

The Time Of My Life

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/77160881) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/77160881>.

Rating:	Mature
Archive Warning:	Graphic Depictions Of Violence
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Heated Rivalry (TV)
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Ilya Rozanov , Shane Hollander , Kip Grady , Scott Hunter (Game Changers)
Additional Tags:	Ilya Rozanov Loves Shane Hollander , authors universe
Language:	English
Series:	Part 2 of Long Live The Walls We Crashed Through
Stats:	Published: 2026-01-05 Completed: 2026-01-31 Words: 37,038 Chapters: 20/20

The Time Of My Life

by [Penelope_x](#)

Summary

Sequel to So High School...

Ilya is ready to start his season with Montreal, he knows that he should be happy, he has everything he has ever dreamed of, his career, his family. But he hates how hard it is for him. But he's trying, he knows with his dads and Shane that everything will be okay, but knowing it and believing it are two different things.

[Warnings: Homophobic bullying, references to suicide, depression,]

Chapter 1

Chapter 1

“How are you Ilya?” Ivan asked through the screen.

Ilya hated that question. He hated it more than anything. He rolled his eyes, fiddling with the strings of his Montreal hooded jumper. “I’m trying.” Ilya replied honestly.

“Trying is good, but you shouldn’t try to be anything that you are not.” Ivan’s soft Russian voice should have made Ilya feel better, but it didn’t. “Shall we talk about your first month of training?”

“I love it,” Ilya nodded. “I love my team, most of them are good people. Teddy has been really good, he has helped a lot. I know I should be grateful, but I can’t help but feel a little empty.”

“Because you miss Shane?”

At the mention of his name, Ilya forced his lips to smile, he played with the ring hanging around his neck and nodded. “Because I feel like I had it all. I had my family. My dads. My Shane. And now I feel like I gave that up to have a career that I could have waited for.”

“That’s a very common feeling, but you also need to believe that you haven’t lost them. Scott and Kip are still your dads, Shane is still your boyfriend.” Ilya wanted to correct him because boyfriend felt too light a term for what they were. “How have you been managing your food since you’ve been training?”

“I try, I know I could do better.” Ilya answered honestly.

“It’s good that you recognise that. The team has their own nutritionist, have they been helping you?”

“Yes, I have been honest with them. I have to keep a diary of what I eat and show it to them weekly.” Ilya sighs. “I am feeling nervous because tomorrow is our first game.”

“You have played hockey all of your life, I am sure the nerves are normal.” Ivan smiled. “Will Shane be there?”

“Yes. Everyone will be,” Ilya whispered. “I just don’t want to disappoint them.”

“I don’t think that’s possible.” Ivan smiled. “You are living with Scott and Kip?”

“Yes.” Ilya smiled. “It is only half an hour drive to the training grounds, it is an hour away from Shane.”

“That’s good.” Ivan smiled. “The media has been quite loud about you,”

Ilya looked down at that, that was what was tying his stomach in knots. First openly gay Rookie in the NHL. First openly gay Rookie to get drafted first. No one was commenting about his hockey, everything was about his sexuality. There had been a few comments of love and support, but the hate was even louder. Every day he woke up to people calling him disgusting, people hating Montreal for signing him.

“It has been a lot.” Ilya mumbled.

Ivan speaks a little more and honestly, Ilya is just glad when the hour is up. He closes his laptop and curls on his bed, he sets his alarm for an hour and closes his eyes. He didn't sleep, but he managed to shut the world out for a little bit and when his alarm went off he padded downstairs. No one was home and Ilya sighed, he could do with a hug from Kip right now.

He opened the fridge and started to make a sandwich, he added meats and proteins and took a banana as well. He chewed it mechanically, he looked at his phone, his screensaver the photo Kip had taken of him and Shane asleep watching a movie. It had been a week since Ilya had fallen asleep with Shane, every night they spoke into the night until one of them fell asleep. It was often Shane who fell asleep first. Ilya was so incredibly proud of Shane. Shane who was now Captain of the school team, already putting his name out there to be picked up, already having meetings with brands. Yuna had become Ilya's agent, she had some contracts lined up but none of them felt real to him. Right now the only people who wanted to have him as the face of their campaign were ones that screamed about his sexuality.

Shane: How did it go with Ivan? X

Ilya: Was ok.

Ilya sent a little selfie of him eating his sandwich, he did it every now and again, like he was sending evidence to Shane.

Shane: I can't wait to see you tonight, bag is already packed.

Ilya: I have half of your wardrobe here already. Surely no clothes left?

Shane: You'll need a bigger closet soon

Ilya: When we move into our own place we will have closet each

Shane: Promise?

Ilya: Promise

Ilya tidied up his empty plate and grabbed his training bag from his room, he wrote a little note to Kip 'Hey Dad, off to training, got the pastries you liked from Pyshka,' He stuck it to the fridge and got in his car.

His draft bonus had been generous, Scott and Kip sat him down and spoke about the importance of money and Ilya had wanted to just give it to them, let them look after it for him, he didn't want the responsibility. Scott had taken him to the dealership and Ilya brought himself his first car, a black Range Rover with tinted windows. He had eyed up some of the

fancier sports cars, they reminded him of the toy cars he collected when he saw them, but knew this was sensible. One day he had told Shane, he would have a garage full of little sleek cars for them to drive. Shane of course had listed everything that was good and safe about his Rover.

“Ilya,” Coach Williams called as soon as he set foot in. “You’re early.”

“Just twenty minutes.” Ilya shrugged. “That’s okay right?”

“Even the Captain isn’t here yet,” Williams laughed. “Of course it is. I think you have some press shoots to do today.”

“Oh.” Ilya nodded. “Great.”

“Smile kid. You’re living the life here.” Williams grinned. Ilya smiled, he certainly was.

The training was hard and intense but this was where Ilya thrived, he followed everything that Teddy shouted, followed every play, did every drill. His body loved this feeling. He knew that tomorrow they were going to win. The press shoot happened after the practice, he showered and changed into a clean uniform, got back on the ice and took the photos. Shane had told him how handsome he always looked in the pictures that were released. Ilya wasn’t too sure.

James was one of the media managers for the Montreal team, Ilya wasn’t too sure he liked him, he thrust Ilya into the spotlight as often as he could, he tried to get him to use rainbow tape on his stick and Ilya had firmly said no. Their jerseys all had the pride flag on the left arm and that was enough for him, he did not want to be the only one with a different stick. James hadn’t liked that from him, but no one pushed him. James took him to the conference room for another interview.

“Try not to scowl,” James said quietly.

Ilya pushed his smile into place, it wasn’t a smile, it was a smirk.

The questions started blandly, but Ilya liked bland, they were predictable and he could answer them easily. How was your first two weeks training with Montreal? Are you ready for your first game? There’s eyes on you, how are you finding the pressure?

Then it got harder. How does it feel to be a role model to thousands of young hockey fans? What pressure do you feel for being part of the change to this sport?

Then one that made him smirk for real. “Chris Furguson has publicly called you out, I’m sensing a rivalry between the two of you. Have you got anything you would like to say?”

Furguson, the prick from the draft weekend. Ilya hated that he thought of him more than he should.

“Yes,” Ilya nodded and he moved forward a little, he liked the panic that was in James’ eyes. “I have one question,” They all nodded their heads a little eagerly. “Who is Furguson?” The room erupted with laughter and Ilya smirked again, this time at James who gave an appreciative nod at his answer.

Shane: Practice is all finished, waiting for you. Love you.
Shane: I guess yours is running late... Call me when you are leaving
Shane: Scott has given me a lift, you on your way?
Shane: Waiting for you at yours x

Ilya hated that his night had gone on so long, he sent a text to Shane and to Scott and Kip that he was on his way and he drove home.

As soon as the door opened, Shane was there, arms wrapped around him. “Hey,” Shane smiled.

“Mm, hi.” Ilya pulled Shane even closer and kissed him slow and hard, his bag dropping behind him. “I am sorry I couldn’t pick you up.”

“It’s okay,” Shane whispered, taking his hand and pulling his bag inside. “Everything okay?”

“Mm.” Ilya nodded. “I had photos.”

“Cause you are so handsome.” Shane winked.

“Cause I have story.” Ilya sighed but kissed Shane’s nose and walked into the living room, he hugged Kip and Scott and threw himself onto the sofa.

“Shoes.” Kip chuckled and Ilya toed off his trainers quickly.

“Sorry dad,” He yawned.

“Tired?” Scott asked. “They’re not pushing you too hard are they?”

“I did not sleep well.” Ilya answered honestly. “I will sleep better tonight.” He smiled and Shane sat down at the end of the sofa and Ilya turned his body so he could let his head rest on his lap.

“Well, we could not be bothered to cook so we ordered a pizza.” Scott hummed.

“I am not allowed to eat pizza before game.” Ilya pouted.

“Well you can write down that you had something different, it’s Friday night and Friday night means Pizza.” Kip smiled and Ilya just grinned. Pizza did sound really good. He closed his eyes and let the soft gentle feeling of Shane’s fingers in his hair lull him into a calmer moment.

Right now, he could just be Ilya, he didn't need to pretend here. He was safe, with his family and that's all he needed.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2

Ilya couldn't look up at the crowds in the stadium. They were so loud, every roar, every chant vibrated through him and all he wanted to do was go back through the tunnel and run away from this. Teddy clasped a hand on his back and grinned at him, he could do this.

Whenever Ilya had the puck bigger players pushed him into the boards, but he could take it, he pushed through and by the end of the first period he had scored one and assisted Teddy with two goals.

"You're doing good kid," Teddy grinned as he clapped his shoulder.

Ilya just nodded, he didn't feel like he was doing particularly fantastic, but he knew that this wasn't high school hockey. This was the major league and he was a rookie trying to find his feet, and that was okay. He felt eyes on him, not eyes like the fans trying to catch a glimpse of him as he took a sip of water, but burning through him and he looked over to the other team and he rolled his eyes when he saw Furguson. Furguson who had been smirking at every push.

"Fucking fag," Furguson laughed to one of the older players who looked at Ilya and laughed.

Ilya looked away quickly, he would cry about it later.

In the second period he used that energy and took the puck, when Furguson came at him he pushed his shoulders out, pushed him hard and away from him and scored.

"Enjoy it whilst you can, listen to them, even you scoring is making them hate you," Furguson laughed and Ilya hated that he listened to him, he turned his head and looked up at the stands, there were some cheering, but there were men shaking their heads as if they couldn't believe it.

But then Ilya found the friends and family seats, he found Scott and Kip who were cheering so loud, he found Yuna and David who were grinning excitedly. And then there was Shane, the biggest smile on his face, and he was wearing Ilya's number. Ilya took a breath, took a moment to just grin at him, and he winked. The crowd went wild and Ilya pushed forward again.

Montreal won 5-3 and Ilya didn't feel defeated anymore. They were lining up for the handshakes and Furguson looked furious, Ilya held his hand out but most of the players had refused to shake it but he didn't care. They had won. He could do this. Ilya was expecting Furguson to do the same, to push his hand away, to call him a homophobic slur, but instead he gripped his hand hard, pinching and he made sure it was only Ilya who could hear him, "You better watch your fucking back." He hissed before moving away.

The locker room was chaotic, Teddy had picked Ilya up with another one of the senior players shouting they had the Rookie of the year on their team and Ilya had tried to smile, tried to enjoy the moment, but all he could think about was what Furguson had said.

“We should go and celebrate,” One of the team shouted. “Beers at Brunswick?” It was greeted by a chorus of yeahs and Ilya realised he was the only one who didn’t want to.

“Kid,” Martins, the one who helped pick him up, smiled at him. “Brunswick is one of our pubs, friends and family will already be gathered there. Your dads and Shane and his parents, they can come too.” Ilya blinked up at that and he smiled.

“I’ll ask them,” Ilya nodded and he pulled off his gear, he grabbed his phone, he smiled at the messages from Scott, Kip, Yuna and David and went straight to Shane.

Shane: So fucking proud, you did it. Love you.

Ilya: Thank you. Team want to go and celebrate, you are all invited. Do you want to go?

Shane: You deserve to celebrate, I can wait at home.

Ilya rolled his eyes and pressed call, “You are invited.” Ilya said softly.

“Do you really want me to come?” Shane asked.

“I do not want to be where you are not,” Ilya said, he didn’t care that half of the team were still in the dressing room, he just held the phone to his ear and continued to undress.

“Then I’ll be there.” Shane grins.

As soon as Ilya saw his family he ran towards them, he rushed forward and picked Shane up, kissing him and swinging him around, then he hugged his dads Yuna and David. “I’m so proud of you,” Scott grinned as he kissed his hair. “And now we are going to celebrate at Brunswick with your team,”

“Just for a little bit,” Ilya whispered.

“Whenever you are ready to go, we will.” Scott promised. Ilya nodded and he linked his fingers with Shane’s and they headed to the bar. He was one of the last team to walk in and when he did it was full of cheers.

Ilya did not let go of Shane’s hand, he introduced him to the team as his partner, because boyfriend was too juvenile and when Teddy brought a round of vodka shots and handed one to Ilya, he did it and pulled a face. “Not up to your standards?” Teddy chuckled.

“You will need better Vodka.” Ilya smiled and he pulled Shane closer to him.

They stayed at the pub for an hour, Ilya had a beer and rested his head on Shane’s shoulder, for a while he was able to forget about everything. “Home.” Ilya whispered to Shane.

“Home.” Ilya nodded. He looked around and saw Scott and Kip, they were both pretty drunk and looked so happy. Yuna and David had left a little while ago, hugging them both, telling Ilya how proud they were. Ilya walked over to Scott.

“That’s my son.” Scott said so proudly and he pulled Ilya close.

Ilya didn’t even get embarrassed, he just hugged Scott. “We are going home.”

“You’re not driving, you’ve been drinking.” Kip said softly.

“Uber.” Ilya rolled his eyes. “Have a nice night,” He hugs them both and takes Shane outside and cuddles into him. “I didn’t tell you how much I like you in my jersey,” Ilya grinned.

“You do?” Shane giggled.

“Mm.” Ilya nodded and he pressed a kiss to his neck as they waited for the uber.

A group of teens wearing Montreal jumpers turned the corner, “Holy fuck it’s Rozanov.” Ilya tensed, he hadn’t met anyone like this yet. “Man, you fucking killed it tonight. Can we have a photo?”

Ilya let out a breath and nodded and took photos with the fans and even signed their jumpers. “Are you his boyfriend?” One of the girls asked. “Cause, the camera panned out when he winked, and I was certain it was on you.”

“It was.” Ilya grinned. “This is Shane.”

“Hey,” Shane smiled a little awkwardly.

“So lucky, he’s so hot.” The girl grinned.

“I know I am.” Ilya winked again and they spoke for a few minutes, the group were lovely and they took a few more photos, Ilya tugging Shane into one of the group ones as well. When they left Shane hummed.

“You didn’t have to do that,” Shane said softly, sliding into the uber as it came.

“Do what?” Ilya asked, taking his hand in his.

“Include me in your fan moments.” Ilya rolled his eyes and kissed Shane’s lips, silencing him.

Ilya woke up and groaned quietly, he opened his eyes and the lights burned behind his eyes and he pressed his hands over them. “Ilya,” Shane grumbled as he woke up slowly. “Ilya,”

Ilya turned away, the pain was blinding and he tried to find more darkness. “Head?” Shane blinked and he looked at the clock, it was four in the morning. Ilya nodded his head and whimpered as the movement hurt.

“Okay, I... Tablets...” Shane sat up quickly, he rushed out of the room and down the stairs to Kip and Scott’s room, he sucked his lip and knocked on the door.

“Huh?” Kip got up slowly and opened the door. “Shane what... Ilya...?”

“Head is hurting. It’s bad. Tablets?” Shane breathed.

Kip nodded and he headed to the bathroom and grabbed the stronger tablets he had kept there for Ilya, he walked into the bedroom, a tired Scott on his heels. Ilya had curled up on the bed, a pool of vomit by his bed, skin pale. “Ilya,” Scott snapped out of his tiredness, “We have your tablets and some water, can you sit up to take them?”

Ilya tried to move but the pain was too much and Scott helped him up, he managed to get him to take the tablets and laid him back down, Kip was already cleaning up the vomit from the floor. Shane made sure the room was in complete darkness and sat back beside him.

“Try and sleep a little more, if you need anything you know where we are.” Kip whispered and he hugged Shane tight before he and Scott left the room.

“Do you think it was the lights?” Scott asked. “He hasn’t had a headache that bad,” He sighed as he and Kip found their way back to their bed.

“Maybe the adrenaline,” Kip said quietly and wrapped his arms around Scott. “When we wake up again, we will see how he is, call the doctor if needed, and if not just have a very lazy day.”

“What if it happens next week when he’s not here, he’s going to be away for two weeks.” Scott whispers.

“We will figure it out, I promise.” Kip said softly, it was already something that he was worried about. Scott just nodded his head slowly and pulled Kip closer.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3

Ilya woke up feeling a little better at around noon, it was the longest he had slept and Shane sat up by his side just waiting for him. Every now and again Kip or Scott would poke their heads in, but Shane just stayed by his side. The rest of the day was slow and lazy. Ilya had showered and he felt a lot better after it and he and Shane went for a little walk, nothing too far or strenuous but he felt better for being out of the house.

“I won’t see you for two weeks and two days,” Ilya whispered as he kissed Shane’s hair. They had grabbed an uber to get back to the stadium to pick up Ilya’s car which was where they were sitting now.

“We will speak every day,” Shane promised.

“I know we will.” Ilya nodded. “I just... You have therapy on Tuesday?” Ilya asked.

“Yes and you have it on Thursday,” Shane smiled, taking Ilya’s hand and playing with his fingers.

“And you have an away game on Friday,” Ilya hummed.

“And you have a charity dinner on Friday night,” Shane nodded.

“So we will be too busy to miss each other.” Ilya sighed.

“I’d never be too busy to miss you,” Shane whispered. “Drive me back to school?”

“Mm.” Ilya nodded. “Maybe I’ll come see Misha.”

“He’d like that.” Shane smiled. “You know, you’re going to be an amazing dad.”

“You think so?” Ilya asked and he put the car in drive.

“I know so.” Shane nodded. “When we retire at 30, then we can think about it.”

“That’s a long time away.” Ilya smiled.

“We will have a good 13 year career, maybe fifteen if we are lucky with injuries. Then we will build our own place, on the water maybe, we can raise a family,”

“I... I’ve always wanted dog.” Ilya whispered.

“We will have a dog.” Shane hummed.

“It will be chaos.” Ilya put the car in drive and kept one hand on Shane’s knee, fingers still linked as he drove them back to school. The whole way, all they were thinking about was

their future and what it might look like.

“Ilya.” Misha grinned excitedly as Ilya tapped on his door. The young boy jumped up and rushed over, wrapping his arms around him tightly. “I’ve missed you.”

“Missed you too.” Ilya chuckled. “How is your aim? Shane says you are doing good.”

“He did?” Misha beamed. Shane chuckled, he was standing behind him. “Can we practice now? Or are you busy?”

“Rink is closed. It is late.” Ilya sighed. “When I come back.”

“Oh, Okay.” Misha nodded. “I have tryouts on Wednesday.”

“Well,” Ilya hummed. “We can sneak in for a mini practice, if Captain lets us.”

“Let’s go.” Shane chuckled.

Misha had been practicing, he was doing so well. He was a little more confident now and Ilya felt so proud of him. They spent an hour on the ice, the three of them laughing and smiling and Ilya could see their future, his and Shane and their son. He could see it and he craved it so much.

“Guys,” Scott’s voice was loud and sharp. “Rink is closed.”

“Sorry coach,” Misha and Shane said quickly.

“Sorry Papa.” Ilya said quietly, he had started to differentiate when they were on their own. Kip was his dad, Scott was his Papa.

“You should be home, packing?” Scott said as they left the rink.

“I packed.” Ilya shrugged. “Sorry, I just...” Ilya sucked his lip, even though he could see that Scott wasn’t too mad at him, he still hated to disappoint him.

“Head doing okay?” Scott asked as he wrapped his arm around his shoulders.

“Mm, better,” Ilya nodded.

Misha hugged Shane and Ilya, wished him luck before rushing back to his room. “I will see you in two weeks and two days,” Shane whispered, pressing the softest kiss to his lips. “I love you so much.”

“Love you too,” Ilya whispered and he hated watching Shane go.

Two weeks and two days, he could do this.

“I spoke to Teddy,” Scott started as they walked naturally to his car. “He popped round for a beer this afternoon, he has a box of your strong migraine tablets.”

“You gave them to him?” Ilya looked away.

“I know you would never take more than one, I know you would never put yourself at risk, but I also know that you can push yourself too far and not take it when you need it.”

“I...” Ilya couldn’t lie and he just nodded his head slowly. “Thank you.”

“You’ll be sharing a room with him when you’re not on the bus,” Scott added.

“He is my babysitter.” Ilya sighed.

“He is your Captain.” Scott corrected. “It’s not uncommon that Captains share with their Rookies.”

“Oh.” Ilya nodded his head slowly feeling like a bit of a jerk.

“I’ll be coming to your Boston game,” Scott hummed.

“Wait... Really?” Ilya frowned, blinking up at him.

“And Kip will be going to New York, so you have four days until you see me and seven until you see Kip.” Scott said softly.

“You really don’t have to do that,” Ilya whispered. “I know you are busy.”

“I want to, this isn’t a chore or a burden for me. I am so proud and all I want to do is shout, “That’s my son,” when I see you win.” Scott chuckled and Ilya wiped his eyes quickly. “So, go home, enjoy your night with Kip and make sure you are up early for your flight tomorrow.”

“I will.” Ilya nodded and he wrapped his Papa in a tight hug, feeling so safe in his arms.

The flight was hard, Ilya wasn’t scared of flying, but he hated feeling further and further away from his family. But, he took photos, he smiled, he watched a very bad movie and when they landed he sent a text to everyone straight away. The first game was fun, they had won, he had scored two goals and the crowds were loud and it was the first time that he didn’t feel like the gay player. He was just Rozanov.

He had turned off the notifications on his social media, they had asked him to run through posts before posting too much anyway and all he did really was just post scenery, but in the quiet moments he would open them. The hate was so loud on there, people hiding behind fake pages telling him how worthless he was. He had blocked over 200 accounts in an hour.

