

Instant Family: Just Add Ice

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Instant Family: Just Add Ice

by [stabthroughme](#)

Summary

A statement released in July, 2022 on the official Centaurs social media channels:

"In October of last year, Shane and Ilya became temporary foster parents to one of the students that had participated in the Irina Foundation's hockey camps after he was abandoned by his birth parents for coming out as queer. Since then they have pursued first permanent foster placement and adoption. That adoption was granted and finalized this month. Mac Hollander-Rozanov has been in many pictures that, with his permission, are being re-edited and re-uploaded to remove the emojis that were used to protect his identity in accordance with the government's guidelines."

An additional paragraph added to a photo Ilya and Shane shared to their personal Instagrams:

"Family looks different for everyone, and our family is no different. Mac is our son, and we are so incredibly proud of him and his achievements. We hope that the hockey community will be as respectful of him as they are of other children of players."

Chapter 1

It started with a phone call from an unknown number after Ottawa's first game of the season. Ilya almost ignored it, figuring it was a scam caller or some journalist who wanted to ask about his *feelings* after winning the first game he and Shane had played *together*.

"Yello?" Ilya answered.

"Mr. Rozanov?" A young, scared voice answered. "It's Mac... From camp."

Mac Belov was 13, already growing like a tree from the initial stats submitted when his parents had signed him up for the camp to when they'd met him in person on the first day. He was good, had a lot of potential, and he was half Russian. Ilya liked the kid, they'd spent the week chattering in Russian and English, and just before the camp ended the kid had come out to him, in Russian. Ilya had felt his hackles rise and fought it back when Mac's dad had dismissed the progress the kid had made in the week long camp when they'd finished the show-game. Not his battle to fight, he'd thought.

"Is everything alright?" Ilya asked, feeling that same urge to step in burble to the surface.

"I um," there was a ragged breath on the other end of the line, "I didn't know who else to call and- oh shit the first game was tonight- shit fuck forget-"

"Mac," Ilya interrupted. "What is wrong?"

"I... I came out to my parents." The way the kid said it sent daggers of ice into Ilya's spine. "They... They kicked me out."

Ilya expected to feel white hot rage, instead all he felt was dread, cold and sticky. "Where are you? Are you safe?"

"Uh, the only place open's the Tims on Carling, by the beach." Another ragged breath and a choked noise that sounded like a sob, Ilya grabbed Shane's phone from his bag and opened the map app, typing in the location. 20 minute drive. "None of my friends are answering their phones and I didn't know what else to do-"

"Mac, I'll be there in 20 minutes, just stay put, we'll figure this out, kid. It's okay." Ilya kept his voice as steady as he could.

"My phone's on 5% and I don't have a charger-"

"Just *stay put*, Mac. Doesn't matter if your phone dies if you're staying put. Okay?"

Another breath, less ragged, but still scared. "Okay."

"You're okay, Mac. Everything's going to be okay." Ilya was lying, he had no idea if everything was going to be okay. He really fucking hoped everything would be okay.

"Okay. I'll stay here."

"The Tim Horton's on Carling by the beach," Ilya reiterated.

"Yeah. I'll wait here."

"And just *breathe*, Mac. Breathe and-" the call dropped with a beep.

Ilya stared at the call ended screen for all of a second.

"Ilya?" Shane asked, towel around his waist in what *would* have been alluring as fuck if Ilya wasn't a second away from freaking out.

"We have to go," Ilya insisted, grabbing his coat to just pull on over the sweat-wicking clothes he wore under his hockey gear. "Mac, the Russian kid from camp, he called," he talked while he pulled Shane's perfectly folded clothes out of his stall and handed them to him, "his parents kicked him out. He's at a Tim Horton's, his phone died-"

"I'll drive," Shane insisted, pulling his clothes on quickly.

Shane did drive, and Ilya jumped out of the car the second it had pulled into the spot, not even waiting for the car to be put in park. Shane would talk at him about it later, scold him probably, but Ilya was worried.

He worried about the handful of queer kids, open publicly and those who only came out within the safety of their week long sessions, a lot. There hadn't been any previously, but after what had happened with their outing, with Troy coming out publicly, with Scott signing up, well. It had been a pretty damn queer coaching staff.

Mac was the only customer sitting in the shop, at the same latte-brown plastic booth benches with the old bright red Timmy's cushions. The kid's head shot up, looking right at the door ready to bolt. Ilya didn't *run* to the little corner booth Mac had stuck himself in, but he did move quickly. Mac stood up, the way all the kids had whenever one of the players-turned-coaches arrived at camp for the day.

Ilya hugged him, tight, and felt Mac tremble as he cried.

"I thought it was safe," he said between tears, hands grabbing onto Ilya's coat to steady himself, ground himself. "I thought they loved me. I thought they wouldn't care."

Ilya felt rage brewing, Mac was a good fucking kid. And here he was, in the middle of October, kicked to the curb for being gay. In *Canada*. In the fucking 21st century. Fuck he wanted to punch Mac's father.

"You're okay, you're safe now, it's okay, it's not your fault, I've got you," Ilya said, phrases in Russian more often than English. "You're safe, I've got you."

"Here," Shane said, setting three large porcelain mugs branded with Tim Horton's logos on one of the circular tables with chairs around it, the mugs topped with mountains of whipped

cream and chocolate shavings. Mac blinked at Shane and Shane shifted to hug both Ilya and Mac. "You're okay, we've got you. Drink some hot chocolate."

Fuck, Ilya wanted to kiss his husband, even with the hoodie string currently in his mouth.

They sat at the round table and Mac set his backpack on the extra fourth chair. His eyes were bloodshot from crying, his hands were shaking while they wrapped around the mug, and he sniffed before he breathed.

"Do you want to talk about it?" Ilya asked. Mac shook his head. "Alright."

"What do I do?" Mac asked after a moment, whipped cream covering the top of his lip.

God, he looked like a kid. He *was* a kid.

"For tonight, at least, you'll come home with us," Shane didn't leave any room for misinterpretation. "In the morning we'll figure out what comes next, okay?"

"kay."

Ilya set a hand on Mac's shoulder. "I am proud of you, Mac. Even if they are not, I am."

Mac smiled a watery, wavering smile. "Thanks."

"He means it," Shane emphasized. "C'mon. Lets get you to a warm bed."

Mac sat in the back seat of Shane's sensible car with sensible tires and sensible interior and for once, Ilya didn't feel like making fun of him for it.

Mac was settled in one of the large guest bedrooms. He had toiletries Shane had pulled from their closet full of various gifted products from shoots they'd each done, and Ilya had combed through both their clothes for anything that might fit a lanky teenager. Anya had sniffed his hand and glued herself to the kid's side, when Ilya had checked on Mac after his own shower, she'd been curled up at his feet.

Shane was in bed, on his phone, glasses on, gnawing on the back of a pen. If he'd been like that on any normal post-win night Ilya would be crawling and kissing all over him.

Instead Ilya crawled into bed and leaned his head against Shane's chest, listening to the soothing, constant beating of his heart. Shane's free hand fell to his hair, idly curling ringlets around his fingers.

Shane spoke around the pen. "What I can find online says we should report him as an abandoned child to the government, that we can put forward an application to become emergency foster parents, and it's possible they'll try to reunite him with his parents."

Fuck that," Ilya cursed in Russian.

"*Agreed*," Shane replied, also in Russian, before switching back to English. "We've already got our Safe Sport clearances, it should make getting cleared as emergency foster parents easier. They'd need to send someone to the house to make sure it meets guidelines."

"What are the guidelines?" Ilya asked.

"Really fucking minimal," Shane scrolled back up and summarized, "one bed per person," they had five bedrooms, all with beds, not counting the pullout couches in the living room for when teammates crashed after parties, "at least one sink per two people, one shower per five, and a sufficiently safe kitchen," check, check, and check. Even if Shane had barely been involved in outfitting the kitchen, he'd begun to use it more since going off his stupidly restrictive diet. "Anya'll have to pass a quick behaviour check-"

"Which she will ace because she is *perfect*," Ilya interrupted. Shane grinned and hummed his agreement. "Is that all?"

"For temporary guardianship, yes." Shane turned his phone off and put it on the wireless charging pad that sat on top of his side table next to the framed photo of their CCM shoot. Then he cupped Ilya's cheek and drew him up, kissing him gently, the warm metal of Shane's wedding ring pressed into Ilya's jaw. "We won," Shane murmured, lips barely brushing against Ilya's as he spoke.

"We won," Ilya repeated, "*together*," he added.

"Yeah," Shane smiled, soft, dopey, *in love*. The smile he'd been giving Ilya in private for over a decade. The smile he'd shot Ilya on the ice, in clear view of the cameras, when Shane had scored the first goal of the game with Ilya's assist. The smile that had already been circulating virally in a meme format Harris had tried to explain to Ilya when he'd met them right after they'd stepped off the ice.

"We will figure the rest out in the morning," Ilya said.

"We will. I texted Mom to see if she could find Mac's health form from camp, double check allergies-"

Ilya moaned softly and kissed Shane again. "My husband is a fucking genius."

Shane blushed, his freckles popping more against the dusty pink on his cheeks. "Shutup," he groaned, all one word.

"Goodnight, Hollander," Ilya teased, turning over to turn his light off.

Shane turned to click off his own and Ilya took the opportunity to slide up against Shane's back and hold him, his nose pressing into the long hair that covered Shane's neck.

Chapter 2

Shane knocked on the bedroom door, it was pretty early and they'd already sent texts to appraise not only their team, but the other coaches, of what was happening. Scott had, true to his goodie two shoes form, sent them a contact for an Ontario social worker he'd apparently talked with at a gala who specialized in making sure queer kids weren't forced back into homes with homophobic guardians. Shane wouldn't've bothered leaving a message if Ryan and Troy hadn't both backed up Scott on said social worker being a decent guy.

"Mac?" Shane called through the door. "Breakfast's almost ready."

He heard a snuffle through the door, but waited until he heard Anya clawing on the other side to open it just enough to let her out. He'd meant to close the door, but Mac was crying, arms wrapped around his legs, chin on his knees, and eyes staring out the window despite the tears. Like he wasn't even aware he *was* crying.

Shane sat on the bed next to him.

"I hoped it was a bad dream," Mac whispered.

"I know." Shane put his hand on Mac's back, between his shoulder blades, supporting him. There to catch him. "I get it."

When he'd woken up the day after they'd been outed he'd *prayed* it was just one of his nightmare stress dreams. Of course it wasn't, and Hayden was still feeling guilty as hell, still did, and Shane felt like the world was ending. But he'd had Ilya, and if he had Ilya, had his parents, then everything would be fine. And it was, fine. Not perfect, but damn if it wasn't a hell of a lot better than what he'd been living. What they'd *both* been living. Eventually.

"What now?" Mac asked.

"Now, you come downstairs and eat pancakes and drink some orange juice." Shane tried his best to offer a reassuring smile. "We've reached out to a social worker who specializes in situations like this, he'll know what steps we gotta take to make sure everything's okay legally."

"We?" Mac's voice held the tiniest sliver of hope.

"We should be able to pass the required screenings to qualify as an emergency foster placement," Shane said simply. "Ilya and I already have our Safe Sport background checks, and they're about as thorough, but they'll have to do a quick behaviour check on Anya and check on the house." He shifted to squeeze Mac's shoulder. "But first, pancakes. You leave the legal stuff to us, okay?"

"Pancakes." Mac nodded. "I can do that."

