For Our Family

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at https://archiveofourown.org/works/77956846.

Rating:	Not Rated
Archive Warning:	Creator Chose Not To Use Archive Warnings
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Heated Rivalry (TV), Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid, Game Changers | Heated Rivalry - All Media Types
Relationships:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov, Shane Hollander & Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander, Ilya Rozanov, Yuna Hollander, David Hollander
Additional Tags:	Angst, Fluff and Angst, Fluff, Domestic Fluff, Angst and Hurt/Comfort, Angst and Feels, Angst and Romance, david hollander - Freeform, Yuna Hollander - Freeform, Unplanned Pregnancy, Pregnant Sex, Anal Sex, Anal Fingering, Top Ilya Rozanov, Bottom Shane Hollander, Pregnant Shane Hollander, Angst and Fluff and Smut, graphic birth, Mpreg | Male Pregnancy, Baby
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-01-19 Completed: 2026-06-05 Words: 33,603 Chapters: 10/10

For Our Family

by Shunkan_Romantica

Summary

Shane was in the last weeks of his pregnancy. He only wanted to spend a couple of days in the cottage alone with Ilya, just the two of them before the baby arrived.

Everything would be alright. Nothing could go wrong, could it?

They had been so naive.

Everything that could have gone wrong did go wrong, putting them through one of the scariest situations of their lives.

Notes

So I had this idea, and before I change my mind, I'm uploading the first chapter.

Chapter 1: The Cottage

Shane was sitting on the front passenger seat next to his Russian husband who was driving their recently purchased luxurious SUV. He was holding a metal white tumbler close to his face as he drank ice cold water from the straw. Ilya couldn't help looking at him every so often. Shane could be doing the most banal activity ever, and yet he would always look like the most beautiful person in the world.

"We could still turn around." Ilya suggested slightly concerned, trying to make sure this was what Shane really wanted.

Shane slowly turned his face towards his husband, fighting the urge to roll his eyes. "For the third time, no. I don't want to turn around. I need to get out and get some fresh air." He stated as he continued sipping water through the straw.

"We should at least tell your mom where we are going. She will worry." Ilya replied back.

"I'll call her when we get there." He said, unconcerned.

"She's not going to like it." Ilya knew that for a fact.

Shane bit his lips in agreement. "I know… She's been great with me– and us, but right now it just feels somewhat overwhelming. I want it to be just us." Shane said as he softly placed his hand on top of Ilya's which was on top of the gear shift. "At least just for a couple of days— before the baby arrives." He said as he looked down towards his large pregnant belly with a tender smile.

Ilya then placed his hand on the side of Shane's belly and pressed it lovingly.

"My baby girl" He said in Russian, loud and proud with a huge smile on his face.

Shane tilted his head slightly, looking down with tenderness. "She's been really good today; my ribs appreciate that."

Ilya gave Shane a mischievous look. "She is always good."

Shane shook his head as they shared a soft laugh.

After a couple of hours, they finally reached their destination. Ilya got out of the car and immediately went to Shane's side to help him out. Even though Shane was able to get out of the car by himself, Ilya wanted to help him as much as possible.

He had witnessed firsthand the toll the pregnancy had taken on Shane's body.

The news of the baby came as a surprise for both of them. Shane had no idea that he was able to bring new life into the world. It was only after a month of getting dizzy and sick that Ilya convinced Shane to go for a check-up. Ilya was very worried since Shane was not only sick,

but also only skin and bones. He had lost so much weight and couldn't keep much down. Nothing could have prepared them for the little heartbeat they heard during the abdominal ultrasound.

They were both shocked. Shane felt mostly confused and in disbelief of the situation, while Ilya was completely terrified for Shane. The doctor had explained to them that Shane's pregnancy was already high-risk just for the fact that he was a man. They were given the option to terminate or to continue the pregnancy.

For both of them it was a no brainer.

Their baby was a blessing. They knew it would change, and realistically complicate, so many things. Still, everything else felt so small and insignificant in comparison to the thought of having a child that was part of both of them. After everything they had gone through, they knew they were capable of going through this new adventure together.

They had each other and that's all they needed.

"Let me get your coat." Ilya said as he opened the back seat's door to get it.

"I'm good, thanks. I'll just go inside." Shane said as he closed the car's door and headed towards the main entrance.

Ilya pretended he didn't listen and put the coat over Shane's shoulders anyway. Shane turned to face him narrowing his eyes with a smile. He then sighed and continued his way towards the entrance while Ilya went to get their bags.

Once they were both inside the cottage, they took off their shoes and headed towards the kitchen.

"So, your great idea for a getaway is coming here to the cottage when it is this cold." Ilya said sarcastically as he went to put their bags in the main room.

"Yes. It actually is a great idea. We have the place for ourselves and just look at this view." Shane said contented as he rubbed the sides of his belly standing by the windows.

The view was breathtaking. There was something about the peace and quiet of the cottage that made it Shane's favorite place to be.

Ilya had to admit the view was one of his favorite things about the cottage. But he'd rather be there during the summer, when they could have barbecues and swim on the lake.

He saw Shane cradling his belly and peacefully staring at the view. "It is beautiful."

"It is, isn't it?—" Shane was interrupted by the strong arms that wrapped him from behind and hugged his pregnant belly. He felt a warm and soft pair of lips kissing him softly along his neck going all the way up to his ear.

"You are beautiful." Ilya whispered to his ear and then rested his face on Shane's shoulder as he hugged him tightly.

Shane smiled. He loved Ilya so much, feeling him close was heaven. “I love you.”

Ilya then broke the hug, went in front of him and cupped his face pulling him towards him.

“I love you too.” He kissed him passionately to then kneel and place his hands on the sides of Shane’s belly, kissing it on several spots. “*And of course, I love you too*.” He said in Russian between kisses.

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“Did you call your mom yet?” Ilya said as he brought their dinner plates to the table.

“Oh shit. I forgot.” He checked his phone and there were two missed calls from his mom and one from his dad.

He called back and put it on speakerphone.

“Shane?”

“Hi mom.”

“How are you? You weren’t picking up, I was getting worried.”

“We’re good. We’re at the cottage right now.”

“What?” She sounded very surprised. “What are you doing over there?”

“We wanted some time alone, before the baby comes.” Shane said.

Ilya raised his eyebrows at him. He wanted to say out loud ‘We?’ but he knew better and didn’t say anything.

“Shane you’re almost full-term. Aren’t you 36 weeks tomorrow?”

“Yes mom. I promise we’re alright. We’ll just be here for a couple of days. This is our last trip as a couple, I really need this.” He said almost pleading. “Once we’re back, I’ll call you so you and dad can come over and help us out finish getting the room ready for the baby. It’s gonna be o—oww.” Shane winced and scrunched up his face for a second.

Ilya deepened his already serious and concerned expression. “You okay?”

“Shane? What is it?” His mom said on the phone.

Shane took a quick deep breath. “I’m okay, she got her foot on my ribs. She’s running out of space in there.” He said facing his concerned husband.

“Oh Shane, I know it hasn’t been easy for you but please take care of yourself.” His mom said on the phone.

“I got this mom.”

The couple could hear a deep sigh coming from the other end of the line.

“I’ll be next to him all the time. It will be alright.” Ilya tried to reassure Shane’s mom, and partly himself as well.

“I know you will.” She sounded more accepting. “Ok then. Have fun and take care! Don’t forget to call me when you get back!”

“We won’t!” They said in unison and ended the call.

Ilya sighed as he shook his head. “I feel bad making your mom worry. She is so good to us.” He continued eating his pasta.

“I know…” Shane said a little remorseful.

Ever since Shane’s parents found out about his pregnancy, they had been nothing but supportive. As the caring parents they were, they were very concerned for Shane at first but after they talked it through with them and became more informed of the situation, they were okay.

When they found out they were having a girl, Shane’s mom was the most excited. She had always wanted to know what it felt like to raise a little girl, and now in a way, she got that chance through her sons. She had already bought so many things for their baby. She called them every day to make sure they were okay and she would also cook for them.

She was wonderful.

Ilya seemed to be very happy about having her close, but Shane couldn’t help feeling a little overwhelmed.

Shane had to come to terms that he would be taking an indefinite pause from Hockey. He also had to deal with all the changes in his body. Morning sickness was so bad, he had to be hospitalized for a few days since he couldn’t keep anything down. Then as the baby grew, he started having issues with is back since his pelvis couldn’t quite accommodate the baby properly. The latest issue he was having was with his breathing. He got out of breath very quickly.

It had been rough.

Ilya and his parents had been there for him. And he loved his baby girl deeply, yet he couldn’t help yearning a bit for those days in which he felt more comfortable.

It was several things that convinced Shane that this trip was the way to go. Just Ilya and him, nobody else, in the cottage that was so special to him.

“I just want to be with you here for a couple of days.” Shane said to Ilya while he began to eat his pasta.

As much as Ilya was concerned for Shane, he understood where he was coming from. Seeing Shane lose weight from all the vomiting and getting hospitalized, seeing him place his hands

on his back trying to find some ease from the discomfort from his growing belly, and now seeing him getting winded just from getting out of the car; it broke his heart. If only he could take some of the pain to make it easier for him, he would have taken it gladly.

“I know. I want to be with you too. Let’s enjoy these next few days together, okay?” Ilya said to Shane with a sincere smile. Anything for Shane.

Shane smiled back softly. “Okay.”

Once they finished their dinner, Ilya took care of cleaning up while Shane sat on the large sofa with his feet up, before they swelled again.

They played video games for a while, before they decided to go to bed and call it a day.

It was almost midnight. Ilya had stayed awake reading one of the books Shane’s mom had given him on parenting. He then felt Shane shifting under the sheets until he woke up.

“Want to pee?” Ilya asked, very confident he was going to be correct.

“Yeah.” Shane said in a deep voice as he slowly sat up and waddled his way to the bathroom. It completely caught Ilya’s attention when he saw Shane coming back completely naked.

As he observed the Russian’s reaction, Shane proceeded to fan himself with his hand and stated. “It’s hot. Don’t you feel hot?” He said now sitting down and laying back down on the bed, keeping the covers off.

“Not really but I definitely feel hot now” He said closing his book and taking his shirt off, throwing it away. He then proceeded to carefully get on top of Shane and kiss his neck passionately.

Shane moaned at the touch. He could never resist to be under the gorgeous man that was his husband.

Ilya made his way down his neck towards his nipples, which were now slightly larger and hyperpigmented and now more than ever, definitely more sensitive. At the same time the Russian’s hand caressed Shane’s thigh, making its way to Shane’s entrance, massaging its rim softly.

Shane let out loud and pleasured moans. It was like fuel for Ilya.

Shane couldn’t resist any longer and turned sideways still holding the back of Ilya’s head pulling it towards his neck. The hand that had been about his entrance was now cradling his large belly.

“Are you okay?” He whispered in Shane’s ear.

He could only nod and moan.

Ilya’s hand went back below and continued massaging Shane. Introducing his fingers one by one.

Shane had missed being this close to his husband so much. When he felt the third finger inside him, Shane then abruptly shook his head. “No.”

“What? What’s wrong?” Ilya said concerned, pulling his hand away.

“I want you.” Shane looked at him determined.

Ilya was caught off guard. “I— I don’t want to hurt you.” Ilya stuttered with a worried glance.

“You won’t hurt me. I need you inside me.” Shane pleaded. “Right now.”

Ilya had been holding back for some time now. He hadn’t been wanting to touch Shane because of his condition. Looking at him carrying his daughter, in a way he seemed holy, too sacred to touch.

But he couldn’t hold out anymore. He had reached his limit. He had him right there pleading to be fucked. He was done.

In one swift move he was inside Shane.

Shane arched his back placing his palm behind him on Ilya’s thigh. Ilya cradled the bottom of Shane’s protruding belly. Shane let out the loudest moan so far.

“Are you okay?”

Shane could only nod and moan.

“I’m going to move.”

“Fuck Ilya, move!” He exclaimed, pressing his husbands head tighter.

Ilya needed no further instructions. He placed a hand on Shane’s chest and proceeded to move the way he knew Shane adored it. “Fuck Hollander.” The Russian couldn’t get enough of his husband. “You are—” He was so agitated; he couldn’t complete his sentence.

Beautiful.

“Deeper.” Shane moaned as he cradled the bottom of his belly for support.

Ilya obeyed and went all out on him. It wasn’t until Ilya finally came and relaxed that he saw Shane panting and gripping the bottom of his belly.

“Jesus Christ. Are you alright?” Ilya said worried placing a hand on top of Shane’s.

Shane only nodded smiling. “I— I— missed you.” Shane said, still trying to catch his breath.

Ilya’s expression relaxed. “I missed you too.” He kissed first Shane’s shoulder, then his temple and finally his belly.

Chapter 2: A Snowy Downhill

It was the early hours of the morning and it was still dark outside. Ilya was woken up by Shane next to him, turning from one side to the other.

“Are you good?” Ilya asked, still sleepy.

“I’m cold, and I can’t reach the blanket.” Shane said trying to reach the blanket that was by their feet.

With a swift move Ilya sat up, grabbed the blanket and put it on top of both of them. “Come here.” He went close to Shane under the covers, pulled him from his torso towards him and then rubbed his belly. Just then he realized he was actually a little cold too. “It’s still early, let’s go back to sleep.”

