snowy nightmare

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by Tizniz

Summary

This has to be a nightmare. Ilya is convinced it must be.

Because there is no way that what he's watching happen is real life.

The SUV ahead of him, the one that is carrying Shane, is swerving out of control, having hit a patch of black ice. The driver in Ilya's vehicle has already hit the brakes, their SUV skidding to a stop. But the one in front of them is still going. And then Ilya can't do anything but watch as it suddenly flips. Once, twice, a third time before it drags across the road, still upside down.

Finally, it comes to a stop.

The Centaurs end up in a car accident on a snowy drive.

Notes

Okay so to start, there is minor spoilers for book six, The Long Game. But most of us have probably read it or know what happens soooo

I just really wanted to hurt our boys. Although I'm very tame in this story. I also liked the idea of doing something post-Shane joins the Centaurs and just playing with that dynamic.

I think I covered all of the tags to give like a warning for anything. Nothing really gory is mentioned because that's a no go for me.

And yes, there is a death, but it is an unnamed made up character that I created literally to die. Nothing graphic is mentioned about him. I tagged it to cover my ass.

ANYWAYS. I'm done rambling.

Enjoy!

See the end of the work for more notes

This has to be a nightmare. Ilya is convinced it must be.

Because there is no way that what he's watching happen is real life.

The SUV ahead of him, the one that is carrying Shane, is swerving out of control, having hit a patch of black ice. The driver in Ilya's vehicle has already hit the brakes, their SUV skidding to a stop. But the one in front of them is still going. And then Ilya can't do anything but watch as it suddenly flips. Once, twice, a third time before it drags across the road, still upside down.

Finally, it comes to a stop.

The entire cab of the SUV Ilya is in is deathly quiet.

Ilya can't breathe. The ice that had caused the accident has replaced the blood in his veins.

This is a nightmare.

It *has* to be a nightmare.

"Oh my god." Someone whispers, and it cracks through the silence in the cab. Ilya is ripping his seatbelt off as he shoves the door open, tumbling out into the snow and cold.

"Roz! Wait!" Hayes calls out from behind him but Ilya doesn't listen. Doesn't stop. His shoes slip and slide along the slickened road, but he keeps going.

"SHANE! *SHANE!*" Ilya yells into the wind, his lungs cramping from the cold air. The wind whips and slices at his face, blows his hair back, tries to freeze the tears he can't feel on his numbed cheeks. "HOLLANDER!"

There's no reply. Not that Ilya really expected one. But he can't help it as Shane's name is ripped from his chest and throat. He needs Shane to know he's coming.

Ilya arrives at the vehicle, fingers scrabbling with the handle. But in the short run from his SUV to the other, his fingers have gone numb with cold. He struggles before managing to get a hold of the upside down handle. Only to tug on it and discover the door locked.

He drops to the ground in an instant, hearing footsteps approaching from behind. "Call 9-1-1!" Ilya shouts over his shoulder as someone crouches beside him. Ilya presses a hand to the window, peering in.

"Evan is calling." Hayes says, the one next to him. "Door?"

"Locked." Ilya grits out. He can't see Shane. Why can't he see Shane?

“I’ve got him, Roz!” Bood calls from the other side of the car. Ilya glances at Hayes, who is already nodding, face grim.

“Go.”

Ilya knows he should check on the rest of his team. Barret, Haas, and Dillion. They’re in there too. But It’s Shane that Ilya needs to see.

He scrambles to his feet and rounds the car, finding Bood crouching beside the passenger window. He glances up at Ilya, a blank expression on his face.

“Is he…?”

“I can’t tell.” Bood tells him honestly, Chouinard is peering into the back door. “He’s strapped in though.”

“Yes.” Ilya falls to his knees beside the window, finding his love’s slackened face through the window. “He always buckles up.”

“Probably saved his life.” Bood pats him on the shoulder as he stands up. Ilya already forgets about him. He presses a hand to the window instead.

“Shane.” Ilya whispers, closes his eyes for a moment and sucks in a sharp, cold breath. Then he slams a fist against the window, “HOLLANDER!”

There’s no movement from inside.

Shane sort of wishes he had gone in the SUV with the others. Mostly because then he’d have Ilya.

Not that there’s anything wrong with Troy, Luca, or Tanner. They’re all great guys. Shane does get along with them. But he’s so new to the Ottawa Centaurs that he still feels out of place. Ilya makes him comfortable.

But Shane is *trying*. He wants to connect with his team. Which is why he had chosen to go in this SUV, sliding into the passenger seat, instead of being tucked up against Ilya in the backseat of the opposite one. It helps. Being in the front instead of in the back. He just doesn’t know the others. Being that close would be a bit suffocating for him. At least, without Ilya.

The group chats, occasionally throwing a comment to Shane, including him but not requiring him to respond. They seem to understand how he works, willing to ease him into everything. It relaxes Shane and makes it easier for him.

