

## Cut-throat

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# Cut-throat

by [Tamystardust](#)

## Summary

Shane heard the blade coming down right by his ear. The *schlick* of it as it sliced through the ice, echoing in the arena, the place eerily silent in a way Shane had never witnessed before.

Then, a gasp.

Or, Shane Hollander takes a blade to the throat.

## Notes

So, I initially didn't want to write for this fandom, because I didn't want to do any research about hockey.

And yet.

I did the minimum amount required of research, if it can even be called that. Also, english is not my first language, so it's a real mixed up here. If you are an actual hockey connoisseur, I'm sorry and I hope it won't take you out of the story too much. As for the others, you are welcome to join me in my remaining blissful ignorance.

I also want to apologize to any medical experts (I am really accumulating them here), as I have only been to the Grey's Anatomy school of medical knowledge. I am really leveraging the "every case is different" here, so hopefully, it won't also take out of the suspension of disbelief.

If you are both a hockey expert and medical expert... I'm sorry.

Last but not least, this fic is finished, just have some editing left. I'll try to update every few days.

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

# Chapter 1

## Shane

It was a stupid accident. It was so stupid. The stupidest. Matti Jalo had not even tried to push him in the barriers on purpose, just tried to get the puck back, or at least stop Shane from scoring. Shane had even seen him coming from across the right side of the rink.

He knew where all the other Admirals were, Scott Hunter right on his heels. Maybe that was what freaked out Shane. He didn't feel *freaked out* but something must have spooked him, because he did a weird one-eighty, he was pretty sure his skate stammered, or maybe he twisted his knee, or his ankle.

Shane didn't know, just that he went down more dramatically than necessary, half pressed in the barriers, and Matti Jalo had been coming at full speed. And maybe there was something wrong with the ice, because Shane watched the Admiral defenseman's eyes widen under his helmet, unable to slow down, before slamming into the barriers, right above Shane's head.

Shane heard the blade coming down right by his ear. The *schlick* of it as it sliced through the ice, echoing in the arena, the place eerily silent in a way Shane had never witnessed before.

Then, a gasp.

Followed by a cry, a scream, and wailing.

But Shane didn't have time to focus on that because then, Scott Hunter slid to his knees, something wild in his eyes as he lowered himself by Shane's side, his hands coming to grasp him.

Hayden appeared above his head, and Shane wanted to reassure him, because Hayden had already removed his helmet, and he was crying. Shane couldn't remember if he had ever seen Hayden cry before.

He wanted to tell them he felt *fine*. He knew what had happened, could guess easily as he had seen it on screen once. Never finished the video, too gutting to bear to watch.

Even with the black growing on the edges of his vision, Shane felt fine. He wasn't even in any pain. He wanted to tell them, to reassure them.

He opened his mouth, but it seemed it was too much effort after his tumble. He hoped he didn't get another concussion. Well, Hayden was holding his head straight so, at least, Shane wouldn't be making it worse.

Under his hand, there was a wrist, and he only noticed then he had been holding onto Scott Hunter, who himself was holding onto him, hand pressed against his throat.

*Fuck.*

Even if Shane felt fine, the impending terror at the thought of dying gripped him at the throat, which he thought might be ironic. He wasn't sure in which way yet, but he felt like Ilya would find it funny, in a morbid way.

*Ilya.*

If for the first time in his life, Shane was scared to die, the possibility of leaving Ilya behind was excruciating.

Would someone tell him? Shane's parents weren't even in the country. Apart from them, no one knew. And no one would probably ever know.

## **Ilya**

The Raiders had been kicked out of the playoffs on the first round, and Ilya wasn't mad about it. Maybe a bit disappointed, but it wasn't the end of the world. Sure it was his last year with them, the announcement he was going to Ottawa already public, but the time spent apart from Shane always more difficult.

Watching the game from his house in Boston with Svetlana was her idea.

*"I don't care he's with you, he's still so much fun to watch. He's really one of the best,"* she had said in Russian as they settled on his sofa.

*"Not better than me,"* Ilya had replied, without any heat or meaning. She had snorted, and he had gasped in offense.

It was the beginning of the second period, and Shane had gotten the puck from one end of the rink to the other without breaking a sweat. The camera was far enough that they could see where the other players were, and who would be trying to intercept the fastest hockey player in the league.

*Spoiler alert:* none did.

Fossil Scott Hunter was not far behind, but his ancient knees couldn't catch up with Shane Hollander, probably wouldn't even have when Scott had been at his prime. Hell, even Ilya struggled to catch Hollander on most days. Thankfully, he was better in everything else. It wasn't his fault he was big Russian.

Matti Jalo really thought he had a shot at getting Hollander, readying himself to splatter him against the barriers, but Shane had seen him coming from a mile away, he would avoid it easily.

Or maybe not.

Because Hollander sent the puck towards the net, scoring neatly because he was Shane Hollander. But the rest of the players didn't seem to notice straight away, Scott Hunter attempting to catch the puck before it went, instead tapping Shane on the side of one of his skates and getting him to stumble.

That wasn't very sportsmanship of *geriatric* Hunter, but Ilya knew enough of the man that it was obviously not a dirty move but an accident.

And apparently, all the Admirals are slow and *decrepit*, because Matti Jalo didn't seem to notice the puck was gone and Shane had scored, because he didn't slow down before slamming into Shane, already down on the ice.

Ilya, so familiar with the rink, who had been playing hockey for more than half of his life, knowing the risks and the dangers of it and laughed in their faces anyway, scooched closer to the edge of his sofa, heart rate picking up.

“*Oh my god,*” Svetlana gasped next to him, bringing her hands to cover her mouth, her eyes widening as crimson filled the screen.

Ilya couldn’t see clearly, everything blurring and narrowing, already standing up to get a better look, but he still couldn’t tell the difference with the red of the Admirals’ uniform as Scott Hunter threw himself down, between Shane and the camera, leaning over the Captain of the Metros.

At some point in the middle of all that, Matti Jalo had fallen on his ass, looking back at Hollander’s upper body, hidden from this angle, looking haggard. He extended a hand, shaky, towards Hunter, or maybe Hollander, but suddenly, Hayden Pike was there, pulling him back and away, standing by Scott Hunter’s side, helmet discarded on the way there. The camera zoomed in on his face, the only one visible from the side, and he was crying.

Hayden Pike was crying on the ice, standing over the body of his Captain.

The world spun around Ilya, his house in Boston fading to black as he watched Shane Hollander bleed on the ice in New York.

He was out of the door, car keys in hand as the darkest thoughts swallowed him whole.

## **Yuna**

Yuna Hollander was drinking a margarita and relaxing on her balcony in Cabo, and definitely not watching hockey, thank you very much, David.

Not that he had forbidden her, because *as if* that was something that anyone could do.

*“The reviews say they have good internet, so you don’t have to worry about missing any games,” he had said matter-of-factly.*

*“That’s not all that matter,” she had replied with a frown, offended he thought that was all she cared about.*

*“Right... sure,” he had chuckled to himself, and so she had taken it as a challenge. And Yuna loved challenges, especially when it was about proving her husband wrong.*

So, while David was lying on the bed doing some crosswords or maybe it was sudoku, she was bathing in the late afternoon sun and absolutely not following the Admirals vs. the Metros’ game. Her phone still *dinged!* every now and then because she had an alert for anything related to *Shane, not hockey*, but she didn’t pay it any mind. She had seen him win the Cup three times already, it would be fine to miss a couple of games on the way to win it a fourth time while her and David were on holiday.

She sighed in relaxation, closing her eyes and just letting the warmth spread over her face.

*Ding*

*Ding*

*Ding*

*Ding, ding, ding, ding, ding!*

There was no reason for the sudden panic that flooded through her. Shane must have gotten another hat trick, beat another record, like her baby always did. Because he was that good.

She still checked, because she was a mom before a hockey fan.

The *dings* had not stopped, only going faster, and she heard David moving inside the room, coming through the door, looking at her with worry etched on his face.

*Shane Hollander critically injured–*

“What is—“

Yuna didn't even let David ask, pushing past him to turn on the TV.

It was already on ESPN, because she had taken a look earlier that day while her husband was having his shower— it didn't matter.

Because on the large TV screen was a news alert, while Yuna watched her son, *her baby* fall onto his side before another hockey player ran into him, *stepped on him*.

There's barely any blood before the replay was cut, showing now the emptying arena, as the game had been suspended until further notice, while Shane Hollander, Captain of the Montreal Metropolitan was transported to New York Presbyterian.

## **Scott**

Scott Hunter was having one of the worst days of his life.

Scott loved hockey, always had been his escapism. So, sure it meant a lot to him, and obviously the fans, but at the end of the day, it was just *a game*. A sport like many others, which had its own dangers, but like... it was just *a sport*.

No one entered the rink expecting to die. He didn't, at least, never crossed his mind much. He knew it was different for his people in the stands, Kip always worried when he got checked too hard in the barriers, but that was all part of the game. He got checked, he checked back and that was the end of it.

Two years ago though, everyone had seen the video of that college hockey league kid who got his throat cut by a blade during a friendly game. Freak accident, during a scrum. Someone from his team.

Didn't even make it to the hospital.

Tonight, the Admirals were playing the Montreal Metros, on their own turf at Madison fucking Square Garden. Both Admirals and Metros struggling on their own, but both teams still managed to make it to the second round of the playoffs.

It happened so fast. *So fast*. One moment, he was trying to recover the puck from Hollander, never letting pessimism get to him that it was an impossible task. The hold on his stick loosened a bit too much, sliding between his fingers. It shook, tapped against Hollander's skate and the Metros' Captain went down, puck already through the net.

Scott had seen Matti, had hoped together they could intercept Hollander before he could score. Everything happened at once, when the kid hit the ice, and Matti was already there, coming full force.

They had drills, how to handle that kind of situation, keep everyone safe.

Again, *it was just a game*. Friendly banter, scrums and stuff, but no one *really* wished death on another player.

But Scott didn't have time, the muscle memory of preventing an accident to happen reacting at the same time as he *watched it happen*. Absolute horror, already coming down to his knee as Matti's skate slid along Shane Hollander's neck.

Scott grabbed Shane by the throat, and for a euphoric moment, everything was fine. Shane looked at him, surprise all over his face, but looking otherwise *okay*.

Until Scott started to feel it, viscosity sipping between his fingers, into his hand. Hollander grabbed his wrist, expression going from surprise to confusion.

He wanted to say something, maybe reassure Hollander, tell him he would be okay, that everything would be alright, but Hayden Pike skidded in then, pushing Matti who had been trying to sit up, reach towards Hollander, terror etched in his traits.

Scott wanted to be a good captain, *a good friend*, reassure Matti that everything would be alright, but in the same way he didn't find the words to lie to Hollander, he couldn't lie to Matti either.

Pike did it for the both of them.

"Hey, hey, you're good Hollzy, it's fine, you're okay— no, don't speak, it's okay, you're fine, you're fine."

Maybe Hollander would be more inclined to believe it if Pike wasn't sobbing while talking, gasping for air, mirroring his captain lying on the ice.

Hollander's eyes, getting glassy now, turned back to Scott. The hand around his wrist was losing strength, not a grasp anymore, barely hanging.

Hollander's mouth moved, but no sound came out, or maybe Scott simply couldn't hear it between the litany Pike was repeating, the crowd crying and screaming around them.

Scott leaned forward, closer to Hollander's face, the pressure against his throat intensifying, and in another life, he would have been scared he was crushing Hollander's airways. But in this life, he was trying to crush his cut artery, to no avail.

"... *lee-a*," Hollander breathed out as Scott watched his eyelids grow heavier, then close.

## Chapter 2

### Chapter Notes

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

#### Yuna

Yuna had shown the video of her son dying to two people already, and she wasn't against showing it a third time.

It had been the only way for them to get from the hotel to the airport in record time, and for anyone at the airport to help them get on the first plane leaving for New York.

The girl behind the desk who had said that all the flights for the rest of the day were full couldn't be older than twenty-five, like Shane. She was doing her job, Yuna knew that. She was simply following her training to handle belligerent people.

Yuna had the stream of live news on her phone since they had packed their bags and left, probably forgetting half of their stuff in the process, but Yuna couldn't give less of *a fuck*. So when she pulled the phone out and pointed at her baby getting his throat sliced for the hundredth time, she got exactly the reaction she expected as horror descended upon the girl and her manager that had appeared in the last forty seconds.

Now, they were waiting for their priority boarding, after showing the video to another airline worker that was just doing their job.

