

To Be There When You Wake

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To Be There When You Wake

by [TuttleAsHimself](#)

Summary

It's their second game since Tampa, and there's a new ease to this thing between Shane and Ilya. They're playing so hard, and it's going so well. That is, until Cliff Marlow lines up a slap shot and hits more than just net...

[New bonus chapter added!]

Notes

I don't know anything about hockey.

I don't speak Russian or French.

I don't know anything about medical treatment for an injury like Shane's.

But I DO love me these hockey gays and I AM capable of googling stuff sooooo, where there's a will there's a way.

I haven't written anything in a very long time, so I'm a bit rusty. Hope it isn't tooo obvious.

Chapter 1: Chapter 1

WINTER - MONTREAL

“1919, that's the code for the front door.”

“Front door. Brave.”

“Fuck you.”

Ilya thinks about Shane's words as he glides into position. About Shane offering it up on the ice, not in a text. Not in a tight lipped whisper. He just says it, and it makes Ilya's heart pound pleasantly in his chest.

The prospect of it all just feels so...*nice*.

They line up to face off. Ilya flashes Shane a grin, and the other man shoots him a small, excited smile back. God, he loves him, and for once the thought doesn't scare Ilya quite as much as it used to.

They tap their sticks against the ice. The puck drops.

They play hard, they play fast—and later, when Hollander snags the puck out from under him, something in Ilya's chest sings. The rhythm of them, the competition, the relentlessness and drive behind the game rushes through Ilya's veins in a way that only their chemistry at the All Stars game comes close to. There's no letting each other off easy on the ice, no way in *hell*, but it's like Ilya's world is falling into sync and from the way Shane turns to grin at him, he's sure he feels it too.

It's just too bad for Hollander that sneaking a peek back at Ilya means Ryan Carmicheal (Boston's Left Winger) has a chance to steal the puck right back. A triumphant laugh escapes Ilya, and he loses track of those magnificent freckles as he glides past Hollander, following Carm's pass to Marlow who sees an opening and takes it.

The puck flies through the air so fast, with such force, that Ilya's eyes can barely keep up with it, but it never reaches the Metros' net.

Call it a fluke, call it bad luck. The broadcasters and press will likely settle on *wrong place, wrong time*. It doesn't matter how or why. What matters is that the world around Ilya slows to a breathless halt the second he sees Marlow's slapshot *thunk* into Shane's chest.

The collective gasp from the crowd thins out to a shrill ringing in Ilya's ears. First, he sees the force of impact knock Shane off his feet and backward, awkwardly into the player right behind him. Then the two men tumble and slide a few feet away. What must only take seconds feels like a thousand years as Shane awkwardly rolls onto his hands and knees, winded. At a snail's pace, Ilya's brain processes Shane pushing himself up. Left skate forward. *Slip*. Left skate forward again. *Slip*. He can't seem to catch his footing.

From where Ilya has stopped, he can see the confusion in Shane's eyes before his entire body ragdolls against the ice and the stare becomes blank and unseeing.

"Shane."

Was that a yell? A whisper? Ilya has no idea, but the name has escaped him just as Pike reaches the collision first, crouches low and frantically taps Shane's cheek. Soon a wall of blue jerseys blocks Ilya's view and the world rushes back with all its intensity.

Whistles are being blown, names are being shouted, calls for trainers and all the while a hush has overtaken the crowd. Or maybe Ilya's brain just can't parse out the details of the chaos in front of him. Someone from his team jostles him lightly, asking if he saw what happened. Another nods toward a stricken Marlow who's being held back by one of their guys, looking like he's going to puke.

Ilya's going to puke.

A small, very distant part of his brain is telling him that as team captain he should be the one comforting Marlow right now. But it's barely noticeable beneath the klaxon of alarm bells going off in his head. He can't feel his fingers. His hands and feet are numb.

Shane. Shane. Fuck, a puck to the chest. The empty, unseeing stare when he...

Fuck.

Ilya looks down at his skates and his brain is playing tricks on him because he thinks he sees a little pink pill sitting innocuously atop the ice just ahead. And then another, and another leading in a trail to the sudden, unbidden vision of his mother laying lifeless up ahead.

She's wearing the cream coloured nightgown—the one with the little roses embroidered around the neckline—just like he remembers. Her golden curls are splayed out like a gossamer halo around her head and she's got one pale arm crossed over her midriff, fingers curled oh so slightly. She could be asleep were it not for her eyes, hollow with the empty stare that has haunted Ilya's memories of her since he was twelve...

Since he was twelve...

Ilya removes his helmet and swipes a shaky gloved hand over his eyes. No, Irina Rozanova has been gone for a long time. She's not here. She died in her bed and now his father is entombed beside her in Russia. Not here.

But Shane is here...

Ilya opens his eyes and the cruel vision is gone but the wall of Metro players remains and he has no idea what is happening beyond them until he sees one of the Raiders helping to rush a stadium medic across the ice and over to the chaos, AED in hand.

No, no, no, no... He wants to charge through the Metros, to be *right there*, so he can grab Shane by the jersey and pull him to his feet. He wants to rip the AED out of that medic's hand and toss it away because Shane doesn't need that. Why— *how* could he ever need that? He's so healthy and so boring, eating rabbit food and barely drinking, what use could he have for a machine to restart his heart?!

It's so absurd Ilya almost laughs, but it comes out as a croak. Someone, Carmichael maybe, is still talking to him in a hushed tone and Ilya becomes aware that he's been trying to get a response out of his team captain unsuccessfully.

"Roz. Hey, hey man, are you alright?"

"What?" he drags his eyes away from the sea of blue and down at Carm's worried face.

The Left Winger looks unsettled and gives his arm a tug. "Come on, let's go sit down before you fall down."

Ilya is already looking back toward where Shane is being blocked before the suggestion is out of Carm's mouth, but he allows himself to be pulled to the bench, too numb to fight it. He lets himself be pushed down beside a despondent Marlow and ignores the others who look at him oddly. He especially ignores the ones who look at him with pity and concern.

Someone explains in a hushed voice, "He's in shock, it's gotta be hard watching something like this after losing his dad."

The death of his father is somehow the furthest thing from his mind while simultaneously hovering like a cruel kind of harbinger above Ilya's head.

Soon the murmurs of other teammates break through the fog of his mind and he hears enough to make his own heart threaten to stop.

“They were doing chest compressions...”

“Did the AED work? Did you see?”

“I don’t know, I can’t tell.”

“Did I kill him? I killed him...”

“Marly shut the fuck up, you didn’t.”

Ilya’s not sure how long he sits there before the crowd on the ice parts and he sees Shane laying motionless on a stretcher as it rushes toward the tunnel. His jersey is cut open, his pads trailing behind on the ice, and his pale and clammy torso is already blooming with a sickening bruise. The Metros coach follows closely, towing Pike along with him and gesturing tersely to Shane and the medics. Pike nods solemnly, his face stricken and tear stained. Ilya can’t hear the conversation but he knows what he must be saying. *Go with him, send updates.*

Ilya should be going. Fuck, Ilya has to go.

He tries to stand up, but the blood rushes from his head and he sits back down with a lightheaded *thump*. He needs to go, he *needs* to, but there are players in his way and his body isn’t obeying his stupid brain and...

And Shane would be furious.

The thought stops him from trying to stand again. Shane would be so mad if Ilya blew their cover now. Not that Ilya cares—he’s feeling especially reckless about his own circumstances—fuelled as he is by terror. But Shane would care and Ilya loves Shane so he has to care too, even if it makes him want to crawl out of his skin to stay here on the side lines.

