

Distance getting Close

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Distance getting Close

by [Carrot_flowers](#)

Summary

Ilya felt like he was in one of his cars and he was hurtling off a cliff- this was his love. There was nothing over the edge but air and the certainty of destruction. He looked at Shane grinning up at him and felt something inside break.

Ilya ends things with Shane after he is injured at the Boston/Montreal game, but shortly thereafter Shane finds out he is pregnant.

Notes

I have imprinted on the scene where Shane is hurt in front of Ilya like a little whump duckling.

Chapter 1

Even though he had played hockey for 20 years, Shane had never known it could be like this. Ilya passed him the puck and he scored and it was as easy as breathing.

It felt so right playing on the same team. They barely needed to communicate. Shane could read every shift of his shoulders, every change in the angle of his head. They played like a single unit and he felt so much joy that they could have this one game where they didn't have to pretend to be enemies. Some small part of him was afraid; surely everyone would look at them and see what they were. But all he could hear was the roar of the crowd after he scored. He looked back to see Ilya's flushed face grinning back at him and he was pulled into a hug and a quick kiss. Ilya winked at him as they pulled apart and Shane felt like he was on fire.

later. He thought.

After the knock on his hotel door, Ilya rushed to him, almost greedily. He held Shane for a minute, just with their bodies against each other. Shane savored it. He had missed Ilya. It felt like they were on the edge of something bigger despite telling himself it was nothing. Just two guys fooling around. For years.

It hadn't been fooling around for him for a long time and that scared him.

As they pulled apart, Ilya cupped his hands around his face and kissed him so gently. Shane was taken aback; this wasn't their usual style. And he opened his eyes only to see Ilya already looking at him.

"I thought you would keep me waiting." He said, with a catch in his voice.

Shane could only shake his head at him as he was backed against the large bed.

"Not more than you deserved." He said, trying to make a joke

Ilya lay Shane on his back and then crawled on top of him, kissing his way up his neck almost hard enough to bruise. Almost.

Shane reached out to cup his erection and Ilya swore into his chest. It really had been a long time.

"I don't care if your stylist picked this shirt for you, if it doesn't come off I will rip it off."

"First of all," Shane said, panting. "I picked this shirt and second of all, you're going to have to get off me."

Ilya shook his head "No, not acceptable." He pulled back and slowly pulled the hem of his shirt up as he kissed his way up Shane's stomach. He licked the grooves of his abs and up his

chest and then they were kissing, hot and deep. Shane drew back only so Ilya could lift his shirt over his head.

When he was gasping, Ilya drew back and reached for a condom.

“You don’t have to if you don’t want to.” Shane said breathlessly “I haven’t been with anyone else in... a long time.. I’ve been tested.”

Ilya’s face was incandescent as he looked down at him.

“Same.”

And so Ilya rocked into him and the feeling of him inside with nothing in between was almost enough to send Shane over the edge. Ilya lay almost on top of him, body covering his like a blanket and held his head as if he were something fragile and precious. It was slower and more intimate than usual and Shane wondered if Ilya had something to tell him as well.

I might be in love. He thought, and was in too deep to care. He thought as they moved together, hearts pressed together, that Ilya might feel the same way.

Ilya’s movements stuttered after a few minutes.

“I am not... I will not last long.” He whispered apologetically.

“Me either.” Shane whimpered.

Ilya held Shane’s hand over his chest as he came inside him. It was so intense, Shane felt the prickle of tears in his eyes. Above him, Ilya looked down at him with a steady gaze.

“Holllander, you are going to kill me. You are too much. Why are you so serious?”

Shane huffed a small laugh and looked away, feeling raw and exposed. When he looked back at Ilya, the moment was gone.

As always, it was too soon before he had to get up and get dressed again. Ilya’s hand ghosted over his shoulder as he kissed him goodbye.

Shane tried to see a hint of what he was feeling in his expression.

But then like always, they went their separate ways.

Something had changed after that night, he thought as he watched the snow fall outside his apartment. It was like life had lost color without Ilya. He felt tired and drained. It was a lot; being such a young captain and he felt the weight of his parents’ expectations, the medias, his fans’.

Sometimes he felt sick, just sometimes. He woke up in the mornings and had to run to the toilet to vomit. And he wondered if the stress was starting to get to him.

He would get home and sometimes be too tired to make dinner before he fell asleep. He lost weight and his mother started packing his refrigerator, something she hadn't done since his rookie season.

I miss him. he realized as he watched Boston beat Toronto. The camera panned to Ilya as he scored and he imagined that when Ilya winked at the camera, it was meant for him.

But then Ilya didn't get on the plane with his team and he was gone.

Ilya sat alone in his apartment in Moscow. His cigarette had become a long line of ash and he had watched it as it burned down. He needed to quit.

It had been a week of funeral arrangements for his father and endless services and receptions. His only role had been to pay for it all and he realized during one of the endless introductions at one of the endless dinners that he would never come back here. This was no longer his home.

He scrubbed his face, ignoring the ash that he scattered over the carpet. But that was the problem. He had no home.

He didn't belong in Russia. He didn't mind Boston but it was just a place where he worked. He was unmoored and didn't mean anything to anyone except for what he could pay for or the number of goals he could score. No one cared about him.

Except Shane.

He let out a small sob into his hands. Shane had texted him as soon as he realized he wasn't playing, that something was wrong. He wanted to call him so badly it he didn't even know what he would say. I miss you? I think I'm in love with you?

He remembered looking up the word "compatible" and the small thrill he had felt when he realized that Shane and Rose were not that. But he was compatible with Shane. He knew it; and he was sure Shane knew it as well. He had never felt like this for anyone and he was worried he would never feel like this about anyone again.

I am in love with him. I am so fucking in love with him and there is nothing I can do about it.

.

He sat on the floor and watched the snow fall outside the window and lit another cigarette.

Shane uncapped the ballpoint pen he kept on his counter and marked another day off his calendar. The match against Boston was in 2 days. They would come back to his house. It would be perfect. He could finally ask if the feelings he had started to have were the same; if they were more than a hookup.

He drank a glass of water as he got ready for bed. His fatigue had improved but he still felt a nagging tiredness. He would go see his doctor after the playoffs- they would tell him to take iron supplements or do more yoga or something.

But as he slid in between his sheets and stared at the ceiling, he wondered what he was finally going to say to Ilya. How was he even going to bring this up? *Hi, it turns out I'm so in love with you I've been literally sick without you.* He groaned into his pillow. That was awful, even for him.

Two days later, they were face to face across the ice. Shane felt something thrum deep in his chest as he won the face off and sped away.

They would talk afterwards and Shane would finally-finally! -figure out how he was going to tell Ilya what he meant to him. He had to.

He looked back to see Ilya grinning at him and never saw Marlow. He didn't even realize he had been hit until he was being loaded onto a stretcher.

Ilya barely made it through the rest of the game. All he could see was Shane laying motionless on the ice. He didn't remember who won or showering in the locker room. The next thing he remembered was sitting on his bed at 2am, re-reading the same sports article about Shane. There was no new information and he refreshed the ESPN page, hoping for an update. Nothing.

His worry felt like an animal trying to crawl out of his chest. He wanted to be at the hospital, getting updates from the doctors. He wanted to be holding Shane's hand. But here he was, hunched over the side of his hotel bed refreshing his phone in the dark.

Shane deserved more than this. He needed someone who could cherish him- be at the hospital and take care of him. Not a secret that risked both of their careers. It was time to leave this behind. It was already going to hurt. When Ilya thought about losing Shane, it was an ugly gaping wound in his chest. He would go to the hospital in the morning and end it. It was the only way.

He turned his phone off and rolled onto his back. The only sounds in the room were the snores of his teammate. He gripped his pillow in front of his chest as he stared at the ceiling and tried to think of how this could be anything other than what it was.

He slept fitfully for an hour or two and woke up feeling washed out and exhausted. He packed quickly. They only had a few hours until they had to be at the airport.

The cab ride to the hospital seemed like it took forever and then he had to wait in line to check in to visit Shane. He pulled his hat down over his eyes. He was attracting too much attention as it was. Then the elevator and the long hallway and then-

-Shane sitting up in bed. Thank god. And then he leaned his head back and smiled at him even though his arm was in a sling and he had two black eyes he was ok and-

-Ilya felt like he was in one of his cars and he was hurtling off a cliff- this was his love. There was nothing over the edge but air and the certainty of destruction. He looked at Shane grinning up at him and felt something inside break. He heard himself say something about how Marlow hadn't meant it. He heard that Shane would be out the rest of the season and he had to say something now before they got any more serious and it was already too late-

"I can't do this anymore." He said. Shane froze.

"What do you....what?" Shane asked, smile fading.

"This thing between us, it doesn't work anymore." Ilya said, hating that he couldn't get out what he wanted to say. *I'm in love with you and we can't be together and I can't take it anymore.*

Shane shook his head, dazed.

"Why not?" He blinked at him, disbelieving.

Ilya shook his head, feeling the sting of tears in his eyes.

"Is not working anymore." He finally said again over the lump in his throat.

"I don't understand." Shane blinked up at him and then shut his eyes against the glare of the early morning sunlight. "I thought.." His voice trailed off and he swallowed hard. "Is there...is there someone else?"

No. There has never been anyone else. Ilya thought. But out loud he said-"You deserve someone else. Someone who can be here with you."

Shane laid his head back against the pillow. "Ok."

"Is what I wanted to say last night. But I will say today. " Ilya could hear voices in the corridor. He needed to leave soon. "Goodbye Shane. I hope you feel better soon. I will see you next season."

He nodded his head stiffly and turned around and left the room without looking back. On his way out, he ran into a doctor walking in. He kept walking and called back an apology. He had to keep going. If he looked back, he would run back to him and cancel his flight. He would say anything to get rid of the small, devastated look on Shane's face. He felt hollow as he walked away from the man he loved, and as he rode back to the hotel to meet his team, he tried to focus on his upcoming games. He realized that without Shane there, he didn't really care at all.

Shane kept his eyes shut as Ilya left his room. He was gutted- he could normally read Ilya so well. He knew he wasn't thinking well from the concussion and the painkillers but he had sworn they felt the same way about each other, that they each wanted more.

He heard the door open again and footsteps stop beside his bed. He hoped briefly that it was Ilya returning to say it was a misunderstanding, they could go back to the way it was, even that would be better than this awful emptiness. What did that mean anyway? It wasn't working, they had to end it?

A woman cleared her throat and Shane cracked one eye open. His doctor was standing next to his bed. She glanced at him and then pulled a stool over to sit next to him.

"I have some news about some of the tests we have run. It's unexpected and I wanted to make sure there wasn't anyone that you wanted to have with you." She began.

His brain still wasn't working. "Unexpected? Unexpected how?"

"As is standard for all traumas, we ran a pregnancy test with your blood type and screen. And yours was positive. We ran a second test to confirm and it was positive as well, and it showed that you are likely 3-4 months along. I would like to get an ultrasound to confirm your dates and make sure there were no problems related to your fall." She nodded out to the hallway. "They're here to start right now if you are ok with it."

Shane let out a shuddering almost sob. "What the fuck. How is that possible?"

His doctor passed him a pack of tissues. "If you have never had specific testing, your ability to carry children is not something that would have been picked up on a sports-related physical. Even at your level."

"Oh my god. " He paused. "What-" *What am I going to do.*

"Is there a partner you want to call?" She asked.

"No, there's not." Shane shut his eyes again and wanted to curl up into a ball and disappear into a wave of misery. "We're not together."

"Ok. We'll get the ultrasound and then we can think about next steps. I'll be back this afternoon. Your parents are in the waiting room. Do you want them to be here for this next part?"

Holy shit. He suddenly felt very, very young.

"Can you bring my mom back here? And can you tell her for me? I don't think I can right now." His lower lip was wobbling and he hated his concussion and the way it made him feel. Also the way that the weeks of fatigue and nausea suddenly made sense.

Ten minutes later, Yuna Hollander walked into the room. She didn't say anything and there were tears in her eyes. The ultrasound tech was getting ready to squirt gel on his abdomen and Yuna reached down and held one of his hands in both of hers. She squeezed his hand and he squeezed back and then they watched as a baby appeared on the screen. He couldn't believe this. Somehow he and Rosanov-Ilya- had made this. And then- there was no way he could tell him. Not now. They were heading to the playoffs and he had made very clear that whatever had happened was over.

Tears gathered in the corners of his eyes and he had to shut his eyes because his head was aching again.

"Sweetheart." Yuna leaned down and kissed his hair, like she had when he was small. "We will get through this together. No matter what you decide."

And then he finally let himself go as his mother pulled him close.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

Cw: discussion of abortion

After they finished wiping the gel off his abdomen, Yuna followed the technician to the door and turned off the lights before she walked back to his bedside.

“Your head is hurting, I can tell.” She said as she sat next to him.

Shane wanted to open his mouth and deny it, tell her that he was fine, but his head and shoulder were both throbbing.

“Just close your eyes. You’ve been getting texts. Do you want me to read them to you?” She asked softly.

“Has Hayden texted? Just him.” He mumbled. He couldn’t think of any reason why Ilya would reach out but he felt too raw inside. His brain skittered over the fact that he would have to reach out at some point. Ilya didn’t know about-

“Hayden says ‘Hey, let me know how you’re feeling. I’m going to take out that motherfucker Marlow the next time I see him.’” Shane could hear the smile in Yuna’s voice as she said “motherfucker”.

“Tell him I’m doing ok. Don’t tell him anything else. I’m not ready.” He said. “But I don’t want him and Jackie to worry. Anyone else?”

“Your coach reached out to you. He’s sending his best wishes and he’ll be by later today to visit. Your dad and I already told him thank you but maybe better once you’re home because of the concussion. We’ll make sure your medical team is discrete.”

“About?”

“About your pregnancy. We don’t know how they will take it. And you have some choices to make.” His mind reeled at that. She was right but he couldn’t even think about it. He took a large shuddering breath.

“You don’t have to decide anything right now. We all just found out and it’s a big shock.” He felt Yuna smooth his hair back again, gently to not disturb the bandages. “Why don’t you try to get some rest? I’ll stay with you until you fall asleep.”

Against all odds, he was exhausted and while his mind kept trying to think through the past 24 hours, from the transition of thinking that he and Ilya would finally take this beyond

hooking up, to the hit to Ilya- breaking up? That wasn't exactly right- they had never been together- to finding out that he-

His breathing must have changed because Yuna's hand was back at his forehead. It was cool and dry as it smoothed the tears away from under his eyes.

"Just get some rest and we will figure this out together. Your health is the most important thing."

"Does Dad know yet?" He mumbled. Somehow that made everything seem more real. He tried to imagine his father, who worked for the treasury board of Canada and had a hockey star son, coming to terms with the fact that not only was his son gay but he was pregnant and the father wasn't in the picture.

"No. I wanted to ask you if you wanted me to tell him or tell him yourself." Her voice was calm and she kept stroking his hair.

"I-" His voice hitched. "I think I'd like to tell him myself. I'm sorry Mom. I don't think this would happen." He tried to open his eyes briefly but the glare was painful and he closed them again. He didn't know if it was better or worse that he couldn't see his mother's face.

"No, Shane. You have nothing to be sorry about. We love you so much. We will figure this out. You're not alone. You're never alone."

He drew in a shaky breath and then another. The room was quiet except for the sound of his IV pump and his pulse ox. He listened to the low beeping noise and soon he gratefully felt himself sinking into sleep.

When Shane woke up, he was alone. The room was darker and it looked like the sun was beginning to set outside. He felt slightly clearer, and while his head was sore, it was no longer throbbing.

There was a folder on his bedside table and he reached over with his good arm. He opened it to find the ultrasound photos from earlier. He had been so shocked that he hadn't even paid attention at the time.

He could see now, there was a baby.

We made that.

He thought back to the night of the All-Star Game. How Ilya had held him so closely. That was the only time they had never used protection. He saw the date at the top of the ultrasound. Shane Hollander. 12w6d.

Estimated due date: 10/20/2017

It was 3 months. He had carried this baby for 3 months and had never known. And he would have the baby at the beginning of the season.

So he would miss next season. At least.

Ilya didn't know either. He slid the photos back into the folder and closed his eyes again. There was no way he could tell him right now. Holy shit, Ilya had just ended...whatever they had...this morning. Thinking about Ilya was like poking a bruise and right now, he just couldn't.

He had to get through the playoffs. His mother had alluded to decisions to make. It was reasonable to think about whether or not he wanted to keep the baby. This would change his entire career, his entire life. This would be an inflection point with a clear before and after. The obvious decision would be to terminate.

He looked down at the picture again and felt more conflicted. Honestly, he didn't know what to do.

There was a knock at the door. Dr. Sullivan walked in again, accompanied by another doctor.

"Hi, you were asleep when I came by earlier. This is Dr. Goldfarb, he's an obstetrician. Is now a good time for us to go over the results of the ultrasound?"

Shane nodded, mouth a little dry.

"Do you want us to get your mom? The nurses said she stepped out to get dinner."

He shook his head. "No, it's ok." Suddenly his palms were sweating. Was everything ok? Had this baby that he hadn't even known he was carrying been hurt as well? It had been such a hard hit.

"Well, we have some good news." Dr. Goldfarb smiled at him. He signed into the computer next to his bed and rotated it so he could see the images on the screen.

There it was again, his baby. He could see it move on the screen. He changed views and there were colors. "The baby is a normal size for how far along you are. These are blood vessels and the color shows the direction of blood flow. We can see that there wasn't any damage to the placenta, which is the organ that feeds the baby. They're pretty well cushioned in there but sometimes when there's a hit, there can be damage to this organ. We will want to repeat this in a few days just to make sure but it looks like your gear protected both of you."

Shane felt something inside of him unclench. Oh. They were ok.

He sat down next to Shane's bed. "I understand that this was unexpected. If you decide to terminate the pregnancy we do not have a time limit but the procedure does become more challenging in the second trimester. Please let us know if we can help with your decision. We do perform abortions here if that is your choice."

Shane looked up into his eyes. There was no judgement there.

"I need some time. I haven't really had a chance to think." He looked down at the sheets of his hospital bed. His vision was starting to blur again and a headache was starting at the back of his head.

“Of course. There’s been a lot going on. He put a hand on Shane’s good shoulder. “Take care.”

“Thank you,” Dr. Sullivan nodded to her colleague and she squeezed his hand briefly. “Is your pain controlled?”

He nodded.

“I’ll be back tomorrow and we’ll talk more about next steps before discharge ok?” She gave him a small smile and then stepped out of the room.

He let his head fall back against the pillow. His thoughts swam. He had so many decisions that he had never thought he would have to make and he wondered for a moment what it would feel like if Ilya were here. Would he be happy about the baby? He remembered watching Ilya swim at the All-Stars game, playing shark with the children. He would be a great dad, someday. His chest clenched; he had guiltily imagined a future, maybe after they retired, where they would have kids, maybe a dog. Maybe at his cottage. He could see Ilya swimming with their kids, tossing them off the dock. His heart sped up. He slid his hand over his lower abdomen where their baby was growing. And Ilya had no idea. Tears started to leak from the corners of his eyes and he turned and watched the shadows shift cross the side of his room as the sun set.

He didn't realize that he had dozed off again until his mother touched his shoulder.

"Shane, we didn't know if you would be hungry but we brought dinner. Just some baked chicken and vegetables."

His stomach growled and he pushed himself up as she opened the takeout container and started to cut up the chicken for him. His dad stood next to Yuna and ruffled his hair.

"Hey champ, they really beat you up." He smiled a little at that nickname. His Dad hadn't called him that since he was a kid.

He tucked into the meal and then after a few bites had to slow down as he was gripped by a sudden wave of nausea. He shut his eyes and groaned.

"Are you ok?" Yuna asked. Shane took a deep breath. The room felt like it was spinning.

"I need some water." He heard her lift the pitcher and opened his mouth for the straw.

"Was he feeling sick earlier?" David asked. "Do we need to call the doctor?"

Shane opened his eyes and looked at Yuna. Her eyes met his and he took a deep breath.

"It may be the concussion but..." He trailed off and he had no idea how to continue. He was just going to say it. "I also found out that I'm pregnant."

David visibly startled. "Oh." He took a deep breath. "Oh wow." He walked over to look out the window and crossed his arms.

The room was quiet. Yuna put her hand on Shane's shoulder.

"Dad, this wasn't planned. I didn't know this could happen." He hated the small waver in his voice.

"Oh Shane, I'm not mad. I'm just surprised." David turned around and walked to the bed. "I bet this was a huge shock for you too." He looked up at Yuna. "Was this why you left earlier?" She nodded.

"Is there...someone else involved?" He asked.

"He's not in the picture." Now Shane's voice really wobbled. David's hand covered Yuna's on his.

"Well that's his loss. We've got you." His father smiled at him, worry still in his eyes.

Shane took a deep breath. This was real. He shut his eyes again, feeling exhausted despite having just woken up for dinner. The water had helped his nausea but he still felt dizzy and had a strange taste in his mouth. The same strange taste that had been there for the past 3 months. Jesus.

"Mom, you can take the rest away. I can't finish it." He said, eyes still shut.

"Yes, get some rest. Do you want me or your dad to spend the night here?" Yuna asked.

He shook his head slowly. "You don't have to. I'll see you tomorrow. Love you."

His parents both bent down to kiss his forehead and then they turned the lights out as they left. He could hear their voices faintly as they walked down the hall away from his room but he couldn't hear what they were saying. Right now, he was too tired to care.

"Hey, did you go see Hollander at the hospital?" Marlow approached Ilya hesitantly a few days later.

Ilya stiffened. It wasn't unheard of for a team Captain to go check on an injured player but he had never done it before. He nodded jerkily.

"I didn't mean to hurt him like that. I'm really sorry." Marlow sagged against the lockers.. it was after practice and they were all sweaty and exhausted. "He wasn't looking ahead- if he was I think he would have seen me."

"He had concussion and broken collarbone. He will be out the rest of the season, but he will heal. Don't give yourself too much credit." He couldn't look his teammate in the eye. He had also hurt Shane, maybe more badly. But it was for the best in the long run. Right now, he felt empty and exhausted. Maybe Shane felt the same way for now, but then he would move on and-

Marlow frowned at him and looked down at his phone.

“Are you sure that’s it? They just released a statement.” Marlow held his phone up so he could see the short news release. “He’s going to be out next season, too.”

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

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

A few days later, there was a longer article about Shane. It was still very vague and alluded to an injury that would require prolonged recovery and physical therapy. One of Ilya's teammates read it aloud in the locker room before practice and there were some snickers.

"Damn Marlow, you really gave it to him." Their goalie said as he nudged him, hard.

Marlow shook his head. "It must be a broken leg, right?! I have no fucking idea how that happened. Maybe Hollander is more delicate than he looks." There were more laughs at that.

Ilya gritted his teeth.

"Enough, assholes. Get out there."

He didn't skate his best that day. He spent the entire practice and the entire ride home thinking about Shane. He couldn't square what he had seen in the hospital with missing the entire next season. He had looked beaten up, but not seriously injured. They were both team captains in the prime of their careers. What could possibly be so wrong with him that he would miss an entire year?

He couldn't think about that day in the hospital without thinking about Shane's face as he had ended things with them. He exhaled again as he saw the small, devastated expression on his face. He hoped someone was there with him, taking care of him. He hoped he was eating enough and that his arm was healing and...

He realized he had been sitting in his garage for some time and without thinking, pulled his phone out. He pulled up their message thread.

The last text was from Shane, over a week ago. *Fuck, how had it only been a week*

And when he read it, it felt like he had been kicked in the chest.

Jane: Can't wait to have my way with you after I kick your ass.

He started typing.

"Are you ok-" deleted

"What happened-" deleted

Fuck. He was so fucking stupid. He banged his head against the headrest in his car. He was going crazy, not knowing what was wrong with Shane. And he had no way of finding out, short of messaging him. If he had known he was that badly hurt, he never would have-

-no, he reminded himself, Shane needed someone else who could be here for him and he needed to not be in the way. He leaned his seat back and stared at the roof of his car. He wanted to hold Shane so badly it felt like he was going to crawl out of his skin. It made no sense. They had routinely gone this long without contacting each other before. He could just pretend this was one of those times. The playoffs would be starting later this week and he couldn't afford to be this distracted.

And then he realized that if Shane was out next season, they wouldn't see each other at all. Some small part of him had clung to the fact that he would see him at least a few times a year, when their teams played each other. But he wouldn't see him for over a year unless they ended up at some stupid sports banquet or fundraiser.

He started typing a text to Shane before he realized what he was doing.

"I'm sorry please-" deleted.

You messed up and fell in love. And then you ended it. You can't just text him like you want to. You can't be anything to him., he told himself.

He sighed and listened to the faint noises of his car engine cooling. Then he opened his phone again and texted Svetlana.

Ilya: free tonight?

While he waited for her to respond, he pulled up the press release.

"...Mr. Hollander will require a prolonged recovery with physical therapy and we wish him the very best on his return to wellness." Says Montreal GM

What the fuck.

"What the fuck, Mom? 'Return to Wellness?'" Shane held up his phone with the press release. He had woken up from a nap, which was a new, annoying habit, to several texts from Hayden.

Yuna paused her typing and looked up from her laptop.

"That was the language we decided on. They agreed to give you some privacy even knowing that being vague would invite some scrutiny." She closed the screen. "I agree it's for the best, especially if the other dad isn't involved." She looked down at her hands on the counter and started to fidget with her wedding ring.

"Sweetie," she began again hesitantly, and he had the feeling this conversation had been hashed out between her and Dad. "Does he know? The other...person?"

He felt something in his chest clench.

"No." He exhaled. "He doesn't."

“Oh honey. You can’t keep this to yourself. He deserves have a chance to be involved, even if you’re not together. People do this all the time.”

Shane tried not to delve into the existential horror that was discussing his sex life with his mother

“I can’t tell him right now. He’s doing something really important.”

Yuna tilted her head. “What’s more important than this?”

“Just trust me, I will.” He said, sitting on the sofa as he turned on the TV.

“Remember, just 15 minutes of screen time every hour.” She said, sitting next to him.

Shane leaned back against the sofa. He couldn’t deny it was helpful, having his parents here to help him recover, but he was so ready to be by himself and just have a little space. They had been good about letting him lead the conversation around the baby, his career, but the one person he wanted to talk to had pushed him away.

As always, they were watching ESPN and Shane closed his eyes through the baseball announcements. His head was starting to hurt again just being in front of the TV. He opened them again when he heard them turn to hockey.

“The playoffs start tonight with the Boston Bears facing off against Tampa.” Shane inhaled sharply as Ilya’s face filled the screen. He had the beginnings of a beard and Shane hurt with how amazing he looked. His headache intensified and he closed his eyes.

I wish he could have been mine.

When he opened his eyes again, he saw Yuna looking at him.

“Is the very important thing that he is doing the Playoffs?” She asked carefully.

Everything inside Shane froze. He didn’t know what to say but he nodded very slowly.

Yuna pressed her lips together. “Well okay then.” She let out a long breath. “I guess I can understand waiting. But you need to tell him. And you can always tell us.” She was looking straight ahead now. “We will support you with whatever you choose. You could never disappoint us.”

But I think I could. Shane thought.

That night he sat in between his parents and watched Montreal lose their first game. He could barely keep his eyes open by the end of the game and dashed off a quick text to Hayden.

Shane: Rough game man. Better luck next time.

Hayden: yeah. We need you man. It sucks.

Shane got Hayden’s text right before he dropped off to sleep.

He felt his stomach drop and his mind went back to the hospital.

He remembered waking up early the morning after he found out. Yuna was asleep on the pullout couch, sleep mask over her eyes. She must have come back later that night, after all. His headache was better and while he was still fuzzy, he had a clarity that had not been present the day prior when he was hit with one thing after another, after another.

Broken collarbone.

Out for the season.

Ilya.

His and Ilya's baby.

He lay in the bed and stared up at the ceiling. The pattern of the blinds was reflected upwards and he stared at the bold stripes as he thought.

Almost cautiously, he ran a hand down the familiar planes of his chest and stomach, down to where the ultrasound probe had rested the day before. Extending about an inch or two above his pubic bone, there was a strange firmness that he hadn't noticed. That was it. He pressed slightly and wondered how long it would have been before he noticed, if he hadn't been hit. He wondered how things would have gone with Ilya, if he hadn't been hit. Maybe they could have talked things out. The corners of his mouth turned down. They had never spent as much time talking as they could have.

