

Unbreakable Ice

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Unbreakable Ice

by [Wipandwonder](#)

Summary

⚠ SPOILER WARNING This takes place after The Long Game, so spoilers if you haven't read the books! ⚠

After years of rivalry and hidden love, Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov are finally on the same team. Married, out, and playing for the Ottawa Centaurs. As they chase their first Stanley Cup together, the season feels like a dream. But when an injury sidelines Shane for weeks, the dream fractures and old fears resurface. Doubts about worth, regret, and whether one can ever truly be enough for the other.

Chapter 1

Timeline note: This first chapter takes place during The Long Game. After the main story, but before the epilogue.

September

The Ottawa morning light filtered softly through the curtains of their bedroom window, casting a warm glow over the tangled sheets. Shane stirred first, his eyes fluttering open to the familiar sight of Ilya's arm draped over his waist. They'd been married for just over a month now, and waking up like this still felt like the best kind of dream.

Ilya was still asleep, his face buried in the crook of Shane's neck, breathing slow and steady. When Shane shifted, Ilya tightened his hold instinctively, pulling him closer until their legs were entwined.

"Morning," Shane murmured, voice rough with sleep.

Ilya hummed in response, pressing a lazy kiss to the warm skin just below Shane's ear. "Good morning, husband."

Shane smiled despite the knot already forming in his stomach. Today was the first official day of training camp with the Centaurs. His new team. Ilya's team since last season. And yeah, the trade was good. It was what he wanted. Shane wanted to be wherever Ilya was, wanted to stop pretending, wanted to build a life without distance or secrets, wanted a team that would support him. But now that it was real, the nerves were hitting hard.

Ilya must have felt him tense, because he lifted his head, light curls falling into his eyes as he studied Shane's face. "You're thinking too loud."

Shane huffed a small laugh. "Can't help it."

Ilya rolled them gently until Shane was on his back and Ilya was propped above him, one hand sliding up to cup Shane's jaw. He brushed his thumb over Shane's cheek, then leaned down to kiss his forehead, lingering there.

"They're going to love you."

"You've said that."

"Because it's true." Ilya kissed the bridge of Shane's nose next, soft and deliberate. "I've been there a year. I know these guys. They're good people. And they already know about us. No hiding. No bullshit."

Shane closed his eyes for a second, letting the warmth of Ilya's words sink in. "What if I suck in practice?"

“You won’t.” Another kiss, this one to the corner of Shane’s mouth. “And even if you have an off day, they’ll still like you. Because you’re you. And because you make me happy, and they like seeing me happy.”

Shane opened his eyes again, meeting Ilya’s steady gaze. There was no teasing there now. Just quiet certainty.

Ilya rolled off of Shane and shifted to sit up against the headboard, pulling Shane with him until Shane was tucked against his side. His hand found its way under Shane’s T-shirt, palm flat against the small of his back, rubbing slow, soothing circles.

“This is going to be the best year we’ve ever had,” he said quietly, lips brushing Shane’s temple. “On ice and off. You’ll see.”

Shane let his head rest on Ilya’s shoulder, breathing him in. “You’re annoyingly confident sometimes.”

“Only when I’m right.” Ilya tilted Shane’s chin up and kissed him properly this time, deep and unhurried. When he pulled back, he smiled. “Come on. I will make breakfast. You need fuel for impressing your new teammates.”

They padded downstairs together, fingers loosely linked. Anya followed closely behind, tail wagging, and Ilya let go of Shane’s hand to open the sliding door to let her into the large, fenced-in backyard while Shane filled her bowl for breakfast. Ilya paused to press a kiss to Shane’s temple before starting the coffee and pulling out ingredients for pancakes.

Shane leaned against the counter, watching him move with that easy grace he’d fallen in love with years ago. Ilya flipped a pancake one-handed, then glanced over his shoulder. “Sit. I bring to you.”

“You’re spoiling me.”

Ilya hummed in agreement. “Yes. But you deserve it.”

Ilya plated the pancakes, extra blueberries, just how Shane liked them, added a drizzle of maple syrup, and carried it over to the island where Shane had settled. He didn’t sit across from him. Instead, he stood behind Shane’s stool, arms sliding around his shoulders, chin resting on top of Shane’s head.

“Eat,” Ilya murmured, pressing a kiss to his hair.

Shane took a bite, then tilted his head back to look up at him. “You’re not eating?”

“I will eat after. Right now I only want to hold you.”

Shane laughed softly, warmth spreading through his chest. “You’re ridiculous.”

Ilya’s hands moved again. One settling over Shane’s heart, the other combing through Shane’s hair. “You feel better?”

“I’m fine,” Shane insisted. “Just a bit of nerves.”

“That’s okay.” Ilya kissed his neck, just below the jaw. “Nerves means you care. But you’re not alone today. I’m right there with you. Always.”

Shane closed his eyes, leaning into the touch. The knot in his stomach loosened, just a fraction.

The arena buzzed with the familiar sounds of skates scraping and sticks tapping as Shane stepped into the room, Ilya right behind him. The Centaurs’ logo stared back from every wall. His stall was ready: HOLLANDER in bold letters, a new jersey with his old number 24.

A few guys were already geared up. Troy Barrett, the defenseman Ilya had become close with over the last season, looked up from lacing his skates and grinned.

“Hollander! Welcome to the chaos.”

Shane smiled, some of the morning’s nerves loosening. “Good to see you, Barrett. Thanks for keeping Rozanov in line last season.”

Troy snorted. “Someone has to. Good luck with that job now that it’s official.”

Ilya brushed past Shane on his way to his own stall, letting his hand settle briefly on Shane’s lower back. Just long enough to say I’ve got you without anyone else noticing.

More players arrived. Handshakes, back slaps, easy questions about the trade and the offseason. No awkward pauses. A couple of rookies asked about the wedding photos that had gone semi-viral last year. Shane answered comfortably, used to it by now. When Ilya leaned over to straighten the neck of Shane’s base layer, fingers lingering a second too long, nobody batted an eye. Troy just smirked and looked back down at his skates.

Coach’s whistle sent them out for warm-ups. The ice felt good under Shane’s blades. Drills were sharp. Skating lines, puck battles. He and Ilya ended up on the same rush group. Ilya carried up the left side, feathered a pass across that landed perfectly on Shane’s tape. Quick shot. Top shelf.

The goalie flopped backward dramatically. “Jesus, you two are gonna be insufferable all season.”

Ilya grinned wide, skating over to bump gloves with Shane. “Get used to it.”

Shane laughed, lungs burning in the best way. It felt right.

Water breaks turned into casual chatter. Troy skated up beside Shane. “So? How’s day one treating you?”

“Better than expected,” Shane admitted.

“Told you,” Ilya called from a few feet away, leaning on his stick. “My team is good team.”

Troy rolled his eyes fondly. “Yeah, yeah, Roz.”

Full-line scrimmage came next. Shane centered the second unit. Ilya took the first. When their lines matched up, the chirping started immediately.

Ilya circled at center ice for the face-off, smirking across at Shane. “Careful, Hollander. Don’t go falling in love with me out here.”

Shane leaned in, eyes locked on Ilya’s. “Too late, Rozanov. Already married you, idiot.”

The bench lost it. Even the coaches shook their heads, grinning.

Ilya won the draw clean, but Shane stole the puck ten feet later, turned up ice, and buried it in the net the other way.

When they changed lines, Ilya caught up to him at the bench and knocked their helmets together gently.

“Thief,” he muttered, voice low and fond.

Shane just grinned.

Practice wrapped with everyone loose and sweaty. In the room afterward, Troy dropped onto the bench beside Shane while untying his skates.

“Not bad for a first day, Hollander. You’re gonna fit right in.”

Shane glanced across the room. Ilya was laughing at something one of the rookies said, completely at home, completely happy. When their eyes met, Ilya winked.

“Yeah,” Shane said quietly. “I think I am.”

Later, walking to their SUV in the near-empty parking lot, fingers brushing as they carried their bags, Ilya bumped Shane’s shoulder.

“Told you,” he said, smug but soft.

Shane rolled his eyes, smiling wide. “Shut up.”

Ilya stopped at the driver-side door, tugging Shane in by his jacket for a quick, private kiss. Just them, the cold air, and the quiet.

“Best year ever,” Ilya murmured against his mouth.

Shane kissed him back, certain. “Yeah. It really might be.”

The weeks before the season blurred into a rhythm that felt both new and inevitable.

Mornings started the same way. One of them waking first, pulling the other closer, trading slow kisses in the half-light until the alarm forced them out of bed.

They walked Anya together, hand in hand. Ilya usually made coffee strong enough to strip paint. Shane handled the smoothies. Kale, berries, protein powder, the occasional argument over whether banana belonged in everything (it did, according to Shane. It did not, according to Ilya).

They drove to the rink together, fingers linked over the console, music low. Practice was hard, but the ice became familiar fast.

Shane slotted onto the second line, centering wingers who read his passes like they'd been playing together for years instead of weeks. Power-play units clicked. Penalty kill rotations sharpened. Off-ice, the team folded Shane in without fanfare.

