

To Be Cared For

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To Be Cared For

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Summary

It's Ilya and Shane's first Christmas together as an actual couple, and Ilya is a bit nervous to spend it with Shane's family. Of course, when he wakes up sick a few days before the holiday, that won't do. He can't ruin Christmas.

Or, Ilya learns what it means to be cared for.

Notes

Hello! I, like everyone else, am utterly obsessed with Heated Rivalry. I read Game Changers before the shows came out but I can't get these boys out of my head. This little fic came to mind this week and I had to get it out there. I'm so obsessed with the fics I've read where Ilya and Yuna bond and she shows him that he can let them in, that they want to take care of him. So I'm adding my own idea to that canon. This takes place after Heated Rivalry, their first Christmas together.

Chapter 1: December 22- Ilya

Ilya woke up with a groan, not knowing at first where he was. He blinked, making sense of his surroundings. Ah yes. He was at the cottage, having arrived the previous night. His last game was a day earlier than Shane's, so it didn't make sense to wait to travel.

They were spending their first Christmas together as an actual couple, and Ilya had been thrilled at the prospect of a few quiet days with Shane. He was a bit nervous to spend time with David and Yuna, but he knew that came with the Christmas part of this trip. Shane's family was close and Ilya had heard all about their traditions. It felt strange to be pulled into this sort of festive dynamic when Christmas had just been another day to him for most of his life, but he figured he could swallow down any discomfort. He was getting to spend nearly a week uninterrupted with Shane, and he wouldn't be alone with them or anything. He could figure it out and be normal, act like he understood their Christmas things. It would be fine.

At the moment, though, something felt off.

Ilya stretched, flinching at the way his muscles screamed in protest. His head was pounding and it felt like knives stabbing his throat when he swallowed. He had felt unusually tired the night before but figured it was due to the long travel day. He pushed himself to sit up and had to lean his head back against the wall when his vision swam and the room seemed to tilt.

Fuck.

He couldn't be sick. He never got sick.

Fuck.

This was not happening. He couldn't ruin Christmas by being sick. It was their first Christmas, and he knew Shane had high expectations for all of the things they'd do together.

The only reasonable option was to completely ignore how he was feeling and force himself to be normal. He fumbled through a shower, leaning on the wall multiple times for support when he got dizzy. He somehow managed to brush his teeth without vomiting or passing out, and clumsily pulled on some sweats before making his way to the couch and collapsing into the cushions.

He closed his eyes, letting out a groan while he rubbed his temples. He belatedly realized that he probably should have grabbed his phone and some water before he laid down, but he couldn't muster the energy to get back up. That was a later problem. For the moment, he was just proud of himself for getting to the couch without passing out.

This whole ignoring being sick thing wasn't working out so well if he couldn't even manage to get back upstairs to get his phone. Shane had probably texted him, he would be annoyed that Ilya didn't respond right away. But it was probably good, because Ilya needed to not be sick when he talked to Shane. And at the moment he probably couldn't fake it.

Sleep, that's what he needed. A nap would make him feel better. He was probably just tired from the long string of games and busy travel. He closed his eyes, drifting off immediately.

He was halfway between asleep and awake, his body floating in a hazy pool when a loud sound yanked Ilya to full consciousness. His eyes flew open and he pushed to sit up, registering the sound that woke him was someone banging on the door.

There were only two people it could be, and he knew he couldn't ignore them. Shane knew he was here, so therefore his parents knew. And David and Yuna knew not to barge in anymore after what David witnessed this past summer. So if Ilya didn't answer, they'd call Shane, and then it would become a whole thing. Fuck, he needed to get up.

He had a tentative alliance with Shane's parents, they were warm and kind, but Ilya didn't quite feel comfortable with them. It had been so long since he had been around an older adult who was a good parent, so it felt strange to interact and understand them. He knew they had good intentions, but part of him just felt that he was a burden, an inconvenience they had to tolerate because Shane loved him. They probably wished Shane was with anyone else but him, and he couldn't shake that feeling out of his head.

The knocking continued and Ilya took several attempts to get to his feet, his vision swimming as he braced a hand on the couch arm before he slowly walked to the door, putting a hand against the wall several times to keep himself from falling over. "Coming," he croaked as he got closer, realizing when he heard his strained and hoarse voice that there was no way David or Yuna heard him.

He fumbled with the lock, probably leaning on the door a bit too much before he managed to pull it open to find Yuna Hollander in front of him, her hand poised to knock again.

"Sorry," Ilya managed, his voice still grating and hoarse. He cleared his throat, attempting to stifle the cough that was bubbling up. Fuck, where did that feeling come from? He didn't wake up with a cough. This was going to be very hard to hide.

"Hello," Yuna replied, moving to come in the door when Ilya stepped aside. "I tried to call, but you didn't answer. I was just checking in and also needed to snag a few ingredients for this morning, and I don't have time to go to the store."

Yuna appeared to be on a mission and Ilya felt some small relief that perhaps she didn't notice him wincing as he swallowed- or him leaning on the wall to keep himself from toppling over before he shakily followed her. He was going to offer to help her, but he was getting really dizzy again, so he decided to move to one of the barstools that overlooked Shane's spacious, modern kitchen.

"Ah, I left my phone upstairs, sorry," he replied as he sank into the seat. Fuck, he needed water. He was definitely going to cough. He tried to hold it in but it tore out of him, sudden and violent. He inwardly cursed his traitorous body. He leaned away from Yuna, coughing

into the crook of his elbow, his eyes watering at the effort. He tried not to fold in on himself but fuck it hurt. It felt like an eternity, but was likely only a few seconds before he stopped. “Choked,” he managed, his voice sounding worse than before, if that was even possible. He blinked back the tears in his eyes and looked up at Shane’s mother, who was standing in the kitchen with her arms crossed.

“Ilya, are you feeling okay?” she asked, tilting her head while clearly assessing him. He tried to sit up straighter but every movement was sending pain shooting down his body, so he couldn’t hide the grimace.

“I am fine,” he responded. “Just, tired. Many games, long day of travel.”

Yuna lowered her eyes at him, but didn’t immediately speak. “Go sit on the couch then. Rest. I won’t be long and I’ll be out of your hair.”

Ilya didn’t quite understand the phrase, but he didn’t bother to ask. He moved to get off the barstool and had to catch himself on the bar when he saw spots in his vision again. His arms were shaking and he felt suddenly clammy and weird. His mind was jumbled and he tried to hold himself up and blink to clear his vision, willing this feeling to go away.

Hands suddenly were on his arms, steadying him. “I’ve got you honey,” Yuna said softly. Ilya hung his head in shame as she guided him the few steps to the couch, where he collapsed in a heap, leaning his head back against the cushions with a groan. He couldn’t hide it, this was becoming a disaster. He rubbed his face, then lifted his head to see Yuna looking at him, her expression pensive. “You are not fine, Ilya. You’re clearly not well.”

