where the hell is my husband?

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where the hell is my husband?

by justhockey

Summary

"Yuna, David - my husband just said he doesn't love me anymore."

"I did *not* say that," Shane argues, when he notes the disbelieving expressions on his parents' faces. "I *said* we can't get another dog."

"Exactly," Ilya wails, throwing his arms up in the air. "Is same thing!"

(Or, 5 times Ilya calls Shane his husband, and 1 time Shane calls Ilya his husband.)

Notes

Title from *WHERE IS MY HUSBAND!* by Raye.

one.

They've done this before.

A few times by now, actually, in the span of their careers. Sitting beside each other at a table, with over two dozen reporters and microphones and too-bright lights shining in their faces. Their feet tapping together where nobody can see, so Ilya feels less visible - less exposed. It's become something of a routine, almost. So familiar that it's almost comfortable now. Almost.

There was the one after the draft, which was brief and awkward, and Shane still cringes at the mention of it whenever it gets brought up. There was one at their first ever all-star game, too - where Shane had swooped in and saved Ilya from the embarrassment of not understanding fast, convoluted English. And then a couple more in the all-star games that followed.

There was also, most notably, the one when they announced the Irina Foundation and their hockey camp. Shane had put his hand on Ilya's arm to comfort him, and the pictures had gone viral: *Has their heated rivalry finally been put to rest?* headlines read for weeks in the aftermath.

None have ever been as important at this one, though.

Because for this one, they don't have to hide. Ilya doesn't have to control his heart eyes, or the way he can't seem to stop watching or touching his husband at every opportunity. He gets to place his hand on the table - wedding ring on display for everyone to see - and tangle his fingers with Shane's. No secret footsie under the table, no subtle glances or nods. Just love on display for everyone to see.

Shane is finally a Centaur. The ink is barely dry on the contract he just signed; eight years and eight millions dollars - Shane taking an absolutely insane discount in order to play for his hometown team. In order to play with *Ilya,* and the team who accepted him instantly, without hesitation, before he was even theirs.

Now Shane's clothes are in their closet - organised within an inch of their life, obviously - and their wedding pictures are decorating every surface, and their en-suite smells like Shane's shampoo permanently, now, instead of just a few days a month.

Ilya's house has finally become their home, after years of waiting for it.

And now, they get to tell the world (i.e. the Ottawa media) what they'd already been suspecting since the moment Montreal announced Shane's departure.

A brief silence falls across the hoards of journalists as the GM and Coach Wiebe announce the signing, and then they open the floor up to questions for Ilya and Shane.

Suddenly there are thirty hands being waved in the air, desperate to be called upon for a question.

It's a lot, even for Ilya, so he glances to his left to check on Shane. He's squirming nervously in his seat, and Ilya squeezes his hand reassuringly. It earns him a soft smile, one of those quiet, honest ones that Shane saves just for Ilya.

He wants to kiss him so desperately that he has to clench his jaw to stop himself.

Shane clears his throat and then - so, so bravely - he points at a random reporter, and the chaos begins.

"What made you want to sign in Ottawa?"

"Are you only here because of Rozanov?"

"Was your parting with Montreal amicable?"

"Rozanov, did you ask Shane to play here or was it his idea?"

"How are you coping after the video was leaked?"

"How long have you really *been together?"*

The bombardment is relentless. Just question after question - about their current team and past teams, about their relationship, about the playoffs, about *that* game, about the signing. They try to answer the questions as diplomatically as possible; they try to remain professional, and polite, and respectful, because they want to make a good impression.

But sometimes it's really fucking hard.

Shane is much better at it than Ilya, biting his tongue and smiling and pretending like some of the questions aren't invasive, or rude, or just plain callous. But then a smarmy looking journalist in a suit way above his pay grade asks:

"Shane, Ilya - do you really think you can play on the same team given your…*personal* relationship?" He pauses for a second, just to let the question sink in, then continues with: "Surely you two will affect the dynamic in the locker room."

Ilya feels Shane's entire body go tense.

His Shane, his husband, who has been more relaxed since their wedding than Ilya has ever seen him before. Shane, his love, who is sweet, and kind, and *good,* who never, *ever* deserves to feel like this. Ilya turns to look at him, sees the way his complexion has gone pale except for the embarrassed flush on his cheeks, and Ilya sees red.

"Is stupid question," Ilya says, waving his hand dismissively. "Next one."

The journalist splutters, his face turning red as he starts to stand up. "It's a valid question, Rozanov. Why won't you answer it?"

Shane shifts in his seat to face Ilya, squeezing his hand like he's trying to calm him down - trying to rein him in from going off on this fucking asshole.

“Don’t rise to it,” he whispers, quiet enough that the mics don’t pick it up.

Ilya considers it for a brief moment, simply because it’s Shane who’s asking it of it him. But then he takes in the humiliation on his husband’s face - embarrassment that borders on shame. He sees the glassiness in Shane’s eyes, like he’s starting to disassociate to protect himself.

