Share a Life

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Share a Life

by spaceyloser

Summary

Rather than stay in Montreal, Shane joined the Ottawa Centaurs when Ilya did.

They are both on the plane when it loses its engine.

Notes

What if Shane had been on the plane when it started to go down?

Ilya was beside Shane, his head turned towards the window, which displayed nothing but endless dark sky. They were flying high (but with low spirits) somewhere between Florida and Ottawa. Ilya, frustrated by the loss, had been quiet. Shane, also frustrated, had been planning. He had his laptop open, studying the plays and various playing styles of his new teammates, trying to figure out where they went wrong.

On paper, they're a damn good team. Wyatt Hayes is a monster in the goal, but no one ever *says that.* Except his own teammates. And Zane Boodram nearly matches Shane in assists that season. Everyone on the team is an impressive player. So why the hell aren't they winning? Why haven't they made it to the playoffs in years?

It didn't make any sense to Shane, and his head was starting to hurt. The light turbulence they had been experiencing, paired with the loud chatter of their teammates a few rows back, was only making it worse.

Shane slid his hand under his glasses, pinching his nose. He did *not* need a migraine right now. But, the stress of the season and his trade, paired with all the bright fucking lights being on-

"Hey," Ilya said, he had turned back around, until he was almost resting on his side, facing Shane. His knee was touching Shane's. That, and sitting together like this, was about as touchy-feely as they got in front of their teammates.

The plan had originally been for Ilya to move to Ottawa, and Shane to stay in Montreal. Except, when Shane came out to his team, about himself, not Ilya, most of them had not been good about it. Including his coach.

Shane realized now how stupid it had been, anyway. Ilya and Shane were in love, they were in it for the long haul. How long could they have kept up that long distance charade? It was for the best, and they were lucky it all worked out, being traded to the same team and all.

Playing for such a rough team was weighing on Shane, though. It didn't help that Montreal had won their game against Pittsburgh that night. He watched the highlights earlier miserably, but texted Hayden to congratulate him on scoring once.

"Hey," Shane dropped his hand, letting his glasses slide back into place. Ilya gave Shane a rare, intimate smile, usually reserved for when they're just waking up and Ilya is impossibly soft and gentle. Shane couldn't help but smile back. His skin prickled with nerves, but it was okay, they were alone in this row.

"We will win next game," Ilya said, confidently. Shane wished he shared these feelings.

Ilya had shared with Shane that he thought their losses might be psychological, that the team just doesn't *believe* in themselves. Shane, someone who cares more about numbers and individual skills, rolled his eyes, as he does at all superstition. He was starting to wonder now, though. They really should be a winning team, there was nothing holding them back. Especially with Ilya and Shane on the roster now.

Fucking Tampa, snuck in with an extra goal right at the end, and Ilya was in the fucking penalty box, because of course he was-

Shane sighed, trying to let it go. Losses always weighed on him, it was something he was working on. Or, more like, Ilya was making him work on it. In their combined trophy room, mostly.

Shane nodded at him, but said nothing. He gathered his papers together and straightened them, just to have something to do. During his shuffling, Ilya's strong hand landed on his wrist.

"Don't worry," Ilya said, smirking a little. "You will still get prize for the goals tonight."

Shane felt himself flush. Ilya patted his wrist, grinning, and took his hand away. Shane missed the weight of it immediately. He wanted nothing more than to be cuddled up to Ilya right now, leeching his body heat from him, maybe petting his hair.

After his former teammates' reaction, Shane was not ready for the Centaurs to know his, and Ilya's, secret. Ilya had been understanding. But in moments like these, when Ilya's curls framed his face just right, and his eyes shone with love (and lust) ...ugh.

Shane dropped his gaze. The plane shook again, earning groans from the back of the cabin. Ilya sat up, retracting his knee.

"Hello, *teammates,"* Shane heard from above. He and Ilya tilted their heads up at the same time.

Bood and Hazy were standing in the row behind theirs, staring down at them mischievously.

"It's still weird to say that, isn't it?" Bood said in Wyatt Hayes' general direction. Hayes shrugged.

"Sure," he said, smiling easily. Hayes was one of Shane's favorite teammates already. He was easy going, and extremely nerdy, which took a lot of the pressure off Shane to act cooler than he was, a performance he put on at Montreal that exhausted him.

