

twenty stitches in a hospital room

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twenty stitches in a hospital room

by [hollidayparty](#)

Summary

Ilya was only a few strides behind Shane on the ice.

He clocked the angle before the hit even landed; Marlow coming in too hot, too fast, shoulder high. Shane turned and slowed at the wrong moment, skates clipping, balance gone.

Impact.

The sound carried oddly through the arena, duller than boards, sharper than ice. Shane went down hard, helmet skidding, body twisting. And then it all happened at once. Skates tangled. Marlow stumbled over him as he fell, too. A skate's blade flashed too close, too sharp.

Shane's injuries during the Boston/Montreal game are much more life-threatening than in canon. Ilya's quick thinking and bone-deep instincts are the only reason he survives.

Notes

TW/CW Significant blood loss, neck wound, graphic injury, blood splatter

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

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

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The next sound was wrong. Metal on flesh. Not ice.

Shane jerked backwards automatically and yelped; a short, startled sound that cut off abruptly, replaced by something wet and splattering that froze Ilya's body mid-stride.

Red was already blooming rapidly against the ice. So *much* red. Too much.

"No!"

Ilya dropped to his knees without thinking, sliding the rest of the way into Shane's space. His stick went skittering away. Gloves were torn off, fingers already bare and trembling. He was beside Shane before the whistle finished blowing, before the crowd fully registered what they were seeing.

Shane was trying to sit up, disoriented, panic overriding pain. His gloves scrabbled uselessly at the collar of his jersey, smearing red everywhere they touched.

"Shane, stop," Ilya said, sharp and commanding, the words biting through the chaos, but Shane didn't even look at him. Ilya already had one hand at Shane's neck, trying to turn him, to see how bad it was but then his fingers were instantly soaked in crimson.

The wound was *wrong*.

Too deep. Too wide. Blood wasn't seeping; it was *pulsing*, bright and arterial, spraying in terrifying little bursts in time with Shane's heartbeat. Each surge painted both their jerseys and the ice anew, shockingly vivid against the white.

Ilya's stomach dropped.

He didn't know the exact anatomy, not the names or the pathways, but he knew in his bones that this was bad. Marlow's skate had hit something vital. Something you didn't get a second chance with.

He clamped his hand down hard, fingers pinching together instinctively, pressing with brutal precision. It was almost frightening how certain he was about where to put the pressure, how much to use. He didn't remember ever learning this. Something in him just *knew*.

The bleeding slowed considerably. Not stopped, but controlled. Contained beneath his palm.

Shane gasped, eyes glassy, unfocused.

"Ilya..."

"Don't move," Ilya snapped, voice steady in a way he did not feel. "Stay down."

Shane tried anyway. Muscles bunched, panic flaring again, his body fighting to sit up, and the blood surged again under Ilya's hand.

"No, Shane. Please."

Ilya moved without hesitation, planting one knee across Shane's chest, pinning him gently but immovably to the ice. His free hand came up to cup Shane's jaw, thumb pressing at the corner there, keeping his head still. The other hand, drenched in red, never left Shane's throat.

"Fuck - hurts -" Shane wheezed, eyes scrunching shut against the pain.

"I know," Ilya said, low and fierce, leaning in close so Shane could hear him over the rising noise. "I know. You're okay. Is fine. Help is coming."

The med team was already swarming, boots stamping frantic, panicked circles around them. Someone reached for Shane's head. Someone else grabbed for Ilya's arm.

"Don't," Ilya snarled.

Whoever it was yanked their hand back as if he might actually bite them.

"If I let go," Ilya said, each word precise, terrifyingly calm, "he will bleed out. Do you understand?"

A beat passed. Then another.

The head medic assessed the scene quickly; her gaze tracking Ilya's hand, the chaotic splatter pattern from the initial strike, the way the bleeding had slowed to a controlled ooze beneath his fingers. Then she looked back up at his face.

"Okay," she said carefully. "Okay. We'll work around you."

They cut the jersey away in swift, practiced motions. Someone stabilized Shane's head, hands firm and steady. Others slid a spine board beneath him in pieces, inch by careful inch, coordinating around Ilya's knee and grip.

Shane's breathing was ragged now, shallow and uneven. His eyes fluttered, unfocused, skittering wildly at the flurry of movement and bodies closing in.

“Hey, hey,” Ilya murmured, lowering his head until his helmet visor was nearly touching Shane’s forehead. “Look at *me*.”

Shane’s gaze caught on him and clung there.

“Just me. That’s it. Good.”

The board locked into place. Straps tightened, securing chest, hips, legs. The medics lifted together.

Ilya stood at the same time, moving instinctively with them, kicking off each of his skates mid-stride and walking alongside the stretcher as it rolled forward. His arms were held awkwardly upright, muscles burning, fingers numb and aching, but he did not move his hand.

In the tunnel, the noise faded to echoes and alarms, boots pounding, gurney rattling, voices bouncing hollowly off concrete. The air smelled sharp and metallic, like blood and disinfectant and cold.

In the ambulance, there was barely room to breathe, let alone move, but Ilya wedged himself in anyway, crowding Shane’s side as the doors slammed shut.

His knee had been replaced by the board’s straps with Shane immobilized and secured. Ilya shifted, adjusting without ever lifting his hand from Shane’s neck. His free hand rested firmly over Shane’s collarbone, the one that didn’t appear bent at a wrong, impossible angle. He was desperate to touch a part of him that wasn’t actively bleeding.

The ambulance lurched into motion.

An EMT glanced at Ilya, then at the angle of his body, the bloodied hand still clamped in place. “You can’t ride like that all the way -”

“Yes, I can,” Ilya said, flat and absolute.

There was a pause. A look exchanged. And somehow, impossibly, they let him.

Shane’s eyes flickered open once more, unfocused but searching, lashes fluttering like he was fighting his way back from somewhere deep and dark.

“Ilya?” he whispered again.

“I’m here,” Ilya said immediately, leaning closer, thumb pressing just a fraction harder at his collar. “I’m not going anywhere.”

Shane’s gaze softened, slackened, and his eyes drifted shut again as the siren wailed overhead.

Ilya stayed exactly where he was. He did not let go.

Chapter End Notes

one day, i will stop using taylor swift lyrics to name my fics. unfortunately there are a million of them that are perfect for almost any scenario i can think of, so today is not that day

i'm working on the concussion scene for a different WIP and i fell down a rabbit hole re: hockey injuries. this is innspired by what actually happened to Clint Maralchuk in 1989 and how he survived because the team trainer was a veteran combat medic and acted quickly. it's terrifying and fascinating to read about.

anyway, my brain wait what if, that, but hollanov? so here we are. this is gonna get fluffy once the scary stuff passes, i swear <3

i tried to make sure i got every tag and tw i could think of, but if i missed any, please tell me so i can add them! <3

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

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

The ER doors slammed open and everything became light and noise and motion.

“Laceration, left jugular, possible carotid involvement. Active bleeding. Direct pressure maintained since the incident - “

They rolled Shane in fast, wheels rattling, voices stacking over one another in clipped bursts. Ilya kept pace without breaking stride, still bent over Shane, fingers still clamped at his throat. His forearms were slick with drying blood, tacky and dark, streaked from where the rest his body had shifted against Shane’s during transport.

“It’s okay, they’re going to fix you now,” Ilya murmured to Shane as they burst into a trauma bay.

Hands were everywhere. Someone cut the spine board straps away. Someone else snapped on fresh gloves, gauze hovering just out of reach, waiting for permission that hadn’t come yet.

“Okay,” a nurse said, sharp but calm. “We’re going to take over.”

“No,” Ilya said immediately, steady and unyielding. “I can’t. Not yet.”

The doctor stepped in closer. He made the same assessment the head medic had at the arena. He looked at the angle of Ilya’s hand and the precise pressure of his fingers; at the flecks of dried blood in a sprayed pattern across both Ilya’s arms and Shane’s exposed skin; at the way the bleeding was controlled, a steady flow instead of spurting chaos.

“Stay right there until we say otherwise,” the doctor said firmly “Keep him still.”

“He *is* still,” Ilya said. Then, quieter, leaning in just enough for Shane to hear him, “Right? You’re perfectly still.”

Shane’s eyes were wide. Pupils blown, breath hitching shallowly in his chest, whether from pain or panic, Ilya couldn’t tell. But Shane nodded.

“Ilya,” Shane said again, barely a sound. His fingers twitched weakly, like he wanted to reach but couldn’t make his body obey.

“I’m here,” Ilya said immediately. He shifted closer, crowding the gurney, refusing to give up space. “I’m not going anywhere.”

A mask appeared in someone’s hand. Clear plastic. Tubing trailing away.

“We’re going to put you under,” the anesthesiologist said gently, positioning it near Shane’s face. “You won’t feel anything. We need to repair the vessel and stabilize your blood

pressure.”

Shane shook his head, small and frantic. His eyes locked on Ilya’s and stayed there, wide and desperate.

“Don’t go,” he said.

Something in Ilya cracked open. He leaned down, careful not to change the pressure of his grip, lips brushing Shane’s ear so only he could hear him.

“Hey,” he murmured. “Hey. It’s okay. It’s okay. You need to sleep so they can sew you up, yeah? So, just take a nap. I’ll be here when you wake up.”

Shane swallowed hard. Nodded once. Barely. Ilya’s chest tightened until it hurt to breathe. He kept his mouth by Shane’s ear.

“I...” The words came out before he could stop them, raw and unguarded and terrifying in their honesty and ferocity. “I love you. I love you so much. I need you to wake up after this, okay?”

Shane froze. Ilya pulled back enough to look at him. For half a second, the fear gave way to something else. Shock, maybe. Or clarity.

Then the mask descended over Shane's nose and mouth. His eyes never left Ilya’s face.

“I love you,” Shane mouthed back. The words were hardly audible and his breath fogged the plastic. But Ilya saw it anyway, the shape of his mouth, the way his terrified gaze relaxed just a little.

Ilya exhaled a shaky, tremulous breath.

“You’d better,” he said fiercely. “And if you die on me, you asshole, I swear I’ll kill you.”

Shane managed a breathy huff of a laugh. His eyelids fluttered.

“Deal,” he mumbled, or maybe he just exhaled.

His eyes drooped shut. The fog thickened on the mask. Then cleared. Then his body slackened, weight going heavy and frighteningly still beneath Ilya’s hands.

“Okay,” the anesthesiologist said. “He’s under.”

Hands closed in immediately.

“Alright, we’ve got it from here.”

Someone gripped Ilya’s wrist and gently pried his hand away.

Blood welled instantly but was controlled this time by gauze and clamps and practiced hands. The sight of it still made Ilya’s knees go weak.

“Sir,” someone said, already steering him backward, “you need to wait outside now.”

Ilya didn't argue this time. He didn't have the strength.

The doors swung shut behind him, sealing off the noise and urgency, the bright violence of the trauma bay, the sight of Shane's body disappearing beneath strangers' hands.

The waiting room was blessedly empty. But too bright and eerily quiet. The hum of the lights felt intrusive, wrong.

Ilya stumbled to the nearest chair and collapsed into it, elbows braced on his knees. His hands shook violently now that there was nothing left to hold in place, the adrenaline seeping out of him all at once.

His fingers found his mother's crucifix automatically.

He rolled it between the sticky, blood-soaked pads of his fingers, metal cool and familiar against skin that still felt unreal. The repetitive motion steadied him the tiniest bit.

For the first time since the collision happened on the ice, there was nothing for him to do but wait. And pray.

Chapter End Notes

do i know shit about fuck re: emergency medicine? no. shhh just walk with me here
okay

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

TW/CW passing mention of hypothetical child loss/death

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

The empty waiting room was uncomfortably quiet. It was too clean, too sterile. The air smelled faintly of disinfectant and floor cleaner. Time felt wrong here, thick and stretched, unmoored from any real sense of forward motion.

Ilya was dimly aware that he had responsibilities.

There was a game happening. Or there *had* been. Coaches. Teammates. Officials. Media. The chaos of it all spiraling outward without him, continuing on some parallel track he no longer belonged to.

He hadn't even *looked* at anyone besides Shane and the medics. Hadn't said anything to his coaches or his teammates. He had just gone.

He was probably going to pay for that in some way, sooner or later.

But the thought only flickered through him, half-remembered and strangely irrelevant, then dissolved under the crushing weight of everything else pressing in on him.

He looked down at his hands.

They were still stained and sticky with Shane's blood. It had soaked into the cuffs of his sleeves, dried in uneven patches along his forearms, tacky where fabric met skin. Splotches mottled the front of his jersey too, mostly dry now and flaking slightly when he moved. The sharp, rusted iron smell clung to him, lodged in his nose and throat, impossible to escape.

It made him sick to think that all of this blood was meant to be *inside* Shane's body and it was *not*. It was on him. And on Shane's clothes and skin. And the ice.

Right. The ice. The game.

I should call someone, he thought distantly.

His team. Shane's team. Anyone. He patted his pockets absently. Once. Twice. Nothing. His phone was still at the arena. In the locker room. He let out a breath that might almost have been a laugh, if it hadn't scraped so painfully on the way out.

Well, he thought hollowly. *There's that, I guess.*

He slumped back against the stiff chair there and waited for time to start moving again.

A few minutes later (maybe hours, he had no idea) he heard footsteps. Fast. Uneven. Panicked.

He looked up as two people burst through the doors, scanning the room wildly. Shane's parents. He recognized them immediately, the faces he'd seen from a distance dozens of times, tight with nerves in the stands, brimming with pride afterwards.

They didn't look anything like that now. They looked shaken. Terrified. Half-mad with worry.

Shane's mother's hand was fisted in the front of her coat like she was holding herself together by force alone. *Yuna*, Ilya thought, not sure when he'd ever learned their names. He just... had. Shane's father's jaw was clenched so hard it looked painful. *Doug*? No. Not that. *David*? Yes. David.

