

diamonds in the dust

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by [lisa6](#)

Summary

A few days before Shane's seventeenth birthday, he told his parents he'd broken up with Elise. "It just didn't work out," Shane said, not really looking at either of them; instead, he was staring at the TV, obviously not really watching the hockey game he'd put on. There was a faint rosy tint to his cheeks.

Or: in which Yuna and David try to figure out what's going on with their son through the years while trying to be good, supportive, non-overbearing parents.

Notes

hi! heated rivalry has consumed me so i wrote this fic about shane's parents who are 100% trying their best. I somehow ended up just building a whole lot of shane hollander lore because i love him. of course ilya is also there. <3

hope you have fun reading!

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

“He’s got talent,” Coach Stevens said. Yuna Hollander’s gaze followed her son Shane skate across the ice, faster than his teammates, the puck never getting away from him; he controlled it easily, intuitively, and found an opening no one else had on their radar. Coach Stevens nodded appreciatively at the goal. The reflections in Shane’s visor hid his eyes, but his smile was bright enough that Yuna didn’t need to see the pride shimmering in them. “And, more importantly, he’s ambitious, especially for a kid his age.”

“He drives us nuts, sometimes,” David laughed. “All he ever talks about is hockey.”

Coach Stevens nodded. “He’s figured out he’s good at it. It comes natural to him in a way that’s rare, even for skilled players.”

Shane scored another goal, and received several affectionate pats to his shoulders for it. Bashfully, he tilted his head down, murmuring something. Yuna was too far away from the rink to hear what exactly, but she could guess from the way some of the other kids playfully shoved at him and waved him away.

“He should train under a better coach,” Coach Stevens said. “I don’t like saying these things, because they put a lot of pressure on the kids and Shane *is* only nine, but I really think he’ll make it all the way to the NHL if he keeps at it.”

“Yes,” Yuna said, “I think so, too.”

When Shane was thirteen, his best friend Tom had his first girlfriend. Shane mentioned it at the dinner table, through a mouthful of pasta. Her name was Carrie, she had four brothers, played the guitar and wanted to become a vet. Shane knew all this because apparently Tom never shut up about his girlfriend, and it was beginning to get on Shane’s nerves, so he complained about it to his parents.

“I had my first girlfriend when I was thirteen, too,” David said. “Are there any girls you like?”

Shane blushed all the way down to neck. “No, dad.” He helped himself to more pasta. “And I don’t want one if it means that’s all I can ever talk about. Tom hasn’t been to the rink with me in a whole week.”

Privately, Yuna was glad Shane wasn’t interested in girls yet. He couldn’t afford to lose his focus on hockey if he wanted to go pro, which he did, because hockey was still all *he* ever talked about. Yuna wondered if Tom sometimes complained to his parents about that, too. *Shane’s training with two different coaches, he gets private practices because everyone thinks he’ll play in the NHL someday, he’s at one rink or another every single weekend during the season so he never has time to hang out with us.*

“Don’t stress yourself out about it,” Yuna said gently, leaning forward. “You’ll find a girl you like when the time comes.”

Shane shrugged. He bit his lip, contemplating for a moment. Then he said, “I’m just saying, it’s annoying. Every time we hang out, he brings her, too, and then all they do is make eyes at each other. It’s ridiculous.”

“You can tell Tom that you’d like to spend some alone time with him. You’re friends. He’ll understand,” David suggested, refilling Shane’s glass for him. Yuna watched the candlelight reflect in the water as it poured from the bottle. “Besides, he’ll not always spend as much time with Cassie—“

“Carrie,” Shane corrected, a little sardonically, like her name tasted foul in his mouth. Yuna snorted, and reached out to rest her hand on Shane’s forearm, squeezing softly.

“—so give it a few weeks. The novelty of having a girlfriend will wear off a little bit.”

“And if you want to play hockey with him, just invite Cassie to the rink as well,” Yuna said. “He’ll want to show off for her, so maybe he’ll try hard enough for you to actually have to work to score against him for once.”

“Yuna,” David sighed.

“What? Shane is way better than him.” Squeezing Shane’s arm again, she added, “Better than everyone.”

Shane rolled his eyes, but his cheeks had flushed with pride.

At 16, Shane still hadn’t told his parents about any girls he liked. He’d always been shy about this particular topic, always tried to evade his mother’s prodding, so David shrugged it off whenever Yuna brought it up to him.

“He’s just... quieter,” he said. “You know how he gets sometimes.”

Yuna took a sip of her coffee, mulling it over. Shane had practice — the first of two scheduled today — and wouldn’t be home until seven p.m. Hockey had gotten more serious, and Yuna couldn’t remember the last weekend Shane hadn’t needed to be dropped off at the rink or the airport. “I’m just worried. He shouldn’t feel embarrassed to talk to us about these things.”

“Maybe he’s not,” David said. “He plays a lot of hockey. Doesn’t leave much time for anything else.”

Yuna shrugged. “Yes, but he’s sixteen and I still haven’t found any, you know, *magazines* in his room.”

“Do kids these days still buy magazines?” David asked, pouring himself another cup. “I think you worry too much, honey. Just because he doesn’t tell us about girls doesn’t mean there aren’t any. He’s a handsome boy.”

“Yes,” Yuna said, a little louder. “He is, and smart, and sweet, which is why there should be girls.”

David took her hand and pried her fingers apart to press a kiss to her palm. Over the years, his eyes had just gotten bluer and bluer; Yuna sighed as the tension seeped from her bones and softened the lines of her face.

“Give it time.”

Six months, as it turned out, was enough time for Shane to meet a girl, fall in love with her and reluctantly tell his parents about her.

“Her name is Elise,” Shane said one Wednesday afternoon. He sounded shy, but he wasn’t blushing. His eyebrows were furrowed, like he was confused about something — he and his girlfriend probably hadn’t made it official yet, but Yuna had been asking him about girls for weeks and he’d likely grown tired of it. “She’s fifteen. Rides horses. Good at math. And she’s, uh, really pretty.”

“She sounds lovely,” Yuna said gently. “Does she want to come over for dinner sometime?”

Shane shrugged and continued taping his hockey stick as he waited for David to get ready to drive him to practice. He’d started training with a second team and a second coach, because scouting would start soon and Shane wanted to soak up all the skill and knowledge he could get. It meant several hours of practice every day. “I’ll ask her.”

“Does she like hockey?”

Another shrug. “She doesn’t know much about it.”

“Maybe she’d like to come to one of your games,” Yuna suggested. “We could take her.”

“Yeah,” Shane said, flashing Yuna a quick smile before getting up to put on his shoes and jacket. “Maybe.”

Yuna finally set her book down when she read the same sentence five times and the words still didn't register. She turned to her husband and took off her glasses. "We should give Shane the talk, I think."

Slowly, David closed his book. "We've had the talk."

"No, I know," Yuna said. "Just... a refresher, you know? Now that he has a girlfriend and they're probably going to— I mean, *we* had sex when we were seventeen."

David hummed. "All right. I can talk to him tomorrow. Might be easier when it's not his mother telling him to remember to use condoms."

"Yes," Yuna said. Then, after a second, "We should buy him some. Condoms."

David reached out to rest his hand on his wife's arm, rubbing his thumb over her skin. "Sweetheart, relax. Shane is not the kind of guy to get a girl pregnant."

"He's a boy. Boys are dumb," Yuna says, "even the smart ones."

"I'll talk to him," David said, and Yuna gave him a small smile. Her eyes had softened again.

"How's Elise?" David asked Shane halfway through the 40 minute drive to the rink. Shane dragged his eyes away from where he'd been fiddling with the radio and narrowed them at his father.

"Uh," he said, "good."

David nodded. As usual, Shane had spent most of the past weeks at one rink or another, playing games — and winning most of them — or training with singleminded focus. Privately, David couldn't imagine how or when Shane found the time to entertain a girlfriend, but they were sixteen, and sixteen-year-olds didn't have mature relationships. At that age, everything was experimental and exciting. The more he thought about it, the more sense another *talk* made.

"Shane... I know we've had this conversation already but now that you have a girlfr—"

"Dad," Shane whined, bringing his hands up to his face and pressing his fingers to his temples. His eyes were wide. Grimacing, he added, "Please don't."

David was looking forward to this conversation as much as Shane was. "It's important to talk about that stuff," he repeated Yuna's words.