"We told you," Ilya started, "it was media thing. Shane what is...?"

"Publicity stunt, mostly," Shane said. Their story was that the media played up their rivalry for some good television. Their teammates mostly accepted that.

Evan Dykstra and Luca Haas moved to the row opposite Shane and Ilya's, effectively bringing most of the party that was in the back of the plane to them. Great.

And, Ilya having the window seat, shouted things at the guys from *across Shane.* Shane couldn't help but feel annoyed (and, maybe a little fond) as Ilya attempted to give Luca Haas tips on a shot he missed in the first quarter. Luca Haas was still in awe Ilya would even talk to him. It was cute, and a little annoying.

Above him, Hazy was leaning over the seats and talking to (at?) Shane about that movie *Dune.* Shane had seen it, so he could mostly hold this conversation with Hazy, until he started talking about his love for the book series and what he was excited for in the second movie.

Bood, standing against the plane wall behind Ilya, effectively trapped in by Hayes, was clearly exasperated by this conversation and was taking a steady stream of sips from his glass of bourbon.

Shane, thankfully, was saved by a bout of turbulence. The plane shook, harder than it had all night, cutting off Hazy's monologue.

The guys laughed. Bood was teasing Haas about gasping loudly. Shane smiled, but he was feeling a little uneasy too. They had to be almost home now. He was beyond ready to feel the wheels touch the ground.

Then, the plane shook again. It shook so hard that Hayes disappeared, Shane heard him hit the floor. Bood, holding onto the seat, was clearly scared but still managing to laugh at Hayes.

The overhead seatbelt light came on. One of the flight attendant's voices came out of the speaker system:

"We're experiencing severe turbulence, please sit down and buckle-"

And then, the plane just dropped.

Shane felt the shriek rip out of his mouth. Later, he would remember the sensation of the leather armrests he dug his fingernails into, and witnessing all their belongings fly around them. He would remember Evan Dykstra praying loudly, almost over the screams of Luca Haas.

They were going to die-in a fucking plane crash. The entire Centaurs team, Ilya-oh god, Ilya-

"Shane!" Ilya was screaming, "Shane!"

"Ilya!"

The lights flickered, Shane, head pressed against the back of the seat, looked to Ilya. He was sure his wide-eyed fear was reflected back in Ilya's gaze. Ilya, with the prettiest blue-green eyes Shane had ever seen-he never told him that, how beautiful his eyes were. Oh god, he never would-

"Shane," Ilya said again, loud enough to hear over the violent shaking and screaming, but quiet, intimate. Shane felt, for a moment, a peace wash through him. But then he remembered his parents, who were not just losing Shane, but Ilya too-

"Shane, I love you. I love you."

Say it again, in Russian. Shane thought, but did not say that aloud, or-maybe he did. Maybe he screamed it. Because Ilya screamed it.

Shane reached for him, Ilya did too, pulling him close.

"I love you, I love you, Ilya."

They just kept saying it. Shane could feel Ilya's hot tears against his neck.

"I don't have any regrets, okay? Not a single one. I would do it all over again."

"Me too," Ilya said. "You are...you are only thing that matters, Shane."

Shane sobbed, and pulled Ilya in for a kiss. He wasn't going to die without feeling his boyfriend's lips on his one last time.

And then, while Shane's brain was tumbling into a blackhole, the plane evened out.

All around them were the sounds of objects clattering to the floor, his teammates attempting to control their breathing, their crying. Someone was talking on the phone, describing what was happening.

Shane pulled back. Ilya and Shane stared at each other, Shane's hands were fisted in Ilya's shirt, Ilya had one on his shoulder, the other on his cheek, stroking over his freckles.

A second later, they felt the sweet relief of wheels on the runway.

Ilya squeezed his eyes shut and dropped his head, saying something quickly in Russian Shane couldn't understand, but he thought Ilya may have been speaking to his mother. He did that, occasionally. When things were hard. Shane wasn't sure what he believed in, but he sincerely believed that Irina was looking out for Ilya in that moment; even if she just existed in Ilya's memories.

Shane dropped his head to Ilya's shoulder. He pushed down the armrest so he could comfortably lean into him. Ilya's hand was in Shane's hair, holding him, rigidly, in place.