His phone started to ring and he answered it straight away, “Hey baby,” He whispered. Teddy was in the bathroom and Ilya was showered and already tucked in his bed.

“You sound tired,” Shane said gently. “I miss you.”

“Mm, I’m in bed, I took a headache tablet, not strong one, but they make me sleepy. I’m glad you called before sleep.”

“I’m glad too, I watched the highlights, your goals were so fucking good.” Shane said excitedly.

“I wish I did more.” Ilya sighed. “Next time.”

“Next time.” Shane hummed.

“Misha made team?” Ilya curled on his side.

“Yes, he did.” Shane smiled.

“And your therapy…” Shane had messaged him about it earlier, it had gone well he had said.

“It was hard, but it was okay. I hate talking to them, but I know it does help. I feel lighter after the heaviness. Make sense?”

“Yes.” Ilya knew exactly what he meant.

“What are you doing tomorrow?” Shane asked softly.

“We travel by bus, then day off.” Ilya was looking forward to doing nothing, but he was also so dreading it. What was he supposed to do?

“Well, I am sure they have things planned right? Or do you just get to explore the city?” Shane asked.

“I will ask. But I don’t know.” Ilya yawns.

“Go to sleep baby,” Shane hummed. “I will call you in the morning.”

“Goodnight Shane,”

“Goodnight Ilya.” Ilya was practically asleep as he moved to put his phone on charge, he saw a message come in and opened it, assuming it was another message from Shane.

Unknown number: Filthy fat fucking fag. You don’t deserve any of this.

Ilya blocked the number and wiped his eyes quickly, he pulled his knees up to his chest and took a deep breath and focused on the love from Shane, his team and his family, but those words were still screaming in his head.

Another message came through.

Unknown number: He’ll realise soon just how pathetic you are, then what will you be? Pathetic, alone, you might as well just kill yourself now, get it over with.

Ilya opened the message, his hands shaking as he read it. He turned his phone off, when Teddy came out of the bathroom, Ilya forced his breaths to even out, but sleep wouldn't take him now.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4

Montreal were doing amazing, they had won every game, Ilya scoring at least twice in each of the games. In the moments of the games he loved it. He loved being on the ice, hell, he even loved giving smirks or even swearing to the boos. But as soon as the skates were off, he felt like a shell of himself. Everything was mechanical. He ate because he had to. He spoke with Teddy and the team but never about anything serious, and even with Shane, he was terrified to tell him what was going on. He hated how empty he felt. He knew he should be so grateful for everything, but he couldn't be.

He hardly kept his phone on, every time he turned it on messages flooded through, they were from different numbers, but he knew that it was the same person. It had the same tone. He hated how much it went into his head. How much he believed them.

"We are going out tonight," Teddy hummed. "So get up."

"No, I... I don't want to." Ilya shook his head.

"Mandatory." Teddy shrugged.

"Teddy..." Ilya sighed.

"Captain if you're saying no." Teddy hummed. "Come for an hour, you don't like it then I'll make sure you can leave."

"Where are we going?" Ilya asked as he pulled on his jumper.

"Bowling." Teddy grins.

"Bowling?" Ilya shook his head. "It's our first night off and we are going bowling."

"My kids love bowling." Teddy smiled. "Come on." Ilya just nodded, he was glad that weren't going somewhere to fancy.

"Do you miss your kids?" Ilya asked as they walked through the hotel.

"Every fucking day." Teddy pulled out his phone and held it out showing photos of his smiling toddlers.

"Cute. Must look like their mum." Ilya grinned and Teddy just chuckled.

"Good to see you smile, man." Teddy hummed.

Ilya looked down, sucking his lip. Could he tell Teddy what was happening? He hadn't told anyone, even Ivan. He had just said it was tiredness, put everything down to being overwhelmed with everything. "Sorry," Ilya whispered.

“I get it.” Teddy smiled.

The whole team were gathered in the bowling alley connected to the hotel, there were a few other people that Ilya recognised as friends and family of the team. He really did like how social the team were, how much they welcomed everyone.

“Hey bud,” Ilya froze when he heard Scott’s voice, he turned around and saw his dad standing there. He rushed over and hugged him tight. Scott wrapped his arms around him tight, squeezing him softly. “Hey, it’s okay.” Scott whispered when he realised that his son was not moving. “I’m here, I’m not going.”

“You said tomorrow.” Ilya whispered and he wiped his eyes quickly.

“I know, but I missed you.” Scott shrugged. Teddy headed with the team and started the games, Ilya and Scott sat at one of the back tables. “You doing okay?”

No. Ilya wanted to scream. He really wasn’t.

“It’s harder than I thought.” Ilya whispered, and maybe that wasn’t the whole truth, but it wasn’t a lie either.

“Shane mentioned that you haven’t been texting as much,” Scott whispered.

Ilya looked down, could he tell him he was scared to open his phone? “I’ll do better.”

“You don’t have to do better, he was just worried that’s all.” Scott said softly. “You have been playing fantastically, you are improving so much.”

“Coach is good. Not like you good, but good.” Ilya shrugs. “How is team?”

“The team are doing well, I’m sure Shane has given you the rundowns. But yes, they are great. We haven’t lost yet, but the teams are getting harder. Shane is pushing the team well,”

“Told you, good Captain.” Ilya smiles. “He’s... He’s okay?”

“Yes, I think so.” Scott smiled. “You talk to him every day?”

“As much as I can. Texting just feels far away.” Ilya was telling the truth, he found it hard texting.

“I know what you mean, I found it hard texting Kip when I was still playing. Is there anything else? Everyone is treating you nicely?”

“Yes dad.” Ilya rolled his eyes.

“I know there have been some people not too happy, but you’ve handled it really well. All of the press have loved you.”

Ilya just shrugs. “Can we not... I don’t want to talk about that. Can we bowl?”

“Anything you want.” Scott nodded.

Ilya felt better with Scott at the game, he had forced himself to focus. He had left a voice note to Shane, apologising for not messaging him as much and promising to do better. He told him how much he loved him and then put everything in the game. When he scored his first hat-trick as a rookie and the crowd went wild. He couldn't stop grinning. When he knew that the camera was on him he gave his signature wink and kissed his ring and mouthed 'Love you'.

“Fucking hell.” Scott laughed as he cuddled Ilya, he waited by the friends and family stands. “You were on fire.”

“Wanted to make you proud.” Ilya whispered.

“You make me proud every day.” Scott assured him. Ilya just grinned, that empty feeling slowly slipping away a little.

The second week of games went just as well, only they did lose one game. Ilya had done everything he could, but the other team had just had a better hand. Ilya hated the feeling of losing, he hated the dip in moral and he hated that he was scared they would suddenly turn on him.

“Hey, it's not your fault.” Marlow promised.

“Just hate losing.” Ilya whispered. “Russia team would have been made to feel pathetic. Stayed on ice for another hour, maybe two. Till our feet bled.”

“Fucking hell.” Marlow shook his head. “Not here bud, here we feel like crap, have a beer, then try and do better next time. Shall we get some vodka?” Ilya thought he should say no, but vodka sounded pretty good right now. So instead he nodded his head.

“Ilya?” Shane's sleepy voice filled the line.

“Woke you. Sorry.” Ilya hiccuped.

“You had a nice night?” Shane was smiling, Ilya could tell.

“Was okay night. You was not here so not nice.” Ilya hiccuped again and he pressed the video button and smiled at his boyfriend who was curled up on the bed they used to share.

“Hello,” Shane smiled. Ilya was sat on the bed, it was the one night when Teddy had his own room, Ilya didn't mind. “Who did you go out with?”

“Marlow. He is kind.” Ilya nodded and he kicked the covers over him. “I felt bad for losing.”

“Wasn't your fault.” Shane assured him. “I will watch the highlights tomorrow.”

“No. No you will not see boyfriend lose.” Ilya shook his head. “You won tonight. Dad sent me video of your goals.”

“We had a good game.” Shane yawned.

“Go sleep.” Ilya whispered.

“Not until I’ve seen you drink some water,” Shane hummed.

Ilya nodded and he stood up slowly and he grabbed a bottle of his water and his pill box and set it on the side. “I love you so much Shane.”

“I love you too baby, I’m glad you had a good night, even if you’re English in texts is very unreadable when you are drunk.”

“I am sorry I don’t text too much.” Ilya whispers.

“It’s okay, just know you can, whenever.” Shane nodded. “You ready to go to sleep.”

“Mm. Shane, I see you in three days.”

“You do.” Shane grinned. “Love you baby.”

“Love you.” Ilya ended the video call and he wasn’t sure if it was the feeling of having a nice night, or the vodka, but he managed to fall asleep quickly.

New York was the last game and it had been a long two weeks and Ilya was ready for a solid two weeks back home. He would have two games at home and practice every day, but he would be home. He missed his bed, he missed Shane, he missed the smell of Scott’s fresh orange juice.

Kip: Hey you, my flight was delayed. I am going to be an hour late and you’ll be in the rink already. So I will see you from the stands and then we will go out after, I love you. Can’t wait to see you.

Ilya sighed when he saw it, he typed out a quick message back, not opening the thirteen messages that had come through in the past hour from the unknown number. He was trying so hard not to read them. He got himself ready, he had his own room - he would be sharing with Kip tonight and then they would head home tomorrow. He sent a text to Shane just a quick message telling him how much he loved him and headed to the rink with the team.

Ilya looked out from the bench and he felt a warm feeling flood through him when he saw Kip in the stands, he gave him a wave and Ilya grinned back. He scored two of their four goals and all he wanted to do was get off of the ice and go to see Kip. After the match was finished he showered and changed quickly, Teddy gave a speech about how they were doing in the first quarter of their season and all Ilya wanted to do was leave, but he listened and he learned.

“There’s my son.” Kip grinned when Ilya finally ran out to him.

“Fuck, I miss you.” Ilya hugged him tight and Kip grinned, he pressed a kiss to his hair and smiled.

Teddy had told him not to worry about coming out with the team, they all knew how much Ilya needed this moment and Ilya was beyond grateful. He had been thinking about whether or not to tell Kip about everything and he decided he was going to. They went to a little diner, Ilya ordered a cheese burger and a milkshake. Kip ordered the same and Kip was pleasantly amused when the waitress said she was a fan and asked for a photo, which Kip took of the two of them.

“Ilya, you look like you haven’t been sleeping properly,” Kip said honestly. Scott had told him of his own worries and Kip hated that his son was so far away from them.

“I...” Ilya looked down. “Kip.”

“What is it?” Kip reached over and took Ilya’s shaking hands on his own.

Ilya took a breath and he pulled his hand away enough to grab his phone from his pocket, he looked at the screen, in the two hours that he had been with Kip there were forty text messages and he knew what they would all say. He unlocked the phone and handed it to him. Frowning, Kip took the phone and he stared at the messages, his eyes watering when he saw just what was being said to him.

“I promise you, we are going to sort this. None of these words are true, this is... This is going to stop.” Ilya wiped his eyes quickly, a little bit of that weight that he had been carrying felt like it was gone now. Ilya watched as Kip turned his phone off and put it in his pocket and he finally felt like he could breathe.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5

Ilya sat on the stairs of the house. Scott was pacing in the kitchen, he could see the shadows on the floor and he pulled his knees up.

“Scott, calm down.” Kip said softly.

“Calm down, Kip... These messages are...” Scott shook his head.

As soon as they got in, Kip had shown Scott the messages. Kip had sent a message to Shane and his parents saying there was some issues with Ilya’s phone and not to message him.

“The police will be here soon.” Kip sighed. “They are going to take the phone and investigate. So are Montreal.”

“Teddy is furious.”

Ilya looked down at that, tears in his eyes. This wasn’t how this was supposed to be. The doorbell rang and Kip walked out, when he saw Ilya sitting on the stairs he held his hand out and Ilya shook his head, his eyes watering. He felt like a child sitting on the naughty step. “Scott, get the door.” Kip shouted and he walked forward. “Why are you sitting here buddy?”

“I... I’m sorry.” Ilya whispered.

“Oh sweet heart, you really have nothing to be sorry for.” Kip crouched down in front of him. “But those messages are not okay, that’s more than a little bit of hate, that’s bullying, it’s criminal Ilya. Do you understand?”

“No.” Ilya whispered. “It’s the same online...”

“I know, I know. But this, these messages are different. They are threatening.” Kip stroked his cheek. “I am so sorry that you had to go through all of this on your own.”

“Just wanted to play hockey.” Ilya whispered.

“Ilya.” Shane’s voice was like music to his ears and Shane rushed over to him. “Ilya baby what’s wrong?”

“Story is long.” Ilya whispered and he held his arms out and Shane wrapped himself in his arms. “Scott can say.”

“Let’s go into the front room.” Scott decided and Kip held Ilya’s hand and led him to the front room with Shane. Yuna and David looked at them both concerned.

“Has something happened with Montreal?” David asked.

“Do i need to call someone?” Added Yuna.

“The police are on their way.” Scott sighed.

“Police? Can someone tell me what the hell is happening.” Shane said a panicked look in his eyes.

“Ilya has been receiving hateful messages that go beyond unhappy fans. It is harassment.” Kip explains.

“You have?” Shane whispered. “That’s why you didn’t like sending messages.”

“I am sorry.” Ilya said quietly. “I didn’t... I didn’t know what to do.”

“How long have you been receiving them?” Yuna asked.

“Since his first game.” Kip answered when Ilya looked away from them.

“Ilya,” Shane breathed.

“I’m sorry I... I...” Ilya sat up quickly and walked out of the room, he grabbed his trainers and went to the garden. Shane was quick on his heels. “I’m sorry Shane I...”

“Please stop running away from me.” Shane said, his voice loud and bold and Ilya stopped walking quickly. “You do not have to apologise to me, i wish you had told me, you had no need to go through that on your own.”

“I just... I’m sorry.” Ilya whispered and he sat down on the grass and Shane walked over and wrapped his arms around him tight, when Ilya didn’t respond to the cuddle he moved forward so he could sit down on his lap and wrapped his body around him tight.

“I’ve got you, it’s okay. It’s okay.” Shane rocked his body softly, cradling him tight. “I love you Ilya, I love you more than anything,”

“Love you too.” Ilya finally whispered and he held onto him tighter.

The police took Ilya’s phone, took Ilya’s statements, thought about who it could be but Ilya had no idea. He didn’t think it was anyone he knew. One of the Managers from Montreal also came around with a new phone and a promise that they would get to the bottom of it. Ilya thanked them, but he didn’t touch the phone. Instead he just stayed holding onto Shane’s hand tight.

He had two weeks at home, and he felt like it was ruined and just overly consumed by this problem that he had caused. He tried not to think it as him causing it. Rationally he knew that it was not his fault.

“I am sorry I ruined our time.” Ilya whispered as he laid on Shane’s stomach. They were in his room, a bad movie on in the background.

“We are together. I have you in my arms. I love you, nothing is ruined.” Shane promised him.

“Was supposed to be different.” Ilya whispered. “We were supposed to do things.”

“And what are we doing now?” Shane hummed. “Watching a movie, cuddled together. Tomorrow, we will go out.”

“Promise?” Ilya whispered.

“I promise.” Shane smiled and he leaned down and pressed a kiss to his lips softly.

It was a lazy sunday and Ilya felt more than just a little relaxed, he didn't have to keep checking his phone, everyone he needed was there. He had just finished a few laps in the pool, Shane was lazing on one of the deckchairs and Kip and Scott were in and out of the garden. Scott had just walked out, phone on speaker.

“Sorry man, we were looking forward to tonight but the nanny is sick,” Teddy's voice filtered through and Ilya looked up.

“What happened?” Ilya asked Kip who was walking out.

“We were going to go out, the four of us, but their nanny is sick so Teddy and his wife can't make it.”

Ilya frowned and looked at Shane, “We'll do it.” Ilya shouted. “We watch kids.”

“Rozanov, you ever watched children before?” Teddy called out.

“You do it. Can't be hard.” Ilya shrugged.

There was some chatter at the back of the phone and Shane looked at Ilya and smiled softly. “If you're sure? I know it's not been the easiest...”

“We can do it.” Ilya smiled.

“Great, thanks man. See you in a few hours.”

“Are you sure we can do this?” Shane laughed.

“Are you mad that I didn't ask?” Ilya asked quietly. “Just... Well Teddy has done a lot. I want to say thanks.”

“I am not mad at all,” Shane promised and wrapped his arms around his waist.

Teddy lived half an hour away from Scott and the drive had been nice, but now suddenly Ilya felt a little nervous as he tapped on the door. Jessica, Teddy's wife answered. Ilya smiled shyly at her, she was gorgeous, big blue eyes and a pretty smile. “Thank you so much you two,” She ushered them in.

“It's okay.” Ilya shrugged and he kept hold of Shane's hand.

Teddy has two little ones, twins, four years old. Ethan and Isabella and as soon as they heard voices they came rushing forward. Isabella dressed in a little pink tutu and Montreal jumper, and Ethan in dungarees with little glasses on. "I have given them so much sugar," Teddy grins as he walks out.

"He's lying," Jessica said shaking her head.

"I'm not." Teddy grins.

"Ilya, daddy said you are going to paint my nails." Isabella grinned.

"Daddy said you were going to read me dinos." Ethan's voice was quieter but he tugged on Shane's hand.

"We can do whatever you want," Shane smiled and he scooped the four year old up. Straight away Ethan rest his head on his shoulder and Teddy grinned at the two of them.

After a quick tour of the house, they were shown the important things, bath routine, where the calpol was just incase and pizza would be there within the hour. When the two of them left, Shane and Ilya looked at each other and grinned.

"Nails?" Isabella pouted.

"Dinos?" Ethan added.

"Let's go." Ilya smiled and he held his hand out to Isabella who led him up to what looked to be the children's play room. It was a nice size room, with bean bags and books in one corner, a dolls house, toys chest and a little makeup station which was where Isabella dragged Ilya. Ethan pointed to the bean bags and once Shane put him down he grabbed all of the books Shane must read to him.

"I want twins." Shane decided three hours later.

They were sitting on the big sofa, between them Isabella and Ethan were practically asleep, a cartoon on in the background. They had eaten their pizza in the garden and then Ethan had asked Shane to build lego with him and it was then Ilya's turn to get his nails painted too. Ethan had picked the good dinosaur to watch and they both had their own little blankets and it had been perfect.

"Not triplets?" Ilya smiled, he had his arm at the back of the sofa and was gently playing with Shane's hair.

"Twins." Shane nods. "I'm glad you said to do this."

"Teddy has been... he's done so much." Ilya whispers.

"I'm glad you have him, I was scared knowing you would be away from us." Shane whispered back.

"He snores very loud but I'm glad I am not alone." Ilya nods.

“I wish you would have told him about the messages.” Shane checks that the twins are sleeping, he tucks the blanket around them more and looks at Ilya. “It kills me that you were going through it on your own.”

Ilya nods and he sucks his lip, “I just... I tried to ignore. It is a lot. To be the gay player. To be the role model. I didn’t want to be the one with the problems. Just want to be hockey player.”

“You are everything Ilya, you are a role model, whether you are gay or not, you would have eyes on you and people would look up to you. But I get it, you are more than just the gay hockey player. You have the biggest heart of anyone I’ve ever known. I love you so much, but you don’t need to hold onto these on your own, okay?”

“Okay.” Ilya wiped his eyes quickly.

They managed to carry the twins up to their room, tucking them in bed. Shane sent a text to Teddy to say they were both asleep and not to rush back and they put another film on. It was midnight when Teddy and his wife opened the door and found Shane asleep on the sofa in Ilya’s arms.

“Fun night?” Ilya asked.

“Very, thanks for doing this man.” Teddy smiled, his voice quiet. Jessica smiled at the two of them before heading up to check on the twins. “You two can stay tonight, crash in the spare room.”

Ilya nods slowly, playing with his hair softly. “Thank you.”

“Listen, about everything, I’m pissed at you for not telling me. You know that right?” Ilya looked down, he didn’t want him to be upset with him but he nodded his head slowly. “From now on, honesty man, got it?”

“Got it.” Ilya whispered.

“Dude, are your nails pink?” Teddy grinned. “They match my toenails.” He chuckles. “Isabella is something else.”

“She is perfect.” Ilya smiled.

“Ethan is more like his mum, quiet. I’ve never seen him take to someone so quickly as he did Shane,”

“Shane is also perfect.” Ilya smiled. “You sure we can stay tonight?”

“Of course. I’ll show you to the guest room.”

“Shh, you will wake them.” Isabella’s voice was loud and Ilya smiled but didn’t move. He wasn’t too sure if Shane was still sleeping, but he knew he wouldn’t be for long.

“You are loud, not me.” Ethan whispered. “Sides, we gotta. Daddy said.”

Isabella nodded her head and walked forward and within ten seconds they were both jumping on the bed. “Pancakes are ready.” She shouted loudly.

“What...” Shane who had definitely been sleeping blinked up so confused.

“I think pancakes are ready,” Ilya giggled and he scooped the twins up in his arms. “We have invaders.”

“Let go let go.” Isabella giggled excitedly.

“Daddy said to give you the Brooks wake up speciality.” Ethan smiled and he freed himself from Ilya and jumped next to Shane with a lot more grace than any four year old should possess.

“And Brooks speciality is this?” Ilya asked, he was now tickling Isabella who was giggling frantically. Shane thought she might actually pee or even puke with how hard she was laughing.

“Yep.” Ethan grinned. “After pancakes can we read?” He asked Shane.

“Sure buddy,” Shane sat up slowly.

Breakfast with the family had been more fun than Ilya thought, the twins, Isabella mostly spoke about everything that they had done last night as she ate. Ethan was a little quieter and kept on looking at Shane and Ilya with big wide eyes. Ilya had eaten two pancakes and two bananas and Shane couldn’t help but smile, it was the most that he had seen his boyfriend eat in a while. As promised, Shane did read with Ethan and when it was time to leave Ethan had cried, clinging to Shane.

“I’ll come back soon bud, I promise.” Shane whispered and Ethan eventually had let him go.

When they got into Ilya’s car he just grinned. “I cannot wait to have a family with you.” Shane whispered.