And Ilya simply can’t keep his mouth shut about this.

“You think you know us because we are in public eye, yes? You think you deserve…”

“…access,” Shane murmurs, filling in the blanks for Ilya with another squeeze of his hand.

“You think you deserve access to us because we are famous. But you do not know us, not really. You only know what we allow.”

There’s a hush that’s fallen over the conference room, now. Ilya surveys the faces of all the journalists and reporters - their hungry eyes with their pens poised, or phones ready to record. They’re desperate for the scoop. Eager for a sound bite that will go viral, as if Ilya and Shane’s relationship could ever been condensed into something so small.

Ilya feels a little bit like a sickly animal being circled by vultures for a moment. Then he remembers who the fuck is he.

“There is not a version of Ilya Rozanov you have ever met that did not love Shane Hollander.”

There are gasps of shock, quiet muttering, jaws dropped. But none of that matters to Ilya. All that matters is the man sitting next to him, who is looking at Ilya like he’s never been more in love than he is right now.

That look of adoration on Shane’s face is what spurs Ilya to continue on with his unplanned speech.

“We have played fiercely against each other for our entire careers. Been tougher on each other than any other players in the league.”

Shane lets out a quiet snort of laughter as he nods his head in agreement.

“We have spent our whole careers competing against each other, and now we finally get to compete *with* each other. Is not a *problem,*” Ilya says with absolutely certainty, “it is a dream come true.”

There’s a sudden stillness to the room that is most unfamiliar for a press conference. It’s clear that - despite the barrage of questions - no one had been expecting to get such a lengthy, *honest* answer out of either of them.

Ilya is a little mad at himself for giving these predators exactly what they were hoping for, but he can’t bring himself to regret it. He knows they’ll find a way to twist his words no

matter what, but at least he got his say. At least he got to defend his relationship while still making it about hockey - still keeping this professional-adjacent.

The slimy reporter clears his throat. “What about the locker room, though? Surely - given how public your relationship is - your teammates can’t be too happy with-“

“Why? Because we are married?” Ilya asks rhetorically. “You ask and ask and ask us questions, but then also think we should hide. Which do you want? You cannot have both.”

Shane’s hand tightens around Ilya’s, and then he feels their shoulders press together as he leans into Ilya ever so slightly. It settles Ilya, makes him take a deep breath and then exhale some of the frustration that’s simmering inside of him.

“Our teammates are extremely supportive of our relationship, and we are very grateful for them,” Shane says, with an air of finality to it. “Any more questions?”

They field a few more questions, some trying to pry about the timeline of their relationship after hearing Ilya’s comment. But mostly they are less invasive, about salaries, and cap space, and what the team plans to do with two star centres who are both used to playing on the first line and captaining the team *(“Ilya is an incredible Captain. I’m excited to work with him,”* Shane answers). They’re easy enough questions - maybe they’ve run out of prying ones, or maybe they simply don’t want to deal with Ilya’s wrath for a second time.

For the final question of the press conference, Ilya picks a woman sitting right at the back. She looks young, barely out of school, probably, with pink braids and matching glasses, and a smile that immediately puts Ilya at ease.

“Mr Rozanov, what are you most looking forward to about playing on the same team as Mr Hollander?”

Ilya grins, wide and smug, as he knocks his foot against Shane’s beneath the table. A memory echoes inside of him from years ago, long before they were brave enough to call this love, when everything they did had to be hidden. Secretive. Ilya turns briefly to look at his beautiful husband. Before he even opens his mouth to answer, Shane is rolling his eyes - already anticipating the chirp Ilya is about to come out with.

“I am looking forward to him assisting my goals,” Ilya teases. “My husband is almost as talented as me, yes?”

The reporters laugh, and Shane laughs too, shaking his head as he gives Ilya the biggest, brightest smile. His cheeks are still flushed now, but with happiness instead of humiliation. His freckles stand out in a way that kind of makes Ilya want to bite him.

He loves Shane so much.

two.

The sun went down behind the trees hours ago, and now their backyard is lit by the roaring flames of the bonfire they’re all sitting around.

They're only four games - and four straight wins, *thank you very much* - into the season, but Ilya wasn't the youngest player to ever make captain for no reason. He knows how to treat his team, how to keep them close, how to make sure they all know they're appreciated.

And there's no better way to do that than beers, barbecue food, and a good old-fashioned bonfire.

It's late October in Ottawa so it's not exactly warm, but the fire keeps most of the chill away and Shane's unreasonably large collection of blankets is fighting off the rest of it. Haas is wrapped up in the crotched banana-yellow one, Bood and Cassie are sharing the fluffy pink one, and Troy and Harris have the thick fire-engine red one Shane bought while they were at the cottage last summer. The rest of the team are sharing the others, in all different colours of the rainbow.

