

Freckles

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Freckles

by [badjujuboo \(miztrezboo\)](#).

Summary

Freckles.

From cheek to cheek, right over the bridge of a very tiny button nose.

He knows these freckles. Knows them better than he knows the backs of his own hands, probably.

Which, really, combined with the basket and the blanket and the fact that this happens at least once a season to someone in the league, Ilya's heart races, then settles as he holds the baby close.

"Well, hello there, my little one."

AKA wish baby fic

Notes

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

Chapter 1

Time seems to stop when Ilya answers the phone.

“Ilya, Ilya, you fucking asshole, did you hear me? Dad is dead. You need to come home.”

He says something back to Alexi. Enough to get him yelling at Ilya again, so he hangs up and walks out of the locker room to find his coach. His skates and uniform were still on. They organise for Ilya to leave, tell him to take a few weeks, and look awkward when Ilya says he'll only need one.

Even though Ilya knew it was coming, he still feels numb. He answers Marley's questions with something that must be enough when he drives Ilya home. Svetlana is there waiting for him, and he falls into her arms. Falls into her constant comfort as he lies on the sofa with his head on her lap, her fingers gentle in his curls as she makes arrangements for them to fly home. He doesn't cry. Doesn't have the energy to. All he feels is numb.

//

Russia is Russia. His brother is still awful. Alexi's wife is just as dramatic in ways Ilya had mostly forgotten about, seeing as he interacted with her only when making time for his niece. All they want is money under the guise of giving their “beloved Papa” a proper send off - and as always, Ilya is the one who pays. So it's a nice crypt, full honours, and a handshake or three from ministers Ilya doesn't know. It's the current head of the police taking him aside, asking Ilya to sign a fucking jersey because his son watches Ilya play.

It leaves Ilya feeling gross, and he comes close to starting something with his brother, but Svetlana takes him aside and calms him down. The vodka is at least good, and he drinks more than he should, but it keeps his mouth busy, and he doesn't have to answer anyone. By the end of the wake, he's sending Svetlana home with her father so that he can breathe on his own. He hates it here. He's never really loved coming back home - no, not home. It hasn't been that in the last few years. Not when his heart was always back an ocean away. In his stupid perfect Cottage in the summer. Doing stupid yoga on a stupid deck, looking stupidly sexy, and bending into positions that Ilya constantly dreamed of fucking him in.

He looks at his phone and thinks about texting Shane back. Thinks about calling. Hearing his voice. He misses Shane with a visceral ache under his ribs, and he knows that he's too drunk to keep things back. After he signs this apartment over to a trust he's set up for his niece, he'll be free of this place. Free of a family that has never wanted him. Free of a country that only loved him when he won. Free of what he can't have if he still has ties here.

Yet ultimately, he feels so desperately, desperately alone. He pulls the last of the vodka from the freezer and doesn't bother with a glass. If this is the last time he'll have access to really good vodka, he'll not sully it with ice. He drinks, and he lies on the thick rug he picked out three or four years ago that still smells like it did when he rolled it out of the plastic. That's how often he has spent here. Even the carpet doesn't hold a part of him. There's really nothing here for him anymore.

Ilya lies on his back, soaking up the quiet of the night, and blinks and blinks against the muted light coming from high above. He drinks some more and then opens his clock app on his phone, checks the time between Moscow and Buffalo. Shane will be on the ice. He flicks through to that one folder that he keeps password-protected. The one he's made again and again over the years just to keep a set of photos that mean more to Ilya than anything else. He stares at Shane in his tuxedo. Flicks through and can see when his touch affected Shane's eyes. His stupid freckles darkened with the ruby flush on his cheeks as Ilya's hand lingered on Shane's ass.

And what an ass.

Ilya sighs and thinks about texting. He could write something. Anything. But anything might come out more honest than he wants. Than he's prepared for.

"All I want is you," he whispers, zooming in and tracing the freckles on Shane's face. "It's always you."

The picture blurs, and Ilya blinks, hot tears spilling over his cheeks.

"I'm so in love with you, and I don't know what to do about it."

//

"What is that fucking sound?" Ilya curses, opening one eye and then the other and closing them twice as fast.

Fuck. As comfortable as this rug was to lie on the night before, it is not built for a full-grown man who beats the shit out of his body for too many months a year to fall asleep on. The noise continues and seems, if anything, to get louder.

Сука блять! Ilya sits up and eyes the window. There was a family who lived in the house opposite that often took their screaming baby out for walks when Ilya supposed it wouldn't shut up inside. Maybe he left one window open, but when he stands up to look, he remembers. He's not in Boston. He doesn't know any of his neighbours here. He definitely has no idea who lives around him, or if they have children.

It doesn't explain the sound, though. He stumbles forward to where he thinks the noise is coming from, kicking his toe on the empty vodka bottle he'd left on the floor. He's cursing as he walks and isn't paying all that much attention when he opens the front door. There's no one in the hall, but the cries are definitely louder, and when Ilya looks down, it's to see a basket and a little bundle in a yellow blanket. Their round face is red and wet, and Ilya wastes approximately three seconds before his brain catches up to his eyes and he picks the baby up.

He rocks them in the crook of his arm and holds them close, making the shushing sound he's seen some of the wives on the team do to their babies. The crying starts to settle, and that's when Ilya notices them.

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Which, really, combined with the basket and the blanket and the fact that this happens at least once a season to someone in the league, Ilya's heart races, then settles as he holds the baby close.

"Well, hello there, my little one."

SHANE

ONE WEEK EARLIER

"Did you hear about Rozanov?"

Shane stops untying his skate and looks at the bench across from him. Comeau and J.J. are gazing down at Gilbert's phone, speaking in French.

"What about Rozanov?" Shane asks quickly, in their native tongue.

Comeau keeps scrolling while he answers. *"He didn't fly to Nashville with the rest of the team today."*

"He flew separately?" Shane asks, sitting up a little straighter, something like worry tightening in his gut.

"No," Comeau answers in English, looking up at Shane like he's a little bit dumb, so he's had to switch languages. "He's just not in Nashville."

"He didn't get hurt last night, did he?" Hayden pipes up as he enters the room, face mostly hidden as he towels off his hair.

"No." Shane answers, possibly too quickly.

J.J. looks up, a surprised quirk of his brow, his dark eyes a little too focused on Shane.

Shane feels his face heat as he quickly adds, "Not that I noticed." He drops his head back down and focuses on tugging at the strings of his skate to loosen it up.

"Sick, maybe?" Hayden says, sitting in his usual spot beside Shane, their shoulders brushing.

"I don't think so." Shane finds himself answering without thought again, at least keeping his attention on his feet and not looking like he's as invested as his quick replies make it sound

"Well," J.J. starts, swiping Comeau's phone, knocking it on Shane's knuckles to hand it to him. "ESPN is just saying he didn't go to Nashville. I'm sure we'll find out."

Shane nods, swiping up to the top of the page and clicking refresh, hoping for more answers, that feeling in his gut tightening when there's nothing else.

//

When the locker room starts to clear, and Shane's had a chance to shower and has his towel wrapped tight around his waist, he picks up his phone.

S - Are you okay?

He hovers facing his cubby and waits for an answer. Seconds feel like hours, and he jumps when the sound of a door shutting nearby echoes through the room.

It's okay, he tells himself. Ilya is probably busy. He's sick, like Hayden thought. Throwing up in the bathroom or something gross.

He puts his phone down after logging in and out of his messages app once more and throws his shirt on. He'll call if Ilya hasn't answered by the time he gets home.

//

It's been an hour, and his phone still hasn't buzzed with a text, call, or anything from Ilya.

Shane's been pacing his kitchen, looking at the thing on the dining table for the last - at least - thirty minutes of that hour, and he's probably worn a path in the floor.

He pulls a soda out of the refrigerator and stares back at his unlit phone while he pops the cap. Maybe the battery is dead? Maybe Ilya's phone isn't getting texts? Maybe he... maybe he could call? He puts the drink down on the bench, and his feet have taken him to where his phone lies dormant before he can overthink things. Shane's picking it up and finding Ilya's contact before he can talk himself out of it, holding the phone to his ear as it calls.

"Hi, this is Ilya. I will never listen to your voicemail." Shane finds himself starting to grin, but hits end before it gets too far. Leaving a message isn't... who knows who could listen on the other side.

It's okay. Ilya will get back to him.

He always does.

//

A week passes, and Shane's sitting up on his bed at their hotel in Buffalo, checking his phone.

"Can you call me?"

Hayden snorts. "From here? Yeah, bud."

"No, I mean on my phone. I think there's something wrong with it," Shane hears Hayden sigh, and the room lights up a bit more as he taps the screen on.

"You answered in the group chat just before, you know," Hayden grumps, but his face and Shane's with the cup the first time they won come up on Shane's phone.

"Was it just on silent, you dummy?"

Shane ends the call, that pit in his stomach deepening as he forces a laugh, "Yeah, it was."

//

"Whatever happened with Rozanov must be serious, hey?" J.J. says as he drops down beside Shane on the ice, stretching one leg behind him as he looks out at Toronto's barn.

Shane stills for a beat and then forces himself to change legs before answering. "Why, what's ESPN say now?"

"*Ostie qu'il m'énerve!*" J.J. spits as that fucker Dallas Kent skates past them a little too close to their shared blue line. Shane hears Kent laugh and say something gross in return.

"J.J.," Shane admonishes but only slightly, "Rozanov?"

"LTIR," J.J. answers, still focused on Kent. "Doesn't say how long or what for, though."

Shane's head spins. LTIR means something serious. Maybe that's why he hasn't heard from Ilya? Maybe whatever it is means he can't use his phone? Maybe he's concussed, or maybe he broke both his arms falling out of bed, or something that would make more sense than that for an adult. Definitely one more balanced and coordinated than a six-foot-three hockey player whose job it is to fly around on ice with blades on his feet.... There has to be an explanation. Something more. Not after all these years. Not after what they sort of said to each other in Florida. Not after the phone calls and the first names.

"Anyway, one less asshole in Boston to worry about, *cher!*"

"Right," Shane shakes himself and answers, swallowing the lump in his throat. "For sure."

//

S - I hope you're ok.

delete delete delete

S - I heard about the LTIR and

delete delete delete

S - Why won't you pick up your fucking

delete delete delete

//

A clean hit by Marleau in the last game before Playoffs sends Shane home with a broken collarbone, a concussion, and the Metro's out in four before the second round.

He leaves the hospital with his Dad driving and his mom in the back seat, her hand a warm presence on his good shoulder in front of her. It's not like he wants to be alone now, and he would have gone up to the cottage whenever the season was over. It just isn't what he thought he'd be doing right now. His mom is now a concussion expert. She spent far too much time thoroughly researching everything online, then questioning the team's doctors and the few she sought out herself just to make sure. So it's no screens, a dark room, and no contact with anyone unless they call.

Hayden does.

JJ calls from somewhere loud, like a club, and Shane ends the call quickly with the migraine the noise brings on. It takes time, and it's kind of depressing, but everyone gets their bell rung at least once. It's part of the game, Shane knows. He's finally cleared for screens in time to watch the Raiders get knocked out of their playoff run, but there's no 81 on the ice, so it doesn't really matter much at all.

He's sat on the sofa with his mom watching fucking San Francisco in the final moments of their run at the Cup. Shane has a week or so until he can take the sling off, and it's annoying to keep wearing, but his mom is adamant that it stays on. Even if Shane is literally just sitting still.

"Are you sure you won't stay here for a few days longer?" Shane's mom asks, with that same concerned look she's had since he woke up in the hospital.

"Yes, Mom," Shane whines. He's been with them for weeks now and he desperately needs some time alone.

He paws at the ache in the muscle underneath his now mostly healed collarbone and concentrates on the screen. He does not look at his phone.

He's looked at his screen as much as he can lately and it still doesn't change that Ilya hasn't called. Texted.

Not a single get well soon.

"I might go lie down in my room for a bit." Shane finds himself saying, his head not aching but maybe his heart just a little.

"There's barely half a period left?" His mom says pointing to the screen where they line up for a faceoff.

The thing is? Shane doesn't actually care about the final. Who'll take home the Cup. He's never liked playing either team and even worse, he's especially never liked it when Ryan Price was on the ice. Dude was a goon.

The thought has barely processed when something happens on screen and he can see the defenceman dropping gloves with Patrick Le Fleur on the ice. It's over fairly quickly, Le Fleur going down with one good hit from Price.

He doesn't get up.

Medics are there within seconds and Shane's mom makes some pained sound, hand covering her mouth before leaving the room. Shane looks back at the screen and they're bringing a stretcher out. It's one of the worst parts of the game. The moment when one tiny move can go completely wrong.

"You hate to see it, even more so in the Playoffs. The announcer is speaking quietly, all the energetic frisson from earlier is absent from his tone.

Le Fleur still isn't moving and Price looks white as a sheet where he's standing off to the side. The captain from Frisco is talking to a referee and everyone else is sort of hovering near the benches. Stick taps have never been so loud in Shane's ears as they start to move Le Fleur off the ice.

A woman wearing a jean jacket covered in sparkles is at the side doors when they open. She's got her hand in La Fleurs and the other covering her mouth. The camera captures where tears are rolling down her cheeks.

"He's lucky she's in the building," Shane's dad says with a tremor in his voice. "I can tell you, son. It's completely different, an out-of-body experience, really, when you're watching something like that happen to someone you love and get a phone call to—" his Dad pauses and lets out a shuddery breath.

"I'm just going to check on your mom."

Shane's dad leaves the room while the announcers replay the one punch that La Fleur threw, losing his balance and hitting the ice hard before Price had even got a proper swing in. It looks like nothing, but even Shane knows a nothing can be a something from the wrong angle. Can be anything to do with the times before that all add up. La Fleur isn't that old but he has always liked to fight and that can't be good for anyone's body, especially getting your bell rung so many times.

La Fleur is lucky his wife is there. Someone who loves him by his side. When Shane went down he only had one person on his mind. One person he wanted to know he was alright.

There's only one person Shane would want someone to call.

He finds his fingers hovering over "Lily's" name, but

Realising that he hasn't heard from Ilya even now, when something like this is happening. Or before when it was Shane and he could have been really injured and no one would have been able to tell Ilya anything. He'd have to learn it all online and through the ridiculous gossiping that all hockey players liked to do. Marleau had come to see Shane at the hospital and apologise so maybe he asked him? Yet surely, he'd be aware of concussion protocol. He

could have left something in a text even not this... nothing. And after all this silence between them? Maybe they never had anything at all.

Shane holds the phone to his chest and breathes deep in and out just for a second. He walks back into the kitchen, where his parents still are. If he did have a person in his life that wasn't able to be out in the open like La Fleurs wife, he'd want them to be able to call someone. To find real details. He'd want his family to know them. This at least, is something he can do for a potential not-Russian-speaking asshole. Maybe. This probably isn't the best time, and it isn't as if he has anyone to take this next step for other than himself, but....

"Mom, Dad? I have to tell you something...."

//

Shane tells Hayden next. Takes him out for lunch and orders himself a beer to go with his steamed salmon, quinoa, and broccolini on the side. Hayden looks at him funny, but Shane needs something, even if he thinks Hayden will be fine with what he has to say. At least he hopes.

Hayden's reaction is as Hayden as it can be.

"Thanks for telling me, bud, can you pass the salt?"

So Shane says it again. "You know what gay means, right? I like men. I've probably always liked men and I want to -"

Hayden waves his hands in Shane's face with a loud, "Whoa, whoa, whoa. I get it, okay, I'll wrap my stick in Pride tape, and I'll go to the parade with you. I just don't need to know where any of the dicks go."

Shane laughs, "Dicks? How many guys do you think-"

"Well, I don't know! I've only ever watched straight porn before!"

The rest of the meal is normal, only the hug Hayden gives Shane before he gets into his car is longer and has more back pats than Hayden usually gives him.

"I'm proud of you, man. You deserve to live your life in the way you want to. You deserve to be happy, and if that's with a man, then that's with a man."

Shane hugs him back harder, his words a little caught in his throat.

"Just as long as he doesn't play for Boston, though," Hayden adds, slapping Shane one last time before he lets Shane go.

Well.... Not anymore.

The team is another thing altogether. Some of the guys are fine with it. Others, he thinks, won't shower with him after warm-ups anymore. J.J. offers to take him out clubbing and be

his wingman. Even though they're super quiet and weird as only they can be, goalie Benoit says he'll come along.

It's fine. No one is outright awful, and as Captain, Shane will just rely on his hockey talk for him. Which it will, when the season officially starts. Shane doesn't put the games against Boston into his calendar this year. He wants that third cup and nothing, not even being ignored or whatever it is Rozanov has chosen to do will make a difference.

Shane's done with it, once and for all.

//

"So you end it with Boston Lily?"

"What?" Shane answers, looking up from where he's lying on his bed, reading a book on the art of war.

"You and Boston Lily. This is our second game down here, and you haven't left me alone once. Kinda miss having the room on my own." Hayden says, throwing himself on the bed next to Shane's, wiggling his brows.

Shane shakes his head and blinks a bit more than he feels is normal. "Boston Lily wasn't--"

Hayden groans, rolling onto his back and covering his eyes with his forearm. "Dude, you definitely were going out and getting laid with 'Lily' anytime we were here in Boston. You did say you've always kind of liked guys, and I figure Boston Lily was one because you never introduced her to us, so, like... what happened?"

Shane puts his book down and takes off his glasses, rubbing at his eyes.

Fucking Lily. Ilya. Fuck them both.

"It ended. I don't know. It just isn't anything anymore." Which is as close as Shane can put into words. Even now, his chest tightens, his eyes well up.

Hayden is silent, and the air conditioning hums into life before he speaks again.

"You wanna --"

"No. Nope." Shane answers quickly, wiping his eyes and putting his glasses back on.

"Good. Okay. Good talk."

//

The third time they play in Boston, they come in early from New York. Hayden's on the phone with Jackie because one of the twins has brought home head lice, and she's on her own, delousing the whole house. It's not anything Shane wants to listen to, so he finds himself heading out.

He wanders and ends up getting stared at in a way he knows means someone has clocked him, so he hails a cab. He doesn't mean to say it, but when the driver asks where to, he's giving them an address on Beacon and....

Now he's standing here in front of Ilya Rozanov's door, raising his hand to knock. There were no cars out front, and the street was empty when the cab pulled up. It was all too easy, so maybe that's why he's not hesitating when he knocks.

The door opens in a few seconds, and all the words Shane has thought about saying to Ilya when he eventually sees him die in his throat.

"You're not Svetlana," Ilya says over the sounds of a very unhappy baby propped on his hip.

Shane stares, and Ilya keeps bouncing this baby, this little loud thing tucked in tight to his body with one arm. His eyes roll, and he turns, saying something in Russian that sounds terse - but what would Shane know?

He hasn't heard Ilya's voice in months.

"Do I take off my--"

"Yes, yes, this time. Svetlana has thing about germs," Ilya calls back from where he's walking deeper into the house, the light coming in through the floor-to-ceiling windows making Ilya's curls glow. They're longer than Shane has seen them in a while, but before he can focus too much on that, he remembers to take his shoes off and tuck them in the pile of sneakers and slides by the door.

He follows the sound of the baby and Ilya's shushing, interspersed with more Russian, and he finds them in the kitchen. Ilya's trying to put the lid on a bottle one-handed, and as the bottle tips and milk spills, he curses loudly in a word Shane definitely recognises.

"Here, make yourself useful," Ilya says, handing the baby to Shane without meeting his eyes.

Shane has no choice but to take the baby. He remembers to tuck one hand under its bottom and the other pressed gently at its back as he immediately starts rocking side to side, jiggling the baby as he goes. It's like muscle memory from all of Hayden's kids he's done this to. Most of the time, just like now, without a choice.

He watches Ilya as he finds a cloth and cleans up the spill. He's quick and efficient at opening a plastic container with other bottles inside, pulling one out. The baby's cries start to soften as Shane tucks their head under his chin and sways, jiggles, and shushes just like he heard Ilya do. Ilya is shirtless, Shane realises, and isn't *that* something to only just notice when you've been standing inside someone's house holding their baby for minutes now.

He looks good, a little more golden than he would normally be this far into a season. Still looking strong and lean as he stretches up into a cabinet above the stove for what looks like formula in a tin. Shane's body reacts like it always does to a half-naked Ilya, a hum that he can almost hear, but the baby has a hand in his hair and tugs, ending whatever that thought was. He looks down, turning his head, and their little eyes are open. Snot bubbles under a

button nose that has tiny freckles already showing. Or maybe they're milk dots. God.... The things Shane now knows thanks to fucking Hayden.

The baby isn't crying all that much as they stare back at Shane, and he finds himself grinning as a hiccup shakes through their tiny form.

"Here," Ilya's voice breaks through whatever moment Shane was sharing with this baby as he shakes the bottle in front of Shane's face. "She likes to be fed in the rocking chair, two doors down the hall. Spit cloths are there, too."

Shane takes the bottle and looks up, a frown already forming as he watches Ilya walk off, stripping his joggers as he goes.

"What, I mean, Ilya--"

"I'm showering. Is your turn now." is all he gets from Ilya before he disappears out of sight.

The baby is making that sound like she's going to cry again, so Shane wanders after him down the hall. He counts the doors, and it's obvious when he gets to the room Ilya has directed him to. It's like a baby store threw up over every surface. Teddy bears and soft toys, a large white cot to one side of the room, and a bookshelf overflowing. The walls are a deep green, broken up by framed prints of bears and forest animals. It's not easy to see, even with the warm light of the three different lamps in the room. Even the windows have curtains with animals printed on them, but not in an over-the-top way. They're soft and muted, and as Shane steps inside, headed to the rocking chair, he notes they're interspersed with hockey sticks, which is more perfect, Shane supposes. He shushes the baby - her - more as he settles on the chair, it's padded and comfortable, and he tucks her into his left arm, nudging her little arm down as he props the nipple near her mouth.