“Can we still get a dog?” Ilya asked.

“Two of them, one for each kid.” Shane winked and Ilya just grinned, he really couldn’t wait for that.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6

The two weeks at home had been amazing, Ilya went to practice every day and on their next home game, when his family had all been present he had scored another hat-trick and gave Teddy two assists. “You’re on fire,” Teddy grinned as the game ended. He wrapped his arms around him and kissed his helmet.

“Jessica wants to throw a bbq tomorrow, so everyone is invited. Loved ones. Family. Children. Bring swim shit.” Teddy shouted, he made a point of looking at Ilya, “Bring Shane. Ethan won’t stop talking about him.”

“Heard you made a good babysitter,” Marlow smiled as he clapped Ilya on the back.

“Good practice.” Ilya winked.

“Kid, you have your whole life ahead of you, don’t rush.” Marlow smiled. “But if you ever want more practice, you can borrow my seven year old.”

Ilya just chuckled and he showered quickly, all he wanted to do was go and see Shane and his dads. Once he was dressed in his hooded jumper and jeans he walked out to the family room, Teddy close behind him.

“Ilyaaaaa.” Isabella screamed and she raced forward and launched herself at him. Ilya just turned his head and smirked at Teddy.

“Betrayel.” Teddy smiled and kissed Isabella’s hair, Isabella who was still clinging to Ilya.

“You scored three. That’s good.” Isabella praised.

“Just good?” Ilya hummed and he grinned when he saw Shane, a part of him wanted to throw Isabella to Teddy but then he saw Ethan firmly attached to Shane’s hip and just smiled even more.

“Better than daddy.” Isabella giggled.

“Of course I am.” Ilya smirked and he wrapped an arm around Shane and Ethan and kissed him softly. “Hi,”

“Good game,” Shane grinned.

“Thank you, Did you like it?” Ilya asks Ethan.

“Ethan ate too much popcorn and vomited on Mr Kip.” Isabella explained.

“He’s okay,” Ethan said softly when he saw the worried look on Ilya’s face.

Ilya nodded and he smiled when he saw his dads and Shane's parents walking up. Thankfully, Isabella decided to jump down at that moment to go to her dad and Ilya was swooped up with Scott and Kip.

"You did amazing." Scott smiled and kissed his hair.

Ilya just grinned and hugged Kip tightly.

The Brooks residence was in full swing when Shane and Ilya walked in. They wanted to spend the morning together and were both feeling very relaxed when they walked in. Of course as soon as they walked in it was that happy chaos.

"How long before your nails are painted pink?" Shane hummed.

"I will pick purple today." Ilya grinned and kissed his nose.

"Ah there you two are," Kip smiled. "Thought you two were going to hide away all day."

"If only," Ilya grinned and Shane pushed his shoulder softly.

"These burgers are delicious," She grinned, he was sitting by the pool with Ethan who was picking at his burger. "You don't like them?"

"It's busy, don't like eating if too busy." Ethan whispers. "Daddy says to try then I can go inside."

"Well, how about we take these burgers inside and find Ilya and Isabella and eat together? Ilya doesn't like to eat around too many people either."

"But he's strong." Ethan frowned.

"The strongest. But it's okay." Shane stood up and held his hand, he looked over to Jessica and gave a little signal that he would take him inside to eat and grabbed some more food.

"Thank you Shane," Ethan whispered.

They found Isabella and Ilya upstairs in the play room, Ilya was laying down on his stomach playing with some dolls, even making voices and Isabella was grinning so excitedly.

"Burgers." Isabella shouted and she jumped up and ran over to Shane. "Inside?" She smiled and grabbed the beanbags and set it up so nicely.

"You hiding up here?" Shane asked Ilya softly. They had spent an hour downstairs, it had been loud and busy and Shane had noticed Ilya head inside a little while ago.

"Maybe." Ilya said honestly. "Is nice. People are nice. But it is busy, loud."

“Head hurts?” Shane asked and he set the plates down and smiled as Ethan took a bigger bite than he had been downstairs.

Ilya sighed, “Yes, but it is okay.” He whispered.

Shane nods and he hands him the food and kisses his hair. “We don’t have to stay long,”

“We will leave in an hour, I will drive you to your practice.” Ilya hummed.

Ilya sits in the stands watching as Shane and Scott lead the practice, the schools next game is tomorrow and Ilya was excited that he would be able to watch it. When it’s finished he drops Shane to his room and after a sweet kiss he tells him he will see him tomorrow.

“Heading home?” Scott hums as he walks down to the car park.

“Yes. It has been a nice day.” Ilya smiles.

“It has, I’m glad you are so accepted in your team Ilya,” Scott grins. “And I’m glad they are an amazing family to you.”

“And you.” Ilya smiles. “And Kip. I am very lucky. I have practice in the morning and then I’ll come and watch your game,”

“That sounds like a good day. You got the spare phone right, it’s registered in our name, so no one should be messaging you,”

“I haven’t had any.” Ilya promises.

“You’ll tell me if anything happens?” Scott urged.

“I will. I... I’m sorry that I didn’t before.”

“I know bud.” He smiles and kisses his cheek softly, they hug tightly and Ilya gets in his car and heads home.

It’s a really good week, practice is going well, Shane leads the team to victory and they get to spend a lot of time together. “Last game at home before we go on the road again for three weeks,” Teddy shouts in the locker room. “Boston has been talking a lot of shit about us, they think they are better than us, but we know they are anything but. Let’s go and prove it.”

Ilya hated facing Boston, it always felt personal with Furguson. As soon as he stepped on the ice the Boston fans booed, there were posters and banners held up showing just how much they hated him, but he was glad that they were at home. All he had to do was wave to his side and the crowd cheered louder. Montreal were on fire though, they scored four goals, Ilya scoring one and being the assist on two. It was in the final period, Boston was ahead by one and Furguson was doing everything he could to stop Ilya getting the puck. In the last few

minutes he pushed him hard, elbow coming into contact with his ribs as he pushed him onto the boards. “Stay the fuck down fag,” Furguson snapped and that was when chaos broke out.

The Montreal team swarmed the players around him, the ref got involved and Ilya tried to stand up but when he did Furguson pushed him back down again, he had picked his foot up to kick him but Teddy pulled him back screaming. Ilya hated that he was crying, the fans who had been so loud were quiet, all he could hear was Furguson shouting at him.

“Ilya, can you stand?” Teddy helped him up and Ilya nodded. He looked up and tried to compose himself. “Easy, it’s okay, it’s okay.” Teddy helped him off of the ice, “Ribs?”

“Ribs and head.” Ilya managed to get out between sobs.

“Your dads and Shane are on their way down,” Coach said, “Medical room. You shouldn’t have got up, you should have got on the stretcher.”

“No. I can walk.” Ilya shook his head.

They helped him into the medical room, he took off helmet slowly just as his dads, Shane and his parents came rushing in. “What the fuck was that?” Scott shouted loudly at the ref who was now in the room too.

“He’s with security and management, you need to calm down.” The ref said.

“Ilya,” Shane whispered as he walked over to his side, taking his hands.

“Hi,” Ilya smiled sadly.

“I need some space to check his ribs,” The medic said and Shane stepped to the side but he didn’t let go of his hand. Ilya squeezed his eyes tightly and he whimpered loudly as he pressed onto his ribs. “Okay, there feels like a crack here. We will get you to the hospital for an x-ray. They will want to check your head as well.”

“We’ll drive him,” Kip said softly.

“What is going to be done about Furguson?” Scott asked.

“We are going to take this very seriously Hunter,” The Montreal manager came in, “Ilya, you doing okay?”

Ilya opened his eyes and nodded his head slowly.

“Go to the hospital, we will come and see you tomorrow with more information about what is happening. We will need a statement from you.”

“Statement? You saw what he did.” Ilya frowned.

“Procedure.” The manager said and Ilya just nodded, he took Shane’s hand again, playing with his fingers.

“Come on, let’s go.” Kip said softly and he helped him up.

Ilya didn’t let go of Shane’s hand, he was trying to breathe through the pain but it felt like it was just making it worse. “I’m right here baby, I’m not going anywhere.” Shane promised and he kissed his cheek once he was safely in the car. Ilya nodded and he stared out of the window, sucking his lip when he saw the police cars stopping outside the stadium.

“It’s going to be okay,” Kip said when he saw Ilya staring at the cars. “He won’t get away with what he’s done.”

Ilya just nodded his head and moved into a more comfortable position against Shane and closed his eyes.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7

Ilya sat down on the sofa and groaned, his head was spinning and he knew it was because of the painkillers. Two cracked ribs. It would heal in time, but they had given him strong painkillers to help him get some sleep. But all it had done was make him feel like he was on his own little planet.

“Shaney,” Ilya yawned and reached for his boyfriend. Shane rolled his eyes, toed off his trainers and tugged Ilya’s off too before sitting beside him. “Can we sleep here?”

“Are you sure you want to? It might be better for you to lay down?” Shane frowned.

“I am comfortable.” Ilya decided.

“It might be better, sometimes finding that comfortable position is really hard, so if he is comfortable you two can sleep in here. I’ll pull the sofa out so it’s longer for your legs.” Scott said softly.

“Papa.” Ilya called.

“Yeah bud?” Scott smiled, his heart beat harder every time Ilya called him that.

“Love you.” Ilya whispered before he moved his head onto Shane’s shoulder.

“I love you too.” Scott kissed his hair. “Try and sleep you little space cadet.”

Kip came into the room with the spare blankets and extra pillows. “Shane, I can stay here if you wanna go and get changed?” Shane nodded and he got up slowly and Ilya made a noise when Shane moved.

“Dad. Why you take my Shane?” Ilya asked.

“He’s gone to get his sweats on, you are already dressed like you are ready for bed.” Kip chuckled and he sat on the arm of the sofa. “I’m proud of you.”

“I got hurt. I did not stand up for myself.” Ilya frowned. “I could have hurt him back.”

“But you didn’t. You were the bigger man Ilya, and that is what is going to be remembered.”

“I hate him.” Ilya whispered, wiping his eyes. “Hated him from the stupid first match.”

“What did he do?” Kip asked, Ilya hadn’t spoken much about it, he knew that Ferguson had made comments but he could also tell there was more to the story.

“Watch my back. Called me fag. Pushed hard. Messages on my instagram.” Ilya shook his head.

“He won’t get away with this,” Kip whispered.

“Love you dad. So much. Thank you for saving my life.” Ilya whispered before he fell asleep.

The next morning Kip walked down to the sofa and smiled when he saw the boys asleep on the sofa, Ilya has turned onto his good side and had his arm and leg draped over Shane who was holding onto him as if his life depended on it. Kip headed to the kitchen and started to make chocolate chip pancakes, he knew they were his sons favourite.

His phone started to ring and he rolled his eyes when he saw it was one of Ilya’s team managers. “Hello?”

“Kip, good morning. How is our boy doing?” Mark asked. Kip had met him a few times, he was one of the quieter managers, but Kip could tell that he was on their side with all of this. He had taken him aside and assured him that Ilya would be looked after. He wasn’t too sure if that was actually the case.

“He is sleeping, what is going to happen?” Kip asked, he tried to force his voice to be calm, but inside he was silently fuming.

“I was actually calling to see if I could stop by this morning to speak to you, I need to run the investigation.”

“The police are also coming to speak today, the detective who is looking into the harassment case wants to talk.”

“Oh, well okay. I can come at around ten? It won’t be too long.”

“Fine, but if Ilya is not up for it then I will ask you to leave.” Kip ended the call, his hands shaking.

“You’re like a protective bear.” Scott’s voice was soft and he wrapped his arms around his waist.

“Of course I am. Our boy is hurt.” Kip said, shaking his head. He went to say something else when he heard a loud groan come from the living room and they both rushed out to see Ilya standing up holding his side. Shane was up so quickly.

“Got up too fast. Pee.” Ilya said, shaking his head. “I am okay.” He said and walked towards the bathroom. Shane rubbed his eyes and fell back onto the sofa, his body was a little stiff from sitting like that but he was sure that Ilya had slept all night.

Kip had gone back into the pancakes and Shane folded up the blankets and carried them to the guest cupboards and put them away. When Ilya came back out he smiled at him softly.

“We can eat some pancakes and then you can have a painkiller?”

“Not too sore.” Ilya whispered.

Shane just nodded and pressed a little kiss to his hair and stroked his cheek. "Pancakes sounds good." Ilya whispered and he took his hand and walked him to the kitchen.

"How you doing bud?" Scott asked softly.

"I am okay." Ilya nodded. "It hurts but I feel okay."

"Mark is coming to discuss some things," Kip sighed. "And Detective Campbell."

"Great." Ilya muttered and he picked at his pancake.

By the time Mark was there Ilya was irritable, his side was aching and he hated the feeling of everyone worrying about him. He just wanted everything to go back to normal.

"So," Mark started, they were in the living room. Ilya was tucked into the corner, he had found a comfortable position and wasn't letting it go. Shane was tucked into his side, hands linked together. "I have spoken with Fergusons's manager. He was arrested last night, but released this morning."

"How could he have been released after what he did?" Kip asked, outraged.

"His manager pulled some strings." Mark sighed, shaking his head. "It is not the first fight that has happened on the ice."

"It was not fight." Ilya snapped. "Was attack."

"They are spinning it as passion for the game going out of hand," Mark sighed. "He will pay a fine to the league."

"To the league?" Ilya shook his head. "I have cracked ribs. I got called a disgusting, filthy fucking fag, but he gives money to league, league already rich? No punishment? Fuck off."

"Ilya..." Scott whispered.

"It's not fair, and that is why I am here to encourage you to write your personal statement and press charges against him." Mark said and the room went silent. "It is not a league that I want my gay teenage boy to grow up watching and think that behaviour is okay."

"Oh." Ilya looked between them. The room felt heavy.

"I can press charges?"

"You have every right to do so." Mark nodded.

There was a knock at the door and Kip explained that it was the detective. Campbell walked in and smiled at everyone, "Ilya, I was sorry to see what happened to you last night."

"I am fine. Just game." Ilya breathed but he kept on looking at Mark, could he really press charges? Would it work?

“It is actually why I’m here, is it okay to speak to you in front of everyone or would you rather we talk in private?” She asked.

“I don’t care.” Ilya shrugged.

Campbell looked at Kip who just nodded and offered her a seat. “We have gone through all of the messages, there was over ten thousand messages in such a short space and this is counted as cyber harassment as well as prejudice behaviour. Our cyber team were able to track the messages, I won’t explain the science they use because let’s be honest, even I don’t know.” She smiled. “But we believe that the messages were actually sent by Ferguson.”

“Him?” Kip gasped.

“We have a warrant out for his arrest.” Campbell nodded. “I will need to take a detailed statement from you, going through any interactions you have had.”

“Oh.” Ilya nodded slowly, his fingers squeezing around Shane’s. “Okay.”

Mark looked between them, eyes wide. “Did you say ten thousand messages?”

“A little over.” Campbell nodded.

Ilya looked away, he hated that he had not told anyone, that he was doing all of this on his own and he could tell that his family hated that he hadn’t done that too.

“When?” Ilya asked. “Statement?”

“The sooner the better, I can do it here.” Campbell said softly. “I would advise you to do it with just you and me, or maybe one of your dads.”

“Okay.” Ilya nodded. “I do statement. Then we sleep. I am tired.” He says to Shane.

“Of course. We can put one of your car movies on in the background,” Shane whispered.

“Will he still pay fine?” Ilya asked, looking at Mark.

“Yes,” Mark nodded.

“Not to league. He makes the fine to a charity, LGBTQ in his name. He would hate it.”

“I’ll make it happen.” Mark promised. “I will pass this information on to the rest of the management team, okay? Rest up.” Kip got up and showed him out and walked back in.

“Kip, you stay?” Ilya asked quietly.

“Of course.” Kip kissed Scott’s hair softly and sat beside Ilya as Shane got up slowly.

“Why don’t you and me go for a run while he does his statement?” Scott suggested as he walked out of the room with Shane. Clear our heads a little.”

Shane nodded, he didn't want to leave Ilya but he knew Scott was right. He just hoped his boyfriend would finally get a break from all of this pain and most of all, he hoped Ferguson would burn in hell for what he's done.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8

Ilya sat in the stands at Shane's game, it had been a week since the incident with Ferguson and he had had no news on anything that was going on. The media had put a statement about his arrest, and then there was silence. Nothing from Montreal and nothing from Boston. Ilya was pissed about it, but he couldn't do anything about it. He had spoken to Ivan about his feelings, Ivan had told him it was okay to feel this way, that his feelings were valid, but all he wanted to do was to forget everything that he was feeling. He had been benched from the games for two weeks because of his injury, he went to the rink to practice but he wasn't allowed any physical contact. He hated that Ferguson had taken hockey from him too.

Shane was doing amazing, that was the only benefit of being benched for the two weeks, he didn't need to go away to the game, he could have if he wanted - but he thought Fuck them. If they weren't in the business to protect him, then he wasn't going to do anything extra. Mark had asked him to do a press interview about his recovery but Ilya had refused that too.

Tonight all he wanted to do was fall into Shane's arms. Shane was the only one who let him be angry, but normally after five minutes the anger fell away. Kip would look at him like he was going to break and Scott would join in on the rants about the team and what they could be doing better, but that didn't help either. Ilya wasn't too sure what they wanted from his dads, he just hated feeling like he was disappointing them.

When the game finished, Shane cheered for his boyfriend, a few families pointed to him and he gave them a small wave, but didn't entertain more than that.

"You were amazing," Ilya smiled as Shane walked out of the locker room. He didn't go inside, he didn't want to take any attention from Shane; Shane was the captain, the best captain that team had ever had.

"I was okay, I could have..."

"You were amazing." Ilya cut him off with a kiss, wrapping his arms around him tighter. "Are you celebrating with the team?" Ilya asked softly.

"Not tonight, tonight I want to do something with you," Shane smiled.

"Captain's should celebrate, it is important." Ilya said, stroking his cheek. "What if we go out with them? Pizza for everyone, and then after me and you can celebrate."

"Are you sure?" Shane asked quietly.

"I am sure." Ilya smiled and kissed him again. "Go and tell them."

Shane nodded and ran back into the locker room, just as Scott walked out. Ilya sighed quietly, he felt so withdrawn from his dads and he didn't know how to stop that feeling.

“Good game coach,” he said but even he could hear how tight his voice sounded.

“It was,” Scott nodded, hands in his pocket and he rocked on his feet awkwardly. “Are you...”

“Okay? No pain, no need for a painkiller. I am tired and I am angry.” Ilya shrugged. “But I guess maybe okay.”

“Thank you for being so honest,” Scott whispered. “I wish I knew what to do or say, but we just need to wait, you know?”

“I know.” Ilya sighed. “I am just tired of everything being shit for me. I just want good life? I did something wrong before? I was bad person in my last life? Murdered children? Kittens maybe? Tell me why I get bad things now.” Ilya wiped his eyes quickly.

“Because the world is a messed up fucking place,” Scott said evenly. “I know that nothing you have ever done, in this life, or your hundred others before you, none of that means you deserve the hand you’ve been given.”

“Then why?” Ilya breathed.

“I wish I had the answers, I wish I could tell you everything, but I don’t know why, Ilya. Other than the fact that this world is a fucked up place.” Scott stepped closer to him. “But I can tell you what I know. I know that you are the strongest person I know, that every test you have been put through in this life you have come out even stronger on the other side. I can tell you how much I love you. How much Kip loves you. Shane loves you. I wish that I could take this pain away from you and hurt everyone who has ever hurt you. But I can’t. But what we can do is face it all together.”

Ilya wiped his eyes quickly, he didn’t know what to say, so instead he just wrapped his arms around him and breathed him in. “I’m sorry papa.”

“You have nothing to be sorry for,” Scott rubbed his back, holding him tight but trying to be mindful of his broken ribs.

“I have not been good this past week.” Ilya sighed.

“You have been hurt and angry, you are allowed to feel like that. I get it. But you have us all here we are wanting to support you and we are going to do that. I hope the process for this is not too long, but I do know that it will be better.” He kisses his hair and Ilya nods his head just as the team come out.

“Pizza!” Sam screamed and he jumped over to them. “Oh you were having a moment.”

“No, we are having pizza.” Ilya rolled his eyes and the team headed to one of their favourite pizza places.

Ilya tapped his foot nervously as he sat in the office of the Montreal stadium, Mark walked in with two coffees and handed him one. Ilya took it without saying thanks, he didn't really care if it was rude or not. "Why did you call me here?" He asked.

"Ferguson has been kicked out of the league," Mark said, sitting down behind his desk. "The statement is going out that he has been kicked out for his harassment towards you, we have a statement ready and we want you to go through it."

"He has been kicked out, officially kicked out?" Ilya asked, he couldn't help but be shocked. He really thought that nothing was going to happen. He thought that every one would let it all slide.

"He will also be charged formally with harassment and face jail time," Mark added.

"Fuck." Ilya breathed.

"I want us to have the statement ready, we have two. One that just mentions the basic information, one that has a little more depth."

"What does management want?" Ilya asked quietly.

"The simple one. The one that says he was homophobic and took it further than the league would allow." Mark pushed it forward and Ilya read it, it was short, bittersweet and Ilya scoffed.

"What one do you want me to sign?" Ilya asked. Mark silently pushed the second one, it was much longer, detailed with points Ilya had said through his statement with the police. Ilya read it twice, signed it and looked up at him.

"Thank you," Mark whispered. "It will be released tomorrow, you are back to regular play for the season. Two months of heavy travelling," Ilya nodded slowly, he really felt sick at the thought. The past two weeks home with Shane had been amazing. He wouldn't be back home for three weeks and even then it would be for three days and he would be back on the road again. "The management have also thought of benching you for the Boston game."

"What?" Ilya's voice was raised.

"I said it was a bad idea," Mark sighed. "It is your decision."

"No fucking way. I will not hide." Ilya said, shaking his head.

"Good." He smiled. "I'm glad."

Shane, his parents and Ilya's dad were all there in the premium seats for the Boston game. Ilya was nervous, but the excitable nerves that set his body on fire. Shane was right there, holding his hands, touching him gently, kissing him and distracting him until Ilya had to go in for the final team meeting.

