

Ginger Pine

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Ginger Pine

by [Caraphernellic](#)

Summary

Shane and Ilya don't stay apart for very long, but will they get their happy ending, or is it gone before it can even begin?

or

Ilya sacrifices himself to save Shane.

This could technically be read as a stand-alone but it makes more sense if you read the first two fics in the series first.

Notes

As listed above, this makes more sense if you read (at the very least) the first fic in this series first!

Thank you to everyone who has followed this series and has asked for more.

Chapter 1

Shane feels worse the further they drive away from the cottage. His chest aches and a dull pounding has begun in his skull. Maybe he's coming down with something, after the heat and the whirlwind that the last two weeks have been.

He ignores it.

He goes home to his apartment in Montreal, and he does his obsessive pre-game routine to prepare for the following day.

Shane hopes that Ilya is doing alright and that he isn't too lonely. Hopefully there are enough things to do at the cottage to keep him occupied. He focuses as much as he can on hockey, but the following day, he doesn't play great during their game. It feels like his mind and body are slightly disconnected, somehow.

He tries to blame it on his heat, figuring maybe it's a hormone imbalance thing or something. His team is cool about it and supportive, which makes it worse.

They actually don't know he's an Omega, with the exception of his best friend Hayden. It's illegal to force a player to disclose their designation, so Shane opted out. The two weeks he periodically has off could be for a heat *or* a rut. Most people actually probably assume he is an Alpha, based on sexist ideals.

He's playing in Boston a few days later when a text from an unknown number comes in.

Is Ilya. Phone came in.

His heart thunders in his chest and he feels some relief wash over him. He'd just gotten out of the shower at his hotel post-game. They'd won this time. He hastily texts back:

How are you doing?

His phone buzzes in his hand and he answers it immediately.

“You play good game tonight.” The voice on the other end says.

“You watched?” Shane asks, a little surprised.

“Of course.” Ilya says.

“Are you doing alright?” Shane asks. He hopes Ilya hasn’t been feeling sick as well.

“I am alright.” Ilya confirms. “Counting down the days until you come back.”

Shane softens. “Yeah, me too.” They talk for a while longer, and when they hang up, the glow from talking to him fades quickly, and Shane is left feeling just as hollow as before.

~

By the time it’s been a week since he’s left his cottage, Shane is in agony.

He feels like his bones have been shattered and rebuilt incorrectly. He had gone to the team doctor and downplayed it heavily, saying that he felt a little under the weather. They did some light testing and couldn’t find anything wrong with him.

The show must go on.

He has a game tonight, and another in two days.

He feels like he's sweltering, yet his skin is clammy. He's unsettled deep down to his core. He tells himself it's just anxiety.

Time is fractured, these days. It's as if his life is one cut scene after another.

Flash.

He's at a game.

Flash.

He's in the team bus.

Flash.

He's in a nameless hotel room.

He starts trying to nest in the hotel rooms, but it barely helps. The blankets are too scratchy and foreign-smelling.

His teammates and coaches are starting to notice that something is going on with him. The only person he might be fooling is Ilya. He doesn't let on to the man that there's anything going on with him. He doesn't want him to worry.

They talk on the phone whenever they can, and Shane feels like it's the only thing keeping him anchored right now. He just needs to make it through another week and a half until he can drive back to the cottage for the weekend.

He doesn't make it past another two days. He collapses on the floor of his Montreal apartment, alone.

~

Someone is touching his face. Cupping his cheeks. He's so tired, he just wants to go back to sleep.

"Nnngh." He mumbles, trying to move away. Don't they know how tired he is?

"Shane, please wake up." A Russian accent.

"Ilya?" He murmurs.

"Da, it's me Shane, open your eyes."

Shane blinks his eyes open. "Ilya. Missed you." He's confused though, how is Ilya here? He was in Montreal and Ilya was at the cottage.

Ilya pulls Shane up so he's sitting. Oh. He was laying on the floor. Why was he laying on the floor?

"What happened?" Ilya asks him, concern evident in his face.

"I don't, I..." Shane leans heavily into Ilya. He breathes him in, feeling like it's the first air he's properly gotten in days.