He rolled over on his good side, feeling strangely vulnerable. He had never been good at reading people, and that Ilya had ended things with him was no less bewildering than their attraction in the first place.

He swallowed hard and turned his face into the pillow. He would give anything to feel his arms around him right now, to feel his chest against his back and his hands sliding down where his rested, where their baby was growing. He took a quick breath.

The day before, they had brought up termination. He knew laying here, that he would keep the baby- his parents would help him. He shoved the thoughts down- he would never be the same, Ilya didn't want him- and focused on the parental leave clause in his contract. It was a standard boilerplate and he remembered telling his mother they could take it out but for some reason they never did. He knew this made no sense. He was logical and his entire life had been about being the best hockey player he could. And he was there. He was the captain of the Montreal Voyageurs. He was living the life he had always wanted. But just this one time, there was something he wanted more.

When Yuna woke up a few minutes later, Shane was already sitting up in bed.

"Mom." He said, "We need to tell Coach I'll be out next year. But I'm coming back."

There was a long pause and he could see his mother's mind working. How to make this fit.

She nodded slowly. "Ok, Shane. Ok. Let's do this."

Now, almost two weeks later, he was home with his parents and recovering more slowly than he would like but still making progress.

He still hadn't told most of his teammates. Hayden had been the only one who knew and he was sworn to secrecy. He would have to tell them eventually but it wasn't the right time. Maybe once the season was over.

Montreal lost again later that week.

Boston won their second game and their third; it was likely they would advance to the next round. After the game, the camera was shoved in Ilya's face. He was sweating and exhausted and something about him just looked *tired*.

He looked away. It was painful to look at the TV.

"When you were hurt, he visited you at the hospital didn't he?" Yuna asked. "I saw him leaving and he looked upset."

"Is that so." He responded, keeping his voice even.

"He must have felt badly about the hit." She said blandly.

By the next week, Montreal was out of the playoffs and Boston had lost their first game in the next round. Shane struggled with the reality that Boston could be out this round and his promise to tell Ilya rattled around in his brain.

He woke up the morning after Boston lost their second game to Syracuse. If they lost two more times, they would be out of the playoffs. He had to tell him. Fuck. He wanted to talk to him so badly.

He wondered for the millionth time, why he wasn't enough for Ilya. Was there someone else for him? Someone who was more fun. *Which is almost everyone* His brain helpfully added. Someone sexy.

He opened his phone and started scrolling Twitter. He passed several sports headlines when he saw a link to a gossip site. There were photos of Ilya with a stunning woman with wild curly hair and lovely upturned eyes. She was wearing boots and a short dress and Shane could admit that her body was-objectively- incredible.

Ilya had his hand protectively over her back and was smiling down at her.

Playoff Love? The headline read. Shane's heart crumpled in his chest like an aluminum can. He threw his phone on the bed and squeezed his eyes shut and tried to breathe.

That morning, he had tried to pull on a pair of khaki shorts- they had always been on the tighter side- but he hadn't been able to button them. And he realized that this would only get worse- he would keep gaining weight and he would have to change how he ate- and he had to lay back down on his bed. He could do this.

He pulled the shorts down his legs and turned to face his mirror in profile. His waist was a little thicker- his OB had told him he would likely not show significantly until later in his pregnancy due to his height and abdominal muscles. Unfairly, his mind flashed back to the photos of Ilya and that woman. She was tiny and Ilya's hand had almost covered her back. He would bet that he could span her waist with both hands together. A hot stab went through him and it took him a moment to identify the emotion as jealousy. And a little bit of anger.

Ilya was out with some woman *during the playoffs* , and she was gorgeous and tiny and Shane was having to deal with all of the changes in his body that came with carrying Ilya's baby *that he still didn't know about*

But the thought of trying to tell him was paralyzing. He felt torn between a fierce love for his unborn child-already!- and shame. He should have known, he should have been more careful. Ilya would be furious- he had made it very clear he didn't want anything to tie them together. *It wasn't working for him.*

Shane covered his face with his hands then got up and pulled another pair of shorts out of his dresser. This was an older pair and like most of his pre-stylist clothes, had a drawstring.

Even if he wasn't working for Ilya, they would have to figure something out and the way Boston was playing it would be sooner rather than later.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you for your kudos and comments!

Sorry for the late update due to snowstorm craziness.

I promise in the next chapter they will talk because this is also driving me crazy.

Chapter 4

"What happened? You played like shit." Svetlana called from his bedroom. Ilya dropped his bag on the floor and shucked off his suit jacket next to it. He walked towards the back of his apartment, feeling empty.

"Is nothing." He started to unbutton his shirt and pulled it out of his pants. But she was right. It should have been a win against Syracuse. The Syracuse power forward was injured and they were playing at home in Boston. The energy of the crowd had been incredible; something he usually fed off. Tonight, everything seemed dull and grey. He felt slow and stupid. There had been so many missed opportunities. He had gotten caught against the boards and he was pretty sure one of his ribs was badly bruised if not broken.

Svetlana looked at him. She had one of his old t-shirts on and the neckline dipped over one of her shoulders. She leaned forward and turned on the light, illuminating her long neck.

"Don't give me that." She scolded. "You've been off since that game with Montreal."

He turned away from her then. He saw Shane hitting the ice, unconscious. He saw his happy, open face and then-

He should care more. If they could have pulled out of this game, they would have a reasonable chance at the cup this year. But all he saw was the summer stretching in front of him. He had never spent a summer in Boston before. It would be weeks of boredom, and then the next season. More of the same. He wouldn't even have the games against Montreal to look forward to. There was no Shane.

"Ilya." Svetlana said, more softly this time. "Did something happen? Did you break up with your Jane."

He froze and turned around. "What did you say?"

She looked back at him, unwavering. "I knew there was someone else. We are not exclusive-is fine. But she fucked you up."

Ilya wanted to deny everything. He felt scraped raw. He ran a hand through his hair, still damp from his shower after the game. He opened his mouth and shut it again.

"Don't start that with me." She held up a finger, warningly. "This is too important. Your contract is up after next year. You can't fuck this up."

Ilya took his pants off and lay next to her, on top of the covers. It was easier to talk when he didn't have to make eye contact.

"It's complicated." He said, It got complicated."

"Complicated how?" She folded her arms under her breasts and leaned back against her pillow.

Ilya was quiet for so long she thought he had fallen asleep.

"I can't say." He said softly.

They lay there in silence for a minute and then she turned off the lights. The room was blessedly dark and he couldn't hear her settle on the other side of the bed. Her breathing grew quieter and more even and he thought she had fallen asleep until she asked,

"Did you fall in love, Ilya?"

He didn't respond. Svetlana flipped the pillow over and pulled the covers over her shoulder. And this time he waited until she was snoring softly before he answered "Yes. Yes, I love him."

Shane sat in between his parents on his couch as he watched what was likely Boston's final game of the playoffs.

His sling had come off earlier that week and he had started physical therapy. His arm was sore from disuse and he had to remind himself to use it so he wouldn't lose range of motion.

Right now, it was curled over his stomach and his small bump.

It had been a hard fought game. Syracuse had some injured players but they were at home and Boston wasn't playing at the top of their game.

"Rosanov is playing hurt." Yuna observed. "Look, he's favoring his left side."

Shane's heart was in his throat. Yuna was right, as usual. He could see how he was slower, his movements stiff. He wasn't as aggressive as he usually was.

"He's been off his game for a few weeks now. Ever since the game where you got hurt."

Shane stared straight ahead.

"Oh really?" He finally asked.

"This is bad timing. He needs to be showing Boston that they want to keep him. His contract is up next year. They could trade him."

He swallowed.

He watched as Ilya got checked on the ice. He took his gloves off and threw a punch at the other player. It took a minute but they were pulled apart and Ilya was sent to the penalty box. There were 3 minutes left in the third period and Boston was down by 2.

The camera zoomed into his face. Shane didn't even hear what the announcer said. His brown curls were stuck to his forehead with sweat and he looked pale and exhausted.

He hated himself for feeling a pang of longing as he looked at him. He felt himself sink into the sofa and then- it felt like someone had poked him very softly inside.

He froze.

The feeling came again and he moved his hand down his abdomen. He could barely feel it from the outside, but it was there. Holy shit.

That's your dad. He thought. He looked at Ilya's face on the TV screen, he looked angry now. On the screen, Ilya shoved a hand through his curls and scowled. Shane remembered how he had looked their last night together, so soft and happy. But that was then and this was-

He took a shaky breath and stood up and left the room.

He heard his mother call after him as he walked into his room and shut the door. He sat on his bed with his head in his hands.

He felt the baby move again and felt tears in his eyes. There were days he still couldn't believe this was happening. He had always been a role model. What would people think of him now? He knew that he would have to reach out to Ilya. They would have this one thing that would tie them together. *If he even wants to be involved.*

Ilya might want to have a wife and a family. With Svetlana. He had gone down an embarrassing internet rabbit hole trying to figure out who that woman was. She seemed like a good fit for Ilya. She was beautiful and Russian but an American citizen. She looked fun and based on her Instagram, she liked cars like Ilya. If Ilya married her, he could become a citizen, too.

Shane was too messy. For the first time in his life, he was the problem. He had walked a straight line, always doing what was expected for him. This was the first time he had ever been off that path and while he didn't regret it per se, it was unnerving.

He heard a soft knock on his door.

"Shane?" His mother called. "Are you ok? Can I come in?"

"Yeah." He answered hoarsely, swiping at his eyes.

She sat on the bed next to him.

"Boston lost. They're out of the playoffs." She said, seemingly out of nowhere.

Shane took a deep breath. There wasn't an easy way to say this.

"The other dad. It's him." He braced himself for outrage, scolding. None of that came.

“Ilya Rozanov?” Shane turned and Yuna was looking at him steadily. She didn’t seem surprised.

“Yes. I’m sorry, it’s just all fucked up.” He put his head back in his hands.

Yuna pulled them away and brushed his hair back from his forehead.

“I meant what I said. You could never disappoint me. It must have been so hard walking around with this.”

Shane’s breath hitched.

“You don’t seem surprised.” He finally said.

“No, I thought it might be him.” She said, hand still on his hair.

“Counting back, it must have happened around the All-Star game.” Shane felt his face catch on fire, but Yuna continued. “You two had such amazing chemistry. I’ve never seen anything like it. And then when you got hurt, they had to pull him away from you. If you could have seen his face- it’s clear you mean a lot to him.”

“But I don’t.” He croaked. “After the game against Boston he came to see me in the hospital. He told me it wasn’t working out. That he couldn’t see me anymore.”

“So....” Yuna asked, “It wasn’t a one time thing?”

“No Mom. It had been going on for a long time.” He said miserably.

“Oh Shane.” She paused for a moment. “How long?”

He looked down at the floor. “Since our rookie year.”

She reached over and pulled his shoulder against hers.

“Ten years? Shane, that was almost ten years ago.”

Horried, he felt more tears come to his eyes.

“It was a long time. And then he just-“ he made a cutting motion with his hand. It was ten years. Ten years of hooking up in hotel rooms, sneaking moments in between games. Ten years of slowly falling in love before he even knew what was happening, at least on his part. No wonder Ilya wanted more.

“I can reach out to him, or one of our lawyers. You don’t have to talk to him if you don’t want to.”

“Lawyer?” Shane turned to face her.

“We can draw up a custody arrangement. I think we all agree primary custody for you would be best- the baby would be a Canadian citizen and you have family support. Your dad and I

could rent a place in Montreal to help out--“

As she talked and laid out her plans, Shane realized that Yuna had been thinking about this for some time. It was comforting. The more things changed the more they stayed the same.

The next day, Shane sat on his bed. He stared at the photo of his parents without really seeing it.

This was it. Boston was out of the playoffs. Ilya's season was over. He had to stop procrastinating.

He smoothed out his list of talking points. He was not asking for financial support. He would request primary custody and they would send him and or his manager forms to sign. They could discuss visitation if he wanted.

He might not even want it.

As nervous as he was, a slow, sick roll went through him at that thought. He couldn't imagine that Ilya wouldn't want to be involved at all. He would be an amazing dad. He thought back to Ilya playing in the pool at the All-Star weekend and for a moment imagined Ilya playing in the lake at his cottage with their child. Throwing them up in the air and catching them, playing tag in the water with a little boy or girl with dark, curly hair. He squeezed his eyes shut. That wasn't their future. They weren't together anymore. He forced the images away and opened his phone. He opened up Lily's contact and hit the phone icon. His heart was pounding in his ears.

He listened to the phone ring on the other end. Once, twice and on the third ring the call connected.

"Hello?" Said a woman's voice on the other end. Oh fuck, he couldn't do this. He hung up and threw the phone across the room as if it were radioactive. That was probably Svetlana. Why was she answering his phone? It was 10am. He sat on the bed, shaking. He couldn't do this.

Ilya got back from his run, sweaty and in a worse mood than he had been when he started.

He grabbed a cold bottled water at the fridge and noticed that Svetlana was sitting at the kitchen island staring at him with a strange expression on her face. His phone was sitting in front of her. He had left it there on purpose. There was no one he wanted to talk to that would be calling him. After the game, his coach had pulled him aside to encourage him to do a clinic over the summer. Everyone had noticed he had been off his game. He wanted an answer today and Ilya didn't want to deal with it.

"Ilya, you got a call a few minutes ago." She began.

"I'll call coach back later. It is nothing."

She shook her head, curls bouncing around her face. "No, you need to call back. It was Jane."

He lunged for the phone. "Jane? And you picked up? Did you say anything."

"Ilya!" She held it out. "No, she hung up after I answered. She didn't say anything."

Ilya tried to take a deep breath but his heart was pounding and his hands were shaking. He walked down the hallway into his bedroom and shut the door behind him. He unlocked his phone and sat down on the bed. He hit the missed call and got up to pace around the room as the phone rang. It rang and rang and rang and Ilya was trying to prepare himself mentally to leave a voicemail when he heard "Hello?"

Shane's voice sounded strange and a little hoarse.

"Shane, I was out when you called. My friend answered." He wiped his free hand on his running shorts, it was sweating.

"You don't have to explain." He heard a click as Shane swallowed. "You're uh, probably wondering why I called."

"To tell me what a shitty game I played." Ilya tried to make a joke and the dead silence that followed told him that it had fallen flat. He took another breath and tried again. "Are you ok, you are out for next season?"

"Yeah, about that." Ilya could hear him take a deep breath. "I got some unexpected news. I, um." There was a long pause and Ilya wondered why Shane seemed so anxious. He was the asshole here. He had broken things off.

"I found out that I'm pregnant." Ilya thought he must have misheard or that this was some English idiom he hadn't picked up.

"You found out that you're pregnant." He repeated slowly. "That means that you are having a baby?"

Shane exhaled loudly. "Yes, I didn't know that I was a carrier, no one in my family, anyways." Ilya's mind slowly caught on.

"How far.."He couldn't think of the words he wanted to say.

"I'm about 17 weeks." Seventeen weeks was about 4 months and 4 months ago was...

"Shane."

"I found out at the hospital when I got hit. I had no idea. So obviously I can't play next season. I'm due at the beginning of October." Shane was babbling now and Ilya could only understand every second or third word.

"Shane."

"So I wanted to tell you but I didn't want to spring this on you during playoffs."

"Shane. You are having a baby?" Ilya had to catch up.

"Yes, like I said and-"

"Is the baby mine?" His voice cracked embarrassingly.

"...Yes?" Shane's voice was quiet.

"Oh Shane." Ilya was crushed. Shane had found out by himself and had kept it to himself. He felt tongue-tied and stupid and was trying to figure out what to say when Shane continued.

"You don't have to be involved if you don't want to be. I have a lot of support."

"No, I want to be involved." He stopped. He had no right to ask this. He felt sick that Shane had not told him right away. "I wish I had known. Shane, compared to this I do not give two fucks about the playoffs."

Shane was quiet for a moment.

"What do you mean you wish you had known?" He sounded almost angry. "You decided it wasn't working for you. You broke things off when I was laying in a bed with a broken collarbone and a concussion. You don't get to say that, Ilya."

"No, I know." He was backpedaling now. "I know, Shane." *Fuck. He kept fucking up.*

He could hear Shane breathing over the phone. He didn't trust himself to keep talking.

"I need to go. I can't talk about this right now." Shane finally said. "We can send you some forms about custody and visitation if you text me your manager's contact information."

The line went dead in Ilya's ear. He laid it down on the counter and sat on the floor, dazed.

Well, what the fuck now?

Shane looked at the phone in his hand, where he had just hung up on Ilya. Then much to his horror, he burst into tears.

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

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

Ilya stared at the phone in his lap. Shane had hung up on him.

Of course he did. You were such an asshole. He thought. He was sweating while he sat on the bed from his run. He stepped into the shower and let the water run over him. He could barely think, his head was so full.

This is why he's going to be out for a season.

He could have had an abortion and never told you.

You never would have known.

But if you hadn't broken up with him, you would have found out sooner. You could have helped him.

He drew in a deep, shuddering breath. Shane was carrying their baby.

The shower was starting to get cold and he turned the water off. He toweled off and got dressed. Svetlana was still sitting at the kitchen island.

"Are you ok?" She asked.

Ilya paused, unsure of how to answer. They hadn't had sex in almost 6 months and had been almost like roommates. He was so lonely it was good to have someone here. As she had said they weren't exclusive or even really *like that* anymore. But he didn't know how much he could share.

"Did you call Jane back?" She continued.

"Yes." He finally answered.

"But you were talking to a man." She looked up at him, not accusingly, but curious.

He took a deep breath. *Fuck*

"You know I won't say anything, Ilya, I never have."

"Yes, he is not really a Jane." He looked down at the floor. "I can't say who he is."

"But you broke up with him, yes?" She was tracing shapes on the counter with one long finger.

"Yes." He ground out.

"So why is he calling you? He can't let you go?"

Oh fuck oh fuck this was all going to be real if he said it out loud. But he had to tell someone.

“He is a Carrier. And he is going to have a baby.” He wished so badly he could say *We are having a baby*.

“Oh shit. And it’s yours?” She sat back and looked up at him, finally surprised. “What are you going to do?”

He shook his head, miserable. “I don’t know.”

They sat quietly for a minute. The only sound was the tapping of Svetlana’s nails on the countertop as she thought.

“So do you want to be with him?” She asked.

“I can’t. It’s too complicated.”

“What is too complicated?”

“Sveta, you cannot say a word, ok?”

“Ilya, what is it? You are scaring me.”

He took another deep breath.

“Jane is Shane Hollander.”

“You got Shane Hollander pregnant?!” Her eyes were wide and her hands were still on the counter. “Oh fuck, Ilya.”

“Yes, oh fuck is right.”

“Wait.” She pointed a finger at him. “Every time you went to Montreal. And whenever Montreal played here. You were always busy. Was it him?”

“You know it already! Why are you asking?”

She tilted her head and leaned back.

“This has been happening for a long time then.”

“Yes.” He exhaled. “It has.”

“He means a lot to you.”

Jesus Christ

“Yes, he does.” He said over a sudden lump in his throat.

“So where did you leave things?”

“Um.....” he felt punch drunk

“When you talked just now, when he told you. Where did you leave things?” When he didn’t reply, she continued: “Are you working things out? Are you getting back together? What?”

Oh.

“No. I asked him why he didn’t tell me sooner. He knew for weeks and he said he wanted to wait for playoffs. I told him this was more important. He told me he would send custody agreement to my manager.”

She clucked her tongue. “You cannot send this to Piotr.”

“I know.”

“And you didn’t ask how he was doing? If he was feeling ok? Ilya, that’s so bad.”

“I fucking know!” He could tell his face was turning red.

“Oh, so now you’re going to talk to me badly as well? I’m trying to help but maybe I should stop.” She started to gather her things.

“Sveta, please stop.” He swallowed. “I’m sorry. I just, I don’t know what to do.”

She sat back down again but kept her purse in her lap.

“I think you should ask him to send you the forms. And we can look them over. I know a lawyer who will be quiet. And then you can reach out and see how he is.”

She paused.

“Do you want to get back together?”

He wanted that, more than anything.

“I can’t. I have nothing to give. I’m not a citizen. If I had to go back to Russia I could never be able to leave again. If people knew. You know that.”

She looked up at him, her heart breaking a little for her friend.

“I know.”

He texted Shane later: “please send me the paperwork.”

And then a minute later: “I hope you are ok. Thank you for telling me about the baby.” And he tried to ignore how his heart pounded in his chest.

Then he called his coach to tell him he would do the clinic. Because he had to start pulling his shit together.

“I’m glad to hear that. I don’t know what happened at the end of the season but that was a one-time thing, wasn’t it?”

“Yes, sir. Will not happen again.”

“Good. Hey listen, can you come to the ESPY awards? It’s a week or two after the cup and we’d like you to represent the team. You’re staying in the States this summer, right?”

“Yes. I will be there.”

“Thank you. We’ll forward to seeing you.”

“Ok, bye.”

It wasn’t until later that night that he realized Shane might be there, too.

Shane was running on the treadmill when the text came through. He had been tense and unsettled after their conversation.

He wasn’t angry about the baby. He was mad I didn’t tell him sooner.

He turned that over and over in his head. He slowed the pace to a fast walk, putting a hand over the small of his back where there was a slight twinge.

“Please send me the paperwork.” followed by a email address. Shane frowned. He supposed that Ilya wasn’t out to his manager, a dour Russian man that he only vaguely remembered from the draft night.

Well, then.

He was getting ready to call Yuna when the next message came through.

“I hope you are ok. Thank you for telling me about the baby.”

His cheeks flamed. *What on earth was that supposed to mean?*

He stopped the treadmill and stood holding his phone.

He started to type a response, then stopped and forwarded his contact info to Yuna.

“Mom, please send him the paperwork.”

He turned the treadmill back on and walked slowly as his heart beat quickly. What would he even say to that? What did he want from Ilya at this point? His cheeks turned even redder. He imagined Ilya trying to explain this to his girlfriend. He wondered what she would think about all of this.

He squared his jaw. Well, what she thought wouldn’t matter. He and Yuna had worked to try and draw out a fair custody agreement. They asked basically nothing of Ilya and he would be

free to continue his life with Svetlana. No one would ever have to know that he had a child with Shane.

It was better that way.

He finally turned off the treadmill and towed off his face.

Ilya re-read the paragraph, certain he was missing something.

“Primary custody would be assumed by bearing father with optional visitation by non-bearing father. Overnight visits by non-bearing father are allowed but must be scheduled at least one month in advance and must not interfere with professional activities of bearing father.”

He put his phone down and stared out the window. It was almost night outside and there was a thin line of pink on the horizon, barely visible behind the trees surrounding his house.

He imagined Shane and their baby, under the same sky and took a deep breath. This agreement was impossible. He tried to think how this would possibly work between the two of them. If their child was to stay in Canada and he went to visit, he would realistically only see them over the Christmas break and summers. Maybe if there was a long weekend; it was only a 5 hour drive to Montreal. But if Shane decided to move back to Ottawa next year to be closer to his parents. That was almost 8 hours? 9? He would drive as many times as he had to.

His heart clenched. He couldn't imagine only seeing his son or daughter a few times a year. He had always wanted a family and when he imagined himself becoming a father, it wasn't something shameful or secret. He imagined waking up at night with a baby, watching their first steps, teaching them how to skate. He had imagined a small head against his shoulder as he read bedtime stories.

He couldn't do this. He would be a free agent after this season. Montreal couldn't afford him. Maybe if he took a salary cut? Would Shane even want him to be that close?

His throat grew thick. He would have to do something to close this gap. It was selfish of him to ask Shane to forgive him. And all of the things that kept them from being together were still there.

But maybe they could be friends.

Ilya leaned his forehead against the glass and closed his eyes.

Then he took a deep breath and pulled out his phone. He hadn't heard from Shane since he received the custody agreement from Shane's lawyer.

“Can we please talk about this? I would like to be more involved.”

“And then he texts me to say he wants to be more involved!” Shane paused to take a drink of his smoothie. “Can you believe that?”

It was a few days later and he still hadn’t been able to respond to Ilya.

There was a brief silence on the other end of the line.

“Do you think he’s doing this to make things hard for you?” Rose asked. There was another pause as she said something off to the side. “Ok, I asked for a 5 minute break in makeup.”

“No,” he huffed. “I don’t know what he wants. He broke up with me when I was in the hospital. I don’t think he would, I mean he never...”

He trailed off. Ilya had never forced himself into his orbit, he had just been there. And he had drawn back after their first time and then he thought they were finally getting together at the All-Star weekend.

“I just don’t know why he would want to be more involved. He has a girlfriend. I wouldn’t interfere in that, in his career.”

“Do you think he has the same priorities? Maybe he’s excited about becoming a dad?”

Shane paused to think. Huh. Maybe this was more important to Ilya. If he wanted to be more involved, he would have to sign with a Canadian team after his contract ended.

“Ok, we have to get started again. But let me know how it goes and sometime you know when you feel like it, tell me who this mystery man is! Take care of yourself!”

He listened as she started to talk to her makeup artist and hung up. He tried to ignore the warm glow in his chest. On some level, under the anxiety from taking a year off hockey and the changes his body was going through, he was excited about becoming a dad. He imagined taking them ice skating, teaching them how to play hockey. He had just never imagined doing this by himself.

Well, we will figure it out, kid. He thought as he absentmindedly rubbed his belly.

He texted Yuna.

“Ilya wants to talk about the custody agreement. He wants more time.”

Her response was almost immediate.

“He lives in Boston and plays professional hockey. How does he think that will work? The baby stays with him in Boston? Do you want that?”

Shane shuddered.

“No. Of course not.” He texted back

“Well, I can reach out and see what he wants. We can hire a mediator if needed.”

“Ok.”

He put his phone down, feeling uneasy.

“Don’t call him for me. I want to talk to him.” He texted back.

The next day, he waited until he’d had his workout, showered and had another smoothie. He looked at his profile in the mirror. The curve under his navel was becoming more pronounced every day but could still be hidden under a baggy shirt.

He lay down on the bed and stared up at the ceiling. He stared up at his phone and pressed Ilya’s contact. What if Svetlana answered again?

The phone rang only once before he answered.

“Shane.” His voice was a little ragged.

“Ilya.” He swallowed. “I, um, I got your text. About the custody thing.”

“Yes. Thank you for calling.”

“You said you wanted more time?”

“Yes.”

There was a long pause. This felt wrong, like business. Shane was starting to panic. He didn’t know what to say.

“Why?” His voice was thin and high and he barely recognized it.

“Because it’s my child.” Ilya also sounded unsure, and he was reminded that for all the years they had spent together, it had been fragmented, spent between hotel rooms and home games, a long-term push and pull but neither of them leaning in at the same time. And it hadn’t worked. For Ilya at least, it hadn’t worked.

“What about your girlfriend? Won’t she mind?”

“My what?”

“Your girlfriend. She answered the phone the other day.”

“Oh.” There was a longer pause. “She is not my girlfriend. Just a friend.”

Shane felt like he would sound psychotic if he brought up how he had seen literally hundreds of photos of them together.

“Just a friend?”

“Yes. I have known her a long time. From Russia. Sometimes we were together but not serious.” Ilya sounded nervous. “And nothing recent.”

“Oh.” Shane didn’t know why this made a difference to him, but it did.

“Shane, I don’t want to just see the baby a few times a year. It’s not enough.” Now he definitely sounded nervous.

And why wouldn’t he be? They were so young and they hadn’t been serious. Well, Shane had thought they were. He had fallen in love. Ilya wanted....he didn’t know what Ilya wanted. But they needed to know each other and work things out. They could be friends. For the baby.

“Ilya.” He blurted out before he could stop himself. “We can take some time to work on this. I’m going to my cottage in a few weeks. You can come, too.”

Oh God. Having Ilya in his cottage suddenly seemed like an awful idea. Why had he said that?

“There are some hotels nearby, like maybe a 30 minute drive. You could stay for a few days and we could just have some time to talk.”

“To talk.” Ilya exhaled.

“Yeah.”

“I think I would like that.”

Shane heard what he thought was a sigh. He took a deep breath and then Ilya spoke again.