Shane laughs as she almost throws herself forward onto the thing, like a shark.

"You were just hungry, weren't you?" Shane says softly as her dark brown almond-shaped eyes gaze up at him through lashes so long, and she nearly tugs the bottle out of his hand with how she's sucking the milk down.

Shane finds himself chuckling again as she takes a moment to breathe around the nipple in her mouth. Her little nose is still snotty, which makes her sound like a pig with each snort. Shane swears she frowns at him. It's a look that makes him think of Ilya all the times he's told Shane off for saying something stupid like "the sheets are all messed up," but it does make him bite his lip on his next laugh.

He sets the rocker in motion as he watches her resume eating and hums a song he always seems to find himself singing whenever he's holding Hayden's kids. Something that his mom always sang in words, Shane doesn't speak as fluently as he should.

He gets through two rounds of it before she's finished, her eyes blinking shut more often than they're open. He sits her up on his lap as she quietly grumbles, grabs a cloth he assumes is clean from the pile on the little table beside him. Shane holds her face under the hand he's draped the cloth on and rubs in steady circles on her back. He congratulates her on a job well

done when his back pats and rubs get two big burps. Her eyes are mostly closed now, and he can still hear the shower running, so Shane leans back. Might as well help out some more and get her to sleep.

Which means he also gets *himself* to sleep if the shock he has waking up to a pair of hands lifting the baby from his arms is anything to go by.

He recognises her face. He's seen her in photographs of Ilya online. Some that line these walls.

Svetlana.

"So," she says, holding the baby to her chest, talking more to her sleeping form than to Shane. "He told you afterall."

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

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

SHANE

It's as awkward as you think it would be.

Shane is sitting on the sofa in Ilya Rozanov's house while Svetlana - who Shane knows is his best friend and sometimes lover - makes them tea in Ilya Rozanov's kitchen. The only sound is the kettle boiling on the stove and her fingernails tapping on the bench top.

And Shane's heart beat. Yeah. That's definitely keeping a rhythm in his ears now.

He swallows hard. "I can--"

"No. You sit. Tea won't take long."

Shane nods and leans back a little further into the cushions. He doesn't know what to do with his hands because it's not like he has a baby in them anymore. Svetlana had taken her to Ilya's bedroom, where she sleeps in a bassinet beside his bed. So he can always keep a hand on her.

Which is something he knows because Svetlana told him.

That, and the baby, Mila, is now in that room under that hand because Ilya didn't just shower; he fell asleep, too.

It's just so quiet, and Shane feels like he's going to bust out of his skin if it goes on any longer. He makes to stand when he hears Svetlana stirring something, but maybe she has eyes in the back of her head because when she calls out, "Sit," he does.

He whets his lips as she walks into the room; his mouth feels stale and dry. She's carrying a tray with a peculiar-looking pot and two small cups on it, along with something that resembles a jar of jam.

"Can I--"

Svetlana cuts him off with a shake of her head, dark curls bouncing everywhere. She sits beside him, leaving a space so that when she turns after doctoring the cups with a spoon of jam in each and then the tea, she doesn't have far to hand him his own.

"Thanks," he squeaks and hates himself a little for it, so he clears his throat. "Thanks for the tea."

Svetlana nods and sits back, crossing her long legs. She gazes at Shane with a stare that feels knowing as she brings the cup to her lips. She nods at him again, looking down at the cup.

”Drink.”

He does, and she does and wow, maybe it's the Russian accent that has him following orders without question.

He sips, and it burns down his throat. It's strong and sweet, once he braves blowing over the top and sips again, slow.

She sits back, holding the cup over her knee, and Shane mirrors her position. She's still staring at him, but now she's got her head cocked to the side.

”She-she's beautiful,” Shane starts with a stutter after he can't suffer the silence anymore. “Mila? Um, she's very pretty and um, loud?”

Svetlana says nothing still, but a corner of her mouth might move a little. Or maybe Shane blinked too fast.

He shouldn't be here. It's obvious that something happened with Svetlana and Ilya, resulting in a baby. Even if Ilya said they only fucked sometimes, and not much anymore, it's not like he and Ilya were exclusive. Shane did have Rose, but that wasn't even really more than friendship. It's just... they talked in Florida. Actually, *talked* and Ilya let Shane hold him, and when they fucked it wasn't just to get off, it felt like everything they'd mostly admitted to. Shane knew what was holding Ilya back, but it felt like something had changed, like some corner had been turned. A valve once opened couldn't be shut off. Having Svetlana here, though? This makes Shane feel so unsure. Not that he'd hate Ilya for having a kid, it's just he couldn't even tell Shane? Not one text? A call?

He shouldn't have come. He *definitely* shouldn't have stayed. There's no place here for him to belong.

”It's probably weird that I'm here. It's just-“

Shane's cut off by his phone, making all the noise from his pocket. Shane spills the tea on his pants as he stands up to make it stop.

“Fuck, *fuck*. I'm sorry, it's just,” Shane apologises and stammers as he tries to slide his stupid phone out of his back pocket. Svetlana takes the cup from his hand as Shane bends himself backwards, hand deep where his phone must have slipped down when he was in the rocker.

He hasn't had the thing on silent since he can't remember (okay, he definitely can, but he chooses not to), and it's squawking so loud. He finally gets it out as he's shuffling out toward the kitchen and away from where the sound hopefully won't echo down the hall.

”Yeah?” He answers to the sound of Hayden's laughter.

”Dude, did I catch you at a bad time?”

”No, um, no, not, not at all,” Shane answers, looking down at his pants. The raspberry jam that didn't quite melt into the tea is now clumped like cooling lava on the top of his jeans, sinking into the fabric and his skin below. It fucking *hurts*.

“I really don’t want to know,” Hayden snorts. “But you do realise we have a game this afternoon that you’re about to be late for?”

“Shit.” Shane pulls the phone away from his ear and checks the time. Yeah, with traffic, he’ll hopefully make it to the hotel in time just to change and head right back out the door.

Hayden’s still laughing as Shane ends the call. Shane closes his eyes, takes a breath, and walks back around to where Svetlana is still sitting where he left her before.

”You forget you are hockey player?” Svetlana says with the smallest of grins.

”Uh, yeah. Um. I didn’t mean to sleep... I’m sorry about the mess I can-“

She shakes her head, cutting him off. “*Что он вообще видит в этом парне?* I will tell him you had to go.”

Shane pauses for another second, feeling like he should say something else.

Svetlana sighs. “And I will tell Mila goodbye.”

For some reason, that eases something in Shane’s chest, and he can then head toward the door.

//

Hayden is waiting for Shane back in the room. He’s got Shane’s suit all laid out and a smirk on his face that makes Shane’s own heat up.

”You and Boston Lily make up a lot today, huh? You sure you have enough energy in the tank for tonight?”

Shane gives him the finger as he heads straight toward the shower, slamming the door.

//

Hayden is still an ass when they head back into the lockers after putting the Raiders in their place, 4 to 1.

“I’m not gonna say it,” Hayden says with a lift of his brows.

Shane throws his jersey at him. ”Then don’t.”

Hayden laughs, “But,” He draws out the word, throwing Shane’s jersey and his own at the laundry bin. “You do always play better when-“

Whatever comes next, Shane is able to muffle behind his hand over Hayden’s face, glove still on.

//

Shane waits approximately five seconds after Hayden starts snoring to sneak out of the room and down the hall. He can't stop thinking about Ilya and the baby and Svetlana and the questions he hasn't been able to ask.

He steps into the stairwell and goes down half a floor before he sits and finds Lily's contact. He presses call because fuck it, Ilya can talk to him.

It's declined before it even gets to voicemail. He presses call again. And again. And again. Fuck Ilya, Shane wants answers.

He's about to hit call a fifth time when he sees a message come through.

L - I have BABY Hollander??!! You want to wake her up??

Shit. Fuck.

S - Sorry. Sorry. I just want to talk.

L - Will talk later. I sleep when she sleeps, so not now.

Right. Shane should have known this. It's just that he finally saw Ilya today, and it feels like a dream that he was there in Ilya's house holding a baby that is definitely Ilya's and well, Svetlana was there.

S - Sorry. I forgot the time. Hope you and Svetlana sleep well

The next text takes a while to come through, but it does make Shane smile stupidly at his phone.

L - Goodnight Shane.

//

He doesn't hear from Ilya the next day. Or the one after. Shane still doesn't know what he feels about any of this, but at least he knows that Ilya isn't hurt.

Then, when he thinks about that too long, he realises that not being hurt and just being a dad has nothing to do with Ilya going on LTIR.

And so he has more questions again.

It swirls something that doesn't feel good in Shane's stomach, so he tries not to think about it and focus on hockey.

Which is fine until he's got three days straight with a break between games at home.

S - Can we talk?

He stares at his phone, waiting, and then three little bubbles pop up. Pause, then pop up. Pause, then pop up.

Then it's an invite to a FaceTime call.

"Hey," Shane answers softly when Ilya's face appears.

He can't stop his eyes from tracking over Ilya's face. Dark circles under his eyes. Some type of something was sticking two of his curls together just over his right brow. He looks a bit thin over his cheeks, but... he's still so lovely to look at.

"Hello."

Ilya seems to be looking over Shane's face just as much, and a warmth starts to fill Shane's bones.

"Hi," Shane finds himself saying again, blinking and shaking his head a bit as Ilya laughs in front of him.

"Asshole."

"Maybe a little bit," Ilya says, scrunching his nose.

"Probably a lot. You have a kid, Ilya." Shane says getting straight to the point always seems to work the best with Ilya.

Ilya nods, a smile breaking across his previously serious face as he looks down away from the camera. "I do."

"When did, how?"

"You want to know details?" Ilya says, those green eyes back on Shane's, any trace of that smile gone. "She is mine. It happened in Russia when -"

Shane interrupts. He does know about that. "I'm sorry about your dad."

Ilya's bottom lip trembles a bit, and Shane watches as his eyes shutter a little, the brightness hidden by stupidly thick lashes. "Thank you," he whispers so softly.

Ilya takes in an unsteady breath, shaking himself, and then looks back at Shane. "Was hard but she is good baby. Tough like her papa."

Shane's stomach swoops as Ilya's whole face softens. He's seen that look a few times, and he thought he knew what it might mean and now... well. It's been too long and too much unsaid to know anymore.

"She is really beautiful, Ilya," Shane finds himself saying, memories of her little face all smooshy and round, how she felt in his arms. That little part of Ilya that, for some reason, he

just gave to Shane that morning. Shane's not stupid enough to think it didn't mean anything. You don't just hand off your child to someone random.

Well, maybe Hayden would, but he's got four, so maybe he doesn't mind if he misplaces one.

"You want to see her?" Ilya asks through a smile so warm that Shane can nearly feel it.

He nods and sits up, leaning against the rail of the stairwell. "Sure, is she awake or--"

Ilya is walking but shakes his head. His face disappears for a moment in the darkness of the hall and then glows in the lamps lit in Ilya's room.

"Oh, hello, little one," Ilya says in a tone Shane has never heard before.

He flips the camera around, and then Shane's staring at a soft green blanket. It shifts again to a smiling face, dark eyes blinking, and little arms wiggling, hands in tight fists near her cheeks.

Something in Shane's chest *squeezes*.

"Передавай привет своему другому отцу, Mila"

She's looking up and gurgling in that way babies do before they laugh. Just happy sounds. Ilya is still talking to her softly in Russian. Shane can pick up Dad, and maybe be tired from what he's heard from Ilya before. On those few nights, they talked on the phone with each other. He really should pick up something to start to learn himself.

"One moment, Shane," Ilya says and then the screen goes dark before it lights up again.

Shane can't stop the grin that spreads across his face as he can now see Ilya and Mila close up. She's on Ilya's hip, and he has the phone facing so Shane can see more of Mila's face than his own.

"So not asleep," Shane says, which is obvious and is definitely obvious to Ilya with his accompanying eye roll.

"She should be, but this little *проказница* is not following the game plan," Ilya brushes his lips against her forehead as Mila's little hand bats at his face, fingers tangling in Ilya's curls.

Ilya just goes with it, leaning away so she can't reach anymore.

It's sickeningly cute. There's no other word for it.

"Do you need to feed her, or change her, or something?" Shane asks, eyes still skating from one face to another on the screen as Ilya busses more kisses over her cheeks, the bridge of her nose.

"No, she wants to play. Is alright, we can sleep later."

“Okay,” Shane nods as he watches the scenery behind Ilya change until the familiar walls of windows and a few more lights turn on. The view goes blurry again, mostly of the ground, and then it’s Ilya’s chest, his gold chain and cross coming into view.

It settles eventually, then there’s Ilya lying side by side with Mila on what looks like a playmat that Hayden and Jackie had for Amber. Mila’s eyes are up and looking somewhere off camera, and Ilya is glancing between Shane and Mila.

”Do you need me to go or-“

”Is fine. She will let us know when she’s bored.”

“Well, you always said I’m boring, so I guess it won’t take long,” Shane says, and Ilya chuckles, pressing his lips to Mila’s shoulder. She’s wearing a pink onesie that looks warm and soft. Both of them look warm and soft. Shane might be sitting on his sofa with the fireplace on and a blanket over his lap, but he doesn’t think he feels anything like that.

There is a quiet that develops between them as Mila grabs at something Ilya is holding above her off camera. He looks so happy and relaxed, and it translates through the screen so Shane feels the same way. There’s just something about watching Ilya with his daughter. Seeing how his face changes to mirror Mila’s own little one. The way he’s so gentle with the few words he speaks to her. The multitude of times he just rests his lips on her shoulder until she wriggles and he has to back off.

It makes Shane’s heart ache a little because this is... this is a future he dreamed about. Maybe not with Ilya in the beginning, but he thought about this. About children and being a dad. When he was holding Arthur, he had wondered what it would be like to have his own. When they were in Florida and Ilya was chasing kids in the pool, his mind wandered to Ilya in a similar role. What it would look like when they’d retired or something, that it could be the two of them making a family.

Mila squawks, and Ilya laughs at her, and it’s so obvious to Shane that Ilya is that step ahead of him. Of a them Shane had only begun to dream about.

”Where’s Svetlana?” He asks after swallowing hard. It should be weird she isn’t there, even more so it’s taken him so long to ask.

Ilya freezes, and it’s all of a second, but Shane’s sure he sees it. “Out.”

”But it’s like... eleven at night now,” Shane says, checking the time on his phone. “Isn’t that a bit late?”

Ilya sighs, shuts his eyes for a moment and only focuses on Mila when he opens them again.

”She is what the Americans say, own person? I am not her keeper.”

This still doesn’t fit with what Shane thinks he knows about people who share a kid. Then he remembers this is another reason he called. Answers. Not just to see Ilya and possibly his daughter, too.

"I guess that's nice? My Mom never went out this late and left my dad at home with me when I was this little, I don't think." Shane says, and it probably comes off as judgemental but fuck it, he is.

Ilya shifts his body so his arm is wrapped around Mila's head. His hand bent over her face at an odd angle. Ilya's pointer finger traces the freckles on her cheeks and nose. He must do this a lot because Mila barely notices.

"She is not mother," Ilya says with a shrug. "She only helps when I ask nicely."

Shane finds himself nodding even though it still doesn't make sense.

"But she knew where your teapot and shit were,"

Ilya rolls his eyes. "*Видишь! Другой папа такой скучный!*" he says softly into Mila's shoulder. "She has been here many times, Hollander. What does it matter that she knows where tea is?"

Shane shrugs and feels like Ilya is probably saying more to his baby than he is to Shane, which kind of sucks. "I didn't even know you drank tea,"

Ilya turns so he is looking straight at Shane. "I don't. But Svetlana does, and she likes to make it old way. So I have teapot and cups and jam she likes here."

Ilya raises his brows just like Svetlana did the day Shane met her, a trait one of them must have picked up from the other.

"Okay. Okay. I just. You haven't really told me much," Shane answers with a shrug. Ilya can be so prickly when it comes to telling him anything, and asking questions now feels like a leap and not the step it should be. Or might have been if Ilya hadn't gone to Russia and come back to the States as a dad.

"It is... hard. I am not used to sharing," Ilya says, looking back away from Shane and at Mila, who now has what looks like a plastic giraffe toy head jammed in her mouth.

"Is she okay there?" Shane asks because she's really shoving that toy in there.

Ilya pulls it out a bit, and Mila puts it right back in. "She is teething. I should go."

"Yeah, oh, right. Um. Me too, I should... go." Shane finishes, talking only to himself as Ilya has already ended the call.

Shane hits his head against the cushion behind him, slides down until he's flat on his back and holds the phone face down, over his heart.

//

ILYA

“Why haven’t you told him yet?” Svetlana calls from the living room, where she’s lying on the floor with Mila. They’re playing peekaboo with the little Boston Raiders Bear, one of the WAGS on the team sent over when Ilya brought Mila home.

Ilya doesn’t answer, just blends a smoothie that the trainers have told him he needs to drink. It’s one recipe among the many listed as “dietary requirements for bulking up” that he has stuck to the refrigerator. Ilya’s supposed to be back on the ice before Christmas. He was also supposed to be eating off their menu for the last month.

His fridge is full of take-out boxes, and the half-eaten jars of purée he’s fed to Mila that she didn’t like a month ago. He really should clean it out. Since he’s been home with Mila all the time, he hasn’t had his usual cleaners come through. Ilya’s not above sweeping and mopping, but other things he kind of lets go.

He pours the green goop into a glass and finds one of the straws he has just for these drinks hidden at the back of the second drawer.

“Ilya, it’s not right that he doesn’t know.”

Ilya rolls his eyes and walks over to the sofa, sitting close enough to them both. He takes a long sip of this ridiculous kale and too many other green vegetables mix before he answers.

”It’s fine, Svetlana. He has met her. She knows him.”

Svetlana groans. “No, it is not fine, he has only met her because he came here and you were too tired to turn him away. Meeting Mila and knowing she is his are two very different things.”

”I’ve told him.” Sort of... he thinks to himself. Because he did. In Russian. It’s not entirely his fault that Shane doesn’t know any of the words.

Ilya manages to duck just in time as the bear Svetlana and Mila had been playing with goes flying past his head.

”In Russian, Ilya, *Russian!*. That’s like if he told you in Japanese or French.”

”Bonjour,” Ilya says because at his heart he is always a smart ass, and he can usually make Svetlana laugh.

She doesn’t. She’s sitting up and looking at him seriously, one hand holding Mila’s and the other in her lap.

”I know it was hard getting out of the country with her, the birth certificate. Passports. You could have made that so much easier if you had told him.”

Ilya shrugs. “Maybe. Maybe not. It is done now, Svetlana. Leave it.”

“You are *infuriating!*” She says, standing up. “And your daughter needs changing.”

Ilya looks down at where Mila is going red in the face, freckles on show as she grunts.

“It is your turn-“

”No, I’m not mother or one of her father’s. Cleaning up her shit is not my job, and neither is cleaning up yours. Call him. See him. He needs to know.”

//

When he had picked Mila up out of the basket that first morning, he already knew why she had come. He knew who the other name on her birth certificate would be. Even though he’d been drunk the night before, he remembered one thing.

Shane.

Just Shane.

He’d wanted Shane with him so desperately, with a longing that made his chest *hurt*.

It really wasn’t a surprise that Mila had arrived. Ilya was leaving the only family he’d ever known behind in Russia and headed back to Shane, who was - a something - but mostly an unknown.

Mila, though? His girl. *Theirs?*

She was the family Ilya yearned for. Mila being half of Shane was the answer to all the worries Ilya had about who they might be on the other side of this.

That knowledge didn’t make anything easier.

Wish babies weren’t as normal in Russia. The MHL had at least one baby a year. Sometimes two. There was a player in Nashville a year ago who had twins, one with each of the women he had left behind in Finland. Though, that one was hushed pretty quickly when it turned out one of the baby mother’s was a little *too* young.

That was Crowell’s MHL for you.

They had been more forgiving of Ilya.

Maybe it was the fact that his father had just died. Maybe it was because the Raiders were desperate to get him home for the playoffs that he ended up missing.

The MHL were helpful to a point, but the Raiders? They were the ones who helped him get Mila’s passport. Ilya didn’t ask, and they didn’t offer, but somehow there was a new birth certificate with just Ilya’s name on it. Getting on that private plane and heading back across the ocean with Mila wrapped tight against his chest was both the most relieving and anxiety-ridden flight he’d ever had.

Only the GM and his wife knew exactly who Mila’s parents were. Only Marleau and Svetlana knew of her existence when he landed.

The league usually gave six months for parental leave when it came to single fathers and wish babies. It was somewhere in Ilya's contract, his lawyer knew, but Ilya had possibly never looked that close. He didn't expect to father a child this way. With how long it took to cut through red tape in Russia, it was seven, nearly eight, that he'd been off the ice.

Eight months of Mila.

Eight months of keeping her for himself. Of pretending that Shane didn't exist, so he wouldn't have to admit to anything. To how big his feelings had been that a freaking baby had appeared with how much Ilya had *wanted*.

He knows he has to tell Shane. Knows he has rights. He wants Mila to know Shane like he does. Telling Shane would be admitting how much Ilya feels, and he's not ready for that.

Not yet.

Not now.

//

The first time he puts his skates back on, it's with Mila strapped to his chest, sliding around the ice slowly. He's come early to practice and wants to introduce her to the team before warm-ups. His stomach feels like bees have taken up residence there. It's only that he knows how Mila is usually calm when he is, that makes him slow his stride and take deep breaths, counting back from ten to one.