Mac walked down the stairs just in front of Shane, Anya trotted happily to her bowl filled with the bespoke chef-cooked meals Ilya paid to have delivered.

"Good morning!" Something Shane had learned instinctively was how to tell Ilya's cheeriness-es apart; when he was being cheery to be an asshole, to hide his positive feelings, to hide his negative ones, and when it was genuine. His cheerful greeting was *not* genuine, and the tightness in his shoulders and at the corners of his eyes gave away, at least to Shane, that he was still fighting back the rage that had burned in his eyes the whole drive to the Timmies.

"Berries, pancakes, syrup, whipped cream," Ilya pointed out, "and yogurt because Shane is weird."

"It tastes fucking amazing and you know it."

"Language, *moy tvorog*," Ilya chastised.

"Cheese?" Shane translated, it was mostly a guess.

"Close enough." Ilya placed the plate of pancakes topped with macerated berries, yogurt, and maple syrup in front of Shane with a kiss to his head.

Mac was blinking confusedly as he looked between them. "What?"

Ilya and Mac took Anya for a walk and Shane was just starting the dishwasher when his phone rang with the social worker's number flashing on the screen.

"Mr. Hollander?" A voice on the other end of the line asked.

"Yeah, hi."

"Hi, I just finished listening to the message you left. I'm so sorry this happened, but thank fucking god the kid's got y'all." The social worker sighed. "Sorry, this is Laurence calling back, if that wasn't obvious."

"Given how few people I actually call, yeah it was pretty obvious," Shane tried to joke, but his heart wasn't in it. "I did some basic research last night, we- that is me and my husband are both cleared by Safe Sport 'cause of the hockey camps, and because they're in both Ontario and Quebec we got the national one done which seems to be around the same level as the Ontario emergency foster clearance."

"That definitely makes this easier. If we can get him placed into your guardianship legally you'll be able to travel with him out of the province and country provided you provide the state with the dates and reasoning." Shane could hear the typing of a keyboard on the other end of the line. "You and Mr. Rozanov are both citizens, correct?"

Shane beamed. He'd been able to sponsor Ilya's citizenship after they'd gotten married, and with how high profile their case had been and how dangerous it would be for Ilya to return to Russia, their case had been heard and granted in record time. Apparently the Minister of Immigration was a fan and had pulled some additional strings.

"Yeah."

"Wonderful. Now, I've got some forms here for you to fill out. I can go ahead and mark Maksimilian Belov as abandoned, a social worker in the Ottawa office will reach out to you to start up the case file. They'll reach out to his parents to confirm the abandonment and send someone to check over your house and do basic tests with your dog."

"What happens if uh... If his parents try to take it back?"

The typing paused. "Well, then it stops being abandonment and starts being neglect. They kicked him onto the streets in the middle of the night in October in fucking *Canada*. Global warming might be a thing but it ain't that fucking warm."

"And if it starts being neglect?"

"So with any new case file the minor, regardless of age, is interviewed. For teenagers it's usually a normal conversation, with younger kids it's usually a little more of an involved process. Either way, the interviews are done with child or adolescent psychologists. Given what's happened they won't be hit with any charges, but they can still have their child taken away without charges being filed." There was some more keyboard typing before Laurence spoke up again. "The fact that he reached out to you two, that he felt safe enough to do so, that he didn't hide out with a friend, actually works a lot in your favour here. He knew to talk to an adult he trusts, and he trusts you. And you are doing everything exactly right here."

Shane exhaled slowly. "So it's a wait until we're contacted thing?"

"Yeah. I don't have any contacts for child psychologists or therapists in Ottawa-"

"My husband has a psychologist, maybe she'll know someone?" Shane suggested.

"Oh probably, if you could get him to a professional as soon as possible that would be best. This is not exactly a *small* thing, and there's a massive transitional period attached to it. The foundations of his world have been irreparably damaged, and we can do everything we can to help fix them but he'll still need support outside you and Mr. Rozanov."

"We figured keeping him home from school would be a good thing," Shane said. "Just for today given... Everything."

"You're right there, the social workers should call you within the next couple hours. They'll probably want you to bring him down to their office for the interview if you're able to." The typing paused. "Okay, I've got everything set up on my end for the official report, you won't have to call anything in since I'm doing it through the in-channels. So just. Keep your phone on you, call if you need any help here."

"Thank you," Shane said, and he meant it.

"You're doing a good thing here, Mr. Hollander. Truly."

The call ended and Shane made sure his ringer was on. And then he waited, because honestly he sucked at doing anything else when he didn't have instructions besides *wait and see*. And

Ilya was still out with the dog, which was his number one way of pulling himself out of standby mode. Either Anya would bring over a toy or Ilya would ask for something and then he'd be distracted enough even for a couple minutes.

Instead of a phone ringing there was a ring at the gate of the house and Shane checked the camera app to find someone in a fairly relaxed suit and fall coat with an ID lanyard covered in some sort of colourful pattern.

"Mr Shane Hollander?" The person asked when the camera connected.

"Yeah?"

"Hi I'm Debra, from CAS. Maxine was going to give you a call-"

As if on cue Shane's phone rang. He answered it as he walked to the door and indeed it was Maxine from Children's Aid and Protection Services. Letting him know that Debra would be dropping by to do the home and pet inspection.

"You guys have either great timing or really shit timing," Shane joked. Both women laughed and Maxine hung up. "C'mon in. My husband and Mac are just out for the morning walk with the dog."

"Why?" Debra asked.

"Because she's a dog? That needs exercise?" Shane frowned a little. He'd thought that was obvious.

"No I mean, why is the child out alone with your husband?"

Shane did not like *that* implication, he hit the record button on his phone just to be safe.

"Because he's a hockey player and he's stressed and terrified and the best thing to do with a riled up hockey player is make them take a few laps until they remember the world doesn't hate them." Shane crossed his arms. "We know that from experience."

Debra hummed and made a note on her paper. "Alrighty, so I just need to check through the house, make sure there's nothing overly dangerous." She gestured to the front of the house. "You already meet the window requirement."

Shane followed her around the house, answering questions honestly. She had a clear check list of essentials, she hummed appreciatively at the cobbled together toiletries and clothes and even smiled a little when Shane mentioned how quickly they'd moved to inform the right people. The door opened and Shane heard Anya's barks and Ilya's commands to sit while he took off her harness and leash and then gave her the release command. Shane pulled one of the cokes from the fridge and handed it to Ilya as he walked in, Debra still examining the number of knives they had.

"I swear she's trying to fail us," Shane muttered.

"She is being thorough," Ilya dismissed. "It is good thing."

"I guess." Shane lifted his head when the laundry machine chimed and he ducked out into the basement to switch over the laundry.

Most of what Mac had managed to stuff into his bag in the 30 seconds his parents had given him had been dirty clothes, and by the time they'd gotten it into the machine Shane figured it was worth it to just wash all of it. He tried not to be pissed when he changed the laundry over, but he definitely closed the door of the dryer with a little more force than was necessary.

He closed his eyes and braced his hands on the top of the machine and took several slow, deep breaths. They had money to hire the best fucking family lawyers in the country, they would keep Mac safe. If that was with them, great, if it was with someone else it would hurt but they'd make sure to stay in contact.

Something in the back of his head, the voice that had morphed into a sick, twisted amalgamation of Metros players and coaching staff, told him that it was his fault. If he hadn't suggested running the camps to fund the Irina Foundation, if he hadn't suggested the foundation in the first place, maybe Mac wouldn't have come out until he was old enough to be financially independent, or at least somewhere where he could land on his feet on his own-

But the voice that sounded like Ilya told him that it wasn't his fault, and even if they hadn't made the hockey camp and the foundation and Mac had waited, he would've been alone. Like Ilya had been, for years, because Shane hadn't noticed and-

"Shane," Ilya's real voice cut through the quickly spiralling thoughts that seemed to have no emergency exit, hyperfocused in on the negative. "*Sweetheart*," Ilya's soft voice had Shane looking at him.

"Dirty move, Rozanov," Shane muttered, voice thick.

"I know," Ilya grinned. He reached out the same moment Shane moved towards him. If anyone asked Shane would *swear* his husband's embrace was fucking magic, it stopped his mind from unravelling at the seams near instantly. "Deb-ora," Ilya added an *o* sound into her name with his accent, "has left. She gave us better than passing grade, and interviewed Mac."

The dryer beeped and Shane frowned at it. He'd *just* started it and the cycle was an hour long- "*Fuck*," he hissed.

"You alright?" Ilya asked. He knew Shane wasn't alright, and Shane knew he knew he wasn't alright and Ilya knew Shane knew that hen knew that he knew-

"Panic attack," Shane said, leaning fully into Ilya. "It's okay now."

Ilya pressed a kiss to Shane's forehead. "You should call Jones," he suggested.

Dr. Jones was *Shane's* psychiatrist, though they were making such slow progress untangling everything that it felt more frustrating than helpful most days. Ilya said it had felt like that for him, too, until it had *clicked*.

"Yeah. I will." Shane meant to dismiss it but he knew Ilya would hold him to it.

Chapter 3

Ilya didn't know whether to be happy or pissed off that Mac's parents confirmed the abandonment. He thought it was a given that when someone chose to have kids that they would fucking *love them*, gay, straight, green, blue, it wasn't supposed to matter.

Mac's school had sent him home with forms, and Ilya and Shane had taken over paying for his extra curricular hockey team, though Yuna had *jumped* at the chance to take Mac shopping to replace his hockey gear. When they'd been out they'd done the math, Mac was 18 years younger than them, which wasn't exactly a big age gap, but Hayden had had the twins in his early 20s, and most hockey players got married pretty fucking young.

They sat, after a Centaurs meeting, in the back bleachers of the tiny hockey rink Mac's team practised in. Honestly, of all the places they were likely to get recognized sitting at a youth hockey practice was top of the list. They'd slipped in towards the later half of the practice, baseball caps, dark sunglasses, and nondescript hoodies on, the gnawed string of one of the hoodies back in Shane's mouth. Mac spotted them anyways and smiled and waved.

One of the parents noticed and strode over. "I'm Kate, you must be Maksimilian's new foster parents. I didn't realize the province has the money to put foster kids into private hockey teams."

Shane was giving Ilya a sidelong look that said *please don't*. And Ilya was tired and didn't care what Kate thought of her government's supposed spending.

"I mean it's all new gear too, I wonder if you could let me know the name of the charity that provided it. We like to find ways to deal with the hockey stuff the kids grow out of, you see."

Ilya tilted his head down and to the side, his face twisting to look at her. Still, he didn't say anything.

"Maksimilian isn't even that good of a player-"

"Okay, is enough," Ilya stated and stood, looking at the clock, there was less than five minutes left of practice. "Mac!" He shouted. "We have a game to get to!"

"Oh shoot! Right!" Mac turned to apologize to his coach.

"C'mon, we gotta beat New York's ass or Hunter will never shut up about it being fluke," Ilya said, stuffing his sunglasses into his pocket and turning to smile a dagger-sharp smile at the team mom who'd shown up. "I think we know what a *good player* looks like, if you have problem take it up with our multiple Stanley Cup wins." He looked back at Shane. "*Sorry, she was pissing me off,*" he said in Russian slow enough for Shane to translate.

Shane who was smiling a new sort of smile at him, close to the watery *'I want to say something and don't know how'* smile and the proud *'you just won the Stanley Cup and I can't kiss you about it'* smile. "Scott wanted to grab dinner, after the game. Check in with Mac."

