

Until You Breathe Again

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Until You Breathe Again

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Summary

Yuna's hand meets Ilya's. The rivalry status that the league had painted over her son's relationship with the Russian now cast aside. They clutch to each other in silent acknowledgement of their shared pain, hope and fear in what had just manifested before their eyes. There's a uniting force in pain and grief—It's one that wipes slates clean, makes you forgive, makes you love harder and appreciate more than you ever thought possible. Everything she ever knew or felt about the Russian whose hand she now clung to was dissolved

Shane Hollander briefly dies on the Ice after the hit from Marlow in the Montreal vs Boston Game. Ilya handles his emotions poorly and has a very public meltdown revealing their relationship to the world.

Notes

Find me on Twitter, Reddit and Tumblr @vernoomie

If you screenshot any of this to insult it on twitter, I am going to kill myself and you will be going in the suicide note. there's no AI in this.

Love you all, Thank you so much for the support

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

Chapter 1

Twenty five seconds on the clock.

That's all they made it to.

He can't even remember who he was before that twenty five second mark hit.

A whole other person surely. Someone that could stand to be parted from Shane's side for a single moment. Someone that had spent years turning over and analysing and suppressing his feelings. Feelings that Ilya had grown, hidden inside him like an oyster with a pearl.

Twenty five seconds of the Boston vs Montreal game pass before Shane is off his feet, his body cutting through the crisp air. First shocked, then braced for impact.

Before the contact, Shane's eyes had been on Ilya. The corner of his mouth turned up in amusement. His freckled cheeks flushed pink.

He hadn't seen Cliff coming. And now, Ilya has to watch in horror as his paramour's body slamming chest first into the ice, head ricocheting against the surface as he continues to slide onward.

When Shane stops finally, there's no movement aside from one large inhale and rattling exhale before complete stillness.

Ilya stopped moving the second he saw the impact sweep Shane away, their eye contact ripped apart feeling like a winding punch to the stomach.

It was the strangest moment. There was just silence. It felt fundamentally wrong to Ilya—Like, he was pushing on a door instead of pulling, or drowning and breathing in the water while gasping for air. He's stricken into a stupor as the screams, the shouts and the skates against the ice fell silent in his ears. At first, the absence of noise makes his ears rang a high pitch. And then, when that pitch falls, He's left with the overwhelming sensation of his own blood thumping rhythmically in his ears with a swooshing and throbbing sound.

Everyone in the arena had immediately stood still drawing in a deep breath as they watched Shane's body fly across the ice to its stop. Their gasps and wincing sound out.

Hayden was the first to move, his eyes falling on Marlow immediately. It was what he had been trained to do. If your captain, or your franchise player goes down, you start throwing fists and ask questions later. Pike's gloves flew off his hands onto the ice as he grabbed forward to clutch the jersey of the Boston player. He drags him down to the ground in a brutal tug and Cliff doesn't fight back.

Boston fans that had travelled for the away match, jeer and cheer on Cliff. Montreal fan's feet stomp as they shout out to Pike.

It's a short lived fight. A Match official pulls Hayden off of Cliffs back and away from him as some of the benched Voyagers pile over into the rink. Their eyes on the Bears, ready to intervene and get stuck in for a full brawl. They don't. The Bostoners are too busy standing, watching Shane's limp body.

Like sheep, they are herded back by the ref away from the body lying still in front of them. They tap their sticks on the ice in encouragement to Shane to get up and move as they skate themselves back and out the way. Not Ilya though. He stays in place.

The medics pass Ilya in a blur.

For the first few seconds, he tells himself it's nothing. That it's just another hard hit—Just another moment where the crowd holds its breath and then cheers when the player gets back up. Hollander always gets back up. He's built for this. He is sure as hell survived worse than this.

But, Rozanov knows something is very wrong before anyone says it.

After the first couple of seconds of no movement from Shane, Ilya's body filled with a deathly sense of dread. A dread that he hadn't felt for a very long time. Not since he was twelve years old, looking into the unmoving eyes of his mother, while calling out “Мама... Ты спишь? Мама... Пожалуйста, проснись.” *Mama... Are you sleeping? Mama ... Please wake up.*

Just like his mother, in the bathroom in his old Moscow home all those years ago, Shane does not move.

The Montreal team jump into action. The three of them had pushed the stretcher along the ice to beside Shane's body. Next to him, they kneel and focus.

He watches as they flip him and then press two fingers against Hollander's neck.

Ilya watches in silence, his face pale as though his body had been drained of blood—his feet locked in place unable to move closer yet unable to move away.

A whistle, shrill and endless, screams from behind him. It seems to bring an end to the hooting and hollering of the crowd. His fellow players drift towards each other in silence. Helpless, like they've forgotten what they're supposed to do with themselves.

Rozanov inches himself closer to Hollander. He needs to be closer. An official steps into his path, a firm hand on his arm telling him to back away, “Rozanov, you need to check on Marlo—”

But, Ilya barely hears him. He pushes closer, now just six strides away from the love of his life on the floor.

Hollander's helmet is off. His eyes are closed.

Having already dropped his stick after the impact, Ilya drops his gloves to the ice and unclips his helmet, pushing it back off the top of his head to the floor. He didn't want a visor between his eyes and Hollander's face.

His heart begins to pound so hard it drowns out the crowd.

No. *No.* He whispers to himself. His bottom lip juts out, his chin wobbling with emotion.

“*Shane*,” he says, just a whisper. An instinct. The name slips out the way it always does when it’s just the two of them, like it does when no one is supposed to hear.

The official is back tightening his grip on Ilya’s arm. “You need to move back, Rozanov.”

Behind him, he registers the echo of his teammate's voice calling to him, “Cap! Over here!”.

He ignores the call. Ilya doesn’t pull away from the ref. Not yet. He doesn't have the capacity to yet.

For a moment he watches the medics work. They were cutting open the front of the Montreal Jersey and pressing a stethoscope against Shane’s chest.

He watches as the medics eye snap up to meet the others in a sharp concern.

Fuck.

Fuck.

They begin CPR. Elbows locked, They push down on Shane's chest in steady compressions.

Meanwhile, one of the medics bolts off the ice with the order to find a defibrillator.

There's a faint voice that sounds from behind him. Ilya doesn't recognise it as reaches his ears. It must be a Voyager. A whisper sharply in disbelief to the next man, "Is.. Is Hollander fucking dead?"

That’s when his world crumbles.

His vision tunnels and for a moment all he can hear is his own panting—It's harsh and uneven in his ears. His mind is impossibly loud and impossibly silent at the same time. all moisture in his mouth evaporates. He can barely swallow. A tightness sticks in his throat.

He’s dead. Shane is dead. The heart that Ilya had felt race under his lips when he pressed his face against Shane's chest. Just hours ago. The pulse he felt under his fingertips as he held Shane's wrists, now gone. The thump he felt against his nose as he sniffed against Hollander's neck, had ceased. The powerful impact of Marlow's body and subsequent hit on the floor had caused his heart to stop.

He processes the gravity of the fact quickly. The man who he'd loved for so long - a love that he'd denied existed. He'd never even told Shane. Not in a language that Shane would understand. He'd never allowed himself the liberty of barring his soul to another.

The gravity and weight of the pure desire, hopes and affection that he had for the Canadian was paralysing. It was the kind of love that kept you up at night, that made his bones ache in anticipation, that gave him goosebumps thinking of the possibilities of a life they could have.

If this man really was dead—then what would Ilya do? How could he go on living without him? Where would he put this love without someone to receive it—without Shane to receive it.

Ilya was powerless at that moment but he couldn't help himself. Like a man being puppeted by an outside force, his body surges forward, shoving past the official.

“No,” Ilya says. Louder now. “No! Fuck, Hollander! No!”

Someone grabs him from behind, a set of hands on his shoulders, but it doesn't matter. He can't stop staring at Shane's still body, at the unnatural stillness of his face as they pump his chest.

“Shane! please,” Ilya shouts, his voice cracking. “Come on, This is not funny.”

His vision blurs as tears spill over. He doesn't care who hears him. He doesn't care about the cameras, the crowd, the league, the rules they spent years obeying. His knees feel weak.

“Please!”

Like one of those tiny wooden toys whose string-legged body collapses as you press against the mainsprings, his legs slacken at the sight of Shane's freckled cheeks. He collapses onto his knees, his hands pull and drag at his own hair. His tears streak down his face.

“Fucking wake up! Shanya. Моя любовь” *My love.*

Shane's mouth is covered by a medic pressing a CPR breathing mask against his mouth pumping air into his lungs. Ilya tries to breathe in the same timing as though his own breath was pushing into Shane's lungs.

The arena is in an alien-like silence, listening to the Russian who's in turn listening to the medics. He takes in the counts of the medics pushing against Hollander's chest. He can't help the wails that escape him. The only two sounds echoing back around the expanse of the ice.

“Please! God! No! Ты, чёртов ублюдок. Очнись.” *You fucking bastard. Wake up.*

The crowd is shell-shocked, not knowing quite what they're a part of. No one knows how to react to Shane's heart stopping or the pure devastation from the Boston captain.

The officials are wise enough to not go near him. His face is red and a vein is throbbing, in his wet sobs he looks almost rabid.

“I need you,” he says, choking on the words. “You can't leave me. Please, Shane!”

Teammates are behind him now murmuring his name, telling him to breathe. Someone says, “Rozanov,” softly, like he's a frightened animal. They stand back like they dare not come closer. Their words fall on deaf ears.

“Talk, Hollander, please! Скажите, разве мы не потратили все эти годы впустую?” *Tell me we haven't wasted all these years.* The words bellow, his throat raw as he shouts. Saliva sprays as he spits his words—tears dripping from his chin. “Hollander, wake up!”

Players on both teams meet each other's questioning stares.

Eyes asking... Did you know?

Eyes telling... No, we had no idea.

The reaction from Ilya is almost too painful to bear. They want to look away but their confusion, curiosity and care for the two men makes the scene impossible to tear their eyes away.

The distance between Ilya and Shane becomes too much for him to bear. He needs to touch him. He needed to kiss him while there was still warmth left in him.

He pushed his way close enough now that his head is above Hollanders.

"You can't leave me now. I don't know how to live without you anymore." He hiccups like a child as he cries. "I didn't get to love you enough."

He lets his fingers lace through Shane's thick, black hair. It's physically painful. The contact with the Canadian feels like fire on his palms—like someone had stuck their hand into his chest and ripped his heart out.

He'd do it himself. He'd rip his own heart out to save Shane.

He continues to wail, tears streaming down his face. There's snot running before he wipes his jersey's arm under his nose. "Моя любовь, I give you my heart."

"Mr. Rozanov, is there something I can do? Do you need medical intervention right now?" the Montreal medic pumping air into Shane's mouth speaks to him. Ilya's bloodshot eyes meet his concerned gaze, and he shakes his head before looking back at his so-called rival's face. That beautiful face. His face crumples as he lets another sob fall from his lips.

Yuna and David Hollander had been stuck in the crowd at first too shell-shocked to move. The shock of Ilya's declarations power them forward though. Yuna grabs David's hand, pulling him down to the gate, and as the staff pulls them through, they finally make their way onto the ice. They too fall to their knees just where Ilya had been and cry for their son. David hands clasp in prayer to a God he'd never believed in before, while Yuna lets her tears fall to the ice as she watches her boy—the man that she had dedicated her life to—lie still on the ground.

three minutes had passed since they started CPR. That's what Ilya hears the medic say to the other.