“Okay.” Teddy shouted, everyone stopped. “This game is fucking personal. No one hurts our fucking Rookie and gets away with it. That scum Ferguson is gone and now that our boy is back in good health we are going to show them why Boston is never a match for us.”

“Fuck yeah.” Ilya grinned and they all clasped him on the back.

As soon as he was on the line the Boston fans went crazy, booing, things thrown towards the glass and Ilya tried not to look terrified. He looked up to his family, Shane’s eyes were big and wide and just staring at him, Scott was shouting something to some fans who were near them and Ilya hoped that they weren’t saying anything to Shane.

The game started and they won, Ilya took everything he felt and pushed it into the game, three goals, two assists and Boston only managed to score once. The players had been hard on him, lots of pushing, he had fallen once but he had got himself up. He knew his body would be bruised and that was not how he wanted to go into his hotel room tonight with Shane feeling. Especially not with this being their last night together for two months.

Once the game was finished and the team had celebrated in the locker room, Ilya pulled on his hoody, it was his favourite forest green hoody that Yuna had bought for him for his birthday, the strings chewed (though he wasn’t too sure if it was by him or Shane) and his nicest jeans and trainers. He had his bag slung over his shoulder.

“There you are,” Scott grinned and he walked over and hugged him tight. “Fucking proud of you kid.”

“Thanks papa.” Ilya smiled and he hugged Kip tight and then David and Yuna. Then he finally saw Shane who grinned at him and rushed forward, kissing him hard.

“Fuck that was so hot,” Shane whispered against his lips.

“Oh, was it?” Ilya giggled.

“Mm.” Shane smiled and kissed him again, neither of them cared about kissing in front of their parents, but as more of the team came out and started to wolf whistle Shane pulled apart blushing.

“What did you think kid?” Teddy grinned, nudging Shane’s shoulder.

“You guys were amazing,” Shane beamed.

“Ilya,” They all turned to the female's voice, thick and Russian and Ilya frowned before turning. “Ilya,” She repeated.

“Sveta?” Ilya gasped, he moved away from Shane and rushed forward. “Svetlana?” Within a second she had jumped into his arms and he was spinning her around. “You are here, in Boston?” Ilya frowned, Russian slipping naturally from his tongue.

“My father is coaching the goalie. He clearly is very bad since you managed to score so many goals.” She grins. “It is good to see you Ilya,”

“It’s good to see you too.” Ilya smiled and he put her down and hugged her again. “Come, I want to introduce you to everyone.” He linked his fingers with hers so naturally and pulled her towards everyone.

“Svetlana,” Ilya smiled. “She was my childhood best friend. Her father was goalie.” Ilya smiled and as soon as he was close to Shane he wrapped his arms back around him.

“Svetlana, this is Shane, he’s my partner.” Ilya said proudly. “My dads, Scott and Kip.”

“Ah you were the kissers on the play offs.” Svetlana smiles.

“I guess we were.” Kip chuckles.

“And Shane’s parents, good as mine.” Ilya smiles.

“Nice to meet you all,” Svetlana smiles and her eyes go back to Shane and then she switches to Russian, “He really is very handsome,” She winks and Ilya chuckles and kisses his cheek. “I have to go back to my dad, but I will see you soon I’m sure.” She gives everyone a wave and Ilya just grins.

“You two were cuddly.” Kip hums softly.

“I have known Sveta since I was four.” Ilya says simply.

“What did she say in Russian?” Shane asks as he rests his head on Ilya’s shoulder.

“Mm, she said that you are very handsome.” Ilya grinned. “I said I know this.”

“Come on, we have a table booked.” Scott smiled leading the group out of the stadium. Ilya was smiling so much from his win and seeing Sveta that he didn’t care about the crowds gathered in the parking lot there just to shout abuse at him.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9

Ilya felt good. Despite the constant haters that were more constant than ever, everything seemed to be okay. The team had won every match so far on the road, he spoke to everyone every day and even though he felt so far away, he also felt like they were all right there with him.

“Finally a night out,” Teddy grinned as they headed to one of the bars. The first couple of weeks, Ilya hadn’t really gone out with them, he had stayed in his own hotel room and called Shane, falling asleep on the phone as they spoke about their day. But Shane had insisted that he go out and socialise a little more and Ilya had insisted that Shane did the same. Right now Shane was hanging out with the team in the common room playing mario kart. He had been sending him little videos of them and Ilya smiled at how much he missed them.

“Finally, you say that like you was not out last night, Captain.” Ilya chuckles.

“Jessica managed to come down, fine me.” Teddy grinned and he led the team to the bar, shots were already waiting and Ilya was getting better at drinking, he never drank too much, but he enjoyed it. After the first few shots Ilya was feeling a little free, he danced with some of the guys and people in the club and when he felt arms snake around his waist he smiled.

“Sveta,” He turned into her and kissed her cheek. “Hi.”

“Privet,” Svetlana smiled, she looked gorgeous in a gold glittered sequin dress, tight on her body and short in the right places.

“You are trying to get a hockey husband?” Ilya chuckled. “I could introduce you.”

“I am fine,” Svetlana chuckled. “I was so excited to see you,”

“Me too. I am sorry I didn’t keep in touch when I left.” Ilya whispered. Truthfully Ilya hadn’t spoken to her about anything that had been happening, he wasn’t too sure what she knew. Or how her family would take him being out, he was scared to ask.

“I am sorry I did not help.” Svetlana sighed and she took his hand and led him to the bar and ordered him another two shots and they did them quickly. “My dad said you are family. He does not understand your love but you are and always will be family. He said you should have gone to Boston, he thought they were better team, or would be now he is coaching the goalie. Montreal is very flashy with their wins.”

“We are the best.” Ilya grinned and he signalled for another two drinks for them.

“You look happy,” Svetlana smiled.

“I have everything.” Ilya nodded. “I have a family, my adopted dads they are amazing, I feel loved and like I have this family I’ve always needed. Shane and his parents have taken me in to. Shane is my life.” He gushed.

“He is handsome, it is a shame the two of you cannot make beautiful babies together.” She grinned.

“We will have our own family,.” Ilya nodded, playing with the ring around his neck. “One day.”

“Dude,” Shane turned his head when he saw Sam call his name. Last night was fun. They had played video games and snuck a few beers in the common room. Sometimes he would get a little nervous about breaking the rules, especially with how close he was to Scott. But also he knew he would never let anything get too out of hand.

“Mm?” Shane yawned.

“Have you erm...” He held his phone up and Shane had a weird feeling in his stomach.

“There’s some paparazzi photos from last night,”

“Oh?” Shane reached for the phone slowly. “What is it?”

“Ilya was out with the team, and there’s photos of him being quite close with some woman. According to the article they were seen dancing and all over each other.”

Shane looked at the photos, swiping through the article quickly. Ilya looked so handsome, he wore a white shirt, practically unbuttoned to his navel. Tight black trousers, his hair curly and unruly. But it was his smile that took Shane’s breath away. He looked happy. Happier than he had ever seen. Or at least that was the thought going through his head. Then there were the photos of Svetlana, draped over his shoulders, kissing his cheek, a few other people around them. Dancing.

“They are friends,” Shane managed to whisper.

“Okay. I mean, I know how much he loves you, but the articles are getting kind of...”

“Sam, what are you... Ilya is not cheating on me.” He snapped louder and his phone started to ring with a video call coming from Ilya. He answered it quickly, smiling when he saw his very hungover boyfriends face.

“Shane, I am dying. This is death.” Ilya mumbled.

“You had a crazy night,” Shane couldn’t help the bitterness in his voice and Sam sighed, a sheepish look on his face.

“I do not remember much. Just vodka. Did you win at mario kart?” Ilya asked and Shane smiled, that was what he had called to ask.

“I did.” Shane laid back on his bed a little more.

“You are still in bed? It is early?” Ilya frowned.

“No, I had a little headache. We had beer.”

“Ah my boyfriend the rebel. My boyfriend the lightweight.”

“Yours.” Shane said and he looked over at Sam who nodded and took that as his cue to leave the room. “There’s photos out online about you and Svetlana.”

“Photos?” Ilya frowned. “I am famous?”

“Apparently, you and Sveta are.” Shane mumbled.

“Shane...”

“You had a nice time?” Shane asked, cutting him off. “With the team?”

“Yes.” Ilya nodded and he sat up slowly and then started to talk in Russian, Shane then heard a female voice and his heart shattered when he realised Ilya was there with Svetlana. Ilya turned back to the camera and smiled. “Two more weeks and I will be home Shane,”

“I have a game the night you are back,” Shane sighed.

“Then I will be there.” Ilya nodded.

“Okay.”

“Shane... Are you...”

“I have to get to practice, I will text you later.” He ended the call quickly and wiped his eyes. He knew he was being stupid, jealous, but he couldn’t help it.

A text came through a minute later ‘love you x’ and Shane realised it was the first time on the phone where he hadn’t said it to him. He sent a quick ‘you too’ and threw himself on the bed.

Ilya felt sick, like he had done something wrong. Shane was hardly talking to him, when they would have phone calls it was weird, distant, the messages were fewer between and Ilya really didn’t know what he had done wrong. His head hadn’t been in his last game and he had missed two passes and only managed to score once - the worst he had played, ever. Shane hadn’t even messaged him that night.

He knew he was spiraling, the progress he had made with his eating was going back on itself, he had been physically sick every day and he could only muster one full meal and a smoothie a day. Something he had been lying to his nutritionist about.

They pulled up into the drive and as soon as he was out of the car Kip was there. “Ilya,” He shouted excitedly and he ran forward and wrapped his arms around him.

“Hi dad,” Ilya whispered and he hugged him back tight.

“I thought you were going to head straight to Shane’s game,” Kip frowned.

“Thought wrong. Going to shower.” Ilya grabbed his bag and walked inside.

“Ilya...”

“Mm?” Ilya didn’t stop, his eyes were already watering.

“Ilya, sweetie, talk to me.”

“I do not think that Shane loves me anymore.” Ilya whispered. “I am going to bed, dad. I am fine. I just... Please.”

“Ilya, of course he does.” Kip frowned. Ilya just ignored him and walked up to his room.

Ilya didn’t know what to do. He had showered, he had changed into his more comfortable sweats and jumper and he was pacing. He had never missed one of Shane’s games when he was in town. “Fuck,” He mumbled and he walked down.

“Took you long enough, I’ll drive.” Kip said, shaking his head and Ilya got into Kip’s car. “Are you going to tell me what happened?”

Ilya told him about it, that he had tried to call him, that he had messaged him, that he didn’t understand why Shane was pushing him away. Told him how much he had missed him.

“I think when the two of you see each other again, then it will be okay.” Kip whispered. “It was a long break for the two of you.”

“Right.” Ilya shrugged.

“I didn’t think you were going to make it,” Scott smiled as he wrapped his arms around him.

“Neither did I.” Ilya mumbled and he kissed his dad on the cheek before heading to the stands. He knew that Kip was telling him what had happened.

“Ilya,” David and Yuna waved him over and Ilya walked over and sat down beside them. David hugged him in his normal embrace but he could tell that the way Yuna hugged him was different.

Ilya didn’t know what to do, he made small talk and then when Shane came out on the ice his heart clenched in his chest and he fisted his hands together, nails digging into his palms. Shane won, of course he did, it was the longest game of his life and all Ilya wanted to do was go down and hold him, but he stayed where he was.

“Come on,” Kip smiled and took his arm and led him downstairs.

“I think I am not wanted.” Ilya sighed.

“Ilya, of course you are wanted.” Kip frowned.

As the team filed out they greeted him with smiles, Sam gave him a nod but said nothing and walked out and Ilya looked at Kip as if to say ‘I told you so.’ Shane was the last one to walk out and he walked straight to his parents who had stood on the other side to them.

“Hi,” Shane whispered to Ilya.

“Hi,” Ilya said quietly, “Good game.”

“Thanks.” Shane nodded. “Me and the guys are going to go for pizza, but... tomorrow, I’ll come over?”

Ilya wanted to scream.

“Practice finishes at 2.” Ilya mumbled before turning on his heel and walking away from him.

Ilya ignored the worried glances at practice, he pushed himself on the ice, he did the interviews needed and he left the locker room without a word. He drove home and waited for Shane. There was a hesitant tap on the door and Shane walked in slowly.

He looked tired, eyes red like he had been crying. Ilya wanted to get up and wrap his arms around him, but he couldn’t. He just stayed on his bed.

“We should talk.” Shane whispered.

“Sure. Talk.” Ilya nodded.

“I’m sorry.” Shane rubbed the back of his neck, Ilya could see how nervous he was. “I panicked when I saw the photos of you and Svetlana.”

“I am gay.” Ilya said, shaking his head. “I am in love with you. Only you.”

“I... I was jealous and I didn’t know what to think, then I heard her on the phone...”

“She is a friend, I was very drunk and did not want to wake Teddy. I slept in her room on the spare bed.” Ilya said, shaking his head. “I would never do anything like that to you.”

“I... I know now.”

“Now?” Ilya shook his head.

“Ilya I’m so sorry.” Shane breathed. “This past month has been...”

“Has been bad. Worse than bad.” Ilya muttered.

“I didn’t handle it well.” Shane mumbled.

“No.” Ilya fiddled with his hands. “What did you tell your mum? She hates me.”

“I didn’t... She saw the photos.” Shane sighed.

“Fuck sake.” Ilya shook his head. “She thinks I would... I would never Shane, I love you. We are going to be married, kids, dog, one day. Why would I...?”

“I kissed someone.” Shane blurts and Ilya feels the whole world cave in around him.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10

“Get out.” Ilya breathed.

“Ilya...”

“I said get out. No. You stay. Fuck. I’m going.” Ilya was shaking, he felt so boxed up in his room and he grabbed his sneakers running down the stairs, he was very aware of Shane running behind him. “No. Do not follow me.” Ilya shouted and he opened the front door and ran.

Ilya ran hard and fast, he didn’t know where he was going but almost an hour later he collapsed on a bench, heaved and threw up by his feet. “Fuck.” He whispered.

“Jesus Ilya,” Scott panted a few minutes later. “I knew you were fast, but I’m an old man you can’t...”

“You should not have followed me.” Ilya mumbled.

“No way in hell I was letting you run out like that.” Scott said and he handed him his water bottle, “Drink.” Ilya took a little sip and then a little more before handing it back to him. “Want to tell me what happened?”

“No.”

“That’s fine, feel better after the run?”

“No.”

“You had bad form when you were running, you’ll need a salt bath when you get in before your muscles start to tense and ache.” Scott hummed.

“Really?” Ilya raised an eyebrow. “You tell me now I have bad form?”

“Well you didn’t want to talk about why you were running and I don’t think silence is good.” Scott shrugged.

Ilya sighed and looked down, “Has Shane gone?”

Scott checked his phone, “Kip is driving him back to school now,” Scott nodded. Ilya looked away, his eyes streaming with tears but he didn’t care. “What happened, Ilya?”

“This past month he has been treating me like I did... Like i did something wrong, when he...” Ilya shook his head, the thought of it made him want to be sick again but he had nothing inside left to come up and all that was left was a pain in his stomach and chest from trying. “He kissed someone else.”

“He what?” Scott asked, his eyes wide.

“It hurts so much papa.” Ilya whispered and Scott wrapped his arms around him tightly.

“I know bud, I know.” Scott whispered. “Let’s go home, I’m getting us an uber, then we will figure all of this out.”

Ilya just nodded his head slowly, he really didn’t know how they could sort this out but he let Scott take him home.

“What do you mean, Shane kissed someone else?” Kip whispered quietly.

“I didn’t know Shane had it in him,” Scott sighed. “Ilya is... he’s broken.”

“And he leaves tomorrow for another month without us.” Kip sighed. “We can’t make him stay?”

“No, we can’t.” Scott shook his head. “I can’t take that time off work, not with the interview preps happening this month.”

“Of course. I could go to a few of the games,” Kip said, scrolling through his phone.

“I do not need babysitter.” Ilya appeared in the kitchen, freshly bathed and in his Montreal jumper and sweats.

“We are worried,” Kip said honestly. “What happened bud?”

Ilya sat on the bar stool and Scott made him one of his protein smoothies and Ilya took a sip, it burned in his stomach and he squeezed his eyes shut. “Shane was upset that I was with Sveta,” Ilya said quietly. “I told him I did not really want to go out, but he told me too. That I should be enjoying my time. I enjoyed my time. I danced and I drank and I felt happy. Like I was really happy. I swear to you I did not do anything inappropriate with Sveta.”

“I believe you,” Kip promised. He had seen the photos, he had smiled and even saved some to print out for Ilya. All they said to him was that his son was happy, enjoying what he deserved. Never in his mind did it even cross that he had been doing anything with Svetlana.

“The whole month Shane didn’t talk to me properly. Didn’t call, his messages were short. Small. I felt so alone.” Ilya looked down. “I didn’t want to tell you if it made you upset with Shane. Yuna hates me.” Ilya cried a little harder at that. “Then last night I went to a stupid game. Thought we would be okay. Then he chose to go out with them. Not invite me. Made me alone. Then today I was apologising. Saying sorry for something I would never ever do. And then he said he did it. He kissed someone else. Someone not me.”

“Ilya...” Kip wrapped his arms around him tight. “Shane loves you.”

“I love him so much it hurts.” Ilya breathed.

“What are you going to do?” Kip asked.

“I don’t know what I want to do.” Ilya whispered and that was what terrified him. “I want to hate him. But I can’t. I want to love him and tell him i forgive him. But I can’t. I want to ask him who. I want to know when. Why? Was it just a kiss? But I am scared.”

“You leave tomorrow, one more month of games and then you are home for a while, maybe that space will help clear your mind a little.” Scott said gently.

“Maybe.” Ilya nodded.

“I think you should talk to him before you go though,” Kip said softly.

Ilya nodded, knowing they were both right.

Ilya waited by his tree at the school, he wore his black jeans and Montreal jumper, a cigarette hanging between his lips. He had sent a text to Shane telling him he was there and now he felt like he was waiting for his death sentence.

Finally, Shane appeared and Ilya could barely look at him. Shane looked as bad as he felt. “Ilya...”

“I wanted to see you before I go.” Ilya nodded.

“I am so sorry,” Shane whispered. Ilya didn’t know what to say so he shrugged. “Do you hate me?”

“Yes.” Ilya breathed. “But also no.”

“I was stupid, I couldn’t stop thinking about you and Sveta, you enjoying your life and you deserve everything Ilya. I just... I was jealous, not of the two of you, but because I wasn’t there sharing that moment with you.”

“So you kissed someone else?”

“I was drunk.” Shane looked down. “It was so stupid. I don’t know why I did it. As soon as it happened I threw up on him and ran away.” Ilya smirked at that but it still made his chest heavy. “Please tell me you forgive me.”

“I don’t.” Ilya said honestly. “I want to. But I don’t. Not know.”

“What happens now?” Shane asks quietly.

“Now I have an hour drive to the airport and then a month of travel and games.” Ilya sighed.

“And with us?”

“Maybe we use this month to think.” Ilya whispered.

“I don’t need to think, I love you and I’m so sorry I hurt you.” Shane whispered.

“I need to think.” Ilya nodded.

“Promise me that you... promise me that you will take care of yourself, you’ll eat and take your tablets, and drink those horrible smoothies.” Shane rambled.

“I will try.” Ilya shrugged. “You have your interview prep this month, you will... you will do well. I know you will.”

“Can I call you, or text you whilst you're away?” Shane asked.

“Ok.” Ilya nodded with a sigh. “Goodbye Shane,” Ilya whispered and he walked away quickly.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11

Week one Ilya felt like he was on autopilot. Kip called more. Scott texted more. David even sent him fun little articles to read. Shane had messaged a few times, little texts ‘Thinking of you’ ‘the team said hey, we lost our game but it doesn’t matter, we tried our best, you’d be proud of them.’ Ilya hadn’t messaged him back yet. He trained, he played hard, he ate, he threw up. He spoke to Ivan for an extra session, he was trying to process everything but it was harder than he thought.

Week two, Ilya missed Shane more than anything. ‘How are you?’ It felt like a timid stupid text to send, but he wanted to talk to him, he needed to know that he was okay. Montreal were continuing their winning streak, despite how shit Ilya was feeling.

“You’ve lost nearly six pounds,” The nutritionist sighed. “Rozanov.”

“I am trying.” Ilya whispered.

“You have been lying in your record book, it is not a punishment. We are doing this to help you, hockey is a very physical game. Your body needs to be stronger than it is now to prevent injuries. To keep up speed and stamina. Your headaches are back?”

“I am trying. I eat. I throw up. It is not something I force myself to do. It doesn’t stay down.” Ilya snapped.

“Have you been speaking to Ivan about it?” He asked and Ilya nodded his head. “What has he said?”

“It is a reaction to my emotional stress.” Ilya sighed. “But I want to eat, I want to be healthy. I want...”

“Okay, okay.” He looked a little awkward as Ilya held back his tears. “I have a new diet sheet for you. Thicker protein shakes. I have also spoken to our medic and you’re going to have some anti sickness shots.”

“Shots as in injections?” Ilya frowned.

“Yes, you are due your next Iron IV so you will get that one as well, then you will get tablets to take daily.”

“Okay.” Ilya nodded. He was given some more sheets, another diary and he put it in his pocket and walked out of the office. He could feel his phone vibrating in his pocket and he answered it automatically thinking it would be Kip calling to see how his appointment was.

“Ilya,” Shane’s voice was soft, surprised that he had answered.

“Shane.” Ilya sighed and he hated how wobbly his voice sounded. He switched to put his headphones in, it was early afternoon and he didn’t need to be back at the stadium til the evening and he walked out of the back exit, he knew there was a nice little park nearby and he headed in that direction.

“Are you okay? I text you back, but you didn’t answer.” Ilya sucked his lip. Just hearing Shane was like a knife in his chest.

“I didn’t see it, was at the check with nutritionist.” Ilya answered honestly.

“How was it?”

“Bad.” Ilya answered honestly.

“Ilya...”

“Do not lecture me Shane. I had it already. Will have it again with dads. Just don’t.” Ilya didn’t care if his voice was cold, harsh.

“Sorry, Misha said hi. I just finished his sessions, he has his first game of the season in a few weeks. He’s terrified.”