“Okay, but I’m not— I haven’t—“

David blew out a breath. “All right. This isn’t me saying you can’t, though. When I was your age—“

Shane groaned, sinking deeper into the seat.

“It’s normal to want to experience sex,” he continued, ignoring the face Shane made, “but it’s important to always use protection. Promise me you’ll never go without it.”

“I won’t,” Shane said, blushing a deep red. “I promise I won’t. Can we please drop this now?”

David stopped the car at a red light and listened to the turn signal’s quiet clicking. He glanced at Shane, whose shoulder was pressed against the passenger side’s window; his right hand was still pressed to his face, covering half of it.

“You can talk to me about these things,” David said slowly. “Always. And to mom, of course. We want you to know that we’re there for you and that we love you very much. Growing up and figuring yourself out can be stressful and—“

“Dad,” Shane interrupted. He’d uncurled a little. “I know. I promise I won’t have unprotected... sex.” He said *sex* like the word hurt his mouth if he said it loud enough. “Also, we have sex ed in school. I know how to avoid getting a girl pregnant.”

“All right,” David said, reaching over to quickly squeeze Shane’s shoulder before he put his hand back on the steering wheel. “I still bought you condoms. They’re in your bathroom cabinet.”

Shane groaned again.

“And you *can* talk to me and your mother,” David stressed. He made sure his voice was gentle; he didn’t want to pressure Shane, but David’s own father had never offered any support or lent him an ear, and David wanted to do better for his son. “I promise we won’t judge. Sex can be complicated, at first.”

“Okay,” Shane mumbled, staring at his hands in his lap. “I’ll reach out if I need to.”

One November weekend, Shane was withdrawn. He didn’t have any games or practice for once, so Yuna had cooked an elaborate meal and brought out Shane’s favorite board game. As usual, when Shane was in a mood, he had gone for a run in the morning, then headed to the gym and, afterwards, cleaned his skates.

“You okay, honey?” Yuna asked in the evening, when they finally sat at the dinner table and Shane couldn’t avoid conversation anymore.

“Yeah,” Shane said and promptly stuffed his mouth with mashed potatoes. He clearly didn’t feel like talking. Yuna, to David’s relief, decided to let it go.

Shane went to bed close to midnight. Once he’d gone upstairs, Yuna turned to her husband.

“The condoms you bought are gone,” she said. “He left his iPad downstairs and you know he keeps it in his nightstand, so I brought it to his room and when I put it in his drawer, I noticed there weren’t any condoms anymore.”

David raised an eyebrow at his wife. “Are you surprised a sixteen year old boy has sex?”

“No, I just— he was quiet tonight. Quieter than usual. Maybe it’s got nothing to do with him being... sexually active. I’m just... concerned.” She bit the inside of her cheek and furrowed her brows. David reached out to cup the side of her face and rub the pad of his thumb gently over the skin above her nose until the wrinkles disappeared. Yuna sighed. “Am I exaggerating?”

David shook his head. “You’re being a good mother. You care.”

“I do,” Yuna said, “but so do you, and you’re so much more relaxed. Shane... I think he’d come to you sooner than he’d come to me if he wanted to talk about anything.”

“He’s pragmatic,” David said. “Just like you. If there’s anything he wants to discuss, he’d want a solution. I rarely have those. That’s all you.”

Yuna contemplated him. A moment later, she leaned in and gave David a kiss. “I love you. I’m so glad I had a friend drag me to that McGill game all these years ago.” Another kiss, this one softer.

“Me too,” David smiled.

A few days before Shane’s seventeenth birthday, he told his parents he’d broken up with Elise. “It just didn’t work out,” Shane said, not really looking at either of them; instead, he was staring at the TV, obviously not really watching the hockey game he’d put on. There was a faint rosy tint to his cheeks.

“Oh, honey,” Yuna said. “I’m sorry.”

Shane shrugged, picking at a loose thread of his hoodie. “It’s okay. Wasn’t meant to be. I’m too busy anyways.”

That was true. It was a few months until the NHL draft and every free minute Shane had was spent at the rink or the gym. David had voiced his concern about Shane's obsession, but he knew what hockey meant to his son. You couldn't become a professional athlete if you didn't have that dogged determination.

And, of course, there was Ilya Rozanov, who was the only player who could keep up with Shane and was also about to be drafted this season. He'd appeared out of thin air, it seemed, and no hockey news outlet had shut up about him since, and every time Rozanov was mentioned, so was Shane. It was impossible to talk about one of them without bringing up the other. Shane, who'd trained all his life to be the best, now trained to be better than Ilya Rozanov.

"And Saskatchewan is coming up," Shane said, as if he'd also been thinking about Rozanov. He probably had; there was little else on Shane's mind lately.

Yuna hummed, and turned to look at Shane. "Yes, there'll be lots of talent scouts. It is important. But they look at career stats, too, and you're better than everyone else. The entire NHL already knows that."

"Not *everyone*," Shane said through his teeth.

"Rozanov?" Yuna snorted. "He's good, but not as good as you. You're reliable, you're more accurate, you understand the game. Rozanov just... bullies his way through defences. There's no creativity."

"That's not true," Shane murmured. "He's really good." Then, quieter, like it pained him to admit, "I like watching him play."

Shane *had* watched Rozanov play. He'd watched every game, every highlight compilation, and read every article discussing Rozanov's strengths and weaknesses. He'd gone to the gym more frequently, trying to gain more muscle, because Rozanov was a stronger skater. He'd practiced his sprints because Rozanov was faster. He'd gone on more runs because Rozanov had better stamina.

Shane was stressed about the draw, but David imagined Rozanov was also at home practicing his shot accuracy, studying tactics, and imitating Shane's playmaking.

"Well," Yuna said again, "you're better, *and* more likeable. Rozanov is an asshole." She shook her head and waved a dismissive hand. "And so unbelievably arrogant. Seriously, who raised that boy?"

Jessica, Shane's new girlfriend, was slim, blonde and talkative. She came over for dinner a few days after Shane had told his parents about her, held Shane's hand while they ate lasagna

and asked countless questions about hockey. She laughed at David's jokes, complimented the Hollanders' house and smiled at Shane's recounting of the first time they met.

"I just thought Shane was so cute," Jessica said. "He's so *nice*. My mom loves him."

After dinner, Shane drove her home. He was gone for much longer than the drive should've taken him. When he came home again two hours later, he went straight upstairs.

Shane stopped suddenly on his way to the rink, his eyes darting to someone standing several feet away from them — it was a boy, tall, broad-shouldered underneath his black jacket, and leaning against the building, sheltered from the wind.

Yuna had seen that beanie before; this morning, when they'd arrived at the International Prospect Cup to get their accreditations. It was Ilya Rozanov.

"I think I'm gonna go say hi," Shane said.

David raised an eyebrow at him. "You sure?"

"Yeah, I—" Shane paused uncertainly. "I feel like I should." His voice went high, like he was asking a question. "I mean, it's strange that people are always talking about the both of us in, like, the same sentences but we've never even spoken to each other."

Yuna hummed. "Maybe it's better this way. He doesn't seem very amiable."

Shane just snorted. Although never one to participate, he'd been around enough shit talk that he could handle whatever Rozanov might throw at him. As a parent, David didn't like to think about all the colorful insults of which Shane had definitely been on the receiving end, but McGill had given him an idea. Still, it was difficult reconciling the young boy on the photos hung up on their walls at home to a soon-to-be millionaire star center of an NHL team whenever opposing players got tired enough of Shane scoring on them that they ended up hurling insults at him on the ice.

"You guys go ahead," Shane said, already making his way across the parking lot. "I'll find you."

"What's he like?"

Shane huffed. “Kind of a dick.”

Shane broke up with Jessica just two days after he’d returned to Canada. Somehow he found a way to head to both the rink and the gym even more often.

“I feel like we’re living with a ghost,” Yuna said one evening. “A very hungry ghost who only appears when there’s food on the table.”

Shane winced. “Sorry, mom. I just— I can’t be second pick.”

“I know, honey,” Yuna said softly, reaching out to squeeze Shane’s hand. “You won’t be.”

Rozanov ended up getting drafted first. Yuna watched him accept the handshakes of the Boston Raiders’ manager and head coach with a smug smile on his handsome face, and took a sip of her champagne so she wouldn’t accidentally and very publicly roll her eyes at a seventeen-year-old who was most likely experiencing the best moment of his life.