For three minutes the others on the ice and in the stands have had to stand and watch in horror as an untouchable man and two devastated parents fall apart at the seams, as their life falls apart. Twenty thousand people and hundreds of staff are frozen still by the most devastating sight they'd ever seen.

Hayden stands limply, arms by his side, his eyes locked onto the face of his Captain and closest companion in the world. Shane had obviously been keeping a few things under lock and key. He wants him back—the uncle of his children, his most trusted confidant. He glances again to Ilya and watched him in his anguish. How did this even happen? How hadn't he noticed?

Ilya's face turns to the heavens, eyes closed as he presses his hands against each side of Shane's face.

"Мама, Боже, пожалуйста, кто-нибудь, помогите мне. Не дайте ему умереть. Заберите меня. Не забирайте мою любовь. Пожалуйста. Пожалуйста. Мы были так близки. Мама, пожалуйста, разбудите его." Rozanov's voice cracks repeatedly as he calls out in a desperate rage. His chest heaves desperate for air. *Mama, God please somebody help me. Don't let him die. Take me. Don't take my love away. Please. Please. We were so close. Mama, please wake him up.*

No one had understood the words but they understood the guttural scream of heartbreak as he sobbed.

His voice gives out completely.

He presses his forehead down, and just for a second, presses his lips to Shane's forehead.

“Please,” he speaks, his voice hoarse. “Please come back to me, I love you, Hollander. I love you. Я люблю тебя всем сердцем. Я люблю тебя всей душой. Я не могу жить без тебя. I love you. I love you. I love you.” *I love you with all my heart. I love you with all my soul. I can't live without you.*

Six minutes feels like a lifetime.

Six minutes since CPR started, that's how long it takes for the medic returns with the defibrillator.

“About fucking time, Jamie,” The lead medic calls.

The returning medic was panting. “They fucking moved the machine, This is from the guest services offices.”

“It’ll do. Everyone, hands off now!” the compressions stop, the face mask pumping air is removed.

They look to Ilya. “You too, Rozanov! Hands off, now!”

He lets go and pushes himself back using the little remaining strength he had.

They charge. They press the paddles to Shane's chest.

They fire. And again and again. And then.

Hollander gasps chilly cold air into his lungs.

His eyes fly open.

“-lya,” He breathes out.

Chapter 2

As Shane's vision flickers to life, the bright white of the space burns a pain into the back of eyes, pain puncturing his brain like a knife.

He had been doused in ice water. As though he was under the ice of a frozen lake, banging, banging, banging against the surface to crack and release him.

His lungs were heavy like lead balloons, the weight pulling his body deeper into the depths of sorrow. His throat was on fire with his inhale.

In his fleeting moments of consciousness his mind goes to the man that had been his first thought every morning for months, if not years now—and he calls out to him. He knows he's on the ice. He knows there's medics fluttering around him, strapping him in and moving him. As he feels that pain stab behind his eyes and the feeling of a tonne of bricks upon his chest, he groans and gives himself away to darkness once before in refuge.

When Ilya hears that voice. The sweet moan of pain tingeing his name. It's the most beautiful sound he could ever dream of.

“-Ilya”

He knew what it meant. He knew who he was calling for. He'd only recently begun hearing Hollander using this name to call him by. Seven years of “Fuck you, Rozanov”, now sweet as he begs, “Fuck me, Ilya.”

He still felt his heart stutter each time he heard it. But, If it made his heart stutter before, then it made it explode now.

When Shane gasps back to life, there's no loud rush of relief the way it usually goes when a player scares the crowd and then bounds right back again and gets to hobble off the ice. The arena has stayed suspended in a terrible, reverent quiet. It's as though each of the twenty thousand people are afraid that a single movement might undo the miracle they just witnessed.

Rozanov, Yuna and David too stand aghast. Praying and hoping that they didn't collectively imagine what they'd just heard. Shane's gasp. His voice.

Their tears stay perched in the water line of their eyes. Ilyas next to Yuna now. He'd met her before briefly but never shared more than five words in conversation. But he can't help his shaking fingers from stretching out and holding onto her jumper's sleeve. It was like a scared child clinging to the trouser leg of their mother, hiding as though she could protect him from any danger.

"Shane, Моя любовь, I'm here." Ilya calls out hoping Shane's still conscious to hear it. "I'm here."

Yuna's hand meets Ilya's. The rivalry status that the league had painted over her son's relationship with the Russian cast aside. They clutch to each other in silent acknowledgement of their pain, hopes and fear that had just manifested itself before their eyes. There's a uniting force in pain and grief—It's one that wipes slates clean, makes you forgive, makes you love harder and appreciate more than you ever thought possible. Everything she ever knew or felt about the Russian whose hand she now clung to was dissolved.

The medics don't have the luxury to wait. Hands move fast around Shane. Efficient, practiced and precise. They slide the travel stretcher onto the ice beside him, the metal legs clattering too loud in the silence. A medic speaks in clipped commands, another secures straps across Shane's chest and thighs, fingers careful where moments ago they had been brutal and urgent. His jersey is still cut open, hanging loose, the captain's C half-dangling, now sopping wet with melted ice and sweat.

Shane's silent again but for small groans of pain.

A beautiful sign of life. To be in pain means to be alive. Rozanov knows this. The last five minutes of the deepest psychological pain he'd ever experienced had his mind screaming *'you are alive and he is dead'*.

He's watching, frozen a few feet away. His chest still heaving, hand in hand with Yuna Hollander, his vision tunnelling in and out like his body hasn't caught up with reality yet.

Shane's eyes are closed again. Breathing on his own definitely—There's movement now, and it's unmistakable. He slipped back into unconsciousness in the move.

“Okay. On three,” Someone says.

They lift.

Hollander's body rises off the ice and settles onto the stretcher. He looks somehow smaller than he's ever looked before. Vulnerable in a way that only Ilyas had the privilege of seeing before.

The gurney starts moving.

The sea of people on the rink make a perfect split to get the stretcher off the ice as quickly as possible.

The wheels don't glide the way skates do. They stutter and creek as they're forced across the ice, leaving shallow wet tracks behind their rattle. The medics jog, careful not to slip while guiding Shane toward the tunnel where the bright white of the rink gives way to shadow and concrete. Ilya follows without thinking, pulling Yuna and by extension David with him.

He wonders briefly how they look to outsiders now. *Do they look like a family?* Do others think Shane's parents knew at all? Do they think Ilyas is like a son to them? Maybe, after this, they would. Perhaps, they would accept him as a part of them.

Ilya could have a real family again. One that wasn't broken and painful. He squeezes Yuna's hand softly and allows himself to hope for a few moments, for something he'd never allowed himself to hope for before. She squeezes his hand back twice over.

Someone calls his name. It's Johansson. He calls it once, then twice—but it barely registers to him at first. It reminds him of where he is and who he's surrounded by. He doesn't let himself dwell on how royally he'd fucked up by revealing him and Shane. He drops Yuna's hand to pull off the Boston jersey over his head. As they pass, he glances at his team. He observes their confused, shocked and concerned faces and he passes his jersey to Sebbin, the closest teammate to him.

His eyes slide back across the silent crowd. He blinks away.

He can hear the gentle tapping of hockey sticks against the Ice in a quiet tribute to the Montreal captain. The stands start to clap softly, as though dazed but still moved and concerned.

He unclips and pulls his pads off from his shoulders letting them drop to the ice. Ilya still follows the gurney. His top is now only covered by the thin thermal skins cold with cooling sweat.

There's something weirdly symbolic in it for him. That he's stripping back his layers for everyone to see. They're watching each movement he's made, and they've watched his devastation. They've felt the cold in his bones. And now they've seen him unburden himself. He feels lighter now. His movements are unrestricted, and he's free to be just himself. He's bared himself to the world. They can all see his tears still steadily streaming down his cheeks. There's nothing he can do to stop them now, but it's okay.

In his devastation, He's shown love. He's felt love. And that's good.

All he can focus on is the back of the gurney. The steady rise and fall of Shane's chest, the loose curl of his fingers at his side. He wants to grab them. He wants to make sure he doesn't slip away again.

At the edge of the ice, they pause just long enough to maneuver the gurney onto rubber mats. The transition feels... strange, in a way Ilya doesn't quite understand. Hollander is no longer part of the game. He's not the captain, the rival, the untouchable force at centre ice. He is just a man. A man who died and lived again. And should he ever return to the ice his identity will never be the same again.

The tunnel swallows them. The sound changes immediately—footsteps echo back to them, radios crackling, the distant mechanical rubble of the ambulance waits. The confusion they've left on the rink behind them feels so insignificant now.

Yuna speeds up, jogging to catch up to Shane's side as if she's pulled by gravity. She reaches out to find her son's hand— Her face pale but fixed and steady in a way that cracks something open in Ilya's chest. David is steadily pacing alongside Ilya, his jaw clenched, eyes fixed forward, moving because stopping would mean collapsing.

The medics don't slow.

They push Shane forward, toward flashing lights and oxygen and everything safer than right here. He's loaded in the ambulance, the lead medic jumping in alongside

Ilya stands at the threshold for half a second too long, the cold air of the rink clinging to his skin, his skates still laced, his entire body screaming that he is not supposed to let Shane go anywhere without him. However, as Yuna looks to him as though to ask if he wants to be the one last person allowed to travel to the hospital, he knows that he has to nod her on to follow him. He'd loved Shane seven years, but his mother had loved him for twenty-six. She nods in acceptance and quickly scans her husband's face.

“Go, go. Please, look after our boy” David chokes out, waving her forward.

Then the doors are shut and they are driven away. David looks to Ilya, finally registering the state the hockey player is in. He sees that Ilya's kit is basically all off, then he looks at the Russian's skates. He swipes a hand across his face, wiping away any devastation in his expression.

“Right, well we have places to be Mr. Rozanov. You'll come with me to the hospital. Go change out of your skates and get your belongings. I'll meet you in the staff parking lot when you're out. Be quick.” He races through his words but Ilya catches each one.

He mumbles and nods in agreement before he sprints his way back out the tunnel and up into the guest locker rooms.



The locker room is already full when Ilya gets there. It's crowded. It's not loud though, which is strange and unfamiliar. It's never quiet—not even when one of their own gets injured.

Players sit on benches with their gear still half on, gloves abandoned, helmets resting on knees. No one is talking over anyone else, Johansson is discussing his view on whether they should comply if game play is started again. They each chime in with their views.

“We've gotta finish, there's like twenty-thousand people waiting to watch a game.”

“Twenty-thousand traumatised people that just saw a guy die and come back to life. There's no way we're starting back up.”

Their low murmurs die the moment Ilya steps through the doorway.

Every head turns. No one says anything at all.

Ilya slows, suddenly aware of how insane he must look—Eyes red, hair damp with sweat and melted ice, red in the face, eyes raw, salty lips cracked and bloody. He feels raw and exposed.

Sebbin is the first to stand. “Cap,” he breathes out into the room. He opens his mouth to speak but words are caught in his throat. “What,- What’s happening?”

Ilya shakes his head once. He doesn’t trust his voice yet. He moves swiftly toward his stall, every step deliberate, as if moving too fast might finally knock him over. He starts pulling things out frantically. Phone, wallet, keys. He throws his sweats and sweatshirt he'd planned to leave later in—Abandoning his game day arrival suit.

They watch each move he makes.

“You okay, Rozanov?” Kane asks, though his face makes it clear he knows that’s the wrong question.