Ilya scoffed. "Because perfect Scott Hunter has to be *soooo* friendly *aaaall* the time."

"He's your friend," Shane noted.

"*Our* friend. He recruited both of us." They talked and walked towards the rink edge. The practice had effectively stopped the second Ilya had opened his mouth, most of Mac's teammates' mouths were hanging open.

"We are kinda a matching set, you get one you get both of us."

"Eh, yes and no, *lukovitsa*. Hayden gets you, he does *not* get me." Ilya wrinkled his nose.

"You're warming up to him," Shane pointed out.

"No, I am friends with his wife and Uncle to his children. There is difference." Ilya reached out a hand and helped steady Mac as he got off the ice and knelt to untie his skates quicker than the kid could. "Besides, Hayden does not like me."

"Because you like to antagonize him," Shane shot back. "And onion bulb."

"Hayden likes me!" Mac added and Ilya grinned up at him.

"He would be more idiotic than I thought if he did not." Ilya wiped the ice from Mac's skates and slipped the guards on. "You good to shower at the arena?"

Mac nodded and stuffed his gear into the monogrammed bag Yuna had gotten him.

"Words, please, Mac," Shane said and then winced. "God I'm becoming my mother."

"Yuna is wonderful, is good you are becoming like her." Ilya stood and threw Mac's gear bag over his shoulder as their kid stood and walked out of the arena between them.

"Who's Kate's kid?" Shane asked idly, sitting in the driver's seat.

"Uh, James. He's alright, doesn't really wanna be there but she's constantly buying him new better gear." Ilya caught Mac's eye-roll in the rear view mirror and grinned.

"Well, money doesn't make talent," Shane said evenly. Ilya scoffed.

"I mean it helps," Mac said.

"It does," Ilya agreed. "We are going for dinner after the game, Hunter wants to check on you."

"Make sure Ilya hasn't turned you into a clone of him," Shane joked.

"It has only been a month," Ilya grinned at Mac over his shoulder. "We have time."

Mac laughed, and Ilya grinned wider, looking over at Shane who's eyes stayed on the road as a massive grin spread over his face.

"I can't fucking believe you managed to get a whole fucking kid," Scott said over his beer.

They were in a restaurant not far from the arena that Shane and Ilya frequented, mostly because there were enough secluded and private tables that they could show up and know no one would notice except the staff.

"What, all the trying you and Smoothie Boy have been doing not working?" Ilya teased.

"Fuck you, Rozanov," Scott said with a grin.

Shane had had to explain the concept of hockey nicknames to Kip, that it was in fact a good thing, and that Ilya did not hate him, because Ilya insisting he liked Kip was more disconcerting than he had meant it to be.

"You wish," Ilya shot back, despite the wedding rings on both their fingers and their husbands sitting at a table back in one of the many secluded corners with said kid. Ilya and Scott had hopped up to get more drinks, though mostly Ilya was investigating the mocktail situation.

"How's he doing?" Scott asked genuinely.

"He seems..." Ilya gestured vaguely. "Is fucking enormous, all of this. He seems adjusted to it, though."

"Adjusted?"

"*Da*," Ilya picked up his vodka, "he is happier, lighter, than he was the first week. I think his mind told him the worst would happen, and it has yet to happen and if we have any say *will not happen*." He barely managed to keep the sneer relegated to only his voice, just in case Shane noticed and thought Ilya was 'being mean' to Scott again.

"Damn right," Scott agreed, clinking his glass against Ilya's in a sort of half-vow half-toast. "I'm glad he called you."

"I'm glad they all have the ability to contact us," Ilya added. "I did not think *this* would be what it was used for but..." He shook his head. "Mac said if he hadn't been able to reach any of us he didn't know who else to call. One of the employees probably would've called 911 or something, and he would have ended up in a system that doesn't care how talented he is on the ice."

"What if we added scholarships to the camps?" Scott suggested. It seemed out of the blue to Ilya and he honestly didn't care enough to ask Scott how his mind had jumped to that point. "The Foundation would still get the money but it would open the camp to kids who only really get to play on school teams."

Ilya clapped a hand on Scott's shoulder. "Hunter. I have already done *so much fucking paperwork*, if you want to figure out how to make scholarships for next summer be my fucking guest. Me and Shane will be busy winning the Stanley Cup."

"How do you turn everything into a fucking chirp?" Scott sounded both annoyed and mildly impressed.

"With the talent you can only dream of, Hunter." Ilya grabbed the sole ginger ale, a fresh straw to replace the one that had been chewed flat in Shane's first ginger ale, and two coke bottles. He carried them back to the table where Mac was trying to explain some sort of modern movie thing to Kip that Ilya didn't feel like interrupting to figure out what. Mac was happy, talking to Kip who was engaging with him.

It was nice.

Chapter 4

Ilya had already been buzzing about spending the first Halloween handing out candy with Shane, but Mac was 13, he was certainly still young enough to go trick-or-treating. Jackie and the Pike kids had driven to their place in Ottawa since Hayden had an away game, and they'd somehow wrangled a full costume set together for the four little ones and Mac.

Shane watched, smitten, with Hayden and JJ on FaceTime with the camera pointed towards the living room where Ilya and Jackie were making sure everyone had their costumes together. Mac, as tall and lanky as he was, was dressed up like Legolas, Ruby and Jade were hobbits, Arthur was Gimli, and Amber was in a gold dress as the One Ring. Jackie looked like a whole ass elven princess as Galadriel, while Ilya dressed as Aragorn. Shane was so fucking in love it hurt, and Ilya looked so fucking hot he wanted to rip off his costume. Or just... pull down his pants while he rode him with the costume on-

Ilya grinned and winked at Shane like he was privy to Shane's private fantasies, though he probably just knew Shane well enough to guess.

"Oh my *god*," Hayden groaned. "This is *so* not fair!"

"Take it up with the fucking NHL bud," Shane teased.

"Fuck you!" Hayden replied. "I want pictures!"

"Yes, you've said that about a hundred times." Shane handed his phone over to Jackie and scooped Amber up before she tried to eat the little lube packet she'd found in a side table drawer.

Ilya caught his waist and kissed him, surprisingly sweet for their normal operations. "You look so beautiful," he whispered.

Shane felt his face heat up and Ilya grinned, eyes darting down from Shane's to focus on the flush that spread across his cheeks. Ilya hadn't told Shane the plan but he'd seemed so excited about it, coordinating with Jackie the whole time. He had, of course, found a costume that Shane could only describe as 'pretty elven man' and added an Evenstar broach to the front to turn Shane into Arwen.

He felt simultaneously stupid and confident and it was confusing his brain.

Jackie set up her camera and the three adults and Mac each took one of the kids and picked them up. Mac had one of the twins on his back, Ilya had the other on his hip, Jackie had Arthur wrapped around her like an octopus while Shane held Amber with her small back to his chest and one arm under her legs and the other across her front to full show off the gold costume. The timer beeped and the shutter sounded about a hundred times.

"Okay, everyone talk to your father," Ilya instructed, setting Shane's phone on the table for the Pike kids to gather around and show off their costumes.

Ilya went to go check the camera with Jackie and Shane gently nudged Mac's shoulder.

"You ready to get a shit ton of candy?" Shane asked.

Mac grinned. "Yeah!"

Jackie joined the kids on the floor to say goodbye and good luck to JJ and Hayden. Ilya, helpfully, yelled "enjoy losing!"

Shane tried not to laugh as he picked up his phone so Hayden could swear without his kids overhearing.

"Your husband's a fucking asshole and he's wrong because we're gonna fucking win!" Hayden shouted.

"Language!" Jackie said.

"Shit," Hayden muttered. "Pictures, Shane!"

"I know, I know," Shane placated. "Go play hockey."

He hung up in time for the AirDrop notification to ping from Jackie's camera.

"Remember you gotta cover their faces, especially Mac's if you're gonna post it anywhere," Shane reminded her as he set about doing that very thing to post to both his and Ilya's Instagrams.

"Do not forget to show Rose and Svetlana," Ilya said, resting his chin on Shane's shoulder and looking at the photo. "Awwww, look at us."

Shane flushed again and held his phone up for Ilya to read the caption.

"Shaaaaane," Ilya groaned.

"You need the practice and *you* made me read you a whole ass Russian kid's book."

"Is Nutcracker! Is good story!"

"Mhm. Read the caption."

Ilya sighed dramatically, looking at Mac who had been watching them with a small smile on his face. "Can you believe him? Making me *learn* on a *holiday*?"

"We don't even take the day off for Halloween," Mac pointed out.

"We should," Ilya countered. "Is better holiday than fucking *Easter*-"

"Language," Shane and Jackie chastised.

"Sorry, sorry." Ilya looked back at Shane's phone. "'Hollander-Rozanov Halloween 2021 featuring at pikepucks and jackiepike's kids. Lord of the Rings, please direct all questions and

issues about the accuracy of costumes to at IlyaRozanov81.' *Really?* You are making me handle angry geek?"

"Making you handle our teammates, yes." Shane pressed send on the post and then opened the text thread Ilya had created with Svetlana and Rose as their token hockey-adjacent friends. He sent the un-masked version of the photo and Svetlana's response of '*soooooo cute*' was almost instant.

"Ahem!" Amber had her candy bag in hand and hands on her hips. "Can we go now?"

"Shoes and jackets first," Ilya answered. "Who has the game plan?"

"I do!" Mac said, following after Ilya to the front foyer.

"So, how's it been?" Jackie asked as Ilya and Mac worked to finagle the Pike children into water-tight shoes.

"Hm?"

"Being a parent for the first time," Jackie clarified.

Shane paused. Because yeah, Mac was their kid, but so were all the rest of the camp kids. Or, well, he had been the same. They had a responsibility to Mac, specifically, because he trusted them and the government had decided that yes, they were a good placement for him for the short term. Ilya and Shane had a meeting in early December with Mac's caseworker to talk about long term fostering him.

A quiet part of Shane hoped it would be a foster to adopt situation.

Because Mac was *their* kid.

"Honestly, easier than I thought," Shane said finally. "I mean, we're not exactly having to get up every four hours to feed him." He took a deep breath and blew it out slowly through his nose before saying quieter, "Mac's still having nightmares. His therapist says it's normal, that it was traumatic. Thank fucking *god* for Anya, if she doesn't get him settled and back to sleep she barges into our room and wakes us up."

Jackie smiled. "No tantrums?"

"He wasn't a big fan of the social media rules, so that was... a *trial*." That was an understatement. Mac had, correctly, pointed out that most talent scouts were combing through prospective player's social medias, and that forcing him to have a private account that Shane and Ilya had to have access to was a violation of his privacy. It was the sort of paradox that only a brand new teenager would come up with and stick to fervently without adding any more reasons when he'd realized how stupid it sounded. He just kept digging the hole deeper.

"We were never that dumb," Ilya had declared. Shane had just looked at him, replaying the entirety of their careers and the accompanying idiotic, dangerous, illicit hookups they'd shared in hotel rooms and nearly abandoned buildings and walls of windows.

What had stung, an unexpected amount, was Mac sulking the next day and when prodded, *gently* prodded, he returned to his loud arguing too fast for Ilya to follow until he'd shouted that they weren't even his parents.

The car had gone silent for a long moment until Ilya broke it, having translated enough to follow the gist, especially the last comment.

