

The Long Change (Between Games)

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/76454861) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/76454861>.

Rating:	Not Rated
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid , Heated Rivalry (TV)
Relationships:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov , Shane Hollander & Ilya Rozanov , Shane Hollander & Rose Landry , Rose Landry & Ilya Rozanov , Shane Hollander & Hayden Pike , Cliff Marlow & Ilya Rozanov , Ilya Rozanov & Svetlana Vetrova , Rose Landry & Svetlana Vetrova
Characters:	Ilya Rozanov , Shane Hollander , Rose Landry , Svetlana Vetrova , Cliff Marlow , Hayden Pike , Original Male Character(s)
Additional Tags:	Book 2: Heated Rivalry (Game Changers) , Ilya Rozanov Loves Shane Hollander , Shane Hollander Loves Ilya Rozanov , POV Ilya Rozanov , Ilya Rozanov Needs A Hug , POV Shane Hollander , Anxious Shane Hollander , Jealous Shane Hollander , Shane Hollander Needs a Hug , Ilya Rozanov Takes Care of Shane Hollander , Jealous Ilya Rozanov , Ilya Rozanov-centric , Hollanov - Freeform , Canon - Game Changers Series & Heated Rivalry (TV) Combination , Episode: s01e05 I'll Believe in Anything (Heated Rivalry) , Hockey , Drunk Shane Hollander , Good Significant Other Ilya Rozanov , Montreal , Los Angeles
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2025-12-26 Completed: 2026-01-12 Words: 41,858 Chapters: 30/30

The Long Change (Between Games)

by [colorsflashing](#)

Summary

Ilya is traded without warning.
Shane is left spiraling.
Between games, everything falls apart.

Or: The one where Ilya Rozanov finds out he's been traded to the Los Angeles Rush moments before taking the ice against the Montreal Metros.

Notes

Timeline: This story starts in April of 2017

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

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

Friday, April 7, 2017

[6:21pm] **Jane:** The code to my place is 1919.

[6:22 pm] **Ilya:** Is that because we were both 19 when we first fucked?

[6:22 pm] **Jane:** Shut up, asshole.

[6:22 pm] **Ilya:** Make me.

[6:22 pm] **Jane:** I will tonight.

[6:24 pm] **Ilya:** Can't wait. 🤩

Ilya can't keep the smile off his face as he sets his phone into his locker and reaches for his shoulder pads. Cliff Marleau glances over at him with a knowing smirk, "When am I going to meet this Montreal chick who has you *still* blushing?" Ilya drops his silly smile and turns to glare at him, "I told you. Russians, we do not blush!" Marleau just laughs and goes back to getting dressed while Ilya looks at him with disbelief.

How could he think Ilya was blushing? He was, but it's rude of him to call him out on it. Besides, it would be Marleau blushing if he knew who Ilya was actually texting and making plans with. Ilya laughs to himself thinking of how Marleau would react if he knew, it would certainly be a shit show. Ilya turns back to his locker and grabs his jersey just as his coach walks into the locker room, heading in his direction.

"Rozanov! I need to talk to you privately. Follow me." He grunts in Ilya's direction as he nods in agreement, setting his jersey back into his locker before turning to follow his coach into a small office made for visiting coaches. His coach points to a chair sitting across from his, but Ilya doesn't sit. His coach sighs and looks to Ilya with a serious expression. Ilya assumes it's because he's about to give his condolences about his father. He braces for it.

"You have been a huge reason why Boston has been so successful the last 7 years. You've helped get us into the playoffs each year and have gotten us a cup. You've been an amazing leader, and even better player and we have loved having you on this team." His coach announces. Ilya furrows his brows in confusion, and all he can do is nod. Why is his coach saying this? It's very odd.

"Unfortunately, higher management think that it's time to rebuild." His coach continues and Ilya's stomach drops. "And as you know the trade deadline is today..." His coach trails off, looking away from Ilya.

"Where am I going?" Ilya asks thickly, trying to keep his emotions at bay. His coaches gaze meets his again, surprise in his eyes. Does he think Ilya can't connect the dots to what he is saying? He may not understand some English words, but he understands how hockey works and what trade deadlines are.

All he can hope for now is that the team they traded him to is in the same division. Maybe he'll be sent to Canada. Maybe he can be closer to Shane. Hope flutters briefly in his stomach. "The Los Angeles Rush." His coach rushes out and Ilya's hope disappears. His chest tightens at the realization that this is the worst case scenario. His coach is still talking, but Ilya isn't hearing his words. All he can think about is Shane.

They won't be in the same division anymore. They won't play each other more than 2 times a year, at least until playoffs. They will be almost 5,000 kilometers apart. Fuck.

"The Rush expect you to be at their afternoon practice tomorrow before their evening game. They have a plane waiting to take you back to Boston so you can get some of your things, before it will take you to LA." Ilya's coaches words filter into his head. There is already a plane waiting for him? He's expected to play for a new team by tomorrow? He won't get to see Shane. Won't get to tell him goodbye. Ilya glances down at his feet to hide the moisture pooling in his eyes.

"It's been a pleasure being your coach. I'm sorry Rozanov. If it was my decision, you wouldn't be going anywhere." His coach misunderstands Ilya's lack of response. Ilya takes a deep breath and looks up again at his coach who looks genuinely upset about this. He gives him his trademark Rozanov smirk, "I will see you in the playoffs. Try to remember this conversation when your team loses."

With that last word, Ilya walks out of the office as his coach laughs. "Never change, Rozanov. Good luck in LA!" His coach shouts as he walks out. Ilya waves over his shoulder but doesn't look back otherwise his coach will see the moisture that's threatening to fall as Ilya walks back into the locker room.

It's empty. Thankfully. Which means that his team is on the ice for warm-ups. Shane is probably wondering where he is. Ilya wishes he could go out there and tell him the news, but he can't. Instead he'll have to text him and let him know what's going on. First though, Ilya needs to change back into his clothes and get his gear packed up. He has a flight to catch apparently.

A few things:

1. Timeline - this story starts in April 2017
2. This story is after Ilya's father dies and replaces when Shane gets his concussion and goes to the hospital (although I am going to have him get injured to where he can't play for a few games to keep the story somewhat the same).
3. I'm taking some liberties with the hockey aspect of this story. For example, I know that normally the trade deadline in the NHL is usually the first week of March, but in this story it's a little bit later (around the first week of April) just so I can fit it in the timeline that follows the books/show.
4. Thank you for reading! I hope you are enjoying the story so far. :)

Chapter 2

Shane was giddy as he glided onto the ice for warm-ups. He was only seconds away from seeing Ilya in person after weeks apart. Skype and texting has been great, but Shane misses being in close proximity to Ilya. He always feels more stable, more in control when Ilya's around.

His eyes immediately search for him as he circles along the boards but Ilya isn't on the ice. Shane's stomach churns with worry, wondering where the hell he is. It was only minutes ago that they were texting. Ilya would have told him if something was wrong, wouldn't he have?

Hayden catches Shane's eye and nods him over to start some shooting practice. He begrudgingly skates over to him even though all he wants to do is skate to Boston's bench and demand their coach to tell him where Ilya is. He can't do that though, even though he's itching with worry.

"Dude, did you hear about Rozanov?" Hayden asks giddily as Shane approaches. Shane grabs a puck that's sitting by Hayden's feet and shoots for the net. He misses when he hears Ilya's last name and turns to look at Hayden with furrowed brows.

"No, what about him?" He asks, trying to not sound too worried or eager to know what the fuck Hayden is talking about. Hayden smiles wide, happier than he has seen him in a long time. Shane frowns.

"He got traded to LA! It was just announced 30 minutes ago." Hayden laughs happily, completely oblivious to Shane's world completely crumbling beneath his feet. Did Ilya know he was getting traded? Why didn't he fucking tell him? Is he even in Montreal right now?

"I guess he got completely blindsided. Had no idea Boston was making a deal behind the scenes. If he wasn't such an asshole I would feel bad for him." Hayden continues to talk.

"Wh-what was the trade? Do you know?" Shane asks, trying to hide the emotion caught in his throat. Hayden smiles again.

"A 2018 unprotected first-round draft pick, Mateo Alvarez, and Caleb Whittaker." Hayden shakes his head in happy disbelief while Shane is trying to get control of his anger. A first-round pick next year. A rookie center who will never measure up to Ilya, or himself. And a mid right wing. What the fuck was Boston thinking?

"Wow, that's some bullshit. Ily-Rozanov is worth more than that. That's a horrible move by Boston." Shane grumbles as he grabs another puck and shoots it towards the net. This time it goes in. He moves his gaze back to Hayden who is looking at him incredulously. "I thought you would be happy about this!" Hayden remarks with a laugh.

"Why?" Shane asks, genuinely curious to know why Hayden would think that. "You hate the guy! And now you'll only have to deal with him twice a year until playoffs. I know I'm fucking ecstatic about it!" Hayden grabs a puck of his own and shoots. Shane's stomach drops

as he processes Hayden's words. Twice a year. They will only play LA twice a year. He'll only see Ilya twice a year. Fuck.

Shane's lungs try to fill with air but he can't get enough oxygen. The hockey stick in his hands won't stay stationary because his hands are shaking. He's having a panic attack. He needs Ilya. He needs to talk to Ilya. He needs to know that they will be okay. They are finally in a good place, and this is going to ruin that.

Shane quickly skates towards his team's bench and pushes past his coaching staff to head back into the locker room. They shout his name as he passes but he tells them he needs a minute. He heads straight to his locker, in search of his phone.

[6:39 pm] **Lily:** I need raincheck on our night.

[6:39 pm] **Lily:** I got traded.

[6:40pm] **Lily:** To LA.

[6:41 pm] **Lily:** I head back to Boston in an hour.

[6:43 pm] **Lily:** I'll be in LA by tomorrow morning.

[6:48 pm] **Lily:** I'm sorry.

Shane's eyes fill with moisture as he reads the texts from Ilya. Instead of texting back, he hits the call button. He doesn't care that the game is about to start. He doesn't care that he's in the team locker room. He just needs to hear Ilya's voice. He needs to know that everything will be okay.

Ilya doesn't answer. Shane squeezes his eyes shut tightly to keep the moisture locked in as Ilya's voicemail sounds in his ear. "Hi. This is Ilya. I will never listen to your voicemail."

"Hey, it's me." Shane says into the phone, ignoring the voicemail message. "Call me when you land. Please." Shane's voice cracks and he sniffs. "I don't care what time it is. Just — call me."

He hangs up the phone and shoves it back into his locker wishing things were different. He hates that he has to go play a hockey game right now against the team that obviously didn't appreciate Ilya. He hates them. Hates that they betrayed Ilya the way they did after he gave so much to them. It makes him want to destroy them, but unfortunately he's not in the right mindset at all. He needs to snap out of it though. His team needs him.

Shane pushes to his feet and walks back down the hallway towards the rink. He ignores his coaches' looks before skating back onto the ice and heading back to Hayden.

"Where did you go? You disappeared." Hayden asks curiously when he sees him approach.

“I had to take a piss.” Shane lies as he steals the puck from Hayden and skates towards the net to take a shot. Shane is able to get his head in the game and by the time the puck drops he’s ready to beat the shit out of Boston.

He does a good job compartmentalizing throughout the game. At least until the last 5 minutes. Montreal is winning by 2 and Boston is getting more desperate and more chippy. Cliff Marleau is the worst of them, getting in Shane’s face every chance he gets. It’s obvious he is frustrated and upset about Ilya and he’s taking it out on Shane. Shane is giving it right back.

They are fighting for the puck along the boards when Shane finally breaks it free and passes it to Hayden. As Shane pushes Marleau off of him and tries to move around him, somehow they get mixed up and Shane trips and falls hard onto the ice tweaking his knee. A loud pop that he feels throughout his whole body reverberates as he goes down and he groans in frustration and pain.

A whistle is blown and Marleau is sent to the penalty box for tripping as Shane lies on the ice. He can’t get up. He knows his knee is fucked up and the pain radiating through his body is trying to take control. He tries to push it away. When the medical staff are called to the ice, Shane tries to convince his body to get up but he can’t stand without help. Fuck!

Shane can’t help but think tonight is the worst night of his life and that the universe is out to get him as he hobbles to the bench with the help of the medical staff. Silently, they lead him down the hall into the medical room and start poking and prodding. Shane doesn't talk unless asked a direct question. He knows he won't be back on the ice for awhile. Fuck Marleau. Fuck Boston. Fuck LA. Fuck the trade deadline.

Shane's diagnosis ends up being a partially torn ACL which means Shane is likely out for the rest of the season.

Chapter 3

"Hey, it's me." Shane's voice filters into Ilya's ear, *"Call me when you land. Please."* Ilya's heart clenches in his chest as he hears Shane's voice crack with emotion. *"I don't care what time it is. Just - call me."* Ilya takes a deep breath and pushes the button to listen to the voicemail again.

He hates how broken Shane sounds and he wishes he could have answered his call, but he was already in the air. It wasn't until Ilya landed in LA a few minutes ago that he got the notification that he had a voicemail. He wasn't going to listen to it, until he realized it was Shane.

He glances at the time displayed on his phone. 4:24am. Which means it's 7:24am in Montreal. Shane should be awake, but Ilya can't bring himself to call him back yet. He's exhausted and still sitting on the tarmac waiting to get off the private jet that the LA Rush sent for him. He doesn't want to have this conversation in front of anyone.

It takes 45 minutes to finally get to his hotel in Downtown LA. The moment the door closes, he pulls his phone out of his pocket and dials Shane. He answers after the first ring. "Finally." Ilya can't help but smile at Shane's annoyed voice.

"I'm sorry, Hollander. I could have called sooner, but I didn't think this conversation should be had in front of people." Ilya replied with a chuckle as he walks further into the hotel room. The view is beautiful, with the light turning purple from the slowly rising sun and the twinkle of the city lights.

He wishes that Shane was here to see it with him. Without thinking Ilya hits the facetime button and waits for Shane to appear. A moment later, Shane's beautiful face fills Ilya's phone screen and he can't help but smile as he takes him in.

"Hey." Shane smiles back. Ilya can't help but notice the dark circles under his eyes and the hint of pain crinkling around his eyes. His smile fades. "What's wrong?" Ilya demands. Shane's smile disappears. "You're seriously asking me that right now? Like you didn't just get traded to a new team across the fucking continent from me." He growls in annoyance. Ilya sucks in a breath to calm his anger. Shane is obviously deflecting.

"No. You're in pain. Why?" Ilya demands to know. Shane shifts his eyes away from Ilya. Ilya clenches his teeth in frustration, but he keeps his mouth shut and waits but Shane remains quiet. "Fine, don't tell me. I'll just figure it out for myself." Ilya growls as frustration tightens his chest and takes hold. Then he hangs up the phone.

He immediately pulls up Google and searches Shane's name. His phone rings with a call from Shane but he declines it and continues his search. When his phone finally loads he curses loudly as he reads the article spelling out what happened and the aftermath while continuously dodging Shane's calls. Finally after he finishes the article he answers Shane.

"I'm going to fucking kill Marleau." He seethes. "You'll have to get in line. My team is pissed." Shane sighs. "What about you? Are you pissed?" Ilya asks, watching Shane curiously. "I was right after it happened, but it was an accident. It wasn't Marleau's fault." Ilya opens his mouth to argue but Shane continues, "he was playing aggressively, but my head wasn't fully in the game either. It was just a night full of unfortunate situations. I'm much more pissed about what Boston did to you." Shane admits sadly, his eyes filling with moisture. Ilya glances away, trying to keep his emotions stable when all he wants to do is catch a flight straight to Montreal.

"Yes. Boston made bad decision." Ilya says once he feels more in control. He glances back to Shane who furrows his brows, obviously confused on Ilya's reaction, or lack thereof. "Did you know this was going to happen?" Shane looks at Ilya with accusation. Ilya's mouth drops slightly in shock as he narrows his gaze on Shane.

He clicks his tongue and slowly shakes his head in disbelief as he tries to gather his words. "You think I would keep something like this from you, Hollander?" He finally asks, bracing for Shane's reply. Shane doesn't answer his question.

"So, you just don't give a shit that you were traded then?" Shane accuses instead. Ilya's nose flares with frustration. He knows Shane is anxious and confused and angry, but Ilya doesn't appreciate the accusations he's throwing at him. Can Shane not see that Ilya is barely holding it together? Ilya snaps.

"Of course I fucking do, Shane! I -" Ilya stops to take a deep breath so he doesn't say something he'll regret. When he's emotional like this, his English isn't as strong. "The only thing I could think about when I found out I was traded, was you." Ilya admits as his eyes fill with moisture. He looks at Shane. "How I would be 5,000 kilometers away from you. How I would only get to see you two times a year unless we both make playoffs. How I wasn't going to get to tell you the news face-to-face. How I wouldn't get to say goodbye." He chokes on the last word and a tear escapes his eye.

"Fuck!" He shouts in frustration and embarrassment, moving the phone away so Shane can't see him fall apart. "Ilya -" Shane tries to get his attention. His voice a plea. Ilya brings the phone back, wiping his face free of tears as he clears his throat, looking at Shane expectantly. Shane doesn't know what to say. He can only stare, trying to grasp for the right words.

"I'm sorry." Shane finally says at the exact same time that Ilya confesses, "I love you."

Shane's eyes widen, obviously not sure if he heard Ilya right. "What?" Shane asks. "I love you. I'm in love with you." Ilya sniffs and blinks rapidly as he waits for Shane to respond. He doesn't though. Shane just stares slack jawed and wide eyed. The longer Shane stays silent, the more Ilya builds his walls back up. He never should have admitted his feelings. His jaw tenses as he swallows roughly and his gaze moves away from Shane and back to the view out of his hotel window. The sky is getting lighter by the second.

"I — I don't know what to say." Shane finally speaks and Ilya squeezes his eyes shut and takes a deep breath before looking at him once more.

“I just. So much has happened in the last 12 hours. I haven’t slept at all. I —” Shane tries to explain. Ilya shakes his head and smiles sadly interrupting Shane, “Is okay. You don’t have to explain, Hollander. I get it.” Ilya knows that Shane is just trying to let him down easy. He appreciates it, but it’s unnecessary. “You don’t owe me an explanation. Just because this is more than sex, doesn’t mean it’s love. I understand that now.” Shane furrows his brows and frowns.

“No — that’s not,” Shane argues but Ilya cuts him off again. “Good luck with rehabbing your knee. Maybe we’ll have a chance to play each other for the cup.” Ilya slips into his cocky, arrogant persona; the one that has been his armor for as long as he can remember. Shane opens his mouth to respond, but Ilya beats him to it again. “I need to try to get a nap in before I meet with my team this afternoon.” He announces.

“Bye Hollander.” Ilya hangs up before Shane can respond, dropping his phone on the floor as he walks across the room to the wet bar in search of some vodka.

Chapter 4

Shane can only stare at his phone blankly as his eyes turn blurry. All he can hear is the echo of Ilya's confession, repeating over and over in his head. *I love you. I'm in love with you.* Those beautiful words that he never thought he'd hear from Ilya.

Shane was so overwhelmed that he didn't know what to say. He's still struggling to catch his breath especially now that he realizes that he made a mistake by not admitting that he loves Ilya back. Ilya's following words after Shane's stupid ones will haunt him for the rest of his life. *Just because this is more than sex, doesn't mean it's love. I understand that now.* How could he have made Ilya believe that this wasn't love that they share?

Fuck. Shane needs to call Ilya back, apologize for how he reacted. He needs to convince Ilya that what they have is love. Has been for a long time. He wipes his eyes and quickly presses the call button on Ilya's contact. It rings and rings until Ilya's voicemail sounds in his ear. Shane doesn't leave a voicemail this time. He can't confess his love in a message. He'll just have to keep trying to contact Ilya, but not today.

Ilya has too much to focus on with meeting his new team and having his first game with them. Shane will call again tomorrow. For now, he needs to try to ice his knee and try to get some sleep. Then tonight he'll watch Ilya's game.

As Shane gingerly climbs out of bed in search of an icepack, he sets his phone face-down on his bedside table.

The following day Shane is even more exhausted than the day before. He didn't sleep well. Each time he shut his eyes, Ilya's words echoed even louder in his head. Each time he moved, his knee throbbed. Each time he finally settled, he heard imaginary phone vibrations.

He finally sits up and grabs his phone when the sunlight creeps through his curtains. No missed calls. No messages. Just the same unanswered call from the day before staring back at him. Mocking him.

Shane tries to convince himself that the reason Ilya hasn't called him back yet is because he had a long day yesterday and it's still early in LA. He decides to ice his knee and make some breakfast, giving Ilya more time to call. After an hour and a half his phone still remains silent. Shane can't take it anymore. He pulls up Ilya's contact and presses call. It rings. And rings. Ilya's stupid voicemail plays in his ear and he wants to scream. He hangs up without leaving a voicemail, and can no longer ignore the panic that's taking grip.

Monday, April 10, 2017

[11:14 am] **Shane:** I wish you would answer my calls.

[4:27pm] **Shane:** You looked good on Saturday. I'm glad you scored and won your first game with LA.

Shane called again on Tuesday. No answer.

Wednesday, April 12, 2017

[2:17am] **Shane:** I'm sorry that I froze.

[2:19am] **Shane:** I should have said it back.

Shane gets embarrassed by his last texts, sent early in the morning after he decided to drink his sorrows away. It didn't work. When he woke up he felt even worse than he did before. His texts staring at him, taunting him because there was no response. He promised himself that he wouldn't call or message Ilya anymore. Not until he called or messaged first. He could be patient. Ilya will eventually contact him. He always does.

Sunday, April 16, 2017

[1:39 am] **Shane:** Congratulations on making the playoffs.

[1:40 am] **Shane:** I'll be rooting for you this year.

Shane broke his promise, but he couldn't help it. He was too happy for Ilya. He stayed up late to watch his game. They had to win. If they did, they won the wildcard and made it to the playoffs. It was an intense game. It went into overtime. Shane couldn't keep his eyes off Ilya. It was like he was in a trance. Ilya ended up scoring the winning goal.

Shane couldn't stop the smile from coming over his face as he watched Ilya's new teammates surround Ilya with excitement, celebrate their victory. The smile on Ilya's face made Shane's heart clench tightly in his chest. There was no way Shane couldn't say something, especially when Montreal wouldn't be in the playoffs this year. So he texted. He waited an hour for a response, but he never got one.

The next morning Shane wakes up with hope that he'll have a message from Ilya. His heart beats erratically when he sees multiple notifications waiting for him. He unlocks his phone with a smile, but it doesn't last. Ilya's name isn't on the list of notifications. His mom's and Haydens are though.

He decides to read Hayden's first. He is not ready to deal with his mom so early in the morning.

Sunday, April 16, 2017

[7:07 am] **Hayden:** Smh I see Rozanov is still an asshole.

[7:13 am] **Hayden:** I have to say, I'm disappointed in Rose Landry.

[7:14 am] **Hayden:** I thought she had better taste than that.

Shane furrows his brows in confusion. He has no idea what Hayden is talking about. He sits up and rubs his eyes as he grabs his glasses from his bedside table and puts them on. Maybe he read the messages wrong. He frowns when he realizes he read them correctly. Shane quickly replies to Hayden.

[7:28 am] **Shane:** What are you talking about?

[7:28 am] **Hayden:** Holy shit dude! You haven't seen the news?

[7:29 am] **Hayden:** tmz.com/photos/2017/04/16-Rose-Landry-Ilya-Rozanov-seen-leaving-Avalon-together/

Shane's heart is in his throat as he clicks the link Hayden texted him. As he waits for the images to show he takes a deep breath. This has to be a misunderstanding. There is no way Ilya and Rose were together last night. Neither one of them would do that to him.

Or maybe they would.

Chapter 5

Ilya groans as the sound attacks his muddled, hungover brain. His head throbs as he slowly sits up. His mouth is dry and his eyes are slits as he tries to open them but it's too fucking bright.

Finally, he is able to open them to slits. He glances around at his surroundings. They are unfamiliar. Light blue walls frame floor to ceiling windows that look out to the Pacific Ocean. He is definitely not at his hotel. It must be one of his teammates homes.

With another groan he stands up. He's happy to find that he's still wearing all of his clothes. At least he didn't do anything regretful.

Ilya makes his way into the kitchen, where the sound of the blender has now thankfully stopped. He's rubbing his eyes when he suddenly stops in his tracks.

Rose Landry is pouring green liquid into two glasses. At the sight of her, Ilya's night comes rushing back to him.

His teammates convincing him to go to club Avalon. Him taking shots of vodka. Him seeing Rose across the club and deciding to approach her. Her eyeing him curiously as he explained he's a friend of Shane. Him not being able to talk about anything but Shane with her and her content in listening to him. Fuck.

He must make a noise because she glances up and smiles, "Oh good! You're awake. I made you a smoothie for breakfast."

Ilya grunts as he takes the smoothie from her out stretched hand and tentatively takes a sip. He gags and grimaces but swallows the smoothie. Rose smiles and tries to hide her laugh by covering it with a cough.

"How did I end up here? I assume this is your home, yes?" Ilya asks as he moves toward the kitchen island, needing to sit down.

