

Magic In My Soul

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/75733626) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/75733626>.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid , Heated Rivalry_(TV)
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov
Additional Tags:	Alpha/Beta/Omega Dynamics , Alpha Ilya , Omega Shane , Mpreg , Male Pregnancy , Sexual Content , Shane Goes Into Heat Unexpected And There Are Repercussions , Injury Recovery , Non-Traditional Alpha/Beta/Omega Dynamics , Mentions of Knotting and Breeding , Ilya loves Shane , Established Relationship , Fluffy , Mentions of First Trimester Symptoms , HollaNov As Girl Dads
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2025-12-14 Words: 14,022 Chapters: 3/3

Magic In My Soul

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Summary

While recovering from season-ending surgery, Shane unexpectedly goes into heat. Thankfully, his alpha is there to help him...which leads to an unintended repercussion.

Notes

HollaNov has taken over my life completely.

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

Chapter 1

The discharge papers felt like they weighed a thousand pounds in Shane's hands, even though they were just a few sheets of paper clipped together. His leg throbbed despite the pain medication they'd given him an hour ago, a dull ache that radiated from his heel all the way up his calf. The surgical boot felt foreign and clunky, and the crutches leaning against his wheelchair were going to be his constant companions for the next several weeks.

"You have someone to help you at home?" the nurse asked, her voice kind but professional as she wheeled him toward the hospital exit.

"Yes," Ilya answered before Shane could, his hand warm and steady on Shane's shoulder. "I will take care of him."

The nurse smiled, probably assuming Ilya was just a good friend or teammate. She had no idea that the man standing behind Shane's wheelchair was his husband, his alpha, his everything. No idea that they'd been married for three years in a private ceremony with only Shane's parents as witnesses. No idea that the matching bands they wore on chains under their shirts meant more than any Stanley Cup ever could. Well...that might have been an exaggeration.

"Make sure he stays off that leg," she continued, handing Ilya a bag full of prescription bottles. "The pain medication is strong—he'll need to take it with food. And he should ice it twenty minutes every few hours for the first week. The surgeon will want to see him again in two weeks."

"I have it all written down," Ilya assured her, patting his jacket pocket. His English was still accented after all these years, but it had improved significantly. Shane loved the way certain words still rolled off his tongue with that distinctive Russian flavor.

The automatic doors slid open, and October air hit Shane's face. It was crisp and cool, the kind of weather that usually meant the start of the season, the smell of ice and the sound of skates cutting through it. Instead, Shane was facing months of recovery, of watching his team play without him, of wondering if he'd ever be the same player he was before.

"Stop thinking so loud," Ilya murmured, leaning down close to Shane's ear as the nurse went to flag down their car. "I can hear your brain from here."

Despite everything, Shane smiled. "My brain's pretty quiet, actually. It's the pain meds."

"Good. Keep it that way." Ilya's hand squeezed his shoulder gently. "No worrying. Only healing."

The nurse helped Shane into the passenger seat of Ilya's car—a sleek black SUV that was probably too expensive and definitely too flashy, but that was Ilya. Everything about him was larger than life: his personality, his playing style, his love. Shane had spent years trying to match that energy on the ice, their rivalry the stuff of sports media legend. What no one knew

was that off the ice, Shane didn't have to match anything. He could just be himself, and Ilya loved him for it.

"Comfortable?" Ilya asked, adjusting Shane's seat back and making sure his injured ankle was set on a pillow he'd apparently stashed in the car ahead of time.

"Yeah." Shane's eyelids were already getting heavy. "When did you put that pillow there?"

"This morning. I plan ahead." Ilya's smile was smug as he buckled Shane's seatbelt for him. "I take care of what is mine."

The possessiveness in those words sent a warm shiver through Shane's body, even through the haze of medication. "Yours, huh?"

"Always." Ilya pressed a quick kiss to Shane's temple before closing the door and rounding the car to the driver's side.

They'd decided Shane would recover at his cottage—a private place about two hours north of the city, tucked away on a lake where no one would bother them. It was where they went when they needed to escape, when the weight of their secret became too heavy, when they just needed to be Shane and Ilya instead of Hollander and Rozanov, rival captains, omega and alpha hiding in plain sight.

Shane drifted in and out of sleep during the drive, waking occasionally to find Ilya's hand on his thigh, thumb rubbing gentle circles through his sweatpants. The radio played softly—some Russian station Ilya had found—and the familiar sound of the language Shane didn't fully understand was oddly comforting.

"We're here," Ilya said softly, and Shane blinked awake to find them parked in front of the cottage.

The trees were bursting with fall colors—deep reds and burnt oranges and golden yellows. The lake beyond was calm and gray, reflecting the overcast sky. It was beautiful and isolated and exactly what Shane needed.

Getting out of the car was an ordeal. Getting up the three steps to the cottage door was even worse. By the time Ilya had him settled on the couch with his leg elevated and ice packed around his boot, Shane was sweating and nauseous from the pain.

"I know, I know," Ilya soothed, brushing Shane's hair back from his forehead. "Medicine soon. Let me get your prescription."

Shane closed his eyes and focused on breathing. He'd played through injuries before—separated shoulder, broken finger, more concussions than he wanted to count. But this was different. This was surgery, his body cut open and stitched back together, and the vulnerability of it made him feel exposed in a way he hated.

He heard Ilya moving around the cottage, unpacking the bags they'd brought, setting up the bedroom. Then he was back, pressing a protein bar and two pills into Shane's palm and

holding a glass of water to his lips.

"Eat that then take these. Doctor's orders."

Shane swallowed the pills obediently, then let his head fall back against the couch cushions. "You don't have to stay the whole time, you know. You've got preseason practice, team meetings—"

"Shane." Ilya's voice was firm. "We have been over this. I told my coach I need time. Family emergency."

"I'm not family. Not officially."

"You are my husband. That is official."

Ilya sat on the edge of the couch, careful not to jostle Shane's leg. "Besides, season just started. They can manage without me for a week or two. You cannot manage without me."

It was true, even if Shane hated admitting it. He couldn't drive, could barely walk, couldn't even shower without help. The independence he'd always prided himself on was gone, at least temporarily.

"Okay," he conceded quietly. "Thank you."

Ilya's expression softened. "You do not thank me for loving you, solnyshko. It is not a favor. It is just what I do."

Solnyshko. Little sun. The endearment made Shane's chest tight with emotion that he blamed on the pain medication.

The first few days passed in a blur of pain pills and ice packs and Ilya's constant, steady presence. Ilya helped him to the bathroom, helped him shower with his leg wrapped in plastic, helped him change clothes and eat meals and take his medication on schedule. He was patient and gentle and never once made Shane feel like a burden, even though Shane definitely felt like one.

The pain medication was strong—stronger than anything Shane had taken before. It made him floaty and disconnected, his thoughts moving through molasses. He slept a lot, strange dreams mixing with reality until he wasn't always sure which was which.

On the fourth day, Shane woke up feeling different.

Not bad, exactly. Just... off.

He was warm, warmer than he should be under just the light blanket Ilya had covered him with. His skin felt sensitive, almost itchy, and there was a restlessness in his body that had nothing to do with being cooped up in the cottage.

"Ilya?" he called out, his voice rougher than usual.

Ilya appeared in the doorway of the bedroom, dish towel slung over his shoulder. He'd been cooking—Shane could smell something savory and rich coming from the kitchen. "You are awake. Good timing. Lunch is almost ready."

"I feel weird," Shane said, pushing himself up to sitting. The movement made his head swim slightly. "Hot."

Ilya's brow furrowed as he crossed the room, pressing the back of his hand to Shane's forehead. "You do feel warm. Maybe fever? Infection?"

"No, not like that." Shane couldn't quite explain it. It wasn't a sick kind of hot. It was something else, something that made his skin prickle and his stomach flutter with an anxiety he couldn't name.

"I will get the thermometer," Ilya decided, already heading for the bathroom.

But Shane knew it wasn't a fever. Deep down, in some instinctive part of himself that he usually kept locked away behind suppressants and willpower, he knew exactly what this was.

No. No, it couldn't be.

He'd been taking his suppressants religiously for years. One pill every morning, never missed, never late. They kept his heats away, kept his scent neutral, kept him passing as a beta in a league that didn't allow omegas. They were as much a part of his routine as his morning workout or his pre-game rituals.

Except.

Shane's eyes went to the prescription bottles on the nightstand. The pain medication. Strong opioids that he'd been taking every four to six hours since the surgery.

"Fuck," he breathed.

"Thirty-seven point four," Ilya announced, returning with the thermometer. "That is... what, ninety-nine point three? A little high, but not too bad. Maybe we should call the doctor—"

"It's not a fever." Shane's voice came out strained. "Ilya, what day is it?"

"Thursday. Why?"

Thursday. Five days since the surgery. Five days of heavy pain medication cycling through his system.