Sebbin drifts closer, stopping just short of crowding him. “You're going to the hospital, right?”

Ilya nods. “We sent his mother with him. I am going now.”

“Good,” Johansson says immediately. “That’s... yeah. That’s where you should be.”

Varkov leans back against a locker, arms crossed, jaw tight. “Don’t even think about the game,” he adds. “None of that matters.”

Ilya could not give less fucks about the game right now, but he appreciates what Varkov is trying to do. He'd not thought about the game since Shane hit the ice.

Sebbin clears his throat from beside him, "And, we've got the press stuff sorted Cap. Whatever happens next—," He pauses, choosing his words carefully, "We've got it."

The room hums softly with agreement. No one argues. No one asks questions they already know the answers to. Ilya finally exhales.

"Thank you," he says, his voice rough but steady, still not recovered from the wailing and sobbing. "I'll try to—" He stops, swallowing. "I'll call when I can."

Sebbin reaches out, resting a hand briefly on Ilya's shoulder squeezing in comfort. It's solid. Grounding. "Take all the time you need, dude."

Marlow hasn't come closer. He's opposite Ilya's locker. Still sitting at his stall, elbows on his knees, staring at the floor ashamed to even breathe aloud.

Ilya glances over while he's untying and removing his skates, shoving his feet into trainers. Cliff feels the Russians gaze against his face and he lifts his head just enough to meet Ilya with his eyes. They're bloodshot, and teary. His jaw is chin almost wavering in emotion. For five minutes he thought himself a killer. He'd always respected Hollander, even if he did hold a slight grudge against him for his rivalry against his good friend, Rozanov.

His chest felt ached and hollow as he watched them pump away at Shane's chest, it devastated him, and punctuated all the more-so as he watched his captain sob into the ice like a madman. It became clear who Ilya Montreal 'Girl' was. and it broke Marlow's heart. In his mind, he thought back on how long he'd watched Ilya smile and blush at his screen over this 'girl'. Years of secrecy and hiding. It gave him goosebumps. So as he met Ilya's eyes it took everything in him to not break.

"We'll talk," Ilya says, his cheeks hollow, his jaw tight. "Later."

Marlow nods. He understood.

Ilya stands and slings his bag over his shoulder ready to begin his mad dash to the parking lot. As he strides to the exit he hesitates. He turns back to reach into his stall to grab a coat. It's Shane's coat. Not that any of his team knew that. It's one that he borrowed months ago when he was in Montreal and never returned.

There had been a running joke recently about the fact Rozanov would rather go out in the rain uncovered than just use his coat. Marlow had laughed at him just weeks ago about it. Marlow had laughed, "Whats the point of a coat that can't go in the fucking rain"

"I told you. This is a very special coat, very expensive, and very nice. I will not ruin it with rain." Conversely, it was a fairly cheap coat. One Shane had got for free as a part of a brand deal but had made good use of it for a while and therefore smelled perfectly of him.

So, to preserve that smell, and to get him through the long stretch of time before he could see his lover again, he never uses it. He just lets it hang in his space, a small hidden shrine to his love.

He holds it close and doesn't explain it. No one asks. Before he turns toward the door, he hugs it into himself and presses it against his nose.

Kane speaks again. "Hey, Rozanov."

Ilya looks back as he continues to the door.

"You know we're with you, right? He's gonna be okay... and you too, man," Kane says simply. It speaks to the respect and affection to the man who had led them passionately through their years together. There's an unspoken bond and support between them all. The game tied these men together and forged friendships between them - a comradeship that didn't just compel them, but required that they back Ilya no matter what hurdle he faced. Ilya was moved. His heart was heavy and aching but with these words he felt a balm.

Ilya doesn't trust himself to respond to his teammate. He just gives a short nod and leaves the room, carrying the weight and warmth of their concern with him as he heads along with David Hollander towards the hospital. Towards Shane.

Chapter 3



CNN ✓

@CNN

Hockey player Shane Hollander, 26, captain of the Montreal Voyageurs has suffered a cardiac arrest following a collision mid-game. Hollander was resuscitated on ice and transported to Montreal General hospital, where he remains unconscious but in stable condition.

Read in full here: <https://edition.cnn.com/074035402397nnh899>



BREAKING NEWS

Breaking News out of Montreal tonight as a terrifying medical emergency during last night's Boston–Montreal matchup has sent shockwaves through the hockey world.

Montreal Voyageurs captain Shane Hollander, 26, suffered cardiac arrest on the ice following a brutal collision just seconds into the game. After approximately five minutes of life-saving measures, Hollander was resuscitated and transported to a nearby hospital, where, according to sources, he remains unconscious but in stable condition.

The game was suspended indefinitely following the incident.

Footage of Boston Bruins captain Ilya Rozanov, Hollander's longtime rival on the ice, is taking the internet by storm following an emotional display at the incident. Rozanov was back in this game for the first time after the passing of his father just two weeks prior to this incident. Fans speculate about the nature of their relationship after Rozanov was seen breaking through officials to reach Hollander during resuscitation efforts.

What many first assumed was an emotional response between competitors now being recognised as a public declaration of a longstanding hidden relationship between the captains.

If confirmed officially, Hollander and Rozanov would become the first openly Homosexual players in NHL history, and the first same-sex couple consisting of two active players in the league.

In the hours following the incident, The NHL released a brief statement emphasising concern for Hollander's health while acknowledging a much broader impact of this incident:

"Our thoughts and prayers will remain with Shane Hollander and his family as he continues to receive medical care. Last night was a reminder that hockey players are people first. We recognize the significance of what fans witnessed and will continue to support inclusivity across the league. We will continue to support Shane in his recovery"

Despite this statement from the NHL, the Montreal Voyageurs have yet to comment on any of the incidents during tonight's game.

Social media has since been flooded with messages of support from fans, players, and public figures across the sports world. Hashtags such as #PrayForShane and #HollanderStrong began trending within minutes of the incident.

As of this report, Shane Hollander remains hospitalized in the ICU at Montreal Center Hospital.

★

Everything had been a mad scramble from the arena to the hospital doors. David and Ilya both travel with their hearts in their throats trying to catch up to Yuna and Shane. Her voice gives details and directions over the speaker in the car. David had called her the second he got back to the parking lot, and had stayed on call the full journey.

They'd been stuck in the waiting room for a long time. It gave time for Ilya to come down from the insane amount of adrenaline that had been surging through him before. He changed properly in the public restroom cubicle and splashed his face with cold water, washing away the tears and snot and sweat.

David tried to make conversation. *Do you like coffee? There's newspapers over there. Would you like one? Oh, you like the New Yorker? Me too! You want a snack? Shane usually likes a post game snack. Yuna used to make him a snack pack until he asked her to stop in high-school.* Ilya tried to keep it going, answering the best he could choke out, his English vocabulary on occasion failing him.

"I saw that you've been in Russia for a couple weeks," David starts, but pauses as if hesitant to say his next words. "I'm sorry for your loss, Rozanov. It must have been hard saying goodbye to your father."

"Ilya." He corrects. "Call me Ilya, please?"

David smiles. "Of course, Ilya."

His inflection sounds like Shane's. Like Shane calls him as he smiles and answers *"Okay, Ilya"*.

"Thank you. Russia was... it was not easy."

It *had* been hard to say goodbye to his papa.

Not particularly because he would miss the man. He was a mean and bitter person, a true scrooge to all that surrounded him.

He sucked all the joy and pride Ilya could find in himself and made him feel small and insignificant. It was hard because it made him confront insecurities he held within himself— that he hadn't done enough for his father, that he was lazy and just like his mother. Ilya wouldn't mind being like his mother, but he knew his father didn't mean it as a compliment.

He meant that Ilya was weak.

He reflected back to the ceremony just days ago. As in the custom of the Russian Orthodox Church Ilya had grown up in, Images flash behind his eyelids. How it had rained in the graveyard as he was lowered into the ground. How he had pressed his lips to his father's head in a parting farewell. With the press of his lips, he tried to forgive himself for all the ways he felt he had failed his papa.

Breaking his thoughts, David replies. "Today... Today couldn't have been easy, after such a big loss."

Ilya nods and takes a moment to find the words. How could he quantify the difference in the death of his father to the death of Shane.

"My fathers death... It was nothing compared to the feeling of losing Shane today. I can live without my father easily but I don't know how-" His voice chokes and he finds that he can't continue. David's grim nod signals that he knows the words that would have followed.

His words move David. He'd spent so many years worrying about his son—*anxious* that he was lonely. He just wanted someone to care and look after Shane the way Yuna loved and cared for her husband, the way he loved and cared for his wife. Now he was reckoning with the fact that Shane has been loved, he has been cared for.

"I knew he was going to die soon for a long time. He was not well."

"Like cancer?" David asks. It makes Ilya smile and let out a small laugh. *Like father, son*, he thinks.

"No, he had dementia. He was not remembering me well the last couple years. But, even when he did, it was... not good. He was not a kind man."

David hums as he watches Ilya pick at the skin around his nails. "My grandfather had dementia."

Rozanov's eyebrows raise in surprise, "Shane did not mention."

"He died long before Shane was born. He'd been an officer in the British Royal Navy in the first and second world war... before he immigrated to Canada. Very Interesting man to read about, not so interesting to spend time with."

"No?" Ilya asked, urging David to continue.

"No. He was awful really. He was a bully to my father. Made him into a mean and spiteful man. He'd lock him in the outhouse for hours at night, even in the winter. And so my father learned how to be a bully from a young age." He looked pensive for a beat, as he reflected. "It was the same

treatment he passed down to me, He thought it made tough men. He couldn't help it, I think. He never learned to be different, or didn't care to try. I cared though. I promised myself that I would never treat my child like that."

"Shane is tough. He is brave." Ilya notes.

"He is." David smiles. "A trait he inherited through his mothers genes, I fear. I'm much too soft with him."

"He is soft too. Like you. It's not a bad thing, I think."

"He is?"

"Yes," Ilya nods.

"I'm glad." David smiles gently, then straightens his expression before adding, "I mention my father to encourage you. Ilya, You have it in you be the broken link in a chain of inherited behaviour."

"You have lost me"

"Oh sorry. I mean, you are different from your father, the way I am different from mine. One day, I hope you will have a son, and he will be as amazing as Shane is and you will be able to break that chain. You get to create a chain of love and respect, instead."

Ilya nods again. "I will."

"I know you will. Anyway, Shane will be too busy passing on his messed up Yuna trauma." His immediate response is to blush a red and splutter out a laugh at both the joke and the concept of Shanes father picturing him and Shane having a son... together.

"Ha! You are very funny, Mr. Hollander." Ilya cheeks dimple as he chuckles. He had no idea Shane's dad would be so cool. He'd never allowed himself to imagine interacting with David like this before, and definitely not as soon.

"Call me David, Son." David requests with a pat on the shoulder. *Son!* It makes his stomach swoop.

"Of course, *David*."

"Do you plan on heading back there after the playoffs this summer?" the Hollander patriarch questioned.

"Ah, you think we're making it to the playoffs?" He semi-joked. "No- well, maybe. I hoped to maybe see Shane for some. Maybe visit home to see my niece after."

As soon as he thinks about it, it spills out of his mouth. "Come stay in Canada for the summer. Shane has his cottage ten minutes up the road from us. We'll have a Barbecue. Do you like ribs? Yuna makes the best ribs."