"Whose kid did Rozy steal?" Carmichael's voice rings out across the ice.

"It could be his, I've roomed with him, remember?" Victor adds. "Always picking up or staying out when we're in Montreal."

"*Myðak!*" Ilya covers her ears as he curses. "Shut your mouths and come meet my girl."

//

When he finally gets back on the roster, it's for an away game, which means leaving Mila behind in Boston. Ilya spends the first period worrying if he told Petra that Mila has a new sleep sack because the old one is too small. Svetlana hired her to look after Mila when Ilya wasn't able to be at home. She seems nice. She's older than what Ilya always thought Nannies were, but Svetlana says she's good, and Ilya really doesn't know what to look for. Mila seems happy, and that's all that really matters in the long run.

In the second period, he scores a goal and an assist, and he only checks his phone once.

The third? He rounds out the night with a hat trick, another assist, and he's in the box for a scuffle with number 21. If it's his own form of payback for a slash on Shane that didn't get a call the week before, only Ilya will know.

//

LJ- you looked really good on the ice

I - make you look boring out there. First game back and three goals. What was your score again?

J - two but I had a concussion and a broken bone remember?

I - boo hoo

J - asshole

I - 🐱

J - how's Mila?

Ilya switches over to his photo album, finds a shot of Mila that Petra sent him earlier of her asleep in her own cot (Ilya was not prepared for how *that* made him feel). He adds another of Mila with pumpkin purée all over her face. There's a ton in her curls that are lighter now than the dark, flat hair she was born with. Then one more of her smiling at the baby swim class he took her to. He might pick that one because his chest is also in it, gold cross glinting in Mila's hand. They both look good, whatever.

He hits send to Shane before he can reconsider it.

Instead of texting back, Shane calls, and Ilya answers, switching it to a video call.

"You wear glasses now?" Ilya says instead of hello.

Even in the low light of whatever room Shane is in, he can see the rosy flush to Shane's cheeks.

"Just for reading," he slides them off with one hand, rubs his eyes with the other.

"No, no glasses on." Ilya finds himself saying. Shane is always pretty, but this? This is sexy, and his dick takes an interest. It has been a while. A long, *long* while.

And this? This, they have always been good at.

Shane sighs and puts them back on, and Ilya's free hand starts stroking low and slow across his stomach.

"She's so beautiful, Ilya," Shane says, once he's settled back down. If the cushions are anything to go by, Shane's at home.

"Yes," Ilya answers in return. *"Ho с нашими генами это несложно."*

Shane rolls his eyes, "You really have to start either teaching me what you're saying or telling me after. You're not always too tired to translate, Ilya."

"I said she has good genes. You happy now, Hollander?"

Shane laughs, and the smile on his face lasts after he stops. “Yes, Rozanov,” he teases back and oh. That tickles something like a memory in Ilya’s brain, sends shivers and sparks down his body. If there was one thing they’ve always done better than talking, it was definitely what Ilya’s body was recalling, like Pavlov’s dog.

He slips his hand under the waistband of his joggers. Ghosts his fingers along his length where it’s already plumping up.

“What are you... *Ilya*,” Shane whispers or whimpers. It could be both.

Ilya licks over his lips and stares back at Shane who still looks gorgeous and Ilya *wants*.

”Take your clothes off,” Ilya orders, his heartbeat quickening as Shane does after taking his glasses off, not a moment of hesitation.

”We were just talking about your daughter, Ilya,” Shane grumbles. His chest comes into view. His biceps look biteable as he tucks his fingers underneath one arm.

”Not anymore. Glasses back on,” Ilya taps the side of his face where they’d sit on his own. Maybe he should get some. Maybe Shane would like it just as much as Ilya does.

“I want to see you,” Shane says, all soft. Ilya can see Shane’s hand has already disappeared between his legs. That shouldn’t be such a turn on, but it is.

“Me too,” Ilya answers. “Move camera.” He throws a pillow toward the end of the bed and sits up, bending over to line it up a little better so he can see his body in the small screen. Shane has disappeared from view but returns just after Ilya lies back against the wall.

”So fucking pretty,” Ilya says, biting his bottom lip. Shane has done more than just move his camera; he’s taken the rest of his clothes off, too.

He’s so gloriously naked, and Ilya is still covered up.

Ilya goes to move, to strip as well, but he’s knocked back as he watches Shane *move*. Shane’s hand lies flat against his cock, pressing it to his stomach as his knees raise and his other hand slips around the side between his legs and oh.

Oh.

”*Fuck, Shane*,” Ilya moans. Shane’s not doing anything, not really, but Ilya can just see his fingers rotating in small circles. Ilya knows what that feels like. Knows how that first touch always has Shane’s skin break out in goosebumps. His dark nipples tighten to little buds.

Ilya whips his pants off before another second passes and sits back against the wall. Ilya gets his hand back on his cock, squeezes right at the base almost too tight because it really *has* been a while. Between looking after Mila and making sure she’s breathing, he’s barely had minutes in the shower to get off. This is different, though. Being with Shane, like this? This is something else.

Ilya groans again as he watches Shane press one finger in, precome burbling up at the tip of his cock and sliding down over Shane's knuckles. Jesus, he always gets *so wet*. It's something that turns Ilya on beyond measure, has him starting a slow pull on his own dick. He's not even sure if Shane can see Ilya's reaction, so he forgets about being quiet in the hotel room and makes a low, appreciative sound.

"Does it feel good?" Ilya asks, his hand a low drag on his cock, from base to tip and back again.

Shane nods, more precome slides over where he's got himself in a tight fist now. "Wish it was you,"

"Me, too," Ilya says, words just falling from his lips as he strokes himself faster.

"Can you, can we. I can't see you," Shane stutters and yes. Yes, Ilya wants that.

He picks up the phone and moves it to the pillow beside him. It takes a minute, but he gets it propped up so it's only Shane's face that fills the screen. His brow shiny with sweat, eyes dark and darker still with want. His freckles stand out, and they're so close now that Ilya can count them, if he wants.

"Better?" He asks, dropping his hand down to squeeze his balls. Shane's obviously still touching himself if what little Ilya can see of his arm moving is anything to go by.

Shane whimpers. "Yes, yes. Fuck, just... I've missed this."

"Missed you."

"Missed, *uh, fuck, fuck*, us," Shane finishes on a gasp, and he's coming, Ilya can tell.

"Oh, yes, yes... *Я тоже, я тоже, о, кончаю!*" Ilya shouts, come hitting him on his jaw and chin, it shoots up that far.

When he can finally blink Shane's image back to rights, it's to Shane's pink tongue pressing through the middle of his own fingers.

God, his dick twitches, or it's an aftershock or something. Watching Shane take pleasure in licking up his own release isn't something Ilya thought he'd enjoy, let alone that Shane would try on his own. Christ, he even got some on the glasses.

"So," Shane says shakily, taking his glasses off and throwing them somewhere when he's done. "That was..."

"Fun?" Ilya offers. His fingertips brush over the screen where he can see Shane's freckles standing out. Like a constellation of stars, Ilya could find anywhere in the universe.

Shane laughs. "Yeah. Yes. Fun."

Ilya smiles, too. His body is still filled with bliss, and the fact that Shane is right in front of him. If only it weren't through the phone.

“What I said, I meant it,” Shane says a little later, once their breathing has gone back to normal.

Ilya feels sticky, and his feet are cold from the air conditioning that he couldn’t seem to turn up enough.

“You said lots of things,” he finds himself answering back snippily and short. It’s not that he doesn’t mean what he said, either. It’s just not the time. Not right now.

”Ilya,” Shane starts. It almost sounds sad or frustrated, and Ilya can’t. He can’t do this right now.

”I have early flight tomorrow. I need to shower and pack.” He lies. His bag wasn’t even really opened for their one night in Philly.

Shane sighs, stares and says nothing. Ilya catches the tremor in his lips, though. The extra shine to his eyes. The same eyes their daughter has.

Fuck. He really needs to fix this. He knows he does.

“Bye, Hollander.” Ilya touches the screen and ends the call, hating himself possibly more than Shane does.

Chapter End Notes

Yes the Russian is mostly from google so if you are russian/speak it please send me the right translations or better ones :D

Что он вообще видит в этом парне - What does he even see in this guy?
Передавай привет своему другому отцу, Mila - Say hi to your other dad, Mila.

Видеть! Другой папа такой скучный! - See! Your other dad is so boring!

Но с нашими генами это не сложно - But with our genes, is not difficult

Я тоже, я тоже, о, я иду! - Me too, me too, I’m coming!

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

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

ILYA

"Mr Rozanov? You will be home for Christmas, yes?" Petra asks where she is in the kitchen with her head over the stove.

"Petra, it is Ilya. There is no Mr Rozanov here," Ilya reminds her, like he has done every day since she walked into their lives. He wasn't sure about Svetlana's choice, but the moment she had settled Mila to sleep after she'd been crying for Ilya for an hour and a half straight? He knew she was the one. That and she made pirozhki the first time Ilya had come home after leaving Mila for a week of away games.

"Da, Mr Rozanov."

Ilya rolls his eyes and continues holding Mila's hands as she bounces on his knees, laughing. She gets so grumpy if she's not standing on her feet now. Will get that same frowny face of disapproval like Shane does if Ilya doesn't help her stand up. She's determined to walk early, his girl. He's already had to baby-proof all his low cupboards when her one-armed shuffle on her butt turned into an army crawl. He'd lost three mugs from her lifting herself up to stand at the coffee table. Luckily, they were empty as she stood still, eyes focused on Ilya, pushing them off. One. By. One.

Mila looked so much like Shane when he was determined to win a face-off.

Ilya really needs to tell him.

Mila's grinning at him with those two little teeth at the bottom and her one tiny vampire tooth at the top. She's so pretty. Her curls were much like his, and her eyes like Shane's.

Shane, whom he hasn't spoken to again after getting off and hanging up.

He sends photos of Mila, though. Like that's actually anything like enough.

Mila loses her balance and falls onto his lap, cackling in that way that tugs at his heart. It's got nothing to do with thinking about Shane and feeling guilty. Not at all.

"Christmas?" Petra says again, sweeping in and lifting Mila off his lap. She brushes a kiss to Mila's forehead and mutters something about getting her too excited before her nap.

"Yes, we come back from Ottawa on Christmas Eve and fly out to Buffalo on the twenty-seventh. Why?"

"My son and daughter bought me a ticket to come visit in New York. You won't be needing me?" She asks, tucking Mila under her arm while popping Mila's bottle into her mouth.

Ilya should be doing that, but he also should be getting ready for his game later tonight. “We’ll be fine. It’s an early flight, I’ll make sure you get to your family.”

Petra smiles and ruffles his hair as she walks past. “You are a good boy, Mr Rozanov.”

Ilya does *not* blush, as he fixes his hair. “It’s Ilya, Petra, *Ilya*.”

//

“I can stay. I will get the later train, it’s fine, Mr Rozanov,” Petra says, but he can hear the sadness in her tone.

Stupid fucking Canadian snow. Stupid fucking pilot not wanting to be brave and take off in a fucking snow storm.

”No. No, you must go. I’ve called Svetlana. She is going to come and stay until I get back, hopefully tomorrow.”

”Rozy, c’mon. We need to get back to the hotel.” Cliff says, tapping Ilya on the shoulder.

“If you are sure?” Petra says, and Ilya can barely hear her from where the wind is whipping up as he follows Marleau out the front door.

“Yes, thank you, Petra. Please hug -“

“And kiss Mila for you, I know.” Petra interrupts, and Ilya laughs, but it hurts because. Fuck. Fuck this. He’s used to the winters back in Russia, but the wind here is something else. Thankfully, the bus the team used hadn’t left yet when their flight was cancelled.

Ilya feels sick. It’s her first Christmas. Her first Christmas Eve, and he’s not there, and it’s all because of three feet of fucking snow.

“They say it’ll be clear by morning. Lunch at most.” Cliff says over his shoulder as Ilya follows him on the bus.

Everyone is seated, and the mood is quiet as most of the others are on their phones. Some are looking just as annoyed as Ilya feels down to his bones.

“Better be.” Ilya gripes as he throws himself on the seat beside Marleau. He puts his headphones on, even though the ride back to the hotel is short. He doesn’t want to interact with anyone. Captain or not.

//

The team eats together in the hotel restaurant, which, because of the storm, can somehow put them up. Well, half of them. Half are bunked together at the Marriott and the other at Brookstreet, where Ilya paid a little extra for a king bed on his own. The view out the window is white and more white, but he has a bed to himself, and he’d rather be alone.

He's lying on the bed in his joggers and an old, comfortable hoodie, chewing at the strings and flicking through the TV channels when his phone starts to buzz.

"Hello, Hollander," Ilya answers, surprise in his tone.

"Hey, um, I heard about your flight?" Shane asks.

Ilya sighs. "Yes, stuck in shitty Ottawa until tomorrow, maybe."

"Ottawa isn't shitty," Shane says pointedly. "Don't knock my hometown."

Ilya snorts. "Is pretty shitty right now. I'm stuck here, and Mila is—" he has to pause when he gets choked up. "Is stupid. She is fine. Svetlana is with her until tomorrow."

"Oh, yeah. It's her first Christmas. Well, okay, maybe Ottawa is shitty then," Shane says, still sounding like admitting even that is hard.

It does make Ilya laugh, though. "Shitty. Super shitty. The most shitty."

Shane is laughing too, even though he's telling Ilya to break it up. "So you're here in the city still?"

Ilya nods. Rolls onto his side and looks out the window into the dark, sets the phone on the bed and puts the call on speaker. "Yes. All alone."

"You know, I'm here in the city, too. Well, not in the city, just outside of it, really. I'm at my parents' since we had time off."

Ilya hums in answer, stretching his body out. He's glad he had a spare pair of socks because the room is cold.

"What's your room number?" Shane asks after the silence stretches between them.

Ilya's skin heats. Shane hasn't asked him that in forever. "What about snow?"

"I've got chains, and the ploughs will have been through by now."

Ilya hums again, picks up his phone and opens his texts to "Jane". He enters his room number and hits send, his hand already slipping down under his joggers. Not touching yet, but close.

"Give me twenty, and you better answer the door when I knock, asshole."

//

It takes Shane more like forty, and Ilya has had to pace the room a little because his eyes kept trying to close.

He opens the door seconds after Shane knocks. Shane walks in, taking off his shoes as he goes.

“Make yourself comfortable,” Ilya says as Shane rips his sweater off, his hands under Ilya’s before his own hit the floor.

”I am,” Shane says, his eyes light up as he smiles, and then he’s kissing Ilya hard and fast.

It sets a fire in Ilya’s body that he feels *everywhere*. Shane’s hand is fisted in his curls, directing their kiss as he walks them backwards. He moans into Shane’s mouth as Shane’s tongue slides against his own in a filthy kiss. How’d he forget the way Shane makes him feel? Makes him *want* just by proximity alone?

He finds himself tugging at Shane’s pants, groaning when he finds that Shane isn’t wearing anything else underneath. Maybe he was getting ready for bed when he texted Ilya? Surely, he wouldn’t have been dressed like this at his parents' home?

”Fuck you feel so good,” Shane says on a shaky breath, his lips tracing a heated path down Ilya’s neck. “Take this off,” he pulls at where Ilya’s hoodie had only made it up as far as his armpits before Shane found Ilya’s hair more interesting to touch.

“Yes, these too,” Ilya pushes at Shane’s pants again before removing his hoodie and shoving down his own joggers. He falls onto the bed with Shane on top of him, scrabbling at his feet to pull his socks off.

Shane’s got him pinned at the hips, body heavy where he sits on Ilya’s thighs. He’s kissing Ilya like their whole world depends on it. Biting at Ilya’s bottom lip, his jaw and then kissing him hard once more. It’s all Ilya can do to keep up, let his hands roam over Shane’s warm body. He curls them over Shane’s hips, slides them up his back. Shane’s skin is so soft, and Ilya can feel each muscle flex as Shane shifts and moves. He’s hard already, and he can feel Shane is, too. Every thrust of Shane’s hips brushes their cocks together. It’s not enough, but it makes him give up touching Shane’s back to focus one hand between them. He gets both their cocks mostly in a tight grip, listens to Shane gasp on a breath just above Ilya’s lips.

“I want,” Shane whimpers, breath hot over Ilya’s ear. “I brought stuff. Can you, want you to,”

Fuck, if that doesn’t make Ilya’s hips stutter. “Yes. Always want. *Всегда с тобой.*”

Shane slides off him, and Ilya feels cold in Shane’s absence. It doesn’t take Shane more than a few seconds to get off and on the bed, throwing down three packets beside Ilya on the pillow.

“Can we?” Shane pauses his hands on Ilya’s chest as Ilya brushes his palms back and forth on Shane’s thighs. He’s so thick here, and Ilya loves it. Loves that he knows how hard Shane works to have legs like these. How strong they are to push Shane as fast as he can go around the ice.

Not as fast as Ilya, but he tries.

He takes one of Shane's hands and brushes his lips to each knuckle. “Can we what?”

Shane flushes, dips his chin and hides his eyes. Ilya finds himself grinning because when Shane blushes like this, his freckles show up more. He drops Shane's hand before he can consider what he's doing. Runs the back of two fingers across Shane's cheek and down his jaw. He's so beautiful. So pretty.

And he wants Ilya.

And Ilya wants him in return.

So, so much.

"Can we do it this way? I want to see you," Shane says, leaning into Ilya's touch.

That has something squeezing tight in Ilya's chest. He nods, because yes, he wants that. Wants to watch Shane's lips tremble when Ilya's dick rubs inside him the right way. Wants to watch Shane's chest grow redder and redder as he works himself to release. Wants to stare into Shane's dark eyes, filled with want and lust and maybe something more.

"Touch yourself while I get you ready," Ilya demands instead of anything else that could potentially fuck this up.

Shane bites his lip as he starts stroking himself, which makes it hard for Ilya to focus. He finally picks up the packet, squeezing out the lube between his fingers, rubbing them together to get it warm. Shane leans in and kisses him again, open-mouthed and breathy as Ilya gets his fingers between Shane's cheeks. He's pretty sure his own dick can't get much harder, but damn if it's trying while he sinks one finger, then two inside Shane. He's so tight and warm, and Ilya cannot wait to get his dick in there. Can't wait to watch how well Shane takes him. How little it takes for Shane to come undone.

"Just... now. Fuck me *now*, Ilya. Please." Shane curses as he leans over and grabs the condom from where it had slid down near his knee.

"Not yet, sweetheart," Ilya croons, curling his free hand around Shane's neck, thumb brushing slowly across Shane's cheek.

He may forget to breathe for a minute when Shane turns his face into Ilya's touch. Shane sucks Ilya's thumb into his mouth and *bites* just on the border of pain.

"Fuck, Shane. *Fuck*."

Ilya slides another finger alongside the first two, where Shane is still so tight and warm. Shane's eyes close as he shudders, his mouth a tight suction on Ilya's thumb. Fuck, maybe Shane *is* ready because if he keeps making those sounds and sucking on Ilya like that? Ilya won't get more than fingers inside Shane at all.

"Okay, okay," Ilya repeats himself, pushing at Shane's shoulder to sit him up.

Shane grins but it's wobbly from what Ilya is doing inside him. Shane still manages to undo the packet. He slides the condom on Ilya who has to close his eyes and think about Petra in

her dressing gown to keep from coming on the spot. It's been... well, it's been since the last time he was with Shane that anyone apart from his own hand has touched his cock.

Shane lifts up and Ilya pulls his fingers out and curls his hands around Shane's hips. They both moan as Shane slides down, slow and careful and it takes Ilya's breath away.

Shane looks... he looks drunk is what he looks like. His eyes roll back and he sighs as he seats himself right on top of Ilya. He feels so good as Ilya runs a hand up Shane's spine. Ilya finds himself leaning up and pulling Shane down at the same time so he can kiss the sounds falling from Shane's lips. Shane starts to rock up and down. He's so tight around Ilya and then Shane's resting his arms on Ilya's shoulders, his hands twisting through Ilya's hair. He tugs and shifts Ilya's head wherever he wants his lips to follow and Ilya does. He presses up into Shane as much as their position will allow and kisses and kisses and kisses Shane like he's the very air Ilya needs to function.

"I missed you so much. Want you always. I'm so sorry. I let it go this long," Ilya whispers in Russian, face hidden at the side of Shane's throat.

"You feel so good around me, want to keep you with me all the time. Want you more than I should," Ilya continues, sets words to breath over Shane's heated skin.

"I want you so much. Love you, love you, so much," he admits more than he should into Shane's collarbones, that hollow in at the base of his neck. Licks them away like they're part of the sweat pooling there.

Shane moans, "Fucking love when you speak Russian." He grips Ilya's face in two hands and drags it up so they're eye to eye. "Tell me in English though, stop hiding from me, *oh fuck*, Ilya,, please,"

Ilya closes his eyes, and he's so close to coming, knows Shane is too from the sound of his moans. He would give Shane everything. Wants to. Just... not tonight. Not now. Not when he has this secret that will have Shane hating him. He's aware enough to know that even his declarations of love won't cover hiding Mila.

"I miss you," Ilya says, because it's the only truth he can speak right now.

Shane kisses him hard and with too much tongue, but Ilya loves him, so it doesn't matter.

"I've missed you so much, *oh fuck*, Ilya I'm going to *come!*"

He does, and he squeezes around Ilya so tight it sets him off, and he wraps his arms around Shane. Holds Shane close to his body while his hips pump and the condom fills inside Shane. He can feel Shane's lips on his skin, blinks back the emotion in his own eyes before Shane lifts his face and kisses him over and over.

