

Making Memories

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Making Memories

by Anonymous

Summary

“What if I forget... everything?” Ilya swallowed hard. “I can’t forget you. I can’t forget us. I don’t think I could - ”

“Nothing is happening tonight,” Shane reassured, "And if things ever get hard... you won’t go through it alone.”

After a rough evening triggered by fears of Alzheimer’s, Ilya spirals in the only way he knows how - by skating harder.

Shane makes sure he never has to face that fear alone by showing him that some memories are made to be shared.

Notes

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

Shane noticed it the moment he stepped inside. The cottage should have been dark at this hour, because Ilya hated wasting electricity. It was one of those stubborn domestic hills he'd choose to die on. Lights left on never meant anything good.

Now the kitchen light was blazing. So was the lamp by the couch, casting a bright pool across the living room rug.

Shane closed the door quietly behind him and paused, his keys still held loosely in his hand.

Then he saw the shoes.

Ilya's shoes were kicked off near the entryway, lying in a careless heap. The toes were crooked, one shoe half-tucked under the bench as if it had been flung there. Shane stared at them for a second longer than necessary. *Wrong shoes. Wrong placement.*

He set his keys down on the side table instead of hanging them up.

The pamphlet was on the kitchen counter, half-crumpled. The glossy paper was bent in on itself, creased from what looked like a hard, sudden squeeze. *Alzheimer's Awareness Month*, the headline read in blue and white. Someone must have handed it out in town; Shane vaguely remembered a charity booth near the grocery store last weekend.

It hadn't made it into the trash.

Shane didn't pick it up, because if he touched it now, it would become a confrontation. A question he didn't have enough pieces to ask properly yet. So he left it where it was, crooked and undeniably visible, and kept moving through the kitchen as if everything was perfectly normal.

The sound reached him before he even got to the hallway - a rhythmic slap of puck against boards. Over and over, with no variation, no pause between shots. There was too much force behind each strike. And underneath it - no thumping bass bleeding through the floorboards, no half-shouted Russian lyrics echoing badly in the concrete space.

That wasn't training. That was Ilya burning something off because he didn't know what else to do with it.

Shane dropped his bag by the door and headed toward the basement stairs. His steps were unhurried. He didn't want to startle him. He didn't want to escalate whatever this was by announcing himself too loudly, by bringing his captain's voice down there instead of just himself.

Halfway down the wooden stairs, he stopped and listened.

The puck slammed again. This time it missed its target, hitting the boards at an ugly angle.

Ilya swore under his breath.

Shane closed his eyes for one brief second, then continued down.

Ilya was already sweating through his thin shirt, his hair damp and curling at the nape of his neck. His movements were almost reckless. He skated hard, stopped harder, and sent the puck flying again before it had even properly settled.

He wasn't wearing any pads.

It took another missed shot, another sharp curse ripped into the chilly air, before Ilya finally noticed him. He glanced up, startled, then schooled his expression into something careless, something easy.

"Didn't hear you come in," Ilya said, skating backward with a false calm to retrieve the puck. "Couldn't sleep. Figured I'd get some work in."

Shane leaned against the railing, his arms folded loosely across his chest, his posture deliberately non-threatening. He didn't comment on the lack of sleep or the late hour or the obvious lie. He watched Ilya's hands instead, the way his grip was too tight on the stick, the way his shoulders hadn't dropped an inch since Shane had arrived.

"You're going to hurt yourself," Shane said.

Ilya snorted, flicking the puck back into position with more force than necessary. "Please. I'm fine."

Shane didn't argue. He simply stepped off the stairs and onto the rink floor instead, moving close enough now that Ilya had to register him fully. He reached for the towel draped over the bench and the water bottle beside it, holding them out without any ceremony.

"Break."

Ilya opened his mouth, probably to protest, then hesitated. His eyes flicked to Shane's face.

After a stretched moment, Ilya skated over and snatched the towel and bottle from Shane's hands, his movements still tight with unused energy. He sank onto the bench, elbows on his knees, head bowed as he dragged the towel over his face.

Shane sat beside him, leaving just enough space to be respectful, but not enough to feel distant. Their knees brushed lightly.

They sat like that for a few long seconds, the only sound the soft rasp of Ilya's breathing slowly evening out in the chilly air.

"I saw the pamphlet," Shane said, his voice quiet but clear.

Ilya stiffened. Then he shrugged, still not looking up. "It's nothing. Some idiot in town was handing them out. I didn't mean to leave it there." His tone was too casual.

Shane watched the tension ripple through his shoulders, the way his foot tapped against the floor. He kept his own voice even. "It didn't look like nothing."

