baby, not baby

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by SpaceWaffleHouse

Summary

The knock at his door comes about five minutes after Shane gets home, three minutes after Shane pees on the stupid sticks, one minute after Shane looks at the fucking pink plus signs, and about thirty seconds after tears spring to his eyes.

Shane Hollander, professional hockey player and captain of the Montreal Metros, has a bun in the fucking oven.

Or Shane and Ilya's enemies-with-benefits arrangement has some unintended consequences.

Notes

after THAT comment Shane made in episode four I HAD TO DO THIS.

**EDIT 01-07-25: in light of recent events on HRTWT I would just like to confirm this work to be entirely human written and not at all ai generated. Thank u.

Chapter 1

Three minutes to the next game against the Admirals, and Shane Hollander is throwing up in an arena toilet for the third time today. He's been hoping that the latest nausea spell—of many he's had of late—would pass by the time the game started, but no.

Shane had left the ice mid-warmup to throw up. Better everyone think he's got the runs than the truth.

The Metros' only omega—and team captain's—heat is late. Five days late, to be specific.

Wiping his mouth, Shane shakes his head, rising to his feet as he heads to the sink. Sure, he doesn't know for sure, but a late heat and puking randomly can only mean so many things. He's probably got one in the oven, maybe two if he's really unlucky. *Shit,* what will he tell the team?

What will he tell *Ilya?*

Making his way back onto the ice, Shane spends the game distracted, barely able to focus. He manages to score two goals, but that's because he's Shane Hollander, and he can play this game blindfolded. Still, he's cautious on the ice, taking care not to get slammed by other players or hit in a fight, but there's only so much he can do.

As soon as the game is over, he heads straight to his phone, pulling it out to text Ilya. Before he can even begin a text to "Lilly" though, Hayden comes up behind him with a hand on his shoulder. "You doing okay, Shane?"

Shane, still fighting back nausea, nods at the beta. "Yeah, totally."

"Never known you to shy away from a hit."

"My ribs were sore from the other night." Shane knows it's a lie, he hadn't gotten hit on Tuesday's game either, but he can't exactly tell Hayden, *Hey, I think I might be pregnant so I can't get tackled right now, thanks for asking!*

"Oookayyyy," Hayden replies, but he doesn't question it. "Jackie invited you to dinner again tomorrow, by the way. She promises to make your gross food."

Fuck, he can't possibly make plans with anyone right now, especially involving his diet--which is gonna have to change if he's pregnant, if he chooses to keep the baby. He's still got to tell Ilya, so he needs to end this conversation now and run for the hills--his apartment.

Attempting a kind smile, Shane shakes his head. "Yeah, I can't, I'm busy tomorrow night, sorry."

Hayden's brow furrows. "You sure you're okay?"

Definitely not. “Absolutely,” Shane replies, then he grabs his phone out of his pocket, fishing out car keys as he waves goodbye to Hayden. “I’ll see you around.”

“See you.”

As soon as he’s out of sight, sitting behind the wheel of his Jeep, Shane begins typing a message with shaky fingers. He can’t remember where Ilya is supposed to be playing tonight, *if* he’s playing tonight. What he’ll do if Ilya is somewhere far away, he’s not sure. He just hopes he’s on the East Coast, or at least somewhere in the vicinity of the Canadian border or an airport.

He needs him here. Now.

Lilly

Where are you right now?

Ottawa. Why?

We’re meeting at my place tonight

bossy… i like.

I’m serious. I need you to come to the apartment NOW.

Is your heat?

No, but I REALLY WISH it was

I am confused.

Rozanov, I can’t talk about this over text. We screwed up. We screwed up BAD.

What is going on Hollander? Panic attack?

Just come over.

ok i will be there in an hour

?? It’s a two hour drive

OK an hour and a half. I will speed.

Don’t get a ticket… I’m sorry.

Why sorry?

I'll tell you when you get here.

Shane's body is a mess when he gets to his apartment. He's grateful for self-checkout, having not wanted to run into anyone during his brief foray into the drug store for a pregnancy test… or two. For something this serious, they'll want to be sure, right?

The knock at his door comes about five minutes after Shane gets home, three minutes after Shane pees on the stupid sticks, one minute after Shane looks at the fucking pink plus signs, and about thirty seconds after tears spring to his eyes. Despite the mountain of evidence preceding this, he's still surprised, still shaken to his core that something like this could happen.

Of course, he knows *how* it happened. Their condom must've broken at some point, they must not have been careful enough in checking.

Ilya opens the door a moment later, calling out Shane's surname as he walks inside. Shane announces that he's in the bathroom, and takes the pregnancy tests in hand, holding them out like they're gifts for Ilya. Maybe in a strange, twisted way, they kind of are.

Shane is pretty sure he wants to keep the baby, but whether Ilya will be on board or not is anyone's guess.

As Ilya walks around the corner into the bathroom, a tear streaks down Shane's cheek. "Hollander, what is this?"

Shane swallows the lump in his throat, handing one of the tests to Ilya's outstretched hand. If Ilya gives a fuck that this is something Shane had pissed on, he doesn't show it. He watches the realization dawn on Ilya's face, watches him pale, then he looks up at Shane, a thousand emotions passing over his eyes at once. "Is this real?"

"Of course it's real," Shane whimpers, wiping the tears from his eyes as he sets down the other pregnancy test. "Why wouldn't it be?"

Ilya exhales shakily, then he sets down the test in his hand, and offers it out to Shane. "We should sit."

Nodding, Shane takes Ilya's hand, allowing him to guide him over to his living room sofa. They sit side by side, Ilya wiping sweaty palms on his black joggers. Neither of them speak for a moment, and when Shane tries, all that comes out is a sob, his arms crossing over his abdomen, fingers clutching at his sides, and suddenly, Ilya is pulling him into an embrace.

Ilya's arms wrap around Shane's shoulders, his nose burrowing into the Canadians neck. "Hey, it's okay."

"No, it's not… what the hell are we gonna do?"

"Do you want to get a…?"

“No.” Shane swallows. “It’s not that I have a problem with them or anything, I just… I can’t.” He’s not even sure why he doesn’t want to get one, but when he thinks about it, there’s this feeling in his gut telling him no, reminding him what this could be. “I can’t.”

Ilya breathes in deeply. “Okay.”

Pulling back, Shane stares at him. “Okay?”

“Yes, Hollander, I’ll do what I can for support.” Ilya reaches down, and takes one of Shane’s hands in his. “Will be okay. You will see.”

Shane sniffles, but wipes the tears away from his eyes. “I’m gonna have to take off the rest of the season. I’ll have to cite ‘health issues.’ The league will have questions. So will the team, but I’ll tell everyone it’s temporary and I’ll be back next season.”

“When are you…?”

“My last heat was six weeks ago, so I guess sometime in July? August at the most?”

Ilya shudders beside him. “July. You’re having a baby in July.” Then he squeezes Shane’s hand, drawing his attention. “*We* are having a baby.”

Looking up at him, Shane shakes his head. “You don’t have to do this with me, if you don’t want to. You can go home, play hockey, forget it ever happened.” He swallows the lump in his throat. “I mean…”

Though he hesitates slightly, Ilya nods. “Hollander—*Shane*—I did this to you. It is my responsibility.”

Sniffling, Shane wipes another tear from his eye. “Okay.” He releases a shaky breath. “So how do we want to do this?”

*

Ilya will continue playing hockey. Shane is going to hide out in his cottage, citing health issues, and Ilya will visit him when he can. If they’re successful, no one will need to know about the baby until Shane is ready—if he’s ready.

Part of him wonders, as he unpacks his things for his long term stay at the cottage, what will happen when the baby is born. He can’t exactly hide it forever, and people will wonder why he has a child—especially as an unmated omega. Sure, society has become progressive enough that single parents aren’t shunned, but with his life in the spotlight… He’ll never be able to escape the question of who the alpha parent was.

Sure, he could just say it was a stranger, and then gain the reputation of careless slut. He has approximately seven and a half months to figure it out.

Somehow, Ilya is incredibly kind through the whole thing. He brings another suitcase of Shane’s stuff into the cottage, grunting softly as he lifts it onto the bed. Shane has tried to help him lift some of the heavier things, but the alpha won’t let him. He’s oddly protective,

considering they aren't together, aren't in love, and there's another thing that tugs at Shane's heartstrings.

When he'd pictured this moment, expecting his first child, he'd always thought he'd be in love.

Ilya places a hand on Shane's shoulder, the omega tilting his head up to look him in the eyes. "Are you okay?"

Looking around the cottage, at the various luggage strewn about the room, the sight of all his family photos lining the walls, Shane knows he isn't. This isn't where he thought his life would go, and he knows he could turn back, that it isn't too late, but every fiber in his being wants this. He wants to keep his baby, even if he doesn't fully understand why.

"No," Shane admits, a tear falling to his cheeks, and he wipes it away. "I'm not okay, but… I want to be."

Ilya swallows. "I'm staying here tonight."

"W-what?"

"Is good for you, and baby."

"Where did you get that idea?"

"Google." Ilya grins, then he sits down on Shane's bed. "Says it's good for the alpha to be near the omega during pregnancy. Something to do with the pheromones."

Shane crosses his arms over his chest. "You don't even like me, and you want to spend a night here."

"Maybe I don't like you, but I like my son."

"Oh, so you think it's a boy, do you?" Shane grins, staring down at his still flat abdomen. "We won't even know what it is for months."

Ilya shrugs. "Just a guess. Either way, I like them, our baby. I want the best for them. I want to be… good parent."

That sounds nice, Shane thinks, liking the idea that Ilya is just as invested in this as he is. They may not actually like each other, but they'll do their best for their child. "We may want to try to get along then, for their sake."

"Become… friends?"

"I guess so. I'd hate to grow up with parents who didn't like each other."

"I turned out okay."

"Fuck off."

Ilya smirks, then he rises from the bed. “If we are going to get along for the baby, there can be no more ‘fuck you or fuck off.’” He puts his hands on his hips, looking Shane up and down. “Maybe fucking you, though.”

Heat rising to Shane’s cheeks, he looks away from Ilya. “Fine, but you’re taking the spare room.”

“Works for me.”

*

That night, Shane lies awake, a hand lazily splayed across his bare abdomen as he contemplates his life. He wonders what his future will look like, what raising a baby with Ilya fucking Rozanov is going to look like.

God, he can’t believe Ilya got him pregnant, that it’s fucking *Rozanov* who is going to be dropping off the kid at daycare and picking him--or her--up from school. It’ll be Ilya who comes with him to doctor’s appointments--if he chooses--and Ilya who’s there with him in the delivery room.

And they barely like each other.

In all honesty, Shane likes Ilya more than he lets on. There’s something comforting about his presence, something that his omega trusts inherently--or they wouldn’t sleep together in the first place. He knows he likes Ilya’s scent, lavender and a hint of pine, but beyond sex, they hardly enjoy one another’s company.

Except that’s not entirely true, is it? Shane distinctly remembers several times he’s left hookups disappointed that Ilya hadn’t kissed him, remembers a text he’d never sent. Part of him *does* long for time with Ilya, to spend more than just a few rounds of mind blowing sex together.

He supposes, now that he’s pregnant with Ilya’s baby, he’ll be getting his wish.

“Fuck,” he mutters, running a hand over his face as he rises to his feet. A tiny wave of nausea washes over him, and he grips his nightstand to keep upright, willing himself not to throw up. Swallowing down the urge, he makes his way out of the bedroom and heads for the kitchen, yawning despite his lack of proper exhaustion.

Just because his mind is awake, doesn’t mean his body isn’t fucking tired.

Tying the loose waistband of his plaid pajama pants a bit tighter, Shane enters the kitchen, flicking on a light before screaming like a little girl. Ilya is standing by the fridge, a cup of pudding in his hands, spoon frozen midway to his mouth as he locks eyes with Shane.

“Jesus fucking Christ!” Shane sputters, then he places a hand over his chest. “What the fuck are you doing in here?”

“Was hungry, needed a snack,” Ilya replies, casually shoveling more pudding into his mouth. “What are *you* doing here?”

Shane swallows, his hand falling to his abdomen. He watches the way Ilya's eyes fall with it, the softness in them profound. "Couldn't sleep. Felt nauseous, so I decided to come down here and get some water."

Humming his response, Ilya takes another bite of his pudding, watching as Shane reaches into a cabinet beside the fridge, and takes out an old Ottawa Centaurs cup his mom had bought years ago. They're quiet as he takes it to the fridge and fills it up, neither of them seeming to know what to say, but Shane can tell Ilya is releasing calming pheromones; he can smell it in the strengthening lavender of his scent.

It's a sweet gesture, one he wonders if he'll see more of in the coming months. Shane takes a sip of his water. "How long are you staying?"

"I have to leave in the morning. We have a game in New York in two days--technically tomorrow."

Shane nods, his nerves creeping in suddenly at the thought of Ilya's absence. "I'm scheduling my first doctor's appointment tomorrow. I'm hoping to see someone within the week."

Disappointment sinks Ilya's features. "I won't be able to be there."

"It's okay. There'll be others." But Shane can't deny he's a little disappointed Ilya won't be able to make the appointment, then he realizes something. "Actually, maybe it's better you don't come to any of them."

Now Ilya's brow furrows with confusion. "Why not? Is my baby, too, yes?"

"Well, yeah, but if a doctor sees you with me, then they'll know you're the father--they'll realize we've been together." Shane gestures vaguely. "They might think we're a couple, might tell people--you know, the press?"

Ilya sets down his pudding, hands gripping the countertop behind him. "You're worried about our secret getting out."

"Yes. I'm already risking it getting out just by seeing a doctor, by going outside, I don't want to risk both of our careers just because of me."

"Hollander, I did this, too."

"I know."

Ilya steps forward, taking Shane's glass out of his hand, and setting it on the counter before he takes his face in his palms, forcing the omega to look up. "I will say it as many times as needs saying," he tells him, voice firm and almost commanding. "I am on board for all of it. I want to be there at doctor's appointments, if you're comfortable with it. I don't want to miss any big moments in the baby's life, even before he's born. Okay?"

Shane's heart is beating in his chest like a little bird. "Okay." He looks down at Rozanov's lips, then back up to his eyes. "I'll have my agent draw up an NDA for the doctor. Maybe Farah can help us keep this a proper secret."

“See? There’s a solution.” Ilya pats Shane’s cheek, then he steps back, and they fall silent for another moment.

Water is sipped, and pudding is eaten. Shane finishes his glass without a word, then sets it in the kitchen sink to be washed in the morning, and Ilya’s spoon joins it a moment later. The two of them stare at one another in the aftermath, and the omega sighs as he leans against the countertop. “I don’t know what I’m doing.”

“Neither do I.”

“Do you even want kids?”

“I do.” Ilya smiles warmly then. “I always imagined two. One boy, one girl. Does not matter which comes first.”

Shane nods. “Yeah, I kinda feel the same. I think I’d like two.” He laughs. “Hopefully we’re not having two *now,* but maybe someday I’d like to have a second kid. Maybe after I’m retired, though.”

“I don’t know, your friend, what’s his name--Pike? He seems to enjoy having many children *and* playing hockey.”

A laugh falls from Shane’s lips. “Because Hayden is fucking insane.” He doesn’t know how Hayden manages to do it either. Being a beta, he should have a harder time fathering as many children as he has, but maybe Jackie is just the most fertile omega on the planet. “Maybe I’ll feel differently after I have this one, but I think I’d like to win another cup or two before that happens.”

“You wish, Hollander.”

“Hey, I’ve already beaten you the past two years in a row,” Shane says with a grin, then he frowns, that sadness creeping up in his throat again. “Guess there’s always next season.”

“Guess so.”

“I’m really gonna miss hockey.”

“I know, I’m sorry.”

Before the first sob can wrack his throat, Ilya’s arms are wrapping around Shane’s waist, pulling him close as Shane rests his head in the crook of Ilya’s neck and shoulder. “I’m so fucking scared,” he whispers, breathing in the calming lavender emanating from the alpha’s scent glands.

One of Ilya’s hands makes its way into his hair. “I’m sorry, Shane. I’m sorry I did this to you.”

Part of Shane wants to tell him it isn’t his fault, that they made this mistake together, but in that moment, he’s a little upset and angry and just wants to yell at the world. He remains

silent, sobbing into the fabric of Ilya's shirt as the alpha holds him in his kitchen, swaying gently back and forth to soothe him.

As Shane calms down enough to pull away from the hug, he takes in a shaky breath. "Will you stay with me tonight? Like in the same bed?"

"Sure." Ilya's expression is serious, leaving no hint of teasing or a mean retort threatening to spill from his lips.

"I just think it might help me sleep better."

"Me too."

"And like you said, it's good for the, uh, baby."

"Right…" Ilya replies. "It's good for the baby." Then he follows Shane out of the kitchen, neither of them speaking as they make their way into the bedroom.