"My suppressants," Shane said, his heart starting to pound. "The pain meds—they can interfere with hormonal medications. I didn't even think about it, I was so focused on the surgery, but—"

He watched understanding dawn on Ilya's face, followed quickly by concern.

"You think...?"

"I don't know. Maybe?" Shane ran a hand through his hair, trying to think through the fog of medication and growing panic. "I've been on suppressants for so long, I don't even remember what it feels like before a heat. But this—" He gestured vaguely at himself. "This feels like something."

Ilya sat down on the edge of the bed, his hand finding Shane's. "Okay. Okay, let us not panic. Maybe it is nothing. Maybe just your body adjusting to the medication."

But even as he said it, Shane could see the worry in his eyes. They both knew what it would mean if Shane went into heat here, now, with his leg in a surgical boot and no way to get to a hospital if something went wrong.

"I'll take my suppressant now," Shane decided, reaching for the bottle. "Double dose, maybe, to get back on track—"

"No." Ilya caught his wrist gently. "You cannot just double dose. That could be dangerous, especially with the pain medication. We do not know how they interact."

He was right, and Shane hated it. He hated the loss of control, hated the vulnerability, hated that his body might betray him like this.

"So what do we do?"

Ilya was quiet for a moment, thinking. Then he squeezed Shane's hand. "We wait. We watch. If it is a heat, then... we deal with it. Together."

"Ilya, I haven't had a heat in almost eight years. I don't even know what it will be like. And my leg—"

"I will take care of you." Ilya's voice was firm, certain. "Whatever happens, I will take care of you. This is what alphas do for their omegas, yes?"

Their omegas. The words sent another wave of heat through Shane's body, and he knew with sinking certainty that this wasn't going away.

"Yeah," he whispered. "Yeah, okay."

By evening, there was no doubt.

Shane's temperature had climbed to just over a hundred degrees. His skin was flushed and sensitive, and every time Ilya came near him, Shane could smell him—really smell him, the way he hadn't been able to in years. Cedar and smoke and something uniquely Ilya, something that made Shane's mouth water and his body ache with need.

The restlessness had gotten worse too. Shane couldn't stay still, couldn't get comfortable, kept shifting and moving despite the pain in his leg. He'd kicked off all the blankets and was down to just his boxers, but he was still too hot.

"This is really bad timing," he muttered, trying for humor and failing. "Like, spectacularly bad timing."

Ilya had pulled a chair up next to the bed and hadn't left Shane's side for the past hour. "When have we ever had good timing?"

That was true enough. Their entire relationship had been a study in bad timing—falling for each other when they were supposed to be rivals, getting married when they were both at the peak of their careers, trying to build a life together while keeping it secret from the entire world.

"I need—" Shane started, then stopped, not sure how to articulate the feeling building inside him. It was like an itch under his skin, a hunger that had nothing to do with food. "I don't know what I need."

"I know what you need." Ilya's voice had dropped lower, taken on that alpha rumble that Shane felt in his bones. "But we should wait. Make sure this is really happening."

"It's happening." Shane could feel it now, the unmistakable slick starting to gather, his body preparing itself. "Fuck, Ilya, it's really happening."

He saw Ilya's pupils dilate, saw his nostrils flare as he caught the scent of Shane's heat. The alpha in him was responding to the omega in Shane, biology and instinct overriding everything else.

"Okay," Ilya said, his voice tight with control. "Okay. Tell me what you need. Water? Food? Should I—"

"You." The word came out desperate, needy in a way that would have embarrassed Shane if he had any capacity for embarrassment left. "I need you. Please."

Ilya closed his eyes briefly, and Shane could see the war happening behind them—the desire to give Shane what he needed versus the fear of hurting him, of making his injury worse.

"Your leg—"

"I don't care about my leg." Shane reached out, grabbing Ilya's shirt and pulling him closer. "Please. It hurts. Everything hurts and you're the only thing that will make it better."

It was true. The heat was building like a wave, and Shane was drowning in it. His body was crying out for his alpha, for Ilya's touch and scent and presence. Eight years of suppressants had kept this at bay, but now it was crashing over him all at once, and he didn't know how to handle it.

"Solnyshko," Ilya breathed, and then he was moving, climbing onto the bed carefully, so carefully, mindful of Shane's injured leg. "I have you. I am here."

The moment Ilya's skin touched his, Shane felt some of the desperate edge ease. Not gone, but manageable. He pressed his face into Ilya's neck, breathing in that cedar-smoke scent, and felt his body start to relax.

"Better?" Ilya asked, his hands running soothingly up and down Shane's back.

"A little." Shane's voice was muffled against Ilya's skin. "Don't let go."

"Never."

They stayed like that for a while, Ilya holding Shane through the waves of heat, murmuring soft words in Russian that Shane didn't understand but found comforting anyway. The cottage was quiet around them, just the sound of their breathing and the occasional creak of the old wooden frame.

But the relief was temporary. Soon the need was building again, stronger this time, more insistent. Shane's hips started moving of their own accord, seeking friction, seeking more.

"Ilya," he gasped. "I need—I need more."

"I know, my love. I know." Ilya's voice was strained now too, his alpha instincts warring with his concern. "But we must be careful. Your leg—"

"I'll be careful. We'll be careful." Shane pulled back enough to look at Ilya, and he knew his eyes must be glazed with heat, his pupils blown wide. "Please. I trust you."

That seemed to decide it. Ilya's expression shifted, the careful control giving way to something more primal. "Okay. But you tell me if anything hurts. If your leg hurts, we stop. Promise me."

"I promise."

Ilya kissed him then, deep and claiming, and Shane melted into it. This was what he needed, what his body was crying out for. His alpha, his mate, taking care of him.

"Let me see you," Ilya murmured against Shane's lips. "Let me take care of you properly."

He helped Shane out of his boxers, moving slowly and carefully around the surgical boot. Shane felt exposed and vulnerable, laid bare in a way that had nothing to do with being naked. The heat was making him shake, making him slick and desperate, and he could see the effect it was having on Ilya—the way his hands trembled slightly, the way his breathing had gone rough.

"So beautiful," Ilya said, his voice reverent. "My omega. My Shane."

The possessiveness in those words made Shane whimper. "Yours. Always yours."

Ilya's hands were everywhere—stroking, soothing, arousing. He knew Shane's body better than anyone, knew exactly where to touch to make him gasp, where to press to make him moan. But he was being so careful, so gentle, always mindful of Shane's injured leg.

"More," Shane begged. "Ilya, please, I need more."

"Patience, solnyshko." But Ilya's own patience was clearly wearing thin. Shane could see the bulge in his sweatpants, could smell the answering arousal in his scent.

When Ilya finally pushed inside him, Shane cried out—not from pain but from relief. This was what his body needed, what his omega craved. His alpha, filling him, claiming him, taking care of him.

"Okay?" Ilya asked, holding himself still with visible effort. "Your leg?"

"Fine. Everything's fine. Just—move. Please move."

Ilya did, setting a slow, careful rhythm that was probably meant to be gentle but felt like torture to Shane's heat-addled brain. He needed more, needed harder, needed everything.

"Faster," he gasped. "You won't hurt me, I promise."

"Shane—"

"Please." Shane wrapped his good leg around Ilya's waist, pulling him deeper. "I need you. All of you."

Something in Ilya snapped. His rhythm picked up, his thrusts becoming harder, more desperate. His hands gripped Shane's hips, and Shane could feel the careful control slipping away, the alpha in Ilya taking over.

"Mine," Ilya growled. "My omega. My mate."

"Yes," Shane moaned. "Yours. Always yours."

The heat was consuming him now, burning through him like wildfire. Every nerve ending was alight, every touch magnified a thousand times. He could feel Ilya everywhere—inside him, around him, the scent of him filling Shane's lungs with every breath.

"Going to knot you," Ilya panted. "Going to fill you up, take care of you. Is that what you need?"

"Yes. Fuck, yes."

Shane had forgotten what it felt like, the stretch and burn of a knot. It had been so long, years since he'd let himself have this. But his body remembered, opening up for Ilya, accepting him completely.

When Ilya's knot finally locked inside him, Shane came with a cry that was probably too loud for the quiet cottage. His whole body shook with it, pleasure rolling through him in waves that seemed to go on forever.

Ilya followed moments later, his own release triggering another wave of Shane's heat. Shane could feel it, the warmth of Ilya's seed filling him, and some primal part of his brain whispered mine, mate, alpha.

They collapsed together, Ilya carefully arranging them so his weight wasn't on Shane's injured leg. The knot would keep them locked together for a while—twenty minutes, maybe thirty. Shane's heat-fogged brain thought that sounded perfect.

"Okay?" Ilya asked, pressing kisses to Shane's sweaty forehead. "Did I hurt you?"