But David was sobbing, hands covering his mouth as he tried to keep it quiet. And they still had not heard anything from New York Presbyterian.

Two hours.

It had been two hours, and no one knew if Shane Hollander was still alive. She had gone through the entire hierarchy of the hospital, and no one could tell her anything about her son. She had tried to figure out if maybe he had been taken to another hospital, but it had been confirmed Shane had arrived at Presbyterian.

*Not dead on the way.*

After speaking to Shane's coach, who failed to have any more news, Yuna returned to sit next to David as she scrolled through her contact to find out who else could help.

David heaved a gasp, and not for the first time, Yuna felt the edge of despair take her at throat, but she couldn't. Not yet. Not when she had a job left to do.

Not looking at him, she reached a hand and grasped his wrist, squeezing it. It wasn't much, not enough, but she couldn't be his wife right now.

"What if," David started, gasping for air, "what if he spent his life hiding who he was. Who he loves. What if he never gets to be with Ilya."

Her husband wasn't talking loud enough that she worried he would be heard, but *she* heard him loud and clear.

Once again, she was gripped by heartbreak and grief, this time on behalf of her son, and the man he loved and loved him back.

"Ilya—" David gasped, as if the thought had not crossed his mind before.

In his defence, it had not crossed Yuna's either.

"We don't even have his number," she said, hoarsely. David's sob echoed around the high ceilings. "But I know who might."

## **Scott Hunter**

There was still blood under Scott's fingernails. He had managed to get a shower before heading to the hospital, and yet, he couldn't get rid of all the blood. It had marred his uniform, and he had left it in the middle of the locker room for anyone else to deal with, the red only darkening the Admiral uniform.

He didn't need to be there, but no one on his team stopped him. Actually, he kept getting messages from everyone, including people on other teams in the league, to ask him if there were any news.

There wasn't.

The only other person present was Hayden Pike, still in his Metros uniform, whose face was deformed by pain, tears still streaming down his face in complete silence.

Scott was about to ask Pike if anyone else was coming when his phone rang with an unknown number.

And normally, he would dismiss it. He should dismiss it, it was probably press or some scrounging piece of shit. But something was nagging at the back of his mind that *he should* pick up.

“Hi?”

“*Scott Hunter? This is Yuna Hollander.*”

“Mrs Holl—“

“*I know. I just need something. I know Ilya Rozanov sent you a message after you won the Cup last year, is that correct?*”

Her tone was so... definitive. Not like she was harsh, or emotionless. Quite the opposite, like she was working *really hard* to keep the emotions at bay.

“Yeah... yeah, it’s true,” Scott confirmed, nodding like she could see him.

“*Can you give me his number?*”

“Uh, what?”

“*I know it is a strange request, but it is really important. Please.*”

She didn’t beg. She implored.

“I’ll sent it to you immediately.”

Once he hung up and sent Rozanov’s number to Yuna Hollander, half in a trance, Scott glanced at Pike, to see if he had heard anything of the exchange. But the Metros’ left wing was lifting his head up from between his knees, only then looking at Scott when he probably felt his gaze on him.

“Is there... is there anyone else coming?” Scott asked, not just for conversation, but gauging if Pike would *know* about his friend and Captain.

“Uh?”

“Anyone else who would want news about Shane?”

Pike looked confused, almost offended at Scott asking stupid questions until realisation dawned on him.

“Fuck! Fuck, Lily— he has a girl in Boston, *Lily*,” Pike said as he pulled his phone out, scrolling through it. “I don’t know her, I don’t have her number. Fuck, and I don’t have Shane’s phone, it’s still at the arena—“

“I’m sure she would know by now,” Scott attempted to comfort him.

## **Yuna**

They just had stepped onto the plane when Yuna got Ilya’s phone number.

“Can’t believe we didn’t have it,” she hissed half to herself, half for David who pushed their carry-ons in the overhead lockers.

She called the number immediately after sitting down.

It rang for long enough she thought he wouldn’t answer, until—

“Hello.”

The voice was, if stern, also definitely feminine. Yuna’s chest tightened, bile rising, but— *no*. She had met Ilya, albeit for a short period of time. Sure, she had learned about him recently, but Shane had been in love with him for a decade (or so). And Ilya loved him back.

“This is Yuna Hollander—“

“He’s gone,” the voice replied instantly, going from closed off to desperate. “We watched it happen live, he grabbed his car keys and he left immediately. He forgot— he didn’t take his phone, I don’t even know how far he is right now.”

Yuna took a deep inhale, heard it get caught in her throat as the tears she had been working so hard at keeping down burnt at the back of her eyes.

“Okay,” she said.

“We’re friends– I’m Svetlana,” the feminine voice said. “Ilya and I, we’re childhood best friends. We grew up together. He never explicitly told me about... but I know. I’m sorry about Shane, Mrs Hollander. Is he okay?”

“We don’t know,” Yuna said, defeated. “We don’t know anything, just that he made it to the hospital and is in surgery, has been for hours now. Can you tell him that? If you hear from him first, can you tell Ilya that?”

“I will,” Svetlana rushed to reply. “I promise I will.”

“If he left when it happened–” Yuna said, looking at her watch.

“–he still has an hour and a half left,” Svetlana finished. “If I get to speak to him before you do, I’ll tell him. Or I’ll give him your number and you can tell him yourself.”

Svetlana was rambling, Yuna could tell, but her care was clear through the phone, and it warmed something in Yuna. She was happy her boys weren’t completely alone in this secret. Not anymore.

“We’re on the plane right now, they are boarding. I’ll have the wi-fi on so the hospital can reach me, and I’ll try to keep everyone updated.”

“Who is Shane’s medical proxy if you aren’t present?” Svetlana asked, and Yuna liked her straightforwardness as well as her practicality.

“Uh, no one. I’ll call the hospital–”

“Put Ilya–”

“Yes. He doesn’t have his phone,” she grunted, rubbing her eyes. “But it’s fine, they can tell him when he arrives.”

“I said he still has an hour and a half left, but it might just be an hour,” Svetlana then said carefully, sheepishly.

“I don’t want to know how he drives. If he kills himself before he gets to New York, I’ll bring him back to life and kill him myself this time.”

## **Scott Hunter**

Hollander had been in surgery for almost three hours at this point. *Three fucking hours*. It was the middle of the night, but it felt like all of New York was awake and waiting with a batted

breath.

More people kept reaching out to him, Kip offering to join him, but Scott didn't feel like he could right now. His mind was spinning with everything at stake, not just Hollander's *literal* life in the balance, but also the conversation with Yuna Hollander still hanging over his head.

Next to him, Pike had been joined an hour ago by a woman Scott assumed was his wife. Her eyes were also red, but she was holding onto him, keeping him upright as Hollander's best friend, who apparently wasn't aware of maybe the biggest secret someone could have, crumbled more and more upon himself.

Half of the Admirals were still at the arena, apparently. Carter was the spokesperson for them, trying to keep Scott from being overwhelmed by everyone asking for news. It didn't really work, Scott feeling *extremely* overwhelmed.

Matti was apparently going through a nervous breakdown, and both the coach and the medical team were thinking of sending him to the hospital too.

Scott felt like shit, not being present for his friend and team member, but he didn't know if he could be good for Matti right now.

He said as such to Kip through text, when he suddenly heard the scrapping of a chair at the same time as what sound almost like a roar.

"What the fuck are *you* doing here!" Pike *growled*, and Scott followed his gaze to see Ilya Rozanov making his way towards them.

The usually hulking Russian, always walking with some sort of swagger, looked haggard, eyes hollow and mouth ajar, looking around the place like he was expecting a banner announcing Hollander's health status.

He didn't reply to Pike, Scott wasn't even sure he even heard him, which got Pike to take a step in his direction.

His wife grabbed him at the same time Scott stood up between them. It seemed to take Rozanov out of his torpor.

"What— what is result?" Rozanov asked sluggishly, Russian accent stronger than Scott ever heard it.

"Wha— *the game*?" Pike asked, offense so massive his face turned red.

"We haven't heard, yet," Scott replied, gentler. "He's been in surgery for— three hours at this point. We don't know anything more." Rozanov's expression twisted with grief, and that

seemed to take Pike out of his rage, now standing there in total disbelief. But Scott didn't have time to focus on him, because if Scott was guessing right, the Russian was going through anyone worst nightmare. Any *closeted queer person* worst nightmare. "Have you spoken to Yuna Hollander?" Scott asked then, putting a hesitant hand on Rozanov's shoulder. He wasn't sure how it would be received, as any other time, the man would probably rip his arm off his shoulder. Instead, Rozanov looked back, unseeing. "She asked for your number, I gave it to her, I hope it's alright--"

"Yes," Rozanov nodded once.

"Have you talked to her?" Maybe she had more news than they did.

Rozanov suddenly patted himself, no jacket in sight, just a worn-out hoodie and joggers, socks with slides and nothing else on him.

"Don't have phone. I forgot it--" Rozanov's face scrunched into something pained, his large body starting to fold on himself, about to fall apart but Scott held him up by the shoulder.

"It's fine, take mine. They were getting on the plane, but we said we would keep each other updated."

Rozanov gave him a nod as Scott gave him his phone, already calling Yuna Hollander. Scott heard Yuna answer immediately, voice muffled.

"Hunter?" she asked anxiously.

"Yuna," Rozanov gasped.

"Oh, *baby*..."

Scott refused to listen to any more of it as, terrifyingly, Ilya *Fucking* Rozanov broke into silent tears.

And if he had been wondering before, Scott was now sure of it, as the entirety of his interaction with either Hollander or Rozanov were put back into perspective.

Girl in Boston, Pike had said. *Lily*.

...lee-a

*Ilya*

Fuck. *Fuck*.

Scott turned towards the Pikes, both looking at the exchange. If Hayden Pike looked like his world was completely uprooted, his wife looked devastated, as she had gotten it before her husband did.

“Can I borrow your phone? I need to call someone.”

It was as if Scott had spoken a foreign language, because Pike looked at him like he couldn’t hear him.

“Of course, here, take mine,” his lovely wife said.

“Thanks, thank you,” Scott said with a nod, before typing a number he knew by heart.

“*Hello?*”

“Hey... *hey*,” for the first time Scott folded, tears springing to his eyes, covering them with his hand, “hey, I need you’re here with me,” he articulated.

“*I’m on my way*,” Kip replied, door already closing somewhere behind him.

## Chapter End Notes

the only plot point I am asking you to ignore is for the Hollanders not having Ilya's number. Even to me it felt wrong, but I liked what I could do with it plot-wise. Also, I had to rewatch the show for that (I know, hardship), but Ilya said he sent a message to Scott after he came out, but didn't precise if it was a text message or an email, so another liberty I took.

Anyway, hope you enjoyed it! It's gonna get worse before it gets better >=)

# Chapter 3

## Chapter Notes

I am incredibly touched by the response I got for the first two chapters of this fic, and I hope I won't disappoint you with the rest. Thank you very much for all the comments, it means a lot to me!

More medical inaccuracies, as I put my poor Shane in a sticky situation, and I need to get him out through the magic of \*rainbow\* yaoi \*rainbow\*

Hope you'll enjoy it!

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

### Scott Hunter

“Shane Hollander?”

Everyone looked up when, after four hours without any news about Hollander, a doctor stood in front of their little group.

They moved at once, like they shared a hivemind, standing up and gathering around the woman in scrubs holding a clipboard. She didn't seem surprised by their intense reaction, instead her eyes shifting from each of them to the other.

“I'm Doctor Chapman. Are you here for Shane Hollander?” she repeated, quizzically.

“Is he okay?” Pike asked first.

“I'm sorry, I can only disclose information to his family or a medical proxy,” she said with a wince.

“His parents are on a plane right now, on their way here,” Scott explained, as Kip stayed back but still holding his hand.

“I'm his best friend, maybe he put me as proxy? Hayden Pike?” Pike said, trying to take a peek at the clipboard. Doctor Chapman checked for herself.

“Sorry, the only medical proxy I've got there is Ilya Rozanov?”

Scott thought Rozanov was going to pass out, but with an impressive fit of strength, he schooled his expression and nodded.

“Is me, I’m Ilya Rozanov.”

Scott wondered if anyone was going to check that, or if she was going to take his word for it. To give it to her, his accent was so sharp and thick, Scott himself would have believed the statement if he didn’t know about him.

“Do you want to talk privately?” Doctor Chapman offered, glancing at the rest of them, and Pike was *absolutely* about to set the hospital on fire, already opening his mouth to argue when Rozanov replied.