He was aware his teammates could see them, if they looked. And, they probably were. Shane didn't care. He *couldn't* care.

They had almost died. They almost *died.*

Montreal all but kicked Shane off their roster. Everyone except JJ and Hayden said good fucking riddance to him. Those assholes tried to make Shane feel small, and it worked. For almost half a season standing beside the man he believed was his soulmate, he could hardly look at him in front of their friends.

Fuck. That.

Fuck all of it. Shane would throw hockey away a million times for this. For Ilya's hand in his hair, the other rubbing his back. For his quiet, whispered words in Russian against his skin.

Shane pressed a kiss to the side of Ilya's neck. Now that it was over, hot tears were rushing down his cheeks. He imagined it-just being over. Nothing. Total, eternal nothing. The years they wasted lay out before Shane in his mind, and it made him feel fucking sick.

The team was ready to deplane. He could see the flashing lights of fire crews and ambulances waiting outside. Everyone seemed okay, thankfully. Later, they would find out they lost an engine, an extremely serious incident. Luckily, they were already nearing Ottawa, and their pilot was a fucking rockstar.

Shane stood, and immediately saw all eyes on Ilya and he.

Haas's eyes were red and puffy, Evan was clutching the cross he wore, still praying under his breath. All the guys looked exhausted and frightened.

Evan and Luca cleared their row first. Ilya picked up his own bag, then Shane's, up off the floor. He wouldn't let Shane take it from him. Shane didn't feel like arguing.

There was stuff everywhere, pens, coats, gloves, fucking broken glass...

The pilot was at the door. He didn't look shaken. All the flight attendants were already off the plane. He wanted to grab the pilot and thank him, shake him, marry him-well, no.
But *something,* but the team was behind him, desperate to get off this death trap.

On the tarmac, Evan dropped to his knees and kissed the no doubt freezing cold and extremely dirty pavement. There were news crews nearby, foaming at the mouth to film their distress.

"Ew, get up, Dykstra," Bood said, sniffling.

"I gotta call Angie," Evan said, "and my mom. Tell them I love them."

"Yeah," Bood said, then glanced over at Shane and Ilya.

They were standing together. Shane had taken his bag back from Ilya. Shane's face was obviously flushed and puffy from crying. Their shoulders were pressed together, but that was the only point of contact.

With everyone off the plane, Wiebe gathered them all. He had his phone to his ear.

"Alright, everyone gather round."

It was loud on the tarmac, and they would surely be kicked out any second. The ambulances were leaving, now that there were no obvious injuries, but the news crews kept rolling, and they looked ready to dive in and beg for interviews.

"In light of, well, that," Their coach said, waving his phone towards the plane, "Team meeting tomorrow instead of tonight. Go home, kiss your loved ones. I know I will."

The guys nodded and muttered, and started clearing the area.

Shane and Ilya didn't bother to pretend like they weren't leaving together. The crowd of athletes left the tarmac together and headed towards their private parking lot. Evan and Luca both were on the phone. Tanner Dillon was too, actively crying while talking to his mom.

Shane was surprised none of the guys were teasing each other for this. Maybe it was still too raw. It certainly was to Shane.

Shane was not surprised, however, when Bood and Hazy followed Shane and Ilya to their cars. They drove their own cars in to keep up appearances, as they usually did, but they were parked beside each other.

Ilya had followed Shane to the driver's side of his SUV. Shane, at first, was confused, but mostly felt grateful. He wasn't ready to be apart from Ilya. Not yet.

He could hardly look at him, his face was so open and honest. So *scared. Every time* he looked at Shane, he visibly softened. That's why when Bood and Hazy approached them, it was so startling. Ilya straightened up, reminding Shane that he was, in fact, about an inch taller than him. (If that!) His face went rigid, Shane knew he was physically biting his tongue. He had confessed to Shane that when he learned that saying, he thought that was something Americans actually did to shut themselves up, so he started doing it too, and the habit stuck.

Well, not really. It's not like Ilya bit back his words often.

"Yes?" Ilya said, waiting. Shane steeled himself, preparing for the worst. His teammates, who he thought of as his friends, no, his brothers, turning their backs on him. Sneering, mumbling comments and laughing under their breath.