“I am sorry about what I did. It wasn’t right to end things when you were hurt and then you were by yourself when you found out...” he trailed off. “I will try my best to support you with the baby. I hope it isn’t dumb like me.”

Shane let out his breath.

“Yeah, me too.”

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for the comments and kudos! I love hearing your thoughts on the fic
 appreciate everyone who is reading.

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

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

Ilya walked aimlessly down the street. The seventh game of the Stanley Cup series was tonight and for once he didn't particularly care who won. It was a strange feeling.

He and Shane had worked out that he would come to the cottage after the ESPY awards. Shane wouldn't be there but Yuna and David would, which made him anxious.

He had still not made an announcement about his pregnancy and Ilya felt a mild sense of unease at that as well. Surely someone would put two and two together once they saw Shane with a baby. Was he not planning on appearing with the baby in public? He had seen photos of Shane with one of his friend's kids online and that had already sparked some gossip.

He felt like they had reached some kind of truce. They texted about logistics- what time his flight would be getting in, what time he would meet Shane at the cottage. They had carefully avoided feelings and every time Ilya thought about apologizing to Shane for breaking up with him, trying to see what he saw for their future, how they could share time with their child. his mind skittered around it. There was too much to work out right now.

He pulled his hat off and ran a hand through his hair. It was damp with sweat and he paused for a minute under an awning to cool off. As he looked at the shop, he realized this was a baby boutique. He must have gone past this a hundred times- sometimes he ran around the Charles River when the weather was nice- but had never noticed it before.

There was a stroller and a crib displayed in the window with a baby blanket draped over the side of the crib. He stood looking at it for a minute. He would need things like that. He would need to make room in his life for a baby. He had a guest room that had nice sunlight. Maybe that could be the baby's room- if he was allowed to have them in Boston. Would Shane bring him down for visits?

Was Shane getting ready like this?

When he got home, he showered, mind still on Shane. He wanted so badly to FaceTime him, to see how he was doing, to see if you could tell.

He was still in love with him. And they would be bound together forever by this. But he didn't have any right to ask for anything more from Shane. Except time with their child.

He jerked off resolutely in the shower and tried in vain to think of anything but Shane underneath him.

Svetlana came over later with dinner to watch the game. They ate wings and talked about her trip back to Russia. He had some presents for his niece that she needed to take with her. Usually they went back together and it felt strange to not be joining her; like he was stepping into a new era of his own life. He would probably never go back again. Especially not once it was known that he was having a baby with another man.

They were half drunk, full and tired when the game ended and Ilya was wiping the grease and buffalo sauce off his hands before he reached for the remote. He watched Scott Hunter lift the cup and then skate off, alone.

He had his thumb on the off button when he saw a man coming down from the bleachers at Scott's urging. He loped down the steps and Scott just stood there, watching him. The camera was too far away to see his face but he recognized that posture- it was anticipation. It was the same way he imagined he looked when he saw Shane across the ice, across the room.

Wow. Scott fucking Hunter.

"What are they doing?" Svetlana asked, pausing her cleanup.

"I don't know but I hope it happens before Scott Hunter dies of old age."

She threw a wadded up paper towel at him.

He watched, then with his mouth slightly ajar as Scott Hunter pulled the man on the ice.

What are they doing? Are they.....

And then he watched as Scott Hunter, the oldest, most boring person he knows in hockey, kissed his boyfriend on center ice.

Instead of feeling happy, as he should, he felt gutted. And he wished that could be him, kissing Shane on the ice after they won the Stanley Cup. Or after one of them did.

Svetlana put her hand on his shoulder. They stood together without saying anything, listening to the roar of the crowd onscreen. Ilya finally lifted the remote and turned the TV off.

"Is different for him." She said finally. "His boyfriend is a regular person. He's an American. If they kick him off the team, it would suck but he would be ok."

He wouldn't lose his visa and get shipped back to Russia.

His phone buzzed on the table. It was a text from Shane.

"Did I really just see that?" He swallowed, unsure of how to reply. He wondered if Shane was also wishing that could be them.

"Crazy, right? Who knew he had it in him." He finally texted back.

"Yeah." Ilya couldn't think of how to respond so he put the phone back on the table, still feeling an ache in his chest. After a minute, it buzzed again.

“I have a big appointment tomorrow where they are doing anatomy scan and make sure everything looks ok. Can also find out if it is a boy or girl.”

Ilya exhaled sharply. Oh wow. This felt very real.

“Please call me if anything happens. Can you send me pictures of the ultrasound?”

“Yeah. Do you want to find out what it is?”

Ilya paused. He had never thought about this, somehow.

“It’s up to you.” He messaged back. There was no response for long enough that he wondered if Shane had fallen asleep.

“I want to find out. I’ve been feeling nervous about this. I think this could help.”

Ilya swallowed at this admission. What was Shane feeling nervous about?

“Ok that sounds good.”

“I don’t have to tell you if you don’t want to know.”

“I want to know.”

He waited for a minute and then helped Svetlana finish cleaning up. They chastely kissed goodbye and he wished her a safe flight.

He was putting on his pajamas in his house that suddenly seemed too large and too quiet when another text came through.

“I’ll let you know.”

He had a response ready and had to think for a minute before sending, afraid it seemed too familiar.

“It is a girl. I know it.”

“You’re full of shit.”

He smiled at the response, but also felt a small burst of anger. If Shane had told him earlier, he could have been there in person. He inhaled slowly and tried to think. It was good that they were meeting up in a few weeks. They could talk more then about how he could be involved. Shane was trying.

He would try along with him.

Shane lay in bed that night staring at the ceiling and, for the first time in his life, thinking about Scott Hunter when he could be sleeping.

He couldn't stop thinking about that kiss; the way he had folded his boyfriend into his arms. He pressed a hand against his mouth and imagined it was him and Ilya, finally letting go. Letting everyone see them. He felt the prickle of tears in his eyes. He was so afraid of that; of losing control.

He turned on his side and turned his pillow over again. Trying to find a comfortable position.

He was also nervous about the appointment tomorrow. It would be the first time since he found out that he was pregnant that he would be having an ultrasound. What if there was still some damage from the hit?

He finally fell into a fitful sleep. And the next day could barely keep his eyes open as he sat next to his mother in the car, waiting to get called into the clinic.

"Ok, the waiting room has cleared out. They are ready for us to go in."

Shane blinked and adjusted his hoody before stepping out of the car. There were no photographers and they walked in the background entrance to the clinic before being shown back to the room.

He sat through having his weight taken and recorded- a number higher than it had ever been- and tried to keep breathing. They asked him to lay back on a table and he scooted his shorts down. Cold jelly was squirted on his abdomen and the tech was talking to him.

He couldn't understand what they were saying and they put the probe on his stomach and suddenly there was a *whoosh whoosh whoosh* .

He turned his face and there it was on the screen, larger than it had been before. Now it didn't even fit in the entire screen. He could see it in profile with one hand by its face and he pulled his phone out and snapped a photo.

"Someone is saying hi." He texted to Ilya with the photo before he could think it through.

"Oh sweetie." Yuna was looking at the screen with a soft look on her face.

The technician smiled at them as she took measurements.

"When I'm done, I can put up some of the video loops and you can record them on your phone. It's pretty wild, isn't it?"

Yeah, it was.

Ilya angled his phone towards the window and opened his photo gallery. His plane would land in Las Vegas in about an hour. He would have a few hours to check into his hotel and get ready and then he would make an appearance at the ESPY awards and then fly to Ontario the next morning.

He swiped through the photos Shane had sent him a few days ago. Truthfully, he couldn't stop looking at them. He looked at the first one, the one of their baby in profile, the longest. He liked to think it had his upturned nose and as he scrolled forward, he covered his mouth with his other hand to hide his fond smile.

Not it, she.

The day after Shane had sent him these photos, he had walked back to the baby store. At first he was nervous and he must have seemed out of place.

A sales associate approached him tentatively. He knew he looked out of place, a 20-something man in gym clothes, even though she thankfully hadn't recognized him.

"Can I help you?" She had asked.

He didn't know what he wanted until his eyes landed on a small stuffed rabbit by the register. It was soft and pink and his heart squeezed at the thought of his daughter having it with her.

"Oh that's very popular." The saleswoman followed his gaze. "Look, you can even record a message and if they push the button on its paw, it will play it back."

He could record himself saying something and even when he was away, she could still hear him.

"I will take that, please." He had said thickly.

And now that rabbit and a small pink blanket were tucked in his luggage to bring to the cottage.

A few hours later he was on the elevator, heading down to the ballroom where the awards were being filmed. His tuxedo felt tight and stiff against his neck. He hated these award ceremonies and usually the only reason he looked forward to them was Shane.

He just had to get through this and then he would see Shane. He had to admit, he missed him. He had to keep reminding himself this was different, there was a different set of rules now. But inside, his heart sang with the knowledge that he would be seeing Shane.

The elevator doors opened on a different floor on the way down and Yuna and David Hollander stepped on. They each startled and then Yuna quickly schooled her face into some semblance of calm. She looked regal in a black evening gown with her hair swept back. Ilya could see Shane's profile in her, but there was no softness in her eyes as she glanced at him.

"We have a lot to talk about, Rozanov." She said quietly. "Later."

The doors opened on another floor and they faced forward again.

Next chapter we! Are! Going! To! The! Cottage!

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

It turns out I'm more productive at editing when AO3 is down. Early update!

Shane rearranged the pillows on his couch for the fifth time that morning. He re-folded the blanket and laid it over the back and then he checked the refrigerator. He had some Diet Coke, buns, hamburger meat and cheese alongside his fruit and natural peanut butter. The vodka was in the freezer. He had already run 4 miles on the treadmill that morning and done a light leg and shoulder workout recommended by his physical therapist.

The idea that Ilya would be here! In his home! Made his heart race and he took a quick breath before he checked his watch again. Ilya would be here in about 5 hours. They had agreed that he could stop by the cottage and they would catch up, then he would check into his hotel and come back tomorrow to start negotiating some of his asks for custody that they would take back to their lawyers. His parents would get back tonight and he told them he would call them after Ilya left to touch base and prepare for tomorrow.

He paced around the cottage again. 5 hours. It seemed like an eternity and he thought about driving into town again to get more food. What if Ilya didn't like hamburgers? He exhaled. This was going to be fine. He didn't need anything else.

As if sensing his anxiety, the baby kicked again. The faint taps and nudges had graduated to all out movement over the past week and he smiled as he felt her.

"That's right kid, you're going to meet your other dad today." He said shakily.

He couldn't do this. He couldn't sit inside for 5 more hours. He could go for a swim- but what if he lost track of time and he wasn't here when Ilya arrived or he was in the shower. His face heated at the thought. That was a bad idea.

But he could go outside. He changed into a sunshirt and put on mineral sunscreen and brought a hockey book. This would take his mind off things.

He pulled a chair onto the shade and leaned back. He would just read for a few minutes. It would fine. After a few pages, he realized he had re-read the same paragraph several times and he blinked sleepily. Even in the shade, it was a warm day. He closed the book and put it on the arm of the chair. He would just shut his eyes for a minute. He yawned. There was time for a quick nap.

Ilya drummed the steering wheel as he drove. He had found an earlier flight out of Vegas. While he hadn't interacted anymore with the Hollanders, Yuna's words echoed in his head.

"We have a lot to talk about."

He still felt a prickle in his spine at those words. Was this trip a waste? Were they not planning on negotiating?

Not a waste. He reminded himself. He would see Shane. This was he and Shane's baby not Yuna's.

He debated stopping at the motel on the way in and then drove past the exit. He would check in later. He had to admit to himself, he wanted to see Shane too badly.

He continued through increasingly remote roads until he finally came to the long drive up to the cottage. Even though he had seen it on TV, he was surprised by the scale. He sat in the car for a minute and then wiped his sweating hands on his shorts, then deciding that he was not going to get less anxious, got out of the car.

He walked up the steps to the front door and then had no idea what to do. Should he knock? Should he go right in? He finally knocked. His heart was pounding in his chest and he took a deep breath. There was no sound from inside the house. He tried again. He had to take a deep breath and his hands were sweating again. Still nothing. He waited for another 5 minutes.

He had never thought about this. He had imagined being angrily sent back to Boston, he had imagined having this leaked to the press, being fired, losing his work visa. But he had never thought that Shane wouldn't be here.

Wait. he told himself. You are early. He might have gone to the store, might be out.

His gaze slid to the side and he saw a chair pulled under a tree in the shade about 50 yards away. Shane was asleep with a book beside him.

Ilya felt dizzy with relief. So he wasn't avoiding him. He wondered if he should leave and come back, but curiosity won out and he tried to walk as quietly as he could over to Shane.

His hair was longer than Ilya had ever seen it and he wore it pulled back in a headband. He was wearing a sun shirt and had traces of mineral sunscreen on his face that hadn't rubbed in all the way. He was snoring softly and there was a thin line of drool from the side of his mouth that landed on his shoulder. The small roundness of his belly was just visible under his shirt. He was beautiful.

Ilya wanted to stand there and watch him sleep and let himself feel everything that he carried in his heart. He wanted to sink to his knees and press his face where their baby was growing.

But he had let that go. And so he quietly walked back to the car, opened the door and slammed it loudly. He could see Shane startle awake at the noise. He walked up to the house again and was getting ready to knock when he heard Shane shout

"Ilya!"

He turned and Shane waved at him from his chair. He checked his watch as he stood up.

"You're early!" Was he imagining it, or was there some panic in Shane's voice?

"No need to stay in Vegas for boring parties." He tried to school his voice so he sounded calm.

"I had stuff ready for dinner. I'm not sure what to do now that you're here early. I guess I can show you around." Shane walked to the porch and stopped in front of him, just a few feet away. His face was a little fuller. He reached up and scratched his nose. His freckles were a little darker against his tan skin.

"I saw your documentary. Have already seen everything." Ilya tried to sound nonchalant but his heart hammered in his chest. He looked past Shane to the lake.

"Oh." Now he sounded a little disappointed. And for the first time in a long time, things felt....awkward. The silence drew out in between them. When he looked back at Shane, he was looking at the wood grain of the front door as if it held the secrets of the universe.

"But you can still show me around." He finally said.

"Ok. Let's go inside. I need some water first." Shane opened the door for him and before he could stop himself, he put a hand on Shane's lower back to lead him inside. Shane's face was already pinkish from the heat outdoors and he might have imagined it but he thought his flush darkened.

While it was true he had seen this before, it had a slight lived-in air. As they passed the refrigerator, Ilya saw two ultrasound photos attached to the front with magnets. The first was dated the same day as the Montreal/Boston game. The baby was smaller in this one, her entire body fit in the frame. Shane saw him looking at it.

"That was the day I found out. Well, a lot of things happened that day."

Ilya had tried so hard not to think about that day; how it had felt walking away from Shane in his hospital room.

"I'm sorry, that you were alone."

"I wasn't really. Mom and Dad have been a big help. Mom goes with me to every appointment. She's going to be there when, you know when I have the baby."

"Oh." Ilya tried to think through his next words. "Okay." He finally said dumbly. He had honestly not thought about that. But now that he had, he couldn't imagine not being there.

Shane had turned away from him, oblivious to his turmoil and filled a glass from the refrigerator. He drank quickly and Ilya watched as a droplet of water ran down his throat. He turned away, his own mouth dry.

"Let's start with the gym, I don't think they showed much of that on the documentary. I still can't believe you watched that." He reached back and pulled Ilya along with him.

An hour later, Ilya had seen the gym (“you can do your workouts here, if you want.”), the lake and the living areas of the cottage. Shane sat down to rest.

“Sorry, I pushed a little hard this morning. My back is killing me.” He said.

“Is it good for you? To keep exercising while...” Ilya had no idea and he kicked himself for not knowing more. Surely there were books about this.

“Yeah. If you exercised before, it’s ok to keep it up. We’ve been interviewing trainers to work with next year in Ottawa, after the baby comes.”

Oh no, Ottawa. Ilya thought. Farther than Montreal.

They sat for a minute and Ilya watched the wind blowing through the trees outside. He tried to imagine coming here under other circumstances. If he hadn’t broken up with Shane, they would be snuggled together on the sofa, or he would be taking him apart in one of the bedrooms he had passed. Now they sat awkwardly side by side.

“Shane, I have something for you.” He remembered the present in the trunk of the rental car. “I will be right back.”

He jogged outside and retrieved it.

When he came back inside, Shane was sitting on the sofa looking up at him expectantly. He handed over the box, wrapped with pink paper.

“Is more a present for the baby. If you don’t like I can return it.” This wasn’t true and he felt stupid. What if Shane didn’t like it?

Shane smiled down as he carefully unwrapped the box and then lifted the top.

“This is so fucking cute.” He smiled so broadly as he lifted the rabbit that his eyes almost disappeared. And then he pressed the paw and the rabbit said, “ Ya tebya lyublyu”.

“Oh.” Shane looked up at him from under his long lashes. “What does that mean?”

Ilya felt strangely shy as he answered “It means ‘I love you.’”

“Oh.” Shane blinked rapidly. “That’s nice.”

“So she can hear me when I am away.” Ilya wished he could tell Shane how precious they were to him, both of them.

“Sometimes it feels hard to be happy about this.” Shane said slowly as he absentminded rubbed the rabbit ears. “Like, we were a secret and now this is a secret and I’m not sure when it’s going to be ok. I want to be excited. Ok, I’m excited about this sometimes but mostly I’m scared.”

“What are you afraid of?” Ilya asked, feeling as though this moment where Shane opened up to him was so fragile it could break at any moment.

“Like that I won’t be able to go back to hockey. And I won’t be able to take care of her. Like I can hire a nanny and my parents will help-“

“I will help, Shane. As much as I can.” Ilya lifted his chin with his finger. “You are not alone. I can’t wait to meet her.”

Shane’s dark eyes looked back at him. He took a deep breath and leaned forward and Ilya realized his hand was still cupping Shane’s face. He felt like he was falling towards him and then-

-the front door opened.

“Shane?” Yuna called as she set her purse on the counter. “Who’s the other car? We got an earlier flight so we could get here before-“

She looked and saw them together on the sofa. Oh.

Before Rozanov gets here. He could finish her sentence in his mind.

Shane stood up awkwardly, adjusting his shorts as he did so. Ilya stood behind him.

“Mom.” He said and then stopped. “This is Ilya Rozanov.”

Yuna stood in the kitchen holding her keys. David walked in behind her and startled as he saw Ilya.

“It looks like we weren’t the only ones who wanted to get here early.” He chuckled.

“Hello.” Ilya said. He didn’t know what to do with his hands and clasped them in front of him.

“Hello Ilya. It’s good to see you again.” Yuna seemed slightly dazed.

The four of them stood looking amongst themselves.

“Would you like to stay for dinner?” Shane asked. “I got stuff to make burgers.”

Yuna’s eyebrows raised. “You’re cooking? I don’t think I’ve seen you use that grill once.”

Shane blushed and ducked his head. “Well, it can’t be that hard.”

David looked between the two of them and clapped his hands “I’m starving, how about we get started?” It was the middle of the afternoon but no one said anything.

He helped Shane pull out the meat and buns. He didn’t have chips, which Ilya honestly should have expected. And he didn’t have beer.

And then, because the moment could not get any worse, Shane couldn’t light the grill. David stood behind him and watched. Shane muttered, “I’ve got this Dad.”

They watched him struggle, his face getting redder. Ilya felt like he was going to crawl out of his skin. He could tell Yuna was looking at him, and he wasn't totally sure he was measuring up. Then David opened up the front of the grill and checked the gas canister.

"Well here's your problem." He said, not unkindly as he stood up. "This expired last year. It's totally empty now."

"Oh." Shane sounded defeated.

"Hey, it's no big deal. They sell these at the gas station. Ilya and I can just run down there and grab another one, can't we?" His clear blue eyes met Ilya's and while they were a different color, the stern, serious gaze was familiar.

"Yes, of course." He swallowed with a click. "We'll be back before you know it."

"Great." David said with a smile. "I'll drive."

Chapter 8

Ilya sat in the passenger seat and stared resolutely out the windshield. David sat next to him in the driver's seat and hummed slightly off-tune as he drove with one arm propped on the open window.

He had no idea what to say. *I'm sorry that I got your son pregnant. I did not know such a thing was possible. I didn't know when I broke up with him. I would have never wanted to do that to him.*

He was certain that David was going to drive him to some remote location and strand him there. God, what must he think of him.

David lightly cleared his throat.

"My name is David. I'm Shane's father." Ilya was glad that he introduced himself but God, how did he get Shane pregnant when he didn't even know his father's name?

"I'm Ilya Rozanov." He said, perhaps unnecessarily.

David laughed.

"Oh believe me, I know."

There was a long silence then, punctuated only by the occasional pothole in the rural road.

"Shane was really excited about seeing you." David finally said, still looking straight ahead.

"He said that?" Ilya said, disbelieving.

David laughed. "You know he didn't." His voice softened. "But I saw him looking up probably a dozen hamburger recipes. Hamburgers! And he had a very specific timeline for today. Which both of us screwed up."

Ilya relaxed slightly.

"He seemed nervous when I showed up early."

"Did you bring that rabbit for him?" David asked. Ilya felt like he was going to choke. He shouldn't have brought it. It was dumb. It was a stupid present. He just nodded.

"It seems like you're excited about seeing him as well?" He continued.

"Yes." It was the only word he could get out. So not only would Shane's father think he was a giant asshole, now he would think he was stupid as well.

David was quiet as he pulled into a parking space at the gas station. When Ilya started to get out, he put a hand on his arm.

“Just a minute.” David closed his eyes briefly. “Shane didn’t tell me exactly what happened between you two.”

Thank God Ilya thought.

“But you mean a lot to him, somehow. I mean, we thought all those years you guys hated each other and you’ve been with a lot of other people-“ he waved a hand. “Anyways, that part doesn’t matter. Before you know it, that baby is going to be here and she’s going to need both of you.”

Ilya sat with that for a moment. He tried to think of how to say what he felt.

“There is no one right now. This is the most important thing for me right now.” He finally said.

“Well then it seems like you need to figure some things out.”

David got out of the car and was walking into the gas station with the empty propane tank before he could respond. He had to run a few steps to catch up.

While he had it filled, Ilya wandered to the back of the store. He found a case of beer and a 6-pack of ginger ale and carried both to the front. David looked at him as he placed them at the cash register.

“For us and for Shane. It’s his favorite.” He felt himself blush slightly and pretended he didn’t see David hide a smile behind his hand.

“You think you can carry all of this back to the car?”

He needed both hands but would have died before he asked for help.

The ride back was quiet and they were getting ready to turn into the drive to the cottage when David said: “You seem like you want this. But things are going to get hard. Things with kids are hard. And it’s complicated with you and Shane and hockey.” He turned the car off and they sat in the middle of the tunnel of trees that led to Shane’s home. “What do your parents think about this?”

“Both of my parents are dead.” Ilya said, not sure where this was going.

David nodded, a muscle in his jaw worked.

“Shane is our only son and now you’re part of our family, whether we like it or not.” The corner of his mouth quirked up. “Let us know when you need help.”

Ilya had to swallow and he blinked rapidly.

“Ok.” He said thickly.

David let out a huge sigh that ended on a shaky laugh. “This is a conversation I never imagined I would have with Ilya Rozanov.”

“Yes, all of this was a surprise.” Ilya shook his head.

David started the car again and drove down the lane towards the cottage.

“I’m not good with words, not like Yuna, but I’m serious. I hope you can agree on some things. We want to help however we can.” He finished a little awkwardly.

Ilya nodded and briefly looked at David. He thought about how different David was from his father. If he had told his father that he was bisexual, had sex with another man and was having a baby with them, well, he couldn’t even imagine his reaction but just thinking of it sent a low coil of dread in his stomach.

But he is not here anymore. He thought as he tried to keep his breathing steady.

David kept driving but glanced at him several times. He didn’t say anything else as the cottage came into view.

Shane watched his father and Ilya drive off and went back inside. Yuna has gone ahead of him and she picked up the rabbit that he had left on the sofa.

“Did he bring this?” She turned it over.

“Yeah. It’s really sweet.”

She looked up at him and then reached out and rubbed something into his cheek.

“You had some sunscreen there.”

Oh no, that had been there the entire time Ilya had been here. Fuck.

“How are you doing?” Yuna asked, studying him.

Shane stood for a minute, trying to process everything. He’d had a plan for today. Ilya would come over, he would cook dinner. It would be good to see him again, they would talk. It would be fun, not awkward. Instead, he had shown up early, it felt like there was a wall between them. Although, he reflected, they had never done much talking before and it had usually revolved around hockey.

“It hasn’t been like I thought it would.” He was embarrassed at how his voice cracked.

“How so?” Yuna tilted her head. Shane blushed.

“It’s been kind of weird and awkward. Like, I don’t know where his head is. I don’t know how he feels about this. How he feels about me.”

“You guys have been texting some. Did that never come up?”

“No, mom. That’s weird.”

“Sweetie.” Yuna reached out for him and he let her rub his shoulder. “You guys are going to be parents together. It feels weird because it is.”

“Mom!”

“Let me explain.” She rubbed small circles on his good shoulder. “You guys didn’t plan this and you’re really young. That wasn’t a dig against him.”

He sagged slightly.

“It’s never been awkward like this.”

“Well, what do you want to know? Think about it.”

Shane sighed, but Yuna was right. It was weird. He had never thought about this, had no idea how to talk about being a dad with Ilya Rozanov, although the thought of him holding their baby wrapped in the pink blanket on the sofa did something to him.

“And what’s important to you? If you wanted, you would never have to see him again.”

Shane felt like he had been stabbed at that thought.

“But-“ Yuna continued. “If you’re going to be in each other’s lives, you need to figure out what that means. Like are you together-“

“Mom!” Shane’s cheeks were flaming red.

She lifted her hands. “I’m just saying.”

He was saved by the sound of his Dad’s car pulled into the driveway. David got out first and then Ilya, who went to the trunk and grabbed the gas tank, some beer and- Shane squinted- ginger ale? *Oh.*

He handed the propane tank to David who went around the house and started to put it in the grill. Ilya came inside and put the beer down before he put the ginger ale in the fridge. He took one out and handed it to Shane.

“Here.” He was a little out of breath and there were fine beads of sweat along his hairline. “Is already cold. Your Dad and I will get grill started. Go sit down and rest while it heats up.”

Yuna raised her eyebrows and looked at him. Shane flushed an even deeper shade of red.

“You can’t tell me what to do.” He mumbled under his breath. But, and he would die before he told anyone, he kind of liked Ilya fussing over him.

He sat on the sofa where he had a view of the grill outside and watched his Dad and Ilya hook up the propane tank and start the flames. Dad said something and Ilya laughed at it and

he could tell that Ilya made some smart ass remark back from the way his father smiled. It felt really good.

Even later, after Shane finished making dinner and they sat outside as the sun went down, he let himself pretend that Ilya hadn't broken up with him. That he was just sitting with his parents and his boyfriend (boyfriend?!) having a nice, normal dinner. The conversation had been relatively tame and to no one's surprise they had talked about hockey. Ilya had been on his best behavior and was respectful and almost timid towards his parents.

"Are you finished?" Ilya pointed at his plate.

"Yeah," he said guiltily, feeling called out while daydreaming.

Ilya took their plates inside. While he was gone, David looked at him over his beer.

"He's trying very hard. I hope things go well tomorrow."

"Ok Dad." He said quickly as he saw Shane come back outside with the throw from his couch.

"It's getting a little cold, yeah?" He said as he held it out to Shane.

Shane looked down and took the blanket from him. It was a little chilly. He wrapped himself up and didn't miss the look his parents gave each other.

Ilya yawned as he sat back down.

"You probably need to go check into your motel." Yuna said as she stood up and started gathering the empty glasses.

"Probably." He yawned again. He moved to collect some of the silverware.

"We'll take care of that." Yuna said.

Ilya stood awkwardly. It was completely dark now and Shane could only see his features as they were illuminated from the lights inside his cottage. He swallowed and nodded at Shane.

"I will see you tomorrow, ok? I'll be here what time? Around 10?"

"That sounds good." Shane stood up, still wrapped in the blanket. He waved from under the blanket and Ilya nodded his head.

"Goodnight Yuna and David, it was good to see you again."