"No. Perfect. That was perfect." Shane felt boneless, wrung out, satisfied in a way he hadn't felt in years. The desperate edge of the heat had eased, at least for now.

"Good." Ilya's hand found Shane's, their fingers interlacing. "Rest now. I have you."

Shane wanted to stay awake, wanted to savor this moment of closeness, but his body had other ideas. The combination of heat and pain medication and sheer exhaustion pulled him under, and he drifted off with Ilya's heartbeat steady beneath his ear.

He woke to Ilya carefully extracting himself, the knot having gone down enough to separate. Shane made a small sound of protest, and Ilya immediately soothed him.

"Just getting a cloth to clean you up. I will be right back."

True to his word, Ilya returned moments later with a warm washcloth, gently cleaning Shane up before helping him into fresh boxers. The tenderness of it made Shane's chest ache.

"How do you feel?" Ilya asked, settling back onto the bed and pulling Shane against his chest.

"Tired. Sore. But better." Shane paused. "My leg's okay. Didn't even really notice it."

"Good. That is good." Ilya's hand stroked through Shane's hair. "But the heat is not over, I think."

He was right. Shane could already feel it building again, that restless need starting to creep back in. Heats typically lasted two to three days, and this was only the beginning.

"No," Shane agreed quietly. "It's not over."

"Then we will get through it together. However long it takes."

The next two days were a blur of heat and need and Ilya's constant, steady presence. Shane lost track of time, lost track of everything except the cycle of desperate need and temporary satisfaction. Ilya took care of him through all of it—bringing him water and food when he could eat, helping him to the bathroom, holding him through the worst of the waves.

They made love more times than Shane could count, in every position that didn't put pressure on his injured leg. Ilya was endlessly patient, endlessly careful, even when his own alpha instincts were screaming at him to claim and possess and mark.

On the second night, when Shane was coherent enough to think beyond the immediate need, he found himself crying—not from pain or fear, but from the overwhelming emotion of it all. The vulnerability of being cared for like this, the trust it required, the love that Ilya showed him in every touch and word.

"What is wrong?" Ilya asked, immediately concerned. "Did I hurt you?"

"No." Shane shook his head, wiping at his eyes. "No, you're perfect. This is perfect. I just—I love you so much."

Ilya's expression softened. "I love you too, solnyshko. More than anything."

"I'm sorry this is happening. I'm sorry you have to deal with this."

"Shane." Ilya cupped his face, making him look up. "This is not something to apologize for. You are my omega. Taking care of you during your heat is not a burden. It is a privilege."

"Even with my leg all fucked up?"

"Even then. Especially then." Ilya kissed him softly. "You are mine to care for, in sickness and health. That is what we promised, yes?"

They had promised that, three years ago in a small ceremony with only Shane's parents as witnesses. For better or worse, in sickness and health, till death do us part. Shane had meant every word then, and he meant them even more now.

"Yeah," he whispered. "That's what we promised."

By the third day, the heat was finally starting to break. The desperate edge was gone, replaced by a bone-deep exhaustion that made Shane feel like he'd played a triple-overtime game. His leg was throbbing—he'd definitely overdone it, surgical boot or not—and his whole body ached.

But he felt satisfied in a way he hadn't in years. Complete. Like some part of him that had been locked away had finally been allowed to breathe.

"How are you feeling?" Ilya asked, bringing him breakfast in bed—scrambled eggs and toast and orange juice.

"Like I got hit by a truck." Shane accepted the plate gratefully. "But a good truck. A truck I'm happy to have been hit by."

Ilya laughed. "That makes no sense."

"Nothing makes sense right now. My brain is mush."

"Eat. Then more sleep. Your body needs to recover."

Shane ate obediently, surprised by how hungry he was. He'd barely eaten during the heat, too consumed by other needs. Now his stomach was making up for lost time.

"Thank you," he said quietly, setting the empty plate aside. "For taking care of me. For... all of it."

"You do not need to thank me." Ilya climbed back into bed beside him, careful of Shane's leg. "But you are welcome anyway."

They spent the rest of the day dozing and recovering, Shane's heat finally, fully broken. By evening, Shane felt almost human again—sore and tired, but himself.

"We should probably talk about what happened," he said, watching the sun set over the lake through the bedroom window.

"What is there to talk about?" Ilya's fingers were tracing lazy patterns on Shane's arm.

"The fact that my suppressants failed. That I went into heat for the first time in eight years. That we have no idea if or when it might happen again."

Ilya was quiet for a moment. "You are worried."

"Of course I'm worried. If this happens during the season, if I can't control it anymore—" Shane didn't finish the sentence. They both knew what it would mean. His career would be over. The secret would be out. Everything they'd built would come crashing down.

"We will figure it out," Ilya said firmly. "Maybe the pain medication is out of your system now, and the suppressants will work again. Maybe this was just one time."

"Maybe." But Shane wasn't convinced. His body had remembered what it was like to have a heat, and he had a sinking feeling it wouldn't be content to go back to being suppressed.

"Or maybe," Ilya continued slowly, "maybe this is a sign."

"A sign of what?"

"That you should not be on suppressants anymore. That your body is telling you something."

Shane turned to look at him. "Ilya, I can't just stop taking suppressants. You know that. If anyone found out I was an omega—"

"I know. I know." Ilya sighed. "But maybe... maybe it is time to think about what we really want. Not what the league wants, not what is expected. What we want."

It was a dangerous line of thinking, and they both knew it. But Shane couldn't deny that some part of him—the part that had just spent three days in his alpha's arms, being cared for and claimed and loved—wanted exactly what Ilya was suggesting.

"Let's just... get through the recovery first," Shane said finally. "Figure out my leg, get back on my feet. Then we can think about the rest."

"Okay," Ilya agreed. "But Shane? Whatever we decide, we decide together. Yes?"

"Yes. Together."

The next few weeks passed in a strange sort of limbo. Shane's leg slowly healed, the pain gradually lessening as the surgical site knitted back together. He graduated from the heavy pain medication to something milder, and his suppressants seemed to be working again—his scent stayed neutral, his body showed no signs of another heat.

But something felt different. Shane couldn't quite put his finger on it, but his body felt... off. Not bad, exactly. Just not quite right.

He was tired all the time, which he attributed to the recovery. He was nauseous in the mornings, which he blamed on the pain medication. His sense of smell seemed heightened, which he figured was just his omega senses being more active after the heat.

It wasn't until he was nearly six weeks post-surgery, finally cleared to start physical therapy, that the pieces started to click together.

He was standing in the bathroom, brushing his teeth, when a wave of nausea hit him so hard he had to grip the sink to stay upright. He made it to the toilet just in time, losing what little breakfast he'd managed to eat.

"Shane?" Ilya's voice came from the bedroom, concerned. "You okay?"

"Fine," Shane called back, wiping his mouth. "Just—stomach bug or something."

But even as he said it, a cold feeling of dread was settling in his gut.

No. It couldn't be.

They'd been careful. Well, as careful as you could be during a heat. Which was to say, not careful at all.

Shane's hands were shaking as he rinsed his mouth and splashed water on his face. He looked at himself in the mirror—pale, dark circles under his eyes, a tightness around his mouth that spoke of stress and fear.

"Shane?" Ilya appeared in the doorway. "You do not look fine."

"I need—" Shane's voice came out rough. "I need to go to the pharmacy."

"Pharmacy? For what?"

Shane met Ilya's eyes in the mirror. "I think I might be pregnant."

The words hung in the air between them, heavy and impossible and terrifying.

Ilya's face went through several expressions in rapid succession—shock, disbelief, and then something that might have been hope. "You think...?"

"I don't know. Maybe. The timing would be right. And I've been feeling weird for weeks, I just didn't—I didn't think—" Shane's voice cracked. "Fuck. Ilya, what if I'm pregnant?"

Ilya crossed the bathroom in two strides, pulling Shane into his arms. "Then we deal with it. Together. Like everything else."

"This isn't like everything else." Shane's voice was muffled against Ilya's chest. "This is—this would change everything."

"I know."

They stood there for a long moment, holding each other in the small bathroom, the weight of possibility pressing down on them.

"I will go to the pharmacy," Ilya said finally. "You stay here, rest. I will be back soon."

"Ilya—"

"It will be okay, solnyshko. Whatever the test says, it will be okay."

Shane wanted to believe him. He really did.

Ilya was gone for forty-five minutes, which felt like an eternity. Shane spent the time pacing the cottage—well, hobbling around on his still-healing leg—and trying not to spiral into panic.

Pregnant. He might be pregnant.

It should have been impossible. He'd been on suppressants for eight years. Yes, they'd failed during the heat, but the chances of conception were still supposed to be low. Weren't they?

But the more Shane thought about it, the more sense it made. The exhaustion, the nausea, the heightened sense of smell. The way his body felt different, like something fundamental had shifted.

"I am back," Ilya announced, coming through the door with a pharmacy bag. "I got three different kinds. The pharmacist said they are all very accurate."