"It is." Rose answers and moves to sit beside Ilya, looking at him closely, studying him. He side eyes her as he takes another sip on his smoothie. This time it goes down easier.

"You didn't want to go back to your hotel last night, so I took pity on you and brought you back here." She explains, sounding sympathetic. Ilya hums. He shouldn't be surprised. He hates his hotel but hasn't had the time to search for a place to live yet.

"Thanks, I guess." He says awkwardly and she smiles and nods as she takes a drink of her smoothie.

He's about to ask her if she has any cigarettes lying around when her phone begins to vibrate on the countertop in between them. He can't help but glance at the screen. His heart thunders in his chest when he sees the name on the display. Shane.

Ilya looks away quickly but he can feel Rose's eyes on him as she grabs the phone and answers it happily. "Shane!" Ilya squeezes his eyes shut as he downs the rest of his smoothie, needing the distraction.

"Woah! I would never sleep with Ilya Rozanov!" Rose exclaims with shock and anger. Ilya snaps his head towards her with furrowed brows. Why would Shane accuse her of sleeping with him. He quickly reaches for his phone in his pocket. It's at 5 percent but he ignores that and goes to Google and searches his name.

"Fuck." He growls lowly when he sees the images of him and Rose leaving the club last night. Rose must hear him because the next thing he knows she's grabbing his phone to look at the images.

"Shane, I swear. Nothing happened! We just happened to both be at the same club last night." Ilya wishes he could hear Shane's side of the conversation. His eyes study Rose, trying to see if he can decipher what Shane is saying based on her expressions.

"What does him being your rival have anything to do with me?" She asks with furrowed brows and Ilya wants to gouge his eyes out. Does Shane really think he would fuck Rose Landry because of their rivalry? Of course not.

Ilya quickly realizes that Shane is just using that as a cover up. In Shane's mind Ilya would fuck Rose to get back at him for not saying I love you.

If Shane only knew that Ilya hasn't been with anyone since him and can't imagine ever being with anyone else besides him. Ilya drops his head on the countertop and squeezes his eyes tightly to keep the moisture inside.

He should have never avoided Shane's calls and texts. If he hadn't this wouldn't be happening right now. But Ilya was so hurt, so destroyed by Shane's response to him confessing his love that he couldn't bring himself to answer. Ilya was truly an idiot. Especially because he probably just lost Shane forever.

"Shane!" Rose cries in disbelief right before she gasps and looks at her phone realizing Shane hang up on her. Her gaze turns to Ilya then as she sets both of their phones gently on the countertop.

"Want to explain to me why Shane thinks you want to seduce me to get back at him?" Rose asks after a moment. Ilya can only look at her with despair. A part of him wants to admit everything to her, but the other part knows Shane would freak out if someone knew about them.

"You're the guy." Rose says in realization. Ilya's stomach drops. She knows. But he raises his brow in question acting like he doesn't know what she's talking about. Rose huffs, "The guy Shane told me about." Ilya doesn't say a word.

"He didn't tell me a name, just that he had been with a guy before." She explains further but Ilya still stays silent.

“It all makes sense!” Rose exclaims a few moments later. “Why he’s freaking out about us right now. And why you couldn’t stop talking about him last night.” She muses.

“It also explains why you are so sad. Why he got hurt in the game against Boston the day you were traded. Why you look at me like you want to destroy me!” She laughs and Ilya can’t help but snort.

“I don’t want to destroy you.” Ilya replies and Rose raises an eyebrow. “Well, not anymore.” Ilya smirks and Rose barks out a laugh.

“So, you two are...?” Rose asks and Ilya sighs as he sits up.

“We were.” He admits. “But now? I am not so sure.”

Rose furrows her brows and leans forward, grabbing Ilya’s hand. She squeezes gently, “Tell me everything, starting from the very beginning.”

Ilya does. Starting from the day they met when they were 17 and recounting every other interaction they’ve had throughout the years, keeping the graphic details to himself of course.

When he admits to her that he confessed to Shane that he loves him she smiles wide and squeals excitedly. It makes Ilya’s heart ache because it should be a happy thing, but it’s not.

Rose frowns as Ilya keeps explaining, until he finally finishes with what happened only moments ago with Shane accusing her of sleeping with Ilya. Her wide, giddy smile is nowhere to be found.

“Ilya. You know he loves you.” She says after a few minutes of silence. Ilya glances at her.

“I know no such thing.” He says gruffly, grabbing his phone so he can order an uber. It’s time that he leaves.

“Ilya...” Rose grabs his hand but he pulls away.

“Thank you for listening, but I need to go now.” He stands and tries to walk past her. She stops him by grabbing his bicep.

“Let my driver take you back to your hotel. Please?” She pleads with him. He nods and she smiles softly before grabbing her phone and making a call.

“He’ll be here in a couple of minutes. In the meantime, save your number in my phone.” She holds out her phone to him and stares him down until he takes it and programs his number.

“Thank you. I will call you later. Make sure you pick up.” She pointedly looks at Ilya while she types on her phone. A moment later his phone dings with a text. He glances down at the unknown number.

[8:21am] **unknown:** He loves you.

Ilya instantly regrets giving her his number. Luckily his phone decides to die a moment later so she can no longer bother him. At least not for the duration it takes to get back to his hotel.

Rose chimes with a message she quickly reads and replies to. "He's here. I'll walk you out." She smiles brightly and wraps her arm in Ilya's as she leads him to the front door. He furrows his brow as she stands on her tip toes and gives him a kiss on the cheek before letting him go.

"Me and you are going to be good friends, Ilya!" Rose shouts as he makes his way to the waiting car. He only acknowledges her by throwing up a thumbs up right before climbing into the back seat.

As he gets settled in he shakes his head in annoyance. Why did Rose Landry have to be so wonderful?

Chapter 6

April 20, 2017

[11:17 am] **Ilya:** Are you busy this afternoon?

[11:17 am] **Rose:** No, what's up?

[11:18 am] **Ilya:** I'm meeting the teams realtor at the arena at 1:30. Want to come along?

[11:19 am] **Rose:** Yes! I love house hunting!

[11:19 am] **Rose:** Want to meet for a quick lunch before?

[11:20 am] **Ilya:** Sure, but not that sandwich shop from the other day. Their tuna melt was awful.

[11:21 am] **Rose:** Let's meet at Kashtan in West Hollywood at noon!

[11:24 am] **Ilya:** A Russian restaurant?

[11:24 am] **Ilya:** You must really feel sorry for me.

[11:25 am] **Rose:** Or maybe I listen to you when you talk and know you are missing Russia.

[11:26 am] **Ilya:** Ugh, why couldn't you have been a bitch? I wasn't supposed to like you!

[11:27 am] **Rose:** I can be a bitch if that's really what you want!

[11:28 am] **Rose:** Have you talked to *Jane* yet?

[11:31 am] **Ilya:** 🙄

[11:31 am] **Rose:** I'll take that as a no.

Ilya has a wide grin on his face as him and Rose walk out of Kashtan. It hasn't been long since he was in Russia for his father's funeral, but having food from his home country in his new city makes him happy. It's like he has a piece of home close by for whenever he is missing it or needing familiar comfort. He's thankful that Rose found it.

"Thank you." He tells her as they walk in the direction of where her car is parked. She glances up at him, "For what?"

“For finding that restaurant. For listening to me talk about my never ending problems. For being my friend.” He lists. Rose smiles and links her arm through his, “Of course! I owe it to Shane to make sure you’re okay.” Ilya grumbles something in Russian which makes Rose laugh. “Plus, you’re quickly becoming one of my favorite people. I’m glad we are friends, Ilya.” Ilya is about to respond when his phone vibrates in his pocket.

Hope flairs briefly, thinking it might be Shane but it’s not. Carla, the team’s real estate agent texted asking if they were still on for house hunting today. He quickly texts her back that he is on his way to the arena now, just as him and Rose reach her car.

Ten minutes later they are pulling up to the arena. Carla is standing at the back entrance with an iPad in her hands when they pull up. She glances up as Ilya steps out of the car and smiles wide. “Ilya! It’s lovely to see you again. Are you ready to find your new home today?” She greets him with excitement. He grunts a reply as Rose steps out of the car.

“This is Rose. She’s going to tag along today if that’s okay.” Ilya says in explanation. Carla looks between Rose and Ilya and smiles before nodding, “Of course it’s okay! Are you two...” she hesitates with what she wants to ask. Ilya quickly shakes his head, “No, we are not together. She is my friend and I thought I could use her help.” He explains, smiling down at Rose and then to Carla.

“Great! Is it okay if I tag along with you guys? My car won’t fit all three of us.” Carla asks looking at Ilya. He glances at Rose since it’s her car and she smiles. “Of course!”

The three of them climb into the back of the SUV. Ilya is sitting between the two women. Carla lets the driver know that they are headed towards somewhere called Manhattan Beach first. While the driver maneuvers through Los Angeles traffic, Carla shows him photos of the home they are going to look at first. It’s nice, but Ilya already knows he won’t pick it. It’s too sterile. Too plain. Too cold. He doesn’t say anything though.

When they arrive at the home 30 minutes later, he dutifully follows Carla as she gives him a tour of the home and lists out all of the specs. Rose stands by his side and asks questions but she can tell Ilya doesn’t like the house. “Where is the next house? Is it also in Manhattan Beach?” Rose asks as they start to make their way back to the car.

“There is another house in Manhattan that I wanted to show you, but something tells me you won’t like that one either Ilya. So, let’s try the one in Hermosa Beach. It’s just a few minutes away and much more quiet and laid back. I think you will like it.” Carla explains. Ilya likes the idea of quiet and laid back so he nods. This time Carla doesn’t show him any photos of the house. She just explains the town of Hermosa Beach, telling him about The Strand, and the local restaurants and bars. That he has multiple teammates that live there and love it.

By the time they are driving down the street of the home, Ilya is more hopeful. It’s a quiet street. No foot traffic. No tourists. The homes here are more private with hedges dividing them and with gated driveways. When they pull into the driveway he smiles. The gate closes behind them and step out of the car.

He could definitely see himself living here. The modern two story home is nothing like the cold and sterile one they just saw in Manhattan Beach. This one is warm and feels lived in,

like a home rather than a museum or status symbol. This one is a *home* and he hasn't even stepped foot inside yet.

As they walk towards the front door he appreciates the private entrance, immediately feeling at ease as Carla enters the code to the door. Rose smiles at Ilya as they follow behind Carla, stepping inside the home.

They are immediately hit with gorgeous natural light and open space. Dark walnut wood floors surrounded by warm, creamy, white walls framed by massive glass doors that open onto a small enclosed patio with the most beautiful view of the Pacific Ocean. It's calm. It's relaxing. It's peace.

"I'll let you look around this time without me. Let me know if you end up having any questions though. I'll be out in the backyard enjoying the sun!" Carla tells Ilya with a knowing smile. He nods appreciatively, then she turns and heads towards the door leading to the backyard leaving Ilya and Rose to look around.

They head in the direction of the kitchen. It's simple with clean, sleek lines and a large island. Functional in nature but someplace he could see himself spending time learning new recipes. His mind instantly goes to Shane and how he commented on his kitchen back in Boston and how Ilya got to cook tuna melts for them.

Ilya's eyes find Rose who is looking at him curiously, silently watching him. Shane left Ilya that time in Boston, to only go home to Montreal and begin dating the woman standing in this very kitchen. It's strange how life works sometimes. Ilya wants to comment on it, but decides to keep his mouth shut. Instead he makes his way towards the living room.

"What were you just thinking about in there?" Rose asks as she trails after him. He takes in the living room. His eyes find another beautiful view of the Pacific Ocean. The room is surrounded by floor to ceiling windows. There's exposed wooden beams that match the hardwood floors framing the ceiling above.

"He would love this place." Ilya says absentmindedly as he sits on the couch they have for display. Rose comes to sit beside him. "Who?" She asks and Ilya looks at her with his eyebrow raised, "You know who."

"Why do you think he would like it?" She asks, turning to look around, like she's trying to put herself in the mindset of Shane. Ilya shrugs, "It is boring. He loves being boring."

Ilya stands before Rose can respond, heading for the stairs off the living room. Rose trails after him as he explores the rest of the home. Every room he explores, he falls more even love with the home. He didn't think he would find something that felt like home, but this house does.

By the time they make their way to the backyard, Ilya knows that this is his new home. Carla smiles when she seems them approach. "How did you like it?" She asks. "I want to put in an offer today. Tell them I'll pay whatever the price to expedite the process. I want to move in by next week."

Carla blinks and looks like she is going to protest, “And I’ll give you a 10% bonus on your commission.” He offers and her eyes widen. “Ilya, that’s...” She tries to protest again but Ilya gives her a look saying to not question him and she sighs, “I’ll go call them right now.”

Ilya watches Carla pace the backyard with her phone pressed to her ear, already talking numbers and timelines. It should make him nervous, this committing to a house in a city that still doesn’t feel like he belongs in. Instead, he feels surprisingly steady.

Rose bumps his shoulder lightly. “You okay?” He nods and answers truthfully, “Yes.”

Even if he doesn’t admit out loud the real reason this place feels right — the reason why it doesn’t scare him. He knows it in his heart. It has already decided.

This is where he’ll wait.

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

I'm trying to figure out how long I want to make this fic. I feel like I could write about Hollanov forever. I have so many ideas swirling in my head for this story, but not sure if people are interested. Let me know what you think of the story so far in the comments and whether or not you are enjoying it and should keep going or if I should just wrap it up! :)

April 25, 2017

Shane used to love walking into the Metros arena. Lately though, it's been hard to appreciate the place he's called home for the last seven years.

It mostly has to do with his injury and the fact that he's here with the team doctors multiple times a week assessing his injury and how rehab is going.

It has nothing to do with Ilya and the fact that they won't be meeting here as often as before.

As Shane hobbles his way into the arena and towards the medical room he tries not to think of Ilya. Of course he fails, Ilya is constantly on his mind.

Especially since Ilya is leading the LA Rush into the second round of playoffs. Tomorrow is the first game of that series. LA is facing off with Edmonton.

Shane pushes thoughts of Ilya away when he finally reaches the medical room and pushes his way inside. Shane frowns when he finds his coach and the team doctor discussing his injury as he walks into the room.

"Shane! Good you are here, come sit down." The team doctor notices him and points to the exam table. Shane makes his way over to it and sits on the edge.

His knee is wrapped in compression and he can't help but stare at the obvious swelling he still has underneath. He braces for bad news, he knows something is wrong.

The team doctor flips through his chart while Shane's coach grabs a seat next to the exam table. The silence stretches too long. Shane stomach twists with anxiety and his chest tightens as he tries to breath.

"Your knee is not where we'd like it to be," the doctor finally says, not unkindly.

Shane exhales through his nose. "That's what you said last week."

“And the week before that,” the doctor agrees. He studies the monitor he and Shane’s coach were discussing, slightly swiveling it so Shane can see the scans.

Shane doesn’t really understand them, but he understands the tone. “You aren’t regressing, but you’re staying stagnant. At this stage, we usually see more improvement.” The doctor admits and Shane can’t help but glance at his coach who looks sort of angry. Shit.

“So what,” Shane asks, tension creeping into his voice despite his effort to keep it steady. “More rest? Different exercises? Tell me and I’ll do it!”

Panic grips his heart and desperation overwhelms him. He can’t lose the Metros too. Not like he lost Ilya. He wouldn’t survive that.

“Possibly,” the doctor says. “But I think it’s time we look at more specialized rehab. Second opinions. Facilities that are more qualified and deal with this kind of injury at an elite level.”

Shane’s stomach tightens as the doctor hands him a printed list. Shane takes it automatically, eyes scanning the names without really processing them at first.

His mind is spiraling as he reads the list of locations. Chicago. New York. Vancouver. Denver. Miami. Los Angeles.

Los Angeles.

“There’s a facility in LA we’ve had wonderful experiences with,” the doctor continues. “They specialize in ACL recovery for professional athletes. Very hands-on. Aggressive, but smart. If you’re serious about accelerating your timeline, that would be my recommendation.”

Shane nods, swallowing. “Okay.”

“We’re not pushing you,” the doctor adds while glancing at Shane’s coach who looks like he obviously doesn’t agree with that statement.

The doctor continues, “This is your decision. But we don’t want to waste time if this knee isn’t responding the way it should.” Shane nods in understanding as he stands carefully.

“I would like to take some time to think about it. I will let you know as soon as I’ve made a decision.” Shane says before leaving the office with the list folded in his pocket and a heaviness in his chest.

Back at his place, Shane spreads the list out on the kitchen island, like it might rearrange itself into an answer if he stares long enough.

LA makes sense. It’s where the team doctor recommends he goes. It’s a highly rated facility that produces excellent results. It makes the most sense in terms of his medical needs.

It’s the most logical choice. The fact that it’s the only city on the list that makes his chest ache when he thinks about it doesn’t mean anything.

Who cares that Ilya is there. Rose as well. They wouldn't sway his decision. At least that's what he tries to tell himself. Maybe if he repeats it enough, he'll convince himself it's true.

It's just rehab. That's all. That's what he keeps telling himself.

Shane drops his head against the island and groans. His phone buzzes next to his head and for one stupid, hopeful second, he thinks it's finally him. It's not. It's a text from Hayden. He ignores it.

Instead, he starts scrolling down his list of contacts until he finds the one he's looking for. Before he can talk himself out of it, he hits the call button. She answers on the third ring.

"Hey," Rose says with surprise, "Shane."

"Hey," he replies. His voice sounds rough even to his own ears. "I, uh... do you have a minute?"

"Yeah," she says immediately. "Of course."

Shane swallows. "I just wanted to apologize. For the other day. For how I talked to you. I was so out of line." There's a pause, but not an uncomfortable one. "Thank you," Rose says. "I appreciate that."

"I shouldn't have accused you like I did," Shane continues, words tumbling out now that he's started. "I know you wouldn't do that...that neither of you would. I was just—" He cuts himself off, squeezing his eyes shut tight to keep his tears from falling. "I was...scared. And angry. And I took it out on you." Rose exhales softly. "I get it. I figured as much."

That makes his chest tighten. Rose is too good, too perfect, too sweet. He doesn't deserve to have her in his life. "Still. I'm sorry." He apologizes again because she deserves it. "I know," she says gently. "Apology accepted." Shane takes a deep settling breath, "Thanks."

There's a brief lull, comfortable but heavy with so many unsaid words floating in Shane's head. He grasps for something to say, but Rose beats him to it. "So," Rose says cautiously, "how's your knee?" He can't help but laugh humorless. "Not great."

He continues on to tell her about the appointment. About what the doctor said. The words that his coach didn't have to say. About the list of facilities.

"So now I have to decide if I'm going to do the specialized treatment," he says. "And where the best place is to do that."

"Well we both know that you are going to do the treatment." Rose says like it's obvious. Shane can't help but smile slightly because she's not wrong in her statement. "Yeah." He agrees, then admits, "There's one in LA that the team doctor really recommends."

Rose is silent for a beat too long and Shane feels the panic taking over again. "Oh?" she says finally. "It's just an option," Shane says quickly, "There are others. Chicago. New York. Vancouver. I haven't decided."

“But you’re considering it,” she says. “Uh yeah, I am.” he admits quietly, waiting for her feedback. Instead he’s met with another long pause. “Can I tell you something?” Rose asks.

Shane’s stomach flips. “Yeah. Of course.” He tries to sound strong. Rose clears her throat, “Ilya told me everything,” she says. “About you. About the two of you.”

The world tilts as he processes her words. *Ilya told me everything*. Shane doesn’t know if he’s livid. Or relieved. Or terrified. Or...

“Don’t be upset with him,” Rose says quickly. “After Ilya and I ran into each other at the club and after our phone call the other day, I sort of made the connection.” She explains. Shane frowns.

“H—how?” He can’t help but ask. Rose sighs, “Well, Ilya wouldn’t stop talking about you when we met. Or maybe he just couldn’t.” She giggles. “There was also the fact that he looked like he wanted to murder me whenever I even mentioned our time together.” Shane can’t help but smile at that. Ilya’s jealousy over Rose amuses Shane.

“Anyways, when you freaked out and accused me of sleeping with him and I saw his reaction to the tabloid photos, I just connected the dots. You two aren’t very subtle in your feelings for each other once you start paying close enough attention.” Rose explains. Shane doesn’t know what to say.

“I know you are probably freaking out over the fact that I know everything about you two. But...I think it’s maybe okay that I do? You both deserve to have someone in your corner. Someone you can talk to about things.” Rose says with hope that Shane agrees.

“What do you mean by you know everything? What exactly did Ilya tell you?” Shane asks. “I mean, I think he told me everything...Jane.” She replies. Shane takes a deep breath. Hearing her call him Jane is terrifying. Ilya must have told her everything. He’s not one to hold back either. Normally Shane would be terrified, but right now all he feels is relief. Like he can breathe slightly better having someone finally know about the two of them. It’s like it makes it more real. More tangible.

“Wow.” Shane laughs. “I’m glad he told you.” He admits. “I wanted to tell you about him back in January, but I just couldn’t.”

“But you’re okay with me knowing now?” She asks. “Yeah, I trust you. It’s honestly a relief that someone else knows. That we’re not carrying this alone.” He confesses.

There’s another long pause and then Rose’s voice softens. “He’s hurting, Shane.” Those three words hit Shane square in the heart. Moisture fills his eyes as he replies immediately, “I know. I really fucked up and I know I hurt him badly.”

“You didn’t mean to,” she says softly. “I know you froze. And he took that as rejection.” Shane squeezes his eyes closed and swallows back a sob, “I love him. More than anything.” Rose doesn’t sound surprised when she replies, “I know.”

“I know I should’ve said it,” he continues, voice thick. “I should’ve said it back. I just... everything happened so fast. The trade. The injury. I panicked.” Shane admits guiltily. It’s not the first time that he wished he was normal. That he could process his emotions and regulate them better. He hates how long it takes him to process his feelings, to sort through all the chaos in his brain.

“Are you done panicking?” She asks without an ounce of judgement or expectation. “I’m not sure I’ll ever be done panicking, but I do think it’s time that I start being honest.” He replies.

“Then you should come to LA.” Rose says the words that he had been secretly wanting to hear. The permission he didn’t know he needed. Or maybe just the encouragement to go after what he wants.

Chapter 8

April 26, 2017

[6:41 am] **Ilya:** I bought a house.

[6:45 am] **Svetlana:** Who is this?

[6:45 am] **Ilya:** Don't be like that. I have been busy since I got to LA.

[6:46 am] **Svetlana:** Not too busy for Rose Landry.

[6:48 am] **Ilya:** Will you forgive me if I introduce you to her tomorrow?

[6:49 am] **Svetlana:** Tomorrow?

[6:50 am] **Ilya:** I just bought you a first class ticket to LA that leaves Boston tonight. You will help me move into my new home tomorrow.

[6:50 am] **Ilya:** Rose will be there too.

[6:52 am] **Svetlana:** And what about Jane? Will he be there too?

[7:03 am] **Ilya:** No.

Ilya walks out of his freshly organized closet and finds Svetlana looking at the contents of a small wooden box. His chest tightens when he realizes what she found.

He tries to act nonchalant as she holds up a hotel room key, pressed gently between two fingers. His mind instantly remembers. Remembers what happened in that specific hotel room.

Las Vegas. 2014. NHL Awards. Fuck.

“Why in the world are you hoarding hotel room keys?” Svetlana laughs in confusion. Ilya's heart clenches hard in his chest. He wishes he could tell her. Tell her how hard he's fallen.

“Are you a serial killer and these are your trophies?” He huffs out a laugh as he walks toward her, his eyes focused on the box still in her hand.

“Something like that.” He tells her as he takes the box and the keycard from her hand. Ilya gently places the Las Vegas key back into the box as he makes his way to his bedside table.

He can feel Svetlana’s eyes on him but he ignores it. It’s embarrassing to be such a sap, but he can’t help it. Shane Hollander has turned him into a lovesick fool who saves each and every hotel keycard from their times spent together.

Once he’s satisfied the box is safe, he turns back to the room and glances around. There are only a few more boxes left to unpack. Svetlana and Rose have been complete angels with helping him settle in. And of course they became fast friends. He knew they would.

“Ilya.” Svetlana says, getting his attention. He glances toward her. She looks concerned and a little sad. Worried. He tries to smile to appease her worry but Svetlana frowns.

“Talk to me. You seem more sad than usual.” She says as she walks toward him, stepping into his personal space. He clenches his jaw to keep his emotions in check.

“I am fine. Just tired.” He replies. It’s not a lie. He’s exhausted, both physically and mentally. Since he arrived in LA it feels like he hasn’t stopped moving. He’s thankful to be busy, it helps keep his mind off Shane.

“This seems like more than being tired.” Svetlana hedges. Not for the first time, Ilya wishes he could confess everything to her. He can’t though. Rose was already one too many people to know. If Shane found out he told both Rose and Svetlana about them he would probably explode with anxiety and never speak to Ilya again.

Ilya opens his mouth to apologize for not being able to tell her. At least not yet. But he doesn’t get the chance. Rose appears at his bedroom door. “Hey! You guys ready to eat?”

