

## Missing Hours

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# Missing Hours

by [ravenkira](#)

## Summary

Ilya doesn't remember the moment his head hit the pavement or the sound of screeching brakes.

He's forgotten he ever left Russia, and the names Yuna Hollander and Shane mean nothing to him, though these people clearly know him pretty well.

## Notes

If it's written in italics, it's said in Russian. All translation of the actual Russian phrases will be in the notes, but I hope you'll enjoy not knowing what's happening just like Ilya – it adds to the experience, imho.

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

- Translation into Русский available: [Неучтенные часы](#) by [ravenkira](#)

# Chapter 1

## Chapter Notes

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

When he comes to, it's too bright, so bright it stings – Ilya groans. There's this odd beeping – is it in his head?

*“Свет,”* he mutters, barely hearing his own voice. Is he sick? He just had the flu – is it back? Father is going to be so angry.

It gets darker – finally – and Ilya hears someone speaking. His head is spinning even with his eyes closed, the back of his head, his temples, his whole body ache terribly. He vomits all over himself.

When he comes to, he is again blinded by light. People are talking nearby - and it doesn't even sound like Russian. Is the TV on? Did Andrei turn it on just to piss him off? Screw Andrei.

When he comes to, someone is definitely speaking English. Every muffled sound makes his ears hum.

*“Можно потише?”* he says hoarsely - a blissful silence follows, but not for long.

“Eeliya.” A male voice. Someone seems to be touching his arm - he barely feels it. “Eeliya? Eeliya!”

*“Тише,”* he grumbles. The pain has subsided, but his brain is all foggy. What... What is...

When he comes to, it's dark, and he finally tries to open his eyes. He's not home.

*“Какого хрена,”* he murmurs. Complications from the flu? Has he been hospitalised?

He needs to pee, so he tries to stand up, but as soon as he moves, the pain – what's happening? - saps his strength and he...

When he comes to, his head keeps throbbing, and he groans.

“Eeliya,” someone says, and who the hell is Eeliya? Sounds like a girl's name. Sounds like Liliya – it's annoying.

Ilya forces his eyes open, and there's a dark-haired man standing over his hospital bed. A hoodie? Not a doctor, then.

*“Что происходит?”* he asks, and the man starts mumbling hurriedly. Is this English? *“Я на англичанина похож? Что за приколы?”*

The man puts his hand on Ilya's palm and falls silent - finally. Ilya doesn't feel his touch; the rising panic is drowned out by the pain.

"Eeliya," says the man. *"You are at hospital."* His accent is atrocious. What the hell is he doing there if he can't even speak properly?

*"What..?"*

*"You... ah, I don't know how to say that. A car. A car accident."* The man keeps on speaking English, and Ilya can only make out "2 days". He's been here for two days? What car?

*"Russian. Speak Russian."*

*"Eeliya, I'm not that good yet."*

*"I'm not Ee-liya. Il-yah! Ilya,"* he says through clenched teeth. *"Call my father."*

The man straightens up abruptly, then says something about doctors and darts to the door. It's almost quiet again.

When Ilya wakes up, the English-speaking asshole is back, and he pushes the red button to call the doctor as soon as he catches Ilya's gaze.

"Eeliya..."

His body is wracked with pain, and now this lunatic... He's not a doctor - who is he anyway? What is he doing here? Ilya feels too nauseous, and the man touches his hand again, but his skin feels numb - nothing but pain.

*"My phone?"* Ilya tries to sound firm. *"I need to call my father."*

*"Eeliya, your father is dead."*

What the fuck did he just say? Ilya can't have misheard that.

*"Dead?"*

Dread fills him, merging with the pain and the panic and the nausea and whatever else is wrong with him.

*"He died three years ago,"* adds the man.

Dread and panic flare into rage so quickly that Ilya doesn't even bother to say, *"Do you think you're funny? I'm going to be funny too,"* before he lands his fist square on the man's nose. He was close enough – he'll soon learn to shut his damn mouth. It's agony, everything is blurry – the asshole is lucky Ilya is weak; otherwise, he'd have smashed his whole face in.

A man in white rushes in – a doctor? Finally.

*"Get the asshole out of here. Call my father."*

The asshole is several steps away from the hospital bed - afraid to come closer, and there's something red on his face – Ilya can't see clearly, but he knows it's blood. To hell with him. Why is he speaking with the doctor – more English?

He retches and passes out.

\* \* \*

“I'm fine.”

“Mr Rozanov is disoriented – we're sorry, but it's best if you keep your distance from him. Head injuries are unpredictable.”

Shane isn't crying – he's shaking so much his ice pack clatters.

“Does he not remember losing his father?” asks Yuna. “Does he have amnesia?”

“He slips in and out of consciousness, and we can't manage a proper conversation. He only speaks Russian - and we're not sure how accurate his speech is, so if you can't translate, it's best to find an interpreter. And we need to do another MRI scan.”

“Shane, did he... Shane!”

\* \* \*

“Hello, my name is Dr Teller. Do you...”

\* \* \*

**ILYA ROZANOV RUSHED TO HOSPITAL AFTER BEING HIT BY CAR**

**HOCKEY PLAYER ILYA ROZANOV IN ICU AFTER CAR ACCIDENT**

\* \* \*

**@CentaursOttawa**

Our captain Ilya Rozanov has been admitted to hospital after a hit-and-run accident. We ask everyone to respect his and Shane Hollander's privacy and send your prayers.

[#staystrongRozanov](#) [#staystrongHollander](#)

\* \* \*

When he comes to, there are too many people in the room. The asshole notices him first – he says something, and suddenly the whole crowd is at his bed.

*“Hello. My name is Anna Karpova, and I'm a Russian-English interpreter. Please pause briefly after speaking so that I have time to translate,”* says a woman.

Ilya squints at her, but he can't make out her features – everything is blurred and out of place. His thoughts are slow, it is difficult to think.

He nods silently, which is a huge mistake - the back of his head, temples and neck are torn apart by pain. A man in white says something, and she speaks again.

*“Can you tell me your name?”*

*“Ilya Rozanov,”* he manages with difficulty. He is thirsty and cannot concentrate - the doctor is talking, she is talking, but at least the asshole is silent.

*“Do you know where you are?”*

*“Hospital.”*

*“Do know why you’re here?”*

Things are so blurry – it must be the flu. He hasn’t felt this awful in a while.

*“Uh... the flu?”*

*“What is the last thing you remember?”*

Panic grips his throat, and he asks hurriedly,

*“That asshole said my father is dead. Is my father dead?”*

The man in white says something to the asshole, and Anna turns her head, listening – why isn't she translating?

*“Tell me. Tell me!”* His voice is so hoarse he starts coughing, he jerks and his head explodes with pain. His mouth is finally wet, and it tastes like copper.

When he comes to, the asshole is nowhere to be seen. Good. He looks around with difficulty and finds a red button. If he presses it, it will call someone, but if it were a button for a nuclear strike on his own head, he'd press it too.

It’s the doctors and the interpreter – unfortunately.

*“Where’s my father?”*

*“Your father is away at the moment. We apologize for the inconvenience, and we will contact him as soon as possible. What do you remember before you ended up in hospital?”*

His memory is a rusty sieve. He remembers hockey – some good hockey, and he remembers his school English teacher. He remembers the asshole saying his father is dead, and it feels real – Ilya can’t make sense of the faces around him, but what they say doesn’t ring true, it all sounds like a lie. His breath quickens.

*“I was taking exams?”* he tries. He knows it’s the wrong answer.

*“What year is it?”*

Why are they asking that? Why are there people speaking English? Are there not enough competent Russian doctors?

*“Why does nobody speak Russian?”*

*“This is a new team from abroad. We apologize for the inconvenience, Ilya Grigorievich. Can you tell me what year it is?”*

*“Why did the asshole say that my father is dead?”* he repeats, and he doesn’t need any more proof – they are going to lie to him again.

*“He confused you with someone else. How are you feeling?”*

His heart is beating so fast he feels like he’s going to throw up.

*“Where’s my phone?”*

*“No phones allowed until you’re better.”*

*“I need to speak to my father.”*

*“He’s away at the moment.”*

A lie, another lie! Ilya grabs the tubes attached to his arm and tugs so hard that the IV stand by his bed crashes to the floor – everything clangs like hundreds of bells in that Valdai museum he visited with his team not long ago. It’s splitting his brain.

*“Fuck, what’s going on? I know you’re lying – tell me the truth! Where am I? Who are you? What the fuck are you doing? What...”*

\* \* \*

## **HOLLANDER INJURED, ROZANOV STILL AT HOSPITAL**

## **HOLLANDER SITS OUT FOR ROZANOV’S HOSPITAL STAY**

\* \* \*

Ilya dreams of the funeral – Andrei looks too fat and too old, Sveta looks as gorgeous as ever, and he finally connects his fist with his brother’s face.

His father is actually dead. The asshole was telling the truth.

## **Chapter End Notes**

### **Russian:**

Свет. – Light. (with the idea that it should be turned off)

Можно потише? – Can you keep it down?

Тише. – Quieter.

Какого хрена. – What the hell.

Что происходит? Я на англичанина похож? Что за прикол?”- What's happening? Do I look like an Englishman? Is it a prank?

## Chapter 2

He wakes up with his hands strapped to the bed – makes sense. He kind of expected that from the moment he punched the asshole – does Ilya need to apologise? Yeah, he damn well does. His legs might also be strapped. He knows he's not paralyzed, but there's something really off with the way his body feels – besides the pain and the discomfort of having been lying in one position for so long.

A nurse brings him water, and he drinks it through a straw – she says something, but he doesn't understand.

"I don't speak English," he grumbles, and the woman falls silent, then pushes the red button. The doctors reappear and chatter away in his ear - is it really so difficult to understand that he cannot comprehend the meaning of their words?

Everything hurts, he's tired, he's groggy, and the interpreter has fucked off god knows where. When a nurse takes out her phone and he hears the robotic voice of an online translator, he feels so grateful he might cry. Oh, no, he's actually crying – what the hell.

*"Mr Rozanov, how are you feeling?"*

*"Everything hurts. What country is this?"*

There is a brief pause, and the doctor finally tells him something new.

*"You're in Ottawa, Canada."*

*"What am I doing here? Why aren't I in Russia?"*

*"You've hit your head and lost some of your memories."*

*"Why here?"*

*"You live in Canada now."*

He doesn't know whether to believe them or not. The explanation that he has somehow forgotten moving to another country sounds more plausible than there being an entire damn foreign team in a Russian hospital with all the nurses speaking nothing but English.

They ask him to count from ten to one, they poke and prod at him – his hands get unstrapped at this point, but he has to promise not to make any sudden movements.

*"Do you promise to stop lying to me?"*

So, he's alone in Canada, he doesn't know how he got there, his father is dead, Andrei is dead to him, and none of it makes sense. These people are probably not trying to harvest his organs – it looks like a really nice hospital. His head is splitting with pain, but at least it's a little easier to think now.

*“It’s a medical imperative to keep you from being overwhelmed. You’ve had several seizures, and we don’t want them to recur.”*

*“And I don’t want to be lied to.”*

*“We are sorry, but you’ll need to wait until your condition stabilizes.”*

There are more questions, and it all drags on endlessly until he finally loses the battle to keep his eyes open. They give him an injection, the pain subsides, and he falls asleep.

He briefly wakes up when a nurse brings him a meal, but he doesn't even have the strength for that - he passes out again almost immediately.

\* \* \*

**@hollyandrozy**

i shit you not i’ve been crying for three days straight 😭😭😭 TELL ME IF MY BABY IS OKAY [#staystrongRozanov](#) [#staystrongHollander](#)

\* \* \*

**DRIVER SUSPECTED IN ILYA ROZANOV HIT-AND-RUN IN CUSTODY**

**HIT-AND-RUN INVOLVING HOCKEY STAR ILYA ROZANOV: POLICE INVESTIGATING DRUNK DRIVING ANGLE**

**GRAPHIC VIDEO: MOMENT NHL'S ILYA ROZANOV IS STRUCK BY CAR**

\* \* \*

**@wifematerialistic**

If I see a person trying to get behind the wheel drunk – I’m gonna fight them, I swear to god I’m gonna throw hands AND set their car ON FIRE. YOU are the problem! YOU should suffer, not him!!! [#staystrongRozanov](#) [#staystrongHollander](#)

**@allexes69**

Regret watching the video so much. Just... a guy laughing on his phone, heading home, and then... because of one selfish bastard? 💔 [#staystrongRozanov](#) [#staystrongHollander](#)

**@hollyandrozy**

AND THE FUCKER JUST DROVE AWAY?!

**@peteyball**

Look, I get the sentiment, but for real... hoping Hollander gets back on the ice soon. Ottawa needs him

**@wifematerialistic**

Btw, have you heard of COVID-19? I’m a bit concerned here

\* \* \*

It doesn't feel like a dream – he's laughing, looking at an open Skype window on his laptop.

His tutor begins a sentence with, "Never have I..."

"Never have I lost a game!"

"Well, never have I heard a bigger lie."

"Never have I lied in my life!"

She laughs too – she's easy to talk to, and she actually enjoys it when he jokes around. He can spout any nonsense that comes to mind - this isn't psychotherapy, after all, he doesn't have to tell the truth.

"Not only do my teammates..." she begins again, and it takes a couple of seconds for him to come up with what to say next. You need to structure it like a question even though it's not one. Inversion. Piece of cake.

