

Love is kind, love's not fair

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Love is kind, love's not fair

by [kool_ranch_kunt](#)

Summary

Ilya sat straight up after falling, and he looked to his immediate left, seeing the motionless body sprawled out on the ice. It didn't register to him right away, though it should have. Then, he noticed the blood, a small pool starting to form under Shane's head. No. no no no nonononono. He glanced down at his skates, noticing a small trace of blood on the tip of his right blade. He felt like he was going to puke.

Notes

I don't really write fanfics, but I am literally obsessed with this show, so, here we are:)

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

Chapter 1: Down on Hope

The play was simple, Ilya and Marlow knew it like the back of their hands.

Shane was about five feet ahead of Ilya skating towards the goal with the puck. As much as he hated to admit it, Ilya loved the way Shane moved on the ice, stealing glances back at him while he maneuvered the puck with such ease. He knew where it was at all times even without having to look down. Ilya saw Marlow out of the corner of his eye and he knew what the plan was. Marlow sped up in order to cut in front of Shane, not to slam him, just to slow him down. Ilya knew Shane wouldn't take the chance, and would slow down slightly to not go flying into Marlow, that's when he would get the chance to catch up, and take the puck back from him. But this time was different.

Shane was looking back at Ilya as Marlow was making the move to cut him off, he turned his head back just in time to see him coming at him from his right, but at that point it was too late. He tried to slow himself, he didn't want to take this hit, but his blade caught an edge on the ice. Marlow had barely made it past him before he went down face first, right in Ilya's path. Shane lifted his head up and turned it to the right, noticing Ilya for a split second barreling straight towards him, and he knew this was not going to end well.

Ilya's face dropped as he realized there wasn't enough time for him to stop, or swerve around Shane's body, he caught a glimpse of Shane's eyes meeting his, before he felt himself crashing into him, sending him rolling over Shane, and straight down to the ice.

Ilya sat straight up after falling, and he looked to his immediate left, seeing the motionless body sprawled out on the ice. It didn't register to him right away, though it should have. Then, he noticed the blood, a small pool starting to form under Shane's head. *No. no no no nonononono*. He glanced down at his skates, noticing a small trace of blood on the tip of his right blade. He felt like he was going to puke.

It was mere seconds before the medics were swarming them, but he could have sworn that he was staring at Shane's limp body for hours before anyone came close. Shane's arms were unmoving in front of his head like he had tried to brace himself, but it didn't matter.

He couldn't stop the image of his mother, in a similar state, limp arm dangling over the bathtub, from forcing its way in from the back of his mind. Ilya thought at that moment that he was glad Shane was in uniform, with gloves on, because he was sure if he saw Shane's hands and fingers completely limp, he would have actually puked.

"Rozanov, can you stand up?" Ilya registered the medic, now standing in front of him blocking his view of Shane. He chose to ignore him and lean his head to the side to be able to see around the medic, he needed to know if Shane was okay. He saw 4 medics surrounding Shane's body, more people in the way of his eye-line. "Rozanov." the man said a little louder this time, causing Ilya to shift his attention back to the medic in front of him. "Can you stand up?"

“I-m-my blade...his head...is he okay? Fuck, tell me he's okay?” Ilya stammered. He could stand just fine, he knew he could, but his body wouldn't move. He felt paralyzed. He wasn't injured, it wasn't a bad fall, but Shane had taken most of the damage.

“I need you to stand up so we can get you off the ice” the medic stated after taking in what Ilya had said, and looking back at Shane and the other medics. “Hollander is getting help, but I need you to stand up so you are out of the way.”

By this point the medics had gotten a neck brace on Shane, slid a backboard underneath him, and were holding pressure to the gash along his right temple. If Shane had a concussion the medics weren't aware of it at the moment, all they could tell right now is that the cut was deep, and he was losing a lot of blood. Once he was strapped into the backboard they lifted him off the ice, and onto a stretcher.

The second Ilya saw them lift Shane's body up, his body unfroze and he was on his feet, skating after the stretcher that was being wheeled off the ice.

He felt a firm hand grab his arm to hold him back. “Rozanov, we need to get you off the ice and back into the training room to get you checked out.”

“No.” Ilya said sternly, as he yanked his arm away from the medic, never taking his eyes off of Shane as he rolled further and further away from him. He felt his breath hitch, like his lungs were going to collapse. What the fuck was he supposed to do?

It didn't take him long to decide. He immediately skated past the medic standing by him, and beelined it for Shane, his eyes catching on the pool of blood where Shane was laying. It didn't take him long to catch up to them, and he realized that he must look absolutely insane right now. Shane was someone he was supposed to hate, someone everyone in this building thought he hated, but right now, he knows that if anyone cared to look at him, they would immediately see through that bullshit. But he didn't care about any of that right now, he couldn't. He couldn't let the image of Shane's lifeless body be the last one he had of him, he wouldn't be able to live through that again.

“Is he okay?” Ilya said, trying not to let the panic show in his voice. He felt an arm push him back. He could hear the medics conversing with each other, but they were talking so fast he couldn't understand.

No one answered him.

“Is he okay, fucking tell me.” he *was* panicking now.

He then felt two people on either side of him, holding him back. He watched helplessly as they wheeled Shane off the ice and down a side hallway, where he could see the lights from the ambulance through the windows on the doors.

Ilya felt himself being guided off the ice, and down to the training room. “I am fine. Do not touch me.” He didn't mean to sound like an asshole, but he couldn't help it.

He was forced to sit down on the table, only then did he wonder how his legs hadn't given out on him before. His mind was racing, and the man he loved just got carted off in an ambulance for something he did.

Oh god. He did this.

He looked down again at his skates, the blood still stuck to the tip of his blade. He felt his stomach twist around itself, and then he started to gag. The trainer quickly moved to grab the trashcan and held it underneath Ilya's head as he threw up all of his stomach contents. He continued to dry heave after there was nothing left in his stomach to puke. He looked up, only then noticing that there were tears streaming down his face, and saw the trainer, Ilya could tell he was trying to see if he had a concussion or not. He was too emotionally and physically exhausted to fight, and he knew he would not be let out of here unless he complied, so he let the trainer examine him.

As soon as the trainer cleared Ilya, he moved quickly to the locker room, completely dismissing the ongoing game. He did not give two fucks about continuing to play after that. His heart was still racing as he shoved the locker room door open, with so much force it slammed against the wall, and bounced back, shutting itself. He was frantically pulling his uniform off, throwing the articles of clothing into his cubby without care. Once he got it off he fell down to the floor against the wall, unable to control his breathing, unable to control his thoughts. His body was shaking and he had no fucking clue what to do. He was scared, unbelievably scared, and angry at himself.

You did this.

The voices in his head were hounding him, all he could do was sit there with his knees tucked to his chest, and his hands over his ears, and sob.

Chapter 2: It's not your choice if you care

Chapter Summary

He sets the phone down on the ground next to him, and buries his head into his knees, trying to tell himself to calm down, to take deep breaths in and out. At that moment his phone starts to ring, he jumps at the sound of the ringtone, the ringtone he has set specifically for Shane. He picks his phone up to look at the screen, to see if he's losing his mind or not, and he sees the caller ID.

Jane.

Ilya's whole body freezes, there is no possible way that this is Shane calling him right now, but he doesn't care. He could care less who's on the other end of the line, as long as they tell him that Shane is okay.

He slides his finger across the screen to accept the call, and places the phone carefully to his ear. He hears a woman's voice on the other end of the line, he hears her clear her throat before she speaks, like she has been crying. Ilya's stomach drops, as more panic sets in.

"H-hello" the woman speaks and Ilya can tell now that she has definitely been crying, if not still.

He doesn't say anything back. He's debating if he should say anything back, he didn't think that far ahead.

Chapter Notes

it's 1am I have work at 8am but I truly do not care.

heres chapter 2:)

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

Ilya had been crying for what felt like hours. Realistically, he knew it had only been roughly 20 minutes, but his chest burned, his eyes stung, and he couldn't figure out how to use his lungs properly again. The image of Shane's bleeding body lying on the ice flashed in his mind every time he closed his eyes, and he couldn't take it anymore. He somehow found the strength to push himself onto his feet to reach the top shelf of his cubby, where he kept his phone during games.

After he managed to grab his phone, he sank back to the floor, to keep himself from passing out. His eyes were still full of tears, making it difficult for him to get his phone unlocked. His hands were shaking, he didn't know what to do, who to call, where to go. He had no way of getting any information about Shane, but even if he did, what was he supposed to say? He frantically went to the text thread he had with "Jane" the pseudo name making him start to hyperventilate for a whole different reason.

He knows the reasons for the fake names, but seeing it now makes his heart clench.

No one knows, no one can know. It's not fair.

The thought of this night possibly being the last time he will ever see Shane, and no one even knows about them, sends him spiraling even more. He begins typing, without really even thinking about what he's saying.

Lily: Please

Lily: Please be okay

Lily: Should have never happened like this

Lily: Should have never happened

Lily: Fuck

Lily: won't know how to live

Lily: won't know how to breathe

Ilya is typing more and more frantically, relying on autocorrect to fix all the mistakes his shaky fingers are making.

Lily: Be okay please

Lily: Please Shane

He sets the phone down on the ground next to him, and buries his head into his knees, trying to tell himself to calm down, to take deep breaths in and out. At that moment his phone starts to ring, he jumps at the sound of the ringtone, the ringtone he has set specifically for Shane. He picks his phone up to look at the screen, to see if he's losing his mind or not, and he sees the caller ID.

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"H-hello" the woman speaks and Ilya can tell now that she has definitely been crying, if not still.

He doesn't say anything back. He's debating if he *should* say anything back, he didn't think that far ahead.

The voice on the other end of the line speaks again, less shaky this time. "Um...Lily, I'm uh...this is Shane's mom. Yuna."

Ilya sucks in a deep shaky breath, and apologizes to Shane in his head before speaking.

"Yuna?" Ilya says, trying not to let his accent be so obvious, but immediately there is a gasp on the other end of the line followed by silence, letting him know that it was, in fact, still obvious.

"I-uh-who exactly am I speaking to?" She sounds concerned, confused, scared, all of the things a mother should be given the circumstances. It makes Ilya's heart hurt, and he feels more tears start to fall down his cheeks.

Ilya tries to collect himself slightly before he speaks again, but it's no use, and he just starts to speak, his voice a garbled mess. "I-I'm sorry, I need to know if he is okay. Please. Not supposed to be like this. Never supposed to happen. I'm sorry, I'm sorry, just tell me he is okay please." He doesn't know exactly how much of that actually made sense, his English has never been great, but it is especially bad right now.

"Oh honey" is all she says in response.

Ilya continues to sob quietly, trying his hardest not to let it show. He doesn't need to say his name, she knows who he is. "Please tell me he's okay." he says quietly, to her, to himself, he's not sure anymore.

"I'm texting you the name of the hospital he just arrived at, do you want to meet us there?"

"Yes. am on my way"

There was a brief pause between them, before Yuna spoke again.

"Just know it's not your fault Ilya." Her voice was soft as she said it, and that only made Ilya sob harder.

After ending the call Ilya leaned his head back against the wall, and tried to collect himself as much as he could. He is in no state to drive, but that's currently the least of his worries. He

stood up quickly, too quickly and felt his head spin, grabbing onto the wall to stabilize himself, as he took a few long deep breaths. Shoving aside the small feeling that he might pass out, he throws a shirt on, grabs his bag, and leaves out the back door of the locker room. The last thing he wants right now is for his coach or team to see or speak to him.

The second he pulls into a parking spot outside of Montreal General, he feels his chest start to constrict again. This is not how any of this was supposed to go, Shane's parents weren't supposed to find out like this, he just prays that Shane won't be too upset with him, but more so he prays Shane will be able to be upset, he'd rather him be upset and *alive*, than any other option.

He walks into the hospital, and does a scan of the waiting room for Shane's parents, and once he sees them standing talking to a doctor, he practically sprints to them. The three of them stare at each other for a moment, and he can see the shock on their faces. He knows they can see that he's been crying, his eyes are red and puffy, his hair is a mess, and he never showered so he probably smells like sweat. He's a fucking wreck.

Yuna manages to give him a weak smile, before turning back to the doctor.

Ilya stands beside Yuna and David listening to what the doctor is saying.

"Mr and Mrs. Hollander, your son sustained a significant injury to the right side of his head, he has a deep wound to his right temple, and imaging showed bleeding inside the brain, which we call an intracerebral hemorrhage. Because bleeding in the brain can put pressure on important brain structures, we made the decision to take him to surgery right away. The goal of the surgery is to control the bleeding, relieve pressure, and prevent further damage to the brain. Right now, the surgical team is carefully monitoring him and addressing the bleeding. At this moment, the surgery is still ongoing, and it's too early to know the full extent of the injury or exactly how his recovery will look. Head injuries can be unpredictable, and the next 24 to 72 hours will be very important. I know waiting is extremely hard, but please know that we are watching him closely and doing everything possible for him. As soon as the surgery is finished and we have more information, I will come back and talk with you in detail about how it went, what we're seeing, and what the next steps will be. If you have questions at any point, please don't hesitate to ask"

Ilya watched Yuna and David watch the doctor as he spoke. While he had no idea what a lot of these words meant, and it was too much for him to truly understand, from the looks on their faces, whatever it was couldn't be good.

After the doctor walked away they turned to look at Ilya. He could see them processing everything in their minds. After a second he hears David let out a sigh, and turn to walk Yuna over to a small, vacant waiting room. Ilya followed slowly behind them, trying not to make things more awkward or stressful, but he wanted to talk to them. He wanted to know what was happening, what he could do. He wanted to sink to his knees right here on the floor of the waiting room and sob to them about how much he loved their son, how sorry he is, how he knows they'll never be able to forgive him if Shane doesn't make it out of this. How he would never forgive himself.

Instead he sits himself slowly in a chair across from the two of them, and watches as David places his elbows to his knees, and covers his face with his hands. Ilya feels a tear escape from his eye and roll down his cheek, but he's quick to wipe it away.

This was going to be a very long night.

Chapter End Notes

roleplaying doctor in this chapter, being a nursing student is finally paying off 😊

Chapter 3: The silence ain't so kind

Chapter Summary

He heard Yuna let out a small laugh next to him, her eyes were wet with tears, yet she was also laughing. “We had an idea that Shane was maybe not...straight.” she let go of Ilya's hand to wipe away the tears on her face. That revelation made Ilya laugh, and he could feel the tension start to fall away slowly. “I just wish he would have told us, I wish he wasn't scared of the idea of us knowing” he heard her say.