That is, until the car hits a patch of ice.

Everything goes a bit dark for a bit after that.

Shane registers the cold first. Finds it odd, because the driver had the heat on for them while they drove through the near snowstorm. The group had been attending a little event for Ottawa, representing their team. And now they were on their way back to the cabin that Coach Weibe had rented for them, encouraging the group to have a few days before their last game prior to Christmas break.

So why is Shane so cold?

And why is there a loud banging to his right?

“Ilya.” Shane slurs, turning his head to the side, searching for his husband. He’ll fix things. He’ll make it warm and quiet and then Shane will be okay.

“Shane?” A voice speaks up from somewhere behind him, “Shane! Are you awake? Can you hear me?”

That voice sounds familiar too. But the pounding sound from next to him is making it difficult to recognize it.

“Ilya.” He mumbles again.

“He’s here, Shane. He’s outside.” *Outside?* “It’s Barret. Troy. Can you hear me, Shane?”

“Troy?”

“Yeah, buddy, it’s me.” Shane doesn’t think Troy has spoken so much. He’s quieter. Although Harris says the opposite about his boyfriend. Apparently he’s actually quite talkative. Shane gets it; it’s easier to talk to some people. “Can you open your eyes? Roz is about to shatter the window to get to you. Let him know you’re okay.”

There’s a weird pressure on Shane’s chest. His head feels heavy and hazy. Opening his eyes feels impossible. But *Roz* is Ilya. Shane wants to see Ilya.

He gets one eye open, a squint really, and despite the ache in his neck, Shane manages to turn his head towards the window. His gaze meets a wide-eyed pair of hazel eyes peering back at him. “Why’s Ilya upsi’e down?” Shane asks, words slurring together.

“Because we’re upside down, bud.” Troy replies from behind him.

“Oh.” Shane closes his eyes. It’s easier.

“SHANE!” The muffled plea of his name comes from Ilya. He sounds so scared. Shane doesn’t want him to be scared. But he can't do anything. He can’t move. He can’t feel his body.

Oh.

“Troy?”

“Yeah?”

“Can’t feel my body.”

“*Shit*.” There’s shuffling and then a thud and another curse. “Stay awake, Shane. I’m coming.” Troy says but his voice sounds distant. Shane tries. He does. But he slips away.

“Shit.” Ilya spits out as he watches Shane’s eyes close and stay that way. He presses his hand to the glass, heart racing. He knows that banging on the window won’t do anything. But he got confirmation that Shane is alive.

“Bood!” Hayes' voice cuts through the wind whipping around them. “Get back! Barret’s gonna kick the window open!”

“Come on.” Ilya feels hands on his shoulder, pulling him. Away from Shane. He fights back immediately but Bood gets an arm around him, forcibly dragging Ilya along the pavement. “I’m not letting you get hurt too!”

Hayes is suddenly there too and he helps hold Ilya back as they all watch the rear passenger window.

There’s a few thuds, muffled swearing, and then a foot appears through the glass.

Hayes gets there first, using his jacket covered arm to clear the shards away. “Troy?”

“M’fine.” Ilya hears as he moves back to his place outside of Shane’s window. “I was in the middle. Just got jerked around.”

“Thank fuck.” Bood says as Hayes helps pull Barrett out. “The others?”

“Out.” Barrett winces as he falls heavily onto the pavement, snowflakes catching in his dark locks. “Got Shane to sort of talk for a moment.” His eyes cut over to Ilya, meeting briefly. “Told him Roz was waiting for him.”

Ilya dips his chin in a grateful nod.

“Let’s get them out.” Hayes decides, Chouinard checking over Barrett.

Bood kicks some of the glass scattered around out of the way as Hayes climbs into the car on his belly. Another body appears and Ilya realizes it’s Dykstra. His phone hangs at his side, eyes widening as he takes in the situation. “Shit.”

“What’s the status, Dykstra?” Bood demands. Ilya reminds himself that Dykstra is Evan. He was the one calling 9-1-1.

“They’re on their way. But this storm is gonna slow them down.” Dykstra frowns at Hayes’ feet kicking out of the car, “Uhm…”

“Haas and Dillon are inside.” Ilya finds himself replying. “And driver. And…” His eyes slide sideways, through the glass is Shane’s slackened face.

“Hollander.” Dykstra whispers. “*Shit*.”

“Pull me out!” Hayes calls, setting both Bood and Dykstra into motion.

Ilya feels useless as his teammates pull out Luca Haas, but he can’t imagine leaving Shane’s side. At least the young player is alive. There’s a trickle of blood along the side of his one head but he’s already opening his eyes as Bood pats his cheek a bit aggressively.