Evenings belonged to them. Some nights they cooked. Pasta with whatever vegetables were left in the fridge, Ilya leaning against the counter watching Shane chop onions with the same intensity he brought to face-offs. Other nights they ordered shawarma and ate it on the couch, Anya curled beside them, arguing over what to watch. Ilya campaigned hard for Russian dramas with subtitles. Shane held firm on old playoffs reruns. They usually met in the middle with something neither of them paid full attention to, too busy trading lazy kisses, hands wandering under hoodies, until one of them pulled the other upstairs.

There were quieter moments too. Ilya playing a game on his phone on the patio while Shane read beside him, feet tangled together. Tossing a ball for Anya in the backyard that somehow always turned into a competition. Mornings off when they stayed in bed until noon, sunlight striping the sheets, Ilya tracing the line of Shane's wedding band with his thumb and whispering, still with wonder, "You're really mine."

Team bonding events came and went. Golf tournament and team meals. A charity skate with kids where Shane was patient and soft-spoken, Ilya dramatic and theatrical, both of them mobbed by tiny fans in tiny jerseys.

Through it all, the calendar ticked closer to opening night. The day before the home opener, practice was short and sharp. After, Coach gathered them at center ice.

"Tomorrow we drop the puck for real," he said. "Play for each other. Play hard."

That night, back home, the house was quiet. Dinner was simple, salmon and roasted vegetables, and they ate at the island, knees bumping.

"You nervous?" Ilya asked, watching Shane over the rim of his water glass.

Shane considered it. "A little bit. First game in a new building. New fans cheering for a new team."

Ilya's eyes darkened with that familiar mischief, a slow smile curving his lips. "I know a way to distract you."

Before Shane could respond, Ilya reached across the island, fingers threading into Shane's hair, pulling him in gently. Their lips met softly at first. Slow, sensual, the kind of kiss that started as a tease. Ilya's mouth was warm, tasting faintly of salt from dinner, his tongue tracing the seam of Shane's lips with deliberate patience. Shane parted for him, sighing into it as Ilya deepened the kiss, one hand cupping Shane's jaw while the other slid down to his waist, tugging him closer.

The kiss built gradually, Ilya nipping lightly at Shane's bottom lip, then soothing it with his tongue. Shane's hands found Ilya's shoulders, gripping the soft fabric of his T-shirt as heat sparked low in his belly. Ilya tilted his head, pressing harder, their breaths mingling faster now.

What started sensual ramped up. Ilya's fingers dug into Shane's hips with growing urgency. Shane moaned softly, the sound swallowed by Ilya's mouth, and that seemed to snap something in both of them. The kiss turned heated, desperate, hands roaming, bodies pressing together against the edge of the island.

"Fuck," Ilya murmured against Shane's lips, voice rough. "Can't wait. Couch."

He grabbed Shane's hand, pulling him into the living room without breaking stride. They stumbled together, Ilya backing Shane toward the couch until the backs of Shane's knees hit the edge. Ilya pushed him down gently, following immediately, knees bracketing Shane's thighs as he captured his mouth again in a bruising kiss.

Ilya's hands were everywhere. Pushing up Shane's shirt to trace the lines of his abs, then lower, palming him through his sweatpants. Shane arched into the touch, already hard, breath hitching. Ilya broke the kiss to trail his mouth down Shane's neck, sucking lightly at the pulse point there, drawing a gasp from him.

"Want to taste you," Ilya whispered, voice low and wrecked.

He slid down Shane's body, hooking fingers into the waistband of his pants and boxers, tugging them down in one smooth motion. Shane lifted his hips to help, heart pounding as Ilya settled between his legs.

Ilya looked up at him through dark lashes, eyes hungry, before leaning in. He started slow, kissing the inside of Shane's thigh, then higher, tongue flicking out to tease the base of his cock. Shane's hand found Ilya's hair, fingers threading through the soft strands as Ilya took him in hand, stroking once, twice, before his mouth followed.

The first touch of Ilya's lips was electric. Warm, wet, wrapping around the head with just enough suction to make Shane's toes curl. Ilya hummed in appreciation, the vibration sending sparks up Shane's spine.

He took more, inch by inch, tongue swirling along the underside, hollowing his cheeks as he bobbed slowly at first, building rhythm. Shane's hips bucked involuntarily, but Ilya's free hand pinned him down gently, controlling the pace.

"God, Ilya," Shane groaned, head falling back against the couch cushions.

Ilya's mouth was relentless now. Faster, deeper, one hand stroking what his lips couldn't reach, the other sliding up to tease Shane's balls with feather-light touches. Saliva slicked everything, the wet sounds obscene in the quiet room. Ilya pulled off for a second, just to lick a stripe from base to tip, eyes locked on Shane's face, watching him come undone. Then he dove back in, taking him deep enough to gag slightly, but not stopping, throat working around him. Shane was close already, heat coiling tight in his gut.

"Ilya—fuck, I'm—" He came with a choked cry, spilling into Ilya's mouth, hips jerking as waves of pleasure crashed over him.

Ilya swallowed around him, tongue gentle now as he eased Shane through it.

Panting, Shane tugged weakly at Ilya's shoulders, pulling him up for a kiss that tasted like himself. His hands fumbled with Ilya's pants, shoving them down, wrapping around Ilya's hard length and stroking firmly. Ilya groaned into his mouth, thrusting into the touch for a few moments before pulling back.

"Wait," Ilya said, voice strained. "I want to fuck you."

Shane nodded frantically, already reaching for the lube they kept stashed in the side table drawer. Ilya took it from him, slicking his fingers quickly while Shane shifted, spreading his legs wider, shirt rucked up, pants discarded on the floor.

Ilya worked him open slowly at first, giving him time to recover. One finger, then two, curling just right to hit that spot that made Shane whine and arch.

"So good for me," Ilya murmured, scissoring his fingers, adding a third when Shane begged for it.

He stretched him thoroughly, lips brushing Shane's inner thigh, his cock, his stomach, until Shane was trembling, hard again.

"Please," Shane gasped. "Now."

Ilya withdrew his fingers, slicked himself up, and positioned himself. He pushed in slowly, inch by inch, both of them groaning at the sensation. Once fully seated, Ilya paused, forehead pressed to Shane's, breathing ragged.

"You feel perfect," he whispered.

Then he started moving. Slow rolls of his hips at first, building to deeper thrusts. Shane wrapped his legs around Ilya's waist, hands clutching his back, nails digging in as the pace quickened. Ilya angled just right, hitting Shane's prostate on every other stroke, drawing punched-out moans from him. Sweat slicked their skin, bodies sliding together, the couch creaking under them.

"Close," Ilya grunted, thrusts erratic now, one hand wrapping around Shane's cock, stroking in time.

Shane came first, spilling over Ilya's fingers with a shuddering gasp, clenching tight around him. That pulled Ilya over the edge. He buried himself deep, coming inside with a low moan, hips stuttering as he filled Shane.

They stayed like that for a long moment, breaths syncing, Ilya's weight grounding Shane. Then Ilya pulled out gently, shifting to lie beside him on the couch. He peppered Shane's throat with soft kisses, then his chest, lips brushing over collarbones and sternum.

"I love you," he murmured against Shane's skin, over and over, voice soft and reverent. "So much."

Shane's hand carded through Ilya's hair, heart full. "Love you too."

Eventually, they untangled, cleaning up with lazy efficiency before heading upstairs to bed. As they slid under the covers, Ilya pulled Shane close, arm draped over his waist.

"So," Ilya said, smirking into Shane's hair. "Was that distracting enough?"

Shane laughed softly, turning to kiss him. "Yeah. Mission accomplished."

Opening night waited.

Chapter 2

Timeline note: The beginning of this chapter takes place during the epilogue of The Long Game, and then moves into the home opener game, immediately after the epilogue.

October

The locker room hummed with that electric pre-game buzz. Sticks being taped one last time, gloves tugged on, the low thump of music from someone's speaker. The Ottawa Centaurs were minutes from taking the ice for their home opener, and the air crackled with anticipation.

Shane sat on the bench in front of his stall, elbows on his knees, breathing deep and steady. The jitters that had lingered through training camp were gone, replaced by a sharp, bright excitement. This was it. New season. New team. New start.

Across the room, Ilya, captain's "C" stitched bold on his jersey, stood in the center, pulling on his own gloves with deliberate calm. He looked every inch the leader tonight. Shoulders back, jaw set, that familiar cocky tilt to his mouth. The sarcastic, competitive fire that had always burned in him on the ice was dialed up, ready to ignite everyone else.

Coach finished his final notes and nodded to Ilya. Time for the captain's words.

Ilya stepped forward, voice cutting through the noise without needing to shout.

"Listen up."

The room quieted instantly. Every head turned. Ilya scanned the circle of faces. Veterans, rookies, new teammates like Shane, old friends like Troy. His eyes were sharp and alive.

"Last year we came close. This year?" He let the pause hang, a smirk tugging at his lips. "This year we take what's ours."