“Is not you knowing that scares him, is the world. He has worked hard, and is scared he will lose it all.” He wished he could find better words to say, he wished his english was better. There's so much more that Shane is scared of, so much that goes on inside of his head, but Ilya just couldn't figure out how to say that.

Chapter Notes

this chapter was kinda hard to write, I got stuck a lot, but I hope yall like it

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

Ilya has never liked hospitals, so many things happening around him, everything completely out of his control. The smell makes him nauseous, but he forces the feeling down, knowing there is nothing left in him to puke other than stomach acid.

They weren't sitting for very long, before he could feel their eyes back on him. He knew he had to speak, but he didn't know how, he couldn't seem to form the right words to say to them. He lifted his head up to look at both David and Yuna, taking in the weight of it all. *Were there even right words to say?* He just sat there for a moment staring at them, looking at the people who brought Shane into this world, the people who raised him to be the amazing man he is. He then realized he's never told Shane how much he actually cares about him, never told anyone, he only recently was able to admit it to himself. A lump in his throat starts to form again, and his eyes start to water. He wants nothing more than to shut his eyes, and hope that he will wake up to find that all of this was a bad dream. A *very* bad dream.

Yuna was the first to speak.

She looked at Ilya and took a deep breath. “How much of that were you able to understand?” He could tell Yuna was trying to keep calm, and she was doing a far better job at it than he was.

“Not a lot. Bleeding, surgery, brain, 24 to 72 hours.” He watched the gears in her mind turn, trying to figure out how to explain what was happening in simple terms, ones he could understand.

“The cut on his head is deep, and it caused blood to pool inside his brain, which creates pressure and can lead to damage inside his brain. They took him to surgery almost immediately when he arrived.” She looked like that was the first time she truly understood what was happening as well. “They said it's too early to tell us how the surgery is going, but that they are watching him very closely.” He saw a tear fall down her cheek, and watched as David reached over and wiped it away.

“It *is* my fault” his voice was small, he remembered what Yuna had said to him earlier on the phone, but it *was* his fault. Shane wouldn't be here if it weren't for him, if he wasn't here, if none of this had happened, Shane would've never been looking back at him, distracting him from Marlow.

If you weren't here none of this would have happened. You hurt him. All you do is hurt him.

Before Ilya could fully register, Yuna stood up and walked over to him, seating herself in the chair next to him. He felt a gentle hand on his jaw, turning his head so his eyes met hers.

“Placing blame on yourself does no good, I don't want you to think of yourself like this, there was no way of knowing that any of this was going to happen.” He can see her fighting back a million questions, ones he knows he's going to have to answer eventually. “I don't want to make any assumptions, but I can see you care about him. You texted him, you answered the call, and you are here now. You have done more than what a lot of people in your position would do.”

“I-” he closes his mouth, not being able to translate his thoughts to English. “He does not deserve this, *I* do not deserve *him*.” He turned his head back down towards the floor, and felt a hand lay over his own.

“How long?” Yuna said, and the question made Ilya shift in his seat.

“I-it-we...were not. I do not know how to say it” He still feels her hand placed over his, gently applying pressure. “Rookie season.” He closed his eyes, scared to see the reactions on their faces.

At that moment David decided to enter the conversation, though Ilya knows he's been listening the whole time. “Really?” he let out a little shocked laugh, it made Ilya laugh slightly too.

“Is not...we are not together, we cannot be, it was not supposed to be like this. It was not supposed to go this far.” Ilya said with a heavy sigh. “He wanted to tell you, not about me, of course, but him. He wanted you to know, just did not know how to say it.”

He heard Yuna let out a small laugh next to him, her eyes were wet with tears, yet she was also laughing. “We had an idea that Shane was maybe not...straight.” she let go of Ilya's hand to wipe away the tears on her face. That revelation made Ilya laugh, and he could feel the

tension start to fall away slowly. "I just wish he would have told us, I wish he wasn't scared of the idea of us knowing" he heard her say.

"Is not you knowing that scares him, is the world. He has worked hard, and is scared he will lose it all." He wished he could find better words to say, he wished his english was better. There's so much more that Shane is scared of, so much that goes on inside of his head, but Ilya just couldn't figure out how to say that.

"We had no idea about you," David said. "We had no idea about 'Lily' until we saw the texts pop up on his phone. We had no idea who this mystery girl was, but those texts showed a lot. I'm glad he has you." Ilya didn't know why they were glad, *he did this*. It was his team, his play, his body that rammed into him, his skate that caused this damage. He's not sure that he'll ever be able to fully forgive himself, even if everyone else had.

"But you two are not dating?" Yuna asked with a curious tone.

Oh god. How the hell was he supposed to explain this to Shane's parents, of all people. He could feel the heat rising to his cheeks, this could not get anymore awkward. He couldn't exactly look at Shane's mother and father, and tell them that they have just been, very low commitment, no strings attached, hookup buddies since their rookie season. The thought that he had buried in the back of his mind that it was more than that for Ilya since the beginning flashed through his head, but he pushed it back down. Now was not the time for him to figure out the timeline of when he actually fell in love with Shane.

"No, not exactly. We just..." Ilya shrugged, not wanting to actually say it out loud.

"Just what?" Yuna says with an even more confused tone.

"We just... you know... I-it... it was supposed to just be fun thing. It was, in the beginning anyway. Now I am not so sure. Is like we both know there is something more, but can not bring ourselves to say so. He is very scared, he does not want anyone to know, here I am, fucking that up too." Ilya fiddles with his hands in his lap as he speaks. This was quite possibly the most embarrassing thing he's ever had to do, and he was doing it alone, without Shane.

There is a long moment of silence between the three of them, he's sure they have more to ask, but he can also tell just how exhausted they are, and he knows they can see the same for him.

Eventually David shifted to sit up straighter in his chair across from him and Yuna, and cleared his throat.

"When he gets out of surgery, whatever happens, we are going to be there for him, and we know you will be too. But we will also be there for you too. Never in my life did I expect to say that to Ilya Rozanov, but never in my life did I think I would be sitting in a waiting room, without knowing whether or not my son will make it through the night. I know my son, and I can only imagine the love he has for you, even if he has never said it, some things don't have to be. Someone this important to him, is important to us, that's just how it works, no conditions"

Ilya hasn't known love without conditions for a very long time, and he finds himself crying again, without even knowing at first. He knew Shane loved him, just as much as he knew he loved Shane, it was shown through actions more than words, but it was all the same to him. This was different, this was a type of affection he hasn't felt since he was twelve, since his mother died.

It was three hours before the doctor came back out to the waiting room, and called for the Hollanders.

Ilya had managed to fall asleep in an uncomfortable chair, his neck strained, lifting his head up as he heard the doctors call for Yuna and David. He watches both of them stand up immediately, and move quickly to where the doctor was standing. He stands up as well and makes his way over to the three of them, he won't know a lot of what the doctor says, but he wants to hear it anyway.

“Mr and Mrs Hollander, I wanted to come out to tell you the surgery is complete, and overall it went very well. We were able to stop the bleeding in his brain and relieve the pressure from the hemorrhage. There were no complications during the procedure and no signs of new bleeding.

He's stable and has been moved to the intensive care unit for very close monitoring. For the next 24 hours, we're going to keep him sedated on purpose. This is a protective measure that allows his brain to rest and helps us control swelling and pressure during this critical early period.

The next 24 to 72 hours are still important. We'll be watching closely for any changes, including swelling or recurrent bleeding, and we'll be doing frequent neurologic checks and imaging as needed. After about 24 hours, if everything remains stable, we'll begin to gradually reduce the sedation and see how he responds.

It's still too early to predict exactly what his recovery will look like, but the fact that the surgery went smoothly and the bleeding was controlled quickly is encouraging. I would suggest at this time, to go home, or to where you are staying for a little bit, get some rest, and come back in the morning, visiting hours start at 9am. He is sedated and closely monitored, please take some time, and take care of yourselves.

Ilya could see the relief in both Yuna and David's eyes, and he could feel himself start to breathe a little better. Shane was alive, he was okay.

Ilya decided it was best for him to go back to his hotel, to shower and attempt to sleep. He left a little before David and Yuna, but not before exchanging numbers with both of them.

As he laid in his hotel bed, alone, he thought about everything. He thought about Shane, David and Yuna, his own mother, his team, Shane's team. *Fuck*. he thought he should probably check his phone for messages from his coach. Lo and behold, when he pulled his phone out of his pocket he noticed a few messages from guys on his team, and at least 5 missed calls from his coach. He didn't feel bad for leaving in the middle of a game, maybe he should, he was the captain after all, and he can't imagine what the media is saying about this.

Ilya simply didn't have the energy to deal with any of it right now. He plugged his phone in, set an alarm for 8:30am, left his phone on the nightstand, rolled over and closed his eyes.

He dreamed for the first time in a very long time, but it was less of a dream and more of a memory reel. It started with him as a child, probably five or six years old, he was curled in his mothers lap on a blanket in their yard. He could feel the sun on his face, and his mothers hands running softly through his curls. He could hear her speaking to him in Russian, "I love you more than you could imagine, my beautiful boy."

The dream then switched to the first time he met Shane, at the 2008 World Junior Championship, in the alley behind the practice rink in Saskatchewan. The way the light came down on his face, showing his freckles, *such beautiful freckles*, he thought when he saw them.

The more he slept, the more memories came to him, mostly him and Shane, some of Svetlana, some of him and his team celebrating.

He dreamed of the people he loved.

Chapter End Notes

It's the new year so I'm gonna be drunk and nasty tonight, I'll post another chapter tomorrow!! 😊

Chapter 4: Been here before

Chapter Summary

Ilya sat in the waiting room of the hospital while David and Yuna were in the room with Shane, they had gotten there before him, and the hospital only allows for two guests in the room at once since Shane is in the ICU. He couldn't sit still, his leg was shaking and his hands kept twitching. He placed one of his hands over the other and rubbed circles with his thumb, attempting to calm himself. He knew Shane was sedated, he wouldn't be able to speak back to him, Shane wouldn't know he was there, but this was more for his sake. He needed to see him, feel his skin, make sure he was still warm.

Chapter Notes

this chapter lowk killed me, enjoy!

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

On a normal day, Ilya snoozes his alarm roughly three times before he actually gets out of bed. This morning, his body woke him up five minutes before his alarm was supposed to go off. He woke up in a cold sweat, telling him exactly what he was afraid of, *it really happened*.

He rushed through his usual morning routine, his team would be flying back to Boston today, but he had no intention of going with them. He grabbed his phone and went to text his coach.

Ilya: I am sorry about last night, there is family emergency I have to deal with. I will stay in Montreal until I can fly to Russia.

Ilya: I would appreciate if this was kept out of the media.

He set his phone back down, not caring to see what his coach's response was. He knows he didn't give a respectful amount of information, and his coach probably doesn't believe him, but he doesn't care if anyone believes him, he does not need the media hounding him right now.

Ilya sat in the waiting room of the hospital while David and Yuna were in the room with Shane, they had gotten there before him, and the hospital only allows for two guests in the room at once since Shane is in the ICU. He couldn't sit still, his leg was shaking and his hands kept twitching. He placed one of his hands over the other and rubbed circles with his thumb, attempting to calm himself. He knew Shane was sedated, he wouldn't be able to speak back to him, Shane wouldn't know he was there, but this was more for his sake. He needed to see him, feel his skin, make sure he was still warm.

Eventually, David walked into the waiting room, and went over to where Ilya was sitting.

"You ready kid?" David said, looking down at Ilya. He was sure that he did not look ready, and the slight smile that David gave him confirmed that.

As they walked down the hallway, he saw Yuna talking to a nurse outside of Shane's room. As they walked over to them, the nurse paused before opening the door to let him in. "It looks a little scary right now, but all the machines you are going to see are helping us monitor him. I promise it is not as bad as it may seem."

Yuna gave his arm a little squeeze before moving out of the way, to let him into the room.

The second he stepped foot in that room, and looked at Shane, his whole body froze in place. There were many wires and monitors hooked up to him, but the only thing he was focused on was the tube that was down his throat. His stomach dropped more and more every time he watched Shane's chest rise and fall, knowing it wasn't him breathing on his own, and then the memories flooded his mind.

—

"Ilya, go tell your mother we are leaving." His father's voice was cold and stern, as always. They were to meet with the family of one of his father's clients for dinner, and punctuality was of utmost importance. It wasn't new for his mother to let time slip away from her, sometimes she took too long getting dressed, or doing her hair, or taking a bath. It made his father upset, he was always upset.

Ilya made his way up the stairs of his family's home and into his parents bedroom, he noticed the door to the bathroom was shut, but he couldn't see the light peaking through the crack at the bottom. He walked over to the door and gave a light knock, "Mama? We are leaving, Papa is ready."

There was no response.

He pressed his ear to the door to try and hear if there was water running, thinking she was possibly in the bath or shower, but he heard nothing. Deafening silence coming from the other side, one that was unusual for this time of day. He slowly reached down to turn the doorknob, he wasn't afraid, but he had a feeling he couldn't shake, like he was about to see something he shouldn't see. As the door creaked open his eyes landed straight on the bathtub, or more so the arm that was dangling off the side of it.

“Mama?” his eyes fell to the floor now, noticing a small pill bottle, an empty pill bottle, that had rolled into the middle of the open bathroom. His feet moved before his brain could process anything, he grabbed his mother's hand, and felt the cool skin, cooler than it should be. Then, he screamed. At first it was just a scream, and then he started yelling for his father, for his brother, for anyone.

“PAPA! PAPA!”

It wasn't long before he heard footsteps running up the stairs and into the room. He could feel the presence of a person behind him, stopping in the doorway, before walking over to him, all too calmly. He felt a firm hand on his shoulder, and then he was rushed out of the bathroom. His father went to the phone that was set on the desk in the main bedroom, and he could hear him speaking to someone, but his eyes were stuck looking at the limp arm dangling over the side of the bathtub.

The paramedics arrived in less than two minutes, but it felt like forever to him. His father went in the ambulance with his mother, leaving him and his brother alone in the house.

The next morning he was at the hospital. His father walked him down a long hallway and into a room. The first thing he noticed was the sounds, rhythmic beeping coming from too many machines, all surrounding the bed in which his mother lay on, unmoving. His eyes fixed on the tube down her throat, watching her chest rise and fall simultaneous with the beeping of the machine the tube was connected to.