They sit there for a while, just holding each other. Shane is too disoriented and exhausted to ask any of the questions that need to be asked right now. He just needs to soak up Ilya's warmth and scent.

Finally, Ilya speaks and breaks up their bubble. "We should get into nest." He says, gesturing at the pile of blankets on the bed.

The idea of Ilya's scent in the nest does make it significantly more appealing. Even his nests here, at home, have been feeling wrong, although definitely better than when he's on the road and in a hotel room. He stands up with Ilya's help and crawls into the nest. He makes a noise of distress when Ilya doesn't immediately follow.

"Hold on, I am grabbing something." Ilya comes back to the nest with two blankets and two pillows from the cottage.

Shane gasps and reaches for them immediately.

"Sorry is not much. Not much time to pack."

"No, this is *perfect*." Shane assures him, weaving the items into the nest. He's starting to come back to some clarity. "Wait, how did you get here?"

Ilya looks sheepish. "I take bus."

The bus route takes at least twice as long as driving. "And how did you get *in* here?" Shane's door was locked.

The sheepish expression doesn't leave Ilya's face. "I pick lock."

Shane reaches for him and hauls him into the pile of blankets. "How did you know where I was, or that I needed you?" He does feel a little bad that Ilya just got here and he's practically

receiving an interrogation, but he's trying to understand.

“Address was at cottage. And I...I just knew. I feel it.” Ilya tells him. “I feel sick while you are gone, I know you feel sick too. Then it was unbearable. Is like...when mates are far apart.”

“Pining sickness?” Shane whispers. Holy shit. He thinks Ilya is right. Especially if he had been feeling ill too.

Ilya nods.

They lay there, looking at each other, for a long time.

Chapter 2

They must doze off, because the next time Shane is aware, he's waking up. The light in the room has changed, and he leans over to switch on a lamp.

Ilya is still in the nest with him. He looks a little better, but he has dark circles under his eyes. Shane is sure he doesn't look much better.

However, his inner Omega is immensely satisfied at having him here, especially in his bed and in his nest. He is getting hungry though. Shane leaves the sleeping Alpha and heads for the kitchen to make them some food.

He hasn't felt hungry in weeks, but now he's starving. It's like everything is catching up to him. He's stirring a pot on the stove when Ilya comes up behind him and presses a kiss to the top of his head. It makes Shane's cheeks turn pink and his inner self preen a little.

"I miss you." Ilya says. "When you were gone, was more than just the hurt in my chest." He taps his head. "I hurt here too."

"I'm sorry." Shane whispers, ashamed. This is all his fault. He made them both so sick, for what? They probably could've made this work if Ilya had just come with him. He would've been alone while Shane was at practice or playing a game but at least during the nights they would've been together.

"I missed you too." He adds. They eat together, side by side, like they can't bear to be apart. That's probably the truth.

"I have a game tomorrow. Here in Montreal." He says after they're done. "Would you like to come? I can make sure there's a ticket for you."

Ilya looks a little apprehensive for a moment. It's there and gone in a flash. He could very well be scared of being out in public, in case one of the men who ran the Alpha fighting ring

notices him, somehow. Shane should have thought of this. He mentally chastises himself.

“I would like to come to game.” Ilya finally says.

“Are you sure?”

“Da.”

They kiss again before they go back to sleep that night. It’s soft and sweet and not hurried, even though Shane thinks he wouldn’t mind if it was.

~

“Good luck at game. Be safe.” Ilya tells him. They’d gotten to the rink a few hours early so Shane could prepare with the team. He feels a little bad that Ilya has to sit there for so long, but he gave him money to get some snacks and drinks, so hopefully he would be alright.

Shane plays a great game that night, likely the result of his Omega trying to impress the Alpha in the stands. He declines the team’s offer to go out to celebrate their win, wanting instead to go home with Ilya. He’s not ready to tell everyone about him yet. They still need some time to figure things out.

They fall into a tentative routine. Ilya drives Shane’s car or takes a plane while Shane travels with the team. Shane feels terrible about it, like he’s forcing Ilya to follow him around, but Ilya assures him that this is what he wants.

