

'Cause I just want you here tonight

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'Cause I just want you here tonight

by [WhimperSoldier](#)

Summary

“I can’t do this.” He said and Ilya’s hands found his waist to ground him. “Riku grabbed Obaasan from the hospital, and I can feel my mom starting to spiral. Minu hired a decorator for the house so it could look perfect for today, can you believe that? I’m going to be sick.”

Ilya ignored the low-hanging fruit about all the pillows Shane liked having around.

“You are four time Stanley Cup winner, have silver medal and many score records. An old lady scares you?” He asked and when it seemed like Shane might just nod, Ilya added “Think of it as game. And we win games.”

“Ilya, you can’t win at Christmas.”

“Says who?” Ilya demanded. “We win other things, why not this?”

Shane looked at him, the determined, cocky tilt to his jaw and then his husband kissed him and laughed. “Alright, sure, we’ll win Christmas.”

or

Ilya meets Shane's extended family and learns about the true spirit of Christmas.

Notes

I need more fics exploring every little detail about these two's lives and so this is my attempt to pad those numbers. That said, as someone who has a complicated family dynamic, read the tags please, family is complicated and these are no exception!

The title comes from THE Hollanov Christmas song, "All I Want for Christmas" by Mariah Carey.

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

Ilya had never seen Yuna thrown off her game. There had always been a steadiness to her, an unshakable quality like a rock against the waves. It was something her son had inherited, a trait which he loved, but it had vanished somewhere between Ottawa and Toronto as they made their way to what Ilya could only assume was all of their deaths if the vibe in the car was any indication.

“Remember to bow to Obaasan, and don't smile, she hates that.” Yuna reminded them for the third time in the last hour. Shane had gone quiet beside him, the way he got before big games. “We got the names down?”

That was for Ilya. “Your sister, Minu, married to her husband Takashi, two children, twins Emiko and Hana, and your brother Hiroto with his wife Dina and their sons Ren, Reo, and Riku. Your mother should only be called Obaasan.” He smiled, saying slyly. “How did I do?”

“Great, you did great.” Yuna said softly, throwing her hand back and Ilya took it without thinking, giving her warm palm a squeeze. She might not have even felt it, the way she was watching the road. So much like her son when she focused in on something. It made her a force to be reckoned with when it came to her work with the Irina Foundation, but here locked in the car it was directionless.

“You know we don't have to stay the weekend.” David tried again. It had been a familiar refrain and Ilya and Shane shared a look in the backseat.

“And give Hiroto the satisfaction? I don't think so.” Yuna hummed, still holding Ilya's hand over the center console but seeming to forget about it. “God he was so smug when he called! You should have heard him!”

“I did hear him, you put it on speaker phone.” David said but Yuna was more talking to the air than to them.

“Saying I've never done anything for mom! Who pays for her treatments? Who got that in-home nurse after she fell?” Yuna demanded, not even waiting for them to respond with You. “Hell, she lived with Minu for two years, I pay for her care home, but he's the one who is doing all the work?”

“Your sister was always thankful for the help, Yuna. You've done what you can.” David tried again and Yuna's hand clenched around Ilya's without thought. She was biting her lip like Shane did, twirling her glasses around her fingers like he did. It was also clear to Ilya that all of this was because Yuna felt guilty.

When the call had come, Ilya had been at the house finishing up a puzzle with David (dogs playing poker, 1000 pieces) and the moment Yuna had answered in what must have been stilted Japanese, David had gone still and stood up, already walking over to place a hand on her shoulder.

The mix of languages was difficult to follow, his grasp on English was alright on a good day, but too many names confused him. What he did grasp was that someone was sick and

someone was dying and they wanted Yuna to come to say goodbye. Ilya didn't need to know Japanese for that, he knew the tone of the words, the way Yuna folded over, hand on her head, as if trying to force the thoughts to stop bouncing around your skull and settle into some semblance of sense. It was painfully familiar.

David had gone to grab her a cup of water when Ilya had sat down next to her. She'd been looking at her phone lock screen where a picture of Shane was displayed, not even ten and done up in little pads and with a tiny stick.