A few low whoops rippled through the room. Ilya's voice dropped lower, more intense.

"We've got speed. We've got skill. We've got guys who hate losing more than they like winning. And that's saying something, because we like winning a lot."

Laughter, sharp and appreciative. Ilya started pacing slowly, energy coiling.

"Tonight, this building is ours. These fans have waited all summer for us. So we give them something to scream about. We play fast. We play mean. We play together. Every shift, every battle. We own it."

Shane pounded his stick on the floor once. Others joined in, a low rhythmic thump building.

Ilya's smirk faded into something fiercer. "I don't care who's on the other side tonight. I don't care what they did last year or what they think they're going to do this year. They step on our ice, they get reminded real quick who runs this city."

The entire room was locked in to Ilya's words.

"This isn't just a game," Ilya said, voice rising now, carrying. "This is the first page of the story we're writing. And it ends one way. With us holding that Cup over our heads in June."

He stopped in the center again, eyes blazing.

"So let's go out there and start writing it. Tonight. Right fucking now."

The room exploded. Sticks slammed against the floor in a thunderous roar. Players surged to their feet, shouting, shoulder-checking each other, helmets knocking together. Bood let out a wild yell. The rookies looked ready to run through a wall. The energy was palpable, a living thing ready to spill out onto the ice.

In the chaos, Ilya turned and his eyes found Shane's across the room.

Everything else faded for a second.

No words. None needed. Ilya's gaze was steady, burning with pride and fire and something deeper. It said *This is ours. You and me.*

Shane met it head on, his own eyes fierce. A small, knowing smile pulling at his lips. It said back *I'm with you. Always. Let's go get it.*

The tunnel vibrated with the distant roar of the crowd, a living pulse that echoed off the concrete walls. Shane's name was called and he skated onto the ice. The crowd went wild, and pride surged in Ilya's chest.

After Ilya and the rest of the team were all on the ice, the announcer's voice boomed overhead, "Ladies and gentlemen... your Ottawa Centaurs!"

The house lights were down, but the ice glowed under strobing lasers. Colored spotlights swept the rink. Music thumped heavy, some rock remix that rattled in Ilya's chest, syncing with his heartbeat.

The bass dropped and the crowd erupted, 20,000 voices strong, chanting "Cen-taurs! Cen-taurs!" Seats packed to the rafters, faces blurred into a sea of jerseys and signs waving like flags.

Ilya saw it all in flashes. The Jumbotron flickering with highlights from last season, his own face up there smirking back at him. Kids pressed against the glass, fists pounding, eyes wide with hero-worship.

This was his kingdom. These fans screamed for him, for the team he'd helped shape with sweat and snarl. And now? Now he had Shane beside him. Not across the ice as rivals, not hidden in shadows. Right here, on the same line, in the same colors. His fucking husband.

Ilya glanced back as the team fanned out for warm ups. Shane was there, a few skaters behind, helmet on and visor down, but Ilya could read him like a play. His shoulders loose and eyes bright under the lights. Two of the best in the league, side by side. The thought surged through Ilya like adrenaline. *We're unstoppable. Me and him. No one touches us.*

He felt it in his veins. The rush, the certainty. Like he could lift the whole damn arena on his back. Powerful didn't cover it. Invincible. With the ice under him and Shane at his side, this season was theirs. The Cup was waiting, and fuck anyone who thought otherwise.

The music swelled, lasers dancing faster as the team circled up at center ice. Ilya tapped his stick on the boards, nodding to the crowd, letting their energy fuel him. The puck drop was minutes away.

Game on.

Early second period, clock ticking down from 12:47, scoreboard glowing 3-1 Centaurs.

The building was deafening. Ilya circled in his own end, puck on his stick, surveying the ice like a king looking over his domain. The visitors, some divisional rival who'd talked big in the offseason, were chasing shadows.

Ottawa was flying. Forechecks relentless, breakouts crisp, every line humming. And Ilya? Ilya was in that zone where everything felt slow and easy, where he knew exactly what was going to happen two moves ahead.

He'd already picked up two assists tonight. One on Shane's sniper from the slot on the power play in the first, one on a perfectly threaded pass to Barrett. The crowd chanted his name every time he touched the puck now, "Ro-za-nov! Ro-za-nov!" rolling like thunder. He soaked it in, smirking behind his mouthpiece. This was exactly where he belonged.

Shane hopped over the boards for a shift change, tapping gloves with Ilya as they passed on the ice. Their eyes met for half a second. Shane's bright with adrenaline, Ilya's saying *watch this*.

Ilya carried the puck up ice on the next rush, splitting the defense with a fake that sent one defender sliding into the boards. He drew the second D-man in, then threw a no-look backhand pass right onto Shane's tape in the high slot.

Shane didn't hesitate. Lamp lit. Horn sounded. 4-1.

The arena detonated. Shane pumped his fist once, sharp and controlled, then skated straight to Ilya. They came together at center ice with gloves up for the standard double high-five, but their bodies lingered a beat longer than necessary, helmets knocking lightly, a quick shoulder-to-shoulder bump that looked like any other celebration on the surface. But anyone who knew them could see it. The way Ilya's gloved hand settled for a fraction of a second on Shane's lower back, the way Shane's grin was aimed only at him. Intimate, even through the

gear. The fans closest to the glass lost their minds, signs flashing “HOLLANDER-ROZANOV” in glitter and bold marker.

A few shifts later, the tone shifted.

Shane battled along the boards in the neutral zone, muscling the puck free. The opposing winger was big, frustrated, and down three goals, and gave Shane an extra shove after the whistle. A cross-check between the numbers that sent Shane stumbling forward a step. Nothing egregious, nothing that’d draw a penalty, just the kind of cheap shot that happens when a team’s getting embarrassed.

Ilya was there in a heartbeat. He inserted himself smoothly, shoulder to shoulder with the guy, stick across his chest, voice low and sharp in that Russian-accented growl.

“Hey. Easy.”

The winger barked something back, probably some variation of “play the game”, but Ilya didn’t budge, eyes locked, smile gone cold. Barrett skated over too, backing Ilya without a word. The ref blew the whistle to break it up, waving everyone away, but the message was delivered.

Shane caught Ilya’s eye as they skated back to the bench. He shook his head slightly, amused. *Don’t start a war over that.* But the look he gave Ilya was soft and grateful. Ilya just winked, cocky as ever. *I’ve got you, always.*

Back on the bench, the guys ribbed them both.

“Rozanov out here playing bodyguard,” Bood laughed, elbowing Shane.

“Someone has to,” Ilya shot back, deadpan. “My husband is too pretty to get roughed up.”

The bench howled. Shane rolled his eyes, but he was grinning, flushed from the cold and the moment.

The clock wound down in the second, Centaurs still pouring it on. Ilya leaned back against the boards during a TV timeout, arms draped over the top, surveying the ice, the crowd, his team. The smirk never left his face. This was his building. His team. His husband beside him. And they were just getting started.

Final buzzer sounded: 5-2 Centaurs.

The building shook with it. Fans were on their feet, towels waving, the roar rolling down from the rafters like an avalanche.

On ice, the team mobbed each other, helmets off and gloves flying, sticks clattering against the boards. Ilya found Shane first, pulling him into a hard hug right at center ice, laughing into his neck as the guys piled on around them. Troy slammed into Ilya’s back, nearly knocking them over. Someone sprayed water everywhere. It was chaos, perfect chaos.

In the locker room afterward, the celebration spilled over. Music blasted from the speakers. Some playlist Troy controlled, heavy on early 2000s rock. Shower steam fogged the air, mixing with the smell of sweat and champagne that someone had smuggled in.

Coach gave a short speech, voice hoarse from yelling all night, then let them loose. Guys danced in towels, sang off-key, took selfies with the game puck. Reporters came and went, but the door stayed mostly closed. This was theirs.

Ilya, hair damp from the shower, shirt half-unbuttoned, stood in the middle of it all with a plastic cup of something bubbly, arm slung around Shane's shoulders. Shane leaned into him easily, flushed and grinning with eyes bright from the win.

Eventually the group migrated. Most the team, plus staff, plus a few significant others, to their usual spot downtown. A low-key bar with dark booths and a back room the owner always saved for them on big nights.

Inside, the volume cranked up again. Drinks flowed. Troy held court at one table, reenacting his goal with dramatic flair. Harris filmed it on his phone for the team's socials, laughing every time Troy flubbed the details. Someone bought rounds of shots. The bartenders wore Centaurs jerseys.

Shane and Ilya found a spot at the end of the bar, shoulders touching, watching it all.

Ilya leaned in close, voice low under the music. "Look at this."

Shane followed his gaze. Teammates laughing, clinking glasses, no one sparing them a second glance when Ilya's hand settled on Shane's thigh under the bar, or when Shane's fingers traced the wedding band on Ilya's left hand.

"No hiding," Shane murmured, wonder in his voice.