Shane has plenty of money for the gas, and the plane tickets, and for booking a separate hotel room than what is booked for him by the team management. He always stays with Ilya in that room.

“Have you thought about what you want to do?” Shane asks one night when they’re watching tv in the hotel.

“Do?” Ilya echoes.

“Yeah. Like, if you want to get a job, or follow a passion. I have hockey, isn’t there something you would like to do too? I can help you.”

Ilya is quiet for a moment. “You don’t want me to follow you anymore.”

“No! That’s not what I said. Or what I meant.” He adds the last part on a beat later. “I just meant, I want you to be happy. If there are things you want to do too, we can figure it out.”

“We get sick if we are apart.” Ilya reminds him.

Shane clears his throat. Here comes the hard part, but he’s been mentally rehearsing. “Well, it probably wouldn’t be as difficult on us if we were bonded.”

There. He said it.

Ilya looks surprised, but his scent smells pleased. “You would want that?”

Shane had been imagining a world where they bonded and then maybe even eventually mated. Ilya would be safe and following his dream, whatever that may be, and Shane would still be playing hockey. They would have dinner with his mom and dad and go on double dates with Hayden and Jackie.

They would be sad when they were apart because they missed each other, but the chemicals of their bond (or mating) would keep them connected. They wouldn’t be suffering like they were when Ilya was at the cottage and Shane had left.

They would love each other and build a life together. Maybe it was a little soon to be thinking about this with someone he'd just met, but he'd never connected with someone the way he had with Ilya. And isn't that the way things were supposed to work?

"Shane." Ilya looks tearful. "I...I would love that."

"Yeah?" Shane asks shyly. "It doesn't have to be soon, even. I was just thinking that one day, it would be nice to be bonded to you."

Ilya cups his face. "I am so lucky. So lucky to have broke into your garage."

Shane laughs a little and leans in to kiss him.

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

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

~Ilya~

Ilya walks into Shane's Montreal apartment. He takes his shoes off at the door like he knows Shane prefers.

He stops in his tracks when he sees his mother's golden cross necklace hanging on the post of a chair.

The last time he had the necklace was his first day at the Alpha fighting ring.

A man steps out from behind the wall. Tall, imposing, dressed all in black.

"Rozanov."

Ilya stiffens, instantly recognizing him as one of the leaders of the fighting ring.

"You thought you could get away from us?" The man tsks. "Hang around with a rich little Omega, and what, just be free? When you've stolen what was rightfully ours?"

"Stolen?" Ilya echoes. He didn't *steal* anything. Except for his own life back.

"Yes. You not only left, but you let all the other Alphas go. We had to make an entirely new crop. That's bad for business." The man sneers.

Ilya feels sick down to his core. He never thought about the fact that they would just bring in more unsuspecting Alphas from overseas.

“Maybe we should do something with your sweet little Omega.”

“Where is Shane?” Ilya asks, horrified. He stupidly, *foolishly* had hoped that they were just here for him and they would leave the Omega out of it.

The man shrugs nonchalantly and ignores Ilya’s question. “Maybe we should break his legs so he can never play hockey again.”

Ilya is going to vomit.

“Or, we could use him as bait.” The man counters thoughtfully.

Ilya’s Alpha rages and he roars, lunging for the man. Two other men step out from the shadows to hold him back. He’s snapping and snarling at the other man, but he just looks amused.

“If you come with us, we’ll let him go unharmed.”

The decision is easy. Of course Ilya will sacrifice himself for Shane.

“Let’s go.” He says automatically. “We go right now and you release him.”

“I thought you might say that.” The man says, visibly pleased. “Get ready to pay penance, Rozanov.”

Ilya looks around the apartment one last time as they lead him out, taking it all in. He was supposed to be with Shane forever. He'd already started planning a proper courtship and then a bonding. Then they would get mated in a year or two once Ilya had met his family and gotten his own job. They would have a dog, definitely. Maybe their own pups in a few years.

That all goes up in smoke as he walks out the door.

"Forgive me, Shane." He thinks.

He has no idea that Shane is safe and sound a few blocks away.

~Shane~

Shane walks through the door of his apartment and takes his shoes off immediately. He takes the grocery bags in his hands to the kitchen.