"Maybe. Maybe, I will see Shane. See what his plans are." Ilya responds coolly, but his heart is warmed and a blush flushes on his cheeks. It's been so long since he's felt his presence was wanted and valued by anyone but Svetlana and Shane.



There's a really fucking annoying sound in the room. Ilya notices it after around ten minutes of sitting in silence.

It's the drip. The IV connected via the line in Shane's arm is responsible for the noise. The drip is the only thing out of rhythm with the choir of noise from all the other medical devices in the room. It's setting Ilya's nerves on edge.

All the beeps, buzzes and drips serve a purpose here so he sits in silence and waits for the next drip.

Time in the ICU is strange. There's boredom, panic and anticipation in the air. Time there doesn't rush or drag. It's like time itself is holding its breath alongside everyone else in the room.

The machines don't care. A monitor marks Shane's heart beat in a pulsing line and unwavering beeps. Measured, controlled and most importantly, alive.

His small frame lies unconscious beneath crisp white sheets. His body arranged with careful precision. The hockey gear has been pulled or cut away from him. Now he's clothed in a cotton patient gown. The tubes trail from him, each tiny lifelines connecting him to a symphony of medical machines glowing in the dimmed light of the private space.

He's still unconscious and will be for the hours to come with the sedation. But he's stable. There's nothing else they can do for him now but wait for him to wake.

Ilya hasn't moved from the chair at Shane's bedside. Not really. He's shifted, and he slumped, then he straightens once again when a staff nurse comes through to check on everything — But, just like the Hollanders, he hasn't left Shane's side.

His elbows rest on his knees, hands laced together until his fingers ache. His body is heavy with exhaustion, his eyes are burning and his head pounding, but with each slip of fatigue threatening to pull him under, fear snaps him awake again.

Every time he closes his eyes, he's back on the ice. And stillness is exactly where it shouldn't be. He's seeing Shane's last rattling breath again and again and again.

The weight of it presses down on his chest until breathing feels like work, and tears sting his eyes once more and he has to brace himself to not let a sob escape his lips.

Yuna sits on the other side of the bed, her one hand resting lightly near Shane's arm, not quite touching as though she doesn't want to disturb him. David sits beside her, hand on her thigh in a soft grip.

Ilya tries not to stare at them but he wants to scan their face deeply. He wants to see where each facial attribute Hollander has inherited from. Where did those freckles come from?

He allows himself brief looks every ten or so minutes. On a couple occasions he catches one of them looking right back.

In time, they speak to each other in low whispers.

“He always hated hospitals,” Yuna murmurs, eyes fixed on Shane’s face. “His checkups were a nightmare. The only time he really fought with us on anything, wasn't it?”

David huffs a quiet, humourless breath. “Stubborn boy. Remember when he didn't tell us about his broken collarbone. Just wanted to take it easy and play the next game”

Occasionally, Yuna's eyes drift inevitably to Ilya.

She has noticed the way Rozanov has barely looked away from Shane.

Unbeknownst to her, he’s trying to picture Shane as a boy. He’s imagining sitting in another room on another day with the four of them again, flicking through the Hollander family albums. He wants to ask a million questions, he wants to know all there is to know about the man he'd come to love.

Over the next few hours, she continues to watch him. How could they not know? There was always an unspoken suspicion that she had about Shane. It was the way he'd never been particularly bothered by girls, not even as a boy. She'd first equated it mostly down to his shy nature. He was withheld and socially stunted at the best of times. It had taken a lot of coaxing in his teenage years to get him out of his shell. Get him socialising with other boys.

There was so much she didn't know about her son. She could've helped him. What did she do to make him think she would accept him? Who had made him think that she wouldn't love him unconditionally?

Ilya a good looking boy. That's what she thinks about him as she watches his chest rise and fall. He is sitting as close as he could get his chair, an arm resting against the leg of her son. The way his whole body leans toward the bed like he’s afraid distance alone might steal him away. The way his chin shakes and his lips purse every few minutes, as if resisting the urge to let loose a sob.

Her heart aches in her chest, like there's a belt tightening around her heart. He loves her son. If his screams and shouts of agony weren't enough proof, then the look in his eyes right now were.

Yuna reaches across the bed and gently touches Ilya’s arm.

“You should have something to drink or eat,” she says softly. “Coffee, maybe? Can we grab something for you?”

Ilya blinks, startled, dragged from a distant world in his imagination. He shakes his head automatically. “No, I’m fine. Thank you.”

David clears his throat. “I’ll grab something and come back, I’ll bring enough for you to have later” he says, voice steady but tired. “I won’t be long.” He rises to his feet. Yuna knows she needs to take a moment for herself and tells her husband she's joining.

She squeezes Ilya’s arm once before standing. “You don’t have to go anywhere,” she adds, quietly. “We know.”

Ilya nods, unable to trust his voice.

Their footsteps echo retreating down the hallway, murmured words fading into the low hum of the ICU. The room feels larger now without them. It's in a way more fragile.

It's the two of them now. Just Ilya and Shane.

His fingers reach up the stroke along his tan freckled cheeks.

The machines fill the silence. Beep. Pause. Beep.

Ilya as he leans back again his hands reach out carefully, like approaching something sacred, and takes Shane's hand in both of his. It's warm.

He lets his thumb fall onto the pulse point and lets himself smile softly as he feels the thump through his thumb.

"I should've told you sooner." His throat tightens, quiet admission slipping into the air before them.

"I'm sorry, Shane," he whispers, his voice rough.

The words spill out once they start. Seven long years' worth of restraint cracking under the pressure of almost losing everything. The walls he'd built were shattered. Shane wouldn't know what to do with him when he woke. It was like a dam of love and agony had split.

"I was so scared," he admits, his forehead dipping closer to the mattress. "I thought we had more time. I thought—" His breath stutters. "I didn't think about what I'd do if I lost you. And then I did. on that ice. In front of everyone."

His thumb brushes over Shane's knuckles. He's grounding himself in the sensation.

"I've loved you, for a long time now" he says quietly. "Maybe I've always loved you."

Silence.

"Sometimes, I think If I- If I loved you less, I'd be able to talk about it more." The monitor continues its steady rhythm, unmoved by confession or regret.

Ilya pulls Shane's hand and presses his lips briefly to the back over a small brown freckle. A soft, reverent touch. His shoulders threaten to tremble, but he doesn't pull away.

"You're still here." he murmurs. "My mama heard me. I'm not going anywhere, Hollander. Not ever."

Time will stay suspended till Shane's eyes open again.

For now, he remains unconscious. stable. breathing. Most importantly, Alive.

Chapter 4

Shane wakes after nineteen hours of unconsciousness, his eyes open to a dim hospital room lit by two small lamps casting a yellow glow off of each surface. There's a heavy ache that settles into his chest first, deep and unfamiliar, like a bruising that reaches all the way through. The sensation is like he's been hit by an eighteen-wheeler. He feels a stab in his lungs at each inhale, his throat burning as he breathes.

The ceiling above him is too white. And he knows exactly where he is. He's not supposed to be here. He tries to sit up in a panic but his body won't follow it. He's too heavy. His body aches too much to allow him to move. The room is quiet, but for the steady beep of his heart monitor and a layering of heavy breathing. He's rooted into the mattress. Wrapped in warmth and wires, with an antiseptic smell permeating the air.

Hospital. Not a new concept for him. He'd been here plenty before, as is normal for a professional Hockey player. What happened to him?

Slow and unfocused, his gaze drifts across the room. Everyone is asleep.

His mother is sitting in the chair beside his bed, curled slightly inward. Her head tipped toward him, fingers still resting near his arm. His father is dozing away next to her, leaning back, arms folded, jaw slack with exhaustion—the same position his dad had fallen into late at night when watching movies throughout Shane's childhood.

And in the corner of the room, there's someone he's shocked to see.

Ilya.

He's curled on the small sofa like he doesn't quite fit there. His shoes are kicked off onto the floor and there's a coat folded under his head. One arm is flung awkwardly across his chest, the other dangling toward the floor. Shane stares at him. It's strange seeing him so unguarded. His face is slack in sleep, lashes dark against pale skin, tear tracks faint but unmistakable.

Then a cold feeling drips down his spine. Ilya is here with his mom and dad. They had to know about him and Ilya. They had to know about him being gay. This wasn't what he had planned. How was he supposed to explain this? He'd imagined the exact conversation he wanted to have with them to tell them.

He'd pictured every possible scenario. It was crippling how much he had stewed on this, but now they knew and he hadn't been able to explain. He didn't get to tell his mom that he really didn't want to be gay but he just couldn't help it. Or that he had tried. With random girls at bars, with Rose, with his high school girlfriend, Jessica. Nothing stuck, but at least he tried. She could curse him out and be ashamed of him but she couldn't accuse him of not trying.

Love just got in the way. Ilya was inevitable. No matter how hard he wanted to walk away and move on he could never seem to stick to it. Rozanov was under his skin and in his bones. Shane was reprogrammed.

There were three things Shane loved. Hockey, His parents and Ilya Rozanov.

All this he could have explained, maybe with fewer words, to his parents but now it was done and there's a chance he could never redeem himself in their eyes.

Why is Ilya even here?

A knockout on the ice hard enough to get you to the ER isn't that common, but not unheard of. He had to know Shane would be recovered in a few weeks. No major cause for concern. Well, considering how bad he felt right now it may take a bit longer. Whoever had taken him out must have done a real number on him. He'd have a word with his coach about it when he's back in it in a few days.

The question and emotion of Ilya's presence drips through Shane's mind, slow and foggy. His parents, he understands. But Ilya.... sleeping over there like that, like he's been there all hours of the night. As though he never even considered the idea of leaving the room, of leaving Shane. It both infuriates him and warms his heart endlessly.

Surely visiting hours are over... Why are the staff letting them stay? It all felt very strange.

He tries to recall what had happened to injure him.

Ice. Lights. A hit he never saw coming. Pain. Then nothing.

He moves to relieve the pain in his stiff neck.

He swallows the small bit of spit he could gather in his mouth, in an attempt to soothe the stabbing pain of his dry throat. The machine beside him answers with an unbothered beep.

Shane shifts, just barely. The movement is enough to pull the sheets. Yuna stirs.

Her eyes scan his body, tired and weak but sharp despite the exhaustion, and when she sees him looking back at her the breath leaves her lungs in a silent rush.

Her eyes open, "Oh," she whispers.

Her hand flies to her mouth. "Oh, Shane." Her face crumpling, and tears threatening to spill before she can stop them.

David jolts awake at the sound. He looks over in confusion before his expression gives way to shock, then relief so intense it looks painful.

He moves closer at once standing at Yuna's shoulder, his eyes shining as he looks down at his son. His only son. The object of all his pride.

Well, they're smiling at him at least so they can't be too mad about the *gay* thing, Shane thinks to himself. Maybe Ilyas explained his way around it. Perhaps he told them that they're just good friends or something. Or maybe they just really don't care about it.

"You're up," he says with a smile. "Hey, kid. How are you feeling?"

"Dad," Shane's gaze flicks between them, his voice barely more than breath. "What... happened?"

"You got hit in the game, baby. You got hurt," she says softly. "Very badly"

“Oh,” Shane frowns. “Who won?”

“The game got called off afterwards. There was only about twenty-five seconds on the clock baby”

His brow furrows in annoyance and confusion, “That’s ridiculous, why wouldn't they play on?”

She nods, tears slipping free now. “Well, Honey, Your heart stopped.”

The words settle gently, but they land hard.

