

don't dream it's over

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don't dream it's over

by [alljustrunaways](#)

Summary

Ilya still loves the sport, but it will always be different for Shane. Hockey runs through his veins, it's his life.

That's what makes it so hard seeing it destroy him.

Notes

Hi!! I've basically lost my mind this week re-watching s1 and reading both Hollanov books (plus following Hudson and Connor's press tour online like everyone else on the planet) so I'm back with another fic that I wrote embarassingly quickly

I've seen a bunch of speculation now that a 3rd Shane/Ilya book has been announced, and while I definitely hope Rachel doesn't go with the career-ending injury trope (they deserve a book of pure happiness IMO), I couldn't get this idea out of my head. I'm sure there a lot of fics about this, but I wanted to explore Shane dealing with maybe not having hockey in his life anymore and what that would mean for their relationship - but don't worry, it won't be too sad (no way would I write Shane retiring without at least a couple more cup wins with his husband)

Disclaimers: I know nothing about knee injuries or hockey, and this might be a mix of show/book canon since I binged both, so pls forgive any inaccuracies!

TW: mentions of pill addiction/suicide (no more descriptive than canon, just mentioned)

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

Chapter 1: Part One - Ilya

Ilya knows Shane pretty well. Pretty much as well as anyone can know another person, actually.

He's known him as a lover for over fifteen years, a partner for eight, and a husband for nearly four. He's played countless games against him, and over the past few years, even more by his side as a teammate.

He knows all his quirks, all his strengths and flaws, all the things that he hates and all the things he loves. He knows how he likes his tea before bed and how he can make him moan by kissing that one spot on his neck every time.

In all the time he has known Shane, in all the different stages of life and their relationship and his career, there is one thing that has always been a constant - he *loves* hockey.

He doesn't love it in the way Ilya does. Ilya used to enjoy playing because he knew he was good at it and he wanted to make his father proud. Even after any illusion that he would ever be good enough to please that man faded, he still loved winning. He loved dominating the ice, making the crowd go wild. He liked the lifestyle playing a major league sport afforded him, the cars and the houses and the parties. In recent years, he's also grown to love the incredibly special feeling of playing with his husband, with the best coach he's ever had and a team of great guys.

He loved winning the cup two years ago, in Shane's second season in Ottawa. He had thought winning it in Boston years earlier would be his career highlight, but nothing could compare to hoisting the silver cup on the ice with his husband and best friends, knowing they proved everyone wrong and defied the odds.

Ilya still loves the sport, but it will always be different for Shane. Hockey runs through his veins, it's his life.

That's what makes it so hard seeing it destroy him.

It's a dark, cold, evening in Ottawa. Despite it being late March, it still feels very much like winter, and Ilya's more than ready for summer to arrive.

He wants to be at the cottage, relaxing by the water with Shane, or at his in-laws' house, playing fetch in the backyard with Anya. He wants to be running their hockey camps and spending time with friends.

Really, he would settle for almost anything if it meant this season would be over. Not because the team isn't doing well - they're on a good streak, actually, and on their way to another playoff run.

It's because when the season ends, he won't have to spend every waking moment watching his husband pretend he's not in pain.

"I'm gonna go take a shower," Shane says quietly as they walk through the front door. He already did at the arena, but Ilya knows that he needs the ritual and solitude of a shower more than he really needs to bathe again.

He's been too quiet, considering they won against his former team tonight and he scored a great goal. He still did press afterward, answering the same questions about playing against Montreal that he's been receiving for the past two years. He put on a brave face for the media, Coach Wiebe, their teammates, the trainers.

Ilya knows better, though. He saw how he was wincing all throughout the third period, how he limped slightly on the way to their car and didn't protest when Ilya offered to drive home.

"Okay," Ilya says, locking the door behind them. "I will make dinner."

Anya comes running over, jumping up on Ilya first.

"Hello, my best girl," he grins, petting her fur while she excitedly licks his face. "We missed you, too."

When she's done with Ilya, she heads straight for Shane, wanting some attention from both of her dads. Shane, who's just finished taking off his shoes, crouches down to pet their dog and immediately winces again, his hand clutching his knee.

"Shane..." Ilya sighs, fighting the urge to run to his side and carry him to their bedroom and take care of him all night. If there's one thing he's learned in the past year, it's that Shane does not like him making a big deal of this.

"I'm fine," Shane says reflexively, giving Anya's fur one more stroke before walking away from Ilya and, more importantly, the conversation.

This is how it's been ever since the end of last season, when Shane completely fucked his knee in one of their first playoff games. That was almost a full year ago now, but even after surgery and physio and every other possible treatment that money could buy, he still isn't back to one hundred percent. Mostly because he's been pushing himself like crazy ever since he was cleared to come back in January, ignoring the doctor's warnings to take it easy.

If anything, he's been playing harder than he ever did before, like he's trying to prove that the injury hasn't slowed him down. But it has - or, at least, it should.

Ilya feeds Anya her dinner and then gets to work on theirs - just pasta and Shane's favourite salad, a standard post-game meal for them. He sets the dishes on their coffee table instead of

the dining table, and he grabs an ice pack from the freezer as soon as he can hear Shane is out of the shower.

Minutes later, his husband comes down the hallway looking just as tired and worn out as before, but now with damp hair and wearing just athletic shorts and a faded Team Canada hoodie.

“How was the shower?”

“Fine,” Shane shrugs as he sits down next to Ilya. “Thanks for making dinner.”

“You’re welcome,” Ilya says, gesturing for Shane to shift over slightly.

This routine has become quite well-practiced for them by now. Shane elevates his leg on the couch sectional, Ilya looks at his knee for a moment and tries not to stare too long at the swelling, and then Shane accepts the ice pack and acts like he wasn’t in desperate need of it.

Ilya puts on the new Netflix series they’ve been bingeing lately, and they watch it in silence as they eat. Ilya tries to pretend he doesn’t notice how Shane shifts his position every fifteen seconds, his breath hitching slightly every time.

When they’re done eating, Shane moves to help Ilya clear their plates and immediately winces again, more noticeably.

“Do you need-”

“I just took more Advil, it’ll be fine soon,” Shane cuts him off before he can finish.

Ilya meets his gaze for a moment, his chest tight as he fights the urge to ask him how many he’s taken today. He knows his husband doesn’t have an addiction problem, but he feels more and more like the 12-year-old boy who found his mother dead of a pill overdose with each passing day that Shane relies on them.

Without a word, he goes to the kitchen to do the dishes.

As he scrubs the pan, he thinks about what his therapist, Galina, said last week:

“I know that you want to help him by alleviating his pain, but sometimes the best way you can do that is just by being there for him. He likely already knows how serious it is, so he doesn’t necessarily need you to remind him of that. He needs his husband.”

He knows she’s right, but it’s a lot easier said than done to bite his tongue on nights like this. Years of therapy have made him stronger, though - even if Shane is still his greatest weakness.

Nevertheless, he’s not going to make him talk about it tonight, not when he’s still actively in pain and exhausted. That won’t end well for either of them.

Instead, he makes him tea.

“Herbal tea with a little honey,” he says as he sets the mug down in front of Shane. “Not too sweet, promise.”

Shane looks over at him, his expression much softer than it was a few minutes ago. He’s reclined comfortably again, and he grabs Ilya’s hand before he can sit on the opposite end of the couch and pulls him down right next to him.

Ilya pauses for only a second before wrapping his arm around him, letting Shane rest his head on his shoulder and snuggle closer to him. His body relaxes quickly with the warmth of his husband against him. He presses a kiss into Shane’s hair and strokes his arm.

“I’m sorry,” Shane says after a few minutes. “I know I’ve been kind of an asshole lately. It’s not your fault that I’m...”

“Still hurting,” Ilya finished for him, tilting his head so their eyes meet. “I know, *lyubimyy*. It’s okay. I just...do not like to see you like this. Again.”

“I know,” he responds quietly - memories of the horrific injury last season undoubtedly flashing through his own mind, too. “It’s not...it’s not that bad, I swear. It’s just hard coming back from an injury, right? It will get better.”

Ilya just kisses his head again and holds him a bit tighter.

He really hopes that’s true, because he doesn’t think his heart could take another repeat of last year.

11 Months Earlier

Things were going so well.