Hayden had tried to fight for Shane in the locker room, on the ice, at team meetings. But, it was no use. Shane's sexuality, while it had not affected their team once in the years Shane had played for them, fractured the team. He was blamed for their poor performance the last season he played for them, by the team, and by the coaches.

He was ready to hear it from them now. From Bood, good natured, hilarious Zane Boodram, who Shane knew Ilya considered to be his best friend on the team. From Hazy, the guy who couldn't shut up about Star Trek if you gifted him a wheelbarrow of money.

Suddenly, Bood was swooping in. Shane visibly flinched, but clenched his fists, ready to hit him.

Shane blinked, and Bood had Ilya in his arms.

Shane stared, dumbfounded.

Ilya clearly was too, he had been prepared for a fight. It took a minute for Ilya's hands to connect with Bood's back. Shane could hear him sniffling.

"Aw, fuck it," Hazy said, and then, to Shane's horror, he was being hugged.

Wyatt Hayes was a massive goalie, he was like, 6'5, Shane thought, and weighed maybe two Shane's. He was engulfed immediately. And Shane thought, I don't deserve this, I don't-

Hayes pulled back. Shane held back the tears that had gathered in his eyes.

"That was really scary," Hazy said, which, yeah, damn understatement.

Shane felt his phone buzz in his pocket. It would be hitting the news now, no doubt. He would have to call his parents back soon.

"Are-um. Are you guys leaving together?" Bood asked, glancing over at Ilya's car.

"Yes," Ilya said simply.

Bood nodded.

"We support you," Hazy said, then cringed. "Sorry, that came out wrong-"

Shane's blood had turned to mush in his veins. He knew they were obvious on the plane, that there was no turning back now, and for Hayes to acknowledge it-

"We love you," Hayes said, which Bood cringed at, staring at the earnest face of Wyatt Hayes.

"The team, we're a family. Okay?" Bood said.

Ilya nodded, his shoulders dropped. Shane breathed, there was no fight here, not tonight.

"Okay." Ilya said. Then, "Thank you."

Bood and Hayes finally left them alone, off to warm their respective cars.

"Oh god, Ilya," Shane mumbled, and he was falling against his boyfriend in a very public way, in a very public place. His head pressed against Ilya's shoulder, Ilya didn't hesitate to pull him in. His strong arms enveloped Shane, fierce and protective.

"We're okay," Ilya said, "We're okay. I love you, ya tebya lyublyu."

"ya tebya lyublyu," Shane said back, he was improving his Russian every day. Ilya rewarded him with a kiss on the cheek as he cradled Shane's face in his hands.

Shane drove. They sat in the car for a moment, just enjoying the silence together. Shane's phone started to buzz again.

"Shane. You said you do not have regrets, on the plane. You mean that?"

"Yes," Shane said. "I would board that plane a hundred thousand times, Ilya."

Ilya stared at him.

"You thought we were going to die." Ilya said, his voice choked, tears came a minute later, rolling quickly down Ilya's cheeks and dripping off his chin.

Shane reached across the center console and brushed his tears away. Then, he did what he wanted to do on the tarmac. He pulled his lover in for a kiss.

They drove home quietly. Holding each other. Halfway there, Ilya held up Shane's phone and they talked to Yuna and David. They were shaken. Shane was pretty sure they had both been crying.

"There's something else," Shane said, when he confirmed for the tenth time he and Ilya were unharmed. Shane glanced across the car and caught Ilya's eyes.

"We were not-on the plane." Ilya coughed. "Our teammates heard us..."

Yuna caught on immediately. She remained outraged at what Montreal did to her son. She had taken all of the Montreal Metros merch out of their house the second Shane called her, finally confessing, after weeks of mistreatment, about what had happened. She built a pyre in the front yard of their lake house and burned it all, happily.

"We will deal with it. Tomorrow, call Farah. We have plans in place, if this gets out, remember?"

"Plan A through Z!" David yelled.

"We have a team meeting tomorrow." Shane said. "I'd be surprised if this wasn't on the agenda."

"Call her before and after, and then call me. Okay? But just. Relax, tonight. Try to, okay baby?"

"Okay, mom."

"I love you both," Yuna said. Ilya shifted in his seat.

"Love you," Shane and Ilya said at the same time. Ilya ended the call.