Shane nodded. They went back to sleep, feeling the scent of each other in their embrace.

A couple of hours later Shane was woken up by his daughter moving inside him. She would always wake up around that time. It was as if she urgently demanded for daddy to stand up and move around. He decided to wait it out keeping his eyes closed in hopes that she would calm down and stay still for a bit so he could get some more sleep. But definitely his daughter had other plans as he could feel her shift restlessly. He then realized that getting more sleep was not going to happen, so he decided to get up.

Ilya felt Shane getting off the bed. “Good morning.” The blond said still sleepy, rubbing his eyes.

He didn’t hear a reply. Once Ilya’s vision was clear, he saw Shane standing in front of the window, staring at the white curtain.

Ilya focused his eyesight better until he realized that Shane was not staring at the window’s curtain but he was actually staring through the windows. The landscape was completely white. It was all covered in snow.

“It snowed last night.” Shane said incredulously.

Ilya got up next to Shane and looked at how they were completely surrounded by snow. “It didn’t just snow, it was a fucking blizzard.” Ilya could see almost two feet of snow surrounding them.

“We’re pretty much buried in snow.” Shane said with a soft laugh as he rubbed his belly. “And I think I still see snowflakes falling. Where’s my phone?”

Ilya looked around. “I think we left them in the kitchen.”

They both made their way to the kitchen and found their phones on the counter. Both of them had been on silent. They both had several missed calls from Shane’s parents.

“What the—?” Shane was confused.

“Did something happen?” Ilya asked noticing all the missed calls.

“I don’t think so. Mom called me, and for some reason I don’t have a good feeling about this.” Shane said pressing the call back option. He waited for a couple of seconds until he noticed that his mom’s phone wasn’t even ringing. He looked at his phone screen.

No signal.

“What? There’s no signal.” Shane said confused.

“What?? Are you sure?” Ilya asked trying to load a video in an app to no avail. “Shit.”

Shane went to his messages and saw that his mom had sent him an audio. He pressed play. “Shane I was watching the news and there is a heavy snow fall alert in your area for the next two days. Sorry to interrupt your trip, I just wanted to let you know. I hope it’s not too bad so you can get home safely. Love you!”

Shane and Ilya looked at each other.

“The signal should come back soon. This has only happened once here, but it was because there was an accident and a tree fell on some cables. It should only be away a couple of hours at the most.” Shane said sitting on the dining table.

“We just have to wait but for right now, we are trapped here.” Ilya stated with a soft laugh.

“We were not planning on going out anyway so, let’s just wait till the snow melts and the roads clear to go back home.” Shane stated as he looked at his husband expectantly. “I’m hungry.”

“Okay then.” Ilya said, raising his eyebrows. “I’ll make us breakfast.” Ilya tried looking up something on his phone and frowned. “Right, there’s no signal. I wanted to try a recipe I saw on ig.” He said pouting.

“This has turned now into an actual meditation retreat.” Shane said with a laugh that was interrupted by a wince.

Ilya looked at him serious.

Shane then looked down and placed a hand on a spot on his belly. “Ow! Gentle. Please.”

Ilya then approached him and placed a hand on the side of Shane’s belly and with a gentle but at the same time a firm tone he bent down to talked in Russian to the baby. “*Sweetheart, gentle please.”*

And as if the baby understood what her dad had said, she calmed down.

“I’m convinced she understands Russian already.” Shane said.

“Of course she can. She’s mine too.” Ilya said proudly, getting also a smile from his husband.

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They had breakfast and since they didn’t have any type of signal or wifi, they spent the morning on the couch, reading some books they had found in the cottage. Ilya also decided to continue reading the book that Shane’s mom had dropped by at their house. He was almost done with it.

“I’m glad you’re having a c-section.” Ilya said as he turned the page of his book. “Everything that happens is crazy.”

Shane stopped reading and looked at him over his glasses. “I know right? I just skimmed through that whole part because it looked scary.” He said going back to his book.

“It is interesting though.” Ilya added. “It says for example, the baby’s first cry is very important because it’s the first time air goes to the lungs and breathes.” Ilya sounded impressed. “It sounds obvious but I didn’t make that connection. It’s the first breath and she will never stop breathing after that until—” Ilya said raising his eyebrows. “Very interesting.” He said nodding.

Shane looked at his husband lovingly. He looked like an indifferent and tough guy with a strong Russian accent to other people, but to him, he was so adorable and caring.

“We won’t ever see her last breath.” Shane added, in a serious but calm tone.

“No, we will not.” Ilya stated. “Are you hungry?”

“Yes. I would very much like a sandwich please.”

“Alright.” Ilya said, putting the book down and heading towards the kitchen to make lunch.

As Shane also closed his book, he looked down at his belly. He could see its surface slightly moving as he felt the baby inside stretching. Shane winced, one eye squeezing shut from discomfort.

“Hey.” He said patting his belly on that spot. “Gentle, baby.” He said as he rubbed it in circles. She wasn’t even born yet and he was already scolding her. He wondered how many times throughout her life and in what other circumstances would they have to scold her. He couldn’t help smiling at the thought of some possibilities. Ilya and him would have their hands full. They didn’t know much about raising a child, but Shane was sure they would figure it out along the way. Shane understood why Ilya couldn’t finish his sentence. It was unimaginable. They already loved their baby so much.

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After lunch, they spent the entire afternoon playing video games. As it was getting dark outside, Ilya noticed Shane was changing positions on the sofa very often. He was surrounded by pillows and every so often he would move them around for comfort. But this time he was taking his time trying to find a good position.

“Are you okay? You look uncomfortable.” Ilya said, pausing the game.

Shane was still trying to find a comfortable position. “She’s got her feet stretching very high up on my ribs and her head is pressing me below. I feel her right in between my pelvis and when I try to sit, it just doesn’t feel right.” Shane said a little annoyed.

Ilya stood up and went to help him adjust the pillows.

All of a sudden, the lights went out.

Since the cottage was in the middle of woods with no public lighting, they were now in complete absolute darkness.

“Oh my God. What happened?” Ilya asked, pressing Shane’s hand tighter.

“This is odd. Maybe there was an accident. Because if the power for the whole cottage is out, then it’s from either the central company or its connections.” Shane said pressing Ilya’s hand. “But don’t worry, the generator is set up to activate in these situations so, it should be turning on soon.” Shane said calmly.

Ilya sat next to him and just like Shane had said, the lights on the house went back on.

“We should turn off unnecessary lights and also plug off some things too.” Shane said.

Ilya then got up and went around the house turning lights off, und unplugging unnecessary appliances. Ilya was now starting to really think coming to the cottage was not a good idea. But he wouldn’t mention it to Shane. Just two more days at the most and they would be heading back. And honestly for Ilya, if it would be only up to him and the road was clear, they would be leaving following day. He knew that would make Shane mad but he would make it up to him. They would be fine.

They remained on the couch. Ilya had finished his book and was now staring at Shane reading.

Shane noticed. “What are you staring at?”

“My boring husband.” Ilya said playfully.

Shane smiled. “Asshole. Help me up I gotta pee.”

Ilya then got to him and pulled him up from both hands. He then went to the kitchen to make something to eat. He was getting hungry and he knew Shane was going to be hungry as well, if he wasn’t already.

They had chicken cutlets in the fridge that wouldn’t take too long to cook so he decided to get that out. He also took out lettuce, tomatoes and some potatoes to put in the microwave.

All of a sudden, Ilya heard loud banging noises coming from their room and a muffled scream.

Shane.

He dropped everything and as fast as he could, he got to the hallway leading to the entrance of their bedroom. His heart stopped when he saw Shane wincing, lying on the four stairs with his head leaning back on the surface of the top of the stairs, one knee flexed backwards and some covers tangled between his legs.

“Oh my god.” Ilya’s world stopped. He immediately ran to Shane. Even though he was only a couple of feet from him, it felt like it took forever to reach him.

“Ah, shit.” Shane whispered as he slowly lifted his head up, biting his lower lip from pain as his breathing became faster.

“Are you okay? Jesus Christ, I got you, don’t move.” Ilya said as he placed a hand behind Shane’s back and the other behind his thighs.

“Oww fuck! Careful! My foot!” Shane said trying to reach for his right foot.

“I got you. It’s okay.” Ilya said lifting Shane as if he was a feather. He went up the stairs Shane had fallen on, careful not to trip on the blanket tangled on Shane’s legs. He headed towards their bedroom. He then carefully placed him on the bed and untangled the blanket from his feet.

“Are you okay? Does it hurt?” He said placing a hand on Shane’s belly.

Shane shook his head. “My ankle hurts and also my back but not as much as my ankle. I was bringing the blanket because I was cold but I didn’t see that corner below and stepped on it and slipped.” Shane appeared to be somewhat agitated, most likely from the scare of the fall.

“Nothing else hurts? How’s the baby?” Ilya asked very worried pressing his fingers on Shane’s belly.

“I think she’s fine. Only my back and hips hurt but not my belly.” Shane said pressing several spots of his belly as checking it just in case.

Ilya’s soul came back to his body. Just then he sat on the bed next to him and hugged him around his belly. “Oh my God.” The scenario of a pregnant Shane lying on the stairs, was still so fresh on his mind. “I never want to see you like that ever again.” Ilya said hugging him tighter.

“I’m okay.” Shane said placing his arms on top of Ilya’s around his belly.

Ilya then kissed his husband’s shoulder.

Shane then felt a sudden rush to go to the bathroom.

“Help me up, I gotta pee.” Shane said turning around and letting both legs hang from the side of the bed to get up.

“Careful.” Ilya said as he held one of Shane’s hands and placed the other on his back to offer him support. “Didn’t you just go? Hold my hand. Can you walk?”

“Yeah. I’m fine.” He said and turned his face to his husband with a soft smile. “I just need to —Ahh!” Shane let out a sharp cry feeling something burst inside him which made him press Ilya’s hand with all of his strength and cup his belly from below.

“What’s wrong?!” Ilya raised his voice panicking, holding him tighter.

“Oh my God.” Shane bent forward with his legs slightly parted and flexed, feeling the warm liquid running from his genitals through his inner thighs all the way to the floor. “I’m— I am so sorry.” Shane said looking at the puddle getting bigger between his legs. “I tried to hold it in— I—”

Ilya saw a puddle of liquid with a slight red tint getting bigger right by Shane’s feet. It had a bleachy smell to it.

They both remained silent for a few seconds that seemed like an eternity, as they each processed what had just happened.

Ilya knew Shane had already gone to the bathroom to pee. There was no way he had to pee again so soon. He did have an idea of what that liquid was, after all he had just finished reading the book. But it couldn’t be happening right now. No, not right now. As much as he didn't want to admit it, the scene he had in front of him said otherwise.

“That is not pee.” Ilya said, seeing that his husband was just as confused and in denial as he was.

No.

No.

No.

“Your water broke.” Ilya said now in shock, still holding Shane tightly.

Shane widened his eyes and started shaking his head slowly. “What?— No— I didn’t—" Shane said in a quiet voice, looking down confused. "This is not—” Shane didn't want to admit it, but he was watching it happen with his own eyes. He was also feeling the warm liquid run through his inner thighs all the way down to the floor, making the puddle he was standing on bigger by the second. “That means—” He looked at Ilya with wide eyes, now scared.

Ilya met his gaze back, sheer terror on the Russian’s face. “The baby is coming.”

Chapter 3: Locked In

“Fuck! No! This can’t be happening! She’s not ready! I still have a month to go!” Shane exclaimed, as he observed between his legs the puddle of amniotic fluid getting bigger.

“You need to sit.” Ilya said trying to remain calm while still holding on to Shane’s hand and keeping the other hand around his waist.

“No, I’m gonna wet the bed.” Shane said as he tried to give one more step to get out of the puddle.

“That’s not important right now! I don’t want you to slip and fall again. You need to sit on the bed first!” Ilya exclaimed nervously trying to get Shane on the bed so he could be safe and comfortable.

“Wait, wait a second.” Shane said, as he was feeling something on his belly. He let go of Ilya’s hand and placed it below his belly. “My belly— it’s getting hard.” Shane said, confused and concerned.

Ilya still held him by the waist, he placed his free hand on Shane’s belly. Indeed, it was getting harder and harder by the second. “It is getting hard.”

“Oh God—” Shane said placing his hand on top of Ilya’s pressing it hard just as his breathing quickened. He felt a wave of pain he had never felt before, it went all the way from his back towards his crotch.

It hurt.

It made him bend his knees a bit and lean on Ilya more. He opened his mouth, wanting to let out a moan, but only a small whimper came out.

“Shane?” Ilya asked scared. He didn’t know what to do.

After a couple of seconds, Shane’s breathing slowed down as he began to relax.

Ilya could also feel that Shane’s belly was getting back its softer feel.

“I think— I think— that was a contraction.” Shane said as he let Ilya help him sit back on the edge of the bed.

Ilya got scared. “We need to get you to a hospital right now!” Ilya exclaimed, looking around the room nervously.

“Right.” Shane tried to remain optimistic. But reality quickly sunk in when he looked in front of him through the window. “We’re fucked.” He said staring at the view outside.