Not just in the game, which they were winning 5-3 against Toronto, but the entire season and playoff run so far.

It was Shane’s third season in Ottawa, now, and after winning the cup last year, the Centaurs were all hungry for more. Their team had really come together and found its groove.

Everything else was pretty perfect, too. Ilya and Shane were coming up on three years of both marriage and being publicly out, and were incredibly happy. They were starting to talk about the potential for kids when one or both of them retired, though neither of them were in much of a rush, considering they were playing the best and most fun hockey of their lives at the moment. The Irina Foundation was going strong with Yuna at the helm and their summers dedicated to running their camp.

Of course, perfect can only last so long before shit hits the fan.

In this case, it happens in the final minutes of the third period.

One minute, Ilya is skating toward the net, acutely aware of Shane's position on the ice and the exact timing needed to make his pass and secure a final goal for them tonight.

The next, he hears the sound of a thud and turns his head to see his husband lying on the ice, curled in toward his knee.

He didn't even make contact with anyone. It was just a terrible combination of speed and him planting his skate wrong to pivot past a defender, but that was all it took.

Ilya's at his side within an instant, kneeling close to him and gently touching his back with his gloved hand. He has a terrible sense of déjà vu to the last time he saw Shane lying on the ice like this, all those years ago, but his only saving grace now is that he doesn't have to hide how terrified he is.

"Hey. Hey, Shane, I am here," he says softly. He can see the trainers rushing over. "You will be okay. Help is coming."

"I-I can't-" Shane tries to turn to face him better, but the slight jostling of his body makes him cry out involuntarily. "Fuck, my knee."

Ilya's jaw clenches as the trainers begin assessing him and stabilizing his leg. He's seen this type of injury before, he knows how serious it might be.

He has to move back to give them space to work, but the moment Shane is loaded onto the stretcher and cries out in pain again, he is right there.

"Ilya-"

"I know, *lyubimiy*," Ilya says, his hand finding Shane's. "I am here, not going anywhere."

He briefly looks up and meets eyes with Troy, who is looking at them with concern. He raises his eyebrow slightly, like he's silently asking something, and Ilya just shakes his head in response. They both know what that means - *not good*.

Ilya follows them off the ice, ignoring the ref's reminder that the game is still going. Their coach is waiting for them at the bench.

"Hey, Shane, it's gonna be alright. You're in good hands," Wiebe says firmly, squeezing his arm before turning to Ilya. "Roz-"

"I am going with him."

He knows he technically shouldn't, since there's a playoff game still going on and he's the captain, but he needs Wiebe to understand that this isn't up for discussion. He is not staying here just to watch them run out the clock on a game that they've already won while his husband is going to the hospital.

Thankfully, Wiebe doesn't argue, because they don't have time for that - he heard someone say that the ambulance is waiting.

"Of course," the coach says. "Keep us posted. Terry will connect with the doctors at the hospital, okay?"

Ilya nods, with no time to properly express his gratitude toward their coach or this team before Shane is being taken down the tunnel and he has to move.

It's a bit of a blur after that.

He manages to get his helmet and skates and pads off, and someone - one of the trainers, probably - gives him a pair of slides so he's not going outside in nothing but his socks. He discards his jersey last, not wanting to draw more attention to them than necessary at the hospital, leaving him in just his black compression shirt and pants.

He follows Shane into the ambulance, glad that he doesn't have to explain his presence. There aren't many people in this country who don't know that they're married, and even fewer here in Ottawa.

Ilya watches helplessly as the paramedics help Shane, taking his vitals and asking him questions - his name, date of birth, allergies. Ilya is tempted to answer for him, to spare him any exertion from having to speak right now, but he knows it's probably some kind of protocol that they make sure Shane can answer for himself.

They ask him his pain level on a scale of one to ten, and Ilya braces for the answer as if he's the one experiencing it.

"Um, eight. I don't know. Nine, maybe."

"Okay," the paramedic says, "we're going to give you something for that."

Ilya remains close throughout the ride, sitting on the narrow bench seat and letting Shane squeeze his hand as tightly as he needs to while his leg is poked and prodded.

When they arrive at the hospital, Ilya trails behind helplessly as Shane is wheeled into the ER on a gurney. Shane whines slightly at the loss of contact between them, and he returns to his side as quickly as he can without getting in the way of the paramedics or the nurse that they're handing him off to.

"Ilya-"

"I'm here," Ilya says quickly, grabbing his hand once more and stroking his hair with the other. "It's okay. We're here now."

He decides to keep talking to Shane, murmuring soothing nothings, in hopes that it drowns out the sound of what the paramedics are telling the nurse - *non-contact knee injury, severe pain, suspected ligament tear.*

They're brought into a curtained area, where they carefully transfer Shane to a bed. They remove the huge brace his leg was formerly in and cut open his pant leg to get a better look. Shane grunts in pain at all the jostling, and Ilya tries to reach for him again, but is quickly given a look by the nurse.

"Mr. Rozanov, I'm sorry, but we need better access to see what's going on," she says - blunt, but not unkind. "You can sit by his head, okay? Just don't move."

Ilya nods, moving to sit on the stool next to the bed and letting his hand rest in Shane's hair.

"Stay here," Shane murmurs, his eyes half-closed. Ilya hopes the drugs are working, since he doesn't seem to be in as much pain as before, but he definitely still isn't comfortable.

"Of course, *solnyshko*," Ilya whispers.

He would normally stick to English at a time like this, so Shane's brain doesn't have to do the work of translating - he knows firsthand how exhausting that can be - but part of him wants the modicum of privacy speaking Russian affords them right now. He's used to them being recognized, and he knows the nurses will still provide Shane the best possible care, maybe even better, considering who he is.

But he really just needs to be Ilya, Shane's husband, not Ilya Rozanov, famous hockey player, right now.

Terry, their team doctor, arrives shortly after, and Ilya is glad for his presence. He's a nice man, and it's good to see a familiar face amongst the chaos of the ER.

"Hey, guys," he says, clapping Ilya's shoulder lightly. "How you holding up, Shane?"

"Oh, never better," Shane says, wincing again as the nurse moves his leg once more.

Terry speaks briefly with the doctor who's just come over to examine Shane, introducing himself and explaining the situation.

"We're going to take him for x-rays now," the ER doctor says. "We don't suspect anything is broken, but we have to rule it out. Mr. Rozanov, we have a room you can wait in."

Normally, Ilya would feel a bit strange about getting special treatment over other patients and their loved ones, but he knows the team has some kind of relationship with this hospital and that Terry probably pulled some strings for this. He also knows he really doesn't want to have to be out in the waiting room and get asked for a picture or an autograph or something right now, so he just nods.

"I'll see you soon," he murmurs to Shane, pressing a kiss to his forehead before he's wheeled away again and out of his sight.

Terry goes with Ilya to the "private waiting room" that is basically just a big closet filled with some chairs and a table with a few magazines on it.

Ilya practically collapses into one of the chairs, the exhaustion of the game and stress of the last half-hour setting in. His clothes are damp with sweat and clinging to his skin, and he reaches for his pocket only to remember that his phone is still in the locker room at the arena.

He panics for a second about not being able to reach Shane's parents, but then he remembers they were there tonight, watching the game - and knowing Yuna, they've probably already been told where they are and are on their way here.

"He's gonna be okay, Ilya," Terry says to him, his tone low and comforting.

Terry's been his doctor since he joined the team six years ago, so Ilya knows him pretty well at this point. He's also the one that prescribed him antidepressants without judgement after he realized he needed them a few years back, so he knows how prone to spiralling he is.

"I know," Ilya says with a tight smile. "Just brings back bad memories. When he got hurt in Montreal..."

He knows he doesn't have to elaborate, seeing as that injury got major media coverage and that Terry is very aware of Shane's medical history.

"This isn't a concussion, so you don't have to worry about that," Terry reminds him. "You just need to be there for him and get him through this, which you're already doing a great job at."

"It is bad, isn't it?" Ilya asks, and Terry doesn't respond. "His ACL?"

"It's too early to say," he says diplomatically, but Ilya doesn't break eye contact. "Yes, probably."

Ilya buries his head in his hands. *That's going to destroy Shane.*

As he predicted, it's not much longer before the Hollanders come rushing into the room, Yuna leaning the way with her eyes wide and concerned.