Ilya and Svetlana turn to Rose. She furrows her brows, realization hitting her when she notices she interrupted a tense conversation. Ilya smiles awkwardly before stepping past Svetlana who sighs and follows after him.

“What did you find us?” He asks Rose as the three of them make their way downstairs.

“Tacos!” Rose replies happily, obviously trying to change the mood that she walked in on. Ilya is thankful. “I hope that’s okay.” Rose adds a bit awkwardly.

“Sounds amazing.” Svetlana responds in earnest and Ilya smiles for real this time. He can’t help but feel blessed to have these two wonderful, beautiful women in his life. Now if only Shane was here, he’d be happier than he’s ever been.

Chapter 9

May 4, 2017

[7:59 am] **Hayden:** When were you going to tell me you've been in fucking LA for the past two days?

[8:00 am] **Hayden:** I had to find out from a stupid hockey gossip site? Wtf Shane!

[11:07 am] **Shane:** Fuck. I'm on a gossip site?

[11:11 am] **Hayden:** That's all you have to say to me? Seriously?

[11:13 am] **Shane:** I'm here for a more specialized rehab for my knee.

[11:13 am] **Hayden:** Oh. That's all?

[11:14 am] **Shane:** Yes. Why else would I be here?

[11:15 am] **Hayden:** I thought maybe you were there visiting someone.

[11:16 am] **Shane:** I actually haven't even seen Rose yet. Been too focused on rehabbing.

[11:16 am] **Hayden:** That's right! I forgot Rose was back in LA now.

[11:17 am] **Shane:** If you forgot that, then who did you think I would be visiting?

[11:20 am] **Hayden:** I clearly have lost my mind. Too many kids to wrangle.

[11:20 am] **Hayden:** Speaking of, I need to take Jade to dance class. Talk later!

Shane feels exposed as he puts his phone back into his pocket. Hayden's messages have him on edge for multiple reasons. Shane isn't happy he made it onto a hockey gossip site. Ilya might know he's here now and he's not sure that he's ready for that yet.

On top of that, and debatably worse, is what Hayden was hinting at. Does he know? About Shane and Ilya? Fuck.

Shane pulls his hat lower on his head and makes sure his sunglasses are in the right spot before heading out of the rehab building he's spent the last two days getting comfortable with.

He's already seeing improvement in his knee which is a relief. The doctors here are great and full of encouragement. They already have him in a walking boot instead of crutches, which he is very thankful for.

Especially because they are encouraging him to walk as much as he can without over doing it. He walked to the rehab today because it's not too far from his hotel. Now that people know he's here though, he wished he had driven his rental car.

He could order an uber but that seems like a waste of money so he hurriedly walks towards his hotel.

It only takes him five minutes to walk into the lobby. As he walks in and heads towards the elevator bay, he can't help but notice a woman staring at him. Not in interest, more in recognition. Obviously she must be a hockey fan.

He can't help but notice how beautiful she is. She looks to be about his age with curly dark auburn hair. Her eyes are striking even from the distance, light but warm. Her skin a beautiful shade of brown. And she's looking at him now like she has a head full of questions. The most obvious one being, *Why are you here?*

He turns to the elevators just as they ding with arrival and immediately steps in, taking out his phone from his pocket. He needs to find the gossip site to see if there is any speculation as to why he's here.

Shane finds the post almost immediately. It was only posted five hours ago and much to his relief, it's only a couple of photos of him leaving the LA airport and climbing into an Uber.

The caption reads, *Shane Hollander, Center for the Montreal Metros seen arriving at LAX earlier this week* 📷📷

Shane opens the comments as soon as he's in the safety of his hotel room. As he kicks off his shoes, he begins to read.

MetrosMaven: I bet he's rehabbing in LA!

ForeverMetros: I just hope he isn't there for Rose Landry.

Hollandry4ever: I hope he's come to get back his woman! He can't let Ilya Rozanov steal her away. Yuck!

Hockeyboywatch: My delusional heart wants him to be here for Ilya.

Shane stops reading them and sets down his phone on the bed as he walks to the large windows overlooking the LA skyline. He takes a deep breath, not sure how to feel. Good news is that no one knows why he's here.

The bad news is that everyone thinks they do, which means theories are running wild. One's that may not be too far from the truth.

He groans in frustration, wishing he was with Ilya. He would know how to calm down Shane and help him forget about everything except for them two.

God, he misses him.

Chapter 10

[11:26 am] **Ilya:** Did you know he was in LA?!

[11:31 am] **Rose:** I swear to you I didn't know!

[11:32am] **Rose:** I did know he was thinking about coming though.

[11:35am] **Rose:** I'm sorry I didn't tell you. I just didn't want to get your hopes up in case he decided not to come.

[11:37 am] **Ilya:** Why did he come? We both know it was not for me.

[11:37 am] **Rose:** Don't say that! Of course he's here for you. But he's also here for rehab. He mentioned needing a more specialized program.

[11:40 am] **Ilya:** He did not tell me he was here. He does not want me to know.

[11:41 am] **Rose:** You know him. So you know he's probably freaking out. Just give him time. He'll reach out.

[11:42 am] **Ilya:** I thought I did, but I am not sure anymore.

[11:42 am] **Rose:** Stop! He loves you, Ilya!

Ilya doesn't respond. He drops his phone on his kitchen table and makes his way outside onto the patio. For the past week, whenever he finds time in his busy schedule he does yoga out there.

Right now he could use the distraction and maybe he can slow his racing heart. Ever since he saw the gossip post this morning, he hasn't been able to settle. He's full of nervous energy.

Shane is in LA. Shane is here. Has been for two days. And he hasn't even told Ilya. He guesses he shouldn't be surprised. Shane obviously is only focused on rehabbing his knee.

It shouldn't hurt Ilya, but it does. Hockey will always be Shane's top priority. The thing he chooses over everything and anything. It's how it's always been and how it will always be.

Ilya is beginning to think that it's a good thing that Shane doesn't love him. He's not sure he'd be able to come in second after hockey when Shane comes first for him.

"I never thought I would see you doing something so boring as yoga." Svetlana's voice breaks through his thoughts. He looks up at her from his position on his mat and smiles

cheekily.

“I never thought I would see you wearing an LA Rush hockey jersey, but here we are.” He replies as he moves to stand so he can give her a hug.

She laughs and hugs him tightly before holding up the bag of food that she brought along with her. He smiles for real this time as he follows her back inside and towards the kitchen island.

“I brought you a tuna sandwich.” She says as she pulls out the sandwich and hands it to him. He eyes it curiously as he unwraps it. Wherever Svetlana got this sandwich, he can already tell it’s going to be much better than the one he had with Rose.

“Thank you.” He says as he takes a huge bite and chews. She rolls her eyes as she takes a bite of her sandwich. They eat in companionable silence for a while until Svetlana breaks it.

“I saw Shane Hollander right before I drove here.” She admits. Ilya turns to look at her, trying to keep his curiosity and jealousy out of his reaction. “You did? Where?” He asks, trying to seem oblivious.

“In my hotel lobby. He was trying to be in disguise but I would recognize him anywhere. He’s still so gorgeous.” She smiles. Ilya rolls his eyes and turns back to his sandwich.

“Weird. I wonder why he is here?” Ilya tries to sound nonchalant. He’s not sure he is successful, he can feel Svetlana’s gaze on him. He doesn’t turn to face her, though. He can’t.

“My guess is because of Rose or maybe rehab. Maybe you should ask her if she has seen him.” Svetlana asks. “I do not care enough to do that.” He replies darkly.

“Right...” Svetlana replies, obviously not believing him but he can’t have this conversation right now. He abruptly stands and crumples his sandwich wrapper into a ball.

“You done?” He asks Svetlana, pointing to her sandwich wrapper. She studies him for a moment before nodding. He takes her trash and walks to throw it away before calling back to her that he’s going to go take a shower before he has to head to the arena for his game.

As Ilya stands beneath the spray of the shower his thoughts run wild. He knows where to find Shane now. He could go find him before he disappears. Before Ilya won’t see him for another five months. He’s desperate to, but desperation leads to making bad decisions.

Their whole relationship feels like it’s been built on that feeling and he just can’t do it anymore. So, he takes a deep breath and lets the moment pass. He has a hockey game to focus on.

Chapter 11

[1:26 pm] **Rose:** I see you decided to come to LA after all! Were you going to tell me?

[1:27 pm] **Shane:** Of course I was! I just needed a couple of days to get settled first.

[1:27 pm] **Rose:** Well are you settled now? I would love to see you!

[1:28 pm] **Shane:** Are you free tonight?

[1:30 pm] **Rose:** I actually have plans, but you should come with!

[1:30 pm] **Shane:** I can't intrude. Does tomorrow work instead?

[1:31 pm] **Rose:** Shane, you wouldn't be intruding!! Send me your location and I'll pick you up at 6:30pm.

[1:31 pm] **Rose:** Dress nice please!

[1:32 pm] **Shane:** Fine. I'll try. See you in a bit.

“Woah. What are we doing here Rose? I thought we were going to dinner to catch up.” Shane says with slight panic as he realizes they are walking directly to the LA Rush arena entrance.

He stops in his tracks and stares up at the building. Right in front of them is a blown up image of Ilya in his hockey gear smirking and looking so damn delicious, it almost knocks the air from Shane's lungs. He has to look away or he'll start to embarrass himself.

“We are going to dinner...just inside the arena!” Rose says with a preppy smile. Shane opens his mouth to argue. “He won't even know you're here. Besides, don't you want to see him play?” She asks carefully, furrowing her brow.

He sighs. Of course he wants to see Ilya play. It's one of Shane's favorite things to watch. Ilya is amazing on the ice and so fucking captivating. Truthfully, he's desperate to see him play in person when Shane's not on the ice with him.

“Come on. I promise it will be okay. If at any point you're uncomfortable or want to leave, we will.” She grabs his hand with a knowing smile and he obliges, following her towards the entrance. After all, he's just here to watch a hockey game. That's it. At least that's what he tells himself as they get swallowed up by the crowd and enter the arena.

Shane gets many looks of recognition as Rose leads them to one of the Premium A Level box suites. There's no way his whereabouts will remain secret. Anxiety ripples through him, but

he pushes it away. It's not that weird that he's here. He's obviously an hockey fan. And since he's here with Rose, he can claim that she dragged him there.

Luckily no one approaches him and they make it to their suite quickly. He breathes a sigh of relief as they make their way into the suite. Rose turns to look at him carefully, "You good?" She asks and he nods. "Good! There's someone I am dying for you to meet. Come on!" Rose drags him further into the room and notices a woman with familiar curly auburn hair standing near the opening of the suite. His eyes narrow on the jersey she's wearing. Rozanov written across her shoulders.

When she turns her head to their arrival, her face breaks out into a warm smile. Shane stops in his tracks when he realizes it's the same woman he saw earlier today in his hotel lobby. Rose is heading right to her and wrapping her in a tight hug. So maybe that's why the woman recognized him, not because of her being a fan. Although, she's wearing Ilya's jersey so maybe she is. He tries to push the jealousy away over the fact that she's wearing the jersey of his...Ilya.

"Shane, come on!" Rose calls to him, breaking him from his thoughts. He makes his way over to the two women and smiles awkwardly. "Hi, I'm Shane." He holds out his hand to the woman. She truly is beautiful. "Shane, it's lovely to officially meet you." She says. Shane tenses when he recognizes the accent...Russian. "I'm Svetlana." She smiles wide as she places her hand in his and shakes. Shane's body turns cold. His grip falters for a quick moment before he recovers. He tries to keep his expression neutral but he can feel himself failing.

This is Ilya's Svetlana. Shane didn't want to ever meet her. Yet, here she is. Standing right in front of him. Wearing Ilya's jersey. His mind runs wild. Has she been staying with Ilya? Was she just at the hotel because she was meeting with someone she knows? Have her and Ilya been having sex?

"Excuse me. I need to...go to the bathroom." He says thickly, and briskly walks away from the women. Shane knows he's being rude, but he doesn't care. He needs to get out of here. Now. He is just out the door when he hears Rose call his name. He stops and sighs deeply, blinking rapidly to try to hide the moisture in his eyes before he turns towards her.

"Yeah?" He clears his throat, and turns to her. She's frowning, looking full of concern. "Are—are you okay?" She asks. "I need to leave. I shouldn't have let you talk me into this." He replies. Rose takes a step toward him but he can't look at her otherwise he's going to break down.

He glances down at his shoes and waits for her words. He knows she's going to try to convince him to stay. "I'm sorry. I didn't realize." Rose whispers in understanding, wrapping her arms around him. Shane squeezes his eyes shut and takes a deep breath.

"I didn't even realize that they could have...were together. They act like brother and sister. And she was talking about some guy she just started dating who she really likes." Rose explains. He finally looks at her.

“So, she’s not staying with him?” He asks roughly and Rose smiles softly and reaches up to cup his cheek. “No. She came to help him move into his new house but has been staying at the same hotel you’re at. She’s heading back to Boston tomorrow.” Shane sucks in a breathe of relief.

A new emotion overwhelms him. *Guilt*. Guilt for assuming the worst...again. And for not being the one to come help Ilya move into his new place.

“I’m sorry.” He whispers, feeling ridiculous. Rose shakes her head. “You have nothing to apologize for.” She kisses his cheek. “Now, do you want to stay or leave? I’ll support you either way but I really want to watch LA beat the shit out of Edmonton.” She winks and smiles. He can’t help but laugh.

“I want to stay.” He admits. Rose smiles wide and grabs his hand, dragging him back towards the suite. “I should probably apologize to Svetlana.” He muses and Rose shakes him off. “No, you’re fine.”

He doesn’t believe her, but as they walk back into the suite Svetlana only smiles warmly at them and suggests they grab drinks because puck drop is about to happen.

Rose grabs a beer. Shane grabs a ginger ale and they make their way to their seats. Thankfully Rose sits between him and Svetlana. He’s not sure if he’d be able to hold a conversation with her.

Rose and her are making conversation but he’s not paying attention. His leg is shaking as he looks around the arena and takes a drink of his ginger ale. He’s antsy and nervous. Desperate to see Ilya even if it’s from a distance.

Finally, after what feels like an eternity the lights in the arena darken and the announcer begins their introductions. Shane is on the edge of his seat now, waiting for Ilya’s entrance, not moving his eyes away from where the LA Rush will be skating out of.

The beginning sounds of Kickstart My Heart by Mötley Crüe begin to play as the Jumbotron flashes between images of the players. When Ilya’s image pops up the crowd goes wild. It’s surreal seeing this from the crowds perspective and it makes him smile knowing that Ilya is obviously loved here.

After the song plays for a little longer the announcer finally starts working the crowd up in preparation of the team taking the ice. Shane holds his breath as the lights flash wildly and then the team is taking the ice and the crowd goes wild. Svetlana and Rose jump to their feet as they cheer. Shane awkwardly stands with them and claps but his eyes remain on the ice, searching for number 81.

Then he sees him and his heart thunders wildly in his chest.

Chapter 12

Ilya takes a deep breath as Kickstart My Heart by Mötley Crüe begins to play throughout the arena. Every time he hears the intro song for his new team, it makes him smile in anticipation. Tonight though? He can't find it in him to even crack a smile. He's having a hard time keeping his thoughts on the game that's about to start.

His thoughts have unfortunately remained on Shane. Ilya still can't believe he's here, in LA. A part of him wonders if Shane will be *here* tonight. Ilya purchased a box suite for Svetlana and Rose to enjoy the game. When he arrived to the arena early today he made sure it would be stocked full of their favorites, including Shane's. He even made sure there was appropriate food provided for Shane's diet. He didn't let himself think too hard about why he'd done that and he'll never admit that to anyone that he did.

He let Rose know that she was more than welcome to invite whoever she liked since she has many friends in LA. Would that include Shane now that she knew he was in town? Would Shane even come if she invited him? Probably not. Ilya knows it would most likely send Shane into a panic attack. He couldn't just show up to his rivals playoff game but a part of Ilya hopes he does. He can't help it.

"Rozanov, you ready?" Ilya's favorite new teammate, Erik Linden, a Swedish Defenseman, asks as he nudges his shoulder a bit roughly. Ilya glances towards him and puts on his cocky smile. "I am always ready, Linden. Are you?" He counters with raised eyebrows and Erik laughs. "Fuck yeah! Let's go out there and kick some Edmonton ass. Show em' whose house this is!" He grins cheekily and holds his fist up for Ilya to pound to which he does with an amused shake of his head.

"Let's get this done tonight boys! I would love to have a nice long break before the conference finals!" The LA Captain, Anze Kovačič shouts loudly in the tunnel. The whole team bellows with agreement and eager excitement, tapping their sticks on the ground. Ilya pushes his thoughts of Shane away as best as he can, letting his team and the energy in the arena fuel him for the game.

As him and his team finally make their appearance, he can't keep the smile off his face. The lights, the music, the cheers, the energy...it's electric. It's one of his favorite feelings in the world. As Ilya and his team do a few quick warm-ups before lining up for the anthems, he forces himself to keep his eyes down and focused. He's itching to look towards the suite, but he knows it's not smart to.

Instead, he keeps his eyes down on the ice all throughout the anthems and ceremonial puck drop. He's buzzing with energy, can feel thousands of eyes focused on him. There's an awareness within him though. A flicker in his heart, that believes Shane is here. He still doesn't look, even when all the lights in the arena turn on and he's sitting on his team's bench. It would only take him a second to find the suite, a second longer to see if Shane is here. But he doesn't.

Not yet, he tells himself. Wait until the last minute of the game. Stay focused.

Luckily, the game keeps him occupied and focused. Edmonton showed up tonight, desperate to keep their playoff contention going. It's tied 1-1 going into the second period. Ilya is desperate to score again. In his next shift, he flies onto the ice, seeing a break away during an Edmonton line change. He calls out to Linden for a pass and charges toward the net. Two Edmonton players fly towards him, but last minute he backward passes to Linden who has a clear shot due to the traffic in front of the net. LA scores a second later and the horn blares, followed by The Hey Song.

The crowd is going insane and it's the loudest that Ilya's heard since he arrived. As he celebrates with his team, he can't help but feel a rush of emotion. As shitty as the trade was initially, he's actually pretty happy here. It's an overwhelming thought to have but he welcomes it anyways.

Once the excitement settles, the whistle is blown for a commercial break. He skates towards the bench to grab some water and to let the ice crew do their thing. Just as he is sits down and is handed a water bottle, the crowd screams wildly again. He glances up at the jumbotron and smiles when he sees Rose's face on the screen with his name displayed underneath, the announcer giving her a warm welcome. The camera then pans a little to the right and Ilya's breath catches.

Shane.

He's here. The crowd boos and Ilya furrows his brow in anger. How dare the crowd boo him. He understands, but it's still fucking rude. He focuses on the jumbotron, worried how Shane is going to react to the fans response to seeing him. All he does is wave awkwardly as the announcer calls out his name. Then he's gone, and they are showing another celebrity that Ilya doesn't give a shit about.

His eyes immediately fly to the suite. He doesn't give a shit anymore. Shane is actually here. A second later, their eyes connect. Ilya takes a deep calming breath and tries to keep his emotions in check. He desperately wants to run up to the suite, but he can't, obviously. He can't wave either without getting questions. So he's stuck, just looking at Shane from a distance. Maybe he could smile at least.

Just as he's about to, his coach gets his attention, and starts showing him a designed play he wants them to execute. Ilya is only half listening. His brain is just repeating, *Shane is here. He's here.* over and over again. By the time Ilya's taking the ice again all he can think about is showing off for Shane. He needs to remind Shane who he is and why he's attracted to Ilya.

And that he does. He ends up scoring ten seconds later. Then again in the third period. LA ends up winning 4-1. They are officially going to the conference finals.

Ilya is riding a high as he and his team head into the locker room after the game ends. He can't stop smiling, feeling lighter than he has in weeks. His team starts celebrating around him as he reaches for his phone. He's expecting to have a message from Shane but when he looks at the screen he only has messages from Svetlana and Rose. Disappointment hits him and his smile fades. He doesn't bother to read Svetlana's or Rose's messages yet. Instead, he

takes off his equipment and heads to the showers letting his team continue their celebrations without his bad mood tamping down their excitement.

Ilya feels like an idiot. Why did he think Shane would have texted him? They haven't spoken in weeks. Ilya made sure of that. Of course Shane wouldn't message him. He must have only agreed to come tonight for Rose's sake, not because he wanted to see Ilya. Or maybe he did come to see Ilya, but once he realized Svetlana was here he got angry. Ilya curses as he turns the shower on and steps into the stream. Ilya really screwed everything up. He never should have told Shane he loves him. If he hadn't, then none of this would have happened.

By the time Ilya is making his way back to his locker, he's a dark cloud of emotions. Linden looks at Ilya curiously as he grabs his clothes and quickly puts them on. "You coming out with us tonight? We're heading to Avalon." He asks Ilya who is now grabbing his phone again. Ilya shakes his head. "Not tonight." Linden looks like he wants to argue but then smiles, "Oh yeah, I forgot. You have your sexy Russian "friend" here." Ilya goes to open his mouth to explain they really are just friends, but Linden is already walking towards the showers. "Have fun Rozy!" He shouts over his shoulder and Ilya sighs and sits down on the bench. He opens the messages from Svetlana and Rose.

[9:05 pm] **Svetlana:** You are the best hockey player to ever come out of Russia!

[9:32 pm] **Svetlana:** Are you showing off for me now?

[9:48 pm] **Svetlana:** Congratulations, Ilya. I'm so proud of you!

[10:13 pm] **Svetlana:** I will see you at Avalon, right?

[10:13 pm] **Svetlana:** I will buy you all the vodka you want tonight. You deserve it!

[10:26 pm] **Ilya:** No, I am tired. I am going home.

[9:49 pm] **Rose:** OMG, ILYA! You were so amazing!

[9:50 pm] **Rose:** This was the best hockey game I've ever been to!

[10:07 pm] **Rose:** We are all going to Avalon!

[10:08 pm] **Rose:** See you there?

[10:26 pm] **Ilya:** No, I am tired. I am going home.

Bubbles appear immediately indicating Rose is texting him back, but Ilya turns his phone off and stuffs it into his bag. He quickly packs up the rest of his things and a few minutes later he's walking out of the locker room desperate to get home so he can fall apart in peace.

Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

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

Shane hates clubs. The only reason he agreed to come was so he could see Ilya. He's currently sitting at a VIP booth with Rose, Svetlana and a few of Rose's Hollywood friends, including Miles. Shane is sipping on a beer and staring at the entrance, waiting anxiously for Ilya's arrival. A few of his teammates filtered in a few minutes ago so he should be arriving soon.

Rose sets her hand on his shaking leg and squeezes and he immediately stops. "Sorry." He murmurs as he takes a long drink. She frowns as she watches him. "I'll be fine once he's here. I'm just nervous." Shane whispers after he swallows.

"Shane..." Her tone is sympathetic and he furrows his brow. "What?" He asks, setting his beer down on the table. "I don't think he's coming." She admits. Shane's throat feels like it's about to close up and his eyes begin to fill with moisture as he stares at her. "What do you mean?" Shane asks thickly. "I texted to see if he was meeting us here and he said he was going to go home. I've been trying to convince him since to come but he hasn't answered any of my texts. I think he turned his phone off." She explains and Shane feels his heart drop in his chest.

"Oh." He replies, looking down at his lap. "Did you text him? I don't understand why he wouldn't come." She asks, trying to figure out why Ilya wouldn't be here right now after obviously seeing Shane at the game. He would have been hard to miss, being booed by the whole arena when he was put onto the jumbotron. "No. I - I didn't text him." He replies and Rose sags beside him in disbelief. "Oh Shane..." She says as she squeezes her eyes shut. "No wonder he didn't want to come." She adds and Shane frowns in confusion. How is it his fault Ilya isn't here?

"God, you can be so dumb sometimes." She says when she opens her eyes and sees his reaction. He opens his mouth to argue but she stops him by putting her hand over his mouth. "He got his hopes up by seeing you at the game and was expecting a text from you. When he didn't have one he probably assumed you only went to the game because I asked you to." She explains.

"But you did ask me to." Shane mumbles around her hand. She narrows her eyes at him. "I did, but you decided to stay for him, not me. I told you multiple times we could leave." She counters and Shane sighs. She's right and Shane's an idiot. He just made Ilya feel unwanted and unloved once again. Fuck. Rose moves her hand from his mouth and squeezes his hand sympathetically.

"I know I don't deserve your help, but can I have his address?" Shane implores. Rose studies him for a long moment before pulling out her phone. She types quickly and then he feels his phone vibrate in his pocket. He pulls it out.

[10:58 pm] **Rose:** 2481 Seabright Cove, Hermosa Beach - Gate Code: 0812

“Thank you.” He says as he immediately stands up from the table and starts to head toward the entrance. Rose grabs his hand before he can walk out and he turns back to her questioningly.

“Don’t hurt him again, Shane. I’m not sure he’ll be okay if you do.” She says seriously, and Shane swallows thickly and nods. She releases him and he rushes towards the entrance of the club while ordering an Uber.