Ilya then turned to face the window and all he saw outside were two feet of snow on the ground and even more snow falling almost horizontally, consequence of the strong and now

audible wind. “Fuck, there’s a blizzard outside.”

“Oh my God.” Shane started panicking as his eyes looked around the room as if somehow the solution was there somewhere. “We’re stuck here, the baby’s coming early, my ankle is most likely sprained and we have no signal.” Shane said finally setting his now glossy eyes on his husband. “She’s coming Ilya! I feel her lower now!” Shane exclaimed cupping the lower part of his belly where he clearly felt her whole weight pressing down. “The doctor said my pelvis was narrow and it was going to be complicated for me to give birth naturally! How am I—?” Shane was now crying panicking.

Ilya’s heart broke at the sight of so much fear in Shane’s eyes. He cupped Shane’s face with his palms. “No. Look at me. Listen to me.” He said with a firm but at the same time gentle grip on him. “We are going to be alright. I’m going to take care of you here and then I’m going to get you to the hospital and they are going to help us. You are going to be alright. Our baby will be fine. Okay?” Ilya said to Shane as he gently pressed his forehead against Shane’s and closed his eyes pulling him into his embrace. “We will find a way. I promise we’re going to be okay.” Ilya said feeling Shane’s tears on his neck.

Shane then started sobbing on Ilya’s embrace. “She’s early! I still have one month to go. What if she needs help? Something for breathing?! She might not—” His voice broke.

Ilya pulled away slightly, fixing his gaze on Shane. “No! Don’t say that! Don’t say that.” It was unthinkable for Ilya. “She’s going to be okay. I know she’s strong like her daddy, she will be fine.” Ilya said, pressing his arms tighter around his husband.

Shane started calming down. He trusted Ilya.

Ilya then whispered on his ear. “We are going to meet her soon. She’s going to be so beautiful. She’s going to look just like you.” Ilya said, letting out a soft laugh as he caressed Shane’s head.

Shane felt comforted by Ilya, he then softly broke the hug and frowned a bit. “Like me?” He let out a soft chuckle. “No. I want her to look like you.” He said a bit calmer.

“Really? But you would be in disadvantage.” Ilya said playfully wiping the tears off Shane’s face.

Shane laughed. “I didn’t say I wanted her to be like you. I just want her to look like you.”

Ilya opened his mouth wide with a laugh. “You—!" But he couldn’t continue as he saw Shane propping himself up on his straightened arms behind him on the bed, his breathing turning slower and deeper.

“Are you okay?” Ilya asked concerned.

Shane nodded as he exhaled.

Ilya could tell Shane was about to have another contraction. As scared as he was, he had to get it together for Shane. His husband was in pain and he had to help him in any way

possible. He placed a hand on Shane's shoulder, supporting him and attentive to anything he may need. At the same time, his mind started working on ways to help Shane. It didn't take him too long to map out his ideas.

After a little while, Ilya could feel Shane's body relaxing. "Are you good?" He asked Shane.

"Yeah." Shane nodded "They hurt but they're— kinda tolerable?" He said trying to convince himself of that.

Ilya could tell Shane was trying to deceive himself into believing that. He had to take action.

"Alright. We need to get you out of this mess and cleaned up." He said getting up and heading towards the bathroom. "I'll get the bath ready for you."

Shane remained silent while his eyes followed Ilya. He was still processing everything that was happening to him. What he was most worried about was the baby. She was not due for another month and they were trapped in the cottage. And going to the cottage had been his decision.

"The bath is filling up. Let's get you to the bathroom. Can you walk or do you want me to carry you?" Ilya asked helping him stand up.

"I think I can walk." He said as he gave a couple of steps from the bed. "Yeah, I can walk, but my ankle doesn't feel very stable though."

"Don't worry I'll hold you." Ilya said pressing Shane's hand tighter as they made their way to the bathroom. He helped him take his clothes off and get into the bathtub. As soon as he sat inside, he could feel a contraction starting. He braced himself for it, but it didn't hurt as much as the previous times. He thought it was probably due to the soothing warm water. He was relieved about that.

"I'm gonna clean up the floor. I'll be back when I'm done." Ilya said standing up to leave.

"Ilya—" Shane exclaimed to Ilya, his hand reaching shyly towards his husband.

Ilya grabbed Shane's hand again and pressed it reassuringly. "I will be right here in the room, if you need me just call me, I'll be here fast." He said to Shane reassuringly and kissed the back of his hand.

Shane nodded, giving him a shy smile and let Ilya go. He then settled back comfortably in the bathtub.

Ilya left the bathroom and as soon as he was out of Shane's view, he started pacing back and forth the bedroom with both hands on the back of his head.

"God dammit!" He whispered in Russian frustrated, pulling his hair into his fists. He was scared but he couldn't let Shane see him scared. He needed to be strong for him. He had to keep himself together. For both of them.

No.

For the three of them.

He nodded with eyes closed, taking deep breaths gathering resolution, then he headed to the living room to look for their phones. Once he found them, he started walking with them around the cottage, lifting them up, trying to look for signal.

Nothing.

Not one single bar of signal. Outside the windows, he could barely see anything, as snow continued to fall over the already snow-buried ground. He would try to check later if maybe there was signal outside. He needed to get the floor cleaned before Shane was done with his bath.

As he got the floor taken care of, he continued thinking of other alternatives. He didn't have many. He considered maybe going out to look for help, but that would mean he'd have to leave Shane alone and that was not an option. Besides, there was no neighbors around that time of the year. What else was there? The only thing they could do was just wait until the blizzard stopped or for the signal to come. Whichever happened first.

It was a very shitty situation but it was reality. Ilya was sure Shane had already thought the whole situation through and already knew they had no way out.

He could only be there for Shane and pray to whatever listened, for the blizzard to stop or for the signal to come back.

He finished moping the floor, changed the bedsheets and went back to the bathroom. He kneeled on the edge of the bathtub and softly caressed Shane's cheek with the back of his fingers. "Hey." Ilya was glad to see Shane calmer.

"Hey." Shane said facing him while leaning back on the bathtub. "This feels nice."

"How are you feeling?"

"The contractions are annoying. But my foot feels better." He said optimistic. "Any luck with the signal?"

"Not really. I left a message to your mom just in case the signal comes back and it gets sent right away. I tried around the cottage but nothing. I hope it comes back soon." Ilya said trying to sound calm.

"Yeah…" Shane sighed. "Can you help me out? My fingertips are wrinkled."

Ilya stood up and helped Shane get out of the bathtub. As he placed the towel above his shoulders Shane bent his knees slightly and propping his arms on them, he slowed and deepened his breathing.

"Contraction?" Ilya asked placing a hand on Shane's back rubbing it gently.

Shane nodded, taking in deep breaths. Once it was over, Ilya helped dry him, get him to the bed and get changed into a thin cotton short-sleeve shirt and fleece pants. When he finished

changing, another contraction started. “Geez.” He said as he sat on the edge of the bed and propped himself up on his straightened arms behind him. “They are getting stronger.” He said, letting out a huff. “And I feel her low. It’s like she’s right between my pelvis.”

“Do you need me to bring you anything?”

“Maybe a doctor?” Shane said.

Ilya knew Shane was not so sarcastic, he did mean everything he said. “I was thinking I should go out, maybe someone close has signal so we could get—”

“And you’re gonna fucking leave me here alone?!” Shane widened his eyes and raised his voice.

Ilya regretted saying his suggestion.

“It’s pitch-black outside! I’m sure we’re the only ones here this time of the year! Just stay here, we’ll figure something out.” Shane said extending his arm towards Ilya.

The Russian hugged him and kissed his forehead. “Okay.”

.-.-.-.-.-.-.-.-.

5 hours later.

It was a few minutes past midnight.

Shane was now kneeling on the floor with his torso resting on the edge of the bed and his face buried between his arms. “Oh God… it hurts.” He said between deep breaths.

Ilya was next to him, sitting on the floor rubbing his lower back. “You got this.”

“When I think they are becoming bearable, they keep getting stronger.” Shane said frustrated. “Did you check for signal?”

“I did fifteen minutes ago. Nothing.” Ilya said defeated.

“Can you check again?” Shane pleaded.

Ilya had been checking for signal every half an hour religiously. He could tell the contractions had started to get to Shane. He nodded, standing up to grab his phone from the bedside table. He checked it, he still had no bars. “Nothing.”

“Fuck!” Shane said frustrated as he felt another contraction coming in. “They are getting closer together.” Shane said annoyed, bracing himself for the wave of pain that was going to take over him. “Oh…” Shane buried his face again between his arms on the bed as he swung his hips kneeling on the floor. “Mmm…” He groaned loudly.

Ilya could tell that Shane was really having a hard time through the contractions. Shane was not one to complain so much when in pain. To see him sweaty, eyes-shut and tired from pain,

it was heartbreaking for Ilya. He was not sure how much longer would Shane be able to bear the pain. If it kept getting stronger, the way it was already getting, it would only be a matter of a couple of hours until Shane became completely exhausted.

Ilya was also worried about the baby. They had no way of knowing if she was okay. He only asked Shane if he could feel her moving, to which Shane only nodded.

After the contraction, with Ilya's help, Shane slowly got up and laid sideways on the bed. "I'm tired." Shane said rubbing his belly. "And sore."

"You are incredibly strong."

"No compliment in the world will ever allow you to put a hand on me ever again Rosanov." Shane said mad.

"But you were the one begging me to—" Ilya didn't continue after the killer 'Don't you dare' stare he received from Shane.

All of a sudden, they heard both of their phones ringing.

They both looked at each other expectantly. "Did you hear that?" Shane asked, looking at the direction of the bedside table where the phones were.

"Yeah! The signal must be back!" Ilya grabbed their phones, giving Shane his.

There were many messages from Shane's mom. Ilya had messaged her and told her what had happened and what they needed. Even though the message didn't send immediately, probably when there was a tiny surge of signal, it got sent. Now they were getting a reply.

"Your mom replied." Ilya said.

"What did she say?" Shane said eagerly.

Ilya read: "Oh my God. I'm calling 911 right now and tell them to get you an ambulance and out of there." Ilya read relieved. "Oh my God, we're saved."

Shane only let out half a smile as he felt yet another contraction building up. He hadn't mentioned it to Ilya, but since about half an hour he already had somewhat of an urge to push settled within him.

"Let's hope they get here soon." Shane said, before the contraction left him panting and gasping for air.

Chapter 4: Inescapable Pain

About half an hour had passed since they had received the text from Shane's mom. Sadly, that was all the signal they had received and now it was gone again.

Shane was kneeling on the floor in all fours.

Ilya had already tried to convince him to get on the bed but Shane refused, saying he didn't like his hands and knees sinking in the mattress and he'd rather be on the floor. Ilya was sitting next to Shane, he had never seen him in so much pain. It broke his heart to see his body drenched in sweat and trembling with every contraction. Shane let out moans that now almost ended in screams. The pain was becoming stronger very quickly. Ilya was scared not only for Shane but also for the baby.

They had been together when they had talked about their birth plan with their doctor. Shane was not supposed to deliver the baby naturally, he needed to have a cesarean section since his pelvis was narrow. Ilya tried to keep all the what ifs out of his mind. He had to be strong for the three of them, but it was so hard when he saw Shane writhed in pain.

Ilya stood up and grabbed a towel that was on the bed. He then kneeled again in front of Shane and proceeded to wipe the dripping sweat from his husband's face.

Shane was now seating on his flexed knees, more towards one side to not hurt his injured ankle. He was panting from the contraction that had just finished.

"I feel her right between my pelvis." He looked up at Ilya. "She's pressing down but it feels as if she cannot go any further and that's when the pain gets worse." Shane said frustrated. "I have a feeling—" Shane's face crumpled as tears started running down his cheek. "She's stuck in there. What if she's—?!"

"Hey. No. No. Don't say that." Ilya said in a serious tone, dropping the towel to the floor. He then tenderly cupped Shane's face into his palms and kissed him. "Listen to me, you are strong. You are doing great, you are so brave." He said looking straight into his red swollen eyes.

"I— I—" Shane's voice broke, unable to get the words out. "What if I can't get her out?!" Shane sobbed. "This is my fault!"

"No—" Ilya said, lovingly kissing Shane's temple.

"Yes! This was all my idea! I'm putting her in so much danger right now! And there's nothing we can do about it!" Shane said with a shaky voice, placing a hand on his belly. "I'm so sorry!" He said, very regretful thinking of his baby.

"You have nothing to be sorry for. It was an accident, you didn't mean for this to happen." Ilya said pressing his face into his temple trying to calm Shane down. It broke his heart to hear him so broken.

“I will never forgive myself if— Shit!—” Shane exclaimed, feeling another contraction building up. He freed himself from Ilya’s embrace and braced himself for that damned wave of pain.

Ilya placed a hand on Shane’s straightened elbow, feeling Shane’s body starting to tremble. “Breathe, you got this, breathe.”

Shane at first always tried to control his breathing with every contraction, but now they had reached a point that that was barely impossible to maintain as they intensified. Shane’s moans increased in volume until he felt a type of pain he hadn’t felt before. It was as if his back and hips were separating.