She didn't turn to him, but she did speak softly when he sat down.

"My mother, she..." Yuna slid her finger over the screen and Ilya realized her home screen was a photo of the four of them taken at their wedding. Something clenched in his gut. "She cut me off when I married David. Said I made a horrid mistake."

"Families are complicated." Ilya said softly. He better than anyone could say that. Yuna might not have known all of it, but she knew enough about his relationship with his father and nonexistent relationship with his brother to know he understood.

"Yeah, and I could have forgiven them. But..." She placed her head in her hands. "David's parents were worse. Said the nastiest things but then they died and I thought it would be a good time to reconnect. Shane had just been born. I made it work for a few years, but they just kept..." She paused again, and Ilya felt wrong footed when he realized she had tears swimming in her eyes. "Oh, Ilya, the things they said about him..."

He froze with his hand hovering between them. Finally, after a second too long, he scooted closer to fold her into a hug. Shane had always said he gave the best hugs and it had become something of a point of pride for him since then.

"We starting a hug circle?" David asked and then Ilya was wrapped in warm arms. It was strange but not uncomfortable, though he felt weirdly like he might cry. He pushed it down when David pulled back and gave their shoulders a little shake. "Don't let Hiroto get to you. He's always been jealous and mean. But I also think you need to do this. I would give anything just to say goodbye."

Ilya felt something choke him, his own emotions maybe, and he desperately wanted Shane to get back from his run so that he could simply hold him. Unbidden, he saw his mother, felt the ghost of her arms and the knowing ache she had left behind. Beyond her was the nebulous anger and loss which his father's passing had planted in him.

"She is sick?" Ilya asked and Yuna nodded. "My family is...complicated. But separating on my terms was better than not."

Yuna reached out to take his hand and then the tears fell. "Yeah, I think so too."

"And if they are assholes, then fuck them." Ilya added and Yuna's laugh was so sudden it was a snort and David's gasp was cut off by Yuna nodding her head.

"Yeah, then fuck them!" She huffed.

“Fuck them!” Ilya nodded back and then they were both crying and that was the exact moment Shane returned from his run to his mother and husband sobbing on their couch, yelling expletives.

Now, Ilya looked over at Shane who was distracting himself with Duolingo as they stood outside the car in the snow, waiting for the gas pump and for Yuna to finish fixing her make-up in the gas station bathroom. The Cyrillic letters flashed over the screen as Shane blew through the little daily tasks. Ilya leaned over and in Russian asked, “*How bad?*”

“*Bad.*” Shane muttered back. It was only when they stopped for gas could Ilya ask for a more detailed reason. “We used to be closer, but my Obaasan really loved my uncle, and my mom and aunt always fell by the wayside. I know they used to say things about me. Mom always tried to hide it, but you can always tell when people are talking about you even in another language.”

Ilya wanted a cigarette but he figured showing up to a Christmas function reeking of smoke was not a good first impression. And despite the bad energy and the growing dislike, Ilya did want to make a good first impression.

“Can you tell me any other details?” Ilya asked. “Cheat sheet?”

“Well for one, get in good with my Aunt Minu, she is the best cook you'll ever meet. When I was younger and they lived closer, I'd always trade my cousins' lunches.” Shane's smile flickered. “They got shit for their names, so I figured they shouldn't also get shit for what they ate. It also helped that she was a really good cook.”

“Emiko and Hana.” Ilya repeated, trying to sound like the Google pronunciation.

“They go by Emily and Hannah.” Shane leaned back against the car, watching the gas gauge slowly climb. “They always got pissed when we were kids that no one mispronounced my name.”

“You can't control that.” Ilya defended. “If I punched everyone who mispronounced my name, all my friends would have concussions.”

“All your friends do have concussions.” Shane argued. “And it was just different. My grandma was really traditional, when my mom named me I guess she really ticked them off.”

“And your male cousins?” Ilya asked. He clicked his finger against his pant leg to distract from the need to pull out his lighter. Shane caught it and then grabbed his hand, bringing it up to press a kiss to his knuckles. “Were they bad too?”