"Yes." David said, "It was. Have a safe drive." Ilya turned around to go and Shane had the ridiculous urge to tell him to stay- he really had plenty of room. But if he spent the night, he would only be able to think about him down the hall and there would be nothing keeping them apart and-

He watched Ilya get in his rental car, turn around and then drive away, his taillights soon vanishing into the trees.

“We should get going, too.” David said. He hugged Shane. “Let us know if you need anything tomorrow. We’ll wait to hear from you.”

Yuna walked outside after she finished putting away the dishes and kissed his forehead and then she followed her husband out.

Shane watched them leave and then went inside. He picked up the rabbit and took it to his room and laid it on the pillow next to his.

Ilya didn’t remember much from the drive to his hotel. He kept replaying the dinner in his mind. It had been relaxing, and he had pretended for a minute that he was with his boyfriend, at his ridiculous lake house, having a regular dinner with his family. It satisfied him on some very deep level and he thought that David, at least, was ok with him.

Later, after he had his room key and was settling down into the sheets he thought about how Shane had looked sitting there in the evening light. He was relaxed with his parents, and softer.

He had been a bundle of excitement and nerves thinking about seeing Shane and he really hadn’t known how it would go. Shane seemed uncomfortable with him- he couldn’t blame him for that- and only relaxed once his parents were there.

He shifted on the mattress. Maybe it would have been better to work this out between lawyers. Not make Shane put up with him. He was already doing so much.

Ilya wanted so badly to take care of him. He wanted to make sure he was eating enough and staying healthy. Even now, he still remembered how he looked crumpled on the ice. He had been pregnant then and they hadn’t even known and when he had been in the hospital room, looking up at him with sadness and confusion and-

He had nothing to offer Shane. He was tied to Boston for his visa and he had no business pretending that he could be anything else. But it scared him how badly he wanted it. To come home to Shane and their baby every day like they were a real family. Watch her grow up, hear her call him “Papa”.

He turned over on his side and stared miserably at the wall. He tried to imagine what kind of future he could have- occasional weekends, his daughter growing up and eventually telling Shane she didn’t want to keep going to America anymore to see her other dad. It was too much of a hassle.

What did he know about being a father anyways? He felt his throat grow tight as he played with his mother’s crucifix.

He thought back to the drive to the gas station with David. He had never met Ilya and only knew him as Shane's arch rival. But he was willing to give him a chance. As he lay in a creaky hotel bed, across the world from the country he had once called home, he realized that he wanted to be that person- someone who would be a good father to his daughter and support Shane instead of being a burden.

He wiped the tears that had started to escape from his eyes. Before he had left Boston, he had met with the lawyer Svetlana had recommended. He was an intensely practical man who shook his head at Ilya's plan for shared custody.

"It is too far. He will be the custodial parent and you will have the ability to take her on summers and any extended time you have off during the season. You may be able to bargain for some weekend time and to have right of first refusal for times when Shane will also be away. But your schedule is not any better" He had leaned back and looked over his glasses at Ilya.

"You can't have more time if you stay in Boston. It's just too far. When we talk about shared custody, it's for parents in the same state or province."

Ilya had made a noise in his throat- what was the fucking point of talking to this man if he couldn't figure out something else.

"You need to decide what is more important to you- your hockey career or being a present father. I have plenty of clients who only see their children over the summer."

That wasn't for him. He knew it. And now he was facing the really terrifying prospect of leaving the team that had signed him, that he had won a Stanley Cup for, for an unknown.

He swallowed and turned over to stare at the ceiling. He wanted to do the right thing. But he didn't know what it was- to leave Shane alone or try to be closer? Sleep didn't come easily that night.

Chapter 9

Ilya drove back to the cottage the next morning. His eyes were gritty and he felt dull and washed out. He had bought a cup of coffee on the way out of town and was holding it like a lifeline. Still, his heart lifted when he turned onto the road to the cottage. He would get to see Shane again today.

As he pulled up, Shane came out the front door. He had obviously been waiting for him. Today, he wore a white linen button down that looked a size larger than what he normally wore. His hair wasn't pulled back and his longer bangs flipped in his eyes. It was a little wavy, which Ilya had never realized because he had always kept it cut so short.

"Hey!" He called as he watched Ilya get out of the car. "I wasn't sure if you'd had breakfast so I made extra!"

Ilya's stomach growled.

"What is it? I remember all those diets you have done."

Shane huffed a small laugh. "Just eggs and fruit salad. Nothing crazy."

He walked in and found a plate sitting at the table. The eggs were steaming and the fruit was cold. Shane had just made this. He had known he would come and expected him to be right on time.

"Coffee?" Shane asked as he got out two mugs.

"Yes please." He said around a mouthful of scrambled eggs. They were delicious.

As Shane handed him a cup of coffee and then sat with him at the table he was struck again by the domesticity of it all.

This isn't yours. a voice in his head said.

Shane was already looking at him when he glanced across the table.

"So you have been up for hours already?" He asked.

"Yeah. I already did my workout." Shane said, a little smugly. He looked down at the table for a moment and then up at Ilya. His eyes were so earnest that he was taken aback. "So, yesterday was kind of awkward. It wasn't just me, right?"

"No, not just you." Ilya felt some of the knot that had been in his stomach all morning unclench.

“I wasn’t expecting you so soon and then having my parents show up....” Shane folded his arms and looked over Ilya’s shoulder instead of his face. “It was a lot.”

“Your Dad is very nice.” Ilya said.

“He is.” Shane said. “He likes you. I can tell.”

Ilya looked down again at his plate, something warm in his chest. He hadn’t spent much time thinking about how Shane was part of a family. A family that treasured him. He had never thought that it would be important to him that Shane’s parents liked him. Then again, he had never thought that Shane’s parents would know about him, and now here he was, becoming part of that family...in some way.

“He’s like you. A little boring.” He meant to say calm, thoughtful, kind, and those skated a little too close to another truth that he was trying to avoid.

Shane rolled his eyes at him but it was fond. They lapsed into silence. It was comfortable but there was an edge and Ilya couldn’t forget that they were supposed to...talk about things today. It would be so easy to ignore that and pretend that this was a normal vacation.

“So should we just jump right in? Start talking about how we are going to split time?” Shane said, echoing his own thoughts.

Ilya’s head spun. But right, that was the whole reason he was here.

Shane stood up and started pacing around his living room.

“I went over this again with Mom and I don’t know how you’re going to have more time in Boston with the baby- like you’re going to be playing so much and I could be there but then that takes me away for training for next season and-“ Shane went on. He had obviously spent a lot of time thinking about this.

“Shane, Shane.” Ilya said softly. “I know.”

“-and then if I come to you, then I would be on a short-term visa and I would have to find a workout facility with ice and trainer and childcare in Boston, and-“

So he had thought about this. How Ilya could have more time. Wait. He had thought about coming to Boston?

“Shane.” Ilya reached across the table where Shane had finished a lap and put his hand on Ilya’s shoulder. “Stop. I know. It would not work.”

“-and we would have to fly back every- oh- ” Shane blinked. “You know what?”

“It would not work.” Ilya said sadly. “For me to split custody with you and stay in Boston. I wasn’t thinking when I asked that. I was...” He tried to think of the English expression.

“Coming to terms with everything.”

“Oh.” Shane said again, blinking at him.

“I talked to a family lawyer in Boston. He told me what you were too nice to, which is that I was being stupid.” He swallowed hard.

“Oh...” Shane seemed deflated and he sat down on his sofa. He had obviously been working up to this conversation.

“You were thinking about coming to Boston?” Ilya asked, taken aback.

Shane looked away. “Things aren’t as concrete with Montreal as I would like.”

Ilya couldn’t speak for a minute, he was so stunned. “What the fuck? You took their shitty team and won two Stanley Cups.”

“They’re not shitty.” Shane deflected.

“Of course now they are not shitty, you are their captain. After you were gone they didn’t make it through one round of the playoffs. So what do you mean they might not want you back?” His voice had gotten louder without realizing.

Shane slumped to one side. “After I found out I was pregnant, Mom met with the coaches and GM without me. I wasn’t in a good place.” Ilya felt like he had been stabbed and he couldn’t only imagine how Shane must have felt.

“They want me to basically re-try for a spot on the team after the baby comes and if I can’t perform at that level then they will put me on waivers.”

“That is bullshit!” Ilya exploded. “You are their CAPTAIN.”

“Mom and Dad went to the ESPYs to stay involved and try to get a feel what people are saying about me.” Shane continued, looking miserable now. “We’re still trying to figure out the situation. Like, people are sympathetic now that they think I’m out for an injury but having a baby is totally different.”

“Are you going to go public with this? How Montreal is fucking you?” Ilya was furious, he couldn’t understand why Shane didn’t feel the same way.

Shane pulled a pillow over his midsection and hugged it. Ilya wondered if the gesture was intentional.

“They would fight back- it’s pretty bad getting pregnant in the middle of the season. Even though I didn’t even know...it usually runs in families.”

“You did nothing wrong, Shane.” Ilya felt a deep shame welling inside of him. Shane had faced all the consequences of this alone. “I am just as much at fault.”

“But no one has to know about you! You could keep living your life, playing hockey.”

“No I can’t! This changed everything!”

“Does it?” Shane frowned a little.

“YES!” Ilya shouted, hurt that Shane would think so little of him. “I cannot just live my life, playing hockey. We are having a baby! This will change things for both of us.” Shane’s eyes slid away, and Ilya had a sudden suspicion, “Is that what you wish you could do? Do you wish you didn’t have to worry about this?”

“THAT’S NOT FAIR.” Shane finally erupted at him. “Fuck you, I had to deal with a concussion and a broken collarbone and a baby, alone and you were off with a gorgeous woman and playing like shit in the playoffs.”

“Do not throw this in my face.” Ilya couldn’t with this. “I didn’t know. You didn’t tell me.”

“Because you broke up with me.”

“But I didn’t know!”

“You knew I had a concussion and a fucking broken collarbone and you STILL! STILL! Ended things. You couldn’t fucking wait.”

This was the ugly truth under all of his fantasies of having Ilya as his boyfriend; the uneasiness under dinner last night. He felt a rictus of embarrassment for all the times he thought of them together; of how he imagined Ilya would want to be his boyfriend. Under all of it was this: even if Ilya hadn’t known he was pregnant, he still kicked him when he was down. It was shameful, and Ilya must think he would crawl back. Sometimes he wanted to just crawl back.

“Shane...” Ilya began.

“Why are you here? What are you doing Ilya?” He could feel his eyes prickling with tears. “You didn’t need to come here for this.”

Ilya looked at him. For once, his face was still and unguarded. He wasn’t looking at him with revulsion; he looked devastated.

“I...” Shane had noticed over the years they had known each other that when Ilya was overwhelmed, it took him longer to find his words.

“I...” He started again and shut his eyes. Shane leaned forward.

“I should go.”

“What?”

Ilya leaned back, avoiding eye contact.

“I have upset you. I am sorry.” He swallowed.

Shane didn’t know what to do. He was torn- on one hand he was furious at Ilya that he could bring up hockey and throw this in his face. His life hadn’t been upended. He hadn’t had to deal with feeling tired and sick and *gaining weight*, and not knowing if his career- the thing

he had been working for his entire life, would be waiting for him when he was finished. But what he said wasn't true- he never would wish this baby away. He wanted this part of himself and Ilya even though-God this was so hard.

"Don't go." He finally said.

Ilya stood up and turned to face the windows, his back to Shane. His voice, when he spoke was rough.

"I didn't break up with you because I wanted to go out and party, and I wasn't with Svetlana like that. She is a friend, we are casual, like I told you." He could barely remember the conversation when Shane had told him he was pregnant but was sure they had covered that, right?

Shane waited, feeling like they were on the brink of something.

"Not like you." Ilya audibly swallowed and the lines of his back grew more tense. "Things are not casual with you. I cannot be casual with you."

Ilya looked up at him. His face was so serious and so earnest.

"My father died a few months ago." Shane made a small noise in the back of his throat. "When I went back for his funeral, I realized I could not go back there. There is nothing for me. But...if I don't want to go back to Russia I have to keep playing hockey. Is the only way I can stay in North America. I can't be citizen yet. It will take a few more years. Unless I get married."

Shane was looking at him fiercely now.

"Do you want to get married?"

"It would not be for love. Just to stay here more easily."

There were tears shining in Shane's eyes now. *For what?* he wondered.

"But then you would still be tied to the US." Shane said thickly.

"Yes, not ideal." Ilya said, resting his chin in his hands.

"And Svetlana is a citizen, right?" The look in Shane's eyes intensified.

"Yes, she is a citizen now. She came over sooner." Ilya laughed a little. "Are you jealous of her?"

"No!" Shane huffed.

"But Shane, we can't be anything. If I don't play hockey, I can't stay here. I have workshop in July- because I really played like shit at the end of the season. I also need to get back into..." he paused for a moment while he searched for the phrase "...good graces."

Shane felt dizzy. What did this have to do with anything?

“Ilya, what are you saying?”

“I broke up with you...” he took a deep breath. “We were going too far- it wasn’t casual anymore.”

Shane felt like he had been punched.

“You broke up with me because it was getting too serious?”

Ilya nodded. His own eyes suspiciously bright. He swiped a hand under his nose.

“This is pretty fucking serious, Ilya.” He gestured to his stomach.

“I know, Shane. I know.” He said softly.

Ilya felt naked.

“What would you want. If you could have anything?” Shane asked

He looked at Ilya, the look on his face was the same as when he was tearing across the ice; focused and intense.

“I want to live close enough that I could see her. Not just during the summer.” He had decided this last night, laying on his back staring up at the ceiling of a no-name motel in the middle of rural Ontario. There were some things that were important to him. They weren’t the things that most people thought: like being rich or having flashy cars or girlfriends. Not being his father; having a family. These were the things that were important to him.

Even if his family was him and a daughter and a man he loved and his parents and he orbited them like a distant moon.

“I have a year left on my contract.” He finally said. “After that, I will be a free agent. Maybe I could play for a Canadian team.”

“Yeah.” Shane said, “Maybe.”

The rest of the morning was quiet, almost as if they had run out of things to say.

Ilya felt completely wrung out. He was relieved when Shane asked him if he wanted to go swimming “as a way to get a workout in.” He borrowed a pair of trunks, which were slightly too tight. Shane stayed on the dock and watched him swim out into the lake. He wanted to keep swimming until he could make sense of everything but instead he swam to the middle of the lake, where Shane was just a small dot on the dock and lay on his back, facing the sky. It felt like a blue fishbowl above him and he wanted to disappear into its depths. He could feel his face start to sunburn.

He couldn't think about their situation anymore- no matter how often he turned it over in his head, there were no good solutions. He stayed in the US and barely saw his daughter or he took a chance and moved here. The closest team was in Ottawa and that was even assuming Shane stayed with Montreal. After a while, he started to get cold, even in the summer sun and he made his way back.

When he got closer to the house, he could see Shane sitting at the edge of the dock. He was leaning forward and had one hand over the small bulge of his belly.

"Did you miss me?" Ilya asked from the water.

Shane huffed in annoyance but his eyes were soft.

"Did you mean what you said, when you ended things with me because you couldn't be casual?" He asked quietly.

Ilya looked up at him, slightly out of breath. He didn't have anything else to lose.

"Yes, I meant every word."

"Ok."

"So what?"

"It wasn't casual for me Ilya. It hadn't been casual for a long time." His eyes were dark and fathomless and Ilya wanted to lean forward and drown in them. Instead he climbed up the ladder on the side of the dock. Shane wordlessly handed him a towel.

"Ok." He said, but it wasn't really.

He dried off and then draped the towel over his shoulders and sat next to Shane. They watched the sun climb into the sky.

Shane was quiet next to him and then he took one of his hands and slid it over his belly. It was warm and a little firm and he felt something press against his palm.

"Oh my god." He breathed.

Shane looked at him with a small smile.

He leaned over and rested his head on Shane's shoulder. Their daughter rolled again under his hand. He could have stayed there for hours; forever. He could have pulled Shane into his lap and held his face and kissed him. But what was between them was too fragile for words and so he stayed there, in this moment he never thought he would have and tried to preserve it like an insect in amber for the uncertain days ahead.

In his heart, he said *I love you*, and he wasn't sure who he was saying it to.

Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone who has read and left kudos and commented! Also sorry for the late update!

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

Shane could have sat on the dock together for the rest of the day. Ilya's huge hand was so warm where it rested on his stomach and the weight of his head was perfect on his shoulder.

If only we could have this forever. he thought. His mind swirled- how *could* they have this, how could they be anything other than what they had been?

Yuna had tried to get him to announce the pregnancy- *You don't have to say anything about the other father*, she said. And that was almost worse. Like, not only was he having a baby 'out of wedlock' (ew, his brain supplied), but he was single? He could imagine kids tearing his poster off their walls. I mean, this would have weirded him out as a kid. What kind of a role model was he now?

He shifted and made a low noise of distress.

"Are you ok?" Ilya asked, drawing back to look at him.

Shane couldn't meet his eyes.

"Yeah."

They spent the rest of the day lounging in the living room. They had never had time together without a deadline, another game, another flight and Shane drank it up greedily. He looked up from his book to see the way the sunlight slanted across Ilya's face, illuminating his curls and cheekbones as if he was a sculpture.

Ilya glanced up from his phone and caught him staring. He glanced down quickly and felt his cheeks turn bright red. Out of the corner of his eye, he could see Ilya stifle a smile.

But when he finally gathered the courage to look up a minute later, Ilya was still looking at him with a very soft look on his face.

"I think your boring is contagious."

Shane huffed at him and went back to his book. Ilya swung his legs onto the sofa and stretched out until they were almost touching his thigh. Shane longed to drop his hand to feel the curve of his ankle, the sloping arch of his foot and the tendons that ran along the top but instead steeled himself and got up to get two glasses of water.

When he returned, Ilya had curled his legs back.

They sat until Shane's stomach growled again. Ilya put his phone down and smiled at him.

"I'll cook tonight."

"What? You're my guest."

He waved a hand as he got up. "I like cooking for you. Don't I get what I ask for? Is that not a guest privilege?"

Shane suppressed a surge of panic. He didn't have much in his fridge.

Ilya opened it and hummed slightly off key as he rifled through the contents. Shane heard him pulling out containers and peeked over the edge of the sofa.

"It's a surprise!" Ilya brandished a knife at him (when had he started cutting?) "Go outside and I will get you when it's done."

He shook his head and took his book and glass of water outside and sat in one of the chairs facing the lake.

He was still freaking out a little about how easily Ilya fit into his life. How badly he wanted this- summers together at his cottage, coming home to Ilya after his games. *Fuck. He was so fucked.*

After a few minutes of his quiet panic attack, Ilya opened the door.

"Dinner is ready!" He called out. Shane got up, book and water both still untouched. Ilya must have seen something on his face because he instantly grew serious.

"Hey, hey, are you ok?"

Shane nodded.

"If it's too much I can go."

He shook his head. No, he didn't want that.

"What is wrong?"

Shane couldn't answer because he didn't exactly know. Well, he sort of did. He wanted something he couldn't have. He wanted to be with Ilya. He thought of what he had said earlier, that he couldn't be casual about Shane. He wondered what would have happened if he

had called him from the hospital; had let him know about the baby then. If he would have come back right away. He probably would have.

“Hey.” Ilya said again softly and brushed a thumb under his eye. Shane hadn’t realized that he had started crying. He stepped forward and slowly, to give Shane time to say no, folded him into a hug. Shane folded himself against him and pressed his face into his neck. He could feel the hard planes of Ilya’s chest against him and where his belly pressed into Ilya.

“Hey.” Ilya said again quietly and Shane could feel the vibration of his voice against him. “This scary for me, too.”

Shane couldn’t speak but held him more tightly. It was. It was so fucking scary.

Ilya held him and rocked slowly back and forth. Shane could feel his thudding heartbeat start to slow. After a minute, he drew back and lifted Shane’s chin with his hand until they were looking each other in the eyes.

“Are you ok?” Ilya murmured. Shane nodded and let himself be led inside.

On the counter were two plates and a large bowl of salad.

“You want to eat in front of TV?” Ilya asked as he started serving.

Shane nodded.

Ilya served them and carried their plates over and fluffed a cushion next to him. They ate next to each other quietly as a baseball game played in the background.

As they finished, Ilya took their plates as he had the night before. Shane stated to get up.

“No, I will clean up. Keep watching the game.”

“But you cooked.” Shane finally protested.

“Will take me 5 minutes- more if you complain about it.”

Shane settled back into the couch and listed to Ilya wash dishes in the background. As promised, it took him 5 minutes and Shane watched as he dried his hands with a dish towel and then hung it to dry on the stove.

“Ilya,” He said, surprising himself. *Would you want to be together? If we could?* “Can you come sit by me?”

And so Ilya sat next to him and draped his arm over his shoulder. The TV was still on but neither of them were watching the game. They sat and as the shadows lengthened across the room, Shane’s eyes started to feel heavy. He leaned into Ilya and before he knew it, he fell asleep.

When he awoke, the house was dark and he was alone. He sat up abruptly, and as he did so, a blanket fell off him.

He reached for his phone, squinting in the darkness. There was a text from Ilya with photo of him, with his head leaned back against the back of the sofa and mouth open all the way.

“I went back to the hotel. Let me know if you want me to come back tomorrow.”

He sat back against the sofa in his dark house and checked the time. It was 11:09pm.

He called his mother and despite the late hour, she picked up on the first ring.

“Hi sweetie, how did things go?” She sounded worried and a little stressed.

“Mom...” his voice came out more watery than he anticipated. “I don’t know....I don’t know what to do.”

Ilya stood in the parking lot in front of his hotel. He was almost done with his cigarette and then he would go inside. He let out a deep breath, remembering the weight of Shane’s head against his shoulder.

He had wanted more than anything to stay there all night and pull Shane down with him and just lay with him on the sofa. Not even to do anything but just lay with him. But instead he had covered him up with a blanket and left. He hadn’t been able to stop himself from dropping a chaste kiss to Shane’s forehead before he left and he pressed his hand to his lips remembering the feel of him after so many months.

He ground the cigarette against the side of the metal trashcan and threw the filter away and walked inside where his bed was cold and there was too much space. He wondered if Shane would want him to come back. What he should do if he didn’t. He had been sound asleep when he left. He might not even hear back until the morning.

Just as he was drifting off to sleep, he heard his phone buzz.

“Anytime after 9”

He smiled and texted back: “yes. I’m making lunch for you but going to grocery store before because even I can only do so much with protein powder. will let you know when I’m on the way.”

Over the next several days they fell into a routine. Ilya would come over in the morning, they would work out together. They would shower separately and then Ilya would make him lunch. The first day it had happened, Shane had jerked off furiously in the shower, his cheeks flaming as he thought about Ilya down the hall, water running down his face and his chest and his- He bit his hand as he came to avoid making any noise. Later, he saw Ilya’s eyes track the mark on his palm but he didn’t say anything.

In the afternoon, Ilya would go swimming while he watched or they would walk around the lake or play video games. Shane drank their time in together greedily, although nothing

progressed physically. They would hug and sit beside each other. He would let Ilya feel the baby when she kicked. One day, Ilya had brushed a stray hair off his face and then quickly drawn his hand back as if he had overstepped. But they didn't move beyond that. But they had never had this before, this stretch of time to just be together.

When they were sitting together, Shane spent time researching strollers and cribs and carseats. He hadn't bought anything yet. In the back of his mind, he was afraid that something would happen, but he knew that he was delaying this because that made it more real.

They avoided talking about what would happen next; aware that it would change this strange, liminal space that they were in. Shane knew this couldn't last forever. Ilya would leave. He would have to return to Montreal. He had a doctor's appointment while Ilya was in Texas for his clinic. And that was getting closer every day. And then, and then....

And he didn't know what came next. This is what was gradually keeping him up at night. Things would change after the summer. His growing belly reminded him of that. But when he tried to figure out what was next for them, he just...couldn't.

He talked to his parents almost every night. He knew they wanted to step in and figure this out for him but they gave him space.

"He's not exactly what we expected." Yuna said during one of their conversations.

"Oh really? Like he's not a total asshole?" Shane replied.

"No, he actually sounds very sweet."

One evening after dinner, Shane made a fire and they sat in front of it. He had to lean back slightly and Ilya pulled him against his side to support him.

"I have to leave, in a few days." He said quietly. Looking ahead at the fire. "There are some things to do in Boston before I go to Texas. I have been here longer than I thought."

Shane felt a deep stab of dread. His mouth was dry and suddenly it was here. He always knew this summer would end. But it was here already.

"Oh." He finally said.

"I wish I didn't have to go." Ilya said softly, looking at him. His gaze was soft, as it often was these days, and a little sad. The moment stretched out, both of them unsure of what to say.

"Well we should do something special tomorrow." Shane finally said. "There's a river that feeds the lake and a waterfall back in the woods. It's a 6 mile hike round trip from the house. I think I could probably manage if you wanted to..."

Ilya was quiet for a minute and Shane backtracked.

"I mean, we don't have to. It's pretty cool though."

"No" Ilya shook his head. "I would like to see what you call 'pretty cool.'" He made scare quotes with his fingers.

Shane huffed against his shoulder as Ilya poked the logs and together they watched the sparks fly up into the night sky.

Ilya wasn't sure what to expect from this hike. He knew Shane could handle it; they had worked out every morning together. But it seemed like they were coming to the end of something. He had treasured this time with Shane and knew somehow that he would remember these days for the rest of his life; a sun-drenched montage of time together. Shane leaning against him while they watched TV, watching him run on the treadmill, reading on the sofa in the afternoon, their toes barely touching each other.

After this week he would go back to Boston. He had decided he would find a new agent. Piotr would want him to stay in Boston; would not represent him when he came out, would not understand when he asked for a trade. Because if Montreal didn't want Shane back, Ilya would go wherever he did. He couldn't be across two countries. If these few, precious days had solidified anything for him it was the knowledge that he would be in Shane's life however he would have him.

And now he was standing on the gravel path behind the cottage watching as it faded into the woods. His backpack felt strangely heavy on his back. It was a sunny day and although it was still well before noon, a trickle of sweat ran down the back of his neck. He squinted up at the sun as he put his sunglasses on. The sky was bright and blue and cloudless.

"Come on, I packed us a lunch and we can eat it by the waterfall if we make good time." Shane was slightly flushed already. He was still wearing baggy clothes and Ilya lived for the moments when he would lean back, or put his hand on his stomach and he would catch a glimpse of his bump.

They walked side by side into the woods. It was a fairly flat trail, although not well-maintained. Ilya guessed Shane was really the only person who came back here.

"I used to walk back here a lot after I first bought the cottage." He said, confirming Ilya's guess. "It'll just be us. I hire a few guys to come back and cut back the trail before the summer but I don't think anyone has been back here except for them." Ilya nodded.

It was quiet, except for the sound of twigs snapping under their feet. The back of Shane's hand brushed against his and he wanted to grab it and hold it, but he wasn't sure it would be welcomed. They hadn't come close to anything since his first day here, when he had sworn they were about to kiss before Shane's parents arrived. It had been torture working out with him every day and then thinking about him down the hall, showering by himself.

But he moved slightly away so their hands wouldn't brush as they walked, even though that meant he was walking through the small plants and trees growing at the edge of the trail. He could see red circles tacked on trees at odd intervals.

“Those are blazes, so we don’t get lost.” Shane said as they walked. “I bet this is the most time you’ve ever spent in the woods, you’re such a city boy.”

“Oh yes, and you are a Boy Scout.” Ilya watched Shane’s mouth curve up in a smile from the corner of his eye.

“Basically.” Shane said, his smile evident in his voice. “My parents used to take me camping in a park a few hours away from here during the summer. It’s out in the middle of nowhere. At night you can see the Milky Way. I used to think about taking my kids there, when I grew up....maybe we could go there sometime.”

“Maybe you could take care of me, then.” Ilya’s heart was thudding and he tried to keep his voice steady. He didn’t dare look at Shane. “I have been cooking for you all week but I don’t know how to do that in the woods. Do you go hunting?”

“No, dummy, you bring a camping stove and some dried meals.”

“Oh, so is what you usually eat then.” Ilya drawled at him.

“Shut up.” Ilya finally got himself under control to where he could look at Shane and saw him grinning back at him.

