voyageurs now trouncing Florida, she's not going to get anything about Rozanov for hours.

Shane's name doesn't pop up in the live ticker very much. Not as much as it usually would. He's just on the one assist. If Yuna were watching she could know if he's playing good solid hockey, standing as the key player in the build-up but not putting up points, or if he's non-existent on the ice. She could know if this was a good game that just doesn't garner much attention, or a shit game that Shane is going to mope about for weeks to come.

She has a pretty firm guess as to which one it is. It's not every day you send your parents to go tend to your injured rival turned potential lover.

David's hand is fiddling at the gear stick, scratching at the leather there. Yuna pries his fingers off it and takes his hand in hers. He squeezes back. They're a team. The best family team in the NHL. They will figure this out. If there's anyone who could figure out how Shane could love easily again, it's them.

They get to the Toronto hospital at 10:35. Shane has sent Yuna a million texts since his game ended but hasn't been able to call as he's still out with his team and can't slink away. Yuna

can do nothing more than promise she'll update him when she learns anything about Rozanov.

He hasn't confirmed what she and David already might know, but he keeps calling him Ilya in their texts. *I need to know if Ilya's okay.* She wonders if that's the closest they'll get to full confirmation. She hopes not.

They make their way to the front desk, blinking at the bright fluorescent lights of the hospital.

"Hi," Yuna says as brightly as she can. She's not sure how this is going to go. Yuna and David aren't famous per se, but it's not out of the question that they are recognized as Shane's parents. They should have come up with a logical reason that they're picking up Ilya Rozanov that doesn't involve her son and being in love. "We wanted to check in on a patient that's been brought in."

"Name?" the nurse asks, typing at her computer.

Yuna and David exchange a look. "Ilya Rozanov?" Yuna asks, her voice going high and nervous.

The nurse stops typing. She looks up at both of them and furrows her brow. "I can't let you see Ilya Rozanov unless you're his emergency contacts."

Fuck. They should have thought this through.

"Who's his emergency contact?" David asks.

The nurse types something else and then looks at her screen. Her eyebrows shoot up to the top of her head. "I think there's a mistake with his emergency contact," she rasps out.

"Is it Shane Hollander?" David asks.

The nurse nods her head, still staring at the screen.

"Well, we're Shane's parents and since he can't be here, he asked us to come see Ilya. Is that allowed?"

The nurse is no help now, dumbstruck at this information. A hockey fan, no doubt. Yuna rubs a head over her face and feels so much more tired than she was in the car.

"Let me talk to someone," the nurse finally mumbles and flees from the desk.

They stand, fidgeting, at the desk, people coming in and out. Yuna checks her watch as David types out another text to Shane to let him know they're at the hospital.

Minutes pass before another man comes out to the desk, the nurse trailing behind him.

"You must be Shane Hollander's parents," he says, offering his hand to both Yuna and David to shake.

“Yes,” Yuna says. “We were hoping to see Rozanov.”

“Of course. I’ve just spoken with him, and he’s agreed to see you. If you’ll follow me, I can bring you back to him.”

“Thank you,” David and Yuna say, stumbling over each other.

He gives them a wave and they trail after him.

“We have him in a private room considering who he is,” he tells them as they traverse round corners and down halls.

“Of course,” Yuna says. “And are you his doctor?”

“Oh, yes, of course. Sorry, I’m Dr. Bennet. I’ve been Ilya’s doctor. He’s awake now, came to in the ambulance on the way over. He has a pretty severe concussion and a broken collarbone. It’s a pretty messy break, so that plus the concussion will keep him out for a few weeks at least.”

Yuna resists the urge to shudder. No hockey player should have to sit that long, especially one as good as Ilya Rozanov.

“How’s he doing?” David asks.

They come to a pause in front of a closed door. Dr. Bennet sighs. “He’s antsy to get out of here, as all athletes are. We would love it if you could convince him to stay overnight for monitoring and not check himself out.”

“Of course,” David agrees. “We’ll do our best.”

What is their best? Yuna wonders. They do not know this boy. What the actual fuck are they doing here.

But the doctor looks relieved. “Thank you,” he says. Then he swings open the door. “He’s right in here.”

Yuna goes in first. She feels timid entering the hospital room, and then chides herself for her timidness. This is just a boy.

And God is he just a boy.