Hayes doesn’t hesitate to slip back in, going for Dillion. Dykstra waits for the call and then they’re pulled out too. Tanner Dillon is in a bit worse state. He’s awake by the time they pull him out, face scrunched up in pain as his arm hangs limply at his side. Broken.

Ilya, ridiculously, thinks how it sucks they’ve lost one of their right wings for the game coming up. But he isn’t thinking rationally. He knows that. Not with Shane unconscious and inside of the car.

“Thanks.” Dillon grimaces, “Didn’t enjoy hanging upside down.”

A few feet away, where Barrett and Haas are sitting, a slightly hysterical giggle comes from the young Swiss. “Upside down!”

Chouinard explains quickly, “He knocked his head good. A bit loopy.”

“Hi Ilya!” Haas waves wildly, spotting where Ilya is still kneeling by the car. His knees are numb. The cold is creeping up through his jeans.

Ilya waves back at Haas, “Hi, Luca.”

Haas gasps and turns to Chouinard, babbling about how Ilya Rozanov knows his name. No one pays him much attention, trusting Chouinard to take care of the young player.

“Right. Going back in.” Hayes says before he slips back through the broken window.

Ilya ducks down to watch as Hayes army crawls and wiggles across the roof of the car, pushing through the front seats until he can get into a decent position. Hayes looks at Shane, presses his fingers to the pulse point on his neck, and a few seconds later, nods at Ilya.

Another confirmation that he’s alive.

Hayes moves his hand to the driver. A man that was hired by the team. Ilya doesn't even know his name. And yet when Hayes meets Ilya's eyes through the window, a grim acceptance settling on his expression, Ilya feels a wave of grief for the man.

"Driver is dead." Ilya announces to the team. A hush falls across the Centaurs gathered on the cement. The wind whips snowflakes around them.

The man was not a part of their team, but he was a living person. An innocent soul now lost.

"We'll get the news to his family when the first responders arrive." Bood says, voice almost carried away in the wind. "For now, let's get Hollander out of there."

Ilya nods, a silent message passed to Hayes, who returns the nod and goes about freeing Shane from his seatbelt.

A touch to his face, neck, and chest stir Shane from the darkness. He manages to get one eye open into a squint, a blurry figure before him. The unfamiliarity has him jerking back, causing a spike of pain to erupt from his torso. "Ah!"

"Woah, Hollander," The voice says, a hand pressing to his chest, "Don't move."

"W-who…"

"It's Hayes. Wyatt."

"Wyatt." Shane echoes, both eyes opening halfway, looking into the face of his teammate, "Hazey."

A smile blossoms across Wyatt's face, "Thought you forgot about me for a second there."

"You?" Shane releases a ghost of a scoff, "Never."

"Exactly." Wyatt pats him on the chest, "What hurts, bud?"

"Uhm." Shane blinks. They feel long and heavy. "Ilya?"

Wyatt shakes his head, "Not Ilya, Hollander. I'm Hazey. Wyatt."

"No." Shane closes his eyes tightly as another wave of pain ripples through him, "Is…is he…"

"Completely fine. Waiting for you outside. You can see him if you think it's safe to move your head."

Shane couldn't care less about if he should or shouldn't move. He needs to see Ilya. He turns his head and there through the window is the love of his life. "Ilya…"

Ilya must be able to tell what Shane has said, because he leans in, mouthing Shane's name as he presses a hand to the window. Shane lifts his own hand, shaky and heavy and upside down, pressing it to the window as well.

"Okay. You've seen your boy." Wyatt's voice draws him back in and Shane forces himself to look away from Ilya and back to the goalie. "What hurts, Shane?"

"S-stomach." Shane's hand flutters towards his abdomen, where the majority of the pain is stemming from. "Why're you upside down?"

"Because the car is upside down. And the seatbelt did a mighty fine job at keeping you in place." Wyatt says as he grazes a hand up Shane's chest towards his stomach. "Thank fuck, honestly. Don't want to imagine what Roz would be like if the seatbelt hadn't held."

Shane barely gets half a nod before his body is jerking and bending in the seat he's hanging from, a cry of agony ripping from his throat. Wyatt's hand jerks back, eyes wide with shock. His skin is painted red.

"Shit."

There's a banging on the window from beside Shade, "What is wrong!?"

"He's bleeding!" Wyatt calls back and Shane whimpers, eyes scrunched closed. "Sorry, bud. Loud?" Shane gives a shallow nod. "Okay. Okay." Wyatt smoothes across Shane's chest. Shane hopes it's the one not currently covered in his blood. "No more yelling. I promise."

Does Wyatt know that Shane isn't struggling from the noise because he hit his head or anything, but because everything is becoming too much?

He's suddenly so aware of the seatbelt digging into his collarbone. The slick sensation of blood on his skin, drying tacky and uncomfortable. The chill is seeping into his bones. And the wind is whipping against the window at a pitch that is making his teeth grind.