“You died, Shane,” she says, voice breaking even as she keeps it steady. “And they did CPR on the ice and they brought you back, Baby.”

Shane exhales, a long, trembling breath. “Oh.”

The room holds its breath with him.

A soft, broken sound comes from the corner.

Ilya is awake now, and has been listening.

He’s sitting up, hands pressed to his face, shoulders shaking as if his body has finally run out of ways to stay composed. When he looks up at Shane, who meets his eyes his face cracks.

“Oh God,” he sobs out loud.

He pushes himself up but stops himself after just one step. He's frozen, unsure if he’s allowed closer. His breath comes fast and uneven, eyes wild with relief. His eyes filled with tears stay glued to Shane's face.

The three Hollander’s watch him, hearts aching. Shane feels disbelief. He can't really believe Ilya's here, that he cares enough to expose himself that Shane's parents could see he cares.

Ilya breaks down fully, turning away like he can’t bear to be seen like this. His shoulders are shaking and he breathes deeply. Yuna moves towards him without hesitation.

She stands on tip-toes and wraps her arms around him, pulling him in like he belongs there. She knows the grief. She understands love. She feels the relief.

“It’s okay,” She murmurs into his hair. “You’re okay. He’s okay”

Rozanov clutches at her like he might fall apart otherwise.

“Ilya.” Shane breathes.

Yuna drops her grip but stays rubbing his back,

“Ilya, come here” Shane asks, patting the bed softly.

He doesn’t realise he’s moving until he’s already there. One moment he’s standing beside Yuna, her hand soft against his back and the next, he’s at Shane’s bedside.

“Hi,” Shane says softly, reaching out his hand. The word barely has sound, but it’s enough.

The same one Ilya had been pressing kisses against just hours ago. He grips the side rail with one hand, the other finally, carefully, finding Shane's. "Yes, That's better".

He's grinning like he's won the lottery. He's just so happy to see Ilya. Seeing him here, knowing that he cared enough to come visit him, and sit with his parents filled him with warmth. His cheeks flush a hot red. He was just so completely in love with him.

"You scared me," Ilya breathes. "You scared me so badly."

"I know," Shane murmurs. His thumb twitches weakly against Ilya's fingers. "I'm sorry."

Ilya laughs once, wet and hysterical. "It's okay. I forgive you."

Shane giggles.

Ilya's eyes search Shane's face like he's afraid it might fade if he looks away. "I thought I lost you."

Shane swallows. "I'm here," he manages. "I'm not going anywhere."

Ilya leans in carefully, pressing his lips to Shane's forehead. As he leans back he smiles, his dimples appearing and sweeps his thumb over Shane's freckles.

"Do you think you could get me some water?" His voice cracked.

"Anything, for you."

★

Shane drifts in and out of a light, medicated doze for the rest of the evening. His Nurses come and go, their voices soft, and movements practiced. His parents are hovering longer than they should.

Yuna sits by his side smoothing his hair back with careful fingers, the same way she did when he was a child and sick with the flu. His Dad does his usual thing of talking about just about anything trying to fill the space. He tells him about some random youtube videos he'd watched in the week. "Have you ever seen that kid Charlie that bit his brother's finger? Very funny. They should put him on Ellen."

"Dad, that's like the oldest video ever, How have you not seen that?"

Ilya butts in, Happy to play along with David. "Mr Hollander, I have never seen Charlie biting fingers off. Don't let him bully you."

"Call me David, Ilya." He responds. "I'll send you a link. Shane, send me Ilya's number sometime."

After plenty of yawning, Shane begs the Russian to sleep. Ilya plants himself on the sofa again. He'd only had forty-five minutes of sleep in the last 40 hours.

At some point, exhaustion finally claims him. He curls in on himself again, sleep taking him fast and hard, like his body has simply shut down after holding together for too long. His breathing evens out, deep and heavy.

Shane watches him while he talks with his parents. He tells them they started before their rookie year. He tells them they tried the casual thing for years now but it had come to a head a few months ago at the All-stars game.

Yes mom, I really was with Rose Landry.

Yes Mom, she knows I'm gay.

Well, no, of course she didn't know when it started but... neither did I really.

This is what he wanted. To end the secrecy, to not have to hide anymore.

Not like this, of course. Never like this. Not forced into a situation where there's no choice but to expose yourself. But for years, tucked away behind jokes and excuses and fear, Shane had carried the quiet, persistent hope that one day his parents could meet the man who was the object of all his desires and would really see Ilya. Not as that hockey player they fucking hated. But as the funny, kind, sensitive person Shane knew him to be.

And as the person Shane loves wholeheartedly.

Eventually he grows weary and feels the pain stronger now, with some of the heavier medication waning off.

Shane swallows thickly, eyes stinging.

"I want you to go home," he says softly.

Yuna looks up at him instantly. "What? Why? "

"Not back to Ottawa," he clarifies. "Just... to my place. Go rest. Shower. Sleep in a real bed."

David studies him for a moment, then nods. He understands the unspoken part, that Shane doesn't want them draped over him exhausted and paranoid.

"And Ilya?" Yuna asks quietly, glancing toward the sofa.

Shane's lips curve faintly. "He's staying."

Something tender passes between his parents at that. Yuna reaches out and squeezes Shane's hand.

"We'll be back later," she says. "You make him call us if anything feels wrong. Anything at all."

"I will. The key for the front door is 1919. I love you, guys"

They leave reluctantly, collecting themselves — pausing once more at the door to look back at their son alive in a hospital bed and at the man sleeping in the corner like he belongs there.

When they're gone, the room feels peaceful and calm.

Shane turns his head slightly, and lets himself watch the Russian for some time.

“I wanted you to meet them,” Shane thinks to himself, “I just didn’t want it to be like this.”

Maybe they needed this. This cosmic kick up the ass, saying *It's been years, Guys. Please get on with it.*

Shane was strangely grateful. He's going to thank Cliff Marlow next time he sees him.



ivy ♡✓

@ivyativy

its been like a full 24 hours. I need someone to tell me shane hollander is alive and breathing or im going to become violent.



♥ 1.2K 5:43 AM - March 19, 2017

126 people are talking about this



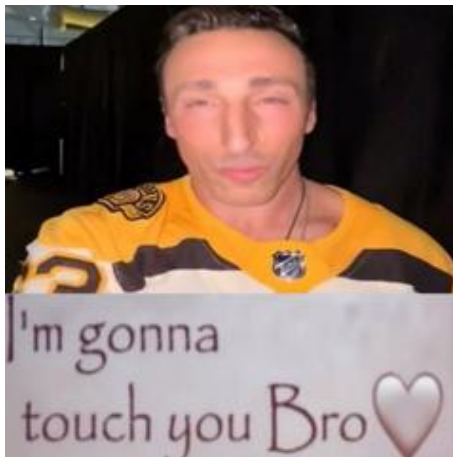
jenni

@bearbuck

Um why in fucks name has Boston managed to put out a statement about Shane and Ilya before Montreal. YOUR CAPTAIN JUST DIED. SAY SOMETHING YOU BUMS.

♥ 15.2K 5:43 AM - March 19, 2017

28 people are talking about this



marchy marry me rat king ✓

@ratkingee

replying to @bearbuck

With love, we're lucky to get the bears posting a statement at all. The only public statements that happen in the NHL are teams apologizing for a shitty season and being Extremely Disappointed That Capitals Forward Tom Wilson Was Not Suspended

♥ 1.3K 5:43 AM - March 19, 2017

8 people are talking about this



Angie

@angelinas4

Girl are you giving fortunes



fujoshi oracle

@supergaynhornee

Hollanov is real

♥ 16 5:43 AM - July 12, 2012

2 people are talking about this

♥ 36K 8:30 AM - March 19, 2017

34 people are talking about this



@Ilyroze

Guys i know its kinda fcked up bc SH was like dead but i have rewatched that video of ilya crying like 100 times now. I could recite that shit

♥ 989 9:43 AM - March 19, 2017

396 people are talking about this



@hollyder

Hi, Can Someone translate what Ilya is saying on that video



♥ 4.5K 3:24 AM - March 19, 2017

16 people are talking about this



mackie✓

@montryall

Its so fucked people are intentionally trying to find that vid of shilya. Get therapy

♥ 8.9K 11:24 AM - March 19, 2017

167 people are talking about this



egg 🍳
@hayseins

Intentionally? girl Its lit every other vid on my tl



mackie✓@montryall

Its so fucked people are intentionally trying to find that vid of shilya. Get therapy

♥ 15K 12:54 PM - March 19, 2017

18 people are talking about this



Tammie
@tamryn943

replying to @montryall

Oh so Im a bad person for wanting to watch a man cry?



mackie✓@montryall

Its so fucked people are intentionally trying to find that vid of shilya. Get therapy

♥ 131 11:00 AM - March 19, 2017

76 people are talking about this



Mackie✓

@montryall

replying to @tamryn943

Yes? His boyfriend just died in front of him?

♥ 2.1K 11:03 AM - March 19, 2017

3 people are talking about this



Tammie
@tamryn943

replying to @montryall

Skill issue ig

♥ 103 11:05 AM - March 19, 2017

4 people are talking about this



@hollyder

Hi so my mootie sent me russian translations for the Shilya video:

At 00.33 - Моя любовь = My love

00. 40 - Ты, чёртов ублюдок. Очнись = You fucking bastard. Wake up.

Скажите, разве мы не потратили все эти годы впустую?" Tell me we haven't wasted all these years.

01.13 - Скажите, разве мы не потратили все эти годы впустую?" Tell me we haven't wasted all these years.

02:32 - Моя любовь = My love

03:20 - Мама, [...] кто-нибудь, помогите мне. Не дайте ему умереть. Заберите меня. Не [...]

Пожалуйста. Пожалуйста. Мы были так близки. Мама, пожалуйста, [...] = Mama, [...]

somebody help me. Don't let him die. Take me. Don't [...] Please. Please. We were so close. Mama, please [...].

♥ 8.9K 11:24 AM - March 19, 2017

167 people are talking about this

Chapter 5

The nurse comes in to check on Shane mid-afternoon.

She's young. Her voice is gentle as she checks his chart, asks him how he's feeling and adjusts the IV.

Shane's utterly exhausted. He's been watching Ilya sleep for the last couple hours—thinking about how Ilya reacted to his incident. He wonders if the Russian made it obvious from the get go.

Hayden made it clear on the phone last night that it had been made clear to everybody the nature of His and Ilya's relationship. Ilya must have gotten too close, looked too affected, followed him off the ice or something. He wanted to see it for himself.

He tried to think about how he would've responded if it was the other way around.

His eyelids feel heavy but he's so entranced in being a voyeur to Ilya's slumber. Shane watches the rise and fall of Rozanov's chest, and notes the way he smacks his lips together before shifting. He smiles at the mumbles and whispers from the Russian in his sleep.

While his nurse silently works away, she glances toward the sofa, then back to Shane with a small, knowing smile. "He's finally sleeping?"

Shane nods. "Yeah. He's done fussing now I think. I just need to convince him to go wash now, huh?"

"I've smelled worse," She smiles before adding, "I could see what I can do about letting him use the staff shower? or we offer a sponge bath? I'm sure our matron would be up for the task"

"As much as he would love that, the shower sounds great."

He then adds, " Please ask first though. I don't want you to get in trouble for our sake."

She finishes what she's doing, then pauses, clearly debating saying something more.