“Ah! Fuck!!— My back!!” Shane exclaimed trying to hold back a scream, feeling the contraction at its strongest.

Ilya immediately went behind Shane and massaged his outer thighs in circles hoping it would somehow help.

Shane hadn’t expected Ilya’s massage to work, but it did help ease the pain a bit. “Harder!” Shane exclaimed.

Ilya obeyed and proceeded to press Shane’s thighs harder together. Shane’s moans became softer. After the contraction was over, Shane sighed tired. “That helps.”

Ilya nodded. “I got you. We are going to be fine.” Ilya said caressing Shane’s thighs.

“Do you think help is close by?” Shane asked hopeful.

Ilya didn’t have the heart to tell him otherwise. “They will be here soon, I know they will be here soon.”

“I don’t think I can hold out much longer.” Shane said with glossy eyes glancing at his husband.

Ilya had to pretend he wasn’t terrified at what Shane had just said. He went back next to Shane and caressed his cheek with the back of his fingers. “You got this baby. You are so strong. We are going to be okay.”

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About half an hour later had passed and Shane was not speaking anymore. When Ilya asked him something, he just nodded or shook his head. He seemed focused on what was happening to his body.

Shane could feel another contraction coming. His knees were starting to hurt and get red from being in all fours for so long. As the contraction peaked, all of a sudden, he felt very deep pressure inside of him. He hadn’t felt like that ever before.

It hurt.

“Don’t touch me!!” Shane screamed.

Ilya obeyed immediately seeing Shane now switching positions. He was now bending forward and moving his hips back and forth just as they did when they warmed up on the ice. “Ah!! Fuck!” Shane screamed, feeling the position help open up his pelvis. The contraction was almost over, that’s when he felt something extremely odd.

“I feel like I need to push.” Shane said holding in his breath for a couple of seconds.

“What?!” Ilya’s eyes widened as his skin turned even paler. “Are you sure?!”

“Yes I’m fucking sure!” Shane exclaimed.

Out of pure instinct, Shane placed a hand between his thighs and introduced his trembling fingers through his entrance. He gasped scared when he touched his daughter’s head just a couple of inches in. “Oh my fucking God!” He removed his hand quickly and turned to face Ilya. “I just touched her head! She’s coming Ilya! She’s coming!” Shane exclaimed looking at the sticky reddish substance on his fingers, crying terrified.

In a swift move, Ilya quickly stood up and pulled Shane up from his armpits making him stand for less than a second before Shane could even react, the Russian was already carrying him bridal style and carefully laying him on the bed.

Their baby was not going to be born on the floor.

“I need to take your pants off, okay?” Ilya said as he was already pulling Shane’s fleece pants down and throwing them aside. He then quickly went to the bathroom closet and brought out all the towels he could find and placed them next to Shane.

Shane’s eyes were focused on the ceiling as he laid naked face up on the bed, legs flexed and spread open. He could feel the contraction starting to build up and now with it, a desperate and uncontrollable urge to push. He didn’t waste any time and got back to his hands and knees on the bed.

“What are you doing?” Ilya asked worried.

“I need to push!” Shane exclaimed desperate groaning loudly lowering his hips as he pushed.

Ilya placed himself behind Shane, he could only see some drops of red fluid dripping from Shane’s entrance.

“Ahh! Fuck!” Shane screamed, feeling as he pushed, an immense amount of pressure inside him downwards through his pelvis. “Shit! Shit!” Shane said in tears between pushes.

Ilya froze for a second, his mind trying to grasp the reality of the situation. Shane was about to have the baby right there and then.

In the Cottage, on that same bed.

“Fuck!” Ilya exclaimed, letting out the fear and guilt that froze him.

Shane then moaned and panted exhausted, indicating the contraction was almost over. “Oh my God.” As scared as Shane had been, having pushed felt right. It was as if somehow his body was guiding him on what to do.

Ilya was about to bring his hands to his head in desperation but he quickly changed his mind as he had to get his shit together and help Shane out. “Do you want lay on your back and be more comfortable?”

Shane shook his head, still panting and recovering from the last contraction. He then crawled to the edge of the bed and placed his right foot on the floor and kept his left knee on the surface of the bed leaning forward on his straightened arms. The position felt better, his pelvis felt more open. “Cold water.”

Ilya ran to the kitchen and brought a jar filled with water and some ice cubes along with a glass. He poured some on the glass and offered it to Shane. As soon as he was about to receive it, another contraction hit that made him shake his head rejecting the water and focus on what his body needed. He grabbed the bed sheets making fists and bent forward groaning while pushing down. “Uhh.”

Ilya saw Shane’s face getting red, the veins on his forehead popped out, his skin was covered in sweat and his entire body trembled as he pushed.

Ilya felt completely useless.

“You are doing good *my love*.” Ilya said the last two words in Russian, as he always did. He wiped sweat off Shane’s forehead with a clean towel.

Ilya had never seen Shane so focused before. It almost seemed as if he was alone, as if he already knew what to do. After the contraction was over, Ilya grabbed the glass of ice cold water he had brought for him before and brought it close to his lips, helping him drink it. Shane only took a couple of sips and weakly nodded signaling him it was enough.

“She’s coming Ilya and I can’t help it!” Shane cried scared.

Ilya next to him, caressed his straightened arm and whispered on his ear. “It’s okay love, do what you have to do, I’m here with you.” Ilya then went right in front of him and looked for Shane’s eyes making eye contact. "I’m here with you.”

Shane nodded. With Ilya by his side, he felt safe. He felt like he could do anything. He braced himself for the contraction that was beginning to build up. He had to be strong.

For Ilya.

For his baby.

For his family.

.-.-.-.-.-.-.-

Shane was now lying sideways on the bed, hands on his belly, panting from sheer exhaustion.

He had been pushing for an hour and there was still no baby.

Ilya was now extremely worried for Shane, he looked so pale and weak. Shane had not been able to push in the last two contractions because he didn't have the strength anymore.

Shane looked completely exhausted.

Ilya was next to him by his ear cheering him on, telling him how strong and brave he was, but Shane's eyes seemed like a doll's, his stare was blank.

"You got this love, you are strong, you can do this."

Shane then looked at Ilya's blue eyes and shook his head slowly. "She's not moving as much anymore." Shane weakly whispered between pants.

No.

Shane's words felt like a punch in Ilya's gut. "She's going to be okay *my love*, she's going to be alright." Ilya said with a shaky voice.

Shane then slowly turned face up, every inch of his body hurt. His eyes were so swollen and on his temples were the trails of all the tears he had shed. He looked at Ilya's beautiful deep blue eyes he loved so much, just a few inches away from him right next to him. "Ilya I'm so sorry—"

Ilya could feel his skin crawl. "No. What are you apologizing for *my love*?" Ilya couldn't contain his feelings anymore and started crying too. "You are doing amazing." His voice broke. "We are going to meet her very soon." He cupped Shane's face with one hand and held his almost limp hand with the other.

Shane softly shook his head. "I'm tired." Shane said as his eyes slowly closed.

"No. No. No." Ilya begged him, shaking Shane's hand trying to keep him awake. But little by little, Ilya saw as if it was happening in slow motion, how Shane's eyes were shutting close.

Ilya had the feeling, that he couldn't let Shane fall sleep. He couldn't let him go. No matter what, he had to keep Shane awake. He had to keep him engaged.

"Shane. Wake up." Ilya said in a serious tone, shaking Shane's hand a little bit stronger waking him up. "Listen to me." Ilya said now with a deep loud voice, cupping Shane's head in his hands.

Shane's eyes were now wide open.

"You are not a quitter. Are you going to give up now? Are you fucking seriously going to give up on us now?!"

Shane's face crunched up.

It broke Ilya's heart to say those things to him but he knew Shane very well. He knew he would get a reaction from him saying those words to him. Shane was an athlete.

"Our baby needs you to be strong right now." Without warning Ilya introduced his fingers into Shane's entrance, which made him gasp at the unexpected touch.

Not even a quarter of an inch deep, their baby's head was pretty much right about to emerge from Shane's body, bringing out a huge grin on Ilya's face. "She's right there! She's pretty much out *my love*! A couple more pushes and she'll be with us soon!!" Ilya said excited.

Shane's breathing became faster, the poor man looked terrified. He started bawling. "I'm so scared! I don't want to hurt her!"

"You are not going to hurt her! You are going to get her here with us. She's almost here baby!" Ilya didn't waste any time and quickly grabbed as many pillows as he could and placed them behind Shane to get him to sit at an angle.

Shane looked so lost and terrified. Suddenly, his belly started getting tight. "Uhh!" Shane tilted his head back.

Ilya positioned himself below, between Shane's legs and spread his flexed knees wide. "Push Shane! Push!!"

With a growl, Shane proceeded to push, now pressing his chin to his chest grabbing the bedsheets in his closed fists, while Ilya helped him keep his knees wide open.

Ilya could see his daughter's head emerging a little. "Keep going! Keep going!" But it appeared Shane could only push for a few seconds, and as soon as Shane stopped pushing, she went back in.

As soon as the contraction was over, Shane threw himself back on the pillows panting.

"Baby you have to push longer. I'm going to count to ten and you have to push while I count okay?"

Shane shook his head bawling. "No! I'm gonna die! I can't do this!!"

"You are not a quitter Shane. You are the strongest hockey player in the world! If anyone can do this, that's you!" Ilya was raising his voice until he noticed that Shane's breathing was becoming very fast.

Shane was having a panic attack. "No baby." Ilya, who was kneeling between Shane's legs, leaned forward to hug him. "I'm here. You can do this. I'm here. This is gonna be over soon. And you'll never have to do this again okay? Just this once. For our daughter okay? You can do this." After a couple of seconds, Ilya could feel Shane's breathing going back down.

All of a sudden, Shane pushed Ilya back. Shane then grabbed his knees towards his chest, took a couple of deep breaths, leaned his chin to his chest and started pushing with all the strength he could muster.

Ilya positioned himself again between Shane's knees. He wasted no time and began counting to ten. He could feel his husband's entire body tensing up. He had to hold the inner side of Shane's knees to keep them open while he pushed. And as he did so, he could see his daughter's head emerging slowly.

Ilya couldn't help but smile at the sight of the color of her hair. Without realizing it, he had reached ten. Shane screamed and threw himself back on the pillows panting.

"She has your hair *my love*!" Ilya said excited. "You are so close! One more push and she'll be here with us!!" Ilya said with a huge grin.

Shane took deep breaths trying to gather the energy to push again, he was so close. He needed all of this to be over. With the new contraction coming, he set his mind, that that was gonna be it. He grabbed his knees pulling them back and with his chin on his chest he pushed with all the strength he had left.

"Ten – nine – eight – seven – six. Keep going Shane!!"

Shane could now feel like his genitals were completely tearing as he felt his daughter's head coming out. It was as if someone was setting him on fire down there.

"Five – four – three – two "

"Ahhh!!!" Shane let out a raw and agonizing scream that made him arch his back and jerk his whole body backwards, grabbing the sheets almost as if wanting to pull them to escape.

"Her head is out! Don't close your legs! She's almost out Shane!" Ilya yelled desperately, grabbing his daughter's head with one hand and trying to keep Shane's legs parted with his other hand and torso. "Give me another strong push Shane!! She's almost here."

Shane could hear Ilya as if he was far away. He only knew he had to keep going, he still felt his belly contracting.

Just one more.

For Ilya.

For his daughter.

Shane pushed one more time with the same strength he had done last time. The burning sensation came back, but this time it went away quicker.

After a bloodcurling scream, Shane collapsed back into the pillows.

Chapter 5: Keeping Strong

Ilya had just touched his daughter's head with his fingertips. She was almost out. Shane was so close to getting their daughter out.

Ilya wanted all of this to be over so bad. Never in his life had he ever felt so useless. Shane was suffering and there was absolutely nothing he could do about it to make it better. The only thing that he was sure would help Shane, was to help him get their daughter out.

That became Ilya's main goal.

Poor Shane looked so terrified and overwhelmed. Ilya felt torn, having to encourage him to keep going, knowing all the inevitable pain the love of his life was going to have to bear.

As he was quickly grabbing the pillows to help Shane sit up in an angle, he noticed his hands were shaking. He pressed them into fists as he accommodated the pillows behind Shane. He couldn't let fear take over him.

No.

Determined, he went back between Shane's legs and instructed him to push, helping him keep his knees open. He couldn't help feeling excited at the sight of his daughter's head, but at the same time devastated since Shane was in so much pain and it was causing him to have a panic attack. Ilya had to embrace his husband to get him back. It broke his heart to see him hurting.

Suddenly, Ilya was pushed back by Shane as he started pushing again. Ilya counted, coaching him as he saw his daughter's head trying to emerge.

Ilya couldn't believe his eyes. His daughter was coming out and her hair color was dark, just like Shane's. Just seeing her hair, made Ilya feel something he couldn't quite describe yet. But most of all, he felt excitement and eagerness to have her in his arms.

When Shane stopped pushing, he could see her head retracting back inside.

"She has your hair my love! You are so close! One more push and she'll be here with us!!"

Ilya could see how Shane, as exhausted as he was, focused and gathered all his strength into that next push.

Slowly but steadily, Ilya saw his daughter's head emerging. He placed a hand below it until it completely emerged.