“The Rs? Yes, they're all fucking assholes.” Shane leaned around the pump to watch his parents who were now talking to the attendant. “Riku, the youngest, wasn't too bad but Ren and Reo made our lives fucking miserable. They played hockey too when we were young.”

“You were better than them.” Ilya concluded.

“Leagues. Literally.” He gave a little smile and Ilya leaned in to kiss his cheek. “They quit when I was ten. Ren works in a bank, I think, and Reo is a chiropractor. Riku does something with birds.”

“Not as good as national hockey star.”

“Not according to my grandmother.” Shane said bitterly. “It never really bothered me, but I know it bothered my mom when she'd say things about my choices. She never thought I'd go pro and when I did, I think she felt mad she was wrong and took it out on my mom.”

“Yuna is too nice.” Ilya clicked off the gas and Shane went to grab the handle.

“That's rich coming from you.” Shane said, not unkindly. “You're a lot like her, too loyal to people.”

“Pot kettle black!” Ilya gasped and pointed. “Stayed with team who were assholes for whole season!”

“That's different!” Shane defended. “And the saying is the pot calling the kettle black.”

“Pots can't talk, stupid saying.” Ilya muttered and then buried his head into Shane's shoulder to stop the argument before it could go anywhere else. “Will they like me?”

Shane went still, the lid clicking closed right before Ilya felt arms wrap around his shoulders. “Honestly?”

“Honestly.”

“Most of them are going to hate you.” Shane said softly and Ilya jerked up. “Not you, you, just like, the idea of you.”

“What?” Ilya demanded. “I am nice guy!”

“The nicest, but my cousins all hate hockey because they kept getting compared to me growing up and my grandma hates it because she never thought I'd get this far and my uncle is jealous of anything his sisters do. You should have seen the fuss he kicked up when mom took over the Foundation. There's a reason you've never seen them at my games or at the rink.”

“I will win them over.” Ilya decided and Shane's face did something complicated where every muscle seemed to clench. “What, you think I not charming?”

“You're very charming, but my family is also very messy.”

“I like messy, I marry you.” Ilya said.

“I'm not messy, when is the last time I was messy?” Shane demanded.

“Last night when I put my tongue—”

“Shut the fuck up my parents are coming back!” Shane hissed and then shoved Ilya back into the car.

When they finally pulled up in front of the house, Ilya expected it to look different. It was a colonial with white shutters and a big yard, clearly well-cared for even under the piles of snow. Cars were spilling out the driveway and they all got out like a small army preparing for war.

“Everyone ready?” Yuna asked, giving them their marching orders. “Shane, you're taking your Aunt, you're her favorite. David, distract the boys? I've got my brother.” She looked back at Ilya. “Ilya, make friends with the twins, they'll keep you safe from the worst of it.”

“Okay.” He gave a salute which got a small smile out of her.

The door opened before they could get up the stairs. A girl popped her head out, about their age but with piercings and dyed black hair and a tattoo peaking out of her ripped top. “Oh thank fuck, Auntie Yuna, if you'd come any later I think mom might have finally snapped.”

Shane leaned in to him, “Hannah.”

Ilya nodded and waited while they all shuffled in until he got close enough to hold out his hand. “Ilya, you must be Hannah.”

“Ah, the fresh blood.” She smiled and then leaned around him to mutter to Shane, “They're going to eat him alive.”

“That's what you're here for.” Shane took Ilya's arm. “If you keep him out of the firing line, I'll make sure you get those tickets you were posting about. Maybe VIP passes too?”

“Fuck, Nini, you drive a hard bargain.” Hannah huffed and then nodded. “Got yourself a deal, come on Eel, let's set you up near the tree so Obaasan can't see you through the lights.”

Ilya leaned around her to mouth to Shane, a smile on his lips, “Nini?”

“Not another word.” Shane hissed.

Ilya was shuffled along and into the living room, impeccably set up like a scene from a holiday movie with miles of tinsel and garlands. An older woman who looked very similar to Yuna stepped out of the kitchen, took one look at Yuna, and seemed close to tears.

“Yuna!” She called and Yuna followed it with “Minu!”