"I'm really glad you're doing so well, Mr. Hollander. I was watching the game from home. You most certainly gave us a fright. I was counting the minutes. Five minutes without the brain getting oxygen is not a small thing. It's next to a miracle that the damage has not presented as more severe. I would say, despite the pain you feel right now, you are a *very* lucky man, Mr. Hollander."

He swallows a dry gulp, then breaks the silence, "Thank you, Ma'am."

She gives a soft nod.

"So, you saw it happen?" he asks.

She stills. "The accident?"

"Yes." He didn't dare ask his parents about it. He'd made them call Hayden on speaker last night so he could assure him he's okay and his teammate sounded so relieved. He'd asked if it looked bad on

the ice and was met with silence down the phone and wincing on the face of every other face in the room.

"It was on the broadcast till they cut away," Her expression softens.

"But, I think everyone saw the aftermath regardless. It's, um... been doing the rounds on social media."

Oh God. He hated social media on a normal day. He only had a page for promotional purposes and even that was managed by his PR team. They must be having a miserable time handling the press around him and Ilya. He'd left it with his mom to deal with but was still curious about the reception he was getting. What did the Voyagers say in their press release about him?

Something tightens in Shane's chest as he asks. "What... what was it like?"

The nurse exhales slowly, mouth twisting as she chooses her words with care. "Well... I've worked trauma for five years now," she says so softly and so silently as though the words could hurt him. "and I've seen a lot of families fall apart in hospital hallways. I don't think I've seen anything like that. It was devastating."

Her head nodded in the direction of the man in the corner of the room.

"He was inconsolable," she continues quietly. "They couldn't pull him away at first."

Shane's eyes burn. "He looked," she adds, "like everything he ever loved had been smashed to pieces in front of him."

Shane closes his eyes. "Do you think- C-Can I... see it?" he asks. "My parents aren't gonna let me have my phone for a long time and I can't ask them to show me and relive it. But, I'm not going to be able stop thinking about this."

She hesitates. "Mr. Hollander... You are already on a major screen restriction."

"I'm not going to be able to sleep till I see it. I'm getting too in my head about it"

She sighs, "Are you sure?"

"Please."

She retrieves her phone from her pocket. She scrolls about a bit trying to find it. She dims the screen, and steps closer to the bed.

"So, they stopped broadcasting what was on the rink after they started CPR and stuff but obviously, there's thousands of people in there with their phones out."

The video is shaky at first. It's shot from the front row, just next to where his body lay on the floor.

He sees them start resuscitation efforts.

Then, there's Ilya. Oh Ilya.

He's on his knees on the ice. Hands in his hair. Face twisted in agony so raw it steals the air from Shane's lungs.

Rozanov is gutterally sobbing. His body is shaking as his brutally animalistic cries sound through the arena.

"I need you. You can't leave me. Please, Shane!"

Shane's breath shudders. The video pans to his parents briefly who are standing there in floods of tears, their eyes flickering between the two men.

"Talk, Hollander, please!" They zoom into Ilya who's sobbing Russian words into the air. It sounds like he's begging or praying—bargaining for his life. "Hollander, wake up!"

The video catches him pressing his lips to Shane's forehead—Kissing him like a sweet goodbye. He stays looking down at him whispering something.

And, then. The next words he can't hear. But he knows what they are. He can see the shape of his mouth.

"I love you," Ilya is saying. Again. And again. And again.

When the nurse quietly turns the phone off, Shane is crying without realizing it. Silent tears slip sideways down to his ears in his reclined position.

"Oh," he whispers. "And everybody's seen this?"

"And the countless other videos. I'm sorry, Mr. Hollander. For what it's worth, there's a whole community out there that is cheering you on and supporting you both. Me included."

"It's okay. Thank you for saying that and you know... for showing me that," He gestures to her phone.

She smiles gently, "You're welcome. I just think, If someone loved me this much I'd want to know. Now that's your screen allowance for the day Mr.Hollander, I think. Please no more now. I'll be back later for rounds, I've got some more patients to check on." She collects herself and pockets her phone. "Please try to rest now. Dr. Samuel will be back in the morning, and you'll most likely be moving out of here into somewhere more comfortable. I have no doubt your parents will be back by then."

The nurse gives him a soft pat on the arm before leaving. Shane turns his head toward the sofa where Ilya is still unaware. Still in a deep sleep.

He watches him with a newfound clarity, his heart is full and warmed and there's gravity that's settling into his chest—certainty.

Ilya Rozanov *loved* him.

Ilya Rozanov loved *him*.

He loved him enough to bare his heart for all to see. Loved him enough to feel anguish at not having Shane in his life.

He can't stop smiling. Sure his heart hurt seeing Ilya in pain but he still can't stop smiling. He is loved! He loves Ilya and Ilya loves him!

What did he do to deserve this? He thinks through the blur of moments of their relationships, all the times Ilya had kissed him deeply, every time Ilya laughed at his jokes, every time they climaxed together—panting into each other's mouths.

Hollander lets out a laugh. It hurts his chest but he can't stop himself. More spills out, he can't seem to stop laughing in joy. The odd, euphoric mixture of morphine and oxytocin floods his brain. He wants to kick his feet. He wants to scream into a pillow. Instead he lays back eyes closed laughing to himself.

“You are crazy now, yes?” Ilya's groggy but amused voice rings through the room.

Shane gasps as he looks back to him, and as he sees Rozanov's smiling expression, his laughter comes back in full force. It's so painful in his chest but rings so sweet in the air.

He has pushed himself upright on the sofa, rubbing a hand down his face, his eyes blinking away sleep and fatigue. He watches Shane's wide smile and his eyes crinkle as he beams back.

“Come over here.” He taps the bed and begins to shuffle himself to the side, making space beside him.

Ilya freezes for half a second. “What?”

“Come here,” Shane repeats, softer now. “Please.”

He's almost fluttering his eyelashes. “Ilya.”

There's something in the way he says his name that has Ilya on his feet immediately. He crosses the room in quiet steps, stopping beside the bed.

“Lie down,” Shane says. “With me.”

Ilya swallows. “I want you to be comfortable—”

“I'd be a whole lot more comfortable if you got on this bed, Rozanov.” Shane interrupts gently. “I almost died. You have to be nice to me.”

That earns him a breathless huff of a laugh.

“Okay,” Ilya says softly. “I will be nice.”

He kicks off his shoes and climbs carefully onto the bed, slow and deliberate, mindful of each movement. He settles on his side, facing Shane. His arm tucks under his head, and he lets his gaze fall on Hollander's face.

“Hello,” Ilya smiles.

“Hi.”

Shane lets his eyes scan over Ilya's face. He lifts his fingers and runs them through Ilya curls. The Russian closes his eyes for a moment and lets himself appreciate the sensation. He runs his knuckles down the side of Ilya's face then swipes his thumb slowly over his lips.

His palm finds Ilya's wrist, then his hand.

“There,” he murmurs. “That’s better.”

They lie there in silence, their foreheads almost touching, breathing in the same air. The world feels reduced again. Here there's no cameras, no ice, no press, no thousands of people with phones. Just this. Just him, and the man he loves.

“I saw it,” Shane says eventually.

Ilya stiffens instantly. “Saw what?”

“The game. The footage...” Shane watches his face carefully. “...of you, and me.”

A muscle jumps in Ilya’s jaw. His eyes flick away. “I’m sorry. I did not think about cameras until after. I- I’ve been so stupid. Now everybody knows that we are...” He drifts off, not quite sure how to describe what they have.

“They don’t.” Shane replies. “They don’t know half of it—of us. They don’t know how far we’ve come. Or the sacrifices we made. They don’t know... how I feel about you.”

Ilya blinks. “How you feel about me?”

Shane brings his face closer to Ilya's, brushing their noses together before pressing a kiss to his lips. “You must know, I love you.” He breathes shakily.

“Fuck. Hollander,” Ilya sighs out, his lips pursing as his jaw wavers in emotion. “I love you. So much.”

Rozanov litters his rosy cheeks with little pecks, as though he was kissing each and every freckle. “я тебя люблю. я тебя люблю. I love you.”

He presses one last deep kiss to Shane's lips, before pulling back to scan over Shane's face.

“It was awful, Shane.”

“I know.” Shane’s thumb strokes over Ilya’s knuckles. “I still wanted to see it.”

Ilya swallows hard. “I’m sorry about—”

“Don’t.” Shane’s voice is firm, but gentle. “No more. Don’t apologize.”

“Yes, well, apologizing is usually your thing.” Ilya looks back at him then, eyes glassy, vulnerable in a way he rarely let himself be before. “I thought you were gone,” he admits quietly. “I couldn’t stay— I didn’t care who saw. I didn’t care about the league or my team or—” His voice breaks. “I just needed you to come back.”

Shane’s chest aches. He presses his forehead to Ilya’s.

“I know, Ilya.”

A tear slips free from Ilya’s eye. He doesn’t bother to wipe it away, and it falls onto the pillow both of their heads rest on. “I was so scared,” he says. “I’ve been scared for years. Of this. Of losing my family. Of people knowing and what it means for citizenship or for my hockey.”

“I don’t want to hide anymore,” Shane says softly. “In a perfect world we could have kept this going for years, and there would be no repercussions but, I wouldn’t have this any other way. I’m glad my parents know. I’m glad my teammates know.”

Ilya searches his face. “You don’t have to make any choices right now.”

“I know.” Shane smiles faintly. “But, I want to. Even with the limited options, I want to choose us.”

Ilya considers that, and looks away furrowing his brow but smiling gently. “I am trying to imagine. Hollander and Rozanov, fighting for the cup. People won’t like it when I bully you on the ice.”

“People don’t like it when you bully anyone on the ice. People kind of hate you, Rozanov.”

“Good. That’s what I like.” Ilya lets out a stark laugh. “I put a lot of effort into becoming the big scary Russian.”

“The press will be insane.”

Ilya blows a raspberry. “Yes, well, we are very profitable couple. Rivals turned lovers, NHL will eat it up”

Silence settles, comfortable and heavy with meaning.

“You’re worth it,” Shane adds. “All of it.”

He lifts his hand to the side of Rozanov’s face once more. And whispers, “I love you so fucking much, Ilya.”

Ilya smiles and presses a gentle kiss against his lips. He pulls back, his eyes dragging over Hollander’s face and presses a deeper kiss once more, his tongue meeting against Shane’s.

They lie in the cot like that, tangled in wires and quiet promises, as they slip into a slumber. Before he drifts away, Ilya curls around his frame, his face pressed into Shane’s exposed neck.

“You’re coming to my cottage this summer.” Shane whispers.

“Mmm, sell me on it.” Ilya replies with a kiss.

“Well, we’ll have so much fun. It’s so private, no one will know where we are. We could be completely alone. Togeth—”

Ilya cuts in, “Hollander, we would not be completely alone”

“Huh? What do you mean” Shane’s nose scrunches making Ilya smile as he compares Ilya to a little bunny in his mind.

“David has already made plans for us to hang out. We are barbequing ribs and reading boring *New Yorker* together”

“You made summer plans with my dad?!” He responds confused.

“Yes, I have plans to become new favourite son. Then, I will be best hockey player in the league and best son in the Hollander family, yes? I try to be the best in all areas.” Ilya replies in his

annoying, stupid, sexy voice and at the words, Shane is angered, endeared and turned on.

“I hate you”, he says simply.