“Don’t tell me that’s what you brought for lunch today. Dried meals.”

“No, it’s a surprise. Two more miles. Can you make it, Ilya?” Shane started to walk faster as he said it.

Ilya looked at him, grinning back at him and tripped over a root in the trail. He stumbled but regained his footing. When he was standing upright again, he realized that Shane had grabbed his hand. It was warm and callused against his. He didn’t think they had ever done this before.

“Are you ok?” His eyes were wide and concerned.

“Yes, ok.” Ilya didn’t want to take his hand back and neither it appeared, did Shane. So they walked together, deeper into the woods with their clasped hands swinging between them.

Chapter End Notes

clears throat so the forest is a metaphor...

Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

Contains sex. If you don't want to read, you may want to wait for next update.

“Admit it, that was cool.” Shane nudged against him, their hands together again.

“What, the very boring sandwiches you packed for lunch?”

“Peanut Butter and Jelly is classic.”

“Ok, if you say.”

“No,” Shane said, exasperated. “We only saw a waterfall and there were beavers near the pond and also loons.”

“What were the loons? The birds that look like ducks?”

“Ilya...”

Ilya peeked out of the corner of his eye to make sure Shane wasn't actually upset. It had been a good day. They had stopped and had lunch at the base of the waterfall and watched the birds (loons?) and cooled their feet off in the stream. Ilya had brought up going swimming.

“You can go, I'll stay back here.” Shane had said, and Ilya had realized that he was self-conscious about himself. His heart ached a little at that. At how much Shane was giving up.

“No,” He had said and sat next to Shane instead. They watched the sun on the water and Ilya had slowly moved his hand closer until his thumb brushed the tip of Shane's index finger. He rubbed it back and forth, hoping he wasn't pushing too hard. Shane ducked his head and covered his hand with his own.

Ilya turned back to look at the water so Shane wouldn't see his grin.

Now they were on their way back to the cottage. The afternoon had cooled off slightly, Ilya looked up at the sky and saw a line of dark clouds through the trees.

“Look,” he said, pointing. “We should hurry.” They were still about 2 miles away from the cottage.

“Oh.” Shane stopped. “It didn't say anything about a storm on the weather app.” He pulled his phone out.

“You can look at sky and see.” Ilya gestured.

“Ok, ok. I don’t have service here anyways.” Shane started to walk faster. The wind started to blow and although he had spent his entire life in cities, Ilya could still smell the incoming rain.

It grew even darker and Shane looked at the sky worriedly.

“Oh shit, we’re going to get caught in this.” Shane started a slow jog. They heard a low rumble of thunder.

“You go ahead.” Ilya let Shane run in front of him. He stumbled and Ilya’s heart leapt into his chest as he watched him almost fall.

“Fucking trail.” He muttered, slowing down to a fast walk. They had made it another quarter of a mile before they heard it over the increasing thunder- a loud rushing sound. Then leaves above them started to bounce as they were hit by the downpour. They went as quickly as they could.

But within a minute they were completely soaked. Shane’s t shirt was plastered to his front and Ilya could see the small bulge of his belly. The temperature was dropping with every minute and even though they had been hot from the sun only a few minutes ago, Ilya was cold. He could see goosebumps on Shane’s arms.

The rain was now pounding around them and Ilya tucked Shane under his arm to try and keep him warm. It was hard for him to see the trail ahead, there was so much water running into his eyes.

Lightning flashed nearby and almost at the same time Ilya could feel the thunder reverberate through him. The air smelled like ozone.

“Oh fuck.” Shane stopped and swore, running a hand back through his hair. Ilya looked down and in the dim light, he saw a trickle of blood running down his leg.

“Oh Shane.” He was starting to feel panicked now. Shane was hurt and it wasn’t good for him or the baby for him to be this cold and wet.

“Let’s go.” He wrapped an arm around Shane and they hurried on.

In what felt like an eternity later, Ilya saw the lights of the cottage through the edge of the woods. As they burst through the edge of the trees, Ilya and Shane broke into a run. They barely stopped until they were inside and staring at each other under the lights.

Shane ran his hands through his wet hair, pushing it off his forehead. His eyes were wide and he was breathing hard. He was shivering a little. There was a stream of blood running down the outside of his left leg.

“Oh no.” Ilya was terrified. He grabbed the plaid throw off the back of the sofa and wrapped Shane in it, holding him close. He wondered if Shane could hear his heart pounding. He ran his hands over his back.

“Are you ok, Shane? Is everything ok?” He asked, over and over again. Shane didn’t reply and he pulled back so he could see his face.

Shane was looking at him with an odd expression.

“I can’t understand when you speak Russian.” He finally said.

Oh.

“Are you ok?” He made an effort and got the words out in English.

Shane nodded, his eyes dark and serious as he stared at Ilya from the circle of his arms. He was still breathing hard and Ilya could feel his heart beating against his, could feel his belly pressed against him, and then Shane shifted, just a little, and Ilya could feel his erection pressed against his thigh.

Oh God.

“Shane...” He started, but even in his mother language, he didn’t know how to say how he felt, how much he felt for Shane. He stared into his eyes, so deep he could be lost in them and he knew he would never be the same after this but he wanted and wanted and...he leaned forward slowly, giving Shane time to step back and kissed him chastely on the lips.

“Ilya,” Shane exhaled. And then they surged at each other. Ilya wanted to feel every inch of Shane pressed against him, wanted to drown in him. Shane’s mouth opened under his and he pressed his tongue inside. It had been so long and nothing and everything had changed and how could he have every thought that he would get over Shane? When he was part of every molecule, every signaling pathway in his body.

He mouthed over Shane’s throat, the skin warm under his mouth. His head tipped back.

“Oh my god Ilya that feels so good.” Shane ground against him and he gasped, the sensation firing through him like lightning. It had been so long, since January, since....

Shane was nuzzling against his neck and he slowly led them upstairs, where his bedroom was. He sat down still wrapped in the throw and grabbed Ilya by the shirt to pull him down. Ilya drew back, suddenly conscious of the fact that he was in Shane’s room, in his home. And, some how his lust-addled brain realized he was dripping all over the floor. He stripped off his T-shirt and dropped it on the floor where it landed with a wet thwack. He stripped his shorts quickly and didn’t miss Shane’s exhale when his cock sprang free. He slowly pushed Shane back until he was laying on the bed. His pupils were wide and his lips were red and swollen.

“Please Ilya.” He exhaled.

“Yes.” Ilya breathed.

He knelt down beside him and started to lift the hem of his T-shirt. Shane put his hand on his, as if to stop him.

“I don’t...” When Ilya looked up, Shane was looking off to one side. “I don’t look the same as I did.”

Ilya rested his head on Shane’s thigh.

“You’re so beautiful. Especially now.”

Shane looked back at him, expression indecipherable.

“Can I?” He held the edge of the shirt.

Finally Shane nodded.

Ilya slowly drew the wet garment up, trailing kisses up his belly as he went. He sat Shane up slightly so he could peel it over his head and then he laid him back down.

“Ah, look at you.” He said, as he palmed his swollen belly. He kissed near his shallow belly button. “So beautiful. You are amazing.”

His nipples were darker and slightly puffy. Ilya mouthed his way up the planes of his chest and took one in his mouth. He sucked slightly and flicked the tight bud with his tongue.

Shane arched against him.

“Oh God, Ilya.” He panted. Ilya lavished his right nipple with attention and then turned to the left.

Shane squirmed underneath him, his face and neck flushed.

“I’m not going to last-Ohmygod- if you keep doing that.” Shane gasped and squirmed and Ilya started to pull his shorts off. “God, I have wanted you so bad.”

“Yes, yes.” Ilya kissed his way down his legs as he pulled Shane’s shorts off. “Always wanted you.” The shorts joined the rest of the sodden clothes on the floor and Ilya crawled up Shane’s body until they were face to face and body to body.

“What do you want, Shane?” Ilya held his face, rubbing his thumb back and forth over his cheekbone. He would give him anything, anything he wanted. He thought he would never have this again. But he would do anything for Shane.

“I want you. I just want you.” Shane said under him, pulling him closer. Ilya shifted to one side to shift his weight off Shane’s belly. Shane pulled back and opened the drawer next to his bedside table. He pulled out a jar of lube.

“There hasn’t been anyone else since last time.” Shane said. “Obviously.” He gestured to his belly.

“Not for me, either.” As Ilya said it he realized he didn’t want anyone else. Would probably never want anyone else again. This was it. And instead of feeling terrified, he just felt peace.

He kissed his way back down Shane's body, licking over the beginning of stretch marks over his hips. He had gained weight and Ilya bit lightly before continuing down. Shane's cock was flushed and hard, curving back against his stomach. Ilya spread a generous amount of lube on his hand and then leaned down and captured his dick in his mouth.

Shane shouted and almost came off the bed.

"Holy shit! Stop, oh my god." He was gasping again and the veins in his neck stood out. He could tell he was so, so close.

Ilya looked up at him, his view partially blocked by the curve of his belly.

He kissed Shane's knee and waited for his breathing to slow, then he lifted one of his legs over his shoulder and kissed his way up the inside of his thigh. He stopped just short of his dick and looked up to see how Shane was doing. His breathing had slowed and he was watching Ilya.

"Please, I just want you to fuck me." He said, wrecked.

Ilya found the tight furl of his ass and slowly advanced one finger past the tight ring of muscle. Shane's head arched back and he slowly pumped it in and out before adding a second. He groaned and used his leg to pull himself down on Ilya's fingers. Ilya grabbed his hip and held on. He inserted a third; Shane was so worked up he barely needed any time for prep. Ilya was so hard. He wanted to grind against the end of the bed, anything to relieve this pressure, but he wanted to save everything, give everything to Shane.

"Oh my god please hurry up." Shane sounded drunk now. "I want you so bad."

Ilya realized that his chest was heaving and he pulled his hand out and poured a generous amount of lube on his hand that he used to slick up his cock. He started to lift Shane's other leg to rest on his shoulders and he made a small noise of protest.

"I can't anymore- let me." He pulled Ilya down onto the bed and crawled on top of him, bracketing his hips with his thighs. Shane reached back with one hand while he braced himself on Ilya's chest and guided Ilya's cock in.

Ilya struggled to keep himself under control. He could see every part of Shane above him as he started slowly to rock back.

"Oh my god, oh my god that feels so good, Ilya." His head fell back and Ilya pushed himself up to drive into him, holding onto his hip. He moved faster, hearing himself babble. There was nothing else but this- him and Shane and the growing, coiling heat between them. Shane matched his punishing pace and he leaned forward, holding Ilya's shoulder so hard it almost hurt.

"Oh my god I'm not going to last it's so amazing Ilya I can't I'm-" and then he gasped and lost his rhythm as Ilya let go with one hand and let him thrust into the tight circle of his fingers. He felt Shane's release cover his chest and it was this that sent him over the edge.

He heard himself shouting and thought absently that he had never been loud but it had never been like this. He had never had anything like this before in his life and Shane collapsed against him, breathing hard.

“Holy shit, holy shit. Ilya.”

“Are you ok, Shane?” He drew back, concerned and Shane huffed a small laugh against his shoulder.

“Yes. I’m the best I’ve ever been. Oh my god.”

He kissed Shane’s forehead and pulled him closer. They stayed there for a while, listening to their breathing and the sound of the thunderstorm outside. Ilya felt the small movement of their daughter against his side. He smiled and ran his hand down Shane’s side until it rested on his belly where he could feel her nudging against his palm.

“You are incredible, Shane.” He said thickly. He still couldn’t believe that he was here, holding Shane. His departure seemed miles away and in that moment, he thought nonsensically that he would never leave, that they could just stay here in this moment forever, and if they could then he would be satisfied.

Shane put his hand on top of his. He was quiet and then kissed Ilya’s chest, where his crucifix lay.

“We’re getting sticky. Shower?”

He let Shane lead him into the bathroom and into the rainwater shower. Soon they were warm and surrounded by steam. They kissed languidly, both of them content for now to leave it there. Ilya soaped Shane off and then after he washed him off, Ilya grabbed his hands and pressed them against his chest. His heart was so full and he couldn’t think of how to express it and so he just rested his head against Shane’s shoulder under the water. They drew apart after a few minutes and Ilya grabbed one of Shane’s huge bath towels and wrapped him in it.

He dried off and got Shane a glass of water. Shane had crawled under the covers again.

“I’m so tired, Ilya.” He smiled sleepily. “Will you stay with me?”

Ilya slid under the covers and pulled Shane’s back against his front. He listened to Shane’s breathing gradually slow and then he was pulled under as well.

Chapter 12

Chapter Notes

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

Shane woke up in stages. At first, he noticed that the pounding of the rain outside had stopped. He opened his eyes and saw the vivid pinks and purples of sunset outside his window. Then he noticed that he was sore...there... and that he was very, very warm. He tried to move but something was holding him in place. Ilya's arm was slung over his waist, hand resting over his belly.

He looked over his shoulder and Ilya was already awake, watching him, breathing quietly. He rolled over to face him.

"How long have you been awake?" He asked. His mouth was dry from sleep and Ilya reached over him and handed him the glass of water he had put on his bedside table before he fell asleep. He sat up and took a few sips, waiting.

"Just a few minutes." Ilya said, his voice still deep and hoarse from sleep. When Shane was done drinking, he took the glass and put it back on the table. Shane felt suddenly self-conscious and he pulled the covers up over his shoulders. He had let Ilya see him, see everything.

"Shane." Ilya turned his face towards him, holding it with one hand. Not asking him, not pressuring him. Shane leaned forward and slowly kissed him. He felt Ilya's smile against his mouth and their teeth hit each other as he smiled back.

"Hi." He said. He could stay like this all night, slowly kissing Ilya. But as he awakened, above the pleasant soreness of his body, he realized his leg was stinging. He remembered their frantic dash through the rain and the low brambles that had scratched him.

He sat up and pulled the covers down. There was a shallow cut on his calf, about 6cm long. It had scabbed over, although there was still some dried blood. Ilya saw him looking at it and was crestfallen.

"I meant to take care of it when we got back here."

"We just forgot." Shane leaned back against the pillows. "Wow." It had really overtaken them, the small touches through the day building to something else.

"Does it still hurt?" Ilya reached out carefully and ran his finger under the cut.

"Just a little bit."

"It bled so much." Ilya said disbelievingly.

"It looks like it's just a scratch. There's some alcohol and antibiotic cream in the bathroom under the sink. I'll get up in a minute."

But Ilya kissed him again then pulled back and rolled out of bed. Shane heard him walk into the bathroom and then rummage through the drawers. He returned a moment later and started cleaning off his leg. Shane could see faint tension in the lines of his shoulder and the set of his jaw. He didn't lift his gaze but asked, "Other than leg, are you ok? "

"I'm fine."

"Just fine?" Now Ilya stopped trying to open the bandaid and looked up at him.

"I'm good." Shane smiled down at Ilya as he dropped a kiss on his knee.

"Are you hungry? I will make dinner." Ilya asked as he smoothed the bandaid over his cut. Shane felt something flutter in his chest.

"I could eat." He was betrayed by his stomach growling. It had been several hours since they'd had lunch.

"Stay here, I will bring it up." Ilya stood up and looked around the room and then paused as he saw that their clothes were still in a sodden heap in the corner.

"You can borrow a pair of boxers. They're in the top drawer." He felt a rush of heat as he thought about Ilya wearing his clothing and this only intensified when he pulled them on and they stretched indecently across his ass and thighs. Ilya glanced back and Shane flushed as he was caught looking.

"You like what you see?" He asked, pushing his hips back.

"Shut up." Shane threw a pillow at him. He was beet red now.

Ilya just smiled over his shoulder and walked down the stairs. Shane huffed and fell back against the bed. He was fucked. He was still so in love with Ilya. And what was worse was that he didn't know what this meant. He knew Ilya said he couldn't be casual with him, but what did that mean? Where do that leave them? He pulled a pillow over his face and groaned.

He could hear Ilya pattering around in the kitchen and suddenly he didn't want to be alone in his bedroom. He pulled out a pair of boxers and wandered downstairs. Ilya was humming off key under his breath as he boiled water for pasta. Shane stopped and looked at him. He looked so at home here. Ilya glanced up and saw him staring, again as he pulled a bag of tomatoes out of the fridge.

"Is whole wheat pasta. Not just regular, ok?"

"That's fine. I eat regular pasta, too sometimes." He mumbled.

Ilya arched an eyebrow at him and then put the knife down and crossed the kitchen island. He put his hand on the side of Shane's face and kissed him softly across his cheeks and the bridge of his nose. Then he bent down and dropped a kiss on his belly. Shane started slightly.

"Your freckles look so beautiful when you blush." He smiled up at Shane. "I hope she will have them, too." He rubbed the area he had kissed with his thumb and then went back to

making dinner.

Shane wanted to melt. *Oh god*. He was going to die. What were they going to be? Two guys who raised a baby together and fucked when they could? He sat at one of the stools at the counter and watched him cook. He didn't want to say anything, didn't want to ruin what was growing between them.

Ilya glanced up and smiled at him as he diced an onion and then swirled olive oil into a pan on the stove. He waited a minute and then flicked water into the pan. It sizzled and he dumped the onions in.

"Where did you learn to cook? Did your mom teach you?" Shane asked, mesmerized.

Ilya shook his head. "No, she died when I was young."

"Oh." Shane asked. "What happened?"

Ilya looked back down at the pan on the stove, nudging the onions around. "She, ah...." when he looked up, his eyes were red. "She killed herself."

"Oh." Shane said again, softly.

Ilya looked down at the pan again. The onions were slowly becoming translucent and he dumped the tomatoes from the cutting board with a little more force than necessary.

"I found her...after." He said, not looking up.

Shane froze.

"She was so sad. Father was terrible to her. He treated her so badly." His voice was hoarse now. "But she was beautiful and funny. She was wonderful." Ilya swiped at his eyes.

Shane walked around the island and put a hand on his shoulder. At first he shrugged and then Shane tugged slightly. He folded back against him and buried his face in Shane's neck.

"I'm ok. It was so long ago. Over half my life." He sniffed loudly. "But I wish she could have seen me win the cup. I wish she could have met you. I wish she could meet the baby."

He squeezed Shane tightly then turned back to their dinner. He splashed a little cooking water into the tomatoes, which had burned slightly.

"I'm sorry Ilya." Shane said. He felt so inadequate. Ilya turned and kissed him again, fiercely.

"Like I said, it was a long time ago." He paused, then said evenly. "There is nothing left for me in Russia. Everything for me is here now. Do you understand?"

Shane felt awestruck in the face of this. He nodded. He felt dizzy and sat back down, leaning his cheek on one of his hands. What had he meant by everything? Hockey? Shane? Their baby?

There was a silence that lasted for several seconds. Ilya was the first to break it.

“I learn to cook from cooking videos.” He said. “My English was terrible at first. Maybe still is.”

Shane shook his head.

“But those videos I could understand. So I watched them for a few hours everyday after practice.” He dumped the tomatoes and onion on a plate and put shrimp into the pan with some garlic that he crushed. His hands were strong and deft and Shane imagined those same hands working over his body. He swallowed hard.

“Almost done, ok?” Ilya looked up at him.

Shane nodded. He had no idea what to say. *I’m sorry about your mom? Do you have any family? Are you ok?*

He watched Ilya dump the pasta into a colander in the sink and then toss it with some olive oil, salt and pepper. He plated it and then topped with shrimp and tomatoes. It smelled delicious.

“I left hot pepper out, I thought you might have some trouble. I read it can cause heartburn when you’re...” he gestured to Shane’s belly.

“Oh, yeah. I’ve had some.” He picked up his fork. Suddenly something clicked for him. “You’ve been reading about having a baby?”

Ilya busied himself fixing his own plate. “You’ve know me, not very smart. Wanted to be prepared.” He avoided Shane’s eyes.

“I’ve never thought that you’re not smart.” Shane said, touched.

“Maybe only you think that.”

This time Shane reached out as Ilya sat down and pulled his face to him. He kissed him very gently on the cheek.

“Thank you for making dinner.”

Ilya finally smiled at him and brushed a hand over his cheek.

“I would do every night. You can’t cook.”

“What? Yes I can. I made you those burgers.”

He got the sense Ilya was trying not to laugh at him.

“Oh yes, that’s right.”

“Jerk.” He muttered around a mouthful of spaghetti. Maybe Ilya cooking for him wouldn’t be the worst thing ever.

Shane insisted on cleaning up after dinner and Ilya lounged on the sofa and watched. Shane glanced up and watched the long line of his body as he stretched out. He was so hot, it was really unfair. He blushed a little as he thought about Ilya’s comment earlier about his freckles. *I hope she will have them.* Whether she had his freckles or not, she was going to have some great genes.

He finished up and sat on the couch near Ilya’s feet. He gave into the urge he’d had only a few days ago and ran his hands over the fine bones of his ankle. Ilya sat up and pulled him on top.

“I’m cold.” He could feel Ilya’s smile against his face as he wrapped his arms around him. He could feel the baby as she rolled inside and from Ilya’s soft huff against his neck, he felt her as well. They stayed for a minute and Shane wanted to sink into him. This felt so perfect- like they were a couple.

His breath caught. Ilya had said they couldn’t be anything other than what they had been, but he wasn’t acting like that now. But they couldn’t keep pretending they were just two guys who hooked up. Thinking back, Shane didn’t think it had been like that for a while, but he just didn’t know. He knew that sometimes he could be too much and had trouble leaving anything alone, but he couldn’t just keep this up. He took a deep breath.

“Ilya, what are we doing?” He said, hating how his voice wobbled as he asked. “You broke up with me because you couldn’t be casual. What does that mean?”

He could feel Ilya exhale against his cheek.

“I decided this week, when I get back to Boston, I will ask for a trade. I don’t want to wait for next season.” He held up a hand, as if forestalling Shane’s argument. “I know Montreal will not work. But maybe Ottawa. Is not so far. Your parents live there, no? I would have visa. Could be citizen if I stay long enough. Even if it’s another Canadian team. Maybe it could work?”

Shane leaned back. Huh.

“I can’t be so far from you.” Ilya continued.

“Because of the baby.” Shane said, steadily.

“Not just that.” Ilya shook his head. “Some because of the baby. But also, I am wrong to ask for this. But I want to be with you.” He swallowed and his eyes were so bright and beautiful as they looked at Shane’s. “You asked what I would want if I could have anything. I want you.” He looked as if he was pleading with Shane. “I...I...know that you might not want that. You can say if you don’t want that.”

Shane blinked. “Like you want to be together?”

He could see Ilya digest the words.

“Only if you want.” He was struggling now. “I am selfish to ask after I broke up with you.”

“Oh wow...wow.” Shane took a deep breath and stared at the ceiling. Tears prickled in his eyes. He was shocked and happy and angry all at the same time.

“You broke up with me 6 months ago and now you really want to be together. Like together together? That’s crazy.” Shane was reeling. He had thought there was something more after the All-Star weekend before he had gotten hit. It wasn’t just him. And then, and then....He could see Ilya retreat inside himself.

“I fucked up. Would give everything to take that back.”

“You would do that, you would leave your team for me and go play for Ottawa? What if I don’t want to be together? Fuck, Ilya, you hurt me so bad. I was falling in love with you.”

“I was too. I am, too.” Ilya swallowed hard. “I wish I could be better for you, could speak better. Could have stayed with you in the hospital. I would leave my team, I would give up hockey if I could stay here with you.” Ilya paused again. “I love you Shane. I have been falling in love with you since that fucking rink in the middle of fucking nowhere.”

“It was in Regina.”

“Like I said, middle of fucking nowhere.”

Shane was quiet for a moment. He needed to think. He looked over Ilya’s shoulder to the dark sky outside. There was only a faint orange glow against the horizon where the sun had set against the deep purple of twilight.

“Shane...”Ilya looked tortured. “What do you want?”

He looked down at Ilya. His eyes were large and afraid as he looked up at him. He had trusted him once and had his heart broken. But when he thought about his future and what he wanted, he couldn’t imagine Ilya not being there. He remembered how Ilya had looked at him, just a few hours ago, like he was starving and he would die if he didn’t touch him. Like he had looked when they were 17 and every year since then. So many nights stolen after games, moving inexorably together. How he had been so patient and not pushed any boundaries while he had been here and fuck, Shane still loved him.

“I want you Ilya. I love you. I never stopped loving you.”

“Shane.” He said quietly and reached his hand up to hold his face. Shane could feel his heart pounding against him. “We could get married before the baby comes. Not just for citizenship. Well, maybe a little for that. But more because we love each other.” He smiled crookedly, but the faint tremor in his hand against Shane belied his nervousness.

Holy Shit.

Now his heart was pounding and he could barely take a breath.

He nodded and whispered “Yes.”

Ilya leaned forward so their foreheads touched and then pulled Shane against him. Shane ran his hand over Ilya’s chest, feeling the muscles of his shoulders flex underneath his palm. Ilya was his. He buried his face in the crook of his neck and tried to slow his breathing. It felt like they were stepping off a ledge together.

“Holy shit, holy shit.” He said out loud. What was he going to tell his parents, his team? How would they come out? This was going to be a scandal.

“Hey, hey, hey.” Ilya ran his hands over him. “Slow down. Slow down.”

Shane tried to take a deep breath.

“What’s wrong?” Ilya’s voice was muffled against his hair.

“How are we going to tell people? How can we come out?” He was hyperventilating now.

Ilya held him and rocked him. He smoothed his hands over his back.

“If you don’t want to come out right away, it can stay a secret.” He said finally. “At some point it will be obvious. But we can wait a little while.”

“Maybe until I know where I’m going to play? Sometime after this season?” There. That seemed manageable.

“Ok.” Ilya said quietly. Shane couldn’t see his face.

“Ok.” He said back.

Ilya lifted his hand and kissed his ring finger.

“Do you want a ring?” He asked, serious.

“Not really? I mean I don’t wear rings and I might lose it when I start playing again. And don’t you think that would look obvious?”

Ilya was still for a moment and then reached behind his neck and unfastened his necklace. He slowly held it out to Shane.

“Can I put it on?” He asked.

Shane’s breath stuck in his chest.

“Oh Ilya.” He couldn’t move as Ilya put it on him. His eyes were brimming.

“I have never taken it off before. But this is mine more than anything else and I want you to have. You can keep under your shirt if you don’t want people to see yet.”

They embraced again and time slowed as Shane listened to Ilya’s heart, beating slowly now, and felt the unfamiliar press of the necklace against his skin. It was warm from Ilya. It still

seemed impossible that they could be together and make this work. But the alternative, not being together, not having this, felt like a gaping chasm was opening in his chest.

Tomorrow he would tell his parents and they would worry about what came next. But for tonight, Shane curled up against his *future husband*, and just enjoyed being his.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you to everyone who is reading, commenting and leaving kudos. Very appreciated ❤️

I think I read the thing about Ilya learning English from cooking videos from another fic and I loved the fanon. I can't remember where it was and my history is no help but would love to credit if anyone can remember where it came from.

Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

I'm sorry I haven't had time to respond to your comments but I read them and appreciate them all.

Ilya woke up the next morning with Shane's head on his shoulder. He was snoring a little bit. Ilya kissed his forehead and pulled him closer. As he looked down, he could see his mother's necklace glinting against Shane's collarbone.

They had stayed up late the night before, just holding each other and cuddling. Ilya had made a halfhearted protest that he had to go back to the hotel for his things and Shane had rolled on top of him like the world's brattiest blanket and kissed him and palmed his dick through his boxers until he lay back gasping and promised that he wouldn't go anywhere if Jesus Christ he would just let him finish.

He stared up at the ceiling and took a deep breath. Last night seemed like a dream. He had told Shane he loved him; had *asked him to marry him*, and he had said yes. He was laying here in bed, holding his family.

His breath stuttered slightly and Shane murmured against his chest. He rubbed his back until he fell back asleep. He tried to focus on this moment, laying here with Shane, watching the room slowly grow brighter around them. He tried not to think about everything he had to do in Boston: contact the agents Svetlana had found, get ready to go to Texas. He would need to hire someone to get his house ready to put on the market. And then the niggling worry in the back of his mind: what if he asked for a trade and couldn't be any closer to Shane. What then?