“How bad?” Yuna asked and her sister sighed.

“Called from the car, Riku's grabbing her. You know mom, Hiroto can do no wrong. We can do no right.” She smiled, seeming to realize they had an audience right after she'd finished talking. “David! Good to see you, and Shane, look at you! And who is this?”

“This is Ilya, my husband.” Shane introduced and even after almost two years, the way he said it still thrilled him.

“Shane spoke much about your cooking, said you were best in the country.” Ilya smiled winningly. “And he would know.”

“Oh, he was always a sweetheart.” Minu smiled but there was a tension to her lips, not the mean kind, but like someone trying to find the words. “Well, we’re happy to have you and you know the whole...gay thing is fine!”

“Thank...you?” Ilya said with a raised eyebrow and Minu seemed to blush so hard it made him wonder if it was a family trait.

“My daughter! Is gay, that is.” Minu explained. “We’re a very accepting household.”

“Ah,” Ilya said and then looked to Shane for help.

“Auntie, can I help you in the kitchen?” He asked. “Ilya and I have been trying new recipes and I’d love for you to see my skills.”

She seemed charmed and Ilya watched them walk through the doorway, Shane glancing back at him once with wide eyes. Ilya gave him a thumbs up which got him rolled eyes.

“Emmy, we get Nini’s boy toy.” Hannah shoved him into a chair tucked up behind a beautifully decorated Christmas tree. A girl, looking both like Hana and not, was leaning against the couch. There was a girl behind her, pretty with long dark hair and the look on her face which told Ilya she knew exactly who he was.

“Hi, I’m Emily, this is my girlfriend Aki.” Emily held out her hand and Ilya took it. Aki waved.

“I’m a big fan! When Emmy told me who exactly her cousin was, I swear I nearly fainted.”

“Was that the only reason you wanted to come this year?” Emily demanded but it was playful, not an argument.

“Oh yeah, only reason.” She said, then leaning in like she was giving gossip, “not the crazy fight that we all know is coming. Your aunt hasn’t come to Christmas in like what, ten years?”

Emily put down her phone and in a move that made her look strangely like Shane, curled her legs up to her chest and muttered, “maybe this year will be better.”

“Sure, and Obaasan is going to jump on the table and start doing a jig.” Hannah mocked. “Besides, she’s already pissed about Mr. Cold War here.”

“Hannah!” Emily hissed. “Sorry, ignore my sister, she was raised in a barn.”

To change the topic, Ilya asked “So, Nini?”

“Oh fuck, I completely forgot that’s not his name.” Hannah laughed. “I think our mom called him Shaney when he was a baby, but Reo thought his name was Shiny, and we couldn’t say that, so we just called him Nini.”

“Obviously.” Ilya smiled, thinking of the little round face on their walls being lovingly called from behind the camera.

“So what’s the deal with you, are you like—” Hannah started and from Emily’s horrified look, Ilya figured it would be something rude or insulting but she was interrupted by the sound of a back door opening and what sounded like a herd of animals released into the house. “Oh shit, they’re back.”

The ‘they’ in question were three men, two younger and the third who had to be their father. One had his hair slicked back so sharply the curved swoop at front looked like it might be made of plastic. The other wore a nice leather jacket and well-tailored pants, all new, giving him the appearance of an old man trying way too hard. The father, undoubtedly Hiroto, had a glare to him and seemed to immediately sense eyes on him because he locked his gaze onto Ilya’s in an instance. Without realizing, Ilya found himself smirking.

Not one of them was nearly as handsome as Shane, and the same pride he felt during a good game came roaring back here, knowing that his husband was the hottest man this family had to offer.

When he said as much to the twins, they let out startled laughs and Aki spit out her drink onto Emily’s hair. Ilya, being the nice son-in-law he was, offered to go find a towel.

“No, here. Fold it like this.” Minu was directing Shane and his husband’s face lifted when he spotted Ilya in the doorway.

“I need a towel? Spilled soda.”

“Oh, those girls! Cabinet to your right, second shelf.” Minu turned and watched him carefully. She was submerged in massive metal pots bubbling away, pans sizzling, and dough of all types in various states on the wooden island top. “Wait, was this pie crust or for dumplings?”