Shane was picked second.

“Shit,” David whispered next to her. They both knew what this had meant to Shane — second pick was still incredible, obviously, but their son’s brain didn’t work that way; for him, second place meant failure.

When it was time to get their photos taken, the three most popular rookies stood side by side, and Yuna’s heart hurt when she saw Shane’s hollow smile. Still, he stood tall, holding his Montreal Metros jersey in front of him and ignoring Rozanov’s glittery blue eyes when they passed over his face for a beat.

The Metros had always been Yuna’s favorite, ever since she moved to Canada, and they made it clear how thrilled they were to have Shane joining their team come season.

“He’s incredible,” one of the managers told Yuna and David when Shane had been whisked away to meet the Metro’s current captain. “Probably the most talented rookie we’ve ever welcomed into our roster. We’re all so excited. You’ve done a wonderful job with him.”

“Oh, thank you,” Yuna accepted the compliment, her eyes shining with pride. “He has made it easy for us, honestly. I can’t wait to see him play in your colors.”

“We’re already printing jerseys,” the manager said. “I have a feeling they’ll be sold out quickly. He’s a great kid and a great player. Montreal will love him.”

CCM’s request for a photo shoot didn’t come as a surprise, but the spontaneous addition of Ilya Rozanov did.

The day went by quickly, as Yuna had spent most of it sitting in the bleachers answering emails to fix brand deals and sponsorships and interviews. Shane was in high demand.

Unsurprisingly, so was Rozanov, although he didn’t seem to be too interested in all of it. Every now and then, you came across his admittedly very handsome face in a perfume shop — he’d apparently been approached by Dior — or his half-naked body in a Calvin Klein store. Those were smart business moves, but Yuna had heard about his growing car collection and figured most of the money he earned outside of hockey went into that. Cars weren’t great investments; they burned more money than they were worth, especially the flashy ones Rozanov drove. He was only 18 and playing a physically taxing sport; hockey could be over within a week if he got an injury that put an end to his career.

Yuna couldn’t help but wonder about Rozanov’s team. As an athlete who had signed a multi million dollar contract, he must’ve gotten a financial advisor, but those weren’t purchasing decisions she imagined one would’ve encouraged.

Maybe things were different in Russia, though. Yuna had heard of dubious oligarchs sponsoring promising athletes and the contracts binding those athletes to paying them back once they had a steady income. She’d also heard of Rozanov’s father being chummy with high-ranking politicians.

Laughter rang out across the ice. Yuna looked up to see Shane and Rozanov giggling at each other, their faces mere centimeters apart.

“Sorry,” Rozanov said, his deep voice shaky with laughter. Yuna raised her eyebrows; she hadn’t expected Rozanov to apologize for... well, anything. Ever. He didn’t seem like the type to care if he was making things harder for others — he certainly did not care on the ice.

There was more laughter and eventually, the director decided to give up on getting them to focus after four hours of filming. Yuna pursed her lips as she watched Shane and Rozanov skate off the ice, and then waited nearly half an hour for Shane to finish showering. When he finally met her in the lobby, he was buzzing with so much nervous energy that Yuna decided to wait until tomorrow to chew him out for being unprofessional.

Yuna ran into Rozanov at the hotel later that evening. She'd been waiting for the elevator when it opened to reveal Rozanov leaning against its mirrored wall.

It was the closest she'd ever been to him, and while she *knew* he was about the same height as Shane, he carried himself so differently that she felt like she should recheck his player information. He stood taller than Shane, somehow; head held higher, shoulders back instead of curled inward. There was an easy confidence to him that Shane lacked everywhere except on the ice.

Rozanov smiled at Yuna, just a little. It was a different variation of the smile she'd grown used to seeing. This one was smaller, softening his features. His voice was softer, too, when he told her in heavily accented English that the elevator was going up.

Maybe he didn't know who she was. The doors closed on him before Yuna could introduce herself.

In the following months, Shane got swallowed up by his responsibilities as a pro athlete. He sounded tired when he and his parents talked over the phone every Sunday evening, but there was always an undercurrent of joy in his voice, too. He was doing what he loved, spending hours upon hours on the ice, proving to everyone he'd earned his place as starting center. He'd scored an incredible amount of goals, especially for a player this young, who many people had expected to feel slightly overwhelmed starting among much more experienced hockey players.

Ever since Shane's introduction, the Metros had been rising in the rankings. And so had Boston.

"Rozanov's been playing well," David said one Friday night. Shane had called after winning against Detroit — he'd scored four goals, and Yuna had had to switch off her phone once it was over so it wouldn't get blown up by incoming emails and calls. Bauer wanted to work with Shane. CCM wanted another photoshoot. So did Canada Dry, and Vogue, GQ, and Rolex. There were so many business inquiries Yuna had prepared an elaborate Excel Sheet to share with Shane so he could let her know which brands he was most interested in without her having to rattle all of them down for half an hour and him getting overwhelmed by the sheer amount of companies interested in working with him.

"Yeah," Shane said, a little muffled. It sounded like he was rubbing a hand over his face. "He's— yeah."

Yuna scoffed. "He's also been in the tabloids a lot. Not sure how he manages to play at all when he's partying so much."

David laughed. “He won’t be nineteen forever.”

“No, he won’t be,” Yuna agreed. “Shane, honey, are you not out celebrating your win?”

“I’m beat,” Shane said, a little distractedly. Yuna had heard his phone chime with an incoming text. A quiet huff came next, followed by fingers tapping on a keyboard. “Sorry,” Shane added a moment later, “Hayden texted.”

“Ah, no, no. I never said forty goals. Is lie. Liar told you that,” Rozanov was saying on MHL Network. He was shirtless, talking to reporters, no shame at all; he’d been grinning when he’d shown up for the post-game interview. His eyes, when asked about Shane, had glinted with mirth. *He’s goalie now, yes?* They were still glinting now, when he clarified, “I said fifty,” and winked at the reporters.

This time, in the privacy of her home without anyone there to judge her for judging a teenager, Yuna rolled her eyes at Ilya Rozanov.

“Can you believe this kid?” Yuna asked her husband, who was sitting on the couch filling out this week’s New York Times crossword puzzle. “He’s so— God, who raised this boy? The *nerve*.”

“He’s got a lot of ego for sure,” David snorted.

“*A lot* of it,” Yuna hissed. “My God. Can you imagine Shane speaking about anyone this way? He’d never hear the end of it. He’d probably have to issue an official apology or something.”

David lowered his newspaper. “Yeah. People like Shane, though. More than they like Rozanov.”

Yuna waved her hand in the general direction of the TV. “He’s, what? Nineteen years old? And already acting as if he’s God’s gift to hockey. Not even a full season under his belt and already such a cocky little asshole.”

“Well, he is a very good player,” David laughed. “You’ve got to give him that. Very entertaining on the ice.”

Yuna scoffed. “Sure. If you think instigating and brute force are entertaining.”

“Yuna.”

“Okay, fine. I know he’s good. Still an asshole.”

David sputtered another laugh. “He’s young. Let him sow his wild oats.”

“Shane’s his age and he would *never*—” Yuna stopped, turning away from the TV now to look at her husband. Her voice had suddenly lost its edge and her eyes were wide. “He’s... God, he’s so quiet. And so careful. Isn’t he?”

David felt his own smile fade. He folded his newspaper and stood up to wind his arms around Yuna tightly. His lips brushed Yuna's temple as he spoke. “Shane *is* quiet. That’s just how he is. Not a bad thing.”

“I know, I know,” she sniffled. “I just... He’s so serious all the time. He's so young, and so serious, and I worry that maybe I've— I put so much pressure—”

Truthfully, David was worried as well. If it weren’t for fucking Rozanov and the media’s constant questions about their ongoing rivalry, Shane would only ever offer perfectly media-trained answers. But Rozanov existed, and so did his taunts, and for all his seriousness, Shane was competitive to a fault. And so Shane smiled sweetly as he jibed back, *I’ll listen when he actually catches up to me*, a few weeks later after a win against Boston, thanked reporters for their time, and continued to score enough goals to stay ahead of Rozanov in the scoring race.

Maybe, David thought as he switched off the TV, they were worried for no reason at all.

“So,” Yuna said a few months later, when Shane finally had two days off and Yuna had made sure she and David would be in Montreal to invite themselves to Shane’s place for dinner.