Ilya has his favourite one - the brown, stripy one that Yuna knitted for them as a housewarming gift - slung over his knee. He's waiting rather impatiently for Shane to come back to him so he can cover them both up again. He's taking far too long for Ilya's liking.

There are several quiet conversations happening around the fire. Luca, Caitlyn, and Lisa are embroiled in a heated conversation about, good lord - *One Direction* of all things. Hayes and Bood are arguing about the proper way to marinate chicken, and Chouinard and Harris are discussing the pros and cons of journaling. For some reason.

God, his team are weird, Ilya thinks as he watches them. But he's grinning from ear to ear, so filled with affection for this little collection of misfits that they've somehow managed turned into a family. Into a fucking good team that's started the season with a four-game win streak. Thanks, in no small way, to his painfully absent husband.

Ilya grumbles under his breath, shifting in his seat as he looks over his shoulder to see if Shane is on his way back yet.

"Bro, you are so whipped," Bood says, shaking his head at Ilya.

"It's embarrassing, Cap," Dykstra teases him, with a knowing grin on his face.

"What?" Ilya asks, throwing his hands up. "I did not say anything."

"You're pining for him like he's been sent off to war," Troy says.

"I do not know what you idiots are talking about."

He absolutely does.

Shane has been gone for less than five minutes, just into the house so he can feed Anya. Ilya had offered to do it, of course, but Shane had simply kissed his forehead and told him to stay there as he climbed out of Ilya's lap. He'd listened, obviously, because everyone knows Shane walks Ilya like a fucking dog with a leash (and that Ilya *loves* it). But he's already regretting not going with him, and simply leaving the team to fend for themselves for five minutes.

He doesn't like being apart from his husband, not even for a single second.

After over a decade of holding back - of hiding, and secrets, and not being able to touch Shane whenever he wanted to - Ilya is absolutely insatiable now. Not for sex (though they both have an *extremely* healthy appetite for that, too) but for closeness, and affection, and the small touches that they were denied for so long.

Ilya loves holding his husband's hand, or wrapping an arm around his waist, or kissing the side of his head. He loves pressing their thighs together when they're on the bench during a game, and sleeping beside him every single night, even during roadies. He loves hugging him whenever he wants and claiming his mouth every chance he gets, and not having to pretend that he isn't hopelessly, irrevocably in love with Shane Hollander.

There's the crunch of footsteps on gravel, and Ilya turns to look over his shoulder. The motion is so fast and abrupt that it's a miracle he doesn't give himself whiplash.

He hears the boys trying to hide their laughter, but Ilya doesn't care. Not when his husband is walking towards him, bundled up in one of Ilya's *81* Centaurs hoodies, with a carefree smile on his face and a blue toque pulled down over his ears. He's the prettiest thing Ilya has ever seen.

He offers out his hand as soon as Shane is in touching distance.

Shane takes it, ducks down to kiss the back of Ilya's knuckles, and then lets himself be pulled back down onto Ilya's lap. Exactly where he belongs. Ilya tucks the blanket back around their legs, and then sighs in contentment as Shane settles against him.

"What?" Shane asks, when he notices the guys have gone quiet at they watch them.

"Nothing, nothing," Bood says, grinning.

"It's just-" Lisa begins.

"-you guys are kind of obsessed with each other," Wyatt finishes his wife's sentence.

Shane lets out a bright burst of laughter, his cheeks colouring slightly beneath all of the attention. But he doesn't pull away from Ilya - he doesn't tense up - he just shrugs his shoulders a little, then rests his head back against Ilya.

"Yeah," Shane agrees. "We kind of are."

The team boos jokingly, hurling their usual chirps at the happily married couple. Ilya ignores them in favour of looking down at his husband.

Shane's admission fills Ilya with fuzzy warmth, like there are bees - no, not bees, *butterflies* - fluttering about in his stomach. It's ridiculous, maybe, given that Shane proposed to Ilya and quite literally *married him,* but still. He likes hearing that Shane is as besotted with him as he is with Shane.

"He is my husband, no?" Ilya says. "We are allowed to be obsessed."

“Well if you could be obsessed *not* in our line of sight, that would be great,” Luca chirps, but he’s smiling too softly to mean it.

Ilya scoffs. “Is my house, asshole. If you don’t like it, you can leave.”

Luca laughs, and so does the rest of the team, and as conversation starts up again Ilya shifts his focus back to the sleepy man curled up on his lap. Shane’s eyes are heavy but still bright, and he’s smiling as his attention flickers between each of the conversations that are happening. He looks peaceful. Content. Like there’s nowhere else he’d rather be.

It makes Ilya want to give him the world. More dogs, and at least two babies, and the fucking sun, if Shane asked for it. Anything at all.

He presses a kiss to the top of Shane’s ear, and whispers, “I love you.”

Shane hums softly, turning his face to rub his nose along the length of Ilya’s throat. “Love you too, baby.”

three.