“No, I am-” Ilya started to protest but was cut off by another cough. Fuck, it hurt. He folded forward, trying to stifle the coughs but failing miserably. It took ages and his chest hurt when he was done, and his nose and eyes were running in an embarrassing fashion.

“Here,” he looked up to see Yuna holding out a tissue, which he took with shaking hands. His whole plan to pretend like he was not sick was crumbling in spectacular fashion. Fucking body, failing him at the worst possible time.

Yuna continued to study him as he wiped his nose and eyes. It made Ilya shift uncomfortably on the couch. “You’re coming with me,” she finally said, her hands on her hips.

“What?” Ilya rasped, his throat still so raw from the embarrassing coughing fit. He tried to stifle another cough, but his body had other plans. This time he couldn’t even hide the groan that involuntarily fell from his lips when he finished coughing. He really felt awful.

“You’re coming with me. You need someone to look after you, and I have too much prep for Christmas to spend the day with you here.” Ilya opened his mouth to protest, but she cut him off before he could speak, seemingly ignoring the look of defiance on his face. “Where’s your bag? You haven’t unpacked yet, have you?”

Ilya sighed. “I am fine, Mrs. Hollander.”

“Yuna,” she replied, giving Ilya a look that reminded him she had told him multiple times to call her by her first name.

“Yuna. I am okay, you don’t, I can be here. Is fine.” Fuck, English was getting harder. His head was truly pounding and he felt so wrung out. Everything hurt.

“Have you taken something for your fever?”

“I don’t, I do not have fever.”

Ilya could see Yuna suppress an eye roll as she marched towards him, putting her hand on his forehead. “Ilya, honey, you’re burning up. I could see how flushed you are from across the room.”

He closed his eyes, trying to suppress a shudder. He was so cold. “Is fine.”

“I’m not taking no for an answer, Ilya.” Her tone of voice certainly left no argument. And Ilya truly had zero energy to push back. He could ignore her, stay on the couch and wallow in his discomfort, or he could give in. And a tiny part of him found the prospect of someone taking care of him appealing. He refused to go down the path of thinking of the last time he had been cared for by a parent- or really anyone, pushing the thought aside before it made him break down completely. Yuna didn’t need to see that.

“Bag is upstairs,” he mumbled, closing his eyes.

He listened to Yuna walk away, his mind unfocused. It felt like a second had passed before she was back, guiding him to the car. He couldn’t muster the energy to say a word, he just nodded when she asked him if he was ready and shook his head when she asked if he felt nauseous at all. He just wanted to lie down, but he wasn’t quite ready to fully admit that he was really ill.

The car ride passed in a blur and before Ilya had a chance to register what was happening they pulled up to the Hollander’s lake home. Ilya looked the window to see David waiting on the porch, no doubt at the prompting of his wife. Ilya felt a pang of shame that not only was he putting Yuna out, now David had to help him too.

Yuna had David help Ilya inside and to the guest room, the other man hovering a bit awkwardly as Ilya slowly walked up the stairs. David guided him into the room, putting Ilya’s bag down on a chair and pointing to the bed. “Yuna is getting you some water and medicine, just rest for now, okay?”

Ilya just nodded, pulling the surgical mask off he insisted on wearing in the car as he crawled under the covers. The bed was soft and warm, and Ilya found he couldn’t keep up with any sort of appearances at the moment. He let his eyes close, letting out a shuddered breath as he tried to keep from coughing. He was sure Yuna would be up in a few minutes for something, but sleep pulled at him quickly.

“Ilya,”

The sound of his name dragged him out of his slumber, but Ilya didn't want to wake up. Sleep meant nothing hurt, and consciousness reminded him that his head, throat, and really his entire fucking body were in agony. He groaned, turning his head to bury it in the pillow.

“Ilya, honey, you need to wake up. Just for a minute.”

Yuna's voice reminded him that he was in their house and he needed to at least be a little compliant. He shakily rolled over, looking over at Yuna. She looked concerned and had a thermometer in her hand.

“There you are,” she said softly. “I've got some medicine for you to take, but let's get your temperature first.” At Ilya's nod, she put the thermometer to his forehead. It only took a second for it to beep and she let out a sympathetic sound. “39.1, quite a fever. Sit up, let's see if we can get it to come down a bit.”

It took a lot of effort on his part, but Ilya managed to push himself to a half seated position, taking the pills and water with trembling hands. He handed her the water once he drank enough to her liking, and he leaned his head back on the headboard. Fuck, he really felt awful, and it seemed to be getting worse. He turned his head away to cough, letting out a pathetic whimper when it subsided. He needed to get his shit together.

“You may have the flu,” Yuna observed after Ilya finished coughing. “With the fever and how that cough sounds, I wouldn't be surprised. Can you tell me what's hurting?”

Ilya felt the bed shift as she sat on the edge, and he was hit with the realization that he may make Yuna sick with all the time she's spending with him. “You'll get sick,” he mumbled, then coughed again. Shane would be so mad at him if he got Yuna sick and ruined Christmas for everyone. He didn't need to be a worse burden, he already was causing enough problems by messing up her day, making her take care of him. If she got sick that would really ruin everything. He felt a pang of guilt, that default feeling he got anytime he felt like someone had to do something for him. Years of being alone to fend for himself and being shamed by his father anytime he made a mistake would do that to a person, and even though deep down he knew this wasn't his fault, he couldn't shake the feeling.

Yuna placed a comforting hand on his back. “I'm not worried about that, dear. How does your chest feel? We may need to get you to a doctor if you get any worse.”

“No, no doctors. Is fine,” Ilya mumbled, turning his head back to Yuna, who somehow had a cool cloth in her possession that he didn't notice before. She helped him shift to lay back down and placed it on his forehead with a sigh.

“You're not fine, Ilya. You are sick. And you need to tell me if you feel any worse, okay? Or if your chest feels tight.”

Ilya nodded faintly, feeling his eyes start to close. He couldn't stay awake. "Sorry, English is, is hard now."

"It's okay. Just rest, I'll bring you some soup and check on you later."

The rest of the day passed in a blur of exhaustion, pain and coughing for Ilya. It seemed that when he finally admitted to himself that he wasn't well, his body truly gave out. Or maybe that's just how his illness was going to go. At some point Yuna brought him soup, coaxing him to take a few bites before he fell back asleep. He vaguely remembered going to the bathroom, coughing so badly he threw up, then being half carried back to bed by David. These events hazily floated back to him as he woke up, his mind somewhat coherent, his legs tangled in the sheets and his body sticky with dried sweat. The room was dark, the sun having set at some point, and he fumbled for his phone on the bedside table. It was 7pm, and he realized with alarm that he slept through the entire day without remembering much. His phone was plugged in, which Yuna or David must have done at some point. He rolled over, unlocking the screen to see a barrage of notifications flood in, all of them from Shane.

There were 10 missed calls and a long line of text messages, each getting more and more frantic.

'Hope you slept well. Miss you already.'

'Have early practice but will call you as soon as we are done.'

'You sleeping in? That's unlike you.'