“Any news?”

Shane looked up, chewing. He lifted his hand and, through a mouthful of steak, asked, “Like what?”

“Shane,” Yuna admonished, and Shane swallowed. *Boys*, she thought, rolling her eyes. “Like, any... girls?”

Shane’s whole face cycled through a complicated mix of emotions before he schooled it into careful, practiced blankness. It was the face he gave during interviews sometimes, after losses. Yuna’s heart stumbled in her chest. “Um, no. Not at the moment.”

“It’s been a while since Jessica.”

Shane dropped his fork and knife. He stared at his plate for a moment, then reached for his ginger ale and downed what was left of it in his glass in one gulp. “Yeah. I’m, uh, not really looking to date right now. I’m busy, you know. Especially with play-offs coming up.”

“You can’t *just* play hockey,” Yuna said. She could feel David’s eyes on her but refused to back down. Shane lived in this huge apartment he’d recently bought, all by himself, which was fine, technically. He was in his early twenties. He didn’t need to settle down yet. But he lived here, all by himself. There were no photos or postcards pinned to his fridge, no pair of

slippers that weren't his own, no spare toothbrushes in any of the washrooms. She knew he'd befriended some of his teammates, and grown especially close to Hayden Pike and, by proxy, his wife, but other than that Shane didn't seem to have made many friends.

It was difficult connecting to people when you were a pro athlete and barely had any free time, Yuna was well-aware of that, but she wanted her son to experience life, too. He'd missed out on a lot growing up because most of his life had happened on and around ice rinks, but even the friends he'd had back then that had frequented the Hollander house had disappeared over time. She tried not to feel guilty about it; she had bought Shane his first pair of skates when he was four years old, signed him up for his first training sessions and made hockey nights a Hollander family tradition. And when he got older and hockey became more serious, she'd taken on the role of his manager; she was afraid, sometimes, that the switch between manager and mother wasn't as seamless and it should be.

"We just want to make sure you're happy," David said gently, refilling Shane's empty glass.

"I am," Shane said, his eyes — warm and expressive and so beautiful — still fixed on his plate. He frowned as he picked up his cutlery again, and stuffed his mouth with another piece of steak.

Yuna, unable to drop the topic, said, "But there must be girls who are interested in you. You are so handsome."

Shane shrugged. When he spoke again, his voice was defiant, "I don't know, *since I'm not looking*." He looked up at that, a little insolently.

"Maybe you don't have to," Yuna tried again, thinking back to the brunch she'd had last weekend. *How's Shane doing? He must be awfully busy. My daughter thinks he's so cute.* "A friend of mine — Susan, you know her. She lives up the street in that gorgeous house. Her new husband is a surgeon. Anyway, she has this really pretty daughter, Mia, who I'm sure you'd get along great with."

"Mom," Shane said at the exact same time David nudged her thigh with his knee. "I am really not looking to date. My entire time is divided between practice, recovery, travel and games. I haven't even seen you and dad in weeks. How would anyone else fit in there?" His eyes flickered between his parents. Then, slowly, calculatingly, he said, "I'd get to see you even less."

David raised his eyebrows at his son. It seemed he had learned a thing or two about negotiating.

"Fine," Yuna said. "You'll tell us, though, right? When you do meet someone?"

Shane bit the inside of his cheek. He nodded, just once, and started cutting off another piece of steak.

They stayed in one of Shane's guest bedrooms that night. The next morning, they had breakfast before Shane had to leave for practice. David went for a run around Montreal, claiming he'd needed to move a little before they would eventually get back into the car to drive back to Ottawa.

While he was out, Yuna cleaned Shane's kitchen, emptied his dishwasher, watered his plants, and folded his laundry. She took the laundry basket to his bedroom and realized she had no idea how he'd organized his massive walk-in closet. Did he still stuff his socks into the top drawer of his nightstand?

She fished all the rolled-up pairs of socks out of the basket, laid them out on Shane's bed, and opened the top drawer.

There were no socks. Just a dog-eared book, a blister pack of Ibuprofen, a half-empty bottle of lube, condoms, and a dark blue, silicone—

Yuna hastily shut the drawer.

Then, she blinked. It'd only been a few months since Jessica had been in the picture. It was totally normal that Shane hadn't yet thrown away a... toy. That they had probably used. Or, Shane had used. On her.

Yuna shook her head. She didn't want to think about her *son* doing... well, that. To anyone. With anyone. Ever. Shane was in his mid-twenties. Of course he had sex. Really, it was good to know he cared about girls' needs and even better that he apparently practiced safe sex, like they'd drilled into him. God, she had to stop thinking about this.

So her handsome, rich, physically fit, *adult* son had sex. And a dildo in his nightstand. That was totally, perfectly normal and not a big deal at all. Yuna wasn't a prude. She and David had experimented a bunch when they were young and everything was exciting still. That was part of growing up. And private. Most of all, it was private, and Yuna had violated Shane's privacy once again by being who she was and she really had to get out of his room and his apartment and her own head.

With shaking hands, she carried the laundry basket into Shane's walk-in closet, left it on the ground, and waited for David to return from his run so they could go back to Ottawa, where she knew where all the laundry went and certainly wouldn't find sex toys in Shane's room.

All-Star weekend was more fun than Yuna had expected, mostly because Shane, as usual — in Yuna's unbiased opinion — , shone brighter than everyone else.

He'd won the shot accuracy competition with flying colors, and set a new record while he was at it. Many years ago, David had spent countless hours on the ice with Shane, showing him different shot techniques and practicing his accuracy from an early age. All that hard work had paid off, and it was gratifying to have proof that Shane was not only more accurate but also had quicker hands than Ilya Rozanov.

It really only was Shane and Rozanov competing for the number one spot of the overall NHL goal scoring race and privately, Yuna and David were glad for Rozanov; there was no denying that they spurred each other on more than anyone else ever could, because no one else was even close to being on their level. They made hockey more interesting. They brought in crowds. They sold jerseys. They broke old records and set new ones.

Yuna watched as Shane returned to his bench and, a moment later, was accosted by Rozanov, who sat on his team's bench close by; the only thing separating them was the glass. Shane seemed nervous around him, sticking to short answers and keeping his eyes mostly on what was happening on the ice but then, suddenly, he turned to Rozanov and said something that made Rozanov smile, sharp and slow.

Now back on the ice, Rozanov stopped in front of Shane, just long enough to say something that made Shane's eyes widen, and then skated to center line grinning from ear to ear.

"That was nice of you," David told Shane over the phone on Monday morning. Shane was back in Montreal after the All-Star Game, and his parents had returned to Ottawa. "Helping Rozanov out during the press conference. I only just saw now. ESPN is calling you a class act."

"Oh," Shane said. His TV was a quiet murmur in the background; it sounded like he was watching hockey. David checked the time. 8:46 p.m. — Boston was playing Los Angeles. "It was a convoluted question. And stupid."

David laughed, switching on his own TV. "Yeah. Still nice of you. Were you two getting along? I saw you talking to each other during the skills competition."

"Uh, no, not really," Shane said a little haltingly. He blew out a breath that might have been half a laugh but ended in a sigh. "He was just... shit-talking. Trying to rile me up, I guess."

"Don't tell your mother that," David suggested. On screen, Rozanov was laughing an opposing defenseman in the face. A replay of the goal he'd just scored played a second later. "Rozanov already drives her up the wall."

"Ha. Yeah, well. He's an asshole."

David made an affirmative sound and watched the defenseman drop his gloves before taking a swing at Rozanov.

The day of the reveal of the Olympic roster, when Shane dropped by for a short visit, Yuna saw his phone light up with a text. She hadn't meant to snoop; it was *right there*, on the kitchen island, while Shane had gone for a hike in the woods with David and Yuna was preparing pumpkin soup for dinner. It was just one text, the only unread notification showing up on the display. Four letters, stark against the background: *Lily*.

good luck, the text read, *you'll need it*.

Yuna's own phone chimed. She'd set a Google alert for Shane's name and was now being informed that he'd been nominated to play for the Canadian national team at the Olympics in Russia. Unsurprisingly, so had Rozanov, who was Russia's best player by a mile, but Yuna didn't care; with Shane on their team, Canada had this in the bag.