They didn't see Ilya. Of course they didn't.

They were too busy searching for answers, single-minded and frantic, running on pure fear toward the place where their son should be. Their only son, Ilya remembered suddenly, the thought landing like a blow.

Oh, *fuck*.

What if Shane had *died*?

What if Ilya hadn't gotten to him fast enough? Or, worse, what if he *had*, but he'd done something wrong? Pressed in the wrong place. Hesitated. Misjudged.

They would have lost their only child.

Their baby.

While the whole world watched. While Ilya watched. While *they* watched.

Ilya swallowed hard, barely keeping the belated panic from consuming him. He told himself firmly, *Shane didn't die. He didn't*. Ilya had helped. He'd kept him alive. He'd gotten him here to doctors, to people who knew what they were doing.

A tiny, insidious voice whispered: *but what if he still dies anyway?*

And what if the last thing Ilya ever said to him was that shitty joke about killing him if he died? Oh God.

But. Then again, it *had* made Shane laugh just a little as he slipped under. So, maybe it wasn't the worst thing he could've said.

Fuck.

He couldn't do this. He couldn't. His chest felt too tight. He couldn't breathe.

Because now there was a nurse, appearing from behind the trauma doors, surely coming to tell Shane's parents they'd done all they could, but...

And then his mother would wail out a loud, wounded animal sound and crumple to the floor. And his father would catch her as she fell, and he'd cry with gasping, body-wracking sobs.

And Ilya would lose half of his soul.

Oh, fuck. Oh, fuck. *Oh, fuck.*

The nurse intercepted the Hollanders with professional calm. Her voice was low and urgent, but controlled.

"He's still in surgery," she said, "but they're starting to close the incisions and his vitals are stable."

Shane's alive.

Ilya nearly slid out of the chair in relief. He forced himself to keep listening over the rush of blood pounding in his ears.

"They've repaired the injuries to his neck," the nurse continued. "And administered a blood transfusion. Set a broken collarbone."

Yuna's hand flew to her mouth. David's shoulders sagged as he exhaled.

"You'll be able to see him in a little while," the nurse said. "Once he's awake. The doctor will come speak with you when he's coming out of anesthesia."

Then the nurse hesitated slightly.

"Your son is very lucky," she said carefully.

The Hollanders looked at her very seriously again.

"His carotid artery was severed," the nurse continued. "He instantly lost a dangerous amount of blood at the arena." She gestured a little toward Ilya in the corner of the waiting room.

"If Mr. Rozanov hadn't applied immediate pressure..." She paused. "At best, Mr. Hollander would be in much more critical condition right now. At worst, he very likely wouldn't have made it here in time."

Shane's parents turned slowly and finally saw him.

David murmured a quiet thank you as the nurse slipped back into the trauma bay, her shoes squeaking faintly on the polished floor. Yuna didn't look back at her at all.

Ilya stood abruptly, the chair scraping softly against the linoleum. He wasn't sure why. Manners, maybe? Instinct. Or the sudden, crushing awareness that he was very much out of place and in the way.

"I - " he started, then stopped.

He had no idea what he was supposed to say.

Hello. Sorry my teammate nearly killed your son. By the way, I love him. More than anything else in my life.

The words tangled uselessly in his throat.

They were staring at him. Their eyes were locked on the blood covering him.

At the thick and unnerving way it stained his jersey, his hands, his arms. At the fact that he looked barely steadier than they felt, shaking and pale and hollowed out by fear.

Shane's mother took a tentative step toward him. She still looked terrified and stunned. But something shifted behind her eyes as she looked at him. *Really* looked. Not at the jersey, or the name stitched across the back, or the rival she'd told herself she disliked.

She saw a young man. The same age as her son. Who, she knew, had buried his own father not even a week ago and was standing right there anyway.

Ghost-white and trembling and shell-shocked. Covered in her child's blood. Looking at her like he was bracing for a rebuff. Or worse.

She closed the distance between them without hesitation and pulled him right into her arms.

For a split second, he froze, the muscle memory snapping tight, instincts screaming *don't*.

And then the thought hit him, sudden and unbearable:

He couldn't remember the last time he'd been held like this. By a mother.

Something in him gave way as the full weight of everything he'd seen and done tonight pressed in on him. He crumpled into her, folding at the waist like his bones had turned to water, forehead dropping against the crook of her neck. His breath stuttered once, twice, before breaking completely. His hands clutched uselessly at the back of her coat.

"I didn't let go," he choked. "I didn't let go. I couldn't-"

"I know," she murmured immediately, arms tightening around him. "I know."

He tried twice, maybe three times to pull himself together.

"I'm - " he managed once, trying to pull away, "I'm sorry. Your coat, the blood..."

“Shh,” Yuna said at once, firm but gentle. Her arms cinched around again, one hand sliding up to cradle the back of his head. “It’s okay. I don’t care.”

She swayed a little, almost without thinking. The small, rhythmic motion was instinctive, the way someone would rock a small child. Ilya sank back against her neck and let her.

Eventually, distantly, he became aware of another presence. A hand, warm and steady, settling between his shoulder blades, rubbing slow circles there.

David.

Then another realization hit him all at once. All three of them were crying. Grief and terror and relief tangled so tightly there was no separating them yet.

They stayed like that until the worst of it ebbed. Until Ilya’s breathing steadied and his hands stopped shaking enough to unclench.

Yuna eased them all down into chairs with gentle insistence, shepherding them without comment. She seated Ilya between them, as if it were the most natural thing in the world. David’s hand rested on one of Ilya’s shoulders. Yuna’s settled on his knee, her thumb rubbing small, reassuring circles over the fabric of his pants.

Then she straightened. Her face changed, not hardening exactly, but focusing. Purpose snapped into place like armor.

“Alright,” she said, already reaching for her phone. “Let’s get some things sorted. Your belongings are still at the arena?”

Ilya nodded. And then she was dialing the Montreal head coach before he could even register what was happening.

“Yes,” she said calmly. “This is Yuna Hollander. Ilya Rozanov is with us at the hospital, yes, right now. He doesn’t have his phone or any of his things. I need you to relay that information to the Boston coach immediately.”

She listened, lips pursed, nodding once.

“Yes. He’s safe. He’s staying with us. We’ll be responsible for him in the meantime, given the circumstances, obviously.” A pause. “He’ll need his things from the locker room brought over. Shoes, phone, wallet. Whatever he had with him.”

Another pause.

“Thank you,” she said. “I appreciate it.”

The call ended. Another began. Then another. Ilya watched, transfixed and stunned.

She was efficient. Decisive. Unflappable in a way that somehow coexisted with red-rimmed eyes and tear-streaked cheeks. She relayed updates, assigned responsibility, cut cleanly

through the chaos like this nightmare scenario was something she'd done a hundred times before.

He was impressed. And a little intimidated. *More* than a little, honestly. He glanced sideways at David, brows knitting, expression asking a silent, *holy shit, is this normal?*

David caught it and snorted softly as he made a fond, resigned face back.

Oh yeah, kid. This is normal.

Yuna finally lowered the phone and exhaled, rubbing at her temples.

"Alright," she said. "Your coach knows where you are. Your things are on their way. You're staying with us tonight. End of discussion."

Ilya nodded automatically, because arguing felt unthinkable.

She softened then, her hand returning to his knee. The three of them sat and waited. No one felt the need to fill the silence. It hummed quietly around them, broken only by the distant sounds of the hospital; footsteps, murmured voices, the occasional beep of something important happening somewhere else.

Ilya stared at the floor, slowly breathing in and out. He was safely tucked between two people who loved Shane, too. And held in place by hands that didn't let him drift too far into his own head.

He knew the ache in his chest wouldn't ease until he saw Shane awake and calm and talking, but for now, it had stopped threatening to tear him apart.

Chapter End Notes

Yuna took one look at sad, scared Ilya and decided

[Tarzan Mother GIF](#)

Also managed to sneak in references to two of my favorite, most heartbreaking moments from two different series so <3

1 - the end of GoF in HP when Harry is recovering after Cedric's death/the graveyard and Molly just sweeps that sad baby up in her arms and holds him. And Harry's internally like, "He had no memory of ever being hugged like this. As though, by a mother." LIKE, ouch. Also - hits very different now that i'm a mom too.

2 - in Mockingjay, when Katniss realizes how Snow is using Peeta and falls apart, and she's like, "the only person I truly want to comfort me is Haymitch, because he loves Peeta, too." UGH

Ilya my shaylaaaaaa :[fluff coming soon, i promise!

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

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

Time stretched. It lost its shape with minutes dragging heavier and slower until Ilya wasn't sure how long he'd been sitting there when a doctor finally appeared in the doorway.

"Mr. and Mrs. Hollander?"

Yuna was on her feet instantly. David rose more slowly, one hand squeezing Ilya's shoulder as he did. Ilya stayed where he was, watching and listening.

The doctor's voice was calm and reassuring. No longer as urgent and commanding as it had been when Ilya first heard it hours ago.

"He's stable," he said. "The surgery went well. No complications. He was extremely lucky. Another few minutes without intervention and this would have been a very different conversation. But he's going to be fine. He'll make a full recovery."

Yuna exhaled shakily, hand pressed to her mouth and made a strangled sound that was thick with relief. David snaked an arm around her shoulders.

"That said," the doctor continued gently, "he's done playing for the season. He'll need to take it slow; there will be some restrictions on his physical activity for a while to allow his body to heal. But everything looks good so far, and we'll monitor him closely over the next few weeks."

"Can we see him?" Yuna asked immediately.

"Yes," the doctor said. "He's waking up now."

They turned together, already reaching for Ilya, hands lifting in silent invitation. He wasn't sure if they were just being polite, or if they assumed he'd want to see Shane awake and okay after what happened. Or maybe... they'd guessed there was *more* to all of this.

Still, he shook his head before they could say anything.

"Is okay," he insisted quickly. "Really. You should go first. I'll, uh -" He gestured vaguely toward the chairs. "I'll wait here. Meet whoever's bringing my things."

Yuna frowned. "Ilya..."

"Is okay," he said, forcing a small smile. "I swear."

Shane's parents hesitated like they knew better but didn't quite know how to argue with him at this moment. Finally, reluctantly, they went. The hallway swallowed them up, footsteps fading.

Ilya was alone again.

He stared at his hands. They were cleaner now; Yuna had fetched a handful of alcohol wipes from the registration desk and gently scrubbed away the worst of the blood from his fingers. It had been oddly comforting to be fussed over like that. And he could tell it helped her, too, to have something tangible to do, something to fix, while she waited for word about her son.

Still, the phantom pressure of Shane's fluttering pulse lingered beneath his fingertips. He shivered, suddenly cold all over.

Maybe I should just leave, he thought.

Shane would want his parents. Of course he would. He was scared. He was hurt. He'd almost died.

There was a very real chance Ilya would only complicate things right now. Especially after what he'd whispered in Shane's ear before the anesthesia took him.

But, impossibly, wonderfully, frighteningly, Shane had said it back.

And then there was the other, more practical consideration. Yuna would *absolutely* kick his ass if she came back and found him gone. The thought made him smile, just a little.

He shifted restlessly in his chair. Five minutes passed. Maybe ten.

He was just starting to wonder if this *was* his cue. If he should stand up, find the exit and disappear quietly, when footsteps approached again.

He looked up. It was David. His eyes were tired and wet, but his mouth was tipped into something indulgent and a little amused,

"Come on," he said simply. Then he huffed a soft laugh, shaking his head. "He asked for you."

Ilya's eyes widened. "He... what?"

"*Demanded* might be a better word," David said, the fond half-smile deepening. "Didn't want to hear anything else until I promised to fetch you."

His heart lurched out of rhythm as relief washed through his chest so sweet and sudden it took his breath away. David jerked his head down the hall.

"Come on. He's going to be very annoyed if we make him wait."

Ilya was on his feet before he realized he'd moved.

The hospital room was dimmer than the hallway, overhead lights off, the lamplight low and merciful. Machines hummed softly. The IV dripped steadily.

Shane was propped up in bed.

He looked awful. Pale to the point of translucence, exhaustion carved deep into his face, dark shadows cut beneath his eyes, shoulders slumped like gravity had finally decided to collect its due. His voice was hoarse as he talked to his mom. She was perched on the edge of the bed, one hand wrapped firmly around his resting in his lap.

There was a wide bandage wrapped around his neck; the thick, layered gauze was secured tightly. Ilya couldn't see the actual stitches, but he could see the uneven ridge of the fabric, the subtle rise and fall where skin had been pulled together again.

It made his stomach twist painfully.

Shane's eyes flicked up and brightened instantly when they landed on Ilya's face. Ilya watched the emotions play out over Shane's features.

Relief. Longing. Joy.

Then Shane's gaze dropped to the carnage still painting Ilya's front. The color drained even further from his face.

"Jesus Christ," Shane said, suddenly pushing himself more upright, breath quickening. "Ilya, are you okay? Is that... They said I was the only one hurt. What the fuck?"

Ilya moved fast, shaking his head quickly. He pressed one hand flat against Shane's chest, gentle but firm, easing him back against the pillows before he could strain himself further.

"Hey, is okay," Ilya said quietly. "You lie down."

He sat on the other side of the bed, mirroring Yuna's position.

"I'm fine. Is your blood. I'm not hurt."

Shane paused and searched Ilya's eyes for a moment.

"Oh," he said faintly.

His eyes dropped again, taking in the dark stains on Ilya's jersey, the dried smears along his forearms. He swallowed hard.

For a long moment, no one spoke.

Shane's gaze flicked up to Ilya's face, then back to the blood, then up again, like he was trying to reconcile the two images and failing. Like part of him was still stuck on the ice, watching red spill where it shouldn't.

Yuna cleared her throat softly and resumed talking.

"So," she said, squeezing Shane's hand. "The med team came out immediately. They stabilized you on the ice and got you into the ambulance. Ilya stayed with you the whole time."