Ilya’s sweat-damp hair is curling against his forehead, and his compression shirt and tights are starting to stick uncomfortably to his skin. His bones are screaming after the brutal game, and while he’s not injured he *is* fucking hurting. He wants nothing more than to strip out of his gear, rush through a shower, and drive home with Shane’s hand tangled in his.

But first, media.

Since the press conference where Ilya and Shane made their positions clear, the pot-game media scrums have been relatively tame. Especially given their current record of 7-0-1 to start the season, their only loss coming in overtime against last year’s cup winners.

Ilya has a feeling this one might be a little more hectic, though, after the Centaurs’ first game against Montreal since Shane joined the team.

“Ilya, how did that win feel tonight?”

He nods his head. “Was good. All wins feel good.”

He knows what they’re looking for: some bitter, snarky remark about Montreal, so fans and presenters alike have something to sink their teeth into. He won’t give it to them, though. There’s no need.

Ilya fucking hates Montreal. The entire organisation could implode and Ilya would smile at the destruction, after the way they treated Shane. He gave them everything he had to give for over a decade - he won them cups, built their dynasty, turned them into a team people feared. And how did they repay him? They turned their fucking backs on him.

So yes, Ilya has a lot to say about Montreal.

But he would rather the talking be done on the ice, and after tonight - after Shane's jaw-dropping hat trick against his traitorous former team - he thinks that conversation is well and truly closed.

He glances briefly to his right, where Shane is surrounded by another gaggle of reporters all asking him the same questions, no doubt. His skin is glistening, slick with the proof of his effort and exertion tonight. Ilya briefly thinks about licking the sweat from his throat, and then he looks away and instantly locks in for the next flurry of questions.

"It was Hollander's first game against his former team," another reporter begins, "how do you think it went?"

"I don't know. Why don't you ask Montreal?" Ilya smirks. The scrum surrounding him all chuckle.

The game was embarrassing for the Voyageurs. A complete and utter trouncing. The score was 7-1 when the buzzer finally sounded, with Montreal's only goal coming from Pike - their 15th best player. Or 14th, now, he supposes. That speaks for itself, Ilya thinks.

"You guys are on a hot streak right now. What do you think has the team playing so well?"

"We are great team. We love each other a lot. Makes for good, safe locker room, and even better connection on ice."

It's not a generic media answer; it's the truth. Ilya has never known a team be as close as this one is, and all the guys say the exact same thing. They know each other's partners, and kids, and *parents*; they remember important dates, and have each other's backs, and they love fiercely. They're not just colleagues, but friends. A family, even.

It's pretty easy to connect with people when you aren't hiding anything from them - when you're aren't pretending to be someone that you're not.

"Ilya, Theriault - the Voyageurs coach - said that-"

Ilya waves his hand to silence the reporter, one known for his inflammatory questions and clickbait articles. "I don't want to hear what that man said."

He's not trying to start anything, honestly, he just - he isn't willing to entertain anything that man has to say. He hurt Shane immeasurably, in ways that he's still reeling from even after so many months. There's nothing he could say that would be worth Ilya's time or attention. Plus, he'd probably say something even *worse* if he actually knew what that sorry excuse for a coach said about Shane. So. It's in everyone's best interests, really.

He glances over to Shane once more, sees the slight furrow between his eyebrows, and wonders if he's being asked about the same thing. He considers bailing on his own scrum in order to crash Shane's - to pull him away before anyone can say anything that might get to him - but Ilya knows better than that. As much as desperately wants to protect Shane, he knows he doesn't need to; his husband is tough as hell and can handle it himself.

“One last question?” Quinn asks.

He’s one of the younger members of the press, and with his pale pink tie and little rainbow tie clip, Ilya knows he won’t ask anything that will piss him off.

He nods his head. “Only for you, Quinn,” he answers with a grin.

“Hollander was flying tonight,” he begins, and Ilya nods in agreement. “Do you think there’s added pressure when playing against your old team for the first time?”

The answer is *yes, of course,* but Ilya won’t admit to that. Instead he hits the reporters with his signature smirk, and says-

“My husband is second best player in league - after me, of course. He is flying every game.”

They all chuckle and thank Ilya for his time, but Ilya is already distracted. Because his husband is finishing answering his own questions, but now there’s a pink flush on his cheeks and he keeps glancing over at Ilya like he heard his comment. Like he *liked* it. When their eyes finally meet Ilya winks at him, quick and subtle and not for any cameras - not for anyone but them.

Shane tries not to smile but he fails spectacularly.

four.

“Ilya, you can’t still be mad at me,” Shane says.

“I don’t want to talk to you right now.”

Shane laughs, soft and easy, with not a single hint of concern. He shakes his head in disbelief, like he’s merely entertaining a temper tantrum. His eyes crinkle at the sides when he laughs, now - tiny little crows feet that show the passage of time - and his nose scrunches up like it always has done. His freckles look like tiny little constellations of stars.