But he does. He sits and he waits until the announcers declare that the game is being postponed. Ilya waits until he's practically carried to the locker room where the Raiders have never gotten undressed in such an anxious hush. He only has silence for them where another captain would have words of quiet reassurance. He waits until he has robotically showered, waits until he sees Marlow in tears.

"It was accident Marlow," he hears himself say.

He waits until Marlow nods, and can tell he doesn't believe it.

Ilya waits until he hears one of the trainers say to the coach, "Sounds like they took Hollander to the CHUM. No word on how he's doing."

And then, not bothering to change into his post-game suit, he slips into the hoodie and sweats he wore to the game, leaves the locker room then the stadium. The press blessedly misses his escape and he's able to duck into a timely taxi, unsure he could have made his fingers work well enough to order an Uber.

"The CHUM," he tells the driver, and has to clench his teeth to stop his voice from breaking and with it the flood of tears he's been holding back.

It sounds stupid and for a moment Ilya is sure he heard the name wrong, but the driver just nods in understanding and pulls into traffic. With the game having just let out, the roadways remain clogged arteries around the Bell Centre and the drive is laboriously slow going.

"Faster, please—this is emergency."

The driver whips his head around and scans Ilya up and down. "Çe va? You hurt or something? This isn't an ambulance."

"No," he snaps, the panic inside him starting to boil over from numbness to something frenetic. "No, not me. My—"

He falters, English words and their meanings getting muddled in his overwhelmed mind.

Любовь всей моей жизни умирает! He wants to shout. *The love of my life is dying!*

He's only said how he really feels once to Shane under the cautious veil of his native tongue. Now he's supposed to describe it to this fucking Montreal cabbie? What a waste, he should have just said it right that night, so Shane understood.

"Not me, someone else, okay? Dying maybe! Just go, please!"

"Ah, d'accord."

The guy could be doing 100 km/h over the bumper-to-bumper streets and it wouldn't be fast enough, but eventually they pull up near the emergency entrance of a hospital and it's all Ilya can manage to throw a few Canadian twenties to the driver (too much or too little, he neither knows nor cares) and rush out of the car and through the sliding doors.

A fire is lit under him now. The numbness has thawed and he *needs* to see Shane's face and feel his pulse and tell him to never do that again. To hold him. Kiss him. Breathe him in and never fucking let him go.

For a moment he falters at the front desk, unsure how to convince the nurse there that these are all good enough reasons for her to break protocol and tell him where Shane is. But then he's jostled slightly and looks down to see a pair of vaguely familiar faces rushing past him to the desk.

"Shane Hollander," the Asian woman ahead of him snaps, looking like her own terror is a breath away from the surface.

"Are you fam—" the nurse barely gets out.

“His parents!” the older man—Shane's father—says with far less restraint, his voice breaking. “Please, how is he?”

Instead of answering, the woman at the desk gives them directions to another waiting room and Ilya uses the commotion of an ambulance delivering another patient to slip in behind Shane's parents as they rush out of the ER.

They round a few corners when suddenly Hayden Pike steps out of a room up ahead. Ilya instinctively pulls back around the corner and practically presses himself against the wall. None of the passing hospital staff or visitors even look at him, but he tugs his baseball cap lower and his hoodie closer around his neck.

Fuck. What is he doing? How is he supposed to walk up to these people and convince them to let him stay?

His phone buzzes, and he pulls it out of his pocket and sees he's got a few missed calls from teammates wondering where he disappeared to, and a worried text from Svetlana. She has surely seen the footage by now, and since the funeral he knows she *knows* even though they hadn't said Shane's name out loud that night. He ignores the messages and opens his last text to Shane.

J: You're going down tonight

L: On you? If it makes you feel better about losing game then ok

J: Fuck off.

He can imagine the flustered blush creeping across Shane's freckled cheeks with that *Fuck off* and it makes hot tears well up in Ilya's eyes. He's not a crier. Hasn't allowed himself to be since...

He remembers his father's sharp backhand the day of his mother's funeral, standing in his bedroom while family and members of the government mingled in hushed tones down below. Crying was a weakness the Rozanovs were not afforded, not then and not now. But Ilya feels like something must have cracked within him that night in Tampa when Shane had crawled into his lap, so softly, so lovingly....

“What the fuck are *you* doing here?”

The incredulous voice almost makes him drop his phone and when he looks up, Hayden Pike is staring at Ilya like he's got two heads.

Ilya's back straightens and he's taller than Pike but he still feels about an inch high. He runs a hand over his face, hoping to erase the evidence of his tears, and mutters a poor explanation looking anywhere but at the other man. “I am just...checking in. Captain to captain. It was bad for Hollander, yes? How bad?”

Pike glances at a clock on the wall nearby.

“The game isn't even over...”

Right, he wouldn't know.

“Postponed.”

It looks like Pike, who is pale with red rimmed eyes, isn't quite sure why Ilya would be worried enough to come here himself instead of waiting for a press release. As he shakes his head and searches for something to say, Ilya loses his patience. He doesn't have time for this. He snaps his fingers in Pike's face, earning himself an indignant glare.

“Holl-an-der,” he bites out, one syllable at a time, “how bad is he?”

If they were talking about a nasty check into the boards and a couple broken bones Pike would probably have told him to fuck off. But it's not every day a player needs an AED out on the ice. Ilya wants to vomit as he remembers the sound the puck made when it hit Shane square in the chest.

Pike swallows hard and his mouth tightens at the corners like he's thinking the same thing. He abandons trying to figure Ilya out and exhales shakily.

"Bad, Rozanov. Really fucking bad."

Ilya wants to scream. Instead, he takes a deep breath and impatiently retorts, "Obviously. Bad, how? *How?*"

He really wants—and really *doesn't* want—to ask, *Bad, like dying? Bad like dead?* If he does and he gets the answer he's dreading, he'll probably black out right here and now.

Pike scowls and his hatred for Ilya finally appears to trump his confusion at his presence.

"None of your fucking business, asshole. Why the fuck are you here, Rozanov?"

Ilya opens and closes his mouth, unable to think of a better answer than the one he's already given.

"Fucking scavenger, you can't wait for the press release, you had to come see how fucked Shane is for yourself?"

Pike has collided with the opposite wall well before Ilya is aware he even moved his arms to shove him. In any case, they're about to start a rink-worthy brawl when Yuna Hollander appears at their sides.

"What the hell is going on out here?" she snaps and Ilya suddenly feels ashamed.

He's making a scene in front of Shane's goddamn mother as if he has any right to be there in the first place. As if she doesn't have enough to worry about. As if he isn't risking exposing not just this thing between him and her son, but Shane's own secret.

I think I'm gay.

Why are you telling me this?

Who else am I going to tell?

Ilya steps away from Pike and looks around him. Though the hall is fairly empty at the moment, a few nurses are eyeing the hockey players warily, one looking like she's ready to call security. Yuna follows Ilya's gaze and when she sees the nurse with her hand on the nurse's station phone she shakes her head curtly. The nurse lowers the phone but shoots Ilya a silent look of warning.

"Sorry, Yuna," Pike mutters like it's his own mother scolding him.

Yuna barely acknowledges Pike, instead staring at Ilya like she could turn him to stone with a word. He doesn't doubt she could do it.

"Why are *you* here?" she demands, hands on hips as if her face isn't tear-streaked and she's not terrified for her only son's life.

Again, shame slides up Ilya's throat. The Hollanders must be going through hell and he is taking Shane's mother's attention away from him.

"Shane."