Shane nodded, trying to focus. His eyes flitted to her. To his dad. Back to Ilya. Back to the blood.

“It was pretty chaotic,” Yuna continued. “But everything went exactly right, thank God. The doctor said the surgery went beautifully. You’re very lucky.”

Shane hummed faintly in acknowledgment, but his attention kept drifting. His jaw tightened every time his eyes landed on Ilya’s stained jersey.

Ilya noticed. He shifted slightly closer, lowering his voice.

“Hey,” he murmured. “Look at me.”

Shane’s eyes lifted immediately.

“I’m okay,” Ilya repeated, softer this time. “You’re okay.”

Shane nodded again, swallowing thickly. He tried to look away. Failed.

Because the blood was still there. *So* much of it. And it was very clearly upsetting him.

For one wild second, Ilya considered tearing everything off and stripping down to his briefs right there. But he wasn’t sure how much blood had seeped through and stained his skin, too. Which might be worse. And also, well. Shane’s parents were *right* there.

He just wanted to remove whatever was making Shane distressed.

Yuna watched for another moment. She saw the way Shane couldn’t stop flicking his eyes back to the blood, the way his fingers kept twitching like he wanted to reach for Ilya and didn’t quite dare yet. Her lips pursed, thoughtful.

“David,” she said lightly, already standing. “Don’t you have some extra sweatshirts in the car? Let’s see if we can find one. Or maybe we’ll run into whoever’s bringing Ilya’s things. But we should get him changed out of his gear.”

David didn’t question it. He just nodded, rising immediately.

Yuna bent and kissed Shane’s forehead. Then, without ceremony, she reached over and stroked Ilya’s hair. Gentle, maternal, automatic.

“We’ll be right back,” she said.

The door closed.

Shane and Ilya lasted approximately one sixty-fourth of a second before they were reaching for each other. Careful but desperate all the same. Ilya cupped Shane’s face, thumbs skimming his cheeks, mindful of the bandage, the IV, the brace supporting the collarbone opposite his neck injury. Shane leaned forward as much as he was allowed, his free hand fisting weakly in Ilya’s jersey.

Their foreheads pressed together for one heartbeat. And then Ilya's mouth was on Shane's, messy and frantic. Shane made a small, broken sound, and suddenly they were both crying with tiny, wrecked sobs that caught in their chests as their mouths found each other over and over. They breathed each other in like oxygen around kisses that were clumsy and urgent, damp with tears, more need than finesse.

Ilya pulled back just enough to press his forehead to Shane's again, eyes squeezed shut, breath coming too fast.

"I - " he tried, failed. Shook his head frantically.

Instead, he folded forward and buried his face in the crown of Shane's head, careful not to jostle him, arms wrapping around him like he was afraid the world might try to take him again. Shane clutched back just as tightly as possible with his depleted strength, fingers digging in.

"I love you," Ilya said into Shane's hair.

Again. And again. And again.

"I love you. I love you. I love you."

Shane's breath shuddered. He laughed wetly, voice shaking.

"I- I love you, too. Oh my god, I love you so much."

He pulled back just enough to look up at Ilya. His eyes were red and glassy and *alive*.

"I wasn't sure," he admitted, voice small. "I wasn't sure if I dreamed that part. Or if it was just the drugs."

Ilya shook his head as a soft, disbelieving chuckle broke through his tears. He leaned down and pressed his lips to Shane's forehead and let them linger there.

"No," he said quietly. "Not a dream."

Their mouths met again. Slower this time, but no less intense. It was all heat and trembling relief, lips dragging and parting, hands fisting gently in fabric, like they were still afraid to let go.

And finally, *finally*, after the ice and the blood and the terror and the waiting, the terrible clawing anxiety in Ilya's chest began to fade away.

my babiesssss

also in case that last line feels a little too final, don't worry; i've got like, at least three more chapters planned for this. possibly more if end up having to split any of the story beats up

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

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

They kept kissing for a several long minutes until the adrenaline and relief thinned enough to let them breathe. Eventually, they settled. Just a little. Not fully calm, not with everything still so raw and recent. But enough that Ilya could breathe without it catching sharply in his chest. Enough that his hands stopped trembling. Enough that he could lean back, just far enough to see Shane's face, and swipe at his own eyes with the heel of his hand. He sniffed hard, laughing breathlessly through it.

"You scared the fuck out of me," he said, voice rough and stripped bare.

Shane slumped back against the pillows and nodded slowly.

Yeah," he admitted hoarsely. "Me too."

A quiet beat passed between them. The silence was heavy but not suffocating. Then Ilya exhaled another shaky laugh despite himself.

"Also," he added helplessly, "your mother is fucking terrifying."

Shane raised an eyebrow at him and laughed. It was a soft croaky sound that caught in his throat and turned into a wince he didn't seem to regret.

"Yeah?" he rasped, grinning again. "But like... in a good way, right?"

"In the *best* way," Ilya said immediately. "Holy shit."

Shane smiled wider, eyes crinkling with familiar affection.

"Let me guess. She had everything settled and handled within, like, five minutes?"

Ilya nodded. "Less."

"She's probably already drafted an email to the league commissioner in her head," Shane murmured, dry as dust. "Something about neck guards. Or skate blade regulations. Or both."

"Yes, she basically said as much."

Shane hummed, the sound content and sleepy. He sat up again and tipped his head forward until it rested lightly against Ilya's shoulder. Ilya brought a hand up to the back of Shane's head, stroking through the damp strands of hair, still soft despite the sweat and the faint chemical scent of antiseptics clinging to it. Shane hummed again at the contact and nosed along Ilya's collarbone until his forehead came to rest in the curve of Ilya's neck.

They stayed like that for several minutes, content and unmoving. Shane's breathing evened out and his body grew heavier as it sagged into Ilya's chest. Eventually, Ilya began to wonder if he'd actually fallen asleep.

But then Shane shifted and leaned back slightly, careful of the bandage and his brace. His eyes flicked toward the door like the weight of reality was beginning to settle back in.

"Don't you have to... I don't know," he asked quietly, voice scratchy, "do captain stuff? Media stuff?"

Ilya shrugged a small, helpless lift of his shoulders.

"Honestly? I don't know."

Shane blinked at him. "You don't?"

"My phone's with my things. Someone's supposed to bring them."

"Oh," Shane murmured. Then, softer, "Right."

For a moment, the familiar weight of obligation hovered above them: press conferences, locker room debriefs, professional expectations. The outside world was waiting to pull them apart again.

Ilya cupped Shane's face gently, thumbs brushing over the curve of his cheeks and tracing the smattering of freckles there.

"But it doesn't matter," he said, voice low and steady. "Even if I do have 'captain stuff,' I'm not leaving you. Not tonight."

Shane exhaled as the relief loosened a bit more tension in his body. He leaned into Ilya's palms and closed his eyes.

"Okay," he murmured.

Shane's parents came back a little while later. David was carrying a bundle of Ilya's things: his phone, wallet, keys, and a change of clothes folded neatly in his arms.

Ilya murmured a thanks and excused himself to slip into the small bathroom attached to the hospital room. He ran the water so extremely hot that it stung a little against his skin. But the scalding sensation weirdly helped steady him.

He stood under the spray for longer than necessary. He scrubbed every trace of dried blood from his arms and chest, from beneath his fingernails, from the back of his neck. Watched the crimson swirls flow down the drain. Then scrubbed himself again just to be sure.

After he changed into his own clothes, he stared for a long moment at the blood-stained jersey and gear piled on the floor. It felt wrong to just leave them there but also wrong to throw them away.

When he stepped out, toweling at his damp hair, David met him at the door with a plain black duffel bag.

“Here,” he said simply, holding it out. “For your gear. We’ll get it all cleaned for you.”

Ilya blinked, caught off guard. “You don’t have to -”

“I know,” David said. “Still.”

Ilya nodded, throat tight, and accepted the bag without another word.

Yuna was back on the edge of Shane’s bed, settled in the same spot as before, her hand resting lightly on her son’s arm. Shane looked a little more awake now. The color was slowly returning to his face, a faint flush replacing the earlier pallor. His eyes tracked Ilya as he crossed the room and sank into the chair beside David. For a moment, the room was hushed again, filled only with soft beeping from the machines and the low murmur of voices in the hallway.

Then Yuna glanced between the two of them.

“Shane, can I ask you something?” she said, her voice quiet and careful.

Something in her tone made Shane and Ilya instinctively exchange a loaded glance.

“Okay,” Shane said cautiously.

“You two are friends,” Yuna continued. “Despite all the... hockey stuff.”

Shane nodded, narrowing his eyes by the tiniest fraction. Ilya could practically hear the *that’s not a question* sitting on the tip of Shane’s tongue. He fought back a smile.

“Are you...” Yuna hesitated, then said gently, “*more* than friends?”

Shane’s eyes darted to Ilya, wide and startled. Terrified, really. The look on his face would have been answer enough. But Ilya gave him a small shrug and made a face in return that said: *it’s pretty obvious to them at this point, babe. It’s okay with me if it’s okay with you.*

Shane turned back to his mother. He met her eyes for half a second before his gaze flicked over her shoulder at the far wall. He nodded again.

Yuna tilted her head and reached out to brush Shane’s cheek with the backs of her fingers, soft and tender.

“Were you afraid to tell us?” she asked. Her voice trembled slightly.

Shane flushed. The color crept into his face immediately as his gaze dropped to his lap. He nodded a third time.

“A little,” he admitted. “But it’s not...” He shook his head. “It’s not your fault. It’s just... a lot.”

Yuna made a small, pained noise in her throat. Her eyes shone.

“I promise I was going to tell you,” Shane added quickly, glancing up at her face before looking down again. Then, a shade more defensive, he muttered, “It was on my to-do list.”

Ilya snorted before he could stop himself. Shane shot him a flat look.

“Sorry,” Ilya said, though he didn’t sound sorry at all. “Just... take out trash. Get groceries. *Come out to parents*. Take car for oil change.”

David let out a short, unguarded laugh from the chair beside him. Yuna exhaled, somewhere between a laugh and a sigh, and shook her head, pressing her lips together. Shane glared but the corner of his mouth twitched. Yuna squeezed his hand, then reached over and rested her other hand on Ilya’s knee.

“I’m sorry,” she said softly, “that you felt like you couldn’t tell us. We would have wanted to know. We *want* to know.”

Shane nodded, eyes suddenly wet and a little sad. But there was relief mixed in too, loosening his shoulders just a hair. Then his gaze flickered to Ily, who could see that even underneath that, Shane was still a little unsure. Like part of him expected this to change things, to scare Ilya off somehow.

So Ilya gave him a crooked, private smile, trying to telegraph everything he didn’t have the words for yet. All the stunned delight, the giddy relief, the certainty still blooming in his chest.

I’m here. I want this. I’m not going anywhere.

Ilya decided then that he’d tell him later, when it was just the two of them, how this was better than anything he could have imagined. No one was storming out. No one was hurling slurs or insults. No one was trying to hit them. No one was even saying they needed time to “process,” like he and Shane had done something *to* them by falling in love.

And sure, maybe the bar was so low it was practically in hell. But *this*? This was good. This was so much more than so many others got. It felt like a miracle.

Yuna glanced between the two of them again.

“So,” she said. “Can I ask... since when?”

Shane tensed slightly. “Uh, our rookie year,” he said after a beat, voice wary.

Both his parents balked. David’s brows shot up. Yuna tilted her head, her forehead wrinkling in confusion.

“Your rookie year?” she echoed, eyes narrowing. “As in, *seven* years ago?”

Before Shane could respond, Ilya made a small, thoughtful noise and said, “Eh, before that.”

Shane whipped his head toward him. “Dude.”

“What?” Ilya said innocently. “It was.”

Yuna stared between them, clearly recalibrating.

“So you’ve, what?” she asked next, then shook her head. “Been together and in love since *before* your rookie year?”

Ilya and Shane both rushed to answer at once.

“No, no, not like that,” Shane said quickly. Ilya shook his head at the same time as Shane let out a long breath. “The... feelings part is new. Very new. It was... casual.”

“Casual,” Yuna repeated, frowning.

Shane nodded, looking pained. “It wasn’t serious. Just... y’know.”

“Casual and not serious, like... ?” she echoed again, brow pinching.

Ilya, unhelpfully, nodded.

“Yes. Casual. Like...” He trailed off, trying to find the right word. “What is term?”

Shane narrowed his eyes in warning.

“Please, don’t.”

But Ilya, clearly emboldened, plowed ahead.

“Fuck buddies.”

“Jesus *fucking* Christ,” Shane grumbled, closing his eyes and sinking back into the pillows with a pained groan. “Ilya, *please* shut up.”

“Oh, you have a better word?”

“Stop talking or I swear I will rip all these stitches open out of spite.”

Ilya snickered. Yuna pressed her lips together, clearly trying not to smile. David laughed outright, dry and amused.

“Maybe save the third degree for tomorrow, honey,” he gently suggested to his wife. “It’s been a very long day.”

“You’re right,” she murmured, then sighed softly. She looked at Shane for a long moment, then at Ilya.

“I’m glad you two have each other,” she said simply.

And then, mercifully, the conversation shifted to less mortifying topics.

It turned out that getting to be alone again with Shane took some convincing. His parents hovered, reluctant to leave even after the doctor reassured them again that he was stable, that the night would be uneventful, that he was going to be fine.

“I’ll be okay,” Shane insisted gently. “I promise. You guys should go home. Get some sleep. You look exhausted.”

Yuna frowned. “We can stay.”

“Ilya will be here,” Shane said, glancing at him. “I won’t be alone.”

Ilya nodded immediately. “I’m not going anywhere.”

That seemed to do it.

They left, hugging Shane carefully, and embraced Ilya too. Yuna lingered an extra second, like she was still reeling a little from the fact of him being there. David squeezed Ilya’s shoulder on the way out.