Much much later, in bed, after Ilya had taken Shane out of his body a couple of times, Shane was holding Ilya, his arm around his middle, blonde curls resting on his chest.

"Were you talking to her?" Shane asked, lightly scratching Ilya's scalp. It was after midnight now, they were both bone-tired but struggling to fall asleep. "Your mom?"

Ilya shifted.

"Mhm," he said.

"I felt like..." Shane cringed preemptively, but could not manage to hold himself back, "I felt like she was there. Watching over us. You know?"

Ilya tilted his head up to catch Shane's eyes. Shane smiled at him, small, gentle. He wished, not for the first time, that he could will Irina Rozanov back from the dead.

"Me too," Ilya said. "I always feel her."

"You do?"

He nodded.

"I am...happy, she visit you too." He sounded so tired.

Shane sighed and kissed Ilya lightly.

Tomorrow, they would face their team, together, united.

Holding his boyfriend, laying together after that harrowing night, Shane would go, if the Centaurs wanted him too. He would retire early, if it meant he could hold Ilya's hand, if he could tell him he loved him out loud. He would do anything.

They drove in together that morning, as Ilya's car was still at the airport. A few inches of snow fell overnight, turning everything crisp and clean.

Shane wore his sunglasses on the way in, even though the sky was so overcast it was impossible to find the sun through the grey haze. The sunglasses hid his shifting, unblinking eyes. Shane was terrified about today. He had been trying to hide it from Ilya after Ilya finally managed to get him to stop pacing their kitchen that morning.

Ilya was too, though. They were both shaken after what happened with the Metros. They talked about Bood and Hayes last night. Their show of support meant a lot to Ilya, that was clear, but they could not let go of the past.

Two friends on the team wasn't enough, they knew that.

They were the last ones to arrive. That much was obvious from the parking lot. Shane immediately panicked. Wiebe sent an email late last night about meeting at 10:00 that morning. It was 9:50. Why was everyone so early?

"Oh god," Shane said, putting the Range Rover in park.

"Shane," Ilya started.

"Everyone's already here."

Did Wiebe give the rest of the team a different meeting time? Were they in there discussing...

"It will be okay." Ilya said, he sounded sure, but Shane could tell he was nervous. "They are a good team. Wiebe is a good coach."

"Right," Shane said, "right."

"So, we go in now, okay?"

"Yes." Shane said. "Yes, okay."

Shane squeezed Ilya's hand. Ilya brought their intertwined hands to his mouth and pressed a lingering kiss there. Shane breathed.

"Ya tebya lyublyu," Ilya whispered delicately against his skin.

They were careful not to be touching each other as they walked into the side door that would lead them to the locker room. Ilya walked with his hands shoved in his pockets, Shane mirrored him, his head hanging.

Ilya squared his shoulders, tilted his neck to the right, then the left, and opened the door.

Shane walked in behind him, dreading this, already too hot in his coat.

The locker room was mostly quiet, save for coach Wiebe, discussing Tampa's defense casually with Troy Barrett.

"Are they the last two?" Someone asked.

"You guys know Bood and Haas are both on their own time," Wiebe said, sighing.

Ilya and Shane were both surprised by the lack of, well, immediate reaction. Ilya took up space leaning with his back against the wall near the doors. Shane sat on the bench, in front of him. He was sweating, so he took off his hat and a ran a hand through his hair.

"Hey, Shane," Hayes greeted, throwing a leg over the bench so he could sit facing Shane. "Did I ever finish telling you about *Children of Dune* last night? Before we all almost died?"

"Jesus, Hazy," Someone said.

"Hazy, not the time for your geek shit, okay?" Evan said, clapping him on the shoulder. "We're all tired."

Shane and Ilya had been up after midnight the day before. Having sex, yes, but neither of them got to sleep very easily that night. The whole locker room was filled with similar dark-ringed, thousand-yard stares, including the coach.

Bood came in five after ten. Haas was another ten minutes after that, running through the door desperately clutching a Tim Hortons cup, hair a mess with dark circles deeper than any of them. He was pretty sure the kid was still in his pajamas.

"Sorry I'm late," he announced, frazzled. Bood snickered.

"Just don't make a habit of it, Haas." Ilya cracked a smile and lightly slapped Bood's shoulder.