Yuna glanced at Shane's phone once more, a smile growing on her face. Lily. What kind of girl fit a name like that? Blonde, probably, because that seemed to be Shane's type. Athletic, because Yuna couldn't imagine Shane dating someone who wasn't willing to put up with his constant chatter about hockey and fitness and nutrition. Confident, too, because Shane tended to get lost in his own head sometimes, distancing himself without meaning to, and that wasn't easy for anyone to deal with, especially in a relationship.

Had they met at a rink or through friends? Maybe she was friends with Hayden's lovely wife. Yuna knew Shane spent a lot of time at the Pikes' house, so it wasn't too far-fetched to think they'd tried to set him up with one of their friends.

Yuna pursed her lips in thought; or maybe Lily was someone working for Bauer, in marketing. Shane had just done a photoshoot with them not too long ago. Had there been someone flirting with him? Most people on set were too professional to do that, even when Shane stood in front of them half-naked. There had been appreciative looks, sure — Shane had a strikingly pretty face and a body sculpted by a lifetime of strenuous physical activity —, but she'd never seen anyone actually approach Shane to flirt with him.

This was all speculation, anyway. Shane had promised her he'd tell her and David if he was seeing someone. Yuna could wait. Maybe. For a little while, at least.

Shane was awarded Rookie of the Year at the NHL Awards. He gave a short, charming speech, promised to continue working hard, got drunk with Scott Hunter and a handful of other players, and then disappeared for a bit. Yuna would've gone looking for him had she and David not been engaged in conversation with a former Metros player, who'd approached them to compliment Shane's striking talent and admirable work ethic.

When Shane returned, minutes or maybe hours later, he was flushed, restless, and miles away.

Months later, Shane was somehow even busier. Montreal had recently made him their new captain, so naturally Shane spent even more time with his team, at the rink and in the gym. He was on a new meal plan that meant he wouldn't let his parents surprise him with homemade lasagna or even a birthday cake anymore. His morning runs had progressed from ten kilometer runs to fifteen kilometer runs.

Yuna couldn't imagine Ilya Rozanov, who had also been named Boston's captain not too long ago, putting in the same amount of work and dedication. Mostly because he was always being discussed in the tabloids. One week, he had been caught making out with an American top model in a club in New York. The next, he'd gotten a new Porsche. Then, a new apartment in Moscow, which people assumed he'd bought so he could spend more time in Russia with his new girlfriend, a gorgeous actress from St. Petersburg. The same American top model a week later; this time, they'd been papped kissing on a beach in Malibu. The very next day, Rozanov's friend from Russia and daughter of a former world-class hockey goalkeeper, Svetlana Vetrova, posted a photo of the two of them lounging on a yacht in Miami half-naked.

It was impressive, really, that Rozanov still found enough time and energy to play hockey. More impressive, that he was currently only three goals behind Shane in the scoring race.

"Have you talked to Shane lately?" Yuna asked David after he'd returned from the tennis court. He played doubles with three of his friends every Tuesday evening.

"No, not since... last Monday, I think," David said, leaving his racket bag in the entryway to kiss Yuna, who was sitting on the couch, hello. "When he was in St. Louis. He wasn't in a good mood because they'd lost that game. You know how he gets."

Yuna huffed a laugh, her phone already in her hand, dialling Shane's number. David sat down next to her and waited for their son to pick up; he did on the third ring.

"Mom?"

"Hi, honey. Your dad's here, too."

“Hi.” There was shuffling on the other end of the line. “What’s up?”

“Just wanted to hear how you’re doing. You’re playing Boston tomorrow, right?”

Shane inhaled, his breath stuttering a little. “Yeah. I’m, uh, good. Excited. How are you?”

“Brad and I just wiped the floor with Dane and Andrew,” David said. “So I’m all right.”

“Oh, right, tennis night,” Shane said distractedly. “Um, how do I get the fireplace in my bedroom to start again, dad? Do you remember? The electrician told me there’s some liquid I have to buy but I forgot.”

David raised his eyebrows. “Yes. I’ll text you the name. It was some special brand — I noted it down. Wait.”

Shane breathed out slowly, the way he always did when he was on edge and trying not to let it show. “Okay. Thanks, dad.”

They hung up seven minutes later. Yuna immediately turned to her husband.

“Do you think he’s planning to have someone over?”

“None of our business, honey,” David chided gently. “Is there any wine left from last night? I bought scallops.”

Shane was different after that game. Neither Yuna nor David could pinpoint exactly what it was but there was something about him that had changed.

The Metros had won that night. Shane had scored — as had Rozanov, but one goal too little. In his post-game interview, Rozanov had shrugged and said, brazen as always, *We’ll get rematch and still win the Cup*. Yuna had tried calling Shane a few hours later, when she knew he must be home after suffering through physical therapy and press obligations.

Shane hadn’t picked up and hadn’t called back until later the next day, claiming he’d been exhausted and crashed as soon as he’d arrived home.

They met for lunch two weeks after, just before the Olympics. Shane looked the same as he always did, tidy and handsome, but he was more terse than usual, somehow. Quieter, too. When Yuna brought Russia up, he excused himself to head to the washroom.

“It’s probably nerves,” David told her in the car on the drive back to Ottawa. “The Olympics are a big deal.”

To everyone's great displeasure, Rozanov ended up being right. A couple weeks after an embarrassing upset at the Olympics, he stood at center ice, lifting the Stanley Cup over his head and beaming up at it.

Frowning, Yuna switched the TV off, and David handed her a bowl of homemade tiramisu to lift her spirits again.

"I can't believe Boston won the cup," Yuna complained to Shane over the phone on Sunday night, two days after Rozanov had lifted the trophy. To her surprise, she hadn't caught Shane at home but at the gym, where he'd answered his phone while he was getting changed to meet some of his teammates for weight training.

"Yeah," Shane said. "Hate to say it's deserved, though. Rozanov played a great season."

That was true. Rozanov was probably going to win MVP at the NHL Awards this year. Yuna wouldn't tune in to them for the simple reason that she couldn't stand Rozanov's cocky grin.

A French voice, muffled by its distance to the microphone, spoke up on Shane's end of the line. "Rozanov? Why are you talking about that Russian cocksucker?"

"Just pissed he won the Cup," Shane said to whoever it was that had chimed in, also in French. Gagnon, probably; he had a reputation for having a bit of a filthy mouth.

"Yeah, me too," Shane's teammate said. "I fucking hate that guy. Wish he'd fuck off back to Russia but then he'd get arrested for being a fag and you probably wouldn't score us as many goals anymore."

"Dude, my mom's on the phone," Shane hissed, then promptly ignored Gagnon's quip about greeting her. When he spoke again, his voice sounded closer yet, somehow, more hollow.

"Mom, I've got to go now but I'll call you back later, all right?"

"Sure, honey. Have fun."

In two successive seasons, Shane and the Metros won the Stanley Cup. The press wouldn't stop praising him and what he'd been bringing to the team. Other teams had made multi-million dollar offers to coax Shane out of Montreal and into their rosters. Companies went out of their way to have Shane, marketable and successful, appear in their commercials and campaigns. Rolex had gifted Shane a silver Day-Date 40 that had made Yuna slightly dizzy when she'd looked up the price, and promised three tickets for seats in a royal box at Wimbledon next year.

"Honey, have you decided about Wimbledon?" Yuna asked at lunch the next day. They'd met at their favorite restaurant in downtown Montreal because Shane liked the privacy it offered and knowing what was on the menu. "They really want you there. I think they're worried their box is... too tennis-y, I think."

Shane didn't look up from his menu. He wasn't reading it either. They came here because he knew what was on it, after all. His eyes had been distant from the moment he sat down at the table, and his voice lacked its usual warmth and softness. Tension kept his body still; he hadn't even taken off his jacket. "Does that mean too white?"

Yuna, caught off guard by his tone, glanced at David, who was looking at Shane calmly. "I thought you liked your deal with Rolex."

"I do," Shane said through his teeth.

"Well, you certainly love the money, and they're great seats. I mean, they're next to a prince." She looked down at her phone, where the e-mail was still up. "Or, no, actually, a Swedish princess."

Shane bit the inside of his cheek. His eyes darted at his parents, just for a second. "I don't think I should skip training."

Yuna hummed. "Meeting a Swedish princess could be fun, right?"

"I don't have time for that right now, mom," Shane argued, an edge to his voice. He had it under control, but barely. "All my time is scheduled."

"No, I—"

"I get like two weeks off a year. I don't want to spend it next to someone I don't know, trying to make conversation about— what? Swedish politics?" he huffed.