Once inside, Shane returns to his side of the bed, gesturing for Ilya to take the side closest to the door. "Is it okay if I sleep on this side?"

"Does not matter to me." Ilya shrugs, then flops down in the bed. "You are pregnant, you should have whatever side of the bed you want."

A tiny smile tilts the corners of Shane's mouth, then he crawls beneath the covers, lying on his side facing away from the alpha. "So, uh… goodnight then, Rozanov."

"Goodnight, Hollander."

Shane closes his eyes, listening to the sound of Ilya's breathing beside him as he slowly falls into sleep. Within minutes, he's out like a light, his thoughts of lavender and pine and a child with Ilya's curls and Shane's smile, laughing as they swing on a playground swingset, watched by both of their fathers smiling faces.

Chapter 2

Lilly

have you seen doctor yet?

send me pictures

i'm in the waiting room, idiot

oh.

they're running behind. Distract me. Tell me how's practice?

Is boring. Game won't be the same without you.

I wish I could be there. I miss it. Tell Hayden I said hi.

That would involve speaking to him.

yes, and?

I prefer not speaking to Pike.

He's a nice guy and my best friend,so get over yourself. I'm carrying your baby, asshole.

OUR baby

Listen I gotta go. Doctor summoned me back

Good luck. Send me pictures.

I know, I will. I promise.

and Shane?

Good luck. I hope everything goes well and you only get good news.

Shane's palms are sweaty as he's led to an exam room. He wipes them off on his Metros hoodie, but it does nothing to stop the seeming downpour of sweat leaking from his hands.

God, he needs to pull himself together. The doctor will be in any minute now to perform the exam, confirm he's with child, and send him off on his merry way with hopefully some cute ultrasound pictures. *Get it together, Hollander.*

As he waits, he contemplates whether or not he still wants to go through with this. By all accounts, it's a terrible idea. He could easily change the ending of this appointment and have it behind him, but it's just that simple--that isn't the choice he wants to make.

For some reason, one he's terrified to unpack, he's determined to have *this* baby, here, now, with Ilya Rozanov. Hopefully, he'll make a good father, or else he's going to kill him.

After a couple of minutes, there's a knock on the door, and Shane tells the doctor to come in. A second later, a kind, alpha woman enters with a clipboard in her hands. "Hello, Mr. Hollander," she tells him, extending a hand. "I'm Dr. Smith."

"Shane," he says, then he looks around the room. "Where do you want me?"

The doctor sets down her clipboard, gesturing to the exam table. "Go ahead and lie down for me, make yourself comfortable, we've got some paperwork to go over before we get started." She looks at Shane with a raised eyebrow. "I believe when you scheduled your appointment, you mentioned an NDA?"

"Yeah. I did."

Sitting down on the table, Shane sits with his hands folded while the doctor goes over some paperwork. He signs her papers, and she signs the NDA his agent had drawn up for him the night before. Once she's done that, she has Shane pee in a cup so they can confirm he's pregnant, then when that comes back positive, they head into a different exam room so they can do the ultrasound.

So that Shane can see his baby.

Goosebumps rise on his skin as he lifts his shirt up, lying back on the new exam table so that Dr. Smith has easy access. "Given your career path, I assume this wasn't planned?"

"Nope," Shane says, wincing as she squirts the jelly onto his abdomen. "Completely unexpected."

"I know that can be scary, but my office has several resources available to help you, however you choose to carry out this pregnancy." She clears her throat as she waves the ultrasound wand over his belly. "You're not alone."

"The father is in the picture, so no, definitely not." Shane manages a small smile as he remembers his text conversation with Ilya, how he'd insistently mentioned this being *their* baby, not just Shane's.

Dr. Smith nods. "Yes, I saw his name in the NDA." She points to the screen with her spare hand. "There's your baby."

And oh, if Shane's heart doesn't just instantly *melt.* "Wow," he breathes, watching the screen light up with a slightly green, very blurry image of his baby. It barely looks like a baby, really more of a blob, and it's kind of alien like, but that's his--and Ilya's--baby. They made that together… *holy shit.*

He can't wait to text Ilya, or his mom--*his mom.*

Shane's heart races in his chest, the sudden realization he's told his parents nothing hitting him like a truck. Sure, his hiatus from the NHL has been announced, but all he'd sent the night he and Ilya made their plan was a quick "I promise there's a good reason, I'll explain soon." And that had been it.

As the doctor explains what's happening with the baby, Shane finds himself only half paying attention, too focused on the fact that he'll definitely owe his parents an explanation after this. He owed them an explanation *days* ago.

"Can you print some pictures for me? I need to show my mom," Shane tells the doctor just before she removes the wand. "She'll kill me if I don't."

Yuna Hollander would hardly kill him, or her impending grandchild--god, he's going to make her a grandmother--and neither would his father, but he knows they'd be disappointed without pictures. Hell, he will be disappointed without pictures. "Of course," Dr. Smith says, smiling as she puts the wand away, then offers Shane a washcloth to wipe himself off with.

The appointment comes to an end, and Shane braces himself emotionally for what comes next. First, he must text Ilya the pictures, then he's going to call his parents and explain why he's on hiatus for "health issues."

*

Lilly

tada

holy shit

is ours?

no this is a random stranger's they gave me the wrong one.

OF COURSE IT'S OURS

I wish I did not have game today. Would like to celebrate.

We will celebrate as soon as you have a few days off. Just two weeks, right?

... yeah… I wish it was sooner.

me too. But the good news is they said my ten week ultrasound will be when you have a game against Ottawa. You can be there then.

wouldn't miss it

I wish you could be here. I have to tell my parents about this and I'm spiraling

oh. Good luck

thanks. I think explaining to them that I'm pregnant will be the easy part. Telling them about you will be harder.

Why? Your parents love me?

asshole :D

see you around, hollander

He waits until he's home, then he sends a text to his mom, asking her if she can FaceTime. It takes a moment for her to reply, but then she tells him she'll be available in the next five minutes.

That gives Shane a few minutes to prepare himself. He grabs a glass of water from the kitchen, bringing it into the living room, where he sets up his phone against a stack of books his father had bought years ago. Hopefully his dad will be there, too, he hadn't even asked yet. In this moment, what he'd needed more than anything had been his mother, the woman who had been through this very thing in order to bring him into the world.

It takes Yuna only two rings to answer, and to Shane's relief, his father is right next to her in frame. They seem to have a similar setup, his mother's phone propped up against something in their Ottawa home. "Shane," his mother breathes. "Are you all right?"

"What the hell happened?" his father asks.

"I'm sorry." Shane runs a hand through his hair, swallowing his nerves as he looks at them. But tears, traitorous tears rise to his eyes, and they spill over before he can help himself. "I'm so sorry."

His parents' faces soften. "Oh, honey, what's going on?" Yuna reaches out for the screen, almost as if she could touch him. "Where are you?"

"I'm at the cottage," Shane says, sniffling as he wipes away his tears. "It's the only place I could think of away from prying eyes. I couldn't stay in Montreal."

At this, his father leans forward, clasping his hands together. "Shane, you love hockey, what… why did you stop?"

“I don’t have a choice, I…” He swallows his nerves. “I’m just gonna come out and say it, I’m pregnant.”

Silence, then his mother’s eyes go wide. “Oh my god, Shane…”

“Who’s the father?” his dad asks at the same time.

And here comes the hard part. Taking a deep breath, Shane clenches his fists. “Look, before I tell you who he is, what I need you to understand is that he’s not the man you think he is. He’s good and kind, and he’s stepping up to be a father, and--”

Yuna’s brow furrows. “Who is it, dear?”

“Ilya Rozanov.”

Two pairs of eyes blink at him. The silence is loud over the phone, almost deafening, and Shane can hear his own pulse racing in his ears. “Ilya… Rozanov?” his father asks, disbelief written all over his face. “Ilya Rozanov?”

“Yes.”

“Your arch rival, Ilya Rozanov?” his mother asks.

“Yes, that one.”

“The man you’ve sworn to defeat every game, Ilya Rozanov?”

“Yes, dad, it’s Ilya.” Shane runs a hand through his hair once more. “Look, we uh, I’ll spare you the details, but we’ve been… seeing each other for years now.”

His mother’s face shifts, her expression unreadable. “Seeing each other as in… dating or…?”

“Do we really want to know the details, dear?” his father asks, and Shane manages a small laugh. “Is he treating you right, Shane?”

“Yes, he is. I mean we’re not *together* together, but we are raising the baby together.”

Though his parents still look apprehensive, their expressions have softened. Then his mom leans forward. “And you’re keeping this a secret?”

“At least until the baby is born. I don’t know if it’ll be as easy to keep secret then.”

“A baby…” His father breathes, exhaling deeply. His parents look at each other then, and to Shane’s utter delight, smiles slowly bloom on their faces. “So we’re going to be grandparents?”

“Yes, you are.” Shane grins, resting a hand gently on his belly, then he reaches down to the couch, and pulls up the pictures from his ultrasound, displaying them to the screen. “That’s them. I had my first ultrasound this morning. I’m six weeks along.”

Shane's mother coos at the picture, then she sighs. "I won't lie, honey, this is unexpected, but if you're happy, we're happy. We'll do whatever we can to support you."

"Of course, is there anything we can do for you, Shane?" his father adds. "Where is Ilya now?"

"Ilya is playing hockey for the next two weeks. Out of town. He's agreed to stay with me in his off time--more like he begged to stay with me, really, but I…" Shane laughs. "I admit, I have been lonely. There's only so much tv you can watch out here."

"Aw, well, we'll come up and try and visit this weekend then, okay?" Yuna grins. "I'll need to buy things for my grandchild, get the cottage ready for our newest addition."

Shane's smile grows as he nods. "I'd love that. But I can't go shopping with you. If the press see me buying baby things, they'll figure it out."

"Got it, no buying baby things in public."

"We can shop online together then," his father says. "We'll figure something out."

"And you both need to be careful what you buy, too. The public could catch on if you're seen buying something in public, too."

Another brief silence, then his mother nods. "Then we'll need to plan accordingly."

Tears spring to Shane's eyes, but he nods. "Yeah, we will."

"Are you all right, Shane?" David asks, worry furrowing his brow. "Why are you crying, sweetheart?"

"I'm just really happy you're taking it well. Ilya and all."

His mother laughs. "Well, it'll be strange sharing family time with Ilya in the future, but I'm excited. *We're* excited. This is our first grandbaby."

"We're happy for you, Shane. No matter what, we will always love and support you, as long as we're both alive."

And oh, if that doesn't send Shane straight into the waterworks.

*

The three weeks they're apart are some of the longest of Shane's life.

When Ilya finally strolls up the driveway in one of his many fancy cars--some kind of Porche, from the looks of it--he runs out of the house to greet him. The Russian laughs as he catches sight of Shane, his breath foggy in the cold, late-December air.

It's Christmas Eve, and Shane is officially ten weeks pregnant tomorrow. He's not showing yet, but that doesn't stop Ilya from looking him up and down, searching for signs of their

baby in Shane's still lean form. "Happy to see me, Hollander?"

"You wish, Rozanov," Shane mutters, reaching into the car to pull out Ilya's suitcase, much to his protests. "Calm down, I'm only ten weeks. I've got to get my exercise in somehow."

Ilya glares at him, but says nothing as the two of them bring Ilya's things into the cottage, both men shivering as they enter the warmth of Shane's grand foyer. "Shit, it's cold," Ilya grumbles, rubbing his hands together as he and Shane head for the spare room. "How are you holding up?"

"Well enough." Shane shrugs as he tugs Ilya's suitcase up a short staircase and into the bedroom. "I haven't been too nauseous lately."

"That is good, yes?"

"Yeah, it's good. It means I don't feel like shit all the time." Shane laughs. "My mom has been watching me like a hawk every time she comes over. If I even stand up funny, she's like an overprotective mother hen."

A small chuckle leaves Ilya as he sits down on the spare bed. "She loves you, Hollander. It just means she cares."

Sighing dramatically, Shane sits down beside him, letting his hand fall in the space between himself and Ilya. "I know, but I just wish everyone--well, the few people who know--would stop treating me like I'm a delicate flower. I'm Shane Hollander, I'm one of the best hockey players in the league, I've scored hundreds of goals." He groans. "I am not delicate just because I'm knocked up."

Ilya snorts, but he doesn't protest. He just looks at Shane with a happy sort of glow in his eyes, one that makes Shane's heart do little palpitations in his chest. "We are just worried about you."

"Well, stop worrying, I'm fine. *We're* fine." Shane's eyes roll as he lies back on the bed, watching Ilya's gaze sweep over him hungrily--almost like… No… no way. Does he really still want to do that? Even now? Even with Shane pregnant? "What are you thinking about?"

"Who says I am thinking?"

"You are. You've got your thinking face on."

Another amused sound parts Ilya's lips, then he shrugs. "I was simply wondering what it might feel like to fuck raw, since we don't need to bother with protection anymore."

Shane sputters. "Wh-What? Aren't you still sleeping around? We definitely still need to use protection."

"Have not been with anyone since you," Ilya replies, placing a hand on Shane's chest, and letting it trail lower and lower until it rests over the waistband of his sweats, right over where their baby is growing within him. "We don't have to, but I'd like to try, if you would."

There's no denying the slick that's already pooling between Shane's thighs. He can smell it, sweet and thick, and if he can smell it, so can Ilya. He wants this, quite possibly just as bad as Rozanov wants this, but he's still confused. "You'd want to? Even with me being pregnant?"

"Is that supposed to be a turn off?"

"Well, I thought it might be. I've heard some alphas refuse to fuck their omegas when they're pregnant."

"Is lie, liar told you that," Ilya insists, then he's crawling on top of Shane, a knee wedging itself between the omega's legs. "Personally, I want to fuck you until I can't see."

A shuddering breath leaves Shane, and he lets his eyes drift shut as Ilya bends down to press a kiss to his lips, then another. It feels so fucking good, so comforting, that he just *melts*. "Oh, god, Rozanov," he whispers against his lips, causing Ilya to giggle as he kisses Shane. "Fuck…"

"Is it not the whole point of our arrangement to fuck?"

"Yes, yes it is." And it's in this precise moment, Shane realizes just how much he wants it. He's leaking slick, his cock is becoming hard, and *fuck* he's missed Ilya, missed his scent, missed his cock, his *knot,* and now all of that missing him is coming to a head.

They haven't even had sex since they found out Shane was pregnant. That must be rectified immediately.

A hum, then Ilya's lips open against his, his tongue seeking access that Shane willingly gives, his mind spinning in circles as he's kissed till he's dizzy. It's like a warm hug, being kissed by Ilya, like coming home after time away--a fact he chooses not to unpack--the alpha's lips are so soft, so plush against his own, he just wants to bite them. His teeth tug on Ilya's lower lip as he pulls back, drawing out yet another moan from the other man. "Hollander…" Ilya breathes.

"Please," Shane whispers, hooking one of his legs around Ilya's thigh. "Please fuck me."

Pulling back, Ilya stares at Shane, eyes hooded and eager. "Are you sure?"

"Yes." Shane's head tilts back, allowing Ilya access to his neck as he grinds his erection against the alpha's thigh. "I need you inside me, I need you *now.*"

He can feel Ilya grinning against his neck, his fingers reaching beneath Shane's waistband. "Then who am I to deny you what you want?"

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

> Thank you all so much for your response to this fic it means the world to me. I can't guarantee I'll be able to keep updating every day but it feels good to write so hopefully I'll have more soon. Much love 💖

There's a big, stupid grin on Shane's face as he takes Ilya's clothes off. Both of them are laughing, tossing clothes in a lazy pile away from the bed as they undress as quickly as their bodies will allow.

Once he's fully naked, Shane stares up at Ilya, watching his alpha as he looks at him like he's a five-course meal. "Oh, I missed this," Ilya breathes, running a hand over the expanse of Shane's chest, over the defined muscles of his abdomen. Still, that'll go away in the coming weeks--they're already softer than they'd been in the past, making Shane feel almost a little insecure as he watches that hand drift further down.

Ilya grins as he takes Shane's cock in his hand, taking a little bead of precome in his fingers, and using it to slowly, lazily stroke him. All the omega can do is watch, propping his head up on his hands as he takes in the sight of Ilya's hand wrapped around his cock. *Fuck* he'd missed this, too. Maybe he'd missed it more than his alpha.

Heavy breaths part Shane's lips as Ilya's hand drifts down, his fingers ghosting over the slick pooling between his cheeks. "So wet for me already," Ilya purrs, swirling a finger around Shane's rim. "You've been dreaming of this, haven't you, Hollander?"

Shane's breaths become whimpers, Ilya's finger prodding in gently as he bends down, pressing kisses to Shane's neck, right by his scent gland, right where he'd bite him if they chose to mate. *God,* isn't that a dizzying thought--mating Ilya Rozanov. It almost makes him laugh, they're barely friends, why would they ever mate?