What a time to become overstimulated.

Shane hasn't exactly told any of his newer teammates his particular issues – hell, he hasn't even told *Ilya* in proper words. But Shane thinks that Wyatt is like Ilya: perceptive. Which means Wyatt probably knows about Shane and how his mind works a little differently.

"I need to get you down." Wyatt says in a softer tone, hand still pressed to Shane's chest. It's quite comforting actually. Offers Shane a spot to ground himself to. "But it's going to hurt like a bitch."

"Get me out." Shane whimpers, "*Please*."

“Okay. Okay.” Wyatt nods, glancing over his shoulder. Shane wonders what he’s looking at but before he can try and look, Wyatt is refocused on him. “Keep your eyes closed for me. Until myself or Roz tell you to open them.”

“Wh-what? Why?” Shane’s eyes dart wildly between Wyatt’s. “What’s wrong?”

“Please, Shane.” Wyatt practically pleads with him, “Keep your eyes closed.”

Shane doesn’t know Wyatt Hayes very well. *Yet*. But he finds that he trusts the man. Wyatt has been nothing but kind, open, accepting, and friendly to Shane since he’d arrived to play with the Ottawa Centaurs. Shane has also heard many stories from Ilya about how nice Wyatt is, how he likes the goalie. So yes, Shane trusts him.

“Okay.” Shane whispers, closing his eyes. “Get me out. Please.”

“I’ve got you, bud.”

There is something very wrong with Shane. Ilya knows that even with his limited view of the man.

The snow is continuing to fall heavily, the wind whipping it into Ilya’s face and eyes, gathering on the window that he's trying to see through. The glass is also fogging up on the inside from Hayes and Shane’s breath, which Ilya supposes is good. Because that means Shane is alert. Awake. *Alive.*

But Ilya feels it in his gut that something is wrong with Shane.

And he hates how useless he feels as he does nothing but stay kneeled on the freezing cement as Hayes gets the seatbelt strapping Shane in released. Shane’s body all but crumbles down with the force of gravity, and through the wind, Ilya hears the cry of pain.

“Wyatt has him.” Bood’s voice is low and firm, spoken almost directly into Ilya’s ear so he can be heard. “He’ll get him out.”

Ilya offers a short nod. He will feel grateful for this team that has welcomed Shane so fully with open arms and hearts later. The Centaurs embraced Shane when he had been tossed out of Montreal. They had shown that they care for him, especially now on the side of this snowy road. And Ilya is grateful for them. Truly. But it’s outshone by the immense fear and concern he has for the man he loves.

“Bood!” Hayes calls out and Bood moves away from Ilya’s side, working with the goalie to get Shane out of the car. They lay him on his back along the side of it, trying their best to protect him from the wind.

Ilya feels frozen as he kneels there, staring down at Shane's beautiful face, his features scrunched up in obvious discomfort and pain.

"Rozanov. *Ilya.*" The sharp tone of his first name has Ilya's eyes snapping up to look at Hayes, a serious expression on his face. "He needs you."

"Is he hurt?"

"Yes." Hayes stated bluntly, "But more than that, he's overstimulated. He needs *you*."

Ilya snaps into motion swiftly, shuffling along the cement on his knees until he reaches Shane's head. He's careful as he lifts the man's head, placing it in his lap.

"Shane. Sweetheart." Ilya murmurs, brushing the back of his fingers against Shane's cheeks. "Open your eyes."

"No." Shane whimpers, eyes closed tightly. "Too much."

"I know. I know." Ilya curves forward, blocking the snow and wind and everyone's sight from Shane. "But it's just me. Look at me, sweetheart. I'm here."

Shane's hand flutters up his chest, rising and falling as he searches. Ilya slips his hand into Shane's waiting one without hesitation, resting them both on Shane's chest. The immediate relief is noticeable as Shane exhales deeply. It hitches at the end, which Ilya thinks is from the pain, but there is not much he can do about that.

He can help with Shane's mind spinning too fast right now though.

"*Open your eyes, my love*." Ilya murmurs in Russian, and it's enough for Shane to latch onto something that's different yet familiar, and his eyes flutter open.

There's a daze there. Not from a head injury but from disassociation. One Ilya learned over years of being with Shane. At least he can handle this.

"You are okay." Ilya brushes his fingers through Shane's hair with his free hand, squeezing Shane's hand with his other in three quick bursts. "I am here."

"Ilya…"

"I know." He presses a kiss to Shane's forehead, the skin too cold for his liking. "I am here. Let go."

Shane whines, the sound high but soft, from his throat. He squeezes Ilya's hand three times in return, and then closes his eyes, releasing a long breath as his mind slips away.

Ilya doesn't want to let it happen, but there is no way to properly bring Shane back from wherever he's spiraled over to. Not while the SUV he had been in is upside down on a snowy road, a dead body inside, and their teammates sprawled across the cement with varying injuries.