Of course Ilya had asked the pharmacist. Of course he'd wanted to make sure they got the best ones.

"Okay." Shane took the bag with trembling hands. "Okay. I'll just—I'll go take them."

"Do you want me to come with you?"

Shane almost said no, almost insisted on doing this alone. But then he remembered Ilya's words: together. They did everything together.

"Yeah. Yeah, come with me."

The bathroom felt too small with both of them in it, but Shane was grateful for Ilya's presence as he read the instructions on the first test. Pee on the stick, wait three minutes, look for the lines. Simple. Terrifying, but simple.

"I will wait outside," Ilya said, giving Shane some privacy.

Shane did what he needed to do, then set the test on the counter and opened the door. Ilya was right there, leaning against the wall, looking almost as nervous as Shane felt.

"Three minutes," Shane said.

"Three minutes," Ilya echoed.

They were the longest three minutes of Shane's life. He couldn't look at the test, couldn't bring himself to check. Instead, he focused on Ilya's hand in his, the steady pressure of it, the reminder that he wasn't alone in this.

"Time," Ilya said softly.

Shane took a deep breath and looked at the test.

Two lines. Clear as day, unmistakable.

Positive.

"Fuck," Shane breathed.

"Is it...?"

"Positive." Shane's voice sounded distant to his own ears. "It's positive."

He felt Ilya's arms come around him, holding him up as his knees went weak. "Okay. Okay, we knew this was possible."

"We should take the other tests. To be sure."

They did. All three tests, one after another. And all three came back positive.

Shane was pregnant.

He was pregnant with Ilya's baby.

The reality of it hit him all at once, and he found himself sliding down to sit on the bathroom floor, his back against the tub. Ilya sat down beside him, their shoulders pressed together in the small space.

"What are we going to do?" Shane asked quietly.

"What do you want to do?"

That was the question, wasn't it? What did Shane want?

His career was just starting to recover. He was supposed to be back on the ice in a few months, supposed to be leading his team to the playoffs. Being pregnant would end all of that. He'd have to sit out the rest of the season at minimum, maybe longer. And when people found out why—because they would find out—his secret would be exposed. Everyone would know he was an omega.

But.

Shane's hand drifted to his stomach, still flat, showing no signs of the life growing inside. Ilya's baby. Their baby.

In the anesthesia-fogged haze after his surgery, he'd told Ilya to put a baby in him. At the time, it had seemed like a joke, a drug-induced fantasy. But now it was real, and Shane found that he didn't hate the idea as much as he thought he would.

"I don't know," he admitted. "I don't know what I want."

"That is okay. You do not have to decide right now." Ilya's hand covered Shane's on his stomach. "We have time."

"Do we? I mean, if I'm going to—if we're going to—" Shane couldn't quite say the words. "There are decisions to make. Soon."

"Yes. But not this second. Not right now." Ilya pressed a kiss to Shane's temple. "Right now, we just... sit with it. Let it be real."

So they did. They sat on the bathroom floor of the cottage, holding each other, three positive pregnancy tests lined up on the counter above them, and let the reality of it sink in.

Shane was pregnant.

They were going to have a baby.

Everything was about to change.

Later, after they'd moved to the couch and Shane had managed to eat some crackers without throwing up, they started to talk about it properly.

"I need to see a doctor," Shane said. "A real doctor, not just a pharmacy test."

"Yes. We will find someone. Someone discreet."

"And I need to figure out what to do about the team. About the season."

Ilya was quiet for a moment. "You are thinking about keeping it."

It wasn't a question, but Shane answered anyway. "I think so. Maybe. I don't know." He ran a hand through his hair, frustrated. "Is that crazy? My career is finally back on track, and I'm thinking about throwing it all away for—"

"For our child," Ilya finished softly. "That is not throwing it away, Shane. That is choosing something different."

"But hockey is everything. It's all I've ever known."

"I know. But maybe..." Ilya took Shane's hand. "Maybe it does not have to be everything anymore. Maybe there can be something else. Something more."

Shane thought about the epilogue they'd already written in his mind—the one where they had a daughter, where they were a family. He'd always thought that was years away, something for after their careers were over. But maybe it didn't have to be.

"I'm scared," he admitted quietly.

"Me too."

"Really?" Shane looked at Ilya in surprise. "You don't seem scared."

"I am terrified," Ilya said honestly. "But I am also... happy? Is that wrong? To be happy about this?"

"I don't know. Maybe not." Shane felt a small smile tugging at his lips despite everything. "You really want this? A baby?"

"With you? Yes. Always yes." Ilya's hand moved to Shane's stomach again, gentle and reverent. "I know the timing is terrible. I know it will be hard. But Shane, we made this. Together. That is... that is everything."

The certainty in Ilya's voice made something settle in Shane's chest. They could do this. It would be hard, maybe the hardest thing they'd ever done. But they could do it together.

"Okay," Shane said. "Okay. We're doing this."

"We are doing this," Ilya echoed, and then he was kissing Shane, soft and sweet and full of promise.

They spent the next few days researching doctors and making plans. Ilya found a private clinic that specialized in omega health, one that promised complete discretion. Shane made an appointment for the following week, using a fake name just to be safe.

The appointment confirmed what the tests had already told them: Shane was pregnant, about six weeks along. The doctor estimated a due date in late June, right in the middle of the off-season. At least that was something.

"Everything looks good," the doctor said, showing them the ultrasound screen. "Strong heartbeat, measuring right on track. You'll want to stop the suppressants completely—they can interfere with fetal development."

Shane stared at the tiny blob on the screen that was apparently his baby. Their baby. It didn't look like much yet, but his heart was pounding anyway.

"What about his career?" Ilya asked. "He is a professional athlete. When will he need to stop playing?"

The doctor looked between them. "I'd recommend stopping now, honestly. The first trimester is crucial, and contact sports carry too much risk. Plus, with the omega hormones no longer being suppressed, there's a chance his heat cycle could return, which would make it difficult to hide his status."

Shane had expected this, but hearing it out loud still made his stomach drop. "So that's it. My season is over."

"I'm sorry," the doctor said gently. "I know this isn't what you wanted to hear."

After the appointment, they sat in Ilya's car in the parking lot, neither of them quite ready to drive away.

"You do not have to do this," Ilya said quietly. "If you want to—if you want to choose your career instead—"

"No." Shane's hand went to his stomach, a gesture that was becoming automatic. "No, I want this. I'm just... mourning, I guess. The season I won't have. The player I won't get to be."

"You will play again. After the baby."

"Maybe. If my body recovers. If I can get back in shape. If—" Shane shook his head. "There are a lot of ifs."

"There are always ifs. That is life." Ilya took Shane's hand. "But this? This is certain. This is real. And I will be with you every step."

"You'll have to go back soon," Shane pointed out. "Your team needs you. You can't just skip the whole season."

"I will go back when you are ready. Not before."

"Ilya—"

"Shane." Ilya's voice was firm. "You are my priority. You and our baby. Hockey is important, yes. But you are more important."

Shane felt tears prick his eyes, hormones probably, but also just the overwhelming love he felt for this man. "Okay. But we need to figure out a plan. I can't just disappear. People will ask questions."

They spent the drive back to the cottage working out the details. Shane would announce that his recovery was taking longer than expected, that he needed more time before returning to play. It wasn't even a lie—his leg was still healing, and adding pregnancy on top of that made everything more complicated.

Ilya would return to his team in another week or so, once they were sure Shane was stable and the pregnancy was progressing normally. They'd see each other when they could, during breaks and off days, but they'd have to be careful. More careful than ever.

And eventually, they'd have to tell people. Shane's parents first, then maybe the teams, then... the world.

But that was a problem for future Shane. Present Shane just needed to get through each day, one at a time.

The next few weeks fell into a new routine. Shane's morning sickness got worse before it got better, and he spent a lot of time with his head over the toilet. His sense of smell became so acute that he had to ban Ilya from cooking anything with garlic or onions. And the exhaustion was relentless—he'd sleep for ten hours and still wake up tired.

But there were good moments too. The first time he felt a flutter in his stomach that might have been the baby moving (though the doctor said it was probably too early). The way Ilya would talk to his stomach in Russian, telling their baby stories about hockey and Russia and all the things they'd do together. The quiet evenings on the couch, Ilya's hand on Shane's stomach, both of them marveling at the life they'd created.

"We should tell my parents," Shane said one night, about eight weeks into the pregnancy. "Before I start showing."

"Are you ready for that?"

"No. But I don't think I'll ever be ready." Shane shifted, trying to get comfortable. "They deserve to know. And I think—I think my mom will be happy. In her own terrified way."

They made the call the next day, asking Shane's parents to come to the cottage for the weekend. His mom immediately knew something was up—Shane never invited them to the cottage, it was his and Ilya's private space—but she didn't push.