"Oh, Ilya, honey," she exhales, pulling him into a hug the moment he stands to greet them. "How is he doing?"

Ilya hugs his mother-in-law back tightly, needing the moment of comfort before he pulls back to answer her.

"Not so good," he says quietly, looking from Yuna to David. "This is our team doctor, Terry."

Terry, who had been scrolling on his phone and trying not to intrude on the private moment, reaches out to shake both their hands.

"Nice to meet you, Mr. and Mrs. Hollander," Terry says with a small smile. "I'm sorry it's not under better circumstances."

"Where's Shane now?" David asks. "The nurse at the front desk just said to come here."

“He’s getting x-rays, mostly as a precaution,” Terry explains. “I suspect ligament damage, but we’ll need an MRI for that. I’ll go check and see if I can get an update.”

As soon as he’s gone, David passes Ilya a black duffel bag with the Centaurs logo on it.

“We grabbed a change of clothes for both of you from the arena,” Yuna explains. “Both of your phones are in there too, and everything important from your lockers. I hope that’s okay, we didn’t want you to have to go back there tonight.”

“We drove Shane’s car over here, too, so you can take that home,” David continues.

Ilya’s happy for the first time ever that it was Shane’s turn to drive today, meaning they took his SUV and not one of Ilya’s sports cars. It will be much more practical to get Shane home in a bigger car.

“Thank you,” he says sincerely. He hadn’t even thought that far ahead yet, but of course, Yuna had. “I’m glad you are both here. It’s been...I do not like seeing him like this.”

“We’re glad you were here with him, honey,” Yuna says softly. “I’m sure that helped keep him calm.”

“I hope so.”

Ilya excuses himself to change out of his base layers and into the comfy track pants and hoodie from his locker. When he gets back, he sits down next to Yuna and turns his phone back on for the first time all night. It’s not surprising that he already has missed calls or texts from half the team, Coach Wiebe, Svetlana, Rose, and Hayden.

“A lot of people reaching out?” Yuna comments as Ilya’s phone buzzes incessantly.

“Sorry,” Ilya says, quickly putting it on do not disturb. “Yes, many friends are concerned. Shane is very loved.”

“Don’t apologize,” she insists, tucking her own phone away and reaching out to squeeze Ilya’s arm. “And they’re calling because they love *both* of you.”

Ilya didn’t think about it that way, but he supposes it’s probably true. He doesn’t have the energy to respond to them yet, but it does make his heart swell a bit knowing how much support they have.

Soon after, they’re told Shane is done with the scans for now and that they can see him. All three of them are escorted down the hallway to another room.

Shane is already sitting in the bed, in a hospital gown now instead of his torn-up pants. His face is still pained, and his eyes are slightly bloodshot, but he sighs in relief when they walk through the door.

“Oh, Shane,” Yuna breathes, walking over and enveloping her son in a big hug. “I’m so sorry, honey. How are you feeling?”

“I’m okay, Mom,” Shane says, muffled by her jacket.

David comes over to give Shane another quick hug, and then Ilya resumes his post at his side. While his parents begin grilling both Terry and the ER doctor for more details, he leans down to kiss Shane’s temple and strokes his hair back from his face.

“You okay?” he asks quietly, hoping for a more real answer than he gave his parents.

Shane still nods, but he grabs Ilya’s hand tightly and doesn’t let go.

The hospital doctor leaves after a moment, closing the door behind her, and Terry turns to address the rest of them, holding Shane’s chart in his hands.

“So, Shane, the x-rays were clear as we expected,” he says cautiously, eyes scanning the page. “Which means we won’t really know what’s going on until we get an MRI. I’m pushing to get you scheduled ASAP, hopefully tomorrow or the day after that. In the meantime, a nurse is gonna come and get you a brace, crutches, everything else you need. They’ll send you home with some meds to get you through the night, but I’ll write you a prescription for more.”

Nobody says anything for a moment, but Ilya looks down at Shane and can see the gears in his brain turning.

“You think it’s my ACL,” Shane says flatly. “Right?”

Terry looks hesitant to answer, just like he did with Ilya earlier. “It’s not really worth it to speculate, we’ll know after the MRI-”

“Just tell me,” Shane cuts him off, a bit harshly. He closes his eyes for a moment before softening his voice. “Please.”

“I think it’s a strong possibility, yes,” Terry says. “I’m sorry, Shane. But we’ll figure this out, okay?”

Shane nods, but his face has now gone paler than normal, and his jaw is clenched. He’s clearly on the verge of a total breakdown or a panic attack or maybe both.

“Shane, what do you need?” Yuna asks, the alarm bells probably going off in her head, too. “How’s the pain? Do you need more meds, or maybe-”

“I need to not have a torn ACL during the fucking playoffs,” Shane snaps.

The room goes silent, and Yuna takes a step back from the bed. Ilya winces at the harsh words, though he - and everyone else - knows Shane doesn’t mean them.

He meets Shane’s gaze, and he sees a flicker of regret in them before Shane closes his eyes for a long moment and takes a shaky breath.

“I’m sorry, Mom,” he says. “I just...can I have a few minutes alone with Ilya, please?”

“Of course, honey,” Yuna says, seemingly a bit relieved that Shane is at least letting himself seek comfort in somebody. “We’ll be right outside.”

They all vacate the room, leaving Ilya and Shane alone for the first time since they got to the hospital.

The moment they’re alone, Ilya reaches out to stroke Shane’s hair again.

“I’m so sorry-”

He’s cut off by Shane desperately reaching for him, pulling him closer until he’s sitting down on the bed with both arms wrapped around him.

“Shh, I’ve got you,” Ilya whispers into his ear as he holds him close, Shane’s face buried in his shoulder. “It will be okay, Shane-”

“No, it won’t,” Shane mutters. “If it’s my ACL, I’m fucked. I’m out for the playoffs, probably a lot of next season, too. Even then-”

He doesn’t have to finish that sentence for Ilya to know what he’s getting at. Even then, there’s no guarantee for a pro athlete to return to playing at the same level after an injury like this. Especially in his thirties.

“I know, sweetheart,” Ilya says, because nothing he can say will make this better, but he can at least try to soothe him with words of affection and comfort. “This situation is shit, but I am here.”

He can hear the quiet sobs beginning to rack Shane’s body and feel his tears against his neck, prompting Ilya to hold him even tighter as he battles his own tears. He needs to be strong, but this feels like one of the worst moments of his life, seeing Shane hurt and scared and trembling like this.

“Fuck, I can’t believe this is happening.”

“Just breathe, my love,” Ilya murmurs, running a hand up and down his back. “It will be okay. I promise.”

He tries to pull away, only to grab him a tissue from the box on the bedside table, but Shane’s arms pull him back tighter and refuse to let go.

“Don’t let go yet, please.”

“Okay,” Ilya breathes, pressing a kiss to Shane’s head. “Not going anywhere.”

Nothing really changes by the time April comes around, other than the fact that they're in the playoffs now.

It's the least excited Ilya's ever been to make it to the playoffs, because the increased pressure has a direct effect on how hard Shane is pushing himself.

They haven't really talked about it in a few weeks, except for a few comments of concern from Ilya that went ignored.

He's been as understanding and supportive as humanly possible, letting Shane pretend that everything is fine and it's normal that he limps off the ice after every practice or makes excuses not to go with Ilya on his walks with Anya.

But tonight, he just can't take it anymore.

They're in Tampa for an away game in which Shane plays way more minutes than he said he was going to, narrowly securing them a victory with a goal in the third that Ilya can't even enjoy.

There's a buzz of excitement in the locker room afterward, everyone congratulating Shane on the goal, but Ilya is singularly focused on the way he winces every time someone so much as pats him on the back.

By the time they're all showered and Shane's been looked at by the trainer - who Ilya suspects he lied to, seeing as he walks out with an ice pack strapped to his knee and not on crutches - the team is discussing where they should go to celebrate.

"I want a steak," Troy says with a grin. "And a beer or three."

"Easy, Barrett," Dykstra teases. "We have a game in two days, remember?"

"After a win like that, we deserve a little celebration," Wyatt chimes in. "What do you say, Roz?"