"*Nyet*," he'd said, switching to Russian without noticing, "*but we are nonetheless responsible for taking care of you according to the rules and regulations set out by the government.*"

Mac had seemed better after practice, he didn't throw his hockey gear into the car or close the door a too hard. And he'd begun talking the second the door was closed about some kind of gossip happening with his teammates. Ilya had engaged, Shane had made a couple noises of interest and agreement at the right times, but it had still stung.

Which he knew was stupid because they categorically *weren't* his parents, and they'd only been responsible for him for a couple weeks.

"Well, babies, toddlers, and gradeschoolers I can help you with, but teenagers?" Jackie let out a breath. "Good luck."

"Will let you know how it goes," Shane added. "You'll have four of them at the same time someday."

"Oh *god*," Jackie groaned.

"Hey, you handle a gaggle of rowdy asshole hockey players well enough. You'll be fine." Shane nudged her shoulder. "Besides, you've got a good few years of trick or treating left."

"Thank god." Jackie smiled at Ilya when he carried their coats over. "Thank you."

"Don't say thank you he just wants us to move our asses," Shane shot Ilya a look.

Ilya held his hands up. "I am just following marching orders, Mac has plan to hit up every house in neighbourhood."

"Of course he does," Shane looked at Jackie, "this is why I said you should've brought the wagon."

Chapter 5

Shane had been dreading their first game against Montreal, they both were. It was late November, the longest they'd gone without playing Montreal, which meant someone was messing with the schedules to try to keep it from happening as long as possible. The pessimist in Ilya said it was because they wanted to psych the Centaurs out, but the more realistic side of him said it was just good TV to wait for the rest of the major sports leagues to be winding down before putting Shane against his team of over a decade.

Ilya *hadn't* anticipated the pang of hurt *he* felt, seeing the Metro's C on someone else that *wasn't* Shane. Because he fucking deserved it, he'd given them a decade of his life, had hidden and sacrificed the best parts of himself to push forward and through to *three fucking cups*.

It wasn't fucking *fair*.

Montreal had a massive fucking lead on them at the end of the second period, 4-1, and Shane was antsy as *fuck*.

They'd kept JJ and Hayden on the bench, which also pissed Ilya off. And then he was pissed he was pissed on Hayden's behalf, and on JJ's.

At the top of the final period it was a captain's face-off, and Ilya ignored whatever bullshit the new captain said.

Ilya won the face-off and managed to score with Troy's assist. Ilya shared a smug grin with his friend as they returned to their places. *Shane* scored the next goal, bringing them to 4-3. And then Ilya and Shane scored a fourth, and Wyatt managed to block three attempted goals.

It felt like some sort of cosmic justice, like the hockey gods were going '*see, they're better than you*'.

And then an elbow flew into Shane's face. It was a fucking dirty thing to do, and it pissed Ilya off more when the captain joined in on the fucking beat-down.

Somewhere in the stands of shouts of angry fans Ilya heard Mac's voice yell "DAD!" with the same level of panic Ilya felt. Ilya shoved the image of Shane in Montreal colours crumpled and unresponsive on the ice far down to ignore more later, pushing forward from the opposite end of the arena where Shane had been.

The refs arrived before Ilya and the fight was over, but there was blood on Shane's face and he was leaning a little too much on the boards. Despite it, Shane was grinning.

"Are you okay?" Ilya asked, hands on Shane's face, turning it side to side.

"He called me Dad," Shane said.

"Yes, he did, now do you have a concussion? Broken bones?" Ilya felt like shaking his husband, shouting at him to *focus*. Because he was still panicking and their kid was up in the stands panicking too. "Shane. *Are you okay?*" He repeated slowly.

Shane's eyes focused back on Ilya, blessedly clear. "I. Yes? I think so?"

"Can you skate to your bench?" The ref asked.

"Uh, yeah, let me-" Shane's balance was off on the second he tried to push off the boards, and Ilya was right there to catch him before he could fall to the ice. "Fuck, okay, ankle's not great."

"I got you," Ilya insisted, his arm wrapping around Shane's waist to help him to the exit at the ref's direction. The team doctor, Terry, was already there, waiting.

"I know you do," Shane whispered for Ilya's ears only.

When Shane was safely in Terry's hands Ilya searched the stands for Mac, he skated by and held up a thumbs up, mostly for Mac, but the crowd roared their approval. Mac's relief seemed to make him sag back into his seat, they'd made sure Jackie was sitting with him, since the game would be rough either way it shook out, and they trusted her.

Ilya was, despite his thumbs up, *fucking pissed*.

"Sorry JJ, Hayden," Ilya said in the driest, non apologetic tone he could muster as he stopped at the Montreal bench for a moment, "we are going to kick your team's asses now."

He didn't give them time for a reply, choosing instead to skate back to his position when the two brawlers were in the penalty box.

They won, because of course they fucking did. Ilya was pissed that his husband was hurt by people who were supposed to be his fucking brothers and he had something to prove; that they never deserved Shane, and that the team he had now, the *family* he had now, was better than any of their emotionally stunted idiotic petty fucking squabbling asses. Hayden and JJ included with the rest of their asshole team, in his mind at least.

Ilya showered before searching out Shane or Mac, knowing that one would mean finding the other, and if Shane's leg was fucked he'd have to wait to shower till they were home with the tiled bench and at the very least *Ilya* could be clean and non-sweaty for him. It was still one of the quickest showers he'd ever taken, and no one questioned him, Wiebe even made a point to tell him which of the medical rooms Shane was in.

The set of rooms set aside for physical therapy and various injury tending was in between the visiting team's hockey rooms and the last thing Ilya had expected to see was a couple of the Metros teammates loitering outside in their hockey gear, talking to someone. Ilya half brushed it off as shit talking to reporters when he heard Mac's voice.

"I just need to get past-"

"What are you gonna go suck your way to a spot in the juniors?" Someone said.

"That what you learned at the fags on ice camp?" One of the players ribbed.

Ilya glared and stalked forward, shoving one of the players out of the way he saw Mac physically held by one of the players. "Get your hands off my son," he growled.

Eyes shot over to look at him, and Jackie emerged from the locker room, a panicked look on her face and with Hayden and JJ in tow.

"Mac," Ilya shouldered the Metros player holding him back, and pulled him to the other side of Ilya and guided him down the hall before he could start a fight off the ice. He heard JJ yelling in French and Hayden's exhausted English dressing down as they turned into the room Shane was waiting in. Ilya didn't care, he kept his hand on Mac's back to keep himself from turning around and-

Shane had his leg propped up on one of the thick foam pillows they had in the physio rooms, his skates off and to the side, and an ice pack draped over it. He had a second ice pack strapped around his waist on his hip, the one that had been checked into the boards, and thin butterfly bandages over a cut on his chin and a normal bandage on a cut just over his brow where his face shield had cut in.

Mac was hugging Shane before Ilya had finished appraising Shane's injuries, making mental notes of how their usual post-game-with-Mac day would change to accommodate. He made a personal projection of how long Shane would be off the ice for before Shane had even opened his mouth.

"It's just a bruised ankle joint," Shane said plainly, one of the doc's citrus flavoured lollipops in his mouth. "And a bruised hip."

Ilya looked at Terry. "Is it just a bruised ankle joint and bruised hip?"

"Possibly a minor sprain, you'll know if it swells tomorrow," Terry responded. "He'll be good for the next game."

"I'm fine, I've survived worse." Shane was saying it to Mac but the memory of his body, limp, on the ice, when they were on opposite teams and no one knew, not even them, what they meant to each other... It was enough to push the image to the forefront of Ilya's mind. It was a lot, all of a sudden. Almost unbearably a lot. He moved closer to the padded table Shane was sitting on, hand resting on Shane's uninjured leg to reassure himself that his husband was, in fact, *fine*.

"Your former teammates are assholes," Mac mumbled.

"Homophobic assholes," Ilya added, one hand resting on Mac's back, the other wrapping around Shane's hand where it sat on Mac's shoulder.

Shane's eyes flared with concern. "What happened?"

"They kept making *jokes* about me, Mrs. Pike tried to tell them to fuck off but they wouldn't listen. She went to get Mr. Pike and they grabbed me when I tried to walk away." The words

tumbled out of Mac in a stream of nervous words. Ilya wasn't sure if it was a side effect of the time he'd spent around Shane or a natural inclination.

Shane held Mac a little tighter. "I'm glad you're okay," he said plainly.

"I'm glad Ilya didn't punch anyone," Mac muttered, squished into Shane's shoulder.

"Was close call," Ilya agreed, squeezing Shane's hand. "JJ and Hayden would have my back." Bare fucking minimum, but that seemed to be their M.O when it came to Shane. In Ilya's opinion, at least.

Shane smiled. "Yeah. They would've."

"Why are they even on that team?" Mac asked. "I mean they spent the whole game benched, the teammates are assholes, and they seem nice!"

Hayden and JJ weren't within earshot so Ilya didn't chirp about their skills or how no other team wanted them. Instead he just sighed and squeezed Mac's shoulder. "Good question, *mal'chik-zaichik*."

Ilya hadn't meant to let the term of endearment slip out, the one his mother had used for him and Alexei both, *little rabbit*, from the stories she would read them as children. He saw a flicker of recognition in Mac's eyes, saw them widen a little, but Shane remained oblivious and for once Ilya was glad of it. He did *not* want to have that talk right now.

"We have a beaver's tail to eat," Ilya reminded them both.

"BeaverTails, not beaver's tail," Mac corrected in a tone that was as good natured as it was sarcastic.

"I am 30 years old I know what I am saying," Ilya insisted, grinning a little.

"Nope, Mac's right, BeaverTails not beaver's tail."

Ilya mocked offence. "Betrayed by my own husband?" He looked at Terry. "Do you see what I must endure, Doc?"

"Mhm. Go home and rest, Hollander. Doctor's orders."

They were sitting on the couch, Mac allowed to stay up later than normal, watching a West Coast game... Shane was *pretty* sure it was San Francisco versus Vancouver but he was struggling to keep track with Ilya and Mac talking in Russian about something. Shane was trying his best to follow the conversation but his hip was hurting and the ice pack on his ankle had reached the gross just-barely-cool squishy stage.

He thought about saying something, or getting up and going to bed, or anything.

But Ilya had his arm around Shane, Shane's head was on Ilya's shoulder, and Mac was on Shane's other side, tucked up on the couch like a pretzel while he talked to Ilya, their dog nestled on the floor in front of the couch. It was comfortable, warm, and felt like a precious moment despite it's mundanity. Snow was falling outside the windows, some of the houses on their street had already started to put up Christmas lights.

It felt like a *family* moment, he realized, and Shane forced his eyes back to the TV.

His *husband* had his arm around Shane, Shane's head was on his *husband's* shoulder and *their son* was tucked up like a pretzel next to Shane talking in Russian while their *family dog* snoozed. Their teenage son, who had called him 'Dad' for the first time when his ears were ringing and he was still trying to fight back after Ilya had shouted his name from the other end of the rink.

Mac and Ilya eventually faded off and Mac yawned and stretched, a couple vertebrae audibly popping. "Let me know who wins," he said, hopping over the back of the couch..

"Do not forget Anya," Ilya called after him.

"Anya!" Mac called, already halfway up the stairs.

Anya stretched and yawned, then jumped up onto the couch to nuzzle Shane as she did whenever one of them came back from a game or practice with any sort of injury. She jumped over the back of the couch and padded up the stairs, her nails clicking against the wood down the hall and into Mac's room.

"We have a son," Shane whispered.

Ilya smiled. "We have a son," he repeated.