And yet the intoxicating fire that is Ilya's scent has Shane wondering if maybe, just maybe, he might want to keep it around forever someday. Maybe they could be more than friends, if they just--

No. He's not going to think about that right now. Ilya is fingering him, pressing a second finger just past his rim, and those fingers begin to pump gently in and out, prepping him for what comes next. More slick leaks from his hole, Shane's lips parting around explicit moans as he wraps his arms around Ilya's neck. "Oh, Rozanov," he whispers, reaching between them to take his own cock in hand, stroking lazily as Ilya adds a third finger. "Please, just… I need you inside me."

“I am inside you.”

“Fuck off, I meant your dick.”

Another smirk parts Ilya’s lips, then he comes up to place a short, surprisingly tender kiss to Shane’s lips. “No more ‘fuck off, or fuck you.’ Bad for the baby.”

“The baby can’t understand, they’re barely out of the embryo stage.” Shane stares down at his own abdomen. “I… I just want you close to me. It feels better when you’re here.”

Ilya’s expression softens then, his hand pulling out of Shane before he sets it on the bed beside him. “I like being around you, too. I don’t know if it is just pheromones or what, but… I am glad that out of all the omegas I could have accidentally gotten pregnant, it was you.”

“Fuck you.”

“I’m serious, Svetlana would not hear the end of it.”

Full on belly laughter shakes their bed, Shane covering his mouth as Ilya rests his forehead against his. “You’re an idiot.”

“You like it.” Ilya kisses him again, Shane’s hands twining in his hair as he returns the kiss, because, yeah, he kind of does like it a little. “You like me, don’t you?”

“I’d like for you to fuck me.”

“But you didn’t say please.”

“Please,” Shane begs, not even possessing the will to pretend he doesn’t want to anymore. “Please fuck me.”

More kisses come his way as a reward, one of Ilya’s hands skirting along his sides as he lines up his cock with Shane’s hole, and slides in slowly. There’s little to no resistance, Ilya’s fingers having successfully opened him up. Soft moans fall from the omega’s lips, his entire body melting into the contact, his mind feeling at peace for the first time since he’d found out he was pregnant.

This is what he’s needed, this is what he’s missed all this time.

Then Ilya begins to move, and it’s wonderful, that familiar feeling, like nothing has changed. His cock reaches places inside Shane he normally can’t reach without a dildo, the pressure nearly perfect already even without thrusting or movement, but then Ilya begins to pump slowly in and out.

Shane relaxes as Ilya moves, his legs wrapping around the Russian as if to bring him tighter–closer. He grinds against him as Ilya picks up the pace, both of them moaning as they move together. One of Shane’s hands reaches between them for his cock, stroking it slowly so as not to come too quickly—but he’s so sensitive. Everything is more sensitive now, especially his cock, and then one of Ilya’s fingers brushes his nipples, and he realizes he’s more sensitive there, too.

“Oh fuck,” he breathes, panting hard as Ilya pounds into him, fingers gripping his hips firmly, but not quite so bruising as they would normally be. “Rozanov…”

“Gonna come for me, Hollander?”

“Please make me…” Shane pants, placing kisses to Ilya’s jaw as the alpha continues his thrusts, each one driving him closer than the last.

After what must only be a few minutes, Shane is tipping over the edge, spilling all over himself and Ilya, and he cries out, swearing loudly for what seems like all of Canada to hear. Ilya follows shortly after, and the feeling of his alpha coming inside him only makes Shane come harder, his mind lost to sensation, his body overcome, and he tightens his grip in the other man’s hair, using him as a tether to reality.

They come down together, slowly and then all at once, and Shane giggles, causing Ilya to giggle, too, and then he’s swallowed by kisses. Ilya’s warm mouth against his makes him melt, makes all his worries melt away, and he allows himself this wonderful moment to forget, to just be with Ilya in the cottage like he’s always wanted.

The baby, hockey, and the secret they keep hidden from the outside world all fade away, and for a few minutes, Shane gets to just be Shane.

*

Ilya comes with him to his next appointment, both of them sneaking into Dr. Smith’s office after hours to avoid being spotted. She’d set up this appointment slot just for them, sending home her entire staff so that it’s just Ilya, Shane, and herself.

The weather has taken a turn for the worse, snow barreling down on them as Shane drives them to the appointment in his Jeep. They’d decided it was less conspicuous than taking one of Ilya’s sports cars. Less chances of people wondering what Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov are doing out at an OB-GYN office in the late hours of the night.

Okay, technically, it’s only 8:30 pm, but that’s later than most doctor’s appointments would be, later than Dr. Smith’s office usually stays open.

“Is she nice?” Ilya asks, squinting beyond the dashboard to try and see the road beyond.

“Is who nice?”

“Your doctor. Is she good?”

Shane nods, pulling off the highway once he manages to catch sight of their exit. “Yeah, she’s nice.” He breathes in deeply as they pull onto the main road. “Discreet, too.”

“Ah, so she knows about me then?”

An amused snort leaves him. “Of course she does. You’re the father, I told her you’d want to come with me to appointments if you could.” Shane pulls off the road and into the parking lot for his OB’s office, relieved to see that there is only one other car present. “Here we go.”

Putting the car in park, Shane pulls himself together, then looks at Ilya. The alpha gives him a wicked grin. “Here we go.”

“You look excited.”

“I am,” Ilya says. “I’m ready to see baby.”

The second appointment goes a bit more smoothly than the first. Ilya is charming with the doctor, making her and Shane laugh in turn. He even makes Shane feel more at ease, less tense, and by the time he’s lifting up his shirt for Dr. Smith to perform the scan, he finds himself completely, utterly relaxed.

At least, he is until she squirts the damn jelly on his skin, then he shivers, causing Ilya to jolt beside him. “Are you all right, Hollander?”

“I’m fine, it’s just cold.”

“Sorry about that,” Dr. Smith replies, sympathy written in her smile. “There’s only so much I can do in the winter months. It’ll get easier when we head into spring.”

And then summer. And then this will be over and I’ll have a baby, Shane thinks, watching as the doctor grabs the wand, and turns on the monitor where the image of their baby will appear on the screen. Nerves overtaking him, he holds out his hand, pleading with his eyes for Ilya to take the hint and take it.

Luckily, Ilya is about half as stupid as he looks, and he takes Shane’s hand, eyes never leaving the screen. “It’s okay,” he assures him. “Do not have panic attack.”

“I’m not having a panic attack.”

“While we’re here, do you have any questions for me?” Dr. Smith asks as she waves the wand over Shane’s belly. “Either of you?”

Before Shane can ask anything, or say that he has no questions, Ilya raises his other hand like they’re in class. “How big is baby now?”

Dr. Smith laughs as an image comes up on screen, looking significantly more baby like, more real than it had the last time Shane had been at the doctor’s office. “So do you see the head there?” she asks, pointing with her free hand. “And that will be the feet. Your baby is currently about the size of an olive, maybe a strawberry. But a small one.”

“Oh wow,” Shane breathes, looking at it reverently. This time, the baby looks more like a baby, rather than just a blob on a screen. He feels a sense of pride swell within him at the sight, a sense of joy, even. “It’s really happening, huh? We’re having a baby.”

He turns to look at Ilya, surprised by his sudden silence, and he's shocked to find Ilya crying, tears streaking down his cheeks as he stares open-mouthed at the screen like he can't quite believe it either. The sight is shocking to Shane, and he almost wants to take out his phone and take a picture, but he finds it precious, something private, something Ilya would want to keep almost to himself.

Squeezing the hand Ilya has in his, Shane offers a smile, and the alpha smiles back, more tears springing to his eyes. A couple of them land on Shane's hand as Ilya holds it close to his chest, and Shane's heart beats a little faster at that. He can feel Ilya's own racing beneath the back of his hand, and he knows that the alpha is just as affected, just as in love with their future child as he is.

This may have been an accident, a mistake, but he's finding this may be one he doesn't entirely regret making.

"Wow," Ilya whispers after a while. "Can it hear us yet?"

"Not yet. That'll be closer to eighteen to twenty weeks." Dr. Smith gives him another kind smile. "The good news is everything looks healthy, so I'll just have some questions for Shane and then you should be good to go until I see you again at fourteen weeks."

Shane beams. "That's brilliant," he says, noticing his voice sounds watery, then he brings a hand up to his face, wiping over his cheeks, and isn't surprised to find his hand comes away wet. Of course he's crying, too. "Oh great."

Now Ilya's laughing. "Hollander, you are crying."

"Shut up, you started it."

"Yes, but you are still crying," Ilya says, and though he's laughing, he's squeezing Shane's hand as if to tell him he understands, that he knows exactly why, because he's crying for the same reason.

"I can cry, I'm pregnant. You have no excuse."

"Is my first baby, of course I am crying." Ilya's eyes never leave the screen, he just watches their baby reverently, like they're something holy. There's so much love in those eyes, Shane finds himself relieved that it was Ilya this happened with, that there was no other alpha who ever turned his head the way that Rozanov did. Would anyone else have that kind of affection for this baby? Would anyone else be so supportive of Shane and his choices?

They may be only starting to like one another, but one thing becomes certain to Shane above all else--Ilya Rozanov is a wonderful guy.

As the doctor removes the wand from Shane's belly, she lets the image loop on the screen, then she wipes off the wand, offering the omega a towel to wipe himself with. "Do you two need a minute before we finish the appointment?"

Blinking out of his stupor, Shane releases Ilya's hand, and wipes himself down, then shakes his head. "No, we can look at it more later. I think I just want to get home."

"Da," Ilya says, still grinning at the image looping on the screen. "As do I."

After, when Shane is driving them back to his cottage, he looks at Ilya in the glow of a red light, admiring the softness still present in his eyes. "Hey, Rozanov?"

"Yeah?"

"Thanks for coming with me, you're a good… *friend.*"

"We are friends?"

"Yeah, we are," Shane replies, looking away as the light turns green, and he pulls out onto the next street. "Might as well be, since we're having a baby together."

Ilya laughs. "There is another thing we cannot tell press. We are friends."

"Good friends."

"Best friends?"

"I wouldn't go that far." Only, Shane thinks he might just go that far, that he might just mean it. Ilya's shown him nothing but kindness through this whole ordeal, so yeah, maybe they are best friends--if it weren't for one person standing in the way. "Hayden would fight you for that role."

"I could easily beat Hayden Pike in a fight."

Shaking his head, Shane sighs. "I'm sure you could, but Ilya?"

"Yeah?"

"Please don't."

"Okay. I won't. Because you asked, I won't." Then they drive on in a peaceful silence, both of them grinning every time they stop to look at pictures of their unborn baby at red lights. And maybe Shane falls asleep looking at the pictures that night, dreaming of what that baby will become, and of raising her with one of his best friends.

*

At twelve weeks pregnant, Shane makes his first public appearance since he'd learned of his condition. He attends a Metros versus Raiders game in Montreal, his changed scent hidden by blockers, and his slight weight gain disguised by many layers of clothing. Sure, he isn't showing yet, but he looks a little softer around the edges, little fluctuations around his waistline and chest revealing more than it ought to with tighter clothing.

The pregnancy could not occur during a better time of year, he supposes.

It had been his agent, Farah's idea. Make a public appearance so that people were not left wondering if Shane was even alive. Suspicion had been raised as to why Shane was hiding from the ice. If people saw him alive and well, they might back off from all their questions and concerns that his health problem would keep him from returning to the Metros one day.

So here Shane sits, just beside the penalty box with his parents, watching the players warm up. His teammates are on the ice—a few having come up to say hello, but most ignoring him entirely. He can't say he blames them, they feel abandoned by their captain in their time of need. If it weren't for the baby, Shane would be guiding them to a third cup right now. They could still win it without him, but as Hayden has told him, it won't be the same.

He's telling Hayden the truth after this game—but only Hayden will get to know, and only because Shane genuinely considers him to be the best friend he has. No one else will know, not a single soul.

After a bit, Ilya skates by, waving to Shane from the penalty box, and Shane rolls his eyes. Their rivalry is still being played up by the NHL, even with Shane off the ice. "How are you holding up?" Ilya asks, leaning against the barrier as he stretches his thigh. It's so casual that everyone else would think it was just a chirp, none would be the wiser to the fact that Ilya is being genuine, attempting communication with the secret father of his child.

Shane shakes his head, leaning away from David and Yuna. "Devastated. I just wish I could be on the ice."

"You'll be back."

"Not for another… six and a half months." Though realistically, it'll be more than that. Once he gives birth, there's still another two months before the season starts again, and he'll spend most of that in recovery. "How about you? Enjoying the game?"

A grin parts Ilya's lips. "I will enjoy kicking Montreal's asses."

"I don't know. Hayden mentioned he was looking forward to kicking *your* ass."

Ilya hums. "Sure he will," then he winks at Shane as he skates away, and Shane is left shaking his head.

Beside him, David and Yuna are wide-eyed, staring between Shane and Ilya's receding form. "Are you sure that was wise, honey?" His mother asks, placing a hand on Shane's shoulder. "Someone could figure it out."

Shane laughs. "It'd look more suspicious if he didn't talk to me. Farah told us to chirp at each other. Gotta maintain the rivalry somehow."

David hums. "So that was about keeping up appearances?"

"Pretty much," Shane says, then he sighs, leaning into his mother's embrace. "But I meant what I said. I wish I could be out there with him."

"Don't you mean them?" His father asks.

“Yeah… them…”

Yuna takes one of his hands in hers. “I’m sorry, Shane, I know you want to be there.”

Swallowing the lump forming in his throat, Shane squeezes his mother’s hand. “I’ll be okay. I have to be.”

“We’ll get you back on the ice,” his dad promises. “This isn’t forever.”

“I know.” Shane sniffles, blinking away the tears that threaten to spring from his eyes. “I know.”

They fall silent as the game starts, and Shane watches his dreams fly in front of his face. It’s hard to see his team play on without him, but he manages to keep his face neutral. His team manages okay without him, but he can tell it’s not the same.

There’s a strange sense of pride welling within him whenever Ilya scores, and he manages to score twice. Butterflies are fluttering in his stomach, and Shane has to force them to be quiet as he watches Ilya score a third goal at the final buzzer, the crowd going wild. He wants to cheer, but he can’t do anything beyond a polite clap if he wants to keep up the charade that he’s here to support his team—and nothing more.

“Good job, Ilya,” he whispers under his breath. “I’m proud of you.”

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Hayden is more excited to see Shane than his own parents were. He can tell by the way his beta friend collides into him, wrapping Shane in his arms and spinning him in the air. “You came!” he cries ecstatically. “Oh, I’m so glad to see you!”

“I’m glad to see you, too, Hayden, put me down.”

“No complaints, Hollander, you’ve gotten heavier since I last saw you.” Hayden steps back, patting Shane’s shoulder. “You been working out, or just eating?”

“A bit of both,” Shane says honestly, then he cocks his head in the direction of his car. “I’ll tell you about it on the way to dinner?” He figures he can tell Hayden the actual news in private and then they can celebrate over a late night dinner at a pizza place near the arena.

An inquisitive look furrows Hayden’s brow, then he shrugs. “Sure,” he says, falling quiet while he follows Shane into his car, then the second the doors close, the beta places a hand over the dash. “Okay now tell me everything. I haven’t seen you in almost two months, and I need to know why.”

Moment of truth. Shane takes a deep breath, pushing the start button on his car so it can at least warm up a little before they start this conversation. “So uh, I’m sorry that I didn’t tell you before I went away, and that I ran so fast after my last game.” Shane swallows. “That was the night I realized what was happening to me—why I had to step down for the season. I was… my heat was five days late and I was throwing up, I think you can guess what I thought was happening.”

At this, Hayden’s face falls, and his hand reaches for Shane’s. “Oh my god, Shane, you’re pregnant?”

“Yep. Twelve weeks yesterday.”

“Holy shit.” Hayden blinks rapidly, letting go of Shane’s hand. “Who’s the other parent? I didn’t know you were seeing anyone. Is it Rose?”

Shane practically guffaws at that. “No, it isn’t Rose. If it were, I could probably just come out and be honest about the pregnancy.” Damn, now he almost wishes it were Rose, but they’d ended their relationship when Shane had realized he only preferred men, and they’ve just been friends ever since. “No, it’s, uh… look, I need you to swear you won’t tell anyone, it’s a big secret.”

“Wait, I thought you were just keeping your pregnancy under wraps because you’re private.”

“Well, that, too.” Shane almost laughs, but then he sighs, shoving his hands beneath his thighs to keep them from fidgeting. “But no, it’s because of what would happen to both me and the baby’s father if it got out. We’d probably be kicked out of the league, or at least face way more public scrutiny than either of us wants.”

Hayden’s face becomes serious. “He’s someone in the league? Is it a member of our team? Was he here tonight?”

“He was here tonight, but no, he's not a member of our team.”

Jaw falling slack, Hayden leans forward, practically on the edge of his seat. “What the… it’s a member of the Raiders? Who the fuck did you sleep with?”