Ordinarily, Ilya would be all for a celebratory team dinner and would be leading the charge as captain. But he knows that Shane isn't up for it, and there's no way in hell he's leaving him alone in their hotel room tonight.

"Sorry boys, I think Hollander and I are going to call it a night," Ilya says with a forced smile.

Shane furrows his eyebrows, leaning in closer so only Ilya can hear.

"You can go with them, Ilya. I'll be fine."

The fact that he doesn't try to insist he can come himself is all the confirmation Ilya needs that he is *not* fine. He just shakes his head at Shane and slings his backpack over his shoulder.

“Drinks on me next time, alright?” Ilya says to the group, earning some more whoops and hollers.

The team filters out of the locker room, some making well-meaning jokes about how Ilya and Shane are obviously going back to their hotel room to jump each other's bones like they often do. Ilya *wishes* that were the case.

They don't talk much in the Uber back to the hotel, or the elevator ride up to their room. Even when they get inside, Shane wordlessly slips off his shoes and goes to sit down on the bed, and Ilya goes to get him fresh ice from the hallway. He returns a moment later and places the bag of ice gently on Shane's knee - he's already stripped down to just his boxers and hoodie, his track pants and knee brace neatly placed on top of his suitcase.

“Thanks,” Shane says. “Um, are you mad at me about something?”

How he can be so oblivious about this, Ilya has no idea, but he really doesn't want to fight about this tonight. Not here, in a hotel room, when they have a flight early in the morning. It can wait until they get home tomorrow.

“No,” Ilya says simply.

“Really?” Shane raises an eyebrow. “Because you haven't said a word since we left the arena, and you didn't seem to give a shit when I scored or when we won tonight.”

Ilya sighs, sitting down at the foot of the bed and taking off his shoes.

“This is not me being mad. I am...upset.”

Shane's frown deepens. “Why?”

“You are kidding me, right?” Ilya says incredulously, his head spinning around to face Shane. “You do not think it is hard for me to see my husband in pain all the time, pretending he is not?”

Shane's jaw tightens as he leans back against the pillows. “Ilya, I'm not-”

“You are, Shane,” he cuts him off. “You always are, and you especially are tonight. You think I do not notice? I live with you, I play with you. I am married to you. I can tell when you are hurting and when you are lying.”

It seems to dawn on Shane that he is not going to win this argument by lying *more*, because his defensive expression crumbles quickly under Ilya's glare.

“A lot of players play hurt,” Shane says - a neutral fact. “You have before, too.”

“Not like this,” Ilya counters - another indisputable fact.

“It's the playoffs. We could get another cup this year.”

He doesn't know how to get through to him that this isn't worth it. There is no trophy or accolade in the world that would be worth destroying his body, possibly doing irreparable harm.

If Shane won't acknowledge that, Ilya knows the only card he has left to play is to be honest about how it's affecting him.

"It is killing me to see you like this, *moya lyubov*," he says. "You are making it worse and worse, taking more and more painkillers to get through every day. It makes me..."

He trails off when his eyes fill with tears unexpectedly, rushing to wipe them away. His intention wasn't to make Shane feel guilty, just to convey the seriousness of the situation.

The look on Shane's face goes beyond guilt, though - he looks horrified.

"Oh shit, baby," he says, shifting over to where Ilya's sitting as quickly as he can in his current state. He places a hand on his thigh and squeezes gently. "I am so sorry. Fuck, I didn't even-I promise I'm not taking too many."

"I know," Ilya says. "I have been counting."

This seems to break Shane further, as he reaches up to cup Ilya's face and make him look at him, and there are tears in both of their eyes now.

"I'm sorry that I've been making you nervous about that," Shane says softly. "I wouldn't do anything dangerous, I promise."

Ilya knows that Shane isn't his mother, that he wouldn't ever do anything like what she did, but it's still nice to hear out loud. He sinks into Shane's touch for a moment, letting his words wash over him.

"I know, Shane," he says quietly after a moment. "It's not just the pills, though. It's the reason that you need them so much. You are wrecking your knee more every time you play, and you know this."

Shane's walls are down now, but he still doesn't answer for a moment, leaning into Ilya's side and pressing his forehead to his temple.

"I don't know how to just...stop," he admits. "It does hurt, a lot, but we're so close to the cup again and I don't want to write off another season because of the same stupid injury."

"It would not be a...*write off*," Ilya says. He thinks he knows what that means, but he'll confirm with Shane at a better time. "You tore ACL a year ago. The fact that you played at all this season is very impressive. You helped us get here. But it will not help the team for next year if you ruin it for good."

Shane melts into his side further, and Ilya wraps an arm around him to pull him closer and presses a kiss to the top of his head.

“It also will not help me if you can’t take walks with Anya or play with our future child,” Ilya says softly. “Or get on your knees for me and suck my dick so good that-”

“Ugh, Ilya, why did you have to mention that in the same sentence as our sweet dog and hypothetical kid?” Shane groans, but he’s laughing now, so Ilya considers it a win.

Ilya leans in to kiss him, tenderly cupping his face and stroking his tears away with his thumb.

When they pull back, Shane is looking at him with the same gentle, emotional eyes that Ilya fell in love with so many years ago.

“Just talk to Terry, make an appointment, something,” Ilya says. “That’s all I am asking.”

Shane nods. “Okay. I’ll talk to Terry tomorrow, I promise.”

Ilya kisses him again, this time in gratitude.

“Thank you.”

They sit like that for another minute before Shane’s knee starts to ache again, and he has to lie down and stretch it out. Ilya helps him get settled back in with the ice pack and turns the TV on, handing Shane the remote to pick something.

Once Ilya’s stripped down to his underwear, he asks Shane if there’s anything else he needs.

“Just a cuddle, please,” Shane says, sleepy and adorable.

Ilya doesn’t have to be asked twice, settling in next to him and pulling him into his arms as the show they’re watching plays on low volume.

He presses kisses into his hair as Shane lays his head on his chest.

He might not be able to take his pain away or magically heal his knee so he can keep playing the sport he loves forever and ever without any repercussions, but he can hold him and kiss him and make sure he knows how loved he is - regardless of if he’s playing hockey.

“Love you,” Shane mumbles when he’s close to drifting off.

“I love you too,” Ilya echoes, kissing his forehead. “Get some rest, *lyubimyy*.”

Chapter 2: Part Two: Shane

Chapter Notes

Back for part two...now Shane's POV picking up where we left off! I hope you enjoy, I really loved writing it ❤️

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

@cens_fan: Shane Hollander barely played in the last Tampa game. Is he still injured?!?

@metrostan97: the Centaurs can kiss the cup goodbye (again) if Hollander is done for the season (again)

@centaurspride: omg whats going on with Hollander. Rozanov was off tn too which can't be a good sign??

@hollz24: If Shane fucked up his knee again and is out for the rest of the playoffs I'm gonna kms 😭

↳ *@haasgirl02: I mean he is 34, could be considering retirement at this point 😞*

↳ *@rozydaily: they beat tampa but at what cost 😞*

Shane throws his phone across the bed with an exaggerated groan.

Today is his 34th birthday.

By all accounts, it should be a happy day. He's at the cottage, his favourite place in the world, with his favourite person in the world. Several of his other favourite people - his parents and Rose - are coming for dinner tonight. They're through to the second round of the playoffs.

He can't be happy about any of it, though, because his knee is killing him so badly and so constantly that he knows he's on borrowed time.

It took his husband begging him with tears in his eyes for him to just talk to their team doctor honestly about how bad it's been since he returned to play. He did that after their third playoff game in Tampa nearly two weeks ago, and he managed to reach a deal with both Terry and Ilya that he would rest for one game and then play limited minutes for the rest of the first round. After that, they would reevaluate.

Now that the round is over and Shane's knee hasn't improved - if anything, it feels worse - he knows that the logical next step is seeing the orthopaedic specialist Terry wants to refer him

to, which will probably lead to another surgery or at the very least missing the rest of the playoffs.

It's hard to even take comfort in the fact that he's been given two days off to celebrate his birthday, considering that Wiebe probably only gave him and Ilya the time since he knows Shane might not be back this season.

"Hey, what's wrong?"

He looks up as Ilya walks into the bedroom from their ensuite, wearing nothing but boxers, his hair still damp from a post-run shower. Of course, he's still training for the rest of the playoffs, because *he's* still going to be playing in them.