“Dump...lings?” Shane answered and then cringed. “I’m going to check on the spill.”

Shane all but shoved him out of the kitchen and into the little hallway, leaning his head into Ilya’s shoulder. “Shane?”

“I can’t do this.” He said and Ilya’s hands found his waist to ground him. “Riku grabbed Obaasan from the hospital, I can feel my mom starting to spiral. Minu hired a decorator for the house so it could look perfect for today, can you believe that? I’m going to be sick.”

Ilya ignored the low-hanging first about all the pillows Shane liked having around.

“You are four time Stanley Cup winner, have silver medal and many score records. An old lady scares you?” He asked and when it seemed like Shane might just nod, Ilya added “Think of it as game. And we win games.”

“Ilya, you can’t win at Christmas.”

“Says who?” Ilya demanded. “We win other things, why not this?”

Shane looked at him, the determined, cocky tilt to his jaw and then his husband kissed him and laughed. “Alright, sure, we’ll win Christmas.”

“Good attitude.”

“Thanks, *Captain*.” Shane hummed and Ilya locked that idea down for later because the door slammed open and Minu shoved them out of the way in her haste to get to the foyer.

Ilya could swear the temperature dropped ten degrees when the bundled form of Shane’s grandmother walked in the door. She was small, even wrapped up in what looked to be six coats, yet when she looked around, it was like a queen surveying an army of underlings. Only when she settled on her son did she look anything close to a mother. Her face wrinkled up and she took his head between her hands, speaking in smooth Japanese. Hiroto nodded and hugged her, responding in more stilted sentences. When she walked past her daughters, she handed Minu her coat and focused her sharp eyes on Yuna.

“You came back.”

“I was invited.”

“So I have to be dying for you to bother to see your family?” Obaasan demanded. Her voice was almost accent free, but there was a touch at the edges. “Where is the boy of yours?”

“Hello, Obaasan.” Shane stepped forward and Ilya didn’t know if this tense moment was the time to introduce your very not straight husband, but Shane just pulled Ilya out from the hallway. “This is my husband, Ilya. We play together.”

That was a bit of an understatement, they’d won the Cup last year, but the way Shane was folding himself up was not promising for the remainder of the night. When Obaasan’s eyes turned on him, he gave his mostly polite smile, but all it got him was a critical once-over and a nose turned up at him. Shane’s hand squeezed his tightly.

Hannah and Emily came over and said hello, and Aki got a glare too which made him feel better. The boys were better received, the eldest and second eldest being folded up into hugs the woman hadn’t even bothered to give her daughters.

“Who wants dinner?” Minu asked with forced levity and a fake smile, hands shaking around her mother’s coats.

If anything, dinner was worse. The years he’d had with Shane’s family at the cottage had been some of his best memories of Christmas since he was a boy, and yet the way it seemed one woman could suck all the joy out of a room had to be studied. Ilya, David, Yuna, and Shane were on one end, Hiroto and his sons alone the right side of the table, Minu and her daughters along the other. A bland looking man, probably Minu’s husband, sat closest to Obaasan as a physical barrier. Obaasan, of course, sat at the head of the table. Opposite her was empty but the untouched glass of some grainy smelling alcohol gave him the idea it was in remembrance for Shane’s grandfather who’d passed when he was young.

Ilya metaphorically poured one out for whichever poor asshole married her.

“So, Shane, I hear your team traded you.” One of the boys, Ilya couldn’t care less which one, asked over turkey. “Tough break, bud.”

“I actually asked for the trade. Two years ago.” Shane said and then, “And it got us a Cup.”

“A cup, yeah.” The other, Ilya thought it was the eldest, mocked. Shane just kept eating and Ilya felt his grip go tight on Shane’s thigh under the table. “Obaasan, did I tell you, I’ve been practicing?”

He went off on what Ilya assumed was a sentence, but it was more stilted than his father and clearly memorized rather than any actual knowledge. Ilya knew that both firsthand and from watching Shane learn Russian. There was a way the words sat in your mouth, he found, which usually told you if people knew what they were saying.