They extract themselves eventually, and Shane follows Ilya to the shower before he's aware enough to ask. They don't stop touching, and Shane is smiling all soft and stupid, and it makes Ilya want to be stupid, too. He kisses Shane long and slow under the hot water until Shane yawns, and Ilya copies. They get towelled off, and Ilya prepares for Shane to leave. It

settles something in his heart when Shane just slides under the covers with Ilya. They kiss a little more, but it's not with any sort of intent, just to kiss. Ilya's heart has never felt fuller when Shane rests his head with a sigh on Ilya's chest. Ilya wraps an arm around Shane, and this, *this* is what he has needed. What he wants from his life.

Just Shane in his arms. Shane by his side. Shane's fingertips play soft circles over Ilya's stomach, and he tries not to move too much, not wanting Shane to stop. It's perfect like this. Just the quiet of the heater humming. Their breaths are slow and steady. Ilya has never felt so calm. So at peace. Ilya presses his lips to Shane's hair, strokes his fingertips over Shane's skin. He's so warm, and he's here, and Ilya just *feels* so much.

"Shane, I need to tell you something," Ilya says, voice trembling. "I need you to listen and let me say it all. I'm sorry I waited. It was wrong. It is stupid why I did it, it's just. Mila?"

Ilya pauses, but Shane is quiet, so he continues. "Mila is wish baby, she is half mine, half yours. I was stupid in Russia. I wanted you so much and... are you snoring?"

Shane chooses that moment to snore loudly again, and Ilya curses in Russian, Shane's arm over Ilya's waist, tightening its hold.

The weight he thought would be taken off his shoulders by finally admitting to Shane who Mila was seems to double down. It probably isn't helped by the way Shane is holding onto him, leg thrown over Ilya's, head resting on Ilya's chest, and his arm wrapped nearly all the way around. At least he's sort of told Shane. Hopefully, it'll be easier the second time around.

When they wake up, Ilya will tell him. He can't feel like this about Shane and keep this secret anymore.

//

It's Marleau banging on his door that wakes Ilya out of his slumber.

"Rozy, c'mon. I'll get the key from the front office if you don't answer this door!"

That's enough to get his eyes open and to realise in less than five seconds that he's alone.

//

SHANE

He opens his phone on Christmas morning to a photo from Ilya. It's Mila under a fully decked out Christmas tree in some green footy pyjamas with little gingerbread men on them. She's got wrapping *everywhere*, and her curls are springing up loose and wild. There's a wide smile on her face that reminds him of Ilya when Shane *really* gets him to laugh. Which hasn't been often, so Shane can remember each one.

S - That's a lot of wrapping paper. Did you buy out every toy store?

L - is not every store. Just ones that had cute toys

S - So every store.

L - 🤪

Another photo comes through, and it's of Mila again, but now she's sitting on Ilya's lap. She's got a moose toy gripped tight in one hand, her mouth chewing on an antler.

L - Mila says thank you, and I do not.

S - She likes it then? I didn't know if it was too much.

L - She likes it a lot. Has not let it go since she opened it.

L - Did you have to get one who is wearing a Canada hoodie, though?

S - It was the only one they had!

L - Liar. You lie. I will cut it off when she sleeps tonight.

S - Ilya! It's just a toy!

L - 🐱✂️😬

Shane hits call and starts arguing back as soon as Ilya answers. "You're such an asshole. Was it ok that I gave her something?"

"Of course. Even if it is creepy Canadian animal. You try to give Mila nightmares?"

Shane laughs, "They're not creepy! They're a national icon." He'd spotted it in some toy store back in Montreal, Hayden had dragged him to a month ago. Knew the moment he saw it that it was meant for Mila. Even if it meant he had to lie to Hayden about buying it for a cousin who lived over the border.

"They are creepy. Most creepy. They swim underwater and get eaten by killer whales," Ilya says with conviction.

"What?"

"I watch documentary, when your game could not put me to sleep."

Shane knows Ilya is probably teasing, but it still doesn't stop him from asking which one.

Ilya sighs long and loud over the phone. "Last week, you played New York. Even Scott Hunter was more interesting than you, and he is always most boring."

Shane feels his face heat, rolls over on his bed to the colder pillow. "You're always bringing up Scott Hunter. Maybe I'm not boring enough for you anymore?"

"No. You are plenty boring for me. More than enough." Ilya says soft and then Shane can hear Mila babbling in the background.

He listens as Ilya says something in Russian to Mila. Hears Mila's babble get louder, and then it's all Shane can hear on the other end of the phone.

It gets a little screechy, and then he can hear Ilya saying something in the background. Then the phone goes clear, but it's only for a second before there's a loud wail.

"Sorry, she would not give me back the phone," Ilya says, making a shushing sound.

"I should probably go, anyway. My mom will be up," Shane says, even though he could spend hours talking to Ilya. Listening to Mila and Ilya and wishing a little that he was there

instead of being alone.

He's just so *tired* of being alone.

"Probably good idea, she is getting loud. Say bye-bye now, Mila," Ilya says in a sing-song voice that does absolutely nothing to Shane's heart. It definitely doesn't hurt when he can hear Ilya saying something about Papa again when he must move the phone.

"Bye bye, Mila, bye Ilya."

Shane ends the call, flicks back to their messages and stares at the one Ilya just sent of him and Mila. They look so happy together, and Shane hates how much he wants to be there. Hates that he is jealous of a baby getting more time with Ilya than he has.

//

"Who's that baby on your phone?" Shane's mom asks, and Shane stiffens where he's seated on the sofa.

It's one of the new photos Ilya sent him of Mila with a face full of cream and blueberries from the pancakes she's got crammed in both fists. She's smiling, and you can just pick out her teeth from all the food she's got in there. It's cute and gross all at the same time, which really - she is Ilya's daughter.

"A friend," Shane answers quickly, trying to swipe the image away.

His mom is too quick. She leans over behind him, zooming in on Mila's face.

"She is a little cutie, isn't she?" his mom coos. "For a moment, I thought it was one of your baby photos with the eyes, but that hair, yours is still as flat and plentiful as the day you were born."

Shane ducks as his mom swishes her hand in his hair and looks closer at the photo. She does have dark eyes, and Ilya's are mostly green, sometimes blue.

She leans in again and presses her lips to his forehead, something she's been doing ever since Shane can remember. More so since he got hurt and stayed with them while he recuperated. "Cute freckles, too. You sure you haven't liked girls for a while now? This baby looks like she could be your clone."

Shane laughs and shakes his head no as his mom disappears from behind him.

He looks at the picture again. Looks at Mila's face. The crooked smile, even while covered in mashed berries and cream. The shape of her nose isn't very Ilya at all. Her eyes, which he's always thought were pretty, are almond-shaped and dark, but that could mean anything.

Maybe Shane just wants what Ilya has so much that he's seeing things that aren't there. There's no way he can be ... no. She's Ilya's, and Shane is, well, Shane wants to be Ilya's, but they can never seem to find the time to talk. Really talk.

He maybe should have stayed after that night in Ilya's hotel room, but his parents always got up early on Christmas. The questions about his absence would have been too much. So he left, brushing one last kiss to Ilya's brow and sending him a text for when he'd wake up.

Soon. Hopefully, they'd find time to hash everything out soon, because Shane was tired of living in this in-between. He wanted them to figure out whatever this was between them.

Even if it meant an end to something Shane thought he couldn't ever live without.

//

Hockey continues to happen, though, which means he and Ilya rarely get a proper time to talk.

That doesn't mean they don't keep in touch.

It's a photo of Mila asleep on a soft-looking, fluffy rug on the floor. The TV is on with a game against San Francisco, and Shane can find himself on the ice in the background.

L - "See, even Mila finds you boring. Good for sleep schedule though"

It's a phone call when Ilya falls awkwardly and bangs up his elbow, so he can't attend All Stars, so Shane goes alone.

It's a video of Ilya making Mila cheer when Shane beats the fastest skate time, followed by a lengthy monologue from Ilya on how he would have been faster. Better.

It's Shane and Ilya buying tripods so that when they can, and they're alone, they get each other off over video.

It's the one time Hayden busts in because he got the key to the wrong room. Then, a week of Ilya begging Shane to ask Hayden for a threesome. Every single time Shane's face gets red until he ends the call with Ilya's laughter in the background.

It's one night when Mila has a fever, and Ilya calls Shane because he's in Chicago and he can't be with her. They stay on the phone until Ilya falls asleep, and Shane listens to him breathing steadily until he passes out, phone lying on the pillow beside him.

Then it's March, and Ilya asks Shane to fly down earlier than the team so he can come over for Mila's first birthday. It's not a big party. Just Ilya, Petra and maybe Svetlana.

Even if Shane is still a little intimidated by Svetlana. He still says he'll come.

//

Shane buys Mila another Canadian-themed gift. This time, an orca, because he can still remember Ilya having nightmares about them and the moose. It probably won't freak Mila out, but he kind of hopes it does something to Ilya.

Shane feels oddly nervous as he turns up at Ilya's place. Presses the buzzer and does a slight double-take when it's a short, elderly lady with a stern-looking face that opens the door.

“Um, hi? I’m Shane. I’m here for Mila’s birthday?” Shane asks more than he says because this woman is almost glaring at him.

So this is the infamous Petra.

She’s silent for longer than Shane is comfortable with, and then says something to him in Russian. She reaches up and holds his chin between forefinger and thumb, turning his head this way and that. Her fingertips are cold where she cups his cheek, brushing her thumb over his cheekbone and nods. Whatever it is she was looking for must be found, as she says something in Russian again. He only picks up the word father before she turns, so he figures he’s being taken to where Ilya is at the very least.

It’s weird, but Shane’s been around Ilya for so long now that it really isn’t all that unexpected.

The TV is on when they get to the living room. Or what was a living room, because it’s filled with balloons and toys over every inch of the floor. If Shane thought her bedroom was bad that one time? This is nothing.

Mila is there in the middle, dancing to a kids' show that Shane is sure he’s seen at Hayden's before. She’s stood with her hands on the coffee table, bouncing on her knees with her curls shaking all around. He can hear her happy babble from here, and he finds himself walking toward her before looking for Ilya.

Petra gets to her first, whispering something in her ear as she offers her a hand. Mila takes it, and Shane steps closer so there’s only a short distance between them now. She’s so beautiful. She’s starting to thin out, not as round and chubby as she had been the first time he met her. Even though he’s had loads of photos and FaceTimes with Ilya and his daughter, it’s different seeing her up close. His heart double-thumps in his chest when she turns around, and her eyes light up when he smiles at her.

She’s babbling some more, and it sounds like “ta, ta, ta.” She steps a foot forward and then another. Ilya has said she’s been trying to walk, but this? When she lets go of Petra's hands, she wobbles but straightens and gets her balance. Shane hears Petra call Ilya’s name, and he must answer, but Shane can’t actually tell. He’s dropping to his knees, and he’s reaching his hands out as Mila takes a step and then another on her own.

He feels more than sees Ilya at his side. Hears him whisper, “Come on, little one, *Он ждет тебя,*”

Shane calls to her, and within three little steps, she’s starting to tip forward, so he leans in and picks her up.

“You did so well, Mila!”

“Well done, *тая любовь!*” Ilya says, bussing kiss after kiss to Mila’s cheek, his arm wrapped around Shane and Mila both.

"That wasn't her first time, was it?" Shane asks Ilya between squished lips, where Mila has her hands on his face, pushing his cheeks together.

"Ahh, yes. Yes, the first time on own. Showing off for her papa," he hears Ilya say, sounding so proud from somewhere to his side.

"You are such a clever girl," Shane says and presses his own lips to her forehead, catching Ilya's eyes.

He's smiling wide but it softens when he looks back at Shane. Makes Shane's whole body light up.

Mila wiggles, and Shane sets her back on the floor, where she drops to all fours and crawls off. Apparently, her first steps party trick is over.

Ilya leans in, and his lips press quickly to Shane's, and it's over before Shane can do more than kiss back.

Ilya stands up with a jump and claps his hands. "Well, now the party can start!"

Shane gets to his feet as Ilya is already chasing down Mila, picking her up and throwing her in the air. Her laugh is bright and loud, and Shane feels so warm.

//

They settle on the floor with their backs against the sofa, watching Mila play with both her Moose and Shane's latest gift. Ilya had made fun of him again, but it gave Shane immense pleasure to see Mila ignore every other toy. And Ilya has tried to get her to play with a range of other things he has bought her, but no, it's Shane's toys she won't let go of.

"I thought you said this was a party?" Shane asks after he's been there for an hour and no one else has shown. It's not like he thought Ilya would have the whole team over, this is just *them*.

Ilya bumps his shoulder into Shane's. "Is not party when there are more than two people? Maybe you are bad at math?"

Shane pushes him back. "I can count fine. I thought maybe,"

"Svetlana is coming tonight. She had work." Ilya says, leaning his head on Shane's shoulder. His curls tickle Shane's cheek. "I thought we could have time alone."

Shane turns and can't help but press his lips to Ilya's hair. Can't help the way his body feels with these words from Ilya. Maybe they'll finally have time then to talk.

"I don't mind being alone with you," Shane says, releasing a breath he didn't even realise he was holding.

//

Petra brings out the cake, and they sit around the dining table singing Happy Birthday in Russian and English. The Russian is to some tune that Shane doesn't know, but Ilya and Petra sing it loud and Mila laughs, clapping. It can't be that bad if a one-year-old likes it.

Ilya blows out the candle for Mila, and then he waves Petra off to cut them a slice. It's a rather small cake with white frosting all over it in the shape of a heart. It's cute, and Shane hopes someone has taken a photo of it. Before Ilya can get the knife anywhere near it, Mila leans over and smashes a fist right into the top.

Petra pulls her away and wipes at her hands with a napkin, then does this weird thing where she pulls on Mila's ears. "*Расту большой – не будь ланшой!*" She says and blows a raspberry at Mila, who laughs and laughs.

"Is a Russian thing," Ilya says with a shrug when he notices Shane watching and then does the same thing to Mila himself.

Petra chooses that moment to cut the cake up, and they eat and laugh as Mila gets more of it in her hair and face than in her mouth.

//

He's about to pick up their plates and take them into the kitchen when a wild swing from Mila's hand knocks over his glass of water.

Shane tries to jump out of the way in time, but it's too late. His lap is completely drenched, and she's chuckling as if it was planned and nothing is funnier.

"Shi- shoot," Shane says, wiping at his crotch with a free napkin, but it's no use. He can feel it right down to his skin, under his underwear.

Ilya is laughing, and Shane shoots him a filthy look. "You can borrow pants, Shane. Second drawer in my room."

Shane nods and leaves Ilya to clean Mila up while Petra wipes over the table.

It's been a while since Shane has been in Ilya's bedroom, but it all looks mostly the same. The bassinet is gone now. His bedside table is a combination of children's books and one that Shane has in his own home on hockey through the ages. Well, Shane thinks it is. The colours and front cover look the same, but the writing isn't something Shane can decipher.

He finds the set of drawers Ilya mentioned, pulls open the second drawer, which is just a bunch of unfolded joggers. He and Ilya are a similar size, so he pulls out the first ones that look plain enough to be Shane's own. It's as he stands there and strips off, he realises he probably shouldn't go without underwear, and it is a bit weird to borrow those, too, but being around Mila without underwear? Well, he's just not comfortable doing that, either.

He opens the top drawer where he keeps his own, and in a much tidier fashion. He shuffles the boxers around when he spies an unopened pack, and yes, he thinks, this is much better. He's lifting the pack out when he realises some sticky part of it is connected to a folded piece of paper. He pulls it off, setting it aside as he changes into dry clothes. Shane goes to put the pack and the paper back, and it's not exactly his fault that it opens, but it does, and his eyes are reading words before he can stop.

It's mostly in Cyrillic, but Shane knows what Ilya's name looks like. Knows what letters make up his own.

But it can't be. It can't.

His hand starts to shake, and he walks over to the bed and sits down.

"You humbled by my fashion, Shane? No stylist here," Ilya's voice breaks through, where Shane feels like his ears are ringing. His hands are holding onto something that doesn't make any sense.

"Where did you get that?" Ilya says from somewhere close. He sounds different. Shane doesn't have it in him to parse why because he's kind of freaking out a little right now.

"*Shane*," Ilya says soft and Shane can't. He doesn't know how to answer.

His eyes go blurry, and he blinks to read what it says again, because surely it's wrong. Surely this doesn't mean.

"My name is on here," Shane says, still looking at his name and Ilya's and where it says 'Baby Hollander-Rozanov' like....

"It has my name on here, Ilya. Why, why is my name on here?"

Ilya looks whiter than a ghost when Shane looks up, and without him saying a word, Shane feels the bottom drop out of his stomach.

"I'm sorry," Ilya says so softly that Shane can hardly hear it. Then again, with how loud his own pulse is pounding in his ears? It probably isn't that quiet.

"Why is my name on here, Ilya?"

Ilya crosses his arms in front of him and leans back against the dresser where the drawer is still open. The new pair of underwear on top, forgotten.

Shane's hand is shaking as he holds the certificate. He's never known what both shock and anger feel like at the same time. They're both burning through him now.

"You hid her from me for a *year*!" He shouts.

Ilya is just standing there and looking at him, not saying anything in return and fuck. Fuck him.

"I missed.. I missed everything?! Just because you, what? Didn't think I'd want her? You didn't think that I would have done *anything* for her, for you? For us?"

Shane sweeps his hand through his hair, choking on a laugh. "Is it about coming out? I know you were worried about Russia, but this is our daughter, Ilya? Is she not worth changing everything for?"

"It is different for me," Ilya starts, shaking his head, looking down at the growing space between them.

Shane can't help but interrupt. "You thought I wouldn't want to come out? That I wouldn't come out for *her*?" Shane's not even shouting now. He's loud still, but he's so, so hurt.

Russia had mattered when they talked in Florida. But they never talked about what would happen if it wasn't a concern anymore. They never spoke about who they could be together. It's something Shane has forced himself not to think about, with how Ilya disappeared after his Dad died. He's wanted so much with Ilya, and he thought maybe with how Ilya had started opening up, sharing parts of his life with Shane. . . .

Was he really opening up to Shane at all?

"We never said anything before," Ilya says, his voice cracking. "We talked about maybe's and what if's, Shane. How could I know what you would want? That you would choose her?"

Shane hears the unspoken. Ilya might not say it, but Shane knows how Wish babies come about. He knows what it means, even if Ilya can't say that he loved and wanted Shane so

much that magic or fate or whatever it is brought them Mila. A little piece of both of them when they couldn't find the words, to be honest about how they truly felt.

"But you never even asked me what I would have done, because I would have chosen both of you. I would choose *us*."

Ilya says nothing, and Shane is too angry to stick around even if he wanted to talk.

When he leaves, he doesn't slam the door, but it is very hard not to.

While Shane walks up the road a little to call his Uber, he doesn't expect to hear Ilya follow him. So he isn't disappointed when he's standing there in silence until the car arrives.

Chapter End Notes

A little later post than planned but I was at the cottage with all of you and happiness trumped this...

Всегда с тобой - Always with you.

Он ждет тебя - he is waiting for you.

Расти большой – не будь лапшой - Grow up – Don't be noodles

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

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

SHANE

Shane is still fuming when he gets into his hotel room. He can't believe Ilya would hide this from him. Her. Mila.

Shane stops his pacing and sits down hard on the bed. *Fuck.*

He has a daughter.

A daughter.

Shane leans forward, head between his legs, because his chest is so tight and he can't breathe. He's panicking; he knows this, but trying to find the calm right now seems impossible.

He tries that whole counting in for four and out for four square breathing thing that he's read about, and it doesn't help. His eyes sting with tears, and he tries to hold them down, but soon he's choking on sobs.

A daughter that Ilya kept from him, and she's a year old. A whole year he's missed out on.

Well, sort of.

He can still remember how she smelled like baby powder and kind of sour like milk when she was all of six months old. He can hear her laugh and see her chubby hands grabbing at Ilya's curls from the first time they video called. He pulls his phone out from his pants and flicks away the missed calls from Ilya. The notifications of texts he can't look at. He swipes into his Photos app.

To the folder that's filled with Mila. His baby girl.

Shane swipes with the back of his hand at his eyes until they are clear enough for him to see properly. Her little face with his freckles and his eyes and Ilya's hair and nose. The ones where she's swimming with Ilya. The ones with her were covered in a rainbow assortment of food. The first tooth to poke through.

Then there are the videos. Her laughter changed from chuckles to proper snorting giggles. The first time she crawled. The first time she played in the snow. The one with Ilya skating with her at the practice rink, her first time on the ice. There's even one Svetlana took the first time she pooped so big it soaked all through her clothes and over Ilya's pants and shirt. Then there's her smiles. So, so many smiles.

Evidence of memories he wasn't there to be a part of.

He lies back on the bed and watches every single thing that Ilya has sent him. It doesn't make him feel altogether better, but his heart doesn't hurt as much anymore.

//

He wakes up later, fully clothed on the bed with his phone still in his hand. He taps at the screen, but it stays dark.

"Shane! Please!"

There are more thumps on the door, and that's probably what woke him up. Shane freezes, doesn't move. Can't.

"Hollander, you better open this fucking door!" Ilya shouts again, and for some reason it's the use of *'Hollander'* that has him getting up.

He pulls the door open with more force than he probably should and has to duck as Ilya falls forward, hand still raised to knock.

He bumps into Shane, and they fall to the floor.

"Get the fuck off me, Rozanov." Shane shoves at Ilya and moves to knee him in the thigh where Ilya's got him pinned.

"I'm fucking trying if you would stop wriggling like worm!"