He doesn't mean to say it. Means to say *Hollander* or maybe something else entirely but his mouth speaks before his brain can catch up and Shane's name sounds broken and desperate coming from his lips. So much so that Yuna narrows her eyes, sees *something* in his face and after a long, scrutinizing moment, gestures back to the waiting room she's just come from.

Ilya can't believe his luck, and isn't about to ask her why she's letting him stay. He just stalks forward, shoulders hunched, to the room up ahead. He sits in the chair furthest away from Shane's father who is undoubtedly surprised to see Ilya Rozanov of all people joining them.

Pike and Yuna follow, sitting on their side of the room. All three eye him curiously but no one speaks to Ilya and soon they fall into a silent waiting game.

Ilya never did get an answer to his question. *Bad, how?* But he won't risk asking Yuna Hollander in case she comes to her senses and sends him away. Being in this room is going to have to be enough until someone comes and gives them a proper update on Shane's condition.

Ilya's hands are shaking. He shoves them under his thighs and takes a deep breath.

They wait.

Time crawls and at some point, an hour or two later, the quiet of the room is interrupted by the buzzing of a phone. Everyone does the cursory song and dance of checking if it's theirs and for one confusing moment no one has a call to answer. And then Pike is exclaiming and pulling a second phone from his pocket.

"It's Shane's," he explains, looking at the caller ID. "Ah it's Rose, should I...?"

Ilya stiffens. Rose fucking Landry. Shane had said they weren't together. Not *compatible*. It digs at something deep within him when Pike answers the call though, because Rose Landry is still important enough to know about Shane's condition and Ilya cannot be.

“Rose? Hey, no it’s Hayden...Hayden Pike...Yeah. It’s um, fuck yeah it’s bad...A slapshot to the chest. I’m with his parents at the hospital now...” Pike glances over at Ilya but doesn’t mention him. “We’re not sure, just waiting for someone to tell us anything...They uh, they had to restart his heart on the ice...”

Ilya hears a quiet, choked sort of sound come from David Hollander and he wants to snap at Pike to take the call out in the hall and spare Shane’s parents the replay. Instead, pathetically, he listens for any little detail to grasp onto and says nothing.

“I can text you when I know more...yeah, no problem...of course. Bye.”

Pike hangs up the phone and the room is quiet before David speaks up, his voice unsteady. “Rose seems like a nice girl.”

“Yeah, we uh, we never actually met.”

“We didn’t meet her either,” Yuna says quietly. “They didn’t get back together, did they...?”

Ilya fights the urge to walk out.

“No,” Pike confirms. “Pretty sure they’re just friends now.”

“Hmm.”

Yuna and David go back to staring hopefully at the door for a doctor and some news, but something seems to occur to Pike. He focuses back on Shane’s phone and spends a second or two searching through it. For an irrational moment Ilya thinks he’ll find their text messages but then he remembers the pseudonyms and takes a deep breath. There’s no reason Pike would suspect that Lily is really Ilya if that’s even what he’s looking at.

Out of the corner of his eye, Ilya sees Pike tapping away at the phone ending with one perfunctory tap.

Ilya's fucking phone pings in his hands.

Chapter 2

WINTER - HOSPITAL

He should have passed it off as a coincidence. *Would* have done, but instead he feels the blood rush from his face and finds himself staring guiltily at Pike who looks like a very confused deer in the headlights.

Ilya might as well have the name Lily tattooed on his forehead.

They stare at each other for an eternity before Pike slowly (almost blindly) types something else into Shane's phone.

Ilya's traitorous phone pings again in a confirmatory response.

Pike's jaw drops open but before anything else can happen, Ilya is standing abruptly and walking briskly out the room.

Fuck, fuck, fucking fuck what just happened? Panic rises in his throat like bile and Ilya's body shakes as he tries to make his way out of this damn hospital. He doesn't realise he's almost hyperventilating until he finds himself outside of the sliding door entrance, a rush of cold air hitting him in the face.

He just ruined everything. He shouldn't have come here. He should have gone back to the hotel and just...just...

His first coherent thought is, *Shane will never forgive me. And then, I can never go back to Russia.*

“Rozanov, hey! *Rozanov.*”

Someone is shaking his shoulder and he looks up in a daze at Pike staring at him like he's worried Ilya is going to keel over. Ilya half-heartedly pushes him away and adopts the haughtiest look he can manage (he can't manage much).

"Fuck off Pike." His voice sounds weak and reedy in his buzzing ears.

"Jesus, it's true. It's...*you're* Boston Lily. What the fuck..."

Ilya is determined to salvage this.

"Did you hit your head? You make no sense."

"Shut up," Pike lacks vitriol, just sounds somewhat awed by his new discovery.

"What the fuck do you want?" Ilya tries to sound disinterested and pulls out a cigarette as something of a distraction for them both. But his shaking hands don't fool anyone, and the cigarette tumbles out of his numb fingers and right into a puddle of slush.

"Lily," Pike insists.

"*Ilya*," Ilya counters, poking himself in the chest, as if Pike is a moron (which he most certainly is).

"He's been texting you all this time. Leaving to hook up with..." Pike eyes him with an expression that Ilya can't quite figure out.

"You do not know what you are talking about," Ilya gives him the hard look that has cowed many a Boston rookie, but his heart stutters with terror when Pike is undeterred by it. "You make no sense."

Pike cocks one challenging brow and presses his lips into a thin, determined line. Once again, he pulls out Shane's phone, finds what he's looking for, and holds it up. *Lily* flashes on the screen. Ilya's phone rings in his hand. *Jane* flashes in response.

"Jane?" Pike reads aloud. "Jesus Christ, Shane."

That last part is directed to the building behind them where Shane could be fucking dying. And yet here they are in the cold winter night, blowing up one of the only good things in Ilya's life.

Ilya, he discovers about himself, is not above begging.

"Pike, please," he hates the way his voice sounds as he pleads with this asshole. "You know nothing. Whatever you think, is wrong. Drop it. Forget it."

Pike takes a step back, clearly unsure how to handle this version of Ilya Rozanov.

"*Please*. What can I...how much will this take?"

At first Pike just looks confused, but then what Ilya is suggesting clicks and he actually looks disgusted before his face settles into a strange, almost *sadness*.

"I don't want your money."

"Then what...?"

They stand there for a moment and Pike looks at Ilya like *he's* the moron.

“I want him to be happy.”

Ilya isn't really sure what's real or not tonight. Everything feels so surreal. He silently takes stock as he follows Pike through the halls of the CHUM.

1. For the first time in nine years, Shane had wanted Ilya to walk through the *front* door of the rental property tonight
2. Ilya never got the chance because of the slap shot
3. Shane's heart had stopped on the ice
4. Hayden Pike knew about them

Ilya looks up from his feet to the back of Pike's head as they walk. He hadn't wanted a bribe to stay quiet. He'd just asked if Ilya really cared about Shane (“*Really care, Rozanov. Like to hell and back, cause Shane is...different, ok? He's not like most guys.*”), and seemed to accept his answer and his presence as proof enough. And then he'd grasped Ilya's shoulder firmly and pushed him back toward the ER doors and told him to get his ass inside.

And he had gone, all without the world ending. But there's still plenty of time for that, Ilya thinks miserably.

They walk into the waiting room just as a doctor is leaving it, and the first thing Ilya registers is that David and Yuna Hollander are embracing tightly and clearly crying.

His legs refuse to take another step. In front of him, Pike is also frozen.

“No.”

He's not sure which one of them says it, but Yuna gasps at the sound and turns around to look at them.

She's smiling.