“Oh, good, good!” She said and then cut right back to Shane before settling on Yuna. “You should teach Shane to talk better, you know what he was like when he was a child.”

Ilya’s head shot up. Yuna went still and David cut in, probably smart because Ilya was thinking about jumping the table. “Shane talks fine, he’s interviewed all the time. I’m sure if you ever watched ESPN or did sports, you’d see him talk plenty.”

David raised his glass and Ilya had never loved Shane’s father more. He knew that the relaxed energy he brought to the family was not a lie, but there was a core to him that Ilya had always liked, a protectiveness Ilya knew was reflected in himself. Ilya quietly clicked their cups together. David bumped his shoulder in return.

Emily talked a bit about her degree, something in journalism which Ilya found cool, and the youngest of the cousins, Riku, went off on a tangent about migratory birds which was nice because it distracted Shane enough to not notice the way his grandmother was seemingly plotting his downfall at the head of the table.

The worst part, the part which had him sitting up like he was second string about to jump the boards, was that from the tension between them, Ilya knew this had nothing to do with Shane at all. This was Yuna’s mother knowing that Yuna had few weak spots to press and Shane was both the easiest and more obvious.

“So Ilka, you play hockey I presume?”

Ilya stilled. So, now Yuna had two weak spots. Ilya looked up, met his mother-in-law’s eyes and then smiled slightly. He was a more difficult target to hit, in part because he had a thicker skin, but also because she knew nothing about him.

“Yes. People tell me I’m good.”

“Where are you from?” She asked instead. “You’re certainly not Canadian.” Obaasan demanded, holding out her glass for a refill from her daughter.

“I’m from Russia. But I’m Canadian same way as you.” He said and he saw the way everyone at the table was still, eyes falling to their plates, even Hiroto.

“Oh you were running from persecution were you?” She laughed, small and controlled and Ilya leaned over to have Shane translate.

“Преследование.” Shane explained and at Ilya's incredulous look he shrugged.

“Oh, yes.” Ilya said, unsure if she was trying to start something or just ignorant. Maybe both. “Very illegal to be gay in Russia, even little bit like me.”

His grandmother scoffed but dropped it, turning to ask one of her other grandsons something. Ilya glanced over at his family and caught Shane's lips pressed into a firm line like the way they did when he was trying not to laugh. When Ilya jabbed him in the ribs, he let out a squeak that had their side of the table laughing.

“Something funny?”

Again, Ilya thought, sucking the energy like a vampire.

“We're just talking about Russian, Obaasan.” Shane said. “I'm learning it and Ilya mentioned a funny word.”

“Learning Russian before Japanese.” She phrased it as a statement but it was really a thinly veiled accusation. “Anything you want to teach us or will you two keep whispering like children? You were always so immature.”

“I have good word for you, for a respected older woman. We call them ведьма.” Ilya explained and Shane's smile dropped and the jab of his elbow into a healing bruise from a recent game was worth it for the way his grandmother could sense she was getting made fun of but couldn't prove it.

“Yuna, control him.” Hiroto hissed and Ilya hated that, hated when people treated him like he was some rabid animal to be handled. Yet, Ilya did realize that the whole table had gone silent and a wave of shame filled him.

To him, this was a rude woman he could mock, but to them she was someone both loved and loathed. She made their lives nightmares, so much so that they treated her arrival like a funeral, and yet they all kept showing up to endure it. That was something he more than anyone could understand. Love was funny like that.

“I'm sorry.” Ilya said suddenly and Yuna's eyes flashed over to him. They were like her son's, so brown that the tears always looked stark on their waterlines. Ilya sighed and turned to Obaasan. “I have had a rough week.” He apologized to his mother in his mind before he said, “I lost my family, I am protective of this one.”

Shane's hand was over his, gripping so tightly, Ilya could feel his nails.

“Oh, well. Good.” Obaasan said, thrown off. It didn't take her long before she straightened up. “A smarter boy than the last one you raised, Yuna. More polite. When I talk to you, you meet my eyes, you don't interrupt—”

“Fuck you!”