Ilya woke him up this morning with kisses all over his face, followed by a mindblowingly good blow job, and breakfast in bed with all his favourites. It was an amazing way to start the day, and Shane felt so much gratitude for his husband. Not just for today, but for the past year of hell that Ilya has made bearable with his love.

Shane can't help but soften his expression as Ilya joins him on the bed - which he hasn't moved from the whole time Ilya's been on his run, icing his knee and doomscrolling through social media - and he sees the look of concern in his eyes.

"I'm old," Shane says simply.

Ilya narrows his eyes. "34 is not old. You are very young."

"Not for a hockey player."

"Shane," Ilya sighs, reaching over to gently cup his face. "Try not to think about hockey today. I know this is almost impossible for you, but today is about you relaxing and letting me spoil you, yes?"

It's a nice thought, but Shane hasn't gone a single day without thinking about hockey for the past thirty years. He's not likely to start when his team is in the playoffs and his career is in jeopardy.

"Okay," he says anyways, leaning into Ilya's touch. "The pain isn't that bad today. I know Terry said it's a long shot, but maybe resting it helped and--"

"Shane, this is you talking about hockey," Ilya reminds him. "Please, *solnyshko*. We can talk about that tomorrow."

He knows that this "no hockey" rule won't last long, certainly not once Rose and his parents arrive later. He also knows that Ilya probably just doesn't want to talk about it because he doesn't want to have to tell Shane on his birthday that he's being ridiculous and there's no way resting for a week healed his knee and he should absolutely see that specialist when they're back in Ottawa.

Shane doesn't really want to fight about that right now, either, so he doesn't.

“Come on, why don’t we go sit outside with Anya and enjoy the beautiful day?” Ilya suggests, stroking Shane’s hair with his fingers until his eyes flutter shut. “I will make coffee. Will need our energy for dinner with both Rose and your mother.”

Shane chuckles - that’s an understatement.

“Okay, yeah.”

He spends the rest of the morning and early afternoon like that, lounging on a chair and looking out at the lake while Ilya plays fetch with Anya and comes over occasionally to give him a kiss or bring him a ginger ale.

Ilya refuses to let Shane help with dinner, using the excuse of it being his birthday to justify making him sit down and elevate his leg on the couch while Ilya happily makes Shane’s favourite, teriyaki salmon.

Their guests arrive around 5:30 - Rose flew into Ottawa earlier and his parents picked her up at the airport to bring her for dinner.

The moment Ilya opens the door, she bursts through it and throws her arms around him in a tight hug.

“Where’s the birthday boy?”

As soon as she spots him over Ilya’s shoulder, she rushes over to hug Shane, which he happily returns.

It’s been months since he’s seen Rose, due to both of their insanely chaotic schedules, and he had insisted that she really didn’t need to fly from LA to Ottawa for one night just for a lame birthday dinner, but she refused to listen.

“Happy birthday, Shane,” she says with a grin as she pulls away, holding him at arm’s length to get a good look at him. “It’s so good to see you.”

He can detect a familiar look in her eye that he knows quite well at this point, whether it’s her or anyone else giving it to him - worry, empathy, maybe even a little pity. He’s not sure if she just knows what she’s seen online or if Ilya or his parents have given her more updates on his current condition, but either way, she’s not doing the best job hiding it. And she’s an Emmy-winning actress.

“You too, thanks for coming,” he says, accepting the gift bag she’s thrust into his hands. “You did not have to get me anything, you already flew all the way here!”

“Don’t worry, it’s just a fancy candle,” she shrugs. “But I’m also buying you a first class ticket to LA to visit me as soon as your season’s over, okay? You’re coming too, Rozanov.”

“We might be out there sooner if the Kings make it to the final,” Shane says.

It slips out before he can really think about it, but he sees the look on Ilya’s face and knows what he’s thinking: that there’s no way in hell Shane is making it that far, even if Ottawa

does.

Luckily, his mom swoops in before any kind of awkward silence can settle in, giving Shane a big hug while his dad gives Ilya the bottle of wine they brought over.

Dinner begins pretty normally, with Rose telling everyone about the latest movie she's filming. Ilya is adorably fascinated by her work, always asking questions about what the other famous actors are like in person and wanting the gossip from set.

At some point, the conversation naturally turns back to hockey. It's inevitable with this group - Rose is complaining about how awful Detroit were this year, and Yuna and David are theorizing about which teams in the West are likely to make it through to the next round.

"I have to say, I think you boys are going to have a pretty easy time with New York," Yuna says after a couple glasses of wine, looking only at Ilya. "I mean, now that Scott Hunter is retired, they're really not what they used to be."

"Wait, so - Shane, are you still planning on finishing the season?" Rose asks innocently, not knowing how loaded a question that is around here these days. "I've been reading stuff online, but I never know how much of it is true."

"Nothing's really been decided yet."

This is obviously the wrong thing to say, because Ilya drops his fork to his plate and shoots Shane a look that he knows means he is seriously upset with him.

"Wait, but Terry referred you to a specialist this week, right?" Yuna asks, looking genuinely confused. "You didn't meet with him already, did you?"

"No, he did not," Ilya answers for him. "And he should not be playing until he does. Terry said-"

"I know what Terry said, but the last few games-"

"*Shane*," Ilya says firmly, a tone he normally wouldn't take with him in front of others, even close friends and family. "You need to stop, okay?"

It's pretty clear he doesn't just mean stop talking, but stop everything else - lying, under-exaggerating, *playing*.

As much as he wants to argue further, to do anything to buy himself a little more time and contribute more to the team and the sport that has given him so much, he knows that he can't keep this up. He can't do that to himself, and he definitely can't do that to his sweet, caring husband who seemed so terrified in that hotel room a few weeks ago.

He meets Ilya's gaze and takes a deep breath before burying his face in his hands for a moment, trying to find the strength to say what he needs to say. He knows if he says this here - with so many loved ones to hold him accountable - he can't take it back.

“I’ll make an appointment with the specialist tomorrow,” he says. “And I won’t play again until they say I can.”

Ilya inhales sharply, his eyebrows raised in obvious surprise, but doesn’t say anything yet. The weight of Shane’s words settles over the table, with nobody speaking or moving for a long moment.

His dad, surprisingly, is the one to break the silence.

“You’re doing the right thing, son,” David says, firmly but with a warm look in his eyes. “I know it’s not an easy decision, but it’s what’s best for your future.”

Shane nods, though he doesn’t speak yet - he doesn’t trust his voice not to break right now.

“We’ll figure it out, honey,” Yuna adds, reaching out to touch Shane’s arm. “Whatever it takes, we’ll get you back on the ice.”

He wishes he felt more confident about that, but he’s grateful for his mom’s optimism and determination, both of which certainly helped him get through the initial injury last year.

“You’ll be back and better than ever, I know it,” Rose smiles.

He smiles back at her before turning to his husband, still sitting silently.

When their eyes meet, Ilya just leans over and presses a quick kiss to Shane’s forehead. He knows him well enough to know what that means, that they’ll talk more about this when they’re alone.

Still, Ilya’s hand rests on his thigh for the rest of the meal, keeping him grounded and reminding him of his presence. He’s incredibly grateful for that right now.

It’s later, after Shane has blown out his birthday candles and opened more gifts from his parents and they’ve said goodnight to their guests - Shane’s parents off to their own cottage, and Rose to the guest room - that they’re finally alone.

Ilya climbs into bed first, and he’s waiting for him when Shane comes out of the bathroom after brushing his teeth. He’s sitting on top of the covers against the headboard, scrolling on his phone, and wearing his comfiest black hoodie. He typically wears much less to bed, but it gets pretty chilly at the cottage, even in May.

“Come here,” Ilya says softly, both with his words and his arms, which are wide open.

Shane wordlessly walks over and tucks himself into his husband’s embrace, melting against him the moment Ilya’s strong arms wrap around him.

“I am so proud of you,” he whispers into Shane’s hair. “I know that was not easy to say.”

Shane buries his face in Ilya’s neck, taking a deep breath. He still feels a bit like he could have a panic attack at any moment, knowing he’s effectively making the choice to *not* play hockey for the first time in his life, but this is helping him keep it at bay for now.