“No, no, no,” Ilya whispers, pressing a soft peck to his lover's lips. “You *love* me”



Hayden Pike✓

@HaydenPikeMntr

"I want to say how relieved I am that Shane is stable and recovering. After talking with him on the phone briefly last night and I am glad to share that he is awake and thankful for your well wishes. Shane is my best friend, my Captain, the Godfather to my children, and someone I trust with my life on and off the ice."

Watching him go down was terrifying, and on behalf of Shane and his loved ones, we are so grateful to the medical staff who saved him. Thank you.

I want to acknowledge the importance of communication in moments like these. When something like this happens—something that affects players, families, and the entire hockey community, I believe thoughtful acknowledgment matters. I'm hopeful that the rest of the Montreal family will come forward and join me in supporting Shane in all areas of his life. His dedication to this team has impacted the core of this franchise and allowed us to become the top performing team in the league.

I'm confident everyone involved—even in their silence—shares the same priority: Shane's happiness, health and recovery."

Hayden Pike

Montreal Voyagers

♥ 52K 11:00 AM - March 20, 2017

1.4K people are talking about this

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

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

He drifts into consciousness in the morning hours as he feels a presence in the room. It's his mom, for sure. She's fussing with something at the bottom of the bed and tells—presumably—his father to be quiet while she's focusing.

He doesn't open his eyes but he can sense her presence by his feet. He can also feel the warmth radiating from the body wrapped around him. The hulking wall of muscle that is Ilya Rozanov was pasted to his body. And, considering the thin layer of sweat on his upper lip, he had spent a good few hours there.

It takes a moment for his brain to sort it out. To separate the rhythm of the machines from the rhythm of the breathing beside him—the steady inhale-exhale that's brushing against his cheek. His eyes stay closed still. He lets himself float there, suspended between sleep and waking, anchored by the weight of Ilya's arm draped carefully across his ribs.

This could be heaven. He could actually be dead. He'd be happy spending an eternity right here.

They had fallen asleep like this hours ago. He remembers calling Ilya into the bed, remembers the way he'd folded himself into Ilya arms, and let himself be held in reverence. He'd looked into Shane's eyes as though holding him was something ethereal—something holy. Shane had been exhausted and while Last night that exhaustion felt bone-deep and medication heavy—after a night in Ilya arms he was better charged and calmer than he'd been in years.

He shifts slightly, testing his body. His chest protests immediately, a sharp reminder of the impact of the collision and the chest compressions. He stills, breath shallow, waiting for the pain to recede.

Ilya murmurs something in Russian and tightens his hold unconsciously, forehead nudging closer to Shane's temple. Shane smiles despite himself.

He hears a giggle from his mother and a scoff from his father and cracks an eye to see Yuna leaning over the foot of the bed, phone in hand, snapping pictures of the two of them stuck together.

She smiles wider when she sees his open eyes, “Good morning, My beautiful boy”.

He grunts in response but can't help the smile that fills his face when he sees how happy she is.

“Smile for the camera.” She sings.

She's a helicopter mom in every other capacity of his life and career, so he's not surprised she's now starting on his relationship. But... Shane's okay with that.

After years of imagining Ilya and his mom meeting, he's glad it's happened, and he's glad she's okay with it. If anything he's a bit put off by how out of character she's being in regards to Ilya. Where was the shovel talk? Where's the insult for his choice of men? He thought she hated Ilya.

In actuality, she lost any negative feelings she had for Ilya Rozanov the second she saw the look of heartbreak he had on that ice. She was made anew. She couldn't look at Ilya now and find a single mean thing to say about him. He loved her son, and he was there for Shane all these years. She'd spent so many years worrying he was lonely, and knowing that Shane had someone that loved him as much as she loved her son meant everything for her.

Her son was a man most worthy of having someone truly deeply in love with him—She felt lucky that her son had found that. Her and David had talked extensively about it the first night they spent away from the hospital. They had found it unnerving that someone else was there now to take their place as a carer and protector of Shane. They respected Ilya and felt they could trust him.

“I didn’t mean to wake you.”

“It’s okay,” Shane murmurs, voice rough. “You didn’t.”

Ilya stirs beside him, blinking awake slowly. He looks between Shane and Yuna, confusion flickering before understanding dawns. He straightens instinctively, starting to pull away.

“No,” Shane says softly, tightening his grip on Ilya’s sleeve. “Stay.”

Ilya stills, then relaxes again, cheek pressing lightly back into Shane’s shoulder.

Yuna watches the exchange, eyes bright. “You look so happy, Shane,” she says quietly.

“I am,” Shane replies, without hesitation.

She steps closer to the bed, reaching out to smooth his hair back. Her fingers tremble just a little. “Sorry, I was intruding on you both. I was just getting one for the family album,” she admits.

“Send it to me,” Shane says. “We’ve spent the last how many years deleting all our photos. I need to start collecting some”

She blinks. “What?”

“The picture,” he repeats, smiling. “Send it to me.”

“I will, Of course. I'm so sorry, Shane. I wish things could have been different for you.” she replies, reaching for his hands. “There's so many things you've missed out on”

“Don’t be. I’m happy now.” He squeezes her hand before letting go and tapping Ilya's side. “Wake up. Mom's taking photos of us. We need to pose.”

Ilya opens one eye and groans. He slightly sits up and as Yuna takes the next picture he presses his lips to Shane's cheek.

He chuckles and tilts his head slightly, letting it rest against Ilya’s, who glances up with a sleepy, crooked grin.

It’s perfect.

Yuna looks at the screen, then presses her hand to her mouth.

“You’re both so beautiful,” she says, voice thick. “Ugh, the ladies and that one ass-hole dad at my book club are going to be so jealous.”

David comes charging in shortly after with a tray of three black coffees and a decaffeinated tea for Shane. He also comes with the news that he'd been talking to Hayden last night and he was planning on visiting with Jackie later in the day. Shane's glad to hear it and gives a swift playful smack to Ilya who groans and whines.

Shane is moved out of the ICU within the hour to a normal room to recover for a day or two more, pending review, before he can leave the hospital altogether.

★

Hayden arrives with noise. He all but bursts into the room in a flurry of dramatic noise.

Jackie strolls in from behind him, calmly. *Thank goodness*, Shane thinks, *he's not brought the kids with him*. Hayden makes enough fuss and noise himself while he's greeting Shane's parents.

Hayden energy has always been that of a Golden retriever when you return home after hours away. On a usual day he fills the room in a storm of joy, passion and energy. Its why their friendship works so well. He brings Shane out of his shell, both challenging and supporting him. He's the perfect alternate captain, acting as the bad cop to Shane's good cop approach.

Jackie is the calm that follows the storm, her smile bright and warm, eyes immediately scanning Shane for signs of improvement.

“Jesus Christ,” Hayden breathes. “You look like genuine fucking dog shit.”

Shane laughs. “Good to see you too, Hayd.”

Hayden crosses the room in three strides and pulls Shane into a careful, one-armed hug that avoids every tube and bruise with uncanny precision. His hand grips the back of Shane’s neck, grounding, familiar.

“I thought I lost you,” he says quietly.

“I know, Bud,” Shane replies. “I’m sorry.”

"Don't apologise. I'm sorry I was wasn't there to stop that fuckhead from hitting you"

"Swear Jar!" Jackie coughs.

Ilya seems to find it all very amusing. “This is very romantic. Should I be worried, Shane?”

“Oh, absolutely. I've been worried for years.” Jackie chimes in. She steps to his side, setting her bag down and leaning in to kiss Shane’s cheek. “You scared us, Hollander,” she says, gently. “You have two very angry girls to answer to. Amber says she will only forgive uncle Shane if he brings her lots of chocolate so...”

"Amber is two months old."

Jackie suppresses her smile, stroking him hair as she hushes him, "Shush. Shush. It's what she said. You have to grant her wish, uncle Shane."

"I'll make a note," Shane agrees with a chuckle. "Unfortunate game to have the twins at... were they okay?"

"I pulled them into the box fairly quickly, nothing to panic about. They'll want you over for dinner as soon as you're recovered—and me too. And, maybe you can bring your *new man*?" Her gaze shifted to Ilya.

She smiles. "Nice to finally meet you Ilya. I want to say I've heard good things, But—" Jackie says tilting her head towards her husband. Meanwhile, Hayden grins, knowing just how much he had complained about Rozanov to his wife in the years they'd played against each other.

Ilya straightens instinctively, reaching out for a hand shake. "Yes. Well, I am not surprised Pike's wife is much too beautiful and interesting for him."

She laughs loudly and reaches out without hesitation and pulls him into a hug.

Ilya freezes before awkwardly hugging her back.

"Oh, I like you already," Jackie says, releasing him and stepping back. "If Shane likes you then I suppose you can't be too bad, huh? I'm going to have to get you signed up for our Montreal WAGs chat. Although, I guess you're a HAB technically?"

"What is this? HAB?" His eyes flit over to Shane.

"WAGs, Wife and Girlfriends. HABs, Husband and Boyfriends" She replies.

Shane and Ilya's faces flush. Through all the I love you's and I cant live out you's, they had kind of forgotten to put a label on anything. Ilya's ears go red.

"I guess, I am first Montreal boyfriend," His eyes flitter over to meet Shane again, "But, one man chat is lonely. I will be WAG with you."

Hayden watches the exchange, brow furrowed. "This is insane."

Ilya, not unlike a child, pulls a face and mocks back in a high-pitched voice, "This is insane," then laughs like he's really amused himself.

Hayden looks at Shane, "Seriously? This is your man?"

"That's my man."

"To be honest I'm a bit lost on this. I-I have questions." He says slowly.

Shane snorts. "Shocking."

Hayden rubs the back of his neck. "I mean – okay. I'll be honest. I did not see this coming."

"That was the aim, Hayd. We couldn't really let people know about us," Shane says mildly.

“I’m not talking about the Rozanov thing. That weirdly makes sense. I mean, in *reflection* knowing that you’re gay and together ... you guys were kind of obvious as fuck” Hayden stops, searching for the words. “It’s the fact that you’re gay at all. I had no clue man. And, I’m not weirded out. I’m not *homophobic*. You know I LOVE the gays. I’m Just... confused.”

“Well, people can get confused sexually sometimes, Pike. But, we will accept you regardless. Is okay to LOVE gays” Ilya says mocking him further.

“Fuck off, Rozanov,” Hayden responds, while Shane's replies, “Shut up, Ilya.”

Hayden looks between Ilya and Shane. “So you're like full gay?”

“I am. Full gay,” Shane replies, nodding.

Hayden quiets his voice as though trying to keep the next sentence private, despite the fact that everyone in the room is clearly listening, “It’s just—I thought you had that thing going on with that chick. Lily”

“Lily?”

“Yeah, Her.”

“You mean Boston Lily?”

“Yeah, Boston Lily. The one you've talked to for like years and years.”

“*BOSTON*... Lily...” Shane raises his eyebrows, as if to say are you dumb?

“Baby, you are going to have to start using some critical thinking skills.” Jackie pats his back.

“Huh?”

“Christ, Hayden, I am Lily obviously,” Ilya butts in. He turns to Yuna, “How am I seen as the problem here. He's an idiot on purpose to anger me. I cannot be blamed for my actions.”

Yuna smiles at him very clearly amused by the four of them, “I'm not getting involved. I have too many emails to catch up on” and she returns to typing away at her phone.

“You are Boston Lily?” Hayden fumes. “Bro? You were ditching win celebrations for Rozanov? I thought you were getting laid, man”

Shane, Jackie and Ilya stare at him then, all adopting the *are-you-dumb?* face. After a few seconds of silence his brain kicks in, sending an image to the forefront of his mind that he could have done without.