No. It was better if Shane slipped away, knowing and trusting that Ilya would be there to guide him.

“I have got you.” Ilya whispers the promise onto Shane’s skin, the faint sounds of sirens growing louder as the first responders approach. “I am here.”

“Ilya.” Shane whispers, hand going slack in Ilya’s.

Shane is confused.

Because what is he doing back in Montreal? What is he doing laying on the ice? He thought he had gone through this injury already. Dealt with the broken collarbone and dizzying concussion that had left him unsteady for weeks.

But he can feel the chill of the rink. Can hear the hushed murmur of the crowd. Can hear Ilya calling out for him.

No. Shane thinks, *Ilya! They can’t see us!*

“They’ll see us.” Shane mumbles, tongue heavy in his mouth. His head doesn’t hurt like it did the first time around. But it does feel floaty. Hazy. Not quite like a concussion, but in a way that is still familiar. He’s disassociated enough times in his life to recognize the signs.

Shitty time for it to happen though. The paramedics will want him to open his eyes, respond to questions, tell him what hurts.

“Ilya, quiet.” Shane mumbles again, groaning in pain as fire explodes from down in his abdomen area. His mind detaches further. “There’s people watching…”

“Shane?” Ilya’s voice is closer. Shane gets his eyes open a sliver, and can make out the blurry face of Ilya. “What are you saying?”

“Quiet.” Shane slurs, “They can see us. We can’t…be found out…”

“Wh-what?” Ilya stumbles over the single word. “Shane. No. They…they know. We are out.”

“No.” Shane whines, trying to curl onto his side, but his body won’t move. “No one can know. Secret.”

Shane loses track of time and his surroundings. Much like he had the first time around experiencing this injury. Or is this the first time? He doesn’t quite know. It all feels the same. Except there’s no shift from cold to warm as he was taken off the ice. The cold stays. Burrows deeper into him.

Forcing his eyes open, Shane finds himself looking up at an unfamiliar face. And there's snow falling. Why was it snowing in the arena?

The face tilts down, a kind woman with a concerned expression on her face, "We aren't in an arena, sir."

Oh. Shane said that out loud.

And then her words register. He's not in an arena. He doesn't know *where* he is. Or who this person is.

Shane tries to sit up suddenly, but he's strapped down. He can't move. Panic spreads through his chest.

"I-Ilya. Where's…Ilya?! ILYA!" Shane cries out, tears streaming down his cheeks. His body, even strapped down, doesn't want to cooperate. The lady above him is trying to soothe him, console him, but she isn't Ilya.

"I think we gotta sedate him." Another voice sounds from towards Shane's feet. He doesn't know them either. "We can't risk his injury getting worse."

"ILYA!" Shane sobs, choking on the name, "Please…"

Warmth blossoms in his hand and Shane opens his eyes, unaware he'd closed them. The snow is gone. There's bright fluorescent lighting and metal walls. But there's also Ilya.

"So noisy, Hollander." Ilya murmurs, lifting the hand he's holding and pressing his lips to it. Shane registers then that it's *his* hand Ilya is holding. "I am right here."

"They'll see." Shane whispers, exhausted suddenly. He doesn't even care anymore, if people know and see him and Ilya. An emotion flashes across Ilya's face and through his eyes, but it's gone before Shane can really sort it out, replaced by that loving smile Ilya saves just for him.

"We are safe, Shane. I have you. I am here."

"Oh, good." Shane's mind starts to drift and float, "Love youuu."

Ilya's low chuckle is the last thing that Shane hears before he disappears into the darkness beckoning him.

Ilya stares down at his hands, hanging loosely between his knees. Once in a while, he swears that Shane's blood is still staining his skin.

It had been Hayes who had brought the blood to Ilya's attention, gently pulling him into one of the bathrooms after arriving with the others. By then, Shane had been wheeled away behind doors that Ilya wasn't allowed through. Haas, Barrett, and Dillion had been brought in a different ambulance, the rest of the team in the SUV that hadn't flipped over. Ilya has no idea what's been done to the body of the driver who didn't make it.

Hayes didn't say anything as he washed Shane's blood from Ilya's skin. Ilya was thankful for that, because he was worried if he opened his mouth, he would throw up. He hadn't even noticed that he'd somehow ended up with Shane's blood on him. It is a sensation that Ilya never wants to experience again.

The waiting room of the little hospital they're in is quiet. Only the Ottawa Centaurs are occupying the chairs, tapping away on their phones or staring blankly like Ilya, waiting for an update on the others. On their family.

The arrival of Yuna and David Hollander is loud and obvious because of the quietness. It forces Ilya's mind to crash back into his body as he stands, arms wrapping around Yuna as she throws herself at him.