Ilya was later told that his mother was already dead then, brain dead at least. The machines kept her body alive, but her soul was already gone, the machines were only delaying the inevitable.

—

Ilya was unsure how long he was standing there, in the middle of the room, frozen, fixed on the machine that was manually breathing for Shane.

He could hear the door open behind him, someone stepping into the room, and closing the door behind them, but he wasn't able to process any of it. He felt the slight touch of a hand against his shoulder, making him flinch.

“Ilya, honey, are you alright?” Ilya turned towards Yuna's voice, without realizing that he had been silently sobbing while staring at Shane. “Hey, come sit down over here, okay?”

He let her lead him over to a chair that was positioned next to Shane's bed, then she took his hand and placed it over Shane's, that was laying so perfectly beside him. Once he felt his skin touching Shane's he took a deep breath in. He felt the warmth, and without realizing it he slid two of his fingers down to Shane's wrist, feeling for his pulse. Once he was able to feel the beat of Shane's pulse in his own fingers, he calmed down, ever so slightly.

“He's okay. It looks terrifying, I know it does, but he's okay. He's going to be okay.” Yuna's voice was soft, reminding him of the way his mother would speak to him when he was sad, or scared.

He wanted to say so much to Yuna at that moment, but all he could manage was a very quiet, “thank you.”

She just looked at him then with nothing but care and sadness in her eyes. She could tell there was more to all of this, but he knew she wouldn’t ask. She placed her hand over the one Ilya had resting on Shane's, squeezed it lightly, then leaned over and planted a very gentle kiss to the top of Ilya’s head.

“Me and David will be out in the waiting room, take your time, please.” Then she turned and walked out of the room, leaving Ilya alone, with Shane, in a state he prayed to god he would never see anyone in ever again.

Ilya didn't know what to do at first, so he just sat there for a while, with both of his hands holding on to one of Shane's, he let himself lean forward to rest his head on the side of the bed. “I don't know how to do this” he said quietly speaking to Shane like he was a god who could answer his prayers. “I do not know how to sit here, to hold your hand without thinking this will be the last time I will ever get to.” he brings his lips to Shane's hand and kisses it softly.

“But I will do it, for you. I will do anything for you, moya lyubov” he whispers against Shane's skin, and closes his eyes, tuning out the mechanical noises in the room, letting himself focus solely on Shane's pulse beneath his fingertips.

Chapter End Notes

I'm a big fat liar, I couldn't wait to post this until tomorrow. The writing was just flowing so I had to keep going (bars or whatever)

Chapter 5: Don't go

Chapter Summary

He lit the cigarette in his hand and took a slow drag, for the first time since he smoked his first cigarette, the taste of it made him nauseous. Though it was probably less the taste that was making him sick, and more the fact that he hadn't eaten anything in over 24 hours, and what he did eat, he managed to throw up last night. He put the cigarette out on the ground, deciding it wasn't worth it anymore.

Chapter Notes

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

Ilya spent the next few hours switching between the waiting room and Shane's room, taking the small moments alone to gather his thoughts. He kept his composure when he would speak to Shane's parents, or when a nurse would occasionally come in to check on Shane, he didn't want anyone to see him break. But it got harder and harder every time he stepped back into that hospital room, every time he spoke to Shane, waiting for a reply he would never get.

He couldn't do it anymore, he needed air, he needed to run as far away from this hospital as he could, until he couldn't feel his legs, until his lungs stopped working. He was restless, feeling like he needed to crawl out of his own skin. He needed a cigarette.

Ilya stood up from his chair in the waiting room so quickly he scared himself, and from the looks on the faces of the other people in the room, he startled them as well. He couldn't stand the eyes on him, he ran out of the hospital as fast as he could, only stopping to catch his breath when he made it all the way around to the back of the building. He did a quick scan of his surroundings, making sure that he was alone, then pressed his back to the concrete wall, and sank down to a squat position. He didn't want to sit, he's been doing too much of that, but he needed to ground himself. He needed to get as close to the ground as he could bare, to force himself to believe that he was here, that he was real, that he wasn't just floating around absently. He dropped his head down and closed his eyes. He needed to breathe, but he couldn't, he felt like his body was betraying him.

He fumbled through the pockets in his jeans and pulled out a pack of cigarettes and a lighter, he could hear Shane's voice in the back of his head, *you shouldn't be smoking, it's bad for you.*

"There are worse things" he answered out loud, like Shane was there, standing next to him. Fuck, now he really was losing his mind.

He lit the cigarette in his hand and took a slow drag. For the first time since he smoked his first cigarette, the taste of it made him nauseous. Though it was probably less the taste that

was making him sick, and more the fact that he hadn't eaten anything in over 24 hours, and what he did eat, he managed to throw up last night. He put the cigarette out on the ground, deciding it wasn't worth it anymore.

The doctors had told him earlier that they were going to start weaning Shane off the sedatives early tomorrow morning, so he would hopefully start to wake up around 9 or 10am, when visitation hours started up again. It was only 1pm now, they still had 5 more hours before the visitation period ended, but he didn't know if he could take 5 more hours of this. The time dragged on, seconds felt like minutes here, and he couldn't stand the feeling of being frozen in time. He wished for nothing more than to be able to snap his fingers, and skip 2 weeks into the future. He needed to be able to see and hold Shane, but more than that, he needed Shane to be able to see and hold him back.

Ilya had no idea how long he had been outside for, but he assumed it was long enough to raise some concerns, because he heard someone walk around the corner and pause for a moment. He turned his head to the left to see Yuna standing there, looking at him like he was a hurt animal, laying in the middle of the road. He turned his head back down and closed his eyes again, he could hear her walking towards him, and could feel her presence once she got close enough. There was a moment between them where nobody talked, nobody moved, he didn't even know if he was breathing. Eventually he brought himself up from the ground and leaned back against the wall, copying Yuna's position next to him, but keeping his eyes trained down on the floor.

Ilya broke the silence, "I don't think I can do this"

"Do what?" there was concern in her voice, and she spoke like a mother would to her child.

"This. Everything. I do not know" Ilya replied, shaking his head.

"Do you want to talk about last night?"

He was shocked at that question, she was at the game, she saw it all, what's there to talk about. He could tell that she knew the question threw him off, and began to back track on it.

"It's okay to say you were scared, that you are scared."

Ilya took a deep breath in, and carefully thought of what to say in response.

"I thought I lost him." He could feel the lump in his throat start to form, but managed to swallow it down, there was more he wanted to say. "I have never felt the way I did at that moment before. I *was* scared, in a way I have never been. And it is part of the game, yes, players get hurt, but never like that. Was like a dream, like my body and mind were not working together; could not stand when I needed to, could not speak when I wanted to. All these people think we hate each other, that is the worst part. I could not run after him, could not show everyone I care. In eyes of the world we are nothing but rivals. I had no way of knowing if he was okay, no one would fucking tell me anything. Why would they, we are not-" there was a pause before he spoke again, and he could feel the tears welling up in his eyes.

“We are not *anything* to them. But he is *everything* to me.” The words came out more choked and desperate than he wanted, but before he could do anything, he felt Yuna wrap her arms around him, pulling him close to her. He fell into her without realizing it, let himself fall apart, let himself be held.

“I really thought I lost him.” he let out with a sob. Feeling Yuna’s hand cradle the back of his head, as it leaned into her shoulder.

“I know, I know, it’s okay, you’ll be okay.” She said it to him, but he also thought maybe, she was saying it to herself too.

And for the first time since he was a child he felt safe to cry. So he let himself cry, harder than he ever has before. Knowing he has Shane, and now Yuna and David too, he felt like he might be okay, at least eventually.

Chapter End Notes

okay I know this is like a really short chapter, but the next one will be longer I swear

Chapter 6: Ease my mind

Chapter Summary

Ilya woke up the next morning to the sound of his phone ringing. It was 9:15am, and he told David and Yuna he would be at the hospital by 10am, since they weren't sure when he would actually wake up. He picked up his phone from the nightstand and saw that it was Yuna calling him. Immediately he sat up in bed, mind running straight to the worst case scenario of why she would be calling him right now.

"H-hello?" His voice was groggy with sleep.

"He's awake honey, and he's asking for you."

Chapter Notes

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

David and Yuna left around 4pm to drive back to Ottawa for the night. Ilya only had to promise them, about 5 times, that he would stay with Shane until the nurses forced him to leave, though he was going to do that either way. No matter how many times he had to fight the urge to run out of that hospital, he knew he would never leave Shane alone if he didn't have to. He was glad they were going home for the night, they deserved to have an evening to themselves, after the absolute hell that they have been through in the past 24 hours. He didn't like to think about what the accident looked like from their perspective, if it hurt him this much, he could only imagine how they felt.

He had to stop himself a few times from looking at his phone to see what the media was saying. The only time he truly looked at his phone was to read the statement Shane's team had released about his injury, it was vague, but that's what David and Yuna wanted. He really didn't want to know what his own team had released on his behalf, he said to keep it out of the media, but that doesn't mean they just say nothing, when a team captain doesn't fly back with the rest of his team it raises some questions, rightfully so.

He also wanted to look at the text he had gotten from Marlow earlier that morning, he didn't really bother with answering the rest of his teammates, but Marlow's text stood out to him.

Marlow: Hey man, I hope you're all good. Coach told us something came up in Russia, and you're planning on flying there from Montreal, so I just hope everything is okay.

Marlow: I also hope you're not too shaken up about what happened to Hollander, it was a rough hit. I'm not sure how long you're going to be in Montreal for, but if you go visit him or anything, just give him my best.

Ilya was actually, sort of surprised when he read both texts, he knew Marlow was a good guy, they'd played together for years, but they weren't really friends. Honestly he wasn't really friends with any of the guys on his team, even though he'd been playing for Boston for 7 years, and most of his team had been with him for just as long. He decided to answer Marlow's text, it was the least he could do.

Ilya: Thanks. I just have to sort some things out with my brother, not sure how long I will be gone for.

Ilya: I was planning on maybe stopping by to see how Hollander was, I will make sure to tell him what you said, if I do.

Marlow: Thanks man, hope everything goes well with your brother.

Ilya: Yes, me too, thank you.

After sending that last text he turned his phone off and put it back in his pocket. He felt bad for lying to his team, but it wasn't like he could tell them the truth, as much as he would like to, it wasn't fully his decision to make, and he had already overstepped boundaries by telling Shane's parents. Besides, he and Shane weren't even officially dating, they never got the chance to talk about it. It felt like they were to him, but he had no idea where Shane's head was at. Even though he could tell Shane loved him, he was still scared that it would be too much for him, he didn't know if Shane would be willing to risk it. It killed him to think about, but it killed him even more that he understood; as much as it would hurt him, he wouldn't be able to get upset about it, they had so much to lose.

He watched for a while as Shane slept. He always looked peaceful when he was asleep, and he cursed at himself for only recently discovering that.

For the past 7 years of their "relationship" they had done a good job at keeping each other at a distance. For the sake of themselves, and their careers, they couldn't be anything more than what they were. He wasn't sure when exactly it started to progress into something more, but it did. They would stay with each other for longer after hooking up, hold each other closer after, fall asleep in each other's arms. Neither of them acknowledged the shift out loud, but they both knew it was there.

"I hope you do not hate me when you wake up, but I will understand if you choose to. There is so much going on in that beautiful head of yours, and it hurts to watch you bottle it up, hide those thoughts away. It hurts me, that I hurt you, I never wanted to cause a scene." Ilya brought his head up, and brushed gentle fingers over the soft skin on Shane's face, caressing the freckles that scattered across his cheeks like constellations.

“I wish the world could see you from my eyes, no one would question why I love you. *God* I love you so much, more than I would ever be able to say in any language. My body is starved for you, and hunger is painful, but you know that.”

One day he will find the courage to say all of this to Shane again, but for now he'll just let himself feel the relief of being able to say it out loud for the first time.

Ilya looked up at the analog clock, ticking away on the wall, and realized that there were only 5 minutes left until visitation hours were over. He stood up slowly, and grabbed his jacket off the back of the chair he was sitting on. Before he left he leaned over and pressed a light kiss to the top of Shane's head, being careful to not touch the right side.

“Do zavtra, moya lyubov',” he whispered as he quietly slipped out of the room.

As he left the room, he walked past one of Shane's nurses, who gave him a slight smile. They all knew who he was, another thing he felt guilty about, but he also knew they legally could not say anything about it, which made him feel a little bit better. He also worried about someone seeing him at the hospital, taking a picture of him secretly, and sharing it to the world, but so far no one seemed to notice or care. He guessed that was one of the good things about hospitals, everyone had their own shit to deal with, they weren't there to get into other people's business, they just wanted to handle their own.

While Ilya was walking out to his car, he felt his stomach growling, remembering that it had been a long time since he last ate. He decided to drive back to his hotel, and then go walk around downtown Montreal to find something to eat. It was early spring here, which meant it was still pretty cold, especially at night, but he never had issues with the cold. Sometimes he actually preferred it. It was familiar, it was something he knew how to navigate, unlike pretty much everything else.

—

As he walked around the busy streets of downtown Montreal, he found himself thinking about what his life would have been like if the Metros had drafted him too. He obviously knew that would have never happened, Shane and him were the number 1 and 2 draft picks of their year, they were never going to play on the same team, but he liked to imagine it. He wondered if it would have made this easier. *Probably not*. It was never going to be easy, no matter how hard they tried, not with everyone watching them.

—

That night in his hotel room, Ilya could not fall asleep for the life of him. It's not uncommon for him, but he wanted to sleep so badly. He wanted his mind to stop racing, he just kept thinking of every possible way he could fuck things up tomorrow. He didn't know how Shane was going to react to him just being there.

Eventually he turned on the tv in his room, and went to Youtube, searching for the video Shane had made at his cottage in Ottawa. He closed his eyes and listened to Shane's voice as it filled the room, hoping it would help him fall asleep, and it did.

Ilya woke up the next morning to the sound of his phone ringing. It was 9:15am, and he told David and Yuna he would be at the hospital by 10am, since they weren't sure when he would actually wake up. He picked up his phone from the nightstand and saw that it was Yuna calling him. Immediately he sat up in bed, mind running straight to the worst case scenario of why she would be calling him right now.

"H-hello?" His voice was groggy with sleep.

"He's awake honey, and he's asking for you."