'Ugh, I don't want to go to practice. I just want to be fucked by you.'

'No response to that one even? Are you ignoring me?'

'Ilya, are you okay? Why aren't you answering?'

'If you don't pick up or answer me in the next 15 minutes I'm calling mom.'

'I'm serious, Ilya. I'm calling her. Please answer.'

'You're sick? And you let my mom drag you back to their house? Wow.'

'And of course you let your phone die. You nearly gave me a fucking heart attack.'

'Mom insists you're okay and she's got it. I was about to bail on the game.'

'Just, text me when you can. Part of me doesn't believe her when she says you're okay. This isn't like you.'

'Game is about to start. Fuck, Ilya, I really hope you're okay. I'll get there as soon as I can tomorrow.'

Ilya smiled, feeling a little twinge of both guilt and warmth at the string of words. He realized that his head felt a bit better and he wasn't so cold. Maybe the medicine was working. Shane was in the middle of the game at this point, but Ilya typed up a text to hopefully reassure him.

'Am fine. Yuna is good nurse. Will be asleep when you finish though. I miss you.'

He put the phone down, rubbing his eyes. He fumbled for the cord to turn the lamp on, squinting as the light illuminated the room. There was a bottle of water and a bottle of gatorade on the table, the thermometer between them. He noticed a box of tissues and a few boxes of medication cluttered on the table as well. He took the water and drank a bit, and laid back down, rubbing the bridge of his nose between two fingers.

There was a soft knock on the door, then Yuna poked her head in. She smiled when she saw Ilya was awake. "I thought I heard movement up here," she said as she approached the bed. "How are you feeling?"

"Okay," Ilya responded, clearing his throat after he heard how hoarse and weak his voice sounded.

Yuna didn't speak right away, instead taking the thermometer and placing it on Ilya's forehead again. At the beep, she frowned. "Still a fever, but a little lower than earlier. You had us a bit worried there this afternoon."

"Sorry," Ilya mumbled, swallowing and trying to hold back a sound of pain. God, his throat really hurt.

"No need to be sorry. I'm just glad to see you awake," Yuna replied. "It would be good for you to eat something, but you also need sleep. Up to you if you think you can stomach any food right now."

Ilya thought for a moment. "I think sleep," he said finally. "Am tired."

Yuna nodded, then handed him the gatorade. "Let's at least keep you from getting dehydrated."

He dutifully drank the rest of the gatorade, trying not to wince at the lingering pain that was becoming more prevalent the longer he was awake. Yuna seemed satisfied and took the empty bottle from him as he moved to lay back down.

"Goodnight, Ilya. If you need anything at all, come get us or call out, okay? Our bedroom is just across the hall."

Ilya rolled over to face Yuna, giving her a small nod. "Thank you," he whispered as he let his eyes fall closed.

"Of course, dear," Yuna replied, then there was a pause before Ilya felt her hand brush gently in his curls. "Sleep. Hopefully you'll feel better tomorrow, and Shane should be here by lunchtime."

He hummed a response, feeling sick and tired but also cared for, which felt strange and, he found he could admit, actually quite wonderful.

Chapter 2: December 23- Yuna

Chapter Summary

Yuna Hollander always figured Ilya Rozanov was standoffish because that was just who he was. But a sick Ilya in their home is showing her that perhaps that's not the case.

Chapter Notes

Thank you so much for your kind words for the first chapter. Back with Yuna's POV today, and one more chapter tomorrow.

Yuna checked her watch as she approached the guest room. It was after 9 and Ilya had been asleep for nearly 14 hours. She wanted to make sure he rested well but he also needed to stay hydrated and certainly needed another dose of ibuprofen to keep his fever under control.

She kept his door cracked last night to make sure she heard him if he needed anything, so she pushed it open to peek in the room.

Ilya was sound asleep, his mouth slightly open, his breathy exhales punctuated by small snores. His hair was mussed and sticking up in every direction, but his face was relaxed in sleep and he looked to be pain free. Yuna breathed out a sigh of relief and realized that she didn't want to wake him just yet if he was sleeping so peacefully. Better to let him sleep a little longer. She had already spoken to Shane, who was incredibly anxious about Ilya being sick. She could tell he didn't quite believe her when she said he was okay, just not feeling well, but hopefully he would see for himself shortly. The weather was looking dicey, though, so it was possible his flight would be delayed. She hoped for his sake it wasn't, she knew how anxious Shane got when plans went awry.

She stayed close, busying herself with preparing Shane's old room in case he decided to sleep there instead of with Ilya- which was highly unlikely, but you never know. After a few minutes, she heard some rustling and coughing, which was her cue to go back to Ilya.

She found him propped up on one elbow, leaning over to the side as he coughed into his other arm. She could see his body trembling as he coughed, and she winced in sympathy at the sound of them. If he got any worse today, an urgent care visit was certainly in order.

She approached the bed, rubbing his back as he finished, then helped him lay back down. His chest was heaving and he had tears in his eyes that he hurriedly wiped away when he noticed her next to him.

“Good morning,” Yuna said softly, reaching over to feel his forehead. “How are you feeling? That was certainly not a fun way to wake up.”

“Mmm,” Ilya mumbled, rubbing his eyes. “I am okay.”

Yuna let out a sigh, swallowing her frustration. Something was keeping him from telling her the truth, and she wasn’t sure if it was pure stubbornness or something else. “Ilya, you really aren’t. How about we cut the crap and you be honest, hmm? Otherwise David and I will drag you to the ER so they can tell all of us how sick you are.”

Ilya cracked an eye open, no doubt appraising her. He seemed to acquiesce as he let out a defeated sigh. “Hollanders are stubborn,” he mumbled.

“Yes, yes we are,” Yuna agreed, reaching over for the thermometer. She leveled it on his forehead and watched for the reading, which was 38.5. Not great, but not as high as the previous day. “You still have a fever. Now, I’ll ask again. How are you feeling?”

Ilya squinted up at her, and she passed him one of her looks that was clear she wasn’t backing down. He blew out a breath. “Tired, sore, cold,” he admitted. “Coughing hurts chest, throat hurts, head hurts.” He averted his gaze, and the look on his face told Yuna that he was very uncomfortable being honest at the moment.

She patted his shoulder. “Thank you for telling me. Is your chest hurting when you don’t cough?” He shook his head. “Good, that’s good at least. I’m sorry you’re so miserable, dear. I don’t like the sound of that cough either, we need to get some medicine in you to help.” Ilya doesn’t respond, but he has moved to look at her again, so she continues. “I’ve got some oatmeal, which should be okay for your throat. It’s like kasha, I think?” Ilya nodded and passed her a small smile. “So I’ll make that for you with some tea, then hopefully you can get a shower and take some medicine to help, okay? How do you like your oatmeal?”

“Bit of sugar, some butter,” Ilya rasped. His voice sounded terrible and Yuna winced in sympathy, and then nodded before leaving the room to prepare his breakfast.