"Oh, *honey*." She exhales into his hair, holding him tightly, "Are you okay?"

Tears rush to Ilya's eyes as he burrows into her shoulder, nodding. "Yes."

"Thank god." She smoothes a hand down his back, "And Shane?"

"In with doctors." Ilya forces himself to straighten up, to look Yuna in the eye, "He had…cut. On abdomen. Not bad. But…" Despite years of working on his English, all the words seem to disappear from him suddenly. Ilya looks around, locking eyes with Hayes briefly before the goalie steps forward.

"Hi, Mr and Mrs. Hollander."

"David and Yuna, please." Shane's father says, reaching out and clasping his hand onto Ilya's shoulder, squeezing it in a silent greeting. "How are you, Wyatt?"

"I'm alright." Hayes replies with a kind smile, "I was in the same car as Roz, so I wasn't hurt."

"Do you know about Shane?" Yuna asks, voice trembling a bit. Ilya takes one of her hands in his. David takes his wife's other hand.

Hayes nods, "Yes. I was the one to get him out actually. Like Roz said, he had a laceration on his abdomen." He gestures where Shane had been bleeding on his own body. "I wasn't able to tell how deep it was, sorry. It didn't appear like he hit his head but…" Hayes pauses, frowning as he glances at Ilya.

"What?" Yuna looks between the two. "What's wrong?"

Ilya shakes his head, “Nothing. He disassociated.” The word tumbles from his tongue with difficulty, but he knows that word. “Thought we were in Montreal. The night he got hurt.”

“Ah,” Hayes nods, “I worried he *had* hit his head.”

“No,” David sighs, “Shane…his anxiety…it…”

“I get it.” Hayes nods again, “There will be some serious bruising too from the seatbelt. I’m not sure about many other injuries, but…” He takes a breath and releases it slowly. Ilya holds tighter to Yuna’s hand. “The car flipped multiple times before skidding to a stop. Shane was in the passenger seat. And obviously it was quite cold while we were waiting.”

“The doctor people…” Ilya waves a hand.

“Paramedics.” Hayes supplies.

“Yes. Them. They said that Shane was not too bad. His panic made it worse though. He tried to move. Very upset.” Ilya hates the memory of Shane crying out for him. He’d been so scared. So confused.

“That’s good, then.” Yuna says, voice tight. “Right? Nothing…nothing too bad.”

“And the others?” David asks, looking between the two younger men. “How are they?”

“Minor injuries.” Hayes answers because Ilya doesn’t know. He feels a bit bad, but knows they will all understand his focus has been on Shane. “The three were sitting in the back, and they aren’t exactly small, so it helped keep them from moving around too much. Dillion got it worst with a broken arm. Haas has a concussion. Barrett is just sore.” He pauses, face turning grim. “The driver didn’t make it.”

“Oh.” Yuna whispers, but neither of Shane’s parents say more. What more *is* there to say? The man was a stranger. A hired hand to drive them.

“The police will let us know of his next of kin,” Hayes says softly, “So we can offer our condolences and support.”

“That’s kind of you.” David replies as Yuna nods. “How about we all go sit down? Wait for our boys.”

Hayes nods and he leads David over to the seats. Ilya goes to follow but Yuna pulls him into another tight hug.

“I really am *so* glad you’re okay, Ilya.” She tells him, “I couldn’t imagine coming here for both of you.”

Ilya can’t help but fall back into the hug, seeking comfort from the person who has become a second mother to him. Who has embraced and loved him so completely since finding out her son was in love with him. “Thank you.”

“Of course.” She kisses his cheek and then pulls him over to a seat, never letting go of his hand.

Barrett emerges first. With him being in the middle, he got the luckiest with some mild whiplash and bruising from the seatbelt.

Ilya watches as Troy excuses himself to call his boyfriend, one of the others having called Harris to let him know. There’s no doubt that Harris is freaking out, and Ilya knows Troy will want to hear his boyfriend’s voice too.

They’re good together. Ilya’s glad they figured their shit out.

Haas emerges next. The younger player has a concussion, is not allowed any screens, was given a pair of sunglasses, and is significantly less loopy than earlier.

Ilya is relieved about that. Less loopy means no serious injury to the brain. Luca is a good kid. Bood tucks the boy under his arm and Haas almost immediately drifts off to sleep, snoring softly against Bood.

Dillion is next, arm in a cast and a sling. Ilya has never been close with Tanner, and even though the man has improved, Ilya still wishes he had a stronger right wing. Regardless of all that, he finds himself relieved again at the sight of the man upright and walking.

Hayes is filling him in as Coach Wiebe fusses over him. Their coach had appeared while waiting for the others, frantic and out of his mind with concern. The sight had confused Ilya at first, unused to a coach that actually cares, but he reminds himself that Brandon Wiebe has proven time and time again to be unlike any coach Ilya has had before.