Ilya turned to him fully, cupping Shane's jaw with one hand, thumb brushing his cheekbone. Then he kissed him. Right there, in the middle of the bar, surrounded by their team and half the staff and a handful of fans who'd snuck in. Slow, unhurried, claiming.

Shane laughed softly against Ilya's mouth. "Remember when we had to wait until hotel rooms? Sneak out separately?"

"Feels like another life," Ilya said, eyes soft even as his grin stayed cocky. He kissed Shane again, shorter this time, then rested their foreheads together. "Now I get to take you home. Out the front door. With everyone watching."

They stayed another hour. Bought shots for the whole room, took photos with the bartenders. Ilya signed the jersey of a fan who'd somehow made it past security. And eventually the adrenaline started to ebb into something warmer, quieter.

Ilya caught Shane's eye across the booth, tilted his head toward the door. Shane nodded.

They said quick goodbyes and stepped out into the cold Ottawa night. They had both stayed sober, not having more than a drink or two. The drive home was short, windows cracked, music low. Ilya's hand rested on Shane's thigh the whole way.

Inside the house, the lights were dim. They dropped gear bags by the door, but Ilya didn't pounce. Shane half expected it. The night had been wild and fast, riding the high of the win. Instead, Ilya backed him slowly against the hallway wall, kissing him deep and deliberate. His hands gentle as they peeled away jackets, shirts, everything.

Upstairs, in their bed, Ilya took his time. He mapped Shane's body like he was memorizing it all over again. Lips on his throat, his collarbone, the line of his sternum. Fingers tracing every muscle, every scar from old battles. Slow licks and soft bites down Shane's stomach, thighs pushed apart gently, reverently. Ilya worked Shane open with patient fingers and a teasing mouth until Shane was trembling, hips rolling, begging in broken whispers.

Only then, when Shane was flushed and panting, hands fisted in the sheets, eyes dark and desperate, did Ilya slide inside.

Slow, deep thrusts. Unhurried. Like they had all the time in the world. Face to face, legs tangled, breaths mingling. Ilya's hand wrapped around Shane's cock, stroking in perfect rhythm, eyes locked the whole time.

They came together. Shane a beat ahead, spilling over Ilya's fingers with a choked gasp, clenching tight around him. Ilya followed a half a moment later, buried deep, forehead pressed to Shane's, whispering against his throat, "I love you, I love you, I love you," like a prayer with every pulse.

After, they stayed tangled, sweat cooling, hearts slowing. Ilya kissed Shane's neck softly, over and over, arms wrapped tight around him.

Shane smiled against Ilya's shoulder. "Good game, Rozanov," he murmured, voice rough with sleep and sex.

Ilya huffed a small laugh, pulling Shane's head against his shoulder and kissing his hair.

"Best one yet, Hollander."

Chapter 3

The weeks after the home opener blurred into a hot streak that had the whole city buzzing.

Ottawa couldn't lose. Ten games, eight wins, two tight overtime losses that felt like moral victories. Ilya and Shane were everywhere on the scoresheet. Points piling up, highlights looping on SportsCentre, fans wearing custom jerseys with their names mashed together. #HOLLINOV was trending. Analysts started throwing around words like "unstoppable" and "Conn Smythe favorites" way too early, but neither of them complained.

Road trips were the best part. No more separate flights or carefully timed hotel arrivals. They shared rooms openly, lounged in each other's beds on off days, and ordered room-service breakfasts that lasted until checkout.

In Boston, after a 4-1 win, they walked the Common hand-in-hand without a second thought, their scarves up against the wind, laughing about nothing.

In New York, they snuck away to a tiny Russian place Ilya loved and ate borscht while arguing over who'd scored the prettier goal the night before.

At home, the rhythm settled deeper. Mornings with coffee and brisk jogs with Anya. Messy breakfasts and sticky, syrupy kisses. Ilya stealing sips of Shane's green smoothie monstrosity just to grimace dramatically. Evenings on the couch dissecting films and hockey games. Ilya's legs thrown over Shane's lap, pausing every few minutes to kiss him slow and lazy.

They hosted the rookies for dinner once. Shane cooked pasta while Ilya held court with stories that got progressively more exaggerated. Troy and Harris came too, Harris snapping candid photos for the team Instagram that got thousands of likes overnight.

November slid into December. The weather turned sharp, first snow dusting the driveway. They put up a tree together. Small and understated, but they'd cut it down themselves and decorated it with ornaments they'd collected over the years: a tiny Stanley Cup from their first All-Star weekend together, a photo of them at their wedding shrunk down and laminated. Ilya insisted on hanging the star crooked just to annoy Shane, then fixed it when Shane pouted.

On ice, everything clicked. Shane's line was dominant. Ilya's leadership was sharper than ever. He barked at refs with that trademark smirk, protected his guys in scrums, and celebrated every goal like it was Game 7. The power play ran through them. Shane set up one-timers, Ilya crashed the net like a freight train. Bood joked in the locker room that they were "disgustingly in sync," and nobody argued.

Christmas morning came quiet. Just the two of them and Anya. Gifts were exchanged. A watch for Ilya engraved on the back with their wedding date. For Shane, a custom 3D viewfinder with pictures from their wedding day, and a ridiculous crop top that Shane definitely would not be wearing. Probably. Anya was spoiled with treats and toys and a plush dog bed they set up by the fireplace.

They spent the day in bed, snow falling outside, trading slow kisses and slower touches until the afternoon faded.

In the evening, they drove to Shane's parents' house for dinner, and Ilya did his best not to cry when he unwrapped a simple silver frame holding a photo from their wedding day. Ilya and Shane mid-laugh during the reception, arms around each other, faces bright with joy. On the bottom of the frame, engraved in small script: To Ilya – Our son, always.

He held the frame in his lap in the car the whole way home.

Boxing Day practice was light. Optional skate, most guys nursing holiday hangovers. Shane and Ilya showed up early, lacing up side by side in the empty room.

"You're quiet today," Shane said, bumping Ilya's shoulder as they stepped onto the ice.

Ilya shrugged, spraying snow with a sharp stop. "Just thinking how good this feels. All of it."

Shane smiled softly. "You said it. Best year ever."

They ran drills alone for a while. Passing, shooting, racing end to end like kids. No coaches, no pressure. Just them and the ice and the quiet hum of a season that felt like it could really be theirs.

Later, in the showers, steam rising around them, Ilya pulled Shane close under the spray.

"Keep playing like this," he murmured against Shane's wet hair, "and we're not stopping until June."

Shane tilted his head back, water streaming down his face, smiling. "Promise?"

Ilya kissed him hard. "Promise."

The streak continued. The points climbed. The city believed.
And for a little while longer, everything stayed perfect.

The Bell Centre in Montreal no longer felt welcoming for Shane. Not after the trade, not in a different sweater. Tonight, with the Centaurs in town for the second time this season, the air crackled with something sharper than usual rivalry.

Hayden Pike, Shane's old linemate and the only Montreal player who'd stayed solidly in his corner when everything came out, tapped gloves with him during warm-ups and muttered, "Good to see you, man. Stay out of the crosshairs, yeah?"

Shane laughed it off, but he felt the eyes on him from the moment he stepped onto the ice. Some of his former teammates wouldn't meet his gaze. Others stared too long. The ones who'd turned cold after the news, bitter about the "distraction," about losing their captain to Ottawa and to Ilya, made no effort to hide it. Elbows were higher. Sticks lingered after whistles. The crowd, sensing blood, booed every time Shane touched the puck.

Ilya noticed immediately. He always noticed.

From the opening face-off, Ilya's protectiveness dialed up. Quietly at first. A shoulder check here, a stick lift there, always positioning himself between Shane and the worst of it. When a Montreal defenseman "accidentally" clipped Shane's ankle in the neutral zone, Ilya was there in seconds, chest-to-chest, voice low and lethal.

"Watch the edges, yeah?"

The guy smirked. "Just playing the body, Roz."

Ilya smiled back, all teeth. "Play it smarter."

But the more Ilya shielded, the more Montreal seemed to zero in. Late in the first, a forechecker drove Shane hard into the boards from behind. Borderline. No call. Shane popped up quickly, waving off the trainer, but Ilya saw the wince he tried to hide when he flexed his right shoulder.

Second period was grittier. Cross-checks after whistles. A trip that sent Shane sprawling. Each time, Ilya responded. Shoving, chirping, once dropping gloves briefly when a Montreal forward speared Shane in the ribs along the bench. He took a roughing minor for it, but the message landed.

On the bench during the penalty kill, Ilya leaned over. "You good?"

Shane nodded tightly. "Fine. Just old friends saying hi."

Third period was tied 3-3, both teams ragged. Shane's shoulder throbbed every time he shot or absorbed contact, but he refused to let it show. Not here. Not in front of them.

With two minutes left in regulation, he blocked a point shot square on the meat of his upper arm, right near the shoulder. The puck ricocheted away, but Shane stayed down a beat longer than usual, breath punched out of him. He scrambled up before anyone could skate over, but Ilya saw everything. The way he rolled the joint carefully, the tight set of his mouth. Ilya's stomach dropped.