When they arrived on Saturday afternoon, Shane's dad took one look at him and frowned. "You've lost weight. Are you eating enough?"

"I'm eating plenty, Dad. Trust me." Shane exchanged a glance with Ilya. "Actually, that's kind of what we wanted to talk to you about."

They sat down in the living room, Shane's parents on the couch, Shane and Ilya in the armchairs across from them. Shane's leg was still in a brace, though he'd graduated from the boot, and he was grateful for the excuse to sit.

"So," Shane started, then stopped. How did you tell your parents you were pregnant? "So, um. There's been a development."

His mom's eyes went wide. "Oh my God. You're not breaking up, are you?"

"What? No!" Shane shook his head quickly. "No, nothing like that. The opposite, actually."

"The opposite of breaking up?" His dad looked confused.

"We are having a baby," Ilya said, apparently deciding to just rip the bandaid off.

The silence that followed was deafening.

Shane's mom's mouth opened and closed several times, no sound coming out. His dad just stared, like he was trying to process the words but they weren't making sense.

"I'm pregnant," Shane clarified, his hand going to his stomach. "About eight weeks. Due in June."

"But—" His mom finally found her voice. "But you're on suppressants. How—"

"They failed. During my recovery from surgery. The pain medication interfered with them, and I went into heat, and—" Shane felt his face heat. "And now I'm pregnant."

"Oh, Shane." His mom's eyes filled with tears, and Shane couldn't tell if they were happy or sad tears. "Oh, honey."

"Are you okay?" his dad asked, his voice gruff. "Is the baby okay? What about your career?"

"I'm fine. The baby's fine. And my career..." Shane shrugged. "I'm sitting out the season. Maybe longer. We'll see."

"We will take care of everything," Ilya added. "Shane and the baby will have everything they need."

Shane's mom was crying in earnest now, and she crossed the room to pull Shane into a hug. "I'm going to be a grandmother," she said, laughing through her tears. "I can't believe it. I'm going to be a grandmother."

"You're happy?" Shane asked, surprised.

"Of course I'm happy! Terrified, but happy." She pulled back to look at him. "This is going to be hard, Shane. Really hard. But you're going to be an amazing parent. Both of you."

His dad was slower to come around, but eventually he stood and shook Ilya's hand, then pulled Shane into an awkward hug. "Congratulations, son. This is... this is big."

"Yeah," Shane agreed. "It really is."

They spent the rest of the weekend talking through the logistics. Shane's parents offered to help however they could—his mom was already planning to come stay with them when the baby was born, and his dad was researching the best pediatricians in the area.

"You'll have to tell the teams eventually," his dad pointed out. "And the league. They'll need to know why you're sitting out."

"I know. We're working on a plan." Shane sighed. "It's going to be a media circus when it comes out."

"Let it be," his mom said firmly. "Let people talk. You're living your life, loving who you love, building a family. That's nothing to be ashamed of."

Shane wished he had her confidence. But he knew she was right. They couldn't hide forever. Eventually, the truth would come out, and they'd have to face whatever came with it.

But for now, in this moment, with his parents and his husband and the baby growing inside him, Shane felt something he hadn't felt in a long time.

Hope.

The future was uncertain and scary and full of challenges. But it was also full of possibility. Full of love. Full of the family they were building together.

And maybe, just maybe, that was enough.

As Shane's parents left on Sunday evening, his mom pulled him aside one more time.

"You know," she said softly, "when you first told us about Ilya, I was worried. Not because of who he was, but because of how hard it would be. The secrecy, the hiding, the constant fear of being found out."

"Mom—"

"Let me finish." She squeezed his hand. "I was worried that you'd spend your whole life hiding, that you'd never get to have the things you deserved. A real wedding, a family, a life where you didn't have to pretend."

Shane felt his throat tighten. "I know. I'm sorry—"

"Don't apologize. I'm not telling you this to make you feel bad. I'm telling you because this baby? This is the beginning of something new. Something real. You can't hide a baby forever, Shane. And maybe that's a good thing. Maybe it's time to stop hiding."

She was right, and Shane knew it. The baby was going to force them out of the shadows, whether they were ready or not. But maybe his mom was right about that being a good thing.

"I love you, Mom," he said, hugging her tight.

"I love you too, sweetheart. And I'm so proud of you."

After they left, Shane found Ilya on the deck, looking out at the lake. The sun was setting, painting the sky in shades of orange and pink.

"Your parents took it well," Ilya said as Shane joined him.

"Yeah. Better than I expected." Shane leaned against the railing, Ilya's arm coming around his waist automatically. "My mom thinks we should stop hiding. That the baby is a chance for a fresh start."

"What do you think?"

Shane was quiet for a moment, watching the sun sink below the horizon. "I think she might be right. I think I'm tired of hiding. Tired of pretending we're just teammates, just rivals. I want—" He paused, trying to find the words. "I want our kid to grow up knowing both their parents. Not having to hide who they are or where they came from."

"Then we will make that happen." Ilya pressed a kiss to Shane's temple. "Whatever it takes."

"It's going to change everything."

"Good. Maybe everything needs to change."

Shane turned to look at Ilya, at this man who had been his rival, his lover, his husband, and now the father of his child. In the fading light, Ilya looked softer somehow, the sharp edges of his face gentled by the sunset.

"I'm scared," Shane admitted. "But I'm also... excited? Is that weird?"

"Not weird. Perfect." Ilya's hand moved to Shane's stomach, still flat but not for much longer. "We are going to have a baby, solnyshko. Our baby. That is something to be excited about."

"Yeah," Shane agreed, covering Ilya's hand with his own. "Yeah, it really is."

They stood there as the last light faded from the sky, two hockey players who had somehow found their way to each other despite everything. The road ahead was uncertain, full of challenges and changes and difficult conversations.

But they'd face it together, just like they'd faced everything else.

And in June, they'd welcome their daughter into the world—the daughter who would grow up to be loved beyond measure, the daughter who would make everything they'd gone through worth it.

But that was still months away. For now, Shane just held onto Ilya and let himself feel the hope and fear and love all mixed together.

They were going to be parents.

Everything was about to change.

And somehow, that felt exactly right.

Chapter 2

Chapter Summary

Shane and Ilya make a decision.

The late afternoon sun filtered through the curtains of Ilya's Ottawa house, casting golden light across the nursery where Shane stood, gently rocking their three-month-old daughter. Alisa had finally fallen asleep after fighting her nap for the better part of an hour, her tiny fist curled against Shane's chest, her dark golden hair—Ilya's hair—soft against his neck.

Shane breathed in her scent, that perfect baby smell mixed with the subtle sweetness that marked her as theirs. His Achilles had healed completely, the scar a thin line he barely noticed anymore. He'd been cleared to play for six weeks now. Six weeks of making excuses, of extending his "recovery," of lying to his team and the league and everyone except his parents.

He couldn't do it anymore.

"She's asleep?" Ilya's voice was soft behind him. Shane felt strong arms wrap around his waist, careful not to disturb Alisa. Ilya's chin rested on his shoulder, and together they looked down at their daughter.

"Finally." Shane leaned back into Ilya's warmth. "She's got your stubbornness."

"My charm, too," Ilya murmured, pressing a kiss to Shane's neck. "And your eyes. Look at her, solnyshko. We made this perfect thing."

Shane's throat tightened. They had. Against all odds, despite everything that should have kept them apart—rival teams, rival countries, the secret of what Shane was—they'd made this beautiful little girl who had Ilya's coloring and Shane's nose and both of their competitive streaks, if her refusal to sleep was any indication.

"We need to talk," Shane said quietly.

He felt Ilya tense behind him. "About?"

"You know about what." Shane carefully transferred Alisa to her crib, tucking her favorite blanket—the one with little hockey sticks that Rose had sent—around her. He turned on the baby monitor and led Ilya out of the nursery, pulling the door mostly closed behind them.

In the living room, Shane paced. He'd been doing a lot of that lately. Pacing and thinking and trying to figure out how to do the impossible.

"Shane." Ilya caught his hand, pulled him down onto the couch. "Tell me."

"I can't keep doing this." The words came out in a rush. "I can't keep lying to my team. I can't keep pretending I'm still recovering when I'm cleared to play. I can't—" His voice cracked. "I can't keep hiding you. Hiding her. Hiding what I am."

Ilya's thumb stroked over his knuckles. "I know."

"You know?"

"Of course I know." Ilya's grey eyes were serious. "You think I don't see? You are miserable. You miss hockey. You miss your team. And you hate lying."

Shane laughed, but it came out bitter. "Yeah, well. Not a lot of options when you're the only omega in the NHL. When you've spent your whole career hiding it."

"So we stop hiding."

The simplicity of it made Shane's chest ache. "Ilya—"

"We stop hiding," Ilya repeated, more firmly this time. He shifted closer, cupping Shane's face in his hands. "We tell everyone. About us. About Alisa. About you."