"Ilya?" He calls. He had thought the other man was getting home a little while before him. Shane stops, realizing that it smells *wrong* in here.

Someone else has been here. A few people, from the multiple lingering scents he can detect.

His heart starts to race. Something is wrong. Now that he focuses on it, he can definitely tell. Ilya is in danger, maybe even hurt. He understands now what Ilya meant when he said he just knew when Shane was sick and unconscious before, when he came here to find him. They may not be bonded yet but they have some sort of connection.

He feels sick. He tries tracking Ilya's phone, but it pings to the apartment. He left it here.

Shane checks and *all* of the other man's stuff is here. Ilya is gone, maybe even taken. Could the men from before have found him?

He picks up his phone again and makes a call.

~

“Anything?” Shane asks again, the third time in the last five minutes. He’s pacing back and forth behind the couch where Rose sits with her laptop.

“Not yet.” She’s kind enough not to tell him to shut his mouth.

Rose is a good friend, and she’s also extremely smart and has connections since she’s an actress. For now, she’s just using her online sleuthing skills before bringing anyone else into it, since they know they’re dealing with something illegal.

Shane had called her sobbing, barely able to get the words out to explain himself. She had rushed over right away with her computer. She hadn’t even given Shane shit for not telling her anything that had been going on the past few weeks. Shane owes her big time.

“Okay wait, look at this.” She tilts the screen and Shane squints down at it, then reaches for his glasses.

Ilya loved when we wore his glasses.

Loves. Present. Because he’s going to come back and he’s going to be fine.

Rose is showing him a beautiful woman in some photos with Ilya. Wait, does he have a girlfriend?

“This woman has posted a few photos of them.” Rose keeps scrolling. “Look, there’s even some of them as kids.” The sight of Ilya as a child strikes Shane in the chest. That little boy

would grow up and see so much hurt.

Shane watches as Rose clicks on a link in the woman's bio. They both gasp at the same time.

This woman, Svetlana Vetrova, has been looking for Ilya. She has an entire website dedicated to it. There's MISSING posters with Ilya's face and weekly updates. Ilya had been missing from Russia for more than a year.

Shane had only known him for a little over a month out of that time. That means Ilya was in hell for around an entire year. Shane wants to curl up and sob, but he can't. He has to find Ilya.

They're supposed to be mates.

It's been hours now and the reality that Ilya is really gone is starting to settle into his bones. He was supposed to have been back at the apartment this morning after going out to look for a job. He would have never been gone this long without checking in with Shane, and he would've never left his belongings like his phone. And besides, there were the acrid scents that didn't belong here, that still lingered in the air. Not to mention the heavy feeling buried deep in his gut.

Shane was pretty sure that bad people had taken Ilya.

"You need to message her." Rose tells him. "Tell her everything that you know."

Shane spends half the night on the phone with Svetlana. She books a red eye flight to Canada.

Rose hugs him tightly. "We're going to find him. She's going to help us."

This is one of my favorite chapters of the entire series!

I am not sure the exact day, but I plan to finish and post the rest of this story this week. Please subscribe so you don't miss it. Thank you again to everyone who has been following along so far, especially those who have commented that they want more!

Chapter 4

Svetlana was tall and beautiful just like her photos. Rose and Shane picked her up from the airport the following morning.

She hugged Shane, which he was a little surprised by.

“You smell like him.” Svetlana says after with a tearful smile. Rose squeezes his hand.

They go back to Shane’s apartment and Svetlana tells them everything she knows. Some of it they talked about last night over the phone or saw on the website she made, but it made Shane feel better to hear all the details from start to finish.

She and Ilya were childhood friends, best friends, and he was leaving for a job opportunity in Canada over a year ago when she never heard from him again. This part, Shane already knows from Ilya himself.

He relays the information that *he* knows to Svetlana once again even though they’d talked about it on the phone.

The three of them sit there in silence for a minute after Shane describes the Hell that Ilya went through. That he might be back in. Shane wonders if the two women are thinking the same thing as him- that they might be in over their heads.

Finally, he takes a deep breath. “I think I need to make another call.”

They discuss, and so Shane calls the smartest woman he knows.