Ilya would kiss him if he wasn’t so pissed at him.

He’s gorgeous, is the problem, and with those big brown eyes and fucking *freckles,* Ilya is kind of helpless when it comes to his husband. He can’t say no to him, and he can’t win an argument to save his life, and he certainly can’t stay mad at him. But. He’s willing to give it his best shot anyway.

He doesn’t even glance in Shane’s direction as they drive, not even when he turns on the god-awful country music station. Shane doesn’t even *like* country - he barely even likes *music!* He’s just doing it to get a rise out of Ilya, but nope. Not today. Today Ilya is pissed, and he’s heartbroken, and he’s going to make sure that his husband knows it.

He taps his thumb on the steering wheel for the rest of the ride, just because he knows Shane hates it.

Ilya eventually pulls the car to a stop outside of Yuna and David's house. Once he's out of the car he doesn't bother opening Shane's door for him, he doesn't even wait. He simply heads straight down the path towards his in-laws, in desperate need of some emotional support in this devastating time.

Ilya walks into the house with purpose. He can hear Shane shuffling in behind him, but he doesn't turn to face him. Instead, Ilya sets his sights on his allies. He heads straight to where he knows Yuna and David will be, and he flings the kitchen door open in a dramatic, Oscar-worthy flourish.

Yuna and David - already preparing dinner on the countertop - turn to greet them with a smile. Ilya doesn't even let them open their mouths before he's saying:

"Yuna, David - my husband just said he doesn't love me anymore."

"I did *not* say that," Shane argues, when he notes the disbelieving expressions on his parents' faces. "I *said* we can't get another dog."

"Exactly," Ilya wails, throwing his arms up in the air. "Is same thing!"

There's silence for a moment. His in-laws look at each other, and then at Ilya and Shane in turn. Shane leans against the door frame, watching Ilya with an impossibly fond look on his face despite the seriousness of the moment. And Ilya waits with bated breath for the unfailing support he knows he's about to receive.

Yuna and David just *get* him. He's their favourite son, after all.

"Well," David says after a long beat, "I guess we need to find you a divorce attorney, Ilya."

Yuna nods most solemnly. "We've got your back, sweetheart. All the way."

He knew they would understand.

"Thank you!" Ilya exclaims, turning to face his husband with a smug look etched onto his face.

Shane simply scoffs. "I should have known they'd take your side."

"They love me more," Ilya reminds him with a shrug of his shoulders.

There's a moment where they locked in an intense stare down, neither of them willing to give in. But then, simultaneously, both of them burst into laughter. Ilya reaches for Shane first, because obviously. Even five minutes of pretending to be mad at his husband is five minutes too many, and he needs to hold his hand - needs to touch him, or kiss him, or something.

Shane reaches back, taking Ilya's hand and allowing himself to be tugged forwards until he's all but melting into Ilya's chest.

"Love you," Ilya murmurs as he presses a kiss to Shane's forehead.

“Oh, *now* you love me?” Shane teases.

He leans back just a little, to look Ilya in the eyes, and his entire face is just…alive. Lit up with happiness, and humour, and that impossibly confident look he gets when Ilya gives in to him. Which, let’s face, is a daily occurrence.

“Shut up. Say it back,” Ilya whines.

Shane rolls his eyes in false exasperation. But then he’s taking Ilya’s chin between his thumb and finger, wiggling his head from side to side, and saying-

“I love you, you dork.”

Ilya smiles so big it makes his cheeks ache.

“God, you boys are impossible,” Yuna sighs, but when Ilya affords her a quick glance she’s smiling softly. David is, too.

He loves his family, and his husband, and this wonderful life they’ve built together. Sometimes he still can’t quite believe it’s his - that it’s something he gets to keep.

This is one of those moments where the awe really hits him, where he’s struck with the reminder that this is his life now, and it’s a really fucking great one. Because he’s in a home that’s safe and warm and filled with love; his in-laws are watching them with such joy on their faces, as their son leans in to press a kiss to Ilya’s cheek. There’s no anger or resentment or expectation.

Ilya is happy.

“Your son is still wrong, though. Yes?”

David laughs. “Yeah, buddy, he is. Anya needs a friend.”

“See!”

five.

The noise in the arena is deafening.

The fans are still cheering and Ilya’s teammates are still screaming themselves hoarse in elation. There’s music, and reporters, and crying family members everywhere Ilya turns. It’s a lot, to say the least. He can hardly hear himself think, let alone what the reporter across from him is asking. He’s not complaining, though. He might never complain again for the rest of his life, actually.

Because they did it. His guys actually fucking did it.

They won the cup together, game 7 of the Stanley Cup finals, in their own fucking barn. His first season playing with Shane, and Ilya got to life the cup with his husband.

It feels miraculous, like a fucking dream come true.