Regulation ended in a tie. Overtime. Three-on-three. Wide open ice.

Shane's line started. He carried the puck over the blue line, shoulder screaming, but the old muscle memory took over. He drew two defenders, then slid a perfect backhand saucer pass across to Ilya streaking down the far wing. Ilya one-timed it top corner. Lamp lit.

The Centaurs' bench erupted. The Montreal crowd fell silent. On ice, the team swarmed them. Ilya reached Shane first, pulling him into a hard hug, helmet to helmet.

"You fucking beauty," Ilya said, voice rough.

Shane laughed, but it came out strained. Ilya's hand tightened on Shane's arm, careful now, feeling the tension there. Shane's eyes were bright with adrenaline and something else. Pain.

Exhaustion. The weight of playing in a building that used to be home and now felt like enemy territory.

In the locker room, the celebration was loud. Sticks banging lockers, music thumping, Bood leading a terrible rendition of some victory chant. Reporters crowded around Ilya and Shane, asking about the chemistry, the overtime winner, the “statement win” against Shane’s old team.

Shane answered smoothly, smiling for the cameras, but Ilya watched him closely. The way he kept his right arm slightly bent, the way he shifted his position when he thought no one was looking. The vibe was off, quiet under the noise, like he was holding himself together with tape and willpower.

Ilya cut the celebration short with a charming, captainly deflection. “Long season, boys. Plenty more wins coming.”

As soon as the media cleared, Ilya slung his arm carefully around Shane’s shoulders. “Let’s get out of here.”

Shane nodded, relief flickering in his eyes. “Yeah. Take me home.”

They changed quickly, said quick goodbyes to the guys. In the quiet of the parking lot, Ilya opened the passenger door for Shane without thinking. Shane slid in, rolling his shoulder once the door shut, face tightening.

Ilya got behind the wheel, started the engine, and reached over to lace their fingers together.

“You did it,” he said quietly. “Shut them all up.”

Shane huffed a small laugh, leaning his head back against the seat. “Felt good for about ten seconds.”

Ilya squeezed his hand. “We’ll get ice on it when we’re back at the hotel. And then bed.”

Shane turned to look at him, eyes soft despite the pain. “Just want to be alone with you.”

Ilya brought Shane’s knuckles to his lips, kissing them once.

The hotel room door clicked shut behind them, sealing out the noise and light of the corridor. Shane dropped his bag by the entry table and rolled his neck slowly, trying not to move the right arm too much. Ilya watched him for a second, then crossed the room in three strides.

“Come here,” he said softly, reaching for the hem of Shane’s suit jacket. “Let me.”

Shane lifted his arms just enough for Ilya to ease the jacket off, careful not to jar the shoulder. The dress shirt came next, buttons undone one by one, Ilya’s fingers steady and deliberate. When the fabric slid away, the bruise was already blooming. A dark, angry purple spreading

across the top of Shane's shoulder and down toward his collarbone, the clear outline of a blocker's edge stamped into his skin.

Ilya's jaw tightened. "Fuck."

"It's fine," Shane said automatically, voice low. "Just bruising."

Ilya didn't argue. He guided Shane to the couch instead, pressing him down gently. "Sit. Don't move."

He disappeared into the kitchenette, returning with a ginger ale cracked open and a bag of hotel ice wrapped in a towel. Shane took the drink with his good hand, sipping slowly while Ilya settled beside him and carefully laid the ice pack over the bruise. Shane hissed at the cold, then relaxed into it.

Ilya shifted, pulling Shane down until his head rested in Ilya's lap. Long fingers threaded into Shane's hair, stroking slowly, rhythmically. The room was quiet except for the low hum of the air conditioner and the occasional clink of ice shifting.

For a while neither spoke. Ilya kept up the gentle motion, nails scraping lightly against Shane's scalp the way he knew melted him.

"You were incredible tonight," Ilya said finally, voice soft. "That pass in OT... perfect."

Shane hummed, eyes half-closed. "You finished it."

"We finished it." Ilya's thumb traced the shell of Shane's ear. "But something else is eating you. Not just the shoulder."

Shane was quiet long enough that Ilya thought he wouldn't answer.

"It's stupid," he said at last.

"Tell me anyway."

Shane exhaled. "Just... being back there. The way they looked at me. Like I betrayed them or something. Like I'm the enemy now." He paused. "I know it's hockey. I know it doesn't matter. But it still... got in my head."

Ilya's fingers stilled for a moment, then resumed. "They're idiots. You left for something better. For us. For this." He tugged lightly at a strand of hair. "They're jealous because they know it."

Shane didn't reply, but some of the tension eased from his face.

After a while, Ilya gently moved the ice pack. "Come on. Hot shower. Loosen it up."

Shane let Ilya pull him to his feet and lead him to the bathroom. The water came on steaming almost instantly. They stripped the rest of the way in silence, stepping under the spray together.

Ilya moved behind him, hands careful as he poured body wash into his palms and began to knead Shane's good shoulder first, working down the arm, then switching to light, circular pressure around the bruise. Shane braced one hand on the tile, head dropping forward, letting the heat and Ilya's touch unravel him.

Slowly, deliberately, Ilya's hands drifted down Shane's spine, over his hips, forward. He turned Shane to face him, water cascading over both of them, and sank to his knees without a word. Shane's breath caught.

Ilya looked up, eyes dark, water spiking his lashes. He pressed open-mouthed kisses along Shane's hipbones, down the V of muscle, everywhere except where Shane wanted him most. Teasing, reverent. When he finally took Shane into his mouth, it was slow and deep, one hand braced on Shane's thigh, the other stroking in perfect rhythm.

Shane's head fell back against the tile, a low groan echoing in the steam. Ilya took his time. Swirling tongue, gentle suction, pulling back to lick long stripes before sinking down again. Worshipful. Unhurried. Like he was trying to pour every reassurance into the act.

It didn't take long. Shane's hips stuttered, fingers tightening in Ilya's wet hair as he came hard down Ilya's throat with a broken sound. Ilya swallowed, easing him through it until Shane sagged, boneless.

Shane reached for him immediately, but Ilya caught his wrists gently and stood, pressing him back against the wall.

"Not tonight," Ilya murmured, kissing him soft and slow. "Tonight I take care of you."

He washed Shane's hair after, rinsed them both clean, towed him dry with the same careful hands. In bed, lights off, Ilya pulled Shane in close, chest to back, arm draped protectively over Shane's waist, avoiding the sore side.

Shane's breathing was already slowing, exhaustion pulling him under.

Ilya pressed his lips to the nape of Shane's neck.

"You're not the enemy," he whispered into the dark. "You're mine. And I'm yours. That's all that matters."

Another kiss, softer. "Sleep, moya lyubov. I've got you."

Chapter 4

Morning in the hotel room came too soon. Shane was up first, moving carefully but deliberately, rolling the shoulder in slow circles under the hot shower spray, testing it as he dressed. By the time Ilya stirred, Shane was lacing his sneakers with his usual focus, face unreadable.

“How is it?” Ilya asked, voice rough from sleep.

Shane shrugged with the good arm. “Stiff. Bruised. Nothing new.” He met Ilya’s eyes in the mirror, steady. “I’m good, Ilya.”

Ilya searched his face for the lie and didn’t find it. Or at least, didn’t find one Shane was willing to admit. He nodded once, swallowing the worry. If Shane said he was fine, he was fine. For now.

The flight home was quiet. Media clips buzzed on their phones the whole way. Talking heads calling the Centaurs “Cup locks,” highlighting the husband duo’s point streak, predicting a deep playoff run. Ottawa was first in the division. But fatigue flickered underneath it all. Guys nursing small aches, the schedule grinding, but no one said it out loud. Not yet.

Three weeks later, one shift changed everything.

It was a mid-February divisional game against Toronto. Chippy from the drop, both teams clawing for positioning with the trade deadline looming. The score was tied 2-2 late in the second, Centaurs on the penalty kill.

Shane was out there killing minutes, as always. A Toronto defenseman wound up at the point and hit a rocket of a clapper, aiming for the top corner. Shane read it, slid across, and took it flush on the right shoulder. No blocker.

The crack echoed through the arena.

Shane crumpled instantly, curling into himself on the ice, one arm clutched tight to his side. A raw sound tore out of him, half gasp and half cry, that cut straight through the crowd noise.

Ilya was on the far wing, but he was there in seconds. Gloves off, dropped without thought, body hovering over Shane like a shield as Toronto players skated up. Refs swarmed, whistles shrilling, waving everyone back. Ilya didn’t move, crouched low, hand gentle on Shane’s neck even as his eyes blazed up at anyone who came close.

“I’ve got you,” he said, low and fierce. “Breathe. Just breathe.”

Shane’s face was white, jaw clenched so hard it trembled. He nodded once, barely, but couldn’t uncurl.

The trainer rushed out. After an eternity on the ice, Shane got to his feet, arm hanging limp, supported by the trainer and Ilya. The crowd gave him a standing ovation as he skated off, but there was no hiding it. Every shift of weight sent pain flashing across his face.