Yuna knew Shane could be stubborn, but this was new. He wasn't usually this... obstinate. She was grateful to have a moment to collect herself when the waiter came to take their orders. Out of the corner of her eye, she saw David was still intently watching Shane.

"I'm sure you could have a glass of wine if that's what you want," Yuna said once the waiter was out of earshot.

"No, I can't," Shane said resolutely, strict with himself as always. No alcohol, no unhealthy foods, an exact amount of protein and fibre, lots of water, a bit of ginger ale. He was so

meticulous about it that even Yuna, who'd raised her son to become a pro athlete, thought he was veering into unhealthy territory. This wasn't just sticking to a meal plan; it was restrictive. "Not during the season."

"Shane," David said. He wasn't scolding his son, but Shane reacted as if that was what was happening. He looked up, finally.

"Yeah?"

"Everything all right?"

Shane tilted his head back down to the menu as though he couldn't stand to look either of his parents in the eye. "Why? Because I don't want wine?"

"No, you just seem... tense."

"I'm fine."

David tried to redirect the conversation to London, suggesting a relaxing family getaway like the ones they'd gone on all these years ago, when Shane had been young and curious and unburdened, and he'd let his parents buy him foreign candy to try and asked for kitschy teacups from souvenir shops and stood in front of historic landmarks with his mouth half-open.

If she tried hard enough, Yuna could still see remainders of six-year-old Shane hidden somewhere behind all those walls that he, as one of the most famous faces in hockey, had built up over the years; his pretty eyes and the adorable smattering of freckles across his cheeks and the bridge of his nose, the charming way his voice still pitched high when he was indignant.

But Shane was a grown man in his mid-twenties, six foot tall and broad-shouldered and playing hockey for one of the best teams in the league that paid him millions of dollars every season. He'd grown up and lived his own life in one of Canada's largest cities, where Yuna had no idea what he was doing half the time. Was he just hanging out at his fancy apartment, all alone, day in and out? Eating different variations of the same foods every day? Not talking to anyone? Not going out and meeting new people and falling in love and allowing himself all kinds of things that made life worth living?

"Well, then I'll just lie, tell them I'm coming. They won't kick you out and you can just tell them I'm sick or something," Shane said eventually, waving his hand dismissively as his eyes shifted back down to the menu.

Yuna frowned at him. "I don't want you to lie, honey. That's not who you are."

Somehow, that gave Shane pause. His jaw unclenched, and all of a sudden he just looked unbearably tired and very young.

"Sorry. I'm in a weird mood," he said, quieter now. "Let's think about London. Maybe it could be fun," he added, closing the menu, before he excused himself and left for the

washroom.

“A Swedish princess?” David asked after a beat of silence, and Yuna sighed.

“I don’t know.”

David drove them home an hour later as Yuna wrote an e-mail to Rolex, informing them that Shane’s busy schedule unfortunately didn’t allow him enough time off to accept their kind offer.

The news broke just a few days later. Shane had met Rose Landry at a bar while out with some of his teammates and, according to credible sources TMZ didn’t mention by name, they’d hit it off immediately. There were photos of them plastered all over the internet. Rose herself had posted a photo of Shane on her Instagram, and everyone in the comment section had congratulated her on snagging the NHL’s cutest player.

“Well,” Yuna said as soon as Shane picked up, “that’s a surprise.”

Shane laughed, quiet and soft. “Yeah, I know. Sorry. It happened really fast.”

“Is it serious?” Yuna asked.

“I think so. It feels— yes, it’s serious.”

“Okay, honey. You could invite her to dinner if you’d like,” Yuna said, “so we can meet her.”

For a moment, Shane fell silent. Then he said, “Yeah, maybe. In a few weeks, okay? It’s still new.”

“Of course. There’s no rush.” Yuna listened to him breathe for a bit before she added, “I’m happy for you, honey. And she’s so pretty. You know, Variety has already contacted me — they do these couple interviews on YouTube. Have you seen them? That could be fun, right? Maybe not *now*, but—”

“Mom,” Shane interrupted, “we’ve only been dating for like a week.”

They had to hang up soon after. Yuna filled two cups with tea and found David on the terrace, cleaning the grill.

“Shane is dating a Hollywood actress,” she told him, setting one of the teacups in David’s waiting hand, and got two raised eyebrows in response. “I know. She seems sweet. She’s in those X Squad movies.”

“In those what?”

“Some stupid blockbuster franchise,” Yuna explained. “But a huge box office success.”

“Well,” David said, “at least we can be sure she’s not in it for the money, then.”

Yuna nodded, contemplating. “It is sudden, though, is it not?”

David gave her a look. His blue eyes sparkled with glee. “Did you not give me your number after like fifteen minutes of talking to me?”

“I had seen you on the ice for two hours before that,” Yuna smiled. “I knew what I wanted.”

David smiled, pulling Yuna into a hug. “I thought you’d be happy he’s dating.”

“No, I am.” Yuna rested her chin against her husband’s chest and looked up at him. “I just didn’t expect him to want a relationship this... public, you know? I always thought he’d be with someone like Jackie Pike.”

“Or a Swedish princess.”

Yuna groaned, squirming out of the embrace. She knew suggesting Shane cozy up to Swedish royalty had been dumb, but Shane had been so on edge and she’d *worried*. Frankly, she still did. Cautiously, Yuna said, “Or maybe... a man.”

David stared at her and for a moment, Yuna thought she had been alone in wondering if Shane liked men. David hadn’t found the dark blue dildo in Shane’s nightstand, and Yuna hadn’t told him about it; at the time, she’d just assumed it was something he’d bought for Jessica, his girlfriend around that time who he’d dated for a few months before she disappeared from their lives as quickly as she had entered them. It wasn’t something she should’ve seen in the first place. Not that she even wanted to think about her son’s sex life, least of all have a conversation about it with her husband behind Shane’s back.

Maybe Rose Landry was going to be different, though. Maybe Yuna had worried for no reason at all. Maybe Shane would introduce her to his parents, shy and blushing and in love, and they’d go on vacations and attend movie premieres and publicly celebrate lots of Stanley Cup wins and, in a couple of years, Shane would propose to her and they’d have a beautiful wedding, and someday, Yuna and David wouldn’t just be parents but grandparents, too.

But then David gave a single slow nod, said, "Or a man," and Yuna breathed out.

Rose Landry stuck around longer than most of Shane’s other girlfriends had. Even as a supporter of Detroit’s hockey team, she went to some of the Metros’ games, wearing a Montreal jersey and proudly presenting the HOLLANDER lettering and Shane’s number 24 stitched onto the back. They went on dates that regularly became topics of conversation on several news outlets. Shane started dressing differently; Nike loungewear made way for

Bottega Veneta. When Yuna asked him about it, he shyly admitted to having hired a stylist that Rose had picked out for him.

They seemed happy and Yuna couldn't wait for Shane to finally bring Rose to Ottawa and introduce her as his girlfriend, which is why it came as such a surprise when one Thursday afternoon Shane told them they'd broken up.

"What? I thought you liked her."

"I *do* like her. It just— we couldn't make our schedules work. She's going to Spain to shoot another movie soon, and I'm never not going to be busy with hockey." Shane blew out a breath. "We're still friends, though."

"Oh, honey. I'm sorry."

"It's fine. I'm not sad," Shane said, then quickly added, "I mean, I am, but it just wouldn't make sense to keep it going. Better to end it while it's still... you know."

Yuna looked at David, only to find him already looking back at her with his mouth pulled into a straight line.

After the shock of Shane's injury and three seemingly endless days spent in the hospital, Yuna and David could finally bring Shane home.

With the help of the medical personnel, they'd managed to convince him to stay with them in Ottawa, because suffering a concussion as serious as Shane's meant supervision was necessary for at least the following few days. Shane had agreed, albeit begrudgingly, but he let his parents cook meals for him that didn't just consist of salmon, broccoli and chicken, stayed up late texting and became whiny when he was told to put his phone away, and went grocery shopping with Yuna and hiking with David. Every evening, they watched hockey together, lounging on the couch.

Detroit lost to Chicago, St. Louis lost to Houston, and Boston lost to New York.