Rozanov looks so young curled up at the edge of the hospital bed. He doesn’t react to them entering his room. He’s a line of tension, with his shoulders pulled up around his ears, his back to the door.

“Hi,” David says, hovering behind Yuna.

Yuna thinks he’s going to ignore them, but at the sound of David’s voice, Rozanov uncurls his big body and pulls himself upright in the bed. It’s slow going, every movement evidence of how much he must be hurting.

“Hello,” he says once he’s sitting, gruff and formal.

Yuna steps further into the room.

“My name’s Yuna, and this is my husband David,” she introduces them even though he must know who they are. “Shane asked us to come check up on you.”

Rozanov’s jaw tightens at her explanation. He hasn’t looked up at them yet, his eyes glued to the blanket in his lap.

“Thank you for coming, but there is no need,” he says, “I will be okay. Shane overreacts.”

“It was a hard hit,” Yuna continues to creep closer to the bed. It’s a little like trying to approach a feral cat in the street or a spooked horse. “It might be nice if we could stay with you. Or at least until your parents or someone else can come.”

“My parents are dead.”

Jesus, Shane, thanks for the fucking warning.

“Well,” David cuts in as Yuna flounders in her misstep, “then we are more than happy to be here to check up on you.”

“Is okay,” Rozanov says again, “I apologize that you drove here, but I am going to leave.”

“Where are you going to go?” Yuna asks. She’s made it to the side of the bed and sits in the chair next to him. David continues to hover behind her.

“Uber. Plane. Back to Boston.”

“You took a hard hit. It would be good for you to stay overnight, the doctor said,” David warns.

“Is okay.”

They are losing this argument and have no way to force Rozanov to stay in this hospital bed, so Yuna says, “Shane’s worried.”

It’s like cutting the strings of a marionette. Rozanov slumps forward. This close to him, Yuna can see the way his hands tremble and his jaw quivers, like he’s trying not to cry. It is so absurdly like Shane.

“He tell you anything?” Rozanov asks, his voice thick.

“He just asked us to come check on you, sweetheart,” Yuna says. She itches to reach out and take one of his trembling hands but keeps her hands to herself. You reach out to pet a feral cat too fast and it bites.

Rozanov nods, “I can’t use my phone. To tell him I am okay.”

“I can text him,” David offers. Rozanov nods.

He picks at the thread on the edge of his blanket, still unable to look at Yuna.

“Does anything hurt?” Yuna asks.

He shrugs.

“It must have been a scary hit to be out that long.”

Another shrug.

“Shane wants to know if you’re okay,” David says, typing on his phone.

Rozanov just shrugs again. David types out the answer.

He looks so tired. In his face Yuna can see her own son at five and ten and thirteen pretending an injury didn’t hurt. Pretending to be brave. Her heart is melting in the face of Ilya fucking Rozanov. The person who has been the villain in her head for almost a fucking decade.

“Okay,” Yuna says, finished with the lack of plan, “Here’s what’s going to happen: you are going to stay here overnight. In the morning we will check you out of the hospital and take you home to Ottawa for however long the doctors think you need to stay before you can get on the plane. We will keep Shane updated and we will keep an eye on you. And tonight, one of us can stay here or we can both get a hotel room if you’d like to be alone. What do you think.”

Another fucking shrug.

“Rozanov,” Yuna says, an edge of warning in her tone. The same tone she gets with Shane when he’s being petulant.

“Alone tonight. And then talk tomorrow,” he finally says.

Yuna sighs. She looks back at David who also shrugs, and she tries not to scream but only because she thinks it will make Rozanov‘s concussion worse.

“Okay,” Yuna says, getting out of the chair, “we will see you in the morning then.”

Yuna and David gather themselves and the bags they have and begin to shuffle out of Rozanov‘s room. Just as she’s about to leave she hears from the bed, “it is Ilya.”

“What was that?” she asks, looking back. He’s slumped down in the bed now, pulling the cover up to his nose.

“My name,” he says, “it is Ilya.”

“Ilya, then. Goodnight. We will see you tomorrow.”

Yuna and David come back to the hospital bright and early the next morning with a breakfast sandwich for Rozanov – Ilya – in hand in case he doesn't like the hospital food. It's a good peace offering; he devours the sandwich in three bites, chewing with his mouth full and giving himself heartburn.