In the room, initial exams were grim. Shoulder separated, possible labrum damage. Shane sat stone-faced on the table while they taped and slung it. Ilya hovered nearby, fists clenched, until the team doctor pulled him aside.

“CT in the morning. But it’s weeks, Ilya. Minimum.”

Ilya just nodded.

Back on the ice, something snapped in him.

The Centaurs won 5-2. Ilya scored twice. Vicious, punishing goals. He hit everything that moved in blue. The bench fed off it. Toronto wilted. When the buzzer sounded, Ilya didn’t celebrate. He headed straight down the tunnel.

By the time he reached the quiet room, Shane was dressed awkwardly in street clothes, arm in a sling, waiting for the car. Ilya didn’t ask how bad. He just pulled him into a careful one-armed hug.

“Let’s go home.”

The CT scan the next morning confirmed it. Grade 3 AC separation, labrum tear. Four to six weeks out. Possible mid-March return if rehab went perfectly. Playoffs still in reach, but no guarantees.

They flew home that night, with two days off before the next game. The house felt too quiet when they walked in. Anya was at Shane’s parents’, as she always was when they were away for games.

Ilya took care of everything without discussion. He carried in their bags, adjusted Shane’s sling, propped pillows on the couch. He made tea Shane didn’t drink, ordered the Thai place Shane liked, kept the TV low on highlights neither watched. Shane sat stiffly, staring at nothing, frustration radiating off him in waves.

“I should’ve blocked it with my stick,” he said finally, voice flat. “Stupid play.”

Ilya sat beside him, careful not to jostle. “You made the play that kept it tied. We won because of it.”

Shane’s mouth twisted. “Yeah. And now I’m out a month. Maybe more.”

Silence stretched.

Ilya wanted to say a hundred things. *You scared me. Rest it properly. Don’t rush. I can’t watch you in pain like that again.* But he knew Shane. Knew babying would only make it worse.

So he settled on, “You’ll come back stronger. You always do.”

Shane huffed, no humor in it. “Four to six weeks, Ilya. That’s half the remaining season. Playoffs start and I’m maybe just getting my legs back.”

Ilya reached over, threading their fingers together on Shane’s good side. Shane squeezed once, hard, then let go to adjust the sling with a wince.

“I hate this.”

“I know.”

Another beat.

“I hate that you had to see it,” Shane added quietly.

Ilya’s chest tightened. He leaned in, pressing his forehead to Shane’s good shoulder.

“I hate that it happened. But I’m here. Whatever you need.”

Shane didn’t answer, but he leaned into the touch, just slightly. Tension simmered under the surface. Shane’s frustration at his own body, Ilya’s worry he kept leashed tight. The season stretched ahead, suddenly uncertain.

The weeks after the injury settled into a rhythm that looked steady on the surface but felt like walking on thinning ice.

Shane’s days revolved around rehab. Mornings in the team facility with the physio, afternoons in the home gym doing band work and single-arm drills until his good shoulder ached in sympathy. He watched every game from the press box, notebook in hand, scribbling notes he texted to the coaches like he could still contribute.

The headlines were relentless.

“Can Ottawa Survive Without Hollander?”

“Rozanov Carrying the Load—But For How Long?”

“Centaur Power Play Struggling in Hollander’s Absence”

Shane told himself he ignored them. He didn’t.

At home, the air grew thick with things unsaid. Ilya came in later and later. Extra ice time and media obligations. He still led the room with that sharp grin, still barked at rookies and charmed reporters, but Shane saw the cracks. The way he rubbed his eyes as if pushing away a headache, the extra minutes in the cold tub, the quiet when they sat on the couch and the TV droned unheard.

Shane tried to reach him. One night after a shootout loss, Shane waited until Ilya had showered and slid into bed beside him.

“You logged twenty-nine minutes tonight,” Shane said quietly. “That’s too much.”

Ilya rolled onto his back, staring at the ceiling. “We needed it.”

“You’re exhausted.”

“I’m captain.” Flat. Final.

Shane let it drop.

It built like that. Small moments, small deflections, until a Thursday night after a flat 3-2 loss in Philadelphia.

Ilya came through the door like a storm contained, keys hitting the counter hard enough to rattle. Shane was on the couch, shoulder iced out of habit, game film paused on the screen. Anya, at his feet, rose to greet Ilya at the door.

“You can’t keep doing this,” Shane said before Ilya could speak. “Thirty-two minutes. Again.”

Ilya poured water, grip tight on the glass. “We’re fighting for points.”

“You’re fighting alone.” Shane stood, voice rising. “You shut me out. You shut everyone out. I’m right here, Ilya, and you won’t let me in.”

Ilya’s shoulders stiffened. “You’re hurt. You don’t need my shit on top of it.”

“That’s not your call.” Shane stepped closer. “I’m your husband. Let me carry some of it.”

Ilya set the glass down carefully. “You’re pushing rehab too hard. I see you wincing after every rep. You want back so bad you’ll risk tearing it again. And then what? We’re fucked.”

“Because sitting here watching you kill yourself is better?” Shane’s voice cracked. “I read the articles. I know what they’re saying. And you’re burning out trying to prove we can still win.”

Ilya flinched. “It’s hockey.”

“It’s *us*. ”

Silence stretched, heavy.

Ilya turned away, rubbing a hand over his face. “I’m handling it.”

“You’re not.”

Two nights later, it exploded on the ice.

Home game against Boston. Tight, physical. A Boston winger caught Ilya near the bench after a whistle and leaned in, voice carrying.

“Tell your husband the press box seats suit him.”

Ilya snapped. Gloves hit the ice. Fists flew. He landed two solid shots before the linesmen hauled him off. Five for fighting. Game misconduct. The crowd roared his name like he'd scored a hat trick.

Ottawa won anyway, 4-3 in overtime, but Ilya watched the rest from the locker room, knuckles bleeding, chest heaving with something more than exertion.

When he got home, the house was dim. Shane sat on the couch, lights low, waiting.

Ilya stopped in the doorway, bag still over his shoulder, looking suddenly younger. Hair messy, eyes shadowed.

Shane didn't speak. Just opened his good arm.

Ilya dropped the bag. Crossed the room. Sank down beside him and let Shane pull him in until his head rested against Shane's chest. They stayed like that a long time.

Finally, Ilya spoke, voice muffled against Shane's shirt. "I'm scared."

Shane's hand stilled in Ilya's hair. "Of what?"

"That we won't make it." Ilya's words came slow, like pulling teeth. "Playoffs. Cup. All of it. Without you, we're... good. But not great. And everyone knows it."

Shane stayed quiet, letting him talk.

"I push because if I don't, we fall. And then they're right. That I'm not..." He swallowed. "That I'm not what the team needs. That I'm not enough."

Shane's heart twisted. "Ilya—"

"Wait." Ilya pulled back just enough to meet his eyes. The cocky mask was gone. Just raw, aching honesty. "It's not just hockey. It's... everything. You gave up Montreal for this. And what if I can't give you what you want? What if we don't win it? What if I can't make this worth it for you?"

His voice cracked on the last word. Shane cupped Ilya's face with both hands now, careful with the healing shoulder, but firm.

"Listen to me." Quiet. Steady. "I didn't leave Montreal for a Cup. I left for you. For waking up next to you. The Cup is a bonus. You are the thing I want."

Ilya's eyes glistened. He tried for a smirk. It wobbled and failed.

"I'm scared I'm not enough," he whispered again, smaller this time.

"You're everything," Shane said fiercely. "You always have been."

Ilya leaned in, forehead to forehead, breath shaking. They moved to the bedroom slowly. No rush, no urgency. Lights stayed low. Clothes came off piece by piece, hands gentle, reverent.

Ilya kissed the scar on Shane's shoulder, the fading bruise, like apologizing to his body for the pain.

In bed, face to face, Ilya traced Shane's features with trembling fingers. Cheekbone, jaw, lips.

"I love you," he said, voice rough. "So much I don't know what to do with it sometimes."

Shane pulled him closer. "I know. Show me."

Ilya slid inside him slow, deep, eyes never leaving Shane's. Long, rolling strokes. Deliberate and grounding. Every thrust a promise. Hands intertwined beside Shane's head, breaths mingling, quiet gasps the only sounds.

When they came, it was together. Soft and shattering, with Ilya buried deep and whispering Shane's name like a prayer against his throat.

After, Ilya held him tight, nose in Shane's hair, arms wrapped like anchors.

"We're enough," Shane murmured into the dark. "Just like this."

Ilya's voice was barely audible. "Yeah. Just like this."

The fault lines didn't vanish, but they stopped spreading, and for tonight, it was enough.

Chapter 5

Conference Finals, Game 6. Ottawa down 3-2 in the series to Tampa Bay.

Elimination game on home ice.

Shane had been cleared two days earlier. Six weeks to the day from the injury. The shoulder held in practice, strength tests maxed, but everyone knew the risk. One bad hit, one awkward fall, and it could tear again. He dressed anyway.