“No, they can hear.”

Thank god, because even if Scott didn’t feel like he had a right to know about Hollander’s medical information, he probably would have joined Pike into throwing a tantrum.

“Shane Hollander is alive,” she announced then, and their sighs of relief sounded closer to sobs. “The blade nicked his carotid artery, and I’m not going to lie to you, it was touch-and-go out there at one point. We lost him on the table for a bit, but we managed to bring him back. He lost *a lot of blood*, and it was difficult to repair his artery while trying to keep him stable. We are bringing him out of surgery now, but he is not out of the woods completely yet. The next twenty-four hours are critical, and...”

She stopped herself to take a deep inhale, before releasing a shaky exhale.

“And what?” Pike urged her.

“You need to prepare yourself.”

After the announcement that Hollander was alive, Scott had felt the entire weight of the world lift from his chest, euphoria spreading through his blood, on the verge of bursting either into laughter or into tears.

But now, they were back to square one.

“Have you called his parents?” Scott asked, his own voice coming muffled as no one else in their group reacted, apart from Kip crushing his hand right now. Or maybe Scott was crushing Kip’s, it was hard to tell.

“No, we’re going to do that now,” she said gently, at the same time Pike asked, “can we see him?”

Scott could barely hear him over the incessant ringing, so he turned towards the Metros’ left wing, who had lost all of the colours on his face.

“I’m sorry, because he’s going to the ICU, only family can see him.”

“Ilya is his medical proxy,” Hayden Pike’s wife interjected then, voice stuffy as tears ran along her cheeks.

Scott then turned towards Rozanov, who had now a blank expression on his face, like he wasn’t present with them anymore.

“I’m sorry, it doesn’t work like that, only the family can authorize—”

“His parents are on a plane,” Pike cried out. “He’s going to die in the next few hours and *he’s going to be alone?*”

“No,” Rozanov suddenly said, and he was shaking his head, eyes closed.

The energy across their group was turning as Pike’s words echoed between them.

“Call them,” Scott suddenly pocketed his phone out, Yuna’s recently added number already on the screen, pressing it before the doctor could refuse.

She gave Scott a heavy look, but she was braver than any of them, as she took the phone and a deep breath at once.

“Hello, Mrs Hollander, I’m doctor Chapman...”

Scott couldn’t listen in, Kip pulling him out so he could take a breather, as he simply couldn’t listen to the doctor repeating to Yuna Hollander that her only child, *maybe* had less than twenty-four hours to live, and she was on a plane and not here, and—

“We’re gonna get you in,” Pike’s determined voice cut through the spiral going on in Scott’s head. Both he and Kip turned to watch Pike grabbing Rozanov by the shoulders, grasp tight and probably painful, but the determination on Pike’s face didn’t leave room for argument.

Rozanov was *white* as snow, his face gaunt as if he had lost all of his weight in the span of few seconds.

“Mister Rozanov?” Doctor Chapman called then, getting all their attentions back on her, as she extended Scott’s phone to him. “Mrs Hollander would like to talk to you. But when you’re ready, you can go see Mr Hollander.”

Not really relief, but something adjacent washed over them.

They didn’t win. Shane Hollander, already one of the greatest hockey players of all time, with so many opportunities to break even more of Scott’s records, might still die at twenty-six years old, from a freak accident on the ice.

He might die tonight while being in the closet, never having been free of the shackles of the very still present homophobia in hockey and sports in general.

He might die and leave another one of the greatest hockey players of all time, also in the closet, who then will have to live the rest of his life with that knowledge. Maybe with their last goodbye around the corner in an arena, or the last meaningful words exchanged during a face off on the ice.

## **Yuna**

Yuna wasn't religious, but being delivered the news that your baby might very *likely* die in the next twenty-four hours while you're on a plane could really be the definition of Hell.

And Yuna was aware it wasn't just bad for them. She just couldn't help it, she was always aware of who was surrounding her, what people would think, would see and interpret from it.

So when Scott Hunter’s number popped up on her phone again, she just hoped it was Ilya, needing to talk to her or something. Anything.

“Mrs Hollander, this is Doctor Chapman. I’m the surgeon that operated on your son, Shane.”

She had grabbed David and dragged him at the front of the plane as she put her phone on speaker.

The cabin was loud, but in that small area with only the flight attendants, the words echoed like a death sentence. In a way, it was. For Shane.

Yuna had pulled David against her, making his forehead rest on her shoulder as she held the phone above him, keeping her head high.

She didn't want to, but she had to, because they still had to make it to the hospital, see their baby, even if it was one last time.

If she crumbled now, they wouldn't make it on time.

"Can you pass me Ilya Rozanov, please," Yuna asked, her own voice sounding so far away now.

As she heard the move happening, the only sign that Ilya was on the other end of the line was his shaky breathing. "Ilya," she started, so assured, determined, but it faltered on the last letter. "I need you..." she gasped, but reeled it back in, "I need you to be with him, stay with him, okay? So that he's not alone. He's been alone so much, I don't want him to be alone now. Please, tell him—" heaving breath, "tell him how much we love him, how much mum and dad love him," David wailed into her shoulder, "that we are coming, and to wait for us. He's always been impatient, but he has to wait this time. He has to... please tell him how much we love him. And to wait. Wait for us."

She didn't wait for Ilya's answer before hanging up.

Time moved in a weird way, after that.

The poor flight attendant she had waved the video of Shane in front of was also on the plane, so at least someone knew.

But everyone left them alone, all of them decent enough to not ask them if they were okay.

After the call, they stayed in their quiet corner, holding onto each other in silence while everything was screaming around them.

Maybe because she still looked put together, eventually one of the other flight attendants, a middle-aged woman, gave them two bottles of water, not asking them if they wanted it, just handing it. Yuna had half a mind of pouring it over her head and her face because her body was feeling tighter and tighter like it was on the verge of expulsing her soul out of it, but she gave the woman a nod, and forced David to drink his. He was probably dehydrated by now.

He drank his bottle, and when he looked like he could do with some more, she asked if they had some sort of juice, or anything with sugar that would keep them from a syncope.

When the flight attendant said they only had ginger ale left, Yuna considered opening the door and throwing herself off the plane.

Her and David shared the can of ginger ale, the rim salty with her husband's tears.

Eventually, they were asked to return to their seats as they were about to land, and Yuna took a deep breath in, trying to pull herself together while refusing to face any look of pity.

She held her head high once more, and guided David back to the front row. She still felt the eyes on them, but ignored it.

A car was waiting for them in New York after they grabbed their suitcases, and thankfully, still no one asked them how they were doing. She wondered if they didn't care or didn't need to ask.

There was a crowd outside of the hospital. The driver took them to a private side entrance.

Inside, they didn't even make it to the front counter before they were ushered to the ICU. Hockey wasn't as big in the US as it was in Canada, but it seemed tonight, the entire world knew what Shane Hollander's parents looked like.

In the ICU waiting room, the man that Scott Hunter had kissed on the ice after his Stanley Cup win was the first to notice them, slapping Hunter on the arm. Right behind him, Hayden Pike and his wife Jackie noticed them too, the four standing up to come meet them.

"Ilya is with him," Scott was the first to speak, as he looked at her hesitantly. At any other time, she would have hugged him, after he had done so much for her and her family, but for the moment, she nodded and patted him on the arm as she followed the nurse, David in tow, to Shane's room.

Coming through the door, the last seven hours, the last twenty-six years, the last fifty years of Yuna's life disappeared, fading into nothingness, as Shane was lying on a bed, a thick bandage on his neck, a tube in his throat, looking smaller than her little boy ever had.

Reality came tumbling down.

Yuna didn't realise she had been crying until she stopped, head resting on Shane's chest, listening to his heart beating underneath her ear. It felt surreal, in a way. A part of her was grieving already, but her son sounded... alive. He was pale, *so pale*, and he looked small, *so small* in this giant bed, not unlike when they had brought him home from the maternity.

The memory was both a bucket of ice and a warm hug, as she remembered David putting him down in the giant crib, ink black tuft of pin straight hair a stark contrast to the white swaddle he was wrapped in.

They had watched him sleep for hours after that, standing by his side, holding onto each other, as they held their breath to any change in his breathing.

He wasn't swaddled right now, but the sheet was tucked under his armpits, arms littered with IV. He had a medical tag around his wrist closest to her. She wondered if it was because it was impossible to reach the other one, Ilya's gigantic hand covering it fully.

Only then, she took in the rest of the room, the rest of the people present, even if it was only David and Ilya.

David was sitting on the edge of the bed, a hand on Shane's thigh while he rested the other on Ilya's shoulder.

The Russian himself looked hollowed out, in a strange metaphor, like a Halloween pumpkin gutted out of everything, left to rot on the side of the road. He didn't really appear smaller, just... empty.

But never taking his eyes away from Shane.

## Ilya

Ilya had no idea how he made it to New York, where his car was parked, or when he took Shane's hand in his.

He didn't remember sitting on the chair by Shane's bed, nor when he had brought Shane's hand to his mouth, the back pressed against his lips.

He remembered Yuna's voice, though. Like clarity in the fog, asking him to take care of Shane, to tell him they loved him, *so much*. To tell him that *mom and dad* were coming and he should wait. They had two more hours before landing. *Please, please wait*, she had asked.

And Ilya couldn't cry then, because Yuna wasn't crying. David, in the background, was, sobs muffled to a certain degree, still audible.

But Yuna wasn't. So he couldn't.

He had, earlier, he thought. Scott Hunter of all people had given him his phone, and Yuna was already talking, and for the first time in what felt like since he had been twelve, he didn't feel *alone*.

He never felt alone with Shane, from the moment they had met. But Shane maybe wasn't *here* anymore.

"*Sweetheart*," Ilya articulated, only able to shape Russian with his mouth. He didn't want to speak, really. His voice was gone, and he had nothing else to say if Shane wasn't there to hear him. But he had made a promise. He owed it to Yuna and David. And Shane, in a way, even if Ilya didn't believe he could hear him right now. "*Your parents, they love you so dearly, and they wish they could be here. Don't take their absence as a sign they didn't want to be with you right now. I think it kills them more than you they aren't. And it kills me you would think you weren't loved. You are, so much.*"

"*Old Man Scott Hunter is outside, with the man he kissed on the ice after winning the Stanley Cup. I need you to know that, because maybe your competitiveness will make you wake up and you can show him he is not all that. Hayden Pike is also right out of this room. You were right, his wife is nice. She already calls me Ilya. You have to wake up, sweetheart. We could have double dates, and it would make Pike mad. Wouldn't you like to see it?*"

Ilya was trying so hard not to cry. If Shane *went*, he didn't want his last words to him to be how Ilya would never recover from it.

Even if Shane struggled with speaking Russian, his boyfriend was getting a lot better at understanding it. And even if Ilya didn't believe Shane could hear him, he didn't want to put the thought in the universe, just in case.

*"For me, then, you have to stay. I don't want to live in a world where you aren't, where you will be just a memory. I can't get back on the ice knowing it took you away from me. What's the point if you can't be there with me?"*

Over the exsanguine pallor of Shane's face, his freckles were even starker than usual. Removing his hand from where it was wrapped around the love of his life's wrist, trying to feel the weak pulse going underneath the thin skin, Ilya came to caress his cheek, thumb grazing over the constellation of little dots.

Ilya took a deep breath, cleared his throat, before pushing through his limits.

"Maybe I have to say in French too, be sure you hear me, but your parents, *mum and dad*," Ilya started to say in English this time, even if he was struggling with pronunciation right now, "they love you very much. So much. Your mum is strong, very strong. Strongest person I know. I know she hurts very much, but she is trying to make back here, and she can't be crying doing it. She fights against the world to be here with you. And your dad... is so sad, Shane. I never seen father crying in my life. I didn't think it was something they could do. But your dad loves you so much, you can't go. None of us will be okay if you go, sweetheart."

He didn't move from his position as medical professionals came and went, checking on Shane, changing the empty blood bag of a transfusion, putting up a new one, making sure it was flowing freely into his veins.

The plaster across Shane's neck was more like a bandage, as this stage, reaching from under his ear, to the bend where throat met shoulder and collarbone, covering his Adam's apple.

Ilya was terrified to look beyond the edges, petrified to see a splash of crimson, in the same shape it had spread on the ice, that had imprinted at the back of his eyelids and couldn't get

rid of.

But the morbid obsession kept making him glance, to check to be sure, because even if he didn't want to see it, maybe if he spotted it early, it would be fine. Maybe he could save Shane.