"Thank you," he says once he's done.

He looks more alive this morning. The doctors tell Yuna and David that they feel good about letting him check out this morning after observations through the night. He has to go home with someone, though, not to an empty apartment in Boston.

Ilya tries to bargain with everyone that he should be allowed to go home, but Yuna knows the NHL schedule too well, so she knows the team is about to leave for a weeklong road trip and that Shane won't be able to come stay with him, only half way through his own road trip.

There are some other names thrown out, but the only person that Ilya seems close to is a girl named Svetlana who's traveling at the end of the week (a detail that came out after very intense interrogation by Yuna), so it's decided he can't go home.

Which means that Ilya is coming home to Ottawa with Yuna and David whether he wants to or not.

Ilya loses a lot of fight as the morning progresses and whatever pain meds they gave him a few hours ago begin to wean. It's easy to get him in the car then. He shuffles out after them, declining offers of help, but David takes his bag from him. Yuna keeps glancing behind them worried he's going to faceplant and not be able to catch himself with one arm in a sling, but he makes it out to the car alright.

David chucks Ilya's bag in the trunk and Yuna puts a steadying hand on Ilya's shoulder as he shakily climbs into the car. She shuts the door behind him and then slides into the passenger seat as David gets in.

"It's a little under five hours, hon, is that alright?" she asks, looking at Ilya slumped over against the window in the rearview mirror.

He nods. "I might sleep if that's okay."

"You should definitely sleep. It will make the journey pass faster. Let us know if you have to use the bathroom at any point."

She gets a thumbs up and David pulls out of the parking garage.

The car is quiet on the drive home. Her and David chat softly as Ilya sleeps in the back, only waking up to stumble to a bathroom when Yuna asks David to pull over at a rest stop halfway.

They make great time getting home. David offers to cook for them if Yuna helps Ilya settle. A deal that Yuna hops on immediately. She only likes cooking if she can spread out and take hours, dirtying every bowl in the kitchen. The daily dinners that pile up with repeating mundanity David is better at.

“We’re home Ilya,” Yuna calls as they pull into the driveway. Ilya barely stirs so Yuna reaches her hand back to shake him awake. He startles and blinks, looking around in confusion before remembering where he is.

“Thank you for taking me,” he says for what must be the tenth time. It’s sweet of him, especially considering they have sort of kidnapped him.

“Of course. We’ll get you set up in the house and then David will make us dinner.”

Ilya nods and works on unfolding his body from the back seat to crawl out, aching and stiff from the drive. He showers as Yuna puts clean sheets on the guest bed for him. He has to call Yuna for help to get his sling off, so it doesn’t get wet, and Yuna gets a look at the infamous bear tattoo across his chest. His whole chest blushes red when Yuna asks if he needs any more help getting undressed.

“Nothing I haven’t seen before. I am a mother,” she says.

“Thank you. I am okay,” he answers, stiff and formal.

At dinner, Ilya eats like all the hockey boys she knows. Which means a lot and at a speed that is semi concerning. After dinner, he asks if he can be excused and takes his plate to the kitchen sink. Yuna has to jump in to stop him from trying to do the dishes, shooing him off to go sleep.

“I feel like I’m in an alternate universe,” David says, watching Ilya stumble off to bed.

“Maybe this is a dream,” Yuna agrees.

Ilya is quiet with pain for the first day and a half he lives with the Hollanders. Yuna worries about his headaches when he squints and winces throughout the day, but the episodes begin to abate. The next night at dinner, he’s much more animated than when they first took him home.

He asks Yuna and David about how they met. About what they do for work. He annunciates each word carefully as he talks, his mouth shaping around the English consonants. The conversation is easy and without the trademark Ilya Rosanov sass and cursing that she’s used to hearing in press conferences and interviews.

It’s like meeting a whole new person.

This Ilya’s hair dries into pretty blond curls. His voice is much softer than it is out on the ice. Yuna can’t let everything she’s known about this kid evaporate after a few pleasant days, but

she is defrosting a little towards him.

“This house is near Shane’s cottage, yes?” Ilya asks as they drift away from jobs and marriages.

“Yep. Just up the road,” Yuna answers, waving her hand in the direction of Shane’s cottage.

“You’ve been there?” David asks.

“Once.” Ilya says. “The wolf birds scared me.”