“When is it?” Ilya asked and he pulled his jacket around him and found a tree and sat down, he pulled out his cigarettes and lit one up and closed his eyes.

“The sixteenth.” Shane said softly.

“I will be home. I will come and see his game.” Ilya said, “I miss him. His pass is getting better?”

“Yeah, he is. He is terrified when he isn’t in neutral but, he’ll get there.”

“He is small.” Ilya said quietly. “The team are good? Your team? Not the children.”

“They are, we lost last week, but we did everything we could. Well they did. I... My head was not really in the game.” Shane said honestly.

“Oh. I am sorry for your loss. You will regroup and win tomorrow.” Ilya whispered.

“Yeah, we will.” Shane said confidently. “Tonight you play against Buffalo.”

“Mm.” Ilya nodded. “They are not too strong. We will win.”

“Of course.” Shane grinned. “You are on a streak,”

“I guess. I have not scored a hattrick in a while.” Ilya took a long drag of his cigarette.

“I thought you were going to give up.” Shane said teasingly.

“I said one day.” Ilya hummed. “Not today.”

“I have to head to practice.” Shane sighed. “But I... Thank you for answering,”

“Thank you for calling,” Ilya whispered. “Goodbye Shane,” He ended the call and whispered ‘I love you,’ before he took a breath and called Kip.

“Hey you,” Kip was smiling as he spoke. “How did it go?”

“Dad, I... I don’t know what else to do.” Ilya whispered. “I am really trying. Ask Teddy. I eat every day with him or Wyatt, and I eat what I eat and then I can’t stop being sick.”

“I believe you bud, Teddy tells me you’re doing really well. What did the nutritionist say?”

“New diet.” Ilya pulled out the paper and sighed, “More dry foods, carbs, breads and stuff.” Ilya took a photo of it and he hesitated over the group chat between his dads, Shane and Shane’s parents. It had been so quiet recently it killed him. He found the one for him and just his dads and sent it there. “I have to get a shot for anti-sickness, I will get it tomorrow with my IV and then we will see.”

“Okay buddy, well looks like I have some new recipes to try out.” Kip smiled.

“Thanks dad.” Ilya sighed. “How are you? Is the gallery okay?”

“Gallery is fine, I am okay. Scott is busy with the upcoming games so he hasn’t been home much. I finished game of thrones, finally.” Kip grinned.

“Oh, you like it?”

“I liked the dragons.” Kip hummed.

“Dragons are fun.” Ilya nodded. “I spoke to Shane.”

“You did?” Kip asked, a little surprised. In all honesty he had avoided any talk of Shane at the house, of course him being the Captain of the schools team, Scott spoke about him, but it wasn’t in the same admiration he held before. Hell, Kip couldn’t even talk to Yuna. He had sent her a message about how Ilya felt she hated him and told her his honest opinions of the matter; she hadn’t responded. David had sent a message wishing them the best and that he hoped everything was okay with Ilya and that he was looking forward to catching up when he was back.

“It was tense. Weird. But It wasn’t horrible.” Ilya sighed. “We spoke about hockey. Nothing else.”

“I bet he feels really bad about everything,” Kip sighed “Rightly so.”

“He does.” Ilya nodded. “Tell me something good, I need good news.”

“Something good?” Kip asked.

“Yes, anything.” Ilya lit another cigarette and took a long drag.

“Well, okay. I do have something,” Kip hummed. “Well, it isn’t something yet but I think we are going to get a puppy.”

“No fucking way.” Ilya grinned.

“I’ve wanted one for a while, sometimes with Scott at the games, and he’s at the school a lot more now, I get a bit lonely in the house you know? I don’t have that big a group of friends around here, they are still in New York so...”

“So you’re getting a puppy.” Ilya grinned. “What breed?”

“I think a labrador, One of the neighbours dog is about to give birth and I’m getting first dibs.”

“I can’t wait.” Ilya was excited. “I’ve always wanted a puppy.”

“Well, hopefully you can come and pick him out when you are back.”

The third and fourth week was a little better. The shot had helped, the tablets tasted like acid, but he was able to eat without throwing up as much. He still felt nauseous but it was manageable. They had lost the last three games and that had sucked. Their goalie was injured, took a blow to the head and the second goalie just wasn’t as good. Two other players were also injured and their starting line was weak. Despite him and Teddy scoring and making assists to each other at every game, they lost and Ilya hated coming back home a loser.

“Ilya, can we talk quick?” Teddy asked as their bus pulled up at their stadium.

“Mm,” Ilya was tired, he had spent most of his time in the bus trying to block everyone out.

“I know this month has been hard on you but I wanted to tell you how proud I am of you.” Teddy patted his arm softly. “You are a strong player, you’re trying really hard to take care of yourself, and this team has so much respect for you.”

“Thank you.” Ilya whispered, he really didn’t know what else to say.

“I just got an email from management, and you know with all of the injuries on the team, we are going to need some help if we want to make the playoffs this season.”

“Yes...” Ilya frowned.

“Well, sometimes we take players who aren’t drafted yet just to freshen the teams energy and keep the line.” Teddy explained and Ilya nodded, because he knew this. “Well, management have just signed Shane.”

“What?” Ilya breathed.

“He’ll be on loan to us for the rest of the season, he’ll still be applying to be drafted and going through that process. But I just got the news and I know things are... but I wanted to tell you.”

“Me and Shane will be on same team?” Ilya whispered.

“For the rest of the season.” Teddy nodded.

“Ok.” Ilya gripped the handle of his bag tighter, knuckles turning white. “He will be at the practice tomorrow?”

“If he’s said yes, all I know is that the management have requested him. I think it is probably because of me, I raved about the two of you, and you post a lot of his videos on your instagram and the fans are very accepting of you. It would boost the moral of the team and the fans.”

“Great.” Ilya breathed.

“Is this going to be a problem?” Teddy asks.

“No. I won’t make it a problem.” Ilya assured him. “Thank you for telling me. And for being a good Captain.”

Ilya drove home, his head spinning from the news. When he pulled up he smiled when he saw Kip waiting outside for him. “You made it.” He says excitedly.

“I made it?” Ilya frowned.

“The puppies are being born,” Kip didn’t give him a chance to even get the bag out of his car, instead he took his hand and ran him around the block to their neighbours and Ilya couldn’t help but laugh, he fucking loved his dad. The neighbours were a little stunned to see him there and Ilya gave a shy little wave to the young boy who was in his jersey.

“Are you here for a puppy?” He asked.

“I am here because my dad is crazy and wants to watch.” Ilya nods and he pulls a face when he sees the actual birthing of the puppies happening, he looks at the boy who is just grinning at him. “Nice shirt.” Ilya winked.

“You’re my favourite.” The boy beamed. “When I am big, Scott Hunter says I can go to his hockey school and he is going to teach me.”

“You will love it.” Ilya grinned. “I loved it there. I am sorry that we did not win the last few games.”

“Sometimes you have bad days, it’s okay. It will be better though, you’re going to win us the cup.” He declared.

“I hope so kid.” Ilya beamed.

“That one, look Ilya, that is our one.” Ilya looked to the puppy that Kip was pointing at and Ilya just hoped they would clean it first, but he couldn’t help but smile.

He felt his phone buzz in his pocket and he knew it would be Shane, a message 'Are you home yet? Need to talk, please? I'm at home, can i come over?'

Ilya sighed, his head aching. 'I am watching puppies being born, it will take a long time to get Kip home. I will pick you up when we are done?'

'I think I need more information on the puppies, but yes. Thank you x'

Ilya smirked and sent a quick photo and chuckled at the response 'Should be really cute, but jeesh that's a lot of blood and gross stuff. See you soon, ly x'

Chapter 12

Chapter 12

Ilya pulled up at Shane's place and within five minutes Shane came rushing out and climbed in the front seat. It felt weird, not going inside. Not talking to David about the articles he had been sending, not giving Yuna flowers.

"They have asked me to play for Montreal." Shane blurted.

"I know." Ilya nodded.

"Is it... Can I?"

"You do not need to ask me permission." Ilya frowned.

"No, I mean, I know that." Shane nodded. "I just, I wouldn't want to do anything to upset you." Ilya looked at him, "More than I already have."

"We are in a bump, but we will get over it." Ilya nodded. "I just need a little time, I... I want you to join, Montreal needs you."

"Will we be okay?" Shane asked quietly.

"I have questions, but I am scared to know the answers." Ilya said honestly.

"Whenever you're ready, I... I will answer them, Ilya." Shane whispers.

"Are you scared? For tomorrow?" Ilya asked.

"Terrified. Do they know... Do they know what I did?" Shane asks quietly.

Ilya shook his head. "No, I think they may have guessed. But no one has said anything. They are good team, no one will make you feel uncomfortable." Ilya promised.

"I know," Shane whispers. "I just... I don't want you to be uncomfortable." Shane said softly. His brown eyes were looking at him in such a way that would normally make Ilya spill his heart out. "So a puppy?"

"Kip is lonely." Ilya says softly. "He's finally getting a puppy, he will be his in about six weeks, when it is safe for him to leave his mum."

"That's nice. I bet Kip is going to go over there every day, imprint on him or something." Shane laughed. Ilya sighed and he laughed too, it was so nice to hear Shane laugh. Like everything was normal.

"Who did you kiss?" Ilya asked.

"His name is Dean, he was on the opposition." Shane sighed. "It was an away game, they

were a nice team, they invited us to the hotel room for pizza and someone had beer and vodka, and it kind of just happened. I had been in a mood all week, my head... I missed you and all I could think about was you and those pictures, I drank more than I ever had before and it felt horrible.”

Ilya just nodded, his hands gripped the steering wheel tightly. “Then you vomited on him?”

“Yes.” Shane whispers. “Was very embarrassing.”

“Good.” Ilya nodded. “And you... was just the one kiss?”

“Yes. I swear to you.” Shane breathed.

“”Okay.” Ilya whispered. “I danced a lot with Svetlana, probably we did look romantic but it wasn’t. She is fucking one of the Boston players.” Ilya added. “When we were teenagers, she was my first kiss. We messed around, but I knew that it wasn’t love. It was emptiness.” Ilya fiddled with his fingers. “She knew it too. We didn’t speak about our hookups or anything, we just became best friends.”

“I was really jealous,” Shane whispers. “I know I didn’t have the right to be.”

“I think if I saw you and Sam like that maybe I would have felt the same.” Ilya nodded slowly. “I didn’t want you to feel like that. It was never my intention.”

“I know, and you don’t have to apologise.” Shane whispered. “I love you so much, Ilya.”

“I love you too Shane,” Ilya whispered. “We are just on a little bump, we will be over it soon. Especially now we will have no more distance. You are going to be the new rookie. Does that make me a senior player now?” Ilya grinned.

“So senior, you are like in Hunter's league.” Shane grinned and Ilya reached over and tickled his sides. It felt so nice to laugh and be together. “Are you still going to Misha’s game tomorrow?”

“Yes, after practice I have a call with Ivan, and then I will go. You going to come?”

“With you?”

“Yes.” Ilya nodded.

“Yes.” Shane grinned. “Will you pick me up tomorrow for practice?”

“Of course.” Ilya smiled, it was a real genuine smile.

Ilya woke up early, he took his tablets; he didn’t really like the anti sickness tablets but he knew that they were helping. They made him feel a little bloated and he rubbed his stomach a little. He changed into his running shorts and a fresh jumper, pushing his hair back a little. He really needed a haircut. Maybe he would get it cut the next time the team stylist is there. He put his headphones in and wrote a note on the fridge that he was going for a jog and he ran into town.

He popped into his favourite Russian bakery, kissing the owner's cheek and spending time talking to her. He paid generously for the baked goods, and then continued his jog, he found a little pet shop and walked in, he picked up a few puppy essentials and headed back home.

Scott was on the phone and Ilya walked in, he wrapped an arm around him and placed the baked goods in front of him. Then he popped upstairs and had a quick shower, when he came back down Kip was there and Ilya grinned. "Look dad." He rushed over with the bag and for the next five minutes they started talking about the puppy and how excited they were.

"Who was on the phone babe?" Kip asked, turning to Scott.

Scott looked between the two of them and sucked his lip, "Erm, it was Linda."

"Linda... Adoption agency Linda?" Kip frowned and he instinctantly reached out for Ilya's hand.

"Yes, but don't worry it has nothing to do with you Ilya, nothing will ever change that." Scott said quickly.

"So why she call?" Ilya asked.

"Well, she erm..." Scott sucked his lip.

"You want me to leave you two?" Ilya asked, looking between them.

"No, I mean... Well, we didn't take our names off of the fostering list. She's asked if we could take someone for a few weeks." Scott whispered.

"You should do it." Ilya nodded straight away. "If that is what you two want?"

"It is a big decision, I have a lot of away games coming up." Scott said softly.

"We can call her back, take some more information and then we can make a decision. The three of us." Kip promised.

"Okay," Scott nodded. "That sounds like a plan. Thank you for the goodies." Scott grinned as he opened up the bag, he put their favourites out and put the rest in the fridge.

"Welcomes." Ilya smiled. "You can mention it, the Shane thing. The Shane on Montreal thing."

"I was waiting for you to say it." Scott said softly. "I only found out yesterday."

"How do you feel about it?" Kip asked.

"I spoke to him a little more. It's still... Still bumpy but maybe now it will be better." Ilya nodded, he went to say something when his phone buzzed and he pulled it out.

Shane: 'Mum wants to drive me to my first official practice, see you there?'

Ilya rolled his eyes and sent a thumbs up and tore some of the pastry away. "I think it will be okay. We need help."

"But for you?" Scott checked.

"Be nice, I think. To have him close. I missed him, it's been hard the past two months have been harder than I thought. So maybe, be nice."

"But if you're not ready for things to be how they were then it's okay," Kip said softly.

"I know, thank you." Ilya nodded and he took a sip of his smoothie and finished the pastry. "I am going to head in early. I will see you later, and you... you should call Linda. If there is a kid who needs you, you are the best people to help."

He hugged them both and he picked out Shane's favourite pastry and one for Teddy before heading to his car. Within half an hour he was walking inside. Of course Yuna and Shane were already there talking to the coach. "I think he's strongest on the starting line." Yuna said.

"Well, we will see." The coach smiled. "Ah, Rozanov, good morning."

"Morning Coach," Ilya smiled. "Shane, Yuna." He nodded his head slowly and he made his way to the locker room past them. Ilya changed quickly, when Shane walked in he looked a little nervous.

"Your mum not helping you to get dressed too?" Ilya teases, but there's something in his voice. Shane just rolls his eyes and he drops his stuff in the empty bay beside Ilya.

"Are you always the first one in?" Shane asks.

"Not today," Ilya winks. "But normally, yes."

"If it isn't my favourite boys," Teddy cheers as he walks in, he looks between the both of them, eyes linger on Ilya, checking that he's okay. "Ready for your first practice?"

"Terrified. But yes." Shane grins. "Thank you for..."

"Was all you man," Teddy smiles. "And all of Ilya's posts about you on instagram," Shane turned to look at Ilya at that, he hadn't realised that he had had such an influence on the decision.

"I am going to help set the cones." Ilya said and he headed out.

"How... How is he really?" Shane asks once Teddy leaves. "I know it's awkward for me to ask, but I feel like he won't really tell me. Not now anyway, and I just..."

"He's doing fine." Teddy said softly. "He's dealing with his eating well, he is socialising a little more with the team, he loves the fans and they love him. We're a good group of guys here, he's like a son to most of us, and I am sure no matter what is happening between the two of you that won't change."

“Did he tell you?” Shane asks.

“No, it is obvious that something happened, his spark was gone. But we would never take sides.” Teddy said and a few more of the team came in, they all knew Shane pretty well and greeted him enthusiastically.

Practice was fun, Teddy had partnered Ilya and Shane together and it was electric, the whole team was buzzing for how they would play together in their next game. When they finished Ilya stayed on the ice a little longer, he saw Yuna smiling at Shane and he wondered if this awkwardness between them would go away. A part of him hated her for how she made him feel, but he also understood.

“Do you want to hang out now?” Shane asked, skating over to him.

“I should call my dads,” Ilya said softly. “I... Well they got a phone call and I want to see what is happening.”

“About you? Are you...?”

“No, not me.” Ilya smiled. “It’s not my business to say, but I’ll pick you up for the game tonight? We can go to dinner after?”

“I’d like that,” Shane smiled and he skated off.

Ilya changed quickly, he would shower at home. He was just walking to his car when he heard his name called. He turned around to see Yuna standing there.

“Ilya...” She whispered. “I am so sorry for how I’ve been acting.”

“You are protective of Shane, it is understandable.” Ilya shrugged, hands in his pockets.

“I assumed that you had hurt him, I shouldn’t have. I saw my boy hurt and I... I should never have reacted that way towards you, I hope that you can forgive me.”

“I get it.” Ilya shrugs. “You were nice to me because of Shane, Shane is your son. I should not have let my expectations of you be so high, they just hurt me in the end. I am glad you got Shane on a good hockey team.” Ilya turned, he had stumbled on his words but he didn’t care. He was tired of letting the adults in his life hurt him and he was ready to take a stand.

Ilya drove away and drove home, he parked up and raised an eyebrow at the new car parked in the drive. Scott came out to greet him and Ilya smiled. “You phoned her back?”

“We phoned her back.” Scott nodded.

“The child is here now?” Ilya asked.

“She is, Sofia. She is seven years old, she is very shy, very quiet.” Scott said quietly.

“Do you want me to go?” Ilya asked, “I don’t want to scare her.”

“No.” Scott said firmly. “I wanted to come out and make sure you don’t run thinking us taking her in makes you any less our son.” He says. “We’ve told her about you, she’s drawn you a picture.”

“Really?” Ilya smiled.

“Yes, do you want to talk first? About practice?”

“Practice was fine, fun actually. I spoke to Yuna, and she apologised.”

“What did you say?” Scott asks.

Ilya shrugs and grabs his bag from the boot and tells him, he is expecting Scott to scold him but instead he pats his back, “Proud of you son. Now, are you ready for this?”

“Are you?” Ilya winks.

Chapter 13

Chapter 13

Ilya walked in and sucked his lip a little nervously when he saw Kip sitting at the kitchen table, colouring pencils scattered everywhere and dozens already drawn on papers around the room. Kip was naming the colours and talking about what he was drawing, Sofia, sat quietly beside him nodding along. She was small, she had bright blue eyes and messy curly blonde hair.

“Hey buddy,” Kip smiled as Ilya walked in. Sofia looked up at him and she edged a little closer to Kip. “This is Ilya, remember he’s our son, and he lives here.”

“Hey there Sofia,” Ilya smiles and he takes off his trainers, knowing they will make him look a little shorter, he walks over to the table and crouches down beside her. “Wow, did you draw all of these?” He asks. Sofia nods her head and looks at Kip and points. “You and Kip did? These are amazing, I think this one is very good.” He points to the one that she had clearly drawn and grins. Sofia gives him a smile and points to the chair. “Oh I can sit?” She nods and hands him a picture. “For me?” Sofia nods again and then hands him some pencils. “I can draw too.” He says and sits and starts to draw with them.

“How was your day?” Kip asks Ilya.

“Was fine.” Ilya nods. “I... I said I would go to Misha’s game.”

“Of course you can still go.” Kip smiled. “Are you busy tomorrow?”

“No,” Ilya hummed.

“We were thinking of going for a picnic and seeing the ducks,” Kip said softly and Sofia’s face lit up and looked at him expectantly.

“I’d love to.” Ilya grinned, he couldn’t remember many picnics as a kid, and he definitely never went to see the ducks.

Ilya sat with her drawing until his hands had cramp and they were nearly out of paper. “Do you need anything?” Ilya asked. “I can pick up some things on the way to the game?”

“No, I think we are okay.” Scott smiled. “Are you going out after?”

“Was going for dinner with Shane,” Ilya nodded. “But I...”

“Go, we will have tomorrow.” Scott said and hugged him tight. “Thank you for being so amazing with this.” He whispered.

“Papa.” Ilya said shaking his head. “You are a great dad, great papa and Sofia is lucky to have you.”

“It’s not a permanent placement.” Scott sighed.

“No, maybe not, but the time she has with you, that will be good for her.” He promised. He ran upstairs and changed into a pair of his new jeans, he had been gifted a lot of clothes that he hardly wore and he pulled it on, he even grabbed a new shirt, a black button up and he ran some product through his hair, he looked good. Maybe good enough to prove to Shane that he didn’t need to kiss other boys.

He walked downstairs and frowned when he saw Sofia crying. “What happened?” Ilya asks.

“She doesn’t want you to go.” Kip whispered.

“I will stay.” Ilya decided.

“No, it’s okay,” Scott said. “Remember, Sofia, Ilya is going out with his boyfriend and then he will be back tonight. Tomorrow we will all go and see the ducks.”

Sofia reached for Ilya and Ilya scooped her up, she was so light it made his chest ache. “Shh, little sunshine.” Ilya whispered in Russian and she instantly stopped crying. “You speak Russian?”

“Da,” Sofia whispered.

“I promise that I will be back, I have to go and watch boring game with boring boyfriend,” He continued to speak in Russian and every time he said boring he rolled his eyes dramatically, fingers tickling her sides making her giggle. “But I will be back and if you are awake I will read you a story.”

“If I am not?” She asked, pouting up at him.

“If you are not I will make you Blini for breakfast,” She cuddled into him tighter before nodding her head and jumping down and running over to Kip. “You did not know she was Russian?”

“No.” Scott frowned and he led him to the kitchen. “Her mum was in a car accident, she is in a coma. Her grandparents are on a cruise and are coming back as soon as possible. Linda said that she has been speaking English with her. Maybe her dad is Russian?”

“Where was he?”

“They can’t find him.” Scott said with a sad sigh.

“Oh.” Ilya nodded slowly and he grabbed the last baked good from the box and cut it in half. “If you need me to talk to her if… you can call?”

“We are very lucky to have you here.” Scott said and kissed his hair. “And you are looking very nice,”

“I didn’t realise we get gifted so many clothes.” Ilya smiled. “Should wear them.”

“Have a lovely night,” Scott smiled and Ilya nodded, she handed the treat to Sofia who smiled happily.

“Thank you,” She whispered in English.