As the door clicked shut behind them, Ilya moved to the bed and carefully wrapped Shane in his arms again. He kissed his forehead and let his lips linger against his skin.

“I love you.”

Shane’s reply came easily, without hesitation.

“I love you, too.”

That night, Ilya slept in the chair. Or *something* like slept.

He was half-slumped forward, arms folded on the edge of Shane’s hospital bed, forehead resting against them. His neck was screaming, muscles stiff and unhappy, but he didn’t care. He needed to be close enough to hear Shane breathe. Close enough to feel the bed shift when Shane moved.

Every time Shane stirred, Ilya jolted awake, eyes snapping to check if Shane needed anything, or just to brush a careful finger over the freckles on his cheek. A few times, Ilya had trouble falling back asleep after.

Eventually, he gave up and reached for his phone, scrolling through the backlog of messages. There were dozens: teammates, coaches, even a few journalists he knew. He skimmed some of the headlines, curiosity outweighing caution. He made sure to toggle the SafeSearch blur and carefully avoid the photos. Everything was already seared into his memory. The blood, the ice, the terror in Shane’s eyes. He didn’t need reminders.

Most of the news stories were about Shane. His injury. Similarities to other incidents over the years. A growing call for regulation changes with neck guards and skate blade safety.

Ilya was surprised to see that no small number of articles praised *him* specifically, commending his “extraordinary display of sportsmanship.”

It made his stomach turn.

Because even if he *wasn't* in love with Shane, what the hell was he supposed to have done? Just stand there? Watch a man die right in front of him because, what? They'd happen to be drafted to rival teams years ago? Because the *media* had played up that stupid fact for almost a fucking decade?

And sure, maybe it *was* a little outside the norm, the way he reacted. Fast. Focused. Like instinct. But he refused to call it *heroic*. He knew other players had frozen and panicked, unsure what to do. And he didn't blame them. But still, he'd only done what he thought anyone would've done if the love of their life was bleeding out in front of them.

Shane stirred suddenly, wincing as he shifted against the pillows. His voice was hoarse, barely above a whisper.

"Water?"

Ilya moved right away. He fetched a cup, helped Shane sit up just enough, and held it steady while he drank.

When Shane finished, he sighed happily and looked up at him, eyes soft and smitten.

"Thanks," he whispered as a dopey, sleepy smile spread across his mouth.

Ilya stroked a hand through his hair and bent to kiss him once, chaste and sweet.

And as his lips met Shane's, the headlines and the noise and the outrage, all slipped away from his mind.

Chapter End Notes

ilya didn't have an emotional support plate of spaghetti to chow down this time, so, we got "fuck buddies" instead of "lovers" lmao
however shane is still like i would literally rather DIE than discuss our history with my parents holy fuck

also, obviously anyone would have a myriad of different fight/flight/freeze responses to their partner getting critically injured right in front of them. but ilya is chaffing so much at being hailed as hero by a few blogs, that he's like, ??? literally wtf else was i supposed to do.

to *him* his quick thinking is the only response that makes sense, but i just wanted to be clear that's not the *only* valid response to witnessing something like that, you feel me?

ALSO if you're here from someone's rec on Twitter or TikTok, would you leave a comment and let me know?? Ive been crossing my fingers to see one of my fics show up

on someone's list 😭

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

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

Morning found them both groggy and sore. Neither of them had slept well; nurses had come and gone through the night, checking vitals and administering meds. Ilya had refused to leave the chair at Shane's bedside, only dozing in brief, uncomfortable stretches.

Still, underneath the haze of fatigue, a giddy feeling flickered between them. They'd never spent the whole night together before. Sure, the hospital walls and IV drips and stitches were very much *not* sexy or romantic, but still.

Around 7 a.m., Ilya pulled out his phone and ordered coffee and breakfast sandwiches.

Shane reflexively started to protest with something about his diet and macros. But mid-sentence, his stomach betrayed him with a loud, unmistakable growl.

Ilya raised an eyebrow.

"*What* is the point of *not* dying," he said dryly, "if you won't even have a fucking latte the next day?"

That made Shane laugh, hoarse and genuine. He rolled his eyes and gave in. He even let Ilya order a few donuts, too.

By mid-morning, Hayden and J.J. strolled into Shane's hospital room, both of them too loud in that vaguely try-hard, comforting way. Relief oozed from their too-bright grins and the way their voices were pitched a little too high. The playful razzing they gave Shane felt a little stilted and slightly off-kilter, like they needed to prove they could still laugh despite what they'd seen on the ice.

Ilya had offered to leave when Shane told him they were coming. He'd meant it.

But Shane reached out and caught his wrist firmly.

"No," he said simply. "Stay. Please."

So, he stayed.

Hayden did an extremely cartoonish double-take when he saw Ilya in the chair by the window.

"Uh, what the f-," he began, obviously floored. But when he registered Shane sitting upright and clearly unbothered, he pivoted without missing a beat. "You alright, Roz?"

Ilya only nodded once, brief and neutral, before pulling out his phone and pretending to scroll.

It was *awkward*, but civil. J.J. seemed content to act like Ilya didn't exist, which suited Ilya just fine. Hayden kept darting glances his way, like he couldn't quite believe what he was seeing. It wasn't comfortable, but it wasn't awful either.

They stayed for a good while, joking around and giving Shane updates about the team. They took jabs at various teammates and at Shane. They valiantly tried - and failed - to bury the quiet undercurrent of *thank God you're still here*. But Shane didn't seem to mind.

Ilya stayed put, quiet and unobtrusive, scrolling through his phone, answering politely when addressed, never inserting himself. His gaze locked onto Shane every time he shifted or sighed, checking to see if he needed anything. But Ilya didn't hover.

Then, rather abruptly, J.J. switched to French.

"Why's he still here?" he asked tightly, nodding toward Ilya.

Shane replied in French without hesitation. *"Because he wants to be."*

"Is he bothering you?" Hayden asked, tone easy but still pointed. *"We can make him leave if you're being too polite to kick him out."*

Ilya didn't understand the words, but he understood the tone and the little sideways glances they shot toward him in his periphery. He very deliberately kept his eyes on his phone.

Shane tried to brush it off at first, offering a laugh that didn't quite reach his eyes.

"No, it's fine. Really."

J.J. frowned. *"You sure? Dude is such an asshole."*

Shane shrugged, his face hardening just slightly.

"He's not, really. It's mostly an act. Deep down, he's a good guy." He tipped his chin toward the thick bandage around his throat. *"I mean... obviously."*

His voice was calm and even, but there was a strain beneath it that suggested his patience was quickly fraying.

But J.J., more foolish than wise, didn't let it go.

"Well, I don't trust him," he said, voice sharpening. *"He's the kind of guy who'd smother you with a pillow or rip out your stitches the second we leave."*

"And flush all that sportsmanship praise straight down the toilet before he can cash in on his new Saint Rozanov branding?" Hayden added, chuckling wryly. *"Come on. He's a dick, but he's not an idiot."*

Shane lost it.

His spine snapped straight as he surged upright, pain be damned. His hands were fisted in the sheets as French poured out of him, hoarse and furious.

*“Are you two out of your fucking **minds**? He’s my friend, for fuck’s sake. He has been for **years**. He saved my life. He held my neck shut so I wouldn’t bleed out. Then he sat in this room all night so I wouldn’t be up here alone.”*

J.J. tried to cut in. Shane steamrolled him.

“I am so fucking tired of everyone acting like he’s the worst goddamn person on the planet. And having to play along with it for this stupid fucking rivalry. I’m sick of pretending he’s some monster just because it makes things easier for everyone else.”

Hayden and Ilya exchanged a brief, startled glance at the sheer rage in Shane’s voice. J.J. rolled his eyes.

*“What the fuck, man? Is this just some trauma bonding bullshit? You’ve never said a word about being his friend. That’s a pretty big fucking secret to keep from your **actual** friends.”*

Shane switched to English without thinking as his temper finally broke loose entirely.

“Well, I wonder fucking why!”

Then resumed snarling in French, sharper and harsher than before.

*“How was I **supposed** to tell you? He saved my goddamn **life** while you and everyone else **froze**, and even **that** isn’t enough for you to get off his fucking back.”*

J.J. flinched. Hayden looked away, his mouth pressing into a tight line. Neither of them had a comeback this time.

Shane’s voice stayed sharp.

“If you’re just here to shit on him, then get the fuck out. You don’t get to talk about him like that in front of me. Not anymore.”

Silence crashed down around their ears.

Ilya hadn’t understood any of the words, obviously. But he’d understood everything *else*. The fury laced through Shane’s voice, the way his hands trembled slightly where they gripped the blanket. He could feel the tension in the air. And saw the immovable way Shane stood his ground, drawing a line in the sand about... something. Ilya, maybe? Probably, based on those furtive little glances right before.

Ilya couldn’t stop the small, involuntary smirk tugging at his mouth as he watched Shane slump back against the pillows, spent from anger and panting slightly. This beautiful, stubborn man who was injured, exhausted and furious, and had clearly planted himself between Ilya and his two closest friends.

Shane let out a long, sharp sigh. “Well?” he snapped, in English.

Hayden lifted both hands in a slow, placating gesture.

“Okay, okay, we get it,” he said slowly, “Point taken.”

J.J. winced. “Fuck, man. Didn’t know you felt that strongly.”

Shane dragged a hand through his hair, his expression still tight.

“Yeah, well,” he muttered. “I do.”

Ilya dropped his gaze back to his phone before anyone could catch the smirk still lingering on his mouth.

The air still hummed with tension long after Shane’s outburst.

His visitors tried to pivot, fumbling through safer topics like projected lineups and J.J. taking over captain duties now that Shane was out for the season. The answers felt hollow, even to them. Eventually, they both mumbled something about needing to catch the team flight soon.

“Get some rest,” Hayden said, edging toward the door. “We’ll, uh... check in later.”

“Yeah,” J.J. added, glancing at the floor. “Text us if you need anything.”

Then, unexpectedly, he turned and crossed the room toward Ilya.

“Hey,” he said, sticking out his hand.

Ilya eyebrows lifted in disbelief. J.J. still looked like he might punch him. Or maybe hug him. Possibly both. It was hard to tell.

Still, Ilya took the offered hand. J.J.’s grip was stiff.

“Thank you,” he muttered. “For... ” he made a vague motion with one hand, “you know.”

Ilya gave a single nod. “Yeah.”

Hayden followed. His handshake was a tiny bit steadier and warmer.

“Really,” he said. “Thank you. He’s my best friend. I’m, uh, glad you did what you did.”

Ilya opened his mouth, already halfway to something sharp and smug. Something that would have felt extremely satisfying.

But then he caught sight of Shane’s face out of the corner of his eye. Wary and hopeful and utterly drained.

And Ilya instantly knew that if he took the piss right now or played into the asshole persona even a little, Shane would be so sad. And he couldn't have that.

So instead, he held Hayden’s gaze and nodded again, simple and sincere.

“Yes,” he said. “Me too.”

Hayden’s shoulders eased down from his earlobes. J.J. gave a final awkward nod. And then they were gone.

Ilya moved the moment the door clicked shut. He crossed to the bed and sat down beside Shane’s knees, just as Shane tilted his chin up slightly, lips pursing in a soft, unmistakable request.

Ilya leaned in and kissed him, slow and warm, and when he finally pulled back, it was only by a few inches. His eyes sparkled, a wicked smile already tugging at his mouth.

“So,” he murmured, voice full of mischief, “what did they say to you, hm?”

Shane groaned. Ilya grinned, absolutely shameless.

“You sounded like a kitten.”

“I did *not*.”

“Oh, you did,” Ilya said fondly. “Angry, ferocious kitten who thinks he’s a tiger. Like Carolina’s mascot.”

“A bobcat?” Shane asked, scrunching his nose in the most adorably skeptical way.

Ilya nodded eagerly, eyes gleaming. Shane rolled his eyes so hard it probably hurt.

“You’re unbearable.”

“Mmm,” Ilya agreed, already leaning in to press a kiss to Shane’s cheek. Then another, just below his eye.

“And not nearly as vicious as you,” he added, letting his lips graze the corner of Shane’s mouth.

“Or as scary,” he said, voice low and amused. “I don’t even know any French, and I still knew they were as good as dead.”

Shane’s mouth twitched despite himself, caught somewhere between a glare and a smile.

“Shut up,” he muttered.

Ilya hummed as he dropped light, playful kisses all over his skin like pattering raindrops. He pressed his mouth to Shane’s jaw, then his temple, then the delicate spot just behind his ear, careful of the bandage but greedy everywhere else.

“Tell me,” he murmured, brushing a kiss to the tip of Shane’s nose, “what was that about, hm?”

Shane gave a small, noncommittal shrug.

Ilya grinned. “What, were you defending my honor?”

He expected a laugh. Or a scoff. Maybe a muttered, fuck off, idiot or *what* honor, dickhead?

Instead, Shane nodded, small and careful, and said, “I mean. Yeah, pretty much.”

Ilya froze, blinking. He pulled back just enough to see his entire face.

“Wait. *Really?*”

Shane nodded again, color rising under the freckles on his cheeks. He looked down at the blanket, then back up at Ilya, a little sheepish.

“They were being weird about you being here,” he said quietly. “Like I was just being polite or something. And it pissed me off.”

He didn’t offer anything else. No elaborate explanations or dramatic confessions. Just that the *implication* he hadn’t really wanted Ilya there had unleashed all that fury.

Ilya’s heart and stomach both did something very strange and acrobatic inside his body. His throat tightened. His eyes stung and he had to rapidly blink a few times to clear them.

“Oh,” he said softly.

Shane glanced up at him, brow creased. “What?”

Ilya shook his head and let out a tiny huff of laughter.

“Nothing. Just...” he leaned back in and kissed him again, this time on the mouth, gentle and certain, “good to know.”

Shane exhaled against his lips as the last of the lingering tension leached from his shoulders.