"Do you have any idea what that would mean?" Shane pulled back, standing again, needing to move. "I'd be the first openly omega player in the league. The first one ever. The media would lose their minds. My team—fuck, I don't even know if they'd want me back. And us, our relationship, that's—we play for rival teams, Ilya. We've spent years acting like we hate each other—"

"I never hated you," Ilya interrupted. "Not once. Not ever."

"I know that. But everyone else thinks—" Shane ran his hands through his hair. "This is going to be a shitstorm."

"Yes." Ilya stood, crossed to him. "Will be terrible. Media will be awful. People will say horrible things. But Shane." He took Shane's hands again, held them tight. "We have daughter now. A beautiful baby girl who deserves to have both her fathers. Not hiding, not secret. She deserves to grow up knowing we are proud of our family."

Shane's eyes burned. "I'm scared."

"I know. Me too." Ilya pulled him close, and Shane went, burying his face in Ilya's neck. "But we do this together, yes? You and me. Like always."

From the nursery, Alisa made a small sound in her sleep, and Shane felt something settle in his chest. Ilya was right. They couldn't keep living like this—Shane flying back and forth between Montreal and Ottawa, making excuses, lying to everyone. Alisa deserved better. They all did.

"Okay," he whispered. "Okay. Let's do it."

The next week was a blur of phone calls and meetings and carefully worded statements drafted and redrafted a dozen times.

Shane's parents came immediately. His mother cried when she held Alisa, and his father clapped Ilya on the shoulder with a gruff "About damn time" when they told them the plan.

"You should have done this months ago," his mother said, bouncing Alisa gently. "Hiding this beautiful girl away like she's something to be ashamed of."

"We're not ashamed," Shane protested. "We just—"

"Were scared. I know." She gave him a look that was pure mom—loving and exasperated in equal measure. "But you're Shane Hollander. You've never backed down from a fight in your life. Don't start now."

Telling the teams was harder.

Shane drove to Montreal, met with management and his coach in a conference room that felt too small and too cold. He'd prepared a whole speech, but in the end, he just said it straight.

"I'm an omega. I've been on suppressants my whole career. I have a three-month-old daughter. And I'm in a relationship with Ilya Rozanov."

The silence that followed felt like it lasted forever.

His coach spoke first. "You're sure you want to make this public?"

"I don't have a choice anymore," Shane said. "I can't keep lying. And I won't hide my family."

More silence. Then his GM leaned forward. "You know this is going to be a media circus."

"Yes."

"You know there are going to be people who have... opinions. About an omega playing professional hockey."

Shane's jaw tightened. "Let them have opinions. I've been playing professional hockey as an omega for years. I've been doing it better than most alphas. That's not going to change."

"And Rozanov?" His coach's expression was unreadable. "You two have been—what, faking your rivalry this whole time?"

"No." Shane shook his head. "The rivalry was real. The competition was real. We just... also fell in love somewhere along the way."

His coach sat back, and Shane could see him processing, calculating. Finally, he said, "You're one of the best players we've got, Hollander. I don't give a damn what you are or who you're sleeping with, as long as you can still play. Can you?"

"Yes." No hesitation. "I'm cleared. I'm ready. I want to play."

"Then we'll support you." His GM stood, extended his hand. "It's not going to be easy. But we've got your back."

The knot in Shane's chest loosened slightly. "Thank you."

Ilya's meeting with Ottawa went similarly, though he reported that his coach had mostly just shrugged and said, "We figured you two were fucking. Didn't know about the baby, though. Congratulations."

"Very Russian response," Ilya said that night, making Shane laugh for the first time in days.

They decided on a joint press conference. Both teams agreed to it, though Shane could tell his GM wasn't thrilled about the optics of their star player announcing a relationship with a rival team's star player. But there was no other way to do it. They were in this together.

The night before the press conference, Shane couldn't sleep. He lay in bed next to Ilya, listening to Alisa's soft breathing through the baby monitor, and tried not to think about all the ways this could go wrong.

"Stop thinking so loud," Ilya mumbled, pulling Shane closer. "I can hear your brain from here."

"Sorry."

"What are you worried about?"

"Everything." Shane turned to face him in the darkness. "What if they don't want me back? What if the league decides an omega can't play? What if—"

"Shane." Ilya's hand found his face, thumb brushing his cheekbone. "You are best player I know. Best competitor. Best father. Best omega. Anyone who cannot see this is idiot."

"You're biased."

"Yes. Is my job to be biased. I am your alpha." Ilya kissed him softly. "Tomorrow, we tell world about us. About our family. And yes, it will be hard. But then? Then we get to stop hiding. We get to be together, really together. We get to be Alisa's fathers, both of us, in public. Is worth it, yes?"

Shane kissed him back, deeper this time. "Yeah. It's worth it."

The press conference was held at a neutral location—a hotel conference room in Montreal, with representatives from both teams present. Shane's parents had Alisa back at the hotel room, and Shane had checked his phone approximately seven hundred times in the hour before they went on.

"She's fine," Ilya murmured, taking his hand under the table where the cameras couldn't see. "Your mama has her. She is safe."

Shane nodded, but his heart was racing. The room was packed with reporters, cameras, the low hum of anticipation. Everyone knew something big was coming. The joint press conference between Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov had been announced only twenty-four hours ago, and speculation had been rampant.

Their PR representative stepped up to the microphone first, giving a brief statement about respecting privacy and keeping questions professional. Then it was their turn.

Shane and Ilya stood together, and Shane felt Ilya's hand brush his—just a brief touch, but enough to steady him.

"Thank you all for coming," Shane started, his voice stronger than he felt. "Ilya and I have an announcement to make. Several announcements, actually."

He could see reporters leaning forward, phones and recorders ready.

"First, I want to address something that I've kept private throughout my career. I'm an omega." He paused, let that sink in. The room erupted in murmurs, but he pushed on. "I've been on suppressants since I was a teenager. I've played professional hockey as an omega for my entire career, and I've never let it affect my performance or my commitment to the game."

More murmurs, louder now. Shane gripped the podium.

"Second, Ilya and I are in a relationship. We have been for several years. And three months ago, we welcomed our daughter, Alisa."

The room exploded. Questions shouted over each other, cameras flashing, the noise overwhelming. Shane felt Ilya step closer, a solid presence at his side.

"Please," their PR rep said, trying to restore order. "Let them finish their statement."

It took a minute, but the room quieted enough for Ilya to speak.

"Shane is best player I ever play against," Ilya said, his accent thicker than usual—it always got stronger when he was emotional. "He is best father to our daughter. The best omega, best partner, best person. We are tired of hiding. We want to be family, in public. We want our daughter to grow up knowing her fathers are proud of who they are."

"We understand this is unprecedented," Shane continued. "We understand there will be questions, concerns, opinions. But we're asking for privacy for our daughter, and for the

respect we've earned as players. We love this game. We love our teams. And we love each other. That's all we have to say right now."

The questions came fast and furious after that.

"Shane, how long have you been on suppressants?"

"Since I was fifteen."

"Did your team know you were an omega?"

"Management knew. It was in my contract."

"Ilya, how long have you two been together?"

"That is private. But it has been several years."

"Shane, do you think being an omega has affected your playing?"

Shane leaned into the microphone. "I've been an omega my entire career. I've won a Stanley Cup. I've been to the Olympics. I've put up numbers that speak for themselves. So no, I don't think being an omega has affected my playing—except maybe to make me work harder to prove I belong here."

"Are you worried about backlash from fans? From other players?"

"Of course," Shane said honestly. "But I'm more worried about teaching my daughter to hide who she is. I'm done hiding."

They took questions for thirty minutes before their PR rep finally called it. As they left the stage, Shane felt Ilya's hand on his lower back, guiding him through the chaos.

In the private room behind the conference area, Shane's hands were shaking.

"You did good," Ilya said, pulling him close. "Was perfect."

"That was the easy part," Shane said. "Now comes everything else."

Everything else came fast.

The story broke across every sports network, every social media platform, every news outlet. "NHL Star Shane Hollander Comes Out as Omega" competed with "Hollander and Rozanov: Hockey's Secret Romance" and "First Openly Omega NHL Player Announces Daughter."

Shane's phone exploded with messages. Some supportive, some hateful, most just shocked. His teammates reached out—some awkward, some genuinely kind.

But there were other messages too. Anonymous accounts calling him slurs, saying omegas didn't belong in professional sports, that he was a disgrace, that he was using his designation as an excuse. Sports commentators debated whether an omega could really compete at the NHL level, despite Shane's entire career proving they could.

"Don't read comments," Ilya said, taking Shane's phone away for the third time that day. "They are garbage. You know that is garbage."

"I know." But it still hurt. Shane had spent his whole life proving himself, and now people were questioning everything he'd accomplished.