“You are very welcome,” Ilya smiled and he hugged Kip and ruffled her hair before heading out.

“Wow.” Shane grinned when he saw Ilya. “You look really good.”

“I know.” Ilya winked. “Sorry I am a little late.”

“That’s okay, was... everything was okay?” Shane asked.

“We have a little girl at home. Kip and Scott they are fostering.” Ilya nodded. “She is Russian, small, sad. We did drawings.” He put his rover into drive and headed towards the school.

“That’s amazing, they are really good parents.” Shane nodded.

“Mm.” Ilya agreed. “I am looking forward to being a dad one day.”

“You’ll make a fantastic dad, Ilya.” Shane whispered.

“We will.” Ilya said and he reached his hand out for him. “Together.”

“No more bump?” Shane asked quietly, nervously.

“No. I think not.”

The game was not so great, Misha was pretty nervous on the ice but he didn’t make any big mistakes. As soon as he saw Ilya in the stands he got so excited he fell down and the coach had to help him up. The school had lost, but the crowd seemed to be excited that they were there. When it was over he headed down and the team ran to him, they gave him high fives and Ilya smiled and took photos with anyone who wanted one.

“Misha,” Ilya grinned and wrapped him in the biggest hug. “I am so proud of you.”

“You came to watch,” Misha whispered. “I didn’t think that you would.”

“Why?”

“Because you are a famous hockey star.” Misha laughs.

“I am just me.” Ilya smiled. “And I am proud of you.”

“Thank you. I want to be just like you when I’m older.”

“Maybe you can be better,” Ilya said and ruffled his hair.

“Before we go for dinner, I want to go to the store.” Ilya decided as he parked up on the high street.

“For Sofia?” Shane smiled.

“Yes, and I think something for Kip and Scott, to say thank you.” Ilya whispered.

“That sounds like a nice idea.” Shane grinned.

Ilya hated walking beside Shane without holding his hand and when he realised how much his fingers were itching to hold his, he linked his fingers into his and it felt so much like home. They found the girls' clothing section and Ilya looked around and hummed, “She really likes rainbows.”

“Oh?” Shane hummed.

“I think this is cute.” Ilya picked up a fluffy jumper, it had a little rainbow on the front and little fluffy ears.

“That is really cute,” Shane nodded and his eyes found the baby section and he gulped, why was he yearning so much for that? He wasn’t even eighteen.

Ilya picked up a few more things, and then he went to the drawing section and brought the biggest box of pens he could find, paper and colouring books and even an arts and craft set.

“What about this?” Shane said as they strolled through the home section and he pointed out a beautiful frame, it had family written in a beautiful script with enough space for five photos. “You have lots of photos you could fill inside.”

“Mm.” Ilya smiled. “I like it.” He picked it up and added it too. “I tell you something?”

“Anything,” Shane whispered.

“Next season, I think I find my own place.” Ilya said quietly.

“Yeah?” Shane tilted his head.

“Maybe... Well if we... If you stay with Montreal, maybe we can...”

“Together.” Shane smiled.

“Together.” Ilya grinned and he pressed a kiss to his lips in the middle of the aisle and they couldn’t help but smile at the domesticatedness of it all.

Chapter 14

Chapter 14

Ilya felt like he was living in a bubble, everything felt pretty perfect. Shane was doing amazing with Montreal, his first game he had been terrified, he had been the one throwing up before the game, Ilya crouching down beside him and holding him close. But they had won. Shane had scored and helped with three assists, two of them being to Ilya and one to Teddy. The crowd had gone wild and Ilya had been scrolling through instagram showing all of the amazing things the fans had said.

Sofia had settled in well at home with Kip and Scott, within the two weeks she had spoken a lot more, was excited with all of the gifts that Ilya had presented her with and she even let Shane and Ilya take her out for the day on one of their days off.

“What are you thinking about?” Shane asked as he threw himself on top of him, they were in Michigan and sharing a hotel room. The team all giggled when they went up to their room, but after the first couple of times they both stopped blushing.

“There is a saying, but I... I am waiting for the foot to drop.” Ilya frowned. “No...”

“Waiting for the other shoe to drop?” Shane hummed.

“Like I am too happy. Something will go wrong.” Ilya whispered.

“Oh,” Shane shook his head and crawled up his body, they had had a lot of sex since Shane had joined the team, pretty much every hotel night they would make love. Ilya was quickly becoming addicted to Shane and his body. Shane wrapped his legs over his waist and pulled Ilya into a sitting position, wrapping his arms around his neck. “I promise you baby, nothing is going to happen. Things are good because they are allowed to be good. You are allowed to be happy.”

“I am?” Ilya whispered.

“More than anyone.” Shane tilted his chin up and kissed him slow and hard.

“I love you.” Ilya whispered into the kiss.

“I love you.”

They were finally playing at home and as soon as they hit the ice Ilya turned to the family seats, grinning when he saw Kip, Scott and Sofia waving at them. Of course Yuna and David were there too and Ilya still hadn't really spoken to Yuna, but they were all together. He wasn't too sure if Kip or Scott were talking to Yuna properly, but it was fine. They were not

just there for him, but Scott was so beyond proud of Shane too and it was nice that they were all there.

They won their home game, a whooping 5-3, Shane scoring two goals and Ilya scoring three. “Fucking hell boys,” Teddy laughed as they walked into the locker room, sweat was pouring off of Ilya and his chest was heaving, his cheeks aching from smiling so much. “I didn’t even get a look in, guess I can retire.”

“You are very old.” Ilya winked.

“Fuck you.” Teddy laughed but he pulled them both into his arms, kissing both of them on their heads. “Shane, you good man?”

“I’m good.” Shane grinned.

“Man, I need to speak to management because fuck if I am letting you leave this team. We are getting the fucking Stanley cup!” Teddy shouted and the whole locker room erupted in cheers.

As soon as they left, Sofia was running up to Ilya. “Wow you were so good. You scored and everyone went so loud.” Sofia said in excited Russian.

“I’m glad you enjoyed it,” Ilya laughed and kissed her hair, she was wearing the hoody that he had brought her, her hair in french braids that Kip had been youtubeing and trying so hard to master, which he had. “Kip said we are going to have ice cream.”

“Oh is that so?” Ilya smiled.

“And your boyfriend Shane and his parents.” She whispered.

“Great,” Ilya smiled and kissed her cheek.

Ilya let Scott and Kip hug him and he moved Sofia so she was on his shoulders, her hands on his head so tight. Shane was walking behind them with his parents. “We are really going for ice cream?” Ilya asked.

“Yes,” Kip nodded. “Yuna’s idea.”

“Great.” Ilya nodded again and tilted his head up to Sofia who pulled a face at him making him laugh.

“I am so proud of you boys,” Yuna grinned when they sat down.

“Thanks mom.” Shane smiled, he was a little oblivious to why this was so awkward and Ilya found it cute. “It’s just temporary...”

“Temporary or not, there’s no way that you won’t get first draft now.” Yuna grins.

“If it means staying in Montreal, I don’t care what I get.” Shane shrugs and gives Ilya a smile. Hands linked on top of the table. Yuna just nodded her head slowly at that and Kip's eyes were on her. He looked ready to say something but Ilya spoke instead.

“Shall we go and get more sprinkles?” Ilya asks Sofia.

“Yes.” Sofia nods and she climbs out of the booth and waits for Ilya.

“Not too much, she won’t sleep tonight.” Scott said. “And neither will you.”

Ilya just rolled his eyes and took Sofia to the station, he put a little more ice cream in her bowl and helped her pick the sprinkles. Ilya felt eyes on him and he looked over at their table and sucked his lip, none of them were looking towards him. Scott and Kip were cuddled in a little kiss and Shane was talking animatedly to his parents. He looked around, but still he could feel the eyes on him, but he couldn’t make out where they were from.

He finished helping Sofia and then helped her back to the table. The feeling of being watched never left him.

“You okay?” Shane asked softly.

“I think... I guess I’m feeling a little tired,” He says and links his fingers with his.

They finish their ice cream, Ilya feeling a little more on edge but doesn’t say anything, he practices the breathing techniques that Ivan had taught him when he feels panic or nervous and of course Kip notices.

“I think it’s time to head home,” Kip hums.

“But it’s all you can eat ice cream,” Sofia pouts and it’s the first time that she has asked for more of something since being in their care and they all share a glance.

“I think one more bowl will be good, maybe you should try the cherry and chocolate sprinkles this time.” Ilya can hear the tremor in his voice but he pushes it down and stands up again, holds his hand out to Sofia who takes it excitedly and he leads her back to the machine, he puts a smaller amount of ice cream in her bowl this time and adds the sprinkles. “Take it back to the table, okay, I am going to the bathroom.” He gestures just behind him. He watches and waits until she is back at the booth before going to the bathroom.

He splashes water on his face and looks in the mirror, his eyes are bright and he squeezes the sink, counts to ten, breathes in and out. The feeling of someone behind him makes him open his eyes and he wishes that he didn’t, he wishes he kept them shut, because standing behind him was his brother.

Dark hair, equally dark eyes and that crooked smile.

“What the hell are you doing here?” Ilya spits in Russian.

“I came to watch my baby brother play in a hockey match, everyone loves you here. They call you a hero, but you are nothing more than a disgusting fag. You think your family there will love you? They think you’re a joke, just like I do.”

“I don’t care what you think.” Ilya spits. “You are nothing to me.”

His fist collides with his cheek hard and his back collides into the sink. He tries to stand up but his fist connects again, Ilya can taste blood and he spits it at him. "This is what is going to happen," Alexi says.

"You are going to take your hands off of my fucking son, that is what is going to happen." Scott's voice is loud in the tiny bathroom and Ilya blinks up at him, he isn't hurt too bad; he's had a lot worse from his brother. Scott is bigger than Alexi, taller, broader, more powerful.

"I will ruin you Ilya, I will ruin everything that you have built here." Ilya knows that he is more than capable of doing that, but he doesn't need to be scared. Instead of shaking his head and looking at him like a lost child he stands up straighter than he ever has and he looks at him, eyes wide and he stares at him.

"You cannot ruin me. You can try. But everything you would want to say is already out there." Ilya shakes his head. "I have a family, i have love, i have everything I have ever wanted. Everything I should never have had to fight or beg for." He is shouting now, voice raised, Russian and English. "You have nothing on me."

Kip comes in and Ilya shakes his head, he doesn't want Kip to be any part of this. Kip is too good.

"Give me money and I will leave." Alexi orders.

"No." Ilya shakes his head. "You will have nothing from me."

"You will regret this Ilya," Alexi spits at him and he pushes past them all and Ilya collapses into Scott and Kip's arms.

"You did so fucking well, come on, let's go and get some ice for your face,"

"I don't want Sofia to see." Ilya whispers.

"I'll take her home, you grab that ice and we will see you at home," Kip whispered. "You want me to get Shane?"

Ilya nodded his head. "Thanks dad."

Kip smiled and kissed his cheek and within two minutes Shane was in and Ilya just sighed, "The other shoe dropped." He whispered and Shane wrapped his arms around him tight.

Chapter 15

Chapter 15

“What was it like to see Alexi?” Ivan asked, Ilya sat out in the garden at the back of the house, phone propped up against his water bottle, a cigarette between his lips. Kip had taken Sofia to the park and Ilya was very much aware that Scott was somewhere nearby. He hadn’t really spoken since he got home last night, even when Shane held him, he just couldn’t form the words. He had messaged Ivan and asked for the appointment, he wasn’t booked for one until next week.

But he didn’t want to spiral.

“It was like seeing a ghost from a nightmare.” Ilya sighed, “I thought I would never see him again, I fooled myself into thinking that that part of me was over.”

“It can never be over unfortunately, your history is what makes you you. What we can only do is grow from the trauma.” Ivan spoke softly and Ilya nodded his head. “Does what Alexi said scare you?”

“Alexi is very powerful in Russia.” Ilya sighed. “Here, I don’t know what power he has. My father, the same. I don’t know what he can do, he said he will ruin me and I believe that he will do his best. And I don’t know how much more I can take.” Ilya whispered honestly.

“What do you mean?” Ivan asked.

“I feel like I am forever fighting. Forever fighting for things to be good, when they are good, I’m holding onto it so tightly that I feel like I’m about to break, then i relax, I breathe and everything falls apart again.” Ilya whispers, tears down his cheeks. “I was so happy, Shane kissed someone else. I finally felt like as a family we were something, Alexi comes to destroy it. I look at Sofia, and she is so smart and funny and she has had something bad happen to her, but she is young and she’s so lucky to have met Kip and Scott. I hate that I am jealous of her.”

“Everything you say makes perfect sense, Ilya. Especially with your upbringing. When you were younger, when your mother died, your life would have been so different if you had parents like Scott and Kip to take you in, to raise you in the light of day rather than tainting you with darkness like your father did. It is okay to wish for your life to have been better, Ilya.”

Ilya took a long drag and sighed quietly.

“How is playing hockey with Shane?” Ivan asks.

“Electric.” Ilya smiles.

“I have been watching your games, you really are an amazing pair. I can see how much he loves you when he looks at you.”

“I love him so much it scares me, I feel like what if I hold onto him too tight and then he’s going to break.” Ilya breathes.

“Is that why you felt he kissed someone else?” Ivan asks.

“I don’t know, maybe.” Ilya nodded. “Probably.”

“On a daily basis, how is your mood?” Ivan asks.

“I like to be busy. I play hockey. I practice. I make sure Shane is happy, not missing home when we are travelling. I be part of the team.”

“And when you are alone with your thoughts?”

“I feel nothing.” Ilya admits. “I try to feel something, I feel empty and sad and I’m really trying not to be.”

“Ilya, I would like to talk to you but I would also like to ask for Scott to come and sit with you.”

“Okay,” Ilya breathed and he looked over at Scott and signalled him to come over.

“Hey buddy,” Scott whispered and he sat down beside him. Ilya finished his cigarette and put the bud in the box and he rest his head on his shoulder.

“Ilya, I am going to switch to English okay, and then I can explain again in Russian. Are you okay with me discussing some things about your health with your dad here?” Ilya just nods, he has this knot in his stomach and he feels sick. “I have been speaking with Ilya for a long time now, almost a year and I have been very hesitant to put a diagnosis on what is happening as there have been a lot of triggers that could have made Ilya feel a certain way. I do think he is suffering with Clinical Depression. This can be genetic, he has a family history of depression.” Ivan’s voice is soft and Ilya hates it.

Depression.

The word hangs heavy in the air.

“I am worried about Ilya hurting himself, which is why I asked you to come and sit with us. He said something that has worried me, that he doesn’t know how much more he can take.” Ivan said softly.

“Ilya,” Scott whispered.

“I’m so sorry. I’m so sorry.” Ilya crumbled.

“You have nothing to be sorry for,” Scott whispered.

“There are medications that can help, however some may cause more sickness and I can see how hard that you’ve been working. Some may also cause fatigue,”

“Will they stop making me feel like this?” Ilya asks quietly.

“It will always be a trial and error until you find the right one.” Ivan said gently. “But I want you to know that this depression is not something that you have caused, it is not something that you have to be sorry about, it is a medical condition Ilya.”

“I am sick?” Ilya whispered.

“It is a sickness of sorts, yes. Therapy is a great way to overcome the thoughts that come with it, but there are medications that can change brain chemistry...”

Ilya zones out, he just stares at the phone but doesn’t listen. He holds onto Scott tighter, he feels like a scared child. But he thinks about Ivan’s words, this isn’t his fault, it isn’t something that he has brought on himself. Ilya hears Scott and Ivan talk for a little longer but then Scott ends the call and Scott just holds him.

“We don’t have to make any decisions yet,” Scott promises.

“What can I do?” Ilya whispers.

“We will have a look at all of our options okay, but I promise you, you are not alone. I am right here with you, okay?”

“Okay Papa.” Ilya whispers quietly. “Are... You’re not disappointed?”

“In you?” Ilya nods. “Never.” Scott promises and kisses his hair. “I love you so much son.”

“Love you,” Ilya breathes. “Don’t want to go inside yet.”

“Then we won’t. We will stay here as long as you need, but I want you to know that I am so fucking proud of you.” Ilya just holds onto him and he thinks maybe knowing that it is actually something more than just managing his emotions, maybe he can actually try and live with it.

Chapter 16

Chapter 16

It had been a week since his phone call with Ivan, a week since his diagnosis, a week since he saw his brother, and everything just felt the same. After the call he and Scott spoke about their options. Ilya liked how Scott called it their problem, it made Ilya feel so less alone. He had told Shane about it, Shane had told him whatever he needed he would be there for him, something that Ilya was grateful for. He didn't push. Didn't ask questions. Was just there. Kip had hugged him, told him it would all be okay. Ilya believed them.

"Listen up," Teddy called out as they were in the locker room for their first away game back. "We have a strong fucking line, but Minnesota play fucking dirty. We need to keep strong, don't pay attention to the chirping, don't fight, let's just show them how fucking good we are at hockey."

Ilya and Shane joined in with the cheers, they finished getting ready and made their way onto the ice. The game was just as Teddy had predicted, Ilya's body hurt as he was slammed into board after board, and he just wanted to push back, but he didn't, he passed the puck whenever he could to Shane or Teddy and they had won, barely, but won. But it felt like the biggest players were ganging up on him.

"Cause they know you're the best," Wyatt smiled as if he could read his mind. "Two days until the next game, Buffalo, will be a lot of the same. Get some ice on your shoulders, maybe a sports massage in the morning, you won't regret it."

Ilya just nodded, he should take on that advice, but he felt like all he wanted to do was sleep. "The team is going to the bar, you boys coming?"

Shane looked at Ilya. "You want to go? We can go." Ilya whispered.

"You look exhausted." Shane said quietly.

Ilya nodded, "I have a little headache. But, you go. I will go back to the hotel, sleep, and you can come in all cute and drunk and wake me up with some kisses." Ilya smiled.

"I... I'll just go for one?" Shane whispered, his parents had told him to try and open up more with the team, if he wanted to stay with Montreal then he needed to be more than Ilya's boyfriend, not that anyone really believed that anyway.

"However many you want," Ilya smiled and he kissed his hair.

He walked to Teddy and sucked his lip nervously, "Headache?" Teddy asked quietly. Ilya still didn't trust himself to hold onto the strong painkillers.

"I can feel one coming, I will go back to the hotel, shower, take one and sleep." Ilya nodded.

Teddy opened his bag and grabbed the slip, he tore two off and handed them to him. “Just a headache? They were pretty hard on us, on you. Did anyone say anything?”

“No.” Ilya shook his head.

“I think it’s going to be a lot for a while, Ferguson’s official charges are coming up soon, he was a bastard, is a bastard, but he did have a lot of players who thought he was something, a lot of fans too.”

“Kip mentioned it. My lawyers want me to go to the trial, read a statement.” Ilya sighed, he had been trying not to think about it too much.

“Do they think he would get locked up?” Teddy asked curiously.

“They are going to try, he’s a public figure. Has money. Probably not.” Ilya sighed. He would just be another person in this world who will get away with hurting him.

Back in the hotel Ilya stripped down to his boxers and then took the painkiller, he left the other on the side and grabbed his phone, Shane had already sent him a selfie with a bright coloured cocktail and Ilya rolled his eyes, he sent one back with a ‘i love you’ and then called Kip.

“Hey buddy, good game tonight,” Kip answered straight away. “Scott has a game tonight, so he isn’t here.”

“Just you and Sofia?” Ilya smiled.

“She’s fast asleep, we watched Monsters inc, she watched some of your game but didn’t like watching you get hurt.” Kip said softly.

“She shouldn’t watch hockey. Too violent.” Ilya hummed. “I took one of my headache tablets, behind my eyes is hurting.”

“Try and get some sleep, where’s Shane?”

“He is with the team at the bar, I didn’t want to go.” Ilya yawned.

“No you sound like you made the right choice, there will be other days to celebrate with the team.” Kip promised. “Something on your mind?”

“I’ve been googling.” Ilya tugged the covers over himself a little. “Clinical depression.”

“You have?” Kip hummed.

“I understand it a little more. We have a month break soon or not too serious games coming up. They have olympic games and then the all star games. I will start medication then. Get the side effects gone or used to it and be back and we will win Stanley cup.”

“That sounds like a really good plan.” Kip praised him.

“I have meeting with Ivan tomorrow, I will tell him too. Tell him the medication I think i will try. Then we will get it and I will try hard.”

“Oh baby boy, I know you are going to try hard, I love you.”

“Love you dad. Talk to you tomorrow.” Ilya whispered and he didn’t have time to end the call before he fell asleep.

Ilya was laying on his bed, the rest of the season had gone amazing. They had won every game, there was a lot about him in the news, it had leaked about what Ferguson had done and Ilya didn’t really know how to handle the interviews or the press, so he had declined to say anything. But a part of him felt like that was the wrong thing to do. He knew he couldn’t say anything, not with the court case being next week.

There was a little tap on his door and he sat up slowly, little feet came padding in slowly. “Ilya?” Soft Russian, “I made you a hot chocolate.”

“You did?” Ilya sat up slowly. It was still early and he had hoped he could hide a little more.

“Well, Kip did, but I added the mellows.” She smiles and she’s holding it with the most delicate precision not to spill it. Ilya took it from her and took a sip, “Do you like it?” She asks.

“This is the best hot chocolate I’ve ever had.” He grinned and he patted the bed beside him and she climbed up. “Best mellows ever.”

Sofia beams at the praise. “My grandparents are coming tomorrow,” She whispers.

“They are.” Ilya nods.

“I miss them, but I am going to miss being with you and Scott and Kip and Shane.” Sofia whispers.

“You don’t live too far from us right?” Ilya asks.

“Not too far,” Sofia nods.

“Well, we will speak to Linda and your grandparents and see if we can still see you,” Ilya whispers.

“You’d do that?” Sofia asks.

“Yes.” He nods.

“Thank you. Can we do some colouring today? Kip says you have an appointment this afternoon.”

“Okay,” Ilya nods. Today he would be going to the doctor, blood tests, weight check, and then he would get his medication. Kip was going to come with him. “Can I have a little shower first?”

Sofia nods and she hugs him tight, kisses his cheek and heads back downstairs.