Ilya sighed out, clenching his eyes as tight as possible so the burn at the back of them would fade.

It didn't, it never did.

“Oh, god.”

Ilya jumped as he turned to look over his shoulder, only to witness Yuna and David Hollander, standing in the door, and taking in the vision of their son. Yuna had been the one to speak, the words not so much said in shock, but in resigned despair. As if, after hearing all about it, seeing Shane for themselves made it just a bit more real.

He was going to stand up, leave the room for them to have this moment only with Shane. But before he could move, feeling sluggish and slow, David had already come up behind him and put a hand over his shoulder, while Yuna, on the opposite side of the bed, leaned her upper body over Shane, holding him in her arms.

## Chapter End Notes

Also, forgive me for any typos, rough grammar or anything of the like, I'm currently sick and editing is hard and I'm sleepy and I want to read fanfics instead of writing it.

Hope you liked it and thank you for reading!

# Chapter 4

## Chapter Notes

I'm sorry, I had intended to post this chapter yesterday but I've been hit by the nastiest cold known to man, so there it is, a day later. I'm still not 100%, so the editing might be lacking, and I hope it won't be too off-putting.

Anyway, more medical inaccuracies in this chapter, now I'm using my 9-1-1 fandom knowledge.

Thank you for reading!

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

## Yuna

Yuna thought that travelling across the continent to get back to her dying son *in time* was the hardest thing she would ever have to do in her life, but the waiting game that followed after they made it was as much torture, if not more.

The guilt of not immediately being by his side eating at her from the moment she watched Shane get hurt to when they finally entered his ICU room, had been replaced by the powerlessness corroding her from the inside out.

She was there, and there was nothing she could do.

Every thirty minutes or so, nurses would come and take Shane's vitals, not saying a word. Not that she asked, a part of her not wanting to know.

The doctor came an hour after they had arrived, Doctor Chapman, the one she had talked to on the phone. She repeated what she had said about the next twenty-four hours being crucial, and that was all. There wasn't a plan for *the after* yet. By now Shane was out of surgery as long as he had been in.

Twenty or so more hours to will him into fighting for his life.

Time worked in a strange way. Sometimes, she would regain some sort of consciousness, get a picture of what the three of them looked like, not having moved an inch from their initial spot.

She would get taken out of her torpor by Ilya trying to move, quietly offering David the chair.

“If you are not leaving the room, you are exactly where you’re supposed to be,” her husband would say.

Ilya didn’t seem to plan on leaving the room. Depending how the next few hours would go, maybe none of them would ever leave the room.

The sun rose through the blinds, and Yuna knew they had not gone past the darkest hours yet.

She had told Ilya to tell Shane to not be impatient, but right now, her own patience was running thin. Her inability to do anything gnawed at her ankles, the need to move, get moving, shake her son awake, fight the world back for the unfairness.

It was an accident. It wasn't supposed to be fair. No one had intended harm.

It still wasn't fair.

“I need to talk to people,” Yuna said for the first time in hours. Both David and Ilya looked at her like they had forgotten she was still there, not even sure they were aware of each other either, but they gave her a nod, neither of them trying to convince her to stay and be more patient.

Coming out of the room, she felt the string pulling her back to what was dear inside. But she had to prepare the world for the worst. Prepare them for an *after*, maybe.

Pike and Hunter were still there, as well as their partners.

The four of them lifted their gaze at her with something akin to terror in their eyes.

“He’s still fighting,” she said, unable to say *still alive* like the opposite could be an option. “I really, *really* appreciate your presence. It truly means a lot how much you care about Shane.” She paused. “Not many people go the extra length to meet him, and learn about him beyond what they think they know and... I’m glad he wasn’t alone when we weren’t there, and that he isn’t alone right now either. I think you should go home, get some rest, eat some food, come back later if you want to, but you don’t have to. You were there when it mattered.”

Yuna wasn't sure if Hayden Pike had stopped crying, but he was doubling down now, and Hunter and his partner didn't have dry eyes anymore.

“Is there any progress?” Hunter’s partner asked, voice a bit shaky, but he was also holding onto Hunter to comfort him.

“He is still *here*. I don’t think they are looking beyond that, right now.”

The man nodded at her, then turned to Hunter and spoke to him softly. Yuna turned to Pike, actually bending to put a hand over his shoulder.

“You are his best friend, and that means a lot to Shane and to David and I. He knows you and your family care. But you are exhausted, and I think you should go rest.”

Pike didn’t reply, definitely crying too much, but he nodded.

“Will you call us if anything change?” Scott asked as their small group was leaving. Yuna tried to smile, unsure if she succeeded.

“I will.”

## **Ilya**

Time was like bubble-gum. Some hours went by far too quickly, some never moved on.

It was almost a day since the injury.

They weren't yet in the twenty hours since the surgery, but they were getting really close. And the doctors’ speech had started to change. There had been a couple to replace the lady that had operated Shane, and they had all said a lot of things that didn’t mean much except *wait and see*.

But recently, if they had been vehemently cautious in their prognostic at first, they were now talking about what would come next.

“Once we reach the twenty-four-hour mark, we want to try to get him off breathing support.”

The same ringing Ilya had heard in his ears when they had been told to expect the worst came back, doubling down.

“You kill him,” he said at the same time the thought crossed his mind.

“No! No, no, that’s not what it is at all,” the new doctor said, a man this time, looking at Ilya and Shane’s parents to make things clear. “The quicker Shane can breath on his own, the better his recovery will be.”

*If he doesn’t die by then* went unsaid.

“You’re talking about recovery,” David deadpanned.

“It is still too early to say with certainty, but Shane has been stable since he came out of surgery, and that is a really good sign.”

Ilya rubbed the crucifix around his neck between his thumb and index finger, not wanting to let any thought of superstition get to him, and yet unable to resist the need to rebuke the jinx. Yuna’s heavy sigh felt like she shared his feeling, her hands clenching around the back of the chair she was standing behind.

“His vitals *are good*, Mister and Mrs Hollander, is what I’m trying to say. I am not here to give you false hope, but I am cautiously optimistic. Of course, even after the twenty-four hours, Shane won’t be out of the woods yet. There is a lot that can still go wrong, but he’s still a young athlete, in very good health and shape, and that works on his side. And he is definitely fighting for it, that’s why I want to give him a good shot at it and take him off breathing support as soon as possible.

It... doesn’t mean he will take to it, just to warn you. That’s why we want to do it soon enough, so that the body gets kind of aware of the next step. It is highly possible that we try to take him off, and he cannot breathe on his own, *and that is fine*. He had a major trauma happen to him, lost a large amount of blood, and his body and his heart are weak.” Ilya frowned at that, because if Shane was a lot of things, weak wasn’t one of them. “And breathing, even if it feels natural to us, is a big task on the body, and if we have to support it for a little while longer to give Shane time to heal and get some strength back, then so be it.”

David thanked the doctor while Yuna barely threw him a glance, and Ilya felt a kinship with her on hating that guy.

Sure, he sounded the most hopeful of them all, but Ilya still didn’t like how he spoke about Shane, like he was a normal patient.

Shane was the best at everything he tried his hands to. The smartest person Ilya had ever met, and he had grown up with Svetlana. Shane had also this *gift* of overcoming any adversity. There wasn't a challenge that Shane Hollander met that he didn't push back and win against.

Ilya had watched on TV Shane lead his team to victory when it wasn't a given. And it had not just been his abilities as a simple hockey player, but seeing the tiniest weakness in his opponents and take full advantage of it, sending his team through the smallest of cracks and *win*.

Their relationship was like that, too. Everytime Ilya even so faltered in the hardship of a long distance, secret relationship, Shane was standing like a pillar in the middle of the storm. He found compromises and solutions in the same way he won a hockey game, an eye on the big picture, pinpointing the weak spot on his own team, fixing it.

Ilya didn't consider himself *the weak spot* in their relationship, thank you very much. He knew he had a lot of flaws, and Shane definitely deserved someone better than that, but he was also extremely selfish and couldn't step away from this even if he ever wanted to (he never had. Even when he thought he did, it was a lie).

But if there was one thing Ilya had never, and would never give up on, was Shane Hollander. Even if in an uncertain, dark future, Shane got tired of him, decided to move on from them, Ilya would still follow him like the tides followed the Moon, from afar yet unwavering.

There was no point dwelling about that right now, because maybe there wouldn't even be a dark future to happen, the darkest one already standing still over a hospital bed.

So they waited, *again*. He could tell Yuna was being eaten alive with the uncertainty, while David was certainly in denial. Ilya didn't think he was in denial, but his brain simply refused to let him think of a world where Shane Hollander wasn't there.

Through the blinds, the Sun had started to set, its orange aura casting eerily shadows, and with still Shane's hand in his, Ilya took his eyes away from the love of his life for the first time in forever, and took in the room. Took in David, sitting on the opposite side of the bed, in the chair abandoned by Yuna, holding their son's hand in his, his forehead resting against Shane's thigh. Yuna was perched on the armrest, arms crossed over her chest, gaze far away from the hospital room.

## Yuna

As minutes ticked by, Yuna kept looking between the door and the clock above it.

They were about to reach the twenty-four-hour mark.

Twenty-seven hours had passed since Shane got his throat cut by a blade in Madison Square Garden. The entire world's attention was on this hospital, even American national news talking about the accident (it was obviously on Canadian news, but anything hockey related was on Canadian news).

All the hockey news outlets had only Shane's name on their lips and pens, the whole conversation about neck guards back on the table. Even if the push back against its mandatory application in the NHL was loud, it wasn't as strong as it had been in the past.

*This is not a skill issue. If someone like Shane Hollander can get injured from it, any hockey player can too.*

A part of Yuna felt guilty spending so much time on her phone, looking at the news, and yet, she felt like they were less alone than she had initially thought.

In the eye of the press and the outside world, Shane was an extremely private person, very hard to read. And she had always thought it was the reason he had struggled so much to get people to meet him halfway.

First with Hayden Pike, but mostly upon meeting Ilya, Yuna's opinion had changed. Because it wasn't so much that people weren't willing to go the extra length to get to know her son so much so that her son didn't let anyone even get close.

It did put back into perspective all of she knew about her son in his adult years, and Ilya's presence by his side even more meaningful.

"Hello, Mrs and Mister Hollander," the same doctor as earlier said, coming through the door with a bunch of nurses. "Are you ready?"

I'm planning on posting the next chapter tomorrow, and hopefully I'll feel better so I can do a proper edit other than whatever is happening here.

Hope you enjoyed it nonetheless!

# Chapter 5

## Chapter Summary

Warning: there is mention of someone being taken off breathing support, and then a breathing tube taken out as well. It is absolutely not graphic, but in case it is upsetting to you, skip Ilya's part and resume from Yuna's!

## Chapter Notes

As promised, the next chapter!

/!\ I repeat myself just to be sure: there is mention of someone being taken off breathing support, and then a breathing tube taken out as well. It is absolutely not graphic, but in case it is upsetting to you, skip Ilya's part and resume from Yuna's!

More medical inaccuracies, still inspired by my 9-1-1 fandom knowledge, so in a way you could blame the most inaccurate procedural show on TV right now instead of blaming me.

A few of you (a lot) were very anxious that I'm a lying liar who lies, and that I had been leading you on with the Happy Ending tag, but starting from this chapter, you'll see I was right all along!

Also, thank you so much for the positive response to this fic, all the comments, it means so much to me.

I'm very grateful for all of you reading and waiting on the update.

Hope you'll enjoy this chapter too!

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

## Ilya

The doctor asked them if they wanted to stay while they took Shane's off breathing support.

Ilya looked at David and Yuna, standing side by side. David looked at Yuna and Yuna looked at Shane.

“You’ll put him back on if he can’t, right?” Yuna asked as a matter-of-fact, her eyes squinting at the doctor.

“Of course, Mrs Hollander. That is why we are all here, to make sure Shane get the help he needs as quickly as possible.”

“He won’t suffer from it, isn’t he?” David then asked, eyes shiny.

“No, and it will go very quickly.”

The *no’s* sounded like a lie. But at the same time, Ilya knew that some things needed to be painful to overcome them.

He took a step towards the bed, taking Shane’s hand back in his, before inhaling deep, holding in, and exhaling.

He wasn't sure if it was his own understanding of the situation, but Yuna and David seemed to come to the same conclusion.

“I... I can’t– I’m sorry, I can’t see him struggling to...” David muttered, lowering his head, and Yuna squeezed his shoulder tightly, but gave him a firm nod. “I’ll wait– I’ll be outside.”