Yuna Hollander arrives thirty minutes later. All Shane had said over the phone was that he really needed help and that it was urgent. He has a lot of explaining to do now.

Rose and Svetlana step out and make lunch for everyone while Shane talks with his mother privately and explains the situation.

“Oh honey, why didn’t you tell us?” His mom asks softly.

“We were trying to figure things out first.” Shane says weakly. “And now-” His breath hitches on a sob. “He’s gone.”

“We’re going to find him.” Yuna promises. “I didn’t just find out I’m going to have another son just to lose him in the same breath.”

~

Shane is so happy that he’s surrounded by so many badass women. Rose hires some people under the table with her connections, and his mom and Svetlana talk about the logistics of human trafficking from Russia to Canada.

They collectively decide to go stay at the cabin, since that was where Ilya first found Shane. The place where he’s being kept, assuming it’s the same place as before, must be at least relatively near there.

It’s hard for Shane, walking back into the cabin without Ilya. His scent still lingers there, and Shane immediately takes all of the bedding from the guest bedroom where Ilya had been staying to his bedroom. He wants any piece of the other man he can get.

They’re not planning to involve the police, because they know they won’t be of any help, and will actually probably make it worse. Svetlana had told them all how the police acted back in Russia and they weren’t interested in a repeat performance. Even Ilya’s own father and brother, who were part of the police force in Moscow, would not help.

“I found something!” Rose declares late that night. It’s been a long day of them all being on edge and desperately trying to come up with a plan. Everyone races to her side.

“Look at this.” She points at the computer screen. It’s a Reddit thread of a guy claiming that his brother was at an Alpha fighting ring near this area, and that he’d only managed to escape because one of the other Alphas had broken them all out.

“Do you think that was Ilya?” It has to be, right? That’s pretty much how Ilya had described what had happened on his last day there, before he found Shane. His heart starts racing.

“Only one way to find out.” Rose says, and she comments on the thread.

~

Scott Hunter is the man’s name. He’s not nearby, but he calls them on the phone and he tells them everything he knows.

He knew Ilya.

He was at the same fighting ring as Ilya, and he confirms Ilya is the one who saved them all.

“I’d like to return the favor. Let me help you guys.”

Scott agonizes over the fact that he didn’t go to the police after he escaped. “I wanted to, I should’ve, but I was afraid.” He admits. “Afraid that they wouldn’t believe me, or maybe they were somehow in on it. I was just so grateful to be out that I wanted to put it all behind me.”

“It’s not your fault.” Shane tells him, and he means it. It’s *not* Scott’s fault that Ilya was taken again. “I’m booking a plane ticket. I can be there by tomorrow morning. Please wait for me. I can show you exactly where the warehouse was.”

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

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

Shane feels like he hasn't slept in days. Well, technically it *has* been two days now.

Today is the day they're going to storm the warehouse. They're going midday, before any of the fights would happen at night. Shane wonders if they've already had Ilya fighting the past two nights and immediately feels sick.

His mom brought her gun. She said that she would be the one to go down if the police got involved. Shane didn't love that idea.

They were just a ragtag team of vigilantes trying to save Shane's future mate. It was dangerous, and it was a long shot, but they weren't going down without a fight.

~

Scott motions for Shane and Yuna to keep moving.

Scott was going to hide to avoid being recognized by the men, Shane and Svetlana were going to sneak around, and Yuna and Rose were going right through the front doors.

"We'd like two tickets for tonight's show." Yuna says confidently to the scary Alpha in what passed for a lobby, but was more like a dingy concrete room.

The man raises his eyebrows at her.

Yuna had gotten the lingo from Scott, so she knew she said the correct thing. She stares right back at the man coolly.

“Bringing an Omega here?” The man tsks, nodding at Rose.

“This is my daughter. She’s just been dumped by her Alpha. Thought I’d cheer her up.” Yuna says with a lecherous grin.

“Can’t argue with that, lady.” The man says, shrugging. “That’ll be \$200 per ticket. If you’re planning on betting, that costs extra.”

Yuna slides over the money without blinking. This is going faster than they thought, and this means they need more time for the diversion. She looks at Rose. “Well honey, should we bet?” They go back and forth for a few minutes, much to the man’s exasperation.