When he opens his eyes, there are two women with him, and his hands are strapped again. It's blissfully dark.

Never before in his life has he forgotten anything like that. Not only do his teammates like to talk shit, but they also enjoy winning cups. Scarcely does he understand what's happening.

"Eeliya," says one of them. She continues speaking, and he understands her – it's 'Good morning, my dear'. The other woman translates, and he recognises her voice if not her face.

"Good morning," he awkwardly says back and waves his strapped hand. "You're back, but they already used Google Translate."

"Eeliya! You speak English again!"

"Yeah, it feels..." he's looking for the word '*familiar*', but his mind is blank. "I know something. I know this, I think."

The dark-haired woman is not pleased with his answer, but he is, he's happy to remember something and he clings to the memory, his heartbeat thrumming in his ears. It's coming back. Slowly – but it's coming back. Maybe soon he'll remember what he's doing in fucking Canada. Canada – why not the States?

"Who are you?" he finally asks.

"Ah, yes, sorry! My name is Yuna. I'm... ah, I'm family."

"My family?"

"Yes."

She's not saying anything else – the doctors must have told her to keep things from him.

“Okay. What day is it?”

“It’s Tuesday.”

Very helpful. He should have asked about the date, not the day. What’s really annoying is that he doesn’t remember which one is Tuesday and which one is Thursday.

“What year?”

“Uh... I’m... I’m not sure I’m allowed to say.”

Annoying, goddamn annoying. He actually wants the asshole to come back – at least he told Ilya the truth, and he is someone important, otherwise he wouldn’t have been sitting by his bed.

“I need something. From pain.”

He drifts off after a nurse gives him drugs, and he sees himself in front of a whole horde of journalists barraging him with English questions, and he understands close to nothing, can’t say a word. A man sitting next to him at the table starts speaking.

He is watching a hockey interview on YouTube and writing down the words he sees in the subtitles.

When he wakes, there’s a man in the armchair opposite his bed. He’s reading, and he glances up when he hears Ilya move.

“Eeli... Il-ya!” the man says. Ah, it’s the asshole.

“I’m sorry about... you know,” says Ilya. “Is your nose okay?”

“Yeah, it’s... It’s fine. You’re speaking English again,” he sounds happy.

The words just come out in English. Ilya lives in Canada now, doesn’t he? It makes his stomach twist that he doesn’t remember, and it’s even worse that he has no idea how much he has forgotten. The asshole- The man said his father died three years ago. Did he forget three whole years of his life? That’s a lot – he feels like he’s only started living, he doesn’t remember graduating high school or going to prom – there’s nothing in his head but emptiness, and he’s still dizzy, and his head hurts even when he’s pumped full of painkillers.

“Do I play hockey?” he finally asks and closes his eyes. The light is too bright – the asshole needed it to read.

“Uh, I’m... I don’t think I should...”

“I remember that I played hockey. Do I play hockey?”

“I mean... yes.”

“For what team?”

“Uh...”

“A Canadian team, yes?”

“Yes. The Ottawa Centaurs.”

“Oh. Are they in NHL?”

“Yes, and we’re pretty good, actually. So, yeah, we are in the NHL.”

We. He’s a teammate, and he’s clearly proud of the team – so protective.

“Do we have Stanley Cup?”

“I mean, not with this team, but yeah, we’ve won some.”

So they’ve played together for a while. Three years? More? Less? The timeline is blurry, and it makes him nauseous.

“What’s your name?”

The man is silent for a moment, then he sighs and says,

“I’m Shane. Shane Hollander.”

He knows this name. He doesn’t know anything else but the simple fact that he knows this name; he’s heard it, and it’s agony how close he is to remembering and how far out of reach it feels.

“How long do we know each other?”

“Uh, twelve years, give or take.”

Ilya’s breath hitches – he’s lost twelve years? More? It’s more than a half of life! No, how old is he? What is he supposed to do now?

“Twelve years,” he repeats, and his heart is racing; everything is spinning, and it fucking hurts.

\* \* \*

“I fucking told him we’ve known each other for twelve years, and he started shaking! Fuck! Fuck! I knew I shouldn’t, but I... It felt so good to talk to him that I... Fuck!”

Yuna is trying to get him up off the floor, but he’s not a child anymore, and she needs to do something quickly before people see.

“Shane, let’s go home. Shane, please. David is bringing the car to the emergency exit. Eeliya is with the doctors now, everything is going to be fine. He’s a tough guy, you have to believe in him.”

\* \* \*

“Mrs Hollander, I believe it’s better for Mr Rozanov’s husband not to visit him for several days. We need to...”

“Yes, Dr Teller, I understand. I’ll talk to Shane. Thank you.”

She doesn’t know how she’s going to tell Shane – he’s just calmed down, and the news will be a heavy blow. She tightens her grip on the phone and closes her eyes, sighing.

“It’s a temporary measure. Mr Rozanov responds well to you, so maybe you...”

“Yes, absolutely, I’ll be there. Thank you.”

\* \* \*

Next time he comes to, it’s the evening, and the two women – Yuna and the interpreter – are no longer there. He half expects the asshole– the man from yesterday to be there. He does need to apologise for punching him in the nose, but it seems like he’s finally got his peace and quiet.

Not exactly peace – his head hurts and he turns his head and gags – a nurse appears by his side and asks him if he’s feeling okay. He’s not.

His hands are still strapped - he has to struggle to reach the bed controls and raise the headboard a little.

He wants to die.

\* \* \*

**ILYA ROZANOV STILL IN ICU**

## Chapter 3

### **@CentaursOttawa**

We're relieved to share that our captain, Ilya Rozanov, has been moved out of the ICU! Long road ahead, but he's fighting. Our thoughts are with him and Shane [#staystrongRozanov](#) [#staystrongHollander](#)

### **@hollyandrozy**

FUCK YEAH I KNEW HE'D PULL THOUGH!!! [#staystrongRozanov](#) [#staystrongHollander](#)

### **@allexes69**

thank god!!! heal up, roz [#staystrongRozanov](#) [#staystrongHollander](#)

### **@peteyball**

Any word on a timeline for Hollander's return to the ice?

### **@sexylime**

saw the video of the hit - that was career-ending. glad he's awake, but let's be real here: this isn't a "when" he returns, it's an "if"

### **@gossippageCND**

EXCLUSIVE: NHL star Shane Hollander seen leaving Ottawa General. The man is going through it [pic 1], [pic 2], [pic 3]

\* \* \*

They remove the straps, and Ilya can finally toss and turn, failing to find a painless position. He talks to the cops but can't tell them anything useful. He simply doesn't remember anything – though they do share the one piece of good news: they've caught the driver. So, apparently, he's been hit by a car.

The man he punched doesn't return, but Yuna, who says she is family, stays, and now that he's feeling a bit better, he reasons she wouldn't have been allowed into the ICU if she weren't close to him – on paper, officially. And that man – he was there too, wasn't he? So both of them must be legally connected to him.

Mustering some courage, Ilya asks about his prognosis, which prompts a long, overly complicated explanation about his concussion, seizures, prosopagnosia and a whole host of other words he doesn't understand. The doctors assure him he's making reasonable progress but add that they can't risk exposing him to anything that might provoke distress - seizures are still the primary concern. With that, they leave him in limbo, Yuna's soothing presence the only thing keeping him from desperately fighting for scraps of information - anything at all.

They tell him his bruises are healing well. He notices a tattoo of a duck on his arm, but they won't give him a mirror. There isn't one in the bathroom, either, leaving only the warped

reflection in the tap. His body tells a story he doesn't understand, and he feels like shit.

He can't go to the bathroom alone, but at least his English is steadily improving – fragments of student textbooks, vocabulary exercises, and the memory of double-checking words in a dictionary float back to him. He remembers flashes of hockey, too – enough to confirm he's a player. That must be how he ended up in Canada.

It's frustrating to rebuild himself from pieces – he's left to guess at everything else, and what if he's wrong? What if he makes up some fuck-ass version of Eeliya Rozanov, who lives in Canada, only to take it apart and start over when he learns the truth? With little to do but sleep, think, and coax clues from Yuna, the days blur together.

He asks for his phone again.

"I'm sorry, Mr Rozanov, but we've been informed your phone was broken in the accident."

No phone, no money, no memory, not even a dictionary. Nothing.

"Do you know where I live?" he asks Yuna.

"But of course!"

"Do I have money?"

"Eeliya, don't you worry – every expense is covered, and you do have enough to live very comfortably."

"So I'm rich."

"You could say that. Don't ask me for the exact sum – I don't know."

Somehow, he doubts she doesn't know, but he won't press. Right now, he can only take things one minute at a time, one day at a time – no matter how much it hurts him.

"Where's my clothes? Cash? Keys?"

"Your money and keys are with... well, they are at home, and I'll get you new clothes because there was just too much... Eh, well, I'll get you something clean. Your SIM-card is at home, too. I'll bring you a new phone as soon as you're allowed."

"I'm bored."

"I know, honey. I'm sorry, but you'll have to wait a little bit longer."

"Tell me something."

"What would you like to hear?"

He wishes he could read her mood, but her face tells him nothing. It must be torture for her to be stuck here with him while he's being so difficult – and he's being difficult because this

feels unbearable, as if he's dying - one damn minute at a time, one fucking day at a time.

"What are you reading?" he finally asks.

"Me? Well, it's a book about hockey called..."

"Good. Tell me about the book."

\* \* \*

"He's restless - I can see that. No, we still can't tell him anything - after the seizures we're afraid of anything that might agitate him. ... I think he does! If he remembers his father, he must remember you. I'm going to talk to the doctor and find out. ... Gosh, I hope so. I really do. ... As well as you can imagine. You should stay with us when you come. Absolutely! Shane would love to pick you up from the airport - he's been on edge, and he needs something to do. Yes, I'll call you. Bye-bye!"

\* \* \*

"*So you're just sleeping all day, huh?*" says a familiar voice. He's not dreaming, is he?

"Sveta?"

"*Hi, asshole.*"

"*Sveta! You're here!*"

He remembers her voice, the shape of her hair, her lean figure - it's really her.

"*Hug me,*" he demands. "*Oh my god, you're actually here.*"

He's so happy to see her he could cry - and he is crying. In the corner of his eye, he sees Yuna slip out of the ward.

"*Ilyusha, everything will be alright. You'll be okay,*" Sveta says, her warm hands wrapping around his back - and suddenly, he doesn't feel so alone anymore. He remembers her. He loves her. And she's still with him, even god knows how many years are missing from his memory.

"*I don't remember shit,*" he says, and speaking Russian is a relief. Words flow without hesitation. "*I hardly recognise anyone, and I don't even understand what I've lost! Nobody tells me anything!*"

"*Last time someone told you about your life, you had seizures. We are afraid, Ilyusha. We love you too much to hurt you,*" Sveta says, and he knew that, but she says it in a way that makes him feel a little less terrible. "*Now we wait. You'll get better - you know it - and everything will be fine. We believe in you, and you need to start believing in yourself, too.*"

He doesn't say that he's afraid something important is gone forever. Sveta, Yuna, that man - they'll tell him something eventually, but they might not know everything. He has always

kept so much to himself - which of those secrets are lost for good? Even his phone is gone – he was hoping to see the photos and the messages.

*“Do you like the food here?” Sveta’s question pulls him out of his misery.*

*“Uh, no.”*

*“Do you want me to find you something better?”*

*“Fuck yes. And just... tell me something. Anything.”*

Sveta pulls back and looks at him. She sighs.

*“Okay... There’s this weird flu in China.”*

*“There’s always a weird flu.”*

*“I mean, yeah, but this one feels... big. Serious. There have already been a few cases in Canada.”*

*“It’s exactly what I need – amnesia and the weird Chinese flu. What else is happening?”*

She rubs his shoulder. The gesture grounds him, and he really does loves her. Has he ever loved anyone more? Should he marry her? Is she already married? Oh, what if he is? Yuna doesn’t seem like she’s into him, so he’s definitely not married to her – and there is no ring on his hand – or Sveta’s.

Would it be weird to propose in a hospital?

*“Your teammates asked about you,” Sveta continues.*

*“I still play hockey – I knew that.”*

*“You, doubting yourself?”*

*“Never. What team? Am I any good?”*

*“Not telling. But your teammates send their love. They say they’ll try to do their best without their captain.”*

*“I’m the captain. Good.”*

*“Happy now?”*

*“Happier. How do I look?”*

*“Like shit.”*

*“Good. I feel like shit, too.”*

*“Very fitting.”*

*“Lie down and hug me. Normal food later.”*

Maybe it’s not that bad – he still has Sveta. Yuna is definitely here to bulldoze people into giving him the best care – he’s heard her grilling the medical staff. Life might be okay again – someday.

\* \* \*

## **SOURCES FEAR ROZANOV MAY BE PERMANENTLY PARALYZED**

\* \* \*

This isn’t a headache, it’s a full-blown migraine, and the sudden light feels like a nail through his skull. Ilya groans.

“Hi, Eeliya, how are you doing?” asks an unfamiliar voice. Doctors usually address him by his last name.

Ilya squints one eye open, taking in the intruder: a man in white. Is he really a doctor? They usually come in groups. There’s a strange, metallic glint in the man’s hand, and an awareness down on him - it’s a phone, the camera pointed right at him.

Moving is agony, but he forces his arm toward the red button before the man can stop him.