“That’s understandable, Mister Hollander,” the doctor said gently, a tight smile on his lips.

David leaned over the bed, over Shane, and pressed a kiss into his hairline. After straightening up and making his way to the door, he stopped in his tracks.

“He will be okay, right? After– if he can’t... he will still be there?”

Ilya felt his own throat tightened, unable to look at David, Yuna or the doctor, turning his whole focus on Shane, on his hand in Ilya’s, skin soft and warmer than earlier, blood pulsing underneath it.

“We are here to make sure everything goes smoothly, Mister Hollander,” the doctor replied, not promising a lie.

There was a heaving breath, followed by a door closing.

Yuna came to stand by the end of the bed, a hand on Shane’s blanketed ankle. Moments later, nurses came on either side, and unhooked the respirator outside of Shane’s mouth.

What followed were the longest seconds of Ilya's life, as if he had not been sitting at Shane's bedside for the last twenty-four hours.

For a *long time*, maybe an eternity (thirty seconds maybe), *nothing happened*.

There wasn't a sound in the room, not even breathing. Ilya didn't know about the others, but he had been holding his breath from the moment Shane was taken off, while Yuna watched her son like a hawk, not blinking once.

They waited.

*And waited.*

From the corner of his eyes, he noticed a nurse glancing back at the doctor, and when she turned back, starting to lean over and about to reconnect—

*Gasp*

Shane's chest moved up dramatically, *on its own*.

Ilya was certain he heard heaving relief, and not just from Yuna and him.

Yuna, who closed her eyes, a sob escaping her mouth as tears ran down her cheeks.

Ilya realized he himself was laughing and crying, somehow. His throat hurt a bit and so did his lungs, heart racing in his chest, but he had been holding his breath for a while at this point.

"That's great, that's great news," the doctor said, coming closer to look at Shane's vitals, the nurses writing them down. "Okay?" he then said, and the nurses nodded, putting down their clipboards, and Ilya felt something was about to happen. But before he could enquire, or bring Yuna's attention to it so *she* would ask, the nurses pressed on Shane's chest and shoulder, while the doctor started to pull the breathing tube out of his mouth.

*Fuck— damn, Jesus Christ.*

The whole room started angrily beeping, and Ilya had a mind of tackling the doctor himself, and seeing Yuna's look, the both of them could probably take the entire team, but before he could think more about it, it was over, the tube was out and the beeping stopped, and Shane was still breathing by himself.

“Well, that's a relief,” the doctor said, tone much lighter than they had heard it all day. “I'm really happy that could come out, it is a very, *very* good sign, Mrs Hollander.”

The doctor stood there, looking really happy with himself, both fists on his hips as he nodded to himself while looking at Shane on the bed. Completely missing the murderous expression on Yuna Hollander's face.

A giggle escaped Ilya, getting everyone's attention on him. But he couldn't help it, covering half of his face with his free hand while still looking at Yuna. The doctor seemed to catch on then, turning back towards her.

“Oh, I know it looked scary. I'm sorry, Mrs Hollander, there isn't a good way to prepare someone for that. But it is really great news, I promise you. When a breathing tube goes in, there is a very high risk it might never come out again. So the fact that Shane doesn't need it anymore is a really positive outcome. And so soon after surgery? Your son is a fighter.”

## **Yuna**

Yuna was either going to pass out or make a press release.

When David came back in the room, tears and snot running down his face, hugging her then hugging Ilya, she left them and took a lap around the floor.

She called Scott Hunter first.

*“Mrs Hollander?”*

“He’s breathing on his own,” the words stumbled out of her mouth. She wasn’t even sure it would mean anything to him, but she needed the world to know Shane Hollander had exceeded expectations once more.

*“Fuck,”* Hunter gasped, and Yuna was glad he got what she was trying to say.

“It’s thanks to you, Scott,” she said, acknowledging something for the first time.

*“I don’t think—“*

“If you had not reacted as fast as you did, he would have lost precious seconds he didn’t have to spare. He has done a lot of the work by himself today, but the only reason he got a shot at fighting was because you were there when it mattered the most. So, *thank you*, for saving my kid.”

Scott didn’t reply, nothing but silence and quiet sobs. Then, movement.

*“Mrs Hollander, this is Kip Grady, Scott’s boyfriend. This means a lot to him, Mrs Hollander. We are both really relieved about Shane. We thought about coming back to visit tomorrow, if that’s alright with you.”*

“That would be really appreciated, Kip. Also, someone please tell Matti Jalo.”

When she called Hayden Pike, his wife answered.

*“Hello Mrs Hollander, this is Jackie,”* she sniffed, but bravely kept her voice even, preparing herself for the worst.

“Shane is breathing on his own,” Yuna said, the words a wave of relief everytime she got to say them out loud. Jackie sobbed.

*“Oh, thank god, thank god, I– I need to tell Hayden, he’ll want to hear it from you or he won’t believe it.”*

Hayden didn’t speak much, but Yuna could picture him nodding as she also thanked him for being with Shane on the ice, a familiar and trusting face when he must have been so scared.

Well, Yuna didn't say that exactly, but since the tube had come out, and the doctor didn't really deny that taking him off breathing support could be painful to him, it had kind of tormented her.

She was so sad for her baby boy, the secrets he had to keep to be more palatable to the hockey world, about his loneliness, even if he had Ilya, the two of them sharing a burden larger than they could carry on their own.

But now, all her thoughts were on Shane's *last moments*.

Had he been scared? Sad? Regretful? Did her twenty-six years-old son, so talented, so successful, had regretted his life choices that kept him from truly being happy, just so he could be an *example*, fit into a box that he had been shoved in since the first time he had step foot on the ice?

Did Shane think he was going to die? That the last faces he would see would be of his best friend to whom he hadn't come out to, *didn't think* he could come out to without losing him, and the first out gay hockey player in *history* while knowing he would never get to have that?

In those last moments, did it haunt him like it haunted Yuna now?

"Mrs Hollander?" Yuna turned around to see an average looking man, in average looking clothes coming towards her with a pep in his walk. "Charlie Hawes, journalist for the Sunday Report," he said extending a hand in her direction when he reached her.

"You can't be here," she said with a frown, taking a step back.

"This is out of worry for Shane, we all are wondering what the news are? Do you have anything to tell the world?" he said, literally pulling his phone out in her face.

"You cannot be here," she repeated, louder.

"What do you have to say about sources saying that Ilya Rozanov has been seen in the hospital, can you confirm or deny?"

"Get the fuck out of here!" she shouted this time, and she was about to take down that man herself if she had to, but it was that moment nurses swarmed him, pushing him back away from Yuna. Shouts for security echoed in the corridor, and even more people came out.

"When will you tell the world Shane Hollander is dead?" this nasty gnat of a man shouted over the crowd separating them now, people pulling her away.

She let herself being dragged back to the room. Her entrance was more dramatic than intended, and both Ilya and David turned to look at her with a jolt.

The door closed behind her.

“What happened?” David asked, leaving Shane’s side to come to her.

“A stupid *fucking reporter* managed to get inside,” she spat out, blood still boiling under her skin.

“That’s so disgraceful,” David said so elegantly, and Yuna burst into tears. Not because David had a way with words (he did), but in that particular moment, he sounded so much *like Shane*, she heard her son say those words with his inflection, and even if she had spoken to him the morning before the accident, his voice sounded so far away, like she was already forgetting it.

David held her as she cried and cried, the dam breaking, her world ending and rebuilding on top of the ruins in a sick loop.

“I miss him,” she sobbed into her husband’s shirt. A few moments later, another set of arms wrapped around her. Her wails doubled down as she patted Rozanov’s hand, because there were in this together.

“I miss him too,” Rozanov said then, voice hoarse. She nodded.

“I heard him, when you said *disgraceful*,” she said to David, and as realisation downed on his face, his eyes also filling up with tears. “I miss him so much. I want my baby back.”

“He would say word like *disgraceful*,” Ilya agreed, and Yuna couldn’t help the laugh that escaped her. “Probably got it from New Yorker,” he added, and that one got David to laugh.

“Probably,” David said. “It was in their last Sunday’s crossword.”

Apparently, that seemed to get Ilya, because it was his turn to burst into tears. Yuna dislodged herself from between the two men, instead gathering each other into a three-person hug.

**Shane**

The annoying beeping was the first thing Shane noticed. He didn't like rhythmic, repetitive sound, always grating on his nerves. His mind would focus on the noise in an obsessive way, unable to think about anything else, feeding into his anxiety, aggravating it.

He needed the beeping to stop or he was going to lose his mind. He didn't remember his alarm to sound like that. Maybe it was Ilya's? Not that Shane had ever known Ilya to put an alarm on.

Was it a microwave? An oven? Fire alarm?

Shane needed to wake up and get out of bed, except it was easier said than done. If his limbs weighed a hundred kilos, his eyelids felt like a tone. Not one to go to bed late, he never struggled that much, so it didn't make sense. And he never resisted waking up, even in his teenage years. He already knew then why he had to get up, and it was enough of a motivation.

So why couldn't he now?

Was the beeping getting closer? He was pretty sure it was getting closer. Also the beat was off, like when cars had their indicators on, and they aligned for a second, before changing again. God he hated that.

Was the beeping indicators? Shane didn't usually fall asleep in cars.

Well, he had to open his eyes if he wanted to find out.

The hospital room he came up to wasn't on his list of options, but now that he thought about it, the heartrate monitor kind of made sense.

The brief thought of *whose* heartrate it was monitoring came and went very quickly, when he took in his body in an hospital bed.

The next thing he noticed was the pacing of his mother at the other end of the room, her eyes fixed on her phone, while his dad was sitting by his left side, fast asleep with his arms

crossed over his chest, head drooping.

But the most important thing Shane noticed was his right hand, held warmly under a heap of a shape topped by wild curly hair.

Shane knew those curly hair, and felt warmth spreading from his sternum all over his body.

Until it turned to dread.

What was Ilya doing here? Wait, where were they? In Boston?

Shane remembered stepping onto the ice, the roar of the crowd around him, in the only way that— Madison Square Garden could make you feel it.

He had been in New York, Ilya in Boston, and now he was here.

Shane didn't think he had moved much, tired to the bone, the effort of pulling his eyes open draining him, and already he was being pulled back into unconsciousness, but he must have moved enough for Ilya to notice, as his head suddenly lifted up from where it was resting over Shane's hand.

"*Shane*," he said with a voice that sounded like it had been scrapped over the sidewalk, face contorting into something Shane wasn't familiar with.

He heard the gasp from his mom, saw the movement of his father standing up and coming closer, and Shane wanted to *stay awake* but he was losing the battle.

He was scared that it was out of his control, tried to fight so hard against it, but he was gasping for air, like his body was reaching its limits before his mind.

"Is okay, is okay," Ilya said, hand on Shane's cheek, thumb grazing under his eye, and Shane let his head lean into the touch, something comforting in it, like maybe Ilya was right and it was okay.

“We’ll be there when you wake up again, honey,” his mother’s voice fading into the void as it swallowed him whole again.

## Chapter End Notes

My baby is awake! I missed him!

Listen, I know the part for the breathing support was probably far from reality, but let's all put on our glasses of Suspension of Disbelief and just rejoy that our baby girl is gonna be okay. In the same way Buck kept his leg in 9-1-1 when he shouldn't have, Shane is recovering well from having his throat slashed U\_U

Hope you enjoyed this chapter!

# Chapter 6

## Chapter Notes

And another one!

I won't be able to update in the next two days, but I should then post the last two chapters two days in a row. Technically, it's one chapter and an epilogue, but you know what I mean.

I'm still working on the epilogue- yes, I know I said I was done, but I wrote one epilogue that is done and now I am not sure about it anymore, so I wrote another one, and I'm still not convinced, so I might write another one. Anyway, don't worry about it.

I hope you'll like this chapter!

## Ilya

Shane had woken up. He had woken up, his eyes already on him when Ilya had noticed.

He had frozen then and there. He had half a mind not to believe what he was seeing, like some sort of hallucination.

He had been dreaming of Shane on and off throughout the restless sleep he managed to get while sitting on an uncomfortable hospital chair, and the Shane that had been looking back at him didn't look like the Shane in his dreams.

Usually, in his dreams, this Shane was sleep-soft but smiling at Ilya, tangled in his bedsheets, or Shane's depending on the light. His freckles were stark against his sun-kissed skin like they actually were at the Cottage, even if that didn't make any sense.

His lashes would cast long shadows over his cheeks, with the most beautiful brown eyes hiding under them.