Shane remembers things in fragments. He remembers pulling on his gear and jersey in the Metros' locker room. The cold rink air and Ilya stretching on the ice in front of him with cocky nonchalance. A conversation that escapes him now but had felt *right* at the time. Rival hockey sticks tap against the blue line. Then the sudden antiseptic soapy smell of nurses and doctors getting much too close and his chest feeling like it's been cracked in two.

They make him stay awake even though he's exhausted, as if he could sleep with the pain he's in. They talk to him the whole time ("*We're checking your heart rate now, Shane*" "*We need to rule out myocarditis, Mr. Hollander*") but he finds it impossible to follow what they're saying. There's something wrong with his chest and breathing feels like a herculean task. A clear mask is placed over his nose and mouth which helps. He wants to ask what happened but every time he tries he just groans painfully.

Finally, some of the urgency bleeds out of the room and there's a singular nurse at his side smiling kindly down at him. She removes the mask and replaces it with something that wraps around his ears and irritates his nose.

He watches as she fiddles with an IV at his side next, and soon a slow sort of warmth pushes the pain out of his body.

"You can sleep now Mr. Hollander."

He wants to, he really does but there's something he was going to say. Something he was going to ask for. Someone...

"Ily..." he doesn't quite get it out and now sleep is dragging him under.

He's fucking exhausted and he doesn't understand why.

“What’s that?”

“He...he’s...s’gonna worry...”

Ilya waits outside the room while Yuna and David sit with Shane first, followed by Pike who is invited in with them. They don’t ask Ilya to join, and he doesn’t suggest it.

Shane is alive—was even awake at one point—and he thinks that maybe he can begin to breathe again. He’s not sure what he would have done otherwise. How he would have been able to live his life pretending Shane was just another guy. One day no more than a rival and the next, gone. Ilya doesn’t want to think about it, so he pushes the thought away and waits.

Commotio cordis, Yuna had said and the words clench at his own heart even now. Ilya knows the term. Most athletes do. A young baseball player had died after taking a baseball to the chest a few years ago and the shock of it had reverberated all the way to the rinks. For Shane, a puck to the wrong place at the wrong time, and here they are.

But Shane is alive, and to Ilya that is some kind of miracle.

He hadn't been able to follow all of it, but according to Yuna the AED had gotten Shane's heart back to its correct rhythm. The tests so far had been positive, but the doctors would be closely monitoring Shane for a few days to be sure there was no lasting complications. If Shane's heart kept up like it was doing now, recovery was more than possible.

Yuna hadn't said it, but Ilya had heard it loud and clear in her voice. If recovery goes well, this would not be a career-ending injury.

Still, there are other injuries to consider. A broken rib where the puck had made contact and extensive surface bruising as well as a bruised lung. Shane's career may yet be intact, but his

season is most definitely over and the road ahead to heal will not be pleasant.

Ilya exhales slowly. Some kind of fucking miracle.

Eventually, Pike comes out and claps a hand on Ilya's shoulder making him flinch.

"He's asleep dude, might be out for a while."

Ilya nods jerkily in acknowledgment, not trusting himself to speak.

"Do you..." Pike sighs and looks awkward. "Do you want a ride back to your hotel? Maybe come back to see him tomorrow?"

Ilya has a flight at 6AM, he distantly remembers. How is he supposed to get on it?

"No, I will wait."

Pike nods like he expected no less and slips back into Shane's room. A moment later, he returns with David Hollander in tow. Shane's dad gives him an odd but not unwelcome look and nods to the door. Ilya sees something of Shane's inherent awkwardness in the older man, and it feels oddly comforting in this moment.

"Go on in, son," David says. He sounds tired.

"Ok."

It's the permission he's been internally begging for all night, but suddenly Ilya's limbs feel like they're full of damp, heavy sand and it's a struggle to make himself get up and go. He

manages it though, and cautiously enters the private ICU room dreading what might be inside.

Chapter 3

Sure enough, it looks bad.

Shane is laying slightly elevated in bed, unconscious and pallid. He's wearing a hospital gown with the opening on the front, and through the gapping material, past the tubes and wires, Ilya spots a furious looking bruise spreading out across his chest. A nearby monitor beeps rhythmically, relaying every steady beat of his resurrected heart. Ilya hangs on to each *beep* like a lifeline.

He's so struck by Shane's prone form that he doesn't notice Yuna is still in the room. It's not until she clears her throat that he jumps a little and snaps his wide eyes to hers. She's sitting in a chair by the bed and holding her son's hand but staring at Ilya where he's glued to the wall, terrified to come any closer. She seems to be scrutinising him, and he's not sure what she'll find but he doesn't think it will be any good.

"Why are you here?" she asks him once again, softer this time and quiet so as not to wake her son.

Ilya hesitates. Shane, he thinks, would not want him to say. But Shane isn't in Ilya's position right now, and Ilya is exhausted. He doesn't think he has it in him to lie anymore tonight.

"We are..."

What, exactly? They've never labelled it.

"Yes?"

"Together," he says, barely above a whisper. It's truer than not.

If Yuna is surprised, she doesn't show it. Instead, she turns back to Shane and pushes back the fringe of his black hair with a loving hand.

Irina used to play with Ilya's curls like this. His chin trembles but he doesn't let himself go. Just holds it in. Buries it down.

"For how long?"

"Long."

Yuna looks back at him. *Not good enough Rozanov*, that look says.

"Since before rookie season," he admits. "The summer before."

She gasps a little at that and looks back at Shane searchingly. Ilya tenses, unsure of this reaction, but more than anything Yuna just looks sad.

"He never said..."

"No."

She turns back to Ilya and he sees something foreign on her face. He's known of Yuna Hollander almost as long as he's known of Shane. She's been something of a curious figure over the years; a fierce and shrewd manager and quintessential *hockey mom*. Ilya has known other guys whose parents have taken on the same role, but Yuna has something of her own reputation in the league. It's not as if Shane, with his flat affect and his social awkwardness, is the one seeking out high profile energy drink and Reebok deals. Ilya has seen her around, and she's always struck him as a strong and calculating woman. Which is why the open look of heartbreak on her face takes him aback now.

"Why not tell *me*?"

Ilya doesn't have an answer for her. The closest thing he can think of is telling his own father, and even in death, the thought of telling Grigori he likes men sets a leaden pit of fear in his gut. It's different for Shane here in Canada, but Ilya suspects the pit feels the same nonetheless.

"He is afraid," he says, unsure if this is a comfort to her, "for us both. Is not so easy. It has been hard."

"And yet you're here."

Ilya looks from her to Shane, and he feels the threat of hot tears once again.

"I cannot be anywhere else."

Yuna's mouth quivers but she takes a deep breath and shakes herself a little, as if to reset. She gives Shane one last look before leaning over to kiss his forehead. Standing, she looks right into Ilya's eyes and seems to have found what she is looking for.

"Take your time, I'll be right outside. I'll tell the nurses to knock."

And then finally, *finally*, Ilya is alone with Shane.

Ilya sits in the chair at Shane's side and hesitates. He wants to reach out, but he doesn't want to hurt him, and he doesn't know what might cause him pain. Eventually, desperation wins out and Ilya traces the backs of his fingers against Shane's cheek and then his thumb over his freckles. His face looks wain and the freckles stand out.

Ilya takes a shaky breath, and then another, and then the dam breaks.

He crosses his arms against the bed, lightly trapping Shane's arm so that he's holding his hand beneath them, and cries. The tears are accompanied by desperate gasps and a torrent of Russian but he manages to keep his voice low and muffled.