He's won the cup before of course, back when he was a Bear, but it's different this time. It means more. Because of Shane, of course. Because he got to do all of this with the love of his life by his side, without any secrets or deception or hiding. But because of their team, too. Because the Centaurs are a family that Ilya could have never predicted a few years ago, but one that he can't imagine his life without anymore.

He feels luckier than he has any right to, and he briefly he thinks of his mom. His beautiful mama, who Ilya knows - with everything in him - is looking down on this moment with such love and pride for the man her little boy has become. He would have never made it here without her.

The memory of her love kept him going just long enough for him to meet Shane. Just long enough for his life to finally begin.

The reporter leans in closer to him, bringing Ilya back into the moment. She points to the camera man beside her, and Ilya spots the blinking, red light that shows they're currently live on air. Ilya locks in, and he doesn't have to fake a smile for the audience this time.

"Ilya, you just won your second Stanley Cup. How does that feel?"

"Like everything I have ever dreamed of," Ilya yells, just so he can be heard above the noise.

The reporter laughs, nodding her head in understanding. "At the start of the season, did you ever think you guys would get here?"

He thinks back to that first day of training camp - Shane's very first time skating with their team. They had clicked instantly. Not just Ilya and Shane, who can all but read each other's minds when they're on the ice together, but *everybody.* It was like something had finally slotted into place, and whether it was Shane, or trust, or simply the belief that they could do it, Ilya can't be sure. But, whatever it was…Ilya knew.

He knew they were going to be something special together.

"Yes," he admits. "I knew we would."

Before she can respond there are hands on his shoulder and a significant weight being draped over his back. Ilya's knees almost buckle beneath Wyatt, with his goalie pads and all, as he screams into Ilya's ear.

"Fucking champions, baby!"

Then he presses a kiss to the side of Ilya's head and disappears. He skates off to scoop up a very pregnant Lisa and do a lap around the rink with her, carrying her like she's his own personal Stanley Cup.

"Sorry about him," Ilya says, apologising for the colourful language.

The reporter - Callie, he thinks her name is - just waves a hand and laughs. “I think you guys will be forgiven. You deserve to celebrate tonight.”

Yes. Yes they do.

“The Centaurs have had a record breaking season: most regular-season wins by a team in over twenty years, President’s Trophy winners, and not just one, but *two* series sweeps in the playoffs. How does it feel to have all your hard work culminate in winning the Stanley Cup?”

“It feels…”

Ilya struggles to find the words. Not just in English, but in Russian too. There aren’t words in any language Ilya knows that could possibly describe what all of this means to him. Maybe Shane could find some in French for him, but he doubts it. He doesn’t think they exist yet.

“It feels like we deserve it, no? This team - they are special. Have worked harder than anyone I have ever known. Have faced more challenges, too. But always keep fighting. And we came out on top.”

This season, for all their glory and wins and records broken, hasn’t been an easy one.

Ilya and Shane’s problems didn’t end the moment they were outed. Their marriage, and Shane signing with Ottawa, and the fact that they refused to stay hidden any longer - the fact that they made the choice to not be invisible - has proven to be unpopular with quite a number of people.

The league, for one. Or, more specifically, Commissioner Crowell. He would have been more than happy for Ilya and Shane to simply fade into obscurity rather than have to deal with all the publicity they’ve brought to the league, and all the issues that their relationship has highlighted. Maybe everyone would have preferred that - for Shane and Ilya to simply keep quiet and skate.

But Ilya and Shane have never been the type to play by the rules; not when it comes to each other.

And of course there are players who have issues, too. Most of the Montreal team - except for Pike and J.J. - just to name a few. Coaches and GMs who always have something to say about Shane and Ilya - and Troy, too, when the mood strikes them - especially when the Centaurs embarrass their teams by beating them. Even a handful of referees as well, meaning the entire team’s penalty minutes were up this season.

Ilya wouldn’t change it for the world, though. He would never go back to hiding his love for Shane, not now he knows how it feels to love him in the sunlight.

Ilya is about to expand on his answer when he spots a blur of red and black skating past him - a blur he would know blindfolded and half conscious.

Shane.

Without even thinking, Ilya reaches out a hand just in time to grab him by the back of his jersey.

Shane stumbles against the interference, but then - realising who grabbed him - he reluctantly allows himself to be pulled backwards into Ilya's chest, right in front of the camera. It's not a gesture Ilya takes lightly, especially with how rigid Shane is about always remaining professional on the ice. Winning the cup is clearly an exception.

Ilya winds his arm around Shane's waist from behind, just in case he changes his mind and tries to escape. Shane starts to laugh a little nervously when he realises they're live. But. He still holds onto Ilya's arm so he can't pull it away, and he lets himself sink into Ilya's embrace.

"This is Shane Hollander," he introduces unnecessarily. "He scored game winning goal."

Shane flushes and gently elbows Ilya, but Ilya just laughs. He's proud, okay? He wants to show his man off, and he doubts a single person in Canada minds right about now.