As he climbs into the uber, Rose's words repeat in his head. Hurting Ilya is the last thing he wants to do. He never meant to hurt him in the first place. On the drive to Ilya’s all Shane can think about is how he’s going to fix all that’s he’s broken. He just hopes that Ilya will let him in. He’s not sure what he’ll do if Ilya turns him away. Probably beg.

Thirty minutes later Shane's uber is pulling onto a quiet, empty street. The homes are big, beautiful and very private. As the car slows to a crawl, Shane looks out the window and sees Ilya's house. The house number displayed modernly on the gate. He thanks the uber driver and climbs out of the car and heads towards the gate. There's a pedestrian gate attached to the large car gate and he quickly types in the code Rose provided him and steps inside a moment later making sure the door shuts behind him.

When he turns, he glances up at Ilya's home. It's amazing. Modern, but charming. Welcoming and warm. He makes his way to the front door and with a deep breath he rings the doorbell. His hands shake as he waits for what feels like an eternity. And then finally, the door opens and Shane's heart beats erratically in his chest. Ilya stands before him in nothing but a pair of low slung Adidas workout pants, his hair mussed and slightly damp. He looks irresistible and Shane's breath catches in his throat.

"Hi." Shane whispers thick with emotion. Ilya keeps his face neutral, showing no emotion as he stares at Shane. Shane furrows his brows and feels moisture filling his eyes. Ilya isn't going to let him in. He's too late. He's done too much damage. Has hurt Ilya too much. Shane is about to turn and leave when Ilya opens the door wider and steps to the side. An invitation.

Shane immediately steps inside. His eyes take in his surroundings as Ilya shuts and locks the door behind him. Ilya passes by him and Shane follows after him silently. A moment later they step into the kitchen and he can't take the silence anymore. “This place is amazing. It sort of reminds me a bit of my cottage in Ottawa.” Ilya can’t help but smile at that.

“Would you like something to drink?” Ilya asks. “Uh sure, whatever you have is fine.” He replies and Ilya opens his fridge pulling out a ginger ale for Shane. Shane stares at the ginger ale as his heart clenches tightly in his chest. He shouldn't be surprised by it, it's not the first time Ilya has had it on hand for Shane, but to know he has it now? Ilya was obviously hoping to see Shane.

Shane looks to Ilya whose staring at him from across the kitchen island. His jaw tenses and his nose flares slightly and Shane sees the first sign that his presence is affecting Ilya. Shane sets the ginger ale on the island and clears his throat. "I'm sorry." He announces. Ilya lifts his eyebrows questioningly, "For what, exactly?" He asks and Shane sighs.

"I'm sorry for assuming you fucked Rose. I'm sorry for assuming Svetlana was here because you wanted to fuck her. I'm sorry for not telling you I was in LA. I'm sorry for not texting you after your game tonight. You were amazing by the way." Shane admits before continuing on. "But mostly I'm sorry for not saying I love you back. For making you think that this," Shane gestures between the two of them, "isn't love." Ilya's eyes fill with moisture and Shane immediately goes to him, caging him against the island.

"I love you, Ilya." Shane admits, his voice thick with emotion. "I think I've loved you from the moment we met."

"You think?" Ilya replies with raised brows and Shane sighs, "Don't be an asshole. I, I - fuck." He steps away from Ilya because he's having a hard time breathing. His hearing goes muffled as he looks down at his feet, hoping they will help ground him, but he can't see them through the tears filling his eyes. This confession is not going like he hoped it would. Ilya is never going to forgive him.

"Hollander." He hears Ilya's voice faintly in his ears, but he's too frozen with panic to respond. "Shane!" Ilya says, sounding worried. Shane still can't move. Suddenly, one of Ilya's hands wraps gently around Shane's chin and the next thing he knows, he's staring into beautiful blue eyes. "Breathe." Ilya whispers thickly and Shane immediately obeys, taking in a deep breath.

After a few moments his panic begins to subside but then the embarrassment creeps in and he tries to look away from Ilya. He won't let him, holding onto his chin more tightly and forcing him to stay put. They stare at each other for a long moment, silently studying each other. Shane swallows thickly, "I'm sorry." He whispers and Ilya furrows his brow, obviously confused as to why Shane is apologizing again. "I'm sorry." Shane repeats, letting the tears fall from his eyes now. "I'm sorry." He sobs. "I hate myself for making you think that I'm not completely, desperately in love with you; for not trying harder to get you to talk to me. I understand if you never want to see me again, but I just need you to -"

Suddenly, Shane's words are being cut off by Ilya's lips on his; brutal but soft. Hungry but languid. **Perfect.**

Shane wraps his arms around Ilya, tangling his fingers into the nape of his hair and deepens the kiss. Ilya moans and presses Shane into the kitchen counter, grabbing his hips and squeezing deliciously. Shane trembles in Ilya's arms, overwhelmed with emotion. Tears are still falling from his eyes, but this time in relief. He's finally kissing the man he loves again. He finally feels in control. Like he's finally made it home.

Chapter End Notes

Anyone else listen to Ember & Ice today and nearly die?! I can't wait until January 6th!

Chapter 14

Ilya is in disbelief. He wasn't expecting Shane to show up unannounced at his house. When he opened the door to see him standing there, awkward as ever but looking better than anything in the world Ilya nearly gave into him immediately.

Somehow he kept it together and invited Shane inside, even offered him a drink. He kept his distance, not wanting to read into why Shane might have showed up at his house.

Then Shane started talking, apologizing for shit that didn't even matter in the grand scheme of things. Ilya was only half listening up until Shane apologized for not saying he loved him back. The memory of their phone call pierced through Ilya's heart and he was close to breaking down when Shane caged him against the kitchen island.

I love you, Ilya. I think I've loved you from the moment we met.

Ilya made a stupid joke because he couldn't control his emotions. He was overwhelmed, exhilarated, terrified of those words, of what they meant. He believed Shane when he said them, but they still shocked him to the core.

His joke sent Shane into to panic though, and the only way Ilya could think to calm him was by kissing him. The moment their lips connected again, it was like coming home. The world felt right again, whole.

Ilya didn't want to ever stop. He wanted Shane in his arms forever, just like this. Unfortunately, he can tell Shane is in discomfort. He keeps shifting his weight from his injured knee.

Begrudgingly, Ilya pulls away. Shane whines and tries to yank him back towards him. Ilya smiles and presses a soft quick kiss to Shane's mouth before disentangling his fingers from his hair which makes Shane pout.

"Please don't give me that look Hollander. You are in pain. I need to fix it. Make you better." Ilya tells him. Shane wants to protest but Ilya is already leading him towards the living room where he helps him sit and spends a good five minutes positioning Shane's knee just right, making sure it's at the perfect elevation.

Before Shane could thank him, Ilya heads back into the kitchen to grab an ice pack and some medicine.

"Are you hungry?" Ilya shouts to Shane.

"No, I'm okay! I'm still full from the Green Goddess Quinoa Salad I had in the suite." Shane replies and Ilya can't help but smile with satisfaction. He's happy that he made sure Shane had something he could eat and enjoy.

“That sounds...healthy.” Ilya responds as he walks back into the room with the ice, a ginger ale, some anti-inflammatory medicine and water. Shane rolls his eyes at Ilya’s comment as he takes the medicine from his outstretched hand followed by the drinks.

Ilya sets the ice pack carefully on Shane’s knee, then sits beside him on the couch, grabbing the remote from the coffee table before leaning back and getting comfortable.

He ends up on sports center. They are talking about LA’s sweep of Edmonton, commenting on Ilya’s performance that night. Ilya is only half listening. His body is vibrating, being this close to Shane. It’s distracting and he’s trying to be good and keep his hands to himself.

It’s not that Ilya needs to or even wants to fuck Shane tonight. Honestly, it’s better if they don’t. Ilya just wants to be close. To feel Shane’s skin against his, fall asleep with him in his arms. He’s just not sure if it’s smart of him. Ilya is still processing what’s happening since Shane arrived.

“Thank you.” Shane whispers, pulling Ilya out of his thoughts. “For what?” Ilya asks, glancing towards Shane who is resting his head on the back of the couch, staring at Ilya.

“For making sure I had food I could eat at the game. For inviting me into your home. For the ginger ale. For taking care of me even when I don’t deserve it. The list is endless, Ilya.” Shane explains and Ilya feels his throat tighten. All he can do is nod and give Shane a slight smile.

“I know I have a lot to make up for when it comes to you. I know you don’t trust me. But I’m not going anywhere Ilya. I love you, and I’ll spend every day proving it to you until you believe me.” Shane declares. Ilya takes a deep, steadying breath to keep himself from completely giving in to Shane like he’s aching to. He knows he needs to say something though. To keep Shane from going into another panic.

“I am glad you are here,” he admits, intertwining their fingers and pressing a soft kiss to Shane’s knuckles, silently expressing his happiness to have him in his new home. “Stay?”

Chapter 15

Shane wakes up the following morning, wrapped around Ilya's body. They are both still in the same clothes as last night, but it doesn't feel any less perfect to him. Waking up like this; in Ilya's strong embrace, with the early morning light warming the room. Ilya looks beautiful. His skin looks almost incandescent and his face more relaxed than Shane has ever seen it. He looks 10 years younger, like when they first met. Shane's heart somersaults in his chest as he leans forward and presses a soft kiss to Ilya's jaw.

A small gasp from the doorway of Ilya's bedroom pulls Shane's focus from Ilya. He's expecting to see Rose, since she has the code to Ilya's house he probably gave her a key. When he turns though, it's not Rose he sees. It's Svetlana. *Shit.*

Shane pushes himself away from Ilya immediately, startling him awake. Ilya groans and blinks, glaring at Shane with annoyance until he notices Shane's panicked expression. "What's wrong?" He asks, completely oblivious to the beautiful Russian woman standing in his doorway. Shane's eyes widen as he climbs off the bed and glances towards Svetlana. She doesn't look surprised to see them in bed together, per se. There's a hint of happiness, a knowingness in her gaze as she looks between Shane and Ilya. Like she's not surprised in the slightest.

"Svetlana." Ilya sounds defeated as he climbs out of bed. His relaxed face is no longer present, full on tension mars his mouth now. His jaw clenched as he glances towards Shane with apology in his eyes before turning his attention to Svetlana. They begin to talk in Russian much to Shane's panic. He wants to know what they are saying, especially when he hears his name said multiple times throughout the exchange of words.

Shane doesn't know what to do. He shouldn't be here. He needs to go. *Svetlana knows.* Who is she going to tell? Will their secret be exposed to the world now? *Fuck.* Shane can't handle this. He needs to go. *He needs to go.*

He can't go. He loves Ilya. He needs to be brave. He needs to prove to Ilya that he's here to stay. That he cares about their future.

With a deep breath, he walks toward Ilya and Svetlana. Both turn to look at him as he approaches, stopping mid conversation. Ilya looks worried, Svetlana looks intrigued. Shane doesn't give himself a moment to hesitate...he leans in and kisses Ilya on the mouth. It's just a quick peck but it still gives him butterflies alongside a jolt of panic. It was the first time kissing it in front of someone else. It's worth the momentary anxiety when he sees Ilya's reaction after he pulls away. He doesn't know if he's ever seen Ilya smile so wide.

"You should extend your stay an extra day, Svetlana." Shane turns toward her with a smile. "If you can." He adds sheepishly. He shouldn't assume she could just extend it so easily, but he continues on with his suggestion, "I'm sure you have a lot of questions about us..." Shane feels Ilya's hand on his waist and he instantly relaxes. "It would be great to get to know Ilya's best friend." He smiles as Svetlana stares at him with a soft smile on her face. Then she

glances at Ilya for a long moment before responding, "I think I can afford to stay an extra day for you, *Jane*."

Shane's stomach twists when she calls him that name. Svetlana is connecting all the dots. He doesn't know if that's a good thing or bad one. Right now, he can't think about it. He needs a minute to regroup. "Great! I - I'll let you two finish your talk and go make us all some coffee and breakfast."

Before Shane can make it a step, Ilya is pulling him back toward him and kissing him. It's more than the peck Shane gave him moments ago, but not enough of a kiss to embarrass him completely. When Ilya finally releases him, they are both grinning like fools. Shane rests his forehead against Ilya as he breaths him in. "We will be down soon." Ilya tells Shane who nods and pushes away from Ilya.

He gives Svetlana a smile as he passes and makes his way downstairs, heading for the kitchen. The moment he enters, he grabs the kitchen island for stability as he takes a deep breath. His hands are shaking from that interaction. His nervous system is in overdrive. *It's going to be okay*. He repeats to himself until finally his hands steady and he can breathe easier. With one last settling breath he starts to get to work.

Ten minutes later, Ilya appears in the kitchen. He doesn't say a word as he approaches Shane, he just pushes him gently against the refrigerator and kisses him roughly. Shane moans as Ilya's tongue presses against his and he tries to deepen the kiss but Ilya has full control of the situation which only turns Shane on even more. Unfortunately, Ilya stops the kiss a moment later.

"You-" Ilya says thickly, staring intently into Shane's eyes, "okay?" He seems worried, nervous, and Shane feels guilty. "I'm okay, Ilya. I promise." He replies quickly, bringing his hand to rest on Ilya's heart. Ilya furrows his brow like he doesn't believe him and Shane sighs, "I admit, for a second I was panicking. I thought about running the moment I saw Svetlana. But then I realized I love you too much to keep running. It's time for me to be brave."

Ilya sucks in a sharp breath and leans forward, resting his forehead against Shane's. They stay like that for a long moment. Silent, breathing each other in. Until finally Shane is reminded he was in the middle of making breakfast.

"I need to finish cooking breakfast." He whispers and Ilya groans goofily in protest. It makes Shane smile.

"Grab some coffee and sit down. Keep me company." Shane suggests, nodding towards the coffee machine that is ready to brew. Ilya grumbles teasingly before giving Shane a quick kiss and then makes his way to the coffee machine while Shane heads to the stove to start the scrambled eggs.

"Where is Svetlana?" Shane asks as he pours the eggs into a hot pan. "She had to call the airline to change her flight and the hotel to see if she can add another night to her stay." He replies as he takes a sip of his coffee and sits on one of the stools at the island. Shane nods as he stirs the eggs around, adding salt and pepper as he goes.

"I hope it's okay that I suggested she stay." Shane comments. "I just - I know she probably has a lot of questions and I'd rather answer all of them before she leaves and we come up with a plan." He rambles. "Plan?" Ilya asks with confusion in his tone. Shane takes a deep breath as he stares at the pan of eggs. "For when everyone finds out about us..." He trails off. Ilya's stool scrapes along the floor and Shane tenses. *Shit.*

The next thing Shane knows, Ilya is reaching around him and turning the burner off and forces Shane to put down the spatula he's holding. Then he turns him to face him. Shane tries to look into Ilya's eyes, but he can't. Ilya sighs and grabs Shane's jaw, holding him hostage. Shane blinks rapidly, trying to keep the moisture in his eyes. He doesn't want Ilya to see how terrified he actually is.

"You think Svetlana will tell people about us?" Ilya asks. He doesn't sound angry, more confused than anything and Shane sighs, "I - I don't..."

"I know you don't know Svetlana, but she wouldn't tell. We can trust her." Ilya cuts Shane off. Shane knows this. Deep down, he does. He can tell how much Svetlana loves Ilya, how she would do anything for him. She wouldn't out them.

"I know. She loves you too much to do that to you. But I can't ask her to keep a secret this big. I already feel guilty about Rose knowing. It shouldn't be their burden to bear." Shane admits and Ilya tilts his head in confusion. "Burden to bear?" Shane explains, "It's not their job to keep our relationship a secret." Ilya nods in understanding.

"I think this is something we should ask them, yes? If they want to burden this bear?" Ilya asks a moment later and Shane can't help but smile and laugh. Ilya looks offended and Shane can't help but lean forward and kiss him. Ilya's hand falls from Shane's face and tangles into his hair as they kiss for a few moments. Ilya stops the kiss, "Rose will be here soon. We will ask them together." He concludes.

"Shit. I'm going to need to make more food." Shane says absentmindedly as he turns back to the stove. "No." Ilya grabs Shane's arm and pulls him back towards him, wrapping his arms around his waist. "Rose is stopping for donuts." Shane frowns, "Should you be eating donuts while you're still in the playoffs?"

"Is okay. I will just burn it off later in bed." Ilya winks right before stealing a kiss.

Chapter 16

The conversation with Svetlana and Rose went exactly like Ilya expected it to. Svetlana admitted to being suspicious about them, had been connecting the dots for awhile that they were together. Ilya suspected, but Shane seemed shocked. Luckily Shane didn't seem to care after Svetlana gave them her full support.

Both women were adamant on keeping Shane and Ilya's relationship secret until they are ready to come out together. Neither of them found it to be a burden. Ilya expected nothing less. Shane has finally relaxed much to Ilya's relief. He hates when Shane is stressed. Usually when he got this way Ilya would take him to bed, but that's not a choice at the moment.

All four of them are lounging in the living room. Shane and Ilya are cuddling together on the couch while Rose is sitting cross legged on the floor. Svetlana is sitting in a chair near the window.

Rose is talking about some holiday called Cinco De Mayo and how we should all go out and celebrate. Ilya has never heard of it, but it sounds fun. And he has yet to explore his new town. He turns giddy thinking about spending the day out with Shane and the girls. Unfortunately, it doesn't last long.

"You're insane if you think we're doing that!" Shane laughs at Rose's suggestion of spending the day at the beach, going to a Mexican restaurant for lunch and getting drunk off of margaritas. Ilya tries to hide his obvious disappointment in Shane's reaction, but both Rose and Svetlana see it. They exchange a look as Ilya bites his lip to stop himself from speaking. He won't say anything. If Shane's not ready for that, he's not ready.

"Why?" Rose presses and Shane laughs again, "Do you know how many people are going to be out today? People who will most likely recognize us?"

"So? Who cares!" She replies, obviously confused. Ilya glares in her direction and shakes his head but she dutifully ignores him. Shane turns to Ilya then, looking for backup but his brows furrow when he sees Ilya's reaction that he apparently didn't do a good enough job of hiding. "You want to celebrate Cinco De Mayo? Do you even know what that is?" Shane asks incredulously and Ilya shrugs, "I don't, but it sounds like a fun day."

"Then the three of you should go." Shane suggests. "I can go back to my hotel and grab my things before I meet you back here later?" He continues and Ilya just stares at him for a long moment, debating on what to say. He goes with honesty, "I want to spend the day with you, Shane." Ilya turns to look at Rose and Svetlana, "No offense." he says. They roll their eyes and smile. Shane frowns.

"If you want to celebrate here, we will. I just want to be with you however that is." Ilya tells Shane, running his hand along Shane's shoulders, massaging gently trying to get him to relax again. "Ilya..." Shane argues but Rose cuts him off. "I don't think anyone would care if you two are seen hanging out together Shane. Especially when me and Svetlana will be there too!" Shane turns to look at her.

"It will just look like four friends hanging out. Or people may assume we are back together and Ilya and Svetlana are together." She continues. Svetlana nods in agreement and adds, "Plus, you two were on the same team for the All-Star game. It would not be hard for people to assume that you have become friends since then. I don't think anyone would be surprised after seeing how well you two play together on the ice."

Shane is still tense in Ilya's embrace but Ilya can see his mind working through what the girls are saying. Processing. They are right. No one would assume that Shane and Ilya are together and in love when the four of them are together. Truthfully, this is the best case scenario for them in terms of being able to be seen in public together but unless Shane agrees, Ilya won't be admitting that. He just wants Shane comfortable and happy. If that means staying in this house all day then so be it.

"You're right." Shane finally responds and Ilya's eyes widen in surprise as Rose squeals with excitement and Svetlana smiles happily. Shane turns to look at Ilya, a bright smile on his face, "Do you have a swimsuit I can borrow?" He asks and Ilya can't hold back his satisfaction. He leans forward and kisses Shane, showing him just how happy he made him.

An hour later, the four of them are climbing out of Rose's car and heading towards the beach. Shane is in a pair of Ilya's swim trunks while Rose borrowed a bathing suit from Svetlana who had brought her things with her to Ilya's since she was planning on leaving from his house for the airport. They find a somewhat private spot on the beach and set their things down on the sand. Shane is scanning the beach, most likely looking for anyone who may recognize them. Ilya doesn't care if people notice. Let them.

He leaves Shane and the girls to their own devices, opting to whip off his shirt and remove his shoes, then heads toward the water. This isn't his first time in the water. He started taking early morning runs along the beach once he moved into the house. And at the end of each run he takes a dip to cool off. It's different today though. More freeing. He feels more alive. Although that might be from the fact he can feel Shane's eyes on him from the shore. His sunglasses may be hiding where he's looking to everyone else, but Ilya knows. Shane is looking at him.

"You should join me, Hollander." He shouts from the water, giving him a cheeky smile. Shane says something Ilya can't hear to Rose and Svetlana who have laid out their towels and are now lying down, taking in the sun. The three of them laugh and Ilya can't keep the smile off his face as he turns back to the water again and starts wading further into the waves. It's nice to hear Shane laugh. It's nice having Shane here. He still can't fully believe it.

Ilya stops once he's waist deep in the water, then drops under the surface letting the salt water wash over him. When he feels the waves flowing back towards the sea he pops his head back above and shakes out his hair. "You know it's not fair." Shane's voice fills his ears and Ilya turns to see Shane a couple of feet beside him. "What isn't fair?" Ilya asks, not being able to keep the smile off his face knowing that Shane decided to join him.

Shane huffs out a laugh as he bites his bottom lip and shakes his head. "How good you look...and I can't even touch you. It's torture." He confesses, glancing towards Ilya.

Ilya can't stop himself from looking at Shane's body, just for a second. Just a glimpse. Then he turns back to the water, "Same. Is good that we are in cold water, yes?" Ilya says with a chuckle. Shane groans and splashes water at him which makes Ilya laugh even more. He splashes Shane back and soon enough they are in a full-fledged water fight, laughing like a couple of teenage boys.

It's Shane who ends it by swimming further into the waves away from Ilya. Ilya watches his strong body maneuver through the waves and can't help but admire him. He looks away too quickly for his own liking though. Shane is being brave by being out in public together. If Ilya gets caught in public ogling him, Shane will never agree to anything like this again.

"Rozanov, is that you?" He hears a deep voice shout at him from the shoreline. Ilya glances back and sees his team captain, Anze Kovačič. Ilya curses internally and starts walking towards him. He knows he can't ignore him. Ilya hopes Shane stays in the water and that Anze doesn't see him. He's not sure how Shane would react seeing Ilya's teammates.

As Ilya steps out of the water, Anze smiles easily and holds out his hand for a handshake. Ilya returns it. "Who you here with?" Anze asks, just as Ilya sees Shane step out of the water, heading towards Ilya and Anze. *Shit.*

"Shane Hollander?" Anze says with confusion when Shane approaches. Ilya tries not to show how fucking panicked he is, not wanting Shane to feel more nervous than he probably already does.

"Hey, Kovačič. Great game last night." Shane replies easily, shaking Anze's hand. Anze smiles, looking surprised. "Were you there?" He asks looking between Shane and Ilya with interest.

"Yes, he was with Rose Landry." Ilya answered at the same time Shane says, "Yeah I did, it was exciting to see a game from a suite. Something I haven't experienced before." Anze nods and points between the two of them.

"Aren't you two supposed rivals? How are you hanging out right now?" Anze asks with a laugh. Ilya opens his mouth to respond, but Shane beats him to it, "We're friends." Ilya looks to Shane who continues, "During the All-Star game we realized the rivalry can stay in the ice and it would be okay if we were friends off the ice."

Shane doesn't even hesitate with the explanation. His tone is easy, practiced, like when he's doing press for hockey. It's the same one he uses when he wants something to sound simple and harmless.

Ilya's stomach tightens. He's good at this, Ilya thinks. Too good. Anze nods like he understands but Ilya can see his confusion as to why that would mean Shane is here in LA though.

"Hollander is in LA to rehab his knee." Ilya adds to make it seem like Shane didn't come out here to California just to see him. Because he didn't. So Ilya is not lying to his teammate.

“Oh yeah. I forgot about that. How is it going?” Anze asks Shane genuinely wondering. “It’s going better now that I’m doing a more specialized program.” Shane replies vaguely.

Anze’s gaze looks beyond Shane and Ilya. Ilya turns and sees Rose and Svetlana walking towards the group. “I was going to see if you wanted to join me and a few of my friends in a pickup volleyball game, but it looks like you’re busy.” Anze smiles suggestively. Ilya tries not to wrinkle his nose in disgust. He smiles in return instead.

“Maybe next time.” He replies. Anze nods and glances one more time at the girls with interest and then finally walks away a moment later, throwing a wave over his shoulder. Ilya sighs in relief that he’s gone and turns to Shane to apologize.

“Hey, are you okay?” Shane asks before Ilya can say a word. He furrows his brows at Shane’s question. “Yes. I’m fine. Are you?” Shane opens his mouth to respond, but Ilya continues, “I’m sorry. I did not think we would run into any of my teammates. If you want us to go back to my place I would understand.” Shane frowns.