Ilya sighs softly, he finishes the hot chocolate and has a quick shower, he wishes he could just stay in bed, but he knows he can't. He showers quickly, pulls on one of Shane's jumpers and his joggers and heads downstairs. Sofia has set up the kitchen table with all of her crafts and Ilya looks at Kip, he has a sad look in his eye - no one wants Sofia to leave them.

“Hey buddy,” Kip says softly. “You okay?”

“I am ready to colour.” Ilya smiles. They colour and draw for a while, Ilya isn't very good at art, but he finds colouring easy, relaxing. Kip had even got him his own colouring book, one that had corny little self help lines but he smiled when he saw them. Scott came in and grinned at the three of them, “Well, don't I feel sad for missing out on the colour party.” Scott smiles and he kicks off his trainers and dumps his training bag by the door and walks over, he kisses them all on the head and wraps his arms around Kip.

“This one is for you.” Sofia says and she hands him a big pile of papers and Scott goes through them all, one by one, he smiles softly. Ilya knows he is going to treasure every one of those photos, it is going to kill them all when she leaves tomorrow. He hates that today he has the appointment, he doesn't want to take anything more from them.

“Okay Ilya, you ready to go?” Kip said softly and stood up.

“Mm.” Ilya shrugged, was he ready? But he nodded, he promised Sofia they would be back soon, she had asked for pizza and they were going to have the best pizza party in the cinema room and watch her favourite movies. Shane would come over too at Sofia's request.

“Thank you for coming with me,” Ilya whispered once as they were sitting in the waiting room at the doctors office.

“Of course, you're my son and I will always be here.” Kip promised, pressing a hand on his knee. “I know I have said it already, but I am so proud of you,”

Ilya didn't know what to say, so he just smiled and nodded. When his name was called they did the weights, he knew he had put a little weight on from his last nutritionist meeting, the anti sickness medication had been amazing and he was keeping more food down. Kip had hugged him, again telling him how proud he was of him and Ilya didn't know what he was proud of him but smiled again. They did the bloods and he would get the results soon to make sure his iron levels were improving.

Now they would discuss the medication.

“I have spoken with Ivan, read through the report he has filed for you. I am really happy to see how much you are opening up. I do believe that his diagnosis is correct,”

“Okay.” Ilya nodded, he had no idea what to say.

“Ilya has been looking at the different medications,” Kip said softly.

“Prozac,” Ilya nodded. “I spoke with the team doctor, said this one will not effect hockey.”

“Prozac is a good fit for you, well done.” Doctor Smarts smiles and Ilya lets out a little breath he didn’t know he had been holding. “I will get you a prescription for this, I would also like you to consider take a cognitive behaviour therapy course,”

“What is it?” Kip asked.

“Therapy is a great way for you to talk about everything, to find an understanding of why you feel certain ways. Cognitive behaviour therapy is a way to handle situations when you’re feeling something in the moment, a way to distract your mind, for example if you are feeling upset or angry then it gives you ideas on how to distract your brain.”

“It sounds like a good idea,” Kip said looking to Ilya.

“Okay.” Ilya just nodded, if the doctors thought it would be a good idea then he would do it. He would do everything that they wanted, he just wanted to feel better.

“And the side effects are not too bad?” Kip asked. “For the Prozac?”

“It can include feeling nauseous, a lack of appetite, of course we need to try and make sure we keep up your eating, you’ve done so well. I will up the strength of your antisickness tablets as well. Some people say at first they can make you feel tired throughout the day, if you want to sleep then you sleep, others get insomnia. We will have weekly talks, just to check in your dosage and how you’re doing.”

“I take them every day?” Ilya checked.

“Yes. Ideally I would say take them when you wake up, at the same time every day as it can help regulate.”

“Okay.” Ilya nodded.

They left the doctors office and Ilya sighed softly and Kip kissed his hair. “Let’s go and get the tablets and then we can buy the pizza and ice cream and anything else you want,” Kip smiled.

Ilya just nodded and he knew they went overboard with everything that they brought, he grabbed a case of cokes and ginger ale and Shane’s favourite chocolates, he picked up some more colouring books for Sofia and another one for himself and some pens too.

He was just about to pay when his phone rang in his pocket, he fished it out “Hey Teddy,” He said softly.

“Hey buddy, how’s it going?” He asked.

“Okay, is everything okay?” Ilya asked nervously.

“I was wondering if I could come over and talk to you? It won’t be long, I know that it isn’t the best time.”

“I... We are going to have a pizza party, it’s Sofia’s last night.” Ilya explained. “Is it important?”

“It can wait.” Teddy decided but Ilya shook his head.

“No, I... It will bother me not knowing. Come over, but you can’t stay long. Even if Scott and Kip say that you can, you can’t.” Ilya said and Kip rolled his eyes.

“Of course. I will not be long,” Teddy promised.

Ilya was nervous when they got home, he could hear Sofia playing in the garden with Scott and he looked at Kip. “What do you think Teddy wants?” He asks as they put the ice cream in the freezer.

“We will find out,” He says and gestures to the door as it rings. Kip heads to get Scott and let him know and Sofia goes to her room.

“What’s going on?” Ilya asks.

“I have a few things that I need to say and I asked the management if I could be the one to say it,” He says softly. “First of all I want to tell you how much I love having you on the team, you are amazing and we are going to win the Stanley cup this year, I can feel it in my bones and I know it’s because you are on the team.” He smiles. “But we have had some reports that we can’t ignore.”

“Reports?” Scott frowns.

“Allegations,” Teddy sighs.

“What allegations?” Kip asks.

“Reports of drug taking, criminal records from Russia, all of which I think are crap, but they have to investigate...”

Ilya didn’t listen to anything else, he knew all of this was Alexi.

“You are on a break now, our next home practice is in just over a month, it will be sorted by then, but I think there will be press releases, there’s already a news article set to come out tomorrow...”

“Saying what?” Scott frowned. “He hasn’t done anything.”

“There is no evidence, but unfortunately you don’t need evidence for a story.” Teddy sighed. “But it’s going to be okay, Ilya. I promise you.”

Ilya just nodded again, was it?

“We will speak to your lawyer,” Scott promised.

“Not tonight.” Ilya said shaking his head. “Tonight is our last night with Sofia. I don’t care. I don’t care, fuck hockey. Fuck all of it.” He wiped his eyes quickly and went down to Sofia’s room leaving the adults standing there looking at each other and all Scott could think about was what Ilya had said to Ivan, that he couldn’t take anything else happening.

Chapter 17

Chapter 17

Ilya did not speak to Scott or Kip about anything that Teddy had said, he did not speak to Shane about it either. That night he was just there for Sofia, he distracted her as Kip packed her bag, he made sure that her new suitcase he had brought her was full of crafts and he had printed out lots of photos for her too.

"I am going to see my mummy, she is going to wake up soon." Sofia whispered that morning.

"She is," Ilya nods, they hadn't really heard much about her hospital treatment. Sofia had asked every day to go and visit her, but she was still in the medical coma and that was not a place for a child to be.

There was a knock at the door and Kip had answered it, Linda and two people walked in. They were old, Ilya knew they would be, but they seemed frail. The grandad had a walking stick, and he looked like he could fall over. Sofia screamed excitedly when she saw them and rushed over, wrapping her arms around them both. Ilya hated them for taking her away, but he knew that this was how it was supposed to be.

"Thank you so much for taking care of her," The lady, Margret started. Her eyes were red from crying and Ilya felt something twist in his gut.

"Can we go and see mommy now?" Sofia asked and Ilya knew what that look meant. It meant no. Sofia wouldn't be going to see her mum again. Shane took Ilya outside, he didn't want to be there to listen to them break her heart.

They sat out on the deck, Shane's arms around his waist, head resting on his shoulder. "I love you." Shane whispered in his ear.

"Love you." Ilya whispered and he settled back against him.

"I was thinking," Shane said quietly. Ilya turned his head so he could look at him, head resting on his chest as they laid back. "We have a good few weeks without practice and things, what if we went away?"

"A holiday?" Ilya frowned.

"Not a holiday, just... a break. My parents own a cottage, it's not too far from here."

"Shane, I don't think it's a good idea." Ilya sighed. "Not with... I should have started my tablets this morning, I don't want to be too far away from my dads if there are issues, and I don't want it to be you to deal with me alone."

"I wouldn't be dealing with you," Shane whispered, "But you're right."

"Next summer." Ilya smiles. "Next summer I want to travel."

“Where would you like to go?” Shane asked.

“Somewhere hot. I am tired of cold.” Ilya pouted. “Maybe Greece?”

“Greece. We’ll do it.” Shane kissed his hair and went to say something and the back door opened and a crying Sofia came running out and climbed onto Ilya. The two boys just held her until she cried herself to sleep.

“I know that we were supposed to take her,” Brian, Sofia’s granddad, sighs. “But we are not the right people to... we would not be able to care for her.”

“Do you have any other family?” Scott asks quietly. They are all looking outside, and can see how much of a protective hold Shane and Ilya have on Sofia.

“No, Maria was our only daughter.” Margret cries again and Kip pushes the tissues over.

“Whatever you need,” Kip whispers.

“Sofia is happy here? Safe?” Brian asks Linda.

“Very, every check I have come here to do she is excelling. She has been going to school every day, Kip and Scott have made sure to be present at every school event.” Linda nods.

“Thank you.” Brian nods.

“Can she stay a little longer? Until we... what would happen to her?” Margret asks.

“We would try and find her dad, he is not on the birth certificate. Sofia said that he is not around any more. We do not know who he is.” Linda says softly.

“Vlad is... he’s a drug addict and dealer. I would not be surprised if he is dead.” Brian says quietly, his voice bitter. “The only good thing he did was give us Sofia.”

“With no other family and if you say that you are unable to then she would go back into the system,”

“No.” Kip says quickly. “She is...”

“Unless the Hunters here are able to take her full time. As a permanent placement.” Linda nods.

“We are, we would.” Kip nods.

“We would... We could still see her?” Margaret checks.

“We would never keep her from you.” Kip promises. “You’d be welcome whenever, and we would bring her to you. We would want her to have you in her life.”

“We should talk to her first, see... See what she wants to do.” Brian nods.

Ilya carries Sofia inside, she's awake but refusing to let go of him. They sit on the sofa and the adults sit around them. Margret tells Sofia what they had discussed and Sofia's fist tightens in Ilya's jumper.

"I can stay?" She asks quietly.

"You can stay," Ilya nods. "If that is what you want?"

"I want my mummy." Sofia whispers but then she nods again. Ilya wraps his arms tighter around her and he kisses her hair, promising her that it was going to be okay. Shane is right there beside him, his arms around them both.

Linda leaves a little later and Kip sets up the third guest room for her grandparents, even though they are checked in a hotel, he insists they stay and Scott drives with Brian to pick up their bags. They live an hour away, but they wouldn't rush them away. Sofia stops crying and she cuddles with her grandmother and Ilya heads up to his room, he takes his tablet and he wishes that he could just magically feel better.

Shane comes in and sits beside him and Ilya takes his phone, he hasn't looked at it yet. He knew that Scott had seen the news, whatever Alexi had put out was there, but no one had mentioned it. "We don't need to look." Shane whispers. Ilya was surprised that Shane hadn't either.

"I need to see." Ilya sighs.

It isn't hard to find, Alexi had spread lies about Ilya as a child in Russia, stealing, bullying, drugs and partying before he left for Canada. It wasn't the worst thing that could have been said, but it was enough to get the team questioning him.

"You should make a statement," Shane whispers.

"To say what? Liar?"

"To tell your truth." Shane plays with his hair. "The whole truth, what your brother did to you, what your father did, how you escaped that life."

"My story is not for the world." Ilya shakes his head.

"But they are rewriting your story," Shane whispers. "This isn't you." He gestures to the phone.

"I..." Ilya sighed, "I will need to do statement for the court. They will know what Ferguson did to me. They will know what my dad did. They will know about my brother. I will be a victim."

"No." Shane shook his head. "You will be a fighter. A survivor."

It had been an awful first week, the prozac was too much for him, he vomited every day - the antisickness tablets not hitting the sides, he was sweaty and miserable. He would sleep for hours during the day and in the middle of the night he was wide awake with his demons. "Ilya?" Kip's voice was soft, he padded into the front room, Ilya was sitting leaning against the sofa, one of Scott's old Admirals jumpers on, he was chewing the string, a colouring book in his lap.

"Mm?" Ilya blinked up at him. "Did I wake you?"

"No, I needed a drink." Kip smiled, he walked through to the kitchen and put the kettle on, grabbed two mugs and quickly made them a cup of tea and walked over and sat beside him. As soon as he was close enough, Ilya laid his head on his shoulder, wrapping his arms around his waist. "I've got you, you're okay."

"Every day more things come out." Ilya mumbles. "They say I'm addicted to coke."

"All of your drugs tests that you do as part of the team have come back negative," Kip sighs.

"Said I was in an orgy when I was fifteen." Ilya pouted.

"They are obviously wrong about that one."

"I was handsome, I could have been," Ilya tried to joke but it fell flat.

"We have a meeting with your lawyer tomorrow, we are going to get this done." Kip promised.

"I have decided to do a statement." Ilya mumbles and he turns to the back of his colouring book where he had been writing what looked like a messy essay. "I will read this."

"Can I read it?" Kip asked quietly.

"It is in Russian." Ilya whispered.

"Read it to me?" Kip said and he took a sip of his tea.

Ilya nodded slowly, his finger resting on the pages, following the words along. "There is lots of things being said about me. Things that are not true. Things that my family are spreading because I did not give them money." Ilya sighs quietly. "When I was in Russia I was beaten by my father for being gay. I was raped by my coaches son. My brother and father are police. When they should have helped me, they hurt me." Ilya wiped his eyes quickly, he couldn't look at Kip, he knew that his hands were shaking. "All I have ever been good at is hockey. I play well. I play fucking good. But now, I am good at something else. I am a good son. I am a good boyfriend. I will be a good dad. I will be a good husband. I will keep being good at hockey. But I do not want to be a victim anymore. Ferguson is being charged with harassment. Every day he sent me hundreds of messages, he said everything my dad said, everything my brother said and for a while I believed it. Not any more. I am not a victim."

Kip wiped his eyes quickly and kissed his hair.

“I think Shane needs to make it better, the English is bad?”

“It’s perfect.” Kip whispered.

Ilya read the statement on his instagram, he didn’t get anyone else to read it, he just set up his camera and filmed it in the garden. He cried, but he didn’t care. When it was posted he turned his phone off and lit up a cigarette. He had been smoking a lot more, it eased his stomach a little. Or at least that’s what he told himself.

Shane walked out a little later, his face tear streaked and he wrapped his arms around him.
“Everyone loves you.”

“Mm?” Ilya blinks up at him.

“Your video, there’s petitions for your brother to be deported back to Russia or mobbed.”
Shane kisses his hair. “And fuck Ferguson is trending.”

“It is?” Ilya wiped his eyes and pulled Shane onto his lap.

“It is.” Shane smiled and kissed his hair. “You’re shaking.”

“It’s cold.” Ilya whispered and Shane ran back and grabbed a blanket and wrapped it around his shoulders. “Shane.”

“Yeah baby?” Shane whispered.

“I am not a victim.”

“You’re not.” Shane nodded, “You’re my man.”

“I want to be your husband.” Ilya whispered.

“One day.”

“No,” Ilya shook his head. “My behaviour book thing,” Ilya pulls a face, the cognitive behaviour therapy book he had been working through was not something he enjoyed, but Ivan had also said it would be good for him. “It says when I feel empty I need to think about the things that make me feel more, and that’s you. It says I need to think about the life at the end of the darkness and you are that light Shane. I... I’m tired of one day. I’m tired of not now. I...”

“Then we get married,” Shane whispers.

“And we get our own place.” Ilya breathes.

“And a dog.” Shane smiles.

“So it’s a yes?” Ilya asks. “You’ll... Will you marry me?”

“I will marry you,” Shane says and he kisses him hard, full of every fibre of love he has for him, both of them crying into the kiss.

Chapter 18

Chapter 18

“We did advise you not to release a statement,” Harris was new at Montreal, he was the social media manager. He didn’t look intimidating like the rest of the management team, if anything Ilya thought he looked a little cuddly. Ilya’s eyes were drawn to the rainbow flags he had pinned on the lapel of his jacket.

“I did not want to waste time.” Ilya shrugs. Scott is beside him, Teddy on the other side. Ilya feels like he has been called into the Principals office.

“Well, I’m glad you didn’t. Your statement was heartfelt and it was pretty perfect.” Harris nods, “Well not perfect, I honestly wish your life hasn’t been... But you know what I meant.” He nods. “I’d like to organise an interview, one where you can talk a little more about it, I have already written some questions.”

“You... The lawyers have said I can’t talk any more about the case.” Ilya sighs, he had gotten into trouble for doing that. The jury would see it and likely it would have an impact, but he really didn’t care. Shane had been right, the support that he had got had been amazing.

“We will keep it away from that, a little about your family, but more of everything that you have overcome.” Harris smiled.

“I will do it.” Ilya sighed.

“Buddy you don’t need to make any decisions yet,” Scott said softly.

“I want to. I should do it. But not tomorrow, tomorrow we need to be home for Sofia.” Ilya whispered.

“Of course,” Scott nodded.

“We can do it on Saturday? I was thinking at your place, in the garden you filmed the original statement. Kip and Scott and Shane can be in the video too if they are okay with it.”

“”I will ask.” Ilya shrugged.

They finished their meeting and Ilya turned to Teddy. “When can I play?”

“Practice starts up in three weeks.” Teddy hums. “How are you feeling?”

“Some days are fine.” Ilya sighed, it had been two weeks now, sleep was the hardest part. He wanted to sleep during the day, couldn’t sleep during the night. Food tasted funny, but he tried hard to keep eating. “I want my routine back.”

“It will come.” Teddy promised.

“Will Shane still be on the team?” Ilya asked quietly.

“Yes, we are due to have a meeting with him later actually.” Teddy smiled. “A catch up, check in with how he is feeling and stuff.”

“Oh.” Ilya nodded, he felt nervous; what if Shane said he didn’t want it and Shane wanted to go back to the school. He worried his lip between his teeth and Scott patted his back.

“We have your doctors appointment now bud,” Scott reminded.

“Great.” Ilya sighed. “Bye Teddy.”

“See you soon.” Teddy ruffled his hair and Scott walked out with Ilya.

“Has Sofia’s grandparents messaged?” Ilya asks.

“I will check with Kip, they messaged this morning to thank us for the flowers.” Scott said softly.

“I miss Sofia. I hope she is going to be okay.” Ilya whispered.

“I know bud, me too. She’ll be home with us in a few days.”

“And she is going to stay forever?” Ilya asked quietly.

“We have a few more meetings with Linda, but yes, I think she will.” Scott smiled.

“And today Kip is picking up the puppy.” Ilya smirks.

“Yes, we are going to be a full house.” Scott chuckles.

“Papa,” Ilya sucked his lip as he got in the car. “I... Next season I... I think I...” He looked down.

“What is it buddy?” Scott frowned. “Ilya, you’re panicking, calm down, whatever you need to say...”

“I think I will move out.” Ilya blurted.

“Okay,” Scott nodded.

“Okay?” Ilya frowned.

“If that is what you want to do, then we will find you an amazing place. But I want you to know that there really is no rush, you do not have to move out. We love having you there.”

“I just... I think I need to.” Ilya whispered. “I don’t know how to tell dad.”

“We can do it together.” Scott promised and he took his hand and squeezed it before he started to drive.

The doctor's appointment went well, the doctor asked how he was feeling and he was honest and said the side effects were normal and would get better. His iron levels were slowly improving and he didn't need another drip, something that he had been glad about. When his appointment was finished, Ilya felt drained. "Whilst we are out do you want to do anything else?" Scott asked.

"I don't think so." Ilya whispered. "I think I just want a nap."

"Well we can arrange that, I think a family nap in the cinema room is needed." Scott hummed. "Shane will come over tonight?"

"I don't know. I think his parents want him to spend some more time at home, he's been with us a lot."

"Well, I have invited Yuna and David over as well but they have been busy." Scott sighs. "David will pop by though, he says he misses game night."

"I hate that Yuna doesn't like me anymore."

"I'm sure she will get over it soon." Scott smiled.

"She has to. I am marrying her son, very soon." Ilya yawned. "Shane would be heart broken if she doesn't come to the wedding."

"Wait... very soon?" Scott frowned.

"I asked him. Maybe end of season we will. Soon." Ilya rubbed his eyes tiredly.

"Okay," Scott breathed.

"You look really handsome," Sofia whispered as she bounced on her feet by Ilya. She had come back from her mother's funeral yesterday and had been quite inseparable from Ilya. Ilya looked down at her and smiled, he was wearing one of Shane's shirts, an orange and brown checkered shirt and a pair of jeans, his hair curly and unruly. He had managed to sleep for six hours last night, on the sofa in the cinema room with Sofia beside him and Shane on the other side.

"Today I be movie star," Ilya winked.

"Kip says I cannot be in the movie." Sofia pouts.

"No, but you can be my helper. All movie stars have good helpers." Ilya decided.

"Do I get paid?" Sofia grinned.

"Oh, you will get paid millions." Ilya hummed. "Best helper ever." Ilya smiled, he would do anything to make Sofia smile.

Shane walked over to them and smiled. "I was looking for that shirt." He pouted, he was wearing a baby blue button up and dark jeans, his hair looked perfect as always.

"It is mine now." Ilya hummed. "Is Harris here?"

"Yes, he is playing with the puppy. Apparently he rescues strays." Shane smiled.

"Maybe we can get another one." Sofia whispered.

"Do not tell Kip you want another puppy, he will get them." Ilya took her hand and walked down to the garden with him.

Scott and Kip were dressed similarly to the boys, both of them smiling at them. The puppy - still did not have a name, was bouncing around Harris excitedly. "Hey," Kip smiled and Ilya walked over and hugged him.

"I brought some cider," Harris smiles. "And some freshly squeezed apple juice," He adds to Sofia.

"Thank you," Shane smiles.

Ilya follows Harris to one of the rocks that he had been sitting on, it's at the back of the garden and he chews his lip. He could do this. Harris had sent over the questions and Shane had helped him with how to answer them, what English words to say.