“Я люблю тебя, я чертовски сильно тебя люблю.”

I love you, I fucking love you so much.

“Пожалуйста, никогда не оставляй меня, ты мне нужна больше всего на свете.”

Please never leave me, I need you more than anything.

“Hey, heeeeeeey...”

Ilya's head snaps up and it's like the sun has come out from behind a sky of storm clouds. Shane is looking down at him, eyes hooded with exhaustion but an unabashed smile resting easily on his face.

He looks so *open* that all Ilya can do is gaze up at him in wonder. He's *awake*.

“Shane,” he says breathlessly.

For Shane's part, he seems sluggish and slow to react and for a moment Ilya wonders if he hit his head at some point and has a concussion no one knows about. But then he notes the IV hanging close by and figures it out.

“You're heeere.”

Shane, beautiful, unencumbered Shane, is high off his ass. Ilya sniffs and wipes his wet face on his shoulder, chuckling a little. He sits up so his face isn't buried in Shane's arm, heart warming at the indignant huff his absence draws from the man in the bed.

"Of course I'm here."

Ilya shifts so that he's holding Shane's hand against his stomach, careful of all the tubes and wires. The whole time, Shane continues to stare at him adoringly.

Shane, Ilya knows, is not one for prolonged eye contact. Sometimes Ilya swears he can see the timer in Shane's mind ticking down the seconds until he can reasonably look away. Except for when they are pressed up against each other, making demands of the other's body. Then Shane never seems able to look away.

"Hmmm, tha's nice," Shane slurs, squeezing Ilya's hand. "You're nice."

"No, I am a mean guy."

"No way, tha's so not true!"

His voice squeaks on the last word and Ilya almost starts crying again. It's a close thing.

"You scared me," he murmurs instead.

Shane shakes his head (or rolls it against the pillow), "I'm okaaaay. Shhh, don't cry."

So much for a close thing. Ilya leans over and this time he rests his head on Shane's lap, not trying to hide the tears that are now just slowly rolling over the bridge of his nose and

soaking into the hospital blanket. They hold each other's gaze for a while until suddenly Shane's face shifts from unabashed and loopy to utterly wrecked. Ilya sits up in alarm.

"Do you hurt?"

"I dunno what happen'd," Shane admits.

In this moment Shane sounds younger and more afraid than Ilya has ever heard him before. Ilya shushes him gently, pulling his hand up to his lips for a gentle kiss.

"You're ok now, don't worry."

"Was there 'n accident?"

"Yes."

Shane's eyes shine with his own tears, and Ilya's heart breaks a little.

"Shhh," he swipes a thumb under Shane's eye and catches a tear before it can fall. "Rest now. You sleep. Details are for tomorrow."

He's not sure he can articulate the medical stuff he only sort of understands, and he doesn't think he can bear reliving what happened on the ice.

"Is it bad?"

He looks so worried and lost than Ilya can't bring himself to add to it now when Shane probably won't remember this conversation tomorrow. So he just says, "Not so bad."

Better than not so bad, he's fucking alive. But that seems a little too heavy to get into right now.

"Promise?"

"Da, of course."

"Please stay," he begs.

"I am here. Right here. I will go nowhere."

Careful of the cannula tubes looped under Shane's nose and around his ears, Ilya leans forward and cups his cheek in one hand. Their lips graze each other, and then find each other more fully with a gentle sort of desperation. God, he's been waiting to do that for goddamn hours. Ilya pulls back only far enough to pepper kisses along Shane's cheeks and jaw.

"You scared me so much," he can't help but admit again.

"I didn't mean to," Shane all but whispers back.

Ilya kisses his forehead and rests his cheek there, breathing Shane in. His hair smells like an odd mixture of hospital antiseptic, his familiar shampoo, and lingering sweat from the game. "I know. Don't do it again."

"I won't."

Ilya moves to hold Shane's face in his hands and looks him over slowly, drinking in every inch of it and dedicating it to memory. This is Shane alive. He will never forget it.

Something over Ilya's shoulder catches Shane's attention and his face crumples *again*.

"Mom?"

Ilya turns to see Yuna and David standing in the doorway, looking at them like Ilya was just looking at Shane. A stab of fear shoots through Ilya (what did they see? How long have they been standing there) but then he remembers Yuna knows and it doesn't matter. Fuck, even *Hayden Pike* knows. Anyway, the moment Shane asks for her, Yuna is crossing the room to the other side of his bed and *gently, so gently* holding his head against her chest. He's crying again.

It's probably good for him that the drugs are letting him be so unrestrained, Ilya thinks. Otherwise Shane would probably never let himself go like he has tonight and all that fear would just fester. He always holds himself wound so tightly.

"Oh honey, you're okay. You're okay now."

"Am I done? Is it over?"

For a second Ilya doesn't understand, but Yuna seems to immediately.

"You need to heal up, sweetheart. It's going to take time, but no. It shouldn't be over."

Ilya rubs Shane's back a little before giving his hand a small squeeze. Ilya feels like now may be the time to leave. He desperately wants to stay, but it feels like he's intruding on a moment that doesn't belong to him, and suddenly he feels so exhausted and depleted. Reality is waiting for him on the other side the that door. Out there, Ilya has a plane to catch in the morning and games to play. Out there, it will be weeks before Ilya can see Shane in person again.

He murmurs a quite *goodbye* to Shane who may or may not have fallen asleep in his mother's arms, stands, and turns away to compose himself a little before facing Shane's family. Shane

and Yuna haven't moved and David is gazing at them with tears in his eyes.

He moves to pass David in the door but the older man stops him with a hand on his arm. They share a brief look before Ilya is being pulled into a tight hug.

"Thank you for being here for him," he hears David say.

Ilya tentatively returns the hug, a host of feelings and years of baggage threatening to overcome him. What it must be like to have parents like Yuna and David Hollander. Ilya thinks of Shane, and for a moment he allows himself to think of what a life together could really mean. He decides that he wants to find out.

"I will always be here."

SUMMER - THE COTTAGE

The sun rises on Lac Cousineau, casting golden hues across its surface. This early in June there is a chill in the air at this hour, but Ilya ignores it. He watches from his perch on a rock as a heron dips low, wings reaching out and hooked legs gracefully cutting a crease through the still water.

It's more peaceful here than he thought a place on earth could be.

The heron turns elegantly around a bend in the lake and Ilya watches it until it's out of sight.

Last night he told Shane he loved him.

Last night Shane had said it back.

The soft crunching of footsteps announces Shane's arrival. Ilya pulls his eyes away from the lake and accepts a cup of steaming coffee as Shane tugs a blanket around Ilya's shoulders. Ilya lifts an arm for Shane to tuck himself under. He does so without a word.

They have a few weeks before the season starts up again, before they're both back on the ice. But for now, this little corner of the world is theirs alone, and Ilya wants to live in it forever.

Shane tilts his head so it's resting on his shoulder and Ilya presses his lips to his temple.

"I love you," Ilya reminds him.

"I love you too."

"More. I love you more."

"Impossible."

Chapter 4: Hayden's POV

Chapter Summary

I finished writing this story and then just couldn't stop thinking about what was going through Hayden Pike's head the whole time, and how his response to Shane getting hurt would be so different from Ilya's or even Marlow's.

So here is an extra little chapter for anyone interested in experiencing Hayden going into dad-mode and his brain breaking over the Rozanov of it all.

Also in my head canon, Jackie is one more supportive Queen amongst the other stellar women of this show, and we love her.

HAYDEN'S POV

Hayden is the first one to reach Shane when he collapses. The second he's been struck by the puck, Hayden's world becomes lazer-focused on getting to him and assessing the damage.