Here goes. “Ilya Rozanov.”

Silence, then Hayden screams, the sound far too loud for the small space of Shane’s car. “Ilya fucking Rozanov? You fucked *Ilya Rozanov?*”

“I’ve been fucking Ilya. We’ve been seeing each other—sexually, at least—for several years now.”

“Ilya. Rozanov.”

“Yes.”

“Ilya. Fucking. Rozanov.”

“Uh huh.”

“You got knocked up… by *Ilya Rozanov?*”

Shane winces at the hint of genuine anger in Hayden’s voice, but he nods. “Yes, and he’s stepping up, he’s helping me with the baby. He’s actually a really decent guy, believe it or not. He’s… responsible.”

Overdramatic as always, Hayden is rocking himself back and forth. “What the fuck?” He mutters quietly. “What the fuck? What the fuck? What the fuck?”

“Please say something that isn’t just ‘what the fuck.’”

Hayden scoffs at him, then he leans back in his seat, staring at Shane in complete disbelief. “You hate the guy.”

“I did.”

“He’s your biggest rival.”

“He is.”

“Oh my god, Ilya Rozanov is your baby daddy.” Hayden giggles, almost like he’s gone mad. “Holy motherfucking shit.”

In an attempt to diffuse the tension, Shane picks up a coin from the cup holder between them. “Swear jar.”

“Fuck off,” Hayden says, but there’s a hint of a smile twitching on his lips. His expression softens then, and he sighs. “You said he’s treating you right?”

“Yeah,” Shane replies, remembering how Ilya had cried at their last doctor’s appointment, how he’d made it clear he loves their baby deeply, even if they themselves are not in love. *Yet.* an unhelpful voice inside his head wants to add. *You're not in love yet.* “He’s been like a rock through it all. I’m… I’m lucky to have him.”

“If you say so.” Then Hayden takes the coin from Shane’s hands. “At least our kids will be close in age. That’ll be nice.”

Shane is beaming as he puts the car in reverse, sensing the tense part of the conversation is over. “Yeah, they’ll be best friends. Just like us.”

“Exactly. Oh my god, Jackie is gonna be so excited. Wait. Can I tell her?”

“Can I stop you?” Shane asks, though he doesn’t exactly mind. Hayden can keep a secret from anyone but Jackie, and Jackie is a damn good keeper of secrets from anyone but Hayden. He can trust them, but after this, he’s hit his limit of people he’s comfortable with knowing his secret.

Beside him, Hayden shrugs. “No, so let’s go get food. My treat. I want to feed my future god child.”

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Now that they’re friends, Shane finds he misses Ilya like a motherfucker when he’s gone. Sure, they text, call, and FaceTime whenever they can, but Shane still misses having the alpha beside him.

His fourteen week ultrasound comes and goes, and Shane finds himself wishing Ilya were there. He cries alone at the appointment, and no amount of convincing himself that it’s because of the baby and how excited he is to see them will change the fact that he’s crying because he misses Ilya.

Damned hormones.

What makes it all so much worse, is Shane starts to show while Ilya is away. It’s subtle at first, but as the days pass, no amount of loose fabric can conceal the fact that he is with child. Well, technically a loose winter coat does the job nicely enough, but if he wears anything that isn’t bulky, it’s obvious he’s got a bit of a baby bump.

Now that he’s seventeen weeks along, he supposes it makes sense, but he wishes Ilya were here to see it. He sends him pictures, of course, but it’s harder to see his bump on camera

unless he's naked. Though he wishes he felt differently, Shane has no desire to send a nude picture right now. He feels the least sexy he's ever been. Like he can't look at himself in the mirror too long or he'll start crying anew.

A lifetime of keeping his body in perfect shape, and it all comes down to this. At least it's for a good reason, he supposes, and at least the rest of him is still in perfect condition, but he doesn't care about that right now.

Ilya is coming to the cottage today, and they're going to spend the afternoon shopping online for baby onesies and furniture for the nursery Shane's converting one of the spare bedrooms into.

When that stupid sports car finally makes its way up the driveway, Shane is grinning wide, stepping out into the cold, February air with his jacket fully zipped up and all his winter gear on. Ilya is beaming, too, looking at Shane like he's got the sun coming out of his ass. "Hollander, you are glowing," he says, gesturing around his own face. "Suits you."

Shane's eyes roll, but he says nothing as he helps Ilya retrieve his suitcase from the car. "Good to see you, too, Rozanov."

They make their way into the house, making small talk about the weather and how much snow they're expecting tonight. It's a good thing they have no plans to go out--there's supposed to be a decent-sized storm, dumping at least a foot on the ground.

Once inside, they shed their winter gear, Shane hanging up his hat and scarf on a nearby coatrack, then he turns around, and Ilya is staring at him slack-jawed. The omega's brow furrows. "What?"

"You're showing," Ilya breathes, staring pointedly at Shane's belly, protruding slightly beneath the thick wool of his sweater. "I can see baby."

Shane's cheeks flush, then he wraps his arms around his abdomen as if trying to hide himself. "Yeah, so? You've seen the pictures. I sent them to you."

Stepping forward, Ilya takes his wrists in his hands, pulling Shane's arms down so that he can see him, *really see him*. He swallows audibly, then he places a palm over the curved edge, a shaky breath parting his lips as he goes down to his knees. Shane isn't sure what he's going to do, but then Ilya leans forward, placing a kiss to his bump, and resting his forehead against it.

After, Ilya's hands drift to Shane's hips, holding him close as they stand there in the grand foyer, swaying gently. "I've missed so much," Ilya says after a while, his voice watery as he looks up at Shane, who stands frozen, unsure how to speak.

"You haven't missed anything, really," Shane insists, stepping back as he crosses his arms over his chest. "All the baby does is grow. I haven't even felt it kick yet."

Rising to his feet, Ilya keeps his hand on Shane's abdomen, then shifts it back so that it rests on his hip, his other hand caressing the omega's jaw. "You get to be with them all the time, I do not. I *have* missed a lot. I've missed so much."

“I’m sorry,” Shane whispers, running a hand through Ilya’s hair soothingly. “I’ll try to update more often, okay?”

“Okay,” Ilya replies, then he’s kissing him, a delighted moan leaving Shane as he’s pulled against the alpha’s muscular form. He hadn’t expected this, but it’s nice, being kissed--it makes him feel wanted, sexy even.

Shane hasn’t felt sexy in nearly four months. Except when he’d had sex with Ilya.

As Shane returns the kiss, Ilya’s arms tighten their grip, lifting him into the air as the omega’s legs wrap around his hips. Though he’s not entirely sure how, they manage to make their way to Shane’s couch, Rozanov setting him down on it so delicately, it almost feels tender and sweet.

He’s grinning as Ilya crawls over him, kissing him again and again as his blood starts to flow south. By the time Ilya’s kisses trail down his neck, Shane’s cock is impossibly hard, slick pooling between his thighs, and regardless of how this ends, he’ll need to change his underwear. “Oh, Rozanov,” he breathes. “I missed this.”

Laughter rumbles in Ilya’s chest, then he’s reaching for the button of Shane’s jeans, undoing it with deft fingers that waste no time in reaching beneath the fabric. His fingers wrap around Shane’s cock, the omega whimpering at the contact, sighing contentedly as he arches into the touch. “Sensitive, Hollander?”

Oh, he has no idea. For the past few weeks, Shane has been *so* sensitive, his body like a livewire at all times. He’s so horny, he can’t think about anything but sex, or go without thinking about sex for more than five minutes. The black dildo he keeps in his dresser drawer has been fucking *abused* since his second trimester started.

But all the toys in the world can’t compare to having Ilya here, Ilya who knows his body and what he wants, who knows exactly how to make him come like he’s never come before. Nothing compares to the real thing, to the reason he’s in this situation in the first place.

“Fuck you, Rozanov,” he mutters, shoving his fingers beneath the waistband of his jeans, and shimmying them off, causing Ilya to laugh as he throws them over the back of the couch.

“Not folding your clothes this time?”

“I’ll fold them later, right now, I need you.” Shane leans forward, kissing Ilya quickly, but passionately. “Please, suck my dick. Or I can suck yours, I’m not picky. Or put it in me, dear god, put it in me.”

Another smirk tilts Ilya’s lips. “Well, if you insist,” he purrs, kissing Shane’s lips once more before he starts trailing kisses along his body. He starts at his jaw, then his neck, planting a few over the center of his chest before descending onto Shane’s belly. There he pauses a moment, placing a surprisingly tender kiss to the swell, then he continues moving downward, placing a couple of kisses to the omega’s inner thighs before he finally kisses the head of his cock.

“Oh, god yes,” Shane whimpers, a hand threading itself into Ilya’s hair as the alpha begins sucking his cock in earnest. “*Fuck,* Rozanov, that’s so good.”

Ilya hums around Shane’s cock, then, just as it starts to feel *incredible*, he reaches a hand down to the omega’s hole, a finger gently circling the rim. Pitchy, hopefully sexy whimpers leave Shane as he presses that finger inside, and his head tilts back as the sensation becomes almost unbearable.

The grip he has on Ilya’s hair must hurt, but the alpha harbors no complaints as he bobs his head up and down over Shane’s cock in earnest. He adds a second finger to his hole as he tongues the slit, lapping up a drop of precome. “You gonna come, Hollander?”

“Please.” He wants to add *please, Ilya,* but they’ve never used each other’s first names before, and he isn’t going to start now. “Please, make me come.”

Licking at the head again, Ilya pumps his fingers in and out of Shane just a fraction faster, and as he takes his cock back in his mouth, it’s enough to send the omega spiraling over the edge. He comes hard and fast down the Russian’s throat, Ilya lapping it up hungrily like he can’t get enough.

As Shane comes down from his high, Ilya pulls the two fingers out of him, lewdly sucking the slick off as just the tiniest bead of come dribbles from the omega’s cock. He licks that up, too, swallowing hard before crawling back over Shane, and kissing him senseless.

Shane can taste himself on Ilya’s tongue--sweet and just a pinch salty, like strawberries with seasalt, a combination of his own scent and come. Still, he kisses Ilya like that, lazy and slow, until the alpha pulls away, smiling down at him. “What?”

“What if I stayed?” Ilya asks, sounding excited at the prospect. “Here, after the snowstorm. What if I just didn’t go back to the team?”

“*What*?” Shane shakes his head. “Rozanov, you can’t.”

“Why not? I wouldn’t have to miss anything, I could be here for you, Hollander.” His hand drifts down again, resting over Shane’s swollen abdomen. “I could be here for our baby. I *want* to be here for our baby.”

It sounds wonderful, the idea of having Ilya here all the time. For a couple of seconds, Shane closes his eyes, picturing Ilya with him at night, fucking and holding one another, shopping for things for their baby, getting to actually do everything together… It can’t happen.

Resting a hand beneath his head, Shane gives him a sad smile. “No.”

“No?”

“You can’t. If you take off, too, then everyone will know.”

“I can just say I’m experiencing health issues, too. Is just bad timing.”

"*Rozanov,*" Shane says sternly. "*No.* The public isn't stupid, they'll figure it out, especially if someone manages to learn that you're not in Boston. Or Russia."

Ilya shifts back, disappointment in his eyes as he returns to a seated position. "But, how else am I supposed to be with you? Both of you?"

"Believe me, I wish it could be different, but if everyone finds out, our careers are over." Shane swallows, watching the regret sink into Ilya's eyes. "You need to keep playing. The season will be over before the baby is born anyway, and you'll still get to see me in the meantime."

Swearing in Russian, Ilya shakes his head. "No, you don't get it, you get to be with them all the time, I don't. Last time I saw you, you had flat stomach. Now you have bump. You're changing and I don't get to be there to see them grow." His eyes are brimming with tears, and Shane fights the urge to wipe them away as he sits there frozen, listening to Ilya's heart breaking. "I have to spend all my time alone pretending that I don't have this, that we don't exist, and I don't know if I can do it, Shane."

The name drop hangs heavy in the air, Shane's breath leaving him in a shaky exhale, and he runs a hand through his own hair, tugging on it gently. "I know, but we knew this was gonna be hard. You're seeing me now, aren't you?"

"Is not the same, Hollander!" Ilya rises to his feet then, leaving Shane feeling impossibly small on the couch. "I come here, we fuck, we talk about baby stuff, I leave, and you change. One day, I am going to come back and you are going to be a balloon and I won't have even felt my baby kick."

Shane scoffs. "Do you really think I'd withhold that from you? Do you think I'm that selfish?"

"Not on purpose." Ilya puts his hands on his hips. "What are we going to do when baby gets here? Hmm? Are we going to hide them away forever?"

No, of course they're not, but Shane always figured they'd cross that bridge when they came to it. He always thought they'd have time to sort it out, but Ilya has a point, that deadline is looming closer with each passing day. Shane's belly will only grow larger and their time alone will grow that much shorter. Someday soon, he's going to be holding that baby, putting them to bed in a crib that he and Ilya will hopefully build together, and they'll have to coparent as best they can despite their growing lives and careers.

"I just want privacy, is that too much to ask?" Shane says after a while. "I don't want to share this journey with the world, and if you go on hiatus, too, they'll figure us out."

"So you don't want me with you, then?"

"Of course I do," Shane replies, rising to his feet, only to realize he's still half-naked below the waist. Reaching around Ilya, he grabs his pants from the couch, shoving them on but not bothering to button his jeans. "Look, it's a sacrifice we have to make, okay? We can't afford to be seen."

A tear falls from Ilya's eye, the droplet darkening his shirt as the alpha sighs. "I just want…" his voice cracks slightly, then he looks to the window, pointedly in the opposite direction of Shane. "It's snowing."

Shane follows his gaze, and sure enough, it is, in fact snowing. Thick, white flakes come down hard beyond the window, and he realizes that now Ilya is properly trapped here, and they've just had their worst argument yet. Turning back, he realizes he's crying, too when a tear streaks down his cheek, then he bites his lip. "Ilya…"

"I'm going to bed."

"It's only seven thirty."

"I'm tired. We'll talk in the morning," Ilya tells him, his voice authoritative and borderline angry. "Good night, Hollander."

All Shane can do is watch as Ilya gathers his suitcase, dragging it behind him as he disappears into the hall. "Night, Rozanov," he whispers, then he falls back onto the couch, his chest wracked by tiny sobs as he curls around the little bulge in his abdomen, wishing he could give Ilya everything he wanted.

Chapter End Notes

IM SORRY

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

EPISODE FIVE WAS AMAZING OH MY GOD

(If you comment let me know what your favorite part was :D)

Shane can't sleep. Ever since his argument with Ilya, all he's wanted was to go out into the hallway and head into the spare bedroom and curl up with the alpha and just cry. He wishes he could make Ilya see his point of view--he's pregnant, terrified, and impossibly alone. Sure, having Ilya around would change that, but impending fatherhood is frightening enough without it being public knowledge, without the risk it poses to his career.

All he wants when this is over is to keep playing, to continue being a member of the Metros as long as they'll have him, and to raise this baby with Ilya on the side. What makes it even harder, is the fact that he wants to be with Ilya just as badly as Ilya wants to be with him, and he doesn't know if it's just the baby making him feel that pull anymore. They're barely friends, how can he have Ilya that close by all the time and try to hide those feelings from him either?

I am not in love with Ilya Rozanov, he thinks, but the denial feels odd in his chest, there's a strange tightening sensation, even. He forces it down, then rolls onto his back, staring at the other side of the bed as if he could somehow summon Ilya there.

Ever since the first time they'd hooked up, long before they'd started to like each other, Shane had always hated arguing with Ilya. It always leaves him feeling dirty, like there's a sour taste in his mouth. The taste is even nastier now that he's friends with him, now that he's starting to wonder if one day he might want to be *more.*

And oh, that's even more dangerous, isn't it? At least if they were properly together, people might come to understand they're in love and accept them and their baby. Where they stand now, this is an accident brought on by stupidity, and that the public definitely won't accept.

Telling Ilya how he feels, though, when he doesn't know whether or not he feels the same way, is even scarier. Sure, Ilya wants to be near him, but what if that's just because of the baby? What if this whole thing is being brought on by pregnancy hormones and Ilya's reaction to him? What if the feelings aren't even real and then they have to raise the baby in that awkward bitterness?

No, it's best to keep those feelings to himself for now, but that doesn't change the fact that he still *needs* Ilya, that he craves him like he's never craved anyone else. Their argument can be resolved in the morning--he needs him *now.*

Rising to his feet, Shane heads out into the hallway, but he only makes it as far as opening the door before he finds Ilya standing on the other side, fist raised as if he were about to knock. "Oh…"

Blinking at him stupidly, Shane steps back. "Can you come in?"

Ilya nods, stepping inside as Shane closes the door behind him. Before Shane can say anything, the alpha pulls him into his arms, the embrace warm and comforting, and the omega buries his face in his neck. "Hollander," Ilya whispers, fingers making their way into his hair as he places a kiss to the top of his head. "Oh, Hollander."