“Ilya. It’s okay. I’m okay. We’re okay.” Shane says it like it’s obvious. Like there was never any other outcome. Ilya nods, because that’s what you do when someone sounds as certain as Shane does. Ilya thought he’d feel that way too, but now that’s it’s out there he wishes it were different. He doesn’t want to be just Shane Hollanders friend. He wants to be Shane Hollanders everything.

“He didn’t suspect anything. In actuality it might be a good thing he saw us. The rest of your team will know what just happened in a few minutes, I’m sure. And I have no doubt that it will be spread to the rest of the league in a matter of days.” Shane smiles, completely oblivious to Ilya’s internal conflict raging inside of him.

It doesn’t help that Shane keeps glancing back toward Rose and Svetlana but doesn’t spare a look at Ilya. He tells himself it doesn’t mean anything. That Shane is just being careful. It still hurts though.

The girls finally step up to them.

“Everything okay?” Rose asks, looking nervously between Shane and Ilya. Shane nods and smiles. “Ilya’s team captain.” He says in response which makes Rose and Svetlana’s eyes widen. “Why does everyone look so worried?” Shane snaps.

“We’re worried about you, obviously.” Rose responds with a roll of her eyes and a slap on Shane’s chest. Shane furrows his brows, “Hey!” He protects his chest. “It’s all good. *You two were right*. About everything.” He replies, looking pointedly at the girls.

“That’s great!!” Rose smiles happily.

“Tell Ilya that, not me. He’s the one who is freaking out now.” Shane replies, sounding annoyed. Ilya glances towards him, his jaw tense. Still, Shane won’t look at Ilya.

Ilya looks to Rose and Svetlana. His shoulders feel too tight, and the air suddenly feels thick in his lungs. He exhales hard through his nose, annoyed with himself more than anyone else.

“I need a fucking drink.” He growls and stalks toward his stuff on the beach so he can get his clothes and shoes back on and head to a closest bar.

Chapter 17

Shane stares at Ilya's retreating back in utter confusion. *What the fuck just happened?* He looks to Rose and Svetlana to see if they understand but they look just as confused as him.

"What the fuck just happened?" He questions out loud this time. Rose and Svetlana glance toward him with concern.

"Let me go talk to him." Svetlana replies quickly and turns to go after him. Rose remains by Shane's side, grabbing his hand in support.

"I was calm. I didn't freak out. I admitted to his fucking captain that we are friends. I don't understand what he could be upset about. I did everything right. I —" Shane's voice turns fraught and he can feel himself starting to break, but Rose stops his rambling.

"Hey, hey stop." She squeezes his hand and steps directly into his path so his eyes are on hers. "I don't know what's going on in his head right now, but I know one thing for sure. He's not upset with you." She says adamantly but how can that be true?

"It doesn't feel that way." Shane frowns and looks away from her and towards the ocean. He blinks behind his glasses, trying to keep the tears from falling.

"Everything felt perfect, like we could really do this...have this relationship. But maybe he doesn't actually want that. Maybe this is all too much." Shane suggests.

Rose looks at him like he's insane. "If you think he doesn't want this with you, you've clearly lost your mind." Shane frowns and Rose continues, "I don't think Ilya wants anything **but** this with you." It doesn't feel that way, Shane thinks.

"Maybe that's why he freaked out...maybe he realized how happy he is, how good it feels to finally experience something like this with you in public, that it made him realize he wants more." Shane can feel her eyes on him, but he can't look at her otherwise the tears will fall.

"Shane." She says urgently and he finally turns to face her. "If that's true, then he should be happy that I didn't go into a panic. He should be happy that everyone will know we are friends now. It means we can be seen together whenever we want. What more could he want?" Shane questions and Rose furrows her brows, looking almost disappointed in Shane.

Is he missing something?

"Come on. Let's go find them." Rose suggests after a long moment then walks away from Shane and towards their remaining things. He follows after her like a petulant child. After he puts on his shirt and shoes he sees Rose texting on her phone.

"They are at Sharkeez." She says not looking up from her phone. Shane raises his eyebrows. "What kind of name is that?" He questions and Rose shrugs, "Who cares when they have chips and salsa and margaritas."

“I think I might go back to my hotel.” Shane says as they start walking towards the restaurant. Rose stops and stares at him incredulously for a long moment before starting to walk again. “If that’s what you want to do, I’m not going to stop you.” She replies, not being able to keep the disappointment out of her voice.

Shane’s chest aches as he trails after her. He doesn’t want to go back to his hotel. But this is what he does. He runs. When things get messy, he leaves because it's easier than facing the mess. But he told himself he wouldn’t run from Ilya anymore. That he would stay. Show him how much he loves him. If he leaves now, it will only show Ilya that he can’t trust Shane’s feelings. That everything he said last night was a lie. Shane would never be able to live with himself.

So he doesn’t leave. He catches up to Rose who releases a breath of relief when she notices him. Silently, they walk towards the restaurant. A few minutes later he can see Svetlana and Ilya sitting at a table on the patio of the restaurant. His heart beats erratically in his chest as he and Rose approach them.

Rose points to their table to let the hostess know they are meeting them and the next thing Shane knows, they are standing at the table. Rose sits next to Svetlana, leaving the chair beside Ilya open for Shane. He looks to Ilya to see if he’s okay with that but Ilya isn’t looking at him, he’s looking out at the people walking around the strand. Shane takes the seat.

A waitress appears out of thin air before anyone could say a word and sets down a margarita in front of Rose and a ginger ale in front of Shane as well as chips, salsa and guacamole. Then she tells them she’ll be back in a bit to take their orders and leaves in a flash.

Shane can only stare at the beverage sitting in front of him. He knows Ilya ordered it for him and for some reason he gets irrationally angry. He wishes he knew what Ilya was thinking. One moment he's sweet and attentive, the next he's cold with walls up. Shane can't handle it, especially in public. So much so, that he abruptly stands up.

All three heads turn to look at him. He doesn’t look at Ilya. He focuses on the girls, “I’ll be right back. I just need to use the washroom.” He explains and then turns toward where he assumes the bathrooms will be. He doesn’t actually have to go, but he needs a minute to compose himself. His emotions are all over the place.

He decides instead of hiding in the bathroom, that a shot might be better so he grabs a seat at the bar. A moment later someone sits beside him. He turns to see Ilya. He debates on leaving but stays put. The bartender steps up in front of them with a wide smile.

”Hey, you’re Ilya Rozanov, right?” The beautiful, dark haired woman asks with a glint in her eyes. Shane grinds his teeth together. “Nope. I do not know who that is.” Ilya replies, shocking Shane. “Can we get two shots of your best vodka, please?” He continues with a bored tone. She looks briefly annoyed but turns on her heel and comes back a few moments later setting the shots in front of them. Ilya pulls out his wallet and silently hands her \$100 and shakes his head when she asks if he needs change. Shane mutters a thank you as she walks away and finds another customer to help.

“Always so polite, even when jealous.” Ilya says. Shane glares at Ilya. “Shut up, asshole. Did you fucking forget we’re in public?” He seethes as he glances around to see if anyone may have heard. The bar and restaurant is too loud, and no one is paying attention to them. Ilya huffs out a cynical laugh as he grabs his shot. “No, Hollander. I did not forget.” He replies nodding his head towards Shane’s shot, silently telling him to pick it up. Shane immediately does, and turns his body to face Ilya who is obviously tense. They stare at each other for a brief second and then silently take the shot together.

Shane hates this. Hates how the day has changed so drastically. That it led to whatever this is.

“I’m sorry.” Shane says. Ilya’s head snaps to his and he looks utterly confused. “I don’t know what I did or said...” he continues but Ilya interrupts, “Hollander,” He shakes his head with a look of despair. “You did nothing wrong. I — I” Ilya struggles to explain.

“It’s okay. We can talk about it later.” Shane says as he stands up. He claps Ilya on the shoulder, leaving his hand there like guys sometimes do. “Let’s get back to the girls. They are probably wondering where we went.” He continues. Before he removes his hand from Ilya, he squeezes three times consecutively, hoping Ilya will understand what he’s trying to silently communicate. *I love you.*

Chapter 18

Ilya feels like such an asshole. He is an asshole. He's completely ruined their day by being a selfish fucking asshole. And now Shane is apologizing to him? *Asshole. Asshole. Asshole.*

He doesn't deserve Shane. Not in the slightest. But for some reason Shane loves him. Ilya can't comprehend it. Shane? He's easy to love. Ilya loves every single thing about him. Ilya on the other hand? He's hard to love.

He's made that blatantly obvious this afternoon by freaking out over nothing. He knows he overreacted. That he is expecting...hoping for too much, too soon. It's hard not to when everything he's ever wanted is right in front of him.

But hearing that person say they are just friends out loud? It killed him, because he wants to be so much more than friends. He knows Shane loves him, but does Shane want more with Ilya? Does he want the future that Ilya does?

They haven't had time to talk about it. Maybe if they had, Ilya wouldn't have had this breakdown. He'd know where they stand. Right now, everything feels so fragile. Like it could shatter in a matter of a moment.

"Let's get back to the girls. They are probably wondering where we went." Shane tells him, squeezing his shoulder three times in quick succession. It almost feels like he's trying to tell him something, but he doesn't know what.

Ilya can only nod, stand and follow Shane back to the table. Svetlana and Rose stop talking as they take their seats and look at them expectantly. Ilya doesn't say anything, he just grabs his beer and takes a drink. Shane grabs his ginger ale.

"We ordered for you guys. Tacos." Rose breaks the silence as she leans forward and takes a sip of her margarita.

"Great, thanks." Shane replies awkwardly and Ilya can't stop myself, he presses his foot against Shane's under the table hoping that he'll relax. He glances over at Ilya with a hint of a smile, "It seems like Hollander is having a cheat day with his diet. I like." Ilya replies with a wink at Shane. He can't help but smile when Shane's cheeks turn a slight pink color.

"Stop being an asshole." Shane grumbles, but he's smiling. Ilya feels himself relax as he presses his foot even more against Shane's. "Never." He replies with a cheeky smile before taking another drink of his beer. Shane shakes his head and brings his drink to his mouth as well. Ilya then turns to Rose and Svetlana who are watching the exchange with wide smiles.

"After we eat, me and Svetlana are heading back to LA." Rose says a few moments later.

"Oh. Can I catch a ride back with you?" Shane asks and Ilya's heart drops. He sets his beer down abruptly and turns to look at Shane. Shane turns to Ilya with a look of confusion. When he notices Ilya's reaction his eyes widen. "I just need to grab my stuff from the hotel. I was

planning on coming right back.” He whispers in explanation and Ilya relaxes. *He's not leaving you, you asshole.*

“I can drive you.” Ilya counters and Shane frowns, staring pointedly at the beer bottle in front of Ilya.

“I am okay to drive.” He growls in annoyance. Shane smiles. “I’m sure you are but it makes sense for me to go with them. I have a rental car that I should probably use since I’m paying for it.” Shane explains. Ilya frowns.

Before anyone else can say anything, the waiter arrives with their food. The prior conversation is forgotten once Svetlana realizes the fifth game between Nashville and St. Louis is being played on the bar tv’s. If Nashville wins, they will be facing LA in the conference finals. They spend the rest of their time eating, talking about the game and whether or not LA can take Nashville and make it to the final. Ilya has no doubt LA will win against Nashville, but he’s content to let the other three bicker about it.

Ilya is happy. He is feeling grateful to be experiencing something so simple like eating a meal with the people he loves the most so publicly. Sneaking glances with Shane, playing footsies under the table where no one can see. It's intoxicating in a way he's never experienced before. He really needs to talk to Shane and see if he's feeling the same.

Too soon, they are done eating and the bill arrives. Shane immediately grabs for it, but Ilya snatches it out of his hand as he takes his wallet out. He can feel Shane’s glare on him, but he ignores it, setting enough cash in the bill fold to cover the check and a month’s rent for the waitress.

“You really shouldn’t be carrying that much cash with you.” Shane comments as they walk out of the restaurant a few minutes later. Ilya glances at him with raised eyebrows. “Why is that?” He asks.

“Someone might rob you.” Shane frowns as he responds. Ilya can’t help but smile. It’s very sweet that Shane is worried about him, but Hermosa Beach is very safe and he doesn’t think anyone is stupid enough to rob a professional hockey player.

“Aww are you worried about me, Hollander?” Ilya can’t help but tease. Shane turns serious as they stop near the curb, waiting for Rose’s driver. “Yes. I am.” Shane answers honestly. Ilya studies Shane’s face for a moment. He truly does seem worried. Ilya's chest tightens with emotion, “Okay. I will stop.” Ilya replies just as the car pulls up.

They start to climb into the car. The girls move to the very back row of the SUV while Shane and Ilya climb into the middle row. The moment the door shuts behind Ilya, Shane is grabbing his face and kissing him. It takes a moment for Ilya to comprehend what’s going on but once he does, he kisses Shane back desperately. He feels the tension that he's been trying to ignore release from his body, as he lets himself melt into Shane's body. It’s not until Rose is clearing her throat that they pull away from each other, breathing hard.

“I’m sorry. I just —” Shane starts to explain, but Rose laughs. “Don’t apologize! I love it! But we need to figure out if you’re coming with us to LA or if we’re dropping you off with

Ilya.”

Shane turns to look at Ilya. Ilya doesn't want Shane to leave him for a moment but Shane does need his things. “You should go get your things. I don't want you to be uncomfortable.” He tells Shane.

“I'll be as quick as I can.” Shane replies before leaning forward and kissing Ilya again. Rose says something to her driver, but both men ignore it.

Once they arrive to Ilya's house, Ilya quickly says a goodbye to Svetlana with a promise to see her after the season ends. He tells Rose he'll see her in a couple of days and then he turns to Shane.

“I'll be waiting impatiently.” He admits, making Shane smile and bites his bottom lip. *Fuck. He loves him so fucking much.*

“I love you. I'll see you soon.” Shane replies and Ilya's heart thunders in his chest as he leans forward and kisses him one last time before shutting the car door behind him and heading towards his house hoping and praying that by tonight Ilya will officially have a boyfriend and be off the market. No more meaningless hookups, no more nights wishing for things to be different. Just forever with Shane Hollander.

Chapter 19

[7:07 am] **Missed call from Mom**

[8:14 am] **Missed call from Mom**

[9:02 am] **Missed call from Mom**

[9:04 am] **Mom:** Call me the moment you read this text!

[9:51 am] **Mom:** Hello?! Are you ignoring your own mother?

[10:36 am] **Missed call from Mom**

[11:07 am] **Mom:** I swear if you don't respond to me Shane, I will report you missing!

[11:10 am] **Dad:** Relax, honey. I'm sure he's fine.

[11:17 am] **Missed call from Mom**

[12:03 pm] **Missed call from Mom**

[1:19 pm] **Missed call from Mom**

[1:21 pm] **Mom:** First you went to an LA Rush game last night and now you're seen at some beach?!

[1:21 pm] **Dad:** He's allowed to have a life, honey.

[1:32 pm] **Mom:** I know that! But an LA Rush game with Rose Landry? The beach with her AND Ilya Rozanov? This isn't great PR, Shane.

[2:22 pm] **Mom:** Now it looks like you are apart of some weird love triangle.

[2:23 pm] **Mom:** Some people are calling you a throuple?

[2:24 pm] **Missed call from Mom**

[2:24 pm] **Dad:** Honey...

[2:24 pm] **Mom:** What? He's supposed to be in LA rehabbing his knee, not getting publicized in the tabloids.

[2:52 pm] **Missed call from Mom**

[3:36 pm] **Missed call from Mom**

[4:19 pm] **Missed call from Mom**

[4:25 pm] **Shane:** Why can't I do both?

[4:25 pm] **Shane:** I think I deserve a little fun for once. Rose and I are just friends.

[4:25 pm] **Shane:** Ilya and I are friends.

[4:26 pm] **Mom:** I'm sorry, what?!

[4:26 pm] **Mom:** Did I just read that right? One of the first texts you send us after we've been worrying all day about you is that you and Ilya Rozanov are...friends?!

[4:26 pm] **Dad:** Honey...

[4:27 pm] **Shane:** Yes, we are. Now will you stop freaking out.

[4:27 pm] **Shane:** I'm a grown man, I'm allowed to have friends.

[4:28 pm] **Shane:** I'm allowed to have a life, Mom.

[4:28 pm] **Missed call from Mom**

[4:29 pm] **Shane:** Dad, will you calm her down please?

[4:29 pm] **Dad:** I'm trying.

[4:32 pm] **Dad:** Just so you know, I'm glad you are out having fun.

[4:32 pm] **Dad:** I missed seeing that carefree smile of yours.

[4:35 pm] **Shane:** Thanks Dad. I'll call you tomorrow?

[4:35 pm] **Dad:** Sounds good, Shane. Love you.

[4:36 pm] **Shane:** Love you too.

Shane takes a deep breath as he sets his phone down beside him on the hotel bed. He drops his head into his hands and groans. He's been ignoring his parents all day. He knows it was dumb, but he knew what his mom was trying to get ahold of him about and he wasn't, still isn't, in the headspace to deal with her. She'll have 1,000 questions that he's not sure how to answer.

Once he got to the hotel though, he knew he couldn't ignore them any longer. He wasn't sure what possessed him to tell them over text that him and Ilya are friends now, but he is relieved he did even if his mom is spiraling about it. Hopefully his dad is able to calm her down

enough to give Shane some time to figure everything out. He needs to talk to Ilya though. They need to come up with a plan on how things are going to be moving forward.

He's nervous. Things between them seem...fickle. It's obvious that they both love each other. Although Ilya has yet to say it back to Shane since he confessed his feelings to him last night. Shane knows Ilya is holding back to protect himself because of how he reacted to Ilya telling him he loved him.

Shane can feel the love from Ilya though. In the way he treats him, the way he looks at him. But there is so much that they need to communicate to each other that Shane is worried that they aren't on the same page. They've spent so much of their relationship keeping their feelings bottled up, and it's time that they stop doing that. Tonight Shane is planning to bare it all. Tell Ilya every wish and dream he has for their relationship. Put it all on the line and hope that Ilya is right there with him.

Then they can come up with a plan and maybe he can then tell his parents the truth. He wants to. More than anything, he wants his parents to know Ilya. To grow to love him just like he loves him. But that means he has to gather the courage to tell them the truth about himself. He feels ready, but he wants Ilya by his side when he tells them. It's crazy, but the truth. Ilya grounds him, keeps him centered. He'll need that. Not because he thinks his parents will disapprove, but because Shane knows that he may panic when and if he feels overwhelmed.

Shane's phone vibrates beside him, shaking him from his thoughts. He grabs it and fully expects to see a call or message from one of his parents but it's not. Ilya is calling him. Shane can't help but feel excitement as he hits accept and answers with a smile on his face, "Hey!"

"Are you on your way back yet?" Ilya asks immediately, ignoring Shane's greeting. It makes him smile wider. "Not yet. I just got back to the hotel about fifteen minutes ago. There was a lot of traffic." He answers and Ilya grunts, "Stupid. You will leave soon then?" He asks.

"I still have to get all of my things together." Shane replies. "I would assume you could pack all of your things in 5 minutes, no less than 15." Ilya replies with annoyance. Shane can't help but laugh. "My parents were kind of blowing up my phone all day and I was ignoring them. I had to respond to them but I waited until I was in the hotel room away from the girls." He explains. Ilya is silent for a long pause.

"Everything okay?" He finally asks. Shane sighs, thinking back on the conversation. "It will be." He answers hoping it's the truth. "I'll tell you about it when I get back to your place. Okay?"

"Okay." Ilya replies then, "So, you will leave soon then, yes?"

"Yes, I will probably be out of here within 10 minutes." He replies with a happy smile. Shane loves that Ilya is anxious to see him again. "It might be a bit before I get to your house though. Like I said earlier, there's a lot of traffic." He adds and Ilya curses in Russian. "Stupid LA traffic." He then says in English making Shane laugh.

"I'll be there as fast as I can, Ilya." He says a moment later. "Drive safe. See you soon, Shane."

Chapter 20

Ilya is full of anxious energy after he gets off the phone with Shane. He was hoping he'd be close to arriving but he hasn't even left his hotel yet, much to Ilya's dismay. He momentarily forgot how much traffic there is in LA, especially on a Friday. So, in order to pass the time before Shane arrives, Ilya decides to run to the local market to grab some things for a healthy dinner for Shane since he hasn't been eating to his normal standards today.

He goes a little overboard on how much he buys, but he's not sure how long Shane will be staying at his house and he wants him to have everything he needs, even if that includes foods that Ilya would rather not eat. He wants Shane to feel comfortable, welcome. He honestly never wants Shane to leave. Which should terrify him, but it really only thrills him.

By the time he's made it back to his house and unloads all of the groceries it's been almost forty minutes. Ilya is still feeling antsy so he decides to start prepping dinner for them. He gathers everything to make sesame tofu brown rice bowls. Ilya can't help but wonder if Shane will like it as he starts the brown rice, throws some cut up bell peppers and onions in the oven and starts prepping the tofu. As he's cutting the tofu into cubes he hears the front door open and his heart thunders in his chest. He stays where he's at though, not wanting to seem too eager to see Shane even though he's dying.

A moment later he hears Shane make his way into the kitchen. "Hey, what are you making? It smells good." Shane asks as he wraps his arms around Ilya's waist and kisses the back of his neck. Ilya shivers from the touch and abandons what he's doing, turning in Shane's arms. Instead of responding, he pulls Shane in for a searing kiss. He doesn't seem to mind, pulling Ilya closer to him and moaning when Ilya slips him his tongue. Eventually Ilya pulls away, knowing if he doesn't stop dinner will be ruined and it will screw up his plans.

"I'm making sesame tofu, brown rice and veggies. I hope is okay?" Ilya finally answers Shane's question as he turns back to the tofu, putting the cut up pieces into a bowl of marinade to help flavor it up. "It sounds perfect. Thank you." Shane replies happily as he walks to the refrigerator and grabs a ginger ale. "Do you want anything?" He asks, like it's an everyday thing. Ilya can't help but smile. "I am okay." He replies, looking over at Shane as he stirs the tofu. Shane nods and smiles, then heads to the island and sits down.

"Tell me what happened with your parents." Ilya inquires as he tosses the tofu into the hot pan on the stove and lets it start browning. He glances over his shoulder at Shane. "My mom - she saw photos of me from last night and today." He confesses. Ilya furrows his brows, glancing back to the pan and stirs. "Is she unhappy that you are getting connected to me?" He asks, suddenly tense. He knows he most likely will never meet Shane's parents, but a part of him hoped that one day he would. Now? It probably won't happen.

Shane sighs and then starts laughing. Ilya frowns and looks back toward him. Why is Shane laughing? "I'm sorry. I just remembered something she said." He laughs as he explains. Ilya frowns even deeper. "She said people think that me, you and Rose are a throuple." Shane

finally explains why he's laughing. Ilya's eyebrows shoot into his hairline and he turns back to the tofu, stirring it once more.

"I told my parents the truth." Shane says once he's stopped laughing. Ilya freezes. "That me and Rose are just friends." Shane continues. Then adds, "That you and me are friends." Ilya turns off the burner and sets his spatula down before turning to Shane.

"Is that all we are?" He asks, hoping his tone doesn't sound accusatory or demanding, or angry. Shane frowns. He's silent for a long time as they stare at each other. "Is that all you want to be?" He asks, swallowing thickly.

"No." Ilya responds immediately. "Do you want things to be as they are right now?" Shane asks with moisture pooling in his eyes. "No." Ilya replies. Shane looks on the verge of tears now. "Then tell me what you want Ilya, because I'm confused." Shane replies, practically begs. This conversation is happening a lot sooner than Ilya was planning, but maybe that's a good thing. Time for Ilya to be brutally honest about everything he wants. There's no turning back now.

"I want *everything*, Shane. I want you to be mine. *Entirely* mine. I want you to be my boyfriend, then maybe one day my husband. I want to spend every minute of spare time we have, together, whether that is here or Canada. Wherever, I do not care as long as I am with you." Shane has tears falling down his face now, but Ilya continues, needing to get everything out.

"One day soon I hope to meet your family, even if they are boring and only care about hockey like you." Ilya jokes to try to get Shane to smile which he does. He takes that as a good sign and keeps going, "I want to meet them - the people who created you. I want to thank them for bringing my favorite person into this world." Ilya says thickly, blinking back tears.

"Ilya..." Shane whispers. Ilya shakes his head and smiles softly, "Mostly, I want to show you how much I love you, for as long as you'll let me." He stares at Shane who looks at loss for words.

"Ilya..." He sighs, but Ilya doesn't let him talk, worried about what he's going to say. "I know I do not deserve you Shane, but if you let me, I will spend the rest of my life trying to be good enough for you."

Shane stands from the island and walks to Ilya. He doesn't stop until they are only inches away. Ilya is trying to keep his tears from falling. Shane is not holding his back. He brings his hand up to cup Ilya's cheek. He presses his face further into Shane's hand, enjoying the feel of their skin touching before he turns and kisses Shane's palm.