The league released a statement supporting Shane and affirming that designation had no bearing on a player's eligibility. Several other players—alphas, mostly—posted supportive messages. A few omegas in other sports reached out privately, thanking him for being visible.

But the scrutiny was intense. Every aspect of their relationship was picked apart. Photos of them from years ago were analyzed for "signs." Their on-ice rivalry was recontextualized. People debated whether they'd been throwing games, whether their relationship was a conflict of interest, whether Shane had gotten pregnant on purpose to trap Ilya.

That last one made Shane want to break something.

"This is ridiculous," Ilya said, pacing their apartment while Alisa slept. "You trap me? I am one who chase you for years. I am one who begged you to give me chance."

"People are going to believe what they want to believe," Shane said tiredly. He was exhausted—from the media attention, from the constant scrutiny, from trying to navigate being a new parent while also dealing with being suddenly, forcibly out.

His postpartum hormones weren't helping. He'd cry at random moments, overwhelmed by everything. Ilya was endlessly patient, but Shane could see the strain on him too. Ilya wanted to protect them, wanted to shield Shane and Alisa from all of it, but he couldn't.

The worst part was being apart. Shane had to go back to Montreal for team meetings, for practice, for games. Ilya had his own schedule in Ottawa. They were trying to coordinate, trying to make it work, but it was impossible. Shane would finish a game in Montreal and immediately fly to Ottawa to see Alisa, only to have to turn around and fly back the next day. He was exhausted, stretched too thin, missing his daughter's milestones because he was on a plane or in a different city.

"This is not sustainable," Shane said one night, after missing Alisa's first real laugh because he'd been in a team meeting. "I can't do this. I can't be away from her this much."

"I know." Ilya looked as miserable as Shane felt. "I know, solnyshko. But what we do? We both have contracts. We both have teams."

Shane didn't have an answer.

Two months after the press conference, Shane was in Ottawa for a rare three-day break. He was on the floor of the living room, helping Alisa with tummy time, when Ilya's phone rang.

"My GM is calling," Ilya said, frowning. "One moment."

He stepped into the other room, and Shane continued encouraging Alisa, who was determinedly trying to lift her head higher. "Come on, baby girl. You've got this. You're strong, just like your nana."

When Ilya came back, his expression was strange.

"What?" Shane asked, sitting up.

"My GM wants to meet with us. Both of us."

Shane's stomach dropped. "Why?"

"He didn't say. Just said is important. Can we come to arena tomorrow?"

They spent the rest of the night speculating, worrying. Shane barely slept. What if Ottawa didn't want Ilya playing anymore because of their relationship? What if the league had decided to intervene? What if—

"Stop," Ilya said, pulling Shane against his chest. "We don't know anything yet. Try to sleep."

But Shane couldn't.

The next morning, they left Alisa with Shane's parents and drove to the arena. Shane's hands were clenched in his lap the whole way.

Ottawa's GM met them in his office, along with the head coach and the team president. Shane's heart was pounding.

"Thank you for coming," the GM said, gesturing for them to sit. "I'll get right to it. We've been watching the situation with you two very closely over the past couple months."

Here it comes, Shane thought. They're going to tell Ilya he can't play anymore. Or that we can't be together. Or—

"We want to offer you a contract, Shane."

Shane blinked. "What?"

"A contract. With Ottawa." The GM leaned forward. "Look, we know the situation you're in isn't sustainable. You're one of the best players in the league, and you're trying to split time between two cities, two teams, and a new baby. That's not fair to you, and frankly, it's not fair to your daughter."

"I—" Shane couldn't form words.

"We've been wanting to strengthen our offense for a while now," the coach added. "And having you and Rozanov on the same team? That's a hell of a combination. You two have chemistry—on and off the ice, apparently." He smiled slightly. "We think you could do something special here."

"But I'm under contract with Montreal," Shane managed.

"We've already spoken with Montreal's management," the team president said. "They're willing to work with us on a trade. They understand the unique circumstances. And frankly, I think they know you're not going to be able to give them your best while you're trying to be in two places at once."

Shane looked at Ilya, who looked just as shocked as he felt.

"You want me to play for Ottawa," Shane said slowly, trying to process it.

"We want you to be with your family," the GM corrected. "And yes, we want you to play for Ottawa. We think you'd be a great fit for our team, and we think having you and Rozanov together would be good for both of you. You'd be able to actually be partners, in every sense of the word."

Shane's throat was tight. "I need to think about it."

"Of course. Take your time." The GM slid a folder across the desk. "Here's our offer. Look it over, talk to your agent, talk to each other. But Shane? We'd be honored to have you here."

In the car on the way back, Shane stared at the folder in his lap.

"Are you okay?" Ilya asked quietly.

"I don't know." Shane opened the folder, looked at the numbers. It was a good offer. A really good offer. "This is insane."

"Is good insane or bad insane?"

"I don't know," Shane repeated. He looked at Ilya. "I'd be playing for your team. We'd be on the same team."

"Yes."

"We'd be in the same city. I could be with you and Alisa every day."

"Yes."

"I'd have to leave Montreal. Leave my team."

Ilya reached over, took his hand. "It is your choice, solnyshko. I don't want you to do something you don't want. But..." He paused. "It would be nice. To be together. To be family, really family. Not just stolen moments and flights and missing things."

Shane thought about missing Alisa's first laugh. Thought about the exhaustion of constantly traveling, of never being fully present anywhere. Continuing to play against Ilya instead of with him, when they could be incredible together.

Thought about coming home every night to both of them.

"Yeah," he said softly. "It would be nice."

That night, after Alisa was asleep and his parents had gone back to their house, Shane sat with Ilya on the couch, the contract offer spread out on the coffee table.

"I'm scared," Shane admitted. "Montreal has been my team for so long. My whole career, basically. And now I'm just supposed to leave?"

"Not just leave," Ilya said. "Leave for something better. For us."

"What if it doesn't work? What if we're terrible together on the ice? What if—"

Ilya kissed him, cutting off the spiral of worry. "We are not terrible together at anything," he said firmly. "We are best together. Always have been."

Shane kissed him back, deeper this time, trying to pour all his fear and hope and love into it. When they broke apart, he rested his forehead against Ilya's.

"Okay," he whispered. "Okay. Let's do it. Let's be a family. Really, actually, together."

Ilya's smile was brighter than Shane had seen in months. "Yes?"

"Yes." Shane laughed, feeling lighter than he had since before Alisa was born. "Call your GM tomorrow. Tell him I'm in."

From the nursery, Alisa made a small sound, and they both turned toward the monitor. Shane could see her on the screen, stretching in her sleep, her little face peaceful.

"She's going to grow up watching us play together," Shane said, wonder in his voice. "She's going to see us on the same team."

"She's going to see her fathers happy," Ilya corrected. "Together. No more hiding. No more secrets. Just us."

Shane pulled him close, breathing in the scent of his alpha, his partner, his family. "Just us," he agreed.

And for the first time since they'd gone public, since their whole world had been turned upside down, Shane felt like everything was going to be okay. More than okay.

They were going to be together. Really, truly together.

Finally

Chapter 3: Epilogue

Chapter Summary

9 years later.

Chapter Notes

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

Nine years later

Shane's knee bounced against the cold metal bleacher, a nervous habit he'd never quite shaken. On the ice below, twenty kids in mismatched practice jerseys skated through warm-up drills, their blades cutting sharp lines across the fresh ice.

"You're going to shake the whole row," Ilya said, not looking away from the rink. His hand settled on Shane's thigh, warm and grounding.

"I'm not nervous."

"Shane." Ilya's lips quirked. "I can smell you from here."

Shane huffed but didn't deny it. Down on the ice, Alisa carved a perfect figure-eight, her dark braid whipping behind her. Even in the generic tryout jersey, she stood out—smaller than most of the boys, but faster. Always faster.

"She's fine," Ilya continued, squeezing Shane's leg. "Look at her. She's not nervous."

That was true. Alisa had her game face on, the one that was pure Ilya—all confidence and barely contained aggression. But her edges were clean, her posture textbook perfect. That was all Shane.

"I know she's fine," Shane muttered. "It's everyone else I'm worried about."

Around them, the stands were filling with parents. Shane caught a few sideways glances, some curious, some disapproving. A woman two rows down whispered something to her husband, and they both looked toward the ice where Alisa was stretching.

The only girl trying out.

"Let them look," Ilya said, reading Shane's tension like he always could. "She's about to make their sons look like they're skating in mud."

Despite himself, Shane smiled. "Don't be an asshole."

"I'm not asshole. I'm realistic." Ilya leaned back, draping his arm across Shane's shoulders in a gesture that was both casual and deliberate. After nine years of being out, of being together openly, it was second nature. But Shane knew Ilya was also making a point—we're here, we're her parents, deal with it.

On the ice, the coach blew his whistle. "Alright, let's see what you've got! Line up for skating drills!"