Shane Hollander is a goddamn national hero.

"How did it feel, Shane, when that goal hit the back of the net?" Callie asks.

"Like a relief," Shane answers honestly, and they all laugh.

"Could not have done any of this without my husband. He is best thing to happen to me, and this team, and all of Canada!"

Shane jerks in his arms, whipping his head around to look at Ilya over his shoulder. His lips are parted on a shocked inhale, he has a terrible case of helmet hair, and his cheeks are pink beneath his freckles. He's kind of glaring at Ilya, just a little. He's the best thing Ilya has ever seen.

Even better than the Cup.

"*Ilya,*" Shane hisses through his teeth.

But Ilya just laughs because he's almost delirious with excitement. He's a Stanley Cup champion (again), he's holding his husband in his arms, live on television, and he thinks he's probably never been happier than in this moment.

He plants a kiss on the side of Shane's head, soft and tender and loving.

"My husband is embarrassed, but it is all true, no?"

And no can really argue with that.

+one.

The bass is pulsing in a way that Shane can feel in his teeth.

Half the team are completely paralytic, or at least on their way there. Luca is sandwiched between a red-headed actress and a tattooed guy with his hair in a French braid, and they're dancing like they're the only people in the room. Dykstra is jumping up and down on a table while Caitlin tries to pull him down. Bood is feeding Cassie shots while she sits on his lap.

Everyone is going a little bit insane, honestly. Though Shane can't really blame them after they just won the Cup.

This kind of environment - where he can feel the atmosphere buzzing beneath his skin - is usually one of Shane's worst nightmares. It's far too loud, and there's too much stimulation, especially given the fact that his ears have been ringing since the moment the buzzer sounded and everyone started screaming.

But, with Ilya's hand firmly locked with his own, Shane finds everything a little more bearable.

Shane loves Ilya more than anyone or anything. He'd choose him over his parents, if it ever came to that - even though he knows it never, ever would - and he would, without a moment's hesitation, choose him over hockey. He's known that for a long time. Years, now, since the very second Ilya had looked at him with tears in his eyes and said, *"You wouldn't even choose me, would you? If it is between me and hockey."*

Shane had never let himself think about *having* to choose, not up until that moment. It had been too unbearable to even consider. But as soon as he was confronted with the dilemma, he realised there was simply no choice at all.

He could live without hockey. He couldn't live without Ilya.

But it still catches him a little bit off guard, just *how* true it is. Because Shane just won the cup again, and it's wonderful, unbelievable, exhilarating - even on his fourth go around - but it doesn't matter half as much as the man leaning against him.

They're stuffed into a sticky, too-small booth in some grungy bar in downtown Ottawa, not all that from the Tire Centre. Shane is half sitting on Ilya's lap, and Ilya is grinning at him with the force of a thousand suns. His curls are slick with sweat, his eyes are glistening with so much emotion, and he's just a little bit tipsy.

He's so perfect that Shane wants to crawl inside his skin.

And when Ilya leans in to kiss him, this - *this* is his very favourite moment of the entire night. Not his game winning goal, or the roar of the crowd, or hoisting the cup. *This.* Ilya kissing him, casual and easy, like there's nobody watching. Or like he doesn't care, even if there is.

"Are you happy, kótik?" Ilya asks, leaning so close that his lips brush against Shane's ear and make him shiver.

Shane nods, and Ilya's kisses his ear. "I'm so happy. Are you?"

"The happiest," Ilya replies. "Except for our wedding day."

It’s sappy, and cheesy, and ridiculous, and Shane has to kiss him about it. He fists the open collar of Ilya’s shirt and pulls him close, and Ilya’s laughs into Shane’s open mouth as their lips collide.

“Boooo! Get a room,” Troy calls out.

Shane opens his eyes, pulling back just enough to see Ilya raise his hand and flip Troy the bird. Then he leans in again and kisses Shane’s nose.

“You want another drink?”

Shane nods. He’s feeling hot, all of a sudden. And thirsty, too.

“Please. Can you get me a-“

“Ginger ale, I know.”

Of course he does. Ilya knows everything about him, from the way he folds his clothes before they have sex, and which spoon he can’t eat with, and the exact temperature Shane needs the house to stay at. He knows that Shane always forgets his reading glasses so Ilya carries an extra pair with him. He knows when Shane needs to be left alone with his noise-cancelling headphones and a podcast on 18th century Japanese architecture, and he knows when Shane’s needs to wrapped up in Ilya’s arms like a burrito.

He’s the best thing that has ever happened to Shane, and he misses him even though he’s barely been gone thirty seconds. It’s embarrassing, really. The crowd around the bar is dense, though, and Shane knows it’s going to take a while, so he quickly heads to the bathroom to kill some time.

The queue there is long as well, and by the time Shane makes it out it’s been almost ten minutes since he last held Ilya’s hand.