Yuna has to mull over what the fuck wolf birds are before saying, “the loons!”

“Yes!” Ilya laughs. “I want to get a tattoo of them. That will be my next one.”

Yuna takes another bite of dinner. There are a million questions on the tip of her tongue threatening to be vomited out over the dinner table. David doesn’t look much better. He keeps catching Yuna’s eye, silently pleading her to ask. Coward. But Yuna is also a coward because she can’t bring herself to ask. They’re caught in this purgatory. A Schrodinger’s relationship that is real and not real because Yuna hasn’t been brave enough to open the box and check.

It's Ilya that brings it up.

“I know you have questions,” he says, matter of fact.

Yuna and David open and close their mouths like gasping carp, now unable to bring up any of the million questions they both have once they’ve been caught out.

“I think we just might have been under the wrong impression,” Yuna says.

“What impression is that?”

“That you hated each other.”

“Maybe we still do sometimes,” Ilya says with that same stupid fucking smirk he gets on the ice when Yuna knows he’s chirping other teams. But then that smirk vanishes to be replaced by a loud yawn that he tries to stifle behind one of his hands. Yuna and David share another glance, coming to the same conclusion.

“That’s enough for tonight,” Yuna says. “Why don’t you head up to bed.”

“I can help clean,” Ilya says, making to stand from his chair.

But David waves him off like they do every time he offers to help. “No. Yuna and I have a system. You should get to bed and keep getting rest.”

“Is your head or shoulder hurting?” Yuna asks. She’s asked it every few hours.

He shakes his head no. “I really can help.”

“Go to bed,” David says again. “We’ll see you tomorrow for breakfast.”

Yuna watches Ilya trudge down the hall before she turns back to David. He takes in a deep breath and shakes his head, her feelings of disbelief mirrored in his face.

“At least he seems nice now that we’ve properly met him,” David says.

The laugh Yuna lets out is only half hysterical.

The three of them settle into a more permanent routine as the days pass and Ilya stays in Ottawa. He’s in pain most of the time he’s awake. His head hurts, and it’s made worse by any bright lights, so they keep the curtains drawn and the lights off. His collarbone is also a mess, and he fumbles his way through tasks one handed, trying to avoid asking for help as much as he can.

Ilya is somehow both quiet and boisterous. Yuna can spot that shithead, cocky asshole that he is on the ice in brief reflections in his toothy grin, but it’s tempered in the house. He jokes about their house being boring and him being the best hockey player in the world, but it makes Yuna giggle when he does it. He’s charming as all hell and eager to please. It’s like having a dog in the house bouncing around, wanting to play fetch.

And then sometimes he goes nearly silent. He curls up on the couch and gets contemplative, listening to music or just staring out at the window and the lake. Yuna was worried at first that he was in so much pain that it made him shut down, and she tried to ploy him with painkillers and darkness and a call to the doctor.

But it’s not the pain. Or not *only* the pain. He just shuts down sometimes.

A week after he came to stay at the house, he gets cleared by the doctor to watch TV and do some gentle exercise. Now when he goes quiet, Yuna sits on the couch with him and turns on something to watch. Yuna loves to talk while the TV is on, especially if it’s hockey related. Ilya joins in, making it the perfect scenario for her.

He listens to her rant about the ineffectual defensive line on Toronto and then will tell her that their right defenseman talks to himself out loud on the ice. Or she’ll complain about how much stamina the Sharks have when a game ticks over into overtime and Ilya will tell her that he heard that their coach watched Miracle too many times and now makes them run bagskates until someone throws up. He knows who’s getting divorced, or who is having another kid, or who is scared of flying.

When they don’t have hockey to watch, Ilya puts on horrible reality TV shows about people falling in love without seeing the other person or people whose only qualifications are being hot and fucking each other on some island in Fiji. Yuna gets even more worked up watching these shitty shows and Ilya laughs at her plight.

She hopes it’s helping pull him out of his head a little bit. She can’t imagine how it must feel to go from the insanity of being a professional athlete to suddenly being coped up in a house with people he doesn’t really know.

David notices the bouts of quiet too. He joins them most of the time, either sitting in the overstuffed chair or moving Ilya's legs and joining them on the couch, squishing them all together.