“No! Shit, come on, man! Just tell me how you’re doing – everyone is worried!”

The door swings open. “Who are you and what are you doing here?” a woman's voice demands sharply. “Security!”

Ilya closes his eyes. He hears someone running, the sound of a struggle, and the woman shouting at someone. Then her voice softens near his ear.

“Headache,” he mumbles. “Light.”

The room mercifully goes dark again, and after several minutes he’s given painkillers - he falls asleep.

\* \* \*

“What do you mean somebody entered the ward?! Where was security? Oh, god. Oh my god. ... Okay, how safe would it be to move him home? ... We understand, and we’ll pay for it. ... Excuse me! Eeliya’s safety is my priority, and it should be yours too. ... Yes, okay, I’ll be there in an hour.”

Fuck.

\* \* \*

“Why do I not recognise faces?” demands Ilya.

“It’s the nature of your injury. Your temporal lobe-”

“I can speak English again, I keep remembering stuff every day, but not faces – faces are not getting better! Why?”

“Head injuries need time to heal - please, try to stay calm. Stress will only slow your recovery. You need to allow more time for recuperation...”

“I don’t know what it means! Give me a dictionary if you can’t give me my phone!”

“Your interpreter can...”

“I do it myself! A dictionary! Something! Damn!”

That night, when no one is looking, he slips out of his ward and gets fucking lost in the hallways – a nurse eventually finds him curled in a visitor's chair, panting into his hands. He can’t remember the way back.

The doctors shake their heads and sedate him.

\* \* \*

“I should have been with him. Fuck, I should have been outside his ward all this time!”

Shane hasn’t been eating – he exhausted, radiating a desperate energy that leaves Yuna feeling helpless. Her suggestion to see a therapist did not go over well, to put it mildly.

“No, Shane, that wouldn’t have been allowed. We’re moving him.”

“But is it safe?”

“We’re going to make it as safe as we can. We just need a little time - maybe a week. Let Svetlana be with him, and you and I... We should stay with David and Anya.”

“If it happened to me,” murmurs Shane, “Ilya would know what to do.”

She’s grasping at straws.

“You can’t know that.”

\* \* \*

Yuna explains he’s not going to his own home because it’s far from the hospital. Instead, there’s an apartment that’s only seven minutes away. He trusts her, somehow he’s always trusted this woman, and he agrees. He can do it – but he hopes the place is small because the thought of getting lost again terrifies him.

“Is it mine?”

“No, it’s my son’s. You’ll be able to go home soon, I promise, but for now...” she sighs.

“Gosh, what a mess.”

“Nothing happened.”

“Nothing, he says! I’ll handle it, Eeliya. Don’t worry.”

“Will I get a phone?” he has to try.

“Absolutely not.”

“Has Sveta come back to New York?”

“No, she’s in Ottawa. She’s helping my son get the apartment ready.”

The uncomfortable knot in his chest can’t be jealousy.

“Is she dating him?”

Yuna stares at him with a strange expression – what’s wrong?

“No.”

“Svetlana is too good for him. For anyone.”

“I’ll have you know that my son is a perfectly good man.”

“You’re such a mom.”

“I’ll be reminding you of this conversation when you remember everything.”

\* \* \*

## **ILYA ROZANOV RELEASED FROM HOSPITAL**

\* \* \*

**@hollyandrozy**

ALL I DO IS WIN WIN WIN NO MATTER WHAT!!! MY BOY IS COMING HOME  
#staystrongRozanov #staystrongHollander

**@tetatrete**

PSA from hell: mom has that new flu virus - this shit is horrible, wear masks

## Chapter 4

They want to do another scan before he can leave, and Ilya hates how the hallways all merge into one endless beige nothing. The rhythmic knocking of the MRI machine makes him feel claustrophobic, and his head throbs, tiny hammers driving nails into his temples and the back of his skull.

\* \* \*

**@HealthyCA**

Due to the spread of COVID-19, we urge the public to wear masks (change every 4 hours), use gloves, sanitize hands regularly, and keep a 2-meter distance from others in public.

**@timdennins**

Okay, sure. But can you tell us where to actually get masks? There aren't any anywhere I've looked. Come on.

**@10tborgia**

no shit where are all the masks? im using a scarf for now but arent proper masks supposed to be safer?

\* \* \*

The clothes Yuna brought for him fit okay and look perfectly boring.

"I'm ready," Ilya says, though he is far from it, his heartbeat lodged in his throat.

He pulls on a warm hat and a mask. Yuna pushes his wheelchair through the identical hallways and past indistinguishable people, heading for the emergency exit. He climbs in the backseat and tries to calm himself. He's going to be fine – Sveta is waiting for him.

A French song whispers from the radio, grating on his nerves. Not another language, please. Shit, does he know French too?

Outside, it's too fucking bright – he needs sunglasses.

"Hi," says the driver.

"Uhm. Hi," replies Ilya. Does he know this man? The reflection in the rearview mirror - dark eyes, dark hair - tells him nothing.

"Are you okay?"

"Yes, of course. Yes."

"Uhm... The apartment is ready, by the way. I hope you'll like it."

“Oh, is it yours?” it finally occurs to him that there’s a reason he’s sitting alone in a car with this man. “Are you Yuna’s son?”

“Uh, yeah. Sorry, I forgot you may not recognize me.”

“Yeah. Sorry.”

“No, I mean...”

“Do we know each other?”

The man falls silent – not helpful.

“Yeah. We know each other.”

“Through Yuna? Or..? For how long?”

Another pause, heavier this time.

“Sorry, I’m not sure how much I can say right now.”

“Bah, boring,” Ilya concludes and looks out of the window, willing Yuna to return – time drips like an IV.

“What is your name?”

The man stays silent for longer – a slow guy. Okay.

“Shane. Shane Hollander.”

Ilya he’s heard the name somewhere – it’s an itch inside his brain he can’t scratch. He knows him, knows his soft voice.

The front passenger door swings open a second before he remembers - the memory slips away.

“Sorry, guys, I needed to have a quick talk with Dr Teller! We’re good to go now.”

The snow in the streets glares, blinding him, and the world tilts and throbs - another migraine is crashing in. The murmuring French from the speakers makes him want to scream.

“Headache,” he murmurs, covering his eyes with his hands. The music stops, and Yuna starts loudly rummaging through her bag.

“Here, honey. Take this pill. Here’s some water.”

He gags on the water, and the coughing sends fresh jolts of pain through his skull. He has no idea where they are, but at least it’s not far from the hospital. When the car stops, he can’t stand steadily; Yuna’s son helps him out - the man is seriously strong - and guides him into a house. He thinks he hears Sveta’s voice, but he passes out as soon as his head hits a soft pillow.

When he wakes, the gap between the windowsill and the Roman blinds is dark. He slowly looks around: a fancy room with glass and wood and lots of tasteful decorations.

He eases out of bed, but the apartment beyond is disorientingly large. A wave of anxiety sends him backing into the room, shutting the door. If he gets lost here, he won't be able to handle it.

"Sveta?" he shouts - his voice is uncomfortably dry, and it rings in his own ears.

"Ilya!" she rushes into his room. *"You're awake. The doctors told us you'll need some time to adjust."*

*"What the fuck is this place? It's huge."*

*"Nice, right?"*

*"I'll get lost,"* he whispers. *"I'll get fucking lost here and will die in a cupboard."*

Sveta stares at him.

*"You're serious,"* she says incredulously. *"Okay. Okay, I'll... What about some signs? We'll just tape labels and arrows to the walls."*

Gosh, so stupid.

*"That won't mesh well with the design,"* Ilya replies.

*"Screw the design. Okay. Okay, so, can I leave you for fifteen minutes? Half an hour max."*

*"I'm not a child."*

*"I'm aware of that, but... Shit, you'll need a phone – if something happens, you need to call me. Wait a minute."*

She hurries out and returns with a white box and a SIM-card.

*"It's a new one, let's set it up."*

He understands it's a phone, but he doesn't quite remember how to use it. Buttons were easier to manage.

*"Right,"* she sees his hesitation and decisively rips off the foil. *"It's easy – don't worry."*

She works her magic, looking up several times and saying, "Oh, right," over and over. It's fucking annoying how helpless he feels.

*"Here. It's done,"* she points at the screen. *"That's my number."* He recognizes the icons. *"I've disabled the browser – please don't try to google yourself. Promise me."*

*"Okay,"* he sighs.

*“I’m serious – I won’t forgive myself if you have a seizure.”*

*“I won’t google myself,”* he repeats, irritated. He’s stuck in an apartment with a younger version of Yuna.

*“Sorry. Anything else before I go?”*

*“Water. And show me the bathroom.”*

*“It’s en-suite,”* Sveta goes to a door, opens it and leaves it ajar. *“I’ll bring you a water bottle.”*

She returns with the bottle, leaves it on the nightstand, and leaves Ilya alone. He heads straight for the bathroom. And there it is - a mirror. He doesn’t recognize himself. Without his hair – this could be a stranger; he’d walk right by.

He steps closer, trying to focus on the details of his own face – there are wrinkles. He has wrinkles now, and that’s more than three years could do. His gaze sweeps the countertop - he grabs the toothpaste tube, searching for the production date – 2019. Fuck.

Ilya returns to the bedroom – thank fuck there’s only one door from the bathroom - and snatches the new phone.

1st of March, 2020.

No. That’s... that’s bad.

He sits down slowly – he knew a lot of time had passed. His memories are like a Pollock painting: splattered everywhere, disconnected, impossible to make sense of. He doesn’t know what came before or after, but he remembers playing a lot of hockey, giving interviews in English, partying – constant partying. Having sex. He definitely slept with Sveta.

The phone starts ringing – an unknown number. Ilya isn’t going to deal with it now – he fumbles with the side buttons and finally turns the damn thing off.

Sveta is back before he knows it, and he forces himself out of the room to meet her. She takes off her mask and lays out markers, paper and tape on the table.

*“How’re you doing?”* she asks.

*“It’s 2020,”* he replies tiredly. *“Fuck.”*

*“No seizures? Have you been conscious all this time?”*

*“Just a headache. The usual.”*

They tape huge paper arrows all over the walls. Now Ilya can find the kitchen, the bedroom, the living room, and the bathroom. He feels a little better, even though the place looks ridiculous, like a child’s game - a giant maze for those who have forgotten the way to the kettle.

Sveta's brought crepes with jam – they are good.

*"I hope you don't expect me to cook," she says.*

*"Nah, I can cook, no problem. Thank you for this, by the way."*

*"I was waiting for Yuna to tell me I could come. They wouldn't have allowed me into the ICU."*

Ilya hums and stuffs himself with crepes – she won't tell him more about Yuna anyway, so there's no point asking. Is Yuna really family? His father's wife? Nothing makes sense.

*"After the accident, Andrei found my number and called," Sveta says, and Ilya stops chewing.*

*"What did he want?"*

*"He asked how you were doing."*

*"Hm."*

*"I told him you had a will, and he wasn't in it – then he called me a gold-digging whore and hang up."*

*"Do I? Have a will, I mean."*

*"Yeah. There was a close call a while ago, and you decided not to take chances."*

*"What happened?"*

*"Rough flight. But nobody got hurt."*

*"Hm."*

That he doesn't remember.

*"Are you married?" he asks.*

*"Ilya!" Sveta laughs at him. "You're not subtle - I'm not going to sleep with you!"*

Now that she mentions it, he could use a blowjob. He's pretty sure he'd feel better after one.

*"I'm just asking. Are you seeing anyone?"*

*"Ilya."*

*"Okay. Tell me something else, then."*

*"There's no toilet paper in the stores – that's wild."*

*"Huh, is there something in the water?"*

*“No, it’s the flu. A new one, COVID-19. They are talking about a lockdown, and everyone’s panic-buying.”*

*“Fuck.”*

Ilya feels helpless: he was supposed to be protecting her, and now she’s stuck taking care of him. The last person to take care of him was his father - a man who solved problems with brute force, money and connections. Ilya always felt that if danger came, his father would be there. His father, dead set on fighting an invisible enemy, saddled with two sons... Oh - he remarried. One blank in his head seems to have filled itself. Was it Yuna? No, Polina.

*“I’m sorry you have to be here.”*

*“I’m not. I want you to feel better, and there’s finally something I can do – sitting on my hands didn’t feel great. We were all scared.”*

*“Sorry.”*

She hugs him, and they settle onto the sofa, his head resting on her warm lap.

*“I miss your hair,”* she sighs.

Ah. Well, shaved hair is the least of his problems, and he doesn’t mind - but Sveta does.

*“Do I look ugly?”*

*“You look sick. But you’ll get better.”*

Ilya knows her well – she sounds sure even when she’s lost.

*“Do we have enough toilet paper?”* he asks, feigning concern.

Sveta laughs, her thighs jerking with the motion, but her hand never stops, gently petting the short hair near his forehead.

\* \* \*

**CANADA ANNOUNCES MAJOR COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS**

## Chapter 5

**@marylalala**

Day 5. Stared at the ceiling. Stared at my husband. Stared at the ceiling again. I'm getting a divorce

**@andyw**

My apartment smells like yeast. Pretty sure I love this sentient flour blob more than most people now #stayhome #staysafe

**@roarofatiger**

Okay the plants are watered, the floors are mopped, I've reorganized the spice rack by color. LET ME OUT OR I WILL RIOT

\* \* \*

It's official - they can't go outside anymore, and it's bizarre. Sveta sets up her laptop in the kitchen, and every evening they Skype Yuna. Then Ilya meets David, Yuna's husband.