He's overcome a lot in his career already, dealing with homophobia from the league and the media and other players, and betrayal from the team that he loved his whole life and to whom he gave ten years and three cup wins. This is just another obstacle, one that he has to tackle off the ice.

"It is time for your birthday present, I think."

Ilya's voice snaps him out of his thoughts.

"I thought you gave me that this morning," he says teasingly, referring to the incredible orgasm and breakfast.

"No, silly, real present," Ilya grins, reaching over and grabbing something from his bag sitting next to the bed. It's a small box wrapped in shiny blue paper with a bow on it. "Open please."

Shane smiles and shakes his head, knowing they had agreed not to get each other birthday gifts after their first year of marriage when *someone* (Ilya) went way overboard. Between their anniversary and Christmas, they already have enough occasions to shop for each other, and half the time they agree to just make a donation to their foundation in lieu of gifts anyways.

When he opens it, he's relieved to find that it's nothing crazy expensive or over the top, but a simple framed photo of them on the ice together after their cup win with the Centaurs two years ago.

In the photo, they're both sweaty and beaming, holding the trophy with their arms around each other. Shane is looking at the camera, but Ilya is looking at him.

"I wanted to get you another boring car, which you deserve after this shit year, but I knew you would not want me to spend so much," Ilya shrugs.

"This is perfect," Shane says softly, unable to tear his eyes away from the picture.

That was one of the happiest moments of his life, aside from only their wedding day. He thought winning the cup with the Metros three times would be his peak, but winning with his husband was incomparable. Not only the joy of playing and winning together, but knowing that they had made every single person - Commissioner Crowell, his old coach and team in Montreal, countless ignorant trolls online - look like idiots for trying to come for them. They won the fucking league with a team that wasn't even making the playoffs a few years prior.

That game, and every game since he came to Ottawa, made him fall back in love with hockey in a way he hadn't since he was a kid.

"I wanted to remind you what you have achieved already," Ilya adds, gently stroking his back. "Four cups, one with your incredibly sexy husband and team that would do anything for you. A very good career."

Shane leans into Ilya's touch a little more, craving his comfort.

“I still want more,” he says quietly, his fingers tracing the outline of the cup in the photo. “I don’t want to be done. I want to play with you again, for at least a few more years.”

“I know, *lyubumiyy*.” Ilya presses a kiss to the top of his head. “This is the best way to make sure that happens. To ask for help and be careful with your body.”

Shane sets the frame down carefully on the desk and launches himself back into Ilya’s arms, pressing their lips together. Ilya returns his kisses happily, tangling his fingers in his hair.

“Thank you,” Shane sighs into his mouth between kisses. “I love you so much.”

Ilya presses their foreheads together.

“I love you very much, too. Happy birthday, Shane. I hope it was a good day for you.”

Despite everything, it was.

The MRI reveals that while it’s not the worst-case scenario, it’s still pretty bad.

The orthopaedic specialist, Dr. Croteau, says that he’s shocked Shane has managed to play for this long given the damage, and that he definitely rushed back too soon after the initial injury. None of this is really news to Shane, but he can practically feel the “I told you so” radiating from Ilya in the chair next to him.

It’s not career-ending, necessarily, but he does need another surgery to fix it. There’s no guarantee that he’ll be back by next season, or even by next year’s playoffs, but it’s his best chance.

The timing could be better, considering Ilya is very much still in the middle of a playoff run and has nearly a month to go if they make it to the finals, but Shane doesn’t want to wait that long. The sooner he gets the surgery, the sooner he’ll recover, and the better his chances of playing next season.

So he doesn’t wait. Two weeks after his birthday, he’s going under the knife again.

It’s almost as daunting as the first time, which he had kind of hoped it wouldn’t be, but he has Ilya with him, which helps. The Centaurs beat the Admirals in only five games - as Yuna predicted - and they’re now up against Boston in the conference final. They already won one of the first two games in Boston, and now have home advantage for the next two. They get two rest days first, and Ilya is dedicating both of his to being there for Shane.

Ilya would probably be more in his head about playing his former team during such a crucial point in the playoffs if he weren’t so laser-focused on the surgery and making sure he has everything he needs. So Shane lets him fuss over him and be extra sweet and sappy the day

before and morning of, telling himself it's mostly to help distract Ilya and not because he's kinda freaking out and needs all the support he can get.

Before he's wheeled back into the OR, his parents wish him luck and then give him a moment alone with just Ilya.

"Is all going to be okay," Ilya says softly, his hand caressing Shane's face and lightly stroking his freckles. "You are very brave, just like last time. Dr. Corneau is the best in Canada, both Terry and your mother confirmed it. And I will be here when you wake up, of course."

"Promise?" Shane asks weakly, even though he already knows it's true.

Ilya nods and leans down to kiss his forehead.

"Promise, *moya lyubov*. It is so rare that I get to see you high, I would never miss that opportunity."

Shane rolls his eyes, his cheeks going slightly red at the memory of his younger, lovesick self being so giddy when Ilya showed up to visit him in the hospital. He thinks he would've felt high even without the drugs, but they certainly elevated the experience.

"See you soon," Ilya says as the nurse comes back into the room. "I love you."

It's hours later that Shane regains consciousness, but the first thing he notices is the feeling of someone holding his hand.

The second is that he feels a bit like he's floating.

"Hmmm..." he murmurs, his eyes flickering open slowly and adjusting to the harsh light. "It's so bright."

When his eyes do adjust, he can see that it's Ilya sitting next to him and holding his hand, a soft smile on his face.

His lips begin to move, but Shane can't quite focus on what he's saying.

God, he's gorgeous. Those lips, and the curls, and the way the blue hoodie he's wearing brings out his eyes...he looks like a model.

"You're so gorgeous," he says out loud, interrupting whatever Ilya was saying.

He looks surprised for a moment before letting out a small chuckle.

"You are adorable when you're on drugs," Ilya says, reaching out to run a hand through Shane's hair, which feels very nice right now. "I was just telling you that your surgery went

well, *lybumiyy*.”

Shane furrows his eyebrows, trying to remember the reason he’s here. “My knee doesn’t hurt anymore. They fixed it?”

“Yes, is fixed,” Ilya says, continuing to stroke his hair in soothing motions. “It will still hurt for a little bit, when the drugs stop working, but then you will heal and it will be better. No more hurting, okay?”

He doesn’t like the sound of the “drugs stop working” part, but he chooses to focus on the end of Ilya’s sentence, which sounds the nicest. No more hurting.

“Hm, that’s nice,” he murmurs, his fingers curling tighter around Ilya’s warm hand. “It hurt so much before.”

Ilya’s beautiful eyes meet his again, and Shane can see that there are tears in them now.

“I know, sweetheart,” Ilya says quietly, bringing their joined hands to his lips and pressing kisses to Shane’s that make his insides feel warm. “That will be over now.”

“Why are you sad?” Shane asks, confused. “You said the surgery was good?”

“Yes, it was. I am only sad because I love you so much, and you were playing in pain for so long and I did not make you stop,” Ilya continues, not letting their hands drop from his lips. “I feel like a bad husband.”

It’s too many words for Shane to process right now, but he thinks he understands what he means. He also knows that he hates seeing Ilya upset and has to rectify the situation immediately.

“You’re not a bad husband, you’re the best husband,” he proclaims, a wide grin on his face. “You’re so sweet and funny and...so *gorgeous*. You look like a...like a model, or a movie star. You *should* be in a movie, then you could get rich and famous and we can go to the Oscars.”

Ilya laughs, wiping his tears away with one hand and continuing to hold Shane’s with the other.

“I am already rich and famous, *kotik*, remember? You are too,” he lightly taps Shane’s nose. “But thank you for the compliment. You could be in movies, too, but I think sticking to hockey is best for us both.”

Shane has to contemplate that for a moment, but he feels inclined to agree. He’s been playing hockey for a long time, and he’s very good at it.

“That’s true. And Rose is in movies, and she has to live in LA, but I like Canada. You know, with the snow and the maple syrup and the beavers and the poutine and-“

“Yes, sweetheart, I know Canada,” Ilya cuts him off gently with another soft chuckle. “We can keep living here, don’t worry.”