He scans the club in search for Ilya, and when Shane’s eyes finally settle on him, he’s still waiting at the bar. He’s sitting on a barstool and someone has sidled up beside him. A guy with dark curls and glasses that look a little bit like Shane’s, and even across the room Shane can see the expression on his face. He’s smiling at Ilya like he’s hungry - like he’s absolutely starved.

Shane watches as the guy tips his head back in exaggerated laughter, then rests a suggestive hand on Ilya’s forearm.

Something hot rushes through Shane’s body. Molten lava and liquid iron, blistering his insides as he watches somebody flirt with his man.

Shane had never been a jealous person before Ilya, not in the slightest. But - if he’s being honest - from the moment he and Ilya first kissed, he never wanted anyone else to touch him again. He knows that throughout the years when they were, well, *messy,* Ilya hooked up with plenty of other people, and that doesn’t bother Shane because it’s all in the past. It happened before they dared to put a name to what they were.

But now - now Ilya has a wedding ring on his finger. They are very *publicly* married to each other. There's no way in hell this guy is at this club, tonight of all nights, and isn't a hockey fan. Which means he fucking *knows* that Ilya is taken, and yet he's still trying it on.

It makes Shane want to break something.

Ilya is subtle about it, polite, but he very quickly slips his arm from beneath the guy's grasp and shoves his hand into his pocket. He takes a small step back, enough to be obvious but not rude, and then Shane observes Ilya as his eyes dart around the room, no doubt in search of *him.*

It makes Shane smile, his heart swelling inside his chest.

The intruder doesn't take the hint, though, and he moves in closer to Ilya for second time. That's all Shane needs to see.

Suddenly he's meandering through the crowd of people, all drunk and sweaty and trying to touch or congratulate him. He barely notices any of them. His eyes are locked on Ilya, and the guy still trying to nestle his way in beside him, even though Ilya is clearly telling him to back off.

By the time he reaches them, Shane is simmering with barely concealed rage.

He moves up behind Ilya, winds an arm around his waist, and pulls him back into Shane's chest. Ilya stiffens for the briefest of moments, but then - upon realising that it's Shane - he melts, leaning his body back against Shane.

The guy's eyes widen in surprise.

"Is there something my husband and I can help you with?" Shane asks, not even attempting to disguise the harshness of his words.

"Oh, uh, I," the guy stutters. "I was just-"

"-leaving?"

He nods his head so violently he looks like those bobble-heads that Shane's dad collects. He almost laughs at the thought. Almost.

"Yeah. Yes. Sorry, Mr Hollander."

"It's Mr Hollander-Rozanov, actually," Shane corrects him. He feels Ilya trembling with poorly concealed laughter.

"Of course. Yes."

He quickly turns to leave, and Ilya raises a hand to wave him goodbye.

The moment he's out of sight Shane groans and Ilya starts to laugh, leaning his head back on Shane's shoulder as he grips his arm and pulls it even tighter around his waist. Shane ducks

down, biting Ilya's earlobe just to sink his teeth into him - to claim him in some ridiculous, animalistic way.

"I can't take you anywhere, baby," Shane grumbles, kissing up the side of Ilya's neck.

Ilya hums. "You were jealous."

It's not a question, so Shane doesn't bother with an answer. He just kisses Ilya again, his neck, and his jaw, and the spot where his pulse thrums beneath his skin. *Mine, mine, mine,* he thinks.

Ilya tugs on Shane's arm, and Shane - completely helpless - allows Ilya to move him wherever he wants him. He comes to rest in front of Ilya, slotting perfectly between his legs as Ilya curls his hands around the back of Shane's thighs to hold him close. Shane places his hands on Ilya's shoulders, leans in to steal a kiss.

"It is hot when you are - what is word? Like owning me?"

Shane rolls his eyes, blushing a little at how easily Ilya reads him. "Possessive?"

Ilya nods. "Mm. Yes. Is very sexy when you are possessive over me."

Shane groans, leaning forward to rest his forehead on Ilya's shoulder. Ilya wraps his arms around Shane's waist, holding him tightly as he presses kisses to Shane's head, and hair, and the side of his face.

"He touched you."

"Yes."

"You're mine."

Ilya groans. "Fuck, that's so hot, Hollander."

Shane nips at the soft skin of Ilya's throat. "That's Hollander-Rozanov to you," he teases.

"How about you take your husband home then, hm? We have stayed here long enough, I think."

Shane pulls back to look at Ilya, trying to work out if he's being serious. The answer is pretty fucking obvious. His mouth is glistening like he's been licking his lips, and his cheeks are tinged pink with desire, and his pupils are blown so wide he looks high on the moment. On Shane. On their love.

Shane doesn't have to think about it for a single second longer. They've done their part, celebrated with the team, and now it's time for them to go home and celebrate *together.*

He can't wait to spend the rest of his career winning with Ilya. The love of his life. His *husband.*

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