The times they turn off the TV to give Ilya's brain a break, David pulls out his puzzles and asks if he would like to join. Yuna is a little worried that Ilya is only doing the puzzles out of general politeness as a guest, but as the days go on, she finds him sat in complete concentration with David, sorting edges and picking through pieces with his one good hand.

She laughs out loud at the both of them when she comes downstairs to find them hovering above the puzzle they've been working on for days with headlights on.

"Ilya suggested it," David says cheerfully.

"To see the dark pieces better," Ilya adds.

Yuna sneaks a photo of them and sends it to Shane. She gets his reply instantly: *I'm flying home after the game tomorrow.*

The aforementioned game is in Atlanta. David makes a slow cooked stew and they all crowd into the living room to watch.

"They look good this year," Ilya says in between bits of his stew as the whistle blows, "but not as good as Boston," he adds with that crooked, toothy grin.

Yuna smacks him on the leg. "Positive talk only."

"That was positive!"

It's a slow start for the Voyageurs (certainly due to Ilya's less than positive comments), which has Yuna groaning and cursing.

"You are very dedicated," Ilya observes.

"Obsessed everyone else says," Yuna mutters as Shane's shot on goal goes wide.

"No, it's good. It must be nice for Shane to have someone to talk to."

David peeks over Ilya's head at her at that comment. Yuna's dedication to Shane's career has been a boon and a burden to Shane, appreciated and hated. Yuna can't help it, but she knows as much as she has helped him, she has grated at him too, annoying him, angering him, frustrating him. She has seen him bite his tongue more times than she can count, bottling up that instinct to tell her to fuck off and let him breathe.

Maybe that's why he never told her he was seeing Ilya Rozanov, too worried that she would be focused on the hockey and not him. It makes her blood run cold. She watches him skate back to defense, colliding with an Atlanta player before scrambling back into position. Was he scared to tell her? Her vision narrows down to the TV. There's a ringing in her ears that's getting louder. How could Yuna have failed so much as a mother that her son couldn't come to her and tell her this?

Ilya's saying something to her.

"Sorry," she says, trying to focus back on the living room, "what did you say?"

"I asked if you played?" he repeats.

That question is like rubbing against scar tissue that's long gone numb. If she pushes hard enough at it, she can conjure up the memory of pain.

"No," she says. "I wanted to."

Ilya nods. "You would have been good, I think. Smart like Shane is, but maybe better at getting in fights and actually winning them."

Yuna snorts. "I tell him to let the enforcers do the fighting."

"You taught him how to skate, though, yes?" Ilya asks.

"Yep. Out on the pond. I wanted to teach him like my dad taught me."

"It's a shame you didn't play if you were good enough to teach him to do all that." It's the closest thing Ilya has offered as a true compliment to Shane tonight. Yuna smiles at it.

"No league for me."

"Yes. My friend, Svetlana, she says the same. She would have been amazing on the ice but instead she helps out with Boston with her dad."

"Do you skate with her?"

"Oh yes," Ilya grins, "she is better at fighting than me."

The conversation cuts off then as Shane gets a hold of the puck and chargers down to the net. "Come on," Yuna chants, with Ilya and David just as tense. Then right before he can get the shot off, he gets waylaid by an Atlanta defender.

"Fuck," Ilya swears.

But then he's back on the puck, passing it off to Hayden who swings it around back to Shane and –

"Yes!" Yuna yells as David stands up to cheer. Even Ilya claps and cheers as the team jumps on each other in celebration.

"A very sexy goal," Ilya says. Then he flushes red when he realizes what he's just said.

"It's okay," David pats him on the knee, "it was very sexy." It sounds goofy coming out of David's mouth, but it puts Ilya at ease even if the tips of his ears still glow red as the game moves on.

Yuna takes a deep breath. She's going to be brave. "So, you are together then?"

Ilya pauses, his eyes fixed on the screen. Then he says, “yes.” Simple and effective.

“For how long?”

“It’s complicated I guess,” is the cryptic answer.

“How long have you been in any form of relationship at all,” Yuna presses.

“Years. Since we were rookies.” She must have left Shane alone only for a few hours the days that he could have met Ilya while a rookie. Bizarre to learn that your son apparently moves fast.

“Do you love him?” That’s David asking that. Yuna still holds her breath waiting for the answer.

“Yes.”

“And how long has that been?”