Shane stops moving so Ilya can shift off, even if it's to sit up and lean against the wall. Shane sits up and shuffles back, crossing his legs so they aren't touching in the entryway to the room.

It's a tight squeeze, and he's suddenly so angry again that Ilya is here.

"How did you even know where I was?" Shane asks because he had told Ilya what hotel he was staying in but not the room.

Ilya shrugs, and his cheeks look red. "I bribe concierge."

"You what?"

"Well, you wouldn't answer your phone, and Svetlana told me I was stupid not to chase you." Ilya crosses his arms over his chest. Looks even redder than before.

That name though, that name still makes something ugly swirl in Shane's stomach. Even if Ilya had told him Svetlana wasn't Mila's mother. "So she knows then. How many other people got to know before I did?"

The skin around Ilya's eyes tightens. "It doesn't matter—"

"It does! It does matter! I'm supposed to be her dad, and you didn't even tell me, but your, what, ex-fuck buddy knows?" Shane shouts.

"She is my *friend*, Shane. "I had to tell someone," Ilya shouts back, and isn't that something that just pisses Shane off even more?

"You should have told me, Ilya. *Me*. I'm the one person you should have told."

Ilya looks up at the roof and runs his hands through his hair, which looks messier than it did when Shane left him. His curls were frizzier than before.

"I know!" He says loudly, filled with frustration. "I know," Ilya adds again, softly.

"She shouldn't have been a secret, Ilya, not from me," Shane says. His stomach and his chest hurt. His whole body seems to *ache* with the little Ilya is saying and how this new revelation changes *everything*.

"I keep my baby, secret, yes? Like secret stupid feelings for her stupid dad with his stupid freckles and his dumb yoga and weak backhand," he says all soft, but Shane can hear the thickness in his words.

Shane shifts, kicking at Ilya's foot where his leg is outstretched. "I don't have a weak backhand."

Ilya smiles, but it's not full; it's sad and it's sorry, and Shane hates that he knows Ilya this well. Hates that he's still so hurt by what Ilya has done but he can see how Ilya also hates himself.

"I am sorry, Shane," Ilya says again, and Shane can only nod.

Shane breathes in raggedly. "I know."

They sit there in the quiet, and Shane stares at where their feet still touch.

"I'm really fucking mad at you," Shane says, but there's no heat behind his words. Hurt, though. He can't keep that from rising.

"Okay."

"Will you tell me properly now? Just tell me how it happened. Because I know how I feel about you, how I've felt about you for so long now, so I know my part." Shane looks up, and Ilya is staring at him, his eyes shiny.

"You do know how I feel about you, right?" Shane asks because he can't do this, go forward without honesty between them.

Ilya nods. "I, I do," Ilya says, swallowing hard as his voice breaks over the words. "I have wanted you for so long, but never thought. I didn't know it was something we could have until I had nothing at all."

It's the tears Shane can see spilling over Ilya's cheeks that have him moving. Shane finds himself shuffling over to Ilya, crawling into his lap and pulling him into his arms. Ilya wraps himself around Shane, and they breathe, and Shane's shoulder gets hot and wet, but he knows he's making Ilya's curls just as wet with tears of his own.

"It was night when I buried my father. The wake was... awful. My brother, he... didn't want me there and hates me for stupid reasons. But I pay for everything, you know?" Ilya pauses and sighs.

"My father. He was not an easy man. He was very old-fashioned. Was not good to my mother," Ilya starts, his voice soft.

Shane rubs his hand slowly up and down Ilya's back. "What? What happened to your mom?"

Ilya takes in a shaky breath and lets it out slowly. "I don't want you to think she was weak. She was... she was so beautiful. Funny. She loved watching me play and would come all the time she could. But she would get sad sometimes."

Shane waits and presses his lips to the curve of Ilya's ear and his hair and holds him close.

"I, I found her." Ilya pauses, shudders in Shane's arms. "It was an accident. She... she accidentally swallowed whole bottle of pills."

Shane whispers Ilya's name as Ilya lets out this broken sob. "I'm so sorry."

"It was long time ago," Ilya says once his cries have gentled. Once Shane has slowed how he's been rocking Ilya in his arms.

"I wish it could have been different. That she could have seen her." Ilya says softly and pulls back from Shane's hold so they can see each other. "Our daughter."

Shane laughs lightly. "Ours."

Ilya looks at him, and there's something serious in his eyes. "I was so scared you would hate me, hate me for wanting you and making it so obvious how much I do. I felt so alone after the funeral. I wanted you to be there with me. I, I thought." He sighs, and Shane uses his thumb to brush a tear from under Ilya's eye.

"I thought it would be easier when I got back," Ilya says. He looks so earnest, and Shane swallows around a lump forming in his throat.

"The longer it took to get home, to come back here, the harder it became to tell you. The longer it took to tell you, the more I knew you would be angry. I was going to tell you today," Ilya says, holding Shane's cheek in his hand, thumb brushing over Shane's jaw.

"Is that why you asked me to come down earlier?" Shane says, leaning into Ilya's touch. His body still remembers and reacts when Ilya is near. Like magnets finding their opposite pole.

Ilya nods. "Yes. We had time today. Svetlana was going to take Mila for the night when Petra went home. I have salmon and quinoa you like."

Shane pulls back. "You were going to make me dinner?"

Ilya shrugs and looks away to the side. "It is nothing. Your stupid cans of ginger ale are still in the refrigerator. I didn't consider that you would have access to knife if it went wrong."

Shane laughs and holds Ilya's face between both hands, turning him so they're looking at each other. "Asshole."

Ilya leans in, and Shane pulls back; his heart still hurts. Even if he still knows how much he wants Ilya. However big his feelings are, he's still so hurt.

"I can't," Shane says, finding Ilya's hazel eyes, more blue than anything now.

"Oh," Ilya nods, and his lip trembles.

"I'm not saying never, just... just not right now," Shane adds because he can't let Ilya go without him knowing that. "We have playoffs."

Ilya nods, though he doesn't look completely assured.

"I need time to sit with this, and we've got the playoffs if we're lucky in the next few weeks. Let's just, let's just get through this, and we'll figure it out."

Ilya nods again, and Shane leans in and presses his lips to Ilya's brow. It will have to be enough because he can't give the rest right now.

"Okay," Ilya says, squeezing his hands over Shane's hips.

"Okay?" Shane asks, just wanting to make sure.

"Yes, we talk when I have beaten you this round." Ilya smirks, and Shane pushes off him and stands up.

Ilya is still chuckling as he gets himself up off the floor.

Shane steps back and has to cross his arms over his body not to reach out and touch Ilya.

"After the playoffs then," Shane nods.

Ilya leans behind him and reaches for the handle of the door.

"Goodnight, Shane."

Shane smiles and just stares back at him for a moment. This stupid idiot boy that he cares for. Loves, probably. Even if Shane doesn't like what Ilya's done in their past. It has to be different because of Mila, but it doesn't change the way his heart behaves when he sees Ilya's crooked smile. He should hate him. He should want to fight and argue some more, but he can't.

Ilya is the only one he's ever wanted. Just for himself.

"Goodnight, Ilya."

//

When Shane's phone lights up with messages from "Lily" the night after they win 4:3 in overtime, he hesitates to look.

L - She won't let them go.

The photo shows Mila in her cot, a moose antler in one hand and the flipper of the orca in the other.

He thinks about something he could text back. Something about how it makes him feel that she likes what he bought her. But he still hurts.

S - Does she even know who gave them to her?

delete, delete, delete

S - This is all she has of me and I

delete, delete, delete

S - I've never even hugged

delete, delete, delete

In the end, he texts nothing back at all.

//

They end up having to play Boston in the first round of the playoffs.

He still hears from Ilya every day. Good mornings and good nights. Photos and videos and parts of Mila's day that he hasn't always been a part of before.

It still sucks, and it still hurts, but Shane can see Ilya is trying.

When Shane asks questions, Ilya answers.

He doesn't ask about Ilya, though. Just things about Mila. What her favourite food is. How she sleeps. Different things about her, but nothing that cuts close to Ilya and what they are or could be or... were.

It is the playoffs, though, and every other season they've stopped communicating around this time, so the parts of Mila are important. The questions about each other and what this means for them can wait.

//

Shane knows he should have a speech or something ready. Knows that as captain it's his role; it's game five, though. Two wins apiece. Shane is dialled in, sitting and listening to the team around him as they go through getting ready. There's the usual tension, but it's turned all the

way up for a game as important as this. They could end it tonight in Boston. They could head home and wait and see what happens with Toronto and New York.

He can hear his phone buzz from above in his cubby, and he knows who it'll be.

He doesn't need to look.

He knows who he's playing for.

//

"Are you sure you don't want to come downstairs and have a few? It's only Patrice, and you know he won't want to talk," Hayden says as he shoves his feet in his shoes.

Shane shakes his head from where he's still sitting in his suit on the edge of his bed. Most of the time he's glad to share with Hayden when they're on the road. Tonight? After that fucking game? He'd so much rather be alone.

"Well, you know where we'll be," Hayden says as he opens the door and then slams it closed.

At the sound, Shane looks up.

Hayden's standing there, back against the door. He looks livid and also maybe in shock?

"What?" Shane asks once Hayden's been standing there with his hand on the handle for a minute or so.

Hayden's mouth drops open, and then there's a knock on the door.

"What?" Shane asks again, watching Hayden close his eyes and shake his head, then turn to look out the little peephole.

"No fucking way."

There's an even louder knocking again.

"Hayden?"

"He's an asshole, but I didn't think he was, like, *that* much of an asshole, you know?" Hayden says, shaking his head.

"Hayden, who is it?"

"Hollander!"

Shane hears a familiar voice from behind the door, and he freezes, his stomach dropping down to somewhere near his toes.

What the fuck is he doing here?

“I know you are in there; tell Pike to open the door.”

Shit. *Shit.*

Hayden’s brows raise to his hairline as he stares at Shane, and Shane curses before he stands up.

“Open the door,” he says, walking over to where Hayden still has a white-knuckle grip on the handle.

“I’m not fucking opening the door!” Hayden says, looking at Shane like he’s gone nuts. Which he probably has. But way before this moment right now.

“Shane,” Ilya calls from behind the door, and he isn’t shouting, which probably makes this worse.

”Shane?” Hayden asks with total incredulity as Shane pries Hayden's hand from the door.

”Ilya, just wait a moment,” Shane says, tilting his head and glaring at Hayden in hopes it’ll make him move.

“Ilya?” Hayden echoes, the pitch of his voice going high.

“Ok.” Shane hears Ilya answer while Hayden is staring at him in what is definitely shock. Fuck it.

“He’s not here about hockey,” Shane says, his cheeks flushed hot.

Hayden doesn’t say anything, so Shane continues. “I promise he’s not. Just, it’s a long story.”

Hayden is still just staring at him, but he does move away from the door.

“Look, I know this doesn’t make sense, and I promise I’ll tell you everything, but he’s not going to leave until you let him in. So, just... Go have drinks, and let me talk to him.”

“Talk... to Rozanov.” Hayden echoes again, and goddamn, who’d have thought this would be something he’d be dealing with after losing the playoffs?

”Yes, talk.”

”I’m not going to hurt your captain, Hayden,” Ilya says loud enough to be heard through the door.

Hayden scoffs.

“Well, not any more than I have,” Ilya says, and Hayden’s eyes flare... Shane really didn’t need this right now.

”Will you shut up, Ilya?” Shane drags his hand down his face. “Not helping.”

"He hurt you?" Hayden says, crossing his arms, 'Great, now he really doesn't look like he wants to leave.' Maybe it would just be easier if Shane did.

He pushes at Hayden's shoulder and gets his own hand on the door. "Look. Either I go out and talk to him in the hallway, or you let him in and you go get a beer and forget about this. Your choice."

Hayden huffs. "I don't understand any of this."

Shane sighs. "You don't have to right now, just... we have stuff to sort out."

"You and Ilya Rozanov have 'stuff' to sort out," Hayden says, and this feels like Shane's going in circles.

"Can you just trust me?" Shane says, testily.

Hayden scoffs. "You, for sure. Him? Ha!"

"I can promise to keep hands to myself," Ilya's muted voice answers. "Maybe not the rest of me."

"Oh my fucking god, Ilya, *shut up!*" Shane squeezes his eyes shut like that'll help him not see the way Hayden's eyes have grown even wider. This is so, *so* fucked up.

They're all quiet for a minute that feels more like ten before Hayden shifts to the side, sweeping his arm out towards the door.

"*Ilya*, huh," Hayden says, glaring at Shane with a look that says he still isn't quite sure about the first-name thing. That's telling. Even Shane can figure that out.

Shane nods. He feels like this is opening up something bigger than the coming-out discussion he had with Hayden. This feels like revealing more.

"I better not fucking regret this," he says as Shane turns the handle and pulls open the door.

"I'll text you when he's gone."

"You'll text me every five minutes so I know you're alive, thanks very much," Hayden huffs, crossing his arms once more as Ilya steps inside.

"Fine," Shane says, shutting the door as fast as Hayden moves out of it.

"I mean it," Hayden says, but if he says anything more, Shane doesn't know. He's already leaning against the back of the door.

"Maybe he *is* your mother."

"Fucking shut up," Shane says with a laugh, looking over to where Ilya is sitting on the bed, looking like he has not a care in the world.

Ilya smiles that crooked smile of his, and Shane feels his lips tug up into some semblance of a grin back at him.

It's sometimes too easy to remember that he's still pissed off with Ilya. Not only for the fact that he and his team took the Metros out of the playoffs but also for the fact that he hid his daughter, too.

That gets Shane's lips turning back down.

"Why are you here, Ilya? I know we said we'd talk after the playoffs, but like, I didn't mean exactly after we were done."

Ilya shrugs and winces. "I know, but I wanted to see you before you left. I won't have much time to talk after."

Shane looks at him, trying to figure out what the wince was for.

"You know, now that I have won and am still playing and you are sad and going home." Shane's eyes widen as he steps over to where Ilya sits and hits him none too gently in the arm. "Fuckin' rub the salt in, why don't you?"

Ilya sucks in a sharp breath, and Shane turns to look at where Ilya is holding his side.

"What's wrong?"

Ilya shakes his head. "It is nothing. Don't worry about it."

"I knew that hit you took in the third was bad," Shane says, trying to lift Ilya's shirt to look.

Ilya pushes at Shane's hand. "It's fine, Shane. Promise."

Shane tugs at the material again, stopping only when Ilya frees his hand, linking their fingers together.

"Is fine," Ilya says, voice turning soft. "I really do want to talk."

Ilya squeezes Shane's fingers, and Shane shifts back.

"I know you are still angry with me," Ilya starts, pausing to turn his head so Shane can see his eyes.

"I know. I am still angry with myself for fucking this up. I don't want to be afraid of this." He shifts a little to the side and covers their combined hands with the other one.

"I will do whatever you need to prove that," Ilya says, and he sounds so certain. So sure that it has Shane swallowing around a lump in his throat.

He nods, unsure of what to say because he wants that. "I don't want to be afraid, either." Ilya starts to smile, but it fizzles out. "I want Mila to know you. For you to know her. I don't want to keep her from you."

Shane feels like his heart might burst. It's a hurt and a happiness he's never actually known. "I want that. I want to be good to her."

"You are good. Too good for-" Ilya cuts himself off, and Shane curves his hand around Ilya's jaw and leans in so their foreheads are touching.

"You are plenty good, Ilya. We can work this out, if you want," Shane says, and Ilya lets out a shaky breath that Shane feels skate over his lips.

"Yes. I want."

They sit there in silence, just breathing together, and Shane feels like he's finally coming in from the cold. He doesn't want to hate Ilya for what he chose to do. He can't when he isn't sure what he would have done himself if the tables were turned.

He probably would have told Ilya from the beginning. But Shane would have had his family to fall back on and would have had maybe even his team, considering he'd already come out to at least them. She would have been born in a country that allowed queer people to have children. Let love be love.

"She misses you," Ilya says after they've held each other close and the quiet between them has settled into something familiar.

"She doesn't know me," Shane argues, shaking his head and turning his face from Ilya's hold.

"She knows," Ilya says, shifting till he can meet Shane's eyes again. "I have always told her about you. Show her your games. We have a photo of you in her room."

"A photo?" Shane asks, his voice whisper-soft.

Ilya nods, wraps his arm around Shane and pulls him closer.

"She kisses her Papa every night."

Shane leans his head on Ilya's shoulder. "Papa?" He's heard Ilya use that word before. Always assumed Ilya was talking about himself.

"Yes, that is what you are. It doesn't have to be Papa; you can choose," Ilya says, tightening his hold on Shane's hip, pulling him close.

"I thought you were, Papa?" Shane asks because he has to know.

Ilya purses his lips and shakes his head. "Maybe? Mila has not said her first words."

"There's so much I've missed. So much I don't know," Shane says, feeling his eyes well up because this still hurts. It's not the fact that he's missed so much now; it's the fact that he doesn't know how to move them forward. There's no playbook for this. No steps he can follow or directions to take from someone who knows.

"So come learn," Ilya says, brushing his thumb under Shane's eye, swiping away a tear. "Come stay at the house. Be with her while I go win the Cup."

Shane huffs because that actually still stings. It was only hours ago that the Metro's lost.

“Sorry,” Ilya says with a soft chuckle.

“No, you’re not,” Shane returns, squeezing tight where their hands remain together.

”Maybe a little,” Ilya says, squinting with one eye.

Shane rolls his eyes. “Won’t it be... weird, I guess? You and me, we haven’t –“

“I won’t be there half the time,” Ilya interrupts. “I have a spare room. Petra can show you what you don’t know,” Ilya says, his thumb still sweeping gently over Shane’s cheek.

Shane blinks and thinks about the possibility. To learn about her. Be with her. To also stay in Ilya’s home. To be around him with time actually on their side.

”Please,” Ilya says softly, and Shane can’t seem to find a reason to argue anymore.

//

ILYA

Ilya stares at the screen while he shifts the ice on his ribs, balancing another bag on his shoulder.

”You tried the warm milk? Put her noisy machine on?”

Shane nods. “Her white noise machine? Yes, and the bottle.” He looks away from the screen back down to Mila, who’s wriggling on the bed. A soft smile plays on his lips, and Ilya just loves him so much.

”Maybe she’s not tired?” Ilya asks, looking at the time on the screen. No, it’s well past midnight. They definitely should all be asleep. Especially Ilya, considering he has Game Five against Scott Hunter and his bunch of assholes tomorrow. Or later tonight, now.

Shane holds her finger in his hand, shaking it lightly where he’s lying on his side, pillow tucked between his head and arm.

“I think she misses you,” Shane says, still looking at Mila with what Ilya has come to realise is how he generally looks at her all the time. With love and an endless curiosity about the things that she does, whether she’s really doing anything at all.

“I bet she hears me say that I’m calling you soon, and she stays up just because.”

Ilya feels his cheeks heat, and he looks up at the ceiling to hide. This calling thing. They’ve done it every night he wasn’t at home. At first, it was awkward. It was more Ilya checking in on how Mila was doing, then Shane would sit quietly as Ilya talked to Mila, as one-sided as that was. Then Shane started talking about what he’d noticed on the ice, and it got easier. He even made Shane laugh *and* call him an asshole – but not with anything acerbic in his tone. The way Shane says ‘asshole’ kind of sounds more like something else.

Something far sweeter.

"You have put her in her bed, yes?" Ilya asks as Shane continues to make faces at their daughter. Ilya can hear her little laugh. Shane doesn't answer straight away, and oh.

"*Shane*," Ilya drags out the word. "We talked about this; she is a big girl now. She likes her cot."

Shane shrugs, and his cheeks go red, and his stupid freckles stand out, and how can Ilya be upset about this?

"She doesn't like being alone," Shane says, glancing up at the camera so Ilya can see his eyes. The same ones he shares with their daughter.

"You mean you don't like being alone," Ilya points out because they have actually had this conversation. Twice.

Shane sighs. "My room is just too far away from hers. What if she gets upset and I can't hear her?"

"That's why we have a baby camera."

"Or if she gets sick and she lies in it or something?"

"She sleeps on her side now; she will be fine," Ilya says with more conviction than he feels because he actually had never thought of that.

"Or if she feels lonely, shouldn't she know someone's always going to be there?" Ilya hears what Shane is really saying. It's why he kept her bassinet beside his bed for longer than was altogether necessary. In the beginning, he had got it into his head that she would disappear much like she appeared. Gone without more than some photos of her existence to hold.

"It probably won't hurt for tonight," Ilya says, and Shane's grin stretches wide. "You try tomorrow, yes? Put her in the cot to nap, and then she can stay up and watch me win her the Cup."

"Of course." Shane says with a serious nod. "Just for tonight."

//

They lose.

They lose, and it doesn't seem to hurt as much as it should. He cried, of course, on the ice. Wiped his tears away and shook fucking boring Scott Hunter's hand. Congratulated him even though the words tasted like sawdust in his mouth. Still, he was old. This was probably his last chance, and Ilya had many, *many* years ahead of him to get more Cups.

He's waiting for the plane to be ready when he checks his phone. Plenty of texts from friends and old teammates, but it's to the recently renamed contact that he opens up first.

S - Fuck Scott Hunter

It makes Ilya smile. Hold his phone to his chest and close his eyes. A few more hours. He'll be home.

//

The lights aren't on when he gets in, but he didn't think they would be. He's glad the team had their own plane and could leave as soon as they possibly could, but it still felt too long.

He puts his bag down in the hall. He shakes his shoes off and pulls off his coat, throwing it on the dining table as he walks past. He makes his way down the hall to his room by memory. Steps around what looks like the shape of Mila's Boston Raiders bear as he looks in her door.

She's not in there, and he knows without even looking where she will be.