Ilya seemed to be feeling a bit better after some food and medicine, and while he took a shower Yuna changed the sheets in the bed and freshened his water. She left the room when the water turned off, but stayed close in case Ilya needed her or David’s help. She certainly hoped he wouldn’t, he seemed so uncomfortable at the prospect of being there, but she knew she made the right decision yesterday by insisting he come back to their home. He was terribly ill and didn’t need to be alone. The previous afternoon he was so out of it, she doubted he remembered much, but David and her were very close to taking him to the hospital until his fever started to go down with medicine. He was too sick to protest at the

time, which was a bit disconcerting. She was glad it didn't appear to be the case at the moment.

Shane had mentioned a few things about Ilya's childhood. His mother died when he was young and from what she gathered from her son, his father had not been very supportive or kind. Shane never mentioned any other family. It was quite possible he didn't have anyone to care for him when he was younger. Perhaps that was why he was resistant to being fussed over.

After a few minutes, she walks down the hall to gently tap on Ilya's door. "You okay in there? Can I come in?" At his agreement, she opened the door to find him in fresh clothes, sitting on the edge of the bed.

"Sorry to be a broken record, but how are you feeling?" she asked as she entered the room.

He shrugged. "Okay. Not so cold or sore now." He paused. "Shane called when I was in shower, I think I will call him back then sleep more."

She nodded. "Sounds like a good plan. I am sure he wants to talk to you."

Yuna left as Ilya shifted to lean against the headboard, his phone in hand. She heard the low murmur of his voice for a few minutes, the conversation punctuated by painful sounding coughs. Shane was definitely going to worry. The conversation didn't last long and a few minutes later she passed by the open guest room door to see Ilya asleep on top of the covers, his body curled up in a ball. It was hard to tell if he was shivering, so she took a chenille throw off the armchair in the room and put it on top of him, hoping it would keep him warm enough.

Her phone buzzed in her pocket with a text message from Shane.

'Flight is delayed, apparently people in this city don't know how to deal with snow. Hoping to take off in a couple hours.'

Yuna typed a response. *'I'm sorry, that's frustrating. Things are fine here, Ilya is sleeping.'*

'Don't you think he needs to go to the doctor? His cough sounds awful.'

'His breathing is fine. Probably a virus, just needs to run its course. I promise we are taking care of him. If he gets any worse we'll get him to urgent care.'

Shane typed for a long time, which probably meant he was overthinking what to say. She was used to this. *'I know you are, I just want to make sure he's okay.'*

'I promise I'll keep you updated. He's resting, which is the best thing.'

Yuna was putting the finishing touches on some miso soup for Ilya, hoping he'd enjoy this favorite sick day food of Shane's, when she heard him making his way downstairs.

"Hi there," she said as he rounded the corner. He looked a bit better than earlier but was still walking gingerly, putting his hand on the wall once as if to steady himself. She didn't immediately rush to him, guessing that he wanted a bit of space.

"Is okay if I sit for a bit?" Ilya asked. "I was tired of the bed."

"Of course. Your timing is perfect, actually. Sit down at the stool there, I have some soup for you."

Ilya eased himself into the bar stool, propping his head up with one hand while Yuna spooned some soup into a bowl for him and added a piece of fresh bread on the side. "This is Shane's favorite soup when he's sick, Miso with vegetables," she explained as she put the bowl in front of him. "But if you don't like it, I can make you something else, that's not a problem."

Ilya picked up the spoon and began to eat, and Yuna busied herself with putting ingredients away so he wouldn't think she was watching him. Though, she was hoping he liked it and didn't want him to eat it on her account. She glanced over at him occasionally but didn't speak.

"Is very good," Ilya said when he caught her glancing her way. "You can send me the recipe so I can make for Shane someday?"

Yuna's heart swelled at his thoughtfulness. "Of course," she said. "And you'll have to tell me your favorite comfort foods for the future, so David and I can be sure to have them on hand."

Ilya smiled over at her and gave her a small nod.

David came in from some errands, greeting them both and patting Ilya on the shoulder before he went into the dining room to work on his current puzzle. Ilya seemed to be taking his time with the soup, so Yuna headed upstairs to continue the laundry. After a few moments, she heard a crash, and rushed down the stairs to find David steadying Ilya in the kitchen. The younger man's head was hanging, one hand braced on the counter. There was a broken glass on the floor.

"What happened?" Yuna asked as she hurried into the room.

"Found this one trying to do dishes," David said, keeping his grip on Ilya's arms. "Let's get you to the couch, son."

Yuna noticed Ilya stiffen at David's last word. She brushed it off to consider later, getting down to the task at hand. "Yes, to the couch. I'll get this cleaned up."

"I'm sorry," Ilya mumbled, his voice barely audible.

"Nonsense, it's fine," Yuna replied.

She watched David gently guide Ilya into the living room, then went about cleaning up the shards of glass in the kitchen. David came back and began cleaning the dishes, which gave Yuna the chance to go check on Ilya. At the sound of him coughing, she decided to quickly make him a cup of tea, grabbing an herbal blend that would hopefully soothe his throat. She stirred in a generous spoonful of honey before briskly walking to the younger man.

He was lying on his side on the couch, staring straight ahead. He looked so sad and worried, Yuna felt a pang in her chest at the look of devastation on his face.

“Hey,” she said softly as she sat down on the coffee table in front of him, placing the mug next to her. “You okay? I brought you some tea.”

Ilya nodded. “Thank you.” He pushed himself up to a seated position and took the mug with trembling hands. “I’m sorry about glass,” he whispered.

“Oh Ilya, we aren’t worried about a glass. We have plenty. But I am worried about you. Why were you trying to do dishes?”

Ilya took a tentative sip of the tea before he spoke. “I wanted, I need to help. You helped me so much, so I do the dishes,” his words were slightly slurred, no doubt from how tired he was. There was a thread of sadness woven throughout them, unspoken things that weren’t hard to pick up on.

“Did you start to feel sick?” Yuna asked.

Ilya nodded. “Dizzy,” he admitted, “Shaking,” he swallowed. “I do not like this.”

“I know, honey. It’s awful being sick, especially this time of year. It’s miserable.”

Ilya shook his head. “No. I mean, yes, being sick, is terrible. But being... um, burden, I think. Is worse.”

Yuna froze. Is that what he thought? What on earth would possess Ilya to feel like a burden? “Oh Ilya,” she said softly. “That’s the last thing you are.”

Ilya blinked a few times, seeming to study the tea in front of him. “Tea is good,” he said simply. “Thank you.”

“Of course,” Yuna replied, noticing the change of subject. She moved to sit on the other side of the couch, sensing that Ilya, while he didn’t want to talk further, could use some company.

They sat in silence for a few moments before Yuna spoke up again, looking at the blank television screen.

“My grandmother died when my mother was a small child. She didn’t talk about it much, but I always sensed that she was left alone for most of her childhood. She didn’t have a parent to care for her when she was hurt or sick, didn’t have someone cheering her on during those big milestones. It was in a different time and I know parenting was different in Japan, but I could always sense her sadness. She seemed guarded, wouldn’t let people in.”