Shane looked at Ilya and smiled, kissing him as easily as breathing. Ilya's hand lifted from Shane's shoulder to cup the back of his head, his lips parting to kiss Shane *properly*. Shane recalled one of their hookups, trying to find common ground about being excited to go home for the off season, to be with family. How he'd really put his foot in it but didn't know it until years later when Ilya had opened up about his father and brother, and then his mother, and every other small thing of their lives before and without each other that had come out in lazy afternoons in the Ontarian summer sun at the cottage. How much his heart had hurt, seeing how alone Ilya had been as a child, how happy it had made him to watch him slot into Shane's family, how fucking precious the moments were when Shane watched his parents come to love Ilya too.

And now they had a son. *Ilya* was a parent, a father who was so fucking open and proud and kind and fair with *their* child.

"We're a family," Shane whispered, pushing his forehead into Ilya's once they parted to breath, maintaining the contact he knew Ilya needed and craved.

"We will be a proper one," Ilya promised, thumbing over Shane's cheeks. "The four of us."

"Four?"

"You, me, Mac, Anya," Ilya counted out each on his finger. "Do not neglect our fur child, Hollander! She is perfect!"

Shane laughed, pulling away to throw his head back. Ilya's smiling lips chased after his, though, and they laughed into another kiss.

Chapter 6

Shane had just gotten home when the Christmas light company Ilya hired arrived. He pointed them to the ladders in the garage and finally got inside with the two bags he'd grabbed from the tiny Italian place that sold their own dried and fresh pasta.

He paused in the doorway, watching Ilya's face scrunch up more and more as he hunched over Mac's homework.

"Oh good, help him," Ilya said when Shane set the bags on the counter.

"Help him?" Shane asked, starting to put away the pasta.

"Yeah, math." Mac scooted over a seat so Shane could look at the sheet between putting things away.

"I do not know these fancy words," Ilya glared at the paper on the counter, "is not needed."

Shane smiled a small, private, lovesick smile as he put away the pasta, wiping the look from his face when he turned around. Ilya was playing at annoyance but his nose was ever so slightly wrinkled, not in disgust but annoyance. Shane recalled the far off look Ilya had had in their first joint press conference when a journalist had asked a too long and too involved question, how Ilya's foot had pressed against his in a quiet moment of thanks.

"Well, I haven't even thought about learning the Russian words for mathematical functions." Shane paused with another bag of pasta in one hand to catch Ilya's chin with the other and kissed him quickly. "So we're even," he finished, bending over to point to something on the page.

Ilya took over putting away the pasta while Shane helped Mac with his homework. It was domestic in a way that Shane hadn't anticipated. When Ilya had first invited him to stay and made him food for the first time, it had been unexpectedly domestic, and it had been unsettling to the denial that Shane fervently maintained. When Ilya had visited the cottage for that first summer, when they lay under the stars and planned out their futures together, it was a domesticity Shane hadn't realized he was craving until he'd had it. Then there were stolen domestic moments; staying over whenever they could, sneaking into each other's hotel rooms at official league functions, photos of Ilya spending time with Shane's parents when he had free time in Ottawa that he smiled at privately before games, all things Shane wished he could have shared and was terrified to even think on for too long. And then, after the video was posted, after they'd come out the other side of the storm, it was moments Shane *could* share.

The secret love letter that was Ilya's Instagram became an open love letter, and Shane's posts stopped being restricted by his team. Harris had even sat with Shane and explained the barrage of features on Instagram besides the post and dm buttons, he'd been fucking delighted when Shane had asked.

Now Shane was almost as active as Ilya, shots of them at the cottage, pictures from their wedding, from Ibiza, from the training camps, from practice, from home, all of them were just domestic. Ilya's had shifted from seemingly random things that he would never openly admit were connected to Shane (but he blushed any time Shane even hinted at their meaning) to mostly pictures of Shane, with Shane, or Anya. The most liked photo on Ilya's entire page was the two of them at the cottage just before the season started; they were in one of the closets going through the clothes they'd need to bring to Ottawa, with the trees turning red and orange in the reflection of the window, and Shane and Ilya were both shirtless. Shane had ducked to press a kiss to Ilya's shoulder and had decided to just lay his head there for a minute, eyes looking out the window, while Ilya played with his hair. Ilya had snapped the picture in the mirror, Shane hadn't even noticed that his arms had wrapped around Ilya's waist, nor had he noticed the picture.

Of course Ilya had asked to post it, and shown Shane the caption. *"Married life is going great"* it had read. Both their rings had been obvious, with Ilya's phone in his left hand and Shane's glinted in the light of the closet. They both found it ironic. Scott, who'd been to the cottage all of once, had the top comment on the post but it *really* read like Kip had typed it *"I can't believe you posted your marriage announcement with a picture in the closet"*.

The rest of the comments were a mix of congratulations and people losing their minds over the bruises that littered both their necks and chests.

"What are you thinking about?" Ilya asked, sliding an arm around Shane's waist and hooking his chin over Shane's shoulder as Mac worked away at a math problem.

"Tell you later," Shane whispered. "Chicken parmesan?" He suggested, louder.

"Yes!" Mac shouted instantly, then adding a quieter, "please?"

"Ilya can you-?" Shane started to ask.

"I have chicken, *khokkeynaya klyushka* you do pasta," Ilya finished.

"Thank you." Shane caught Ilya's hand as he reached for one of the cutting boards and kissed his wrist quickly. "Hockey stick. Easy."

"I know," Ilya dismissed. His tone made it clear to Shane that it was not a response to his claim that translating hockey stick was too easy for their little game, but the thank you. Because Shane hated handling raw chicken, it felt like he could feel the slimy texture lingering on his fingers and spreading over his skin. And Ilya knew that Shane didn't like touching raw chicken.

Shane grinned and pulled a couple cans of tomatoes from the cabinet and slid them and the opener over to Mac. Expanding his and Ilya's insular cooking togetherness to Mac had been easy, and just like everything else, blissfully domestic.

"Okay, so we're at the point right now where the Belovs have stopped responding to any communication," Mac's caseworker said. Mac was one floor down with his therapist and the snow was really coming down. "At this point we can look at designating you his permanent foster parents or finding him another placement, I know for you two the playoff season can get a little intense-

"Is adoption an option?" Shane asked.

They'd talked about it, and it had probably been the briefest life-deciding conversation the two of them had ever had.

"If it is option," Ilya had said, laying in bed, looking up at Shane with his adorable fucking glasses and his overly stressed posture.

"Do you... want it to be?" Shane had tried not to sound nervous, but he was wearing one of Ilya's shirts after showering and that was more a marker of stress than anything else. Either it was on purpose because he'd sought out comfort or he'd been too stressed to notice and thought it was one of his.

Ilya set his phone on his chest and had looked at Shane, trying to discern what was making him nervous before he answered. "*Da*," Ilya answered. "He is family, yes?"

"Of course he is I just-" Shane shook his head. "This wasn't in the plan-

"Sweetheart our plan went out the window seven months ago, was shit plan, did not have room to change," Ilya aimed for levity and was rewarded with a smile.

"So... Fuck the plan?" Shane phrased it like a question.

"Fuck the plan," Ilya had agreed. "Life does not respect our plans."

The caseworker looked between the two of them. "Adoption is a lot more than just some paperwork, the Belovs would have to formally terminate their parental rights-

"Is that not done already?" Ilya frowned, looking over at Shane. "I thought that was the abandonment."

"Legally they still have rights, and legally we pursue reunification before adoption is considered." She held her hand up when Ilya opened his mouth. "I know. I know. With teenagers it's a little more complicated. At this point, if you're genuinely considering adopting him then I would tell you to just wait until he ages out in five years. Adult adoption doesn't require anything but the adoptee's and adoptives' consent. It would really make no big difference."

Ilya's frowned deepened. It *would* make a difference, because being their *foster* child, being Mac's *foster* parents, was different than him being their *son*, being Mac's *fathers*. The part of Ilya's mind that had learned to keep his deep distrust of governmental systems to himself for his and his loved ones' safety told him that if they were *foster* family then he could be taken away.

"It makes a difference," Shane spoke without shouting at the caseworker, calmer in his words than Ilya felt able to be. "Right now Mac's being told we aren't his family, and we are. We showed up for him and we want him to know we're choosing him."

"It'd be a lot of paperwork, and you'd have to hire a lawyer and serve the Belovs with the required documents, and only if they sign them could you go ahead with more paperwork." The caseworker set her pen down. "You both have busy lives." Like having a job from October to April, through to June if they went to the playoffs, was different from anyone else.

"What is more paperwork?" Ilya dismissed.

"We fly a lot," Shane added. "Lots of time to do paperwork."

"Talk to a family lawyer. For now, we'll start the process for you to be Maksimilian's permanent foster placement." She handed some forms over for them to sign. Ilya trusted Shane to read through them, and he was, his glasses out of his pocket and on after a few moments of squinting at the paper.

Ilya pulled his phone out and typed up an email to Lucy to ask for a family lawyer she trusted, and gave the rundown of what the caseworker had said about just *waiting* for Mac to age out. It seemed fucking ridiculous, at least to Ilya, and he was halfway through typing the breakdown of the caseworker's idiotic points when Shane's free hand came out to rest on Ilya's leg. He didn't look up from the paper, but he squeezed gently, reassuringly. Ilya blinked and took a breath and realized he'd been clenching his jaw and glaring at the phone screen.

He'd also switched to the Cyrillic keyboard and begun to type in Russian. He saved the email as a draft to translate later.

Shane signed the forms and held the clipboard out to Ilya who signed in the second blank space.

"Great, I've got everything else here so shouldn't be a problem." The caseworker looked at her watch. "Maksimilian still has about a half hour left with his therapist, so if I need anything else I'll let you know when you pick him up."

"Great," Ilya said flatly, following Shane out the door.

"*Ilya*," Shane chastized when the elevator doors closed.

"What? Was stupid fucking opinion." He did his best idiot impression, which meant he did his best Hayden Pike impression, "'Maksimilian should just age out of foster care. You don't have time for legal work. The Belovs are his real parents and always will be'," he dropped the impression, "bullshit."

"It is," Shane agreed, reaching out to take Ilya's hand in his. Ilya raised Shane's hand to his lips and kissed his knuckles. "You didn't snap at her."

"She called him Maksimilian. Twice. He hates being called Maksimilian." Ilya let his head flop over onto Shane's shoulder, watching the slowest elevator in the world crawl to the

ground floor. "*Do you think he wants to be adopted? I mean, would we be taking something from him?*" Ilya asked in Russian.

"We'd ask him, if it's even possible." Shane squeezed Ilya's hand. "If he does want us to adopt him, and it's not possible, then we'd be giving him false hope."

"Do you think his genetic fuckheads would sign away their rights if we paid them?" Ilya asked.

"That's almost definitely illegal, Ilya."

"Damn." Ilya sighed. "Would make it easy."

"And probably lead to a bunch of exploited kids," Shane pointed out.

"Point Hollander." Ilya stood up when the door dinged open.

"Coffee?" Shane suggested, already walking to the little cafe that took up a corner of the atrium in the tall building that the CAS used three floors of.

"Obviously." Ilya was only a step behind him, and while he could have caught up he took the chance to let his eyes skirt down Shane's back to watch his ass for a few moments.

Until Shane turned to ask him something when they reached the door to the cafe. His mouth dropped open, eyebrows raised and knitted together to form a little crease just above the bridge of his glasses. "*Really* Rozanov?"