“Yeah?”

“Yes,” Ilya murmured, resting his forehead against Shane’s. “Turns out I like having my honor defended. By you, especially.”

Shane snorted under his breath. “Don’t get used to it, asshole.”

Ilya smiled anyway.

Chapter End Notes

honestly if jj has 0 haters, i'm dead.

was shane's outburst a little overkill? perhaps. was it deeply satisfying for me to write after tlg? oh yeah lol

also does hayden speak french? fuck if i know. he does now

also Hayden and JJ accidentally becoming the Chris Rocks to Shane's full Will Smith.
Keep my {future} husband's NAME outta your FUCKIN mouths

also my HC is that Ilya, a little boston boi, is a slut for dunkin donuts, but will settle
grudgingly for tim horton's bc canada

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

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

Ilya hadn't moved far. He was still perched on the edge of Shane's hospital bed, one knee bent up on the mattress, one hand braced near Shane's hip.

His blood still thrummed from the thrill of Shane defending him, fierce and unapologetic, like it wasn't even a question whose side he was on.

He leaned in and brushed the hair back from Shane's temple, then kissed along his jaw, slow and teasing, lingering on the soft skin just beneath the hinge of it.

"I wish I could take you home," he murmured, voice rough and husky. "Thank you properly."

Shane's breath caught. "Yeah?"

Ilya smiled against his skin and moved to whisper filthy promises against the shell of Shane's ear and the sharp, unsteady gasp Shane gave at his words was *immensely* satisfying.

"If you give me a hard-on while I'm in this hospital gown," Shane grumbled warningly, "I'm gonna kick your ass so bad."

Ilya chuckled darkly, delighted.

"Big talk for a man with one arm in a sling and over two hundred stitches in his neck."

Then, he grinned wolfishly and dipped back in like he had every intention of calling Shane's bluff.

A sharp *buzz buzz buzz* came from Ilya's lap.

Ilya pulled back with a frown and fished his phone out of his pocket. The screen lit up with an email notification.

Team Travel Update **Montreal → Boston**

Ilya's jaw tightened slightly as he scanned the message. Their chartered flight was set for just over three hours from now. Which meant he'd have to leave soon. Pack up, call a car, head to the airport. Walk away from the other half of his heart, who was very much still pale and exhausted in his hospital bed.

Shane's face fell a little. His smile faded and the playfulness in his eyes was replaced by wary alertness as he watched the change come over Ilya.

"What is it?" he asked softly.

Ilya didn't look up right away. "Team flight," he said. "Back to Boston."

The words hung heavy and unwelcome between them. For the last twelve hours or so, the entire universe had shrunk to just this room. Now everything waiting outside was beginning to break through in earnest.

Shane continued to study Ilya's face as the inevitability of having to part again sank in. He reached out and brushed his fingers lightly along Ilya's wrist.

"It's okay," he said. "Really, I'm fine. If you have to go, then you have to go."

Ilya gave a small nod, but it felt robotic and forced. He swallowed, still staring at the screen.

"I know, I just..." his voice faltered, "every time I close my eyes, I see it. You on the ice. The blood. And I don't want to leave yet."

Shane's throat went tight. He didn't know how to answer without crying, and he was already right at the edge. So instead, he just laced their fingers together and brought their joined hands to his mouth, so he could softly kiss Ilya's knuckles over and over.

A moment later, the door opened. Yuna and David came in with lunch, paper bags tucked under their arms, soft drinks balanced carefully. Yuna swept one glance over the room and seemed to clock the shift immediately, but she didn't comment. She just moved forward, calm and purposeful, setting food down and handing things out like nothing had changed.

Suddenly, Ilya realized leaving felt utterly impossible and unthinkable. So, he murmured an excuse and stepped into the hallway.

The moment the door closed behind him, he dialed. His head coach picked up on the second ring.

"I need to talk about the flight," Ilya said. "I was thinking I could maybe fly later. Separately. Just today."

There was an incredulous pause. Then came the chewing out.

It was sharp and clipped and unyielding. A reminder of his responsibilities. His role. The optics. The expectations. He was told, explicitly, that he had already done *more* than enough for the Hollander kid. That this was not his emergency.

"You have duties," his coach said. "You don't get to just disappear, especially for another team's player. Nevermind that you *just* got back from dealing with your *own* shit, Rozanov."

Ilya stared at the blank wall across from him, jaw clenched tight. For one horrible, electric second, a very dangerous thought flashed through him.

I could resign.

Right now. On the spot. Just say the words and be done with it.

Because if he and Shane were together openly, or hell, married, if this were public and unquestioned, no one would dare say this to him. He would be staying with his family during a family emergency. End of discussion.

But he couldn't say any of that. So, he forced himself to swallow the words.

"Yes, sir," was all he said instead.

The line clicked dead.

Ilya stood there a moment longer, phone still pressed to his ear, breathing slowly and deliberately until the burn behind his eyes dulled enough that he could move again. Until he could go back inside to where Shane was waiting. And where Ilya would have to leave him. Soon. And not because he wanted to.

Shane had clearly filled his parents in, even guessed correctly what Ilya had gone outside to do.

Yuna looked up the moment Ilya stepped back in the room, reading his face like a case file.

"So?" she asked.

Ilya shifted uncomfortably. "Uh. No. I still have to leave soon; I was told I have... duties. And stuff."

Her mouth pressed into a thin line. Not angry, exactly. Just focused.

"And... stuff?"

"Is not *my* emergency," he said stiffly. "And I have already missed too many days. Because of the funeral. So."

Her eyebrows flew skyward. She narrowed her eyes, slow and lethal. Then she held out her hand.

"Your phone, please."

Ilya hesitated. He glanced at Shane, then at David, then back to Yuna. Then to Shane again.

Shane gave a small, wry shrug that clearly said *just let it happen, it's easier this way*.

So, Ilya handed over his phone. Yuna didn't waste a second.

She dialed, her spine straightening, voice smoothing into something cold and precise the moment the line connected.

"Hello," she said. "This is Yuna Hollander. I'm calling regarding Ilya Rozanov and his travel arrangements."

There was a spluttering reply on the other end.

“Yes,” Yuna continued, still perfectly pleasant. “I understand you’ve informed him he’s expected on a team flight today. I had a few questions about your organization’s policy regarding personal emergencies.”

She tilted her head, listening.

“I assume you have one,” she said lightly. “Most institutions do. Family emergencies, medical crises, bereavement. It’s a fairly broad category.”

Another pause.

“You know, I would’ve thought you’d be more sensitive to this,” Yuna said, her voice still calm, still perfectly reasonable. “Especially considering this happened to your captain and star player during his very first game back after burying his father.”

The line went quiet. Then more rushed, fumbling words on the other end. Yuna didn’t rush to reply.

“Mmhmm,” she said eventually. “And where, exactly, does witnessing a near-fatal injury fall under that policy?”

She listened again, her expression unreadable.

“Because Mr. Rozanov rendered emergency medical aid,” she continued smoothly. “He believed, quite reasonably, that the person he was helping might die. He was covered in blood. He stayed through transport and surgery.”

There was another beat of stillness.

“And surely,” she added, her tone just as light, “you’ve already arranged appropriate mental health care. A trauma specialist. Immediate psychological support.”

Her lips curved into a sharp smile.

“Not just for the team in general,” she clarified, “but for Mr. Rozanov specifically.”

Another pause. Longer this time. Yuna’s voice never wavered from being polite and devastatingly calm.

“Because if you haven’t,” she said, “that would be... concerning.”

She let that hang in the air for a moment, then she struck.

“Let me ask you something,” she said, her tone full of gentle curiosity. “If this were your son, if he had saved someone’s life, witnessed something like last night, was shaking and terrified and covered in blood, would you be insisting he board a plane today?”

More spluttering in reply.

“Or,” she added softly, “does mental well-being only matter to you as long as you’re winning games?”

She didn’t stop there.

“It would be a shame,” Yuna said, tone still light, “if the league knew this was how you treat your players.”

There was another beat of tense murmuring.

“I can’t imagine many kids would be eager to be drafted to a team like that,” she added mildly, “if they knew they were expected to clock in and suit up and shut up, no matter what they’d been through.”

The line went absolutely silent.

Yuna waited. When she spoke again, her tone was crisp and final.

“Thank you,” she said. “We’ll expect a follow-up shortly.”

And with that, she ended the call. Ilya took the phone back like it might burn him. For a moment, he just stared at it in his palm. Then he glanced up and over Yuna’s shoulder as she turned back to her lunch and mouthed very clearly at Shane:

What the fuck?

Shane only grinned at him, smug and unapologetic.

Ilya’s chest suddenly felt too tight. He looked away quickly, because the tangle of feelings rising inside him were too sharp and almost too big to touch safely.

He couldn’t remember the last time he’d been defended him like that.

Well. Obviously, Shane had just done so. But that was different.

This was... something else. Yuna barely knew him. And nearly all of what she *did* know came from the rivalry stuff and how people saw him as a player, not as a person.

But she had done it without hesitation, like there had never even been a question of whether he was worth standing up for.

The same thought bloomed in his mind again with an important qualifier.

He couldn’t remember the last time *a parent* had defended him like that.

It hit him like a blow and sent his mind reeling.

But then. Well. That wasn’t exactly true. Of course he could remember.

Before his mother died.

The memories rose fast and vivid. His father's voice, cold and sharp, slicing through the house. Dressing him and his brother down for some small slight that had somehow become unforgivable. The way the walls always felt like they were closing in when his father screamed like that.

And his mother, stepping in and turning the fury on herself instead.

How she would lift her chin, meet his father's rage head-on while flicking a subtle hand gesture behind her back.

Go. Both of you.

Ilya had always fled. He had always known what she was doing. After she was gone, he wished he'd stayed instead. Tried harder to protect her from his father in those moments.

His throat closed up. He pressed his tongue to the roof of his mouth and breathed carefully through his nose, fighting the overwhelming sting behind his eyes. He did not want to start crying again.

As if sensing the shift, Yuna absently reached over and gave his forearm a gentle squeeze. He covered her hand with his. She turned then and caught how he was holding himself together by sheer force of will. She studied his face closely. *Really* looked at him.

"Was that... okay?" she asked, brow furrowing in concern. "I'm sorry if I overstepped. I just _"

"No," Ilya interrupted, shaking his head before she could finish. "No. It was -" he swallowed hard, voice gravelly, "it was wonderful."

That was all it took. Yuna's face softened completely. Her icy armor and no-nonsense demeanor dropped away.

"Oh," she said, gentle now, "honey. Come here."

And then she pulled him into her arms again, just like she had in the waiting room. Ilya stiffened for a fraction of a second. Then let go.

He folded into the hug, pressing his forehead to her shoulder. His breath hitched as he exhaled. His hands hovered awkwardly before settling at her back, fingers curling into the fabric of her cardigan because he needed something solid to hold onto.

One of her hands rubbed slow, soothing circles between his shoulder blades. The other was warm and steady at the back of his head.

"It's alright," she murmured. "You're alright."

Ilya closed his eyes and nodded a tiny nod against her shoulder.

He didn't cry. Not really. Just let himself be held in a mother's embrace again.

Chapter End Notes

i feel like that "i survived bitch" meme after the week i have had lol
failed my glucose test with baby #3, brand new baby nurse blew a vein taking the blood sample [: the bruise still fucking hurts
then my older two kids both caught a 24 hour stomach bug. today (so far) is the first vomit-less day. fingers crossed

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

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

Midway through lunch, Ilya's phone buzzed again.

He barely registered it at first, too focused on David recounting a backyard soccer match from Shane's childhood that ended in chaos thanks to a swarm of bees. Ilya grinned with food tucked in his cheek, but then his eyes flicked down to the screen.

He blinked. Once. Twice. Then let out a sharp, disbelieving laugh.

Personal Travel Update & Extended Leave

His eyebrows lifted as he scanned the message quickly. By the third paragraph, he was snickering so hard he nearly dropped his sandwich.

All three Hollanders turned to stare.

“What?” Shane asked immediately, half-rising from his pillows.

Ilya didn't answer right away. He just stared at the screen like it might vanish if he blinked too fast, then wordlessly held the phone out.

Shane took it, angling it so his parents could see as they leaned in over his shoulder.

The email was... a complete reversal.

Of course Ilya could take as many days as he needed. They cited his father's recent death (bereavement leave was still applicable here, apparently) and *also* “the recent traumatic incident.”

There was a carefully legal-sounding line about how it was *at Mr. Rozanov's own insistence* that he returned to play so soon after his father's funeral, but that management had now made an *executive decision* to place him on personal leave for at least the next week.

A trauma-specialized therapist would be in contact shortly. All sessions would be arranged and paid for by the organization.

He was free to make his own travel arrangements back to Boston *at his leisure*. Any and all expenses incurred in the meantime would be reimbursed, of course.

There was even a paragraph offering the communications team's help in drafting a statement about his leave and/or requesting additional discretion from the press.

It was blatant and transparent CYA. Top to bottom.

Shane let out a low whistle. “Wow.”

“That was fast,” David said with a soft snort.

Yuna’s mouth spread into a satisfied, smug smile. “That’s what I thought.”

Ilya slumped back in his chair and ran a hand through his hair. He laughed again, breathless this time.

“I...” he began, then shook his head, “I don’t even know what to say.”

Shane handed the phone back with a broad grin, his eyes warm and bright.

“Well, looks like you’re not going anywhere.”

Ilya swallowed.

“No,” he said quietly. “Guess I’m not.”

Yuna reached over and patted his knee. “Good.”

The doctors and specialists didn’t keep Shane much longer.

The discharge process was slow and bureaucratic and exhausting: papers, signatures, instructions repeated three different ways. Shane listened, nodding dutifully, even as the reality settled in.

Out for the season. Out for the playoffs. A long, slow summer of recovery ahead of him.