She saw Ilya stiffen out of the corner of her eye, but he didn't stop her. He drank some more tea and Yuna turned her body to face him. Something in her gut told her this was the right choice, but she felt a wave of apprehension at his body language. Everything within her told her that Ilya needed to hear this- and he needed to hear this from her.

"She tried, and she learned how to love. She was a good mother. But I remember thinking, when I became a mother myself, that the pain she must have felt as a child was unacceptable. No one should be left alone, especially a child. I can't even fathom it. And I've made an effort to ensure other people don't feel the way my mother felt over the years."

"I am sorry for her," Ilya said softly.

"Me too," Yuna responded, then considered her next words. She was never one to hesitate to speak her mind, but she also didn't want to overstep. "I feel for you too, Ilya. I feel like, with what little I know, that maybe you experienced something similar."

Ilya looked up at her from where he was studying his mug, then looked back down at his hands before he spoke. "She was so good at showing me love. I would get sick, and she was there. She made me soup, she held me in her lap. She was the best," he said softly. "But she was sad. And one day she was too sad," he swallowed. "And then, I was alone."

Yuna didn't hesitate to move towards him as she saw his hands begin to shake and he let out a choked sob. She wrapped an arm around his broad shoulders, pulling him towards her. And for once, she saw his body relax and not stiffen at her approach. He put his head on her shoulder, his tears falling freely. She whispered soothing words as he cried, his fingers gripping the fabric of her sweater as she held him.

"I know, honey. Let it out. I'm here," she whispered, rocking him back and forth. They stayed like that for several minutes, Ilya sniffing through his tears and Yuna holding him, whispering comfort. David walked in the room at some point and Yuna was able to mouth for him to get some tissues, which she gently handed to Ilya when his sobs began to slow.

Her heart felt so broken for the young man in her arms. No doubt this was both due to how sick he felt and years of pent up loneliness and grief. And the fact that no one else had thought to step in and support him for all of those years felt overwhelmingly sad. She let out a deep breath as Ilya lifted his head, choosing not to dwell on it so she could support him in that moment.

"I am sorry," Ilya rasped as his eyes met hers.

"Ilya, honey." Yuna began, her tone firm. "No more sorrys. None. You have nothing, and I mean nothing, to be sorry for. It is okay to feel sad, it is okay to be sick, and it's okay to not be okay. We are here for you, all of the Hollanders. You're family."

Ilya blinked a few times, tears coming to his eyes again. "Okay," he gave her a watery smile. He hastily wiped his eyes again. "I think I ruin your sweater though." He pointed to her damp shoulder.

Yuna let out a small laugh of relief at his grin. "Oh this old thing, it's fine."

“You are a good mom, Yuna. I know why Shane is so kind.” The genuine look on Ilya’s face brought tears to Yuna’s eyes and she quickly blinked them away.

“Well, I’d like to think we did a few things right,” she hastily replied. She looked at Ilya’s face, his eyes puffy and red from crying and his fever. “Now, you must be exhausted. Do you want to lay down on the couch for a bit? I can get you the remote?”

Ilya nodded, and Yuna handed him the remote and put a couple of pillows down on the couch. She helped him get settled, placing a blanket over him and grabbing some water to put on the coffee table. When she came back, Ilya had a sports commentary show on, which of course Yuna couldn’t resist because they were recapping the most recent hockey games before the holiday break. She sat down in one of the arm chairs and looked over at Ilya, who gave her a half smile. His eyes were heavy and sure enough, after just a few more minutes she looked over again and he was sound asleep.

His phone was buzzing on the end table, and before Yuna could get to it to silence it, it stopped and hers started immediately on the kitchen counter. She smiled and shook her head as she hurried to grab it, knowing exactly who was calling her.

“Hi honey,” she answered, keeping her voice down as she glanced back over at Ilya.

“It’s fucking delayed again because of the fucking snow. I’m so furious,” Shane grumbled through the phone. “They’re saying 5pm now, which means I probably won’t get there until like eleven. How is he?”

“He’s okay, napping now. Nothing new. Just the fever, cough, and generally feeling miserable. I know he will be happy when you get here.” Yuna chose to not disclose Ilya’s breakdown earlier, deciding it would be best for him to share with Shane if he chose to. She just hoped it would help him open up to her a bit more in the future, to let her and David be his family, especially if he moved to Ottawa.

“At this rate I should have just gotten a car,” Shane complained. “I would be halfway there by now.”

“He’s fine, Shane. He’s not gotten worse, he might be a little bit better today. Try not to stress. We’ve got him.”

She heard a sigh through the phone. “I know, I’m trying. I’ll keep you updated. I’ll be there tonight if I have to fly the fucking plane myself.”

“Travel safe,” she said. “We’ll see you soon.”

After another few hours of sleep, Ilya managed to eat some tomato soup and grilled cheese that evening, joining Yuna and David at their kitchen table. His fever was steady but didn’t seem to be spiking like it had the previous evening, and he seemed a bit more stable as he

made his way upstairs after dinner. He definitely looked disappointed when he found out Shane was delayed again, but didn't argue when Yuna told him that he probably didn't need to wait up. She wasn't sure if his compliance was because they had built some trust that afternoon or he was feeling worse, so she checked his temperature once more after he was settled into bed.

"38.6" she stated as she pulled the covers over Ilya. "It's probably time for more medicine, hopefully it'll help you sleep." She handed over a couple pills. "I'm sure he will be up here as soon as he arrives, which should be soon, I think the flight just landed."

"You will make him sleep in another room, yes?" Ilya mumbled as he put the water down and laid his head down, closing his eyes with a sigh.

Yuna let out a huffed laugh. "I'll advise it, but I doubt he will. You know how he is."

"True," Ilya murmured. He reached his hand out and Yuna took it in her own. "Thank you," he breathed. "For everything."

Yuna smiled down at him and squeezed his hand. "Of course, honey."

True to Shane's prediction, it was nearly 11pm when Yuna looked up from her book at the sound of the door opening. She rose to meet Shane as he hurried into the room. "Hey honey," she said as he approached her for a hug, the expression on his face both frantic and tired.

"How is he?" Shane asked, skipping over a greeting entirely. Yuna could understand his one track mind at the moment. "Fucking delays and bullshit, I'm so frustrated."

"He's okay," Yuna replied. "Nothing has changed. He's sleeping now, convinced him to go to bed early again, though he wanted to wait up."

Shane visibly sagged with relief. "Okay, yeah, good. I'm glad he didn't wait up."

"Sit, Shane. Let me get you some tea before you go up to bed. I'd advise you to sleep in your old room so you don't get sick but I don't think that's going to happen, is it?"

"No way. I'll risk it, I don't care."

Yuna passed him a smile as she walked into the kitchen. She was grateful Shane had found someone who loves him like Ilya did. And she was grateful Ilya had Shane to love him. She turned to meet Shane's eyes as he followed her into the kitchen. "He's had a really hard life," she observed. "I don't think I realized it until today."