"I'm going to have some puzzles delivered to you, son," the man says, and Ilya doesn't know how to respond.

After receiving the packages, Ilya stops pestering Sveta with whining and restless wandering from wall to wall. Instead, he anchors himself to the kitchen table, absorbed. He does need the mental exercise - David is very thoughtful.

Sveta goes out and returns with several bags of homemade food from the Hollanders, and Ilya stuffs himself full.

He makes a couple of trips to the hospital for an IV, and his headaches begin to ease. With the pain receding, he's left with a restless mix of boredom and pent-up energy. After Svetlana bluntly tells him to fuck off, he doesn't ask again. That leaves him with one reliable outlet: a jerk-it marathon. No porn, though - the browser on his phone is still disabled. He misses it; he does like to watch.

Then Sveta gets a call from home.

*"My dad has caught it," she mumbles. "The new virus."*

Shit.

*"You should go home."*

*"I don't want to leave you."*

*"Look, I'm better, and you need to go. Your parents need you. I'm fine."*

Well, he's as fine as he can be.

Shane - Yuna's son - takes her to the airport, and Ilya doesn't have much time to panic, to wonder what he's supposed to do next, when a man – it's Shane, it's his place - lets himself into the apartment. Sveta did promise Ilya wouldn't be alone. Shane's in a dark hoodie and a surgical mask, and there is something that Ilya should remember, but the memory won't surface, it's an itch he can't scratch.

“Hi,” says Shane. “I’m staying with you.”

“Huh, I thought Yuna would beat you to it.”

The man pauses – Jesus, the guy's so slow – then shakes his head.

“Okay. Sorry about this,” Ilya waves a hand at the signs and arrows all over the walls and doors.

“It's fine.”

The man doesn't look good – his slumped posture and unsteady voice betray him even to Ilya's faulty senses. Shane heads for the bathroom, and Ilya follows him like a shadow.

“You okay?”

“Yeah! I mean... yeah. Yeah.”

“One more ‘yeah’, and I’ll definitely believe you.”

“Oh, fuck off,” says Shane, and the delivery is jarringly, deeply familiar.

“Are you going to take off the mask?”

Shane shakes his head and scrubs his hands at the sink. Okay. Weird.

“Are you sick?”

“No? Drop it.”

“No? Then why don't you take off the mask?”

“Fuck off,” says the man and goes to some unmarked door. How to be absolutely suspicious and not to breed trust – a manual by Shane, Yuna's son.

Ilya steps right after him,

“Give me Yuna's number. Sveta and I Skyped her every evening, but I don't have my own computer.”

“You do,” Shane mumbles through the mask.

“I do? Here?”

“No, at home.”

“I want to call her. Now.”

“She’s... Eh...”

“Something happened,” Ilya deduces. He’s not stupid. “You’re in mask, you don’t want me to call her – is she sick? Did she catch it?”

His command of English grammar is in full retreat, but now there are few things he cares less about than this.

“I don’t know, okay? She has a fever – Dad’s with her right now, and I don’t know if I’m sick or not.”

And there’s no one else who Ilya knows. Sveta has left, only Yuna, Shane and maybe David are still there, but they have their hands full. Ilya can’t make it alone.

No. He must be brave.

“Don’t be stupid. We will live in one apartment – if you sick, you can at least infect me comfortably, and not like this.”

“I’m not going to infect you,” Shane snaps. “Fuck!”

He paces, plants his hands on a chair, and sags forward, breath labored. “It’s fine. Everything’s fine,” he murmurs, then sinks to the floor. “We’ll be fine.”

“Wow, Shane! Come on, let’s get you on the bed.”

Ilya lifts him off the beige carpet and heaves him onto the mattress. Shane slumps against him, dead weight, his head slowly coming to rest in Ilya’s lap. That’s when his own body decides to wake up - a jolt of sensation straight to the groin. Shane’s face is much too close to his crotch, and now it definitely not the time. No-no-no, not now.

Ilya needs to get laid, but there’s the new virus, the lockdown, the getting lost, the not recognizing faces – yeah. No. It’s going to be just him and his hand for the foreseeable future.

Shane’s breathing deepens. Feeling awkward, Ilya pets his hair in what he hopes is a calming, paternal gesture. It’s surprisingly soft - cool and heavy, like black silk. His own father would have killed him for hair like this. He’d prefer a buzzcut. He’d say Ilya looks like a real man now.

“You okay?” Ilya asks.

“Yeah, sorry. Yeah,” Shane mumbles and pushes himself stiffly off Ilya’s lap – is he embarrassed? Are they not close?

No straight man has ever put his head in Ilya’s lap, and he briefly wonders if it’s a Canadian thing - just bros being supportive. Are they friends? Shane certainly seems physically comfortable around him.

What if he's fucked Shane? He probably hasn't. Logically, a fuckbuddy wouldn't have let his mother stay at his side.

Shane sits up. Ilya stands – he should get water, tea, do something – and he sees Shane cover his face with his hands. A wedding band glints, but Ilya struggles to tell which hand it's on.

Does it matter? A ring is a ring.

“Is nobody waiting for you at home?” Ilya asks. “I have money, yes? Can't I just hire a help?”

Shane looks up – his eyes are wet.

“Mum's sick, but we're hoping it's not COVID. Dad's with her and with... Look, we don't need to hire anyone right now.”

And with who?

“I don't think your wife would appreciate that.”

Shane is silent for a long moment.

“I don't have a wife.”

“You're wearing a ring.”

Shane glances at the band, then back at Ilya.

“There's no wife.”

He leaves it at that, and Ilya feels he's missing something obvious. A marriage, but no wife. And Shane was just in his lap. Wait, is gay marriage legal in Canada?

“A husband, then?”

Shane sighs, “I really don't want to talk about it.”

“Marriage problems?”

“Ilya, it's not the time.”

Fine. He can drop it for now, but if Shane's going to hide Ilya's life from him, he'll need to share something about his own. Ilya can be unbelievably annoying – so annoying that Sveta promised to strangle him if he didn't shut his gob.

“Okay,” he says, backing toward the open door.

He busies himself with cooking and puzzles while time drips by. Eventually, Shane joins him, still in the mask.

“You're taking all this pretty well,” the man says.

“What? The fact I can’t remember more than ten years of my life? That the people who are supposed to be close to me are strangers? That I’m dependent on you all because my sense of direction is a horrible and I can’t recognize faces? Or that I don’t know if I’ll ever play hockey again?” Ilya’s voice sharpens. “Maybe you mean how well I’m taking the fact that you’re all too scared to tell me anything? Which part of this, Shane, am I taking so well?”

Shane just watches him, silent. Who the fuck knows what he’s thinking.

Ilya doesn’t want to burden him with whining.

“There’s nothing I can change. I have money, right? If it all goes to shit, I’ll still have money. Money is the most important thing.”

He doesn’t miss hockey – not exactly, but he misses moving, going somewhere, getting out of his head and into somebody else’s bed. And yet, he’s never felt more loved – by Sveta, Yuna, even by Yuna’s husband and her son. Everything they say - or don’t say, in everything they do – there’s so much love that Ilya wills himself to be grateful and not to do anything that might worry them.

He’s trapped in this apartment and in their love.

No. It’s not bad. Ilya is grateful. He probably loves them, too. Things could be worse.

He’ll get better. Everything will be fine. He’s brave. He needs to be brave.

\* \* \*

**OTTAWA URGES RESIDENTS STAY HOME AS COVID CASES SPIKE**

## Chapter 6

### @waitinghere

How to lose your job in one day: lockdown happens. What the fuck am I supposed to do now? Anybody know about any government support programs? I'm desperate

\* \* \*

“How rich am I?” Ilya asks, staring at Shane. The other man is still in a mask, but he’s sitting close on the sofa – close enough for it to feel intimate - and he’s not panicking about his mother. Ilya wants him to open his mouth, start speaking and never stop. He wants him to put his head in his lap again.

It’s good that Shane’s not holed up in his room – he’s sitting here as if he wants to be here. Ilya is not hiding either; this man makes him curious in more ways than one, and the living room is the only place where he can learn more.

“You’re comfortable,” says Shane. A fuck-ass word for “very rich”, but okay.

Shane’s looking at him, and Ilya really wants to study the face behind the mask. He stares back, openly.

“Were you living with your parents when Sveta and I were occupying your apartment?”

“Uh, no, that’s a rental. I was at home.”

“O-oh, Mr Landlord,” Ilya drawls.

“You asked!” Shane indignance sounds fake. A slow guy like this investing in real estate? Maybe he isn’t slow at all - maybe he’s calculating. Ilya wants to know how they met, but he’s already asked and got no answer. He stays curious.

“How many properties do you have?”

“Uh, four rentals, including this one. Then there’s my apartment and the cottage.”

Shit. A real estate mogul who dresses like a gym bro. If Ilya owned that much property, he’d dress like a pimp: dripping in gold, diamonds, and fur - all of it at once.

“So you’re rich,” Ilya says, shifting toward him - just a little.

“I’m comfortable.”

“Are you more comfortable than I am?”

“That’s not a competition.”

“It’s absolutely a competition. Do you also invest money?”

“Of course I do.”

Of course. If Shane is in business like Yuna is at the hospital, no wonder he’s rich. Ilya’s always had a knack for finding himself wealthy friends – he remembers a few of them. None of those friends were in the ICU, but Yuna was there. If she’s really family, Shane is, too - and Ilya is missing something. What is it?

“What’s with all the questions? Ilya... just tell me what you want.”

His voice, so gentle – Shane would moan so prettily.

“I want to go outside.”

“I’m sorry, but...”

Ilya wants to fuck someone and google himself. He wouldn’t mind hearing his own biography narrated while he fucks. Running a few blocks would also help. Or the gym. But mostly fucking and googling. Anxiety crawls under his skin.

He starts doing push-ups, then sit-ups. He’s going crazy, and he can feel Shane tensing – his answers growing shorter, almost monosyllabic.

Shane probably isn’t down to fuck, if Ilya’s reading his marriage situation right. Shane also feels... different from Sveta - maybe he’s just not the friends-with-benefits type. He’s married to a man, for god’s sake. But Ilya wants – really, really wants - to fuck. It’s the only thing that makes his idiot brain shut the fuck up - he knows it, he remembers it: he needs to fuck, and that will do the trick.

He runs restless circles around the living room while Shane just sighs from the couch, dark eyes tracking his every move.

He calls Sveta. She says her father is stable - good. He calls Yuna, but she doesn’t pick up.

“She’s been taken to hospital,” Shane says, his eyes wet – he never said a thing. Fucking asshole in a fucking mask.

“It’s been long enough. Take this shit off. You’re not sick.”

Shane nods and reluctantly pulls the mask down - standing close, Ilya is struck by the freckles scattered across his face. They are cute.

“You’re pretty,” Ilya says quietly.

Shane snorts – a bitter sound. “You’ve said that before.”

“What else have I said?”

Shane looks at him, and his face... Ilya is sure he’d finally be able to pick it out in a crowd. Shane is soft-featured and unmistakably Asian - how could Ilya have missed that Yuna isn’t a

typical Canadian name? He's lovely. There's something a bit awkward in his expression, almost virginal, even though Ilya knows he isn't. He's married. Still.

Ilya shouldn't be propositioning his married friends. No - he's Yuna's son, and if he makes a move and it blows up, he'll lose the whole family. He's pretty sure they are not blood relatives though - in-laws, maybe? He doesn't understand the connection, only one clear fact: he really, really shouldn't.

He's so horny it hurts, and he can't sleep - he lies there staring at the ceiling, willing himself not to cry. Why does everything feel so awful when he's alone? If Yuna doesn't make it...

He shakes as he sobs.

\* \* \*

### **@ShaneHollanderHockeyPlayer**

Thanks to everyone for the kind messages and support. Ilya is recovering at home, resting and focusing on his health. We look forward to seeing you all when it's safe [#StayHome](#), [#StaySafe](#)

### **@CentaursOttawa**

Our next game has officially been postponed - the safety of our players and fans comes first. In the meantime, take a look at what our team's been up to during the break! [vid 1] [vid 2] [#stayhome](#) [#staysafe](#)

\* \* \*

Ilya can't get an MRI scan - too many people with pneumonia need it more. Dr Teller speaks to him on the phone; they decide he's stable enough and light exercise wouldn't hurt.

Shane disappears for several hours and returns with a big set of dumbbells - he asks Ilya not to push himself, and he has to agree, otherwise Shane threatens to take everything right back into the car.

Shane's on the phone a lot - Yuna's stable, but the news that his father has been hospitalized is a hard blow. Apparently, David didn't want to worry him, and Shane is absolutely blindsided. Ilya sits with him through several panic attacks - he feels so lost he doesn't react when Shane's head drops into his lap. Then Shane says he has to go. Ilya begs him not to drive in such a state, but Shane says he has pills for emergencies.

When he returns, it's already dark outside, and Ilya stares at a fluffy dog who starts squealing and jumping at the sight of him. Oh, so that's the reason to be urgent.

"Oh my god!" Ilya can't believe his eyes. "A dog! You've been hiding a dog from me!"

He crouches down, but the dog meets him halfway, launching into his arms. Clutching the excited creature - it's the best thing to happen all month.

"Such a precious baby! Is it a girl?"

“Yeah.”