The kids scrambled into position. Alisa ended up near the back of the line, and Shane watched a bigger kid—had to be at least ten, maybe eleven—look down at her and smirk. Say something Shane couldn't hear.

Alisa's chin came up. She said something back, sharp and quick, and the kid's smirk faltered.

"That's my girl," Ilya murmured, pride thick in his voice.

The first drill was simple—end-to-end sprints. The coach wanted to see pure speed and edge work. The first few kids went, competent but unremarkable. Then it was the big kid's turn, the one who'd smirked at Alisa. He was fast, Shane had to admit. Good acceleration, decent form.

"He's not bad," Shane said.

"He's fine." Ilya waved a dismissive hand. "Wait."

Two more kids went. Then it was Alisa's turn.

She exploded off the line like she'd been shot from a cannon, her first three strides so powerful Shane heard the dad next to him inhale sharply. Her crossovers were flawless, her transitions smooth as silk. She hit the far end, pivoted on a dime, and came back even faster, her edges biting deep.

When she stopped in a perfect hockey stop, ice spraying, she wasn't even breathing hard.

"Hollander!" the coach called, checking his clipboard. "Good speed. Nice clean edges."

Shane's chest swelled with pride. Alisa skated back to the line, and this time, none of the boys said anything.

"See?" Ilya's grin was insufferable. "Told you."

The drills progressed—puck handling, passing, shooting. With each one, Alisa proved herself. Her stickwork was surgical, precise in a way that reminded Shane of watching game tape of himself at that age. But she had Ilya's creativity too, the way she could make a play out of nothing, turn a simple drill into something spectacular.

During a two-on-one drill, she took a pass at center ice, deked around one defender so smoothly he nearly fell, then shot a backhand over the goalie's glove. The sound of the puck hitting the back of the net echoed through the rink.

"Holy shit," someone behind Shane muttered.

"Language," a woman hissed back. "But... yeah."

Shane bit back a smile.

"She's showing off now," Ilya said, sounding delighted.

"She learned that from you."

"Yes. And you taught her that backhand." Ilya kissed Shane's temple. "We make good team, Shaney. On ice and off."

They did. Nine years in Ottawa together, first as teammates, then as coaches after they'd both retired. Nine years of being openly together, openly a family. It hadn't always been easy—there were still assholes, still people who thought an omega had no place in professional hockey, still parents who clutched their pearls when they found out Alisa had two dads.

But they'd built a life anyway. A good one.

The scrimmage portion of tryouts started, and the coach divided the kids into two teams. Alisa ended up on a line with two boys who looked skeptical about having her as a center.

"Pass to the wings," Shane heard one of them say to her. "We'll handle it."

Alisa just stared at him. "Sure," she said, in a tone that promised absolutely nothing.

The puck dropped, and Alisa won the faceoff cleanly, pulling it back to her defenseman. She drove hard to the net, calling for the return pass. The defenseman hesitated—Shane could see it, that split second of doubt—but sent it anyway.

Alisa one-timed it top shelf before the goalie could react.

"Fuck yes," Ilya breathed. "That's my daughter."

"Our daughter," Shane corrected, but he was grinning too hard to put any heat into it.

The scrimmage continued, and Alisa was everywhere. She set up her wingers with perfect passes even when they didn't deserve them. She back-checked like her life depended on it. She threw her body around—not dirty, but physical enough that the boys learned quickly not to underestimate her size.

At one point, the big kid from earlier tried to hit her in the corner. Alisa saw him coming, pivoted, and he went crashing into the boards while she skated away with the puck.

The parents around Shane and Ilya were getting louder now, more animated. Some were clearly impressed. Others looked uncomfortable, like they weren't sure what to make of a girl not just keeping up, but dominating.

"Is that Hollander's kid?" someone asked.

"And Rozanov's," someone else answered. "Both of them are here."

"Oh." A pause. "Well, that explains it."

Shane wasn't sure if that was meant as a compliment or not, but Ilya squeezed his shoulder, and Shane decided he didn't care.

With two minutes left in the scrimmage, Alisa stole the puck at her own blue line. She had nothing but ice ahead of her and three defenders back. Shane watched her calculate, saw the exact moment she decided to go for it.

"She's going to dangle all three," Ilya predicted.

"No way. She'll pass."

"Twenty bucks says she dangles."

"You're on."

Alisa hit the offensive zone at full speed. The first defender lunged—she pulled the puck between her skates and around him. The second tried to poke check—she dragged it backhand, protecting it with her body. The third defender was the big kid, and he was playing the body, trying to line her up.

At the last possible second, Alisa dropped the puck between her legs, let it slide past the defender, then picked it up on the other side. She was alone on the goalie now, and she went five-hole so fast the goalie didn't even drop.

The red light went on.

Alisa pumped her fist once, then skated back to center ice like it was nothing.

"You owe me twenty dollars," Ilya said smugly.

Shane was too busy being proud to care about the bet.

The coach blew the whistle, ending the scrimmage. "Good work, everyone. We'll post the roster by Friday. Thanks for coming out."

The kids started skating off, and Alisa headed toward the gate where Shane and Ilya were waiting. Her face was flushed, her eyes bright. When she pulled off her helmet, her braid was a mess, and she was grinning.

"Did you see that last goal?" she asked in Russian, because she always spoke Russian when she was excited. "Papa, did you see? I went five-hole just like you taught me!"

"I saw, my darling," Ilya said, pulling her into a hug despite her sweaty gear. "You were perfect. Better than perfect."

"You were incredible, sweetheart," Shane added, ruffling her hair. "That backhand in the first period—"

"I know!" Alisa bounced on her skates. "It felt so good. And did you see when that big kid tried to hit me? I totally saw him coming."

"We saw everything," Shane assured her. "You made us very proud."

"Do you think I made the team?" For the first time, uncertainty crept into her voice.

Shane and Ilya exchanged a glance.

"Alisa," Ilya said seriously. "You were best player on that ice. If they don't take you, they're idiots."

"Ilya," Shane said warningly, but he was smiling.

"What? Is true." Ilya looked down at Alisa. "You skate like your dad, you shoot like me, and you're tougher than both of us. Any coach who doesn't see that is blind."

Alisa's grin came back, full force. "Some of the parents looked mad."

"Some parents are always mad," Shane said. "Doesn't matter. You know what matters?"

"That I played my best?"

"That you played your best," Shane confirmed. "And that you love it. That's all that matters."

"I do love it," Alisa said. She looked between them, her expression softening. "I love it because you guys love it. I love watching your old games, and I love when you teach me stuff, and I love—" She paused, suddenly shy. "I love that I get to be like you."

Shane's throat tightened. Ilya's arm came around his waist, pulling him close.

"You're not like us," Ilya said gently. "You're better. You're you."

"But I'm also yours," Alisa said. "Alisa Rozanov Hollander. That's who I am."

Shane had to look away for a second, blinking hard. Nine years ago, he'd been terrified of what going public would mean, of what kind of life Alisa would have with two dads, with an omega father, with all the scrutiny and judgment that came with their family.

But looking at her now—confident, happy, secure in exactly who she was—he knew they'd done something right.

"Come on," Shane said, clearing his throat. "Let's get you home. You need to shower, and then we're ordering pizza."

"Can we watch the Senators game tonight?" Alisa asked as they headed toward the exit.

"Of course," Ilya said. "Is tradition."

They walked out together, Alisa between them, still chattering about the tryout. A few parents stared as they passed, but most just nodded or smiled. After nine years, they were a known quantity in Ottawa—the retired hockey players, the family, the dads who showed up to every game and practice.

In the parking lot, Alisa ran ahead to the car, and Shane caught Ilya's hand.

"She's going to make the team," Shane said.

"I know."

"And she's going to be amazing."

"I know that too." Ilya brought Shane's hand to his lips, kissed his knuckles. "Just like her parents."

Shane laughed. "You're impossible."

"You love me anyway."

"I do," Shane agreed, watching Alisa try to open the car door with her hockey bag still on her shoulder. "I really do."

They'd come so far from that hospital room, from those early terrified days of hiding and secrets. They'd built this—a life, a family, a daughter who was brave enough to be exactly who she was because they'd shown her how.

"Hey!" Alisa called. "Are you guys coming or are you going to stand there being gross?"

"We're coming!" Shane called back.

Ilya grinned at him. "She gets the attitude from you."

"She absolutely does not."

"Does too."

They were still bickering when they reached the car, and Alisa rolled her eyes in the backseat, but she was smiling. They were all smiling.

And when the roster posted three days later with Alisa's name at the top of the list, they celebrated like she'd just won the Stanley Cup.

Because in a way, she had. She'd won the right to play, to compete, to be herself without apology.

Just like her fathers had taught her.

I hope you liked this little story!

End Notes

Comments and kudos are always welcome.

The response to this has been insane! I appreciated all of you!

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!