Every moment that went by without it, *them,* being discussed made Shane feel like the elephant in the room was standing on his fucking chest.

Only, the vibe in the room didn't feel malicious. Or even casually hateful. Shane had noticed a few looks being thrown their way. Troy Barrett looked at Ilya, then Shane, raised his eyebrows and looked away. That was the most blatant stare they had gotten. Shane would have been concerned, because of Troy's past with Dallas Kent, if Shane had not come to know Troy over the season. He was pretty sure he wasn't like Kent. He was also pretty sure he had a crush on their social media manager, he always got a bit moony when Harris was around.

"Okay," Coach said, clapping his hands together to get everyone's attention. "I want to keep this short, there's no practice today, and I know we would all rather be home with our families."

The guys nodded and grumbled out various confirmations.

"First, I want to remind you all that we have a team psychologist, Rosa, and I urge you to make use of her. This was...not to be taken lightly. We all went through a very scary experience, and well, if you need to talk to her, please do so. Take care of yourselves, boys."

Shane saw Ilya nodding. Ilya was going to call his own therapist later that day to make an appointment.

"Rosa will be in her office until three today, and then she will be here regularly, when we are here, she is here, okay? Stop in, any time."

The tone shifted. The coach had the projector pulled down.

"Alright guys, gonna keep this as brief as possible. We need to go over it while it's fresh."

He started going over plays from last night.

Shane's shoulders dropped. The lights were dim so they could see the clips from Wiebe's presentation. He was showing where Ilya missed a goal, and then why Luca tripped while chasing the puck.

Shane felt Ilya's strong hand on his shoulder. He was relieved, Shane could tell. Hell, Shane was too. And Shane knew it wasn't dark enough in the room for his teammates to miss it, but Shane put his hand overtop Ilya's. He felt like crying.

When the presentation was over, the lights came back up, Shane instinctively dropped his hand but Ilya didn't.

"Alright." Wiebe said, "Remember to talk to Rosa. Your mental health matters just as much as your physical health."

Shane was dumbfounded, you never, *ever* would have heard those words come out of the mouth of a Metros coach.

"You can all go home. Rozanov and Hollander, though, a word in my office?"

The locker room went dead silent. No one moved.

Wiebe looked around, surprised by this reaction.

"All good, just take a minute, boys," Wiebe said.

Shane stood up and robotically followed him, Ilya close behind.

Conversation in the locker room started back up as soon as the door to Wiebe's office was shut. Wiebe wasn't sitting, so Shane and Ilya didn't either.

"It's complicated, having players on the same team romantically involved," Wiebe said. *Here it comes,* Shane thought.

"Not complicated," Ilya said. "Very simple, we play together well. That is all that matters."

"You do, having you both on the line might actually get a banner hung from the rafters someday."

"Yes," Ilya said. "Not someday, this season."

Wiebe smiled wearily at Ilya but did not correct him. He was ready to say something else when Shane's mouth opened, and words just started falling out.

"Coach, with all due respect, our relationship does not affect our performances on the ice. We've been doing this a very long time. We have never cheated for each other, we've never thrown games, we are professionals." Shane's voice was steady, if a little heated. He was red in the face, he was pretty sure, but this had to be said. It was all bubbling up inside him, threatening to choke him if he didn't say it. When Yuna learned about them and asked Shane if he had ever let Ilya win, he felt sick. He could not stand the thought of someone thinking he was anything less than an upstanding NHL professional.

"I didn't think so. My wife never lets me or the children win at monopoly. You ever hear three little girls cry after landing on a hotel on Boardwalk? Listen, the point is, I want you to know that the team supports you. By "the team," I mean me. But, the guys are...they're good guys. I think most of them will be okay, and if they aren't I want to know about it, okay?"

Shane was floored.

"Yes," Ilya said, answering for them both. "We will tell you."

They wouldn't, though. Shane could tell that from the look he exchanged with Ilya. They would handle it themselves.

"I want to clarify, this is still a secret, yes? The team knows but not the world at large?"

"As you said," Ilya started, "It is too complicated. They would not understand."

"I think you're right. But you should be prepared, with a team this large it's likely it will get out eventually."

Shane and Ilya shared a look.