"He is asking for *me*?"

"Your name was the first thing he said when he woke up." Her voice was shaking ever so slightly, like this was the first time it all became real to her. Before this moment they had only seen Ilya's perspective, and now they are seeing it from Shane's as well.

That was also the last thing he had expected her to say, and he knew Shane must be high off his ass on pain meds if he was asking for Ilya specifically. Shane would never risk that normally, but even then, even if it was just the painkillers, it made his heart clench.

All Ilya could manage to say in response was, "really?"

"Yes, and he's actually quite upset that you aren't here." She let out a small laugh, and honestly, Ilya would probably be laughing too, if he was in her shoes.

"Give me 15 minutes and I will be there. Can you tell him I will be there soon?" He was a little embarrassed to ask that, but he knew it would most likely help Shane calm down a little bit, if he was that upset.

He hears a door open and close on the other end of the line, and then in a soft voice he hears Yuna speak. "Shane, honey, Ilya is on his way, okay?" Then he heard him, his voice wasn't very loud or clear, but he could hear it. "Ilyaaaaa" it actually made him laugh, he had never seen or heard Shane high before, but if that's how he was, he could definitely get used to it.

"Yeah, I am definitely on my way. Thank you Yuna, for everything." he said as he ended the call.

He quickly got out of bed, threw some clothes on, brushed his teeth, put on deodorant, and practically sprinted out the door.

Ilya was more nervous about this, than he was the first time he and Shane hooked up, and that's saying something. He will never ever admit how nervous he was the first time he knocked on Shane's hotel room back in the summer before their rookie season, but he *was* nervous. He played it off then, saying he just liked trouble, but truthfully, he just liked Shane. They just also happened to be the two best hockey players in their generation.

He saw David standing in the hallway outside of Shane's door talking to a doctor. He made his way down the hallway, to first greet David, and then to see what he was actually getting himself into. As Ilya approached the doctor gave him a small smile and excused himself.

"How is he, what are the doctors saying?" He wanted to know Shane's status before he went to talk to him.

"He's doing really good actually, the doctors took out the intubation tube during the night to see how he would do breathing on his own, and they said everything went very smoothly, he is *heavily* drugged, but he's stable, and he's awake, so I truly cannot think of a better outcome." David said with a smile, that Ilya could tell was very real.

Ilya let out a sigh of relief, but he was still freaking the fuck out internally, and he guessed it was showing on his face.

"You know, Ilya, I'm glad you have been here with us throughout all of this. It was hard for me to wrap my head around at first, but when I took a moment to look back on everything, it honestly made a lot of sense. I don't think we would have known what to do this morning when he woke up practically crying for you, if we hadn't known about anything. So thank you for sparing us that awkward situation."

Ilya laughed, thinking about how that encounter would have gone. He honestly would have loved to see how that would have played out.

"I am glad I was here too, as much as it sucked, it would have killed me to not be here."

"You should probably go see him before he starts to cry again, I know it's just all of the drugs they have him on, but it has been quite entertaining."

"I hope I do not make him freak out even more"

"I think you are the only person in the world who could calm him down right now." David said, giving his shoulder a squeeze, and walking away to go sit down in the waiting area.

Ilya gave his body a shake to try and rid himself of the nerves, took a deep breath in, and opened the door to Shane's room.

Chapter End Notes

okay I swear I'm not trying to edge you guys, the next chapter will be full of shane and Ilya talking and whatnot, also shane being high off his ass on painkillers. I just didn't want to write one huge mega chapter so I'm splitting it up.

Chapter 7: Lovers talk

Chapter Summary

He had told himself, for years, that what they were doing was temporary. That it was easier this way. Safer. He had believed, needed to believe, that loving Shane quietly was better than loving him honestly.

And now Shane lay broken in a hospital bed, drugged to all hell, saying things that cut straight through every careful lie Ilya had built.

What if he remembered? What if he didn't? Both thoughts terrified him.

Chapter Notes

Sorry for blue balling you guys 😭

enjoy the chapter!?

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

Shane's eyes practically lit up the second Ilya stepped foot into his room. Seeing Shane, awake, alert, talking, breathing on his own, made Ilya want to drop to his knees right there and start crying. He didn't know that he was able to feel so much relief, but it felt like the weight of the world was lifted off his shoulders. Shane reached his hand out for Ilya like a child asking to be picked up, and Yuna took this as her cue to leave the room, and let them have a moment alone.

She gave him a wide grin as she walked past him and said, "he's on *a lot* of drugs, don't have too much fun with him" and then she was gone, and he was finally able to take this all in.

He walked over to the side of Shane's bed and took his outstretched hand into his own.

"Mmm...good...better." Shane said, his speech was slower and somewhat slurred, he seemed like he was on a whole different planet.

"I am sorry." Ilya said looking down at Shane, there was sadness showing all over his face, but he knew Shane wouldn't be able to tell.

"Mmm...no, this is what I want... is what I want."

"No, I am sorry for this, Shane," he said gesturing to Shane's injuries, and the hospital room.

“Is not your fault... happens.” Shane tried to shrug his shoulders, but his body did not like that, and he let out a wince.

“Hey, hey, do not do that, please, you are hurting yourself”

“Meh, could be worse. The doctors said I am fine.”

Ilya shook his head at that, he was pretty sure the next worse thing was Shane being in a coma, or dead, so he was very *very* glad that it was not worse. “You *will* be fine,” Ilya corrected.

“Yeah yeah, whatever.”

Shane had a stupid grin on his face, and it made Ilya smile too.

“Dorogoy” Ilya said softly, and Shane let out a groan that made it seem like Ilya had just slapped him across the face.

“Ilya.” Shane’s face now being forced into a frown, “I wanna understand”

“Oh sweetheart,” Ilya spoke softly, as he reached up to stroke Shane's cheek.

Shane closed his eyes, and let himself be calmed by Ilya's touch. But he started to squirm again slightly, he wanted Ilya to be closer, needed him to be closer.

Ilya tightened his grip just slightly, careful not to hurt him. “Easy,” he murmured, voice low and soft. “Do not move.”

Shane’s brow furrowed, like he was concentrating on something far away. His fingers curled weakly around Ilya’s hand, holding on more out of instinct than strength.

“Didn’t mean to scare you,” Shane said after a moment. “Hate when you look like that.”

Ilya’s breath caught. “I do not look like anything,” he said, too quickly.

Shane let out a quiet, semi-strained laugh. “You do. You always do.” His eyes drifted shut, then fluttered open again. “You stay?”

“I am here,” Ilya said immediately. “I am not going anywhere.”

“Good,” Shane whispered. “You’re... feels safer when you’re here.”

The words landed heavier than they should have.

Ilya’s head fell, pressing their joined hands gently against the mattress. “Shane,” he said, softly, “you should rest.”

Shane squeezed his fingers once, deliberately this time. “Don’t let go.”

Ilya didn’t answer, but he didn’t let go either.

For someone who had just woken up from a 36 hour long medically induced nap, Shane was exhausted. He could barely keep his eyes open anymore, and he wasn't sure if it was because of all the drugs he knew he was on, or if it was Ilya's presence calming him down.

Shane's breathing evened out, shallow but steady. The room settled around it, the soft whir of machines, the distant footsteps in the hall. Too quiet.

Ilya did not move.

He stayed standing at the bedside, Shane's hand still warm in his own, afraid that if he let go something terrible would rush in to fill the space. He watched Shane's chest rise and fall, counting without meaning to. One. Two. Three.

feels safer when you're here.

The words looped in his head. "You do not get to say things like that," Ilya whispered, though Shane could not hear him. "Not like it is nothing."

His throat burned. He pressed his free hand against his mouth, breathing slowly through his nose the way he'd trained himself to do when things started to spin. It didn't help.

Ilya squeezed his eyes shut. *What was he doing? How could he have let this happen?*

He had told himself, for years, that what they were doing was temporary. That it was easier this way. Safer. He had believed, *needed* to believe, that loving Shane quietly was better than loving him honestly.

And now Shane lay broken in a hospital bed, drugged to all hell, saying things that cut straight through every careful lie Ilya had built.

What if he remembered? What if he didn't? Both thoughts terrified him.

—

Shane's eyelids fluttered open, and he was still as groggy as before, still felt like he wasn't quite real.

Ilya shifted closer to the bed, careful with every movement, like the wrong step might break something fragile between them. Shane had been asleep for about an hour, long enough for Ilya to step out of the room and collect himself, or at least attempt to. But he was back in the room again before Shane could wake up.

Shane watched him with unfocused eyes. "You're still here," he said, sounding surprised.

"Yes," Ilya answered softly. "I told you."

Shane hummed, like he was weighing that answer. "Thought maybe I'd wake up and you'd be gone." His fingers twitched against the sheets, searching. "You always leave."

Ilya stiffened. “That is not-” He stopped himself. Correcting him felt wrong, but Shane's words stung, more than he wanted them too. “I am here now.”

Shane’s mouth pulled into a small frown. “You say that,” he murmured. “But then you don’t stay.”

Ilya swallowed. The room felt suddenly too small, the air too thin. “I stay when it matters,” he said, though the words sounded unsteady even to him.

“This matters,” Shane said simply.

The certainty in his voice knocked the breath from Ilya’s chest.

He reached out resting his hand over Shane’s, grounding them both. “Yes,” he said quietly. “It does.”

Ilya then realized he had let go of Shane’s hand while he was asleep, and forgot to grab it again before he woke up. Luckily he didn’t think Shane remembered asking him to not let go.

Shane relaxed a fraction at the contact, his grip tightening on Ilya's hand just enough to be felt. “Did I do something wrong?” he asked, the question soft, almost childlike.

“No,” Ilya said immediately. “Never.” His thumb brushed once over Shane’s knuckles, a small, unconscious motion. “You have done nothing wrong.”

Shane’s eyes stayed on Ilya’s face. “You look tired,” he said. “Have you slept?”

Ilya shook his head. Of course he looked tired, he hadn’t truly slept in the past two days. “Yes.” He lied.

Shane blinked at that, like it surprised him. “Bullshit. You’re bad at lying right now,” he said faintly. “Your voice does that thing.”

Ilya let out a short breath. “I am not lying.”

Shane moved slightly, wincing before settling again. “Why do you always act like this is temporary?”

Ilya froze. “Like what?”

“Like...” Shane searched for the word, fingers tapping weakly against the sheet. “Like you’re just visiting. Like if you stay too long something bad’ll happen.”

“That is not fair,” Ilya said, though there was no heat in it.

Shane frowned. “Didn’t say it was. Just how it feels.” He looked at their hands. “You don’t hold on unless I’m hurt.”

Ilya’s jaw tightened. “You are allowed to need me even when you are not hurt.”

Shane's eyes lifted again, sharper now. "Then why don't you let me?"

The question hung between them.

Ilya opened his mouth, closed it, and tried again. "Because," he said slowly, "if I let you, I will not know how to stop."

Shane stared at him. "Why would you want to?"

Ilya's pulse was beating in his ears. He lowered his voice. "Because wanting you like that is not safe. You know that." *God* he wished Shane knew what he was saying right now, he wished this wasn't all just the pain meds swarming his thoughts.

"For who?" Shane asked quietly.

Ilya didn't answer.

Shane shifted. "You already do," he said. "Want me. You just pretend you don't."

Ilya sucked in a sharp breath. "Shane," he warned, though it came out like a plea.

Shane's thumb brushed his knuckles. "I'm not mad," he said. "I just... don't want to wake up and forget this. Don't wanna have to pretend again."

Ilya leaned closer, their foreheads nearly touching. "You may forget," he said softly. "And if you do, I will carry it for both of us."

Shane studied his face for a long moment. "That sounds lonely."

"It is," Ilya admitted.

Shane was the best part of Ilya's life, but also the scariest. He wanted to be strong, he needed to be strong for him, but god he felt so weak, so small. He had Shane laying there, clinging to him like he was the only important thing in his life. It was beautiful and terrifying. He knew he couldn't lose this, but he had no idea how to keep it either. This wasn't just meaningless hookups anymore, this was love, and pain. This was real.

Chapter End Notes

This was genuinely so difficult to write, like I had to pause at times for my own sanity.

Chapter 8: Late at night

Chapter Summary

Hearing his mom say Ilya's name, in this context, like it was completely normal, was so strange to him. It made his stomach twist, and he wasn't sure if it was in a good or bad way. He thought it had to be good, right? It was good, he didn't have to hide anymore, but still, something in the back of his mind was screaming that this was bad, that this shouldn't be happening.

Chapter Notes

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

Shane had been in and out of it all day, and he hated feeling like this. He hated not having full control over his own mind.

This time when he woke up he noticed that the sun had started to set. He wasn't sure what time it was or how long exactly he'd been asleep for, but he knew that he had probably been out for a couple hours. The sun was coming in directly through the window to his right, and it was in his face just enough for it to make his eyes hurt. Once he was able to blink the light sensitivity away, he noticed Ilya, who was asleep on a fold out cot under the window. The way the light beamed down on him, made his golden curls look brighter than usual, *god he's beautiful*. Shane always thought that Ilya was beautiful, but this was truly a sight to see.

He realized his mind felt clearer than it had all day, but his head was killing him, he knew the pain meds were wearing off, but he wanted to wait longer until he called his nurse in to ask for more. He could handle the pain, if it meant he could think properly for a few moments. He prided himself on control, and it was something he had in pretty much all aspects of his life, *except one*, he thought as he looked at Ilya.

He had no idea how Ilya was even here right now, he had so many questions to ask. *What do my parents know? What do our teams know? Fuck*. He could probably look past his parents finding out about him and Ilya like this, but if their teams know now, he might kill Ilya. But then he paused for a moment, looking at Ilya lying there completely still, and he took a minute to put himself into Ilya's shoes. He couldn't imagine how he would have reacted if any of this had happened to Ilya, if he had to watch everything, knowing there was nothing he could do, and no way of knowing if he was alright, or *alive*. He would have lost his shit. He blinked slowly and inhaled a deep breath. He knew Ilya would never do anything so dramatic that it risked their careers, but he still wondered how it all played out.

At that moment he heard the door creak open, which then made Ilya jolt awake.

Shane turned his head to see David and Yuna walk into the room.

“Hey honey,” Yuna said, walking over to the side of Shane's bed. “We’re going to head back to Ottawa for the night, we just wanted to say bye. The doctors are letting Ilya stay here tonight, we figured it would be better than you being alone. How are you feeling? Any pain? The nurses said you probably will need to take some more meds here in a minute, but they are going to come check on you.”