Silence stretched between them then, heavy but not hostile. Shane had learned over the years that if he rushed to fill every quiet, Ilya never got the chance to find the words he usually kept buried.

Finally, Ilya huffed a laugh that didn't quite land. "You ever notice how they always make it sound so... clean? In those things. Like it's just facts." He finally lifted his head, staring across the rink at the puck-marked boards. "No one looking right through you."

Shane turned slightly on the bench, enough that their shoulders touched now. He didn't answer with empty reassurance right away.

"It makes sense that it got to you," he said instead. "That's all."

Ilya's hand tightened around the plastic water bottle, making it crackle softly. For a long moment, it looked like he might deflect again, crack a jagged joke, push the whole thing away with a smirk. All at once, his shoulders sagged, the fight draining out of him.

"My dad didn't recognize me last time," he said, the words so quiet they were almost swallowed by the vastness of the basement. "He just... looked right through me. Like I was a window."

Shane didn't interrupt. He didn't rush him with platitudes.

"Right now," Shane said after a beat, "you know who you are. You know where you are." He paused, making sure Ilya was listening. "You know who I am."

Ilya finally turned his head to look at him, his eyes searching Shane's face.

"Nothing is happening tonight."

Shane lifted his hand and rested it at the back of Ilya's neck. His palm was warm and solid against the damp skin. He drew him in, until Ilya's forehead pressed against the curve of his shoulder.

For a while, that was all there was.

Ilya's breath came uneven at first, sharp inhales that seemed to scrape on the way in, like his lungs hadn't caught up with the fact that he'd stopped skating, stopped fighting. Shane's other hand settled between Ilya's shoulder blades. A point of contact.

Eventually, Ilya spoke.

"Not all at once." His voice was thick. "He forgot... in pieces."

The words were muffled into Shane's shoulder, flattened by fabric and distance and the sheer effort it took to say them out loud. Shane closed his eyes and tightened his grip by a fraction. Enough to say *I heard you*.

"They say it's genetic," Ilya whispered.

His fingers curled into the front of Shane's sweater, bunching the soft fabric there like he needed proof it was real, that this was real.

"What if I forget... everything?"

The word hung between them. *Everything* could mean memories, names, faces. It could mean this room, this rink, this life they'd built. Shane knew better than to try and define it for him.

Ilya swallowed hard. "I can't - " He exhaled, frustrated with his own voice, with the fear. "I can't forget *you*. I can't forget *us*. I don't think I could - "

His voice broke there. Shane felt it like a crack through bone.

Shane kept his hand steady at Ilya's neck, his thumb resting against the pulse point he knew by heart. He counted the seconds between Ilya's breaths without letting it show.

Shane shifted just enough to turn his head, to rest his temple lightly against Ilya's hair. The scent of sweat and cold air and familiar soap grounded him as much as it did Ilya.

"Nothing is happening tonight."

Ilya's grip on his sweater tightened once more.

Shane waited before adding, softer now, "If things ever get hard... you won't go through it alone."

Ilya shuddered, a full-body release of a tension he'd been holding for hours. Shane drew him in closer, his hand firm at his neck, his forearm solid across his back. He led the closeness without forcing it, let Ilya take as much of him as he needed.

They sat like that.

Minutes passed. Maybe more. Time softened and lost its shape in the chill of the rink.

Ilya's breathing evened out, the sharp edges rounding off until it matched the rhythm of Shane's own chest. His shoulders dropped, finally, the rigid line of them softening as the adrenaline drained away. Shane kept one hand at the back of Ilya's neck, the other braced at his spine, holding him here.

Holding him *now*.

—

The water was already running when Shane nudged Ilya toward the bathroom.

He did it gently, a hand at Ilya's elbow, not steering so much as guiding. Ilya followed without comment, his movements looser now, as if the edges had been filed down to something more manageable. Shane handed him a towel from the rack, then folded another over his own arm out of long habit.

The bathroom filled with steam almost immediately, a thick, warm cloud that softened the edges of the room.

They shed their clothes without looking at each other, fabric dropped carelessly where it landed. Shane kept his back half-turned, not out of modesty so much as instinct - offering Ilya the space to not have to perform or brace himself. The shower spray was the kind Shane preferred after a hard game, heavy and forgiving. He stepped in first, adjusted the temperature by muscle memory, then reached a hand back out through the curtain of steam.

Ilya took it.

Under the spray, the world narrowed to pure sensation. Heat against tired skin. Water beating a steady rhythm against shoulders and tile. Shane felt some of his own residual tension leave his body as he breathed in the damp air.