Good. He sees them as two silly women taking up his time and nothing more.

Meanwhile, Shane and Svetlana are peering in through a window in the back, the one that Scott had described to them.

“The room is empty.” Shane tells her, cupping his hands around his eyes to see better. It’s a dark, plain concrete room with nothing in it.

“No cages or anything?” Svetlana checks.

“Nope.”

“I think we should go in.” She says. “This is our best shot at entry, maybe we can find him somewhere else.”

That's a good point.

The frame of the window is bent, so it isn't too difficult to get the pane out of the frame and shimmy inside. It's a bit of a tight squeeze for Shane, but he makes it work. They drop down into the cold, empty room. There is a door on one wall that's miraculously not locked, so they go through it.

Another empty room.

"Are we sure that he's even still here?" Svetlana wonders out loud.

"I mean, technically, no." Shane admits. Shane's gut tells him that he is though. He can't explain it, but he can *feel* Ilya. He's somewhere nearby. They just have to find him.

This part of the building is akin to an empty maze. They walk through dank hallways, losing hope as they continue to find nothing.

They come to a hallway with a door on either side, with small windows at the top to allow them to see into the room. Shane is on the left, so he'll take that one, with Svetlana on the right. They both take a deep breath and peer into the small windows.

They both gasp at the same time, but while Svetlana's is a mess of syllables, Shane's is 'Ilya'.

He stares at the Alpha through the window. He's not in a cage, but he's tied to a chair. He seems to be unconscious, his head slumped toward his chest. He blindly reaches back for Svetlana's arm and pulls her over.

"That room is full of caged Alphas." She tells him. "I'll get them, you get him?"

"Okay, yeah." Shane says automatically. His mind is numb as he still stares at Ilya. What if he's seriously injured, how will they get out? What if he's-

No.

Shane would feel it if he was.

He opens the door and Ilya doesn't move. He crouches in front of him and places his hands on his knees. "Ilya, it's me. We're getting you out. Don't worry. I'm here, okay?"

Ilya opens his eyes, his head still hanging limp. His gaze looks cloudy but he looks at Shane. "Oh Shane. Forgive me." He murmurs. He sounds really out of it. Shane can see blood crusted at his temple, he might have a head injury.

"Shhh. I'm here." He soothes. He stands up and hastily starts trying to untie Ilya before he remembers he has a pocket knife with him. His hands shake as he slices the ropes.

"Can you stand?"

Ilya is murmuring in Russian, but he does stand. He sways in place.

"I know it's hard, but we have to be quick and quiet, okay?" Shane tells him. Ilya lets Shane take his hand but he still seems distant, like he's not really aware. He pulls him into the hallway, where Svetlana is directing scared and sad looking Alphas back the way she and Shane came in.

Just the sight of them reminds him of Ilya the first night they met.

There's a large group of them now, hastily filing back into this maze of a building.

Shane wonders how his mom and Rose are doing with the diversion as they help Alphas shove themselves through the window. They really should've bricked it up the last time,

because now their Alphas have escaped through the same way twice.

It's just Ilya, Svetlana, and Shane plus a few of the Alphas left when their time runs out.

Chapter End Notes

I love badass women!

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

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

The door into the last room with the window slams open.

“What the fuck do you think you’re doing?” The Alpha spits.

Shane and everyone else in the room freezes.

“We’re leaving.” Svetlana announces bravely.

“No, you’re not.” The man snorts and promptly pulls out a gun, walking further into the room. Shane’s main regret is that he should’ve made Ilya be one of the first to escape out of the window. He squeezes his hand tightly. If this is how it ends, at least they were together. They didn’t go down without a fight.

The Alpha glares at Shane and Ilya’s conjoined hands. “You’re not taking that one.” Then he levels his gun at Shane and Svetlana cries out.

“No!”

“Don’t let them keep him.” Shane begs her. He’d rather be shot where he stands than have Ilya stay in this place. He closes his eyes and braces himself.

The door bangs open again and a shot rings out. Shane flinches, expecting to feel the pain of a bullet.

He doesn’t.