It's as he's headed towards the spare room that he notices a light from his own room, the door not entirely closed.

He pushes it open softly, and his heart seems to grow as his eyes get used to the light.

Mila is asleep in her Boston onesie, moose in one hand, orca in the other.

And Shane. Shane curled around her like a question mark, naked except for a pair of joggers that Ilya can see have an old faded 81 on the pocket.

Ilya showered after the game, and he could probably do with another one to get the plane funk off him, but....

He strips off his shirt and pulls off his joggers and socks. He's too exhausted to turn the one lamp off, instead curling up on the other side of Mila. He places a hand on her soft tummy and feels her belly shift with each breath in and out. It's something he's done since she was born, and it never fails to make him feel calm.

"You're home," he hears Shane say through a yawn.

Ilya nods, looking up from where he'd been focused on Mila's face. Noticing all the slight changes to what being away from her, even for this short period, had brought.

Shane looks tired as he rubs at one eye with the knuckles of a fist. He was still smiling, though.

"Yes." Was all Ilya could answer, his chest tight at seeing Shane in his bed. At Shane looking so at ease in Ilya's space like this.

"I did try the cot, I promise." Shane says, brushing the curve of one finger over the roundness of Mila's chubby cheek. "She seemed to sleep better in here, though. It smells like you."

Ilya lifts a brow, and Shane gets even redder. "You know what I mean. It's something my mom said would help."

"Your mom?" Ilya asks, and that's not something he expected. He knew from what Shane had said that he didn't want to keep secrets, but Ilya hadn't thought the truth would go further than themselves.

"She rang me the first night you were gone. Wanted to know why I hadn't come home. I don't; I try not to lie to them anymore, you know?" Shane says, and Ilya nods, not sure what this makes him feel, but guilty is definitely up there.

"I was talking to her in the kitchen, and Mila was asleep, or so I thought; then she cried, and Mom heard it. So I sort of told her. And Dad," Shane looks at Ilya as if checking that he hasn't done anything wrong, and he hasn't.

"Is fine. She should know her grandparents," Ilya says, and Shane breathes out long, his body relaxing back down into the pillow.

"Okay, I mean. They sort of know everything?" Shane says it like a question, and Ilya chuckles.

"Is *fine*, Shane." Ilya reaches over, presses a hand to Shane's hip and leaves it there.

"I meant about you and me,"

Ilya squeezes his hand on Shane's hip and shakes it. "I said, okay. You can have more people who hate me for keeping her secret."

Shane shakes his head. "They don't hate you. They're not happy you're *you*." Shane's brows lift. "There may have been something mentioned about finding a good Montreal guy."

Ilya hums, but it sounds more like a growl. Or at least that's probably why Shane chuckles, reaches out and pats Ilya's chest to calm him down.

"I think it helped that we have Mila. She's a pretty good reason not to be too upset about anything, really."

Ilya smiles and covers Shane's hand with his own.

"She is great, baby. Beautiful eyes and always happy. Pretty freckles like her papa," Ilya teases.

Ilya really looks at Shane then and sees how Shane's eyes say all the things they once did when they looked at each other. Before all this with Ilya keeping secrets. Well, before the one lying between them, anyhow.

"I should go sleep in my own bed," Shane says through a yawn.

"No, stay. She will miss you," Ilya says, takes Shane's hand from where it covers Ilya's chest, and presses it to his own cheek instead. "I will miss you."

He can feel his hand trembling, but it stops when Shane smiles and slides his fingers through Ilya's curls and behind his ear.

"Okay," he says, brushing his fingers through Ilya's hair again and again.

If he stops at any stage, Ilya doesn't know. He falls asleep with one hand on their baby and Shane all around.

//

It's way later than normal when Ilya opens his eyes again. Ilya woke up fast with a kick from Mila to his stomach right over where he had taken a puke the night before.

He shushes her and talks to her about how pretty she is and how much he loves her in Russian. It's not long after that he realises Shane is now watching them both.

"I should get up. Pack and find a flight out," Shane says, but he doesn't look that excited about it. He looks as sad as Ilya feels now that Shane's talking about leaving.

"You don't have to go right now," he says. "I can make breakfast; you can change Mila."

Shane laughs. "What, make up for all the shitty diapers you changed without me?" Ilya shrugs, smiling at Mila between them. "Papa has a *lot* to make up for,"

Shane kicks at Ilya's legs where they had been tangled together. "I've done my part while you've been gone!"

"Hmm, and all times Petra was here, you did them for her, too?"

Shane doesn't say anything, and this time it's Ilya who cackles. "I thought so." He reaches over and pats Shane's face.

"Don't worry, I do the same. I hid once when she had a bad one; let Petra do it on her own."

"And there you are making me feel like an asshole," Shane says, grabbing at Ilya's fingers and squeezing them in his own.

Mila squawks between them, probably tired of being ignored.

They both chuckle, and Ilya calls her name, telling her in Russian not to be so needy like her papa.

When she's smiling and babbling again for a while, it's Shane who breaks their silence.

"I don't want to go," he says, quietly, like it's a confession he doesn't think he wants Ilya to hear.

"Then don't. Stay," Ilya says. Squeezes Shane's fingers in his hand once more. "Stay with us. With me."

Shane nods, looking at Ilya with shiny eyes.

"Ok."

//

Two days later they're sitting on the sofa watching San Francisco play Dallas. They're not really into it, but it does mean knowing who will play the Admirals, probably. Mila's in bed – in her own bed – and they're curled up together on Ilya's sofa.

They'd started at either end, but as the game progressed, Ilya had shifted closer. At first, it was because Shane was hogging the popcorn. Then it was teasing Shane about some advert that flashed up on the screen for either a watch or clothing. Ilya still wasn't sure, and he'd watched that advertisement a *lot* because Shane was only in a pair of very tight, very white, very revealing briefs. After that, Shane had just pulled him down into his arms and not let him go.

Ilya is lying with his head on Shane's lap, eating popcorn from the bowl on the floor while Shane critiques everything on the screen. Shane's fingers only pause from where they've been carding through Ilya's hair to make a point.

It's another ad break when Shane's circuit pauses, his touch a little softer as he runs the pad of his thumb over Ilya's brow.

"You know before Marleau hit me? Before you disappeared to Russia, I kind of wanted to ask you something. Had a plan and everything," he says with a soft laugh.

Ilya turns so that the back of his head is in Shane's lap and looks up into Shane's eyes.
"What was it?"

"Well, I had thought. We'd had that talk at the All-Star game, and you said later that you wanted to have more time together, alone."

Ilya nods in answer; he isn't sure where this is going, though.

"You know how I have that cottage? It's out on this lake, really private. It's got a pool and all these bedrooms. I thought, maybe it wouldn't be so different now if you and Mila came with me? We'd have the whole place to ourselves, and there's a portacot from when Hayden and the kids and Jacki came up a few years ago, and—"

Ilya reaches up and presses two fingers to Shane's mouth.

"Yes," Ilya answers. Knows if he doesn't that Shane will roll on and on.

Shane grins. "Yes?"

”Yes,” Ilya answers; he leans up and presses his lips to Shane’s. The first time they’ve kissed since it all went to shit. Since the lies and the secrets and god, Ilya is just so sick of it all. He probably should have said something or asked if he could kiss Shane, but as Shane hums and leans into it? Ilya knows it was the right decision. Maybe they can be something more.

He pulls back eventually, and Shane’s eyes flutter open; Ilya hadn’t even realised they were closed.

“Mila needs to see the great Canadian outdoors.”

Chapter End Notes

I had thought this could be wrapped in 4 but we still need a cottage chapter

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

This one is all for B, ya tellytubby labubu x

ILYA

The car doors shut quietly and Ilya shifts a sleeping Mila onto his shoulder, arm tucked under her bottom, presses his lips to her curls. He looks up and Shane is already walking past them, suitcases in both hands.

"I can carry my own bags, Shane," Ilya says, shaking his head as he follows Shane up the gravel path to the door.

"How're you going to do that and carry Mila?" Shane asks, ignoring Ilya by all means as he continues walking.

Ilya sighs and pretends to whisper, "Your Papa forgets that we both play hockey, I can do both things better than him in half time."

"I heard that," Shane says, dropping the suitcases as he pulls out the keys from his pocket and opens the door.

"Oh no, you weren't meant to," Ilya says sarcastically, feeling excited at being here, nervous because they are here and kind of tired because the drive was long.

They had thought about taking a plane but the idea of the flight with a baby and maybe being seen? It just made more sense to drive even if it took them longer even if it meant arguing over who drove when and what music they listened to. Though in the end that came down to what kept Mila happy. It became a lot of children's songs in Russian, and Happy by Pharrell on repeat because it never fails to make Mila smile. Which is much better than her endless crying. Turns out? Mila isn't really big on long car rides.

Ilya looks up as Shane gets the door unlocked, holding it open wide. Ilya walks through and finds himself smiling because it looks just like the clip he saw. It's beautiful wood trim and these big open spaces with windows that let in so much light. He shuffles his slides off and walks through toward the view of green, green, green and more green in sight.

"Mom came over and set up the port-a-cot and the camera we bought downstairs if you want to," Shane says, tapping Ilya on the shoulder.

He nods and follows Shane back through a baby gate and down a short flight of stairs to the first room off the hall. He takes note of the view through the large windows here, too. At this

level, there's less of the lake and more of the trees and grass but it's still beautiful. He carefully lays Mila in the bed while Shane fiddles with the curtains behind him. It's not too warm or cold in the room, but he still pulls the fuzzy navy blanket in there over her, tucking it in all around. There's some kind of image on the material that is too faded to really pick out, even when he smooths it over her tummy to try.

"Oh," Shane says as he comes up close beside Ilya. "I didn't even know she still had that,"

Ilya turns his head, taking in the shine to Shane's eyes and the way he's chewing on his bottom lip.

Shane nods down to where Ilya still has a hand on Mila. "That was mine."

Ilya looks back down and he can see it now. "Sentimental, yes? But she is definitely not a Metro's girl."

Shane snorts, shoving at Ilya before walking around and turning the baby cam on. He and Ilya fiddle with it for a bit, making sure they have the right angle. Shane motions to the door once they've got it right, and they leave with Ilya closing the door quietly behind him. He follows Shane back up the stairs and finds him at the top of the landing, thumbs tucked into his dark shorts. It feels like the first time he's looked at Shane properly in days. His light blue shirt is crumpled and creased from the drive, his hair is probably the longest Ilya has seen it, curling over his eyes so much that he's kept sweeping it behind his ears half the time. He's still so beautiful. They've been together but there was always something to do. Mila or food or just to stretch their legs and make sure Mila had time out of the car. Then that one night they stopped at Shane's place in Montreal before continuing their drive.

Even if that had turned into an argument on whose car they should take to the cottage because "It's British. It's practical. Good in the snow."

How that mattered in the middle of summer, Ilya did not know. It was still Ilya's pretty red Porsche Cayenne that they left in Shane's garage. Ilya did try to argue about the safety ratings (Shane had already had Hayden Pike install a new car seat) and Mila was comfortable where she was, but Shane knew the roads. It was annoying moving all their gear from one car to another, but Shane's car was roomier. Not that Ilya would ever admit that.

Ilya rolls his eyes as Shane turns and walks further into the room.

"I had Mom stock the fridge with food so we won't have to go anywhere. Got you Coke's, too and I have a well here so the water is good if you're thirsty."

Shane rounds the kitchen island and points to the baby gate on the stairs and the latches on the kitchen cupboards. "Dad came and fitted everything out with baby proofing stuff so Mila should be okay. We'll just have to make sure we keep the door locked I guess because there's no screens but I'll get someone to come do that soon and--"

He stops and breathes and Ilya just wants to touch him. They didn't do anything other than share a bed in Boston. It wasn't that he didn't want to..... it just didn't seem right with how

Shane had stayed for Mila. He didn't want to seem selfish, wanting pieces of Shane for himself.

Now though? Shane was right in front of him with his thumbs back in his pockets again. His bare feet on the wooden floor that's warm underfoot from all the sun pouring in from outside. He wants to see if that stupid blue shirt is as scratchy as it looks or soft because Shane fiddled with the neckline a few times in the car. He wants to see if he can make Shane blush. When Ilya steps closer Shane's cheeks pink up and yes, this is what Ilya wants.

"There are more rooms downstairs beside Mila's so you can be close and there's a full tub down there, too. I think there might be bubble bath from when Hayden--"

Ilya gets within touching distance, so close he can feel Shane's breath skate over his own lips. He takes Shane's chin in his forefinger and thumb. Slides his hand up Shane's jaw and curls his fingers through Shane's hair. It's getting so long that it brushes over Ilya's wrist as he brushes his thumb over Shane's ridiculous freckles.

"I don't want to talk about Hayden," Ilya says, his voice deep even to his ears.

"No?" Shane asks, on what could be mistaken for a whimper.

Ilya shakes his head, skates his lips over Shane's brow. "No."

"Want to see your room then?" Shane asks as his hands are a heated brand on Ilya's hips, burning through his vest and to his skin below.

"Yes," Ilya says into Shane's mouth more than anything as his lips finally meet Shane's and the kiss turns hungry fast.

Ilya can't stop kissing Shane once they start. Feels Shane push him back until he's spinning them around.

He rests his forehead against Ilya's as he takes his hand and this.... This feels so different to every other time they've done this. This feels like a reconnection that's so much more important than every other time they've been apart.

Shane grins wide but he's still breathing unsteady and Ilya takes delight in the fact that their kisses alone have him panting.

"What's in there?" Ilya nods to the open doorway behind Shane.

"Oh this? This is my room." he's smirking as he tugs their joined hands through the door.

Ilya slaps Shane's ass as Shane turns to face him, puts his hands behind his back, expression serious but there's still a quirk to his lips.

"It has king sized bed? And view?"

Shane nods, "All our rooms have these features, yes."

Ilya steps closer, copying Shane's stance. "I also need, what do you call - ensuite bathroom?"

Shane nods and tilts his head to the side. "Unfortunately, only one room has that and I'm sorry sir, that room isn't available to guests."

He looks so fucking proud of himself and Ilya's done waiting. Done playing this game as fun as it is. He doesn't give Shane a second before he's pushing him onto the bed behind him. Ilya follows, crowding Shane's space. He climbs over Shane's body, pinning his hands onto the pillows above.

Shane is cackling from underneath Ilya, his face lit up with happiness. A look Ilya is sure is echoed on his own.

"I'm just a bellboy, you can't treat the staff like this!"

Ilya leans in close, rocks his hips down to Shane's as he nips at the tip of Shane's nose. "Oh, I think I know how the staff like to be treated after all these years."

That's it for taking things slow and taking into account the mess between them that's not completely worked out. It doesn't matter. Nothing matters when it's Shane and they're here, together. Nothing has ever really mattered when it comes to Shane and his stupid freckles, and his cute nose, and the way he smiles. How he strains against Ilya's hold to kiss and kiss and kiss him back.

It doesn't take long for Shane to buck his hips up against Ilya's. Or for Ilya to release Shane's hands with a need to touch and be touched. He's pulling at Shane's shirt with one hand while Shane is carding his fingers through Ilya's hair and directing their kiss. Shane's legs open wider, feet curling over Ilya's thighs and pulling him down while Ilya is still attempting to unbutton Shane's stupid shirt.

Their lips don't leave each other. Tongues dancing between their mouths as Shane whines and Ilya swallows the sound whole. He pulls back eventually, as Shane's nails are dragging a heated path over the small of Ilya's back. It feels so ridiculously good and he can't help but smile because this - this has always been so easy between them. Something they've always done so well and after everything this feels *right*.

He's still however, stuck on Shane's stupid fucking buttons, which he must say out loud because Shane turns his head to the side and laughs.

"Sit-up," Shane says, pushing at Ilya's shoulders where he's managed to pull them away from exploring Ilya's ass.

Ilya does, rocks back on his heels when Shane's legs unwrap from around him. He tugs his vest over his head while Shane actually gets to undo more than the two buttons Ilya had managed to. Ilya licks at his lips as more of Shane's body is revealed, bends and presses his mouth to Shane's heated skin, runs his hands up Shane's rib cage and down again. Shane's muscle tone is even more pronounced with it being the end of the season and making it into the playoffs. He's so fucking *hot*. Ilya can almost make out every rung of Shane's ribs, every

hard-earned muscle that stretches and moves with Shane's panted breath. He runs his tongue from just above Shane's belly button and up, up, up. Salt and sweetness and *Shane*.

"Mark me up," Shane whispers, like it's something he doesn't want to admit to wanting.

"*Please*," Shane adds, his eyes dark and hooded when Ilya glances up, blinking from the sudden light after having his own eyes closed. Ilya puts his mouth on the bottom curve of Shane's pec, presses his teeth in and *sucks*. Shane's moan vibrates under Ilya's lips. He's never left anything permanent on Shane's skin before. Always made sure not to scratch even though he wanted to. Used his tongue to trace paths over Shane's skin instead of bruises to match the accidental rainbows of green and gold and purple from living the life they've chosen.

But Shane is right. There's no one to see or make up an excuse for. Not for the expanse of summer that lies ahead of them. It will only be for them. For Ilya, really. A curl of heat joins the fire in Ilya's belly at having this part of Shane. This piece of Shane is for himself. He finds a mole that he's always loved to press his lips to on Shane's rib cage, and decides one mark will not be good enough. Maybe two. Maybe more.

Shane bucks beneath him, one hand pressing down on Ilya's head. He can feel how hard Shane is beneath him. How with every rock of Shane's hips reminds him of how he hasn't done this in so long. Maybe he should slow it down so he doesn't embarrass himself, but it's so hard when Shane is here and touching him and his skin is so, so *hot* under Ilya's mouth.

When Shane starts shifting to one side and then the other, Ilya sits up and helps him finally get that stupid shirt off. He throws it behind him, trails a finger lightly over Shane's chest. Presses hard into the mark he can already see blooming there and doesn't hesitate to follow when Shane clasps his face and drags him back down. He bites at Shane's bottom lip and is going back for seconds when Shane's hand pressed to Ilya's chest makes him stop.

"Wait, um, wait." Shane says and his cheeks are pink, flushing red as Ilya pauses.

"I um, I might not last that long?" He says, as if it's a question. "It's been a while."

Ilya shakes his head and leans in again, "Me too,"

Shane pulls back and Ilya huffs.

"Really?"

"Really."

Shane's eyes are lighting up again, his smile blinding as he cups Ilya's jaw.

"Not since, like Christmas?"

Ilya rolls his eyes and leans in once more, hoping Shane won't notice how his cheeks feel flushed and feel extra warm. "Months, yes? So can we fuck, please? Mila won't be asleep for long."

Shane grins harder - if it's possible - his hand sliding around the back of Ilya's neck as he pulls him back down. Ilya runs a hand along Shane's side while he plants the other on the bed for balance. He manages to get Shane's zipper undone and his fingers are just sliding into Shane's underwear when Shane stops again.

"Oh my god, Hollander what?" Ilya gasps, leans into Shane's touch where he's brushing his thumb over Ilya's cheek and brow.

"I um, me neither. It's just been you. Since then. Before then, actually," Shane says, eyes searching Ilya's while he smiles. Ilya knows who he means, but doesn't want to think about that now. Not like this. Jealousy is not a good colour on him.

Ilya leans forward, thinks about how honest he wants to be. Needs to be. Presses his forehead to Shane's. "Before I went to Russia, the last time. Only you."

"Really?"

"Yes, really. Are we done now because I really want to touch your dick," Ilya huffs, not really annoyed at all.

Shane just surges up in answer, licking his way into Ilya's mouth as he directs their kiss with one hand. His other is right there beside Ilya's, tugging at Ilya's joggers while Ilya *finally* gets his fingers wrapped around Shane's cock. He's already wet because it takes nothing for Shane to get that way. Ilya moans into their kiss as Shane's hands have both now shoved the elastic down over the curve of Ilya's ass. Shane's pulling him in and Ilya needs more space. More of Shane on show but that means moving again. Stopping for even a moment feels like a moment too long.

It's when Shane has somehow wiggled his body enough that Ilya can get a good grasp on his dick that Ilya hears it. Shane's too busy pressing his lips to Ilya's neck and jaw so maybe he doesn't. It's enough to make Ilya think he was wrong. He sits up for what he hopes is the last time, wriggling back, pulling Shane's pants off with him, while Shane arches up to get them off. He's just got them down to Shane's knees when he hears it again.

A squawk.

A Mila sound.

They freeze as they wait to hear if Mila makes another noise. Sometimes she settles back on her own.

"Pa Pa Pa Pa!"

And sometimes she's done with a nap and it's Shane's name she calls.

At least that's what Ilya tells him as he rolls off to the empty side of the bed, shoving at Shane's shoulder.

"I thought you said she hadn't figured out what to call us?" Shane asks, already getting up and tucking himself back inside his shorts.

Ilya puts his hands under his head, smiles at Shane while still panting. “You got up, think Papa is you now.”

Shane rolls his eyes, but when Mila calls out Papa again with the start of a cry? Ilya catches the lift of Shane’s lips in a smile before he walks out the door.

//

Mila loves being outdoors. She loves watching the ducks on the lake. She loves holding Shane’s hand as he walks her over to a patch of land that has wildflowers growing on it. She loves picking the flowers and scrunching them up, or shoving them in Shane’s nose.

Okay, maybe it’s Ilya that likes that last one, because no matter how many times she does it? Shane will give her another flower and let her do it again, over and over.

They coat her in SPF and Ilya dresses her in the little red swimsuit with the ruffles on her butt. Shane blows up the floaty ring he bought for her covered in rainbows and unicorns, grinning around the plastic in his mouth. He hasn’t stopped looking happy, and it’s kind of a lot to take in. Mila grabs the ring as soon as Shane is done and he smiles so wide when he takes her hand in his that Ilya is afraid his heart might actually burst.