"What? Can I not admire my husband?" Ilya opened the door and stepped into the line. He rattled off Shane's order by heart and ordered one of the cafe's holiday flavoured cookies to split between them before Shane could press further.

"What were you typing?" Shane asked when Ilya sat at the table with the cookie on a little plate, waiting for their drinks.

"Hm?" Ilya asked, a bite of cookie in his mouth.

"Upstairs, when I was reading the forms. I looked over and you were typing in Russian."

Ilya broke off a piece of the cookie and held it up to Shane's mouth, grinning a little triumphantly when he took it, both that Shane was actually eating sweets again *and* that Shane's mouth was on his skin. "Was asking Lucy if she knew any family lawyers."

"Mm, she probably does." Shane smiled. "Honestly, she might even *be* a family lawyer."

"Maybe." Ilya wrinkled his nose. "I did not like how it was phrased. I tried to explain what was said."

"And you couldn't translate your rage to English?" Shane was half teasing. "I thought you only raged in English so the stupid Americans and boring Canadians could understand you."

"Unfortunately I am now boring Canadian," Ilya sighed. "My handsome husband is boring Canadian and makes it very hard to stay angry."

"Well that sounds like quite a hardship," Shane was fully teasing now, grinning his cocksure grin that Ilya fucking *loved*.

"Yes, the worst. And he has the cutest smile and freckles that are burned into my brain." Ilya popped a bit of cookie into his mouth, smugly watching as said freckles were made all the more prominent by the blush that spread across Shane's cheeks. "True pain."

"Oh how impossible your life must be," Shane leaned over the table, looking up at Ilya with hooded eyes and *fuck* he loved Shane's eyes, "I can't even begin to think how he could compensate you for all of the trouble he causes you."

Ilya leaned in, nose brushing Shane's. "I can think of some *methods* of compensation, *banka gazirovki*."

"Pop can," Shane translated, leaning in as if to kiss Ilya, only to grab the cookie from his hand and stand up to go get their drinks from the barista.

Ilya flopped back in his chair with a groan of protest, his head falling back to follow Shane's movements.

Shane returned with their drinks and set them down before putting his thumb on Ilya's chin with the smallest bit of pressure. Ilya opened his mouth and Shane dropped the last bit of cookie into it, then kisses the tip of his nose.

And Ilya was so fucking in love he could fly.

Chapter 7

It was a Christmas party, a week before the actual holiday itself, at Shane and Ilya's home in Ottawa. There were still two games to go for both Ottawa and Montreal but they'd made the choice to host when the Ottawa team *and* JJ and Hayden could make it.

"You really don't like them, huh?" Fabian asked, a fruity mixed drink that had come pre-mixed in a can that was almost as colourfully festive as the musician's makeup in hand.

"Who?" Ilya asked.

"Those two, the black guy and the guy with like, ten kids."

"Why do you think I do not like JJ and Hayden?" Ilya looked down at the smallest person in the room, besides the literal children. "They were at my wedding. They are Hollander's friends." He winced a little and took a sip of his wine to cover it up. "Shane's friends," he corrected.

"*Mhm.*" Fabian squinted. "I could *try* to pry it out of Ryan but I'm pretty sure he'd have the most cliffnotes version of it."

"I do not like how they treated him," Ilya answered. "Hayden has never liked me, thought Shane loving me was stupid and self-destructive. And JJ..." Ilya took another sip of his wine. "He felt fucking *entitled* to Shane's secrets. Because he considered Shane a good friend."

"Entitled?"

"Yes, he could not understand why Shane did not want to tell him, then assumed that Shane tripped on purpose to let me score a goal after we were..." *outed*.

He didn't say it, because it didn't feel real, sometimes. But Fabian's gaze softened and he put a reassuring hand on Ilya's arm.

"Then why are they here?" Fabian asked.

"Because they are the only two people, of every Montreal player that Shane captained, to even sort of stand by him." Ilya shook his head. "I like the *four* Pike children, too. Hayden's wife is nice. It is a package deal."

"So... You don't want them here but they're here because you're giving them a second chance for Shane's sake," Fabian summarized.

Ilya nodded.

"Wow. Hockey's so... Soapy."

"Soapy?" Ilya frowned. "I do not understand that adjective."

"Oh uh, like a soap opera, like reality TV but acted out. I guess." Fabian looked at JJ and Hayden, his head tilted to one side the same way Anya's did when she was hearing an unfamiliar noise. "Cute kids, at least."

"And nothing like their father," Ilya agreed.

Fabian giggled and Ilya grinned, watching as Ryan re-attached himself to Fabian's side with a paper plate of cookies in his hand.

"Wyatt tried to explain the New 52 to me," the former player said, arm tight around Fabian's waist like he was anchoring himself back to earth.

Ilya blinked. "The what?"

"Comics, I think?" Ryan shook his head. "I didn't realize there'd be so many people I knew."

"People that liked you, you mean?" Fabian rephrased and Ryan nodded.

"You are good guy, Ryan." Ilya offered a genuine smile to the guy. "Glad you did not stay in Boston, though. It got much less fun."

"Glad you didn't stay in Toronto either," Troy added. "It turned into a fucking shit show."

"Maybe I should've gone to Ottawa," Ryan half joked, turning his head to look up at Troy where he was sitting on the stairs behind them. "And Toronto was already a shit show."

Troy raised his glass in a *'fair enough'* gesture.

"Eh, Ottawa now is different. Ask Bood," Ilya nodded to where the aforementioned man was shoving a one of the Nanaimo bars that Yuna and Mac had made specifically for this Christmas party into his mouth, "besides, it would not have changed the crowds. Or the press. Or the online bullshit."

"True." Ryan sighed. "Two weeks of hockey with kids is enough for me."

"Two weeks of hockey with kids and not dealing with their *parents*," Ilya added. "I swear the parents in Mac's league are fucking *devils*."

"I am gonna go grab something to drink, you need anything babe?" Fabian asked Ryan who shook his head. Fabian stood up on his toes and kissed Ryan's cheek before slipping off to the kitchen.

"How long do you think I have to stay?" Ryan whispered.

"Is *my* party, Price," Ilya answered. "You can leave whenever. Or go find Anya and Chiron." He basically pried his gaze away from Shane to look at Ryan. "I am glad you attended, honestly."

Ryan smiled a relieved smile. "It wasn't a like, pity thing?"

"No, of course not." Ilya gestured to himself. "You think *I* do pity? Come on." He did not roll his eyes, he made the conscious choice not to. "You are a friend that Shane and I both are glad to have."

"Oh. Okay. Great." Ryan shoved a cookie in his mouth and Ilya idly wondered if it was to keep from talking nervously.

"Oh, had question for you," Ilya tapped Ryan's shoulder playfully, "Shane wanted to do road trip to the Maritimes-"

Ryan's eyes lit up. "Oh I know the best places. Without people who'd like, sell pictures or anything, obviously."

"That is why I wanted to ask you." Ilya let his eyes drift to find Shane again in the chaos of the Centaurs players, the WAGs, and the kids filling their home. "I thought you would also know where to avoid."

"Absolutely I... do..." Ryan trailed off the same moment Ilya's eyes found Shane.

Harris had Bood's kid in hand and was attempting to hand them off to Shane to keep them from pulling the small gems off of Fabian's face. Shane with kids, with *super* young kids especially had been a weakness of Ilya's. The fact that the Pikes were definitively *not* having more was a bit of a downer for that exact reason, but now they *shared* a team, and shared teammates who had kids, who had *babies*.

There was the click of a camera and Mac was grinning at Ilya as the picture printed out.

"All three of you all just kinda stopped, it's funny," Mac defended as he handed the picture over to Ilya.

Ilya looked at the picture, it wasn't of the frankly adorable scene they'd all witnessed, but of the three tall, buff hockey players being exceedingly gay for their partners. Ilya handed it to Ryan and then grabbed hold of Mac, messing up his hair and taking the camera from him. They had a couple around, all Polaroids so there would be no digital copies if they weren't wanted. Most of the players kept their kids' faces hidden, so it was an extra bit of security.

"Ilyaaaaa," Mac complained, smacking against Ilya's side until he let up, letting his arm wrap around Mac's shoulders instead.

"You having fun, kid?" Troy asked as Ryan handed the picture to him. "Unofficial official photographer of the Centaurs Christmas Party would make one hell of a resume."

Mac shrugged, leaning into Ilya. "If I can't be in the pictures anyways, I might as well take them."

"We're keeping all the unedited photos anyways," Troy said. "Harris has a whole folder of them, before cropping or photo-shopping emojis onto your face."

Ilya felt his heart warm at the mere mention that Harris was saving photos that couldn't be released until Mac was no longer a ward of the state. It warmed even more when Mac's eyes

got a little shiny with tears, his voice almost a disbelieving whimper.

"Really?"

"You're one of the team kids, so yeah." Troy said it like it was a given, obvious thing, and Ilya wanted to hug him for it. He didn't, mostly because he had Mac under one arm and a staircase railing between them. But he did really want to.

Instead Ilya just squeezed Mac a little tighter.

A second Polaroid camera snapped a few feet away, the picture safely tucked into Shane's pocket.

They met with the lawyer the day of their last game before Christmas, against Florida which Shane and Ilya both considered easy enough to win that even if the meeting had gone poorly it wouldn't really matter. Except it hadn't. The lawyer had agreed that while waiting for Mac to age out was *an* option, it was ridiculous to treat it as *the* option when the two of them were there, ready and able to take him in.

So they had filed the petition for termination of the Belovs' parental rights, and the lawyer was handling the details and would "let you know if anything else pops up".

"I get the feeling they don't get to do a lot of happy things in family law," Shane said, sitting in the car outside Mac's practice. Ilya remained quiet, thoughts and fears and worst cases playing in his head. Shane talked, his voice a soothing background noise that kept the worst case scenarios from including things like Shane leaving him.

Shane stopped talking, his eyes scanning Ilya's face. Then his hand was on Ilya's cheek, turning him towards Shane, making him look at him. "Ilya," he spoke softly, love so heavy in the sound of every letter that Ilya let himself lean forward to rest his forehead on Shane's.

"What if it goes wrong? What if they take him away from us and we'll never see him again and-"

"I thought spiralling was supposed to be my thing," Shane half-joked, his hand falling to play with the ring on Ilya's finger. The ring *Shane* had put there. "Look what becoming parents has done to us."

"Is this normal?"

"Mom says it is." Okay. If *Yuna* of all people had spiralled then yeah, okay, this was normal. He let his head thump softly against Shane's shoulder. "And Dr. Jones actually worked through some of the spiralling with me, after the inspection."

Ilya hummed and nuzzled against the column of Shane's throat focusing on how every breath made Ilya's head move up and down.

"Even if they took Mac away, he has your number, and mine, and Hayden's and Jackie's and Scott's and Ryan's and Mom's and Dad's and Wiebe's. He's less than 5 years from being a legal adult. They wouldn't take him away without giving us a chance to say goodbye, and it wouldn't *be* goodbye, because we would both make sure he knows to call us if he needs anything, that he would always be welcome in our home and family. And he's good enough now that if he sticks with it, he could very well end up in the league. That happens and we would *definitely* see him again, even if he never reached out again. And we would watch out for him, and so would everyone else. Because we love him, they love him, and they love us."

By the time Shane finished talking the voice that sounded like Ilya's father had quieted, the darkness that had started to tinge his mind with baseless fears retreated, and Ilya felt...