Dad-mode, Jackie likes to tease.

Fucking right, dad-mode.

Hayden sees the shift from confusion to nothing in Shane's eyes and it has him sliding to his knees and throwing off his gloves so he can get hands on his boy. He gives Shane's face a few forceful taps.

"Shane, buddy! You with me?"

Shane's eyes are half-lidded and vacant and Hayden pushes the terror in his chest down. He can freak out later, but there isn't time for that now.

“Wake the fuck up, man. Come on, I got ya. MEDIC!”

Soon enough, they are surrounded and Craig, the Metros head trainer, is helping Hayden carefully roll Shane onto his back and removing his helmet. Hayden tosses it aside just as two stadium medics push through the growing crowd of Metros players. He watches with bated breath as one of them checks for Shane’s pulse...and doesn’t find it.

A lot of things happen then. Shane’s jersey and the chest panel of his shoulder pads are cut away, exposing the sweaty pallid skin of his torso where a swollen red mark is already forming on his chest. Hayden helps push the stray pad cutaways out of the immediate space around them. One medic fits a bagged mask to Shane’s mouth and the other wastes no time starting chest compressions. Hayden is right beside him, keeping time aloud.

(Later, he’ll probably come back to this moment and think about the absurdity of muttering *ah, ha, ha, ha, stayin’ alive, stayin’ alive* under his breath, but right now he clearly recalls the instructor of his Daddy First Aid class saying it was perfect beat for doing CPR right. Right now there is no option where they do it wrong.)

There’s no reaction from Shane, and soon an AED is brought over. Hayden instinctively holds an arm out to ensure the players, refs, and trainers around them stand back as the pads are applied mid compression. They wait for the machine to give the go-ahead before everyone leans back, hands up.

Hayden grimaces at the way Shane’s lax body jerks slightly and for a moment it seems like nothing has happened, but then the younger man lets out a short gasp and his eyes flutter for a brief moment before rolling closed again.

His chest rises and falls.

The world inches closer to making sense again.

From there, there’s a rush of momentum as Shane is loaded onto a gurney and whisked off the ice, Hayden and Coach Theriault follow close behind.

“I’m going with him,” he tells Coach, leaving no room for argument.

This is more important than sticking around for a hockey game. He fully expects an argument but the older man just nods grimly and snaps at Hayden to keep Craig posted with any updates. Emergency hospitalization is bad for the bottom dollar after all.

“Ride with him and keep me posted,” Craig seconds with a comforting squeeze to Hayden’s arm.

As they chase the medics through the tunnel, a staff member helps Hayden haphazardly shuffle out of his gear, directing someone else to grab his shoes and bag from the locker room. Hayden barely registers any of this, doesn’t even feel it when he’s jogging across the frosty pavement to the ambulance in his socks, turning just in time for one of the guys to toss his sneakers and duffle bag into his arms.

Then they’re loading into the ambulance, the doors are closing, and they’re off.

Somewhere between the Bell Centre and the CHUM, Hayden registers that he must have been crying the whole time if his wet cheeks are any indication. As if his body is one step ahead of his brain, reacting to the stress before Hayden gives himself permission to mentally acknowledge it.

It’s not until Shane disappears behind a set of doors in the ER and Hayden is shuffled into a quiet and empty waiting room that he finally takes stock of what he’s just been through. What *Shane* has been through. His heart had stopped right there on the ice. His best friend’s heart had stopped beating and for more than just a moment, he hadn’t been sure if it would start again. Hayden takes a deep, shaking breath and pushes the heels of his hands into his eyes until he sees spots.

He needs Jackie. A chill runs over his damp, sweaty skin. He needs her, but first...

He digs through the bag he's been white knuckling and pulls out gym sweats and a hoodie. The room is empty and he barely thinks about what he's doing, just strips out of his Under Armour and into the gym clothes, feeling fractionally better, especially when he changes out of his slush soaked socks and into dry ones.

The bag also holds some random shit that he doesn't immediately recognize. Whoever had grabbed his stuff seems to have emptied Shane's cubby into it too. There's a hoodie, keys, Reeboks, and his iPhone. Hayden pockets the phone for safe keeping and leaves the rest in the duffle bag.

"Fuck," he breathes out.

For the first time since the slap shot, Hayden feels himself becoming unmoored. Shane's heart had restarted but what if it stops again? It hadn't stopped in the ambulance, but Hayden's not sure he understood any of what the paramedics had been saying or doing, so he's not really certain of how Shane was doing when they got here. Just that he was unconscious the whole time.

Hayden paces for a second before realisation hits him. Were the Hollanders at the game? He didn't see them...would they know about this already?

"Shit," he bites out and fumbles for his phone.

The phone on the other end of the line barely rings once before Yuna is answering.

"How is he?" she demands. "Are you with him?"

"Yuna, I- I'm not sure. He's with the doctors now. We're at the CHUM, I'm just waiting."

Yuna wastes no time asking for details she must understand he doesn't have.

“We’re on our way. An hour at most. *Don’t* leave him.”

The thought hadn’t even occurred to him.

They hang up and next Hayden does what he’s wanted to do since this whole thing started. He calls his wife.

Back in the day, Jackie would have been watching the game as closely as any fan and she would already know what was happening. She’d be hosting the other WAGs, her brother, his too, their friends and would be making a night of it. But six years, three kids, and one more on the way later, Hayden knows that tonight she is more likely elbow deep in bath time or catching up on the Bachelor. She won’t be expecting his call until much later in the evening.

Maybe that’s why when she answers, it’s with a tone of worry.

“Hey hon, everything ok?”

Hayden closes his eyes and just stands there, soaking in her voice and the intermittent cooing of Arthur in her arms.

“Hayden?”

“Sorry, I’m here.”

“What’s going on? Are you hurt?”

It’s a constant source of anxiety for her, and one he can’t ease. This is just their life.

“Not me,” and now with his person on the other end of the line, Hayden feels the weight of everything *really* hit him. His voice shakes, and his eyes burn. “Babe, Shane’s really hurt.”

It comes out small and choked, and full of fear.

There’s a pause and he knows Jackie is in shock.

“What happened?”

Somehow he manages to tell her the whole awful thing, and by the time he’s done they’re both in tears. Over the years, Shane has become as much a little brother to her as he has a best friend to Hayden.

Way back when, before they’d really become friends, Jackie had been the one to clock Shane before Hayden ever had. Clocked him in the sense that he wasn’t quite like the other hockey players they knew. He wasn’t loud and boisterous, wasn’t a party guy, didn’t shit talk and was objectively bad at chirping. He was quiet and shy, tightly wound and always a few steps apart from the others, thumbs tucked awkwardly in his pockets and just...*existing* in the moment. The kind of guy who would have been picked on as a kid for just being *different*. The polar opposite of the branded persona his mom had already started to build him up to be. It had taken only two team get-togethers for Jackie to demand that Hayden force him over for dinner.

“That poor boy needs a quiet dinner in, not a crazy night on the town with you idiots.”

She hadn’t been wrong.

Hayden thinks about Shane now. He’s come a long way from his rookie year in the sense that he’s become a natural leader and an excellent team captain. But he’s always remained the same steady guy. The guy that lives within a set of quiet, restrained parameters of his own making. For Shane, everything has a place and things only make sense when routed in structure. His workout routine, his diet, his home. He thrives on practicality over flashiness, and takes the world around him at face value—struggling when things don’t work the way

they should. He's somehow endearingly literal and blunt while simultaneously being the most guarded person Hayden has ever met.