The locker room before the game was taut, electric. Guys taped sticks in silence, eyes hard. Some paced. Some sat wide-eyed. Ilya stood in the center, captain's presence filling the space, but even he couldn't quite cut the tension.

Shane sat at his stall, lacing skates with deliberate focus. When he stood to pull on his jersey, the room quieted further. He hadn't played in fifty-one days. Ilya caught his eye across the circle, gave a small nod. We've got this.

The game was brutal from the drop. Fast, heavy, and playoff desperate. Tampa smelled blood.

Shane started on the second line, minutes managed. First shift he stripped a puck in the neutral zone, drove the net, took a hit but stayed up. The crowd roared his name like they'd been saving it for weeks. Second shift he set up a scoring chance that rang iron.

Mid-second period, disaster. Tampa forechecked hard. Shane battled along the boards, shoulder to shoulder with their biggest defenseman. The guy twisted at the last second, driving Shane awkwardly into the glass. Pain lanced through the joint, sharp and familiar. Shane crumpled to his knees, arm clutched tight, breath gone.

The whistle blew. Ilya was there before the trainer, kneeling, face fierce.

"How bad?"

Shane gritted his teeth, testing it. Not separated. Not torn. But hot and angry.

"Enough to feel it," he admitted. "But I'm not coming out."

Ilya searched his face, saw the steel there, and nodded once. He helped Shane up, shielded him back to the bench while the crowd chanted his name louder.

In the room between periods, the trainer taped it heavily, shot him with Toradol. Coach wanted to sit him the rest of the way. Shane refused.

Ilya didn't argue. Instead, he gathered the room. Everyone circled up. Sweaty, bruised, staring elimination down.

Ilya's voice cut through the quiet, low and lethal at first.

"We are not losing tonight."

Heads lifted.

“Not in this building. Not after everything.” His eyes swept the room, landing on Shane last. “We’ve clawed through worse. We’ve got guys playing through shit that would bench anyone else. And we’ve got each other.”

He stepped into the center, fire building.

“Tampa thinks they’ve got us. They think one hit and we fold. Fuck that.” His accent thickened with intensity. “We play smarter. We play meaner. We cover for each other. Every shift, every battle. We take it from them.”

Someone slammed a stick on the floor. Others joined. Thump, thump, thump.

Ilya’s voice rose. “This is our fucking ice. Our fucking season. Our fucking year. And we’re not giving it away. Not tonight. Not ever.”

He looked straight at Shane again.

“We finish this together.”

The room erupted. Sticks banging, voices roaring. They filed out like a storm.

Third period. Ottawa adapted. Lines shortened. Barrett took heavier defensive minutes. Wingers collapsed low to protect Shane’s side. Ilya played possessed. Thirty seconds on, thirty off, every shift a statement. They tied it with five minutes left on a seeing-eye wrister from the point.

Regulation ended 3-3.

Overtime.

Four-on-four. Wide open.

Shane’s line started. Coach’s trust, or a gamble.

First minute he felt the shoulder loosen under the tape, pain dulled to a roar in the background. Adrenaline carried him.

Ilya jumped on with him halfway through the shift. Double shift, lungs burning, eyes wild.

They worked it down low. Ilya behind the net, drawing two killers. Shane drifted to the slot, quiet, waiting. Ilya felt him there like always.

No-look pass. Saucer over a stick, right on the tape. Shane one-timed it. Top corner. Lamp lit. The arena detonated.

Shane’s arms shot up, then dropped as the team mobbed him. Pain flared, but he didn’t care. Ilya reached him first, helmets crashing, arms tight around him, lifting him off the ice despite

the risk.

“You fucking did it,” Ilya laughed into his neck, voice thick.

“We did it,” Shane corrected, grinning through the ache.

The bench emptied. The crowd chanted their names. Hollander, Rozanov, over and over, until it blurred into one.

On the handshake line, Tampa players nodded respect. One tapped Shane’s good shoulder.

“Hell of a goal, man.”

Back in the room there was chaos. Champagne sprayed, music blared, guys howled into phones to families.

Ilya pulled Shane aside in the corner, away from the worst of the spray, hands gentle on his face.

“How is it?” Quiet now.

Shane flexed it, winced. “Going to hurt tomorrow. But worth it.”

Ilya’s eyes were bright with pride, relief, and love all mixed. “You scared the shit out of me again.”

“Sorry.” Shane smiled softly. “Had to finish it with you.”

Ilya leaned in, forehead to forehead. “Unbreakable, yeah?”

“Yeah,” Shane whispered. “Unbreakable.”

One more game to force. Then the Cup Final waited. But tonight, their game was still alive.

The house was quiet when they got home, the high of the overtime win still humming under their skin like a live wire.

The bedroom light was low, just the lamp on Ilya’s side casting a warm glow over the bed. Shane sat on the edge, rolling the shoulder carefully, testing it. The pain was there, a dull throb under the tape, but manageable. Worth it. Ilya watched him from the doorway, eyes dark and intense.

“You’re sure it’s okay?” he asked, voice low.

Shane met his gaze, steady. “It’s fine. C’mere. I want you.”

Ilya crossed the room slowly, like he was giving Shane one last out. When Shane didn’t take it, Ilya leaned down and kissed him deep, claiming, tasting the victory still on his tongue.

Clothes came off slow this time. Ilya's hands were careful around Shane's shoulder, but everywhere else they were hungry. Tracing abs, hips, thighs.

He reached into the nightstand drawer, pulled out the lube and the dildo they kept there. Realistic, thick, the one Shane liked best because it filled him just right. Ilya's eyes flicked to Shane's, a silent question.

Shane nodded, breath already coming faster.

Ilya slicked it generously. He guided Shane back against the pillows, propping him up just enough to take the weight off the shoulder.

"Like this," Ilya murmured, working Shane open with fingers and tongue before positioning the toy at Shane's entrance, pressing slow and steady until Shane took the head with a soft gasp. Inch by inch, Ilya fed it in, watching Shane's face the whole time. Eyes fluttering, lips parted.

When it was seated deep, Ilya shifted down the bed, settling between Shane's spread thighs.

"Move for me," he said, voice rough. "Fuck yourself on it. Slow."

Shane's good hand reached back and gripped the headboard, angling himself, hips rolling experimentally. The stretch burned perfect, dragging over that spot inside him on every push. He groaned, head falling back. Ilya waited until Shane found a rhythm. Slow, deep thrusts of his own making, then leaned in.

His mouth closed over Shane's cock in one smooth motion, hot and wet and perfect. Shane cried out, hips stuttering. Ilya hummed around him, taking him all the way, tongue swirling on the underside. One hand braced on Shane's hip, guiding the pace without controlling it. Letting Shane set it, letting him chase what he needed.

Shane's movements grew more desperate. Hips rocking down onto the toy, up into Ilya's mouth, breath coming in ragged pants. The room filled with wet sounds. The slick slide of the dildo, Ilya's mouth working him relentlessly, Shane's broken moans.

"God, Ilya—fuck—"

Ilya pulled off just long enough to growl, "Let me taste you," before sinking down again, cheeks hollowed, throat relaxed.

Shane lost it.

He came hard down Ilya's throat, body arching off the bed, good hand fisted in the sheets, the dildo buried deep, hips circling as he rode out every pulse. Ilya swallowed around him, sucking him through it until Shane collapsed, trembling.

Ilya eased the toy out gently, setting it aside, then crawled up the bed and settled against Shane's chest, careful of the shoulder, lips brushing his temple, his cheek, his mouth.

"You're incredible," Ilya whispered, voice wrecked. "Every fucking time."

Shane was boneless, chest heaving, but his eyes were clear, focused. He reached for Ilya with his good hand, tugging weakly.

“My turn.”

Ilya pressed a hot kiss to Shane’s mouth, and then his neck. “If you insist,” he murmured at the hungry look in Shane’s eyes.

Ilya shifted up the bed, thighs landing on either side of Shane’s shoulders. Shane reached up, grabbing at Ilya’s ass and pulling his hips closer. He took Ilya in slowly at first. Tongue tracing the vein underneath, savoring the weight, the taste of pre-cum sharp on his tongue. Then deeper, cheeks hollowed, hand wrapping around the base to stroke what his mouth couldn’t reach.

Ilya groaned, head tipping back, fingers threading gently into Shane’s hair, anchoring. Shane worked him with single-minded focus. Long, wet pulls, tongue swirling around the head, hand twisting in perfect rhythm. He hummed low, knowing exactly what it did to Ilya.

It didn’t take long. Ilya’s thighs tensed around Shane’s shoulders, his breath ragged.

“Shane—”

Shane took him deeper, swallowing around the head. Ilya collapsed forward, one hand supporting himself on the headboard, the other snaking down to tangle in Shane’s hair, and Ilya came with a broken curse. Hot pulses down Shane’s throat. Shane swallowed greedily, until Ilya shuddered and pulled back gently.

They collapsed together. Ilya gathering Shane carefully against his chest, avoiding the shoulder, lips brushing sweat-damp hair.