"Good for Scott Hunter," Yuna said and, over dinner, went on to explain to a sceptical Shane why she thought the Admirals were going to win the Cup this season. She ended up being right, of course. Yuna had always prided herself on her intuition and understanding of the game. What she never — not in a million years — could have predicted, however, was Scott Hunter kissing a man on live television after winning the Cup.

"What the fuck?" Shane asked no one in particular. His eyes were wide open and disbelieving, fixed on the TV, until his phone lit up with an incoming call and he hurried out of the room. He returned shortly after, still dazed.

“Who was that?”

“Huh?” Shane asked, lips twitching like he was fighting a smile. “Oh. Hayden.”

David gave him a look. He couldn’t remember the last time Hayden had called and Shane hadn’t put him on speaker.

“So I’ll be doing this silent retreat thing,” Shane told them a few days before he was going to leave for his cottage. “Coach said he’d read about it recently and that it’s supposed to be good for your focus. It’s, like, meditation. Just so you know, because I, uh— you have to do it for two weeks for it to really work. Apparently. No distractions.”

Yuna levelled him with a look. “So you’re not going to speak for two weeks?”

“Yep.”

“Don’t you think you’re focused enough on hockey?” David teased gently.

Shane shrugged. “Always room for improvement.”

Well. Yuna couldn’t argue that.

David’s phone rang two days later.

“Shane?”

“Yeah, hi dad,” Shane said. He sounded irritated. “The fucking grill won’t work.”

“What?”

“My grill,” Shane said, “won’t work. I want to make burgers tomorrow but I can’t get this thing to—”

“Have you checked the ignitor electrode for dirt?”

Shane sighed. “No.”

“Want me to come over and help?” Before Shane could reply, David asked, “Aren’t you doing this silent retreat thing?”

“Uh, yeah,” Shane stammered, a little absentmindedly. David pictured him closely inspecting the grill and smiled fondly. “Starting tomorrow, and then doing it for two weeks.”

“Looking forward to it?”

“Can’t say I am,” Shane said, exhaling on a laugh.

“Well, who knows,” David mused. Secretly, he thought it was a load of bullshit Shane’s coach had probably taken away from one of those ridiculous athletic performance optimization books that weren’t backed by any reputable medical research, but if Shane wanted to try it he could be supportive. Even if he couldn’t imagine Shane actually believing that holing himself up at the cottage and staying silent for two weeks would somehow make him an even better hockey player. “Could be interesting to see where the next two weeks lead.”

Shane fell silent for a moment before he, very softly, said, “Yeah.”

David hadn’t meant for this to happen.

He’d just needed his charger, because his had suddenly stopped working and the other one was still at Shane’s cottage. He should’ve just listened to Yuna and finally upgraded to a newer phone. *I know this phone*, David had argued, stubbornly, *it’s reliable. I can text and call people. What else do I need?* Yuna had even already ordered an iPhone for him that was now sitting on the bookshelf, still in its pristine white packaging, because David had been annoyed with her for trying to force a new device on him that didn’t even have *buttons* anymore.

So he’d taken the ten minute drive to Shane’s house, listening to the Rolling Stones and wondering if he should ring Shane’s doorbell or just use his key. Usually, when Shane spent his summer in Ottawa, he kept to the outdoors, his gym or the ridiculous training rink that was basically his entire basement.

It probably made sense to just use the key, especially because David was planning to just quickly slip inside, get the charger and be on his way again before Shane even knew someone was there. As silly as the idea of a silent retreat David thought was, he didn’t want to bother Shane, who was obviously taking it way more seriously than expected; neither he nor Yuna had heard from him at all for the entirety of last week.

David parked his car on the gravel driveway next to Shane’s Land Rover, walked up to the front door and turned his key in its lock.

Inside it was quiet — the sliding door to the lake had been left open an inch — and not quite as tidy as usual. There were two coffee mugs in the sink, a black Adidas hoodie carelessly

draped over one of the barstools, a pair of expensive sunglasses that David had never seen before on the kitchen island, right next to two empty bottles of beer. The door to Shane's bedroom stood ajar, just enough that David could see an unmade bed, which was so uncharacteristic that David almost started worrying about his son's wellbeing if he hadn't caught sight of him in that very moment, walking up the stairs to his terrace in just a pair of bathing trunks.

"Maybe. What do you have in mind?" Shane was asking, low, teasing, his tone so unlike anything David was used to hearing being said in his voice that it barely registered it was Shane talking at all.

"Nothing that will take too long," a second voice said, heavily accented and way too familiar. David's eyes shifted to the man who was currently pressing his son against the glass door, smiling as he leaned in. And then Shane was being kissed. By Ilya Rozanov. Who, a second later, had his hands on his son's butt and wasn't getting socked for it. Instead David heard Shane make a soft sound that he instantly wished he had never heard.

He should leave. He should look away. But he couldn't. No matter how hard he tried, he couldn't get his body to move, couldn't wrap his mind around the image of his son kissing his brash, arrogant, promiscuous arch-rival, who he had apparently invited to the only place on earth Shane could exist freely.

Ilya Rozanov was at the cottage, having coffee with Shane, swimming with Shane, maybe even got Shane to drink a beer and leave his bed a mess. He was taking up space, left his belongings lying around, and Shane just... let him. Happily, it looked like, because Shane was kissing him back, uninhibited and passionate.

And then, to David's utter horror, Rozanov's eyes opened and met his. He immediately took a step back from Shane, as if putting thirty centimeters of distance between their bodies could somehow unhappen what David had just witnessed, and, with a quick glance to Shane, nodded in David's direction. Because David was the one who'd come to Shane's cottage uninvited. *He* was the intruder here, not Rozanov. Without meaning to, he had taken the very important decision of how and when to come out away from Shane.

Guilt finally stung David into action. His feet quickly carried him outside before he could see Shane's instantaneous panic.

Yuna looked up at the front door slamming shut. David muttered a quick apology, sat down on the couch, and froze. He looked like he'd seen a ghost.

"Honey?" she asked, carefully, as she inched closer.

David dropped his head into his hands, shaking it. "Fuck."

“What’s wrong? What happened?” she said and, when she didn’t get an answer, added, “David, you’re scaring me.”

“I should’ve just taken the iPhone,” he was mumbling and Yuna furrowed her eyebrows in confusion. Helplessly, she glanced out of the large windows overlooking the driveway to check if the car was still in one piece and let out a sigh of relief when she saw that it was. Her hand found David’s neck.

“Is Shane all right?” she tried again. “You saw him, didn’t you?”

David let out a laugh but it came out somewhat hysterical. In nearly thirty years of marriage, Yuna didn’t think she’d ever heard *that* laugh before. “Yeah, I— I saw him.” A moment later, he lifted his head and dropped his hands. “Sorry, you have nothing to worry about. He’s okay.”

“Then what—?” Yuna checked the time, finally feeling like she could breathe again. “You were gone for half an hour. What happened?”

“I had to stop on my way back here,” David said, like that was any explanation at all, when suddenly Shane’s black Land Rover pulled into the driveway. Yuna watched Shane get out of the car just as the passenger door opened as well and— Yuna stood up on shaky legs and shot her husband an incredulous look. Was that Ilya Rozanov following Shane to the front door?

“Hey, it’s me. Shane,” Shane called as he entered the house, then fell silent when he saw his parents already waiting for him in the living room. Ilya Rozanov stood next to him, ramrod straight, his hands clasped in front of him like he was a young boy awaiting a rebuke.

“I left my charger at your place,” David started, “and it’s the old one that fits into my phone, and all the other chargers we have are newer—”

“It’s okay, dad,” Shane said, and it looked like he was steeling himself. His eyes kept shifting from David to Yuna and back again. “I’m sorry. You shouldn’t have found out that way.”

Yuna was growing tired of being the only one not knowing what was going on. “Found out what, exactly?”

“I’m gay,” Shane said, quick like a shot, like he’d had the words lined up and now they were just tumbling out. Yuna felt them hit everywhere all at once; around her, the world was beginning to spin. “Which I was going to tell you soon. I’m sorry I didn’t tell you sooner. Uh, and this is Ilya,” he continued, looking at Rozanov standing silently next to him. “Rozanov. But you already know that.”

“Hi,” Rozanov said.

Shane dragged his eyes back to his parents. He took a deep breath and said, “He’s visiting and we’re, uh…”

“Lovers,” Rozanov offered when it took Shane too long to find a suitable word to describe what they apparently were to each other, and Shane made a face, muttering about it being a

gross term to use.