"Remember, we can stop at any time," Harris says gently.

"Okay." Ilya nods and he fiddles with his hands. He wouldn't smoke, not with Sofia watching.

It takes Harris a few minutes to set up the camera and then he starts. "Ilya, would you like to tell me what hockey means to you?"

Ilya smiles and looks down at his hands before looking up. "Hockey is everything to me, for a long time hockey was my escape. Hockey was what I was good at. Hockey is where I met my family."

"Your family being the Montreal team?" Harris smiles.

"Yes, but also my family as in my dads. Scott Hunter, he played hockey a million years ago, he was my coach at the school. For a long time he tried to help me, but for a long time I didn't let him. Then one day I had to tidy my room because Shane would be sleeping in the bed beside me. Feels like a lifetime ago. But just one year." He smiles up at Shane. "Then Scott and Kip adopted me. My father is not a kind man. He hurt me for being myself. I was never good enough. But Kip and Scott make me feel like I am doing the best I can and I am forever grateful to be their son."

"I have to say your relationship with Shane being so public is inspirational, was that always the plan?" Harris asks.

“No.” Ilya shrugs. “I don’t think we had a plan. It was Shane who said he did not think we should hide. I did not want to. I was tired of hiding. But I did not do it to be inspiration. I play hockey. I have a boyfriend. It is pressure to be perfect. To be good role model. Some days I want to smoke but I know I should not. When I drink I think if I should not.”

“It’s tough to be in the spot light, even without that pressure of your sexuality.” He says softly. “Recently there has been a lot of news about you, would you like to talk about that?”

“I wish I did not have to.” Ilya sighs. “My brother is not good man. Like my dad. He’s police. He is blackmailing me. He wants money, always. Said if I did not give him money he would ruin my life, but he is trying but he will not. My life is the happiest it has ever been. Even if they take hockey from me,”

“Do you think that it would come down to that?” Harris asks.

“I hope not. I love hockey. I am a good player. I want to go to the play offs. Want to win. Want to hold that trophy and say fuck off to everyone who... I swore. I was not supposed to.” Ilya laughs and rubs his eyes.

“I can bleep it out,” Harris chuckles.

“Sorry.” Ilya smiles. “But I do not want them to take hockey from me. Hockey is not my entire life, but it is important. And playing with Shane, it is magical.” He winks.

Harris speaks to Shane, Scott and Kip about Ilya, asks Shane what it’s like to play on the team with him, gets some candid shots of the family and it is a perfect afternoon. Ilya likes Harris, he is funny and charming and it is the first day since he’s taken the tablets that he doesn’t feel like he is pretending. Once the interview is over, Kip insists that Harris stays for dinner, and Sofia had picked pizza again. They were given her anything that she asked for, they wanted her to be happy and all Ilya could think about was how lucky she was to have them.

Of course he could see it in her eyes how much she missed her mum, the quiet moments where she would just stop and then start again. Ilya knew it all too well.

“I want to tell my mum,” Shane hums. “And my dad.”

“Tell them what?” Ilya asks, they are sat on the deck chair they always end up on. Ilya is sat up with Shane laying between his legs, the puppy was running around excitedly with Sofia chasing him. Kip, Scott and Harris sat on the deck talking and laughing. It was nice. But even Ilya thought it missed something - Shane’s parents.

“That we are going to get married, that we are going to move in together.” Shane grins. “And I want to tell you something first.”

“What’s that?” Ilya asks.

“Well, I had my meeting yesterday with the management team. I didn’t get a chance to talk to you yesterday,” They both look over to Sofia automatically, yesterday they had been there for

her, whatever she needed. “They want to sign me, fully. Now.”

“A mid season draft?” Ilya asks softly.

“Mmhmm.”

“But what about...”

“I signed it.” Shane whispered.

“But Shane, you... You’ve been dreaming about first draft pick.” Ilya frowned.

“Then I met you and my dreams are changing.” Shane shrugs cutely. “I haven’t told my parents yet, my dad he is thrilled. My... I over heard my parents talking, my mum feels really bad for everything that she did, I told her so many times that it was me, that I had hurt you. Maybe she was pissed at me too.” Shane sighs. “But she thinks I’m too addicted to you or something.”

“Addicted to me? I am not drug.” Ilya frowned.

“No, but you are important to me, the most important thing in my life. I am not throwing away my chances of being first draft, I am signing onto a future with the love of my life. What would happen if I don’t sign? I wait, I get first draft, maybe, but it’s in Boston? It would suck.”

“It would suck.” Ilya nods.

“So I signed, because I want to share hotel rooms with you. I want to travel the world. I want everything. I want it as your husband.”

“I love you so much.” Ilya whispered, lips pressing to his.

“Love you too.” Shane smiles. “So, I think before we both go back to practice, I think we should tell them.”

“Okay. I told Scott already.” Ilya adds.

“Maybe we can get Harris to film our engagement post.” Shane grins and he snuggles into him.

“Shane, I love you.” Ilya whispers, “Can you promise me something?”

“Anything.” Shane says softly.

“If I... I take my pills, today is the first day that I feel better. But if I... If later they don’t work and I... Please don’t blame yourself or feel that you need to fix me.”

“Ilya...”

“I mean it.” Ilya breathes. “I don’t want this to bring you down too. If it gets too much. If I get too much, please...”

“You won’t.” Shane promises and kisses him again. “I know it’s scary, you don’t know how you’re feeling from day to day, but I have been doing research, I can see you doing okay. I will never think you are too much. I will never think you are a burden and I will never leave you because of how you feel.”

Ilya didn’t argue, he wiped his eyes quickly and kissed him again, trying to put every ounce of love into the kiss as he could. Neither noticed the perfect photos Harris took of their moment.

Chapter 19

Chapter 19

“Whatever happens today, we deal with it together, as a family.” Scott whispered.

“Yes. As a family.” Ilya nodded, he had written a statement and the lawyers had said he was not needed to be a witness, they had enough evidence. But Ilya had insisted on coming, to see the trial, to see what happens. Kip is on the other side of him, Shane beside him too.

Sofia was with Yuna and David, it had been Shane’s idea. A way for his mother to start making amends, David had wanted to be there with Ilya too, so did Yuna, but they knew this was the right thing to do. Shane and Ilya had decided that no matter what happens at the trial today - tonight would be their night. Shane had even asked his mum to do some baking with Sofia, lots of cakes, Yuna had thought it was a sweet tactic to distract Sofia from her family being away for the day, but Sofia knew. Tonight they were having a party, Ilya had brought her a sparkly new dress to wear, he knew money wouldn’t fix her sadness but she had a light in her eyes at the pink glittery material.

The trial was long, honestly, Ilya didn’t really understand a lot of the words. Ferguson looked horrible, his eyes were heavy, skin sunken into his face. He was not the obnoxious hockey player who rivalled him on the ice. Ilya was tapping his leg nervously, Scott placed a hand on his knee and Ilya sighed quietly. What felt like an eternity later, the judge read out the sentencing. They found him guilty of harassment and stalking, six months prison time shortened to three months and a heavy fine and community service. Ilya didn’t feel like they had won, not really.

“Are you okay?” Shane asked as they left, there was a press stand there and Ilya knew he needed to make a comment, but he didn’t know what to say.

“It didn’t feel like enough,” Ilya whispered. “But he can’t hurt me anymore.” Ilya nodded, “So I’m okay.”

Shane linked his fingers with his and walked to the press area, as soon as they saw them they were shouting questions, Ilya sighed, this was what he hated after games. “Do you think justice was served today?” No, Ilya thought to himself.

“Three months is not a long time, but hopefully he will learn from... I don’t care.” Ilya sighed, “As long as he stays away from me and my family and he learns that what he did was not okay.” They shout more questions but he walks away tugging Shane’s hand.

“Shall we go for a coffee or something? Destress before we head home?” Scott says softly.

“I need to go and get something.” Ilya said, shaking his head. “But I will see you later. You will drive Shane home, yes?”

“Are you sure you want to be on your own?” Shane frowned. “I can come with you.”

Ilya shook his head, "I am fine. I love you." He kisses Shane's lips and hugs Scott and Kip and walks to his car.

"You really think he's going to be okay?" Kip asked, a little worried.

"I think so." Scott nodded. "Come on Shane,"

Ilya walked through the doors a few hours later, he had two big boxes of cakes in his hands, a bouquet of roses and a smaller one of lilies. "Ilya, where have you been?" Sofia asked in Russian.

"Surprises," He winks and he hands her the small bouquet of lilies. "For you."

"No one has ever brought me flowers before," She whispers and touches them so delicately. "Can we put them in my room?"

"Of course." Ilya nods, "Let me give these to Yuna,"

"But you don't like her," Sofia frowned.

"I like her, and I like her son very much." Ilya whispers. "Can you go and get her for me?"

Sofia nods and within a few minutes Yuna is in the hallway, "For you." Ilya says and holds the roses. "For... A clean slate?"

"I'd like that." Yuna whispers. "I truly am sorry for how I've acted recently. I worry about Shane, and I worry about you. I hope that you can forgive me."

"I do." Ilya smiles and she wraps her arms around him. "I love your son very much, he is my whole world, he is not a drug to me, he is more than that. I would never hurt him and I know we are going to be together. I would never want him to feel.." He tuts as he struggles to find the word in English, "To feel torn between us."

"I'd never let that happen, I want him happy and I want you happy. I worry that you are both so young,"

"Age doesn't matter." Ilya shrugs. "Love is everything."

"I know." Yuna smiles. "Thank you for the flowers, truly they are beautiful."

Ilya just nods and he walks into the kitchen and smiles. He holds up the baked goods, "I could have come with you to pick them up." Shane pouts.

"I know, next time." Ilya hums and he winks over at Sofia who is staring at her flowers.

"Are you sure you still want to have everyone over tonight?" Scott asked softly. "I'm sure they would..."

“I am sure.” Ilya says and he looks at Shane who nods. “First maybe a little shower and maybe a nap.”

“A nap sounds boring.” Sofia says. “I’m going to play with puddles.”

“Puddles?” Ilya asks.

“He was licking the puddle in the garden, we are testing it.” Kip chuckles.

“Puddles.” Ilya hums. “Suits him.”

Ilya was only supposed to sleep for an hour, but he had slept for three. When he woke up he quickly realised the house was full, he was just sitting up when Shane poked his head in. “I was going to wake you, but you looked so peaceful. And I know you didn’t sleep well last night.”

“It’s okay, I needed it.” Ilya smiles and he opens his arms and Shane cuddles into him. “You look handsome.” Ilya smiles.

“It’s a big night,” Shane whispers. “Everyone is here.”

“Do you think we should have told our parents first?” Shane asks. “Officially?”

“No.” Ilya smiles. “I think a surprise is fun.”

“Mm.” Ilya nodded. “I will change now,” He says and he stands up and changes into a pair of tight grey chinos and a nice crisp blue shirt, he puts his trainers on and sprays Shane’s aftershave.

Downstairs everyone greets him with a smile. Teddy and the twins rush over to him, Ethan secures himself to Shane and Isabella hugs Ilya. Sofia is watching, a jealous little look and she rushes over and hugs Ilya’s other side.

“Princesses.” Ilya chuckles and cuddles them both.

“Thank you for my dress.” Sofia smiles.

“It is very pretty.” Ilya ruffles her hair and she swats his hand away and they head out to the garden.

Harris is there, smiling and joking with the rest of the team and Ilya is just happy to see he has his camera. He wants this night fully documented.

“You look very handsome,” Kip hums as he walks over to Ilya.

“Thank you dad,” Ilya smiled. “Thank you for everything, not just tonight, not just... but everything.”

“You’re my son.” Kip said easily. “Why do I have a feeling tonight is more than just a celebration to the trial?” Ilya just winks.

It’s a little later when Ilya decides it’s the right time, he and Shane hadn’t planned it, but his eyes find Harris and he nods and he sees the camera come out. He gestures for the music to be turned down and he coughs, hands sweaty. “I just want to say a few words.” He says and smiles. “Thank you to everyone for coming. I wanted to have this party as a... to close the book on all of the bad things that have happened lately. Today, I can only wish that he had got longer, but I cannot change it. But I can change what happens next. But first to my dads, i love you and Sofia you are my family and I will cherish you forever. For Yuna and David, i am so grateful for you. For my team, my Captain... I love you all.” He finds Shane, his hands shaking now as he steps forward. “But for Shane, you... you are more than my best friend, more than the love of my life. You are my world,” He takes a breath and he bends down on one knee. “I know we have already said it, I asked you, but I did not ask you properly.” He pulls out the box from his pocket - the real reason for his errands after the trial. He opens the box showing the beautiful gold band. “Shane Hollinder, will you marry me?”

The crowd gasps. Teddy is crying, Jessica his wife is sobbing against his chest. He sees Scott and Kip crying too, Puddles jumping around them confused by their emotions. Yuna is in tears, David just stares at them and Ilya thinks that maybe he should have spoke to them first but then he sees him pull Yuna close, a smile on his face.

“Shane... Please...” Ilya frowns when he realises that Shane hasn’t said anything.

“Yes.” Shane breathes. “Yes of course I will marry you.” He breathes.

Chapter 20

Chapter 20

“It’s been three months since you started your tablets, how are you feeling?” Ivan asked.

“Good.” Ilya nodded through the camera. He was sitting on the floor in the hotel room, Shane was down in the lobby with the team giving him the privacy for his session. Ilya meant it when he said good, life felt pretty normal. The team were doing amazing, they were going to make the play-offs and they were going to win, there was no ifs or buts about it. Family and everything at home was amazing. Sofia was doing well, they spoke every day and Ilya hated being away from her when they were travelling, especially when she told him how much she missed him. Ilya had suggested to Kip and Scott that she speak to Ivan too and he was glad that they had taken it on board. “I have days when I feel a little blank, but I breathe, I name the things around me and I feel better.” Ilya nodded.

“I think that is normal, depression isn’t something that goes away fully, not really, but you seem to be managing it really well. It is something to be proud of.” Ivan smiled.

“Thank you,” Ilya grinned. “I feel proud of myself too.”

“Have you had any contact with your brother?”

“No.” Ilya shrugged. “I haven’t. I remember before I said to Shane that I am waiting for the other shoe to drop, but now, I don’t care when it does. Ferguson is getting released next week, he cannot contact me or come close to me. I thought I would be scared, but I’m not.”

“It is okay to feel scared,” Ivan says softly. “But It is also good that you’re not waiting for something bad to happen.”

“I am not naive.” Ilya nods. “I know something will happen, eventually, something will happen. But I know I will deal with it better.” Ilya smiled.

“I believe you.” Ivan hummed. “I can see how much you have grown Ilya, I am very proud of the man you have become.”

“I owe a lot of it to you.” Ilya said honestly.

“You need to take some of the credit too, Ilya, you have done remarkably well.” Ilya just smiled, he isn’t too sure how to take compliments like this yet. But he’s trying, he really is.

“I think I could be sick,” Ilya groaned as they sat in the locker room.

“Get in line kid,” Wyatt laughed.

This was their moment, three months of back to back games, of winning back to back games and here they were at the play offs. At home. The crowd was so loud the room was practically shaking.

“Listen up.” Teddy shouted and Ilya immediately sat up straighter. “This is our fucking night. We have worked so hard for this, we have been through everything as a team, we have been tested, we have faced injury, a new signing,” He winks at Shane, “A fucking media circus, but we are amazing and we are going to do this. We are going to win.”

The room erupted in cheers and Teddy gave Ilya a beaming smile. Teddy had confided in him one night, telling him he didn’t think the team would have got this far without him, he wasn’t too sure he believed him, but when he said next season he would make him the A Ilya had cried and he asked Teddy to be his best man at his wedding. Teddy was his best friend, a big brother to him, someone he looked up to more than anything.

They went on the ice to their screaming fans and it was a grueling game. Ilya had been pushed into boards more times than he could count but that didn’t stop him from scoring two goals and assisting on three, two for Teddy and one for Shane. Shane’s goal had been the winning one of the game, 5-4 to them and if he thought the crowd had been loud before it was nothing like the sound of the final whistle. Shane skated right up to Ilya and wrapped his arms around him tight.

“We did it.” Ilya breathed.

“We did it.” Shane smiled and they both took their helmets off and kissed each other hard, arms wrapping around each other and then more arms were there. The whole team buddled into a massive hug and Ilya couldn’t stop crying.

They stood in a circle watching as Teddy skated around holding up the cup, he then gestured for Ilya to come over and take it and when he held it up the room went insane. Ilya held it up and pressed a kiss to it, “For you mama,” He whispered before passing it around to his team.

“Last weighing of the season,” Doctor Marcus hummed as Ilya stepped in. “I have to say, you look like a different man from the boy who walked in at the beginning of the season.” He smiled.

“Really?” Ilya smiled shyly.

“I can see a little more weight around your face, your eyes are brighter. Your last bloods have come back really strong, your iron levels are nearly at the regular level. Anemia can be quite hard to manage but you’re doing really well. Keep up with spinach and blueberry smoothies,”

“Kip makes really good smoothies,” Ilya smiled and he stepped onto the scales.

It had been months since he had been sick, thankfully the side effects of the prozac hadn’t lasted more than a month. There were good days where he felt normal, busy, but some days he still felt a little tired, a little empty. But he was managing it all well.

“So you have put on a healthy amount of weight, your muscle mass is great. Well done.” Marcus grinned as he stepped down. “I don’t think we will need to keep these check ins as regularly, of course if you feel yourself slipping or want some advice I will be here.”

“Thank you.” Ilya grins and he heads back out.

“How did it go?” Shane asks, he’s resting back on Ilya’s rover and Ilya just grins, Shane had signed his permanent contract and was sporting a new Montreal jumper and tight jeans. He looked delicious.

“He said I am healthy.” Ilya grins and Shane wraps his arms around him.

“I told you you’ve done so well baby,” Shane whispers and Ilya melts a little.

“We are going to be late.” Ilya hums.

Shane just rolls his eyes, kisses him again and gets in the car with him and Ilya starts driving. Shane takes his hand and plays with his fingers and they get to their destination.

“Wow.” Shane breathes as he pulls up.

It’s a small mansion style house on the edge of a gated community, two stories with a large front garden and back garden that leads to a woodlands area. “Welcome home.” Ilya whispers.

“I still can’t believe this is ours.” Shane smiles and he gets out.

“Well, not ours yet, we need to sign.” Ilya smiles and their estate agent is waiting for them with the paperwork.

“We are not too far from everyone,” Ilya says when he sees a look in Shane’s eyes. “Twenty minutes from your parents, fifteen minutes from Scott and Kip. We will still never be alone.” He chuckles.

“Oh, we will be.” Shane winks.

It doesn’t take long for them to sign the paperwork and then they are given the keys. It’s fully furnished, but they have already plans on redecorating and making it truly their own. There’s three guest rooms and one that would be for Sofia if she ever wanted to stay. Ilya wanted Kip and Scott to have time for themselves too, he knew Kip had turned down a few trips recently and he wanted his dads to have a summer too.

“I love you so much,” Shane whispers.

“I love you so much more.” Ilya chuckles and he leans in and kisses him so softly.

The cottage is beautiful, when Yuna suggested they use the family cottage for the wedding Ilya wasn’t sure what to expect, but Shane jumped with joy at that and Ilya had trusted him.

“Who is going to wear the dress?” Sofia asked as she sat in the bedroom with Ilya and Kip.
“You are in a nice suit so it is Shane?” She asked.

“No,” Kip chuckled. “Unless he is.”

“No, his legs are too hairy,” Ilya winks. “We will both be wearing suits. Even though they are uncomfortable. I wanted to wear my sweats.”

“But you are getting married.” Sofia gasps. “No sweat pants. Gross.” She shakes her head, her blonde curls falling around her face and Kip tucks it back behind her ear and then straightens Ilya’s bow tie.

“How do you feel?” Kip asked softly.

“Like my life is finally ready to begin.” Ilya whispers.

“I can’t believe you’re getting married,” Scott smiles as he comes through the door.
“Everyone is here and we are ready. Are you?”

“I am.” Ilya smiles and Sofia jumps up and she picks up her white basket full of rose petals and turns to Ilya, she is in a pretty white dress with a sky blue band around the middle, the same blue of Ilya and Shane’s bow ties. Kip and Scott are both in suits, proud smiles on their faces as they head downstairs.

Everyone is in the garden. The team from the school, Misha, Sam, the Montreal team, a few friends he has made along the way. Harris is already crying and Ilya grins at him. It’s so quiet as he walks through the garden, the fairy lights are everywhere.

“Wow.” Sofia whispers. “It’s like a fairytale.” She isn’t quiet and Ilya just grins down at her.

At the end of the garden is Shane, his Prince waiting for him. His parents are either side of him; Yuna is already crying and Shane is chewing his lip and Ilya is surprised that he's not bleeding. But as soon as he sees him he stops and just breathes. “I love you,” Shane mouths and Ilya says the same back, his own eyes tearing up.

Sofia finishes scattering the rose petals around them as she steps to the side and Kip and Scott hug Ilya, “I love you,” “I’m proud of you,” Is whispered so much and Ilya breaks away and smiles at Shane. He reaches out and takes his hand in his, fingers linked together, squeezing tight.

Ilya isn’t nervous, he isn’t scared. He’s excited to stand there in front of all of his family, all of his friends and share this moment with them. He remembers the first day he saw Shane, how scared he had been to have a stranger in his life and how in a year his whole life had changed. He still can’t quite process it. The vows are simple, they didn’t choose to create their own, they had said everything they needed to say in private. When it was time for the I do’s they were both crying, but then Ilya pulled him into his arms, barely heard the ‘you can now kiss your husband’ and just held him as everyone around them cheered. Their first kiss as a married couple was full of love and passion and when Ilya pulled away he used his thumb to brush away Shane’s tears.

“I cannot wait for the rest of our lives,” Ilya whispers, the statement heavy between them. Shane knew how bleak Ilya thought his life would be, how he had admitted a few times that he couldn’t think of a future without emptiness or clouds hovering over it. But now, that was all Ilya could think about, the rest of his life with his husband.

Shane just grinned, kissing him slowly, their lives truly were just beginning and neither of them could wait for what was waiting for them next.

The End

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