Shane is satisfied with that answer. He likes living in Canada, and he would miss his parents and Tim Horton's coffee too much if they left. Plus, he really likes their house here in Ottawa - he's pretty sure they're in Ottawa, at least - and their cottage.

"Can we go home soon?"

"Yes, later today," Ilya confirms. "Your parents are already there, making sure we have everything you need."

"And you'll stay there too, right?"

Ilya nods, smiling at him again and pulling his chair a bit closer to the bed. He sinks his fingers into Shane's hair again, and it feels like heaven. He can't help but close his eyes and just focus on the feeling for a moment.

"Yes, I will stay. We live together, remember? We are married."

"Right," Shane recalls, his blissful smile remaining glued to his face. "That's good. I've loved you for...like, so many years. Maybe..." He tries to do the math, but his brain isn't capable of it right now. "Since a long time ago."

"Me too," Ilya smiles, and Shane has a feeling he knows *his* number. He wonders if they're the same. "Half our lives, now, I think. Is crazy to think about."

Shane nods, but he doesn't actually think it's crazy. He can't really remember a time before knowing or loving the man in front of him.

"I'm sleepy," he says all of a sudden, before he's even processed the thought. His limbs do feel heavier, though, and his head lolls to the side in Ilya's direction. "You'll wake me up when it's time to go home, right?"

Ilya looks like he wants to laugh again, but instead he brushes a kiss against Shane's lips. It's over too quickly, and Shane wants more, but he's too tired to ask for it.

"Yes, I will. Sleep some more, sweetheart. *Ya tebya lyublyu.*"

Shane remembers what that means just before he falls back to sleep, a smile still lingering on his face.

The Centaurs lose 3-2 to Colorado in game seven.

It's a tough pill to swallow for Shane, who is watching from their house in Ottawa instead of being there on the ice or even the crowd in Denver. He's only a few weeks out from surgery, and he can't even walk properly yet, so travelling with the team was not an option.

Instead, he's lying on the couch with his leg elevated and trapped in the stupid icing machine that he knows is helping but is super uncomfortable, with his parents sitting next to him, knowing that if he had been there, he might've scored another goal or two and won them the cup.

"An incredible playoff run from the Centaurs, who very nearly secured a Stanley Cup win for the second time in three years tonight. This is due in no small part to the leadership - and scoring record - of their captain Ilya Rozanov."

As the announcer speaks, the camera cuts away from the home team's celebration and pans to Ilya. He looks disappointed, of course, but he seems to be focusing his attention on comforting some of the younger players. Of course he is.

One of the rookies, a super nice kid from Slovakia that Shane noticed Ilya took under his wing this year, looks like he's crying, and Ilya is comforting him. He obviously remembers what it feels like to be eighteen, in a foreign country, with so many expectations placed on you.

"It's hard not to speculate about how this might have ended differently for the Centaurs if MLH superstar Shane Hollander, who helped them achieve their groundbreaking win two years ago, was here tonight. Rozanov told reporters before the game that Hollander - his teammate and husband - is recovering well at home, three weeks after the Centaurs announced he would be undergoing a second knee surgery following his ACL injury last season-"

The voice is cut off as Yuna grabs the remote and turns off the TV.

"That's enough of that," she says softly, reaching out to squeeze Shane's shoulder. "It looked like they were heading back to the locker room, I'm sure Ilya will want to talk to you as soon as he gets to the hotel."

Shane nods. He feels terrible right now, but he needs to get his head together before Ilya calls - the last thing his husband needs is to have to comfort *him* when he just had a devastating loss.

"Try not to think about what the media is saying, Shane," David adds. "You getting this surgery is gonna help the team a hell of a lot more in the long run than you playing hurt would."

He knows that's true, too. It's nice having his parents here, even if it's only because he still can't drive or cook or do laundry or basically anything without assistance. The emotional support is an added bonus.

His mom helps him up, making sure he's steady before she lets him go. He's not on crutches anymore, but he's still only able to make it short distances without his knee feeling like it's going to explode.

She's been fussing like crazy since the surgery, just like she did last time and every other time he's been hurt in his life, but Shane doesn't mind that much. Frankly, Ilya is worse, *and* he

insists on helping with the tasks Shane would never let his parents do for him, like getting dressed or showering or even *brushing his teeth*, once.

He slowly makes his way up the stairs to their bedroom and carefully gets undressed, throwing on one of Ilya's sweatshirts before starting his bedtime routine. It's after eleven now, and though he's been asleep by this time pretty much every night since the surgery, there's no way he's sleeping before talking to Ilya.

He's just climbed into bed and elevated his leg on some pillows when his phone rings, and he answers it immediately.

"Hey, baby," he says softly. "Are you at the hotel?"

"Yes," Ilya says. "Just sat down. Some of the team is going to get dinner, but I am too tired."

"You should order room service, get something really fancy like lobster and caviar or whatever."

"I am not sure Denver hotel will have caviar," Ilya points out. "Also, that is food for winners. We did not win."

Of course, Ilya's stubborn, Slavic mentality would never allow him to reward himself after a failure.

"No, but you scored a great goal and had a hell of a season-" Shane starts, before cutting himself off. He knows exactly how Ilya feels right now, and he knows he doesn't need to be reminded of how great his season was. He just needs to wallow for a bit. "I'm sorry. This sucks."

"Yes," Ilya sighs. "I thought we had it this year. I felt good about it. But you never know in hockey."

"Yeah," Shane says. "I wish I could've been there. Even if I couldn't play, just to hold you right now."

There's a pause on the other end, and he can hear the rustling of sheets. Ilya must already be in bed, lying there all alone.

"I wish that too, *moya lyubov*," he says. "Even if we had won, it would not have been the same without you. The team misses you. And I miss you most, of course."

Shane closes his eyes, letting Ilya's voice wash over him like a soothing balm. It's been a difficult month, recovering from surgery while his husband has to fly back and forth across the country every few days. Even when he's been in Ottawa, he's been busy with games or practice or media stuff.

"I miss you too," he says. "I can't wait to see you tomorrow."

"How's your knee today?" Ilya asks, as if he didn't also text him that earlier during the middle of the pre-game press conference. "Yuna told me doctor's appointment was good."

And that you are sleeping better.”

Shane rolls his eyes a bit at his mother reporting to Ilya on every minor detail of his recovery, but he knows that Ilya probably asked her to do so.

“Yeah, I’m okay,” he assures him. “Range of motion was a bit better today.”

“And the pain? Is not too bad, right?”

Truthfully, it’s been about the same for the past week or so since he’s weaned off the stronger meds, but he doesn’t really need to worry Ilya tonight with what he knows to be a normal part of his recovery.

“A little better,” he says. “A lot better when I’m talking to you.”

“Very smooth, Hollander,” Ilya says, and he can hear his grin. “Can we switch to FaceTime, please? I want to see you.”

Shane obliges, pressing the button and holding his phone up.

Ilya looks exhausted, slumped against the pillows, but his eyes light up a bit when he sees Shane.

“Better,” Ilya says, taking in his face for a moment. “You look tired, sweetheart. I am keeping you up too late.”

“So do you,” Shane points out. “And I wanted to talk to you before bed.”

“I miss our bed, too, so much better than the hotels,” Ilya groans. “Is Anya in there with you?”

“No, she’s downstairs with my parents,” Shane says. “Do you want me to go down so you can see her?”

“No, no,” Ilya says, to Shane’s relief - he would do it for Ilya, but the thought of limping back downstairs right now feels like the equivalent of running a marathon. “You rest. I will see her tomorrow.”

“She’ll be excited to have you home,” Shane smiles. “And to go back to the cottage in a few days.”

Just the thought of having interrupted time together at the cottage for the next few weeks makes a sleepy smile spread across Ilya’s face.

“Yes, it will be perfect,” he agrees. “We can just sleep and eat and cuddle and-”

“Oh!” Shane interjects, suddenly remembering something. “I forgot to mention, the doctor cleared me for light sexual activity. So lots of that, too.”

Ilya smirks. “That was not in Yuna’s update.”

“Yeah, I waited until my mom left the room to ask that one.”

“Well, that is very good news,” Ilya says, still smiling. “We should say goodnight. Is late for you, and I should probably eat before bed.”

Shane doesn’t really want to hang up, but he is on the verge of passing out, and at least he gets to see Ilya in person tomorrow.