No workouts. No skating. No lifting. *Two full weeks* of nothing strenuous, not even long walks, not even yoga or stretching. Nothing that could risk pulling the stitches or reopening the wound.

Pain meds. Antibiotics. Blood thinners. Careful wound cleaning. A list of potential complications to watch out for, which Ilya read over and over with a kind of grim intensity, committing each one to memory.

By the time they got him dressed and into a coat, the adrenaline had fully burned off. He was pale again, moving carefully, shoulders hunched like his body was a little afraid of itself.

Yuna hovered. David carried things. Ilya never let himself drift more than half a step away.

They got Shane home to his condo in Montreal just as evening settled in, lights coming on in neighboring buildings, the city easing into night. It felt surreal, like they were stepping into a life that had been paused mid-sentence and then handed back with caution tape and warnings.

Dinner was simple and easy and a little subdued. Takeout containers were spread across the counter. Yuna fussed over Shane, offering to cut up his salmon and vegetables, which made Ilya laugh and Shane blush. David refilled Shane's water every time it came close to being even halfway empty. Ilya sat close, thigh pressed to Shane's, unobtrusive but constant.

Eventually, Shane's parents stood, hovering uncertainly in the kitchen. But Shane had shaken his head when they offered to stay the night in his guest room, insisting he'd be fine. Ilya was here.

Still, Yuna and David hesitated at the door.

"We're just a few blocks away," Yuna reminded them. "At our apartment. Call if you need anything. Anything at all. Doesn't matter how late it is."

"We will," Shane promised.

They each pulled him into a careful hug in turn. Then, without comment, each of them turned and pulled Ilya into one, too.

When the door finally closed behind them, Shane exhaled deeply and sank down against the couch, head tipping against the cushions like he was finally allowing himself to feel how tired he was.

Ilya sat beside him. Shane automatically lolled his head around to rest on his shoulder and reached to twine their hands together.

They sat in silence for several long minutes. Then, seemingly out of nowhere, Shane let out a pitiful, drawn-out whine and gave a full-body shudder.

Ilya turned, concerned. "What was that?"

"I feel *disgusting*," Shane groaned. "Like I'm covered in six different layers of hospital grime and... crustiness."

"Ah," Ilya said knowingly.

Shane blinked up at him with big, mournful eyes.

"Could you help me shower? Please? If I don't wash up soon, I'm gonna take a potato peeler to my skin just to get out of it."

Ilya snorted and cupped his face gently with his free hand.

"Yes, of course, solnishko." He hesitated, brow furrowing slightly. "Though... we should probably keep your neck and stitches dry."

Shane pitched his head back against the cushions and groaned again, more dramatically this time.

"What about a bath?" Ilya offered, tilting his head.

Shane wrinkled his nose. “I don’t like sitting in the water. It feels like... marinating in the filth.”

Ilya kissed him then, because *goddamn*, he was so cute when he was fussy like this.

“Okay,” Ilya said, lips still close to his. “We wash off carefully in the shower. Rinse all the dirt in the tub away. Then we run a clean bath to soak in. Now that we are clean, too. Yes?”

Shane considered, eyes narrowed like he was trying to find a flaw in the logic. After a moment, he nodded.

“Yeah,” he said. “Okay. That works.”

Ilya smiled. “Perfect. Come on, let's make you human again.”

Ilya glanced around the steaming, luxurious bathroom with a tiny frown.

“Do you have, like... a chair? Or stool? Something like that?”

Shane frowned. “For what?”

“I don’t want you to get light-headed from heat or something,” Ilya said. “The papers the doctors gave us said it can happen. Blood thinners, trauma, whatever.”

Shane hummed thoughtfully, then padded off and returned a moment later with a 3-step metal utility stool pulled from a closet.

“This work?”

Ilya nodded. “Excellent.”

Shane gingerly perched on the stool while Ilya adjusted the shower head, angling the spray so it hit his abdomen and avoided the thick bandage at his neck. The water was blissfully hot, steam curling into the air, and Shane exhaled like it was the first time he’d really breathed in days.

He started washing up on his own but Ilya gently swatted his hands away. Shane let them drop to his sides and surrendered without protest as Ilya took over.

Ilya’s hands were careful as they skimmed soap across his skin, down his back, over his arms, then up to his shoulders. He lingered there, rubbing slow circles into the tense muscles, fingers digging in just enough to start unraveling the knots.

Shane sighed dreamily. His head tipped backward until his crown rested against Ilya’s stomach. His eyes fluttered open, bleary and soft, and he gave a small, contented smile.

“I love you,” he murmured.

Ilya bent and pressed an upside-down kiss to Shane’s mouth. It was awkward and a little wet from the spray, but warm and tender all the same.

“I love you, too,” he whispered.

Ilya continued massaging his shoulders for a few minutes as the warm water cascaded around them and steam fogged the mirror and softened the edges of the world. Shane closed his eyes again, a small smile still tugging at the corners of his mouth.

“You’re gonna spoil me,” he mumbled.

Ilya kissed his forehead. “Good.”

He gently worked the soap over the rest of Shane’s skin. Shane let out a low hum of contentment as the combination of warm water and Ilya’s patient touch rinsed away the worst of the grime.

When the suds had washed away, Shane breathed out an emphatic *thanks*.

“Could you hand me that salt scrub?” he asked sheepishly after a beat, nodding toward a jar near the edge of the tub. “I just... still feel kind of gross. Like, deep in my skin.”

Ilya turned immediately to retrieve it. “Of course.”

Shane reached for the scrub himself but Ilya lightly smacked his hands aside again. He worked the scrub across Shane’s body with the same methodical care as before, slow and steady, coaxing away every unwelcome particle of whatever Shane felt still clung to him. He melted under the rhythm of it, his head lolling slightly, another pleased hum slipping out of him.

When it came time to rinse, Ilya guided the water over him with smooth strokes. He paused at Shane’s hair, eyeing the proximity of the bandages and frowning thoughtfully, already considering how best to protect the wound.

Shane cracked one eye open, curious. “Hm?”

“I’m going to put a towel over this,” Ilya said, fingertips brushing the edges of the gauze. “Like with a haircut. Catch most of the water from your hair. Then, once we’re out and the bath is running, I’ll clean it properly. Like the doctor said.”

Shane nodded, a little dazed with relaxation. “You’re so smart. To think of all this.”

Ilya gave a small shrug, but his eyes danced with the praise.

Once the towel was in place and Ilya angled the spray again, Shane leaned back slightly, exhaling in relief.

“This is nice,” he mumbled. “The towel, I mean. It keeps all the shampoo and dirty water from running down the back of my neck and over everything that just got clean.”

He flushed slightly, realizing how *particular* he sounded. “Sorry. I know that’s... weird.”

But Ilya just leaned in and kissed his temple, utterly unfazed.

“No, you’re right,” he said simply, “is a good point. Very smart.”

Shane smiled, eyes fluttering shut again, entirely content.

Ilya washed Shane’s hair with care. His fingers were slow and deliberate as he massaged shampoo into his scalp. He took his time, relishing the way Shane’s whole face softened, brows unknitting, lips parting just slightly, eyes scrunching a little in pleasure. He looked blissed out. Practically boneless in Ilya’s hands.

“Just shampoo?” Ilya murmured near his ear. “Or something else?”

Shane made a small, needy noise with his eyes still closed.

“Would you mind lathering it again? There was so much sweat. And then... conditioner?”

“Of course,” Ilya said, already reaching for the bottle.

Shane peeped one eye open as Ilya worked the second round through.

“Thank you,” he said quietly. “For being so thorough. And being so patient with all my weird shower preferences.”

“Is not weird,” Ilya said, shrugging. “Is just how you like to shower.” He paused, then added, “I have a whole thing for my curls, you know. Whenever I have time for it, my routine is *much* worse.”

Shane perked up a little at that, curiosity flickering over his face.

“Yeah? What kind of routine?”

Ilya smiled, thumbs still moving in wide, methodical circles over the ridges of his skull.

“Special shampoo. Leave-in conditioner. Microfiber towel. Diffuser sometimes, if I’m not feeling lazy.”

Shane chuckled, eyes still closed. “Sounds fancy.”

“Is science,” Ilya said solemnly, making Shane laugh again.

“You’ll have to show me sometime,” Shane murmured.

Ilya leaned down to kiss his forehead, smiling. “Okay.”

He worked firm, tiny circles into the divot of Shane’s temples for a few minutes, letting the conditioner soak before he rinsed it out.

“But you know,” Ilya said softly, “you could ask me to scrub every centimeter of you with a tiny doll’s toothbrush and I’d do it. If it helped you feel better again after... everything.”

Shane made a sound that was half laugh, half whimper, and turned to press his face to Ilya’s stomach. His arms wrapped around Ilya’s waist as he nuzzled into the damp, warm skin, like

he couldn't get close enough.

Ilya stroked a hand over his wet hair, cradling the back of his head gently. They stayed like that for a moment with the water still running and steam curling around them.

Eventually, he carefully rinsed Shane's hair a final time as he clung to him. Then Ilya dipped and kissed the crown of his head.

"Here," he murmured, voice low. "Let me wash up, too. Then bath. And I'll clean your neck properly, like the doctor said."

Shane gave a small, content hum against his skin and gently squeezed his waist before he let go.

Ilya washed himself quickly in a faster, more efficient version of what he'd just done for Shane. He didn't feel particularly grimy, not the way Shane had, but he didn't want him squirming at the idea of soaking in bathwater someone else was dirtying up.

Once they were both wrapped in towels, Ilya moved the stool over to the vanity so Shane could sit while he waited. Ilya took the showerhead off its hook, rinsed down the tiles and tub thoroughly, then turned the water on to start filling the bath.

While it ran, he came back over and knelt beside Shane.

"I'm going to take the bandages off now," he said softly.

He'd seen glimpses of the wound before when the hospital staff had changed the bandages. But up close, it looked obscene and awful. Angry red and raw, twisted and puckered in places, knit together with far too many stitches to comprehend. He tried not to think about the ones buried beneath the skin holding delicate tissue and arteries and veins together.

He gathered the supplies and cleaned around the wound. Then further, the stripe of skin encircling Shane's neck that had been hidden under the bandages. He worked with a soft touch and careful fingers, soaping and exfoliating just enough to freshen the swath of skin without irritating the edges of the wound.

Shane winced slightly when Ilya dabbed at the deepest gnarl with antiseptic.

"Sorry," Ilya murmured, leaning in to press a kiss to his cheek. "Almost done."

He applied the ointment, smoothed on a fresh dressing, and secured the gauze in place. Then he stood, checked the water level in the tub, and turned back toward Shane.

"You want anything for pain?" he asked. "In case it starts hurting again from being poked at?"

Shane shook his head. "Not yet."

Ilya nodded, then helped him stand and steered him toward the bath. Once Shane was settled, Ilya climbed in behind him, guiding him back to rest against his chest. Shane let out a long,

low breath, his head rolling back to rest on Ilya's shoulder as the warm water wrapped around them both. Shane let his eyes drift shut, muscles loose and warm against Ilya's chest.

Eventually, he muttered, grudging but sincere, "Okay. This is... extremely nice."

Ilya laughed, soft and pleased.

Shane tilted his head slightly and let his lips brush the edge of Ilya's jaw.

"Thank you," he said again. "For letting me be... fussy and picky. And not making fun of me."

Ilya kissed his temple.

"I will make fun of you for other things," he murmured. "Not for how you want to feel normal in your own skin again after being in the hospital and almost dying."

Shane made a small, content sound in the back of his throat. His fingers tightened lightly around Ilya's forearm.

Ilya pressed a slow, unhurried trail of kisses along the uninjured side of Shane's neck. He grinned when he saw the faint ripple of the water that betrayed the way Shane's cock was twitching beneath the surface at his touch.

He set his lips against the shell of Shane's ear.

"Remind me..." he murmured silkily, "what did the doctor say about *strenuous* activities?"

Shane huffed a breath of laughter.

"To avoid them completely," he said peevishly. "For the next few weeks. Maybe longer."

Ilya hummed, theatrically disappointed. Then he nipped playfully at Shane's earlobe. His voice was low and husky, the smirk on his lips audible.

"Do you think orgasms count?"

Chapter End Notes



Mr Real Estate would absolutely buy his parents their own condo/apartment in Montreal for home games/whatever they want lol. He is baby boi but he is also a grown man in his late 20s, my guy would want them close but not on top of him

Also I am convinced Ilya would 100% be a DIVA about the Curly Girl Method. Esp in like 2016-2017? A bottle of conditioner and an un-scrunched gel cast hate to see him

coming

Thank you for all the love on my last update <3 everyone in this house is feeling much better!

Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

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

Shane's eyes flew open at Ilya's words.

"Jesus *fucking* Christ," he muttered with half a laugh and half a scandalized wheeze.

Ilya chuckled darkly, clearly delighted with himself and mouthed at the shell of Shane's ear again.

Shane pressed his lips together, then said very seriously, "I can look it up?"

He started to rise and reach for his phone over on the counter, but Ilya caught him and tugged him back against his chest, one arm looped securely around his waist. His own erection was now unmistakably trapped against Shane's ass.

"Please?" Shane said, craning to look at him. "I don't want you to make me cum and then I like, have a fucking aneurysm in your arms or something."

Ilya frowned, confused. "A what?"

"Like, uh," Shane gestured vaguely. "A big deadly stroke. A huge clot in your brain explodes and kills you."

Ilya briefly considered this with an expression that was moderately horrified.

"Okay," he relented. "Fine. But only because I don't want to waste all my hard work keeping your blood inside your neck."

Shane rolled his eyes and then scrolled intently, thumb flicking through a mix of forums, articles, and dry medical PDFs. Ilya leaned over his shoulder at first, pretending to read too, murmuring the occasional *hm* or *interesting*, but his attention drifted almost immediately.

He started pressing slow, soft kisses to Shane's skin. The slope of his shoulder. The nape of his neck on the safe, unbandaged side. The delicate shell of his ear. Each one was warm and unhurried, spaced like commas.