There are times when Hayden thinks that if he never forced him out on errands and days out with the kids, Shane would just be sitting at home waiting for the next practice or game. It makes him and Jackie worry sometimes.

The sound of Arthur fussing brings Hayden back to the present and he sighs.

"Are *you* okay?" Jackie asks him, sniffing.

"I dunno. No? Does it matter?" he asks, staring blankly ahead.

"It matters to me."

"God, I love you. I miss you and the babies..."

He saw them this morning, but it's still true.

"We'll be here when you come home."

"I dunno when that'll be."

"Do you want me to be there? My dad can come stay with the kids."

It's exactly what he wants. "Can you?"

“The minute Arthur goes down I’ll head out.”

He tells her he loves her and then reluctantly ends the call. Now all there is to do is wait.

When he finds Ilya fucking Rozanov hovering in the hallway, Hayden’s brain can’t quite compute his presence. Something about his excuse (“*I am just...checking in. Captain to captain.*”) doesn’t ring entirely true.

But then they’re almost at blows and *that* at least makes sense coming from this asshole. Should Hayden have called him a scavenger for hanging around the hospital instead of waiting on a press release like everyone else? Yes, he stands by that choice even when Yuna is scolding them like children.

He *almost* argues when she wordlessly invites the Raiders captain into the waiting room, but Yuna isn’t someone you argue with. So instead, Hayden grudgingly follows them into the room and takes a seat with the Hollanders, putting his body protectively between them and Rozanov.

For Rozanov’s part, he looks like shit. He’s hunched over his knees, like he’s ready to be sick and Hayden is at a loss as to *why*?

Okay, objectively he can accept that seeing another player go through what Shane went through is deeply upsetting. His own team is probably at their wits end, hungrily waiting for every update he sends to Craig (of which there have been few). No doubt the guys on the Raiders have also been shaken by tonight’s events. But this is Ilya fucking Rozanov.

He and Shane have been at each other’s throats for their entire careers, with the majority of the public digs coming from Rozanov not Shane. Is this a weird competitive thing? A power play that Hayden isn’t understanding?

And is he just imagining things, or does Rozanov look...*annoyed* when Rose Landry calls Shane's phone frantic with worry?

"They didn't get back together, did they...?" Yuna asks, eyes never leaving the door through which an update could come at any moment.

"No," he confirms. "Pretty sure they're just friends now."

"Hmm."

Mention of Shane's microscopic dating life suddenly reminds Hayden that his friend *has* in fact been seeing *someone*. Boston Lily has been a pretty consistent hookup for Shane for a lot of years now. It's a topic he flat out refuses to talk about—which admittedly stings *a little*—but Hayden knows that anytime Shane is glued to his phone, it's Lily he's talking to.

Over the years he's speculated with Jackie about what could be so wrong with this woman that Shane refuses to admit she exists. Hayden's best guess is that she's the sister of a rival hockey player and Shane doesn't want to get his ass kicked. His worst guess is that she's someone's wife and he'll have to knock some sense into his boy about staying out of other people's marriages. Whenever he brings it up though, Jackie just rolls her eyes, ever the defender of Shane's right to privacy on the subject.

"He's just private. Stop badgering the poor guy! God, I wouldn't want to tell you either."

Still, Boston Lily is clearly *someone* to Shane and as his someone, Hayden suspects she's going crazy with worry if she was following the game earlier.

He taps Shane's password into his phone, knowing it only because he's seen Shane enter it a million times before, and looks for their text chain. Their last conversation catches him off guard.

S: You're going down tonight

L: On you? If it makes you feel better about losing game then ok

S: Fuck off.

Okaaaay. One, rude. Two, Hayden very much does not want to know anything about whatever this weird sexual power dynamic is. He makes the very easy decision not to read any more of their texts and sends one of his own.

S: Hi Lily, this is Hayden Pike from the Metros. I think Shane would want you to know he was injured in tonight's game and he's in the hospital. Please text me at 514-881-9871 and I can keep you updated.

He sends the text and across the room Rozanov's phone pings.

Ilya fucking Rozanov looks like he's been caught red handed.

Which...No, that's not possible. Right? No.

No.

He and Hayden lock eyes and stare at each other for the longest few seconds of Hayden's life. Maybe it was just a coincidence? Maybe Rozanov just looks like he wants to sink into the pits of hell for reasons completely unrelated to this moment.

Maybe a girl named Lily really does just think it's hot to go down on Shane when he loses games.

In a last ditch effort to make this make sense, Hayden almost blindly drafts another text on Shane's phone.

S: Lily?

The stupid fucking phone pings again, and before Hayden's brain can even begin to try and reason with that, Rozanov is up and out of his seat making a break for it.

"What—?" Yuna asks in surprise, and David's brows knit together in confusion.

"B-R-B," Hayden manages before he's practically tripping out his seat to give chase.

Rozanov isn't actually *running* away, but the fucker has long legs and he's not exactly slow. Hayden almost loses sight of him when he exits through the ER doors and he has to stop and look around before he spots him again. The other man is leaning hard against the building a few yards away, clutching at the golden cross around his neck, eyes squeezed shut, and sucking in air like it's about to run out.

"Rozanov!"

He doesn't seem to hear his name and is practically hyperventilating now.

"Rozanov, hey! *Rozanov*."

Nothing. Cursing, Hayden reaches out and gives his shoulder an apprehensive shake—certain that the second the Russian realizes he's there, Hayden's gonna get decked in the face.

Instead, Rozanov looks up at him a little glassily and—like it's the hardest goddamn thing he's ever done—pulls himself upright and attempts to school his features. Hayden's not buying it.

“Fuck off Pike.”

Somehow that’s all the confirmation he needs to know that he is living in Bizarro World.

“Jesus, it’s true. It’s...*you’re* Boston Lily. What the fuck...”

Rozanov isn’t ready to admit it apparently.

“Did you hit your head? You make no sense.”

“Shut up,” he says a little lamely and wonders distantly if this is what going crazy feels like...

Rozanov huffs with desperation poorly disguised as irritation. “What the fuck do you want?”

His disinterest would be a lot more convincing if his hands would stop shaking long enough to keep a hold of his cigarette.

A far away part of Hayden’s over-taxed brain can’t believe this fucking guy, pro-athlete and NHL superstar, smokes. Or that Shane puts up with it. Hayden shuts *that* thought down immediately to avoid his brain imploding. Instead he focuses back on fucking Rozanov acting like Hayden doesn’t *know*. Like he *stupid* or something.

“Lily,” he insists.

“*Ilya*,” Rozanov counters, poking himself in the chest and it takes every ounce of tenuous control in Hayden’s body not to punch this fucking asshole in his stupid, infuriating face.

“He’s been texting you all this time,” Hayden insists. “Leaving to hook up with...”

Ok, so all the puzzle pieces are starting to come together a little belatedly. *Extremely belatedly*, Jackie’s exasperated voice says in his head. Hayden does the math. Boston Lily is Ilya Rozanov. Which means Shane is having an affair with his archrival. For like...a long-ass time. Years. Which means Shane likes guys. He’s gay. He’s gay for Rozanov. For a *Raiders* player. For...and...and he never told Hayden.

Why wouldn’t he tell his best friend he’s gay?

Hayden’s brain goes offline for a second or two as he processes about nine years of moments so small they were barely blips on his radar. Shane’s usually stilted affect being interrupted by the smallest smile every time he read a new text. Dithering over what outfit to wear while insisting he was just meeting a friend. Not *really* being too put out after breaking up with a sexy as fuck, honest to god movie star...