"Rozanov," Shane breathes, holding him close as they sway on their feet.

"Shhh…" Ilya strokes his hair gently, pressing kisses to his temple. "I'm here."

Sniffling, Shane tightens his grip around Ilya's waist, fingers pulling at the fabric of his shirt. "I am so fucking mad at you."

All Ilya does is shush him, guiding him back to the bed. Together, they sit, still embracing each other as Shane starts to cry in earnest, his chest shaking with tiny sobs, because he wishes he could give in to what Ilya wants. He wishes he could just end their fight by telling Ilya to take the rest of the season off and join him in solitude at the cottage, but he can't.

This is for the good of them both. He knows it is.

Part of him hopes Ilya has come here to reconcile, that he has come to agree and they can spend their remaining time here without fighting, but he knows that's not the case. They're drawn to each other, Shane's hormones calling out to the alpha's, summoning him in like a bat signal. There's no fighting it, they need to be together.

And even if Shane is mad at him, he does like being in Ilya's arms.

His tears soak through Ilya's shirt, and the alpha pulls back to take it off, allowing Shane a moment to look at him. Ilya looks tired, impossibly so, like he carries the weight of a thousand souls behind his eyes. "I am mad at you, too," Ilya says, and Shane feels it like a knife to the heart. "Very."

"I'm so mad."

"I know."

"I'm scared, Ilya," Shane admits, no longer having the energy to pretend. "I'm so fucking scared."

"Me too." Ilya places a kiss to Shane's temple, and it's so soft, part of Shane wonders if the feelings blooming in his heart might be reciprocated. Not that this is the time to find out.

They're fighting, and no relationship can bloom in the middle of a fucking argument. "Do you want to shop for baby things?"

Shane sniffles. "We're in the middle of an argument."

"We're not going to solve it tonight." Ilya shrugs. "Are we?"

"No, I guess not."

"This is what I came for, yes? We solve problem later. Let's shop now."

Another sniffle. "Yeah, I'd like that."

A weak smile parts Ilya's lips. "I, uh, bought you something," he says, then he pulls a piece of fabric out of his pocket, unfolding it to reveal a tiny Raiders onesie, all black and yellow and so, so Ilya. It even has his jersey number on it. "For us to bring them home from hospital."

"I'm carrying this baby for nine months, and you want to bring them home in a Raiders onesie?"

Ilya shrugs. "It's their first onesie."

"We are going to be buying them more," Shane mutters, then he pulls out his phone, opening the Amazon app. "Okay, I guess we're looking up onesies first."

Another smile, then Ilya leans his chin on Shane's shoulder. "Maybe you can buy them a Metros onesie."

"Maybe." Shane switches to Safari, pulling up the Metros' website and heading straight for the merch section. It doesn't take him long to find the onesies, there's a surprising amount of baby merch for little Metros fans.

He knows Hayden owns some, but he didn't realize how easy it was for him to find. Sure, he could've asked Hayden, but he's not exactly going to call the poor bastard at three in the morning just to ask "hey, where'd you get that onesie you put your newborn in last week?"

That would be ridiculous.

Adding it to the cart, Shane places the order, eager to see the onesie for his team next to Ilya's Raiders one. "Okay, what should we shop for next?"

"Can we look at cribs? I want to make sure we have plenty of time to build one."

"We have four and a half months, Ilya. We'll be fine."

"I've heard crib building can get tricky."

"Not that tricky," Shane says, but he pulls up a search for cribs nonetheless. "So, do we want to do wood or something else?"

A pensive look furrows Ilya's brow. "Hmm…" he mumbles, then he turns the screen toward himself, pointing at the first white and blue painted crib that comes up in the search results. "I like the colors."

"Me too." Shane frowns. "But it has only three stars. We're not giving our baby a three star crib."

"No, we are not."

"We'll keep looking. I'll stay up all night if I have to."

Ilya shakes his head. "No, you will not stay up. Bad for baby. I will stay up, you can sleep."

"I thought we were done arguing for the night," Shane protests.

"We are," Ilya replies, causing Shane to giggle as he searches through more cribs, their argument from earlier fading into background noise as they become properly excited for their child's future, and what it's going to look like when they're all together.

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"I want to… compromise…" Ilya says, then he rests a hand on Shane's thigh, stopping him from fidgeting as they wait for Dr. Smith to return to the exam room. She'd gone off about two minutes ago, citing something about paperwork. "About my time off."

Shane sighs, bouncing his other leg on the exam bed as Ilya splays his arm across both of his thighs. "How so?"

"I will take off one week extra each month leading up to playoffs. If we do not make playoffs __"

"You better not throw the playoffs just because of me. If our secret gets out, we'll never hear the end of it." Shane shudders at the thought. "Besides, I'm twenty weeks, halfway through, and the playoffs start in like a month or so. You may not need to be gone for that long."

Ilya scoffs. "Yes, because playoffs are my priority right now," he says sarcastically, practically glaring at Shane. "We are about to find out if we are having boy or girl. I am not thinking about the fucking playoffs."

"But you should be," Shane grumbles, fidgeting with the edge of his shirt. "We're going in circles, Rozanov."

Before Ilya can say anything else, Dr. Smith returns with a clipboard in hand, and a guilty look on her face. "Sorry about the wait, gentlemen, had to sort through some paperwork," she tells them, then she sits down by the monitor. "You ready for this?"

Shane nods. "Born ready," he replies, then she instructs him to lift up his shirt, and the appointment truly begins.

The gel she uses is still far too cold, but Shane says nothing as he watches her work the wand over his belly. Ilya's arm, still draped over his thighs, bends to provide a cushion for the alpha to rest his chin on as he, too, watches their doctor work.

Soon, the image of their baby pops up on screen, and Shane feels a shiver run down his spine at how much more baby-like they look, how much more real this is all getting. Pretty soon, he's going to be holding this baby in his arms, running back and forth between hockey life, and parenthood, and he starts to realize Ilya is at least partially right.

There will be no hiding this baby once they're born. As soon as they enter the world, they're going to be a part of his normal life and his celebrity life, and maybe he can hide them for a little while, but he can't hide them forever. He starts to form an idea, a way to properly compromise with Ilya, but then Dr. Smith's voice interrupts his thoughts, and Shane is snapped to attention by her pointing hand.

"Looks like you're having a girl," the Doctor says, grinning as Shane laughs delightedly.

"A baby girl…" Ilya repeats, staring dazedly at the monitor, then he spares a glance at Shane. "A daughter?"

"Yeah, she's our daughter," Shane replies, and he tries very, very hard not to cry. "Our baby girl."

Laughter spilling from his lips, Ilya takes Shane's hand, placing a kiss to his knuckles as they watch her move about on the screen. *Her.* They finally get to call her that, and Shane couldn't be more excited that he's having a girl. Not that he'd mind if he was having a boy, but he's always imagined having a girl when he pictured himself as a parent. Now that dream is about to be a reality.

God, their argument feels ridiculous now, watching the baby move on the monitor. As the doctor explains some of the more technical stuff, Shane starts to form a plan, a way to end this strife between them, at least for now.

Later, when they're on the road home in Ilya's car—which Shane had protested but the alpha had insisted on taking—the baby kicks while Shane is staring at pictures of the sonogram. "Whoa," he breathes, a hand flying to his bump. "Holy shit."

Immediately, Ilya is concerned. "What is it? Did something happen?"

"Nothing bad," Shane assures him, waiting until Ilya comes to a stoplight to take one of his hands off the wheel, and press it against his abdomen. "Just feel."

It takes a second, but she does it again, kicking a little harder against Ilya's hand. Almost like she's trying to say hello to her other dad. "Oh my god," Ilya breathes, laughing delightedly as he rubs his hand over the spot she'd just kicked. "Hi, baby."

Shane giggles, running a hand through his hair as his daughter continues to kick right beneath Ilya's hand. It's a little weird, but a good weird, he thinks. He'd be kicked a million times just

to see that wonderfully happy look on Ilya's face, to hear him laugh like he's actually, genuinely happy.

"This is real," Shane says, breathless and overjoyed. "We're having a baby."

"Oh, yes we are." Ilya pats his belly once more, then focuses his eyes on the road as the light turns green. "*We* are having a baby."

They're still laughing about it as they pull up to the cottage, and the second Shane is out of the Porsche, he runs over to the driver's side, tugging on the open edges of Ilya's hoodie to pull him into a kiss. The alpha is a little caught off guard, but then his hands find their way to Shane's hips, pulling him closer as the kiss deepens, the omega's hands drifting up into his curls.

He's not fully sure why he's kissing Ilya. All he knows is he's so happy he could melt, his joy overshadowing all of his fear, all of his doubts about the future, and he's hit with a sudden dose of clarity.

That's what this is. A kiss of joy and celebration and unspeakable pleasure at being alive.

Pulling back, Shane places a hand on Ilya's chest, feeling the alpha's heart pounding beneath his palm. "After she's born."

"Wha…"

"When I have her, when *we* have her…" Shane swallows, planting another kiss to the edge of Ilya's mouth. "We can tell the world about us—the baby I mean."

"Shane…"

"Ilya, please. I… I can't tell people while I'm pregnant. I don't want to share that journey with the world, but I do want them to know what we made together." He glances between Ilya's eyes, watching them soften with his every word. "Just hold out for me a little while longer. I promise we can tell people then."

Tongue darting out to wet his lips, Ilya shakes his head. "But what about while you're pregnant? I don't want to leave her."

"I'll drive to Boston next week." Shane nods eagerly. "Okay? Give me the keys to your apartment, and I'll hole up in there."

Ilya pauses, thinking it over. "Okay," he replies, squeezing Shane's hand. "We'll do that."

"Is it a good compromise?"

"… good enough," Ilya says, then he pulls Shane into a hug. "I am glad we are not fighting anymore."

Shane nods as he burrows his face in Ilya's neck, breathing in his scent as he rubs a hand over his back. "Me too. Me fucking too."

*

Lilly

dont come to boston

i am so sorry

I am in rut

? Why is that a problem?

I could hurt you and/or the baby

ilya we've had sex during your rut a million times

not with you pregnant we haven't. I don't want to take chances.

what the hell happened to "I need you I don't want to miss out on our baby's development"

seriously? I just don't want to see you get hurt.

I don't think that makes me asshole

I didn't say that I just think I could help you. Maybe being around the baby will help you calm down

… maybe. Look the second I get too intense, you're leaving. I will pay for the gas or hotel or whatever you need. But you. Will. Leave.

ok. I can do that, but Ilya? I trust you.

i hope that is not mistake

Im hitting the road now.

drive safely. See you soon.

Driving eight hours while five months pregnant is not something Shane fancies doing again. Maybe Boston won't be so doable further down the line, but with just a month until the playoffs, he doesn't see it being a problem for very long.

The playoffs. Then the off-season will start, then they'll be free to anticipate the arrival of their daughter in peace.

Ilya's rut comes first, though, and he can smell him the second he steps out of his car outside the alpha's house. The scent of lavender and pine is thick in the air, almost intoxicating, and

Shane feels slick already forming between his thighs as he approaches the house.

The door is thrown open, and a half-naked Ilya comes out into the mid-March air with a relieved look on his face as he approaches Shane with outstretched arms. “Shane,” he breathes, pulling him into a warm embrace, though his arms are a little shaky, like he’s barely holding himself back.

“Ilya… god, you smell *incredible.*”

There’s a heavy inhale against his throat, Ilya scenting him like his life depends on it. Neither of them moves. They should go inside, should get Shane’s stuff into the house, but they don’t. They just stand there, swaying peacefully as Ilya breathes him in, and it’s so perfect Shane almost forgets why he’s here.

“Shane… your scent…” Ilya breathes him in once more before pulling back. “It’s intoxicating.”

Humming contentedly, Shane scents Ilya, burrowing into his neck as he rubs his cheek against his scent gland. “Oh, fuck, Ilya.” He pulls away with a raised eyebrow. “You’ve been jerking off all day, haven’t you?”

“And it has barely made a dent. Come inside, I need to have my way with you all over the furniture.” He kisses Shane then, the omega practically purring as the alpha runs a hand through his hair, one of his arms wrapping around his waist to pull him a fraction closer. “And maybe outside, too.”

Oh, how that sounds promising, but first, he has another problem to take care of. His bladder.

“I would love for you to have your way with me all over the furniture. And outside, but I really need to pee.”

Ilya scoffs, offended. “What? Now?”

“Yes, now. Your daughter is pressing on my bladder and I need relief.”

Laughter falls from Ilya, then he nods, gesturing to the house. “Go. I’ll bring in your things.”

“You sure?”

“Least I can do.”

Smiling, Shane nods. “Okay, thanks.”

“But Shane?”

“Yeah?”

“You’d better be naked when I come in there.”

Heat rising to his cheeks, Shane turns and runs for the bathroom, shucking off his hoodie on the way.

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

> The chapter count has gone up! And may do so again. I just want to allow myself the maximum amount of time to enjoy this story, cause I'm having a ton of fun writing it. I can't guarantee I will be able to update tomorrow, but I hope so.

Ilya must be aching, burning with the fever of his rut, but he still takes the time to take care of Shane first.

Careful hands pry him open, spreading Shane's legs so he can kneel between them at the edge of the bed, tongue pressed flat against the omega's hole, lapping up his slick. The sensation has Shane keening out his name, gripping the bedsheets beneath him as his back arches off of them. *Fuck,* this feels so good.

He doesn't know what he's done to deserve Ilya, only that he's glad he has him.

Another lick, then Ilya's tongue pushes past his rim, stretching the muscle he finds there as Shane whimpers. The omega's hands dig into his alpha's hair, tugging his face against him as he's licked within an inch of his life, Ilya's tongue reaching impossibly deep.

One of Ilya's hands comes up to rest on his belly, keeping him pressed down as Shane nearly bucks his hips into his face. The bastard laughs against his hole then, licking another stripe before he pulls away, lips wet with slick before he wipes his mouth with the back of his hand. "I think you are ready," Ilya says, crawling over Shane's body with a hungry glint in his eyes. "Hmm?"

Shane hums his assent as he finds himself being kissed, the fingers he keeps in Ilya's hair tightening their grip as he wraps an arm around the alpha's shoulders. This kiss is slow, surprisingly soft for a rut kiss, but he's not complaining. It's nice, soothing even, especially given how stressed out they've both been as of late.

The sun is warm against his skin where it drifts in through the window, and as Ilya's lips part and come together with Shane's, he can taste it on his tongue along with the lavender and pine. Ilya is all warmth and sunlight, and maybe part of that is his rut, but Shane likes to think it's just the way the alpha is, that he's made like that. Or maybe, just maybe, it's because he's slowly falling in love.

Before Shane can muse on his feelings, Ilya pulls back, placing a hand on his cheek, then he's pressing inside of him, cock already hard and wanting, and the omega moans around the stretch. He's pretty thoroughly warmed up, but the ache hurts just enough that it's still pleasurable, and he presses little kisses to the side of Ilya's head as he pushes in.

Both of them sigh once he's settled as far as he can go, then as Ilya begins to thrust, pumping in and out with a speed typical of his rut, Shane lets himself go. His legs wrap around the alpha's hips, holding on for dear life as Ilya hits that spot inside him that always makes him wail, and he's grateful Ilya's house is relatively isolated from the rest of the neighborhood. They are definitely loud enough to be heard through any shared walls.

The thought makes Shane laugh as he kisses Ilya, the alpha pulling away ever so slightly to stare at him. "What is so funny?"

A moan leaves Shane then as Ilya hits that same, deep place. "N-nothing," he manages. "We're just loud."

"I'd like you to be louder." Ilya places a kiss to the edge of his jaw. "Much louder."

"I am not going to start actually screaming, Ilya, that'd be ridiculous." Shane shakes his head, but he damn near does just that when Ilya burrows his face in his neck, sucking a mark into the skin just by his scent gland as he thrusts in deeply. "Oh, fuck…"

"Change your mind?"

"Fuck you."

"Stop that," Ilya tells him, a hand reaching down to brush over Shane's abdomen. "Is bad for baby."

Shane kisses him again, losing himself to the feeling of kissing and being fucked, wondering why Ilya was ever worried about being gentle or hurting him. Every touch, every kiss, is so sweet, Shane could almost cry, and he does—damn fucking hormones—tears springing from his eyes as he's brought close to the edge. He always did come quickly, and pregnancy has only made him more sensitive.

"Knot me," Shane breathes, pulling back from the kiss. "Please…"

Hesitance briefly stills Ilya's hips. "Are you sure?"

"Yes, god, don't stop," Shane whimpers, digging his heels into Ilya's thighs to encourage him. "Don't ever stop."

Smirking against his lips, Ilya obeys the request, shouting Shane's name as he comes apart a moment later, and the omega gasps as he feels the base of his knot push past his rim, locking them together. They've never been knotted together before, fearing breaking the condom, but now that Shane's already pregnant, they're free to do whatever they like.