His hand wandered, too. He let his fingers draw lazy patterns along Shane's thigh. Just the very top, his touch featherlight. Not enough to distract him completely. Not *really*.

Except Shane's breath hitched a little, and the phone stopped scrolling.

Ilya hummed again, clearly pleased, and let his hand drift just a little lower beneath the water, slow and deliberate.

His mouth hovered near Shane's ear as he murmured, "So... what is verdict?" punctuated by another kiss to the damp skin of his neck.

Shane's breath stuttered, but he managed to answer, though his voice was a little husky.

"It should be... fine. Just, you know, nothing too intense." He shifted slightly in Ilya's arms, head tipping back on his shoulder. "Mostly thing's said... slow. Drawn out. Nothing too fast and crazy."

Ilya's grin was wicked and indulgent.

"Slow and drawn out?" he repeated, the words soft against his jaw. "Mmm. I can do that."

His fingers dipped lower still on Shane's thigh, drawing gentle circles as he moved toward his crotch. His touch was just firm enough to make Shane gasp and melt against him.

Ilya's fingers wrapped around Shane's flushed, leaking cock, firm and possessive. His grip was perfectly calibrated; tight enough to make Shane twitch but loose enough to keep him dangling right on the edge. His thumb circled the slick head, teasing the sensitive underside with languid precision. The water sloshed faintly as he stroked him under the surface, the motion slow and smooth, matching the rhythm of his breath against Shane's neck. His other hand gripped Shane's waist, thumb tracing idle patterns on his wet skin.

Shane let out a stuttering exhale as his thighs tensed slightly. He groaned as he let his head tip back again to rest on Ilya's shoulder, exposing the clean line of one side of his throat.

"Good?" Ilya whispered, panting against the shell of his ear.

Shane nodded, too dazed to speak, hips rocking forward into Ilya's hand, then back again, grinding against the hot and thick hardness behind him.

Ilya groaned low in his throat, his cock pressed flush into the cleft of Shane's ass. He rocked forward, slow and careful, rutting against him in sync with his strokes. The slick glide of water and skin and heat between them made his breath quicken.

Shane whimpered and reached down to clutch at Ilya's wrist. "God, I -"

"You gonna come for me?" Ilya murmured, clumsily kissing the hinge of his jaw, though his movements never faltered. "Give it to me, sunshine."

And Shane *did* with a ragged gasp that tore from his throat as his whole body clenched and trembled in Ilya's arms. His cock pulsed in Ilya's hand, spurting into the warm bathwater as he jerked once, twice, then repeatedly until he went utterly limp against him. Ilya kept stroking him through it, murmuring soft and filthy things against his ear. Then he let out a sharp, stuttering breath as his own release followed, hips grinding forward, cock rutting helplessly against the curve of Shane's ass. He buried his face in the back of Shane's shoulder as he spilled against him, the waves of pleasure drawn out and deliciously slow.

They stayed like that for a long moment, panting, limbs heavy, and hearts thudding in sync.

Eventually, Ilya reached for the washcloth again, murmured something about rinsing off properly before the water got too cold. Shane just hummed, boneless and pliant in his arms.

Then, Shane wrinkled his nose and made a tiny, distressed noise low in his throat.

Ilya raised an eyebrow, amused.

“What?” he asked. “The water is gross now?”

Still melted against him, Shane gave a tiny, tired nod. Completely spent but clearly a little over the whole bath thing.

Ilya chuckled and pressed a kiss to the side of his head.

“I figured,” he murmured, reaching forward to unplug the drain. “Come on. Let’s go to bed.”

In his wide bed, with its surgically precise sheets and neatly arranged pillows, Shane curled into Ilya without hesitation. His head fit perfectly in the hollow beneath Ilya’s collarbone, one leg draped lazily between Ilya’s. They had never really held each other like this before, but it felt effortless, like muscle memory they hadn’t known they had. He loved the way Shane flopped into his arms, instinctive and trusting.

A few moments later, he was sure Shane had already drifted off when, suddenly, his drowsy voice broke the quiet.

“Friends with benefits.”

Ilya blinked. “Huh?”

“Instead of *fuck buddies*,” Shane slurred. “You could’ve said *that* to my parents.”

Ilya snorted softly with a small shrug that rocked Shane where he lay.

“Maybe. If I knew what that meant.”

Shane’s voice was muffled against Ilya’s throat when he answered.

“A friend that you sleep with. But not exclusive or, like, romantically involved.”

Ilya hummed. “So... basically what I said. But since when have we been friends?”

Shane groaned but nuzzled in closer.

Ilya ran a hand down his back, slow and soothing.

“Or I guess, more like Svetlana,” he conceded. “But she and I haven’t hooked up in a long time.”

“Oh?” Shane murmured, lips brushing against his collarbone.

“Mmh, I haven’t wanted anyone else,” Ilya said softly, “not for a long time. Only you.”

Shane lifted his head, eyes glassy with sleep and affection. He kissed Ilya, slow and deep and sure.

“Me too,” he whispered, smiling shyly. “I love you.”

Ilya smiled back. “I love you, too.”

He kissed Shane’s forehead gently, then coaxed him to lie back down. Shane melted into him again, head tucked under his chin, their limbs tangled beneath the blankets. Ilya pressed his cheek against Shane’s hair, still faintly damp from the shower.

Within minutes, Shane’s breathing had turned deep and even, his body heavy with exhaustion. He was out cold, completely at peace in Ilya’s arms.

Ilya didn’t sleep. Not really.

He loved having Shane beside him. Loved the warmth and intimacy of being Shane’s real bed in his home. Loved the comforting weight of Shane curled against his chest and the soft puffs of his breath against his collarbone.

But everything in the room was too quiet. Too... *unmonitored*.

At the hospital, there had been machines tracking Shane’s vitals. Nurses passing in the hallway. A call button within reach. People trained and ready to react if something suddenly went wrong. Now, it was just them. No steady beeping, no low voices at shift change, no constant reassurance that someone else was keeping watch, too.

Ilya’s brain refused to let it go. Every small shift of Shane’s weight set his heart thudding too fast. Each time Shane exhaled a little too slowly, or shifted with a muffled groan, Ilya’s body went tense with dread. He stared into the dark, ears straining for signs that everything was still okay. That Shane was still breathing.

Sleep came in pieces. A few minutes here. A shallow doze there. He startled awake more than once, heart pounding, half-convinced he’d find blood soaking the sheets. That the stitches had split open in the night. Or worse, that Shane had stroked out in his sleep, just like the doctors had warned might happen. They had stressed that the odds were next to nothing.

Still, though.

But every time he woke and glanced down, Shane was still breathing. Still warm. Still safe. He would press a hand to Shane’s chest, just to feel the rise and fall of it. Just to be sure. Only then would he let his eyes drift closed again. Until the next time.

Eventually, Ilya gave up on lying in the dark between half-dozes. He shifted carefully, making sure not to disturb Shane, and reached for the remote. The TV flickered on at the lowest volume, light spilling across the room. He clicked through until he found a nature documentary, all slow camera pans and calm narration.

He used to watch things like this late at night when he was learning English. They were easier than sitcoms or movies, where he had to keep up with rapid dialogue and jokes that

didn't always translate. Nature shows were placid. Predictable. Comforting in their own way. He'd watched plenty of everything else back then too, but these had always helped his brain slow down.

Tonight, even English felt like too much effort. He switched on Russian subtitles without thinking and let himself stop concentrating entirely.

It helped.

The quiet narration and slow camera work dulled the sharp edges of the anxiety in his chest. He slept in longer stretches after that. He still woke occasionally, fingers brushing Shane's wrist or chest to check on him.

Eventually, pale morning light slanted in through the curtains.

Shane blinked awake slowly, the corners of his mouth lifting into a sleepy, delighted smile the moment he saw Ilya beside and beneath him. He looked so happy, so warm and soft, like waking up next to Ilya was a delightful surprise. A perfect gift.

"Morning," Ilya murmured.. The word came with a kiss to Shane's brow.

"Morning," Shane echoed, voice still thick with sleep. He blinked up at Ilya, eyes soft. "You sleep okay?"

Ilya hesitated, then gave a small shrug. "*You* did."

Shane's sharp gaze swept over his face, taking in the shadows under his eyes. He reached out, thumb brushing just beneath one. "You didn't sleep much, did you?"

Ilya tried for a wry smile. "Kept waking up."

Shane frowned. "Why?"

Ilya's gaze drifted across his face, resting briefly on the bandage at his neck. He made a mental note to check it soon, maybe change the wrappings once they got out of bed.

But Shane was still watching him, waiting for an answer.

"Kept thinking something would... happen to you. While I was asleep." He hesitated, eyes dropping to the sheets. "There's no fancy hospital equipment hooked up to you here. No doctors just down the hall to come running. So. I kept having to check you were okay."

Shane's expression softened as immediate concern flickered in his eyes. He reached up and brushed the tip of his index finger along the curve of Ilya's cheek.

"I'm sorry."

Ilya gave a small shrug, ducking his head. "It's okay. Just my dumb brain."

But Shane didn't let that slide.

“Your brain’s not dumb,” he said simply. “It’s just scared. Because of all the *extremely* scary shit you saw. And did.”

Ilya didn’t answer, but some of the tightness in his chest eased at that. Not just from the words, but from how Shane said them; plain, direct, honest. Like it was okay to be scared. Like Ilya didn’t have to pretend *not* to be.

He suddenly felt tired in a different way, like letting someone, letting *Shane* see right through that part of him took more effort than basically staying up all night.

Shane studied him for a moment. Then he said, “Give me five minutes, okay?”

He slipped out of bed, freshened up, made himself tea, grabbed a book. Ilya stayed where he was, heavy-limbed and almost dozing. He was a little fascinated just watching Shane move around his space. Like every ordinary detail of his life was something intimate.

When Shane returned, he set everything aside on the nightstand and reached out.

“C’mere,” he murmured.

They traded places; Shane flat on his back, Ilya curled against his chest. His head tucked perfectly in the hollow just beneath Shane’s collarbone. One of Shane’s hands drifted lazily up and down his spine, steady and soothing.

“Go back to sleep,” he whispered. “I’m fine. I promise, okay? My parents are gonna come over soon with breakfast, but sleep as long as you want. Someone else will be here to take the next watch shift. Like cavemen guarding against saber-tooth tigers.”

Ilya let out a soft laugh.

Shane grinned triumphantly and kissed the crown of his head.

Ilya tried to stay awake until David and Yuna arrived, just to be sure. But Shane was so warm and solid beneath him, his hand drifting in lazy, rhythmic strokes up and down Ilya’s back. It was soothing, almost absent-minded, like the way someone might pet a cat they had forgotten was curled in their lap.

The room looked safer in the dappled morning light. It no longer hummed with the anxious energy that slid beneath his skin in the dark.

Ilya’s eyes slipped shut before he could stop them. Within minutes, his breathing slowed. His body relaxed. Finally, finally, he slept.

And Shane didn’t move an inch.

When Ilya woke again, the light in the room had changed. The afternoon sun slanted through the curtains, cozier and warmer than before. From down the hall, he could smell food cooking, something savory and comforting. His stomach gave a soft, hopeful growl.

Still, he didn't move. Just nuzzled in closer, his face tucked into the curve of Shane's collarbone, soaking in the warmth of his skin. Shane pressed a kiss to the top of his head.

"Did you have a good nap?" he asked fondly.

Ilya nodded sleepily, then glanced up at him. Shane was sitting comfortably against the pillows, phone in hand. He paused what he was scrolling through and turned the screen toward him.

"Look," he said softly.

It was an image of a sleek little device, something that looked like a cross between a fitness tracker and a ring. Ilya blinked at it, confused.

"It syncs to an app," Shane explained. "Bluetooth. Monitors my O2 levels, heart rate, all of it. If anything drops, it chirps. Sends a real-time alert to my phone. And to yours, too."

Ilya stared at the screen then back up at Shane. He still looked a little paler than normal and the gauze on his neck freshly changed. The memory of the accident and the hospital were not so distant. But his smile was small and sincere, a little lopsided. A little shy.

"So you don't have to worry," Shane murmured, leaning in to kiss Ilya's temple. "Or, like... to help you worry less. Me too, honestly. Because... *fuck*."

He trailed off, the unspoken fears and what-ifs heavy and loaded in the air between them.

Ilya looked up at him, stunned. A lump formed in his throat before he could stop it. It was just so... *him*. So thoughtful. So kind. So considerate.

Without a word, he surged upward and kissed him, deep and slow and searching, his hand rising to cradle Shane's jaw. The kiss was long and dizzying, full of everything Ilya didn't know how to say out loud.

Shane kissed him back just as fiercely, like he understood it all anyway.

When they broke apart several blissful moments later, Shane's voice was hushed and breathless. He ran his fingers gently through Ilya's hair, still holding the phone between them with one hand.

"Even when you have to go back to Boston," he murmured, "you'll still be able to check it. In the middle of the night, if you wake up and wonder. Or when you're on the road, at some away game."

He smiled then, a little sheepish and a little proud.

"You can check and know I'm okay."

Ilya blinked hard. His throat tightened, the emotions rising far too quickly to push down completely.

“Thank you,” he whispered. “Seriously. Thank you.”

He thought about how reassuring it would be. How much better he would sleep, knowing he could check Shane’s vitals from anywhere. Even from across the continent. Even in a random hotel bed, hours after a game.

But then the darker thought crept in, uninvited and cold. What if something *actually* went wrong? What if the alarm went off and he was hundreds or thousands of miles away, helpless?

It was like Shane heard it as clearly as if Ilya had said it out loud.

“My parents are gonna stay here when you leave,” Shane said quietly, still carding his fingers through Ilya’s curls. “When you go back to hockey, I’ll put the app on their phones, too. So if it goes off, it’ll alert them in the next room. They’ll get help if I need it.”