“For me I think since the beginning. For Shane you would have to ask him.”

She will be asking Shane that exact question. Preferably when he’s in front of her and unable to run away or lie. That’s one skill her lovely boy has never learned.

“But you’re not out,” Yuna presses again.

Ilya shrugs. “No. Not yet.”

“You want to be?”

“I want to marry him.”

He’s watching the TV as he says it, his eyes fixated on Shane. There’s something so soft in Ilya’s face as he talks about her son. God, he wants to marry her son. If Shane has lost anything in his hockey career, it’s been taken by Ilya. Part of her, the part that she’s tried to hollow out of her chest when she wasn’t born a man who could play professional hockey, shudders at the idea that you could have such love for someone who’s your rival.

But also, maybe, she gets it too. There’s no one in the world who could understand what Shane has been through, is going through, except for Ilya. They’ve been connected by the NHL for eight years. Of course their connection has run deeper than this surface level promotion. If Yuna could parse through every interaction they’ve ever had like flicking through a photo album, she thinks that connection would be obvious to anyone looking for it.

“The long distance must be tough,” David says, pulling Yuna back into the conversation.

“I’m moving to Ottawa,” said so casually.

“What?” Yuna yells.

Ilya jumps in surprise at her raised voice. He gives her a bewildered look. “To be closer to him!”

“You would leave your team, that you’ve won a Stanley Cup with, to play for Ottawa?”

“You like Ottawa,” he defends.

That’s true. And thinking back on it, it was suspicious that Ilya quizzed her about Ottawa for 15 minutes yesterday. She just figured he was talking hockey with her.

“Yeah, I like them. But you are so much better than Ottawa is.”

“I’ll make it better. They just need the best hockey player in the NHL to join them.”

“So, you’ll be making Shane join too?”

Ilya laughs. “No,” he says once he’s done. “I wouldn’t ask him to do that. And he hasn’t asked me to do this, but the distance doesn’t work, and hockey is different for Shane than it is for me. I am ready to do this for us.”

Yuna sighs. She has a million more things to say about dynasties and legacy and the balance of NHL teams, but she knows when a fight is lost. And more than anything she wants her son to be happy, so she is selfishly glad to hear the love of his life will be closer than Boston.

“Well, you will have to come for dinner then,” Yuna decides.

David nods happily. “It will be nice to have a kid back in the house.”

Ilya’s ears glow red for the rest of the game.

The sound of the front door opening has Yuna up like a shot. Her heart is hammering in her chest as she reaches over to shake David awake. He barely stirs as Yuna slides out of the bed and creeps towards the door. She holds her breath, sliding in socked feet across the floor. She should have grabbed a weapon.

There’s no one in the living room. Or kitchen. Or bathroom. She’s about to think she imagined it when she hears another noise. This one from the guest room where Ilya is staying.

Yuna tip toes towards the room, the door slightly ajar. She pokes her head in, holding her breath, ready to scream for everyone else in the house to wake up, when she spots a familiar body in the bed next to Ilya.

Shane sits up as the light from the open door shafts across the bed, illuminating a strip of his face. He must have gotten on a flight from Atlanta within hours of the final whistle blowing on their victory.

“Hi, baby,” Yuna whispers.

“Hi mom.”

Shane pushes the quilt down and slides out of the bed. Ilya grumbles as he moves, and Shane leans over to whisper something to him that settles him. Yuna wants to close her eyes, caught in the feeling that she’s intruding on something.

Shane creeps out of the room and they both tip toe back to the kitchen. They used to work in a silent duo when Shane was a kid at Christmas. David would make batches upon batches of cookies for cookie swaps at Christmas and bar both of them from eating any. When he fell asleep, Shane and Yuna would creep out into the dark kitchen and munch on matcha cookies and the ones with dark chocolate with sea salt.

David would make extra because he knew he was losing at least four every night he left them out.

This time they make their way to the living room. Yuna pulls out the soft blanket her mother made her and drapes it over both of them. The house is chilly in the night, the heat automatically turned down when they all went to bed. Shane’s arms are covered in goose bumps and Yuna rubs at his cold skin.

Shane curls up on her lap like he’s ten again, chewing on the cords of his sweatshirt. Yuna resists the urge to tell him to stop, afraid he’ll pull the ties from his mouth, and his head off her legs, and vanish from the house before she can look him in the eye and get answers. Sometimes she can’t believe how old he’s gotten. Or that she can’t pick him up anymore and tuck his head into her shoulder when the world got too big and too mean for him.