"You already are good enough for me, Ilya." Shane whispers thickly. "You're *everything* and I'm so goddamned in love with you, it's been pure agony being apart from you." He laughs wetly. Ilya can't stop his tears from falling anymore. He looks away from Shane, but he forces Ilya's head back to look him in the eyes. "I want *everything*, too. Every single thing you just said? I've been wanting it, dreaming about it...for years..." Shane admits and Ilya feels like his heart is about to explode with how much love he feels for Shane in this moment.

He feels Shane tense. "But..." Shane rests his forehead on Ilya's and squeezes his eyes shut tight. Ilya grabs Shane's waist and squeezes in support. "But you are not ready to tell everyone about us yet. I know." Shane nods in agreement. "One day soon I hope you will be ready. But until then, I can wait..." Ilya reaches up and cups a hand around Shane's jaw, pushing him back just enough so they are eye to eye, their lips only a breath apart. Shane opens his eyes and Ilya smiles. "As long as you promise to be my boyfriend today."

"I'll promise to be your husband today." Shane responds with a laugh but it gets lost as soon as Ilya's lips connect to his.

Chapter 21

The timer for the brown rice and vegetables goes off. Shane ignores it, continuing to kiss Ilya who groans in annoyance when he hears it. Shane tries to keep Ilya where he is, not wanting to let him go after what they just confessed to each other. "Shane - I," Ilya tries to talk but Shane kisses him harder and Ilya moans instead, pulling Shane closer. "Fuck. We need to stop." Ilya pushes away.

Shane pouts as he glares at Ilya who immediately turns to pull the vegetables from the oven and turn the burner off for the rice and taking the lid off. Steam rises as Ilya fluffs the rice and Shane can't help but watch him in utter happiness, thinking that this will be their future. They'll get to spend everyday together. They'll get to live together. They'll get to be together forever.

"Can I help you with anything?" Shane asks and Ilya turns to glance at him over his shoulder.

"You can get me two bowls in that cabinet." He replies pointing to a cabinet to his right. Shane immediately gets him the bowls and hands them to him. While Ilya plates their food, he searches for the silverware. He finds it two drawers later, much to Ilya's amusement. Shane playfully glares at a laughing Ilya and hands him two forks. Before Shane can turn to go to the refrigerator to get Ilya a drink, Ilya pulls him in for a quick peck on the lips before turning back to what he was doing.

Shane sighs happily and turns to the fridge to get Ilya a coke. He also grabs napkins and his own drink before following Ilya outside to the patio. They sit down side by side, facing the view of the Pacific Ocean. Shane can't help but admire the view. He likes it here more than he imagined he would. He turns to Ilya who is sitting relaxed and content beside him, bringing a bite of food to his mouth. He glances at Shane curiously, "What? Something wrong?" Ilya asks, setting his fork down without taking the bite, concerned.

"No. Everything is perfect." Ilya relaxes. "I just - I really like it here. It strangely feels like home?" Shane says in surprise. Ilya can't hide his smile and Shane furrows his brow making Ilya smile wider.

"I chose this house because I knew you would love it here. Is boring, like you." Ilya laughs as he grabs his fork again and finally takes a bite of his food, relaxing once again. Shane gapes at Ilya. "So you only bought this house for me? Do you even like it?" Shane asks in distress. How would Ilya spend probably an alarming amount of money on a house he thinks is boring? That he would never pick for himself? Ilya furrows his brows, looking utterly confused as he stares at Shane.

"Of course I like it. I love boring." Ilya replies pointedly. "Now eat." He demands, raising his brows and pointing his head to Shane's bowl. Shane wants to be annoyed, but he can't find it in himself to be. He turns to his food and smiles as he takes the first bite. He moans happily as he chews the first bite. Ilya freezes beside him, and Shane turns to him in confusion.

"You need to stop moaning like that, Hollander. It's not time to go upstairs yet." Ilya says darkly and Shane sucks in a breath, inhaling a piece of rice. He starts coughing roughly and Ilya can't help but laugh. Shane glares at him as Ilya slaps his back while still laughing. Eventually Shane starts laughing too, once he's done coughing.

"You're such an asshole." Shane laughs while glaring at Ilya. Ilya just leans forward and kisses Shane and all his anger disappears in a second.

When they pull away from each other a few moments later, Ilya turns back to his food so Shane does the same. They eat silently, peacefully, as they watch the sun set before them. Eventually they move to the daybed where they cuddle up together and slowly make out in between teasing each other and whispering how much they've missed each other, content to just be together with no restrictions or time lines.

Eventually they make their way back inside. Shane forces Ilya to sit and watch sports center while he cleans up the kitchen and does the dishes. Once he's done he checks his phone since it had been hours. To his dismay he had two more missed calls from his mom. He sighs deeply as he leans on the kitchen island staring at his phone. He doesn't know what he's going to do about his parents.

Arms wrap around his waist and he relaxes into Ilya's touch. He shivers when he feels Ilya's body against his and then his mouth on the back of his neck. "What's wrong?" Ilya whispers, bending his head to be beside Shane's. "My parents..." Shane replies. Ilya waits patiently for him to continue. "I want to tell them about me and about you - us." Ilya kisses Shane's cheek. "Okay." He replies. "Do you want to call them now?" He asks, full of confidence and no hesitation.

"No! No," Shane sighs and Ilya frowns, obviously confused since Shane made it sound like he did want to tell them right this minute. "I need a little bit more time to figure out the best way to go about it. I can't tell them over the phone when I'm 5,000 kilometers away." He explains. Ilya relaxes and nods, "Okay, I will book you a flight for whenever you are ready." Shane can't hide his disgust, "I can book my own flight."

"Oh sorry, I thought it would be nice to support my future husband. I will not offer again." Ilya jokes, but there's an underlining hurt in his voice that makes Shane frown. "You can support me by coming with me when I talk to them. I'm thinking after your season ends. You could come to Ottawa. To my cottage. We can tell them, spend the summer there so they can get to know you..." Shane responds shyly with his plan. Ilya looks shocked.

"You would want me to come to Ottawa...to your cottage? You would want me there with you when you tell your parents about you?" Ilya asks unsure, repeating everything like he wants to make sure he heard correctly. Shane turns to face Ilya, grabbing his face in his hands. He stares at him for a moment. "I don't just want you there Ilya, I need you there. You're my center. My rock. My everything." Before Ilya can say something stupid in response to piss Shane off, he kisses him with everything he has.

"Let's go upstairs. I can't wait anymore." Ilya pulls away breathlessly, looking completely wrecked as he grabs Shane's hand and tugs him towards the stairs. Shane can't help but laugh happily as they race up the stairs hand in hand.

Chapter 22

Chapter Notes

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

Two and a Half Weeks Later

May 22, 2017

Ilya heads toward the visiting locker room with a wide smile on his face. He just finished up an interview in front of the home team fans. The Nashville crowd was so loud with their booing and frustrations after LA just won and advanced to the Stanley Cup Finals that Ilya couldn't help but piss them off more with his signature cocky grin and arrogant replies to the interview questions.

As he enters the locker room he hears Despacito booming in the background as well as his teammates celebrating. The moment he enters the room he's being doused in champagne but he doesn't care. He's going to the Stanley Cup Finals with a team he only joined a couple of months ago. Meanwhile Boston just got embarrassingly swept by New York.

Ilya will have to thank Scott Hunter for that once the playoffs are done and over with. For now, Ilya will just have to celebrate the great news with his teammates. Shane didn't travel with him much to his dismay, so he won't be able to celebrate with him until tomorrow.

He does carefully check his phone though, making sure his back is blocking most of the champagne spray. Ilya smiles wide as he sees his notifications. He has messages from Svetlana, Rose and Shane. He only cares about Shane's at the moment.

[7:14 pm] **Jane:** God, you look so fucking hot on the ice.

[7:15 pm] **Jane:** I can't wait to play against you again.

[7:37 pm] **Jane:** Fuck, are you okay?

[7:39 pm] **Jane:** Thank god you're okay. I was about to break something.

[8:09 pm] **Jane:** Beautiful goal!

[8:10 pm] **Jane:** It's so annoying how amazing you are.

[8:28 pm] **Jane:** Please stop chirping. They are bigger than you.

[9:12 pm] **Jane:** You really need to work on your face offs.

[9:36 pm] **Jane:** That was obviously not goalie interference and 100% a goal.

[9:46 pm] **Jane:** You need to score again.

[9:51 pm] **Jane:** I swear Ilya, if this game goes into overtime I'm going to lose my mind.

[9:54 pm] **Jane:** Way to wait until literally the last second, asshole!

[10:03 pm] **Jane:** God they really hate you lol

[10:04 pm] **Jane:** Is it bad that I'm extremely turned on right now? You're such an asshole.

[10:05 pm] **Jane:** I love it though. I love you.

[10:06 pm] **Jane:** I'm so proud of you. Congratulations, Ilya.

[10:07 pm] **Jane:** Call me when you get back to your hotel.

[10:19 pm] **Ilya:** You think I'm hot?

[10:19 pm] **Jane:** Out of all that, that's what you decide to comment on?

[10:20 pm] **Ilya:** Yes, you never call me hot. I like it. Gets me extremely turned on.

[10:20 pm] **Jane:** fuck off.

[10:21 pm] **Ilya:** Is not lie. Want me to send you proof?

[10:22 pm] **Jane:** Wtf no!

[10:22 pm] **Ilya:** You sure?

[10:22 pm] **Jane:** Go be a menace with your teammates and celebrate your victory. Call me later and we can show each other how turned on we are.

[10:23 pm] **Ilya:** Fuck, you have gotten much better at sexting. I will call soon.

Ilya wasn't lying to Shane when he said how turned on he is. It's slightly uncomfortable since he's still wearing his uniform and all his gear. As the celebration continues around him, he starts undressing so he can take a quick shower. He wants to head back to the hotel as fast as possible so he can call Shane.

It takes Ilya 30 minutes to finally make his leave. The team is still celebrating in the locker room and they gave him a hard time as he left but he doesn't give a shit. With the permission of his coach, he heads back to the hotel. As soon as the door shuts of his hotel room, he's FaceTiming Shane.

"Hey, took you longer than I was expecting." Shane answers on the first ring. He's lying in Ilya's bed, shirtless.

"It wasn't easy leaving. The celebrations were still going on when I left." Ilya replies as he makes his way to the bar cart and pours himself some vodka.

“So does that mean you are the only one at the hotel right now from your team?” Shane asks. “Yes.” Ilya replies as he takes a long sip of his drink.

“So no one should be bothering you for the rest of the night?” Shane asks and Ilya can’t help but smile at what he’s insinuating. Without responding, Ilya sets his drink down, followed by his phone. He props his phone on the glass and begins to take off his clothes.

“Is this what you want, Shane? To see me naked?” Ilya asks as he strokes his cock a few times while staring directly into Shane’s eyes.

“Yes. It’s my favorite view.” Shane replies gruffly. Ilya smiles cockily, “Then tell me what you want me to do.” Shane swallows hard as he watches Ilya’s hand stroke himself.

“I want you to tell *me* what to do.” Shane replies with a deep sigh. Ilya groans in satisfaction, loving that Shane wants to submit.

“Take off your clothes.” Ilya demands as he continues to touch himself. Shane instantly obliges, propping his phone up so he can remove his sweatpants. He’s not wearing underwear and Ilya moans when he sees how hard Shane already is.

“Fuck. Have you been that hard for me since the game?” Ilya asks, barely able to contain how badly he wants Shane. He wishes they were together in person.

“Yes.” Shane whimpers and Ilya nearly comes undone but squeezes his cock hard to prevent himself from coming before he’s ready to.

“Have you touched yourself at all?” Ilya asks, hoping Shane’s answer is no.

“No. I was waiting for you.” Shane replies breathlessly. “Fuckkk.” Ilya rasps as his balls tighten and he feels himself get even closer to coming undone.

“I need you to touch yourself Shane. I need you to cum with me.” Ilya demands.

“I’m not going to last long.” Shane argues, not touching himself yet. “I’m already there Shane. Touch yourself. Make yourself cum for me. Now!” Ilya growls as he begins to breathe heavier as he speeds up his movements. Shane’s eyes widen when he realizes Ilya isn’t lying when he says he’s close.

Neither one of them says anything else. They just watch each other, silently taking each other in, cherishing this moment that they will not forget.

It doesn’t take long until they are coming together with loud moans of satisfaction, with murmured words of devotion and love.

Ilya can barely stand so he grabs his phone and vodka and flops onto the bed, not bothering to put on clothes. Shane lies back down on Ilya’s bed and smiles.

“I love you.” He tells Ilya.

"I love you." Ilya replies with a happy sigh. He still isn't used to hearing Shane say those words. It still feels surreal.

"I can't wait until we can celebrate in person." Shane says sleepily. Ilya stares at him through the camera. He is lying sideways, his head resting on Ilya's pillow. Ilya just wants to kiss him so badly. *Tomorrow.*

"Me too. I miss you." Ilya confesses shyly. Shane smiles sleepily, "I miss you too." Ilya should probably let Shane sleep, but he can't bring himself to hang up the phone. He watches him for a long moment, studies the freckles on his face and aches to be beside him.

"Why do you look so sad?" Shane's voice penetrates his thoughts and Ilya swallows hard before bringing his vodka to his mouth and taking a drink. Does he be honest with Shane? Does he tell him what's on his mind?

"I am worried about what will happen after summer. When next season starts." He admits. Shane furrows his brows and pushes himself into a sitting position, fully awake now.

"What do you mean?" He asks with obvious worry, not understanding what Ilya means.

"I am getting used to having you close. I love having you close. I am worried about what is going to happen when we get to October. We will only see each other a couple of times during the season? I do not know if I will be able to do that." Ilya explains. Shane frowns.

"Are - are you saying you want to see other people during that time?" Shane asks and Ilya feels a flare of anger that Shane immediately went to that. Has Ilya not shown Shane that he only wants him?

"That is not what I'm saying." Ilya sighs heavily, trying to not release his anger. Shane frowns, "Then what are you saying?" He asks and Ilya wants to laugh but doesn't. He slams back the rest of his vodka and sets it down on the nightstand before turning back to Shane.

"I do not want to be with anyone but you, Shane. I thought I have made that clear but maybe I -" Shane interrupts Ilya, "You have! God, you have Ilya. I'm sorry. I - it's just habit I guess to assume you will get bored and want to sleep with other people again." Ilya furrows his brows. "I only want you." He whispers thickly, trying to keep his emotions under control. Shane opens his mouth to reply but Ilya continues on. "I have been thinking about retiring."

Silence.

"I have had a great career. Won a cup, about to win another. It might be good time." Ilya continues to explain. Shane doesn't look like he's breathing, obviously never imagining a time where Ilya would say something like this. The thought never crossed Shane's mind to retire, and Ilya tries not to take that personal. Shane lives and breaths hockey. Ilya needed it to survive. But he doesn't need it anymore. If he has Shane.

"No." Shane shakes his head adamantly in obvious disbelief. "You can't retire." He adds, sounding angry now. Ilya opens his mouth to explain himself, but Shane cuts him off. "You're only 26,

Ilya! You could easily play for another 10 or more years! Wh-why would you want to retire?" He rant, the last part sounding more like *Why would you want to leave me?*

"It doesn't make sense. You would have to go back to Russia!" Shane is shouting now, frantic, panicked. Ilya feels like someone just gutted him. His plan never included going back to Russia, but that fact that was Shane's immediately thought? Obviously it means they are not on the same page to what they want their future to look like and all the talk about becoming husbands was just talk. At least for Shane. Ilya meant every word.

Ilya swallows thickly. Does he continue to lay out all his feelings to someone who clearly doesn't feel the same way? Can he handle it? *No*. Looking away from the phone, he replies, "Da, you are right." Ilya swallows thickly, "I don't know what I was thinking. Forget I said anything. I just thought..." He hesitates debating on telling him what he thought. *I thought we would get married, Shane. That we could be together for real.*

"Thought what?" Shane asks. Ilya clears his throat and schools his face, clenches his jaw and puts up his walls, before finally looking back at Shane. "Nothing. Is not important." Shane furrows his brows obviously noticing the change in Ilya.

"I need to go to bed. Early flight tomorrow. I will see you soon." Ilya tells Shane who frowns, "Ilya-" He tries, but Ilya cuts him off. "Goodnight, Hollander." Before Shane can respond, Ilya hangs up the phone.

Chapter End Notes

Alexa,
Play 1 step forward, 3 steps back by Olivia Rodrigo.

I'm sorry guys, but I needed more angst again. It's far more fun to write. 🧟

Don't worry, I'm not going to break them up or kill anyone. I'm not a masochist.

Their happy ending is coming, I promise!

Thank you all for reading and showing your support 🧡

Chapter 23

Shane couldn't sleep. His mind won't stop replaying his and Ilya's conversation. *Retire*. That one word has him in a panic. Why would Ilya even suggest such a thing? He's the best player in the league after Shane. It makes no sense for him to retire.

He's young. He hasn't had any serious injuries. He gets to live and be safe in North America. He has a massive income. He gets to play fucking hockey...for a living.

Shane doesn't understand. He has never once thought about retiring. It's not on his radar, even with his injury.

He is so confused. Especially since Ilya started the conversation because he was worried about how they won't get to spend much time together come October. How would retiring help the situation? Ilya won't have a job if he retires. He will have to go back to Russia. Which means they would see each other even less.

Unless...

"Fuck!!" Shane shoot's up in bed as he realizes what Ilya might have been trying to tell him. But that can't be right?

Shane reaches for his phone on the nightstand and looks at the time. 1:27am. Too late to call Ilya. Too late to call anyone. But maybe Rose is still awake? She was going to some event tonight so maybe. Shane decides to try to text her.

[1:28 am] **Shane:** Why do you think Ilya would suggest retiring after this season?

[1:29 am] **Rose:** Damn that boy is so hard up for you.

[1:29 am] **Shane:** What do you mean by that?

[1:30 am] **Rose:** Didn't you just agree to be his fiancée?

[1:30 am] **Shane:** That was a joke!

[1:31 am] **Rose:** Shane you should joke like that with him, it's cruel.

[1:31 am] **Rose:** He probably thought you meant it and that's why he's suggested retiring so you two could be together for real.

[1:32 am] **Shane:** I don't understand. If he retired, he would have to move back to Russia.

[1:35 am] **Rose:** Oh babe. Please don't tell me you got upset when he told you and accused him of wanting to go back to Russia.

[1:35 am] **Shane:** I didn't accuse him.

[1:36 am] **Rose:** But you did assume he would just go back to Russia...

[1:36 am] **Rose:** Did it ever occur to you that he was trying to tell you he would marry you now without sending you into a panic?

[1:37 am] **Shane:** But why would he think I would be ready for that?

[1:38 am] **Rose:** Idk maybe because you agreed to be his fiancée?

[1:38 am] **Shane:** I didn't mean right now! I meant in the future!

[1:39 am] **Rose:** Well, I guess you should have specified. I don't blame him for not understanding.

"Fuck!" Shane shouts again, slamming his phone down not bothering to text Rose back. No wonder Ilya immediately put all his walls back up. He thought Shane lied about wanting to marry him. Shane didn't lie though. He desperately wants to marry Ilya, but he also doesn't want Ilya to retire.

There has to be another solution so that they could see each other more often. Maybe start a charity or foundation. Then both of them are going to be free agents at the end of next season. Maybe they will end up being in the same division again.

Shane's mind goes into planning mode, trying to come up with a solution other than the one Ilya suggested. He can't be the reason why Ilya leaves the league. He'd never forgive himself.

Chapter 24

Chapter Notes

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

[9:32 am cst] **Ilya:** I am sorry for last night.

[9:34 am cst] **Ilya:** I do not know what I was thinking, suggesting what I did.

[9:35 am cst] **Ilya:** I realize now that is stupid.

[9:36 am cst] **Ilya:** I love you. I am sorry.

[9:40 am cst] **Ilya:** Shane?

[12:36 pm pst] **Ilya:** Just landed. See you soon?

Ilya is tense as he makes his way into his house. He hasn't heard from Shane since last night. He had no idea if he was even still at his house until he pulled it and parked next to Shane's rental car. It was only then that he was able to take a breath. He has no idea what he's walking in on though. He knows Shane is going to be upset after last night. It's clear from his lack of response to Ilya's texts.

Ilya hears Shane before he sees him. He finds him sitting on the kitchen island. He is focused on his laptop in front of him, while his phone sits next to him. He's talking to someone on speaker phone and he hasn't noticed Ilya yet.

"I think it's a great idea to start a foundation like this Shane, but I'm just not sure that partnering with Ilya Rozanov is the smartest choice." a woman's voice stops Ilya in his tracks. Foundation? Ilya is confused about what she is talking about. "You need to think about your reputation. I'm not sure attaching your name with his is the best for your career." Ilya urges Shane to respond, stick up for him, but he remains quiet.

"He is a great hockey player, don't get me wrong..." she continues, "but he's brash, and arrogant, and a womanizer, and do you want to be associated with that? It's not who you are."

"Mom, you don't know him personally," Shane replies quickly. "You know you can't trust everything you read online." Ilya's stomach churns when he realizes the woman on the phone is Shane's mother. Although her words are true in everyone else's eyes he thought Shane at least would try to change her mind.

"You barely know him personally, Shane! You two *just* became friends. Sure, you've been playing against each other for a decade but you weren't friends, you were rivals." Shane's mom laughs, and Ilya feels like he's going to be sick. He urges Shane to confess. To tell her their history.

"Yeah. I —" Shane hesitates. "I guess you're right." Shane says dejectedly and Ilya feels a tear fall down his cheek.

I don't know him.

That statement hurts. Even if Shane doesn't mean it, and only said it because he's not ready to tell his mom about them. Ilya wants to tell the whole fucking world about them, yet Shane can't even tell his Mom. He had the perfect chance to tell her the truth and he chose not to. Ilya knows he can't be mad, but he's sad and disappointed.

"Look Shane, I'm just trying to protect you from any potential fall out and I really believe this will lead to fall out. I'm all for you doing this with someone like Hayden or just by yourself." Shane's mom says after a few long beats of silence. Shane slumps and looks toward the ceiling, his eyes squeeze shut as he takes a deep breath to gather himself before responding. He's obviously frustrated. "Yeah...maybe." Shane replies, clearing his throat to hide the emotion he's feeling. "I have to go mom. I'll call you later." He says the next moment. "Alright, love you!" She replies. "Love you too" He mumbles and ends the call and drops his head to the island.

Ilya steps into the kitchen. "Foundation? What foundation was your mother just talking about?" He asks thick with emotion. Shane's head snaps up, his eyes wide, wet and panicked.

"Shit..." Shane curses under his breath. Ilya clenches his jaw and lifts his brows at Shane's reaction. Obviously he didn't want him to hear that conversation with his mom. "You scared me." He laughs as he stands from the stool and makes his way to Ilya either completely oblivious to Ilya's frustration or choosing to ignore it.

"I texted to let you know I was on my way home." Ilya replies as Shane wraps his arms around his waist and pulls him in for a kiss. Ilya keeps it chaste. Shane pulls back with a frown. "I'm sorry. I didn't see it." He apologizes. "I've been on my phone since this morning." He continues like that explains everything. Ilya is even more confused as to why he didn't reply to his texts then.

"Is that true or are you lying to me?" Ilya asks. Shane drops his hands and takes a step back, looking hurt. "Why would I lie about that?" Shane demands and Ilya sucks in a sharp breath. *Because I made you so angry last night that I wouldn't be surprised if you were purposely ignoring me.* Ilya couldn't help but think. Instead of saying that out loud though, he changes the subject back to Shane's phone call with his mom.

"What is this foundation that your mom does not want you to partner with me in?" He asks. Shane glances away for a moment before turning back to Ilya. "I thought we could start a foundation or a charity. It could be different hockey camps for kids and all proceeds could go to a specific cause we are passionate about." He explains. "I thought it might give us more

opportunities to see each other throughout the year without anyone thinking it was weird we were together. We could say it was foundation business.”

Ilya can't help but think it's a brilliant idea, except for the fact that Shane's mom doesn't think it's a good idea and Shane agrees with her. “But you agreed with your mom that it would be a bad idea to partner with me.” He replies thickly, trying and failing to hide the hurt in his voice over the fact that Shane didn't put up more of a fight with his mom and gave into her words about Ilya so easily.

Shane furrows his brows, and reaches for Ilya's hands. “What? No I didn't!” He shouts frantically, squeezing Ilya's hands tightly like he's worried Ilya is going to walk away.

“You made her think that we hardly know each other Shane! You did not correct her when she called me brash, arrogant and a womanizer either!” Ilya shouts in frustration. “But you are those things, Ilya!” Shane shouts back. Ilya flinches and pulls his hands away from Shane. “I — you. I didn't mean that.” Shane stumbles over his words as he shakes his head like he's trying to take back what he said.