Each player that has emerged from their time with the doctor, and even those who weren’t in the destroyed SUV, had their time being fussed over by Coach. Except Ilya.

Coach had tried, but Ilya had waved him off, clinging tightly to Yuna’s hand. Shane’s mother had muttered a soft *I’ve got him* and that seemed to placate Coach Wiebe. Ilya’s noticed concerned looks being sent in his direction from the man but otherwise he’s respected Ilya and given him space.

They all have.

Because the only one not to have been returned to them is Shane.

Ilya has quietly been freaking out.

He had been told that the cut was not that serious.

That Shane had not hit his head.

That he was mostly okay.

So why was everyone else now piled into this tiny waiting room *except* for Shane?

If it weren't for Yuna holding just as tight to Ilya's hand as he is holding onto hers, he'd probably be up and demanding answers. Even though Ilya can clearly hear Shane's voice in his head chastising him for being rude.

You're such an asshole. Shane would say with a small laugh, tugging Ilya away.

God, Ilya wants to hear Shane's laugh.

"Family for Hollander?" A nurse asks as she steps through the doors.

Ilya and Yuna are on their feet first, David quickly behind, and then the rest of the Centaurs.

The nurse looks briefly startled and confused but Yuna steps forward, pulling Ilya with her, and David at her side. "I'm his mother. This is his father. And his husband."

Husband. Ilya will never tire of that title. He is Shane's husband. The greatest honour he could ever achieve. And he has achieved many titles and awards through his years of hockey.

The nurse smiles and nods, "Shane is okay. The cut did go a bit deeper than we expected. There was some minor damage to his kidney, but it will heal no problem. He'll just need to rest. His right knee has also been dislocated, which has been fixed but will also need to be rested for a couple of weeks. No hockey for a couple of months, I'd say."

"Shane will hate that." Ilya comments before he can stop himself. Yuna laughs softly in agreement. Both are just relieved to hear he's okay. Alive.

"Can we see him?" David asks, "Please."

"Of course." The nurse nods, "We'd also like to keep him overnight, just to be safe, but then he can be released tomorrow morning."

"Good." Yuna replies and Ilya can see her mind whirling as she already makes plans for recovery. Ilya will have to speak with her a bit later on, gently remind her that Shane is also his now, and that Ilya will be taking care of him.

For now though, the priority is to put eyes on Shane.

"This way." The nurse waves a hand and heads back towards the doors. Ilya follows immediately, knowing the team will understand his need and will wait for further updates.

“Fuck.” Shane whispers as he comes back to his body, head pulsing with a growing headache. A hand flexes against his, fingers loosening and then tightening, callouses familiar against his skin even without opening his eyes.

“Shane?”

“Ilya.” He exhales, his entire body relaxing at the fact that Ilya is here.

“Can you open eyes, please?” Ilya is nearly pleading, which makes Shane frown. Ilya doesn’t get like this. Claims he is too Russian for emotions, even though Shane knows that’s absolute bullshit and has held his husband time and time again as he lets himself feel a variety of emotions.

Not wanting to deny Ilya anything, Shane manages to get his eyes open, squinting at the bright light, but smiling when he sees Ilya sitting beside him. “Hi.”

“Hi.” Ilya replies on an exhale, a wobbly smile sent back in Shane’s direction. “Stop scaring me.”

“Sorry.” Shane mumbles and movement in the corner of his eye catches his attention. He turns his head to see his parents standing at the end of his bed, his dad holding onto his mom. “Hi, guys.”

“Oh, *Shane*.” Yuna covers her mouth with her hand, tears shining in her eyes.

“Mom…”

“Ilya’s right, son,” David’s voice shakes a bit too, “You gave us another big scare.”

“M’sorry.” Shane says again, eyes darting between each face. “I didn’t—”

“We do not blame you.” Ilya tells him quickly, “But we love you. And worry.”

“You’re okay though.” David nods and Shane nods back at his dad, “That’s what matters.”

“Yeah,” Shane shifts a little in his hospital bed, grimacing at the ache in his side. There’s obviously pain meds in his system because it doesn’t hurt nearly as much as he thinks it should, but at least he’s not all loopy like last time. “How’re the others?”

“Fine.” Ilya replies shortly, and Shane knows that it’s not because Ilya doesn’t care about the others. It’s because Shane simply matters more to him. So instead, Shane looks towards his parents.

“One broken arm.” Yuna says, discreetly wiping the tears away from her arm, “Tanner.”

“Not a big loss.” Ilya mutters and Shane pinches his hand lightly.

“Luca has a concussion but is being looked after by Bood.” Yuna continues, “And Troy is alright. Harris is probably here by now to be with him.”

Shane nods, glad to hear the others are alright. “The driver?”

A silence settles across the room. No one meets his eyes.