And the feeling is fucking *insane.* Shane feels impossibly full, like he's going to burst, but in a good way. Ilya's knot is fucking enormous, but he takes it with relative ease, grinding his hips against the alpha's until it's fully settled inside him.

Shane comes undone like that, with Ilya's knot swelling within him and his entire body on fire. The alpha coaxes him through it, rolling his hips gently as Shane's come coats them both

in white. It's warm and sticky and gross, but he loves it, loves being surrounded, having Ilya inside him.

More laughter spills from his lips as he comes down from his high, covering his mouth with one hand as Ilya looks down at him with an almost affectionate gaze. "What?"

"You are very pretty," Ilya whispers, kissing him again. "I like your freckles."

"I like you," Shane admits, running a thumb over the swell of Ilya's lower lip. "More than I probably should."

Without another word, Ilya kisses him, and it becomes abundantly clear to Shane that they've mutually crossed the line between friendship and something more. Once upon a time, that would've terrified him, but he finds as he kisses Ilya, he's not as scared anymore.

As Ilya pulls back, he nods, brushing a piece of Shane's hair out of his eyes. "I like you, too."

*

The Metros are heading to the second round of the playoffs. They beat the Raiders with a close four out of seven games, and Shane finds it a little bittersweet to watch his team go on without him. Beyond anything, he wishes he were there with them, that he was the one guiding them to another trophy.

On the ice after the game is over, Hayden blows a kiss to the camera, one Shane knows is intended for him, since he's currently hugging Jackie on the ice. He blows a kiss back, laughing as a second later, Ilya also blows a kiss to the camera, though he looks significantly grumpier than Hayden.

Laughter echoes from the other side of the couch, where Shane's parents are sitting side by side, wrapped up in each other's arms. They're here to help Shane with the nursery, to paint the walls a light purple and finish building some shelves, a rocking chair, and a crib.

Though he supposes now Ilya will be joining them. If he knows his former rival like he thinks he does, the alpha will be on a plane as early as tonight, flying straight home to Shane and the baby.

"Was that for you?" his mother asks from her side of the couch, sipping a glass of wine Shane is staring mournfully at.

"I think they both were, yeah," Shane replies, then he reaches for the tv remote where it rests on his belly, turning the volume down. "Nice of them."

A sympathetic look crosses his father's face. "I know you miss them, Shane, I'm sorry."

Running a hand over his bump, Shane shakes his head. "It's okay. I'll be with them next year. We'll take the cup again." He smiles at his baby. "Yeah? I'll hold you higher than the trophy, sweet girl."

“It’s fun to talk to her, isn’t it?” Yuna sets down her wine glass, reaching over for her son’s hand. “Even if you know she can’t understand.”

“Dr. Smith says she can hear me now. I’m six months along.” He’s twenty-six weeks as of today, as a matter of fact, and his daughter is growing like a fucking weed. Pretty soon he’ll look like he’s got a fucking watermelon under his shirt, if he doesn’t already. Maybe a small one.

“Then you’ll need to watch your language,” his father teases. “I blame your mother for your mouth.”

Scoffing, Yuna rolls her eyes. “Please, David, you swore just as much as I did when I was pregnant with Shane.”

“They say swearing is a sign of intelligence,” Shane replies, setting the remote down on the table before he slowly hauls himself to his feet. Both of his parents rush to help, but he waves them off. “I’m fine, I’m not *that,* pregnant.”

“Where are you going?” His dad asks.

“Time to work on the nursery. Game’s over.”

His mother frowns. “Don’t you want to call Ilya?”

“He’ll call me later. He’s still on the ice, mom.” Shane puts a hand on his hip. “We’ve only got so much time before the baby gets here.”

An affectionate look passes between his parents, and David nods. “Okay, I’ll go get the paint.”

“I’ll get the Philip’s head.” Then they’re off, the three of them headed their separate ways.

Making his way out of the living room, he heads up into the former spare room, admiring all the work they’ve done already. There are stuffed animals on a bookshelf by the wall they’ve already painted, stars that glow in the dark stuck on the ceiling.

Three walls remain unpainted, still a basic gray. They’ll get done today, hopefully by the time Ilya gets here, they’ll be finished, and together they can put finishing touches on the nursery.

It’s a nice thought, right?

Suddenly, Shane’s phone rings in his pocket, “Lilly” wanting to talk to him. A smile blossoms on his face as he answers the call. “When are you coming home?”

“Wow, Jane, no condolences on my loss?”

“Right, sorry. I just… were about to paint the nursery and I want you to see it.” Shane sits on the box that will soon become the baby’s rocking chair. “It’s the purple color you said you liked.”

An amused hum comes from the other end of the line. “Ah, so now you’re listening to my suggestions.”

“I listen when I think you have something good to say.” Shifting slightly so he’s more comfortable, Shane sighs. “So when are you coming to the cottage?”

“In the morning. I’m catching a red eye.” Ilya groans. “Leaves at midnight.”

“Ew. I’m sorry.”

“Don’t be. Will be worth it to be near the baby… and you, I suppose.”

A tiny flutter occurs within Shane’s heart, and he places a palm over his chest, willing it to be still. “No offense, but I’m glad you guys lost. If you hadn’t, we’d be looking at another month or two apart and by then I could be a full blown watermelon.”

“I’d like to see that.” Ilya sounds like he’s smiling. “I’ll *be there* to see it.”

Heat rising to Shane’s cheeks, he becomes distracted by a kick to his abdomen, laughing joyously as his daughter kicks again. “She’s kicking me now,” Shane tells him. “Ow, that one kind of hurt.”

“That’s not very nice of her.” Ilya makes a strange, discontented sound. “Is very Russian, though.”

“Oh, so she gets it from you then?”

“Genetics,” Ilya replies, throwing Shane back to a simpler time, when they’d only just started hooking up, and their relationship wasn’t anywhere near this complicated. How had they gone from a Las Vegas bathroom to this?

“Yeah, genetics.” Shane exhales deeply. “Ilya?”

“Hmm?”

“Just… get here safely please. We need you.”

“I will, Shane. I promise.”

*

The next morning, Shane picks up Ilya from the airport. He can’t leave the car for fear of being spotted with his now sizable bump, but the second he and Ilya are on the road, he gives the alpha an enormous smile, relieved beyond measure to see him.

Ilya smiles back, the two of them falling into easy conversation on the hour-long drive back to the cottage. When they arrive, Shane helps Ilya with his things despite the alpha’s protests. “Shane, you’re six months pregnant, you shouldn’t be lifting my suitcase.”

“I have to keep up my strength somehow,” Shane mutters, staring at his own arms, mourning the loss of some of the muscle there. “I can’t go back to hockey if I let myself go while I’m pregnant.”

“Yeah but, isn’t there a limit to how much you can carry?”

“Yes, but I lifted your suitcase for two seconds, I think we’ll be fine.”

Glaring at him, Ilya takes the suitcase from Shane’s hand. “You need to be more careful.”

“I’m not made of glass, Ilya,” Shane protests, running a frustrated hand through his hair. “I shouldn’t have to ask for permission before I do anything that *might* be a little strenuous.”

Ilya cocks his head to the side. “I’ll have to look up that word. ‘Strenuous.’” He pronounces it wrong, and Shane’s heart thaws a little.

“Come on, let’s go inside,” Shane says, gesturing to the house. “I want to show you what we’ve done to the nursery.”

At this, Ilya grins, and he follows Shane into the cottage, hanging on his every word as the omega explains what they’ve done so far. “My parents are out getting more paint. We got through most of the walls, but ran out midway through the last one,” he says, gesturing to the half-painted wall. “Hopefully they still have that color.”

“Would be a cute story if they didn’t,” Ilya muses, putting his hands on his hips as he looks around the room, admiring all the ways the nursery is coming together. His eyes land on the baby’s changing station, diapers already stacked on the shelf beneath. “Wow… she’s really coming.”

“She is.” Shane rests a hand on his belly, breathing as deeply as the baby will allow.

A frown forms on Ilya’s mouth. “You ok?”

“It’s just a little harder to breathe these days,” Shane admits, sitting down on top of the rocking chair box again. “But it’s okay, it’s worth it for her, right?”

The frown still present on his face, Ilya kneels down in front of him, eyes trained on Shane’s abdomen as he places his hands on either side. *What the fuck is he doing?* Shane wonders, watching Ilya as he leans forward, placing his head on his belly.

Then Ilya begins to speak Russian, and Shane can’t understand a word of it, but he’s transfixed, hanging on the alpha’s every word. It sounds sweet, whatever it is, and Shane wishes he spoke Russian. Maybe now he’ll have to learn, since he’s raising a baby with someone from there. Maybe he can ask his mom to teach the baby Japanese. Yuna’s Japanese is limited, but she knows more than Shane does.

A trilingual baby would be pretty cool.

After a while, Ilya’s head comes up, his chin resting atop Shane’s baby bump, then he grins. “Okay, am done.”

“What did you say to her?”

“Just asked her to be nice to you. Let you breathe.” Ilya’s cheeks flush slightly. “And I told her I love her.”

Heat flooding his own cheeks, Shane looks away, then he nods. “Maybe you can teach us both Russian. It’d be unfair if you told her things I couldn’t understand.”

Ilya smiles, the sight like pure sunshine. “Yeah, maybe I will.”

Laughing slightly, Shane pushes himself to his feet, then looks at the box containing the crib. “I was hoping you could help me with this.”

“What is it?”

“It’s going to be her crib. Mom bought it from IKEA, so I’m like eighty percent sure the instructions will be Swedish or some shit, but would you want to maybe try and tackle it together?”

Nodding, Ilya takes the box in his hands, peeling off the tape that holds it together. “Do we have the proper tools?”

“Yeah, mom said most of them should be included in the kit,” Shane replies, watching as Ilya gently removes most of the contents of the box, placing them on the ground beside him. “Have you ever built a crib before?”

A bittersweet look crosses Ilya’s face. “Last summer, I helped my brother with the crib for my niece.”

Ah. “You don’t talk about your family much.”

“There is nothing to say.”

“Would they not want to know our daughter?”

Spare parts in hand, Ilya freezes, giving Shane an impossibly sad look. “No, I would not want them to.” He shakes his head. “They are not good people, Shane.”

Unable to help himself, Shane takes his hand, sitting on the ground beside Ilya—with great effort—as he laces their fingers together. “Can I ask why?”

“My father is dying. Dementia. My brother is an asshole. My mother…” A sad smile tugs on his lips. “My mother would have loved you. And her.”

“She’s dead, too?”

Ilya nods. “She died when I was twelve,” he says, and Shane senses there’s more to that story, but he doesn’t push. This is the most vulnerable Ilya has been around him since the day they had their big fight. “At least she’ll have your family. Yuna and David seem like they’ll be good grandparents.”

“They’ll be wonderful grandparents,” Shane says, squeezing Ilya’s hand. “Ilya, I—“

“We should build crib, yes?” Ilya lets go of his hand, reaching for the instruction manual that fell from the box. “Don’t want to waste too much time.”

“I’d argue we have all the time in the world now that you’re here,” Shane replies, but he grins. “Ilya?”

“Yeah?”

“I’m really glad you’re here.”

Placing a hand on his cheek, Ilya leans in, kissing him sweetly, and Shane feels his heart do backflips in his chest—or maybe that’s the baby kicking his fucking lungs—as he kisses him back. It feels good, even as it steals from his already limited oxygen, but before the kiss can grow too intense, someone clears their throat, and the two of them break apart.

“We can come back another time,” David says, holding up the can of paint they'd gone out to retrieve. “If you’d rather be alone.”

Looking at Ilya, Shane finds himself laughing, patting the alpha’s knee as he pushes himself to his feet. “No, we need to get to work. Baby will be here before we know it.” He offers Ilya a hand, but the stubborn Russian refuses to take it, rising to his feet of his own accord. “So… did you get the right paint color?”

Chapter 7

Springtime with Ilya kicks off to a grand start. They spend their days building the nursery, packing it with baby things and hanging out by the lake. It's here that he truly gets to know Ilya, that they have conversations deep into the night about their lives and their hopes and dreams.

One night, they stay up talking until the wee hours of the morning, not sleeping until the sun is threatening to come up, and then Shane all but forces them to.

He wakes up that afternoon to his baby's feet pressing on his bladder. A soft groan parts his lips, his body is so fucking comfortable right now, tangled up with Ilya's. One of the alpha's hands rests over his chest, the other over his belly, their legs entwined as well. It'll be impossible to get out of this hold without waking Ilya.

Slowly, he makes an attempt to do just that, pulling apart from the alpha as Ilya sleeps on through it all. Once he actually departs the mattress, Ilya stirs, but he quickly shushes him. "I'll be right back," he says, kissing Ilya's cheek before he heads to the bathroom, has the quickest piss of his life, then returns.

Ilya moans as he returns to the bed, wrapping his arms lovingly around Shane as the omega crawls toward him. They lay there facing one another, staring into each other's eyes in the daylight.

"Hi," Shane says after a couple of seconds.

"Hi."

"Sorry I woke you."

"Is okay. Just don't wake me again."

"Asshole."

Ilya says something in Russian then, and Shane groans, but before he can properly complain, Ilya translates, "Please just shut up and let me hold you."

And Shane is only too happy to oblige. He wraps his arms around Ilya, winding a leg between the alpha's, and he burrows his face into his neck, just breathing him in.

It's nice, lying here like this, just holding one another. Shane almost feels like he could start fucking purring, but he manages to keep the urge down.

After a couple of seconds, Ilya shifts back, running his fingers through Shane's hair as the omega sighs contentedly. "I wonder if she'll look more like you," he murmurs, still half asleep and a little dazed. "Or if she'll look like me."

“I’ve been told I look like a fair mix of my parents,” Shane says, shrugging. “Dad’s smile, mom’s eyes, dad’s freckles…”

“I hope she gets your freckles.”

“I don’t. I hate my freckles…”

“No, Hollander, they are sexy,” Ilya protests, running a finger over his cheeks as if tracing them. He very likely is. “I love your freckles.”

Heat rises to his cheeks as Shane looks away, then he looks back at Ilya. “What about you? Do people tell you that you look more like your mom or…?”

Ilya’s face falls, his eyes drifting away. “My mom.” He swallows, and when he looks back up, Shane realizes he’s crying. “People used to tell me I looked like my mom.”

Wrapping his arms around the alpha’s shoulders, Shane presses his nose against his scent gland, releasing calming pheromones as he holds him tight. “Oh, Ilya.”

A sniffle. “I’m okay.”

“No, you’re not,” Shane replies, then he takes one of Ilya’s hands in his, placing a kiss to the back of his knuckles. “Tell me about her. What happened?”

A shaky exhale leaves Ilya, then he nods. “My mother was depressed. I did not know how bad—I was too young—but it was very bad. Spent many days in a gray fog, never seemed truly happy unless she was around me. I was her favorite.” He smiles sadly, then wipes a tear from his eyes. “But she lost her battle when I was twelve. I found her… I found her unconscious with a bottle of pills. Dad tried to tell me it was an accident, but I knew.”

Shane’s heart breaks in his chest at the revelation, and he pulls Ilya in a little closer, the alpha sobbing gently into his chest. “Oh, Ilya, I’m so sorry.”

For a couple of minutes, Ilya just sobs, then he pulls back, resting a hand on Shane’s belly. “She would have loved you. Both of you. I can’t imagine my father or brother…” Sniffling, he gives Shane a sad smile. “My father is dead anyway.”

Realization dawns on Shane. Ilya has no one on his side to support him. Shane has his parents, Hayden, Farah, but Ilya has only the hope that his deceased mother would have loved them. Resting a hand over Ilya’s, he places a kiss to the alpha’s forehead. “My parents like you. I don’t know if they love you yet, but my mom thinks you’re funny. And sweet.”

Ilya manages to grin through his tears, eyes impossibly soft as Shane wipes them away. “And what about you? Do you think I’m funny? And sweet?”

“Funny looking maybe,” Shane grumbles, then he’s laughing as Ilya pushes him onto his back, straddling his thighs. Both of them are giggling as he bends down to kiss him, careful not to put too much weight over the omega’s midsection. “Hey, watch out for the baby.”

“Believe me, I’m very aware of the baby, you are huge.”

“Oh thanks, totally what I want to hear,” Shane says, but it’s true. At twenty-eight weeks, he’s starting to look and feel like a fucking boat. “I’ve never felt less sexy.”

“No… Hollander, you are very sexy,” Ilya runs a hand along the omega’s sides, bending down to press a kiss to the edge of his jaw. “I am… *very* turned on by you like this.”

Shane giggles as he tilts his head back, letting Ilya kiss his neck. “See? You are funny and sweet.” He sighs as Ilya’s lips find his pulse point. “You’re going to be a great father.”

“You can make me cry later, Shane, I’d like to fuck you now.”