“Fuck, I'm sorry. I should have handled that conversation with her differently. But I couldn't really tell her the truth!” Shane argues and Ilya huffs out a laugh. “It would have been the **perfect** time to tell her the truth, Shane! You could have admitted to her that you know me better than anyone else in the fucking world. You were already planning on telling her in a few weeks anyways!” Ilya responds with frustration, staring at Shane who looks sheepish. He glances away from Ilya and bites his bottom lip as moisture fills his eyes. They are silent for a long pause. Ilya studies Shane who will not look at him.

“You were never planning on telling your parents were you?” Ilya whispers as a tear falls out of his eye. He quickly wipes it away. Shane finally looks at him. He blinks and tears fall down his face. “I — I was but, after this conversation with my mom...I,” He pauses. “Her opinion matters more than anything to me and I'm worried that once she finds out about us that I'll lose her.” Ilya wants to scream. *What about losing me, Shane?!* He doesn't ask though.

“You are done with rehab, yes?” He asks instead. Shane furrows his brow, obviously confused about Ilya's change of conversation. He nods and Ilya swallows thickly, “Then you should go home.” Shane opens his mouth to argue that he's already home.

“To Canada.” Ilya confirms and then walks out of the kitchen.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry.

Chapter 25

Chapter Notes

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

Two Weeks Later

Stanley Cup Finals - Game 7

LA Rush vs. NY Admirals

June 14, 2017

[9:46 pm] **Rose:** Fuck.

[9:47 pm] **Rose:** They're going to lose, huh?

[9:48 pm] **Shane:** Yeah...

[9:48 pm] **Rose:** Ugh!! I wanted to drink champagne out of the cup.
Now I have to waitttt??

[10:12 pm] **Rose:** Nothing? Not even a "ha"? Svetlana at least humored me and she was gonna drink out of it tonight if they won!

[10:25 pm] **Shane:** No.

[10:26 pm] **Rose:** boooooo! :(

[10:31 pm] **Rose:** Wait...what is Scott Hunter doing?!

[10:33 pm] **Shane:** Holy shit!

[10:33 pm] **Shane:** HOLY SHIT!

[10:35 pm] **Shane:** This changes everything, Rose.

[10:36 pm] **Rose:** Have you talked to him at all since you left?

[10:37 pm] **Shane:** Only a few texts. He said some space would be good for us. That we would talk once the season was over.

[10:38 pm] **Rose:** Well the season is over now. I think it's time you go get your man.

[10:39 pm] **Shane:** There's something I need to do first.

Shane immediately stands from the couch at his cottage and makes his way toward the front door, grabbing his keys as he slips on his shoes. He's in his car a minute later, backing out of the driveway. His mind is going a mile a minute, thinking about what he just saw on national television. Scott Hunter just kissed a man. **A man.** In front of millions of people, he had the courage to come out as gay. The first openly gay hockey player.

Shane still can't believe it. He hopes that Ilya saw somehow. That someone told him, maybe Rose or Svetlana and that it gives him the same hope it's given Shane. That it will encourage him to not give up on Shane and the future they both want. Shane can't help but think back to two weeks ago...after Ilya told him to leave.

Two Weeks Ago...

*Shane stares at the retreat back of Ilya. Anger, fear and panic overwhelm him. **What just happened?** He immediately follows Ilya to the bedroom they've been sharing for the past few weeks. Their things intertwined and weaved together like they are meant to be. It makes his heart hurt that Ilya has asked him to leave. He doesn't want to.*

"I'm not leaving. Not like this." Shane says when Ilya turns toward the bathroom, most likely to escape him. He stops and turns toward Shane. Tears are falling from his eyes and he looks gutted. Shane immediately rushes to him grabbing his face, looking into his eyes. "I love you. I'm so sorry if I've made you question that." He whispers before tentatively leaning toward Ilya for a kiss.

He waits for Ilya to go the rest of the way, not wanting to make him more upset. For a few moments, it seems like Ilya isn't going to kiss him, but after a few moments he squeezes his eyes shut tightly and grabs Shane's hips and tugs him close, bringing them together.

They both moan in relief as they kiss. Their salty tears mixing together reminding them that this wasn't the happy reunion they both wanted. Shane tries to reach for Ilya's shirt to take off, but Ilya stops him and takes a step back putting some distance between the two of them. Shane frowns in confusion.

"I love you too." Ilya says thickly, swallowing hard. "Then why are you asking me to leave?" Shane begs to understand. A flash of something like anger or resentment fills Ilya's eyes for a quick moment and then it's gone, replaced with sadness. "Because I," Ilya chokes out then clears his throat and takes a deep breath. "I think we need to take a step back...to think about what we want and I can't do that with you here." Shane feels like the floor is being ripped out beneath him.

"A step back? What does that mean?" He asks trying not to sound as panicked as he is. Ilya glances down at his feet for a moment before looking back to Shane. "I told you last night that I was thinking about retiring." Shane opens his mouth to reply but Ilya keeps going, "I

realize now that was stupid, but I was considering it...for the chance to be with you, because I want to spend the rest of my life with you. If you would have agreed, I would have done it. No question." Ilya laughs humorlessly to himself as he glances to the small box on the nightstand that Shane now knows contains a key to every hotel room they've shared over the years.

"I would give up hockey for you. I would risk never being able to see Russia again for you. I would do anything for you." Ilya whispers. Shane can't breathe.

"I know that you aren't ready to tell the world about us yet and I understand why. I was okay with it because I thought the most important people to you would know about us, but now?" Ilya sighs, looking at Shane who is barely holding it together. "I let myself dream of a future I knew was too good to be true."

"Ilya..." Shane takes a step toward him, not being able to stop himself for trying to comfort Ilya. Ilya clenches his jaw and tenses at Shane's approach, bracing for him and Shane immediately stops himself from touching him like he wants to. Shane's stomach drops. "Are you," He swallows thickly, trying to hold back more tears from falling. "...ending this?" Shane barely can choke out the words, it makes him ill even thinking about them being over. "No." Ilya responds immediately. Shane sighs in relief.

"I don't think I'll ever be able to walk away from you completely." Ilya admits, looking anywhere but at Shane. Like he's afraid to see Shane's reaction to those words. "But I need some space to think about some things and like I said. I can't do that if you're here."

Shane desperately wants to argue with Ilya but he can see how dejected Ilya is in this moment. How he's trying to hold it together after Shane has made him question their relationship once again. Shane is scared to leave though. Afraid that if he does then they will be over even if Ilya claims he'd never be able to walk away fully.

"How long?" Shane asks. Ilya turns to look at him with confusion on his face. "How long do you need space?" Shane clarifies.

"I don't know...at least the next two weeks. I need to focus on beating New York. But possibly longer..." Ilya replies. Shane wants to scream. How are we at this point once again?

"Can I at least call you? Text?" He asks a bit desperately. Ilya hesitates, and takes a moment to think. "Text, yes. No calls." Shane wants to demand both, but he just nods willing to accept anything Ilya is okay with. "Okay..." Shane cries, "I - I guess I'll start packing." He turns from Ilya, and pauses, staring up at the ceiling to try to calm his racing heart. He takes a deep breath just as he feels Ilya step up behind him.

"I'm sorry, Shane. I just..." Ilya sighs sadly, as he reaches for the right words. "I know, Ilya. It's okay." Shane replies thickly. Then he walks into the closet and begins to pack.

Shane has tortured himself over what happened for the past two weeks. Tried every day since arriving back to Canada to work up the courage to tell his parents. Ilya is willing to give up so much for him, be brave and try to make his dreams come true meanwhile Shane can't even

work up the courage to come out to his parents. But now? Shane is taking the risk. Being brave. Scott Hunter has given him the courage. Has showed him that if he wants Ilya, he needs to prove it.

A few minutes later, Shane is pulling into his parents' cottage driveway. It's almost 11pm, but he knows they are still awake watching the post game interviews and celebrations. Shane doesn't bother knocking, just walks right in and heads to the living room. "Shane! What are you doing here? I thought you wanted to be alone tonight?" His mom gasps when she sees him, furrowing her brows as he stands. His dad looks at him with worry and immediately stands as well, thinking something is wrong.

"I - I need to tell you guys something." Shane says, clearing his throat and standing taller. Both his parents glance at each other and then back to him.

"I'm gay." He admits confidently. "And I'm in love with Ilya Rozanov."

Chapter End Notes

Hopefully this chapter will make everyone a little happier again! 😊

The end is near, we're almost there folks. We're almost to the HEA!

Thanks for sticking around through all the miscommunication nonsense, I applaud you.

Love you all! ❤️

Chapter 26

Chapter Notes

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

June 15, 2017

[8:02 am est] **Jane:** I can't believe Scott Hunter did that.

[8:16 am est] **Ilya:** Yes. Very brave.

[8:16 am est] **Jane:** I sent him an email this morning.

[8:17 am est] **Jane:** Telling him that I was happy for him and thanking him for having the courage to do what he did.

[8:19 am est] **Ilya:** That is nice. He was getting a lot of messages last night so do not expect quick reply.

[8:19 am est] **Jane:** You were with him last night? Where?

[8:25 am est] **Ilya:** Yes. At Kingfisher. Gay bar in NY.

[8:31 am est] **Ilya:** Svetlana's doing. We met Hunter's partner, Kip. Had one drink. Back at hotel by midnight.

[8:31 am est] **Jane:** Sounds fun.

[8:32 am est] **Ilya:** Was okay.

[8:35 am est] **Jane:** Can I come see you in LA?

[8:42 am est] **Ilya:** I still need time.

[8:54 am est] **Jane:** Okay.

[8:54 am est] **Jane:** I love you and miss you.

[8:56 am est] **Ilya:** Flight is leaving now. Talk later.

[8:59 am est] **Ilya:** I love you and miss you too.

June 16, 2017

Ilya is exhausted as he pulls up to the arena the day after they got home from losing the Stanley Cup. He wishes he could sleep for days, but unfortunately he has his exit interview today and locker clear out. Then he has to rush back home to finish packing. He has a redeye flight to catch tonight. Tomorrow he can rest. Tomorrow he can relax. He just needs to get through today.

As he makes his way into the arena, many of his teammates are already in the building. Both coming and going. His meeting is in five minutes so he heads directly to the conference room. When he arrives the door is open and his coach, some executive and HR rep are sitting at the table laughing easily together. Ilya sticks his head into the room. "Am I late?" He asks with a sly smile and they all turn to look at him.

"Rozanov! Come in." His coach smiles, pointing to the seat across from them. Ilya makes his way into the room, shaking their hands before taking a seat. He's done many of these interviews through the years but this is the first time with a new team. He tries not to show any stress but they just lost the cup after making such a huge trade to get him. He's worried.

"First off, we want to say how happy we are that you're here with us." The executive says. "You definitely went beyond the expectations everyone hoped for this year since your trade. We never expected to make it to the finals. So thank you." He continues. Ilya doesn't know what to say. He just nods and smiles.

"As we are all aware, you are a free agent after next season." the HR rep adds. "But we hope that you'll consider extending with us. We know it's still a ways away, but we want you to know that we hope your future is here."

"Thank you. I haven't thought much about my contract but I am pleased to know that I will have this organization as option. I love it here." He smiles easily even though it's partially a lie. He has thought a lot about his contract. On whether or not he should retire. Or find a Canadian team. Or try to convince Shane to find a team in this division since his contract is up after next season too.

"We love you, kid. And you've been an amazing addition to the team. You're a Captain through and through. That's why we want to offer you the captaincy for next season." His coach says, making Ilya forget all about his contract. "What about Kovačič?" Ilya asks curiously. Not that he truly cares. He didn't like the guy. "He has been released." Is all his coach replies with. Ilya nods knowing he'll hear the details from his teammates. "I would be honored to be Captain, Coach. Thank you." He smiles happily.

"Good. Let's take some much needed time off this summer and come back ready to win the cup next season. Sound good?" His coach asks and Ilya smiles ruthlessly. "Fuck yes!" Ilya replies and then quickly realizes he probably shouldn't have said that in front of the executive and HR rep. "Sorry." He turns toward them and smiles sheepishly. They both laugh along with his coach who is shaking his head in amusement.

"We'll see you in a couple of months Rozanov. Have a good summer." His coach says as he stands along with the other two men. Ilya stands as well and quickly shakes their hands and says goodbye.

"Don't forget to talk to the media before you go!" The HR rep shouts after him and he internally groans but throws a thumbs up to let him know he heard him.

Ilya decides to head to the media pit before clearing out his locker. He gets ushered to a table by the head of PR and answers questions for ten minutes before she announces he's done. He thanks her and heads to the locker room. Luckily he's the only one. He's anxious to get home. He makes quick work of clearing out his locker and fifteen minutes later he's walking out of the arena towards his car. Unfortunately there is a lot of traffic so it takes him almost an hour to get back to Hermosa Beach.

When he pulls into his driveway he smiles when he sees Rose's car sitting in his driveway. Her real car, the one without the driver. He quickly makes his way inside his house and finds her easily enough. She's sitting on his coach watching some reality tv show.

"Boo." He whispers in her ear, making her scream and jump. He laughs and wraps his arms around her over the couch and kisses her cheek.

"Fuck you! I'm so happy to see you, but fuck you." She grumbles in annoyance which makes him laugh even more.

"I'm happy to see you too. Why didn't you text me that you were coming?" He asks as he lets go of her and jumps over the couch to sit beside her.

"I figured surprising you might be better. I didn't know what your mood would be like with losing and everything going on with you and Shane." She replies and he nods. "As you can see, I am doing okay." At least he's trying to be.

"You really do seem like you're doing okay." She looks at him curiously. He raises his brows in question, "Why are you so surprised?"

"I just. I thought you would be upset. At least about Shane. He told me this morning that you asked for more time apart." She responds. "What else did he tell you?" Ilya can't help but ask, wondering what else they discussed. "Just that he asked you if he could come here and you said no. He's really sad Ilya. I understand that you need time to think, but you two need to talk sooner rather than later."

"I know but the last couple of weeks have been brutal. I'm exhausted. My body. My mind. I just need a little bit more time to process everything then I'll call him and we'll talk." He responds, looking away from her and out the windows to the ocean. The view still awes Ilya.

"You're going on a trip with Svetlana, right? She mentioned something about the Amalfi Coast." Ilya nods absently before turning back to look at Rose who smiles softly at him. "Good. You deserve to relax and take a break. Just don't take too long to call him, okay?"

"Okay." He agrees. Rose leans against his shoulder and they lay together for awhile watching mindless tv until Rose finally announces she has to go meet with her agent in Hollywood for an early dinner. They quickly say goodbye. Once she leaves, Ilya makes his way upstairs to his room to finish packing. Two hours later he's climbing into the back seat of an uber with his bags in tow heading to catch his flight.

After three hours waiting at the airport, going through check-in, then security, then customs and finding the right gate, he's sitting in his first class seat anxious for take off. His leg won't stop bouncing as he patiently waits for all of the passengers to board so they can leave. He grabs his phone out of pocket of his work out pants and pulls up his text messages, scrolling until he finds the ones he's looking for. He rereads the conversation once more, then sends a quick message before switching his phone to airplane mode and settling in for the flight.

June 15, 2017 (yesterday)

[1:17 pm pst] **Unknown:** Ilya Rozanov?

[1:17 pm pst] **Unknown:** This is David Hollander. Shane's dad.

[1:17 pm pst] **Unknown:** I hope this is the right number. The contact name was Lily.

[1:18 pm pst] **Unknown:** But with the amount of calls, I assume it's you.

[1:20 pm pst] **Ilya:** Yes.

[1:20 pm pst] **Ilya:** Is Shane okay?

[1:20 pm pst] **David:** He came out to me and his mother last night.

[1:21 pm pst] **David:** Told us all about you two and your relationship.

[1:21 pm pst] **David:** I hope we get to meet soon.

June 16, 2017 (today)

[8:57 pm pst] **Ilya:** Takeoff now.

[8:58 pm pst] **David:** See you in the morning. Get some sleep son.

We're almost at the cottage folks! I repeat, we're almost at the cottage!

Chapter 27

Shane has been staying with his parents ever since he confessed to them. Partially because he doesn't want to be alone, and partially because his mom won't let him leave. She's been making all of his favorite foods, watching all his favorite childhood movies with him, she even let him win in cards last night, although she denied it. He thinks it's her way of apologizing to him for not feeling like he could come out to her before now.

Of course she also apologized to him and they had a really long conversation about everything. About how long he's been hiding who he is because he's been terrified of how people would react. They are in a good place. Shane's dad was great from the start. He admitted that he suspected he was gay, but never brought it up because he didn't want to make Shane feel any certain kind of way. He didn't even seem that surprised when Shane admitted to being in love with Ilya. In fact he didn't seem surprised at all.

Now all Shane needs to do is tell Ilya that he confessed to his parents. The day after he confessed to his parents, he texted Ilya. Shane couldn't stop his jealousy from rearing its ugly head when Ilya told him he had been out with Scott Hunter the night before. Not because he thought something would happen, but because Shane wishes he was there. He asked Ilya if he could come to LA. He was desperate to tell him the news, but Ilya asked for more time. It killed Shane, but he listened to Ilya and didn't book a flight even though he desperately wanted to.

All day yesterday Shane tried not to think of Ilya, but failed miserably. He even texted Rose to see if she had seen him or heard from him. She hadn't and of course asked why so Shane had to tell her about Ilya telling him not to go to LA. She promised to go see him but he hadn't heard from her since so he has no idea if she did or not. He grabs his phone from the bedside table to see if he has any texts, but there's only one from Hayden but he doesn't bother reading it. He'll text him later.

Instead Shane sighs and climbs out of bed, making his way out of his bedroom and toward the kitchen. It's around 9 in the morning and he can hear and smell his mom making breakfast. He yawns as he steps up to the coffee machine to pour himself a cup of coffee then he gives his mom a kiss on the cheek in greeting. "Morning. Where's dad?" He says as he leans on the counter watching her flip a pancake. "Oh, he just had to go pick something up real quick. He should be back soon." She answers noncommittally and Shane furrows his brows.

"What did he have to pick up?" Shane asks as he takes another drink of his coffee. His mom turns toward him, but her eyes aren't on him. They are focused on something beside him, in the direction of the hallway leading to the front door.

"Me." A deep accented voice answers his question and Shane almost drops his coffee as he turns to see Ilya standing in his parents cottage. He hastily sets the cup on the counter and rushes toward Ilya, pulling him into a tight hug. Shane squeezes his eyes shut to keep his tears at bay as Ilya laughs easily in his ear and wraps his arms around him, pulling him in

closer. Shane can feel himself relaxing for the first time in weeks. Being in Ilya's arms feels like coming home.

"How? How are you here right now?" Shane can't hide the emotion in his voice as he pulls away to look at Ilya. "Your dad texted me." Ilya says like it explains everything. Shane shakes his head in confusion, but he can't keep the smile off his face. "He found "Lily" in your contacts and figured out it was me and saved number in his phone. He texted me and told me what you came out to them. I'm so proud of you, Shane." Ilya explains further, moisture filling his eyes. Shane sees movement over Ilya's shoulder and sees his dad smiling at the two of them. He will have to thank him later. Right now his boyfriend needs all of his attention.

"I'm sorry I didn't tell them sooner." He whispers as he leans forward and rests his forehead on Ilya's. Ilya shakes his head causing their noses to brush against each other. "No. No apologies. Please. You told them when you were ready. I should not have been pressuring. I should have been patient. I am sorry." Ilya replies regretfully.

"We both made mistakes." Shane pulls back and looks at Ilya who nods in agreement. "Yes. I need to work on my communication. I will try to be better. I love you." He says and Shane smiles, "You're not the only one who has to work on that. I love you too. So much." He sighs happily. The next moment Ilya leans forward and presses a soft kiss on Shane's mouth. Not caring that his parents are watching them. Shane can't keep the smile off his face when they pull away from each other a moment later.

"Well," Yuna says as she clears her throat, "who is hungry?" She asks as she wipes her eye of a tear and turns back to finish making the pancakes. "Ilya and I are starving!" David announces as he makes his way into the kitchen, clapping his hands on Shane's shoulders as he winks at Ilya. Yuna laughs, "I'm sure. McDonalds wasn't filling enough for you two?" She looks over her shoulder at the two men who are pretending like they don't know what she's talking about. She rolls her eyes which makes everyone laugh.

"Why don't you boys set the table while your dad and I finish up in here?" Yuna suggests as David moves to take over for her. Shane immediately heads to the cabinet to grab plates, handing them to Ilya before he finds the cutlery before walking to the dining table in the other room. The moment they are out of view of Shane's parents, they hastily set down the place settings and pull each other in for a frantic, passionate kiss. Ilya gently presses Shane against the wall as he deepens the kiss. Shane moans a little too loudly. They pull apart with wide eyes waiting to see if his parents heard. They can't help but laugh when they hear them bickering over the shape of one of the pancakes.

Ilya can't stop smiling as he presses soft kisses to Shane's mouth, keeping things PG for a few more moments before they finally move to set the table like Yuna requested. Right as they finish she rushes into the room holding plates of pancakes and bacon. David follows with a plate of toast and eggs. All four sit down.

Shane can't keep the smile off his face as he watches his parents interact with Ilya. It seems like he's already won his dad over and he knows by the end of the day his mom will love him too.

Chapter 28

Ilya didn't know it was possible to feel this happy, this content.

Growing up the way he did, he was forced to spend it in constant fear. Fear of his father. Fear of his brother. Fear of his mom's sadness that he didn't understand until it was too late. Fear that he would never be good enough to be loved. After his mom died, he hadn't had anyone love him unconditionally except for Svetlana. Rose. Most importantly Shane.

And now maybe Shane's parents. His parents that Ilya was absolutely terrified to meet. The whole flight to Ottawa he was anxious. He couldn't stop thinking of worst case scenarios. What if he lands and David isn't actually there to pick him up and it was all just a ruse and he'll be bombarded with paparazzi? Shane's parents' way of getting him out of their son's life. Or maybe David will be there and the moment Ilya opens his mouth David decides he hates Ilya and doesn't want him anywhere near Shane.

He had to force himself to calm down multiple times throughout the flight. Had to tell himself that David wouldn't have reached out if he didn't want Ilya to come to Ottawa for real. He is too much like Shane to be insincere. Ilya though they were both nice, boring men. Ilya had nothing to worry about. And he didn't. When he landed, he texted David to let him know as he made his way through the airport being careful to keep his identity as discreet as possible. David returned his text to let him know he was idling outside, that he was in a black Toyota RAV4.

Unfortunately, when Ilya stepped outside he didn't know where to go. For being 7am, the airport was extremely busy and there were multiple black RAV4's idling. He grabbed his phone to call David because he didn't want to be searching for him when there were so many people. He was about to press the call button when he heard a man shout, "Lily!" He glanced in the direction the man was yelling wondering if he was trying to get Ilya's attention. Sure enough it was David Hollander yelling through the open car window and waving at Ilya. He knew it was him because he had seen him in photos and at past award ceremonies.

Ilya glanced around to see if anyone noticed the interaction but no one was paying attention to him, too focused on their own business. With a deep breath he headed towards the car. David was all smiles as he approached and Ilya tried to smile but it probably looked like more of a grimace as he opened the back door first to put his bags away, before climbing into the front seat next to David.

Neither man said anything as David began to drive away from the airport. It wasn't until they were heading towards the highway David turned to Ilya with a smile. "I'm happy you are here. Are you hungry?" He asked warmly. Ilya didn't know what to say. He was hungry. Starving really because he was too nervous to eat on the flight, but he didn't want to be rude. "I'm starving. Yuna is at home preparing breakfast for us all, but I was thinking about stopping at McDonalds. It can be our secret?"

“Yes. Sounds good.” Ilya answers with a nod and half smile. David nods happily as he turns his turn signal on and gets off the highway, heading towards a McDonalds. After they ordered and were back on the highway, Ilya relaxed and started opening up. Answering David’s questions, talking about hockey, about Shane, about Russia. He never asked Ilya anything too personal which he appreciated. By the time they were driving up to David and Yuna’s cottage Ilya was no longer as anxious as he was. He was still nervous to meet Yuna, but for now he didn’t care. He was about to see Shane.

Shane didn’t know Ilya was coming, obviously. The moment he realized Ilya was standing in front of him, he had never looked so beautiful. His hair was mussed from sleeping, his freckles darker from obviously getting some sun, his eyes full of moisture, looking at Ilya with so much love it made it hard for him to breathe. And then they were hugging, and Ilya felt complete. For the first time in his whole life, he felt whole.

Throughout the breakfast he relaxed even further. Holding Shane’s hand helped. Being able to love him freely helped ease that fear. Especially when his parents would smile, glance at each other and sigh happily. They obviously love seeing Shane happy, and Shane is happy. Every one of them is happy.

At one point throughout the morning, Ilya finds himself in the kitchen alone with Yuna. He offered to do the dishes after breakfast and she kept trying to protest until Shane finally asked her to go on a walk with him and his dad. Apparently she ditched them though and opted to help Ilya in the kitchen. Truthfully, it was a way for her to have a private conversation with Ilya. One that was much needed apparently.

“I owe you an apology.” She says as Ilya heads her a wet plate to hand dry. He furrows his brow in confusion.