“What is her name?”

“Anya.”

“Oh! Is she my dog?”

“Eh... Yeah.”

“Where has she been all this time?”

“With me, my parents... there’s also a dog hotel... She was alone all day, and I had to get her.”

“Anya. Oh, you are such a beauty!”

Shane sounds bone-tired, and Ilya has to stop himself from offering to suck his cock. It’s not the right time.

He has a dog. She’s amazing, overjoyed to see him. He doesn’t remember her at all, but he loves her with his whole heart.

“What else have you been hiding from me?” Ilya has to ask.

“Your whole life in Canada,” Shane answers, his tone flat. “And in the States.”

Ilya knows he shouldn’t find it hot - how direct Shane is - but he does. He knows, somehow, that he’s felt this way before.

“Huh! So I played in the States. Did I get traded?”

“No. You chose to move to Ottawa.”

“Why on earth would I ever move to Ottawa?”

“...I can’t say.”

“Come on. Come on, it’s killing me - I need to know.” Shane stays stubbornly silent, so Ilya changes his approach. “Tell me something about us, then. About me and you.”

Shane sinks into the sofa. Ilya half expects him to say he’s exhausted, that it’s been a nightmare of a day. Instead, Shane indulges him. Does he not want to be alone, either? Does he find Ilya’s company just as comforting?

“You... ah, I don’t know what’s safe to say. Okay. You and I have a charity together.”

“Huh? What charity?”

“The Irina Foundation. We raise money and donate it to suicide prevention organisations.”

“We have a charity named after my mum.”

“Yeah.”

“Whose idea was it?”

“Uh. Technically, mine, but we run it together – and my mum helps.”

What kind of a friendship is this? That’s soulmate-level shit. Ilya is pretty sure Shane is his soulmate, and what is he supposed to do now? Oh god.

“Fuck. Okay. What else?”

“The tattoo on your arm – it’s a loon.”

“The Canadian wolf-bird,” the words spring out of his mouth – fuck, he knows that. Somehow, he knows.

“You remember?”

“Not everything, but... it’s coming back, Shane. Slowly. Help me. Tell me more.”

Ilya’s heart hammers against his ribs, loud in his ears.

“You got really scared the first time you heard one – that was at my cottage. There are a lot of loons there.”

“When was it?”

“A few years ago.”

Nothing. No more memories surface. Disappointing. Then - Shane’s phone rings.

“Sorry, it’s Rose. She needs updates about my parents - I have to take it.”

Who’s Rose and why is she calling this late?

Ilya listens as Shane talks – he already knows Yuna is stable and David’s left lung isn’t doing well. He’s so familiar with her, so gentle - Ilya hates her instantly. He’s just realized how important Shane is to him, and then she is there - a young or an older female voice? It’s hard to tell.

“So, Rose. Who’s that?” he asks as soon as Shane lowers the phone.

Let her be a relative.

“She’s my ex, but we’re good friends now.”

“Better friends than us?”

“Uh.”

“Is your marriage falling apart because of her?”

“My marriage is fine!”

Sensitive. Okay. Ilya’s sad, horny, jealous, and a dickhead, so he presses on,

“Will your husband get half of your property if you divorce?”

“Fuck off!”

Shane leaves, and that tells Ilya more than anything: he probably loves his nameless man deeply. He doesn't mention him at all, but he loves him - what's happening?

Ilya can’t calm down. Shane doesn’t show his face, locked away in his room.

He shouldn’t have pushed, but Ilya is climbing the walls. He needs... something.

Ilya can now find his bedroom, Shane’s bedroom, the bathroom, the kitchen - he peels the arrows off the walls, though paper signs stay stuck to the doors.

He can’t sleep, tossing and turning until Anya starts grumbling in protest, so he slips out of the room to find Shane in sportswear lifting dumbbells, and the guy’s ripped under all the hoodies. Ilya thought he couldn’t get any hotter – it’s fucking sad. Ilya has a sad crush on a rich Canadian guy with whom he runs a charity. Sad and horny at the same time – is there a word in English for that?

“When did you get all those muscles?” he asks. It is either this or dropping to his knees panting like a dog. Shane’s innocent expression only makes it worse. Oh no, fuck, come on.

“I’m a hockey player,” Shane replies.

“No way,” Ilya breathes out. “And real estate is what – a hobby?”

“I won’t be playing forever,” Shane shrugs, his shoulders strong and slick with sweat. The tank top doesn’t hide the outline of his chest. He’s flushed and so pretty, so fucking pretty, goddamn it, Ilya wants him desperately.

“No way you’re a hockey player. I don’t believe that. Stand up.”

Shane rises, dutiful and serious, still flushed from the workout. Would he get on his knees and suck Ilya's dick if he asked? Damn.

“Turn around.”

Shane turns, an amused little smile on his lips, and Ilya sees it now – the hockey butt. Shane really does play.

“Ah, I believe it now. You can’t fake an ass like that.”

Shane snickers – Ilya hears soft huff of his breath, and fu-u-u-ck, he wants that man. There has to be a way around his marriage. Whoever the husband is, the guy doesn't deserve Shane anyway. Ilya could probably take him in a fistfight.

Wait.

“You're out?”

Shane blinks and simply says, “Yes.”

“And you're still in hockey? Professional hockey, yes? For real?”

“There are a lot of players out now,” Shane shrugs. “It was hard at first, but things are getting better.”

“Who? Who's out?”

“Uh, Scott Hunter was the first one.”

Fuck, he remembers Scott Hunter. The New York Admiral's captain.

“He won the Stanley Cup and kissed his boyfriend on live TV. They are married now, by the way.”

“Scott Hunter and the boyfriend?”

“Yeah. There's a video from... Oh, right. You're not supposed to have screen time. Sorry.”

“No, no! If it's short, it will be fine! You know I'm getting better – show me. Shane, please.”

Shane sighs, pulls out his phone - it's huge, why are they all so big? - and goes quiet, typing something.

“Uh, here it is.”

The video has 20 million views – impressive. He watches the man, Scott Hunter, skate to the boards and wave to someone, then there's a guy stepping onto the ice. Ilya's heart is thumping as they exchange words, then there's a kiss, a hug. It's... lovely.

“Wow.”

“Right? And there's... Uh, there's Troy. He's on our team, and he's dating Harris, our social media guy.”

“You and I are on the same team?”

“Yes, The Ottawa Centaurs.”

“And our team is gay as hell.”

“I'd say we are inclusive.”

“What are you trying to tell me here?”

Is it Shane’s way of saying that he, Ilya, is out, too? No way. There’s no way – he’d never be able to go back to Russia. It would be a fucking nightmare, he’d lose everything - literally everything! There is absolutely no...

“Things are different now from what you remember. Really.”

Ilya’s not the one working out, but his breath is laboured.

“You guys are really brave,” he says finally.

“You’re brave too.”

Is Ilya out? Is Shane saying that he’s out? Damn. Oh god.

“What do you mean?”

“Just... in general. You’re a brave guy.”

And then Shane says nothing else. What a secretive asshole - it’s the longest emotional edging session Ilya can recall.

“You know I’m bi.”

Shane’s not surprised – the realisation that he can read emotions on Shane’s face is not as heady as the lack of surprise. Shane knows, and still puts his head in Ilya’s lap when he’s panicking. They are comfortable together – intimately so.

“Have we ever slept together? You and I.”

Shane looks away, too quickly.

“Sorry, I’m... I’m tired, and I have to...”

Did they use to sleep together before Shane married some asshole? Is that why the tension between them feels sharp enough to cut? How close were they that Yuna was in his ward every day? David called him “son” – was that just a turn of phrase, or something more?

Because if Ilya messed this up, if Shane married someone else out of hurt or spite, Ilya knows exactly how to fix it. The real question is, does Shane actually love his husband, or is he just hiding his unhappiness from Ilya?

## Chapter 7

Ilya dreams of his father: trying to offer him pills, only to have his hand - the one holding the glass - angrily pushed away. His dad was paranoid, difficult to manage, and Ilya understands that now. In hospital, he felt the same paranoia and helplessness. He still feels helpless, but he can't let it out - he refuses to become a greater burden to Shane; his frustration is not Shane's to manage.

Ilya always believed he took after his mother. Yet half of him will always be his father's, and sometimes it feels like it's the only part that's left.

His father was also confused and scared, he didn't understand what was going on, and Ilya still raised his voice. Who knows what Andrei did, that absolute asshole. Ilya should have been there.

\* \* \*

**NHL 2019-2020 SEASON PAUSED**

**ADMIRALS PLAYER TESTED POSITIVE FOR CORONAVIRUS**

**MUSEUMS SHIFT TO VIRTUAL TOURS DURING PANDEMIC**

**BAKING, GARDENING, KNITTING: HOBBIES BOOMING IN LOCKDOWN**

\* \* \*

**@day2nite**

okay but it's cruel and unusual punishment that Roz doesn't post thirst traps anymore. give the man his phone back for enrichment purposes! we are deprived!

**@CentaursOttawa**

We asked. You begged. They delivered. Your fave Centaurs share how they stay in shape. Is it getting warm in here?  [vid 1], [vid 2], [vid 3]

**@day2nite**

TROY BARRETT. TROY. BARRETT. I need him to crush me with his thighs, is that too much to ask? [#forevergrateful](#)

\* \* \*

Shane suggests the fans would love a picture, so Ilya poses with Anya on the sofa. He looks better in the photo than he feels, managing an almost sincere smile. After Shane posts it, Ilya talks him into reading the comments aloud - a moment that becomes the highlight of his day.

He's still without the internet. He doesn't know how to enable the browser, and the phone demands an Apple ID – what the hell is this?

\* \* \*

**@hollyandrozy**

NOT THE CURLS!!!!!!

**@freaktuesday**

Rozanov gets hurt and now nobody is playing hockey. I'm not saying these facts are connected, but...

**@day2nite**

Mr. Rozanov, sir? If you could just post a thirst trap, please. Sorry - a thirst trap. I meant a thirst trap. Sorry, I mean-

\* \* \*

"... No, honey, I'm fine, truly. A bit bored, but the food's okay and I've got my book. ... No, Shane. Shane. If you need space, take Anya to the park or go home. Please don't think you have to come here - they wouldn't let you in anyway. I know. I already asked. ... No, I asked because I needed proof to give you, so you wouldn't try. ... Yeah, we're checking in every few hours. He's doing better now. ... He apologized. He knows he was wrong. He won't hide anything like that again. How's Eeliya? ... Oh? Please send it!"

\* \* \*

Both David and Yuna are stable - Shane isn't allowed into the hospital, and he's not taking it well.

"Fuck, I should be there," Shane murmurs. Ilya knows he's spiraling, his thoughts about to corner him until he starts rocking back and forth, trying to calm himself. Ilya doesn't know how to help, so he begins to interject, turning the despair into a dialogue.

"You should go there and get sick too – three Hollanders at the same time. It's a hat-trick."

"Fuck off."

Shane keeps saying that, then melts under his touch as Ilya's hands smooth over his shoulders and down his back.

"We just spoke to Yuna. She'll be out soon. David is okay, but it's better for him to be under observation, yes? That's best possible outcome. The best."

"Uh-huh," Shane manages, trying to breathe deeper - his knuckles are white where he grips the back of the kitchen chair.

"We are lucky. You are lucky. The best outcome."

"Uh-huh."

"Look at Anya – she wants you to pet her. Give her a hug. Give her a kiss."

Shane looks down at the concerned dog, who is busy rubbing her nose against his legs. He dutifully pets her head.

“Now me.”

Shane hugs him too – no kisses, though, a point of disappointment for both Anya and Ilya. Maybe another time.

Ilya doesn't sleep much. Emotionally, he feels like shit. Not physically - not anymore - but he's restless and aching low. Not low enough to cry, just low enough to lie for hours staring at the ceiling, absently petting Anya. His girl stays close, leaving only when Shane takes her for walks.

Ilya tries not to let his moods show. But lately, he's been cycling through anxiety, sadness and horniness, none of which he can risk bringing to a... flatmate? who's already panicking.

“Do I have American or Canadian citizenship?” Ilya asks. He still doesn't know if he's officially out - and without confirmation, he can only guess and stress. Shane has refused to budge, refusing to tell him anything even when, one night, Ilya confessed his fear for the future. The asshole just said, “You're safe, there will be no problems,” and left it at that, which was spectacularly unhelpful.

“No, you don't,” says Shane. So much for ‘there will be no problems.’ “But it's in process. You will have Canadian citizenship, I'm just not sure how the timeline looks with the lockdown.”

“Okay,” Ilya nods. “Alright.”

Ilya is restless, aching so. He notices Shane isn't eating enough. He notices Shane isn't sleeping. And, over and over, he returns to the thought that Shane is just as horny as he is - that in their quiet moments together in the living room Shane looks at him with those deep, soulful eyes, and Ilya wonders if either of them will ever act on it.

He steps out of his room wearing nothing but a towel.

“Have I lost a lot of muscle?”

Shane is looking. He flushes easily - just the tips of his ears, which is somehow perfect. He parts those soft, full lips and says nothing.

“But still handsome, right?” Ilya takes a step closer. “Still made you look.”

Shane bolts to his bedroom.

Why not? It's a genuine question. Why does Shane keep refusing? Did Ilya misread his interest? Shane still wears his ring, but not once has Ilya heard him speak to his husband. He talks to his parents, to a few aunts, to Hayden Pike and JJ Dagenais - old teammates, to motherfucking Rose. He takes team calls in his room, but through the door Ilya can make out the murmur of many male voices.