He could feel his heart start to pound and took a deep breath. He had to believe this could work. They had tried to stay apart, He had tried to tell himself it was for the best but he knew that being away from Shane would kill him. He would face these things as they came and he would have to leave soon enough. He focused on Shane's faint snores, and the feeling of his warm body alongside him. He couldn't waste this time they had together.

A few minutes later, he heard Shane's breathing quicken as he stretched himself awake.

"Morning sweetheart." He murmured against Ilya's chest. Ilya smiled down at him. He would savor these moments when he missed him, when he was in Boston, in Texas. When he was away next season.

"Breakfast?" He murmured against Shane's forehead. He hadn't lied when he told Shane that he learned English from cooking videos. What he left out was that he had kept watching them

because he had always wanted someone to cook for. Shane would be that person. Shane would always be that person.

Shane snuggled against him and pulled him closer. “Maybe in a minute.” He murmured as he rolled on top of him.

It was longer than a minute when Ilya finally made it down the stairs into the kitchen. Shane was napping upstairs but after they had showered and he had bundled him back into bed, he had given Ilya strict instructions to wake him up for breakfast.

He opened the fridge and pulled out eggs and vegetables to make omelettes. He whistled as he sautéed the vegetables and then set them aside to pour the eggs in the pan. When they were mostly set, he put the fillings in flipped the top over. He leaned against the counter while he waited for them to set and watched the way the sun shone on the lake outside. He could see why this was Shane’s favorite place. His mind felt quiet and standing here in the brightening kitchen, it was easy to forget about the outside world.

When they were finished, he plated them and went upstairs to wake up Shane. He was sleeping in Ilya’s side of the bed, curled around his pillow. His dark hair fell over his eyes. The covers were shoved down around his hips and Ilya leaned forward and fit a hand around his cheek. The look in Shane’s face when he saw him, was so soft and amazed, like he was surprised he was still there.

He wanted to remember that.

He wanted to remember the dinner they had that night. After lunch, Ilya had brought Shane with him to check out of his hotel. On the way they had called Shane’s parents to tell them the news.

Ilya could hear Yuna’s quiet “oh wow” When Shane told her they would be getting married-in secret. He heard her ask if Shane wanted to bring him over for dinner that night. Shane looked over at him and he nodded. They spent the rest of the afternoon lounging on the sofa playing video games. Ilya tried to ignore the butterflies in his stomach. Would Shane’s parents be mad? He was sure that she would have preferred someone else for Shane’s spouse. He remembered Yuna’s face in the elevator in Las Vegas, stoic and proud.

But when they pulled up to their cabin, she and David rushed out of the door and pulled Ilya and Shane into a big hug. Even when they let go, Ilya kept his arm around Shane and he thrilled at this small moment. Other people could see them together as a couple. It wasn’t just between the two of them anymore. He pulled Shane in and kissed his forehead before they went inside, hands still laced together. Shane gave him a small smile and squeezed his hand. “They will love you.” He said quietly as they went through the door.

They had laid out appetizers in the living room and Yuna disappeared for a second. She came back with a bottle of champagne.

“We wanted to pull this out to celebrate!” She smiled hesitantly at Ilya. “I’m not sure if you drink...”

“I do, not much recently.” Ilya said, looking sideways at Shane.

The bubbles fizzed in his mouth after the toast.

Yuna fidgeted with her glass.

“This is really great that you worked things out..” She trailed off. “You have a year left on your contract, right?”

The uneasiness returned.

“I will ask for trade when I get back. I leave the day after tomorrow.” The words were a pit in his stomach as he said them.

“And you’ll ask for....?” She trailed off.

“Ottawa. Is close and they could afford me.” And Shane will be there next year, after the baby. After that, we can see.”

Her gaze was in the far distance and she was quiet, thinking.

“You would leave Boston.”

“For Shane, yes.”

Beside him, Shane ducked his head. Ilya put his hand on top of his and laced their fingers together.

Yuna sat back.

“The Centaurs could use a player like you but you might never win another cup again. Are you sure?” She frowned as she said it, like it was hard to understand.

“Mom!” Shane looked horrified.

“Yuna!” David turned to look at his wife.

“But I could be close to Shane and our daughter. Our family is worth more than that.” His voice caught as he said *our family*. Yuna quickly wiped at her eye, like Shane did when he was overwhelmed.

“Ok.” She said. “Ok. I know their GM. Can I let him know I heard something? That you were wanting a change? Are you going public with your relationship?”

“After I know where I will be after next season.” Shane jumped in.

Yuna and David looked at each other without saying anything. There was an uneasy pause.

“That sounds really hard.” David finally said. “You won’t be able to be in public together, Ilya won’t be able to take the baby outside. It will be hard for him to visit.”

Ilya's stomach clenched. He knew these things. Had thought about them all night. But hearing them said out loud made them all the more real.

"I know, Dad." Shane said. "But I really think this would hurt me going back to Montreal."

Where they treated you like shit.

Yuna's mouth twisted slightly.

"Oh Shane." She said. "That seems so sad."

He started to pull his hand away from Ilya, but Ilya held on.

"Shane, we will make it work, ok?" He said quietly.

Shane looked at him, eyes a little glassy.

"Yeah."

"Well, congratulations. Ilya, welcome to the family." David looked at him steadily.

The mood lifted over dinner. Ilya threw out increasingly outlandish wedding ideas: Vegas, on a boat under Niagara Falls, the top of the Empire State Building. Shane nudged his foot until he stopped, and afterwards Yuna pulled out Shane's old baby book. They looked through pages of his baby pictures, a chubby baby with fat rolls and black hair giving rise to a serious toddler in ice skates, holding a miniature hockey stick.

"You were so cute!" Ilya exclaimed, delighted. "But the freckles didn't come right away."

"No, they popped up when he was 3 or 4."

"It's ok," Ilya said, resting one hand on Shane's stomach. "She will still be cute with such handsome papas. Even if she doesn't have any freckles at first."

Shane blushed and moved to close the baby book. His eyelids had been drooping and Ilya knew it was time for him to go to bed. He didn't want today to end. Tomorrow was his last full day at the cottage before he flew back to Boston and it felt like something was coming to an end. He knew Shane felt it too.

They spent the next day in bed, Ilya worshipping Shane's body until he was gasping for Ilya to just fuck him already. He did then, slowly, trying to memorize the way Shane's face looked when he was about to come, trying to save these moments for later, when it wouldn't be just the two of them, when they would go back to sneaking around, but married. And with a baby.

His head and his heart hurt trying to think about it, and he focused on the immediate next steps; going back to Boston, getting a new manager, going to Texas and playing as hard as he could. He had to show the other teams that the end of the last season was a fluke. He was still Ilya fucking Rozanov.

And a small, deep, secret part of him wanted to prove that he was worthy of Shane. He had been a shameful hookup for so long and thinking about being a husband and a father felt like it was happening to someone else. He wasn't sure he was enough to be that person.

They got up only to eat and when they finished, Shane wrapped him in a hug from behind.

"I don't want you to go." He whispered and Ilya could tell he was trying to not to cry.

He turned around and Shane buried his face against his neck.

"It's not forever. I'll be back in a few weeks." Ilya said hoarsely. They had made plans for him to come to Ottawa to see Shane after he finished in Texas before the preseason started.

The trade was hanging over both of their heads but having this to look forward to was the only thing keeping him sane right now.

"I love you." Shane said into his shoulder.

"I love you." He said back, marveling at how easy it felt. And he tried to remember how it felt to be pressed together like this, Shane's warmth against him, feeling the press of his necklace against his chest, feeling him breathe against him in the circle of his arms.

He held onto that feeling the next day when he packed up his rental car and drove back to the airport. Shane hadn't been able to say goodbye and they had held each other again for a long time and then parted with a kiss when even Ilya was getting worried about making his flight.

And as his plane rose above the clouds, leaving everything he loved behind, he thought about Shane, growing their baby under his heart, and coming home. Someday.

Chapter 14

Chapter Summary

Thank you again for all of the kind comments. I'm so happy people are enjoying this story ❤️

Out of all of the hard conversations Ilya had over the past week, this was the worst. Not firing his agent, not telling Svetlana he was moving or arranging to have most of his car collection sold off. It was telling his coach that he was leaving.

He had texted LeClaire as soon as he got back, asking for a time to meet and now they sat facing each other, the older man leaning back against his chair, hands folded on the desk in front of him.

"Coach." Ilya began. "I am grateful for all my years in Boston. Very much. I am going to ask for something and it may not make sense. "

LeClaire shifted and kept looking at him. Ilya started to sweat under his collar. He remembered how he had felt after he got drafted. He knew nothing about America, except it wasn't Russia. LeClaire had taken him in and built him up as a player. Boston had been the closest thing he'd had to a home since his mother died.

"My contract isn't up until the end of the season but I would like to be traded. My agent will be calling the GM but I wanted to let you know so it does not..." he struggled to find the idiom he wanted "...come from blue."

LeClair sat up, frowning.

"Ilya if this is about having to go to Texas or playing time, we can come to an agreement. This doesn't have to be a big deal like threatening a trade."

"This is for other reason. Is personal." He shook his head. "I cannot say why. But is nothing with you as coach or the team."

LeClaire was quiet. He had been a formidable hockey player, back in the day. He had been legendary for his shrewd playing style and Ilya could still see his mind working as he sat and thought.

"Ok." He finally said. "Most people wouldn't have told me. This might have been pretty stupid. But tell your agent to wait until after Texas. And work your ass off down there and you might get a better deal."

“Ok.” He stood up.

“Ilya?” LeClaire reached out to shake his hand. “Good Luck.”

“How did it go?” Shane asked later, while they FaceTimed.

Ilya made a back and forth motion with his hand.

“He told me to wait until after Texas to go to GM.”

“Huh.” Shane paused. “I guess that makes sense. You really played like shit at the end of last season.”

“I know this.” Ilya sighed with mock-exasperation. “I was distracted because I could not stop thinking about you.”

“Really?” Shane smiled at him. He was laying on his side in bed. The necklace glinted in the lamplight.

“Really.” Ilya wanted to reply with some joke about how if he had been playing Shane, they would have won the cup because it would have been easier. But it wasn’t true and also Shane was blinking at him sleepily and Ilya just wished he was there to pull him into his arms.

“Was doctors visit ok?” He cleared his throat and asked instead.

“Yeah.” Shane smiled. “Everything looked good.”

“Did you get more pictures?”

“Oh, ultrasound? No, if everything keeps going well I won’t have any more.”

“Oh.” Ilya was disappointed.

“But look,” Shane rolled onto his back and turned the camera around. “She’s like sticking her butt out or something. It’s really fucking weird.” Ilya looked at his phone. Shane’s stomach looked lopsided for a second and then as he poked at it, a bulge moved across his middle.

“Oh shit.” Ilya smiled. “She’s giving trouble already.” He couldn’t wait to see Shane again.

“Oh shit is right.” Shane huffed and then yawned.

Ilya coughed a few times. He had woken up with a scratch in his throat.

“Are you ok?” Shane frowned.

“Yeah, I think it’s just allergies.” Ilya sniffed and rubbed his nose.

“You need to quit smoking.” Shane grouched.

“Ok, ok it’s past your bedtime. Go to sleep. I love you.”

Shane looked at him, smiling. “I love you more. Good luck in Texas. Let me know when you get there?”

“Yes. I’ll text you when I get there.” He kissed his fingers and held them up to the camera. Shane had already hung up. He was probably already asleep.

Ilya turned over and stared at the ceiling. This might be one of the last nights he spent here, if the trade went through. This was the first home he had bought with his own money. And it would be the last home he would live in by himself. He tried to imagine having Shane with him all the time. Maybe they would get a dog. It would be good for their daughter to have a dog, he thought. He smiled a little and turned his face into the pillow at the thought of himself, a scared and lonely kid from Russia, growing up to have a family with Shane Hollander. It was not something he would have ever dared to hope for.

He fell asleep thinking about wide lawns and maybe a tree swing and a dog chasing after tennis balls and a girl with dark curly hair.

He coughed again a few more times and didn’t think anything of it.

This was the first time he had stayed in the US for the summer and when he had thought Boston was hot, it in no way prepared him for Texas. The heat shimmered off the road as he stepped out of the airport and walked to the rental car kiosk and his shirt instantly stuck to his back.

Driving to his hotel, he turned up the AC as high as it would go and he still felt like he was melting into the seats. His nose was more congested and as much as he hated to admit, he was probably getting sick. He groaned internally. The timing was awful. He had to look really impressive this week.

When he checked into the hotel, the clerk straightened.

“Oh, Mr. Rozanov, we have a package for you. It’s already in your room. Please sign here for incidentals and just to confirm, you have a 5:30am wake up call.”

He took his key and then as he rode the elevator up, tried to figure out what it could be.

When he opened the door, he saw a massive case of Gatorade, some healthy snacks, Tylenol and cough syrup. There was a card on the TV stand with some flowers. The card read: ‘It’s not allergies. Love, Jane.’

He let out a short laugh. Shane was such an asshole sometimes. Especially when he was right.

He had to be at the arena at 7am the next morning and it was just past 5pm. He opened a Gatorade and a box of protein balls and lay down on the bed. He would rest for a little and

then go downstairs for dinner. He was just a little achy from the flight. He drank a few sips of Gatorade and then shut his eyes.

He woke up suddenly to the phone ringing. The room was pitch black and he felt like he had been hit by a truck.

“Hello.” He said blearily.

“Good morning Mr. Rozanov. This is your 5:30 wake-up call.” A woman’s voice, altogether too chipper, rang out from his phone.

“Oh shit.” What had happened. He had closed his eyes just for a second. He picked up his phone. There were several texts and 6 missed calls from Shane. “Can you call me back in 10 minutes?”

“Of course. Thank you.” She said as she hung up.

“I am in Texas. I’m sorry I forgot to call. Thank you for the presents .” He texted Shane. He managed to sit up and finish the room temperature Gatorade on the nightstand. He walked over to the medicine Shane had sent and took two Tylenol. He heard his phone chirp.

“Are you ok?” Shane texted.

“Ok just tired. I’ll call you when I get back tonight. Need to rush.” His head swam a little when he stood up and he drank another Gatorade as he got dressed and felt somewhat better. He pocketed the Tylenol and as he drove to the arena he started to feel almost normal.

He felt better as he put on his gear and was able to shake it off. He always felt a little bad after he flew.

Shane picked at his dinner. Yuna looked up at him and then she shared a glance with her husband.

“We really liked Ilya, actually.” She cleared her throat. “He was not what I expected.” It was their first dinner together back in Ottawa.

“Oh really?”

“Yeah.” Yuna gave a small smile. “He’s actually kind of sweet. And he’s head over heels for you.”

Shane felt himself blush.

“I mean...” He ducked his head. “He’s pretty great.”

“We’re happy you worked things out.” David said from across the table. “When does he hear about the trade?”

“His Boston coach told him it would be better if he waited until after this week. So it’ll be a few more days before his agent reaches out.”

Yuna made a face. “Yeah, I guess. He looked so bad at the end of last season. I guess now we know why.”

David looked at her reproachfully and Shane saw him mouth *Not now*.

“That must be hard to wait.” He said to Shane.

“Yeah.” He poked at his dinner again. “It’s hard just not knowing if he’ll be any closer next season.” He wished he still felt the certainty that he had at the cottage, that next year Ilya would be in Ottawa and everything would be fine. Ilya had forgotten to text him last night when he got in to Texas. Shane hoped that was just because he was tired, not because he was getting sick...or sick of Shane. He shook his head as he remembered the soft look on Ilya’s face while they FaceTimed.

“Are you ok, Shane?” He looked up and both parents were looking up at him worriedly.

“I’m fine, I’m just full.” He pushed back from the table and put his plate in the sink then went upstairs to lay down in his room. He pulled out his phone. No new messages from Ilya since that morning.

“Hope things went well today. Call me when you can.” He texted and then lay back on the bed, his phone on his chest.

He hadn’t told Ilya but he had an appointment with a realtor to look for apartments for next year. He loved his parents but he was going crazy staying with them again. He was afraid of going back to Montreal; of running into his teammates. He still hadn’t told them, even Hayden and he couldn’t imagine what their reaction was going to be.

His phone buzzed.

“Hard but good. Going to bed.” Ilya had texted. Oh. His heart fell a little.

“I love you Shane.” That helped. He clicked over to the apartment listings the agent had sent over, he would go look at them and then send Ilya the ones he liked.

He lay on his bed, staring up at the glow in the dark stars he had put up when he was 8 years old. He took a deep breath and reopened his message app.

“Hey, do you have time to talk this week? I know you guys are staying with Jackie’s family.”

Hayden texted back almost immediately.

“I can talk in an hour. Trying to get these monsters to bed.” He sent a photo of the twins in the bathtub, with as much water on their floor as there was in the tub.

He sent back a thumbs up, his heart beating quickly.

Ilya lay on the hotel bed. His cough was almost gone and while he ached all over, he felt like he had played his best today. It had been a hard workout with other players from around North America. He had even met most of them before, which made it suck less.

When he got Shane's text, he just didn't feel like talking. It wasn't just his allergies or the skating that had him feeling tired and wrung out.

At the end of the day, they had been showing in the locker room. Ryan Maguire, from the New York Rangers had picked up his phone and immediately grinned down at it.

"What's that?" Ilya asked, not used to seeing him smile like that.

"Oh. My wife is having a baby. She just sent me some photos from her checkup."

"Oh." Ilya had to stop himself from pulling out his phone.

"Congrats, man. Your first?" Another guy called from across the locker room.

"Yeah." Ryan ducked his head. "We're really excited."

"That's awesome! Congratulations."

Another guy gave him a pat on the back as he left.

Ilya got dressed quickly, feeling an irrational surge of jealousy, and drove back to his hotel. He felt selfish, greedy. He wanted to tell everyone that he was going to be a father. Instead, he felt like it was a shameful secret. He couldn't blame Shane. On an intellectual level he understood, but he felt sad and frustrated and he wasn't in the mood to talk.

When he woke up the next morning, his muscles hurt worse than ever and his cough was back.

Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

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

”This makes sense. This actually fucking makes sense.” Hayden’s voice said from the phone. “Shit. You disappeared every time we played Boston. Every single time. We thought you had some girl there, but even when they played in Montreal...but fuck Shane, pregnant? What the fuck are you going to do? And Ilya? He’s such an asshole.”

Shane could hear him pulling the phone away from his face and talking to someone.

“Yeah ok, I hope you’re ok but Jackie heard everything.”

“That’s fine.” Shane mumbled. Fuck, what was one more person?

“She says congratulations. Oh shit, yeah, I guess I should have said that too. But what shitty timing, man. We really need you. I hope they get their heads out of their asses and let you come back.”

“Yeah, me too.” Shane said unsteadily. Hayden was taking this much better than he thought, which wasn’t saying much.

“Maybe our kids can play together?” Hayden said.

“Are you having more?” Shane asked. There was a laugh in the background.

“Jackie says no.” And then the phone was taken away.

“Hey Shane, Hayden is being an idiot. We are really happy for you. I can’t believe you’re getting married to Ilya Rozanov.” Jackie said.

That makes two of us.

“Let us know what we can do. We love you and we’re sure we will love Ilya when we get to know him better.” Shane could hear Hayden protesting and he grabbed the phone back.

“Maybe Jackie will.” Hayden muttered.

They had talked a little while longer, and that had been that. It felt like a huge weight off his shoulders. Someone else knew now. The world hadn’t ended. He knew Hayden and Jackie wouldn’t tell anyone else.

The thought of watching all of their kids run around in a group- his and Hayden’s- made him smile a little bit. And he was going to look at apartments the next day where he and Ilya could live *together*.

Shane sat in his car as he texted Ilya. The realtor had focused on Glebe and Old Ottawa and there were two modern, walkable apartments for sale. The entrances were discrete and Ilya would probably be able to come in and out without being noticed.

She had left him her card as well as a folder with pricing options for buying and had looked briefly at his abdomen before letting him know if he needed more space in the future, there were some homes nice homes that would be coming on the market in the next year.

He liked the thought of having an apartment. It was safe; inside a building, closed off. Houses seemed too open. Besides, the places he had seen today were really nice.

He sent both listings to Ilya with a brief note. "Need to not live with my parents anymore. Let me know which one you like."

He expected a joke from him about "Mr. Real Estate." But nothing came. Even as the end time for the clinic came and went. Ilya was an hour behind in Texas and it got later and later in Ottawa.

"Hey, if you didn't like them just let me know. We can look together some other time." He texted again. He chewed on the collar of his T-shirt as he waited for a response. Neither message had been read. It was 8pm in Texas now. Even if he had gone out with the other players, he would have had time to message him, right?

He stood up and stretched. His back hurt more and more as he got bigger.

As he stepped into the shower, he wondered why he hadn't heard back from Ilya. Surely Ilya would text him back sometime tonight? But when he stepped out of the bathroom, he had no new notifications. His thumb hovered over his contacts. Was this his way of asking for space?

He tugged at the necklace around his neck. No, that couldn't be it. He pressed dial and listened as the phone rang and then eventually went to voicemail.

"Hey, it's me. Just give me a call when you get this." He hung up, feeling uneasy.

He stayed up a little later than usual reading and still there was no reply. He called again and it went to voicemail. He started to quietly panic.

This isn't like him.

Even he could tell that something had upset Ilya. He had been evasive and shorter with him, but he wouldn't ignore him like this. But what if he met someone?

Shane shook his head to clear that thought away. He remembered less than two weeks ago, Ilya giving him his mother's necklace, his face soft and beautiful.

You are spiraling. He's probably just tired.

Ilya sat in his rental car. They had finished skating about an hour ago and he still couldn't find the energy to drive back to the hotel. He could barely remember that day. He had woke

up feeling hot and achy but had tried to get as much water down as he could. At one point, he remembered the coach telling him to take a break, that he looked tired, but he had waved it off. He had to look good. He could see reporters sitting in the stands. He knew he was being watched. He had to prove that last season was a fluke. He had to be closer to Shane next year. Had to. Even now, he felt a deep ache that had nothing to do with his illness at the thought of being apart from him.

His head was swimming and he finally pulled out his phone and opened up the Uber app. There was no way he could drive. He just needed to go back to the hotel and go to bed early and he would be fine. He could pick up the car tomorrow.

As he booked his car, a call came through from Shane. Fuck. He sent it to voicemail. He would call him when he woke up. He would just worry him if they talked now. Shane was already doing so much. He didn't want to be a burden.

As he got out of the Uber, the driver looked at him. "Are you ok? You don't look so good."

Ilya knew he was pale and sweating but he waved him off and staggered into the hotel. It seemed like it took forever to get to his floor and he had to lean against the wall in the elevator for support.

He finally got to his room and didn't even have the energy to get undressed before he collapsed on the bed and fell into a deep sleep.

Shane woke up suddenly. It was still dark outside. He grabbed his phone off the bedside table. It was 5:17am. He had no new calls or texts.

"Fuck." He whispered to himself. He called Ilya again, not caring it was even earlier where he was. It rang again and again.

He took a deep breath and then went back through their texts to find the name of the hotel where Ilya was staying. He had to call, he didn't know how to get in touch with anyone from the clinic or Ilya's friends or anyone.

He listened, his heartbeat thudding in his chest as the phone rang. A tired sounding man picked up.

"How can I assist you?"

"Uh...I..." Shane stammered. "I have a friend staying there and no one has heard from him in the past day. Can you go check on him?"

"Just a day?" He asked and Shane felt like an idiot.

"Yeah. He was sick and I just wanted to to make sure he's ok."

There was a deep sigh and then he took Ilya's name from him.

“I’ll call his room and then have housekeeping go see if he’s there if I can’t get a response. I’m going to put you on hold. I mean, he’s probably fine.”

Shane listened to the canned hold music for several minutes. He got up to pace. If Ilya had answered, he would have let him know by now, right? He rubbed a hand absentmindedly where a foot or something was shoved against his ribs. *Please be ok, please be ok.*

He wanted to hang up and call again but then he was afraid he wouldn’t be able to get through. He started to feel faint. Should he wake his parents up for this? It had been almost half an hour now.

He grabbed the crucifix without realizing it when he was abruptly taken off hold.

“Oh hi.” The voice on the other end sounded more awake. “I’m sorry for the wait. It’s uh..it’s good you called when you did.”

Shane wanted to scream at him to get to the point.

“So no one picked up when I called the room and housekeeping said no one answered but they thought they heard someone in the room so we went in and your friend was really sick. He was like, burning up and wouldn’t wake up all the way. So we called 911 and EMS just came. They’re taking him to Houston Methodist. So....”

“Will he be ok?” Shane asked, starting to panic.

“He looked really bad. I don’t know.”

Somehow he had the presence of mind to mutter a quick thank you before hanging up.

He sat heavily on his bed. Ilya was sick and he was thousands of miles away. What was he going to do?

He’s in the hospital. They’ll take care of him.

He remembered being in the hospital months ago and how frightened he had been. He had even had his parents. Ilya didn’t have anyone else. He didn’t even know if they would contact Ilya’s coach or how to get in touch with his teammates. Ilya had literally no one.

If I go to Texas, someone will see me. They’ll make the connection.

He felt frozen in place. This would be the end of hiding, the end of everything. People would know about him and Ilya. They would probably know about the baby. It was getting fairly obvious that he was pregnant and it was too hot to hide behind sweatshirts. He couldn’t move. He didn’t know what to do.

Everything that had been just them would belong to everyone. He had no way of keeping them safe.

What if he’s really sick. What if he dies. And he’s all by himself. Would that be worth it.

A ragged sob escaped him and opened his closed and pulled out his suitcase. He threw it on the bed and quickly packed clothes and toiletries. After a lifetime of traveling it took less than 10 minutes. He sat back on the bed and pulled up flights to Texas. There was one leaving from Montreal in 6 hours. He bought a first class ticket and texted Ilya.

“I’m coming to you. I love you.”

He hoped against all hope that he would see Ilya respond, but it was unread, like all of his other messages.

He heard the door to his parents’ room open down the hall and there was a knock on his.

“Shane?” David’s voice was deep from sleep. “Is everything ok?”

He opened the door, knowing it would be obvious he had been crying.

“No. Ilya is really sick. I called to check on him and they said he wouldn’t wake up. I have to go. I can’t make him stay all by himself.” Tears started spilling over his eyes as he talked.

“What? Ilya’s sick?” David rubbed his eyes, waking up all the way. “What? When did that happen?”

“I don’t know. He didn’t sound so bad the last time we talked. Like it was just a cold.” Shane swiped at his eyes. “I have to get there, Dad.”

“Hold on.” David guided him back towards the bed. They both sat down, side by side. “Let’s think about this. I don’t want you to go by yourself.”

Yuna appeared in the doorway, wrapping her bathrobe around herself.

“Is something wrong with Ilya?” She asked sleepily.

Shane felt like he was going to explode. “Ilya is in the hospital. I have to get there. He’s all alone. What if he…?” He couldn’t finish the sentence. It was too awful to even contemplate.

Yuna looked down at the phone in his lap.

“Did you find a flight?” She asked.

“Yeah. It leaves in 6 hours.” Fuck, how was he going to wait that long? He wanted to be there right now.

“Ok. David, Can you drive us to the airport? Someone will probably see you and they may connect you with Ilya. Do we want to put out a statement? We should call Farrah on the way and let her know we are going public so we can get ahead of everything. I had something drafted just in case something like this happened.”

Shane thought for a minute and found he didn’t really care anymore. All he wanted was to be with Ilya. Their daughter rolled inside of him and he put a hand on his belly, on the only piece of Ilya he had.

“Yuna.” David said quietly. “Maybe not now. And get me a ticket, too. I’ll let work know there was a family emergency.”

She nodded. “Ok. Two tickets.” She strode down the hall and Shane could hear her opening drawers and packing.

David pulled him closer so their shoulders were touching.

“Ilya’s young and strong. He’ll be okay.”

Shane nodded shakily, wishing he had the same kind of certainty.

Chapter End Notes

Ilya isn’t going to die! We don’t do untagged major character death in this house!

Thank you all again for your support on this fic 

Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

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

The first thing he noticed was the dry air flowing into his nose. He lifted a hand to brush it away and it encountered plastic. He winced as even that small movement was painful. He felt like he had been hit by a truck. His entire body ached and he was more tired than he had ever been in his life. He groaned quietly and then opened his eyes.

Oh. This wasn't good. This was definitely a hospital.