Blinded by the pain, Shane screamed, closing his legs and moving as if trying to get away.

"Her head is out! Don't close your legs! She's almost out Shane! Give me another strong push!! She's almost here." Ilya yelled, trying to protect his daughter's head.

Ilya could tell Shane had reached his limit. It took everything from the poor man to concentrate into gathering the strength to keep going. Ilya saw Shane's eyes fill with determination as he grabbed his legs below his thighs and pulled them towards his chest to push with the little strength he had left.

Ilya could feel his daughter's head against his palm. All of a sudden, Ilya saw her shoulders emerging and in a matter of a second, as Shane let out an agonizing scream, her body slipped out into his arms.

"She's here!" Ilya yelled in disbelief with a huge grin, holding his newborn baby girl against him. She was finally here. Ilya glanced up to look at his husband.

Shane was lying back down against the pillows panting, trying to recover. "You did it my love." Ilya said excited to Shane. "You did it!" He said, holding his baby girl against his chest. The baby's head rested on Ilya's forearm and her tiny body fit in Ilya's palm perfectly. With his other hand he secured his hold around her.

It was in that moment, that Ilya looked down to admire his baby and his smile faded.

It was quiet.

She was not moving.

She was not crying.

She was limp.

Ilya started bouncing her against him as he patted her belly rapidly with his other hand. "Baby?" Ilya said in Russian. He continued patting her belly but he was not getting any reaction from her whatsoever. Ilya could see then, her skin was starting to turn blue. "No." Ilya bounced her and patted her a bit harsher. "Cry for me my love, please cry for me!" Ilya raised his voice in Russian.

Nothing.

Desperate he decided to turn her over facing down and patted her back rapidly and firmly. "Please! Please, cry baby please!" He begged desperately to the tiny infant in Russian.

Ilya then looked up for a moment. He wasn't expecting to see Shane staring at him, covering his mouth with both hands crying and shaking as he saw his still daughter in Ilya's embrace.

"Come on! Come on!" Ilya screamed as he was now rubbing her back with more force. After a couple of seconds that seemed like an eternity, Ilya heard the baby cough. He rubbed her back a bit harder which made her cough turn into loud and strong cries. "There you go!" Ilya closed his eyes for a moment and sighed from so much relief as he now softly rubbed her back. Immediately he could see her skin turn into a soft pink. He could feel her arms and legs now moving against his arm. He turned her back facing up, and that's when he really saw her.

She was the most precious little thing he had ever laid eyes on.

Her hair was black, just like Shane's. And her little face and features looked so familiar to Ilya. She flexed and extended her tiny arms and legs as she cried her lungs out.

Ilya looked towards Shane. "She's okay now." He reassured him.

Shane had started bawling as soon as he heard his daughter's cries. He had his arms extended, dying to hold the baby that had kept him company the last few months.

Ilya then carefully extended his arms and placed the crying baby face down on Shane's chest. Shane received her and placed his hands on her back securing her on him. Her tiny head was in contact with Shane's chin. Ilya then grabbed a blanket and covered them both as he went to kneel next to them by the side of the bed.

Feeling his baby's warmth and breathing her scent on his chest, Shane cried. He had been so scared for her. Just having her there at that moment, he was so relieved.

"We are okay." Ilya said, giving Shane a kiss on his forehead.

"I was so scared." Shane said between sobs hugging his baby and looking at his husband.

Ilya caressed Shane's hair as he gave soft kisses to his temple and whispered into his ear. "You did amazing. You are the strongest man in the world. You did it, *my love*." He said, and gave him a tender kiss on his lips. "You did it."

Ilya could tell Shane was still processing what had just happened. Shane seemed distracted. Shane only looked at the top of his baby's head and hugged her for dear life as he then looked around him.

Ilya knew that stare.

He introduced his hand below the blanket that was covering Shane and the baby, and carefully placed it on top of Shane's. Ilya could feel how tense and protective his hold on the baby was. Ilya intertwined his fingers between Shane's and now he could also feel the softness of their baby's back.

"We are good Shane." Ilya softly passed his other hand through Shane's sweaty hair. "She's finally here and she's okay." He rubbed Shane's hand lovingly, also rubbing the baby's back as he spoke.

At the soft touch, Shane faced Ilya. The Russian looked at him and his daughter with so much love. He had only seen him once with such adoring expression on his face before. The day he told him he loved him, the day he chose him. Just like he felt that day, he knew everything would be fine. Shane continued staring at his husband's adoring eyes and nodded.

Ilya was happy to get a reaction from Shane. He softly kissed his lips and then he also kissed his daughter's head.

At the feel of Ilya's touch, Shane was finally able to relax his whole body, his breathing slowed down and the grip he had around the baby loosened. Shane looked down at his

daughter, he could only see the top of her head but he could hear her cries and also feel her breathing and moving against his skin.

Although the baby's cries had brought great relief at first, now Shane felt the need to sooth her, to calm her.

Shane joined Ilya rubbing her back. "It's okay baby. We are okay." Shane said looking down at her. "We had a rough night, didn't we?" He spoke to his newborn baby girl.

At the sound of the voice of the one who bore her, the baby moved her head towards Shane's and stopped crying.

Shane and Ilya looked at each other, they both shared a brief look of concern when the baby stopped crying. Thankfully it was short lived since they could actually now make sure that she was still breathing. Ilya could see and feel her chest going up and down and Shane could also feel her on his chest.

Ilya then smiled and caressed her little head. "You are okay baby. We are okay."

Since the baby was facing Ilya, he could now see her facial features more clearly. Her eyes were like Shane's, as she winked trying to open them, it reminded Ilya when Shane had a hard time waking up from a really long nap. Her nose, mouth and cheeks looked so familiar. Her skin was fair and her hair was black just like Shane's, except that it was curly, just like Ilya's.

"She's so beautiful." Ilya said, admiring her. "She has my curls."

Shane couldn't quite see her face yet, but at that moment, knowing she was okay and having her in his arms, made him feel content enough.

The newborn baby girl was now trying to open her eyes as she squirmed pulling her arms towards her, opening and closing her tiny fists.

"She's trying to open her eyes." Ilya said, softly caressing her pink little cheek with his thumb.

"Is she really?" Shane said tired, gazing at his excited husband fondly.

"Yes." Ilya said with a huge grin. "The shape of her eyes is like yours, but—" Ilya narrowed his eyes trying to check out their color. He let out a laugh. "She has blue eyes."

"Aww." Shane let out a soft laugh. "She's so tiny. Do you really think she's okay?"

Ilya, who seemed mesmerized entirely by his daughter, nodded. "She's perfect. She's little but she's strong." He said proud, now placing his index finger between her little fingers and caressing them with his thumb. He had never seen fingers so little, but yet strong enough he could feel her grip around his finger. Ilya then looked at Shane. "How about you? How does your body feel?" The Russian asked concerned.

Shane sighed looking at his husband. “I feel like I was cornered and hit with sticks by every single player of the NHL at the same time.” He said tired.

They both laughed and then Ilya kissed him.

Shane then stared at him. “But I’d do it all over again if it means seeing the way you look at her.”

Ilya immediately shook his head and his expression turned completely serious. “No. She is the only child we will ever have. You cannot go through this again. Never again.” Ilya said in a harsh tone and then kissed Shane’s lips.

All of a sudden, Ilya saw faint red and blue lights blinking through the windows. He carefully let his daughter’s hand go, got up and went towards the windows. The lights were faint. “I’ll be right back. I’m going to see from the living room.” He said making his way out their bedroom.

Shane nodded. Although he was exhausted, having his baby with him on his chest made him feel calm.

In the distance, through the still strong blizzard Ilya could see a couple of cars approaching, they all had their sirens on.

Ilya closed his eyes and took a deep breath. Help was finally close. Thankfully Shane and the baby were okay. But he knew they still needed to get checked out by doctors. Ilya decided to go to the living room and turn on all the lights of the house to make it known that they were there. They had turned them all off since they were depending on the generator for energy. And also when Shane was in labor, he didn’t want the bedroom so bright, they only had their bedside lamps on. Ilya went back to their bedroom and turned the lights on.

Ilya froze.

Between Shane’s flexed legs, there was large blood stain on the bedsheets.

“No. Turn it off.” Shane frowned, his voice groggy. “We want to take a nap.” He said rubbing his baby’s back under the towel.

Ilya’s expression turned serious, he didn’t want to alarm Shane. He slowly approached him and kneeled on the bed between his legs. “Let me check how you are doing over here, okay?” He said, trying to remain as calm as possible.

Shane nodded. “I don’t want to look. I’m probably a mess down there.”

Ilya carefully opened Shane’s flexed knees. From Shane’s entrance he could first see the umbilical cord, through which the baby was still attached to Shane. Below it, he saw a very thin thread of blood coming out that led into the large blood stain on the bed.

“Is it bad?” Shane wondered, looking at his husband’s serious expression.

Ilya really didn't know what to say. He only softened his expression a bit, trying to transmit to Shane that it was not as concerning. "Uhh— We'll see. I'm not sure, help is close." He tried to change the subject. "How are you feeling? Do you feel any pain down here?"

Shane shook his head sleepy. "It kind of burns." After being in pain for so long, Shane was just recovering the feel around his genital area. "And I'm cold, I think I'm wet."

Ilya wanted to help Shane by maybe changing him, but he didn't want to move him and make things worse when help was already so close. "Okay. They are almost here, let's just wait a little more." Ilya got off the bed, got out a thicker blanket from the closet and covered Shane and the baby with it. He then went to Shane's side and kissed him.

Shane's lips were cold. He had just kissed him several times and they hadn't been as cold. Ilya continued staring at Shane for a bit while he passed his fingers through his black hair tenderly. Just then he noticed how pale he was.

"I'm a mess." Shane said with a soft laugh.

"You are beautiful." Ilya looked at him with so much love. "You are both beautiful."

Shane smiled to his husband. "I love you."

"I love you too." Ilya said with a sly smile and kissed Shane and the baby. "I will be right back, okay?"

Shane nodded.

Ilya got off the bed and went back to the front door to try to see how long would it take them to get there. Thankfully they were not far, maybe two or three minutes away at the most, considering they were surrounded by feet of snow.

Ilya felt deep pressure on his chest that made him lean his back on the front door.

He knew that feeling, he could feel fear once again trying to take over him. His breathing was becoming faster, he couldn't stop the tears from coming out. He closed his eyes and covered his mouth and nose with both hands facing one another, holding in the scream that at that moment he was dying to let go. He had to chant to himself that Shane was alive, he was still breathing, he was alive.

He couldn't go through something like that again.

No. He couldn't lose Shane.

He looked in the direction of their bedroom and took a couple of deep breaths. He needed to go back to Shane but first he needed to calm down. Shane couldn't see him panicking. Once again he had to get himself together, it was not over yet. But now he was going to have help. That made him feel slightly better.

Before he knew it the ambulance turned on its sirens letting him know they were close. Ilya immediately got out and closed the door behind him. It was freezing cold, he didn't want to

let cold air inside where the baby and Shane were. The sudden freezing breeze was just what he needed. It helped him get some of his objectivity back and stay grounded. He could see two ambulances and a police car, led by a snow plow truck, come into the driveway.

Two fully equipped paramedics from the first ambulance ran towards him.

“Mr. Rozanov, we’re sorry about the delay. The snow is knee-deep. Are you alright?” They greeted him just as Ilya proceeded to open the door behind him and let them in.

Ilya had wanted to confront them for being so late but he didn’t say anything. He didn’t want to waste time. “I’m fine! My husband needs help! Please hurry!” Ilya pointed towards their bedroom and the paramedics fast walked in that direction. “He just had the baby fifteen minutes ago and now he’s cold and he’s bleeding.” Ilya said behind the paramedics.

“We got you.” One of the paramedics said as they rushed into the bedroom.

“I noticed just now, he’s—” Ilya couldn’t keep talking since he saw how quickly the paramedics placed themselves in each side of the bed and started assessing Shane.

“Mr. Hollander, we’re here to help you.” One of them said, while the other one quickly removed the thick blanket that was covering Shane. “Mr Hollander?”

Once the blanket was off, Ilya's heart stopped beating.

Shane’s arms that had been holding the baby were now on his sides.

One of the paramedics grabbed his radio. “Get the Defib. Mr. Hollander is unresponsive.”

Chapter 6: Not a Dream

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"Mr. Hollander? Mr. Hollander?" One of the paramedics tapped both of Shane's shoulders continuously trying to get a response from him while another one had his fingers on the side of Shane's neck.

"I've got a pulse but it's weak and rapid."

Ilya stood by the feet of the bed with his hands covering his nose and mouth, palms facing each other. He couldn't believe what was happening. Shane had been conscious and talking just a few minutes prior. The hands that just moments ago held on for dear life around their baby were now limp on his sides.

This could not be happening.

It was not real.

"I'll check BP, you asses the baby." The paramedic tending to Shane said, setting his eyes on the baby.

"Got it." The paramedic nodded and pulled out a blanket with which he carefully turned the baby, examining her and noticing she was still attached to Shane. "Baby is still attached to dad, the placenta is still inside."

As the paramedics spoke, Ilya could see them quickly moving their hands taking care of Shane and the baby. Two other paramedics entered the room and immediately went to Shane's side.