He opens his eyes and sees his dad standing there, holding a gun trained on the Alpha that he just shot.

“Don’t ever point a gun at my son again.” David Hollander snarls. The other man has dropped his own gun and is holding his leg, howling in pain.

David kicks it away. “You guys alright?” He asks the pack of stunned people standing off to the side.

“Y-yeah.” Shane grits out. “I think so.”

“The police are on their way. A lot of them.” His dad tells them. “It’s over. Everyone is safe now.”

“But how did you...” Shane trails off, confused. He has no idea what his mom told his dad about any of this, and then there’s the matter of how he got the police to listen and believe him.

“They didn’t want to risk Canada’s darling, Shane Hollander getting hurt.” David smirks and Shane’s cheeks flame.

He finally turns his attention to Ilya. The man still looks dazed and confused. Shane looks at Svetlana. “What was he mumbling earlier, in Russian?”

She looks at him sadly. “He was apologizing for leaving you. I think he thinks that...that he died. That this is all his imagination. He was talking about angels a lot.”

Shane cups Ilya’s face. “Ilya. Look at me. This is real. It’s over. You’re saved.” He takes Ilya’s hand and puts it on his own chest. “Feel my heartbeat.”

Ilya's face crumples and he closes his eyes, burying his face in Shane's shoulder as he sobs.

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It's a long, scary day that ends joyfully. They're reunited with everyone- Scott, Rose, his mom. Everyone is okay. They all have to give statements to the police, which will likely happen many more times throughout their investigation.

Ilya refuses to be taken to the hospital unless Shane is with him. He snarls at anyone who tries to separate them. He seems more alert as they get into the ambulance together, but he's very quiet. He just keeps looking at Shane, gaze flickering over him like he's trying to memorize his face.

He's admitted to the hospital for an overnight stay so they can monitor him. He has some wounds but nothing serious- they mostly inflicted psychological torture on him. Lying to him about having Shane in their custody as well. Telling Ilya that they were doing bad things to him.

Ilya tells this all to Shane in a whisper, like he can't bear to say it out loud.

"They never even had me. I was never with them." Shane assures him. "I'm sorry that they used me against you."

"Is okay. I would do it all again to protect you."

"You'll never have to again." Shane reminds him. "They're going to jail Ilya, for a long, long time."

Ilya is reunited once again with his mother's cross necklace. He holds it reverently. "Со мной всё будет в порядке, мама." *I'm going to be okay, mama.*

Epilogue- One year later

“Hi. I miss you. How are you?” Shane answers the phone for Ilya on the first ring.

“I miss you too. I will see you in three days.” It doesn’t feel like soon enough to Shane.

“Guess what?” Ilya asks cheerfully.

“What?” Shane asks with a smile, purely at the sound of his Alpha so happy.

“Anya has won employee of the month!” He says excitedly.

Shane laughs. “She wins every month, Ilya.”

“Because she is such good girl.” Ilya coos. Ilya now owns and runs a dog rescue, and they have a dog of their own, Anya. Ilya’s pride and joy. She goes with him to work every day, and wears an employee nametag. Ilya makes her employee of the month *every month*, complete with her framed photo on the wall.

Shane is so happy that Ilya has found something he’s passionate about, and that he has Anya for company when he’s away. They’ve been officially bonded for almost a year now and are planning to get mated and have a wedding ceremony in six months. Shane never imagined he could be this happy.

“Yeah, she is.” Shane agrees. “I miss her too. Tell her dad will see her soon, okay?”

He hears Ilya murmuring in Russian, presumably to Anya. He’s insistent that she will be a bilingual dog.

“Good luck at game.” Ilya tells him.

“Thank you. I love you.” Shane says back. He squeezes the phone, wishing it was Ilya’s hand instead.

“I love you too.”

They hang up, and Shane kisses the ring on a chain he wears around his neck, takes a deep breath, and gets ready to play a hockey game.

Chapter End Notes

Honestly, I'm quite happy with how this story came out. I hope you all enjoyed, and a special thank you to everyone who stuck around for the whole series, and/or left a kudos or a comment! It truly makes my day.

This is the end for this series, but I hope you will check out my other Hollanov works (:

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