Ilya takes her other hand and they walk carefully with her down to the dock where there are stairs into the lake. Ilya gets in first and it’s cold, but it’s nicer than being out in the heat of the sun above. It’s nothing much more than the temperature at the pool where he’s taken Mila for lessons, so he tells Shane it’s fine. He holds his arms up and takes Mila from Shane’s hands as he lowers her down. She’s babbling again with something that sounds more like “Dada” than the “Papa” she calls when she’s been looking for Shane the past day or so.

Time seems to have stretched for them here and Ilya kind of loves it.

He wouldn’t mind getting his hands on Shane again and finishing what they started yesterday. But with Mila being so active, and Shane being absolutely enamoured by everything she does? He hasn’t wanted to push or deny Shane the time he’s making up. It was Ilya’s fault after all.

So they fell into bed that first night, freshly showered and skin damp and warm. That could have been time for something, but it ended with slow kissing and Shane’s legs entwined with his own. Then, it was Mila waking them up at the crack of dawn, followed by walking along a trail by the house. Shane pointed things out to Mila as she toddled along, picking her up when she fell down a third time and refused to move. Ilya took photos with his phone and sent them to Shane to find once they got back. Mila was out of sorts when they finally returned, falling asleep on Shane’s chest outside while Ilya made them sandwiches for lunch. When Ilya went to move her, Shane was also asleep, mouth open and snoring softly. Ilya couldn’t stop himself from brushing his fingers through Mila’s curls, thumb caressing the freckles on her cheeks that matched Shane’s own.

Now it’s time to show Mila the lake and Ilya hopes it will mean she’ll fall asleep early and he can finally have Shane alone. It’s something he feels the tiniest bit guilty about but, as he’d

said to Shane, it had been *months*. Ilya really wants to feel Shane's hands on his body and possibly get Shane's dick in his mouth.

Mila slaps at his face with a wet hand and Ilya relegates himself to not thinking about getting Shane out of those green swim shorts for the time being.

"Alright *малышка*, keep hands to yourself," Ilya teases, making sure Mila's legs fit in the base of the floatie. She grumbles a bit, but once he's done and she realises she's free to kick (Ilya in the stomach) and move her hands (tugging a handful of curls in her fist) she's happy.

"She should be safe in there, right?" Shane asks, his back to Ilya as he clammers down the stairs in his lake shoes.

Ilya also has his feet in something similar, even if it feels weird to go swimming with shoes on. Even if Shane tells him that it's normal and every Canadian does it.

He's going to text that rookie they signed last season to check when they get back out. Tremblay is still pretty intimidated by his Captain after all. There won't be a lie from that one.

"She is fine, Shane. Look," Ilya says, pushing at the ring so it spins Mila out a little way from them and she laughs.

"Ilya!" Shane squawks, making waves as he jumps the last few steps into the water. He's swimming off the three arm laps it takes to get to Mila while Ilya chuckles and treads water. Once he's got both his hands on the ring and Mila's body, probably, he turns to Ilya with that angry kitten frown Ilya is actually quite fond of.

"She could have tipped over! That's not funny," Shane sputters whatever is coming next as Mila slaps him with a face full of water.

Ilya laughs along with Mila. "Mila thinks is funny,"

Shane wipes at his face with one hand, then takes Mila's in his own. "It isn't though, you could have floated away and then I'd have to show your Dad how slow at swimming he is," Shane says in a voice that's all sweetness compared to the words.

"Faster? I can show you faster." Ilya says, swimming up to Shane, wrapping his feet around Shane's ankle and tugging him down.

"Oh my god, do you want her to go under?" Shane says, pushing lightly at where Ilya's now managed to wrap his legs around Shane's waist, floating on his back looking up into the blue sky above.

"No, I think you are strong enough to hold us both," Ilya says quietly. He lets the sounds of the lake and Mila's delight at splashing Shane drown out everything else.

Shane's up on the deck, wrapping Mila in a towel while Ilya is still playing around in the water.

He's cold, but it's too much fun making Mila laugh when he dives down and lets his legs spear out of the water. Shane said he looked like a mermaid and Mila clapped the last four times he did this so he hasn't stopped. Even if he is getting a little dizzy with the diving and the turning.

"Are you ever getting out?" Shane asks, hiking a cranky Mila onto his hip. She isn't fond of either being wrapped up or being out of the water.

Ilya's money is on the water because she has always loved it. Bath or pool, and now, lake.

He nods and starts to swim over. Shane's waiting when he gets to the top of the ladder, holding a towel out with one hand while he pretends to eat Mila's fingers. Anything to entertain her. She's laughing so it's definitely working.

He looks so at ease with Mila in his arms. Like she's meant to be there. Like they all are meant to be together.

Ilya brushes the towel over his head, his curls will dry however they want anyway so it's no use being thorough. He wraps it around his shoulders and steps in close between Shane and their daughter. She looks up at him and smiles and Ilya's heart beats outside his chest like it has done since she was born. He leans in to Shane, puts an arm around his waist and squeezes.

"Gimme kiss," he says with a pout.

Shane glances to the side and doesn't hesitate to press their lips together. "You're cold,"

"Maybe we put Mila down when we get back and I make us both warm," Ilya squeezes at the round of Shane's hip, pinching his ass before walking off ahead of them both.

"Your Dada is an asshole."

Ilya hears Shane say and Ilya laughs, knowing Shane's quiet, "and don't you ever say that word," wasn't meant for him to hear at all.

//

When Ilya wakes up the next morning it's raining. It's not heavy and it's not light. It's just a miserable drizzle and it kind of makes Ilya want to stay in bed. He wraps himself around Shane a little more, pressing his lips to Shane's hair where his head is using Ilya's chest as a pillow. He's so warm here. Shane curled at his side, one leg thrown over Ilya's thigh, his arm wrapped around Ilya's stomach. His own personal Shane blanket to go with the sheet covering them both.

There's this feeling in his chest that has been growing and it's so big now it sits in Ilya's throat. He wants to say it. Wants to tell Shane that the "nice" they'd talked about so long ago in Tampa was still there. But bigger. Wants to tell Shane that he wants more than just these

weeks at the Cottage. That he wants them to be together. With Mila. A family he can call his own.

He knows Shane has said he wants him. That he wants Mila, too.

Ilya brushes his fingertips over Shane's hair, tucking stray pieces behind his ear as Shane's even breaths play over Ilya's skin.

The words are right there, three little words on the tip of his tongue but....

He's tried being open with Shane before. Tried telling him how he feels and it might have ended up with them creating this baby between them, saying them out loud?

Shane can still walk away. Can still decide it's too much and go.

It's not like he hasn't done it before.

Shane mumbles something in his sleep, rubs his face on Ilya's chest but doesn't do much more. Ilya just presses his lips to the back of Shane's head, blinks up at the roof above where the light grows brighter. Maybe the sun is poking through the clouds.

He blinks and then it's gone.

//

Ilya puts Mila down after lunch and comes back upstairs to see Shane sitting in front of the TV, MHL15's menu playing on loop.

"I thought since it's raining, and she probably won't sleep that long because we didn't get outside-" Shane starts with a grin, tossing a controller to Ilya.

He catches it and throws himself down beside Shane, bumping him with his shoulder.

"I'm picking Montreal."

Shane splutters, shoving his shoulder back against Ilya's. "You can't do that!"

"I can and I did. I've always wanted to know what it would be like playing for shortest Captain in MHL," Ilya teases, clicking his way through before Shane can.

His knee brushes up against Shane's, and he leaves it there as Shane grumbles under his breath something about picking Boston and killing the Metro's.

"*I am* you," Ilya scoffs.

Shane shoves his arm over the crook of Ilya's and pushes down. "You aren't anything,"

Ilya shakes him off, leans forward picking up the game box in front of them. "I'm on cover of fucking game?"

Shane has that angry kitten look again and Ilya can't help but lean in and kiss it off. "Maybe next year they ask you," Ilya says, lips hovering over Shane's own. "Feel sorry for the injured one who missed playoffs. Boo hoo, OW!"

Ilya pulls back and rubs at where Shane nearly stomped on his ankle.

"Pucks about to drop," Shane says, a sparkle in his eyes that Ilya has come to know so well.

He sits back and shoves at Shane once more before getting the 24 on-screen ready to go.

They've managed to skate from both ends of the ice to the other when Shane's phone lights up on the table in front of them.

Hayden fucking Pike's face is there with Shane's and the Cup.

Shane hits pause and Ilya looks at him, raising a brow.

"It's Hayden," He answers with a shrug. "I haven't talked to him since we left Boston. It won't take long,"

Ilya throws himself back on the sofa and drops the controller to the floor with an exaggerated sigh.

"Always with the dramatics," Shane says with a laugh, already picking up his phone.

Ilya huffs and looks at the ceiling. He listens as Shane goes through the motions, checking on what Ilya guesses is Pike's wife and children. Apparently, he has a few of those.

"Yeah, Ilya is here and Mila. It's... It's really good." Shane says with a smile just tugging at the corner of his lips and he's so fucking pretty.

So pretty.

A line forms in Shane's brow which Ilya knows means it's something more serious and no. This is their break from all of that. Even if it's not Shane's problem, he's too good at taking on other people's problems.

Ilya sits up. Runs his tongue over his bottom lip and bites at his top lip. Shane's watching and his pupils bloom. Ilya shuffles closer. Rests his hand gently on Shane's knee, taps his fingers from thumb to pinky and back again.

"I mean you have been talking about it for a while. Remember after Arthur was born and you wanted to do it then?" He pauses and Ilya can hear Pike on the other side of the phone. Probably whining. He seems like the type.

Ilya presses in closer, looks up at Shane as he tip taps his fingers up Shane's thigh.

"Right, yeah. Okay." Shane goes on, meeting Ilya's eyes with a tilt of his head that says *what are you doing?*

Ilya grins and raises his brow which is *nothing at all*. Even though it really *is* something. Maybe.

"I don't know. We'll probably be here a while. Mila loves the lake."

Maybe Shane doesn't necessarily *need* to keep talking on the phone. Maybe Shane needs a reminder that when Mila sleeps it's their time. To do things. With each other.

He walks his fingers right up to the tie of Shane's shorts, tugs at the knot. He looks up at Shane whose eyes have definitely widened and then back down to Shane's crotch and back up again. Checking silently. He smiles, hopeful and teasing.

Shane shakes his head. His tongue darted out quickly and pink over his lips leaving them wet. When did Ilya last get his tongue on Shane's cock? When did he just give Shane something of himself?

He moves in closer, gets himself between Shane's knees as he sits back on his heels on the floor.

Shane is frowning now. Looking slightly murderous, but as Ilya tucks his fingers under Shane's shirt, drags his blunt fingernails down Shane's ridiculously fit body? He still hasn't actually said no. He still doesn't say no when Ilya tucks his hand under Shane's shorts and he's just about got his hand on Shane's dick when he hears Shane gasp above.

"Can you just, hold on a minute, it's my mom," Shane pulls the phone away from his mouth and presses something on the screen.

"What are you even doing right now?" Shane asks and his voice is high, kind of thready.

"I think you know what I'm doing," Ilya answers, his heart racing because this still isn't a no.

Ilya slides his hand in further, cups Shane where he's still sort of soft. Ilya *wants*. He's never really had the opportunity to have Shane's cock soft like this. Held him in his mouth and just tasted his skin and teased until he grew hard. Then again, they're both usually stupidly hard whenever they are in proximity of each other. Even here, Ilya has probably been mid-chub the whole time.

Still, he won't do anything that Shane doesn't want to.

But.... He thinks maybe Shane does.

"Later," Shane says though he doesn't sound all that confident.

Ilya purses his lips in a pout. "We might be busy later. Right now, we are not,"

"Ilya..."

Yes, it's probably not the sexiest point to make that their daughter is currently napping and she barely gets through an hour if they're lucky. But Ilya is bored and he selfishly wants all of

Shane's attention. Pike can't wait until preseason. Maybe even after that. He can wait until Ilya has had his fill.

"I make you deal, if you don't get hard? I won't touch you. I won't do anything," Ilya states as seriously as he can.

Ilya pulls his hands away. Sits back on his heels. Tries to look innocent.

Shane is staring at him now, mouth open a little but his eyes....

Oh, it is *game on*.

"I won't get hard."

Ilya shrugs. "Okay. No problem."

Shane sits back a little further into the sofa behind him, his knees falling wider than before.

Grumpy kitten face is back but Shane's eyes? They say something else. He's always been so competitive.

Shane's got the phone up against his ear. Pokes his tongue out at Ilya before he restarts the call.

"You still there? Yeah, *Mom* can be really *annoying* sometimes." He gazes pointedly at Ilya. As if he doesn't know who those stressed words were for. "She's not happy we told her to wait a week before she can come over."

Ilya grins from his place on the floor, tucks his hands behind his back and just *stares* at Shane.

Shane frowns but he hasn't pulled his shorts back up from where Ilya had tugged at them. Has possibly moved them down for Ilya with how he shuffled back onto the sofa. Ilya stares at the space between Shane's shirt and the smooth skin leading down like an arrow to where Ilya focuses.

"So, are you all heading to Jacki's parents soon?" Shane asks, still glaring at Ilya.

Ilya makes a show of licking his lips, maybe rocking his own hips forward, just a little.

Shane stares and stares, not even blinking so Ilya smiles some more. He promised not to touch. Didn't mean he wasn't going to make it easy on Shane.

"Yeah, right. Ruby still.... Yeah. I remember," Shane's cheeks pink up and Ilya drops his gaze pointedly to Shane's crotch.

Ilya might moan, just a little one, as he focuses on the dip of the cloth he knows covers Shane's cock. Shane's saying something again but Ilya's not paying attention anymore. He's watching and waiting and then, there. A twitch. And then another. Shane's cock is definitely plumping up.

Ilya finds himself grinning so hard it hurts as he continues to watch. The material stretches and Shane's hard-on gets more noticeable. And Ilya hasn't even *moved*.

He looks up to find Shane with his eyes shut tight, little wrinkles between his brows. He's got a hand on his knee curled into a fist, as if he concentrates enough he won't find this such a turn on. Ilya *did* promise not to touch unless Shane got hard and... when Shane's dick twitches again and Ilya can see a wet spot bloom? Light blue material fading to dark?

He moves.

He leans in, presses his mouth to the curve of Shane's knee, and slides his hand so gently up Shane's opposite inner thigh. He can feel the muscle there, thinks of how hot Shane looks when he's racing on the ice ahead of him. Ilya looks up at Shane again as his finger tips curl over where Shane is tenting out his shorts and this time Shane's eyes are open, wide.

"Um... so you said something about Ruby?" Shane's voice is strained at best but he isn't saying stop.

He doesn't say anything as he presses his face into Shane's crotch and brushes his mouth back and forth over Shane's covered cock. Fits his mouth over where the head is and *sucks*. It's cotton and salt and Ilya needs to take that taste from the source. He reaches up with one hand, fits his hand to Shane's chest and pushes him back as he grabs at the band of Shane's shorts and tugs them down.

"Oh god," Shane whimpers, but Ilya's not looking up. Not now he's managed to get Shane's shorts down enough that his dick springs out.

He grins as Shane's dick bobs in front of him, head wet and shiny and just calling for Ilya's tongue.

Ilya glances up at Shane one more time and sees how fast Shane's chest is moving in and out. How his mouth has dropped open and his lips are just as flushed as his cheeks, those damn freckles standing out. He raises his brows in question one last time and Shane barely nods but it's something.

Fuck, he loves it when Shane lets go like this. Gives in and is brave to just take what he needs, what Ilya is offering.

Even if it is a blowjob while he's on the phone to his best friend.

Even then.

Ilya wastes no further time, opens his mouth and just takes Shane's cock in and in. They don't really have time for Ilya to savour this, he wants Shane too much. Wants to feel him fill his mouth and that salty tang is back again as Shane's thigh bounces under Ilya's palm. He bobs his head, taking in more and more. Swirls his tongue like he knows Shane likes. He can barely keep back a groan himself when Shane's hand slides over the back of his head, fingers tight in his curls and *pulls*.

It's so fucking hot and makes Ilya work twice as fast. He's hard in his own pants, thinks about touching himself but this is about Shane and only Shane right now. Then again, with how his cock is rubbing against the seam in his jean shorts? He might not need anything else.

"Oh fuck," Shane calls from above and Ilya doubles down. He slides his hand in and down and cups Shane's balls. He rolls them gently and pulls and gets his tongue down between his fingers and over Shane's skin. He's so surrounded by Shane, so encompassed by his body, thighs secure around Ilya's waist, his hand guiding Ilya's mouth. It's so fucking hot and the only reason he's not being loud himself is how much he's working over Shane's cock. Shane's constantly leaking precum over Ilya's tongue so it's all he can taste and all he wants.

"Yeah um, look there's a, shit," Shane mumbles and he sounds close, feels like it too when Ilya hollows his cheeks while coming up. Ilya can't believe Shane is still finding enough focus to answer Pike. He reaches up and drags his hand over Shane's cheek, gets his fingers inside his mouth. Shane backs off and Ilya tries again, slapping Shane just a little before getting two fingers inside. Shane hums around them before pushing Ilya's hand down.

"I just. Yeah, I hear you."

Shane is panting now and Ilya tries not to smile with a mouthful of Shane's cock. Instead, he moves his free hand to jack Shane off while sucking on the head. Taps his tongue on that place underneath that always makes Shane's legs shake. Makes him moan loudly. He slaps at Shane's face again, feels the warmth of Shane's breath at his fingertips before Shane says something about needing to get a package. Then two of Ilya's fingers are surrounded by wet heat and oh.

Ilya's dick definitely takes notice and he rocks against the front of the sofa. There's just enough pressure on the ridge of his dick to make getting off something that might happen. Shane's moaning above him and Ilya's taking him deep once more. He knows what Shane sounds like when he's right on the edge and this is now. Shane pulls at Ilya's hair and within what feels like seconds Ilya feels him grow in his mouth. The bitter salty taste of cum follows a second later and Ilya doesn't stop swallowing until Shane is patting at his shoulder, shoving him off.

He rests his head on Shane's thigh, eyes focused on where Shane's going soft. Sticks out his tongue and licks at a pearly coloured drop. His laugh is shaky to his own ears when Shane pats Ilya's head right over his ear, none too gentle.

"Stop!"

Ilya laughs and turns his face to press his lips to Shane's thigh instead. Rests for a moment while he hears Shane return to his call.

"Hey um, that was a delivery guy so. I kinda need to go, I'll call you next week and we'll work something out."

Ilya laughs because, delivery guy? He did kind of deliver an orgasm so maybe Shane's right. He snorts and Shane puts his hand over Ilya's mouth.

"Okay, yeah. Um, love to Jacki and the kids. Bye," Shane ends the call and then he's on top of Ilya, pressing him down onto the rug Ilya had been kneeling on.

He grabs Ilya's hands, threads their fingers together as he pushes them into the floor.

"You fucking asshole!" He says, a smile on his face as he leans in and kisses Ilya with a hefty amount of tongue. Like he's trying to taste himself in Ilya's mouth.

"Why, why was that so fucking hot?"

Ilya smirks, fits his lips to Shane's again and again before answering. "Because you like to be bad, Shane Hollander. You like it when I'm bad with you,"

Shane's gaze turned serious, his knees sliding to fit over Ilya's waist. He pulled Ilya's hand in front of him, slid his grasp down to Ilya's wrist and pressed a kiss to Ilya's palm.

"Maybe, maybe in the beginning but what we have now? It's not that. I don't want it to be anymore."

Ilya nods, feels that sentiment in his bones. Aches to say those words again that might change everything. Might not.

Instead, he brushes the hair out of Shane's eyes and rubs his thumb over his beautiful freckles.

"Okay."

Shane's face lightens and he leans into Ilya's touch. They stay that way for a beat, a breath or two. That bubble in Ilya's chest grows and grows and he could be brave. Could say it first. He's sure he sees it in Shane's eyes but....

"How the hell did he not know?" Shane asks, and Ilya laughs and the moment is gone.

//

H: you know you have to hit MUTE only ONCE for that to work you morons!

H: I'm fucking scarred for life

H: Good for you though

H: BUT NEVER AGAIN ASSHOLES

H: Jacki says I have to tell you and Rozanov that if Mila needs clothes we have bags of them she can have.

H: Jacki also says you're invited to dinner next time you're in town.

H: Jacki also says that ILYA can come too

H: I say you can leave him at home

*Ja: Don't mind him he's just jealous he can't have what you apparently had because
SOMEONE finally got a vasectomy 🍌✂️😊*

//

It's late and Mila is finally tired enough that Shane decides to try to get her to sleep. Ilya wasn't watching the monitor when Shane first went down, but now it's sort of like a TV show he can't look away from. Shane's got her in his arms, sleep sack put on and the room lights off. There's a little glow from the nightlight near the door but otherwise, Ilya knows it's pretty dark. He can hear the rhythmic whoosh of her white noise machine and her saying "Pa pa pa pa," to Shane like she always does.

Shane's saying something, holding her little hand in his after he finishes shutting the curtain. Twirls them both around slowly, rocking side to side. It takes Ilya a good few seconds to realise what it is Shane is doing.

He's dancing. Badly, but dancing with their little girl.

"You know, I might not have been with you in the beginning?" Shane says softly.

Ilya turns the volume all the way up and brings the screen closer to his face to hear more.

He watches as Shane presses his lips to her nose, her cheeks. Ilya is almost certain he's following the path of her freckles much like Ilya does to Shane's own. She tucks her head under his chin as Shane turns slowly, guiding their hands to his chest, but not letting go.