“Oh.” Shane swallows, “Right.”

He feels a brief moment of sadness for the life lost but he doesn’t know what to do beyond that. He didn’t know the driver.

“You can go home tomorrow.” Ilya says quickly, shifting the tension in the room. “But your mother and I are fighting.”

“We aren’t fighting.” Yuna replies quickly and Shane smiles gently at his mother, “We’re at a disagreement.”

“Because you don’t want to let someone else take care of me.” Shane assumes and by the pinched expression on her face, he thinks he’s guessed right.

“I can take care of Shane.” Ilya huffs. Looking over at his husband, Shane is amused to see a small pout on Ilya’s face. “I am capable.”

“No one is saying you aren’t, Ilya.” Yuna says and it’s obvious this is not the first time they’ve had this conversation. “He’s just…it’s just…” She looks to her own husband for help.

“He’s our baby.” David replies, simple and to the point.

Shane groans and feels his cheeks flush, “Mom! Dad!”

“Well it’s true!”

“I know.” Ilya nods, “But he is also *mine* now.”

“Do I get a say in this?” Shane grumbles.

“No.” Ilya and Yuna reply in unison. David gives Shane a sympathetic smile.

“This is unfair.” Shane sighs, closing his eyes and turning his head on the pillow, “I just wanna go home.”

“See?” Ilya huffs, “Home. Our home.”

“Our home is his too!”

“But is not *home* home.”

Shane smiles, dragging Ilya’s hand onto his lap, smoothing his thumb along the back of Ilya’s hand, keeping his eyes closed as listens to his husband and his mother argue over who will

take care of him.

A bit later, once Shane manages to convince his parents that he really is okay if they go to the hotel that Shane's dad found them last minute, after the team had made their rounds and come to see Shane as well, once Ilya had been talked into climbing into the hospital bed with Shane, the two curling up together and letting Shane relax for the first time, he decides to ask his questions.

"Ilya?"

"Hm?"

"I'm out for the season, aren't I?"

Ilya's chest rumbles with a chuckle against Shane's cheek, "I was wondering when you would ask."

"I wanted to ask a lot earlier."

"I know." There's a press of lips to the top of his head and Shane sighs happily. "But I do not know. There is still some months left."

"Yeah."

"But also you are hurt." Shane feels his husband's fingers graze over where stitches hold Shane's skin back together. "It was deep. Bad."

"I heal quick."

"You can also rest."

"Would you?"

"I am Russian. Built different from Canadians."

Shane swats Ilya on the chest, leaving his hand resting there, fingers curling into his shirt. "I'm sorry. That I won't be able to finish the season with you."

"Bah," Ilya waves a hand above them, "That does not matter. What matters is that you are here." He settles his hand over Shane's, "You are going to heal and be okay. And then we train all summer. And you come back next season even better."

Shane turns his face into the warmth of Ilya's skin, pressing a kiss to his neck, "You'll train with me over the summer?"

“Mm,” Ilya hums, fingers moving through Shane’s hair gently, “Yes because I know you will not rest. At least this way I can see you in summer.”

“I’d spend time with you.”

“But you’d spend more time on rink.”

“I like skating…”

“And I love you.” Ilya states, simply and clearly. And Shane’s heart still flutters at the words.

“I love you too.”

“I know.”

“We aren’t going to make the playoffs…”

Ilya sighs deeply, “Yes. I know. We all know. We lost best player.”

“Thought that was you.”

“I am best captain.”

“Ah, right, my bad.”

“Hmm.”

They settle back into silence. It’s more than just losing Shane that is impacting their chances at the cup. Haas and Dillion are both out for a little while too. Barrett will be back quicker but is probably going to wait until the new year before he rejoins the team. The dynamic of the Centaurs is completely thrown off. And that’s before taking into consideration how miserable Ilya will be with Shane benched.

Benched or not though, Shane will join his team. He’ll sit on the side of the ice and cheer them on. He doesn’t want them to go into any game without him.

“You are coming home with me.” Ilya says out of nowhere and Shane blinks his eyes open, having been starting to doze.

“Huh?”

“Your mother. She says you go with her. But no. You are my husband. You come home with me. I take care of you.”

“Not this again.” Shane mumbles sleepily, “I thought you two figured out a schedule earlier.”

“Bah!” Ilya huffs, “We paused because we wanted you to rest.”

“Which I’m trying to do now…”

“You will rest at home. With me.”

“Okay, dear.”

“I take care of you.”

“I know.”

“You are my husband.”

“I am.”

“So you come home with me.”

“Alright, Ilya.”

“You are falling asleep on me.”

“Mmm…”

Shane feels and hears Ilya chuckle and then kiss his forehead, “Sleep, *moya lyubov*, we talk when you wake. I have got you.”

And it’s safe in his husband’s arms that Shane drifts off to sleep.

End Notes

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