Hearing his mom say Ilya’s name, in this context, like it was completely normal, was so strange to him. It made his stomach twist, and he wasn’t sure if it was in a good or bad way. He thought it had to be good, right? It *was* good, he didn’t have to hide anymore, but still, something in the back of his mind was screaming that this was bad, that this shouldn’t be happening.

“I’m okay mom, I’ll ask the nurse for more meds here in a minute, but right now I just like the clarity. Drive safe, I’ll see you tomorrow.” he said, giving them a slight smile. He noticed Ilya out of the corner of his eye, now sitting upright on the cot, feet flat on the ground, with his head down, and he realized that this was just as weird for Ilya, as it was for him.

As they walked out of the door, his dad turned and said, “Get some sleep,” then he looked at Ilya, “both of you.” Shane watched Ilya just smile and nod in response.

After his parents were gone, Shane turned back to Ilya, who was now rubbing his face with both of his hands. “Come lay with me, please.”

He watched Ilya pause and look up at him, and then watched him stand up and make his way over to Shane’s bed. He crawled in gently on the left side, and they both shifted slightly to make themselves comfortable.

Shane’s head hurt like a bitch, but he wanted to just ask Ilya one question.

“What did you tell them?” he said while tracing circles on Ilya's hand with his middle finger.

There was a moment before Ilya answered, and Shane could practically hear the thoughts bouncing around in his brain.

“The truth,” Ilya said calmly.

“The truth?” his tone was slightly confused, but mainly because he didn’t even know what the truth was.

“Yes, the truth,” Ilya paused, and then continued, “I told them about us, about how it was supposed to just be fun, but...now is more than that. I think so anyway.”

It was more, and for Shane it had been more for a while, and hearing Ilya say it too made his heart clench. It also made his head pound even more, and he decided it was probably time to call his nurse in so he could get more pain meds.

“I’m glad they know,” and he meant it, he didn’t realize how much he was aching to tell someone, and how good it felt to not have to carry this alone anymore.

“Yes, me too,” Ilya responded quietly.

He didn't realize how much the pain was showing on his face, until he watched as Ilya reached over, and pressed the call button.

"You need meds, you are hurting, can see it," Ilya said, pressing a light kiss to Shane's shoulder.

Shane was going to press it himself, in a second, but he felt comfort in knowing that Ilya could read him so well.

Almost immediately, one of his nurses walked into the room holding a new IV bag. Ilya began sitting up, but the nurse insisted that he was fine to stay where he was.

Shane could not imagine what all of his nurses were saying about this. He knew they couldn't talk about this to anyone outside of their job, *HIPPA or whatever*, but he was sure he and Ilya just made their lunchtime conversations ten times more interesting. Even knowing they are legally sworn to secrecy, it still made Shane tense up, and he knew Ilya could tell, because he felt Ilya's hand squeeze his. Not just once, but three times.

The nurse finished adjusting the IV and asked a few routine questions, pain level, nausea, dizziness. Shane answered them on autopilot, his attention fixed on the steady warmth of Ilya beside him. When the nurse finally left, the door clicking shut behind her, the room felt quieter than before. Not empty. Just... sealed off from the rest of the world.

Slowly, Shane felt his mind begin to fall back into that hazy state, but his head stopped hurting so he couldn't complain too much. He blinked, fighting the heaviness settling behind his eyes.

"You okay?" Ilya asked, voice low.

"Yeah," Shane murmured. "Just... floaty."

Ilya shifted closer, careful of the lines and monitors, one arm coming around Shane's waist like it had done a hundred times before in hotel beds and borrowed apartments. This time, though, there was nothing rushed or hidden about it.

"They were calm," Ilya said after a moment. "Your parents."

Shane huffed quietly. "Yeah. That's... not what I expected."

"I think they were more scared of losing you than anything else," Ilya said. "Everything else is less important."

Shane let that sink in. He stared at the ceiling, watching the colors blur slightly. "My dad told you to sleep," he said. "That's... it's weird to hear him speak to you so calmly."

Ilya smiled faintly. "It is weird for me too."

Shane turned his head just enough to look at him. "You didn't freak out."

“I was very much freaking out,” Ilya said. “Just did not show it. I freak out every time I speak to them Shane.”

That got a weak laugh out of Shane, which immediately turned into a wince. Ilya’s hand was there instantly, thumb brushing slow circles into Shane’s side.

“Easy,” he murmured.

Shane exhaled. “You didn’t have to tell them. You know that, right?” He didn’t mean for it to come out like that, obviously he knew Ilya didn’t want to tell them, but desperate times call for desperate measures.

Ilya went still for half a second before answering. “Yes. I did,” he said carefully.

“They were the only people who helped me. They are the only reason I am here. I almost lost you,” Ilya said, voice steady but edged with something raw. “And I realized I was tired of pretending you were something I could afford to lose.”

Shane swallowed. The meds made everything feel distant, but that, *that* landed sharp and clear. He shifted his hand, fingers curling into Ilya’s shirt like an anchor.

“I’m scared,” Shane admitted quietly.

“I know.”

“Not of... this,” Shane clarified. “Of what happens after. When I’m better. When we have to go back.”

Ilya leaned his forehead against Shane’s shoulder, careful, grounding. “We will figure it out,” he said. “But not tonight.”

Shane closed his eyes. “Promise you won’t disappear when I wake up again.”

Ilya didn’t hesitate. “I promise.”

The haze thickened, pulling Shane under more insistently now. His thoughts slowed, edges blurring, but the warmth beside him stayed solid. The last thing he registered was Ilya bringing his hand up and pressing a gentle kiss to his fingers.

For the first time all day, Shane let sleep take him voluntarily.

—

Ilya did not sleep. He lay on his back beside Shane, one arm tucked carefully around him, afraid that even breathing too deeply might wake him. The room was dim now, the sunset long gone, replaced by the low glow of monitors and the thin strip of hallway light peeking in under the door.

Shane slept unevenly.

Every so often his brow would knit, a faint sound catching in his throat, and Ilya would tighten his hold just slightly, grounding him without waking him. He counted the rise and fall of Shane's chest, over and over, like a promise he was afraid to stop making.

He had watched Shane bleed.

The memory surfaced without warning, sharp and unwelcome. The ice, the impact, the way time had seemed to fold in on itself. Ilya clenched his jaw tight, forcing the image back down. Tonight was not for that. Tonight was for *here*. For Shane alive, warm, breathing.

He shifted carefully, brushing his thumb over Shane's wrist, feeling the steady pulse beneath his skin. Real. Still here.

At some point in the early hours, a nurse came in quietly to check vitals. Ilya didn't move, just lifted his eyes and nodded when she met his gaze. She smiled softly, the kind of smile people give when they think they're seeing something good in the middle of something terrible.

When she left, the room settled again. Ilya stared at the ceiling, thoughts looping endlessly. He thought about what he had told Shane's parents, how the words had come easier than he expected once he'd started speaking. How saying *we* out loud had felt like crossing a line he could never uncross.

He thought about the morning that would come, about doctors and timelines and recovery and everything he did not yet know how to face.

Most of all, he thought about Shane waking up and not remembering anything that was said today. The possibility sat heavy in his chest.

If Shane forgot, if the clarity faded and the walls went back up, Ilya knew he would not be able to pretend nothing had changed, and he didn't want Shane to have to pretend anymore either.

Around three in the morning, Shane stirred, breath hitching, fingers curling into Ilya's shirt.

"Hey," Ilya whispered immediately, leaning closer. "I am here."

Shane didn't wake fully, just murmured something unintelligible, pressing into Ilya's collarbone. Ilya kissed the top of his head very carefully without thinking, the gesture instinctive and unguarded.

"I have you," he said quietly, to the dark, to himself. "I am not leaving."

Eventually, exhaustion caught up to him. Not sleep, but a kind of stillness. He stayed awake until the sky outside the window began to brighten.

When the first light touched Shane's face, Ilya allowed himself one dangerous thought: *Whatever happens next, I choose this*. And when Shane breathed in, steady and sure, Ilya breathed with him.

Chapter End Notes

welcome back shane hollander pov

Chapter 9: What do you say

Chapter Summary

For a second, Shane let himself imagine a different version of things. One where hockey wasn't the center of both their universes. One where Ilya could stay, could be the one making sure Shane took his meds on time, could sit on the couch with him during the long, empty hours. The image hurt too much to hold onto.

Shane had been in the hospital for six days, and he was losing his mind. By day four, after many scans and neurological checks, they had moved him from the ICU up to the Med-Surg floor. His body was healing fairly quickly, which he was proud of, he worked hard to maintain his health, and it paid off in this scenario. He was one tiny step away from this ending horribly, he very easily could have died, but he didn't, and for that he could only thank the universe, or God, or whoever was looking out for him. The doctors had told him that he would eventually be able to go back to playing hockey, but it would be a while. The injury wasn't career ending, it definitely ended his season, but not his career, and *that* he was okay with.

The doctors had come in earlier that morning to tell Shane that they would be discharging him tomorrow. They already had a plan set before they even knew when Shane was going to be released. Ilya was going to drive him down to his parent's house in Ottawa, where he would stay for the next few weeks.

The doctors had made it very clear that he needed people around him, which made sense, but still, he just wanted to be in his own home. If it were up to him, he would have Ilya taking care of him, but Ilya had a season to finish, he had already dropped everything, and lied to his team and his coach, to be able to stay here this week with Shane. He knew Ilya had to go back but it still fucking sucked. Everything about this sucked actually, but at least he wasn't dead, *right?*

A terrifying thought then slipped its way into his mind:

Maybe it would have been better if the hit did kill me.

But he immediately remembered the look on Ilya's face as he was about to crash into him, and he knew Ilya would have never forgiven himself.

The thought lingered longer than he wanted it to.

Shane stared at the ceiling tiles, counting the tiny cracks he'd already memorized over the last couple days, and let the guilt settle in his chest. Wishing he were dead, even hypothetically, felt like a betrayal. Not just to Ilya, but to everyone who had sat by his bed,

who had whispered his name like it was something fragile, something they were afraid might break if they said it too loudly.

The door creaked open, and Shane didn't have to look to know it was Ilya. He had told him to go back to his hotel last night, so he could actually get some sleep, because he knew Ilya never really slept in hospitals. He could hear him before he saw him, the careful footsteps, the way he always paused like he was bracing himself for bad news, even now.

"You're awake," Ilya said softly, like that was something to be grateful for.

"Unfortunately," Shane replied, his voice dry. "I was having a great dream about hospital food magically tasting good."

Ilya huffed out a laugh, the sound short and tired, and crossed the room. He looked different than he usually did. Unshaven, eyes shadowed, shoulders tense like he'd been holding himself together with sheer will. Shane hated that he was the reason for it.

"They said you're out tomorrow," Ilya said, settling into the chair beside the bed. "That's... good, right?"

"Yeah," Shane said, then hesitated. "I think so."

Ilya nodded, staring down at his hands. There was a long pause, thick with all the things neither of them seemed ready to say. The discharge felt less like freedom and more like the moment when the adrenaline wore off and reality set in. Tomorrow meant separation. Tomorrow meant Ilya going back to his life, his team, his season, everything Shane couldn't touch for a long time.

"I don't want to go," Ilya said suddenly, quietly.

Shane turned his head toward him. "You have to."

"I know." Ilya swallowed. "Doesn't mean I want to."

For a second, Shane let himself imagine a different version of things. One where hockey wasn't the center of both their universes. One where Ilya could stay, could be the one making sure Shane took his meds on time, could sit on the couch with him during the long, empty hours. The image hurt too much to hold onto.

"You didn't even tell them the truth," Shane said, trying to keep it light. "Your coach is probably convinced someone died."

Ilya smiled faintly. "If he ever finds out, *I'm* dead."

Shane reached out, his movements still slow and careful, and hooked his fingers around Ilya's wrist. The contact grounded him in a way nothing else had since the accident.

"I'm glad I didn't die," he said quietly.

Ilya looked up, his whole demeanor changed, his eyes sharp with something close to fear. "Don't joke about that."

"I'm not," Shane swallowed. "I just... I'm glad. Because of you."

Ilya's jaw tightened, and for a moment he looked like he might say something reckless, something honest, something that would change everything. Instead, he squeezed Shane's hand and leaned forward until his forehead rested against the edge of the bed.

"Don't ever scare me like that again," he whispered.

Shane closed his eyes, breathing him in, anchoring himself to the weight of that voice, that presence.

"I'll try," he said. And for the first time since the hit, he believed that surviving might actually be worth the pain.

At that moment the door creaked open slowly, both Shane and Ilya lifted their heads casually, both expecting it to just be a nurse coming to check on Shane. What they were not expecting was to see Hayden Pike standing in the doorway, with his jaw practically on the floor. Both men practically jerked their hands away from one another, but there was no way Hayden didn't see anything. Shane watched for a second as Hayden's eyes darted back and forth between him and Ilya, neither of the three men said anything for a moment, they were all just frozen.

Shane had talked to Hayden on the phone a couple times in the past few days, and Hayden told him that he wanted to come see him before he went to Ottawa, but he didn't expect Hayden to show up unannounced. *Great timing Hayd.*

Shane tried to clear his throat but it sounded more like a choke. "Um... Hayd I wasn't expecting you to um... be here... right now." His voice was slow like he was piecing the sentence together as the words were coming out of his mouth.

Hayden snapped his jaw shut and pressed his lips together like it was trying not to laugh. Out of all the reactions Shane thought Hayden was going to give them, watching him actively having to try and stop himself from laughing was not at all in the cards. Shane and Ilya exchanged shocked and confused glances, before Hayden finally decided to speak.

"Is this real? I have four kids and I average probably five hours of sleep each night, so am I like hallucinating right now, or is Rozanov actually in this room, sitting by your bed." He let out a small laugh.

"This is dream Pike," Ilya said, "you are dreaming of big handsome Russian."

Good fucking lord, Shane thought as he reached out to slap Ilya's shoulder. This was so awkward, he hadn't even told Hayden that he was gay.

"Jesus Christ Ilya," Shane said, practically giving Ilya a death glare.

Shane watched Ilya put his hands up in surrender, but Ilya shrugged as he said, “hey, he was the one who asked.”

Both of them looked back at Hayden who was still standing there, so much confusion plastered all over his face.