“You do not know what you are talking about,” Rozanov is saying, getting Hayden’s attention again. “You make no sense.”

Ok, *fuck* this fucking guy. Or...or not *fuck* but...Jesus Christ. Hayden is so done with this. He pulls out Shane’s phone and calls the number under *Lily*. He holds it up so Rozanov is forced to see it when, sure enough, his own phone starts ringing in his hand.

Hayden sees the name Jane flashing there and groans. “Jane?”

He looks in the general direction of where his best friend is somewhere in this hospital. *Really dude?*

“Jesus Christ, Shane,” he says to him, out of his mind with the absurdity of it all.

Before he can think too hard about it, Rozanov is fucking begging him to forget this whole thing. It’s a side of him that Hayden has never seen before and it makes him take a step back.

Rozanov sounds legitimately scared now.

“Drop it. Forget it. *Please*. What can I...how much will this take?”

It takes a moment for Hayden to understand what is being asked here. So sue him, it's been a long fucking night. The second he realises that Rozanov means to pay him off, he can't help but feel disgusted. A bribe for what? His silence? Hayden's not a fucking monster, he's not about to go shout from the rooftops that Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov are what? Gay lovers? More than that? Less? Regardless of what they are to each other, they have lives and careers and reputations to protect. And despite everything, it doesn't escape Hayden that being gay in Canada is a very different experience from being gay in Russia. He's not sure on the specifics but whatever would be in store for an outed major league athlete is probably really, really bad over there.

God it's bad enough here...

The thought makes this whole thing so much sadder than Hayden has even begun to consider. Rozanov's palpable fear suddenly puts it all into perspective.

Jesus Christ Shane, he thinks. *How have you two been living like this?*

“I don't want your money,” he says simply, hoping the look on his face can convince Rozanov that he's dead serious.

He's not sure he succeeds when the other man asks hollowly, “Then what?”

Is it really that hard to imagine that someone who loves Shane would just want the best for him? Is there really no one in Rozanov's life that wouldn't want the same?

“I want him to be happy,” he says like it should be obvious because to Hayden it *is*.

Rozanov just stares, like he can't quite believe what Hayden is saying.

"And as much as it pains me to say it, Rozanov," he continues, suddenly very tired, "when it comes to all *this*, whatever *this* is...you...you deserve happiness too. I'm not gonna say shit to anyone about any of this."

Jackie doesn't count, but he doesn't say that out loud.

Rozanov lets out a long slow breath, and some kind of weight seems to lift from his shoulders. Still, he glances back at the ER entrance, like he's not sure if he should go back in. If he's *allowed*. Hayden just has one more thing to figure out before he makes that decision for him.

"Whatever it is you guys have been doing," he pins Rozanov with a hard look, "I need to know if...if you're treating it seriously? If you care about him?"

Rozanov looks a little surprised. "Of course."

"*Really* care, Rozanov," he pushes, with no room for nonsense now. "Like to hell and back, cause Shane is...different, ok? He's not like most guys."

Hayden doesn't know the details of what these two idiots have been doing (he's not sure he *wants* to know) but he knows Shane. Maybe not this part of him, this big stupid part that Hayden is 100% not sad about being kept in the dark for, but he *knows* the other stuff.

Knows that even if you can't tell how Shane is ever feeling on the outside, on the inside his emotions are running on overdrive *all* the time. Knows that Shane will put every ounce of energy into not crying over the smallest thing, because the smallest upset feels like the biggest disaster to him. He holds everything in to maintain as much control over the uncontrollable as possible. Most of the people Hayden knows are made of sturdier stuff. For all the walls Shane has up around him, the core of him is fragile, soft. Hayden worries what will happen if Shane is more invested in whatever this is than Rozanov.

He already knows his best friend must be in this up to his eyes—has probably been the whole time. Shane has never struck him as the carefree, sleep around without catching feelings type. Hayden can't help but feel protective of him now. More than he's already always been.

Dad-mode.

Rozanov looks him in the eye and Hayden can tell he's psyching himself up to say something. For his sake it better be the right thing.

"I lo- *need* him. I need to be with him. Shane is...he is everything."

Rozanov doesn't actually say the word, really just *barely* says it before catching himself, but Hayden hears it. Not *I need him*, but *I love him*. Jesus. Fucking. Christ.

"It's cold," Hayden says and that throws Rozanov off a little. "It's fucking cold. Let's go inside."

Later, after finding out Shane is alive and out of the woods, after seeing him for himself, and after leaving Ilya Rozanov with the Hollanders (who have clearly caught onto the whole secret relationship thing), Hayden meets Jackie out in the hospital parking lot.

"*Babe*," he exhales.

She opens her arms without a word and he sinks into them. The adrenaline he's been running on from the second Shane collapsed is finally seeping out of Hayden's tense body.

"He's going to be okay," he breathes into her hair. "It was bad, so fucking bad, but they think he'll be fine."

“Thank god,” she murmurs back, and they just hold each other for a moment.

“He could have died,” Hayden says aloud for the first time, barely above a whisper and really letting himself feel the anxiety of it.

Beneath the down of her Canada Goose coat, he feels the solid warmth of Jackie's pregnant belly between them. The stark reminder of the life *there* really brings the hammer home on how close Shane was to losing his own.

“I know.”

“This could still end his career.”

The doctors are optimistic, but there are more tests to run and Shane's heart still needs monitoring before they really know for sure, and Hayden...well he worries. If nothing else Shane will be out for the rest of the season.

“Shhh...it won't. He's going to be fine.”

“How do you know?”

“What did Yuna say?”

“She said it won't.”

“Then it won't,” Jackie reassures him.

Hayden nods his head against her shoulder. “Ok, I believe you.”

“Good. Is he up for visitors?”

They slowly pull apart and Hayden gently thumbs away the glistening tears clinging to Jackie’s eyelashes. He shakes his head but promises, “Tomorrow, he’s asleep now.”

“Ok. Let’s get you home, mister. You look ready to fall over.”

Hayden takes a deep breath and her hand and lets her lead him to their SUV. There’s one more thing he needs to get off his chest though.

“You have no idea. Babe, when I tell you…”

“Tell me what?”

“I’m serious,” his voice takes on a pained tone. The kind that always gets an eye roll out of her. “It’s so fucking crazy. You’re going to lose your fucking mind.”

“What? Tell me.”

“I dunno. I kind of wish I didn’t fucking know about it. Maybe I should spare you.”

They part for a moment to climb into the SUV, but Jackie is demanding answers before she even has the driver's side door open.

“Hayden Christopher Pike, if you do not *spill*—”

“Okay! Okay, don’t tell me I didn’t warn you. Seriously, the first thing I’m doing when we get home is pouring bleach in my ear and sloshing it around my fucking brain to forget.”

She turns in her seat and grabs his jaw, giving it a little shake.

“Tell me or no more sex.”

“I honestly never want to think about sex ever again.”

She places her other hand on the swell of her belly and raises her brows. “Well, now it’s serious.”

“Brace yourself.”

“Consider me braced.”

“So, Lily…”

“Of the Boston Lilies.”

“Is not Lily at all.”

Jackie releases his jaw and sits back, a look he can’t place crossing her features. She has listened to all of his theories over the years and dismissed every single one.

“Boston Lily is…”

“Oh my god, you ass. Just tell me!”

“Ilya. Fucking. Rozanov.”

A slow grin spreads across her face, which is *not* the reaction Hayden feels he is due with news *this* insane. She looks so triumphant and he is so confused.

“I fucking *knew* it.”

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