"I'll get the IVs started."

"BP is 80/50"

"Haemaccel is ready to be infused."

"10UI Intramuscular Pitocin administered."

"Baby's heartbeat is 145 beats per minute, don't hear any murmurs."

"Checking the source of the bleeding."

"IV is in, infusing a saline bolus right now."

Once again, Ilya felt useless.

He couldn't do absolutely anything for Shane. The love of his life was unconscious and there was nothing he could do about it.

Immense amount of guilt, flooded his thoughts.

It was his fault that Shane and him had got together.

It was his fault Shane had got pregnant.

It was his fault they had got to the cottage.

In Ilya's mind, it was all his fault.

It was just as if he was losing his mama all over again. But this time, he was witnessing it. He was reliving his worst memory and nightmare.

He couldn't lose him too. No. He couldn't lose Shane.

"Mr Rozanov?"

Ilya had unconsciously quietly stepped backwards to the furthest corner of the room. He was still covering his nose and mouth with both hands while his breathing was shallow and fast. His chest hurt and the tears just poured out of his eyes.

"Mr Rozanov." Ilya hadn't realized that one of the paramedics was now standing in front of him. He set his eyes on the paramedic's, as she placed one hand on his shoulders, trying to get him out of his head. "We are here and we are going to take care of them, okay?"

Ilya didn't know what to say or do, he just let out a couple of sobs and nodded.

"I need your help right now. We need to cut the cord but I'm sure you'd like to do that, right?" She said with a slight optimistic tone amid the chaotic situation.

Ilya hadn't expected there was still something he could do. He wiped off the tears on his face and nodded.

"Alright. Let's head over here quickly." She said, making some room so Ilya could get on Shane's side. Ilya felt a bit nervous because he didn't want to get in the paramedics' way, Shane needed their help. But as he got close to Shane, the paramedics made room to let him through just as they continued working diligently on him. For a very brief moment, Ilya was allowed to be close and next to Shane again. The paramedics had only been but only minutes with them and they already had Shane hooked to an IV now, he was receiving oxygen through a nasal canula and he had electrodes on his chest. Ilya felt somewhat overwhelmed by all the equipment on Shane but he knew that's what he needed.

Their baby was still on top of Shane's belly, covered by a blanket. One of the paramedics had his hand on her tiny back to keep her from falling. With his other hand, this paramedic held the umbilical cord between his fingers, which now had a pair of tweezers clamping it, a couple of centimeters from the baby's belly.

“Okay dad I need you to cut here right next to the tweezers.” Said the paramedic gently lifting the tweezers a bit upwards.

Ilya carefully and nervously did as he was told, he didn’t want to hurt Shane or the baby. Contrary to what he ever thought cutting their baby’s umbilical cord would feel like. *It felt wrong.*

It felt as if he was allowing their baby, to be taken away from Shane. Especially since as soon as the umbilical cord was severed, the paramedic wrapped the baby well in the blanket and lifted her up to place her in the far corner of the bed. Ilya could understand that she was taken away so that she could continue being examined and probably also to allow the other paramedics better access to Shane.

But it felt wrong.

Shane had been the one who had nurtured their baby inside his body. And now he was the one fighting for his life after bringing her into the world. Shane was supposed to witness all of it, he had been supposed to allow it.

“Ilya…”

Everyone turned in the direction of the soft voice.

Ilya hadn’t expected to hear his husband’s voice, not in the condition he was in. “Shane!” Ilya cried tears of joy at the sound of Shane’s voice. He wanted to hold his hand so bad but on the side he was in, the paramedics were still trying to get an IV access. “I’m right here! You are going to be okay love. They are helping you and we are going to get you to a hospital soon, okay?” Ilya said, trying his best to make him feel safe again.

Shane looked now at his flat belly and widened his eyes as much as his leftover energy allowed him. “Where’s— my baby?” He said now trying to look at his surroundings, trying to find her. “Where is she?!” Every single person in the room could perceive the desperation and demand on Shane’s weak voice.

“She’s okay, she’s right here. Look.” He said pointing with his face towards the corner of the bed where the paramedic was still examining her.

Shane tried to look but he only saw a wrapped bundle. “Is she…?” Shane managed to get out.

“She’s just fine Mr. Hollander. She’s breathing on her own and is doing very well.” The paramedic lifted the newborn baby up and placed her right next to Shane’s head in a way he still had a grasp on her tiny body and Shane could just turn to see her face. “She’s beautiful. You did an amazing job Mr. Hollander.”

Shane had his baby so close to his face, he took his time to take a deep breath and breathe in her scent. He closed his eyes for a moment feeling his baby’s cheek on his and sighed relieved. “Thank God.” He had been so worried for his daughter. Having her next to him and also listening to the paramedic say she was alright, brought him so much peace.

“I’m gonna continue examining her and also let my colleagues here finish helping you out, alright, Mr. Hollander? As soon as they’re done, she’ll be back in your arms again. I promise.”

Shane nodded and took a couple of deep breaths staring at the ceiling. He then set his eyes on his husband. Ilya’s eyes were red, swollen and he looked so hopeless. Shane had only seen Ilya’s face with so much sorrow a couple of times, but mostly when he spoke about something related to his family. Ilya looked at him just like a child would look at his parent, seeking protection and safety desperately.

Shane had very clear it wasn’t over yet. He could feel his body trying to betray him into losing consciousness again. He physically couldn’t be there for Ilya at the moment, but they now had a daughter and he needed Ilya to remain strong.

“Ilya, listen to me.” Shane said trying to speak as loud as he possibly could, which sadly was just barely heard by the people surrounding him. The paramedics remained quiet for a moment, still working on Shane.

“You have to stay with her. Be by her side.”

“Of course, my love. I’m right here. She’s here on the bed with us.”

It broke Ilya’s heart to hear Shane so weak but at the same time, his words were like fuel for him. He was right. Their daughter needed him.

Ilya kissed the back of Shane’s hand, right next to the IV that had been placed on it.

“Okay.” Shane whispered.

“If you could excuse us Mr. Rozanov.” The paramedic said trying to get some space to examine Shane.

As much as he didn’t want to, Ilya had no choice but to back off.

“A bolus of saline went through, now the Pitocin drip is infusing through the other arm.”

“Alright. Mr. Hollander, we need the placenta to come out right now. We’re gonna help you with that and afterwards we’ll transport you to the hospital, okay?” Said the paramedic in a very sweet but still firm tone. Since Shane was still bleeding, they needed to get that taken care of, if they could, before they transported him.

Shane closed his eyes and nodded.

“Alright. I need to get this placenta out, I’ll be as gentle as possible, okay?” The paramedic positioned herself between Shane’s legs and carefully opened them wider.

Shane only nodded looking up at the ceiling, he didn’t want to look at whatever was happening down there. He could feel a pull below, it didn’t hurt but it felt weird.

“I’m gonna press your belly Mr. Hollander, it’s not gonna be pleasant but I wouldn’t do it if I didn’t have to, okay?”

Shane took a deep breath bracing himself for whatever was to come. He didn’t have a good feeling about it.

The paramedic, even though she was small, she pressed Shane’s belly really hard, deep and downwards.

Shane let out an agonizing scream that made Ilya’s skin crawl. “Oh my God! Stop!” Shane exclaimed letting out painful moans as the paramedic pressed his belly.

“It’s not fully contracted. I’m sorry Mr. Hollander but I need to keep going. We need to get it out.” She said, still pressing his belly.

Shane’s back arched as he bit his lips trying to suppress the screams, he was holding in.

Ilya hated seeing him in such pain, but it had to be done.

“Ah fuck!” Shane exclaimed, feeling something slip out.

“It’s out!” Right after the placenta was out, a stream of blood came out. It looked almost as if someone was pouring out a bucket of red liquid. “Eddy, check the membranes!”

“On it!”

“Charles, press the saline solution bag as hard as you can.”

Ilya saw how one of the paramedics pressed the solution bag between his hands so that it would infuse through faster.

“Placenta incomplete!”

“Fuck. I’m going in! Mr. Hollander the placenta came out incomplete, if I don’t get it out right now you will bleed out more than you are right now. I’m gonna put my hand inside and get it out.”

As much as Shane didn’t want to, he didn’t the have the strength to say anything, he just pressed his eyes shut as the paramedic shoved her hand inside him.

"Fuck! Oh my fucking god!” He said trying to close his legs.

“Don’t close your legs Mr. Hollander! I’m almost done!” She said as Ilya and the other paramedic grabbed Shane’s legs keeping them open.

After a couple of seconds that seemed like an eternity, the paramedic pulled out her hand holding the missing membrane of the placenta. “Got it! Get an ampule of ergotrate on his thigh right now.”

“Done.”

“I have to continue pressing your belly Mr. Hollander, I gotta make sure your womb is fully contracted.” She said as she immediately went back to pressing and massaging Shane’s belly.

Shane closed his eyes as he tried to breathe through the pain. At moments, he pressed his eyes shut and opened them wide towards at the ceiling letting out air as if he was being punched in the gut. Because it kind of felt like that. It felt as if the paramedic was punching him over and over on a large open wound on his belly.

The paramedic continued looking down between Shane’s legs as she pressed his belly. “There you go.” Her tone seemed calmer. “I can tell it’s contracted because it’s not bleeding anymore.” She said confidently as she still pressed Shane’s belly but with a softer motion now.

Ilya sighed as tears of happiness and relief streamed down his face, his hands were shaking. “Thank God.” He said, wiping off the tears on his face with the back of his hands. “Thank you so much. Thank you. Thank you.” He said giving a grateful nod to each one of the paramedics. Had they not arrived at the time they had, Ilya didn’t even want to imagine what would have happened to Shane.

Ilya then grabbed Shane’s cold hand and kissed it several times. “You are so brave my love. You are so strong.”

Shane, as exhausted as he was, managed to give him a soft smile.

Ilya then turned to see their baby. “Did you see that baby? Daddy is—” Ilya’s smile faded when he saw his baby, noticing she was now sleeping and had a nasal canula on her tiny and sweet face. “What happened?”

Even though Shane was not fully conscious. He could tell immediately by the tone of Ilya’s voice, there was something going on with their baby. His expression turned serious. “Is she okay?” He whispered, trying to keep his eyes open.

“She’s fine now.” The paramedic taking care of her said. “Her oxygen saturation started dropping a bit so, to make her more comfortable, I put some oxygen to help her out and her sat is back to normal now.”

Ilya remained silent, not believing what he had just heard.

Ilya had been so focused on Shane that he hadn’t paid any attention to the baby at all. He had completely forgotten about their daughter. Ilya felt dreadful. Shane had told him to stay with the baby and be by her side but he hadn’t done that.

Shane tried to get up. “I need to hold her.”

“No. No. Please Mr. Hollander.” One of the paramedics said, trying to hold him down. “I promise your baby is in good hands. Right now, we need to secure you well to the backboard to be able to transport you to the hospital.”

Shane shook his head. “No! I have to hold her! She needs me!” Shane said trying to extend his arms towards his baby but was futilely interrupted by the paramedics trying to get his arms down so he could be strapped down to the board to be transported. “No! Let me—”

“I’ll hold her.” Ilya exclaimed, extending his arms towards the paramedic that was tending to the baby. The paramedic proceeded then to carefully lift the baby from the bed, making sure her nasal canula and oxygen monitor stayed on, and gently placed her on Ilya’s arms.

The baby fit so perfectly in his arms. She was sleeping so peacefully, making Ilya’s chest feel warm and his heart full. Having her in his arms made Ilya feel complete. It was as if his daughter was what had been missing his whole life.

He then went next to Shane and stared into his eyes. “Don’t worry, okay? She’s gonna be with me. I will not let her out of my sight. I won’t let her go.” He said wiping off the tears, he didn’t know he had shed, with the back of his hand. “You just worry about getting back your energy and rest. I got her.” Ilya said trying to reassure Shane that their daughter was going to be alright with him.

Shane didn’t insist. Seeing Ilya hold their daughter, gave him so much peace. Besides, he had absolutely no energy to refute anything. Shane only nodded and relaxed, letting the paramedics wrap him and strap him to the orange backboard.

“BP is 90/60, heart rate is 110 and his oxygen sat is 99%. Mr. Hollander is ready to go.”

The paramedics made sure he was correctly and securely strapped and with the help of police officers, they proceeded to take him out of the house and into the ambulance.

As they did so, two paramedics stayed with Ilya and the baby.

“Mr. Rozanov.” One of the paramedics said putting a hand on his shoulder. “Do you have a thick jacket you can put on, so we can head out?”

Ilya nodded. “Yeah. I have it in the closet by the entrance. We can go.”

All of a sudden, there was a beeping noise coming from the equipment that had been put on the baby. Ilya happened to be holding it as well since it was attached to the baby’s blanket.

One of the paramedics quickly grabbed the baby’s monitor and checked it. His expression completely changed.

“Her oxygen saturation is 88%, increasing oxygen to four liters. We got the high-flow nasal canula and intubation equipment ready in the ambulance. Let’s go!”

Chapter End Notes

Thanks for all the feedback last chapter. I'm so glad you are enjoying this story as much as I love writing it. This was only suppossed to be a 10k fic but I got a bit carried away. Hope you don't mind all the medical details. Thanks for reading!