Yuna stood so abruptly that the whole table shook and she looked as surprised to be standing as the whole table was to see her standing. The entire room was watching her in unadulterated shock, mouths open and unmoving.

“Fuck all this! All this pretending and lying...I love you all but...” She laughed and then gestured to everyone, “Fuck all of you for doing this! Mom is dying, and I’m heartbroken and scared, and grieving, and—and angry!”

Ilya watched with awe as Yuna seemed to realize she had a captive audience.

“Dad’s gone. I miss him everyday but that’s no reason to pretend like me and Minu don’t exist! To say all those nasty things about us! About me!” She gestured to Shane who looked like he wished he could be subsumed into the chair he was sitting on. “And Shane was not a mistake! So what if he took a bit longer to speak, or to make friends? He was a great kid, the best, and now the whole world gets to see that!” Yuna took a deep breath and more in control of herself said sharply, “And Ilya is a fantastic husband to our son, and he shouldn’t have to apologize for calling you what you are acting like: a rude old *hag!*”

The world landed with all the subtlety of an atomic bomb. Obaasan gasped and Ilya had never been more unsure of how he should be feeling than at the moment. Yuna looked proud, standing tall even in the face of her sister’s fear and her brother’s anger. Shouts rose up, the twins diving out of the way and the boy cousins all echoing anything their father said. Yuna never so much as flinched.

“If you want to talk, you know where to find me. We’re leaving.” Yuna said and her boys followed her, Shane nearly jumping the table to get out of the corner and Ilya was right behind them. When he risked a glance back, Hannah was flashing him a thumbs up and Emily and Aki were laughing with their heads tilted together.

Yelling followed them as they grabbed their coats and abandoned any of the dishes they’d brought along to shove themselves into the car. Ilya climbed over Shane and his husband even grabbed him by the belt loops to pull him over and onto the other seat. Yuna smacked her husband’s arm.

“The keys, start the car David!”

“I’m trying!” He yelled as Hiroto started marching across the snow and the car turned over a few times before igniting. Shane was yelling, gripping at Ilya’s arm as his uncle marched towards them, like he was some zombie instead of a family member.

Finally the engine turned over and they tore off into the night. For nearly three miles no one spoke. The heat was blasting and that was the reason Ilya blamed for why his throat was so tight.

“What the hell did I do?” Yuna leaned back and covered her face with her hands. “I shouted at my mother!”

“She needed shouting at.” David reassured her and Ilya saw for the first time a reflection of his own marriage. Even more so when David reached out and took her hand. “We can turn

around if you want, but you wanted to let go on your own terms. Those sounded like terms to me.”

Yuna looked back at them, at Shane who watched her with those same teary eyes, and then at Ilya who had, since the words came out of her mouth, feared that he had been the thing which drove a spike between herself and her mother.

“No, you’re right. This was a long time coming,” She smiled and then rubbed her face vigorously. “But maybe we invite Minu and the girls over next year?”

“Done.” David said and then, “You know, seeing all this, I’m kind of glad my parents are dead.”

Ilya and Shane made a choking sound, and Yuna smacked her husband's arm with a hissed, “David!”

“What, Ilya gets it!” David looked at him and then laughed when he saw in the rearview mirror that Ilya was laughing so hard he had literal tears in his eyes. Ilya, for his part, was trying to keep quiet about it but his attempt to stifle himself only made him laugh harder and that set off Shane who set off Yuna.

A warm hand took his, Shane's, and in the dark of the car, laughter still hanging in the air, there was only one thing he could think to say.

“Merry Christmas. I love you all.”

Shane's grip grew crushing when he said softly “I love you, merry Christmas.”

“Merry Christmas Ilya, we love you.” Yuna said softly. “And I'm glad I get to spend Christmas with my family.”

Ilya raised Shane's hand up to his mouth for a delicate kiss.

“Me too.”

End Notes

Please consider leaving kudos and a comment, they are the only thing to help me coming out of the absolute Hollanov hangover I'm going to have tomorrow after the finale.

Happy Cottage Eve to all who celebrate and like any other holidays too!

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