“Okay, well, at least get something healthy if you won’t indulge yourself,” Shane suggests. “I’ll make you something good for when you get home tomorrow. Maybe *pelmeni*.”

Ilya’s eyebrows shoot up, and Shane knows what he’s going to say before he even opens his mouth.

“You should not be cooking anything, Shane, you are still-”

“Fine,” he acquiesces. “My mom will make them and I’ll supervise. She’s bummed that we didn’t get to properly celebrate your birthday last week since you were in Denver, so she’ll be happy to do it.”

“Okay. Thank you. I love you.”

“I love you, too,” Shane says. “Text me when you’re taking off tomorrow?”

He still has some anxiety about Ilya flying without him, a residual and somewhat irrational fear leftover from the emergency landing the Centaurs’ plane had to take years ago, before Shane joined the team. He knows the odds of it happening again are incredibly slim, but his anxious brain doesn’t really care about the statistics of it all.

“I will, sweetheart,” Ilya says, understanding. “Good night.”

Their first few days at the cottage are pure perfection.

Shane’s finally starting to feel a bit better, after religiously following the exercises that the team physio gave him and resting as much as he’s supposed to under his parents - and now Ilya’s - supervision.

He has enough mobility now to enjoy some short walks and gentle swims in the lake, and most importantly, to be able to have sex with his husband again. It’s still careful and slow and he has to ice after, but it’s so good that he doesn’t care.

Their fifth day there, Shane is sprawled out on the couch after a quick physio workout. He’s drinking a protein smoothie that he made and going through some of the details for this summer’s hockey camps on his laptop, as well as some other foundation-related stuff his mom sent him.

He hears the front door open, Anya running from her spot curled up by the window to greet Ilya, and a smile spreads across his face. He was only gone for an hour, but that's long enough.

"I got fresh fruit at the market," Ilya says as he walks into the kitchen, carrying two large tote bags and looking a vision of domestic bliss. "Also more Tiger Balm and Gatorade from Shoppers."

Shane grins, admiring his adorable husband as he happily unpacks their groceries. He's wearing athletic shorts and a hoodie, and his curls are a bit unruly from their swim that morning. He loves how much Ilya is in his element here at the cottage, despite being from a major city on the other side of the world.

"Thanks, babe," he says, setting the laptop down on the table. "Did anyone recognize you?"

It's no longer a question he asks with fear, nor has it been since they came out four years ago. It is, however, pretty much an inevitability considering he's wearing a Centaurs hoodie and is the captain of the nearest MLH team.

"A couple kids," Ilya says. "One boy said we should have won the cup and that Colorado are shit. His mother did not like the cursing, but I thought it was very cute. I took a photo with them."

"That's sweet," Shane smiles. Ilya is always so good with kids. He's going to be an incredible father one day, whenever they decide it's the right time.

As soon as he's done, Ilya walks into the living area and settles into Shane's side on the couch, first meeting his lips in a soft kiss. If not for his healing leg, he probably would've plopped himself right on top of him, but instead he lies down next to him, wrapping his arms around Shane's waist and tucking his face into his neck.

Shane's arms wrap around him just as tight, and they both just breathe each other in for a few minutes.

"It's been a really good year for the foundation," Shane murmurs. "I've been too distracted with everything to pay much attention to it, but it's crazy to see the...real impact that it's making."

"Yes," Ilya says, fiddling with the hem of Shane's t-shirt. "I read the reports, so I know this."

"Right, of course," Shane says, feeling a bit guilty that he's been too self-absorbed to think about something so important to both of them. "Well, I'm gonna focus on it more until I can come back next season. Might as well make the most of the time, right? My mom was talking about booking some meetings with potential donors in Toronto once the camps are over."

The "until I can come back next season" hangs in the air - they both know there is no guarantee of this. The surgery went well, but it's too soon to come to any conclusion about if he'll be able to return to play at the same level, or at all. Lots of players don't.

“This is a good idea, *kotik*,” Ilya says, reaching down to lace their fingers together.

He only calls him that, the Russian word for kitten, when he’s feeling particularly soft or worried for him. Shane learned this when they had been officially together for about three months and Ilya flew to Montreal to take care of him when he had the flu.

Shane stares down at their joined hands and squeezes tightly for a moment.

“I really want at least one more good season,” he says quietly. “I mean, hopefully a few more, but at least one good year where I’m not in pain and I can give it everything I have and actually have fun playing again.”

Ilya nods, smiling despite his eyes being full of concern. “I want that too, Shane. Playing with you has been the most fun time of my life.”

“Same here,” he says without hesitation. “It’s been perfect, Ilya. And I’ll never be able to thank you enough for moving to Ottawa for me and building this incredible team and welcoming me when everything happened with the Metros and-”

“Whoa, whoa,” Ilya interrupts his rambling, rubbing his back gently. “You are talking like you are going to die, sweetheart. What’s this about?”

Shane takes a deep breath. He’s obviously not articulating himself very well, the thoughts in his head too jumbled.

“I’m saying if I *can’t* come back...like, if my knee is still fucked or something else goes wrong-”

“You should not think like that-”

“Ilya,” he says, his voice cracking a bit as he tries to keep his composure. “I’m not saying I think it will happen, I just want to be prepared for any outcome. And if I do have to retire, I’ll figure it out.”

It’s still a terrifying possibility, but the past year - the past several years, actually - have taught him that he’s capable of more than he thought.

“I’ll spend more time on the foundation, maybe consider coaching eventually,” he continues. “It would be nice to spend more time up here, too, but I would obviously miss you like crazy if I did that.”

Ilya furrows his eyebrows. “Why would you miss me?”

Shane blinks in confusion. “Um, because you’re my husband? Because I love you? What kind of question-”

“No, I mean, I will be at the cottage if you are at the cottage,” Ilya clarifies.

“Sure, during the off-season, but-”

He stops talking as he meets Ilya's eyes, which are incredibly soft right now and glistening in the afternoon light. The realization dawns on him then, making his own eyes water.

"Are you saying you would..."

"Of course I will," Ilya says, barely above a whisper. "I love you much more than I love hockey, you should know this by now. And I know you would hate watching me play when you can't, even if you would not admit it."

"I wouldn't..." Shane begins to say, but he knows it's a lie that Ilya will see right through. "You don't have to do that. Even if I don't retire for years, you shouldn't stop just because I am. You should do it when *you* want to."

He's not sure he would be able to make the same sacrifice if the roles were reversed, though he suspects Ilya probably wouldn't mind as much.

"I want to stop when you do," Ilya says. "I love our team, and I would not leave them up and dry-" (*high and dry*, Shane understands to be the phrase he was going for) "-so I would finish the season, even if you can't. But after that, I would much rather spend time with you and Anya and working on our charity."

Shane feels the tears in his eyes begin to spill over as he looks down at his husband, surely the most wonderful man in this world. He can't believe how lucky he is, even after all this time.

"I love you," he says, pressing kisses to Ilya's forehead, his cheeks, and finally his lips. "Thank you."

Ilya smiles, his cheeks flushed from the display of affection.

"Also...when that time comes, maybe this is when we start talking about adoption more seriously," Ilya says a bit sheepishly. "We said we would when one of retires, yes? Maybe this would be earlier than we thought, but would still be good. And would be nice for our child to have both dads at home."

They haven't talked about it in a while, due to the craziness of the season and the surgery and everything else, but the thought of growing their family makes his heart flutter with joy.

"Yeah," Shane breathes, kissing Ilya's curls and burying his face there. "That sounds really good."

He tightens his grip on his husband, and Ilya follows suit, both of them holding each other silently as the warm sunlight reflecting off the lake covers them like a blanket.

Shane still doesn't want hockey to be over, but if it is, he knows that the rest of his life is just beginning.

....And then they lived happily ever after and win another cup together (at least) and retire together and adopt a baby girl and everything is perfect bc they deserve that 😊

Thank you for reading if you made it this far!! I truly loved writing this story. Also loved writing in some little Canadianisms (like Tim's and Shoppers) lol, this show is the best representation of my country on an international stage and I love it so much for that!

End Notes

I hope you enjoyed this, it would mean so much if you left a comment and let me know your thoughts. Shane POV coming up next. 

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