The last thing he remembered before this was going to sleep at his hotel. And somehow he ended up here.

"Ilya? Are you awake?" A man said off to his left. He slowly turned his head.

Shane's father was sitting at his bedside.

"Is Shane ok?" He was suddenly flooded with fear and tried to sit up but he couldn't.

"Shane is fine. The doctors didn't want him in here because you have a really bad case of the flu and they didn't want him to get sick. But he's in the waiting room with Yuna and crawling out of his skin." David yawned and pulled his phone put. "I'll let him know you're awake."

"Oh." As he woke up more, he noticed an IV going into his arm, hooked up to a large bag of fluid.

"You're really sick. You got really dehydrated and had some muscle breakdown." David continued as he texted.

Ilya blinked. David seemed calm but his eyes were red and tired and his clothing was rumpled, like he had slept in it. There was a small pile of coffee cups and food wrappers next to him.

There was a knock at the door and a doctor stepped into the room.

"Mr. Rozanov, you're awake!" He said.

Ilya scowled. The doctor looked like he was twelve.

"Can I talk about all of this in front of your..." he trailed off.

"Future Father-in-Law." David supplied.

"Oh. Great." He nodded. "So your labs are looking better. Your kidney function looks better after the fluids and your blood cultures are negative. We will keep you on fluids through tomorrow and if you can eat and drink you may be able to go home in a few days."

Ilya nodded still feeling like he was ten steps behind.

“Thank you.” David replied for him.

The doctors nodded and turned to leave, then paused at the doorway.

“I just wanted to say Congratulations to you and Sh- Mr. Hollander. My husband and I are big fans. We had a baby last year.” His eyes crinkled in a smile. “You’re going to be busy so rest up.” He left, shutting the door behind him.

Ilya smiled and then blinked as the realization hit him.

“What did he mean? Congratulations? He knows about the baby? Because Shane is here?”

David exhaled and paused, as if he was picking his words carefully.

“When we got to the airport, Shane was recognized and they found out what flight we were taking, that we were going to Texas. There was a lot of interest because of his ‘injury’.” David made scare quotes. “And we were followed from the airport here. They wouldn’t let us visit at first. Because we aren’t related. Shane was upset and there was a small scene-“

A small scene. Ilya mouthed to himself.

“-which was picked up by some of the visitors and put online. People put two and two together and things have come out. About you and the baby.”

Ilya laid his head back on the pillow, defeated. Embarrassingly, he could feel tears welling up in his eyes. This was everything Shane had been trying to avoid.

“Is Shane ok?” He asked, hating the wobble in his voice.

David nodded slowly. “He was so worried about you. We all were. I don’t think any of us have had time to process.”

The phone buzzed in his lap.

“Shane said the doctor told him he could come in for a few minutes.”

Ilya’s heart leapt at the thought of seeing Shane and he only had a few seconds before the door flew open.

“Ilya!” Shane rushed in, wearing a surgical mask, followed by Yuna. They both looked exhausted. Ilya could barely see Shane’s face under the mask but there were dark circles under his eyes. It felt like ages since they had seen each other.

Shane looked at him for what seemed like forever and then sat in the chair that David had vacated and buried his face in his chest. Ilya faintly heard David and Yuna step out. He realized Shane was crying quietly into his hospital gown.

“Shane...” he lifted his hand again and tangled his fingers into Shane’s dark hair.

“Ilya. Oh my god. I was so worried. What if you didn’t wake up?”

“What happened? How did I get here? How did you get here?” The time after he fell asleep at the hotel was a large blank spot.

“Ilya.” Shane swallowed and pushed himself up. He put his hand on top of Ilya’s as if to convince himself that this was real. “You didn’t answer any of my texts or calls on Tuesday. And then I woke up really early on Wednesday and I was so afraid and I still hadn’t heard from you...so I called the front desk and your hotel and asked if they could check on you. And you were really really sick and they called an ambulance. And then we flew down to be with you.”

“Shane.” Ilya was overcome.

“There was a minute though,” Shane continued, not meeting his eyes. “Where I didn’t want to come. Because I was so afraid of what would happen. But I couldn’t live with myself if you were really sick and I wasn’t there. Oh my god Ilya, I was so scared. I can’t do this alone.”

“Shane.” Ilya said again.

“And I’m so ashamed that I even thought about staying in Ottawa when you were here in the hospital.” There were tears soaking the top of his mask, under his eyes, and Ilya could see it pull against his face as he drew in great, shuddering breaths.

He wished he was strong enough to fold him into his arms.

“Shane. You saved my life.” He turned his hand over so he could squeeze Shane’s hand.

“And I don’t know what’s going to happen. I might have just screwed everything up. If I had been quieter. If I-“

“Stop.” Ilya tapped his wrist with his thumb. “Shane. You did so much. I wouldn’t be here if not for you.

“We can wish things were different but we are what we are. I will never regret that we are going to get married. I will never regret our daughter.” He felt certain in a way he rarely experienced. “We will face together.”

“Fuck Ilya. I love you.” Shane was squeezing his hand so hard it was painful.

“I love you, too.”

They sat there in that moment, not knowing what this meant for them, their careers or their family but that they had each other for now.

He fell asleep shortly thereafter and when he woke again, he was alone. He could hear a woman speaking outside his room but it was too quiet to hear what she was saying. It was

bright outside, like an early morning light. He had no idea what day it was. He still felt like he had been hit by a truck but it had maybe been downgraded from a semi to a pickup.

His phone was plugged into a charger next to him and he reached over to grab it, remembering at the last second that there was still an IV in his arm.

He had too many notifications to scroll through so he clicked through to messages, looking for Svetlana and his agent.

His new agent had left a single text. "Call me when you wake up. We have a lot of work to do."

Svetlana sent him a link to the video of Shane at the hospital that had been seen by everyone and their dog at this point. He scrolled past it for now, not knowing if he could stand seeing Shane so upset.

He put his phone down. He didn't know what to do. He couldn't make himself feel upset that he and Shane were out in the open. But he was worried it would affect his ability to be traded, Shane's ability to return to Montreal. But a secret, shameful part of him thrilled that everyone knew that he and Shane were together.

A still deeper part of him was terrified. What would this mean for his spot on the Raiders? Would he still be Captain? Would he lose his job? The thought of losing his visa and having to return to Russia opened a deep terror. His heart rate sped up on the monitor and he felt the edges of his vision start to grey out.

This is what he had been afraid of, the whole time. The thought of leaving Shane alone, not knowing when he would be able to come back.

There was a quiet knock on the door and Yuna stepped into his room.

"Ilya-" she started, seeing something on his face.

He turned, not wanting Shane's mother to see him like this.

"What is it? Is Boston giving you trouble?" She sounded angry but not, he realized, at him.

He shook his head, feeling tired and worn out and weak and not wanting to be any of those things in front of Yuna.

"No. I don't know. I need to call my agent." He sighed.

Yuna sat down beside his bed. She also looked tired. She wasn't wearing makeup and her hair was back in a ponytail. Every time he had seen her with Shane she had looked invincible. But today he realized this was taking a toll on all of them. That they were worried about him, maybe only inasmuch as his life affected Shane's, but it was still more than anyone else had worried about him in a long time.

"There has been a lot of blowback." She started, taking a sip of her coffee. "But also a lot of support."

He waited.

“I think we could still target Ottawa for a trade. It makes it more favorable for Boston- this coming out. It makes it obvious that you want to be traded for personal reasons, not dissatisfaction with the team.”

“But I didn’t-“ he struggled in his mind, trying to figure out what day it was. “-finish clinic and now it’s over and I was in the hospital almost the whole time.”

Yuna shrugged. “It’s not ideal. But we could either move now or take some time in pre-season before asking for a trade.”

He sighed. He hadn’t spent much time playing in the preseason in several years.

“What about Shane?” He finally asked. “Has he heard from Montreal?”

Yuna’s mouth twisted and she was quiet for a minute.

“We have a formal meeting next week.”

There was something she was leaving out and he waited, afraid to ask more.

“I don’t think he will go back after next season.” She finally continued.

That felt like a blow and Ilya screwed his eyes shut. How could they? Shane had built a dynasty. When they had been drafted, Montreal hadn’t been to the playoffs in 3 years and he had won two Stanley Cups for them.

“We are unhappy, of course, but Shane ultimately doesn’t want to stay in a hostile environment.”

“So what will he do?” He finally asked.

Yuna sat down next to his bed.

“Take some time, think about options.” She folded her arms and leaned back. “He’s never been disappointed before. He was their golden boy and as soon as he did something ‘wrong’, they dropped him.”

“Fucking your rival for 8 years is not wrong?” As soon as the word left his mouth, he wished he could snatch it back, but Yuna put a hand on his arm.

“What you have goes beyond that. And it’s not wrong. You have made him so happy lately. And you take such good care of each other.”

Ilya had to blink as his vision blurred suddenly.

“Do you want me to talk to your agent with you?” Yuna wiped at her eyes and suddenly she was all business again.

Ilya nodded as he pulled up her number. Yuna's hand was still on his arm, comforting and warm. Ilya had missed his mother terribly and he had never thought that anyone could take her place. Yuna still didn't- but it felt good knowing that there was someone who could take care of him.

When she left, he felt calmer. They had a plan. His agent would reach out to Ottawa. If they wanted to wait on the trade, he would wait. She seemed confident it would work out. Ottawa needed a new center badly.

Yuna had brought him some soup from the cafeteria before she left. He suspected that she just wanted to see him eat something. Shane would be by in the afternoon, for another few minutes. He felt the calmest he had felt in the past week.

He opened his phone and started to scroll through the hundreds of texts. He immediately deleted media inquiries and then saw again the link that Svetlana had sent for the video. He took a deep breath and clicked.

It was take in some kind of lobby and started in the middle of a confrontation. Someone was whispering into the phone: "um, I think that's is Shane fucking Hollander and he's definitely pregnant and losing his shit because they won't let him up to see Ilya Rozanov. Am I seeing this? Is this real?" The account was of a sports reporter based in Houston. Just their luck.

But what Ilya saw on the video undid him. Shane was obviously crying and yelling at the attendant. He looked wild and out of control in a way he had never seen before.

"-he is my fiancé and doesn't have anyone else. I need to make sure he's ok." He could faintly hear Shane yell.

"Well shit. That's some news." The reporter whispered into the camera.

Ilya felt faintly disgusted that their life had been put on display like this, but he ached for Shane- not knowing if he was alive or dead.

He could see a security guard approaching the camera and then the video ended. He rolled over onto his side and called Shane.

"Hey," Shane answered as he was driving. "Are you ok? I'll be there in a few minutes."

"Shane." His voice must have sounded wet.

"Ilya? Hold on, I'm parking." He heard the car turn off. "Are you ok? Did something happen?"

"Shane, I saw the video."

"Oh. Yeah. That."

“I’m so sorry. I should have gone to the doctor, I should have rested. You should not have had to come here to take care of me.”

Shane didn’t sound angry often but he did now.

“Ilya, these people feel entitled to our lives. Fuck them. I’m over this.”

Ilya pulled back and stared at his phone.

“I’ll be there in just a minute. We’ll talk more then. I love you.”

True to his word, Shane stepped into his room 5 minutes later. He wore a short sleeved button down open over a T-shirt.

“I’m done with this. Do you know what Montreal wanted?” He was breathing hard through his mask. “They wanted me to put out a statement that it was a one night stand, that we got carried away at the All-Star weekend and it was a mistake.”

Ilya startled.

“That’s bullshit.” He said. He could see that Shane’s face was red with anger.

“We’re getting married. You’re not a one time thing. You’ve never been a one time thing. I may not have wanted to be out in the open but I’m not going to lie about what we have.” Shane was pacing now. Ilya watched him from his hospital bed. He was amazing. No one had ever stood up like this for him. He couldn’t believe how lucky he was, that he was going to spend the rest of his life with Shane.

Shane stopped and looked down at him. His eyes were dark and serious.

“It’s a good thing your fans can’t see you right now because you are fucking terrifying.” Ilya said dryly. How was this his life? His partner?

Shane just smiled at him and picked up his hand.

“When do you think you’ll hear from your agent?” He asked. Yuna must have called him right after she left his room.

“In the next day or two. Maybe before I get discharged.” He shrugged, trying to pretend he didn’t feel like crawling out of his skin at how uncertain everything was.

“When Ottawa accepts you as a trade, which they will-“ he added as Ilya opened his mouth to deny it. “-I want to go look at houses. I’m done with hiding.”

Ilya was taken aback and more than a little turned on. He had forgotten how singleminded Shane could be when he had a goal.

He scooted over in bed, ignoring the protest of his muscles.

“Come here.” He said in what he hoped was a husky voice. His mouth tasted horrible. He could smell himself, which was never good; and his scalp itched. He hated looking like this in front of Shane but he missed him so much.

Shane awkwardly climbed into the bed with him and put his head on his chest.

“I’m sorry Shane. I would never have taken this away from you.”

Shane pulled him closer even as his shoulders ached.

“It wouldn’t have worked long term. As soon as we came out, they would have dropped me.” His hand was holding Ilya’s arm so hard it hurt. “We can’t hide this forever. I don’t know why I thought we could. We love each other. We deserve to be a family.”

Tears prickled in his eyes and he rested his cheek on top of Shane’s head. Yes, they did.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for reading and for all the comments and kudos! I am really blown away by the support. ❤️

Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

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

Ilya felt a sharp pinch as his nurse pulled his IV out. She pressed a gauze over the area and put a bandaid over top.

“You can take that off tomorrow.” She smiled at him. “Your discharge papers are on top of your bags. Try to stay out of trouble and make sure you see a doctor if your symptoms come back.”

“Ok.” Ilya tried to imagine a world in which he would go to the doctor voluntarily for something non-hockey related and failed, then reminded himself he was going to be a father and needed to take better care of himself. He wondered if he could buy nicotine gum at the airport.

“You’re all set! Take care of yourself.” She said as she left the room.

Shane rested his hand on his shoulder.

“Mom and Dad are downstairs. Security is going to meet us at a service entrance so we can get out without a fuss.”

Ilya grunted.

“Why do I have to ride in this thing.” He gestured to the wheelchair he was sitting in.

“It’s policy. And I saw how wobbly you were walking to the bathroom.” Shane deposited the papers and the bag of his clothing in his lap. “Come on.”

“Oh, you cannot push me.” Ilya groaned. “You’re pregnant.”

“I’m still stronger than you.” Shane dropped a kiss on his hair and wheeled him out of the room. Ilya was a little annoyed that he didn’t struggle at all.

As he was wheeled down the hallway to the elevators, he grumbled again.

“I should be taking care of you, now.”

“You’ll have your chance.” Shane pushed the down button on the elevator and leaned back, sliding a hand under his abdomen. He was really starting to get big and Ilya still felt a very primal sense of satisfaction at the thought of Shane Hollander having his baby, being claimed by him in a way no one else ever would.

“You’re staring.” Shane admonished him. Ilya brushed his fingers over his.

“You look so good I can’t stand it.” He said with a smile.

Shane shook his head and wheeled him into the elevator.

“You almost died you know.” Shane said as the doors closed.

Ilya knew. He had thought about it quite a bit, actually. What would have happened if Shane hadn’t called his hotel. Would he have ever woken up? What if he had died and left Shane and their daughter alone? The thought felt like something was tearing inside of him.

“Let’s get married.” He said, watching Shane’s reflection in the elevator doors. Shane huffed quietly under his breath.

“Yeah, you asked me already.” He was smiling now, like Ilya was being ridiculous. Without realizing it, he put a hand over where the crucifix rested under his shirt, which warmed Ilya.

“No, I mean when we get to Ottawa. Let’s get married.” Ilya said, still looking at Shane in the elevator doors. His smile slowly disappeared, replaced by something more serious.

“Don’t you want to find out if the trade worked out?” There was a small frown now, the skin between his eyebrows pinched.

“I don’t care. I want to be married to you if I live in Boston or Ottawa or wherever.” He was serious. His time in Texas had been a wash; he might as well have stayed at the cottage two more weeks. Would have actually been better off, he thought, as he would not have almost died from the flu. But it had clarified something for him. That Shane wanted this as much as he did; wanted them to be together, wanted them to have a family. And now they were out in the open, there would be no more hiding.

Shane was quiet for a moment then smiled. He leaned down and kissed his cheek as the doors opened. The only sound as he was wheeled out of the elevator was the quiet squeak of the wheels on the linoleum.

“Yeah.” Shane swallowed. “When we get to Ottawa, let’s get married.”

“What do you want for dinner?” David asked from the kitchen. Ilya groaned and leaned back against the sofa. He couldn’t believe he had been in Texas that morning. Now he was in Ottawa at Shane’s parents’ house. His discharge, the flight home and drive from Montreal to Ottawa were a blur and he felt exhausted in a way that he had never experienced before.

He had held Shane’s hand walking through the airport. Thankfully hockey was not a huge deal in Texas but he saw some phones pointed at them. That was ok now. They had nothing else to hide. It was a new feeling, after almost a decade of sneaking around in hotel rooms, being out in the open, and he had almost wanted to cry with relief. On the airplane, he had

gone to his contacts and changed “Jane” to “Shane ❤️”. Shane had seen him, and taken a quiet breath, like he couldn’t believe it.

And now here they were. In Canada, where he would hopefully stay for a long, long time.

Yuna slumped against his other side.

“Can we just get takeout?” She groaned. “It’s late and I don’t know what we have in the fridge.”

David visibly wilted and untied the apron from around his waist.

“Ok. I’ll make something tomorrow for you tomorrow, Ilya. What sounds good tonight?” He opened a drawer and took out a bunch of takeout menus.

“Dad. We’ll just do DoorDash.” Shane said, his head resting on Ilya’s shoulder. “What do you want?”

Ilya felt uncomfortable. “You pick.”

“The place around the corner has pizza but also really good salads.” Shane said, pulling out his phone.

“Even now you can’t give up your salads.” Ilya smiled and leaned his head against Shane’s.

In his lap, his phone buzzed. He picked it up and saw his agent’s name on the caller ID. He stood up quickly, dislodging Shane and Yuna in the process and walked into the hallway off the living room. He could see Shane and Yuna sitting on the couch, trying to act uninterested and failing miserably.

“Hello.” He said quietly.

“Ilya, are you back in Ottawa?” Rebecca asked. She was his favorite of the agents Svetlana had found who were taking new clients. In a strange turn of events, she had gone to law school with Shane’s agent, Farrah. He was sure they’d had a lot to talk about over the past several days.

“Yes, we just got back about an hour ago.” He was almost vibrating and hoped she did not want to make small talk. “Do you have news?”

“Ottawa wants you.” He exhaled, tension leaving his body. Oh thank god. At least next year he would be close to Shane. “It’s not exactly what we wanted. They want you to sign a 5-year contract.”

“No.” He said immediately, his heart dropping. “That will not work. We do not know where Shane will be next year.”

She made a small noise in the back of her throat.

“I would really advise you to take that offer. I think things will work out better than you think.”

He walked down the hallway a little further so Ilya and Yuna couldn't hear.

“How?”

“I can't say anything yet. But trust me.”

“How long do I have to make decision?”

“If you need a day or two, but I really think you should take this. Trust me on this.”

Ilya looked back towards the living room, Shane was standing in the doorway, his eyes large and worried.

“What is she saying?” He asked.

“Let me talk it over with Shane. We will decide together, ok?”

“Ok. Don't sit on this too long.”

Ilya hung up.

“Ottawa wants to trade, but want me to sign a longer contract. Five years.”

Shane's eyes widened.

“That's amazing. Mom-“ he called back. “Ottawa wants to trade.” Yuna gave a small whoop and ran into the hallway. She hugged both of them.

“You'll be together next year! Oh that's amazing!”

When she pulled back, her eyes were shining.

Ilya sighed. Shane and Yuna were looking at him so happily, like this fixed everything. He hated to put a damper on this, to be the problem again.

“They will trade but for longer contract- 5 years. I don't want to stay here if Shane will not be in Montreal, if you will be somewhere else next season.”

Shane sagged against him.

“It's hard to think that far ahead.” He mumbled.

“When do you meet with Montreal?”

“Tomorrow.”

“Well then we wait and see.” He held Shane as tightly as he could.

It was a long drive back to Montreal. Yuna was yawning behind the wheel as Ilya napped in the backseat. Shane stared out the window and wished that this could have just been a phone call. But that would give the wrong impression, that he was crawling away with his tail between his legs.

Since the news had broken about he and Ilya, he had only heard from Hayden and JJ. Hayden was supportive and understandably upset on his behalf. JJ's message was less straightforward :

"I wouldn't have been mad. You didn't need to lie."

And the silence from the rest of the team was ominous. He had been their star player and captain for almost ten years. He hadn't been close to most of the players but had felt like a solid leader. They were a strong team.

He leaned his seat back slightly and felt his daughter nudge his side. He was wearing a button down shirt under a blazer and felt slightly wilted from the heat, even in the air-conditioned car. As they passed through the suburbs and grew closer to the city, his anxiety grew until Yuna pulled up at the rink where he was meeting Thierault and the GM.

As they walked across the parking lot, he remembered the first time he had seen the arena as a rookie. How anxious and excited he was and how certain he was that he would do anything not to let his team down. How at that point, Ilya had been a confusing attraction.

But I'm not letting them down, they're letting me down.

He had spent time researching other professional athletes who had been carriers. Most of them stepped away for a season and then returned. Many had still won awards. He knew he would be one of them.

Ilya woke up as they arrived. Farrah was there as well, waiting for them in the parking lot.

She shook Shane's hand as he got out of the car and walked with her into the building.

"Let me do most of the talking, ok?" He nodded, wondering what she had up her sleeve.

They wandered through a maze of offices until they reached his Thierault's. He could hear echoes of players' voices down the hallway, getting ready for the preseason.

They opened the door and Thierault was sitting at his office with the GM and another man. They looked somber and Shane's stomach felt like lead.

The GM was in his early 60's. He reached out a hand and smiled, but it didn't quite reach his eyes.

“Hello Mr. Hollander. We appreciate everything you gave to this team. But let’s cut to the chase.”

Gave. Past tense.

“Unfortunately, some of our actions don’t align with the culture priorities of our organization and we don’t feel it’s best for our relationship to continue. You will be put on waivers for the upcoming season.”

Shane couldn’t speak. He felt the words like a slap across the face. They knew no one would sign him for this season. How could they? His eyes stung and he forced himself to sit up straight.

Farrah slid a folder out of her briefcase.

“That’s so interesting.” She said, opening the folder and pulling out a small stack of papers. “This is Shane’s contract. And there are a few clauses in there that I’d like to review.

“The first, is that he had paid parental leave, and since he was already out on injury and was not cleared to return, he cannot be fired or out on waivers during this time.”

The GM and the third man, who Shane realized must be their lawyer, coughed and shifted.

“However, after Shane’s third year with the team, which was four years ago, his no-trade clause expired, and he may request a trade at any time. Including while he is on leave. His new contract will not start until the following season and you will be obligated to pay his full salary until that time.

“I am happy to review this again with you, if needed.”

Shane looked out of the corner of his eye at Farrah and Yuna. His mother looked a little smug. Had she been responsible for this? With warmth in his chest, he realized that he was surrounded by smarter people and he was so glad they were on his side.

“We’ll look this over of course.” The lawyer said.

“Of course. It’s won’t change anything.” Farrah stood up and pulled her bag over her shoulder.

On the way out of the building, he saw some of this teammates walking down a different hallway. It was like they didn’t see him at all. He thought he saw JJ lift this head but then turn back and walk away. It stung, but he kept walking.

He couldn’t believe this was how it ended for him and Montreal. That he would never play with Hayden again. He would need to text him. Hayden had been optimistic- certain that the team needed Shane too much to let him go.

“Well.” Shane let out a huge sigh as they god outside. He took off his jacket in the sudden rush of heat. “That takes care of this season. But after that?”

Farrah was frowning down at her phone. “Let me work on this for for you. Would you want to play on the same team as Ilya?”

He paused for a minute and realized he was gaping at her.

“You mean for Ottawa?”

“You may have not realized but their second line center is retiring after this upcoming season and they don’t have much depth. Adding Rozanov helps, but the two of you together...” She trailed off and smiled. “You could really make that team.”

Shane held his breath, not even daring to think about it. But as Ilya stepped out of the car and made his way towards him, he allowed himself to feel something like hope.

The drive out of the city felt strangely final. He realized he would never be a Metro again. He watched as the city vanished in the rearview mirror and then glanced over at Ilya next to him. He was strangely quiet.

“Will you miss Montreal?” Ilya finally asked.

“Maybe someday. For now I just feel...” he frowned. Words sometimes didn’t come easily to him. “Used? Like they wanted what I represented. And as soon as I was something else, then suddenly I wasn’t good enough.” His voice cracked on the last phrase.

“Oh Shane.” Ilya held one of his hands in both of his.

“I could have told you years ago Montreal was terrible except for you. The fucking worst.” Ilya continued. Shane lifted his head in indignation but Ilya continued with a soft look on his face.

“You are amazing. The best person I know. If they don’t see that, fuck them. You will be great on another team, but they suck without you.”

Ilya rested one of his large hands on Shane’s belly.

“I think it will work out. With Ottawa. And we will have our family there. And we will take that shitty team and make it something great.”

“Ottawa isn’t shitty!” Shane protested.

“Is a little shitty. But not for much longer.” Ilya’s mouth quirked up in a smile.

“This is your new team you’re talking about. Have some loyalty.” Yuna chided from the front seat, but she was smiling.

“Maybe our new team. Who knows?” Shane looked at Ilya. They could do it. They could be teammates. “It could be really great.”

“You think we could look at houses tomorrow?” Ilya asked, yawning. In an almost silent whisper he added, “we cannot fuck at your parents house. You are too loud.”

Shane blushed and hated it.

“We can go look at houses. Maybe apply for a marriage license?” Shane added.

Ilya was looking at him with such naked fondness that it almost hurt. He squeezed their hands together.

“You guys are getting way ahead of yourselves. Ilya, please call Rebecca back and tell her you will sign with Ottawa before I drive off the road.” Yuna laughed.

Ilya pulled out his phone and texted her.

“Ok. Is done. We are good.” He laughed.

Shane rested his head on his shoulder and looked ahead at the highway leading to Ottawa unspooling in front of him like their future.

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the delay getting this chapter out! Work was killing me like Hollander and I injured my thumb, which may not seem like a big deal but I have written this entire fic on the notes app of my phone and it really slowed me down.

Thank you again for all the comments and support! We are getting close to the end.

Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

2% plot and 98% fluff

It was almost 2am and Shane couldn't sleep. This wasn't unusual in and of itself. He was an anxious person; even he could admit this about himself. And as his pregnancy had progressed, there was more and more physical discomfort: his back hurt, his feet hurt. But this was different. He listened to Ilya breathing quietly next to him and tried to let the sound sooth him as it usually did.

There was just *so much* happening. In the past few weeks, Ilya had signed with Ottawa, they were closing on a house this week and they were getting married *tomorrow*.

Svetlana had come into town that night and Ilya had gone to meet her for drinks. He had invited Shane but Shane was exhausted and couldn't drink anyways. So he stayed in at his parents' house and watched movies with his parents on the couch until Ilya got home. He knew that there was nothing between the two of them but he didn't ever know if he would like Svetlana.

Rose would be arriving in the morning on an early flight from LA. And Hayden would be there. He would be around all his close friends and family. And most importantly, Ilya. But he still felt on edge.

And underneath that anxiety was this fact: Shane hated change. And even though these were all good changes, sometimes he still felt blindsided by how quickly things were moving. He thought back to his younger self, awkwardly approaching Ilya outside of a rink in "the middle of fucking nowhere". If he could have ever anticipated that he would spend the rest of his life with someone that he had been obsessed with; telling himself it was because he was the best hockey player he had ever seen, he would have thought he was crazy.

He didn't regret being out and he didn't regret being with Ilya, but when he thought of being *perceived* for the rest of his life, it was so much. He had never thought he was gay, then he never thought he would be open while he was actively playing, and here he was, engaged to a man and having his baby and trying to keep playing and hockey, the thing that had always been his North Star, was suddenly so complicated. Farrah had told him to trust her about Ottawa and he wanted to believe that it would work out, but he just didn't know.