"Yeah," Shane said, his voice trailing off.

"I'm not sure he's felt cared for by a parental figure since he was a small child. He was so resistant, didn't want to be a bother. It makes me angry, thinking of what he had to endure."

Yuna paused, blinking back the tears that came to her eyes at the thought of Ilya's broken sobs earlier in the day.

"It's not fair," Shane whispered, his own eyes looking a bit bright as he met hers.

"No, it's not. But we are here now. I think he's starting to realize that."

Shane drank his tea, the two of them sitting in companionable silence. David came down from their bedroom to greet Shane for a few minutes before he went back upstairs to watch television in bed, leaving them alone in the kitchen. Yuna observed her son, his eyes a bit tired and his posture tense. He was carrying a lot, as was Ilya. Coming to terms with their new reality and juggling an actual relationship in secret was no doubt challenging on top of everything else. But at least they had each other.

She realized that she couldn't dwell too much on the loneliness Ilya had felt for most of his life, otherwise it felt paralyzing. She couldn't change the past, but she could certainly make sure Ilya's present and future were filled with love. As she looked over at Shane, smiling as he said goodnight and rushed up the stairs to see the love of his life, she thought about the phrase 'there's no such thing as other people's children.' That mantra had always resonated with her, that while she only had one child, the opportunity to mother others was always there. And she resolved to continue to ensure Ilya felt a mother's love once again.

"I'll take care of him for you," she whispered to what felt like the unseen ghost of Ilya's mother in the kitchen as the clock approached midnight. "I'll take care of your son."

Chapter 3: December 24- Shane

Chapter Summary

It's Christmas Eve, and Shane can't help but worry about his boyfriend.

Chapter Notes

Wow, thank you for your kind words and kudos for this fic! We've come to the last chapter, and I really love how it turned out.

Also, sending hugs to anyone who struggles during the holiday season. I know it can be really hard. I hope you have a Yuna in your life to show you love.

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

The dresser and bedside table in the Hollander's guest room was full of sick day essentials. Shane hadn't noticed the night before, but when he blinked awake Christmas Eve, far too early for a holiday, his eyes first focused on the pills, tissues, thermometer and various drink bottles his mother placed there. It reminded him of what he had walked into yesterday, a very sick boyfriend who was currently curled up next to Shane, his forehead nestled against Shane's shoulder. He was sleeping peacefully, but Shane could feel the heat radiating off of him.

He shifted slightly, hoping he could get up for a moment without waking Ilya, and managed to slide out of the bed to pee and brush his teeth.

The prospect of staying close to Ilya won out over breakfast, so even though it was approaching 7:30 and Shane could hear his parents moving downstairs, he decided to get back in bed and wait for Ilya to wake up. He gently slid back under the covers, reaching for his phone to occupy the time.

A text from his mom was waiting for him, sent about an hour prior. 'Going to give you both some space this morning, but please check his temp when he wakes up and let me know when he's ready for breakfast. Let me know what he wants and what his temp is.'

Shane replied with a thumbs up, then scrolled his instagram feed for a bit before he felt Ilya stir next to him. He hastily put his phone down and turned towards his boyfriend, who was shifting, his eyes fluttering open. He focused on Shane quickly, giving him a sleepy smile.

“You’re here,” Ilya whispered, blinking slowly as he woke up, which Shane thought was the cutest thing in the world.

He leaned over and kissed Ilya’s forehead. “I am. I’m sorry it took me so long to get here. I missed you.”

“Missed you too,” Ilya mumbled as he nestled closer, pressing his forehead against Shane’s thigh and wrapping an arm around him.

“How are you feeling?” Shane asked, running a hand up and down Ilya’s back. “I have strict instructions to take your temperature and get you breakfast soon.”

“Mmm,” Ilya said against his leg.

“You going to answer my question?” Shane kept his hand on Ilya’s back, rubbing soothing circles. He wanted to push up the t-shirt that was keeping him from Ilya’s warm, perfect skin, but settled for stroking along the fabric. Ilya was sick, after all.

“I do not know.”

Shane sighed at the mumbled reply. “Don’t be an asshole.”

Ilya turned his head to look at Shane, shifting his body to lay on his back. “No, I do not know. Maybe better, maybe the same? Not worse, I think.” He paused to cough, turning his head away.

“Oh, okay.” Shane felt a bit sheepish for automatically assuming Ilya was being snarky. He reached over for the thermometer. “Here, let’s do this before my mom texts me again.” He studied it for a second, trying to figure out how it worked.

“Middle button, then push again here,” Ilya instructed, pointing to his forehead.

“She upgraded,” Shane smiled down at Ilya as he got the device working. “Used to be an under the tongue one.” He looked down when it beeped. “38.3.”

“I think that is lower,” Ilya replied, pushing himself to sit up next to Shane. “Yuna would know, I was not awake much yesterday.”

“I’ll ask her. How about breakfast? Then I was thinking we stay in bed for a bit, let you rest. This afternoon I’m sure mom will have cookies to bake and dinner tomorrow to prep. I usually help her, but we can see how you’re feeling.”

“Is good plan,” Ilya said, putting his head on Shane’s shoulder. “I am fine, you should do your traditions.”

Shane kissed the top of Ilya’s head, “We will make our own traditions, too.”

“The only tradition I want is to fuck you twelve times for twelve Christmas days,” Ilya said, his voice more playful but still hoarse and weak. “But maybe next year.”

“Yeah no fucking for you til you’re feeling better,” Shane agreed, then kissed Ilya’s forehead before he got up. “I’ll be back, just going to get you some breakfast. Oatmeal?”

Ilya leaned back against the headboard. “Da, your mom makes it good. And if is no trouble, her tea helps my throat.”

Shane smiled over at his boyfriend, “She’d make you buckets of tea if you asked. I’ll be back in a few minutes.”

Shane’s mom had a tray pulled out, and she was wiping the already spotless counters when Shane entered the room. “Good morning, honey,” she greeted him, then turned to grab the oatmeal. “Coffee is ready, I’ll get the oatmeal going. There are eggs and fruit too, or I can make you oatmeal. How’s he feeling?”

“Eggs and fruit are great,” Shane replied, grabbing a plate. “He said he wasn’t sure if he felt better or about the same. Not worse though.”

Yuna nodded as she reached for the sugar. “Good. Temp?”

“38.3. He said you’d know if that was better.”

“It is a little bit better. Hopefully it’ll break soon. It’ll make a world of difference once it does, and hopefully he can feel better for Christmas.”

Shane sat down at the bar and ate his breakfast while his mom finished up the oatmeal. “Does he want tea?” she asked as she stirred in some sugar.

“Oh, yeah, he does.”

She nodded, then grabbed a mug. “Your dad and I are going to head into town for a few things, then are grabbing lunch with some friends. We’ll be back for the Christmas Eve afternoon activities, but I’ll cancel our usual reservation and just order food for us from the restaurant for tonight. I don’t want to leave Ilya alone or drag him out when he’s feeling bad.”