Chapter 7: A New Type of Love

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"I'll take her to the ambulance Mr. Rozanov." The paramedic said, extending his arms towards him.

Ilya looked at him feeling lost. Shane's voice telling him to stay by their baby's side echoed inside his head. He looked at his baby girl in his arms.

The paramedic could tell Ilya didn't want to let go of his baby, understandably so. "Just so you can bundle up and lock the place Mr. Rozanov. We'll be in the ambulance on the left." He said pointing outside.

He looked down at his sleeping baby. He never imagined he would see her with a tube around her tiny head in her first hours of life. How he wished he could do something for her. Feeling numb, he handed her over and saw how the paramedic immediately turned around and got into the ambulance. His baby girl had just been born and there was nothing he could do for her but hand her over to the paramedics.

The police man next to Ilya had witnessed the whole ordeal. It was sad to see someone who always looked so strong and invincible like Ilya Rozanov go through such traumatic experience. He gave him a sympathetic pat on the shoulder. "You did really good Mr. Rozanov. I assure you they are both in good hands."

Ilya looked at the him without saying a word.

"It's cold outside so grab a thick jacket." The police man said, noticing how lost the always confident hockey player looked.

Ilya nodded, he quickly took out a jacket from the closet, grabbed both his and Shane's phones and left the cottage.

Outside, the two ambulances had their engine's running. Ilya saw that one had the doors open, inside a paramedic waved for him to come in.

For a brief moment Ilya stood looking at both of the ambulances. It was as if his heart had split in two. Each part was on each ambulance. Ilya had never felt this way before. Even though he knew he had to be with his daughter, it hurt having to leave Shane.

They made him sit on the stretcher and they gave the baby back to him as they strapped him tight.

Having her in his arms made him feel better.

"We've increased her oxygen and she's responding good to it. We're heading straight to The Ottawa Hospital, it will take us about two hours. Dad and baby are stable now, they will get

the best care there. Let's go!" And as soon as the paramedic gave the order, the ambulance started moving.

That was good news for Ilya. "Thank you." He looked down at his baby relieved. "Is my husband okay?"

"Yes, sir. He's doing fine. He's not bleeding anymore and his vitals are good."

Ilya stayed silent. The mental image of Shane being alone in the other ambulance made him sad.

"They are both stable. You did amazing Mr. Rozanov."

Ilya didn't say anything. He felt like he hadn't done absolutely anything. The paramedic continued congratulating him but Ilya wasn't paying attention. In his mind, he thought how it had all been Shane. He had been the one who had suffered for hours and he had been the one who had given him back a family by giving him a daughter. The sweet baby girl sleeping in his arms.

Ilya stared at her with so much love. She looked just like Shane, it was as if he was holding a little piece of him. She was so adorable.

Thirty minutes into the drive, he felt the phones in his pocket vibrate. He pulled his phone out and there were several messages incoming at the same time, most of which were from Yuna, Shane's mom. Reading them would be a waste of time so he just tapped the call button. It ringed only once before he heard her voice.

"Hello? Ilya! Oh thank God! How are you? How is Shane?"

Ilya could feel his eyes burn welling up with tears. Hearing Yuna's voice made him feel safe. But still, how could he explain what they had just gone through?

With difficulty, he managed to speak. "Uhm… Shane gave birth in the cottage. The baby is here."

"Oh my God! No way! Congratulations! How are they?" Yuna said excited but at the same time concerned.

Ilya took a deep breath and made a pause.

Yuna immediately knew something was wrong. She had got to know Ilya so well. He always had a reply for absolutely everything.

Ilya's voice broke. "Shane lost a lot of blood. If the paramedics had not come, Shane would have— I can't even—" Ilya sobbed.

Ilya heard Yuna gasp. There was a brief moment of silence, broken by a sob on the other end of the phone. "Is he okay now?" Yuna asked with a shaky voice.

Ilya let out a sob and and after he took a deep breath, he replied. "Yes, he is stable now."

Yuna sighed relieved. “And the baby?”

Ilya then looked at the tiny and innocent baby girl in his arms. “I have her. She needs a tube to help her breathe but besides that, she is perfect.” Ilya let out a soft smile, looking at her adorable face. “They are taking us to the hospital now.” Ilya said trying to calm down.

“Oh my god.” He could hear Yuna crying.

“Where are they taking you son?” It was Shane’s dad on the line.

“Ottawa Hospital, we get there in two hours.” Ilya said, trying to maintain calm.

“We’ll be there when you get there.” Ilya heard Shane’s dad say. “Oh, and Ilya, thank you for taking care of Shane.”

Ilya’s heart crumbled and his eyes burned with tears he couldn’t stop from shedding. “I love him.” He said with a broken voice.

“We know you do. We’ll see you soon son.”

Ilya nodded, hung up and bawled his eyes out. In that moment he felt accompanied and safe. Ilya was so grateful to have Shane’s parents in his life. Now more than ever. Especially for his daughter as well.

Without realizing it an hour had already passed. Ilya had spent the whole way staring at his daughter sleeping.

He took in all of her facial features. She looked a lot like Shane. She had the shape of his eyes and also the color of her hair. Her nose and mouth seemed to look like Shane’s but the longer Ilya looked at her, it wasn’t really like Shane’s. Especially her eyebrows, they were thin and angled. He wondered if it was because it was his own features he was looking in his daughter. Was that why she looked so familiar? He wasn’t sure. What he was one hundred percent sure was that she had inherited from him the color of his eyes and his curls.

She was beautiful.

He never thought he could feel the love he felt for Shane for another person. It wasn’t quite the same though, this type of love was so pure. It was almost as if his heart had come out of his body and taken the form of the innocent baby girl in his arms. The world revolved around her. All he wanted to do was hold her, protect her and love her. He held the living proof of their love in his arms.

He stroked her rosy cheek with his thumb. At the touch, the newborn baby started fidgeting in his arms. She opened and closed her mouth turning her face in the direction of Ilya’s thumb.

“She’s hungry.” The paramedic next to him said. He then pulled out a pair of sterile gloves, and helped Ilya put one on. Ilya had no idea why he was doing it but at this point he trusted the paramedics entirely. “You can use your index finger as a pacifier.”

Led by the paramedic, Ilya placed his index finger by the baby's mouth and softly tapped her lip. The tiny baby opened her little mouth and began sucking eagerly her papa's finger.

Ilya felt how the tiny baby sucked his finger and pulled it, bringing a smile to Ilya's face. He couldn't believe she was so strong already. He felt so proud of her.

Ilya needed all of this to be over so he could actually feed her properly and hug her.

Another hour passed and they were very close to the city now. They would be in the hospital in a matter of minutes. Ilya had kept his finger on his daughter's mouth. With every bump on the road that made his finger move, the baby would begin sucking Ilya's finger again. He had no idea that holding his daughter would give him so much peace he desperately needed.

He looked down at the baby and was surprised to see her now staring back at him.

Ilya saw himself reflected in his daughter's blue eyes. "Hello." He said in Russian. He took his finger out of her mouth and with his thumb proceeded to caress her cheek. The baby responded with a pout and was about to start crying, but Ilya put back his finger by her lip and she began sucking it again. "Yes. I'm hungry too. You could not wait to meet us huh? Do you have no patience like your papa? Cannot blame you." Ilya said in russian while he managed to caress her cheek, still with his finger on her mouth. "After all this we will go home together. We will play a lot. Your daddy is dying to hold you and kiss you."

Ilya felt sad when he thought about Shane. It was so unfair that Ilya could hold her and Shane couldn't. He lifted her up towards his face and gave her a kiss on her forehead. He wondered what had been his purpose in life before her.

The sirens were turned on so that they could get to the hospital faster. It was so loud, Ilya instinctively protected his daughter's ears with the crook of his elbow and the blanket. It took them a couple of minutes to reach the hospital. Once the ambulance doors opened, Ilya was completely woken up by the freezing breeze. He covered the baby's face entirely with her blanket and hugged her towards his chest to not expose her to such temperature.

As he was rolled outside the ambulance, he could see that Shane was already out surrounded by the paramedics rolling him into the emergency room. He saw Yuna run next to them and disappear inside the ER with Shane.

"Ilya!"

Ilya looked at the person calling him and saw David, Shane's dad. Once again, just as he had felt with Yuna on the phone, Ilya felt safe. "David."

It all happened so fast. David followed them and stayed with Ilya as he was taken on the stretcher inside the emergency room towards the pediatric area. The paramedics unstrapped him and instructed him to place the baby in an examination table that almost looked like a high transparent cot with a bright light above.

As soon as Ilya left her on the table she started crying her lungs out.

“That’s definitely what we want to hear.” One of the nurses said.

Almost four people were now surrounding the baby. Every once in a while the doctors turned to Ilya to ask him questions about the delivery. He told them everything. They continued examining her for minutes that for Ilya seemed like an eternity. He was on his tiptoes lifting his face upwards trying to catch a glimpse of her.

“Congratulations son.” David said patting Ilya’s back and resting his arm around his shoulder. Ilya looked at him briefly and nodded. “I am worried for her.” He said still trying to get a glimpse of his baby.

David sighed. “That never goes away.” He said, now pressing his shoulder.

Ilya then looked at him somewhat mad thinking briefly what did he know about how he was feeling. But just as he thought that, it clicked that he did because he was also a dad. Just like him. Ilya’s face softened a bit and he nodded empathetically at the realization while David continued patting Ilya’s back.

The doctor finally approached them. “She seems to be doing good for now, considering she is a little bit premature. Her respiratory rate is a bit faster than normal but that is to be expected in some babies born at 36 weeks. She’s responding well to oxygen but we will take an x-ray to see how her lungs are doing and a blood test just to see that everything is in order.”

“But she will be okay, yes?” That’s all Ilya wanted to hear.

“It does look that way right now. We have to take it hour by hour with babies this small. We’ll be more certain about that once we have the results.”

Ilya didn’t look satisfied. He only nodded. “Thanks.”

Finally the nurses left some room for Ilya and David to get closer.

“Oh look at her!” David said with so much love and adoration. “It never occurred to me that I would get to see Shane as a baby again.” He said with a soft laugh and teary eyes. “She’s beautiful.” He said now giving Ilya a side hug that the Russian quickly turned into a normal much needed frontal hug. David patted Ilya’s back reassuringly as he felt him sobbing on his shoulder. “Congratulations son. She’s so beautiful.”

“I was so scared.” Ilya whispered, unloading all of his fear on David's shoulder. He was so thankful for his presence.

“She’s going to be okay. They are both going to be okay.” David said as he gently rubbed Ilya’s back.

Ilya then broke the hug and wiped off his tears with the back of his hands.

“You should go see Shane. I’ll stay with her for her x-ray and her lab tests.”

Ilya was dying to see Shane, but then he looked at her daughter and hesitated to leave her. “I got her. I promise I’ll get you as soon as there is a change or the results are back.”

Ilya took a deep breath and nodded. He then looked at his daughter and lowered his face so she was close to him. “I will be back soon. I will go see daddy and come back.” Ilya said in russian as he softly caressed her tiny head with his palm and gave her a kiss on her forehead. He then gave David a look, letting him know that he was counting on him.

David also nodded back and took Ilya’s place next to his granddaughter.

Ilya exited the pediatric area of the emergency room and asked the main desk for Shane’s location. They pointed towards a room with glass walls, inside which he could see several people gathered. In one side of the room close to the door, Yuna was standing with one arm crossed and the other one biting her thumb. She was on her tip toes trying to get a glimpse of her son.

As fast as he could, Ilya went towards the room, got inside and stood next to Yuna. As soon as she saw him, she immediately pulled him into a tight hug. “Oh Ilya.” She whispered. It was a very brief hug since all Ilya wanted to know was how Shane was doing. “How is he?”

“I don’t know yet. They’ve been examining and doing an ultrasound. He’s awake.”

Just by hearing that he was awake, it brought Ilya’s soul back to his body. Ilya was dying to get closer but he knew he would just get in the way of the six people taking care of Shane. Ilya got a tiny glimpse of his face and was happy to see him awake. Since he was lying flat, Shane couldn’t see him.

After a couple of minutes, the doctor next to Shane gave Ilya and Yuna a nod so they could approach the bed. Ilya pretty much ran to Shane’s side. Shane’s pale skin looked like it shined bright from all the sweat and all the lights above him. Ilya was sure Shane was exhausted and that he was probably only keeping himself awake to know how their baby was.

“Hey—” Shane whispered. Ilya shushed him placing his hand below Shane’s and pressed it lightly, not wanting to do anything to the IV line on the back of his hand. Ilya could see several wires attached to Shane. He was also receiving oxygen from a nasal canula around his face. There was an IV bag filled with blood hanging high from one corner of the bed and two other bags with clear liquid next to it. Ilya didn’t know if he was allowed to touch Shane or not, but he didn’t care. He caressed his temple with the back of his hand and gave him a quick kiss on the forehead.

“How is she?” Shane frowned wanting to know about his newborn daughter’s condition.

Ilya couldn’t help smiling. “She is perfect. She is with your dad now. They are taking tests to make sure her lungs are good.”

“Thank God.” Shane sighed relieved.