Well, happy wasn't the right word, calm? Maybe. Balanced. Ilya felt *balanced*.

"*Spasibo*," Ilya whispered.

"I've got you," Shane replied, kissing Ilya's head.

"I know." Ilya pushed up against the centre console and kissed Shane on the way, gentle and adoring.

The doors to the arena slammed open and a gaggle of kids with massive hockey bags started walking towards cars. Ilya hopped out and took Mac's bag, listening happily as he talked about practice.

"Who're you playing tonight again?" Mac asked, skates dropped on the floor of the car.

"Florida," Ilya and Shane answered, Ilya with vague disgust and Shane with a complete monotone.

"Pfft, tell me how you really feel." Mac was grinning, though.

"Florida has a team so the other teams can visit when it is cold." Ilya gestured out the window as they started to drive through the neighbourhood Mac's team's arena was in. "Look, it is so cold here it is snowing *and* the tempos are out. They could have sent Florida here in October-

"

"They still would've complained about the cold," Shane interrupted.

"Yeah but then everyone would've laughed at them," Mac noted. "They'll be babied if they're in Canada in the winter cause everyone knows they don't do cold."

"Which is why they will never make the playoffs," Ilya finished. "If you get drafted to Florida you will expose them to winter so they stop sucking at hockey."

Shane scoffed. "If Mac gets drafted to Florida they'll stop sucking pretty damn quick."

"Very true. Montreal sucked before Shane was drafted, Boston sucked before they drafted me, look how they are doing now without us!" Ilya grinned wide. Montreal was unlikely to

make the play-offs this season. Boston hadn't made them since Ilya had signed with the Centaurs. "And look at Ottawa!"

"You think you'll make it to the play-offs?" Mac asked.

"*Moy mal'chik*, we are going to win the whole fucking Cup."

Shane and his Dad sat on the couch, both reading. Or, well. David was reading the mystery book Ilya had gotten him for Christmas, Shane was *trying* to read, perched on the edge of the couch cushion.

Instead he was watching over the top of his book as Yuna, Ilya, and Mac decorated cookies in the kitchen.

It was Shane's paternal grandmother's recipe, they weren't actually gingerbread but when he was a kid Shane had thought they were. And really, they were close enough, with enough ginger to be able to taste it, but there was no brown sugar, only molasses and white sugar, and a hint of nutmeg. It used shortening, not butter, and when Shane had tried to use butter the cookies had spread too much. It tasted like the Christmases of Shane's childhood.

And Ilya and their son were decorating them in the kitchen, after Mac and his *grandmother* had made and chilled the dough before baking them off just in time for Shane and Ilya to arrive on Christmas Eve.

Two garbage bags full of brightly coloured and metallic patterned wrapping paper all scrunched up sat in the corner of the living room next to the door, and the gifts sat in piles for them to bring home later. There was laughter and Ilya had icing on his nose and fingers and somehow Mac was spotless and being so careful with his decorating. Yuna was keeping hot chocolate topped up and sorting through the candies and sprinkles and making her own little gingerbreads.

Shane couldn't stop watching his family.

"You okay?" David asked and Shane smiled.

"Yeah."

Mac and Ilya finished decorating their portions of the cookies and Ilya jumped over the back of the couch, slotting himself in the space between Shane and the couch back. Before Shane could properly look at the cookies Mac had brought him Ilya had his arm around Shane's waist and was tugging him back, grinning.

"Mac has discovered new talent," Ilya declared, his chin resting on Shane's shoulder.

Mac blushed a little and set down the cookie sheet. "I was just gonna make you both but I really liked making the jerseys so."

On the sheet were individual gingerbread men, most with little candy canes as hockey sticks in their hands, and Tootsie Rolls moulded onto the curves to turn two of them into goalie sticks. Each gingerbread was identifiable even without the carefully piped numbers on each

jersey, there was a little suit and beard piped on for Wiebe and the gingerbread Harris had a gummy bear in his hand and a chalk-candy phone in the other. Shane's mouth hung open.

"Holy shit, Mac!" He exclaimed. "These are fucking amazing!"

"Yuna said we have enough that he could bring these in tomorrow for the game," Ilya said. "I thought Harris would love to see them."

"It's just some cookies."

"Do you have any idea how many shitty personalized cookies we've eaten in our careers?" Shane took a picture of the tray and sent it to the team group chat. "These are fucking incredible."

Mac preened a little and sat next to Shane, watching as compliments piled in and the drooling face reactions to the image piled up.

The cookies were, of course, a massive fucking hit, and Mac handed them all out and got all but squeezed to death until Harris and Troy arrived and Harris stepped in to help with the delivery with his Troy cookie in hand.

They were shared to the official Instagram with the caption reading that "one of" the team kids had made gifts for the first day back. Shane posted it to his Instagram story instantly, as well as the photo from the aftermath of the kitchen with Ilya tagged and a comment that "one workstation made these masterpieces. the other was Ilya's".

They warmed up on the ice and Ilya skated up to Shane. "Your lack of proper grammar and capitalization is horrendous," Ilya snipped, but he was smiling. He was smiling the playful smile he'd shot Shane at so many face-offs over the years that it activated some sort of Pavlov response.

Shane was stretching on the ice and grinned up at him. "What're you gonna do about it, Rozanov?"

"Oh I have many ideas," Ilya teased, skating around Shane. "I know what makes you tick, Hollander."

"Oh yeah?" Shane got up and spread his hands wide. "Prove it."

Ilya skated up, grabbed the front of Shane's jersey, and kissed him. Dirty and filthy and like he was *devouring* Shane, his tongue pushed into Shane's mouth and just *taking*. Shane, for his part, melted into him, arm coming up to wrap around Ilya's shoulders as the world of the arena faded away.

"Told you," Ilya teased, bumping his helmet against Shane's. He spoke quiet, but Shane was *sure* there were no other sounds in the world.

"Go fuck yourself," Shane responded, gathering what little brainpower he had left for the remark.

"That can be arranged, though I am sure you would rather join me-"

"Alright! Enough! Please!" Wyatt groaned, smacking Ilya's back with his stick.

Bood's teasing voice joined in. "Keep it in your pants please!"

Shane skated to the bench to gather around Wiebe, listening to the chirping amongst teammates with a lovesick grin he didn't bother to hide.

There was a tag on his Instagram after the game, he'd assumed it was a shot of the goal he'd scored seeing the tag from the official account. It was not. It was a looping clip of the overhead coverage from the team warmup, catching Ilya and Shane's heated kiss on the ice, that Harris had stuck a little twinkling cartoon mistletoe over.

Shane added it to his story anyways.

Chapter 8

Their lawyer called them in February, setting up a phone meeting that had Ilya and Shane both stressed. Except the call had opened with the declaration that the Belovs had surrendered their parental rights. Then the lawyer and paralegal both walked through the adoption application with Shane and Ilya, and sent the finalized documents to them to sign.

They picked Mac up from school, made mac and cheese, and tried not to stress. He seemed happy with them, right?

"Did I do something wrong?" Mac asked, and Ilya realized that he'd just been pushing his food around his plate and not actually eating any of it. And so had Shane.

"No," he said. "We uh," Ilya cleared his throat looking at Shane who had also opened his mouth, but nothing had come out. "Oh fucks sake, Hollander, fix your face. You look like you are delivering a fucking eulogy."

Shane blinked his watery eyes and cleared his throat. "Sorry."

Ilya turned his full body to face Mac. "Mac, you have not done anything wrong. You know that, as your foster parents, there are some things we cannot do with you easily."

"Like crossing the border," Mac suggested and Ilya nodded.

"Yes, that is one that most people do not notice." Ilya sighed. "Shane there is many complicated words here if you could say some of them it would be nice."

"We hired a lawyer," Shane said, scooting his chair to be closer to Mac. "As it stands, we're not a great permanent foster placement because of how much we travel, but because we have such a deep bench and the monetary resources it's been fairly smooth sailing thus far."

"But?" Mac braced for impact.

"We hired a lawyer to look into adopting you," Shane said.

Mac recoiled a little and blinked quickly, looking between the two of them. "Wait. What?"

"The caseworker told us to wait for you to age out or hire lawyer. So we hired really fucking good lawyer," Ilya explained. "We do not want you to be taken away."

"Because I'm good on the ice," Mac surmized, and Ilya's heart hurt. Because he and Shane both knew what it felt like to be valued for hockey talent alone, and nothing else. At least Shane had had Yuna and David to come home to.

"Because you are *ours* Mac," Ilya corrected, placing a hand on Mac's shoulder. "You are part of our family, you will *always* have a place here."

"If you want it," Shane added.

"*Da*, if you want it," Ilya agreed. "We have application filled out, it just needs signing but we did not want to assume-"

"You want to keep me?" Mac asked like it was the most out there thing in the world. "You're not sending me back or to someone else or-"

"*No*," Shane interrupted, arm wrapping around Mac to pull the teenager close to him. "You're not going anywhere you don't wanna go. We want to make sure that, if you want to stay here, that no one will take you away from us."

"Like... your kid?"

"You *are* our kid," Shane's voice was firm, and Ilya could see all over him how desperate he was to make Mac understand, from the restrained tight grip on Mac's shoulders to the wide eyes and the tight corners of his lips.

"You are ours, *moy mal'chik-zaichik*," Ilya reiterated, gently taking Mac's hands and squeezing them. "If you will have us as your parents, we will be."

"*Da, konechno, Papa*," Mac said, voice wobbling.

Ilya hugged him tight with one arm and wrapped the other around Shane, holding his family, the family he had *built*, in his arms.

They sent in the signed application and sent it in the next day. It would take, likely, up to a year to get their court date, but it still felt like a final nail in the home.

They made it to the final round of the playoffs against Winnipeg and some part of Shane was proud that, either way, the cup would be Canadian this year. He kinda got that vibe from the Winnipeg team too, that they were just stoked to be there, and yeah they were gonna fight for the cup but getting this far had been a longshot for both teams.

"I talked to Kitts," Ilya said in their hotel room in Winnipeg as the "white out" party happened throughout downtown. "Said it would be nice to end this in Ottawa, so Mac could be there."

Kitts was the captain of the Winnipeg team, the local CBC station had had both captains in to talk about bringing the Cup home to Canada. "Mm? What did he say?"

"He gushed about the kids he and his wife have fostered. Had one of those fold out albums in his wallet. Was cute." Ilya smiled at Shane who hadn't bothered with a towel after his shower. "I showed him the cookies and some of Mac's shots at practice and at games."

"Yeah?" Shane folded Ilya's sweater and placed it on top of the dresser. "We are two to one right now. We're probably gonna beat them."

"Oh we definitely are," Ilya's confidence was, as always, attractive as hell. Especially when it wasn't layered in with annoyance and ribbing at Shane's expense. "Did you see Haas today?"

Ilya proceeded to break down everything that had gone right like Shane hadn't also been out on the ice with him, like he hadn't scored one of the goals in question. But it felt... Nice.

Shane guessed that if some people listened to white noise to fall asleep, he could listen to Ilya's recaps of games he'd played, even if Shane had been right next to him the whole time.

Eventually Shane pulled the covers over himself, watching his husband still talking, sitting up on their bed. He reached up, grabbed Ilya's shoulder and pulled him down. "Sleep, Ilya. I need it."

"Should I go-"

"Fucking- No. Just lay down so I can fall asleep, asshole."

Ilya grinned and slipped under the covers, pulling Shane into his arms. "How did you ever manage to sleep without me?"