“Yeah. Right. Yup. Okay. What the fuck?” Hayden said, genuinely sounding like he was going into shock.

For a beat, Shane was pretty sure Hayden might actually pass out. He was still standing in the doorway like someone had paused him mid-thought, eyes wide, mouth opening and closing like he was trying to reboot.

“Okay,” Hayden said finally, stepping fully into the room and letting the door swing shut behind him. “So. A couple of things. One, hi, you look like hell, but in a very ‘I survived something traumatic’ way, so congrats. Two,” He gestured vaguely between Shane and Ilya with both hands. “What. *That*.”

Shane rubbed a hand over his face, immediately regretting it when the room tilted just a little. “It’s not- I mean, it *is*, but,” he sighed. “Fuck.”

Ilya shifted beside the bed, suddenly quiet, his earlier bravado gone. “I can leave,” he said, already halfway to standing. “This is... not my conversation.”

“No,” Shane said quickly, reaching out again without thinking, fingers brushing Ilya’s sleeve. He stopped himself just short of actually grabbing on this time. “Don’t.”

Hayden’s eyebrows shot up. “Wow,” he muttered. “So this is... real-real.”

Shane swallowed. His heart was pounding way harder than it should have been, and not because of the head injury. “Yeah,” he said. “I guess it is.”

Another long pause stretched between them. Then Hayden exhaled sharply and ran a hand through his hair.

“Okay,” he said. “Okay. That’s fine. That’s—” He nodded to himself. “That’s actually very fine.”

Shane blinked. “It is?”

“Yeah, I mean no, I don’t know,” Hayden said. “I mean, look, man, I walked in expecting to see you hooked up to a couple machines and whining about hospital Jell-O. Instead I walk in on... whatever the hell *this* is.” He pointed at Ilya. “Which explains why you sounded like shit every time I called, by the way.”

Ilya frowned. “I sound like shit?”

Hayden glanced at him. “No, *he* did. You just sound like an asshole.”

That earned a small smile from Ilya, which somehow made Shane’s chest ache.

Hayden stepped closer to the bed, his expression finally sobering as he looked at Shane properly. “You scared the hell out of us,” he said quietly. “Me, the guys. Your parents called me crying, man.”

Shane’s throat tightened. “I know.”

Hayden reached out and gave Shane’s shoulder a careful squeeze. “I don’t give a fuck who you’re holding hands with,” he said. “I just care that you’re still here.”

Shane let out a breath he didn’t realize he’d been holding. “Thanks, Hayd.”

Hayden straightened, then glanced between them again, smirk slowly returning. “That said,” he added, “if this is some secret love affair thing, you owe me *details*, eventually.”

“Absolutely not,” Shane said immediately.

Ilya, on the other hand, looked amused. “He will tell you everything,” he said confidently.

“Jesus,” Shane muttered, sinking back against the pillows. “I almost died and this is how my life ends.”

Hayden laughed, the sound filling the room and cutting through the tension. “Nah,” he said. “You almost died, this is just the weird part after. And I won’t tell anyone I promise. *Well*. Can I tell Jacki?”

Shane looked at Ilya first, and then nodded slowly. He loved both Hayden and Jacki, they were his best friends, if he could trust anyone with this secret it would be them.

For the first time since the door had opened, the room felt a little less fragile, like maybe, just maybe, things could be okay. Three people knew about him and Ilya, three more people than he ever expected to know, but it wasn’t bad, no one hated him, no one ridiculed him for anything. Maybe it was just because they thought he was going to die, so they were going easy on him, but even then, it made him feel a little better knowing he wasn’t all alone in this anymore.

—

The second Hayden left, Shane let out a sigh. “I’m sorry,” he said, honestly thinking Ilya would be upset about the whole ordeal.

“Why?” Ilya said looking confused.

“Because, I don’t know... we haven’t even really talked about what *this* is, and now we have three people asking us what it is. I’m just sorry I put you in this position.”

“So let’s talk.”

Shane didn’t know exactly how to say what he was thinking, but he decided to just give it his best effort anyway. “It’s different now. Like we’re in a lot deeper than we were before.”

Ilya smiled deviously before speaking, “I do not think I can go any deeper, Hollander. nine inches not enough?”

“Fuck off, you know what I mean.”

He watched Ilya shift uncomfortably in his chair. “Yes, I know what you mean, Shane.” His eyes now looking anywhere but at Shane. “Do you remember the conversations we had the first day you woke up?”

Shane nodded, because he did remember them, most of them anyway. He hadn’t brought them up again because he was scared.

“You told me you didn’t want to have to pretend again,” Ilya paused. “What do you mean by that?”

Now it was Shane's turn to pause, because what *did* he mean by that.

“It’s just... the past few months have been different. Better. And I don’t know if you’ve noticed the shift, but I have, and I don’t want to keep pretending that I haven’t.”

Ilya looked up at Shane then. “I noticed too,” he said quietly.

Shane swallowed before speaking, and reached his hand out, motioning for Ilya to grab it. “This summer, what if, instead of you going back to Russia, you come with me to my cottage.” He paused and took a moment to study Ilya's face, and to his surprise, it looked like he was going to cry. “I-I mean, you don’t have to, but I just thought it would maybe be nice. And it’s like three months away, so I should be mostly healed by then.”

At that moment Ilya brought Shane's hand to his lips and kissed it.

“Is um... that a yes?”

“Yes, moya lyubov”

Chapter 10: Wasting time

Chapter Summary

Shane laughed, quiet and tired, and reached for Ilya's hand without hesitation this time. Ilya laced their fingers together, and pulled Shane's body so he was carefully resting against his chest, feeling the weight of the choice settle in his bones.

Soon, they would leave this house. Soon, he would drive Shane to Ottawa. Soon, he would get on a plane and go back to a life that would feel wrong without him.

But for now, they sat together in the open. No boundaries. No hiding. And for the first time, Ilya did not feel like he was crossing a line. He felt like he was finally stepping into it.

Chapter Notes

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

For once in his life Ilya was sure about something, and that something was Shane.

As much as Ilya loved seeing Shane walk out of that hospital, (well, actually, he was wheeled out, but same difference) he hated knowing what this meant. This meant Ilya going back to Boston to finish his season, it meant being in a different country than Shane for the next 4 months. It was nothing new to him, of course, they had been doing this for years, but now he didn't have anything to look forward to. He used to count down the days until his team played against Shane's, but now that Shane is out for the rest of the season, he was dreading the upcoming games against the Voyagers.

Shane told Ilya that they needed to go to his house first before they drove to Ottawa, and Ilya had no complaints about that. He had never been to Shane's actual house before, only to the hideaway building Shane had bought years ago for them to hook up at. He claims that he bought it so he could remodel it and then eventually sell it, but it has been fully remodeled for four years, and he has yet to sell it. Ilya knew the real reason Shane bought it, even if Shane would never say it out loud, it was for safety, to keep a boundary between them. Being in each other's actual houses was a step in the direction both of them were scared of, a step Shane hadn't been ready to make, and truthfully Ilya never thought he would make it.

For a moment he felt glad that all of this happened, Shane's brush with death seemed to make him bolder, make him realize what he actually wanted. That feeling was immediately overwhelmed by guilt, Shane could have actually died, and that was not something to feel glad about.

That feeling sat heavy in his chest as he pulled the car up in front of Shane's house. It was quiet, too quiet. No reporters, no teammates, no noise except the engine ticking as it cooled.

Ilya turned the car off but didn't move right away, hands resting on the steering wheel like he needed the grounding.

"This is it," Shane said, glancing out the window.

Ilya nodded. "Is nice."

Shane snorted softly. "You haven't even seen inside yet."

Ilya followed him up the steps, careful, watching every movement. Shane fumbled slightly with the keys, swore under his breath, then laughed at himself. Ilya hovered close enough to catch him if he tipped, but Shane didn't. He never did.

The door opened into a space that felt unmistakably Shane, clean but lived-in, neutral colors broken up by small, intentional details. Hockey sticks leaned in a corner. Framed photos lined a shelf. Ilya's eyes snagged on one in particular: it was a framed photo of the two of them, one of the stills from the CCM commercial they had done the summer before their rookie season. It was them pretending to be in a face-off, they looked very serious, and it only made Ilya remember how unserious they actually were during that shoot. Ilya has these pictures too, but not the serious ones. He had somehow gotten the pictures they didn't use for the actual campaign, the ones of them laughing and smiling at each other. He loved those pictures.

"Don't read into that," Shane said, noticing where his gaze had landed. "My mom had it framed years ago, it was my first ad campaign. She thought I should keep it as a reminder of how far I've come."

Ilya hummed. "I like it."

Shane's ears went pink.

Ilya could see the embarrassment plastered across Shane's face, he loved seeing him like this, but he also wanted him to know that I wasn't just him. "Can I show you something?"

Shane raised an eyebrow at him, "Depends. Am I going to like it?"

Ilya just nodded as he pulled out his phone and searched through his camera roll to find the pictures he had of that moment. When he turned his phone around to show one of the pictures, he saw Shane's face drop, and then slowly start to form into a smile.

"I didn't even know these photos existed, I guess I always thought they just deleted them."

"Usually they do," Ilya said. "I asked for them."

Shane looked at him then with such admiration, it was a look he had never seen before, but he was keen on seeing again.

They continued into the house, Shane giving half-hearted explanations, Ilya absorbing everything. This was not the place they met in secret. This was not a boundary. This was a life.

It scared him.

Shane lowered himself onto the couch with a quiet sigh, exhaustion finally catching up to him. Ilya sat beside him, close but careful.

“I didn’t think I’d ever bring you here,” Shane said after a moment.

Ilya looked at him. “Why?”

“Because once you do that,” Shane shrugged, “there’s no going back.”

Ilya nodded slowly. “Yes.”

Silence stretched between them, comfortable and dangerous all at once.

“I’m sorry,” Shane said suddenly.

Ilya frowned. “For what?”

“For this,” Shane gestured vaguely between them, at the house, at the situation. “For making everything... complicated.”

Ilya turned fully toward him then. “Shane,” he said, firm but gentle. “You are not the complicated part.”

Shane swallowed.

“I am going back to Boston,” Ilya continued. “And I hate that. But I am not scared of this anymore.”

Shane looked up at him, searching his face. “You’re not?”

“No,” Ilya said. “I am scared of losing you. That already almost happened. This—” he let out a breath, “this is worth the fear.”

For a moment, Shane didn’t speak. Then he leaned his head back against the couch, eyes closed.

“God,” he muttered. “You’re gonna ruin me.”

Ilya smiled softly. “You will survive.”

Shane laughed, quiet and tired, and reached for Ilya’s hand without hesitation this time. Ilya laced their fingers together, and pulled Shane’s body so he was carefully resting against his chest, feeling the weight of the choice settle in his bones.

Soon, they would leave this house. Soon, he would drive Shane to Ottawa. Soon, he would get on a plane and go back to a life that would feel wrong without him.

But for now, they sat together in the open. No boundaries. No hiding. And for the first time, Ilya did not feel like he was crossing a line. He felt like he was finally stepping into it.

“What time is your flight tomorrow?” Shane asked after a moment of comfortable silence.

“I need to be at the airport by noon.”

Shane didn’t say anything for a second, and Ilya could tell he was contemplating something.

“We could stay here tonight. Drive to Ottawa in the morning. I can text my parents and just say I was too tired, and didn’t want to be in the car for two hours. I just want a night alone with you, no nurses, no parents, just you.

Ilya’s breath caught, just slightly.

It was such a simple request. One night. No explanations. No pretending. And yet it felt like Shane had reached directly into his chest and wrapped his fingers around something fragile and exposed.

Shane had lifted his head so he was looking at Ilya. Ilya watched him for a moment. The careful way he was sitting, like he was still listening to his body. The way his eyes held that mix of hope and uncertainty, like he was already bracing for Ilya to say no.

“I do not want you to do anything you are not supposed to,” Ilya said slowly.

Shane huffed. “I’m not breaking any rules. Just... delaying the plan.”

Ilya studied his face for a moment longer, then nodded once. “Okay.”

Shane blinked. “Okay?”

“Yes,” Ilya said. “We stay.”

Relief washed over Shane so quickly it was almost painful to watch. He leaned back against Ilya, exhaling like he’d been holding his breath since the accident.

“Thank you,” he said quietly.

Ilya squeezed his hand. “You do not have to thank me for wanting the same thing.”

They moved through the house together with an ease that felt new. Shane showed him where the guest room was, then stopped in the doorway like the thought had just occurred to him.

“You don’t have to sleep there,” he said. “I mean, only if you want to. The bed’s big enough. I just,” He laughed nervously. “I’m bad at this.”

Ilya smiled, soft and fond. “I noticed.”

—

They brushed their teeth side by side in Shane’s bathroom, shoulders bumping occasionally, neither of them making a joke about it. Shane let Ilya remove his clothes slowly, until he was down to his boxers, this time there was nothing sexual about it.

When they climbed into bed, Shane stayed on his side at first, like he was giving Ilya space to change his mind. Ilya lay on his back, staring at the ceiling, acutely aware of every inch between them.

“You’re really here,” Shane said softly.

“Yes.”

“I’m not dreaming?”

“If you are, then I am also dreaming,” Ilya said. “Which means Pike was wrong earlier.”

Shane laughed, quiet and real, then shifted closer.

“I’m scared,” Shane admitted.

Ilya turned his head toward him. “I know.”

“I don’t want this to hurt,” Shane said. “I don’t want to wake up tomorrow and have it feel worse.”

Ilya reached out, slowly, giving Shane time to pull away. He didn’t. Ilya’s fingers brushed Shane’s wrist, then his hand, and finally curled around it.

“It will hurt,” Ilya said honestly. “But it will not hurt because this was a mistake.”

Shane’s grip tightened.

They lay there in the quiet, hands linked, breathing in sync. No urgency. No expectations. Just presence.

Eventually, Shane’s breathing deepened, his body relaxing against the mattress. Ilya stayed awake long after, memorizing the sound, the warmth, the weight of being chosen.

Tomorrow would take him away.

But tonight. Tonight, he stayed.

—

Ilya woke before the sun.

It took him a moment to remember where he was, to register the unfamiliar ceiling, the quiet hum of a house that wasn’t his. Then he felt it: warmth at his side, steady and real, and his chest tightened with relief before the ache even had time to set in.

Shane was still asleep.