She sniffles. Wipes at her eyes. Tries to be discreet. But Shane rolls his head back so he can look up at her.

“Are you crying?” he asks.

“No.”

He chews more on the cords. “Are you upset with me?”

“Upset about what?”

“Come on mom. You know what. Ilya.”

He has that tone of voice that sometimes grates on Yuna’s last nerve. Whiny. Annoyed. He used to yell *Come on mom*, as she tried to pause in the store and figure out what they were eating at dinner, or to get her to stop talking when trying to leave grandma’s house or the rink as she was talking to other moms.

Now she’s listening to him whine and worried this is what’s going to break her heart.

“I would never be upset over something like this,” she says, her voice firm.

“Then why are you crying?”

They’re both tense. She can’t imagine he’s comfortable lying like this, but Yuna wants to put her hands on his shoulders and hold him down so he can’t vanish from her.

“It’s stupid.”

“Tell me.”

Yuna sighs. “I guess I was just sad to think you couldn’t tell me about it. I thought maybe you’d at least have told your dad.”

“Why would I tell dad?”

“I don’t know. Sometimes I think he was maybe better with all that outside of hockey. That maybe you didn’t feel like you could tell me since I was so involved in it all.”

Shane rolls over again. His face is a mask of earnestness when he says, “I couldn’t tell dad about it because I was worried he wouldn’t understand the hockey part of it. And yeah, I couldn’t tell you because you understood the hockey too much. But really, I couldn’t tell anyone about it because if I started talking about how much I loved Ilya, I was worried I wouldn’t be able to stop. That every word out of my mouth would be about him once the dam broke.”

“You love him too?”

“Yeah, mom. I love him so much. I’m so glad you got to meet him because I think he’s it for me, mom. I want to marry him.”

Yuna takes a shaky breath. “I wish you could have told me earlier. I wish it could have been safe for you, baby.”

Shane reaches up to snag Yuna’s hand. He sniffles himself, eyes wet and glossy. “There was no safe space for me. Or for Ilya. Or for anyone else. But maybe now we can make one, yeah? Maybe it can be different now.”

“Yes,” Yuna agrees wetly. “I would be so proud to watch you build that.”

But Shane’s eyes darken. “It scares me to be the face of all that change.”

Yuna squeezes Shane’s hand back. “You’ll have all of us there to support you know. I can’t promise you everything Shane, but I can promise you that.”

He smiles, his eyes still shining with tears. He lets go of Yuna’s hand and rolls back over, laying his head back against her legs. They sit like that for a long time. Yuna would keep him in this bubble of safety forever if she could.

“He wants to move to Ottawa for you,” Yuna says as the silence stretches.

Shane laughs, the sound choppy with the tears still in his eyes and throat. “I know. Are you mad he’s betraying Boston for me?”

“No,” Yuna protests, “I’m really happy he’s going to be closer to you.”

“You’re mad.”

“No, I am not Shane. Please do not tell him that I am mad he’s betraying his team.”

“So, you do think he’s betraying his team?”

Yuna sucks on the inside of her mouth. “It’s just very sudden of him, especially as a legacy player.”

“I’m going to tell him you said that.”

“Do not!”

“Why are you so nervous about what I’m going to say?” Shane’s still laughing. Yuna would bottle up the sound if she could.

“I want to make a good impression on your boyfriend.”

She waits for Shane to make some remark, but he’s gone quiet.

“Sorry,” Yuna backpedals, “are you not that?” she winces at the awkwardness.

“No. We are. It’s just so nice to hear,” he’s got that crack in his voice again and Jesus now Yuna is going to cry again.

She reaches down and pulls Shane’s head and chest up like he’s five again and small enough for Yuna to manhandle around. He lets himself be dragged up her chest and buries his head against her neck. Her son is home. And he’s brought his boyfriend, and he’s in love, and everything is going to be alright. Yuna will make sure of that.

She squeezes him as tight as she can and vows then and there to never let any part of him stay hidden again.

In the morning, the whole house is a chaotic mess of noise. David is making pancakes and Yuna gets a front row view of Shane and Ilya’s relationship.