“Oh, yeah, that’s a good idea.” Shane hadn’t thought ahead about their annual tradition of going to a local restaurant on the lake each year, but his mom of course had a plan.

Yuna stirred some honey into the steeping tea before putting it on the tray. “Here you go, I’m sure you want to get back up to him. If his fever spikes again we need to get him to a doctor- I’m still a bit worried about his cough. The urgent care closes at 4 today, but hopefully it won’t be needed.”

“Yeah,” Shane agreed. “I’ll keep you posted. Hope you guys have fun in town.” He grabbed the tray and made his way upstairs.

Ilya was dozing again, having shifted to lay down in the time Shane went downstairs. He put the tray down and walked over to the bed, sitting on the edge and gently taking his knuckles down Ilya’s cheek. “Hey,” he whispered. “Breakfast is ready.”

Ilya's eyes blinked open and Shane's heart swelled at his lazy grin, an expression that was definitely a glimmer of his boyfriend's typical mannerisms.

It still felt weird and wonderful to call Ilya his boyfriend, even though it had been several months. He loved it, though. He helped Ilya sit up, then put the tray in his lap. Shane sat down next to him, their shoulders almost touching. As Ilya began to eat, Shane wondered what happened yesterday that made his mother say what she said about Ilya's family and him being resistant to them helping him. Apart from a few things here and the time he shared what happened to his mom, Ilya didn't say much about his family. Shane realized he didn't know how Ilya's childhood had been, except for his mother dying and his father being stoic and cruel. Did anyone take care of him? Was he alone when he was a child? The thought of the love of his life alone with no one to comfort him made Shane's heart clench.

And this week, why hadn't Ilya said something to him when he woke up sick? What if his parents hadn't been at their place already? Would Ilya have just suffered alone? What if he had fallen, or gotten really sick and couldn't get to his phone. Why didn't he tell Shane when he started to feel bad? Shane felt himself spiraling, worrying about other times Ilya didn't let people in and suffered alone. It was dangerous to do that, but maybe Ilya didn't know any better. Or maybe he hadn't had anyone until now. Shane felt a lump in his throat and tried to push the emotions down, not wanting to make this a thing when Ilya was clearly still feeling shitty.

After a moment, he felt a leg press against his, and he looked over at Ilya, who was smiling at him. "You are quiet," Ilya said between bites.

Shane shrugged. "Was just thinking."

"About?"

Ilya was looking at him curiously, so Shane sighed and decided to just ask. "I was just wondering about yesterday, seemed like you've been pretty sick the past two days, but you didn't tell me. I'm just glad my mom needed some spices and happened to come by."

His boyfriend averted his gaze, looking back down at his mostly empty bowl. "Yes, was good she came," he said softly.

"Ilya, why didn't you call me? What would have happened if you passed out, or hit your head, or-"

"Is fine, Shane. I am fine." Ilya put his hand on Shane's thigh. "Nothing happened."

"Something could have happened, though," Shane emphasized. "I don't know why you didn't tell me."

Ilya let out a deep sigh, which turned into a cough. He leaned away from Shane, hacking into the crook of his elbow. Shane's anxiety rose with each cough, and he put his hand on Ilya's back, rubbing circles and willing his coughing to ease.

“Fuck,” Ilya rasped after he was finished, leaning his head back. “Sorry.” He rubbed a hand across his face.

“Here,” Shane held out the glass of water, which Ilya took with shaking hands. After a few sips, he handed it back to Shane and closed his eyes. “How’s your chest? Mom said you needed to go to the doctor if you got any worse. Was that worse?” He reached a hand to Ilya’s forehead. “You feel warmer.”

“No, is not worse,” Ilya whispered. “Just normal.”

Shane sighed. “Okay, if you’re sure.” He worried his lower lip, his hand mindlessly running up and down Ilya’s arm.

They sat in silence for a few minutes, Shane watching every breath Ilya took, counting them in his head. What do they say about respiratory rates? He should get his phone and see. If there are too few breaths then that’s a bad thing? And probably too many is bad too? Maybe his mom has a pulse oximeter, he was pretty sure she got one when she was caring for his grandmother. That thing would tell him if Ilya was getting enough oxygen. He was just about to go dig into their first aid cabinet when a he felt a hand on his thigh.

“Shane,”

Shane jerked his head over to Ilya, who was looking at him with heavily lidded eyes. “You worry too much,” he said.

Shane reached over and brushed a stray curl off Ilya’s forehead, still looking at the rise and fall of his chest. “Well when you are stubborn and hide how you’re feeling, of course I worry.”

“I am sorry,” Ilya looked down again before he continued. “I have hard time telling people I need help, if I am not fine.” He closed his eyes, still breathing a little too heavily for Shane’s liking.

“Well, you can always tell me, Ilya. I want to help.” Shane removed the breakfast tray and pulled Ilya close.

Ilya practically melted onto Shane, wrapping his arms around him and resting his head on Shane’s chest, wrapping a leg around him. Shane pulled him closer, tightening his grip and kissing the top of his head.

“I was left alone too much,” Ilya admitted, his voice barely audible. “Is hard to remember is not normal. Yuna showed me, yesterday. I will try to be better.”

“I love you, Ilya. I’m here for you for all the things, okay.” Ilya nodded against Shane’s chest, and he continued. “Rest now. I can tell you’re tired.”

“Mmmm,” was Ilya’s response, he was clearly already half asleep. Shane rubbed his thumb up and down on Ilya’s back while holding him close, watching his breathing deepen and his body go slack on Shane’s chest.

The morning passed with snuggles and sleep, with Ilya's fever finally breaking at the end of his nap. He woke up abruptly and told Shane he felt really hot, pulling away and kicking off the covers. He was sweaty and clammy, and Shane ended up calling his mom frantically, thinking Ilya was getting worse. His mom calmly explained that Ilya's fever was probably breaking, and she was, of course, correct. Shane felt a little embarrassed that he didn't really know how fevers worked, but also knew it was possible that his overwhelming worry for the love of his life might have been clouding rationality at that moment. Sure enough, Ilya's temperature was 37.4, which felt a little too high but at least wasn't a fever. Shane sagged in relief when he saw that reading.

After a shower, fresh clothes and gatorade, Shane helped Ilya downstairs and heated up some leftover soup for them both. Ilya looked better, his eyes were clearer and he didn't need much help getting around, much to Shane's relief. Shane was taking their bowls to the sink when he heard a car door close, quickly followed by the front door opening.

His mom smiled and greeted him then made her way straight to the couch, where Ilya was flipping through their TV options. Shane followed her, wiping his hands on a kitchen towel. "Well you look better," she said, putting her hand on Ilya's forehead. "No fever, that's good."

"Yes, I feel better." Ilya gave her a tired smile.

"How's the cough? Headache?" she asked.

"Is okay, not too bad."