Or sometimes, Ilya would have his nose burrowed into the nape of Shane's neck, his smell pungent there, already drunk on it, while his arms were wrapped around him, one hand on the stomach, the other over where his heart was beating. With the proof of life, that was Ilya's favourite one.

His Shane, though, the one looking at him, was still pale, but had regained some flush on his cheeks, that made him look like he had make-up on, which Ilya knew would annoy him. His Shane was also frowning, not relaxed and happy like in Ilya's dreams.

Up until Ilya reached out to him, cradled his face in his hand, his Shane had looked scared.

But what made Ilya realise he really wasn't dreaming was that his Shane, like all of his iterations, leaned into his touch, found comfort in Ilya.

Also, he had that stubbornness that was *oh so* familiar as he tried to remain awake, but less than forty-eight hours after almost bleeding out to death, even Shane Hollander would be too exhausted to do so.

But only Shane Hollander would wake up less than forty-eight hours after almost bleeding out to death, or so the doctor said.

"This is quite the fit," he said, after Yuna had run out to get someone once Shane had closed his eyes again. "The time frame for his recovery is much quicker than expected. Him waking up so soon is really a positive sign."

If David was nodding at the doctor, Yuna had been chewing on something for a while, her eyes remaining on Shane. Ilya wondered what was on her mind, and wished she would ask, in case she thought something was wrong with him.

And maybe he willed her with his mind, because she looked up then, met his eyes, and finally took a deep inhale.

"I'm not a medical expert, right," she started, and Ilya was already excited to hear more of what was to come. "But I've seen movies, tv shows..." Everyone's attention was on her, waiting with a bated breath for her to continue. "In Grey's Anatomy, when one of the characters, Doctor Sloan, *McSteamy*," Ilya's English had apparently reached its limitations, because he didn't understand any of those words put together, "he almost died in the plane crash, then he was awake and back to normal, but everyone knew he was going to die from it anyway--"

Thankfully for Ilya, he wasn't the only one looking at Yuna in disbelief, while her tone went from relatively rational to borderline hysterical.

"What I'm trying to say!" Yuna exclaimed, passing an anxious hand through her hair, "is that Shane waking up is not something like that, right?"

Ilya had to give it to him, the doctor remained pretty neutral. He did open and close his mouth a few times, until he seemingly nodded to himself

“I think you are asking about some sort of Terminal Lucidity, Mrs Hollander. Beyond being *very rare*, I can tell you this is not what is going on for Shane. Waking up in short increments of time is totally normal after a physical trauma. His body is recovering well, his vitals are excellent, but even Shane Hollander cannot fight losing that amount of blood. He had several transfusions which did their job, but at the end of the day, his body is in charge, and it will take sometime to get full recovery. He will probably feel very tired in the weeks that will follow his discharge. He might have to work his endurance back up before going back to hockey. But I do have high hopes he will make a full recovery.”

## Shane

Shane woke up annoyed. There was this incessant beeping, right by his ear, and it was so irritating. Was it his alarm? It didn't sound like that, but he was so tired that maybe he had thought his usual tune wouldn't be enough. It had to be that, what else could it be?

He was warm, and there was pressure on his thigh and across his arm. Oh, so maybe, it was Ilya's alarm, not that he'd ever known Ilya for putting alarms on.

Wait, was it his microwave? Did Ilya put something in the microwave and came back to bed with Shane?

Well, that sounded very plausible. They often did that, especially at the cottage. They both get hungry, with their physical activity (actual physical activity, not just the sex). They were big boys, with an intensely physical job, and who worked out as much, if not more, and who needed to eat a lot and were always kind of permanently hungry. So they would get up and have breakfast together at an *ungodly hour* (Ilya's words, in Russian usually, not his) before going back to bed.

Did Ilya fall back asleep while making their breakfast? Wait, why didn't Shane get up with him? He had a light sleep, he always knew when Ilya was getting up—

Oh.

Upon opening his eyes, trying to clear the confusion, some sort of memories came back to him in flashes.

*Ice, hockey, puck, skates, fall, collision.*

*His mother with her phone, his dad asleep, Ilya by his side.*

*In Boston?*

*No, New York.*

Shane's body took a deep inhale, which surprised him because he was pretty sure he had stopped breathing.

A pair of hazel eyes meeting his, underlined with dark purple. A blinding smile.

"*Dusha moya*," Ilya sighed softly, already reaching for Shane's face. Another flash, and Shane tried to lift his head up to meet him halfway. Okay, that was harder than he had anticipated. There was a strange pull around his neck, something that reached deep inside of him that didn't make him feel very good.

"It's okay, baby," his mom's voice coming from his other side, and he finally saw her face for the first time in what felt like ever.

"You're okay, Shane, take it easy." His dad, next to his mom, didn't have time to move, the weight he had felt on his thigh as he had fallen asleep on him.

"What—" he started to articulate, but the three of them shushed him gently.

"Don't talk, sweet boy. We'll tell you what we can, but don't fight against your rest, okay?"

Shane looked at Ilya, whose thumb was caressing under his eye, brushing against his eyelashes.

Shane blinked pointedly then, making his mom smile brightly.

“You were in an accident on the ice, while you played against the Admirals. You fell, and Matti Jalo couldn’t stop in time, and the blade of his skate went through the carotid artery in your neck. You lost a lot of blood, but thanks to a lot of people that helped you, they managed to get you in surgery quick enough and you are fine. They’ve given you a lot of transfusion to replace your blood loss, but it is still going to make you very tired, that’s why you can’t stay awake. But it’s alright, because you can wake up when you are properly rested, and we will all be there everytime you do, yeah?”

Shane wasn't sure about the enthusiasm, because he was freaking out as she described exactly what was happening to him, his body growing bone-deep tired very quickly and he couldn't fight against it.

But he wanted to stay, he wanted to ask more questions, ask how Ilya was there, how long it had been, will he ever play hockey again–

“Hey, you’re fine, my boy,” his dad said, rubbing his arm. “I know it’s very scary, but you’re gonna be alright, the doctor said so. Full recovery. You just have to be patient, okay?”

Shane blinked again, this time joined with a nod, or an attempt to, at least. His parents smiled softly at him.

“You have to rest to recover,” Ilya then said, and Shane’s gaze returned to him.

Already, the darkness started creeping on the edges of his vision, and he didn’t want to, but it also kind of felt good, surrounded by the people he loved the most.

“You just want to beat my goals,” he tried to say, but he was pretty sure it didn’t come out as clear. But Ilya understood him because he snorted.

“Was already gonna do that anyway, Hollander. You being out doesn’t change anything.”

“Ass’ole,” Shane whispered in the dark as a kiss was pressed to his brow.

## **Ilya**

The next time Shane woke up, the doctor had moved him out of the ICU into a normal room. Like the previous time, he came to himself with a sigh, and Ilya got to watch him open his eyes this time.

They roamed over the room, maybe confused about where he was, unclear to say if he remembered the previous times he woke up.

But maybe he did, because immediately after looking around, his gaze shifted to Ilya at his side, as if he knew where to find him.

Shane also looked less panicky, less anxious. He wasn't connected to a heartrate monitor anymore now that he was out of the ICU, but Ilya would still like to know what his heart was doing.

Yuna and David weren't currently in the room, as David went out to get them some food, and Yuna had to deal with the press after they had released a statement about the long-awaited update on Shane's health.

Ilya wanted to go get them, so Shane knew they were still around and just gone for a brief moment, but he also didn't want to leave him alone in the rare and precious moments he was awake.

"Hey," he whispered, unable to refrain from smiling.

Ilya had never smiled as much as he did in the last twenty-four hours. Smiled and cried. Even after his mother died, he wasn't allowed to be seen crying, so it had to be limited to the night. Or when it was really too hard, he would run and hide under his bed in the middle of the day, and cry as quietly as he could.

That wasn't what happened here. Neither Yuna nor David shied away from their grief, and they had not let him disappear back in himself to mourn quietly. So Ilya cried a lot. So much so even Hayden Pike and Scott Hunter saw him cry, which was rough on his reputation, expecting the information to spread like wildfire in no time.

Apparently, people had already seen him coming into the hospital, and even if in the press release, Yuna had called it *a show of sportsmanship and deep respect between career-long rivals turned friends*, well, it was a matter of time.

That was the only thing that took away his smile, the fact his careless behaviour might out his and Shane's relationship. Ilya both didn't care *at all* and cared *a lot*.

Didn't care if it fucked up his career, or his transfer to Ottawa, in the case they didn't want a queer player in their team.

Cared a lot that Shane didn't have any control in being outed, that he had a long recovery ahead of him and if he was stressed or depressed because the repercussions, it might actually impact said recovery.

And it wasn't taking into consideration that Shane might be mad at him, for outing them. That he might never forgive Ilya for ruining his career, in a worst-case scenario kind of situation. Maybe Shane will want nothing to do with him once he found out.

“Hey,” Shane said back after a beat with a soft, tired smile, like in Ilya’s dream.

“I miss you,” Ilya sniffed, as he brought his hand back to Shane’s face, along his cheek, caressing along his jaw, brushing against those freckles that held all of the love he had on this earth.

“Did my parents have your number?” Shane asked in a breath, in an effort not to strain his voice. Ilya frowned in confusion.

“What?”

“You’re here. I’m so glad you’re here. I was thinking of you. I was worried about you.”

Ilya pushed out of his chair, sitting onto the mattress by Shane’s side, bringing his face closer as he watched the beautiful and exhausted eyes of the love of his life glaze over with burgeoning tears.

His hand moved to cradle Shane’s face, gently but firmly holding onto his jaw, his thumb passing over cracked lips.

“I was watching,” Ilya said. “I always watched your games. I saw it happen. I was in New York four hours later. I was going to come no matter what, Shane. There isn’t anything in this world that could stop me to come to you.”

Shane nuzzled in his hand while closing his eyes, Ilya half worrying he was going to fall back asleep.

“I’m sorry you were alone,” Shane then said.

“I wasn't, *Lyubimiy*. Your parents have been really kind to me. They made me medical... *something*, so that I could be with you when they were on their way here.”

Shane gave such a big sigh that Ilya thought something was wrong, that maybe his heart was giving. But instead, a large smile grew on his lips, eyes still closed, and now, Ilya was pretty sure he was falling back asleep.

# Chapter 7

## Chapter Notes

I know, I'm sorry, I said I would post this chapter yesterday, but in my defence, AO3 was down for most of the day.

So, anyway, here's the last "real" chapter, as the next one will be the epilogue, which I like better than the first iterations, so hopefully, you'll appreciate it too.

Enjoy!

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

## Yuna

Yuna wasn't even disappointed she had missed Shane's last wake window.

The term *wake window* was bringing her back to a long time ago that yet felt so close, of a little baby trying to make his nights.

Shane had been an easy-going child, from toddlerhood onward. But before that, it had been *really hard* too. *He* wasn't hard, as long as he was in someone's arms, his little head resting on someone's chest to listen to their heartbeat. It wasn't just Yuna, David worked too. They had taken turn, staying awake while he slept in their arms, for months on end. It always felt like never-ending, in those moments, like they would never have a full night of sleep in their life.

And look at her now. Wishing she could hold him in her arms, his face pressed against her throat like he had the first few weeks of his life.

She really had thought he couldn't breathe, but his paediatrician had said it was normal, babies did it often and would grow out of it. Now she wished he didn't.

Well, no, that wasn't true. For the same reason she wasn't disappointed to have missed him last time he had woken up, she was happy that he had not been alone then, and he had more than just David and her. That Ilya had been the one with him.

He had told them and the doctor that Shane seemed to remember a lot more now, and that he was anxious about it.

*What a shock, who saw that one coming.* Yuna had avoided David's stare as they both knew where their son got that from.

Ilya's worry about Shane's mental state was really dampened by the soft smile still gracing her son's face while deep asleep, though.

She got to be here when the Pikes visited, at least.

Hayden was losing the fight against his tears as he made his way to Shane, who was smiling at his best friend, and opened one arm for a side hug.

Pike's wife, Jackie, to whom Yuna had spoken on the phone, looked bright and happy, looking at the two men with something tender. Until she went to Ilya's side, and touched him gently on the arm, exchanging a few words.

Yuna already knew that Rozanov wasn't everything he showed in the medias. From the first time she had met him, and his relationship with Shane, how they behaved with each other, it was obvious everyone was *far off* about what kind of person Ilya Rozanov really was. That was why she had been fixated on getting him to Shane as soon as possible. Not just for her son's sake, but because she didn't know how the Raiders' Captain would react. *Not well* had been her guess, and she had been proven right.