Sometime during the night, he’d shifted closer, careful even in sleep, like his body had learned its limits overnight. His forehead was pressed lightly against Ilya’s shoulder, one

hand resting on Ilya's chest as if it had always belonged there. His breathing was slow, even. Alive.

Ilya did not move.

He stared at the thin line of early morning light creeping in through the curtains and committed the moment to memory. This was not something he could take pictures of. This was something he would have to carry.

Eventually, Shane stirred. Not all at once, just a subtle change in breathing, a quiet inhale that hitched before settling again. His fingers flexed slightly where they rested on Ilya's chest.

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

"Good morning," Ilya said softly.

Shane smiled without opening his eyes, then shifted carefully, pushing himself up on one elbow, squinting as he took in Ilya's face like he was checking for damage. "How long have you been awake?"

Ilya considered lying, then decided against it. "A while."

Shane sighed and flopped back onto the pillow. "You're bad at sleeping."

"I was fine," Ilya said. "You were warm."

That earned him a sleepy laugh. Shane turned onto his side, facing him fully now, their noses almost touching.

"This feels dangerously domestic," Shane said. "I kind of love it."

Ilya's mouth curved into a small smile. "Do not get used to it."

"I absolutely will," Shane replied. "That's kind of my thing."

They lay there for a few more minutes, neither of them rushing to break the spell. Eventually, reality crept back in, slow but relentless.

"What time is it?" Shane asked.

Ilya checked his phone. "Seven."

Shane groaned softly. "Gross."

"You need to eat," Ilya said. "And take your medication."

Shane blinked at him. "Wow. You sound like my mom already."

Ilya raised an eyebrow. "I will take that as a compliment."

They moved slowly through the morning. Coffee for Ilya, something resembling breakfast for Shane after some gentle convincing. Shane took his meds without complaint, though he made a face like he deserved an award for it.

The house felt different in daylight. Less like a secret, more like a life. That scared Ilya more than he wanted to admit.

They packed quietly. Shane moved carefully, still stubborn but listening when Ilya told him to slow down. When they finally stood by the front door, jackets on, keys in hand, the air shifted.

This was the part Ilya hated.

The drive to Ottawa was quiet at first. Shane leaned his head against the window, watching the scenery blur past, his reflection ghosted in the glass. Ilya kept both hands on the wheel, focusing on the road because if he looked at Shane for too long, he might forget how to leave.

“I don’t like this part,” Shane said softly.

Ilya glanced at him. “You said that yesterday.”

“Yeah,” Shane said. “Still true.”

Ilya nodded. “Me too.”

They drove in silence for a while longer, but it wasn’t empty. It was full of everything they weren’t saying, of plans made and promises implied, of summers at cottages and pauses that would eventually end.

When Shane’s parents’ house came into view, Ilya felt the familiar tightening in his chest. This was the handoff. The moment where he stepped back.

Ilya parked the car and turned the engine off, the quiet sudden and heavy.

Shane didn’t get out right away.

He turned in his seat instead, careful and deliberate, and looked at Ilya with an intensity that made his throat go dry.

“Hey,” Shane said. “Thank you,” he said. “For staying. For... all of it.”

Ilya reached out before he could overthink it, cupping the side of Shane’s face gently, thumb brushing his cheekbone. “There is nowhere else I would have been.”

Shane leaned into the touch, eyes closing for just a second. Then he nodded, like he was sealing something in place.

They got out of the car together. Yuna opened the front door almost immediately, relief written all over her face. She hugged Shane tightly, then surprised Ilya by pulling him into a hug too.

“Thank you,” she said quietly. “For bringing him home.”

Ilya swallowed. “Of course.”

“Come in, just for a little” Yuna said.

Ilya was not expecting to be invited in, but he had at least an hour before he had to be at the airport in Ottawa, so he politely accepted, and walked into their home, *Shane’s childhood home*.

The house smelled like something warm and familiar, clean laundry, coffee, maybe the faint trace of whatever Yuna had cooked the night before. It felt lived in, loved in.

There were pictures of Shane *everywhere*. Shane at different ages, frozen in time: gap-toothed smiles, scraped knees, hockey jerseys that grew progressively larger. One photo near the stairs caught Ilya’s attention, Shane at maybe twelve or thirteen, helmet too big, grin too wide, missing a front tooth and holding up a trophy like it weighed nothing at all.

Ilya smiled without realizing it.

“You can tell which one is him, right?” Yuna said fondly, following his gaze.

“Yes,” Ilya replied immediately. “He is soft, even when he is trying to be tough.”

Yuna laughed. “That hasn’t changed.”

Ilya loved this, he could see just how much love Yuna and David had for Shane. It was love that was shown, not just through the pictures in this house, but by their actions. Yuna and David were so quick to accept Ilya into their lives, just because he was in Shane’s. It made him feel seen, wanted, maybe even *loved* too.

As they moved through the house, Ilya became acutely aware of how easily he was being folded into it. David asked him about his flight. Yuna asked if he’d eaten. No one questioned his presence or his importance. They just... assumed it.

It made his chest ache.

Eventually, Shane nudged his arm. “You wanna see my room?”

Ilya nodded, suddenly nervous.

Upstairs, the hallway creaked softly beneath their feet. Shane’s childhood bedroom was at the end, the door half open like it was waiting. Shane pushed it wider and stepped aside to let Ilya go first.

The room was small, smaller than Ilya expected. Posters on the walls, old bands, hockey teams, a faded schedule from a long-forgotten season. A desk cluttered with things Shane clearly hadn’t touched in years. Trophies lined up on a shelf, dusty but proud.

Ilya stood in the doorway, taking it all in.

“This feels... private,” he said quietly.

Shane smiled, something soft and almost shy. “Yeah. It is.”

Ilya walked in slowly, running his fingers along the edge of the desk, careful not to disturb anything. This was the version of Shane before contracts and expectations and hiding. Before fear had taught him restraint.

“I used to sleep here every time we played Ottawa,” Shane said, leaning against the doorframe. “Thought it made me play better.”

Ilya turned to him. “Did it?”

Shane shrugged. “Sometimes.”

They sat on the bed, close but not touching at first. The mattress dipped slightly beneath their weight, old but familiar. Ilya could picture Shane here at fifteen, sixteen, lying awake and dreaming of a life he hadn’t known would come with so many complications.

“I don’t think I’ve ever brought anyone here,” Shane said after a moment.

Ilya’s throat tightened. “You did not have to.”

“I wanted to,” Shane replied simply.

That was what made it intimate, not the room, not the proximity, but the intention behind it. The quiet offering of something sacred.

Ilya looked around at the collection of items around him, “You have lots of things, what do they call that... hoarder?”

Shane looked somewhat offended by that statement, and drew his hand to his chest in an exaggerated manner. “Me? A hoarder?”

“Mmm. Yes.”

“You truly are an asshole,” Shane said, but there was no weight behind it.

“Ah, but you love it.” Ilya said with a smirk.

“No. I think I just love you.” Shane let slip, without even realizing what he just said. When he did realize, his face dropped into a panicked expression. “I-I mean-”

Ilya cut him off, “I love you too, Shane.”

He watched Shane’s whole body relax, he looked like the weight of the world had just been lifted off his shoulders. It felt the same for Ilya, those words had been stuck in the back of his throat for so long, begging to be let out.

They both let the moment sink in, there were no other words that needed to be said, nothing else could possibly matter now.

Ilya reached for Shane's hand, slow and deliberate, and Shane took it without hesitation. Ilya wanted to kiss him so badly, but he didn't know if that was allowed. So instead he pulled Shane's body close to his and wrapped his arms around him, he just wanted to be as close to Shane as possible.

For a few minutes, they just sat there, surrounded by memories neither of them had lived together, but somehow belonged to them both now. Ilya eventually decided that he didn't care if kissing him was allowed or not, he needed to feel Shane's lips on his at least once. He brought a gentle hand to Shane's jaw, guiding his face to his own, and pressed a careful kiss to Shane's lips. It wasn't frantic, it was calm, and it was passionate in only a way lovers knew.

When Yuna called from downstairs that it was time to go, the moment broke gently, like it was meant to.

Ilya stood, lingering just a second longer before following Shane back toward the stairs.

This house was not a place he would stay in. But it was a place he would remember. Because this was where Shane had learned how to be loved.

And somehow, impossibly, It was where Ilya felt it too.

Ilya said his goodbyes to Shane's parents, and watched them walk away from the front door and back into the kitchen, giving Shane and him a moment alone. Ilya's cab was waiting outside to take him to the airport, away from here, and that made his heart ache.

Shane squeezed his hand once before letting go. "Text me when you land."

"I will," Ilya promised.

"Go win me a cup, okay." Shane said with a smirk.

"You know I will," Ilya said, as he gave Shane a wink.

This was not the end.

It was just the space between.

Chapter End Notes

Okay my loves, this fic is sadly coming to an end. There's going to be one more chapter, I'm working on it right now, and I'm hoping to have it posted by tomorrow. For now, enjoy this chapter!

Chapter 11: Leave it all behind

Chapter Summary

Dinner was a team effort in the loosest sense of the word. Shane cooked, Ilya hovered, stole ingredients, and claimed he was helping. They ate on the porch most nights, the sky turning pink and gold above the lake.

They played cards after, badly. Shane accused Ilya of cheating. Ilya accused Shane of not understanding the rules. Neither accusation was wrong.

At night, they curled up on the couch with a movie Shane had seen a hundred times and Ilya pretended not to like. Shane usually fell asleep first, head tipping against Ilya's shoulder. Ilya stayed awake longer, tracing absent patterns into Shane's arm, committing the weight of him to memory.

Some nights they talked quietly in the dark. About nothing important. About everything. And when they went to bed, it felt natural, like something they had always been doing.

No urgency, no secrecy, just soft laughter and tangled limbs and the comfort of knowing the other one would still be there in the morning.

For the first time in a long time, life wasn't loud. It was just warm.

Chapter Notes

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

When Shane told Ilya to win the cup for him this season, he had no doubt in the world that he would follow through.

Now it was June, and he was sitting on the couch in his parents home, watching Ilya hoist his second ever Stanley Cup into the air, surrounded by his teammates and an obscenely loud crowd. He felt a tinge of sadness in his chest, watching what could have been him. The Voyagers had been on a kill streak before Shane was injured, but the second Shane was out, so were they.

Suddenly the feeling was overcome by something different. Pride.

He watched Ilya stake around with the cup in his hands, holding it like it was his prized possession. There was a moment then, when the camera zoomed in on Ilya's face, his teammates around him were yelling and jumping. Ilya was still for a second, looking into the camera, and mouthed, "for you." It was such a quick moment that if Shane had looked away for even a second he would have missed it, but he would have never looked away, and he was sure Ilya knew that.

To Ilya, these past three months had been harder than he ever anticipated, he missed Shane, more than he was willing to admit, even to himself. But he had something to look forward to, he had a lot of things to look forward to actually.

What he had yet to tell Shane, was that he was not planning on resigning with Boston next season. He was a free agent now, and as much as he loved his team, he had someone who he loved even more, waiting in Canada for him.

Ilya had spent many nights alone in Boston thinking about this, and he had come to the conclusion that he was going to sign with Ottawa this summer, after his contract with the Raiders was up. They needed a star center, but more importantly, Ilya needed to be closer to Shane.

He had planned to tell Shane right after he came up with the idea, but every time they called, the moment never felt right. He wanted to tell him in person, wanted to see the reaction on his face, down to the smallest detail. He decided that he would wait to tell him until July when they were at Shane's cottage, that was when he would sign with Ottawa anyway.

He did tell Yuna and David though, they called him a lot, and he figured that he should at least get a second opinion. He was worried that this was a stupid idea, but to no one's surprise they were very *very* supportive of the decision. Yuna was skeptical at first, naturally, he truly didn't think anyone loved hockey as much as she did, but once Ilya explained his reasons, he gained her full support.

He felt good about his decision, even more so now. He had just won them another cup, and to him, that felt like the perfect chapter to end on. His team was not so thrilled to hear that he wasn't coming back next season, and he understood why, he *was* the best player on that team. They were scared of what losing him meant for the team, and realistically he couldn't imagine them doing too well next season, but that wasn't his problem anymore.

Right now his only focus was getting through June, hopefully with an MVP award, and then getting on the first flight to Ottawa.

—

The flight to Ottawa felt unreal.

Ilya sat by the window, forehead resting lightly against the glass as clouds stretched endlessly beneath them. His phone buzzed nonstop once the plane touched down, teammates, reporters, numbers he didn't recognize, but he ignored most of it. The Cup, the noise, the questions about his future all felt far away now.

This was the part that mattered.

He moved through the airport quickly, cap low, bag slung over his shoulder. He didn't linger near baggage claim, didn't scan the crowd. Shane had told him exactly where to go, short-term parking, row C, black SUV, back corner. No waving. No lingering.

When Ilya pushed through the sliding doors into the humid summer air, he spotted the car immediately.

Shane sat in the driver's seat, sunglasses on, baseball cap pulled low, window cracked just enough. He didn't get out. He just watched.

Ilya's chest tightened.

He opened the passenger door and climbed in, shutting it softly behind him. For a moment, neither of them said anything.

Then Shane reached over and grabbed the back of Ilya's neck, pulling him in. The kiss was quick, desperate, careful, months of restraint packed into two stolen seconds. When they pulled apart, Shane laughed under his breath like he couldn't quite believe it.

"You're here," Shane said quietly.

Ilya nodded, smiling. "Told you I would be."

Shane exhaled, starting the car as if he needed the movement to ground himself. "Sorry I didn't come in. I just—"

"I know," Ilya said immediately. "Is better this way."

They merged into traffic easily, windows down, summer air filling the car. Shane drove with one hand on the wheel, the other resting casually on Ilya's leg.

The city faded behind them. Buildings gave way to trees, highways to narrow roads. The noise softened.

"This okay?" Shane asked after a while, glancing at him. "The drive, I mean. I can stop somewhere if—"

"No," Ilya said. "It's perfect."

When the cottage finally appeared, tucked between tall pines and the lake beyond, Shane slowed the car like he didn't want to break the moment.

He parked and cut the engine.

Ilya stepped out and took it all in, the quiet, the water, the beautiful house that stood before them. It was exactly like Shane had described, and somehow even more than that. It felt protected. Hidden.

"This is it," Shane said softly behind him.

Ilya turned, studying him. "You have good taste, Mr. Realestate."

Shane smiled, small and real, and unlocked the door.