It starts with Shane nagging at Ilya that he’s hiding how much he’s hurting. That does surprise Yuna because she’s gotten pretty good at sussing at hidden hockey injuries. But Shane needles and probes and bitches Ilya into confessing that his shoulder is sore, and he is still getting headaches. They fight about what that means which would have been concerning except for the fact that they're so curled up together on the couch as they fight that Yuna can’t tell where one of them ends and the next one begins.

They go on a walk together after breakfast on a not well trodden path that winds along the lake. Ilya and Shane goad Yuna into competing over who can keep a rock for the longest that they kick down the trail. They stand some distance apart, drifting closer when they are well out of the way from anyone who can see them. Even then, Ilya snags Shane's hand only once, giving it a firm squeeze before letting it go.

Back home it's mandatory rest for Ilya. Yuna and David join them for one of Ilya's terrible reality shows that Shane groans about, swearing he would never watch any of that "stupid shit," but winds up staring at over the top of his hockey book he's pretending to read.

"He loves Patricia," Ilya whispers.

Shane kicks at his ankle. "Shut up. I don't watch this stupid show."

"He was the one who knew that lady in White Lotus copied her. What was her name?"

"Victoria."

"You watched White Lotus?" David asks from where he's been banished to the chair now that the couch is full.

"No," Shane says as Ilya nods his head enthusiastically.

Ilya falls asleep in between episodes of Southern Charm, his big hockey body flopped on top of Shane and pinning him to the couch. Shane drags a hand through his hair, rubbing circles at his neck and his temples.

"Will you head up to your cottage?" David asks, keeping his voice quiet.

Shane shrugs, the movement shifting Ilya who sleeps through it. "In a few days. He's been happy here."

"He has?" Yuna asks.

"Yeah. He was texting me about it. I'm happy you guys will be here for him when he moves to Ottawa."

"Of course we're here for him. Even if it's a huge surprise, Shane," David says. It's the closest he's gotten to bringing it up to Shane personally.

"Yeah," is all Shane says to that.

Yuna knows in the next few days he and David will talk. It'll be weird and awkward for both of them dancing around asking about Shane's sex life and dating life, but she believes in them. They've always had the non-hockey stuff figured out between them.

She's excited to hear Ilya feels comfortable at their house. She's gotten used to having him around the house, and wants him to come back, even if it means betraying Boston.

There's a hockey game later that they'll watch. In a few days Shane will have to be back in Montreal; Yuna can't help but bristle a little at the lie Shane said about a family emergency to get out of practice, but she tamps down the impulse to say something about it.

When Yuna was little, she would wish on every star and 11:11 and birthday candle that she could play hockey professionally. She learned how to fly with her dad out on the ice and then discovered that the path to flight was barred to kids like her. All her life, Yuna thinks she would have sacrificed anything to be able to play.

But then she met David and had Shane. She wouldn't give up either of them for anything, even for that five-year-old's dream. She doesn't want Shane to ever have to give up this either. She wants him to get to be himself and play hockey.

Yuna has felt lost since Shane went professional and stopped needing his mom with him. She was always his protector, screaming at racist coaches and shitty moms. Demanding the best from him and from the teams he was on. She had a purpose. When Shane stood up on his own two feet and dominated in the NHL she wasn't needed anymore.

Now, Yuna thinks there's something here for her to help with. The charity the boys tell her about first. Then meeting Ilya's friend Svetlana who has some ideas about women's professional hockey. And then fighting for an NHL that her son can play in without sacrificing anything.

Small, attainable goals. Nothing that big.

But looking across at Shane and Ilya, now both napping on the couch, and David doing the crossword on his phone, Yuna knows she's in good company. This is the best family team in the NHL.

End Notes

I have probably also taken liberties on Canadian geography. I personally drive 4-5 hours often and that's how far apart Google Maps told me Ottawa and Toronto are. If you think that drive is crazy or I am totally off on the distance please suspend your disbelief and I am so sorry Canada.

I also am not a hockey watcher. My sports are cycling and soccer but I am OBSESSED with all things athletic so I felt like I needed to write for this fandom. I will start watching hockey, though, because I am intrigued, so if anyone has a team I should support in the PWHL or NHL please let me know! I sort of love a defense minded team who love each other but will break my heart.

Comments and kudos are so appreciated!

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