But even after they joined him by Shane's side, waited for Shane to survive and then wake up, she had been surprised that he also was *a lot* like his persona he showed in the medias. He was still confident, larger than life, and definitely funny in a way she had a hard time to accept. Yuna found him hilarious, but she couldn't tell him. Not yet.

Not even seconds before the Pikes walked through the door, he and Shane were bickering about Hayden, finishing with an *of course you think he is good, with your weak backhand*.

Shane had squeaked, slapping him on the arm (because he had made Rozanov sit closer to him on the mattress). The slap, closer to a kitten swat, was more for show than real effect, but Rozanov snickered anyway.

But now that Shane was with his best friend, the two talking closely, Ilya had moved to the back of the room, giving them space. And when Jackie came to him, none of his boisterous or charming, or flirty behaviour was on display. He looked at her while she spoke, but everytime he replied, his eyes always drifted back to Shane, as if to make sure he was still doing okay.

Yuna would find it *just* cute, if Shane wasn't meeting his eyes everytime, like he was also making sure Ilya was near-by. *That* was romantically transcending.

She had prepared for a Shane Freakout™ as he realized that even more people knew about he and Ilya's relationship.

She had not prepared for her son to worry about the Russian. He had been staying awake longer and longer, and he would always ask either David or Yuna to make sure Ilya was fine.

While Ilya was standing right here too, looking at Shane in absolute disbelief.

*"I'm strong Russian man, I take care of myself,"* he'd say, and Shane would give him a look that often ended with Rozanov climbing back into the bed and curling around Shane's body, his head on his shoulder, while Shane carded his fingers through the curls.

There was so much she didn't know about them, while they knew *so much* about each other.

The only time Ilya *left* Shane's side was to use the bathroom attached to his room, which had happened at the same time of one of Shane's wake windows. She had watched her son take in the room quicker everytime, but when his attention went to his side, expecting to find Ilya there, *and didn't find him*, it had been probably the first and only strong reaction Shane had since he had woken up.

He wasn't hooked on a heartrate monitor anymore, but she knew if he had been, it would probably have started ringing, as a full-blown panic attack descended on him in a matter of seconds.

David went to knock at the door to the bathroom when Yuna's words didn't reach Shane.

It wasn't *humiliating*, per se. It was a sobering realisation that maybe the two of them couldn't stick to the timeline they had established for their plans about their future.

*Before the summer of their Rookie Year.*

Yuna had not found it fair when they had told her then, and she found it even less fair now. Actually, it was now closer to unbearable *to her*, so she couldn't imagine for them.

No, there must be another way.

And if there wasn't one, she would make one.

## **Scott Hunter**

Life had regained colours. Scott had a full night sleep. And an everything bagel with cream cheese.

And a blueberry smoothie (with banana).

This morning, for the first time since *The Incident*<sup>TM</sup>, as it had been branded by Yuna Hollander herself, he had returned to the ice with his team, minus Matti Jalo. He was on medical leave until further notice.

During the waiting hours in the ICU waiting room to hear anything about Shane Hollander, Carter had minimized the situation back in the locker room, but Matti did go through an actual mental breakdown, and did end up in 72-hour psych hold. So, there was that.

Matti was doing good, Scott had heard from his sister. Now that Shane was waking up and talking, the weight of *involuntary manslaughter* wasn't resting on his shoulders. And, you know, *fair*.

Being back at the Presbyterian felt strange, especially with the crowd held at a safe distance across the streets, while *a mountain* of flowers and candles were leaning against the walls by the entrance.

New York liked its hockey, but it wasn't a city like Montreal. He had never seen such a display for hockey here. Even when he won the Cup— well, no, he couldn't compare winning the Stanley Cup and coming out publicly with someone literally dying. And they still had him preside New York Gay Pride that year, and drove around the city bare chest and tiny shorts—

*Anyway*, all that to say, he had been celebrated, and *it wasn't that he was jealous of the reaction*— this was not that!

Just that there was maybe more hockey fans in New York than he thought, or all of Montreal and half of Canada had made their way here to come support their golden child.

*Jesus Christ.*

He didn't even know what he was *stressing* about. Kip kept rubbing his thumb against the back of his hand as they made their way inside.

“Hey, everything's fine,” Kip said to him while they waited for the elevators.

“Yeah, I know,” Scott sighed. “And Yuna said he's awake and has been talking. And that he would make a full recovery. That's good, right?”

Kip simply hummed and nodded.

As they got closer to the room number Yuna Hollander had given them, Scott started to sweat like crazy.

In front of the door, he stopped altogether.

“I don't know if I can,” he admitted in a whisper. Kip took his face in his hands.

“It's going to be alright. He's doing okay and you can see for yourself. His mother wouldn't have told you to come if she didn't think he was ready for it, yeah?”

“But what if I'm not?” Scott replied like it was a secret.

“You're a big hockey player who gets crushed and slammed all the time by other big hockey players. You can do hard things,” Kip patted him on the cheek.

The door suddenly opened on Ilya Rozanov.

“What’s taking you so long, Hunter? Are you so old you can’t read room number?”

Scott felt himself flush, trying to come up with a retort, but another voice came from inside the hospital room.

“Be nice, Ilya.”

Rozanov rolled his eyes petulantly, but stepped to the side to let Scott get through.

Kip squeezed his hand, before whispering, “I’ll wait out here.”

Scott wanted to ask him to come, which he couldn’t really justify. As he had told Scott already, he was a big hockey player who got into scrums on the ice all the time. He could face a rival captain, whose blood had sipped between his fingers, as well as said captain’s obvious boyfriend, who was also another rival captain, and a personal enemy of Scott if he was being honest, and who also was gay, apparently. Both of them gay, everyone in the room gay.

Maybe the world had shifted on its axis and he was in alternate universe.

“Do you want tea?” Rozanov asked, and Scott waited for Hollander to answer him, but Hollander was smiling, waiting patiently, so Scott looked back at Rozanov, only to find out he had asked *him*.

“What?”

“Do you want tea? I’m getting tea for Shane, wouldn’t be problem to get more.”

Definitely an alternate universe.

“Uh, no, I’m good. Hum, thank you, Rozanov.”

The Russian shrugged, before looking back at Hollander with a nod.

“I’ll be back soon.”

“I know,” Hollander replied, and suddenly, Scott felt like he was intruding, so he looked down at his shoes, hoping they would forget he was here.

“Thanks for coming,” Hollander said as the door closed and it was only the two of them.

“Oh, uh, no need to thank me. I should thank you to let me come to you in the hospital. You don’t owe me that.”

“You were nice to my parents. And Ilya. And you saved my life. I think I owe you more than that.”

Scott was taken aback by Hollander’s bluntness. He was still smiling softly, eyes on the door where Rozanov had disappeared moments ago.

“I... yeah, but I couldn’t let... I didn’t really think before doing it.”

“I know, I saw.”

“You did?” Scott asked in shock, as their gazes finally met.

“Yeah. I needed to know what it looked like, you know. For my parents and Ilya. But I saw how fast you reacted. My mom’s right, you probably saved my life by being so fast with it.”

“I haven’t... I haven’t been able to watch it,” Scott admitted.

“I wasn’t expecting you to. It’s different for you. And Hayden. And Matti.” At the mention of his teammate’s name, Scott gasped, ready to ask– “my mom already tried to reach out to him, but he apparently isn’t...”

“No, he’s—he hasn’t been doing well. Better now that you are...” Scott waved at Shane sitting up in the bed, who nodded understandably.

“Yeah, I kind of want to talk to him. Maybe it will help him. I’m not mad at him or anything. No one is.”

“Not even Rozanov?” Scott’s mouth spat out the words before his brain could filter them.

That got a laugh from Hollander.

“Nah. He’ll chirp about *incompetent hockey player who don’t know how to skate*, but he knows it was a freak accident. It could have happened to any of us. It’s kind of everyone’s nightmare, doing it to another player.”

A long, *relieved* sigh came out of Scott, his shoulders drooping down, not having realized how high they had been before.

“I know you aren’t his biggest fan, but thank you for what you did for him too. That he wasn’t alone when he made it here. That means a lot to me.” *Almost more than saving my life* was implied.

Scott nodded slowly.

“This is... kind of a nightmare, for us. I think anyone... *queer*,” Scott tested, “to not be able to be by our loved ones’ sides when something happens.”

“Yeah, I know,” Hollander said, almost more to himself than for Scott to hear, and Scott was curious if Hollander *knew*.

Of course, he could relate to what had happened to him, but *did he know*? Did he know that before gay marriage got legalized in the US, *not even five years ago*, queer people that had been together for years but not allowed to make it legal, couldn’t be there for their significant other’s last moments because they weren’t *family* and could never be? That some queer people either died alone, or surrounded by people that hated them for who they were but had a right to them because they shared a DNA?

“We’re getting married,” Hollander said then.

“What?”

“He doesn’t know it yet, but when we go back to Canada, we’re getting married.”

“He doesn’t– *what?*”

“We had a whole plan,” Hollander continued so casually. “A good plan, at that. The foundation, you might have heard,” Scott was batting his eyelids in fast repetition, “he was going to transfer to Ottawa so we could be closer. And maybe, when we retired, we could come out, like you,” Shane said with a wobbly smile. “Then get married, get a dog. Not necessarily in that order. Then, maybe, one day, children. Maybe,” Shane said wistfully in a whisper. Then he sniffed non-committedly, looking back up at Scott. “But that has changed, now. Mostly it doesn’t matter anymore. Well, *to me*. He might not want it. He still needs to go back to Russia, so that’s not gonna work very well, so I don’t know. Maybe my parents could adopt him, that’s an option. Then he’s family, right? I think my parents would like that, actually.”

“Hollander, *what?*”

Of course, Ilya *fucking* Rozanov chose that *fucking* moment to come back into the room with a take-away cup of tea.

“I brought sugar too. I know you don’t drink with sugar, but is special occasion.”

The whiplash was going to kill Scott Hunter.

“What special occasion?” Scott asked dumbly, and Rozanov seemed to agree.

“He didn’t die,” Rozanov replied like it was obvious. Right. *Right*.

Across the room, Hollander was watching the exchange with a lovesick grin.

Scott watched Rozanov then go to Hollander's side, *oh so* gently handing him the cup, while whispering *is hot*, which Hollander ignored as he took it, but his eyes were on Rozanov's face.

"I-I won't tell anyone," Scott then felt the need to add, as he was getting ready to leave.  
"Neither is Kip—my boyfriend, we won't tell anyone. You don't have to worry about that."

"We know, Hunter," Rozanov said, and at any other time, it could have sounded like a threat. Instead, it came out as kinship. Hollander smiled at him, and waved goodbye.

Scott was almost through the door, before he turned around one last time.

"How long have has this been—" he started but stopped when he saw the feral grin growing on Rozanov's face, while Hollander was blushing. "You know what, never mind."

## Chapter End Notes

Thank you for being so patient with this one! The epilogue will be up either tomorrow or the day after (I still have a job to attend, if you'd believe it).

Also, thank you so much again for the reactions to this fanfic, it has kind of blown my mind but it is a great boost for the ego and the writing.

I write a lot, not just fanfics, not just for this fandom, but I have some ideas about Heated Rivalry, so if I feel confident about it, maybe I'll post more.

Thank you so much for reading!

# Chapter 8: Epilogue

## Chapter Notes

It's a wrap, gang!

This epilogue challenged me, because there were a lot of things I wanted to include, bring a conclusion and answering some questions, but I know I left some things under developed. Hopefully, it won't be too off-putting.

There is only one POV in this part, but the truth was that if I made it from anyone else POV from before (Yuna, Ilya, Shane), I would just double-up the word count. Maybe one day, if I get inspired, I might write from the others POV during that time.

Anyway, I still hope you'll enjoy it, and that it will bring enough satisfaction to the end of this story!

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

Madison Square Garden was one, if not *The* most famous arena in the entire world. Sure, it wasn't just for hockey, but it was emblematic nonetheless.

On any other occasion, it was a significant intensity to watch a hockey game there, but tonight of all night, the atmosphere was electric.

Picture this: first game to set off the new hockey season, the New York's Admirals against the Montreal's Metropolitans.

But most importantly, five months after the horrific incident taking place in this exact same rink, Shane Hollander was back for his first game after recovery.

Everyone and their neighbours were present. The entirety of the city of Montreal and half of the population of Canada filled the stands, and even New York fans were there to support the Metros' Captain's return, but also just to witness this historic moment.