Yuna nodded. "Good. You look tired though." She looked back at Shane. "Honey, you can help me with the cookies. Ilya, you just rest okay? Do you want to go upstairs and nap so we aren't disturbing you?"

Ilya shook his head. "No, is fine. I am not so tired, am okay here."

Shane watched his mom smile brightly. "Good, that's good. Well you just let us know if we disturb you. Come on, Shane. We have work to do."

Shane grinned over at Ilya, who was smiling back at him. Ilya reached out and took Shane's hand. "I want to see this cookie making. Sounds hot, Hollander." He lowered his voice to a whisper. "Maybe only in apron if you bake at home for me." He winked.

Shane rolled his eyes. "Gross," he said, but he felt his body uncoil just a little bit at the sight and sound of his boyfriend back to his usual antics. He squeezed Ilya's hand before letting go and following his mom to the kitchen.

Baking cookies with his mom was something Shane looked forward to every year. They started when he was about 5 and with each holiday season their baking experiments grew. He figured they'd attempted over 30 different cookie recipes over the years, alternating a few

different types with their staples. Baking was soothing, he liked following a recipe and making the perfect cookie. It also was something that existed outside of hockey, outside of his mom helping him with brand deals and playing her 'momager' role. He was grateful for her support and help, sure, but it was nice to just be baking cookies for Christmas.

Ilya ended up dozing on the couch for most of their baking, barely making it 30 minutes into the show he selected. Shane looked over with concern, but his mom reminded him that rest was a good thing, that Ilya was on the mend. She told him to breathe, which he honestly needed. They replaced the drone of the TV with some Christmas music, Yuna's bright turquoise stand mixer busily spinning dough as Shane rolled ginger maple cookies in sugar before putting them on the pan.

Before too long the house smelled like sugar and spices, the oven and the fire in the fireplace making the house cozy and warm. Ilya woke up after a bit, and David and he chatted in the living room while Yuna plated cookies on her Christmas tray, a bit faded and worn from years of use but one she refused to give up. It felt like Christmas, and it felt like home to Shane. He hoped it felt that way to Ilya too.

When the cookies were ready Shane grabbed the tray, setting them down on the coffee table and plopping down on the couch. He wrapped an arm around Ilya, pulling him close and kissing the top of his head. "Still feeling okay?" he asked, moving a hand to feel Ilya's forehead.

"Fine," Ilya responded, pushing Shane's hand off. "There is no fever, I am just tired, and I ache a little."

Shane felt relief at Ilya's honesty. Maybe he and his mom had finally gotten through to this stubborn man that he could relax with them, that he didn't have to be okay all the time. "Good," he replied, then reached for a cookie. "Want a cookie? It's a tradition, we bake Christmas Eve in the afternoon and then have some cookies and hot chocolate while we watch a movie."

Ilya turned his head to grin up at Shane, taking the offered cookie. "You have many traditions," he observed.

"Yeah, we started when I was a kid and the routine, and things to look forward to, I like it."

Ilya snuggled closer to him, moving his head to rest against Shane's chest. "Is nice," he said softly.

Shane leaned back, finishing his cookie as he grabbed the remote with his free hand. "Okay, so the movie. Home Alone? That's our usual."

"Mmm, does not matter. I have not seen many Christmas movies."

Shane gasped in mock outrage. "What? This is a classic."

"Not as good as Christmas Vacation, though," Shane looked over at his dad, who was settling in one of the chairs, coffee mug in hand.

Shane scoffed. "Maybe to you, old man," he shot back.

Yuna entered the room at that moment, rolling her eyes. "It's the same argument with them every year," she said with a smile as she put a mug down on the coffee table in front of Ilya. "Tea for you, dear. Just how you like it," she patted his knee and continued as she walked over to the other chair. "If it were up to me we'd watch the latest cheesy Netflix holiday romance movie. I'm not one for re-watches, but these two like their movie traditions."

Ilya pushed himself up off of Shane, reaching for the mug before setting back against the cushions. Shane noticed him wincing and restrained himself from reaching over to check Ilya's temperature. He watched Ilya pass a smile to Yuna.

"I think," Ilya started, then paused to cough, which thankfully didn't sound as chesty as it had earlier. "We vote on the movie. And I vote for, how you said, cheesy Netflix holiday movie."

Shane and his dad groaned, but Shane also felt a wave of relief at the smirk on Ilya's face. With each glimmer of Ilya's normal self, more of the worry rolled off Shane. "You're a menace," he mumbled, wrapping an arm around Ilya.

Ilya shrugged. "I like cheesy things." Shane watched him pass a small smile to Yuna, an unsaid alliance that warmed Shane's heart.

"Ah, so that's what it is. It has nothing to do with mom being your favorite Hollander now?" Shane said with a chuckle.

"No, I do not pick favorites. But only one Hollander brought me tea." Shane watched him smile over at his mom again, his mom's grin widening in return.

Shane couldn't bring himself to say no to Ilya, so Yuna got her holiday romance movie, but Ilya barely made it 20 minutes before he started to nod off, his head jerking as he tried to stay awake.

"Hey," Shane whispered as he reached for a throw pillow on the floor. "Lay down," he patted his lap and scooted over so Ilya could spread out. His boyfriend was too tired to protest, moving to rest his head on the pillow, tucking a hand under Shane's leg. Shane absently ran his fingers through Ilya's hair as he watched his breathing deepen and slow. He caught his mom's eye as she looked over at them, a gentle smile on her face.

After the movie was over, Shane flipped the TV off, glancing down at his phone. They still had an hour or so before David would go get dinner, so there was no need to wake Ilya, who was still breathing deeply, his face relaxed in sleep.

"Looks like you're stuck," his mom said fondly as she walked towards the kitchen. "Let him sleep, he needs to rest."

"Not planning on moving," Shane responded quietly.

Yuna paused, the look on her face pensive as she met Shane's eyes. "I'm glad he let us take care of him."

“Me too.” Shane paused before continuing. “I hate that he’s felt so alone.”

“He will be okay, honey. He’s got a family now.”

Shane swallowed, his vision going blurry as he thought of the pain, the loneliness- and all Ilya had lost. At the flashes of vulnerability his boyfriend had shown to him, unable to trust anyone else with the pieces of himself that felt too raw. Of the moments of hardness that were nothing but a defense mechanism to hide his trauma. His mom broke a couple of those walls down this week in ways Shane realized he couldn’t. And he was so grateful.

Shane blinked rapidly to stave off the tears, then cleared his throat before speaking. “Thank you, Mom,” he whispered.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for reading! I'm so hooked on all things Ilya and Shane and am sure will be writing more to cope after season one is over. I've read all 6 books and I can't get enough! I'm a hurt/comfort addict, so drop any ideas or prompts if you have them.

Edit: 1/3- Wow! I’ve gotten so many kind comments and kudos in the last 24 hours! If you found this story outside of Ao3, I’d love to know where! It’s been so fun to get your comments and hear feedback, as I’m still pretty new to my return to creative writing.

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