Ilya stared at him for a moment, overwhelmed again by the kindness and the foresight. The brilliance of his planning for any contingency.

He sank back down, curling against Shane’s side like gravity pulled him there.

“You’re so fucking smart,” he muttered into the warmth of Shane’s t-shirt.

Shane flushed but smiled a small and pleased smile as his hand still stroked gently through Ilya’s hair.

“Thanks,” he said softly.

Chapter End Notes

~ i lived bitch x100 ~

- passed my 3 hr glucose test, didnt get any veins blown having my blood taken 4 times in 3 hours
- threw a baby shower
- went to like 3 kid birthday parties
- watched in horror as my country descends further into fascism and violence and cruelty
- tried to be a present and happy parent despite all that
- the horrors persist, yet so will we

anyway, i thought this would be the last chapter, but i have a little bit more i want to write to wrap this up, so we'll get one more chapter. probably shorter than this one, but better to have it be separate than this one go on for miles and miles lol

also, an owlet sock, but make it for a grown man lol. i had debilitating post-partum anxiety/ocd with my oldest. i was CONVINCED she was gonna stop breathing away if i

looked away from her for more than 5 seconds. so, the owlet saved my sanity. plus zoloft, eventually. this little gadget does the same for ilya. (and also zoloft probably would too tbh)

Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

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

That evening, Shane's parents had hovered at the door longer than necessary before they finally left for the night. Yuna had adjusted Shane's collar twice, kissed his cheek, then pulled Ilya into another firm, motherly hug. David had clapped Ilya on the shoulder and reminded them both, for the third time, that they were only a few blocks away.

"And the app is on all our phones," Shane had added, holding up his like proof. "Mom's, Dad's, yours. Mine. It'll scream at all of us if anything's weird."

Yuna nodded, visibly reassured. David had looked impressed in a low-key, dad way. And Ilya had just stood there, overwhelmed all over again.

The little tracker had arrived less than an hour earlier. (The perks of being rich included same-day express delivery.) Shane had lit up like it was Christmas, immediately opening the box and setting it up with careful focus. He had synced it to his own phone first, then Ilya's, then his parents', walking them through the app interface with endless patience.

"There," he'd said proudly once it was done, holding up his hand with the small ring-like monitor settled against his finger. "Now everyone can stalk my oxygen levels."

He had looked so pleased with himself that Ilya's chest had ached.

He hadn't even had to ask. Shane had just... fixed it. Solved a problem Ilya had originally been afraid to articulate and sound unhinged. He had thought about Ilya waking in the dark, full of fear and helplessness. And he had sought out a solution that helped Ilya, himself, and his parents, too.

It affected Ilya more than he could say.

Now they were stretched out on Shane's couch, half-watching the Detroit and New York game. Shane was tucked between the cushions and Ilya's side, curled close and boneless with contentment, radiating warmth into Ilya's skin.

Ilya ran a hand lazily up and down Shane's arm, smirking down at him.

"So," he drawled, "it must be nice to get to be lazy for the rest of the season. While the rest of us still go to work."

Shane snorted. "Oh my god."

"I've had hangovers worse than a concussion and still made it to practice," Ilya went on solemnly.

Shane rolled his eyes so hard it was theatrical. "Shut up."

But he was smiling. Fond. His cheek dented around Ilya's shoulder as he settled more comfortably against him.

"Slacker," Ilya added under his breath.

"Rude," Shane muttered, but his hand found Ilya's thigh and squeezed lightly, betraying how pleased he was.

"I'm not gonna lie," Shane murmured after a beat, "missing the playoffs and everything sucks, but I *am* kind of excited to get to go to the cottage earlier than I expected."

Then he frowned slightly.

"Although, I'm not supposed to do yoga or go for runs or take the jet skis out," he added. "Which is, like, half the point."

Ilya hummed thoughtfully, his gaze flicking between the screen and Shane's face.

"Do you always do yoga outside on that little dock? Or was that just for filming?"

Shane blinked. Then turned slightly, peering up at him. "You saw that?"

Ilya gave him a sheepish grin. "Maybe."

Shane narrowed his eyes, clearly amused. "Seriously?"

Ilya shrugged, unbothered. "You're hot. I will gladly take any excuse to look at you."

Shane flushed and ducked his head with a little huff of laughter. Ilya leaned down and kissed the crown of his head, then added, "In my defense, Sveta turned it on. She's the one who remembered to watch the segment."

Shane tilted his head, eyebrows raised. "Really?"

"Mm-hmm." Ilya nodded, lips twitching. "She has a big fat crush on you. Makes a point to tell me every chance she gets."

Shane snorted. "Yeah, *sure* she does."

"She does," Ilya insisted, grinning into Shane's hair. "Said you're like a golden retriever with perfect cheekbones."

That made Shane laugh harder, his whole body shaking against Ilya's side.

Ilya was just about to launch into a smug monologue about how Shane was clearly catnip to hot hockey-loving Russians (he had statistical proof, after all) when Shane tilted his face up, a little more serious now. His voice was soft and careful.

"Are you going back to Russia this summer?"

Ilya considered it for a moment, then shook his head.

“No,” he said quietly. “I don’t think so.”

“Will you miss it?”

Ilya snorted softly. “Not really. I don’t even have anywhere to stay. I gave my condo to my brother. Didn’t even empty it.”

“Oh. Why?”

Ilya hesitated, searching for words that didn’t feel overly dramatic.

“I just... wanted to be done.”

Shane nodded slowly, eyes dropping to the sloping lines of Ilya’s collar bones for a beat. Then he looked back up, cheeks faintly pink.

“You could come stay at the cottage,” he said carefully. “When your season’s done, obviously. However long you want.”

Ilya blinked rapidly a few times, genuinely startled. Then he smiled.

“Okay,” he said. It came out softer than he intended. Almost breathless.

Shane’s eyes lit up. “Really?”

Ilya nodded, a little more firmly this time. “Yes. Really.”

The transformation on Shane’s face was immediate. Bright and shy and full of an almost boyish delight that caught Ilya off guard. Like Shane couldn’t quite believe he was allowed to have this.

Ilya would have agreed to anything in that moment, just to keep Shane smiling at him like that.

He leaned in and kissed him slowly, savoring the warm give and slide of Shane’s mouth beneath his. The kiss deepened easily, tipping into hunger. Tongues slick, mouths hot. Shane made a low sound in the back of his throat, curling tighter into Ilya’s body as if he couldn’t stand to be even half a centimeter away.

Ilya slipped a hand under the hem of Shane’s shirt, fingers skimming across soft, warm skin. Shane arched into it, chasing the touch, groaning when Ilya’s nails grazed lightly over his ribs.

Then Ilya was up and off the couch, on his feet, pulling Shane with him in one smooth motion.

Shane groaned, pouty and betrayed at the sudden loss of contact. He sagged against Ilya’s chest, mouth already searching again, lips hunting hungrily up the side of his neck and under his jaw.

“Why,” he mumbled, petulant.

Ilya laughed softly, kissing the tip of his nose.

“Because,” he murmured against his skin, “I don’t think you want to make a mess of your nice couch, yes?”

Shane tipped his head, pretending to consider.

“Okay, fair. I *don’t*.”

They didn’t bother turning off the TV. The low murmur of the game followed them down the hallway, a distant hum beneath their laughter. Ilya laced his fingers through Shane’s and led him toward the bedroom, Shane trailing behind, pliant and smiling.

The bedroom was dim, washed in late evening light. Ilya closed the door with his foot and pulled Shane in by the hips. Their mouths met slowly.

It was unhurried, exploratory. Ilya cupped Shane’s jaw, thumb brushing the soft line of his cheek before sliding down to his throat, careful of the bandage. Shane sighed into the kiss, hands gliding up Ilya’s chest, over muscle and warm skin.

Clothes came off piece by piece, not torn or rushed but coaxed away. Fabric whispering to the floor. Fingertips lingering at waistbands, skimming over hips, tracing the lines of ribs and shoulders. Shane’s O2 tracker carefully slipped from his finger and placed on a nightstand. Every touch felt deliberate.

Ilya laid him back carefully, mindful of his healing body, and followed him down. His lips mapped a slow path across Shane’s pecs, over his sternum, stopping to press a kiss over his heart. Shane’s fingers threaded into Ilya’s hair, tugging gently when the sensation grew too much.

The room filled with soft sounds. Breath catching. A quiet gasp. The low slide of skin on skin as they shifted closer.

Ilya took his time. His hands moved in broad, warm strokes over Shane’s sides and hips, thumbs pressing into muscle. Shane arched into the touch, hips lifting instinctively, seeking friction, seeking more. Ilya gave it to him slowly, building it carefully, until Shane’s body felt soft and open beneath him.

When he finally pressed forward, it was gradual. A slow, indulgent stretch. Shane’s eyes fluttered shut as Ilya eased into him, both of them moving with practiced patience until the rhythm found them.

It wasn’t frantic. It was deep and steady. Each thrust measured, controlled, the mattress shifting softly beneath them. Shane’s hands roamed over Ilya’s back, nails dragging lightly down his spine, drawing him closer with every roll of their hips.

Their foreheads met again at one point, breath mingling, noses brushing. Ilya murmured his name like a prayer. Shane answered with a broken sound that sent a shiver down Ilya’s spine.

The pleasure built slowly, a tide instead of a wave. Heat pooling low in their bodies, rising inch by inch. When Shane finally came, it was with a sharp inhale and a trembling clutch of Ilya's shoulders, his whole body tightening around him.

Ilya followed moments later, slower, deeper, pressing his face into the curve of Shane's neck as the release washed through him.

Afterward, the sheets were rumpled and warm around them, the air still thick with heat and salt and the faint scent of sweat. Shane lay half draped over Ilya's chest, tracing lazy circles there with his fingertips. His breathing had evened out, but his mind clearly hadn't.

"I've been thinking," Shane said softly.

Ilya exhaled a sleepy laugh. "Dangerous."

Shane nudged him weakly with his knee. "Shut up."

A beat passed as Shane gathered his thoughts.

"I want to change the narrative," he said finally. "About us."

Ilya stilled. His hand, which had been idly combing through Shane's hair, stopped.

"How?" he asked carefully.

Shane swallowed.

"We could start a foundation together. Something good that's both ours. Benefits both of our cities. We could start it this summer. Or next season. Something about youth hockey. Or safety. Or mental health, I dunno. Or all of it. But people would see we're friends."

Ilya watched him, stunned by the steadiness in his voice.

"And," Shane continued, quieter now, "I could come out to my team first. After the season's officially over. Then... publicly. Not in ten years. Not when I'm retired and even more boring." He huffed a breath. "Soon. A few months. Maybe a year."

The words hung between them.

"We could still tell people we're just close," Shane added, almost shyly. "Best friends. Or we could just... be together. Publicly. For real."

Ilya studied him carefully. "That is what you want?"

Shane nodded. "Yeah."

"You'd want to be together for real?" Ilya pressed. "Even with the distance? Our schedules?"

"Yes," Shane said firmly. Then, more cautiously, "And... both of our contracts are up for renegotiation soon. Maybe, if it makes sense, one of us could be traded. To a team closer to

the other. It would take some of the heat off the Montreal versus Boston rivalry part, too.”

Ilya balked, then broke into a wide grin, sitting up straighter.

“Really? Where would you go? Where could I go?”

“Any team would be dying to have you. Except maybe Montreal,” he added with a smirk.

Ilya laughed.

Shane reached up and stroked his face, thumb brushing along his cheekbone as he continued, “Ottawa needs a center. But... going from Boston to Ottawa would be a lot.”

Ilya sucked his teeth thoughtfully.

“True. But it could also be a fun project. Turning a team like that into one that could pummel even Boston. Eventually.”

Shane’s eyes darkened with delight. He dragged his index finger slowly over Ilya’s pecs.

“Or,” he said, voice dipping, “I could try and get traded to Buffalo.”

“Buffalo?” he echoed, incredulous.

Shane nodded solemnly. “They’re going to need a center and a captain when Hunter’s hip replacements shatter the next time he gets checked into the boards.”

Ilya laughed, loud and bright, and rolled them gently so he was braced carefully over Shane, mindful of the bandage at his neck. He leaned down and kissed him, smiling into it.

“You’ve thought about all of this?” he asked.

Shane gave a small, almost sheepish shrug. “Yeah.”

“With so much detail?”

Shane hesitated. “Honestly?” He let out a quiet breath. “It was like a decade-long plan, originally. Carefully timed. Risk-managed. Spreadsheet level.”

Ilya barked out another incredulous laugh.

“But now,” Shane said, his voice changing, losing the humor, “I don’t care about that timeline anymore.”

“Why not?” Ilya asked gently. “You’re always so careful.”

Shane was quiet for a long time. His hand stilled against Ilya’s chest.

“I nearly died,” he said at last.

The words were simple but they hung heavily between them.

“I want a life with you,” Shane went on, voice rough but steady. “Deep down, I think I always have. But now that it almost didn’t happen...” His throat worked. “I don’t want to waste another minute.”

Ilya didn’t make a sound at first. The tears just flowed instantly, hot and silent, sliding down his face as he stared into Shane’s eyes and tried to breathe through it.

“Hey,” Shane whispered, lifting himself onto one elbow and brushing a thumb under Ilya’s eyes.

“I don’t want to waste it either,” Ilya managed at last, voice breaking several times. “Not one second.”

Shane cupped his face and brought their foreheads together.

“Okay,” he murmured.

“I love you,” Ilya said, his lips lightly brushing against Shane’s.

Shane’s smile bloomed wide and unguarded, bright enough to steal the light from the room.

“I love you, too.”

Chapter End Notes

we did it joe <3

i have a few hollanov one-shots sketched out that hopefully i'll be able to post before baby comes. but my induction is scheduled for ~3.5 weeks from today
sooooooooooooooooooooo we'll see lol

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