"Really fucking badly," Shane answered the sarcastic question honestly. Playing with Ilya, being *out*, being *married*, he wasn't sure which part had done that, made it easier to sleep better. But it had.

"I like watching you sleep," Ilya admitted, his lips brushing the back of Shane's neck. If they hadn't fucked when they'd gotten to the hotel before the game, then again when they'd gotten back, and a third time in the shower, Shane was *sure* his dick would be getting hard. As it was, he felt the smallest pinpricks of goosebumps and warm pleasure settling over him.

"Good," Shane held up his hand and wiggled his wedding ring, "cause you got a lifetime of it, Rozanov."

"Fucking perfect, Hollander."

They won the next game, making it three to one for Ottawa, and Shane was vibrating when they got on the plane. They had two days off, back home, before a game that could give them the first fucking Stanley Cup in the history of the Centaurs.

The welcome at YOW was fucking *insane*. People in Centaurs jerseys and waving flags and pennants and a handful of the pride-themed flags and jerseys they'd released. And then, separated from the fans by security, were the families.

Shane zeroed in on Mac a second after Ilya who sprinted over and picked him up off the ground. How Shane had ever thought that Ilya had stopped competing, stopped *caring*, when he was like *this*?

"We have a court date," Mac said when Shane arrived. "In July."

Shane crushed Mac into his arms, grin splitting his face so wide he was sure he'd start bleeding.

"*July*?" Ilya repeated. "Like. *This* July. July 2022."

"Yeah," Mac pulled the envelope out of his pocket, rumpled but still clearly addressed to Shane and Ilya and *not* Mac. "I saw the court seal on it and thought it was important-"

"Is only minor federal crime," Ilya dismissed, taking the letter. Shane was giving Mac a look.

"Sorry, Dad." Mac didn't *sound* sorry at all, but Shane was willing to let it go.

The letter did say the date, in big bold lettering, and listed their lawyers. It was *actually* happening.

"I filled out the name change forms too," Mac said, remaining tucked under Shane's arm as they left the airport to meet Yuna and David's car. "The lawyer said I could do it myself and if there were any problems they'd let you know."

"Okay then. We have everything done, then." Shane grinned at Ilya. "Now we just have to win the Stanley fucking Cup."

They did win.

And Ilya kissed Shane on the ice like they'd seen Scott Hunter do half a decade ago, but their gloves and helmets were off and their wedding wrings glinted in the bright lights and as the WAGs and kids poured out, Mac crashed into them.

Ilya lifted the cup for the second time in his life, and Shane had his arm wrapped around Ilya's waist, grounding himself in the moment. He wanted to remember the feeling of this. How it felt to win, without feeling the need to be perfect or live up to anyone's expectations. Ilya kissed Shane in the official team photo too, the one that would hang in a hall of photos of other hockey teams going back over 100 years. With countless unknown queer players in the history of the league, it felt like a special kind of fuck you to the Commissioner and his outdated rhetoric.

Try erasing us now, Shane thought, eyes drifting to the private box the guy was supposed to be watching from, and skirting right on past.

They were at home, the court date had come and gone, and it had been a mostly unremarkable morning.

Get up, make breakfast, work on getting Mac awake before noon like the teenager he was. Mac was out in the afternoon sun, jogging to the ice cream parlor by the community mailbox with Anya, when both Ilya and Shane's phones dinged with an alert from the Centaur's Instagram.

It was a photo from their wedding, one of the handful Shane and Ilya had sent to Harris to pick from for the team to post after they did, celebrating their wedding and Shane's signing to Ottawa all in one post. It was one Harris hadn't posted at the time, the two of them swaying on the spot, Anya sitting to the side. The fairy-lights that had crisscrossed the backyard made the photo look dreamy.

The caption had Ilya frowning and double checking.

"Did. Did we forget our wedding anniversary?" Shane asked.

"Did Harris just *remind* us that it *is* our wedding anniversary?" Ilya rephrased.

"Yeah. I uh. I think he did." Shane tapped the button to share it to his story anyways.

Ilya texted Harris to double check it was, in fact, their wedding anniversary. Harris, helpfully, texted back '*lol yeah*'.

"God. We should add this date to the calendar app." Shane had said app open on his phone and a little notification popped up at the top of Ilya's screen inviting him to the repeating yearly event.

"To be fair to us, we adopted a kid and won a Stanley Cup in the span of our first year of marriage." Ilya crossed to Shane and cradled his face in his hands. "Still." He kissed Shane gently, impossibly soft, and Shane sighed into it. "Happy anniversary, sweetheart."

"Happy anniversary," Shane repeated, eyes meeting Ilya's with such soft, tender love that Ilya felt like a magnet being pulled naturally to the opposite pole. He kissed him again, slid his hands into Shane's hair, and tasted the slight tang of ginger ale on his husband's lips.

"Oh my god gross," Mac said from the door a half second before Anya made impact with Ilya's knee, jumping up excitedly.

"Is our anniversary, we can be gross," Ilya defended.

"I uh. I did research," Mac said, sitting down and plonking the stack of flyers Shane inexplicably signed them up for, "the first year is paper, right?"

"Uh, yeah. Your Grampa got your Gramma some origami flowers made after the first bouquet he ever gave her," Shane answered.

Ilya did not know this, but it tracked.

"Happy anniversary Dad, Papa." Mac slid over a minty, new birth certificate.

It now listed Shane and Ilya as his parents, had the hyphenated last name and-

"*Mac*," Ilya breathed, rereading the name again.

Maksimilian Shane Ilya Hollander-Rozanov

"It's Russian tradition, right?" Mac downplayed it.

"Oh my god, *Mac*." Shane pulled his glasses off and squinted at it like it would change the letters, then put them back on. "You filled out the name change forms-"

"Yeah, I didn't know if I did it wrong so I wanted to wait and-"

Ilya hugged his son close, his son. Who had not only his name, but the names of his husband, the man Ilya loved more than anything, the man who made Ilya believe in the concept of fucking soulmates because what else could explain how they tumbled into this blissful fucking happily ever after?

"Wait, if they issued this," Shane placed his hand next to the birth certificate, "then. It's final. Completely. That's what the judge said, that he was granting the adoption and the final part was the birth certificate."

"Wait, can I turn my Instagram off private then?" Mac asked.

Ilya laughed, gently shoving his son's shoulder. "Yes, if you want. But," he held up a finger, "we still have access to it until you turn 18."

"And if anyone gives you shit or freaks you out or anything you tell us, okay?" Shane set the boundary. "There's a lot of people who don't like us, if they try to take that out on you we need to know about it."

Mac nodded. "Okay. That's fair."

"And, if you're okay with it, we'd like to make a post about the adoption being finalized. It's up to you how much we say, obviously." Shane squeezed his shoulder. "But hey, if everyone else gets to make birth announcement posts we should get to make a *"we adopted a whole teenager and he's really cool"* post."

Ilya and Mac laughed, and they spent the rest of the afternoon drafting the statement to put under the post. Mac picked the photo, one of the Polaroids from the Christmas party. Ilya stood behind both of them, an arm around Shane's waist and hand on Mac's shoulder, Mac with his head on Shane's shoulder and Shane with his arm around Mac's waist. It was an interconnected knot of them.

"In October of last year, Shane and Ilya became temporary foster parents to one of the students that had participated in the Irina Foundation's hockey camps after he was abandoned by his birth parents for coming out as queer. Since then they have pursued first permanent foster placement and adoption. That adoption was granted and finalized this month. Mac Hollander-Rozanov has been in many pictures that, with his permission, are being re-edited and re-uploaded to remove the emojis that were used to protect his identity in accordance with the government's guidelines."

"Family looks different for everyone, and our family is no different. Mac is our son, and we are so incredibly proud of him and his achievements. We hope that the hockey community will be as respectful of him as they are of other children of players."

Chapter 9: Epilogue: 2026 Draft

Chapter Notes

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

Canada had won gold at the Olympics, and for the first time in their lives Shane, Ilya, and Mac had all played on the same team. The photo that had gone viral had been their backs; Shane with the C, Ilya with the A, and Mac between them, their names hyphenated on the back of his jersey.

Yet, sitting and waiting at the draft, Ilya and Shane were more nervous than they had been for either of their drafts. JJ was the only one still in Montreal, and the team had been doing worse and worse. And the coach and the owners that had made life so shit for Shane after his outting were long gone.

Ilya and Shane had thought about chipping in to buy the team, they had a fair chunk of the money now, but the *'fuck you'* wasn't worth owning a team they would be playing against for the foreseeable future.

They watched as Mac was drafted first, to Montreal. Ilya side-eyed the new coach, making the choice to give them a bit of a break.

And then they watched the second draft pick go to New York, an American kid who Scott had mentioned being an asshole in the fond way he referred to Ilya as an asshole. Ares? Aris? Eris? His last name was Floros and that was about all Ilya cared about. Mac and the kid had had something between them at the Olympics, Shane and Ilya were sure of it.

They stayed back for the press conference, letting Mac speak for himself.

And they laughed between themselves as one of the journalists started to lay the groundwork for a narrative.

"There's rumours about a rivalry between you and Hollander-Rozanov, are those at all founded?"

"Should we start planning a wedding?" Ilya asked.

"Maybe just tell them to pick a first dance song before the first dance," Shane answered with a grin.

"History is a flat circle," Ilya said, and Shane nodded his agreement. "Tell JJ to watch out for our boy."

"You know he will."

"I know." Ilya kissed Shane's head. "How many seasons do you think we have left in us?"

"Dunno." Shane looked up at Ilya. "I think whenever Ottawa doesn't re-sign either of us, that's when I'll retire." He kissed Ilya chastely. "I don't want to play without you."

Ilya hummed. "That sounds like a solid plan, Hollander."

Mac returned to them with the Montreal jersey in hand, his arms thrown around both their shoulders. "I got picked first!"

"Just like your Papa," Shane said proudly.

"Go tell the second pick congratulations," Ilya advised. "Make sure he doesn't pout like your Dad did."

"I did not-"

"You did. And then you needed to run off your pouting like hamster in cage." Ilya winked at Shane who rolled his eyes. Ilya looked at Mac. "Seriously, though. Go wish him luck."

They watched Mac look around for the second pick, and watched his eyes lock on him. Shane was struck by how much he looked like Ilya when he was looking at Shane across a room. Ilya thought he looked like Shane in the club in Montreal.

"Flat circle," Ilya repeated, watching their son walk away.

"Let's hope it doesn't take them the better part of a decade to figure it out." Shane smiled at Ilya. "Shall we go relive some memories, *moy lyubov*?"

Ilya hummed softly, checking his phone. The image of their sleeping toddler calming him. "Irina is still sleeping in our room."

"She's two, she does that." Shane was leading Ilya to the elevator. "I think we should inspect their gym."

"Oh, looking for a rematch are we?" Ilya teased.

"Or a recreation," Shane suggested, "with slight deviation from historical record."

"Oh?"

Shane leaned up and whispered in Ilya's ear, and as the elevator doors closed they watched the newest Admirals player blush as Mac talked to him.

Chapter End Notes

Hi yes I am so proud of how my tax dollars have been spent thank u Crave I feel so very patriotic now. This gays are not leaving my brain my god they're so good.

Edit: Dec 22/2025

oh my god this is a lot. I've had a couple folks comment about wanting to see what happens with Mac and his rival and I am actively writing it now :D

[I also made adult Mac in a picrew](#)

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