The mixed signals leave Ilya unmoored: the intimate, almost erotic closeness when Shane is distressed, the immediate distance when Ilya makes it sexual, the constant scorching stares. He knows he shouldn't press if Shane isn't interested, but... damn. What if he is, and he's just waiting?

He can't be a creeper about it. He won't push.

When Yuna is finally released, she sounds ecstatic over the phone. Shane is out the door immediately, but he returns that evening - Ilya was sure he would stay with his mother.

That night, Shane is in his arms again.

"She's got older," Shane chokes out. "She looks so old now, Ilya. I was so scared."

What the fuck is Ilya supposed to do? He feels useless. He would usually make a joke, but he can't joke about Yuna. Not about her.

Shane's mother is home from the hospital, yet Shane still stays with him.

"Don't worry about me, Ilya. I'm fine. Shane visits for hours every day. Honestly, I get more help than I need."

Ilya knows he's missing something. The math doesn't add up. The wildest guess - the one he refuses to even consider - is impossible because Ilya will always go back to Russia. Always. His mother is buried in Moscow. He just can't be openly bisexual because if he were, he could never return to her grave - he can't be the one married into the Hollander family, so it has to be something else. Yet Shane is most likely in love with him, and his parents know.

Ilya has lost count of how many times he's got off to the thought of being loved by Shane Hollander.

Shane returns from his parents' house carrying a massive exercise bike - fuck, yes - and then goes back for yoga blocks and a mat.

"I want a treadmill."

"I'm not buying another treadmill. One is enough, and it's at home."

Whose home?

"And where is that?" Ilya asks instead.

Shane ignores him, so Ilya sighs and returns to his puzzles. Shane changes and begins to warm up, the exercise bike quickly plugged into the nearest outlet. Then he's on it, panting with a soft, rhythmic sweetness, as if he were jerking off.

He looks younger like this - almost innocent - head bowed, eyes closed, his breathing obscenely loud and intimate. Ilya gets on the nearest bike and starts pedalling, acutely aware of every soft sound escaping Shane's lips.

Oh. It's the first time he's remembered Shane.

*"You sound like you're wanking,"* he comments, not expecting a reply.

*"Fuck off."*

A jolt of desire shoots through Ilya - Shane knows Russian. Not the basics - those words in particular. A jolt of dread follows, just as powerful. Shane learned Russian for him.

He can't be out. No. He couldn't have left his mother alone. But... Yuna was allowed into the ICU. David called him 'son'. It was Shane's idea to start a charity named after his mother.

Shane's phone lights up on the table - Ilya sees Rose's name and the background image: a picture of him asleep in an armchair, Anya snuggled close.

No. No, he can't deal with this. Ilya retreats to his room and tries to calm down, but the attempt only tightens the panic in his chest. He falls asleep too early, before Shane and Anya return from their walk, and wakes hours later in the dark, his face wet. His phone is in his hand - he's calling Sveta. His ragged voice frightens her.

No, nothing is wrong, but he has to ask,

*"When was the last time I went to Russia?"*

*"Huh... I think it was the year after your father died."*

There's no other explanation. Fuck. No, no - why did he do it? Why did he hurt himself? Did he have to cut out a piece of his life just to be with Shane?

*"Oh, Ilya. Don't cry, it's fine. Everything's fine."*

*"How... how do I take care of Mum and Dad's graves?"*

*"You hire someone online - they do the work and send you photos. And whenever I go to Moscow, I visit them for you. I give them your love. Her grave always has the most beautiful flowers. Ilyusha... she would understand."*

He would have returned if he could - which means he can't. He must have chosen Shane, and now Shane is stuck with him, someone who can't remember the most important parts of his life, someone who gets lost just stepping out of the ward.

Is that why Shane keeps pulling away? Being with a sick person isn't hot. Ilya thought he didn't look too bad, though. His dick works fine, so does his mouth.

Has he lost Shane, too?

## Chapter 8

Shane doesn't want to give him the keys to the apartment, but relents the moment Ilya asks if he's a prisoner here. Ilya is so fucking tired - maybe he already hates Shane. He doesn't voice his frustration, though - Shane has a lot on his plate, and most time he's at home he's teetering on the edge of panic.

Ilya no longer hugs him when he starts rocking and mumbling to himself. His feelings toward his jailer are already too conflicted and confusing without layering intimacy on top, but he does feel guilty about it. What would he have done if his memory were intact? Would the man he was over a month ago curse him and call him useless? Would that man call him a bad husband?

Ilya can't help but feel pathetic and rejected. Shane kept pulling away from him after calming down, and maybe Ilya isn't handling it in the healthiest way, but god, is he tired of all this. Maybe the problem isn't losing Shane, but losing himself.

*"Sveta, tell me how to enable the browser. I also need my Apple ID and passwords – there has to be a way to restore everything."*

*"Ilya, I'm not sure it's..."*

*"I'm not stupid, I know that some parts of the last twelve years are missing, that I'm apparently am married to Shane Hollander, and I can't return to Russia. I may not remember, but come on – Hollander is a terrible liar."*

*"I knew you'd figure everything out."*

Yeah, no shit. Ilya can't shake the thought that Sveta would've told him everything already - if not for the Hollanders.

*"So how do I do it? I'm still struggling with this phone."*

*"Can't Shane help you? I'm sure it would be easier in person."*

Hearing his husband's name feels jarring. He refuses to think about him now.

*"Can I do just one thing without Hollander? Is he holding my leash? I'm so fucking tired of this – I want to do it now, without him."*

*"Well, you're the one who married him."*

*"And now I have to merge with him into one person and forget who I am?"* Ilya doesn't know what their relationship was like before the accident, but being constantly near him - so dependent and yet so politely rejected - is tearing his mind apart. *"Do you think spouses are always right? Are you seriously telling me you agree with how Shane and Yuna have been*

*hiding everything from me? I'm isolated from everyone and everything - and not all of it is because of the lockdown."*

*"I...No, I don't agree with them. But I don't want them to think I went behind their backs. We care about you - we love you. But I won't be the one who has to face the consequences if something goes wrong."*

*"Sveta. Sveta, please. If you don't help me, I'll find another way. I'll order a new phone or something. I'm going to do this, no matter what. I need you now. Will you help me or not?"*

*"Okay. Okay, yes, of course. But you have to stay on the line with me the whole time - if I hear something is wrong, I'm calling Shane immediately. And you'll set time limits for all your apps. You need to be serious about your screen time."*

*"Fine. Whatever. What do I do first?"*

It takes a while, but with Sveta's help, he gradually gets back his digital world: his email, the photos saved in the cloud, his notes, his messages, his social media accounts - everything.

His photo library is a window into a life he doesn't remember. Endless happy shots: he's with Shane, he's with Anya, he's with another dog he doesn't recognize, he's with strangers whose names are lost to him. There are screenshots of dictionary entries, photos of Yuna and David, a few of Sveta — she doesn't seem to visit Ottawa often. He has a lot of unread messages and emails, but they are not so important right now.

The contrast is jarring: the trapped, resentful man he is now as he is reflected in the darkened screen, and the smiling, contented person in the pictures. It's like one of them is a fake, but who?

*"Ilya? You've gone quiet. Say something or I'm calling Shane."*

*"It's just..."* he sighs. *"I don't visit you enough, do I?"*

*"Well, you're a married man now - you have responsibilities. And I'm still a free bird."*

*"I miss you."*

She's been his rock all this time, and he worries he hasn't been hers in years — he turned into a burden, a boulder of nostalgia. The days when he beat up racist bullies for her at school are long gone, and he certainly wasn't going clubbing with her — he hasn't taught drunk idiots a lesson in consent in a while.

*"Tell me if you need anything else. Anything, Ilya. And please don't do anything stupid."*

*"Listen, I want to go outside. Would you video call with me while I try not to get lost?"*

*"Are you sure you don't want Shane for that?"*

*"I absolutely don't. Sveta, I need space - I can't go on like this. I've been trying to... you know. I've been trying to get together with him, and he's been ignoring me. It's not even about*

*sex. He treats me like a child. I don't know what he's thinking - if he sees me as less of a man because of the amnesia - but if this marriage ends, I can't let myself end with it. Sveta, I feel so fucking bad - all the time."*

*"Shane won't divorce you. Come on, he loves you."*

*"Well, I'm tired, okay? I'm unhappy, I'm tired, and I need a break. I won't be trying anymore. I feel so fucking pathetic right now."*

*"Ilya, trust me - he loves you, and he won't file for divorce. You need to unwind, and... Well, you get depressed sometimes. It's possible that you're going through that now, too."*

*"Like... like Mum?"*

*"Yes. And you have a therapist. You'll probably find her number in your contacts - her name is Galina, and she speaks Russian."*

*"Oh."*

*"I think you should talk to her. She's helped you before, and I'll help you, too. You can rely on me, but you can also rely on Shane. And... I think we all are doing our best - just because it's not enough doesn't mean we're not trying."*

*"Since when are you a therapist too?"*

*"Piss off. You still need Shane for you citizenship. I don't want to have to marry you to keep you here - that's Shane's job. You also love him, but that's just a bonus."*

*"You wish you were married to me - I'm awesome."*

*"I lived with you for a week - you were such an annoying prick. Shane may be the only one who thinks you're adorable. I wanted to set you on fire."*

Ilya snickers. He absolutely did everything to piss her off - on purpose.

\* \* \*

**@IlyaRozanov**

Missed me? 😊 [pic 1]

**@hollyandrozy**

HOLY SHIT HE'S BACK!! THE KING HAS LEFT CONFINEMENT 🏰🏰🏰🏰

**@gossippageCND**

Ilya Rozanov just posted for the first time since his accident - seems to confirm the paralysis rumors were false. Thoughts? [screenshot]

\* \* \*

**Harris:** Shane, you sly dog! You should have warned me that Ilya is back online – he’s broken the internet

**Shane:** What do you mean? He isn’t online.

**Harris:** [screenshot]

\* \* \*

“Ilya-” Shane just barges in – what a way to make him feel like a naughty teenager and not his fucking husband. Fuck. Motherfucking fuck. “You shouldn’t have any screen time!”

Ilya’s whole body tenses. He wills himself not to snap. He shouldn’t start. No, he really shouldn’t.

“Knock first,” he says instead, his voice low. Shane stops short as if he’s hit a wall.

“What?”

“Ever heard of knocking?”

“I... I’m sorry.”

Shane looks absolutely lost – his eyes are wet, but Ilya has never seen him actually cry. He takes a step back, hesitates, then retreats and closes the door quietly behind him.

Fuck. That didn’t help. If anything, Ilya feels worse - hollowed out and petty. Fuck, no, that didn’t help anything, and Ilya feels even more like shit. Maybe they need to talk, but he’s afraid he’ll feel worse on the other side of the conversation, and he just doesn’t have the energy for that.

\* \* \*

“So he didn’t tell you anything either... Shane, don’t get me wrong, but we haven’t exactly been open with him. Yes, it was for his own good then - but now that he’s better, maybe it’s time to... I know, I know I wasn’t there. ... Shane... Shane, you couldn’t have known how he’d react. Head injuries are unpredictable. But you have to find a way forward, because - judging by how he’s behaving - whatever you’re doing now isn’t working. Have you thought about talking to a... Okay. Okay. I’ll call him. I’ll try to talk to him. But honestly, it’s been over a month. He must be feeling... I know, but the hospital is at capacity and Dr Teller can’t just... Shane. Shane, listen - Ilya’s getting better. Shane...”

\* \* \*

**@IlyaRozanov**

? [pic 1] [pic 2]

**@hollyandrozy**

**@IlyaRozanov** DON’T TOUCH THE CURLS I AM BEGGING YOU 🥹🙏

\* \* \*

He hasn't remembered anything new. It bothers him, the way flashes of memory and dreams have become so rare lately.

Yuna calls. He asks how she's doing - she's better, she says, but her sense of smell is still off, and she can't enjoy her morning coffee like she used to. Then she asks how things are with Shane.

"I think you both should talk to someone."

"Like a marriage counselor?"

"So you do remember that."

"I googled it."

He can hear the disappointment in her voice. Honestly, he wishes the Hollanders could hear the same in his. What should he say now - apologize?

"David is getting released from the hospital tomorrow. He's really excited to go home."

"Finally. Can you ask Shane to come help you? Maybe stay with you both for a while?"

Yuna goes quiet on the other end of the line.

\* \* \*

Shane leaves early to help his dad settle in at home. Ilya video calls Sveta and forces himself outside. It's better than the time he left his ward, but he still struggles - Sveta's little comments help him navigate.

*"Have you talked to Shane?"*

*"Can we not talk about Shane fucking Hollander for one second? Huh? Please."*

*"But I'm your biggest fan! I ship you so hard. I want my disgustingly happy hockey husbands back."*

*"Piss off. I just... I hate being treated like a stupid, beloved dog just because I lost some memories."*

*"I get that. You should really talk to Galina about it."*

*"I've already texted her. We have a video call the day after tomorrow."*

*"Thank god. Honestly, Ilyusha, sometimes I don't even know how to respond to the things you say."*

One thing has become painfully clear to Ilya: he needs more people. If he were stuck alone with Shane - without Yuna or Sveta just a phone call away - he'd have walked out the fucking

window by now. He needs more voices, more faces. Maybe then the static in his head would quiet down.