He wanted to be able to step outside of his life for a minute, to pick things up and examine them and think about everything. Part of him had never been happier. Another part just wanted to yell “stop”- just so he could have a minute to breathe. He hadn’t realized that his breathing had quickened until Ilya’s steady tidal breathing halted and he heard him roll towards him.

“Shane?” Ilya’s voice was deep and raspy from sleep. “Are you ok?” He pulled Shane against his chest and kissed his forehead.

He nodded and held Ilya harder. He could feel his heart beating steadily under his ear- the beat that ran through his entire life.

Ilya pulled back and turned on the bedside lamp so he could look into his face and his lips parted slightly as he saw Shane’s expression.

“Oh sweetheart, what is the matter?” He murmured.

Shane shook his head, wishing that he could just be happy. That he was getting everything he had never even allowed himself to want.

“It’s so much.”

“So much...?” Ilya ran a thumb under his chin.

“There’s just a lot going on.” He mumbled, feeling stupid. This was everything.

“I know. It is a lot.” Ilya soothed.

“Are you happy about it? You left your team and moved to Canada.” He felt small and couldn’t believe he was asking this. “What if you regret this. Leaving Boston, being a dad, marrying me.”

Shane was crushed against Ilya again. “Do you? Are you sorry about this?” Ilya asked, quietly devastated.

“No, no.” Shane answered. “I just can’t....its hard to adjust. I want this. I want you. It’s just...”

“Overwhelming?”

Shane nodded against him.

They lay there, holding each other.

“Is scary for me too. But there was so long where we hid. And I am more scared that we might have stayed broken up.” Ilya admitted.

Shane kissed his chest. That thought scared him too.

“And we got back together for the baby.” He murmured.

“Not just for the baby. Maybe just at first.” Ilya lifted his hand and put it on top of Shane’s, resting on his chest. “I could not live without you. I know this now.”

Shane had known that, as soon as Ilya had left in the hospital in Montreal. He knew it now, months later.

“I love you, Ilya.” He said quietly.

“I love you. More than anything.”

Shane’s mind went back to something Ilya had just said.

“Are you scared, too?”

Ilya was quiet for so long that Shane thought he had fallen back to sleep.

“Yes.” He felt Ilya take a deep breath and swallow. “I have never had a family, a real family. I will probably fuck it up. You know me.”

Shane rubbed his chest. “I don’t know either. I’ve barely even had girlfriends.”

Ilya laughed softly under him and slid a hand over his stomach.

“And look how well those girlfriends turned out.”

Shane gently butted his chin with his forehead.

“What if you get bored. When we aren’t sneaking around. When it’s just me that you’re with. I’m not sexy or fun. I’m really into hockey, like, maybe too much. And that’s pretty much it.” He felt the sting of tears in his eyes.

“Shane,” Ilya lifted his head with a gentle finger under his chin. “I have known this about you for ten years now. That you are boring. But I am...” he struggled for a minute with the word. “Captivated by you. I have never wanted these things, a house, a family, with anyone but you. So maybe I am boring, too.”

He reached a thumb up to wipe the tears leaking out of Shane’s eyes.

“Do you still want to get married tomorrow? We can wait if it’s too much.”

Shane looked at Ilya, nothing but love and patience in his expression. He was so beautiful, even with circles under his eyes. Shane knew that 10 years, 20 years from now, he would feel the same way.

Shane nodded.

“I want to get married. But I’m still scared.”

“Me too. But we can be scared together.” Ilya said against his forehead as he lay back down on his chest. He turned the light out and now the darkness was comforting.

His eyes were drooping now and Ilya was warm all around him. He wasn't alone, would never be alone again. His breathing evened out and before he knew it, he was asleep.

In the morning, Ilya woke before Shane. He had pillow creases on his face and was snoring softly. He hadn't been lying- he wanted the kind of life with Shane that he had never wanted with anyone else. It scared him, how badly he wanted it.

He put a shirt on and wandered into the kitchen. This was their last night in Shane's parent's house and Ilya couldn't wait to check into a hotel tonight. He really liked Shane's parents and was glad to know them better, but the lack of privacy was starting to chafe.

Their ceremony was at 10am at city hall. Hayden, Jackie and the kids and Rose and Svetlana would be there with Shane's parents. As he started the coffeemaker and cut up kale and fruit for Shane's gross protein smoothie, he wondered what it would be like if his mother were here. He knew she would be happy for him, would be so proud of him for everything good that had happened. She would be so excited to be a grandmother. His breath caught in his chest when he realized that he would never know what she looked like as an old woman. Before too long, he would be older than she was when she had died.

He turned and braced his hands on the counter and dropped his head between his shoulders. Grief was a funny thing. He lived with a constant mild ache, like a toothache. But right now, it was like a tidal wave. His mother would never get to see that he had made something of himself, would be a father before too long, was marrying the most incredible person he had ever met. He sniffed and wiped his eyes as the coffeemaker beeped and then looked up and saw David frozen in the doorway.

"Ilya..." he crossed over to where he was still grasping the counter. "Are you...is everything all right?"

Ilya nodded and tried to explain. He was afraid David would think he was having second thoughts- that he was leaving Shane after all.

"I was thinking about my mother. She would have wanted to be here..." Ilya's voice cracked. "She died, when I was younger."

David stood with his hands by his side.

Ilya felt stupid. Shane's father was very nice but he had only known him for a few weeks. He didn't need to dump all of this on him. He stood up and turned away while he wiped his face.

"Sorry." He said thickly. His vision was blurry now.

He didn't hear David but he was enveloped in a hug. David patted his back and they stood in the kitchen like that. He didn't say anything for a long time.

"I'm sorry she couldn't be here, too." David's voice was muffled against his shoulder. "I wish I could meet her and tell her that she raised an amazing son."

Ilya tried to keep his breathing steady, even as he wanted to start weeping.

“We’re so happy you’re going to be part of our family. I wish we could tell her that, too.”

Ilya felt his heart overflowing. Of course these kind, generous people had raised someone like Shane. He felt like he had spent a lifetime outside in the cold, looking in at people inside their warm houses. And now Shane and his family were opening the door and letting him in. He sniffed and said quietly.

“Thank you David.”

David patted his back again as they drew apart.

“Anytime.”

David got out four mugs and poured coffee for each of them.

“I know you guys probably can’t wait to have your privacy but we’ve enjoyed having you here. It’s been good getting to know you.” He said gruffly. “I know you guys won’t be too far away, but come back anytime.”

He put milk and creamer into two of the mugs while Ilya dumped perfectly good fruit and vegetables and protein powder in a blender to become something else entirely.

“Good morning.” Shane said sleepily from the doorway.

“I was going bring this to you. Go back to bed.” Ilya smiled as he saw Shane. His eyes were puffy from sleep and his hair was a mess.

I can see this every morning. he thought and felt his heart skip in his chest. He walked over to Shane and gave him a chaste forehead kiss.

Shane must have been tired because he gave Ilya a sleepy smile and then turned around and padded back to their room. Ilya turned back to the blender and Shane’s awful brown smoothie and whistled quietly as he poured it into a glass.

A few hours later, they sat in the backseat of a limousine on the way to the courthouse. Ilya had wanted to drive them and Yuna looked at him like he had grown another head.

“Ilya, what if you can’t find parking.”

As if he couldn’t circle the block a few times or park in a public lot. He looked over at Shane. Maybe she had a point, it was one less thing for him to worry about. He rubbed his hand over Shane’s knuckles and Shane looked back at him and smiled.

They had almost been late when Shane had a small meltdown over the outfits Yuna had picked out.

“I look awful in this shirt, oh my God.” He had started to take off the button down shirt and trousers. “I can’t wear this.”

“You look very beautiful always, Shane.” Ilya held his elbow. “But if you do not want to wear, you do not have to. Is our day.”

So he had changed into a short sleeved sweater and brought a blazer for photos. Yuna pursed her lips and then gave him a quick peck on the cheek.

“You look great, Shane.” She squeezed his hand and then gave them their boutonnieres. Ilya’s hands shook a little as he pinned the flowers onto Shane’s jacket.

And now they were pulling up to Ottawa City Hall. Ilya tucked Shane against him as they walked inside. Svetlana was waiting inside and Ilya could feel Shane jerk slightly as he saw her. He kept his hand on the small of Shane’s back as they met her.

“You must be Shane.” She leaned forward and kissed his cheek. “I am so happy to meet you.”

“Thank you. You as well.” Shane said, slightly stiffly. Ilya leaned forward and kissed her cheek.

“Thank you for being here, Sveta.”

“I would not miss it. I’m thrilled for you.” She beamed at them. “Shane, I hope you will return to playing next season. Ilya needs someone to keep him in check.”

Ilya had a sinking feeling in his stomach.

“Sveta, we don’t know...”

“It will work out, I am sure of it.” She said, sizing up Shane. “Montreal was stupid to let you go.”

“Agreed.” Yuna said, walking up behind them.

Shane pulled his phone out of his pocket. “Hayden will be here soon. They couldn’t find parking.”

Yuna looked up at Ilya, as if to say *see?*

Five minutes later it seemed as if a small explosion had happened as the Pikes arrived. Rose walked in close behind them and gave Shane a tight hug.

“Watch the flowers!” He put a hand in between Rose and his boutonniere.

“Look at you! So handsome!” She held Shane back, looking him over.

“Hi.” She stopped, looking at Ilya.

He took a short breath. He knew she had been a big support for Shane after the breakup and he hoped that she had forgiven him. Shane had just a few close friends and he didn't want to come between them.

"Thank you for coming." He said hesitantly.

She patted his arm and opened her mouth to say something when one of the Pike children made a run for the stairs, he couldn't tell if it was Jade or Ruby or whoever but Shane put his hand on his shoulder and looked up at him and said: "It's almost our time, maybe we should go up now?"

He wasn't nervous per se, but as he climbed the stairs to the ceremony room on the second floor and saw other couples waiting in line there was a moment when he wondered what their stories were like, what they had been through. Thankfully, they had flown under the radar and although he caught a few people looking up and doing a double take when they saw him and Ilya, they were more concerned with what they had going on and no one held up a camera.

It was a relief for today just to exist with the rhythms of other people- he was marrying the love of his life and he was here with dozens of other people doing the same thing, out in public, just living their lives.

He held Shane without saying a word and they watched Hayden's children- Ilya remembered the word "feral" and wondered if it would work in this context- scramble up and down the stairs, in between the other people waiting for their ceremony.

When it was their turn, they stepped into the room and a middle-aged woman in robes welcomed them and after confirming that their paperwork was in order and they were here of their own free will, began the ceremony.

In the years to come, Ilya would remember very little of the words she said, or of the rote vows. He would remember sliding a ring onto Shane's finger and seeing the glint of his mother's necklace around his neck. He would remember how Shane's hand was shaking a little bit as he gave him his own ring and that it took him two tries. He would remember at the end, looking into Shane's face and seeing his dark, intelligent eyes that were glassy with tears and how they spilled over as they crinkled with a smile. He didn't realize until Shane's face blurred that he was also crying and they briefly kissed and then he held Shane-his husband!- and wanted to never let him go.

They stood for a minute- everyone around them congratulating them- and then made their way out of the room. Ilya looked back for a moment while the next couple was called in and then picked up the youngest Pike child and held him on his hip as the two older girls were captured by their parents and they made their way back down the stairs and outside where their car was waiting. As they walked, he wondered if it would feel like this, to carry his own daughter. It wasn't bad.

"You're a natural already." Jackie held out her hands for Arthur and he grudgingly let her transfer him to her arms.

“This will be you in a few years.” Hayden said as he walked past them, holding a girl under each arm.

Shane knocked their shoulders together.

“It’s good practice.” He said, with a small smile. And when he took Ilya’s hand, he could feel the metal of his wedding ring warm against his fingers.

The small reception was in a private room of a restaurant. It was about a 5 minute drive away and Ilya felt Shane relax against him in the quiet of the limousine. He was staring out the window, his expression inscrutable.

“You ok?” He asked.

Shane turned to him and nodded, his smile crinkling his eyes again.

“I was thinking about the All-Star weekend. You know...” He gestured to his swollen belly.

“I remember it.” Ilya kissed his hair.

“That was the first time I saw you, after I realized that I loved you.” Shane said. “And it was just a little time together. But now we have the rest of our lives.” He broke off. “And I’m just really happy.”

Ilya just pulled Shane against him.

“Me too. Now we just have to go through a lunch with Hayden and his kids and then I can show you how happy.”

When they finally got to their hotel, Shane was exhausted. Despite his reservations, he’d had a good time at the reception. The kids had behaved themselves and despite his initial misgivings, he actually found that he liked Svetlana very much. She and Yuna knew more about hockey than anyone he knew and he thought his mother was happy to find someone who could keep up with her.

He’d found himself looking around the table and couldn’t believe that all of these people had ended up in his life. Especially Ilya. He’d needed to step outside and had spent a minute in the bathroom just to give himself a minute- it was so overwhelming.

When he came back, Ilya had looked up at him almost with wonder, and squeezed his hand as he sat down.

He had that look on his face now, as they stepped into their room. There were rose petals on the bed and an ice bucket with champagne and some small cans.

“Ilya,” he said, laughing. “Is that ginger ale?”

“Yes, you can’t have champagne. Is not fair to have nothing for you.” Ilya said with a faux wounded expression. There was a large flower arrangement and a plate of chocolates next to it with a card.

Shane crossed the room and picked up the card. He didn’t feel like going through his bag to look for his glasses so he had to hold it close.

“Congratulations Shane and Ilya from the Centaurs! Best wishes from our family to yours.” And it was signed by most of the team.

He set it down and Ilya glanced at it quickly.

“I think this will be a better place for us.” He said with a small smile, as if gauging how Shane felt.

“Yeah.” He signed. “That’s very kind. And those look very good.” And then he yawned.

He was beyond tired. He hadn’t slept well and spending all morning surrounded by people, even people that he loved, was exhausting.

Ilya helped him take off his jacket and his wedding ring flashed in the light. He peeled his shirt off and then scooted out of his pants. Ilya brushed some of the petals off the bed.

“Lay down.” Ilya said softly.

“We just got married.” Shane protested weakly.

“I will take care of you when you wake up. I’m not an asshole.”

“You kind of are.” Shane smiled against his lips as they kissed.

“Yes, well you married me anyway.” Ilya laid him back and pulled the covers over him.

He was asleep as soon as he shut his eyes. And when he woke up a few hours later, Ilya was laying next to him. His eyes were barely open and he reached out to brush Shane’s face as he woke up.

“Finally awake.” His smile was soft.

“How long was I out?”

“Not too long.” Ilya slid out of bed and walked across the room to get him a glass of water. Arousal began to thrum inside of him. He felt like they had spent the last several weeks sneaking around his parents’ house. And now that he was rested he really, really wanted to have his way with Ilya.

He accepted the glass from Ilya and drank gratefully. When he handed the glass back, Ilya’s hand grazed his. He remembered, years ago, when they met after the draft. Ilya deliberately placed the glass on the bedside table then climbed into bed next to him.

He leaned forward and kissed Ilya deeply and then rolled so he was on top. He ground forward slightly and felt Ilya's erection under him and gasped.

"Oh fuck, Ilya."

Ilya reached up and rolled one of his nipples between his fingers. It was so sensitive and Shane moaned. He was rock hard now and leaking on Ilya's stomach. He tried to thrust against him and Ilya held him in place with his other hand.

"I bet I can make you come hands free." He looked so smug, Shane wanted to argue but he felt so fucking good. He nodded as Ilya pulled him down and kissed his way down his neck and pecs. He paused when he got to his stomach and traced some of the stretch marks that Shane hated with a finger.

"You're so beautiful like this."

Shane squirmed under him and he kissed his way down and then continued down his thighs. Shane whined and tried to bring a hand down to give himself a few strokes. He could feel himself getting tighter and tighter. But Ilya pinned his hand against the bed.

Ilya chuckled at him and then spread his legs and poured a generous amount of lube on one finger. He slowly, slowly inserted it and then even more slowly, dragged it backwards. Shane felt tears leaking out of his eyes. He was felt like he was about to come and was starting to babble and then Ilya stopped for a second, then pulled out and added a second finger.

"Ilya please oh my god, I need, I need-" he was flushed all the way down his chest and his hands were starting to tingle- all the blood in his body was going to his neglected dick.

"What do you need?" Ilya asked, almost lazily.

"I need you to fuck me." Shane said, wrecked.

He was hauled off his back and flipped over so he was on his hands and knees. Ilya put a hand on his hips and lined himself up and then pushed inside. Shane shuddered. It felt so good, finally being filled up. Ilya leaned forward and laid one hand on the side of his belly. Shane reached back and laced their hands together. He pulled out and then began to thrust. He started out slowly and then groaned, "Oh god Shane, I can't stop, I can't-" and then sped up until he was pounding Shane into the mattress. Shane saw stars and suddenly was rising and growing tighter and tighter and then was coming all over the bed. Behind him, he heard Ilya shout and his hand tightened over his and he lost his rhythm and came.

They collapsed together and Ilya scooped him backwards so he didn't lay in the wet spot.

They lay together, breathing heavily.

"I can't feel my hands, Ilya, holy shit." Shane gasped.

"Same." Ilya lay back. "I have been wanting that for weeks. It was torture. You walking around in your little workout shorts. Too much."

Shane rolled over to face him.

“We never have to live with my parents ever again.”

“Good. I can’t withstand that. I did not want to be rude to Yuna and David.”

Shane scooted over and lay his head on Ilya’s chest. His heart was still racing.

“We’re going to have that big house to break in.”

“Yes. Will be such a burden with my insatiable husband.”

Shane rolled his eyes. “Well you’re going to have to get used to it.”

Ilya leaned down to kiss his forehead.

“I cannot wait.”

Chapter 19

Chapter Notes

Cw: childbirth via c-section. To avoid, scroll to ***

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

“Are you nervous?” Shane asked, standing in the doorway. It was late September and Ilya was leaving for his first pre-season game with the Centaurs. Shane was wearing one of his old Boston sweatshirts and it barely fit him anymore.

Ilya adjusted his tie and exhaled, looking away.

“Are you sure you’re going to be ok?” He responded, avoiding the question. It was strange playing with a new team, but not bad. He was still slowly recovering from the flu and his muscles ached more than he was used to. This team didn’t quite gel and he didn’t know why, but he liked being their captain, had fun at the practices they’d had so far.

He loved coming home to Shane. He would give anything up for the past two months where they had moved into their new house and had just been able to live together. He loved the quiet rhythms of breakfast, lunch, dinner, winding down and falling asleep together.

But he knew Shane was struggling with not starting up the season and he felt guilty about leaving him behind.

“I’ll be fine. Mom and Dad are coming over to watch the game. The rest of the furniture for the nursery is getting here on Saturday so it should be all set by the time you get back.”

It was so close now. Every time he left Shane, there was a small fear in the back of his mind that this was going to go wrong.

But he leaned forward and kissed Shane, then leaned down and kissed his belly.

“I love you. I’ll see you Saturday night.” Shane pulled him up and kissed him, hard.

“Love you.”

He walked away and then got into the car, he knew if he looked back, he wouldn’t be able to go.

It continued like that for the next four weeks. Most of the pre-season games were on the road and every time he got back, Shane was more and more pregnant. He often got home late at

night, and found Shane curled on his side of the bed asleep, sometimes holding the stuffed rabbit he had bought for the baby.

He had a scheduled caesarean at 39 weeks and Ilya prayed that he would make it until then- that nothing would happen while he was on the road.

Finally, they made it- the Centaurs had given him a two week healthy scratch at the beginning of the season. Ilya knew how lucky he was.

And here they were. It was 5am and they had to be at the hospital at 6:30 for the admission. Shane had slept fitfully and Ilya not at all. He snuck a quick breakfast and gave Shane a small sip of water and then they packed up the car.

“The next time we come home, there’ll be three of us.” Shane said as their house disappeared into the foggy early dawn behind them. He put a hand over his stomach, which was really enormous now.

Ilya reached out and grabbed his hand.

“I can’t believe it.”

“Are you scared?” Shane was looking at him.

“Yes. A little.” He squeezed Shane’s hand harder.

“Me too.”

At the hospital, Ilya shouldered their bags as they made their way to Labor and Delivery. They checked in and were taken to their room. Shane was given a gown to change in to and Ilya was struck again by how this was just another day for everyone around them. They were just doing their jobs and his life- their lives- were about to change forever.

Before he knew it, Shane was sitting on the edge of the bed. Ilya was told to hold him while they gave him an epidural for anesthesia. He didn’t want to see the needle going into Shane’s back, so he closed his eyes and buried his face in Shane’s neck. He concentrated on the smell of his shampoo, his quiet breathing.

And then Shane was laying down and they were putting up the bedrails and rolling him back for the procedure. A nurse led him back, and had him wait at the door of the OR. She handed him a mask and booties and a bunny suit.

“These are for you, Dad.”

Dad.

The bunny suit was not meant for a 230 lb hockey player and he knew he looked stupid but he didn’t care. He was so relieved when he stepped into the OR and saw Shane laying on the table, smiling at him. He was led behind the drapes and sat next to Shane. He put his hand on his cheek.

“This is really happening.” He said, his voice shaking.

“Yeah. It really is.”

And it hit him then, that everything between them had led to this moment. Their meeting, their hookups, breaking up and somehow they had come back together and they were married and were getting ready to become a family.

He leaned over and pressed their foreheads together.

He heard the surgeons and anesthesiology prepare for the procedure and then they got started. He kept his forehead pressed to Shane’s and it seemed like seconds later when the lead surgeon said, “We’re getting ready to take the baby out. Do you want to lower the drapes so you can see?”

“Yes!” Shane said, looking down. The anesthesiologist reached forward and grabbed the clips holding the drapes in place and brought them down so they could see the whole view. Ilya had been worried he would pass out- but all he could see was the doctor reaching into Shane and pulling out their daughter.

His heart stopped beating as he saw her for the first time. She was small and wrinkled with a full head of black hair. Another doctor reached forward with a bulb and suctioned her mouth and then she took a breath, her very first one and started to cry.

“We’re going to cut the cord now.” The surgeon clamped the tortuous umbilical cord, then made a cut and suddenly, she was being handed off field.

Ilya had to sit down. There were tears running down his face.

“Oh my god Shane, did you see her? That is our baby. Oh fuck.”

They had done this, somehow. They had made another person who was now swaddled in a blanket and being put in his arms. Ilya was weeping now and he didn’t care. A nurse put her arms under his to steady them and he held her towards Shane.

“Hi.” Shane said softly. He lifted one hand- the one without an IV and brushed her small nose. “She’s so small.”

“Perfect.” Ilya looked down at her tiny face. She wasn’t crying anymore and her eyes were open. They were bright blue. Like his. Like his mother’s.

She had started off as a test result, then an image on an ultrasound and now she was here and she was really real and alive.

Ilya had to take a deep breath. He looked down at Shane who was staring at her with amazement.

“Look at her.” He said quietly. “She’s perfect.”

She was put in a bassinet and a nurse accompanied them back to the room while Shane was stitched up. They were assured it would only be another few minutes until he joined them.

He sat in the hospital room by himself and looked down again at his daughter. She had already worked one arm out of her blanket and he held one of her hands in his. It was so impossibly small and there were already tiny fingernails. He kissed her tiny fingers and she stared at him, blue eyes framed by long lashes.

He rubbed her black, spiky hair. It was so soft. Her entire head fit in the palm of his hand.

He still couldn't believe he was a father- that this baby was his. He was just a dumb, 27-year-old hockey player and somehow he had been entrusted with this small, helpless person. He drew a deep, shuddering breath and wondered when someone would be by to check on them.

Before too long he heard a bed being pushed down the hallway.

"He's been given some pain medicine so help him hold the baby at first." The nurse said as she pushed it inside.

Ilya looked at Shane, so relieved to see him again.

"Hi." He said quietly.

"Hi, yourself." Shane grinned.

"No lifting for now and call us for help when you want to get out of bed. Grandparents are out in the waiting room. Can they come back?"

Ilya looked at Shane.

"In a few minutes." Shane said. She waved and then left the room.

Ilya got up and walked over to Shane. He lowered the baby so he could see her and he held his arms up. Ilya awkwardly handed him the bundle that was their daughter and then put his arms on his to steady her.

"Wow. We really did it." Shane's voice was wobbly.

They stared at her, at what they had made between them. Her eyes were shut again and she gave a small sigh.

"What should we name her?" Ilya asked. Shane had gotten very into baby names in the past few weeks but was determined that they should actually see her before deciding.

"I think Emily." Shane said, tracing the outline of her cheek with his finger.

"Is pretty. What did this one mean again?"

"Rival. To work hard." Shane grinned up at him.

“Rivals.” He chuckled. “Emily Hollander-Rozanov.” Ilya tried it out. He liked it. “Is very pretty, and strong.”

He reached back and pulled his chair next to the bed and then leaned so his head was nearly on Shane’s chest. They sat there, quietly marveling at their daughter.

“This is too good. I can’t believe you are mine.”

He said very quietly.

“Which one of us?”

“Both.”

“Well, get used to it. We’re not going anywhere.”

Five Years Later

As the final seconds counted down in the finals seconds of the MHL championship, Shane paused to look up into the stands. He could barely see his parents and Emily, who had promised to be very good if they let her stay up late, but knew they were cheering. Ilya was behind him and as the horns went off, he felt him skate up beside him and lay his arm over his shoulders.

He pulled Ilya beside him and knocked their helmets together.

“We fucking did it.” He exhaled. It had been an exhausting 7-game series against Toronto. Montreal hadn’t made the playoffs in the past 3 years- something that gave him grim satisfaction.

“Fuck, I love you.” Ilya said, a smile cracking open his face

“Love you too.” Shane braced as they were enveloped by the Centaurs. They had been playing together for four years now, the Centaurs having requested Shane to replace their retiring center when Emily was 5 months old. Shane didn’t like to think about those early days, struggling with Ilya being away, adjusting to being a parent. He’d had a lot of help from his parents, even Hayden. He knew that it had killed Ilya to be away so often. And then the next year, they had been together.

He had wondered sometimes if it would be boring to play on the same team, but then he had fallen in love over and over again watching Ilya as captain, a father.

“Are you going to miss this?” He asked Ilya, as confetti rained down on them.

Ilya looked up and swallowed.

“Yes. I will miss this, but it is time.” Outside of them, only Coach Wiebe, David and Yuna knew, but this was Ilya’s last game. He would announce at a press conference later that he was retiring at the age of 32. He wanted to spend time with Emily. She was getting ready to

start kindergarten Their schedule was so hard on everyone and he wanted to get out before he had any major injuries. As it was, there was a shoulder replacement surgery in his not-too-distant future.

Shane wanted one more season, and he would be stepping up as captain the following year, but sometimes he wondered if playing without Ilya was worth it.

“You think you can win one of these without me?” Ilya said echoing his private thoughts as they watched the cup being brought out onto the ice.

“You asshole, I know I can.” Shane grinned.

The commissioner gave a very boring speech and Ilya shook his head. Shane skated over to where Emily, David and Yuna stood at the edge of the rink.

“Want to help me and Papa lift the cup?” He asked.

She nodded and grinned. As she had gotten older, her hair had gotten curlier and a spray of freckles dotted her nose. He lifted her up and skated to center ice.

“You stink.” She groaned and covered her nose with her hand.

“Well it comes with the territory.” He kissed her face and she giggled as his attempt at a playoff beard brushed her face.

“Daddy that tickles.”

“Don’t worry- it’s going away as soon as we get home.”

They made it to where Ilya was starting to pick up the cup and he shifted her so she was between them. Looking at Ilya and Emily, there were so many things that ran through his mind; how impossible any of this had seemed, how he had thought they could never be anything but a hookup and here they were: husbands and fathers and teammates and they had worked so fucking hard for all of it.

They put the cup back on the ice and skated to where David and Yuna waited. Shane looked up into the rafters and knew that one day, their jerseys would hang side by side. But for now, they had the rest of their lives in front of them.

And he couldn’t fucking wait.

Chapter End Notes

And that’s a wrap!

Thank you to everyone who commented and left kudos. I have been blown away by the support. There are so many amazing fics in this fandom and I appreciate you for

spending time on this one ❤️

The year where Ilya plays for Ottawa while Shane is at home with their baby could have easily doubled the length of this work and I may make this a series and add some one shots later on.

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