Snorting his amusement, Shane places a kiss on Ilya's lips. “Okay, but this conversation isn’t over.”

“Yeah, yeah, whatever,” Ilya mutters, then he’s kissing Shane properly, climbing over him with just enough distance between their bodies that he isn’t crushing the baby. “Just… just let me fuck you.”

Shane laughs, but he’s already taking off his clothes, reaching for Ilya’s once his own are gone. The alpha is grinning as he reaches between Shane’s thighs, pressing a finger between his legs as he kisses him fiercely. “Oh, god, Ilya…”

Another finger presses into his hole, then Ilya begins pumping them in and out in earnest. “Already so wet for me…” He pulls back, smirking down at Shane. “You hardly need any help at all.”

“Fuck you, just fuck me.”

“So polite,” Ilya whispers, but he pulls his fingers out, licking them clean before he lines his cock up with Shane’s hole, and pushes in slowly. “Oh, Shane…”

“Fuck me, please,” Shane breathes, the hands on Ilya’s back digging into his skin, nails becoming almost claw-like as Ilya begins to move, and he moans, head falling back into the pillows. “Ilya… Oh…”

Ilya kisses his neck, unable to kiss him properly at this angle. His stupid belly is too big now for them to kiss during sex like they used to, but Shane doesn’t mind. This is temporary. Soon enough, they’ll be able to fuck like they used to--if they have time between the baby crying and hockey.

Part of Shane is terrified for that aspect of the future, but mostly, he’s excited. Just two more months, he thinks as he kisses the top of Ilya’s head. Two more months and they’re going to be parents.

He moans as Ilya thrusts inside him, each thrust growing faster than the last until the alpha reaches a comfortable speed, both of them panting hard. Eventually, Shane reaches a hand between them, stroking himself to completion as Ilya pulses inside of him. Warmth coats his insides, the omega whimpering his alpha’s name as he’s brought down from his high. “Can we go back to sleep now?”

Another laugh falls from Ilya's lips as he pulls out of him, not allowing his knot to swell. "We just slept all day."

"I'm pregnant and tired. Let me sleep more."

"Okay," Ilya replies, but then he rises from the bed anyway. "But I'm not letting you sleep in dirty sheets."

*

As the weather gets warmer, they spend more time outside. Eventually, it gets warm enough that Ilya wants to go swimming in the lake, and Shane obliges him, though he spends his time outside of the water, reading one of his hockey books as he gets some sun.

Ilya's tanning on a floatie in the water, a cutesy little donut shaped thing that Yuna had bought a few years ago when she and David had visited. Occasionally, he swims around the dock Shane has made his perch, attempting to splash him, but the omega just blows raspberries at him.

"You're gonna get my book wet, asshole," Shane mutters, setting the book down beside him as he leans forward, glaring at Ilya where the alpha splashes about in his little donut. "Can I help you?"

"Join me, Hollander, it's nice."

"I'm trying to read."

"Reading is boring."

"It's for work. I can't fall too far behind this season or I'll never catch up." But Shane is already rising from his chair, shucking his tank top as he makes his way to the little ladder that leads into the water.

The water is cool, but not frigid. Still, Shane can't be in here too long for the sake of the baby, but the look on Ilya's face makes it worth it—plus the water takes the extra weight off of his back. A soft moan parts his lips as he disappears into the water, floating briefly beneath the surface for a moment before he comes back up beside Ilya's donut.

His alpha stares at him endearingly, then he rolls off of the donut, splashing Shane as he falls into the water. "Asshole," Shane sputters, but Ilya is sweeping him into his arms, kissing him fiercely, and he forgets about all the names he was about to call his daughter's other father.

Returning the kiss, Shane wraps his legs around Ilya's waist, grabbing hold of the donut to keep them afloat. Water drips from his hair as Ilya's fingers run through it, both of them moaning softly as their lips part and come together. It's serene, beautiful even, and Shane wonders how he ever got this lucky, how Ilya Rozanov ever learned to like him—maybe love him this much.

"Ilya?" Shane asks, pulling back as he places another kiss to the corner of his mouth.

“Hmm?”

“I… I love you,” Shane admits, then he smiles to himself. “Yeah, I love you.”

A disbelieving look crosses Ilya’s face, but he smiles back. “I love you, too.”

“Go out with me,” he says, kissing Ilya again. “I want us to go on a date.”

“Where?”

“I guess just… we could watch a movie here. I’ll set up my dad’s projector and we’ll watch a movie on the garage door.” Another kiss, then Shane frowns. “One day, we’ll have to tell people about that, too.”

“We don’t have to, Shane.” But Ilya doesn’t sound like he means it, he almost sounds like he wants the exact opposite. “Not if you don’t want to.”

“No, I want to. Plus, it’ll make it easier for the public to accept our baby if we’re together. If they know it was love…”

“You were in love with me when this started?”

Blushing, Shane shrugs. “Maybe I just didn’t know it yet.”

Ilya laughs, shaking his head as he pulls Shane in for another kiss. “I would tell the world about us right now if you wanted,” he says against his lips.

“I’m not ready. I don’t want to share my pregnancy with the world. I already don’t have a choice in sharing her, I don’t want to share this part of my life.” Shane laughs. “I almost don’t want to share you. I want to keep you all to myself.” Swallowing his nerves, he manages to look into Ilya’s eyes. “Would you ever want to do more one day?”

“Like what?”

“Like get mated. Married. I know we’re only just starting out, and everything’s so new, but we’re about to have a kid together. Do you want to do more than just… You know, be a couple?”

Fingers running through his own hair, Ilya shrugs. “If you asked me to, I’d mate you right here right now.”

“And marriage? Would you want to marry me?”

“That too, but we don’t have to do that right now. We should take our time. We haven’t even gone on a real date yet.”

“Right… plus a wedding band and mating mark would be a lot harder to hide.”

“Shane…”

“But I won’t,” he promises. “When the baby is born, we can tell people. We can tell them everything.”

One of Ilya’s eyebrows quirks. “Everything?”

Splashing him, Shane swims away, heading back toward the dock. “Come on, I’m getting hungry.”

“Coward!” Ilya shouts, but he follows behind Shane, the two of them making their way back to the cottage.

*

“What do you want to name her?” Shane asks a few weeks later, laughing as Ilya rubs the spot where the baby just kicked.

Ilya hums, his hand resting lazily on Shane’s belly as they watch *Titanic* together on the omega’s garage door. He’d gathered some lawn chairs and blankets, the projector propped up on a table in front of them. They’d chosen the movie because Ilya said he’d never seen it, and Shane wants to be sure he sees what he calls the “quintessential date night movie.”

“Do you have any ideas?” Ilya asks, grinning as she kicks again, right in that same spot. “She’s a little devil.”

“You’re telling me.” Shane groans as she kicks him again. “Eight more weeks of this shit.”

“You’re doing a great job.”

Shane laughs. “I am just sitting here.”

Bending down, Ilya presses a kiss to the round curve of Shane’s belly. “Yes, sitting here growing a a baby. Is very impressive.”

Another giggle leaves Shane as Ilya sits up, pulling the omega into an embrace. “Watch the movie, dumbass.”

“You asked a question. I want to answer.” Ilya ignores Jack and Rose flying on the Titanic, rubbing a hand up and down Shane’s arm. “I have given a lot of thought to her name.”

“Yeah?”

Ilya grins, lacing his fingers with Shane’s. “Have you?”

“I’ve tried to come up with a few names here and there, but nothing’s stuck out.” Shane shakes his head. “I don’t know, something about naming a whole person is just hard… like… she’ll be stuck with that for the rest of her life.”

At this, Ilya nods, expression growing serious, and he takes a deep breath. “I had an idea, and… if you are okay with it, I’d like to name her after my mother, Irina.”

Sitting up straighter, Shane blinks, a smile slowly spreading on his face. “That’s a beautiful name.”

“Yeah?”

“Yeah,” Shane breathes, resting a hand on his abdomen. “Little Irina Hollander-Rozanov. Or would it be Rozanov-Hollander?”

There are tears in Ilya’s eyes when he looks up at them, the alpha seeming genuinely moved by Shane’s suggestion. “I like both of them.” He’s still smiling as he kisses Shane, though it’s a little wet because of the tears. “Thank you.”

Shane wipes his tears away, placing kisses to Ilya’s cheeks. “Shhh, it’s all right,” he whispers, fingers reaching back to stroke the alpha’s hair. “Shhh…”

“I know, I know,” Ilya whimpers, the arm around Shane’s waist pulling him in closer as he exhales shakily. “I… I cannot go back to Russia. I don’t want to go back to Russia. The only reason I would want to, would be to visit her grave. This is… this is a better way to remember her.”

“If I can do that for you, I will.” Shane brushes away another tear. “But I want you to tell me about her. What was she like? Favorite color? Song she used to sing to you when you were little… stuff like that.”

“Only if you tell me what kind of stuff *your* mother used to do for you when you were a kid.”

Shane nods. “Deal, but you first.”

“Why me first?”

“I want to know more about you. You’ve met my parents, and since I won’t get the chance to meet yours, I want to know about them,” Shane says, squeezing Ilya’s hand. “Tell me everything.”

“Well, my father was piece of shit, as you already know, but my mother…” Ilya smiles, memories dancing in front of his eyes. “My mother was kind, always so kind, loved by anyone who met her…”

And for what seems like hours—really just until the titanic sinks and the old lady throws the necklace into the ocean at the end—Shane listens to Ilya talk about what was actually good about his childhood. He listens to the life story of Irina Rozanova, the woman who will be his child’s namesake, and watches a weight lift off of Ilya’s shoulders. For the first time in a long time, Ilya looks free, like he hasn’t a care in the world.

It’s a welcome sight, one Shane thinks will only be beaten by the sight of Ilya with their daughter in just eight short weeks.

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Why Shane still allows himself to sit down in chairs that are too short for him, he has no idea. Half an hour ago, he'd thought it was a great idea to sit down in Irina's rocking chair to read to her--*Please Go the Fuck to Sleep*--but now, with the weight in his middle, he can't get back up, and Ilya is somewhere else in the cottage.

He needs help, and though it'll wound his pride, Shane shouts for his alpha, "Hey! Ilya, can you help me?"

Nothing. "Ilya? Sweetheart? Babe?"

Still nothing. "Ilya! For fuck's sake, I need help!"

At last, Ilya's footsteps can be heard running down the hall, the alpha looking slightly disheveled as he shows up at the door, looking white as a sheet. "Is it the baby? Is she coming?"

God, he's so cute when he's stupid.

"Not right now," Shane grumbles, rocking back and forth in an attempt to get some leverage. "I'm just stuck."

Realization dawns on Ilya's face, and he throws his head back, laughing his ass off at Shane's misfortune. "Oh my god."

"Fuck you."

"I'm sorry." Ilya hurriedly makes his way over to the chair, still laughing as he watches Shane struggle. "Oh my god, I am sorry."

"I'm so done," Shane groans, leaning back in his daughter's rocking chair as Ilya laughs at him. "Fuck you, it's not funny."

"It's a little funny," Ilya replies, but he reaches out his hands to help Shane. "Come here, I'll help you up."

Hesitating slightly, Shane lets Ilya pull him up and out of the rocking chair, swaying slightly once he's up on his feet. Now thirty-eight weeks, it's hard to do much more than waddle everywhere, or even get up on his own. He has to rely on Ilya for a lot more than he'd anticipated, and sometimes his parents come over and help, too, but mostly, it's his former arch rival who earns his praise.

In all honesty, he couldn't ask for a better partner, but he's so frustrated with himself and how much he *needs* Ilya, he kind of wishes this would just end already. God help him, Shane is

crying again, tears brimming in his eyes, and Ilya is holding him again, rubbing a hand up and down his back as the omega sobs.

“I’m sorry, Shane,” Ilya whispers, gripping the fabric of Shane’s tank top, holding him close. “I’m sorry I did this to you.”

“No.” Shane sniffles. “We did this together, okay? And it’s almost over.” More tears spill from his eyes as he pulls back, letting Ilya press their foreheads together. “I’m just ready for it to be over.”

Nodding, Ilya continues rubbing his back, soothing pheromones bringing Shane back from the edge. “You’re going to be okay, моя любовь.”

“What’s that mean?” Shane asks.

“My love,” Ilya replies, bringing a hand up to stroke Shane’s hair. “I’ll have to start teaching you Russian now.”

“Can it wait till I’m not pregnant anymore? I don’t know if my brain can handle anything else.” Shane laughs, and Ilya places a kiss to his temple. “Maybe when I’m busy nursing or something.”

He doesn’t want to think about the fact that he’ll be busy dealing with the press, too. He’d promised Ilya that they could come forward about the baby once they have her, and he intends to keep that promise, but that doesn’t mean he isn’t nervous as all hell about it.

Every time he thinks about it, his stomach twists in a knot. Especially today. They’ve been reading stories to the baby, in English, French, and Russian, to get her acclimated to their voices. It had been why Shane sat down in the rocking chair in the first place. With how close they’re getting, it’s been on his mind more than ever, and every so often, Shane gets distracted by those thoughts of what life will be like once the world knows why he took most of the season off.

There’s another ache in his belly now as he and Ilya make their way from the nursery back to the kitchen. It’s time for dinner, Shane’s stomach growling for food, but it also hurts—and he has a bad feeling why.

It’s probably just fake contractions. Dr. Smith had warned him this could happen, warned him that just because he felt contractions, didn’t mean labor was starting. Plus, he isn’t due for another week.

Calm down, Shane, he thinks to himself. *Just breathe.*

Ilya makes him a tuna melt, just like he had last year before they’d conceived their baby. Shane’s had cravings for them lately, tuna melts and ginger ale becoming a nightly ritual now. Shane sits at his kitchen counter, rubbing his aching belly as the pain becomes just a pinch more intense. “Ow,” he mutters, wincing as it becomes even worse.

The alpha frowns as he sets down the tuna melt in front of him, cracking the can of ginger ale open. “Are you okay, Hollander?”

“Stomach hurts, I think it’s just more of that Braxton-Hicks stuff Dr. Smith told us about.” Shane takes the tuna melt in his hands, forcing himself to take a bite as the pain ebbs, and Ilya comes to sit beside him.

Concern is rife on the other man’s face, but Ilya doesn’t call him out on it. “Eat your food, idiot,” he says, taking a bite of his own sandwich, then he pats Shane’s back. “You and baby need nutrition.”

“Irina and I are fine, Ilya,” he assures his over-worried alpha. “You eat *your* food.”

Though he doesn’t look like he believes him, Ilya starts eating his food, the two of them falling into an easy silence as they eat together side by side. It’s quiet, comfortable, but as they finish eating, that dull ache in Shane’s gut begins blossoming anew, and he groans as he clutches at his belly. “Fuck…”

Ilya’s eyes go wide. “Shane…”

“I’m fi—*Ow.*” He hisses as the pain reaches a fever-pitch, but before he can tell himself it’s all fake, there’s a small trickling sound beneath him, and he realizes it’s very much not. “Was… was that?”

Ilya nods. “Uh huh,” he says, breathing shakily. “Your water just broke.”

“Fuck,” Shane whimpers, terror keeping him pinned in place. He looks at the mess beneath him, at the puddle forming in his chair, and he knows this is real. His time is up—this baby is coming, whether he’s ready or not.

“We need to get you to the hospital.” Ilya reaches out a hand. “Can we do that, Shane?”

Slowly, Shane nods. “Ilya, I’m scared.”

“I know, sweetheart,” Ilya says, leaning in to press a kiss to Shane’s forehead. “It’ll be okay. This will pass, and we will be holding little Irina together soon, yeah?”

Though he’s shaking now, Shane nods, taking Ilya’s hand. “Okay, yeah. I’m ready.”

“Good. Let’s go have a baby.”

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Ilya holds his hand the entire time. From the moment they enter the hospital doors to the moment they get a room and Shane is settled into a bed and beyond. Once they arrive, the doctors confirm Shane is definitely in labor, and from there, things only escalate further.

There’s a little awkwardness as some of the hospital staff realize who just rolled into the labor and delivery ward, and Shane is certain he’ll be all over gossip blogs later, but he can’t worry about that right now. They’ll make their official statement after the birth, and that’ll

put any odd stories the press can come up with to rest. Hopefully they don't write anything too eccentric.

"Ow," Shane mutters for the umpteenth time that hour, gripping Ilya's hand tight enough to bruise.

The alpha just rubs his back as they're led to their own private suite, shushing him as they get Shane settled into a hospital bed, and hand him a gown. He's told he can change whenever he wants to and the doctor will be in to check on him momentarily, since he isn't urgent yet. This allows them another moment to themselves, one Shane finds he's grateful for between contractions.

He lays back on the bed, hands folded beneath his belly as he takes in a series of deep breaths--mostly to calm himself down. "Are you okay?" Ilya asks, sitting down on the bed beside him, taking one of those hands in his.