Inside, the cottage was warm and familiar, sunlight spilling across the floors. There were mismatched mugs in the kitchen, an old blanket folded over the couch, everything just slightly imperfect in a way that felt intentional.

Ilya set his bag down carefully.

“I like it here,” he said.

Shane leaned against the doorframe, watching him. “Yeah?”

“Yeah,” Ilya said, meeting his eyes. “I think I could get used to this.”

They stood there for a moment, the lake quiet outside, the world finally far enough away that it couldn't reach them.

—

Their days at the cottage settled into something easy, almost accidentally.

They slept late, not because either of them needed the rest, but because neither one felt like being the first to move. Mornings usually started with Shane waking up first and pretending he wasn't awake, just to feel Ilya's arm heavy across his waist a little longer. When Ilya finally stirred, it was always slow, all warmth and sleep-soft murmurs in Russian that Shane couldn't understand.

Coffee happened eventually.

Shane made it strong. Ilya complained every single time, then drank it anyway. They sat on the dock with their feet dangling above the water, mugs warming their hands, the lake so still it felt fake. Sometimes they talked about nothing, what they'd make for dinner, whether the weather would hold, which of them would cave first and jump in. Sometimes they didn't talk at all.

Ilya liked the quiet more than he expected.

Midday meant movement. Short walks through the trees, Shane careful but stubborn, Ilya hovering just enough to be annoying. Shane swatted him away more than once.

“I am not fragile,” Shane said for the third time that day.

“You had a brain injury,” Ilya replied calmly. “You are very fragile.”

Shane laughed, shoving him lightly. “You're dramatic.”

They swam when the sun got too warm, Shane easing into the water like he was testing a promise, Ilya diving straight in without hesitation. Shane cursed him out for the temperature, but followed anyway. They floated on their backs afterward, shoulders brushing, counting clouds like kids.

Afternoons blurred into lazy productivity. Shane tried to fix the flickering porch light and somehow made it worse. Ilya attempted to help and immediately dropped a screw into the grass, then stared at it like it had personally betrayed him.

“Maybe leave it,” Ilya said finally.

“It’s mocking me,” Shane replied.

Dinner was a team effort in the loosest sense of the word. Shane cooked, Ilya hovered, stole ingredients, and claimed he was helping. They ate on the porch most nights, legs tangled under the table, the sky turning pink and gold above the lake.

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For the first time in a long time, life wasn’t loud. It was just warm.

—

One night, when they were laying in bed, bodies woven together and sweaty, Ilya was suddenly reminded that he still hadn’t mentioned to Shane the fact that he was going to be signing with Ottawa.

He propped himself up onto his elbows, and looked at Shane for a moment. “I have something to tell you, but you have to swear you will not get upset.”

He watched Shane's face grow into a confused and slightly scared expression, “umm... okay...?”

“I am not going back to Boston.”

“What?”

“I am not going back to Boston. I-um, I’m singing with Ottawa.” Ilya squeezed his eyes shut, preparing for the worst.

“Wait, are you serious, I know Ottawa needs a center but like are you actually serious, this isn’t a joke?”

Ilya opened his eyes back to see Shane staring at him, his eyes were wide, but his mouth was forming a crooked smile.

“Is not a joke, Hollander. I actually need to drive down to Ottawa in a couple days, you know, paperwork and stuff.”

“Why didn’t you tell me this sooner?”

“I figured it would be good surprise, yes?”

“I mean yes, absolutely, holy shit,” Shane said, “but also fuck you for not telling me.”

“You will get over it, your parents are very excited.”

“You told my parents, but not me!” Shane immediately pushed himself up, and positioned himself so he was straddling Ilya's waist.

“Mmm, yes, I told them back in May that I was thinking about it.”

“Oh. My. God. You guys are so fucking dead.”

At that moment Ilya took the opportunity to flip them over so he was pinning Shane down to the bed underneath them.

“Save killing for later, we have more important things we could be doing.” he said with a smirk, before dipping his head down to kiss Shane.

—

Shane was freaking the fuck out.

He stood in the kitchen staring at absolutely nothing, coffee gone cold in his hand, brain running laps at full speed. He’d invited Hayden. And Jacki. And their kids. Plural. Small, loud, observant humans who asked questions without fear or shame, to spend a weekend here at the cottage.

And now they were actually on their way.

“They’re five minutes out,” Shane said for probably the third time in the past twenty seconds.

Ilya, who was leaning against the counter peeling an orange like this was the most normal thing in the world, glanced up calmly. “You already told me this.”

“I know,” Shane said, pacing. “I just— I don’t know why I thought this was a good idea. What if it’s weird? What if the kids ask questions? What if Hayden starts making jokes? What if—”

“What if they like me?” Ilya offered.

Shane stopped short and looked at him. “That’s... not even remotely the concern.”

Ilya smiled anyway, slow and confident, the kind of smile that usually made Shane forget his own name. He finished peeling the orange, separated a slice, and held it out. “Eat. You spiral when you do not eat.”

Shane accepted it automatically, chewing while still visibly vibrating with nerves. “You don’t understand. This is the first time I’m doing this. Like... openly. With people who matter.”

Ilya’s expression softened. He set the orange down and stepped closer, resting his hands on Shane’s hips, grounding him. “Shane,” he said gently. “They already love you. Anyone who loves you will try to understand this.”

Shane exhaled slowly. “You say that like you’ve never met Hayden Pike.”

“I have met him,” Ilya said. “He is loud. But he is not cruel.”

As if summoned by the universe, a car door slammed outside.

Shane froze. “That’s them.”

Ilya squeezed his sides once, reassuring. “We have survived worse.”

“Have we?” Shane muttered.

The front door burst open seconds later, followed by chaos.

“UNCLE SHANE!” Ruby and Jade yelled, sprinting inside like missiles.

Shane barely had time to brace before their two small bodies collided with his legs. “Hey! Hey- careful!” he laughed, instinctively steadying them.

Hayden came in next, grinning like an idiot. “Wow,” he said, looking around. “This place is unfairly nice.”

Jacki followed, carrying bags and already apologizing. “I told them not to run— oh!” She stopped short when she saw Ilya. “Hi.”

Ilya straightened immediately, polite and composed. “It is very nice to finally actually meet you.”

Jacki smiled warmly. “Likewise. Thank you for letting us invade.”

One of the kids, Ruby, looked between Shane and Ilya, head tilted. “Are you his friend?”

Shane’s heart jumped into his throat.

Before he could answer, Ilya crouched slightly to the kid’s level and said calmly, “I am his... boyfriend.” it sounded more like a question than a statement, and Shane realized that was the first time either of them had ever referred to the other as their boyfriend. It felt good, normal.

Ruby nodded, satisfied. “My daddy was my mommies boyfriend and then they got married. Are you going to get married?”

Shane stared at him, stunned, then laughed under his breath.

Ilya laughed too, “I mean maybe someday,” he said glancing up at Shane.

Those words made Shane's whole chest constrict, he could imagine them being married, maybe even having kids of their own someday.

Maybe this wouldn't be so bad after all.

Shane watched the kid immediately lose interest and sprint toward the back deck like nothing monumental had just happened, and his chest loosened.

Hayden snorted. “Yeah, that tracks.”

Jacki laughed, shaking her head. “You should've seen them on the drive. They've been feral since we passed the ‘Welcome to Cottage Country’ sign.”

“They're welcome to the dock,” Shane said automatically. “Just, no running.”

The kids nodded solemnly, which meant absolutely nothing, and disappeared out the back door within seconds.

Silence settled for half a beat.

Hayden turned slowly toward Ilya, arms crossed, mouth twitching like he was fighting instinct. “Well,” he said. “If it isn't the bane of my professional existence.”

Ilya's lips curved, controlled but unmistakably smug. “Hello, Pike. You look shorter in civilian clothes.”

Shane groaned. “Do not. Start.”

Jacki sighed. “I swear to god, if you two chirp each other in my presence—”

“We won't,” Hayden said immediately.

“We promise,” Ilya added, far too smoothly.

They held eye contact for half a second too long.

Hayden broke first, snorting. “Still can't believe you're actually real. Thought Shane was hallucinating you this whole time.”

“I am very real,” Ilya said. “I have the cup to prove it.”

“See?” Shane pointed between them. “This is what I mean.”

Jacki stepped between them, smiling tightly. “Okay! lets go unpack before someone gets emotionally injured.”

Later, once the kids were in the lake and the grill was warming up, Shane found Ilya and Hayden standing on opposite ends of the dock, beers in hand, both watching the water like it personally offended them.

“You’re not allowed to talk about hockey,” Shane warned, joining them.

Hayden held up a finger. “I haven’t.”

Ilya nodded. “We are being very mature.”

There was a pause.

“You tripped me on purpose in December,” Hayden muttered.

“You skated into my stick,” Ilya shot back.

Shane cleared his throat loudly.

They both stopped.

Hayden sighed. “Look. I don’t like you. Professionally.”

“Mutual,” Ilya said.

“But,” Hayden continued, eyes still on the kids, “you stayed when he got hurt. You showed up. That counts.”

Ilya glanced at Shane, then back at Hayden. “I love him.”

Hayden nodded once. “Yeah. I figured.”

Shane’s chest felt too full all at once.

A kid yelled Shane’s name from the water, splashing wildly.

Hayden pointed at Ilya with his beer. “Hurt him, and I will end you.”

Ilya smiled faintly. “Understood.”

Shane shook his head, laughing quietly. For the first time, it didn’t feel like balancing two worlds. It felt like they were finally learning how to share him.

—

By the time the kids were finally coaxed into bed, exhausted from cannonballs, tag, and endless questions about fish, the cottage felt like it had exhaled. The air smelled faintly of charred burgers, lake-water, and pine.

Shane poured the last of the wine into three glasses, he hadn't even noticed Hayden and Ilya had followed him into the kitchen, hovering like predators waiting for him to screw up.

Shane groaned. "Oh my god. Leave me alone. You two are insufferable."

Hayden smirked. "Speak for yourself. *He's* insufferable."

They ended up in the living room, the fire casting a lazy orange glow. The kids' giggles echoed faintly from the hallway as they tried to quiet themselves in their rooms. Shane had brought out a board game, Clue to be exact, he and Ilya had played it dozens of times with his parents, but he knew it was Ilya's favorite.

"See, this is why he's dangerous," Hayden said, nodding toward Ilya. "Everyone thinks he's calm and quiet. Then he hits you with a strategy you didn't even know existed."

"I am not quiet," Ilya said, mock-offended. "I am calculating."

"Calculating," Shane repeated, laughing, "is just code for cheating."

"How can I be cheating, we are playing Clue for fucks sake."

That made everyone laugh, even Hayden.

They continued playing, wine in hand, Ilya and Hayden going back and forth accusing each other of something, laughter ricocheting off the walls. At one point, Ilya leaned just slightly too close to Shane, and Hayden raised an eyebrow like he noticed it too.

"You're lucky he's mine tonight," Hayden said casually, voice low, but Shane's ears pricked.

Jacki laughed and shook her head, "Hayden, come on."

That made Ilya laugh. "I'm sorry Pike, but he is very distracting."

Shane choked on his wine. "Distracting?"

Ilya shrugged, pretending innocence. "I'm just stating facts."

Shane laughed, wine shaking in the glass. "I can't take you guys anywhere."

By the time they called it a night, the fire was dying and the wine glasses empty, the cottage felt warm in a way it hadn't before. Ilya slumped onto the couch, pulling Shane next to him like it was the most natural thing in the world. Hayden grabbed a blanket and threw it at them, muttering about how no one could steal his spot near Shane.

Shane rested his head against Ilya's shoulder, sighing. "We survived," he murmured.

"I told you," Ilya said softly, hand sliding into his.

Hayden, lying on the floor nearby with his wine, rolled his eyes. "Barely. But yes, congratulations."

Jacki slapped Hayden's arm, and then pulled him up, "I think it's time we go to bed, I'm exhausted, and I need my beauty sleep, if I don't want to be hungover tomorrow."

She pulled Hayden down the hall, and yelled out, "Thank you guys again, for everything."

And for once, in the quiet that followed the chaos of kids, lake, and laughter, Shane felt like he had a little corner of the world where nothing could go wrong.

—

After Hayden and his family left, Ilya was glad to have some peace and quiet, but as much as he hated to admit it, Hayden was starting to grow on him. He loved Shane, he couldn't be mad at him for that. Jacki was lovely, and he was truly curious how Hayden managed to marry her, and their kids were just rambunctious little devils, but he supposed he liked them too.

Ilya watched Shane wipe down the last of the coffee mugs, humming softly to himself, and something in him softened completely. The chaos of the weekend, the screaming, the running, the relentless energy, had melted into quiet, the kind of quiet that only came when the people you loved were safely home or asleep.

Shane turned, catching Ilya staring. His smile was small, gentle, just for him. "You thinking about them?" he asked, nodding toward the empty rooms where the kids had been.

Ilya shook his head, though the truth pressed warmly in his chest. "No... about you. About us."

Shane's eyebrows lifted. "Us?"

"Yes," Ilya said, stepping closer, pressing himself close against Shane's back, wrapping his arms around his waist, swaying them ever so slightly. "This... everything here... it feels right. Like we could have more. Something lasting."

Shane swallowed. "I've thought about it," he admitted quietly. "A lot more than I probably should."

Ilya grinned, tilting his head to press a kiss against Shane's shoulder. "Good. Because I'm not letting you get away. Not again. Not ever."

Shane laughed softly. "You better not. I like this too much."

They stood there for a long moment, the sun dipping low over the lake, painting the cottage in soft orange and gold. The future didn't feel scary anymore. It felt like possibility, warm, quiet, and theirs.

And for the first time, Ilya let himself close his eyes and imagine it all: laughter echoing across the dock, tiny feet running through the grass, Shane teaching their kids to swim, building forts in the living room, quiet mornings together on the porch.

He held Shane's waist a little tighter, smiling. "I want that," he whispered.

Shane's answer was in the squeeze of his fingers, in the way he let his head tip back into him, and the way he whispered, almost breathless, "Me too."

And for the first time, it didn't feel like dreaming. It felt real. It felt like home.

It felt like forever.

Chapter End Notes

I truly hope that you all enjoyed this! I loved writing it. Stay tuned for some other stuff I'm working on, and if anyone has any other fic ideas please please let me know, I'm enjoying myself a little too much!

End Notes

I got the main and chapter titles from the song Fool's Gold by Buffalo Traffic Jam!!

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