Stunned, Yuna said the first thing that came to her mind, the one thing she'd thought she'd known for sure, "But you hate him."

Out of the corner of her eye she saw an emotion flicker across Rozanov's otherwise neutral face, but it was gone too soon for her to analyze, even if most of her attention hadn't been concentrated on Shane.

"No," Shane admitted slowly. "I mean, I get that, but no. I actually—" he paused, like he needed a moment to gather his thoughts, and then said, "I love him."

Ilya Rozanov sat at their kitchen table, both of his hands clasped tightly around a cup of tea, and listened to Shane explain their relationship to his parents. Yuna realized, now, several minutes after Shane's confession, that he was wearing a Raiders shirt. There was a golden curl falling into his forehead. His eyes — were they green or blue? — kept shifting between Shane, his tea, his hands, the table decoration, Yuna and David, like he wasn't sure what was safe to look at. His elbow was pressed firmly to Shane's underarm.

She'd never seen Shane like this, anxious himself but, at the same time, an anchor for someone else, too. They'd been seeing each other since the summer before their rookie season, Shane's parents learned. *For sex*, Yuna's brain supplied unhelpfully, which still wasn't a thought she ever wanted to entertain. It explained the dildo she'd found all those years ago, though. And maybe running into Rozanov — *Ilya*, she reminded herself — in that elevator after the first of many CCM photoshoots, seven years ago.

Seven years.

For seven whole years, she hadn't known that her son was seeing a boy. Shane had cried over that boy, probably, at some point, and started falling for him. He'd tried dating women, maybe because he hadn't yet figured out that he preferred men, or maybe because his mother kept pestering him for his dating life every chance she got. He'd put on his skates, time and time again, and faced Ilya at center ice, with hundreds of cameras pointed at them. He'd endured questions about their high-profile rivalry, went into the Metros' locker room never knowing when he'd next have to listen to yet another homophobic joke and, for the longest time, only got to be fully himself when the season schedule required him and Ilya to be in the same city.

Seven years, and Yuna hadn't noticed a thing, not when Shane and Ilya had played on the same All-Star team and nobody had been capable of shutting up about their on-ice chemistry for weeks, not when she'd heard about Ilya visiting Shane in the hospital after Marlow's unfortunate bodycheck, and not even when Shane had been glued to his phone while he'd recovered at his parents' house.

Shane's voice jolted her out of her thoughts. "Ilya likes both."

"Oh," she said, and couldn't help but wonder what would happen if Ilya decided it was easier to be with a woman.

She looked at him, but Ilya wasn't looking at her; he was fiddling with the handle of his mug, biting the inside of his cheek before he, a little reluctantly, said, "Is true, I've been with many women, but..." he paused, turning to look at Shane, "I have only been in love with one person."

Shane gazed back at him and said, quietly, "Same here. Only one."

Seven years.

Yuna felt her eyes stinging with unshed tears. Seven years of hiding, all on his own. Seven years in which Shane hadn't felt like he could open up to his parents. Yuna had always prided herself on her relationship with her son, had boasted about Shane dutifully calling every Sunday evening to her friends when they complained about their own children having wandered off into the world, but evidently it wasn't as good as she'd thought it was if all this time Shane had secretly been seeing someone Yuna had never even thought he could be interested in.

Her sudden need for air overwhelmed her. She forced a quick smile, got out of her chair, and headed out into the front yard. It didn't take long for Shane to join her. He'd brought her cardigan and helped her put it on. Then they stood silently, as Yuna searched for the right words to use to ask for her son's forgiveness.

But Shane beat her to it.

"Mom," he said, his eyes fixed somewhere on the ground, "I need you to know that I did really try. I tried really hard, but, um—" He took a breath, shaking his head. His voice, when he continued, shook, "I just can't help it. And I'm sorry. I—"

Yuna immediately reached out for him. "You have nothing — *nothing* — to apologize for."

Shane's jaw clenched. There were tears in his eyes, but he refused to let them fall. His control, however, was wavering. He blinked, tilting his head back, eyes darting everywhere but at her, so Yuna cupped his cheeks and tried her very best to steady him.

"Look at me. Hey, look at me," she said gently, dropping her hands to curl her fingers around his. Shane blinked once more before he finally met her eyes, his chin quivering. "I am sorry that I made you feel like you couldn't tell me."

The first tear fell, and Shane squeezed his eyes shut. His chest rose, and then stayed that way, like he could keep from crying if he just managed to hold his breath. Yuna squeezed his hands, and Shane's control slipped. Tears caught in his lashes and he quickly wiped them away with shaking hands.

Her own vision blurring, Yuna said, “I’m so proud of you,” and gathered him into a tight embrace. She had to raise herself on her tiptoes and stretch to wrap her arms around his shoulders but somehow, in that moment, Shane felt smaller than he ever had. “Please forgive me.”

Shane curled into her. “I forgive you, mom.” He was shaking with silent sobs. “I love you,” he sniffled into her hair.

“Oh, I love you, too,” she said, holding him close and rubbing her hands over his back, just like she had when was a child.

An hour later, David had the spaghetti ready. Ilya had helped him in the kitchen, which had been strange and a little awkward, but less strange and awkward than it would’ve been had he cooked while Ilya still sat at the kitchen table on his own. And, to David’s surprise, Ilya wasn’t nearly as useless in the kitchen as he’d assumed.

“I was home alone a lot growing up,” Ilya had explained, shrugging, as he swiftly opened two cloves of garlic with his thumb and the edge of a knife.

“Didn’t your parents cook for you?”

“My mother did, when I was young,” Ilya had said, slowly, like he was thinking about what information he was offering. He’d turned to David, then, a glint in his eyes. “I’m adult now. I like food. Real food, not what Shane eats.”

David had laughed. “Yeah, he’s... intense.” Dropping the spaghetti into the boiling water, he’d asked, “What’s your favorite Russian dish?”

“Pelmeni. Kind of like Russian dumpling.” Ilya had fished his phone out of his pocket, typed something into it, and then turned it around to show David a photo of pelmeni. “I’ll make it for you someday.”

David was looking forward to it, but the spaghetti they were currently eating were good, too. Ilya certainly seemed to think so, David thought, as he watched him stuff his face with a wry smile on his face while an exasperated Shane tried to rein back his mother’s thirst for action.

“You’d play for Ottawa?” Yuna asked Ilya, once Shane had shared their plan going forward.

“Yes,” Ilya said, as if it wasn’t a huge deal to willingly sign with a much weaker team. Or maybe Ottawa was just weaker because they were lacking a center like Ilya.

Yuna hummed, which kindled a new argument between her and Shane. David watched Ilya listen to it — he didn’t miss the corners of Ilya’s mouth twitching in amusement — before he skilfully steered the conversation into the direction of Scott Hunter.

Conversation flowed effortlessly, until Shane suddenly pushed away from the table, folded his arms on top of it and rested his forehead against his wrist.

“Shane?” Ilya asked, eyes darting uncertainly at Shane’s parents. Yuna was just about to jump in when Ilya leaned closer to Shane and began rubbing his thigh. “Shane.”

“I’m okay, I’m just freaking out,” Shane mumbled. “I’ll be okay in a second.”

Ilya’s hand rose to Shane’s neck. “Hey, hey. We’re good here.” He glanced up at Yuna and David, as if to make sure he wasn’t overstepping, but when he saw Yuna’s soft smile, he turned back to Shane, leaning even closer. “Your family is here. Your boyfriend is here. You’re good here.”

“My boyfriend?” Shane repeated. His voice was so hopeful and soft that David felt like he was intruding on a private moment. Again.

“I mean, yes,” Ilya said, squeezing Shane’s neck gently, as Shane just stared back at him. “I think so. Probably.”

And then he leaned in, kissing Shane, and Shane didn’t just let it happen; his eyes fluttered shut and he tilted his head up to allow for a better angle, even though it was a simple kiss, short and sweet. Shane blushed a little, which always made his freckles stand out even more, when Ilya brushed his fingertips over his neck as he sat back upright.

“Since rookie season,” Yuna whispered next to him, and David grinned.

Out of the corner of his mouth, he said, “The summer before,” and Yuna breathed out on a laugh in response.

They made plans for dinner, waved goodbye as Shane and Ilya got into the car, and watched them drive away. Yuna turned to him, then, with raised eyebrows.

“You really walked in on them making out?”

End Notes

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