“Oh, God Shane. With the enemy all these years.” He groans.

“How are you surprised by this? I think it's fairly obvious we've been seeing each other for a while.” Shane responds.

“I didn't think as long as that! I was thinking that this,” He points between the two, “was a recent development, man. Like a year at most.”

“Technically, seven... or nine if you really get into it.”

“Nine years?” Hayden looks crestfallen. “Since before our rookie season?”

“Yeah, it's been... a long time,” Shane smiles sadly.

Hayden comes forward and leans over to hug Hollander. He wraps his arms around him softly so as to not injure him further and whispers into the hold, “I'm so sorry, Shane”. He leans back and continues “I can't imagine hiding Jackie for nine years. I mean it would be harder because she's so much hotter than Rozanov but, I'm sorry it's taken this long. No matter what anyone says I want you to know I've got your back. I don't love your choice of men, but I'm happy he loves you the way you deserve, Man. and you know what? Fuck Montreal. If they don't want to support you being queer and shit then we'll pack our bags and go elsewhere”

Shane's ears ring at that last line. “I'm sorry, what?”

Yuna's head has popped up, “Hayden,” she hisses, “We talked about this”

“Talked about what? What's happening” Shane's heart speeds, which made evident to the room via his heart monitor that he's still hooked up to.

“Shane, you need to calm down.” Ilya comes over to embrace his hand.

“No, no, it's nothing.”

“Well, it's obviously not nothing if my moms told you to be hush about it.” Shane rebuts. He needs to know what his team had said about the incident – His injury and his unintentional coming out.

“No, they've literally said nothing. It's been a couple days now and people are finding it a bit weird so they've been getting real shit about it but they've still just said nothing. It's kinda like they're trying to pretend it never happened because they've still been posting upcoming game dates and stuff.”

Shane huffs. He wishes he was surprised about it but he's not. In his years of imagining what it would be like when he came out as gay, if he ever came out as gay, The dream scenario was always that they were just breeze past it, ignoring it, not bringing any attention to it and he could just go on living happily under the radar. But now it felt a little bit disappointing.

Having the most important people in his life finding out this new part of him and being so supportive, He'd allowed himself to dream in a way that he hadn't let himself dream before. He'd let himself think that everybody would be so supportive – This was foolish and he knew it. But when you've spent years expecting the worst and it doesn't come – a new faith sparks.

He starts to feel breathless and begins gasping in air as he lifts his free arm over his eyes blocking out the faces of everyone staring at him around the room. His bottom lip begins to quiver as the panic rises in him and settles on his chest like a sopping wet duvet.

He feels Hayden move away and Ilya slips into the vacated place next to him. “Shane.”

He doesn't respond.

“Shane,” Ilya's voice soothes him and he lets himself respond.

“It’s okay. I’m just freaking out. I’ll be okay in a second” His voice cracks

“Hey, hey. It’s okay. It’s all good. We’re gonna figure it all out. Your friends are here. Your family is here. Your Boyfriend is here. We’re all good. We’ll make a plan in a couple days if we need it. But nothing’s happened yet, okay?”

Ilya’s words and the comfort Shane feels from his soft pets across his chest, calm him and he drops his arm and takes a deep breath.

He closes his eyes and leans his head back against the pillow for a few moments. The silence in the room as they watch him process the new information. “Okay”, He speaks after a few moments.

“Are you okay?” Rozanov responds.

“Not particularly, but I feel like if I dwell on this right now it’s not gonna be good for my health,” Shane looks at him, “I’ll think about this in a few days when I get out of here.”

“So healthy and responsible, lyubimyy. This is good idea.” Ilya presses a kiss to his forehead.

They talk for a while amongst the four of them—about recovery timelines, about Jackie’s efforts to set Shane up with her entire yoga class, about how Shane’s dearly missing his eye-glasses and wanting a shower (and for Ilya to have one too, preferably with him in it). Laughter creeps back in, tentative but real. Eventually, they leave with promises to come back. The room quiets again.



Shane stares at the ceiling for a long moment, phone warm in his hand.

They’re in Shane’s apartment now. He felt lucky to have such a quick turnaround in the hospital. They probably would’ve liked to keep him a bit longer but Yuna was very persuasive. All in all I think they were happy to get him out of the building. The press outside had been a bit of a nightmare, Journalists hung by the entrances, asking patients whether they’d seen him or Ilya—Hunggrily snapping photos of Yuna and David when they arrived and left each day. A few had attempted to get up to his ward, posing as his ‘PR team’ or ‘assistants’. The price tag on a picture of Ilya and Shane was astronomical and it was a definite means for concern from the staff.

On the phone resting in his palm, a photo sits open on the screen.

It’s the one his mom took just ten days ago in his hospital room. The one where he’s asleep still—or freshly awake, still having yet to open his eyes. He had the line attached to his arm, wires connected to his chest poking out the neck of his hospital gown and he’s pressed into the chest of his boyfriend—their legs tangled beneath the sheets.

He scrolls to the next picture in his gallery. They were in the same position but Shane has one eye cracked open, a slight smile curled on his lips.

He scrolls on. Ilyas awake and sleepily pressing a kiss to the freckles on Shane’s cheeks. Shane is beaming at the camera. He looks so unbelievably happy. He’s bruised and injured and in pain but beaming as though he’d never felt more joy in his life.

"You are frowning." Ilya notes.

"Not frowning. Just concentrating." He leans down to peck Ilya lips, before adding quietly, "I'm debating whether I should post now."

"You don't have to. Your agent said its up to us. You don't have to say anything at all. It's not like Montreal has said anything "

"I know, but I kinda understand why they didn't." Shane replies, his brow furrowed.

"I don't. They are cowards." Ilyas frowning now, but lets his face slacken as Shane swipes his thumb over his brow. "Are you ready to say anything?"

"I want to. I really really want to."

Ilya studies him. "I'm okay with anything, Shane. I will go anywhere you go."

Shane nods. "We're choosing happiness, right? It's not ideal but I'm happy that there are no more secrets. I don't know if I would've ever been able to take the step to come out myself. Like, in normal circumstances. And, it's not like I'm saying anything they don't know already, I'm just like... confirming."

His boyfriend smiles, runs his fingers through his hair and presses a hard kiss into Shane's mouth. "You are so brave, Shane Hollander."

That settles it.

He opens his notes app and copies the statement he'd been drafting with Yuna and Farrah for days. He's already re-downloaded Twitter ready to post for the first time in many months. He selects the three photos and pastes his caption.

@ShaneHollanderHockeyPlayer

Hello everyone,

I wanted to say thank you to the medical staff who saved my life. I'm here today because of them, and I'll never be able to fully put my gratitude into words. I'm glad to say I've been able to return home just a few days ago and will continue to recover, and come back to the game hungrier than ever.

What happened on the ice was terrifying, but I do not believe there was intent to cause what followed. I've spoken with Cliff Marlow, and there is no ill will between us. I support him in his career, and I don't want this to be something that defines either of us.

To the Boston Bears organization, players, and staff, I want to thank you. The care, respect, and support that you've shown to me and my family, both publicly and privately, has meant more than you know. To the NHL also, thank you for prioritizing my health and standing behind me during my recovery. Hockey culture is changing, and I felt that in a very real way over these last few days. Seeing the posts and messages from our fans and the wider hockey community has shown me the importance of our words and actions. Thank you all for the kindness, patience, and acceptance you've shown.

Finally, to the man I love most. While maybe this hasn't been the most ideal way to come out, I wouldn't change a thing. I'm incredibly grateful that I get to keep living my life, but most of all I get to keep living it with you.

We all deserve the opportunity to be authentically our true selves and I endeavour to continue to represent the need for safe places within the sport for LGBTQ+ fans, staff and players.

He presses post before he can overthink it.

“Feel good?” Ilya whispers to him, and Shane nods a yes before pressing a kiss to his lips. “Do I get to read it now?”

“Hmm, later,” Hollander replies as he pulls himself up, pushing Ilya back and mounting himself on Ilya's lap. His crotch presses against the hard muscled abdomen of his boyfriend.

Shane exhales, smiling.

“I feel lighter,” he says. “Do you feel lighter?”

Ilya presses his forehead to Shane's. “I did before you sat on me.”

The comment makes Shane grin. For the first time, there's no secrets left. There's no burden on their shoulders.

He grinds his ass down onto Ilya's crotch in a slow rocking and grinding motion—his cock hardening against their stomachs as he feels Ilya boxers tent under him.

“Shane,” Rozanov moans into the air.

“Ilya,” He pants back against his lips.

He presses a wet, breathy kiss to his boyfriend's lips. Ilya pulls back and cradles Shane's face with his hand.

“Hollander,” He whispers. “If you don't stop that, this is gonna be over in *twenty five seconds*.”



rina

@rozanslut

i didn't expect to cry reading a hockey statement today but here we are. "I'm incredibly grateful that I get to keep living my life, but most of all I get to keep living it with you." what if I just kms

♥ 4K 2:52 PM - March 29, 2017

3 people are talking about this



will

@hollandass

replying to @ShaneHollanderHockeyPlayer

Ilya come eat this dudes ass rn before i do it for you

♥ 1K 4:00 PM - March 29, 2017

23 people are talking about this



Hayden Pike

@HaydenPikeMntr

replying to @ShaneHollanderHockeyPlayer

love ya bud. I mean came to see you in the hospital and didn't get a shout out? Wtf bro 🙄😂

♥ 6K 4:00 PM - March 29, 2017



Boston

Bears ✓
@BostonBears

replying to @ShaneHollanderHockeyPlayer

Sending you hugs and support from your Boston In-Laws. Rest well and get better soon step-captain!

♥ 27K 12:30 PM - March 29, 2017



Ilya✓

@IlyaRozanov81

replying to @ShaneHollanderHockeyPlayer

imagine if I did all that crying and you just rejected me when you woke up lol



♥ 36K 12:34 PM - March 29, 2017

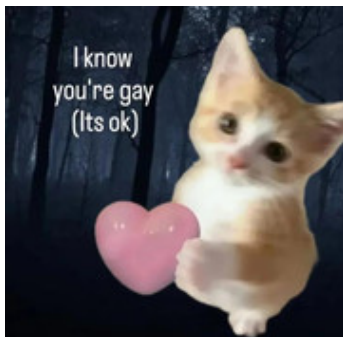


Ilya✓

@IlyaRozanov81

replying to @ShaneHollanderHockeyPlayer

Я люблю тебя всем сердцем.



♥ 54K 12:35 PM - March 29, 2017

WEEEEEEEEEE DONEEEEEEEEE - writing this for the last 5 nights has been SO fun.
thank you to everyone that's stuck it out to the end. It's not the best but I was passionate! thank
you especially to the people that have come back each night to get the next chapter, I see you
and I love you.

End Notes

I've tried editing this myself numerous times but nothing is better than a second set of eyes. If you are interested in editing anything from just half a chapter and upwards, please leave a comment or drop me a dm on my accounts below.

Find me on Twitter, Discord, Reddit and Tumblr @vernoomie

I want to say thank you to all the people leaving lovely comments, bookmarks and kudos on this! You have been so nice to me and I feel so encouraged by you all

If you screenshot any of this to insult it on twitter, I am going to kill myself and you are going in the suicide note. there's no AI in this.

Love you all, Thank you so much for the support

Works inspired by this one

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