"I will be." Shane takes in another deep breath. "I'm just nervous."

"Me too," Ilya replies, squeezing Shane's hand as the omega closes his eyes. "Mostly I'm nervous for you."

"I'm not nervous about giving birth, I'm nervous about what comes after." Shane's eyes meet Ilya's, the beautiful hazel color relaxing him a little further as he runs a thumb over the back of the alpha's hand. "We're going to be parents. That's way scarier than a few hours of pain."

A nervous laugh shakes Ilya's chest. "True. But Shane? I think you will be a great dad."

Shane grins back. "I think you'll be a great dad, too," he tells him, then they're smiling at one another for a moment. It's nice, peaceful, like a calm before the storm.

Then the pain in Shane's abdomen starts up anew, and the omega groans, head falling back as Ilya tightens his grip on his hand, countersqueezing against him. "Fuck, fuck, *fuck*..." he whimpers, then he glares at Ilya. "Fuck you, I can't believe I let you do this to me, *fuck.*"

All Ilya can do is apologize, wiping sweat from Shane's brow with his sleeve as he presses a kiss to the omega's forehead. "I'm sorry, Shane," he whispers. "I'm really sorry."

"I bet you are," Shane grumbles, then the pain begins to fade, just as quick as it had started, and he sighs. "I should probably get changed. The doctor will be in any minute. And then…"

"Then?"

"Then I want them to give me some good fucking drugs."

An epidural is one of Shane's top priorities, the omega not wanting to spend another second cursing out Ilya despite the fact that the alpha honestly deserves it. Earlier, Ilya had apologized for doing this to him, but Shane now thinks he shouldn't have denied that apology. This sucks, and it's only just beginning.

Eventually, Shane's parents arrive, driving from central Ottawa to get there, and by that point, the omega has progressed far enough that the doctor on duty has him ready to push. He gets to have his mom and Ilya there, both of them holding his hands as he's guided through the process.

He just hopes his tight grip doesn't hurt either of them.

The entire time, he's fucking terrified, but Ilya comforts him through it, muttering soothing words in both English and Russian, and sure, Shane can only understand half of it, but it relaxes him nonetheless. Yuna tries to soothe him as well, stroking Shane's hair and telling him he's doing such a good job, that she's proud of him, and by the time he's on his last push, the omega actually does feel like he can do this.

Irina comes into the world with the loudest cry Shane has ever heard, and the moment he hears it, he starts crying, too. A nurse wipes her off, Ilya is handed scissors to cut the cord, and she's laid on his chest by the smiling doctor, his arms wrapping around her instantly. "Hey, Irina, I'm your dad," Shane tells her, placing kisses to the newborn's tiny little head.

"She's so little," Ilya breathes, his fingers brushing over Irina's cheek. "You did so well."

"You really did wonderfully, Shane," his mother replies, placing a kiss to Shane's temple. "I'm so proud of you."

Shane laughs breathlessly, still panting slightly as Ilya wipes the sweat from his brow with one of the many, many towels they have on hand. Looking up at the alpha, he can already see the tears falling from his eyes, the fond smile parting his lips. "Do you want to hold her?"

"Of course I do," Ilya says softly, voice breaking as he takes the baby from Shane's arms, immediately planting kisses all over her face. "Oh, she's beautiful."

"Yes she is," Yuna agrees, reaching across to affectionately pinch her granddaughter's cheek. "She looks just like you did when you were a baby, Shane."

More breathless laughter spills from Shane's lips, then he reaches up, brushing his fingers against his daughter's, unable to believe she's really here. He's held her, touched her, kissed her like he's dreamed of doing for nine months. And she is, as Ilya said, very beautiful. Sure, she's a little pink and still smells terrible, but she looks like the perfect combination of them both—already she sports Ilya's blonde curls—and he is so, so, so in love.

"She's perfect," he whispers, letting the tears fall freely from his eyes as he enjoys this first moment with Ilya and their daughter as a family.

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Later, Shane and Ilya sit alone with the baby, his parents having gone out to bring them food. The baby is clean now, having been washed off by the nurses, and she smells like something Shane can only describe as "new baby." Well, and she smells a little sweet like he does, taking after his scent even though she's a mere two hours old.

Beside him, Ilya coos at her, offering his finger to the baby and giggling when she grabs it with her tiny hand. “So precious.”

Shane rests his head on the alpha’s shoulder. “She’s got your hair.”

“Russian genes are very strong,” Ilya tells him, running his thumb over the back of Shane’s hand. “This is…”

“Yeah,” Shane breathes, adjusting the cute pink beanie they’d put on her head so it covers her tiny ears. “I’m so happy right now.”

It’s the happiest he’s been possibly ever. He thinks through the best moments of his life, winning the cup twice, meeting Ilya… none compare to this. Holding his daughter for the first time has been indescribable, getting to tell her he loves her to her face is unlike anything he’s ever experienced.

Then Ilya pulls him in for a kiss, soft and delicate, and his heart melts just a little more. This is what it’s like to be a family, what *their* family will be like. It makes Shane impossibly happy to realize, to see that all this suffering was worth it—except there’s one thing they still have to do.

Pulling back, Shane sighs, looking down at the precious little bundle in his arms. “We have to tell people.”

“What?”

“Now that she’s here, we have to tell people about her,” Shane says, running a thumb over one of Irina’s cheeks, a smile parting his lips when she whimpers. “I’ll have to make a phone call.”

“Now?” Ilya shakes his head. “Shane, we don’t have to tell anyone today. When I said I wanted to tell people, I didn’t mean right away.”

Shane offers a sad smile. “We signed our privacy away the second we walked through the hospital doors,” he reminds him. “I think I saw someone take a picture. We’re probably all over social media right now.”

“So?”

“So, maybe we should just get it over with. Tell the world,” Shane says, placing a kiss to his daughter's forehead. “I don’t want to hide her. Not anymore.”

Ilya kisses his temple then. “How do you want to tell the world, then? Do you want to make that phone call?”

“No,” Shane replies, grinning. “I have a better idea. Grab my phone for me, will you?”

Without hesitation, Ilya does, rising from the hospital bed and his cozy perch with Shane to go to the things they’d laid out on a chair earlier. He reaches into the pocket of Shane’s

jacket, grabbing hold of the omega's phone before he returns to the bed, handing it back to its owner.

"Here, take the baby," Shane tells him, and Ilya is only too happy to hold his daughter.

He smiles down at her, nuzzling his nose against hers for a moment before he places a kiss there. It makes Shane smile to see how affectionate he is with Irina--Ilya truly is going to be a great dad.

For a moment, he just watches them, taking in that last moment of privacy he knows they already don't have. Maybe they could've had it if he'd stayed home for the birth, but he wasn't risking either of their lives just so he could have those last seconds of peace. Irina means too much to him for that.

Shane opens up the camera app on his phone, placing a hand over one of Ilya's as he snaps a photo of their baby, keeping her face just slightly out of frame. The photo focuses on their hands, Shane's on top of Ilya's, and Irina's finger wrapped around the alpha's thumb. He uploads it to his Instagram, tagging Ilya with the caption, "If you've been wondering where I've been the past eight months, look no further than Irina Rozanov-Hollander."

A small laugh shakes Ilya's chest. "That's perfect."

"You think so?" Shane asks, staring at his post as the likes and comments start pouring in. "You know, we're gonna have to explain us, too, soon enough. Are you ready for that?"

"Shane, I signed on to a life with you the moment we realized she was coming. I'm ready."

"I love you."

"I love you, too," Ilya replies, then he's kissing him again, the two of them smiling helplessly into the kiss until they're interrupted by their baby's cry, and they part with a groan. "I think someone's hungry."

Pulling his hospital gown away, Shane holds out his arms. "I got it." Then he takes the baby from Ilya, feeding her for the first time as the world blows up around them, and their last minutes of true privacy unfold.

Chapter End Notes

Now there's just an epilogue left! Thanks for following me on this journey everyone. See you soon for the conclusion :D

Also I wrote another one shot for Hollanov if y'all wanted to check it out. Merry Christmas folks.

Chapter 9: EPILOGUE

Chapter Notes

> Thanks so much for sticking with me through this plot bunny… turned long fic. This has been so much fun to write and I can't wait to write even more from here. Much love, happy holidays, and LETS GO COTTAGE EPISODE.

Ten months Later…

For their child's first birthday, Ilya takes her to her dad's hockey game. Irina is happy as a clam in his lap, clapping her hands with the alpha whenever her other father scores a goal. It makes Ilya proud, to see Shane shining like this, firmly back in place in his captaincy and position on the team.

It had been rough, the first couple of months after their daughter was born. Shane had struggled, with his body, with hockey, with his sense of self. He hadn't been sure if he would be able to play again the way he had before, but after a lot of practice, he found himself again. For the past several months, he's led the Metros to victory after victory, taking them all the way to the playoffs.

That's where Ilya sits now, watching Shane face off against San Francisco, hoping he'll take them to victory. Either way, there's a ring in his pocket he's planning to put on the omega's finger, whether it's to cheer him up or help celebrate, though, he's unsure.

Right now, the score sits 3-3, both teams giving it their all as the third period goes on, threatening to go into overtime. But Shane shows no signs of stress or lack of confidence, he keeps playing like it's nothing, like nothing has changed.

It's very, very sexy to Ilya.

"There's your papa," Ilya tells his daughter in Russian, bouncing her gently on his knee. "Say hi papa."

"Eye baba," his daughter babbles, and Ilya laughs delightedly at the sound. She's still learning to talk, but she'd said her first words a few weeks back, and seems to love saying "baba" over and over again. It's impossibly endearing to Ilya, who can't get enough of his daughter.

And he can't wait to get even more of her soon. Now that the season is over, he's able to actually move to Canada, having opted to switch teams to the Ottawa Centaurs. It's closer to Shane, and he'd wanted to be on the Metros with him, but the league hadn't allowed the

trade. Hopefully someday, Shane will be able to join him there, but his contract isn't up for another year, and he supposes his luck has already run out.

Being away from her so much this past season has sucked, thoroughly. He and Shane share their time over who has her in what city pretty evenly, but it's not the same as when they're together. Plus the two of them take a game off every month just to be together as a family, and it's a little wonky with scheduling, but they make it work.

When neither of them can watch her, she stays with her grandparents, who love her like she's the sun itself. Not that she'll have to do that for a while, once this game is over, they have a whole summer to themselves, and her first birthday to celebrate.

"Come on, Shane," Ilya whispers, watching his boyfriend line up what looks to be a perfect shot. "Take it."

He does, Shane's puck going right past San Francisco's goalie as the final buzzer sounds, earning the Metros a victory. Ilya scoops his daughter into his arm, raising a fist in the air as he cheers loudly, his own voice lost in the roar of the crowd.

On the ice, organized chaos descends. Shane and the Metros are awarded the cup, the omega holding it high over his head before pressing a kiss to it, and handing it off to Hayden Pike. Ilya makes his way onto the ice then with the other WAGs, careful not to slip as his daughter coos happily in his ear. "Let's go see papa," he tells her, pressing a kiss to the infant's head.

Shane looks relieved to see them, skating over with joy in his eyes before he wraps his arms around his family, kissing all over the side of Ilya's face. "Hey, sweetheart," he says to Ilya, then he bends down, removing his gloves so that he can pinch his daughter's cheeks. "Sweetheart."

"You played wonderfully tonight, I'm very proud of you," Ilya tells him, wrapping an arm around Shane's waist. "Would you mind holding your daughter in front of the cup? I want to get a picture with you two."

"Hey, Hayden! Bring the cup over here!" Shane shouts, having to be extra loud over the chaos on the ice.

Hayden Pike, annoying and obedient as ever, skates over with the cup in his hands. "You want me to take your picture, Hollander?"

"Yes please," Shane replies, then he takes the trophy from Hayden, setting it down on the ground before taking his daughter from Ilya, who hands the beta his phone. "Take several, I want Irina to have something to look at when she grows up."

"Yeah, sure, cap." Hayden grins as he readies the camera, and as he starts counting down for the photo, Ilya seizes his chance.

Pulling the ring box out from his pocket, Ilya sinks to one knee, nearly slipping on the ice as he goes. He tugs on Shane's hand, drawing his attention right as Hayden starts snapping a burst of photographs. "Shane Hollander," he begins, watching Shane's face light up as he

holds up the ring. “Champion or not, this past year with you has been the best of my life, and I want to spend the rest of it with you and Irina. Will you marry me?”

Shock and awe still written on Shane’s face, he nods eagerly, holding out a hand for Ilya to put the ring on. He slides the black and gold band on with a smile, rising back to his feet to kiss Shane as fiercely as he can with their daughter still wedged between them.

All around them, the cheering grows louder, the sound of cameras flashing echoing in the background as they kiss. After a couple of seconds, they pull apart, Shane handing Irina to Hayden in order to kiss him properly, not caring at all for the thousands of people around them.

They’re engaged. They’re really engaged, and Ilya can’t wait to spend the rest of his life with them, to be formally married and never have to worry about citizenship or his rights over his own daughter again.

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Later, Ilya holds Shane in their bed, both of them naked and covered in sweat, the omega staring at the ring on his hand with a smile. “Do you like it?” Ilya asks, running a hand up and down Shane’s arm.

“Of course I do,” Shane kisses him, then he shakes his head. “Does everything with us have to be so public?”

After Shane’s post the day their daughter was born, things had blown up quickly. They’d come home to a media swarm, having to fight through paparazzi to get their daughter inside, and as new parents, it was terrifying. Then came the questions, the many reporters, and eventually, they chose to give an interview explaining everything.

The NHL had come down on them hard, but considering they weren’t fired, Ilya guesses it turned out okay. He’d been banned from playing for a month, Shane had also earned an extra month off for his trouble, just until the frenzy had died down, but it allowed him an extra month to practice, to get his groove back.

All of it had been so, so public, the privacy of the nine months beforehand completely gone. Everyone knew about their relationship now, so Ilya figured what the hell? Why not propose publicly, too?

“We can get married in secret at least,” Ilya assures him, placing a kiss to his forehead. “Small wedding. Few guests. Won’t tell anyone about it.”

Shane grins, nodding as he wraps an arm around Ilya’s waist. “Yeah, I like that idea. I’ll invite Hayden and Jackie. My parents, too. Maybe Rose.”

“I’ll invite Svetlana,” Ilya says. “Good friend of mine. You’ll like her.”

“I’m sure I will.” Shane squeezes Ilya’s waist, laying his head on the alpha’s shoulder. “I’m glad you’ll have someone on your side. I mean, my parents would gladly stand up for you,

but…”

“I know… no family.” Ilya sighs, lamenting briefly over how his mother won’t be there to see him get married, how she’ll never meet her granddaughter. But she’s the only one of his family he’d want there anyway, the only piece that’s missing. He reaches up a hand to clutch at the cross around his neck, and he smiles. She’ll be there. In every way that matters, he’ll have her there. “But I’ll have you. You’re my family now. You and Irina.”

Another kiss finds its way to his lips, then Shane rolls on top of him, straddling Ilya as the kiss deepens. Ilya melts into the warmth of him, arms wrapping around the omega’s waist. Now that Shane’s on top strength suppressants, they don’t have to worry about condoms as much, but Ilya still might grab one, not wanting to take chances so soon after Irina.

In all honesty, he’s probably going to talk to Shane about getting a vasectomy soon, really not wanting to risk the omega’s career any further than he already has. They’ll need to talk about it later, but right now, Ilya just wants to keep fucking his fiancé and have celebratory sex late into the night.

Of course, when one has an infant, plans are never concrete. A few seconds into kissing Shane, Ilya hears the sound of her cries over the baby monitor they keep on their bedside, and both of them groan, pulling apart to glare at the monitor. “I’ll get it,” Ilya tells him, Shane laughing as he rolls off of him, and ruffles his hair. “You prepare yourself. I will come back.”

A moan leaves Shane. “Looking forward to it,” he says, watching as Ilya leaves, heading straight for his daughter’s nursery.

When Ilya gets there, it’s fairly obvious exactly what his daughter needs by the smell. Fanning in front of his face, the alpha sets to work changing her diaper, teasing his daughter all the while. “It’ll be all right, sweetheart,” he assures her afterward in Russian. “I love you.”

Pressing a kiss to her forehead, Ilya rocks her back and forth for a moment, letting his daughter settle in his arms. “Go back to sleep, my love. We’ll be there when you wake up.” Another kiss, then the baby’s eyes begin to close, and Ilya sets her back in her crib, swaddling her in blankets before kissing her goodnight. “Time for me to take care of your father now.”

Without another word, Ilya makes his way out of the nursery, making sure Irina is asleep as he goes. “You almost done, Ilya?” Shane asks from down the hall, and Ilya grins, practically running back to the bedroom.

“I’m on my way,” he says, then he’s back in the bedroom, sweeping Shane into his arms as he descends into the sheets, and makes good on his promise of a round two.

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