“Fuck, Hollander,” Ilya breathed, voice wrecked. “You’ll kill me one day.”

Shane laughed softly, nuzzling into Ilya’s neck, tasting salt and skin.

Ilya’s arms tightened. “I love you.”

“I love you, too,” Shane whispered. “So fucking much.”

One more game to the Final. And they were unbreakable.

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

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

Stanley Cup Final, Game 7. Ottawa vs. Vegas. Tied 3-3 in the series.

The locker room before puck drop was a pressure cooker. The air thick with sweat, tape, and unspoken stakes. Guys sat hunched on benches, eyes fixed on nothing, the weight of the season pressing down. One game. Winner takes everything.

Ilya stood in the center, the captain's "C" a beacon on his jersey. He didn't pace. Didn't fidget. Just waited until every head lifted, every breath synced to his.

Then he spoke, his voice low at first, but building like a storm.

"We've been here before."

The room stilled.

"Not this exact ice. Not this Cup. But we've been in the dark places. Had the doubts."

His eyes swept the circle, landing on faces he'd fought and bled with. They landed on Shane, quiet intensity in his gaze.

"And every time, we came back stronger. Because we don't quit. We don't break."

He stepped forward, voice rising, accent sharp as a blade. "Vegas thinks they have us figured out. They think they can outhit us, outskate us, outlast us. But they don't know what we know. This is our *fucking* year."

"We've fought for every inch this year. Injuries. Losses. Bullshit headlines. And we're still here. One period at a time. One shift. We take it tonight. We own this building. We own this series. And when that buzzer goes, we lift that Cup."

Sticks started tapping. Ilya's eyes burned.

"For the guys beside you. For the city out there screaming our names. For everything we've given. Let's go fucking win it!"

The room exploded with roars, shoulder checks, and helmets knocking. They filed out to the tunnel, energy crackling like lightning.

In the dim light before the ice, Ilya caught Shane's arm. They didn't do this. They kept it professional, boundaries sharp in the arena. But tonight was different. The stakes felt too high, the moment too raw.

Ilya pulled him close and planted a quick, fierce kiss on his lips. He pulled back with a cocky grin.

“For luck.”

Shane’s eyes flashed, lips curving. “We don’t need luck, Rozanov. We’ve got skill.”

Ilya laughed, low and electric. He nodded, eyes burning into Shane’s. “Let’s show them.”

The doors opened. The sound in the arena hit like a wave. 20,000 voices, lights blinding, anthems thundering. Vegas waited, faces set like stone.

Puck drop. Ilya versus Vegas’s captain, a grizzled vet with a smirk that said he’d seen it all. Ilya leaned in as they crouched.

“Ready to go home empty-handed, old man?”

The captain snorted. “Talk after we lift it, Rozanov.”

The puck hit the ice. Ilya won it clean. He snapped it back to Barrett, who fired it up the boards. The game ignited. It was everything a Final should be. End-to-end fury, bodies flying, saves that defied physics.

Vegas struck first, a tip-in off a point shot. Ottawa answered with a snipe from the slot, Shane threading a perfect pass to Ilya for the one-timer. Tied 1-1 after one.

The second period was brutal. Checks rattled glass. Sticks slashed high. Ilya chirped relentlessly. “That all you got? My grandma skates faster.” Vegas pushed back, but Ottawa held.

Emotions boiled under every whistle. This was it, the pinnacle, the dream every kid with skates chased. Hearts pounded with the what-ifs: One mistake, and it’s over. One goal, and immortality.

In the middle of the second period, Ilya carried into the zone and faked out a defenseman clean. The Vegas winger came flying. It was a clean hit, but hard. His shoulder driving into Ilya’s chest. Ilya went down, sliding into the boards with a thud that echoed.

The whistle blew.

Ilya popped up fast, shaking it off, jaw set, but Shane was already there. He inserted himself between Ilya and the winger, gloves off, shoving hard.

“Touch him again and you’re done.”

The winger swung back. Fists flew. A quick, ugly exchange before refs hauled them apart. They received matching minors. Two for roughing on the winger, two for Shane.

Shane skated to the box, blood trickling from a split lip, but he caught Ilya’s eye and grinned wide, winked once.

Something ignited in Ilya. That grin, fierce and protective, lit a fire under him. He skated to the bench, eyes blazing. The penalty kill held. When Shane emerged from the box, the crowd chanted his name like thunder.

By the third period, there was desperation on both sides. Vegas tied it at 2-2 on a power play. Ottawa pushed hard. Shots peppering the goalie, rebounds fought for tooth and nail.

With 4:12 left, Barrett buried a rebound. 3-2 Ottawa. The building shook.

Vegas pulled their goalie, empty net desperate. Ilya won a draw in their zone and flipped it high from center. The puck sailing, sailing, and then sliding home.

4-2.

The buzzer unleashed pandemonium.

Teammates mobbed the goalie. Sticks clattered. Confetti exploded. The roar wasn't sound anymore. It was pressure, physical, wrapping around them like the tightest embrace.

Shane skated through the chaos, eyes scanning until he found Ilya. They collided hard. Pads crashing, arms locking, foreheads pressed together through helmets.

Ilya's voice cracked when he said, "we did it."

Shane couldn't speak. He just held on, feeling Ilya's chest heave against his, tears already hot on his own cheeks.

The handshake line passed in a blur with respectful nods and quiet "good series" from men who'd left everything on the ice.

Then the Cup. The commissioner handed it to Ilya. The weight hit him like a memory. Cold silver, engraved with the names of legends.

The chant started immediately. "Ro-za-nov! Ro-za-nov!"

Ilya didn't lift it. He turned, eyes cutting through the swirl of confetti and teammates, finding Shane instantly. Tears tracked openly down his face now, no hiding them, no need. He skated straight to him and held the Cup out.

Shane's hands shook as he reached for it. Ilya steadied him, fingers overlapping on the base.

"Together," Ilya said, voice thick, barely audible over the roar. "Always together."

Shane's throat closed. He looked at Ilya. Looked at the man who'd seen him at his lowest, press-box helpless, doubting his own worth. And in Ilya's gaze he saw only fierce, unbreakable love staring back.

They raised it overhead. The arena lost its mind. Cameras flashed. The moment frozen forever. Two husbands hoisting the Cup, tears flowing freely.

They skated the lap together, Ilya's hand never leaving Shane's back. Guiding him and grounding him. Every cheer felt personal. Every flashbulb a promise kept.

Later, champagne soaked everything. Family rushed the ice. Troy hoisted it next, then Bood, voices hoarse from screaming.

But the image that endured, the one etched into highlight reels and hearts, was Ilya handing the Cup to Shane, eyes shining, like saying Everything I have is yours.

EPILOGUE

Late August

The windows of the cottage were open to a warm breeze and the sound of cicadas. Shane sat on the end of the dock at dusk, bare feet trailing in the water, the faint silver scar on his shoulder catching in the dying light. Fully healed now. Stronger, the physio said, than before the tear.

Ilya joined him quietly, two bottles of beer sweating in his hand. He settled close, thigh to thigh and shoulder to shoulder, like personal space had stopped existing somewhere between the injury and the Cup. They drank in silence a while, watching the sky bleed from orange to indigo.

Shane spoke first, voice low. "I still catch myself flexing the shoulder sometimes. Like checking it's really fixed."

Ilya's fingers found his, lacing tight. "I still check your passes in warm-ups. Make sure you're not favoring it."

Shane huffed a soft laugh. "We're ridiculous."

"Little bit."

There was a pause, comfortable. Shane took another sip.

"I thought those 6 weeks, watching every game from the box, feeling like I was holding you back, were going to change me."

Ilya nodded slowly. "Was hard. Seeing you up there. I hated that I couldn't fix it faster."

Shane turned to him. "Looking back... it maybe did change things. Maybe in a good way."

Ilya's thumb traced lazy circles on Shane's hand. "How?"

"We stopped assuming we could do it all alone. We saw each other at our weakest and came out stronger on the other side." Shane's voice softened. "We learned where the cracks were... and we filled them with something stronger."

Ilya's eyes warmed. "Like kintsugi."

Shane smiled. "Exactly. The gold in the repair."

Ilya leaned in until their foreheads touched. “I used to think the Cup would be the thing that proved everything. That if we won it together, no one could ever say we weren’t enough.”

“And now?”

“Now I know we were enough before the first puck dropped this season.” Ilya’s voice was quiet, certain. “The Cup’s incredible. But it’s just metal. This...” he squeezed Shane’s hand, gestured to the quiet lake, the life stretched out in front of them “this is what matters.”

Shane’s throat tightened. He brushed his lips against Ilya’s temple. “Best year ever.”

Ilya’s answering smile was real and bright. “Best life ever.”

Stars pricked the sky one by one as they sat in the growing darkness, heads resting together, breath syncing without thought.

Champions.

Husbands.

Unbreakable.

Chapter End Notes

Thanks so much for reading! Hope you enjoyed it as much as I enjoyed writing it!
Happy New Year!

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