If the ambiance was usually already buzzing, tonight, the walls were shaking, the excitement of the crowd so deafening Scott couldn't even hear his own thoughts.

The fans weren't the only ones excited for the game. Even on the ice, Admirals and Metros already present kept skating by the Metros' bench with the need to be the first to notice Hollander coming through.

He wasn't sure it was the case for everyone, but Scott was actually anxious to see the Metros' Captain back on the ice.

They had dinner together last night, Shane, Scott, Kip, and both Yuna and David Hollander. There had been a Russian-shaped elephant in the room at the restaurant, but Scott had watched Shane rub something underneath his shirt, not unlike the many times he had seen a certain ex-Boston Captain do.

He wasn't the only one noticing apparently, because everytime Shane did so, Yuna would also catch it, rubbing his arm or his shoulder.

And Shane Hollander had been... Shane Hollander.

Scott wasn't sure who he was expecting to see when he had received the invitation to meet at a quiet Italian restaurant in the East Village.

He had been wary, in a way, half expecting some thundering news. He didn't know why he thought he would be entitled to any of that from Hollander, but he couldn't help it.

Unnecessarily so, as Kip had told him, because Shane had been his normal self. Yuna was leading most of the conversation, Kip and Scott more than happy to chat with her, while Shane and his father were quieter. Not in a subdued way, just... the Hollander way.

At one point, Scott had gone to the restroom, and as he was washing his hands, Shane had followed him in.

"Thank you for meeting us tonight," Scott said as he dried his hands while Shane leaned back against one of the sinks, looking at the ground.

"Thanks for accepting the invitation."

"You must have had more interesting offers. Wasn't even one talk show ready to have you?"

Shane made a face at that.

"They are being really weird," the Canadian said like he thought people were overreacting.

“Yeah, they can be. I think people are just really excited to see you back here, you know.”

“My mom had muffins delivered to the nurses at the hospital.”

Scott snorted, because Shane was still making a puzzled face, like he just couldn’t get it.

“You’re doing okay?” Scott asked after a bit, going for casual, but his voice stumbled on the last word. Shane finally looked up.

“I am. I... I’m seeing someone. To help—“ Shane admitted eagerly, before stopping himself, but Scott was nodding in understanding. “I’m fine, though. Everyone’s been waiting for... something to happen. But I feel fine. It was weird, for a while, how tired I felt all the time, and that probably messed with my head the most. Not really hurting, but feeling weak. Not having PT for a singular injury, but to not strain my heart and to straighten it. That I have to worry about that now. That it might have changed me in a definitive way.”

Scott listened, breath caught in his chest as the raw emotion Hollander displayed with a detachment like he had watched it happening rather than lived through it.

“But I feel fine, now. Physically, but mentally too. I’m not scared, by the way, to return onto the ice. Everyone keeps asking me that,” Hollander made a perplexed face, and Scott couldn’t help but laugh.

“Yeah, *how crazy*,” Scott said, and at least that made Shane smile and shrug.

“I know. But like... I don’t know. I don’t feel it. I’m still more scared of the ocean than I will ever be of going back on the ice.”

Scott laughed again, rubbing his eyes and shaking his head.

“The ocean, really?”

“It’s really deep,” Shane said with a briefly haunted shadow crossing over his face, and Scott laughed again.

“I’m glad, though,” he said. “I’m glad you are not... I’m glad it didn’t change that for you. I know how much hockey means to you, means *to all of us*, but even that sometimes is not enough.”

As Shane sighed and nodded, they both knew who they were talking about.

Matti Jalo had gone into early retirement. Scott didn’t know the extent of their exchange, but he knew Matti and Hollander had met once they both had come out of the hospital.

Matti had finished the couple of games the Admirals had left in the playoffs, but Scott knew his decision had probably already been made. His heart wasn’t in it anymore.

“But yeah, I’m glad you’re back, Hollander. I can’t wait to show them we were going to win that night,” Scott chirped to try and lighten the mood.

“I saw my goal before I got injured,” Shane deadpanned, and Scott didn’t manage to rein in the surprise laugh that burst out of him. “It’s a shame, if it wasn’t for that, I could have been the MVP of the game.”

“*You were* the MVP of the game,” Scott replied in a similar deadpanned tone.

“Well, yeah. But I kind of like, *died*. They had to give it to me.”

Scott laughed again.

Something that had been wound so tight for weeks, months, even, loosened in his chest. Because Shane Hollander was so unapologetically Shane Hollander. And some more.

“You kind of sound like him,” Scott then smirked.

“Where do you think I got it from?” Shane said flippantly, but he was also smiling. Scott chuckled softly.

“Maybe next time, he could also come to dinner with us.”

Shane hummed, still a small smile as he seemed to reminisce.

“He would have been here, but he had a team-building thing.”

“That’s right, I forgot. Ottawa, uh?”

It was Shane’s turn to smirk at him.

“Oh, so you keep tabs?”

“As if you don’t do the same, Hollander.”

“Hopefully, for very different reasons,” Shane replied, and Scott’s mouth dropped as he watched Shane Fucking Hollander turn red as he realized what he had just said.

“Jesus, Hollander. I don’t want to know,” Scott scoffed, but he was laughing too.

“Sorry,” Shane said, not sounding sorry one bit.

A day later, Scott had hoped that conversation would be enough to calm his nerves, but his own first time back on the ice after the accident had been difficult enough that he should have expected this reaction.

A part of him felt bittersweet about tonight. Of course, like everyone else, he was just happy to have Hollander back. He simply couldn't help being mad at the league for banking on the accident rather than do anything to prevent it to happen again.

Because the game got suspended and couldn't finish that day, and Hollander got injured during the first period, the league had decided to make the Metros and Admirals replay it. People had wondered about the goals already scored, but since Hollander's goal counted, it was a draw at the time of the accident.

Not only it was cruel, as both teams were down a few players, but for their first game back, the Metros didn't even know if Hollander would ever return, barely awake at the time.

Sure, they couldn't stop all of hockey from happening, they had a deadline after all, but Scott wondered what would have been their plans if Shane had died. There had to be a cup winner no matter what, but what would have the final looked like as a team lifted a cup high above their head while a *one-in-a-generation* talent was dead?

Scott didn't have a good answer, just that he wasn't interested to know how far worse the league could have been.

Carter Vaughan skated to him lazily, coming to a slow stop inches away from Scott, and he had half a mind of pushing him off, especially with Carter's smirk, knowing perfectly well what he was doing.

"Did you really gel your entire hair except your slut-strand?" Carter scoffed, and Scott lifted a hand, feeling indeed a loose strand right on his forehead.

"I didn't gel my *entire* hair, and I'm sweating already, okay? It's gonna fall off, it's not on purpose."

"Oh, and it has nothing to do with Kip looking at you with heart eyes from the stands?"

Scott would have liked to say that he remained chill and suave, *not eager at all*, but the truth was that he spun around so fast he briefly wobbled on his skates, before catching Kip leaning over the seat in front of him so he could get a better look at where Scott was, looking at him with the softest smile.

Scott's breath itched.

"Twirl your slut strand," Carter jabbed him in the ribs, and Scott batted his stick away. Instead, he tried to push back said *slut strand*, to no avail, because it fell back exactly into place, and Kip's smile grew into a grin, while his cheeks turned pink. Probably from the cold.

Carter snickered behind him.

But before Scott could retort something, *anything*, the crowd *bristled*, the tension in the arena suddenly morphing and going from ecstatic to absolutely animalistic. If the place was loud before, it breathed at once to scream at the top of its lungs.

He turned just in time back towards the Metros' bench to see number 24 step into the ice.

*I will survive*, by Gloria Gaynor shook the arena, as all the screens displayed Shane Hollander's return to the ice.

Scott would have appreciated the poetry of the moment, if it wasn't for Shane's face. The Metros' Captain had one of his branded awkward smiles on, his gaze flicking up to the different screens, grimacing everytime he noticed himself.

He waved at the crowd nonetheless, getting an even stronger reaction, and his eyes widened. He probably then decided that was enough, and he started skating around, Hayden Pike following him like a shadow.

A lot of players went to him, slapping him on the back, shaking his hand, exchanging well wishes, Scott assumed. Everyone was a fan of Shane Hollander this day, most players forgetting their ongoing beef with the fastest skater in the NHL.

Even after seeing him the previous night, Scott wanted to go speak to him, pass on his well wishes or tell him it was nice to have him back here, or ask if a hulking Russian would jump over the barriers to come beat anyone that would even just skate by Hollander tonight.

Not that it even crossed his mind that Shane couldn't take care of himself, but everytime Scott remembered Hollander and Rozanov in the hospital together, there was no way they were normal about each other.

In the end, Scott didn't even need to find an opening to go to Shane, because the Metros' Captain came to him instead.

That got a renewed reaction from the crowd, as upon reaching where Scott and Carter stood, they clasped hands and pulled each other in a short side hug.

"Hey," Shane said awkwardly, leaving it at that. Scott had seen for himself the Metros' Captain was more talkative under heavy medication, and very much less so on a regular day. But he was trying, and Scott remembered watching him get confused, looking eerily like a lost kid, right there, on this exact ice, right across from they were standing now.

"Good to see you back on the ice, Hollander," Scott said.

"You look normal," Carter said, "like you're about to kick our asses."

That got a snort out of Shane.

"Don't know about that," Hollander said, as he looked around, noticing the cameras still on them.

"Heard you beat your previous in-team sprint record," Carter pointed out, and that took Scott by surprise. Hollander simply smirked and shrugged.

"I do, every so often," he said casually, and Scott rolled his eyes, but didn't try to hide his smile. "Nice gear," Shane then said, pointing with his chin at their own neck guards.

Hollander was wearing one too, so was Pike behind him, currently distracted with Boiziau.

Scott had seen the scar, last night, unable to hide it under the collar of his dress shirt. Honestly, even if it was still red, it was such a small line compared to the effect it had had. Under his hands, Scott had found it so large and gaping like a leaking faucet, and yet, under the very brief look he had given it, it appeared so... innocuous.

The neck guard hid it completely from prying eyes, to which Scott was grateful, and Shane must be too.

"Well, if we want the league to make it mandatory, we have to lead by example," Scott said.

Shane made a face.

“Yeah, I hope so,” he added distractedly.

“You’ve met with one of the league’s commissioners, yeah? Did he say anything?”

“Beyond the usual *no rainbow tape*, no,” Hollander replied bitterly.

“Fucking asshole,” Carter shook his head before spitting.

“My mom told him that too,” Hollander snorted, which got both Carter and Scott to laugh.

“Well, if we stay on their ass, maybe we can make them change.”

The referees then called them, so they had to go back to their own team, but the conversation had settled something in Scott.

All the players took their places, and of course, both Scott and Hollander were called for the first face off.

The two made their way centre ice, bending down, stick to stick.

“So, is there a big Russian with a bald-cap and sunglasses on somewhere in the stands right now?” Scott asked, their helmets inches away from each other.

Shane almost reeled back at that, making a disgusted face. Then he looked around, while everyone else appeared distracted.

“He would never wear a bald-cap. A wig and a hat, maybe.” Scott chuckled. “And he has a game in Vancouver tomorrow.”

“So the tall bodyguard with long hair next to your mom is not—“

Shane’s eyes flickered to the stands, before shaking his head and laughing as well, batting Scott’s stick with his.

“Forgot to say it last night, but I heard congratulations are in order,” Shane then said, looking away from the ground for the first time, to meet Scott’s eyes.

“I... yeah, thank you. What you said, in the hospital, that day. I realized I didn’t want to wait to marry Kip.” Shane hummed. “And you?” Scott enquired hesitantly, unsure if he was allowed to ask.

“Uh?”

“You guys went back to Canada, didn’t you?”

“Oh. Yeah.” It was Scott’s turn to hum, coming to the conclusion he wouldn’t get more than that. But then, Hollander took a deep breath and surprised him. “By the way, the congratulations come from the both of us.”

“Really? He said as much?” Scott smirked, trying to imagine the unnamed Russian sending his congratulatory wishes.

“Well, it kind of bothers him.”

“What does?”

“That we’ll share the same anniversary month,” Shane replied as the puck dropped.

Hollander won the face off.

## Chapter End Notes

I know that I might receive push back on how Shane reacted, and dealing with the trauma of it all, but I feel, as also someone on the spectrum, that we can deal with trauma in strange ways and not what would be expected.

Anyway, I still hope you enjoyed this conclusion, and the fic in general!

'Til next time!

End Notes

Thank you for reading!

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