“Shane told me you overheard our conversation about the foundation.” She explains and Ilya nods in understanding. His jaw tenses as he turns back to the sink to wash the next dish. “I said some awful things about you, that I thought were true at the time. Obviously I know now that I wasn’t completely right.” She continues and Ilya can only nod.

“I think on the ice you are brash and arrogant. And I know you’re not a womanizer, at least not any more.” She laughs but Ilya doesn’t. He hands her another plate to dry. She sighs. “From what I’ve seen of you so far Ilya, is that you are extremely sweet especially with Shane, you are funny and charismatic and open-minded. But I can’t help but also see a man who is scared, maybe a little sad and lonely.” Ilya feels moisture in his eyes.

“Shane didn’t tell us any details about your life in Russia, just that it wasn’t the best and that you lost your mother when you were young. I’m so sorry you haven’t had the family you needed but I hope that we can become that family for you. I can see how much you love our son and how much he loves you. And I know that the more time we spend together, the more David and I will love you.” She says thickly, urging Ilya to look at her.

He finally turns to her and she sees a tear fall down his face. “Oh, Ilya. Come here.” She sighs as she sets down the plate and rag she’s holding and wraps him tightly in her arms. “My hands are wet.” He urges her to let him go but she holds on tighter. “I don’t care.” He

squeezes his eyes shut and hugs her back, welcoming the loving feeling of holding a mom for the first time in fourteen years.

He doesn't know how long they hug, but it's not until they hear the front door open that they pull apart. Yuna wipes at her eyes as she grabs her rag and looks toward the hallway when Shane and David are entering the kitchen. Shane immediately looks at Ilya who is wiping his eyes as well. His brows furrow. "Everything okay?" He asks as he glances to his mom with accusation.

"Is great, Shane." Ilya replies quickly with a smile, not wanting Shane to be angry with his mom and jump to conclusions. He studies Ilya for a long moment trying to decipher if he's telling the truth or not. "Okay." He finally replies, "Are you ready to go?" Shane continues. Ilya turns back to the dishes and sees he still has a few left. Yuna touches his arm, "I got it. You two go and enjoy the rest of the day. We will see you tomorrow night for dinner." Ilya hesitates but Yuna nods her head toward Shane who has now made his way toward them, grabbing Ilya's hand in his.

"Love you, mom. We'll see you tomorrow night. Text or call before you head over though, okay?" Shane says as he leans down and kisses her cheek. Ilya does the same, "Thank you." He tells her when he pulls away and Yuna smiles knowingly. Shane leads Ilya down the hallway where David is waiting by the door. He gives Shane and Ilya both hugs as they leave. "I moved Ilya's bags into your car Shane. We'll see you two tomorrow night. Glad you are here Ilya." He says as they walk towards Shane's car.

They wave to Shane's parents as they back out of the drive way. When they get to the main road, Ilya turns to look at Shane, resting his head against the head rest and feeling more content than ever. Shane glances at him and smiles. "You doing okay?" He asks Ilya. "I have never been better." He replies as he reaches for Shane's hand resting on the shifter and brings it to his mouth to kiss. Shane relaxes and smiles happily.

"How are you doing?" Ilya asks. Shane chuckles. "I can't even describe how I'm doing. I'm so beyond happy." Ilya's heart expands in his chest as he stares at Shane. He's so in love with him. He's so lucky to be able to call him his. "I love you."

Shane glances back to him, looking at him in a way that makes his breath hitch. "I love you, too. I'm so happy you're here." He tells Ilya.

"There's nowhere I'd rather be."

Chapter 29

They arrive at Shane's cottage quickly. Shane carries Ilya's bags in and tells him all about the house as they make their way inside, but Ilya doesn't seem to be listening to a word of what he's saying. When Shane finally gets the door open, Ilya wastes no time pushing him against the wall, kicking the front door closed with his foot. Shane gasps as he drops Ilya's bags and wraps his arms tightly around Ilya. Ilya takes advantage and deepens the kiss, pressing himself harder against Shane, pushing him even more into the wall. They both moan when their bodies press perfectly together.

"Fuck. I've missed this, missed you so much." Shane gasps when Ilya moves his lips to his neck, sucking gently before moving towards his collarbone, nipping at Shane's skin as he goes. "Mmm..." Ilya replies, humming along Shane's skin, trying to hide the yawn that just hit him. Shane pushes Ilya gently away, looking at him with shock.

"Did you just fucking yawn?" He laughs looking incredulously at Ilya who tries to pull Shane back towards him. "I am sorry. I didn't sleep on the plane because I was nervous. I haven't slept in...I don't even know how long." Ilya admits with a sigh, his eyes are at half mast as they stare at each other. His fatigue is hitting him hard all of a sudden and Shane's laugh fades when he realizes Ilya is fading quick. Shane grabs Ilya's hand and leads him to his bedroom.

"Let's go take a nap, and then when you wake up we can pick up where we left off. Okay?" He says as he pushes Ilya down onto the bed, then places the light blanket over his body. He leans down to give Ilya a soft kiss as his eyes flutter closed. When he gets close, Ilya wraps his arms around him and pulls him down into the bed with him. "Lay with me." He pleads sleepily, pulling Shane closer. Shane doesn't protest, he just presses a kiss to Ilya's lips and relaxes in his boyfriend's arms, listening to his breathing slow.

Shane lays with Ilya for awhile, basking in the joy of having Ilya here, in his cottage. His parents know and accept him and his relationship. It's something he's wanted for longer than he realized and now that he has it, he's elated. There's still so much that him and Ilya have to discuss though regarding their future. Both will be free agents after next season, which means that there's a chance that they could be in the same division again. Ottawa is looking to restructure and rebuild and are in need of a power house center. And if Ilya were to get traded there, he would automatically be made Captain, unlike in LA. He'd be a leader again, just like he was in Boston.

And in the meantime, they can move forward with the Foundation. Start putting on camps and events, possibly even in the middle of the season depending on both of their schedules. They could see each other more than two or three times a season. They could make things work until they are closer and can see each other more freely the following season.

Shane doesn't know how much time passes, thinking of the potential future they have and wanting it more than ever. Eventually Ilya stirs and blinks slowly up at Shane who is still holding him tightly. "How are you feeling?" Shane asks Ilya as he runs his fingers through

his curls. Ilya smiles softly, "Better. Still tired, but I am good." He replies as he reaches behind Shane's head and brings their mouths together for a sweet kiss. They are both smiling when Shane pulls away.

"So, how was your exit interview?" Shane asks curiously. Maybe if they can talk about their potential futures now they can spend the rest of their time here not worrying about anything except for making each other feel good and relaxing together without any stress.

Ilya tenses slightly before relaxing again and rolls to his side to fully face Shane. "It was really good actually." He admits. Shane mimics Ilya's position, rolling to his side to face him. "Yeah?" Ilya nods.

"They were happy. With the season. With the trade..." Ilya pauses for a moment, then adds quietly, "They offered me the captaincy." Shane can't hide his shock and his eyes widen in surprise. Not because Ilya doesn't deserve it, but because Kovačič being their main guy for countless years. Ilya frowns at Shane's reaction. "Do you think I do not deserve it?" He asks darkly.

Shane reaches out to him, pressing his hand on his pec. "Of course you deserve it. I just wasn't expecting that. I thought Kovačič was captain?" He asks. "He was. They released him." Ilya says simply and Shane nods.

"I'm so proud of you, Ilya." Shane smiles, but Ilya can sense Shane is hiding something. "You are upset. Why?" He asks, more curious than demanding. Shane debates on telling the truth, but realizes that he needs to be honest, otherwise this relationship isn't going to work. "Do you like being on LA? Are you happy there?" He asks.

"I do. I like it more than I expected to. Much more than Boston if I'm honest. The only negative is that it's so far from you. I hate that." He answers honestly. Shane isn't necessarily surprised. He likes LA more than he expected too. It just throws a wrench in his plans. LA will offer Ilya a contract extension, a large one at that because they can afford it. Which means he will most likely want to stay, and Shane would want that for him.

"Talk to me, Shane. Your mind is running a mile a minute or whatever that stupid saying is." Ilya grumbles and Shane can't help but laugh. "You have it right." He tells Ilya as he leans forward to kiss him, he can't help it. He needs to feel close to him right now. When he pulls away Ilya is grinning, but still looking worried.

"I've been thinking a lot about our future." He starts, "We'll both be free agents after next season." Ilya nods. "Yes, I have been thinking a lot about it too." He admits and Shane smiles happily knowing that Ilya is just as devoted to making this work between them.

"I was thinking you could maybe go to Ottawa, but now..." Shane trails off and Ilya nods. "I thought of Ottawa too." He admits and Shane pulls back in surprise. "You would leave LA for Ottawa? Even now that you're going to be captain?" Shane asks. Ilya grabs his hand and intertwines their fingers. "I would if that's what we decided. But there is also the potential for you to come to Anaheim. They are in the same situation as Ottawa." Ilya says carefully, obviously worried about how Shane will react. Shane thinks for a minute. He's never thought

about leaving Montreal. His dream has always been to retire there. But things are different now. His priorities have shifted slightly. He has more than himself to think about now.

“Look, we don’t have to make any decisions right this minute.” Ilya squeezes Shane’s hand. “It’s nice to know that we will have options though, yes?” He asks cautiously. Shane squeezes back, “Right. When the time comes, we’ll make a decision together.” Ilya smiles and leans forward to kiss him. Shane pulls back to stop him though, “In the meantime though, we need to start the foundation. I’m going to need to be able to see you more than two or three times next season.” He says as Ilya groans in teasing frustration. “Yes. We can plan tonight when your parents are here. Right now though, I want to fuck you.”

Before Shane can reply, Ilya is pushing him onto his back and straddling him. He bends down and kisses Shane hard, and the world completely melts away. All that Shane can think about is Ilya and how perfect he feels on top of him, how badly he wants him. How badly he needs him. He groans when Ilya reaches between them and pulls out Shane’s dick from his shorts and starts stroking him for a few blissful minutes. “Fuck, stop. I don’t want to come yet.” He pulls his mouth away from Ilya who only moves his lips to Shane’s throat but lets go of Shane’s dick and lets Shane flip them so he’s now straddling Ilya.

Shane wastes no time pulling Ilya’s dick out of his workout pants and groans in happiness when he sees how hard Ilya is and the drop of precum glistening at the tip. Shane can’t stop himself from bending down and wrapping his mouth around Ilya’s dick, moaning from the taste of him. Ilya curses in Russian and tangles his fingers into Shane’s hair. Shane loves it. He loves driving Ilya wild with his mouth.

But right now they are both desperate. It’s been weeks since they were last together and both of them are getting impatient. Ilya only allows Shane to suck him for a few more moments before he pulls his off and brings his mouth to his so they can kiss. Their dicks collide and they both moan when they touch. Shane without missing a beat, wraps his hand around both of them and starts stroking while Ilya continues to fuck his mouth.

It’s not long until they’re kisses turn sloppy as they mumble incoherent declarations of love and filth until finally after only a few more long, hard strokes, they completely fall apart together gasping as they come together.

Chapter 30

Chapter Notes

Last Chapter!!

Might add an epilogue but haven't decided yet.

Also, sorry the POV's got a little wonky in this chapter. Hopefully it's not too confusing!

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

One Year Later

June 2018

Ilya never expected his life to end up the way it has. He has everything he's ever dreamed of plus more. This past year has been filled with so many ups and downs. He's had to adjust and learn how to be open and communicative. As well as be the leader his team expected as well as a role model to young kids who attend his and Shane's camps for their foundation, named after his mother Irina. All donations go to mental health charities in honor of her.

Ilya fell in love with Shane even more when he made the suggestion one night last summer at the cottage. Ilya had finally started talking about his past, mainly about his family. It was nice to talk about them, to have Shane know all the gory details. It took a weight off of Ilya that he didn't realize was so heavy until it was gone.

Shane has truly been Ilya's rock this year. He's so thankful to be able to call him his. And having Shane's parents take him in as well and treat him like another son has healed something in him. He is finally apart of a functioning family unit and he's never been so grateful to have the Hollander's in his life.

On top of having an amazing partner and new family, Ilya's team just won the Stanley Cup. Today he's having a celebration at his house in Hermosa Beach in honor of his successful season. He looks around at the people who form his found family. Yuna and David are sitting on the patio sipping on wine. Rose, Svetlana and Jackie are laughing together in the kitchen, gossiping about some actor Rose just started dating. Hayden and JJ are in the living room with the Pike children playing Mario Kart.

Shane is no where to be found though which makes Ilya furrow his brows in worry. He heads toward the kitchen, stopping by the refrigerator to grab a ginger ale before heading up the stairs to his bedroom.

He finds Shane standing near the window, staring blankly outside clearly lost in thought. Ilya walks up behind him, wrapping his arms around him and kissing the back of his neck. He

holds out the ginger ale to Shane who looks down at it and smiles as he takes it. He doesn't open it though, he sets it on the window sill and turns toward Ilya then leans forward and gives him a kiss.

"You found me." Shane says when he pulls away. Ilya studies him for a moment before replying, "I'll always find you, Shane. No matter what." Then he leans forward again and kisses him.

"You okay? Seems like you have a lot on your mind." Ilya asks careful. Shane sighs. "Just thinking about this last season. How much of a shit show it was, wondering if things would have been different if I had made different choices."

Six Months Ago

December 2017

"Dude, come over to our place instead of whatever you're doing tonight. It's gotta be better than sitting at home alone or having dinner with your parents AGAIN when you're spending the whole day with them tomorrow." Hayden says into the phone after Shane tells him for the 100th time that he has plans and to leave him alone.

"JJ is coming too. His family is out of town but he couldn't go with them because of our schedule." Hayden adds like that will change Shane's mind. Of course it won't. Ilya is in town for one night and he's not going to waste it. They have only seen each other twice since the beginning of the season and it's not enough.

"I have plans. I'm sorry. I'll try to come over for a bit tomorrow though, okay?" Shane suggests.

"Is Rozanov...sorry I mean 'Lily' your plans?" Hayden calls Shane out. Shane is gaping in shock. What the fuck. He tries to come up with a story but can't. Besides he was already thinking about telling Hayden about him and Ilya.

"Yes." He admits. "I promise I will explain just not today, okay? I'll come over for lunch tomorrow and I'll tell you everything. Okay?" Shane asks quickly to appease Hayden's curiosity at least for the time being.

"Fuck, I didn't think I was actually right. Okay fine. I'll see you tomorrow. Happy Christmas Eve, Shane." Hayden sighs heavily obviously frustrated with Shane for not telling him everything instantly. But it's a conversation they need to have in person.

"Don't mention anything to JJ, okay? Not yet. He can be there tomorrow when I explain but I need to be the one to tell him. I don't want it coming from you because you can't keep your mouth shut." Shane says pointedly and Hayden scoffs but then concedes, "Fine, I'll keep my mouth shut. But I'm telling Jackie tonight after everyone leaves."

*Shane laughs, not the least bit surprised. Hayden would never be able to keep it from Jackie. "That's fine, I trust **her** to be able to keep the secret." Hayden makes a sound of outrage, "Rude. I'll see you tomorrow, dude." Shane laughs, "See you." Then hangs up and looks up at Ilya who is staring at him with a curious expression.*

"Hayden knows." Shane says simply. Ilya quirks his brow in question. "About us." He sucks in a breath and immediately sits down next to Shane, grabbing his hand.

"Do you need to go talk to him?" He asks and Shane shakes his head, leaning forward to kiss Ilya softly. He's surprised to hear Ilya suggest that when they don't have a lot of time together and how much he dislikes Hayden, but then he remembers how much Ilya loves him, how worried he's been about Shane stressing about telling Hayden about them.

"I'm going over there tomorrow to explain. I want to spend today with you and only you." He whispers as he moves to straddle Ilya who happily pulls him closer, deepening the kiss.

Shane and Ilya spend the whole day getting lost in each other, exchanging gifts and enjoying what little time they have together. Ilya ends up flying out early the next morning leaving them both a little bit more upset about the time and distance apart. Each goodbye gets harder and harder.

Around noon the next day Shane makes his way over to Hayden's house. When he arrives he finds Hayden and JJ by themselves. Jackie took the kids to her parents house for a little while so the guys could talk without absolute chaos of Christmas with kids.

"Will someone tell me what the fuck is going on?" JJ asks after a few awkward moments. Shane sighs heavily and looks between his two best friends.

*"I'm gay." He says out loud. Hayden doesn't react since he's obviously known for awhile if he suspected Lily was Ilya. JJ lifts his eyebrows at Shane. "That's it? I already figured that out after you said having sex with Rose Landry was just **okay**." He says which makes both Hayden and Shane laugh.*

"That's not completely it..." Shane says after a moment and takes a deep breath. "I'm in a relationship with Ilya Rozanov. We've been together on and off for...a long time." He admits. Silence descends upon them. Hayden is grasping for words, but looks like he doesn't know where to start and JJ, he's going through many emotions. "How long is a long time?" Hayden finally asks and Shane braces for outbursts by his friends for keeping a secret from them so long. "Uhh, since the summer before our rookie season." He admits.

JJ starts pacing, Hayden looks obviously confused and a little upset. Shane doesn't know what to do or say. He wishes Ilya were here. "So you've been hiding this for almost 10 years?" JJ asks and Shane can only nod as moisture fills his eyes. "Fuck!" He seethes and Shane braces for some kind of fallout. He should have gone about this so many different ways so this wouldn't happen.

"I'm sorry you felt like you couldn't tell us." JJ says, surprising him. Shane lets out a breath he didn't realize he was holding. "Seriously man, I can't believe it's been this long and you've been dealing with it by yourself." Hayden adds, looking guilty.

"It took me a long time to admit to myself what was actually happening. I was in denial up until last year." Shane explains.

"I can understand that." JJ comments, then "I am a bit confused about Rozanov though. He's such an asshole." JJ laughs and Shane can't help but smile.

"He is, but he's..." Shane hesitates trying to come up with the right words. "My favorite person in the entire world." He settles on.

"I'm offended." Hayden jokes, and Shane rolls his eyes. "You better be his favorite person in the entire world too or I'm going to have to have some words with him the next time we play LA." JJ declares. "I am." Shane says immediately without hesitation. He has no doubt about Ilya's feelings for him, not anymore.

"Well good. But I'm still gonna have some words with him." JJ decides making Hayden and Shane both laugh.

The rest of the afternoon Shane answers most of the questions that Hayden and JJ ask about his relationship. By the time Shane needs to leave to go to his parents house, both Hayden and JJ are trying to convince Shane to come out to the rest of the team, at least about him being gay. He's hesitant, not sure how the rest of the team will react. They may be his teammates, he may be their Captain but they are still hockey players. It's always been a pretty toxic environment especially for queer people and even though Scott Hunter came out as gay, some players think that sort of thing needs to be kept secret.

"I'll think about it." Shane concedes as he walks out the door.

Three weeks later, he tells the team and it turns into a complete shitshow. The team he thought had his back completely turned on him, except for Hayden, JJ and a few others. Some of his teammates even tried to get him banned from the showers, others have called him slurs behind his back and to his face. Management lets everything sly without batting an eye.

It gets even worse when Montreal starts losing. His teammates are blaming him, but how is he supposed to be a leader, how are they supposed to be a team when they hate him just because he's gay?

He spends the rest of the season, focusing on only himself. He doesn't look at anyone in the locker room, he doesn't shower at the facility, he wears his headphones to drown out the hate and grits his teeth. It's not until he's alone at his apartment or hotel room that he falls apart. Ilya comforts him as best as he possibly can and he does help, but Shane is constantly wishing that Ilya was closer. He just needs his boyfriend to hold him and tell him everything will be okay.

"Seriously, fuck Montreal. Have you thought anymore about coming to Anaheim?" Ilya asks one night after an exceptionally brutal loss against Florida that would have gotten Montreal into the wildcard if they had won. Of course his team put all the blame on Shane leaving him reeling in regret. Regret for ever wanting to stay at an organization that is full with such shitty people minus a select few.

"Yes, I told my agent to contact them." Shane confesses. He hasn't stopped thinking about Anaheim ever since his team turned on him. He also decided to contact San Jose and San Francisco as well just in case. He'd prefer Anaheim so he and Ilya would be only minutes apart, but at this point, he just needs to get the fuck out of Montreal.

"Do you regret telling the team that you're gay?" Ilya asks pulling Shane from his thoughts. Shane shakes his head. "No. It showed me how toxic Montreal is and I do not want to be apart of that." He says. "I just...I wish I would have waited a bit longer to tell them. So I wasn't so miserable for so many months." He blinks back the moisture in his eyes thinking about how awful it was for him while also being extremely happy for Ilya and all of his successes. He's happy to be done with Montreal, done with feeling that way. He has strong hopes for his new team and organization.

"I know, but it is over now. You have new team who will treat you the way you deserve. A new captain who loves you more than anything in the world." Ilya whispers heatedly as he leans forward and kisses Shane hard on the mouth, pulling him close. Shane's stomach flips, hearing those words. It's still surreal, the fact that will be teammates this next season.

He's still not sure how it happened. Up until a few weeks ago, talks with Anaheim were in full swing. Shane was ready to sign a multi-year deal, making more money than he ever thought possible. Then his agent called with news that floored him: the LA Rush were interested. Shane thought it was a prank at first. He didn't think LA had the cap space to fit both him and Ilya, but then his agent forwarded the offer.

That's when it hit him. LA had cleared the room. Big trades, buyouts, and some serious roster shuffling had opened enough space for two blockbuster contracts. The numbers were staggering. They weren't breaking the cap and they had worked the system to perfection. And with the team fresh off a Stanley Cup win, ownership was all-in, ready to double down on success. Two of the league's top centers on one roster? It was bold, maybe even reckless, but it was real. Shane couldn't believe it. He still has trouble wrapping his head around it and it's been a week.

Ilya came home to Shane freaking out. When Shane told him why Ilya immediately demanded to see the contract not believing him. His eyes widened comically as he realized Shane wasn't fucking with him. "What are you going to do?" He asked trying to keep his demeanor neutral even though he was practically vibrating with excitement. But he knew Shane was about to sign with Anaheim, he didn't want to assume that Shane would change his mind. "I'm going to sign this fucking contract right now. I was just waiting for you to get home." Shane laughed manically when Ilya attacked him with kisses.

"I still can't believe you're going to be my captain. I'm not sure how I feel about that." Shane laughs when they finally pull away from each other. Ilya smiles cheekily as he smacks Shane on the butt. "I think you will love it. You like when I make demands of you." Shane feels his cheeks warm. "Yeah, in the bedroom. Not sure how I'll feel on the ice though." He laughs as

he turns to head back to the party, grabbing Ilya's hand on the way. "We will see." Ilya winks and Shane's stomach fills with butterflies.

"You ready to tell everyone the good news?" Ilya asks as they descend the stairs hand in hand. Shane squeezes his hand tightly. "Absolutely." They make their way to the kitchen where the girls are still sitting, but now they are all hunched around Svetlana's phone looking at something.

"Is this true?" She asks, pointing her phone in Ilya and Shane's direction once she notices they are standing in front of them. Her phone displays a tweet from .

NHL Trade Insider: TRADE RUMOR Shane Hollander to sign with LA Rush

Shane glances at Ilya who is looking at him with a smirk and then turns back to the girls who are looking at them with wide eyes. Shane doesn't have to say a word, and they are all screaming with excitement which makes him laugh. Rose immediately runs to him and pulls him into a tight hug as his parents, Hayden and JJ rush into the kitchen wondering what the excitement is about.

Shane finally gets Rose off of him and turns toward everyone. His parents look expectantly at him while JJ sidles up beside Svetlana and Hayden wraps his arms around Jackie. Shane can't help but smile in appreciation as he looks around at the most important people in his life. Ilya wraps his arms around him and he relaxes into his embrace before taking a deep breath.

"Last week I signed a three year contract with the LA Rush." He barely gets the words out before his parents are wrapping him in a tight hug and his friends are cheering with excitement. He catches Ilya's eye as Svetlana hugs him tightly whispering something in his ear that makes him smile wide with so much happiness that makes Shane heart clench tightly in his chest. He never thought they would get this. He never thought they would be this happy.

"Let's keep this good news train going." JJ announces once everyone settles down a bit. He glances to Hayden who nods, "Me and Hayden will be heading to Boston next season." Another round of cheers and excitement fill the group and Rose suggests popping champagne and toasting to all the great news. A few minutes later, everyone has a glass and they are holding them up.

"Before everyone drinks, I just want to say how thankful I am to have each and every one of you in my life. I never thought I would get to experience this type of overwhelming happiness. Thank you all for your support, especially this year." Shane chokes up a little and Ilya pulls him tighter against him, kissing his temple in silent support. Shane smiles, "I love you all. Cheers!" He lifts his glass as everyone shouts cheers.

After they take a drink, he turns to Ilya who has moisture in his eyes as he smiles softly at Shane. "You okay?" He asks and Ilya smiles and leans forward to kiss Shane softly. "I have never been better Любимая."

Chapter End Notes

Ah I can't believe the story is complete!

It turned out a bit differently than I initially intended but I'm so happy with it!

I hope you are too!

Thank you all who have spent your precious time reading this fic.

I am so thankful and appreciate it so very much!

Love you all 

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