"I promise you Mila," Shane says, pausing to press his lips to the top of her curls. "I promise you'll never be alone. It's always going to be you and me and your Dad. Always my pretty girl."

Ilya blinks and blinks and that ache in his chest returns. Shane might only be talking to their daughter but... those words Ilya needs to hear as well. Words he wants Shane to say to him. To mean as much as he does to this little part of both of them that continues to grow like a weed.

"I love you," Shane says, finally placing Mila into the cot, pushing her curls back from her forehead. They're so golden now from being outside with Shane and Ilya in the sun. Probably getting long enough for her first haircut but Ilya can't imagine cutting them just yet.

"I love you so much," Shane says again, tucking her blanket up because it's somehow cooler tonight than it has been the whole time they've been at the cottage. He makes sure the horrible Canadian animals he bought her are at the end of the bed.

Shane turns and Ilya can see he's closing the door so he turns the sound back down on the monitor to where it normally sits. He wipes the wetness from his cheeks with one hand as he sets the screen on the side table and fixes the throw blanket over his toes.

He's flicking through Instagram on his phone when Shane comes back in. Pretends to be engrossed in what is possibly an ad for women's diet pills. Ilya honestly wouldn't know.

"She's asleep," Shane says with this warmth in his voice that Ilya can't help but look up and notice. Shane's eyes are warm and soft from behind the frames he's just put on, and he looks happy. Really happy.

"Good," Ilya says in return. Watches as Shane gets comfortable at the other end of the sofa, presses his socked toes against Ilya's covered ones. He's reading a fucking biography on some Canadian hockey player that is in the Hall of Fame. A name Ilya recognises but doesn't really know.

"You need anything?" Shane asks, forever the polite Canadian even though he's just settled himself down.

Ilya shakes his head. The "I love you" and "I love you so much" play on repeat in his mind.

That. That's what he wants. He wants love to be enough. Love to be what they have and build upon together, not apart. He wants summers in this cottage. He wants Shane in his bed, his toes tucked under Ilya's legs to keep them warm. He wants to make Shane breakfast even if it's stupid chia pudding and wheat grass and other gross stuff. He wants them to make a home and raise their daughter together. He wants to play hockey and win more Cups.

The quiet settles between them so easily, so comfortably, that Shane jumps when Ilya starts to talk. He wasn't going to say anything but it just came bubbling up.

"Mila has Canadian passport," Ilya says, not knowing exactly where he's going but it's a start.

Shane nods. "Yeah, I remember when we went over the border."

"And you have one."

Shane nods again.

"I want to not have Russian passport." Ilya breathes in shakily, watching as confusion colours Shane's brow.

"Okay, but how are you going to do that?"

"My contract is," he tilts his head side to side. "In negotiation?"

Shane puts his book down on his lap and takes his glasses off. "Do you want to leave Boston?"

"Yes, maybe. I thought maybe play for Canadian team. Get passport that way."

Ilya can see the possibilities play over Shane's face. The teams that are available here. Or maybe one team... even if that could never work.

"Not Montreal," Ilya says softly.

Shane shrugs. "I know."

If they could, though? Be on the same team. The same line as they had been back at the All-Star game? They'd be unstoppable. Probably. That's really not the point. Not with this talk, anyhow.

Shane drags in this unsteady breath, staring intently at Ilya. "So you'd play on a team here, then what?"

"I can't go back to Russia," Ilya says, feeling like he's getting this all out of order. His thoughts are just as much of a mess as his words.

"I want to be same as Mila," Shane blinks and Ilya continues. "Would be nice," Ilya says, knowing he's falling back on using short sentences. Not filling spaces with words.

Shane is still staring at him and Ilya doesn't know how to ask. How to put all his wants into words.

"You'd like, marry someone? Here?" Shane asks and Ilya's heart hurts. Shane won't even consider that someone could mean anyone else.

"I guess. There are women here. Boring I guess but," he shrugs. God why did he say that? Why can't he just say what he wants?"

Shane's eyes look glassy and his lips are in a straight line. "So you'd just marry someone. Even if it's not for love?"

And that's as close as they've ever both come to admitting to it. To this tether between them that's only stretched and curled in open itself, twisting and growing into something unbreakable. At least, Ilya hopes.

"Maybe? But..."

"But?"

Ilya takes a deep breath, can't take that look in Shane's eyes. They're shiny and he can see how wet his lashes are with tears unshed.

"But I have this problem," Ilya starts. "I don't want to marry just anyone. I have Mila and she is beautiful and she already has two parents. She doesn't need anyone else."

"Right," Shane says looking slightly more settled, his tongue flicking out quickly to wet his lips. "So what's the problem?"

"I could marry any boring Canadian," Ilya sighs, tries to pull back the grin that's tugging at the edges of his mouth. "But my problem is I only want just one."

Shane's smiling, blinking a little as a few tears slip down one cheek and then the other.

"He is so, so slow on the ice and he has these beautiful freckles and only drives practical car and is so, so sexy in his glasses. Is terrible problem." Ilya finishes with an exaggerated sigh. Shane is pushing his toes against Ilya's, and Ilya pushes back.

"Is this something you want to go away?"

Ilya shakes his head, feels like the balloon has popped. That he's finally laid it all out.

"No, I do not ever want that problem to go away."

He breathes and Shane's bottom lip trembles and maybe this was too much. Maybe he should have waited for another time to show his hand.

"Don't," Shane starts, rubbing his finger and thumb over one eye, then the other. "Don't just marry anyone. We'll figure something out."

And it's not everything Ilya needs or wants to hash out between them. It's not those three words he is still holding so tight within his chest that they feel like they might burst from the pressure alone.

"Okay." He answers. "Okay."

//

SHANE

His parents arrived an hour ago and it was awkward but Mila is Mila and she manages to wrap them around her finger within minutes. Shane thinks it's probably because of the curls. At least that's why he gives in to her more often than not. She's just so cute and when she smiles and her freckles stand out. Shane thinks he can see why Ilya has such an obsession with Shane's own.

"So, Rozanov?"

His mom's voice breaks into his thoughts where he'd been flipping the burgers over on the barbecue.

"Ilya." He corrects her.

"Ilya, whatever. But Shane, really?"

"Yes, Mom. Haven't we talked about this already?" Shane whines because they have. Well, maybe not a lot but enough since Shane was in Boston. And in text. And a FaceTime or two when Ilya was in New York.

"Fine, fine." She says, wrapping her cardigan around herself. They both pause to look down into the yard when Mila squeals.

His Dad and Ilya are kicking a little soccer ball around that Arthur had left the previous summer. Ilya had picked her up and run her and the ball past his Dad, them both cheering with whatever perceived goal just happened. His Dad hasn't stopped smiling at Mila since

she wandered over and pulled herself up on his lap when they'd first arrived. She'd turned, placing one hand on his cheek and babbled in his face, nonsensical words but in such a serious tone.

His Dad had just looked so enthralled, started answering her like he knew what she was saying and ignored the rest of them for the first half hour.

"She looks so much like you, but then so much like Ilya, too," His mom says, bumping her shoulder into Shane's. "All those curls."

"Definitely has his temper though, super stubborn." Shane adds, thinking about earlier that morning trying to get her dressed. He'd had to chase her around the bottom half of the house while Ilya sat in her bedroom on the floor and laughed.

"Oh I think it's fair to say you have a stubborn side, too," his mom chuckles. "I remember a certain young man who refused to sleep with anything but his Metro's blanket."

Shane feels his face heat, turns to look at the burgers so it's them more than anything making him redder than he was before.

"I was a kid."

"You were fourteen before I finally got it out of your bedroom and in the attic with all your other baby things."

Shane rolls his eyes but says nothing because there's no point in arguing when his Mom is right.

"Have you two talked about what comes next?" His mom asks, moving to stand beside him and using the spare tongs to shift the hot dogs around.

Shane shrugs. Last night on the couch might be the closest they'd come to discussing what was between them. What would it mean when summer ended and Shane had to head back to Montreal?

"You don't have much time left to figure things out. You need a plan. You can't spend another year apart, she needs both of you."

Shane shrugs. He has thought about it. He'd spent most of the night while Ilya slept with his hand on Shane's stomach thinking of nothing but what they could do.

He lets out this long sigh before answering. "Ilya's contract is up for negotiations. He knows that. We talked about him moving to Canada so we'd be close? Maybe... I don't know, Ottawa has cap space. They could afford him."

"He'd leave Boston?" His mom says with something that sounds like shock.

"Well, I mean yeah. For us."

"Hmm," is all she says in return and when Shane turns to look at her he can see what she really thinks about that.

"Oh my god mom, he'd leave so we could all be together. It's not a bad thing if he's thinking about us both."

"It's just... they drafted him. Loyalty is a good trait to have."

"Seriously? He'd be moving for me, for us? For us to be a family? Jesus, Mom." Shane can't believe her but then again he can. She lived and breathed hockey long before she passed that love onto him. He'd have to watch her with Mila so didn't have that much crazy rub off on her. Surely there'd be enough with having two professional hockey-playing dads.

They both pause again when Ilya's voice carries across the yard. He's lying down now with Mila throwing herself onto him and David clapping, giving out instructions on where to jump next. It's nice, seeing his family like this. His dad. His daughter and... well whatever Ilya was.

His mom wraps an arm around his shoulder, bends him close so she can press her lips to his cheek. "I can look into some things, make some calls. You can't be expected to be apart from her. Not when she's your daughter just as much as she is Ilya's. They can't expect that to work."

Shane nods, leaning into her touch. That strength and comfort he's always felt from her. It makes him wonder when Ilya last felt that. When he had someone on his side so fiercely, so without question.

"I mean. We haven't even talked about us or what this looks like, but Mom?" Shane says still pressed close, her hand a tight comforting squeeze over his arm.

"Make the calls."

//

His parents take Mila for the night. Not before Ilya gives her a dozen or more kisses and hugs. Then graciously allowed Shane to do the same before he held her again and kissed her forehead again and again before she wriggled out of his hold. Ilya had given the lowdown on her sleep routine to Shane's parents three times before Yuna had put her hands on Ilya's shoulders, looked him in the eye and told him that they'd raised one son and he was fine.

Ilya had side-eyed Shane hard with that comment but said nothing.

They're still standing out the front, the headlights long gone on both Shane and his parents' cars. Shane took Ilya's hand when they'd been waving them off and hadn't let go. Well, Ilya hasn't let go. His hold is pretty damn strong.

"It's just a sleepover," Shane says, looking to the side where Ilya is still focused on the driveway, the light fading fast.

"She was pretty much already out to it when you gave her to my dad."

Ilya nods but it's short and sharp. His eyes look glassy. It tugs at Shane's heart.

"We can always call and they can bring her back?"

"No," Ilya says so softly that Shane can barely hear it. He squeezes Shane's hand. "Is okay."

Shane steps closer, brings their joined hands to his face and presses his lips to each of Ilya's knuckles, one by one.

//

They go inside eventually and Ilya is quiet. He's still holding Shane's hand when Shane leads them into the bedroom. He pulls Ilya's shirt and pants off and pushes him back onto the bed once he's removed his own. When Shane lies down beside him, Ilya shuffles over, rests his head on Shane's chest and wraps most of his body around him.

Shane runs his fingertips slowly and steadily over the warmth of Ilya's back and it's nice. The quiet. The closeness. Just being together. Shane thinks about what his mom said earlier. He thinks about what Ilya said the night before. He wants this. He can't imagine not having Ilya beside him in bed at night. Ilya pushing him around on the ice and then pushing him around at home in the kitchen. He wants to wake up and hear Mila call him Papa and trade off with Ilya on who has to change her dirty diaper. He wants to curl up on the sofa together at the end of the day and run his fingers through Ilya's curls. He wants Ilya.

He wants to not be living his life in half anymore.

Lying here with Ilya's head on his chest, when it seems so easy for them to take comfort in one another? This moment feels like the culmination of something they've been slowly dragging themselves towards and he can't help but break the silence.

"I've been thinking. About next season? Did you mean it about playing in Canada, leaving Boston?"

Ilya's shoulders lift and Shane feels a rush of warm breath play across his chest.

"Yes. Canada would be good. Would be closer to you."

"Ottawa could have the cap fit for you. They're looking for a good centre and you're good,"

"Better than you," Ilya snorts, rubbing his face into Shane's chest then rolling over, lifting his head so Shane can see him blinking his eyes open sleepily.

"I would have scored more goals than you if your-"

Ilya pats at Shane's hip where his arm is still mostly lying over Shane's waist. "Told you many times Marleau didn't mean to."

"Right, yeah. I know." Shane shakes his head because this is getting off track. "But Ottawa is only like a two-hour drive either way?"

Ilya shifts up a bit more on the pillow, his eyes more focused on Shane's.

"Is close yes, but Shane she is - I don't think I can share her like divorce."

Shane is fucking this up. "I would never, she's ours, Ilya. I don't want to share her I want us to be with her."

"Shane," Ilya sighs and his eyes look sad. Shane doesn't want to make him sad, not when there's a tiny slice of hope.

"I, I was talking with mom this afternoon, and I think we can work something out. I don't know if there's ever been a couple like us with our situation," He takes a breath, brushes his fingers over Ilya's stupidly defined cheekbone and the soft skin around his eye. "There's probably something in the guidelines about couples being in two different teams. I don't think they can separate us if it's something that we don't want."

Ilya still looks unsure. Shane doesn't know if it's how many words he's using or the fact that Ilya was nearly asleep or if he's just not making sense at all.

"Everyone would know. Not just your family but everyone, everyone Shane."

"I know. But it's Mila. It's you. We could be together, all the time," Shane says and it's scary and his heart is racing but fuck... he wants this. He wants them to be as - no, more - important than where they play and who they play for.

"But Ottawa is," Ilya grimaces like he's smelled something bad and yeah, Shane gets it.

"They're shit, yeah. I know. But, it was so good playing with you at all stars? Like, imagine if we did that all the time?" He's sitting up more now, searching Ilya's face for some sign that he hears what Shane is saying under all these words.

Ilya looks away though, hiding his eyes. "Is not.. is not possible."

Shane reaches for Ilya again, grips his chin with his forefinger and thumb and tilts Ilya's face back toward him. "It could be. If it's too hard to work out now, my contract runs out in two years. I could ask for Ottawa. We don't need all the money, we've both got enough," He pauses, giving time for Ilya to catch up. "I just want to play hockey with you. I want to be with you."

Ilya is quiet. Searching Shane's face for a moment that feels too long. Too stretched out. It makes the beat of Shane's heart speed up.

"You think all these thoughts instead of us resting?"

Shane feels his cheeks heat up. He had thought he'd been pretty quiet while they'd been lying there. He hadn't even jiggled his toes. "Well yeah, I think a lot about you. About us. I don't want to wait to be with you anymore."

He hears the catch in Ilya's words, something Russian he keeps repeating as he shifts his body over Shane's covers him up and kisses his chest over his heart, his neck and both

cheeks. There's a wetness to his eyes when he finally looks into Shane's own.

"I love you."

Shane's almost certain his heart actually might stop.

"I mean-"

"No," Shane interrupts, cups Ilya's face in his hands from where he'd had around Ilya's shoulders holding him close. "I love you, too. I love you so fucking much."

He kisses Ilya everywhere then. Kisses the wetness from his cheeks. The wiry hair of his brow as Ilya leans on him, his hands holding onto Shane so tightly.

//

Shane wakes up with the sunrise to Ilya's mouth at his neck. Ilya's cool hand slides between his thighs.

He moans and turns, gets his hand in Ilya's hair and tugs so he can kiss Ilya on the mouth. It's deep and dirty Shane wants.

Ilya's hand curled around their dicks, shifting his hips so there's a slide of skin on skin. Fuck.

"Just think," Ilya says, his heated breath at Shane's ear where he's kissed and nipped at Shane's skin to get there. "We could have this all the time."

"Oh god," Shane moans, turns his head into Ilya's touch and sucks on his thumb.

Ilya feels so good on top of him, around him, their cocks pressed together tight in Ilya's hold. Shane wraps his arm around Ilya and gets a hand on his ass, squeezing and pulling him in.

"It'll happen. For us. We have to try," Shane says, lips brushing Ilya's before Ilya dives in for another deep kiss. Brushes away the curls that had fallen over Ilya's eyes.

"I will need to thank your mother."

Shane stops what he's doing fast and leans back. "Dude,"

That crooked smile of Ilya's is right there in front of Shane and why did he have to fall in love with such a fucking asshole?

"Please stop talking about my mom when your hand is on my cock."

Ilya laughs and laughs until the laughter and chirps fade into moans and first names and nothing else.

//

"I'm telling you it's Scott Hunter's year!"

Shane's mom calls from where she's bringing in popcorn from the kitchen.

"You keep saying this, Mom. Do you have a bet on this or something? I don't think that's allowed."

Ilya looks up from where he's sat on the floor with Mila, trying to get her to hold one of Shane's old sticks from when he was four. It's nearly twice her size but between Ilya and Shane's mother? They'll probably have her in skates and shooting before she's even toilet-trained.

"I have money on Hunter. He is old. He deserves maybe at least one Cup."

Shane's dad comes in after his mother, hands Ilya a beer, then Shane before setting up in his usual armchair. "Is that a thing you can do? Not that you boys should get into gambling,"

Shane's eyes widen as he looks at Ilya who just shrugs with a deflective laugh. "Well, technically we play so no. Insider trading,"

His dad nods like this makes sense and Shane kicks a foot at Ilya.

Ilya just grabs at Shane's toes and squeezes before he has to let go quickly, catching the stick Mila was about to whack him in the head with instead.

"I thought you always said no hockey inside the house?" Shane whines at his mom as she curls up on the other end of the sofa, popcorn bowl in her lap.

"Eh, it's only one little stick." His mom waves him off.

"She nearly took out your lamp and that weird glass bowl thing you had on the table!"

"How else is she supposed to learn?" Shane's mom stares at him eyes wide, like Shane's making a big deal out of nothing.

"Well, I just don't think it's fair." Shane huffs, crossing his arms.

"Such a baby," Ilya mouths at him looking overly happy with the conversation around him. "Is time for her bed anyway."

"Don't be too long," Shane says when Ilya brings Mila over for him to kiss goodnight. "Third period is about to start."

Ilya nods, presses his own lips to Shane's brow. "Night night, Papa."

Then it's Shane's mom's turn for her Mila kiss and a goodnight Nana and Shane's Dad with a goodnight PopPop. They left her with Shane's parents for twenty-four hours and when they brought her back she already had two new words. That and poop but Shane is pretty sure he has Ilya to thank for that one.

Ilya disappears and he's back in time for the last two minutes of the clock winding down. Shane's mom keeps jumping up and down from her seat with bad calls and penalties so Ilya has taken up a perch leaning over the back of the sofa. His arms wrap over Shane's shoulders

so he can shovel popcorn from the bowl in Shane's lap into his mouth. Shane might have had to rescue it early on in the piece before his mom lost the whole thing when Hunter scored a goal.

"I told you playing sticks with her inside this late would wind her up," Shane says when Ilya presses his buttery lips to Shane's cheek after Shane had held the bowl up higher, for Ilya to scrape the last few pieces out.

"But worth it. Now boring game is nearly done."

"You going to thank Scott for the boring game when he's done?" Shane says and yelps when Ilya pinches his nipple through his shirt.

"Ilya!"

"You know I only like one boring hockey player," Ilya whispers in Shane's ear as the clock on the television starts counting down the seconds to the final horn.

"Like?"

"Я люблю тебя больше всех," Ilya says with heat and the added touch of his mouth and teeth teasing Shane's earlobe.

That shouldn't be hot. That shouldn't be making Shane thankful for the bowl in his lap.

But it does.

"And there you have it, 82 regular season games and 23 playoff performances and the New York Admirals have it! Your 2017 champions!"

"I told you," Shane's mom says sounding incredibly impressed with herself and Shane's dad reaches over and pats her knee.

"Witch. I told you, Shane."

"Oh David," Shane's mom hits his dad with one of the throw pillows.

"What is he doing?" Ilya says from behind Shane and he stops staring at his parents to focus on the television.

"Don't they let their families in through the tunnel like we did?" Shane's dad asks.

"The families are already out there," Shane answers, still focused on where Scott is bringing some guy over the boards and out onto the ice.

"Maybe it's a friend he didn't know could make it?" His mom adds and well... Shane's never held hands with a friend like that. He's only just started holding Ilya's hand.

"Holy shit," Ilya says as Scott turns and looks at this much shorter, dark-haired man and kisses him.

Kisses this guy on centre ice.

//

ILYA

A day later, Shane gets his mom to send him the photo she took of all three of them together sitting around the fire they had in Shane's yard. Shane and Ilya sat close, Mila between them, curls wild where she's looking up at both her dads. Shane's arm is around Ily's shoulder, his fingers playing with the curls of Ilya's hair. You can't really see Mila's face, but you can see how Shane and Ilya are looking at each other. They look like a family. They look so in love.

Shane's typing away and Ilya's watching, blinking away tears as they form in his eyes.

"This okay?" Shane says, twisting up to look at Ilya where he's curled himself in his usual position under Ilya's shoulder, head on Ilya's chest.

Ilya nods. "Give me moment. We post at the same time."

Shane lifts his face, and Ilya kisses him because he can't not.

*@ShaneHollander: @irozanov81 Congrats from our family to @ScottHunterOfficial
#loveisloveisloveislove*

End Notes

I'm going to TRY and be good and post often and I promise this won't just sit there and gather dust because the whole thing is plotted out.

Thanks to my E and my B for indulging my many questions and to S for all our many MANY rewatches of 1-5 and 5 and 5 and 5 and 5...

(Lighter clicks)

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