He also needs more independence.

He goes out with Anya, and when the streets begin to swim, his sweet dog nudges him gently back toward home if he stops nervously and starts looking around. He goes out a third time that day and returns to find Shane rushing out the front door, wild-eyed.

“Ilya!”

“Hi.”

“I thought you’d left.”

“Left where? I only have one set of keys, and I don’t have money.”

It comes out harsher than he means it to, but he’s not at his best. He’s just dead tired, and he wants to rest a little more, get some sleep, and do everything else later.

The next morning, he finds a wallet on the kitchen table – the cards useless without the PIN codes he can’t remember - along with a second set of keys and an address: their address, the home they shared. He thinks he should say something, but Shane is already gone. He doesn’t return until evening - still refusing to stay at his parents’ place.

It’s easier to navigate now. After a walk with Anya, Ilya opens his phone again. In his notes, there is a list of products that Shane likes and dislikes, several plans that obviously fell through, a couple of movie titles. Unfamiliar birthdays are marked on the calendar, as well as the date of the wedding anniversary — there are hearts next to it, and he doesn’t remember, he doesn’t fucking remember anything.

Galina is silent about their past sessions and insists on focusing on the present. Ilya tells her he hates Shane, and they spend the hour unpacking that — only for him to feel even emptier by the end. He’s so frustrated he seriously considers smashing his phone against the wall.

Of course, he won’t. He still needs it to escape this fucking apartment.

He watches a few old Boston–Montreal games, and the way he and Shane played against each other - all that competitive fire and physicality - is so intense he ends up jerking off and then crying himself to sleep. Okay. So, he’s depressed.

He finds a “Best of HOLLANOV on Ice” compilation and sees himself kissing the man during an All-Star game - no one even blinked. Ilya must have loved him - he realizes. Ilya must have loved him so much to choose him.

He opens his own Wikipedia page and, for the first time, reads past “married Shane Hollander.”

Shane’s friend outed them. The same friend Shane still talks to — more than he talks to Ilya now. So Ilya didn’t even make that choice: Pike, the bastard, robbed him of the opportunity to

return to Moscow, and he stayed here, trying to move on, trying to build something special with Shane, and for that, Pike gets to be what? A family friend? Maybe Ilya still goes to his house for dinners?

*“Are you kidding me?” Sveta shouts when he tells her about his conclusion - unexpected. “Shane proposed to you, you said yes, and then you were outed! Are you calling Shane your second choice? For fuck’s sake, Ilya, think before you speak.”*

Sveta rarely curses, and Ilya is genuinely taken aback.

*“I don’t get it.”*

*“You do, though! You do understand that you don’t have to come back! The Church doesn’t give a flying fuck about people who die by suicide. They won’t do anything, but you can still pray for her, honor her memory, fund support programs and live your damn life. Shane is your life! What’s not to get?”*

*“Sveta, calm down.”*

*“You calm down!”*

*“You really like him, huh?”*

*“He’s hot and he’s talented. If you don’t want him, I’ll take him and peg him until he forgets your name.”*

*“Jesus. That’s... is that how you talk now?”*

*“I’ll tag team him with Rose if I have to.”*

*“What the actual fuck is happening right now?”*

He really needs to talk to Shane. If even Sveta is tired of his shit, something has to change.

## Chapter 9

After Shane has dragged the exercise bike into the apartment, Ilya gets haunted by flashes of them together - visions of a happiness so radiant it feels like a crime to let it go. The images are utterly random, and Ilya struggles to make sense of them, to explain or impose order.

He downloads a diary app and begins to reconstruct his life. He googles himself, rearches his social media, desperately trying to piece it all together.

\* \* \*

### **A NEW STRAIN ON MATRIMONY: AMID LOCKDOWN, SARAH TALLEY JOINS A RISING NUMBER SEEKING DIVORCE**

### **YOUR MARRIAGE IS STRUGGLING. HERE ARE 7 WAYS TO FIX IT, STARTING TONIGHT**

\* \* \*

“So,” Shane says, decisively pulling out a chair at the kitchen table. It sounds serious, and Ilya is not ready. No-no-no-no-no - maybe Anya needs another walk? His eyes dart to the empty dog bed, then to the couch. “Ilya, I’m not divorcing you.”

Ah. Sveta called him - of course she did.

“Okay.”

“And I’m really sorry. I haven’t been handling this right. I need to explain. Please... Please, listen. I am sorry.”

Honestly, an explanation would be fucking nice, even if Ilya has guessed the broad strokes. He shouldn’t snap - this is an adult conversation, and he is an adult. He can handle this.

“Okay,” he repeats, striving for calm.

“At the hospital, when I told you... Well, I said something and you reacted really badly. And then I was stupid enough to say more, and you had seizures. It was one of the scariest things in my life. I never want to hurt you like that again. I... I’m so sorry, I’m-”

Ah. He should have guessed about the seizures; there were hints, but... Oh, Shane is crying. Well, not quite crying - he’s doing that thing when no teardrop falls, but lakes of them well up, held back by sheer will. Ilya shouldn’t find Shane irresistible when he’s sad, but he’s not a good man, and Shane’s so hot.

“I wasn’t aware you were at the hospital with me,” he says, instead of offering to suck his husband’s cock - a monument to adult restraint. Shane’s single step toward him makes him

want to forgive absolutely fucking everything. He's desperate to trade this tension for the raw, bright flashes of a happiness he can only remember in glimpses. He keeps craving.

"You didn't...? Right." Shane turns his head away for a moment. When finally meets Ilya's gaze, his cheeks are wet. "They kicked me out after the seizures. Mum stayed."

It explained everything. Every fractured detail snapped into a whole - oh, wait.

"You're the hoodie guy? The one who told me about my dad?"

He punched Shane. He punched his husband – even his own father had never lowered himself to do that to his wives. Fuck, he's worse than his dad. The shame is instant and corrosive: that's why. Shane wasn't withholding; he was afraid.

"I'm so sorry," Ilya chokes out. "No excuse. I'm so terribly sorry..."

"You're sorry? I triggered your seizures. You could have died, Ilya. There could have been permanent damage, and I was just-"

"I literally punched you in the face, Shane."

"Well, I should've kept my damn mouth shut!"

"I married you! And then I hit you!"

"I play hockey for a living, Ilya. I've taken punches before."

"How does that excuse-"

"And it doesn't excuse me ignoring doctor's orders either." Shane probably hasn't noticed it yet, but he's gently rocking back to forth – he's as stressed about it all as Ilya. "You were talking to me on the phone when you got hit. I heard you shout, and then the line went dead. It was fucking horrible. And then I came to the hospital and made it worse. I'm so glad you're alive, but fuck. It was... it was bad."

Oh.

"And then your parents caught COVID," Ilya says, mostly to himself.

"Can you believe my Dad was afraid to tell me he got sick? Am I really that bad at handling things? Why am I so bad at this?"

"Well, it's a stressful time," Ilya offers, the understatement hanging lamely in the air.

"No shit! Sorry." Shane stands up and shakes his arms, as if reading himself for a fistfight.

"Well, you probably have questions. I... I really don't know where to start."

The thing is that Ilya wants the conversation to stop – Shane is vibrating with stress, and Ilya'd rather have a good cuddle session on the couch and let the tension bleed away. But

offering comfort feels like pity, and Shane is in no state to read Ilya's own crumbling composure.

So he deflects, "Start with Rose Landry." It's the perfect pivot: a topic of genuine interest, strategically far from the hospital.

"Can we not?"

"What? I want to know. There's so much gossip online - it's hard to know what's true. How long were you two together? Why did you break up? I mean, you clearly have more to say to her than to your own husband who you live with."

Shit. It was a worthy effort to keep it cool, but the bitterness has won.

"I'm sorry. And I can't believe you googled her."

"Can't you? Really?"

"She's my best friend! When I met her, we just clicked - we could talk for hours. I thought she was the one."

"The one?" Ilya's laugh is sharp. "Talking for hours - yeah, I've noticed."

"We weren't compatible. There's nothing between us but friendship."

Compatible. The word is a tripwire in Ilya's mind. He remembers a club - Shane and Rose on the dance floor, her hands under his boring white T-shirt. Back then they looked pretty compatible, and Ilya has no trouble picturing that compatibility playing out between the sheets.

"What, you couldn't get it up for her? Can't say I blame you."

"Fuck off. I'm gay, Ilya. Fully. And you don't get it - you actually like women."

"Not all women - I still have standards."

"What, someone like Svetlana?" Shane snaps. "Who you wanted to marry for fucking citizenship? I know your standards, you asshole."

"You don't like Sveta?"

"I like her, I think she's great. I don't like you being a dick to Rose."

"Okay then. I can be not a dick. Tell me why you still talk to Hayden Pike, the guy who outed us. It wasn't nice. Right? I'm not a dick here."

"For god's sake..."

"You wanted me to ask questions," Ilya spreads his hands, a mockery of openness. "So I'm asking. I'm sitting here, ready to hear some answers. Start talking."

"It was an accident – he hadn't noticed us in the video. He apologised."

"So I can just forgive anyone, too, right? Just like that?" Ilya leans forward, his voice dropping to a razor's edge. "Well, stop fixating on the seizures. They were an accident. I can forgive you, just like you forgave fucking Pike. Right?"

"That..." Shane's voice falters. "That's not the same."

"Right," Ilya says, the bitterness sharp. "Because Pike didn't just out you. He outed me, too. I couldn't even visit my mother's grave for the last time."

As the words leave him, he realizes it wasn't a guess - it was a fact. He had been planning the trip, checking flight tickets...

"Oh." Shane's voice was soft. "That's why... You never said."

"That Hayden Pike is an asshole? I refuse to believe you're surprised."

"I'm sorry. Ilya, I'm so sorry."

Shane is staring at him with his wet eyes, and in any other situation Ilya would be already on him, kissing him, but Ilya's done with rejection, and, well, he does feel bad about the punch - he doesn't want to scare Shane.

Shane holds his gaze for a long moment, then looks down with a sigh,

"I don't know what else to say other than that I'm really sorry."

Ilya doesn't know what to say either. Okay. He could just... not be a dick. He is recovering. Relationships need work. He could choose not to be an asshole for once in his life.

"So," he says, forcing a lighter tone. "If Rose Landry and I were drowning..."

"Oh, fuck off!" Shane laughs, and Ilya can't help a cheeky smile in return.

Shane is studying him again, then stands up straighter. "Well, if there's nothing else..."

"It's enough for now."

"Okay."

The silence is excruciating, and Shane awkwardly retreats to his room, only to return moments later with a book - something about hockey, Ilya's sure. The man settles on the sofa and pulls out a pair of...

"You wear glasses?" Ilya is genuinely surprised. Shane looks like a hot little nerd. A seemingly innocent but desperate, slutty bookworm. What the fuck is that? How come Ilya's never seen him read before?

Shane hums in agreement – he's definitely not looking in the book.

“Are you seducing me?”

“No,” Shane says hurriedly – oh, but he is.

“You are! What’s with the... uh, sexy Literature teacher look?”

“The what now?” a gentle smile, so gentle that it pulls Ilya from his chair, drawing him closer. Shane doesn’t look away, his mouth slightly parted. The heated gaze slowly drifts down to Ilya’s crotch.

Okay. Ilya palms himself through his sweats, and Shane’s lips part further on a silent breath. That mouth... Ilya could find a use for it. The sweet, red tips of Shane’s ears are a devastating contrast to the sinful frames of his glasses.

“I could...” Shane whispers.

“What?”

“I could help with that.”

“Oh, could you? Only if the glasses stay on.”

“Okay,” Shane breathes, looking up through his lashes. What an obedient, perfect slut - Ilya isn’t going to last.

Shane tugs his sweatpants down, and his hot mouth is on him.

\* \* \*

## **FIVE WAYS TO IMPROVE YOUR SEX LIFE DURING LOCKDOWN**

\* \* \*

“Hi! ... It’s really nice to hear from you. ... Shane? Ah, he must be busy. ... Okay, I’ll try Eeliya, maybe he knows. ... Yes, okay! Bye-bye!”

David looks at her, eyebrows raised.

“That was Rose. She’s been trying to reach Shane all evening, but he hasn’t replied yet.”

“That’s odd. He’s usually so quick.”

“I know. I’ll call Eeliya. But if he doesn’t pick up...”

“We wait,” David interrupts. “We wait at least a couple more hours before we go over there.”

“But what if-”

“The Cottage Incident.”

“Okay. Fine.” Yuna lets out a breath she didn’t know she was holding. “I mean, yeah. I hope it’s the case.”

\* \* \*

Shane’s smile is blissful, and Ilya is sure his own matches it. He drags his prickly chin across Shane’s chest, and the man wriggles deliciously. Ilya’s smile widens.

“I missed this,” Shane whispers.

“It’s nice you don’t have to go anywhere. That I can just keep fucking you.”

“Do you remember? Us, I mean.”

It’s a complicated question.

“Bits and pieces. I don’t know how to put what I remember in order, or how to make sense of it. But I, uh... I remember you proposed – there were candles. Electric ones.”

“You remember.” Shane’s smile is almost drunk, soft - as if he’s on good meds. He reaches out to touch Ilya’s face. “Good.”

“I remember visiting you at hospital,” Ilya says. “You were pretty fucked up.”

“Ah. Hockey accident.”

“Were we together then?”