"There's nothing we can do about that now," Shane said finally. And it was true. The cat was out of the bag.

"No," Ilya said, his mouth twitched before spreading into a gentle smile. Shane couldn't help but smile back, and, in front of Wiebe, take his hand.

Wiebe raised his eyebrows.

"How long has this been going on, anyway?" Wiebe asked.

"A very long time," Ilya responded, not taking his eyes off Shane. "*Not long enough,"* Ilya said quietly, in Russian. Shane pinked, he loved him.

The locker room had quieted down, the guys must have been filing out.

"You should both see Rosa. This secret...it is a big one to keep."

Shane nodded at Wiebe, who dismissed them a moment later.

Most of the guys were still in the locker room.

They were staring at the coach's office door, waiting for them to come out. Shane and Ilya had still been holding hands.

Upon exiting, everyone, a moment too late, pretended to be busy with other tasks. Haas opened and closed his locker, Hazy started fucking whistling and staring off into space.

Shane and Ilya looked at each other.

Now? Shane thought.

Ilya shrugged. *Why not?*

"Shane is gay, I am bisexual. We are in a relationship. Who has questions?"

Three hands went up.

"Hazy," Ilya said, calling on him.

"Were you saying I love you in Russian on the plane? I've been trying to learn Russian."

Ilya stared at him.

"Why the fuck are you trying to learn Russian?"

"Because it sounds so cool when you talk! It was Luca's idea!" Luca looked outraged at this accusation and blushed scarlet.

"You try to learn Russian and do not tell your Russian captain?"

"It was supposed to be a surprise."

Ilya waved his free hand, annoyed. Shane was deeply amused by this.

"Next question," Ilya said.

"You actually didn't answer-" Hazy was cut off.

"Young, what do you want, after fucking up all your goals last night?"

"Dickhead," Young said. "Shane does this mean you didn't actually date Rose Landry?"

"Oh fuck off with the fucking Rose Landry-"

"We dated," Shane said. "Now we're friends."

"I have a question," that was Tanner Dillon, the man Ilya described as "one of Ottawa's weakest players."

Ilya and Shane stared, waiting.

"Did you guys ever let each other win?"

"No," Shane and Ilya said at the same time, firmly.

Dillon shrugged. "Okay."

The locker room turned away from them, grabbing their things and getting ready to leave.

"One more thing," Wiebe startled them with his authoritative tone, but he was leaning casually against the doorframe of his office. "This is going to be sort of an open secret. It does not leave the locker room, okay? The league might make trouble. Trouble we don't need. Especially because your captain intends to win the Stanley Cup this year. Got it?"

A chorus of "yes coach" sounded off. Bood started excitedly describing the massive cabinet they would build in the locker room offices to display the cup. He started to ask Ilya about what kind of wood would be best for the job, and obviously it would be oak-

"Uh, I have another question." Young announced, raising his hand again.

"What is it?"

"Does this mean Rose Landry is single?"

The locker room erupted in teasing jabs aimed at Young. Shane couldn't help but smile. He felt a little light headed. He never imagined a universe in which this, coming out, sharing his

relationship with Ilya, would be positive. Where it would be met with this much warmth.

He knew the world as a whole would not react like his team just had, but he was grateful for this, for the simplicity of their responses, for their firm support, for Ilya's hand in his.

Shane and Ilya left not long after. It was snowing in Ottawa, as it often was. Shane let the windshield wipers brush off the flurries when Ilya grabbed him.

Ilya pressed kisses to Shane's face. His cheeks, his forehead, his mouth, nose, chin, jaw.

He was crying, Shane could feel it. Shane was a little bit too.

"We did it," Shane said, a little stupidly. "We came out to them."

"They are good guys. Good teammates," Ilya said, wiping a tear off of Shane's cheek. He leaned in, feeling Ilya's stubble scratch him.

"They have our backs, I think?"

"Mm. Wiebe too."

"Yeah, god, what a trip," Shane laughed, Ilya smiled at him. Shane was deliriously happy and he was certain that the feeling would never go away.

"I am very in love with you," Ilya said, grinning widely. He was being so sweet; Shane was soaking in it. "moya lyubov."

Shane breathed, grinning broadly, they looked like two robbers who just got away with the loot.

"Ya tebya lyublyu, Ilya."

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