Ilya stood still, head bowed slightly, his hands braced flat against the wet tile wall.

Shane reached for the shampoo, poured a careful amount into his palm. He hesitated for half a second - long enough to give Ilya the chance to pull away, to signal *no*, to reclaim the space as his own.

Ilya didn't move.

So Shane stepped closer and began working the shampoo into Ilya's hair. His fingers were gentle but thorough, massaging in circles, careful not to tug at the roots. He knew the exact places where Ilya held his tension - the rigid band at the base of the skull, the tight knots just behind the ears - and he lingered there, applying firm pressure, not rushing.

Ilya exhaled. His hands slipped from the wall, hanging loose and heavy at his sides.

Shane rinsed the shampoo out just as carefully, using his free hand to shield Ilya's eyes, making sure no stray soap ran down his face.

He stepped in closer, close enough that their bodies almost touched, and rested his forehead briefly against the curve of Ilya's shoulder under the relentless spray. Warm water cascaded down his own back, down Ilya's, mingling in the space between them before disappearing into the drain.

They breathed together.

Shane stayed there until the last of the reckless, frightened energy drained away and what was left was simply solid and present. Only then did he pull back, just enough to rinse his own hair, keeping one hand lightly at the small of Ilya's back the entire time.

When they stepped out of the shower, steam clinging to their skin and the cool air of the bathroom raising goosebumps, the night itself felt slower.

Shane handed Ilya a clean shirt, soft from too many washes, then pulled on his own without a second thought. Ilya padded into the kitchen barefoot, the towel still slung over his shoulder.

Shane flicked off the harsh overhead lights and left only the soft glow of the lamp by the couch. He turned on the speaker.

The music that filled the space was mostly instrumental - a melody with a rhythm that moved forward without any need to rush. There was a faint Russian lilt to it, the kind of folk melody that sounded like memory itself, even if you didn't know what it was remembering.

Shane held out his hand.

Ilya looked at it for a second, his brows lifting slightly, the corner of his mouth twitching. "You trying to make me worse at hockey?"

Shane stepped closer before the joke could fully harden into a deflection. He set one hand at Ilya's waist.

That was all.

And they swayed.

Bare feet on worn wood, small steps that didn't require thinking. Shane led without effort. Ilya followed, his body stiff and hesitant at first, then gradually easing, his muscles recognizing the rhythm even if his mind hadn't quite caught up yet.

Shane could feel Ilya's heartbeat under his palm, too fast at first, fluttering like a trapped bird against his ribs.

After a minute, Ilya exhaled a soft laugh, genuine this time. "This is ridiculous."

Shane hummed, the sound a near-shrug against Ilya's temple. "Maybe."

They kept swaying anyway.

The music filled the quiet spaces, giving Ilya something to lean into besides his own thoughts. His forehead dipped toward Shane's shoulder, hovering close enough to feel the warmth radiating through his shirt.

"You're very bossy tonight," Ilya murmured, the words softened by the closeness.

"Only when necessary," Shane replied.

That earned him a quiet snort. Ilya shifted, mis-stepped on purpose, letting his foot bump gently against Shane's. Shane corrected their balance without breaking rhythm, a ghost of a smile tugging at the corner of his mouth.

Eventually, Ilya spoke again, more tentative. "You think this stuff actually works? All this... memory-making."

Shane considered him for a moment, then tightened his hand at Ilya's waist just enough to draw his attention back to the present, back to the feel of their bodies moving together. "I think this counts," he said. "Right now. Us, standing here. You'll remember this."

Ilya's brow furrowed slightly, a shadow of doubt crossing his features. "What if I don't?"

Shane didn't hesitate. "Then I'll remind you."

He tipped his forehead forward until it rested lightly against Ilya's temple.

"We're making memories together," Shane added. "The kind you don't lose. Not the important ones."

Ilya went quiet at that. His arms slid more fully around Shane. They swayed like that until the song ended, then drifted into the next one, and the one after that, moving as if they had all the time in the world.

Then Ilya tilted his head, like he was checking - asking a question without words.

Shane answered by staying exactly where he was.

The kiss was more a press than a meeting. Shane kept it gentle, like everything else tonight. He didn't deepen it, didn't chase it. He let it be exactly what it was: a reassurance, an affirmation.

When they pulled back, it was only enough to rest their foreheads together again.

"You're here," Ilya murmured, as if confirming it to himself.

Shane opened his eyes and smiled faintly, the kind of small, private smile he didn't show to anyone else. "Yeah," he said, his own breath mingling with Ilya's. "I'm here."

End Notes

Hope you liked it!

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