“Kind of? Almost.”

“What kind of answer is that?”

“Ilya,” Shane interrupts his thoughts, giving him a sweet peck on the lips. “Do you feel better? Do headaches bother you?”

“No, I’m fine - I feel okay,” Ilya whispers back.

“Let’s go to the cottage.”

# Chapter 10

## Chapter Notes

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

“Why did you all act so much cooler about your hospital stays than I did?” Shane grumbles, carefully folding a shirt into his suitcase.

“Maybe you just never noticed how uncool we were,” Ilya suggests from the bed, smiling. Shane was so wrapped up in his own head that he missed how much everyone else was struggling. Maybe Ilya should tell him - but not now.

“Yeah. Maybe.”

Shane sighs and unzips another suitcase.

“So, I’ve been thinking...”

“Ominous,” Ilya comments. He’s quite proud of recalling the word; usually, the English in his head sounds much better before he opens his mouth – not after.

“I probably should... no, I definitely should see a therapist. I feel so stupid about how I handled everything. I couldn’t help you - you were stuck helping me instead. All of you - Mum and Dad included - needed me, and I was just... useless.”

“Everything’s fine now,” Ilya says, his brow furrowing. “Why are you thinking about it again? I’m better. Yuna and David are better. Anya is doing better than all of us combined.”

“I need to prepare if something like this happens again. I need plans,” Shane says, turning away from the suitcases and crouching – oh, no, it’s bad.

“Okay. We’ll make plans. Come here. Just come here.”

Shane exhales in a few sharp bursts, then stands. He joins Ilya on the bed and buries his face against his shoulder, breathing uneven and warm against his neck. Ilya wraps an arm around him, pulling him close.

“And also,” Shane murmurs into his collarbone, “in case Rose and you are ever together near water... both of you should be wearing...”

It takes Ilya a second, then he gets it.

“Are you serious?” he laughs, the sound startled out of him. “It was a joke! A stupid joke - I wasn’t actually asking who you’d save!”

He doesn’t get to be an asshole and add that if Rose Landry started drowning, he’d probably have something to do with it before Shane continues, voice muffled against his skin.

“I know. But... I’ve ordered life jackets. I mean, I already had a couple. But I ordered more. We can take them when we travel.”

Oh.

Oh. He’s actually serious. It’s killing him - the sheer, overwhelming force of what he feels for this beautiful neurotic Canadian man. Damn. He’s married to him. They’re out. They live and work together... but does Ilya deserve any of it?

Shane is absolutely gorgeous and caring beyond words. He’s serious and sexy, an obedient slut in bed, his cock is sweet, his chest and ass feel incredible under Ilya’s hands, and he’s a top-tier hockey player. He doesn’t seem overly irritated by Ilya’s antics; he’s considerate. His family is nice. Yuna and David treat Ilya like a son. Shane’s rich - richer than Ilya, if Google doesn’t lie - and he’s Ilya’s husband.

But Ilya’s fucked in the head in more ways than one. His family is dead - the part of it that actually cared about him, at least sometimes. He’s an immigrant. He doesn’t know if his career is over because of some drunk asshole. He loves Shane, and he doesn’t deserve him. His mum would have loved him, too, no doubt, but his father would have crushed him with his words. And Ilya’s terrified he’ll lose himself to dementia, that he’ll become his father, or that he’ll end things like his mother did.

Shane has folded every bit of his clothing so neatly - Ilya remembers that. When they first - first? really? - hooked up, Shane folded his clothes, too, and that’s when Ilya fell for him. So what does he do with that now? He selfishly wants this marriage.

\* \* \*

**@ShaneHollanderHockeyPlayer**

❤️ [pic 1]

**@IlyaRozanov**

Husband is hot, but count the votes again. 4th place for me? Really? Look at me – 4th place? You all are blind, go see a doctor [pic 1] [pic 2] [pic 3]

**@IlyaRozanov**

Anya is ready for a walk [pic 1] [pic 2]

\* \* \*

Ilya still can’t handle car rides. They have to stop every fifteen minutes so he can get out and breathe the nausea away. He’s pretty sure pills exist for this, but he didn’t expect it to be this hard. He’s fucking exhausted by the time they get inside.

The cottage is peaceful. Ilya loves it immediately, though not as much as Anya – the dog is too excited to finally run without a leash. He feels leashless here, too: carefree and horny. His plan is to fuck Shane in every room, on every surface, trying to see if anything jogs a memory, and then fuck him again, just to be sure.

He is relaxed and loose-limbed, he's better. Shane's muscled thighs bracket his hips - a perfect fit. Here, on Shane's bed, over Shane, pressing his hands into the mattress on either side of that smiling face, this has to be the best place on earth.

Shane, of course, has a small synthetic ice rink near the cottage. Of course he does - the man is obsessed with hockey. There's a gym, too. No wonder he ended up married to Ilya: the more hockey in his life, the better.

He has every single NHL video game - naturally. There's a library of hockey books, a huge printed portrait of them hugging on the ice. Hockey is everywhere. And so is Ilya: his stuff on the shelves, his food in the pantry, his favorite drink in the fridge.

"Did you jerk off to me before we started hooking up? I was the first draft pick, and good hockey makes you horny."

"No," Shane says - like a liar.

"You always wanted to fuck me because I'm a better player," Ilya nods, absolutely sure.

"You are not better than me!"

No, he's not. Ilya has already watched the highlights of literally all of Shane's games, all his - and their shared - interviews, and the documentary shot in this cottage. He's seen himself, lost on the ice, while Shane was lying unconscious. He's compared the stats - Shane is a little better than him at hockey, a fact he is never, ever saying aloud. It feels like if he admits it, Shane will file for divorce - the man is so into hockey he wouldn't want... It's not a thought Ilya welcomes, but it won't leave.

"Will you divorce me if I stop playing hockey?"

Shane shoots upright in panic.

"You want to retire?"

With everything that's happened, hockey hasn't been a priority, but if Ilya gets the chance to play with Shane again, he'll take it - the thought triggers a spark of excitement and the cold dread that the chance might never come at all.

"I don't know yet. You know I haven't been to a doctor, and all the MRI machines are booked. So I don't know. Maybe I can't skate anymore? Is that possible?"

"Do you want to try?"

Ilya doesn't know. Or maybe he's just afraid to find out what the answer will mean - for Shane, for them and for everything that could still fall apart.

"What happens if I can't skate?" he asks.

"We'll find the best doctor. There are rehab programs, we'll-"

“What if I never skate again?”

“Shit. I don’t know. Fuck, that would be horrible.” Shane’s eyes glisten. Ilya is sure he’s imagining himself in his shoes, his existence hollowed out and meaningless without hockey because for Shane life is hockey. But for Ilya? What is life for Ilya? Is it Shane who he doesn’t deserve?

“Will you divorce me if I can’t?”

“What? No! What are you...?” Shane looks hurt. “I married you because I can’t live without you! I love you! Ilya, you know we’ll have to retire eventually. I just don’t want it to happen like this. Why would you even say that? Stop talking about divorce! Fuck!”

Ilya doesn’t know if he believes him and whether he should be ashamed for doubting. He definitely should stop thinking about divorce – he doesn’t want it.

“Let’s go then. Let’s skate,” he decides.

\* \* \*

**@CentaursOttawa**

Your essential viewing for tonight: a compilation of the sexiest goals by the sexiest player of the year, Shane Hollander 🔥🔥🔥 You're welcome. [vid]

**@Haasy**

Can’t wait to get back on the ice with [@ShaneHollanderHockeyPlayer](#) ...and the other guys, of course 😊

**@EvanDykstra**

[@Haasy](#) Me too!

**@IlyaRozanov**

[@Haasy](#) me too [vid]

**@hollyandrozy**

[@IlyaRozanov](#) THE KING IS BACK! FUCK. FUCK. OMG. I LOVE YOU BOTH SO MUCH THIS IS NOT A DRILL!!!!!! THEY ARE SKATING TOGETHER 😭😭😭

\* \* \*

They work out together, but Shane insists on low-intensity training. Dr. Teller finally calls back: no MRI scans in the near future, but maybe in a month, and then they’ll talk about returning to professional training.

They cook. They take Anya outside. They clean. They play games. Ilya finally joins team calls - the guys don’t know about his memory, but with the season on hold, they aren’t talking about anything serious anyway, and Ilya is relieved to be finally included – he doesn’t handle isolation well.

They fuck - all the time, actually. And when Shane closes his eyes, lets go and just takes what Ilya gives him, the feeling is so overwhelming that Ilya wants to shout his love. But can he, when his own memories are full of holes? Is he allowed?

“What do you remember?” Shane asks afterward, his voice soft.

Ilya knows, with a sinking certainty, that the answer will disappoint him.

“Little things. I think I actually remember your house. Where do we live now, by the way?”

“With me. You sold your place and a few cars to fund the charity.”

“I still can’t believe I’m here. In Canada. Married to you.”

“Is it that hard to believe?”

“Yeah.”

“Is it... a bad thing?”

“Oh, no. It’s very good. Amazing, actually. I’m ready to look at your freckles every day.”

“Really?”

Ilya smiles. “Really-really.”

“I love being married to you, too.”

“*Я тебя обожаю,*” he says in Russian.

Shane lifts his head from his shoulder. “I don’t know that one. I know *I* and *you*. What does it mean?”

“Uh...” Ilya searches for the word in English, but there’s nothing. “Wait.” He grabs his phone and taps open the translator. “Adore. It means ‘I adore you’.”

Shane’s face lights up. He kisses Ilya’s cheeks, his forehead, his mouth - soft, eager presses like an overexcited puppy. The warmth of it hurts, a dull ache spreading behind Ilya’s ribs, and he could cry from its weight.

“I want to remember,” he says, voice low. “But it’s not working. Will you tell me about us?”

“Yeah. Okay.”

Shane tells him about Saskatchewan, the first time he walked up to Ilya while he was smoking somewhere he shouldn’t have been. He tells him about the hotel gym, the two of them cycling side by side.

“I remember that! You sounded like porn. Did you want me then?”

“Maybe?” Shane answers honestly. “Everything was so confusing back then, but... I felt something.”

Ilya writes it down in his diary app.

“I bet,” he says, a slow grin spreading, “that I looked at you in Saskatchewan and thought, ‘What a cute, polite Canadian boy. I hope he won’t cry when his team loses.’”

“Fuck off,” Shane laughs, shoving him gently.

“Want to watch something? I don’t feel like moving.”

Shane hums in agreement and picks up his tablet. A hockey game is paused on the screen.

“No. No hockey tonight. Something else.”

They settle on something romantic with a fair amount of shooting. Ilya is endlessly amused that Shane doesn’t recognize Brad Pitt. Shane frowns every time Ilya remarks on the lead actress’s beauty, and Ilya just laughs and kisses his temple each time.

Still, he feels a little off. The heroine’s name is Jane, and it’s a hook in his memory, pulling at something important.

“Do I know any Jane?” he asks.

“Huh?”

Shane isn’t even trying to stay awake. His eyelids are heavy while Brad fucking Pitt runs around a house, shooting at his sexy wife.

“Do I know a woman named Jane? It sounds really familiar.”

Shane opens his eyes and looks at him carefully, his drowsiness gone.

“Do you remember Lily?” he asks instead.

Ilya frowns. Lily and Jane.

“No,” he says, “but the names are familiar.”

On screen, Brad Pitt shouts, “Jane!” - a raw, desperate sound. Very sexy of him. Jane is sexy, too.

“Jane isn’t a woman,” Shane says carefully, his voice measured. “Shane–Jane. Lily–Eeliya.”

It clicks. Ilya knows exactly when it happened. He grabs his phone, opens his diary app, and scrolls through notes, screenshots and photos until he finds it. 2011.

“You got scared of fucking. We blew each other. I asked for your number. There was Scott Hunter!”

“Not with us,” Shane clarifies, a flush creeping up his ears. “He was next door. And I wasn’t scared, I just... Scott Hunter was right next door! And now I know that he knew, so...”

Ilya remembers typing his number into Shane’s phone. And when he wakes the next morning, he remembers even more. He hears the loons on the lake and remembers. He watches Shane studying a recipe for burger patties and remembers this exact moment, and doesn’t stop him from making far too many. It’s funny. They’ll be eating burgers tomorrow, and the next day, too.

He still can’t remember the accident itself - the scream of tires, the moment his head hit the pavement. But maybe that’s for the best.

\* \* \*

## **OTTAWA CENTAURS’ TROY BARRETT ANNOUNCES ENGAGEMENT TO BOYFRIEND**

## **NHL’S HOLLANDER AND ROZANOV RENEW VOWS IN PRIVATE CEREMONY FOLLOWING ROZANOV’S ACCIDENT**

\* \* \*

**@hollanovwins**

All my years of tapping at the boy aquarium and telling the boys to kiss each other keep paying off! Congrats, Troy! ❤️

**@HockeyTroyBarrett**

@hollanovwins Thanks! I’m not marrying another player though. Only Roz and Holls can handle this much hockey

**@IlyaRozanov**

@HockeyTroyBarrett Wishing you very happy marriage. Try not to get divorced! ❤️

**@HockeyTroyBarrett**

@IlyaRozanov 😊 We'll do our best, man

**@hollyandrozy**

feeling so single rn ngl

**THE END**

Chapter End Notes

So, what do you think?



## End Notes

English is not my native language, and any mistakes are there because I haven't studied enough.

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