Ilya gave Shane another kiss on the forehead and without letting go of his hand, he stood back straight facing the doctor, expecting him to inform him on Shane’s condition.

“I’m Dr. Hernandez, I’m in charge of Mr. Hollander’s care. Right now he is stable. I just would like to ask you some questions on what happened Mr. Rozanov.”

Ilya and the doctor talked back and forth for a couple of minutes as Ilya told him everything that had happened during the night, about the fall, the birth and the postpartum bleeding he had witnessed.

Yuna listened to the whole conversation with a hand covering her mouth in disbelief and at the same time grateful that after that whole ordeal, her son was alive.

“All things considered Mr. Hollander is doing good. We did an ultrasound to check that there were no remains of the placenta inside. The paramedics mentioned that they had to manually retrieve it to stop the hemorrhage. They did an amazing job, they were able to remove it entirely otherwise Mr. Hollander would have continued bleeding. He lost a considerate amount of blood, his hemoglobin is at a 6 right now.”

“He was 12 in his last check up.” Ilya added.

“Yes, he will receive a transfusion of two units of packed red blood cells to get that number higher. Also we’re starting him on antibiotics since he gave birth at home and his water broke before labor started. So far he is looking good. We’ll get him to a room upstairs and you’ll be able to stay with him.”

Ilya and Yuna felt so relieved.

“Thank you so much.” Yuna said to the doctor.

“Thanks.” Ilya also said and extended his hand to the doctor.

The doctor noticed Ilya’s handshake was very weak. He was not expecting that. “Are you alright Mr. Rozanov?”

Ilya widened his eyes. “Yes. Yes. I am only tired.”

“You should get some rest. I’m sure you also had a rough night. I’ll visit Mr. Hollander later when he is in his room.”

Ilya and Yuna thanked the doctor again and then turned to Shane’s side. Ilya hadn’t let go of Shane’s hand the whole time. It was now getting warm. He couldn’t help leaning towards him again and kissing Shane’s temple, forehead and finally his lips as he lovingly passed his hand through Shane’s hair.

“You scared me.”

“I’m sorry." Shane whispered. "Didn’t mean to do that again.” He said slowly.

“No. Is okay.” He whispered into his ear and kissed his temple again.

“Are you sure she’s okay? I have a feeling—” Shane insisted.

Ilya nodded and said with a smile. “All is okay. Now you need rest. I will take care of our daughter while you sleep. Okay?”

Shane weakly nodded. “I wanna see her.”

“You will see her, after you rest.” Ilya said softly caressing Shane’s hair. “She’s just like you, beautiful.”

Ilya’s voice was like a lullaby to Shane. He closed his eyes and after about a minute, he passed out from sheer exhaustion. Ilya couldn’t stop looking at Shane. He was going to be okay. In a couple of days the three of them would leave the hospital as a family. Ilya couldn’t wait to see their daughter in Shane’s arms.

All of a sudden, the door of Shane’s room opened revealing David fast walking towards them. He looked pale and serious. Ilya stood up straight frowning. “Ilya I think you should go see the baby. It happened so fast—” Before David finished his sentence Ilya was already out and running towards the pediatric area of the emergency room.

Once he reached his daughter’s room. There was a multitude of people surrounding her. One of the nurses moved just enough and he was able to catch a glimpse of her. It had been brief but it had been enough time to leave Ilya shaking at the sight of his sweet and innocent baby girl with a large tube on her nose that covered the top half of her face and her tiny body completely covered in wires.

Chapter End Notes

I almost didn't get to write this chapter because my work contract ends in a few days and I need to move cities. But yesterday I got inspired all of a sudden and here it is! Hope you enjoy it!

Chapter 8: Beautiful Blue

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Ilya knew fear.

There had been several instances in his life where he had been at a point where he thought he would lose something important to him or that something was going to happen to him. But this type of fear was completely new and so different. *It was the most terrifying.* Never in his life had he ever felt this way before.

How could Ilya feel so much fear of losing someone he had just met?

What had he been doing before he had his daughter? What had he been living for?

He had no idea.

His dad teammates had told him how there was a before and after becoming a dad. They spoke of this "unique bond" that each of them shared with their kids which was very hard to explain but at the same time effortless to feel and surrender to it.

For once, they had been right.

Ilya loved his daughter from the minute he knew of her existence. Before she arrived, Ilya had already imagined how it would be having her here. He had read books to get ready to care for her, raise her, and of course play with her. But nothing could actually compare to what it really felt like. It was beyond him, too complex for words. The love he felt for his daughter was just indescribable.

He would die for her.

All he cared for was for the wellbeing of the tiny baby girl in the incubator. If somehow he could switch places with her, he would do it in a heartbeat.

But sadly, that was not possible. It wasn't reality.

The reality was that their daughter was struggling to breathe on her own and was hospitalized in the Neonatal Intensive Care Unit.

She needed a huge tube on her nose that covered the top half of her little head to help her breathe properly and she also needed a thinner tube down her mouth for feeding. She was sleeping lying in an incubator face up with her arms flexed towards her chest. The back of her tiny hands were right below her chin which despite all the medical equipment she had on, made her look adorable. She had several lines attached to her chest and also thicker ones around her feet. Those had red lights that monitored her heart rate, breathing and blood oxygenation. Her legs were extended over a small blanket that was folded below her knees to make her comfortable.

Ilya inserted a hand through the incubator and very gently with the back of his fingers caressed her forearm.

“You are strong sweetheart. You will get over this and we will go home together with daddy.” Ilya said to his baby in russian.

Suddenly Ilya felt a hand on his back.

It was Yuna. She went to Ilya’s side giving him a hug and stood next to him to meet her granddaughter.

“Oh my God—” She said covering her mouth in awe. “She looks just like Shane.” She said placing a hand on the surface of the incubator. “She’s so adorable. I can’t believe she’s finally here.” Yuna’s voice broke on the last two words.

She then saw on top of the incubator the sign where it had written:

‘Baby Girl Hollander-Rozanov.

Dad’s name: Shane Hollander.

Weight: 6 pounds 10 ounces.

Length: 21 inches’

“Oh my goodness. Almost 7 pounds, huh?” Yuna said with a smile wiping some tears off with a tissue. “Look at how long her legs are! She’s gonna be tall.” She said admiring her granddaughter excited. She had only dreamed of being a mom to a girl and now she was meeting her granddaughter. In a way she was finally going to get to live her dream.

Yuna couldn’t help noticing the pace the baby's chest moved up and down with each breath. She had never seen a baby breathe so fast. It didn't look right.

“How is she?” She asked concerned.

“She is okay now.” Ilya sighed. “Her oxygen went really low for a minute and then went up again but it did not reach a good number so they decided it was best to put that tube on her to stop going low again and make her comfortable.” Ilya said, his voice sounded defeated.

“Did they tell you how long would she have it?”

“As long as necessary. It could be hours or days.”

Yuna closed her eyes and bit her lips at Ilya’s last words. She then sighed and rubbed circles on Ilya’s back. “She will get through this. She will be okay.” She said trying to reassure Ilya.

Ilya nodded feeling her trembling hand on his back. He continued caressing her daughter’s forearm. “She is strong. She will get over this.”

“Of course she will. She’s your and Shane’s daughter after all.”

Ilya's eyesight got blurry. "She is stronger than me already." And let the tears fall.

-.-.-.-.-.-.-.-.-

Ilya opened the door quietly and walked inside Shane's room. He was sleeping while the second packet of blood was being transfused. Although he was still pale, his complexion looked so much better. He did look like he was going to be alright which made Ilya feel immense relief.

On the sofa next to the bed, David stood up to greet Ilya. "The doctor was just here." He said almost whispering to not wake Shane up. "He said this is the last packet of blood he will receive. Afterwards he'll receive only medication and fluids and he will be alright." David said very happy for his son.

Ilya nodded, grateful that he had kept Shane company while he had to go see the baby. "Thanks."

"How is the baby?" David asked concerned.

"She will be on oxygen for a while. But she is strong, so I think she will get better soon. Yuna stayed with her so I could come here. You can go see her. You should go see her."

"Alright." David nodded and then pointed towards a backpack. "We brought you a change of clothes. You should shower and also get some rest too." David said placing a hand behind Ilya's arm.

Ilya widened his eyes, he hadn't realized he was still wearing the clothes from last night. "I will change and stay with Shane."

"I'll be with Yuna and the baby."

Ilya nodded as he saw David heading towards the door. All of a sudden Ilya remembered to ask David something but as soon as he was about to call him, David turned to face him. "Don't worry, I'll call you immediately if something's up with the baby."

Ilya's frame relaxed. "Thanks."

David nodded and left the room trusting his son to the only person in the world, other than his wife, he would trust his son to.

Ilya went to Shane's side and leaned on the plastic rail of the bed.

Shane looked so peaceful and so beautiful while he slept. It appeared to Ilya that Shane had received some sort of bath. His skin didn't have traces of dry blood anymore, he looked more like his normal self. Ilya wanted to touch him but when he extended his arm to do so, he saw dry blood on his forearms and then his arms. He then glanced down at his clothes and immediately stepped away from Shane's bed. He went inside the bathroom and looked at himself in the mirror horrified. He hadn't done so since last night. His shirt and mostly his pants were drenched in blood.

Shane's blood.

Seeing the dark red stains on his clothing made him sick. He quickly undressed and threw his clothes in the garbage. He took a quick and necessary shower and got dressed with fresh clean clothes. It definitely made him feel a lot better.

He looked at his reflection in the mirror. Even though he looked and felt more like himself again, there was something different in his reflection. And he wasn't referring to his red and swollen eyes or the huge eyebags under them. It was something else, something much deeper.

He felt a continuous need to protect and watch over his family. He wondered if it had anything to do with the fact that he was a dad now.

He didn't know.

.-.-.-.-.-.-.-.-.

Shane had no idea where he was. But god it was cozy.

He wasn't in pain anymore. But wait, had he been in pain before? It felt like it. He took a deep breath– Wait a fucking minute, had he just been able to take a deep breath? That was awesome. It had been months since he was last able to breathe without getting winded.

He instinctively and quietly moved a hand and placed it on his midsection.

It was flat.

That was all it took for Shane to open his eyes wide and look down where he expected to touch his belly. There was nothing there. He looked at his bedside where he saw his husband, Ilya, holding his hand and also waking up to the movement in the bed.

"Hey sweetheart." Ilya said, now fully awake. Ilya gave the back of Shane's hand a kiss and stood up to kiss his lips as well.

"What—" Shane felt somewhat lost. "We are in—"

"Yes. We made it to the hospital." Ilya said to him in a gentle tone.

Shane was frowning, still feeling a bit out of place and unsure of the whole situation. "How long was I out for?"

"The entire day. But is okay, you needed to rest." Ilya said with a soft smile.

He moved his body a bit and winced. Never in his life had he ever felt this sore. It had been years since he had last been knocked out during a game. Wait a minute. Wait a fucking minute. He hadn't been playing. He placed a hand on his belly. There was no belly.

No baby.

All of a sudden, all of the events of the night prior came back to him. Ilya could see the panic in Shane's face while he seemed to remember everything.

"Where is she? How's my baby?" Shane asked, pleading to Ilya for answers.

As much as Ilya was happy that Shane was awake, he was dreading exactly this part. He now had to tell him about the baby and he was a hundred percent sure he was not going to take it well. Who would really?

"It is okay sweetheart. She will be okay." Ilya said in a caring tone, trying to fake a smile as he ran his fingers through Shane's hair .

"She is? Thank god." Shane whispered and sighed. "I want to see her. Where is she?" Shane said hopeful, looking around the room for her.

"She is in the NICU."

Shane frowned confused. "The NICU?" He couldn't quite remember what that meant at first. It sounded familiar, he had read that term in a book. Until it dawned on him and his expression suddenly panicked. "But isn't that?"

"Yes. Neonatal Intensive Care Unit. She was 36 weeks and the doctor said she is a bit premature." Ilya made a pause and stared at Shane for a moment.

Shane had noticed the way Ilya looked at him and also the way he spoke. Even though Ilya's tone was serene, he had put emphasis in every single word, trying hard to pronounce each of them properly. Ilya would never— do that. Immediately Shane knew there was something wrong. Very wrong. In Ilya's eyes he could clearly see deep concern and anxiety.

"There is something wrong with her." Shane stated, his expression turned serious and at the same time sad.

Ilya shook his head feeling a lump in his throat. He hated having to be the one to tell him what was happening to their daughter, but he had to do it.

"She has a little problem breathing. She is on oxygen right now. The doctor says it could be hours or days until she can breathe on her own."

Ilya saw how Shane's expression froze in confusion. He then looked away from Ilya, and faced the wall in front of him. Ilya saw Shane frown in confusion, as he seemed to realize what he'd just been told— his mouth pulled into a small pout before he burst into tears.

"Was it because I—?"

"No!" Ilya knew Shane would say something like that and blame himself. "You were so brave! You were perfect!" Ilya said cupping Shane's cheeks into his palms and kissing his forehead. "Listen to me." It broke Ilya's heart seeing Shane looking away. He didn't want to face him. "Look at me. Look at me sweetheart."

Shane couldn’t look at Ilya. He had failed him and his daughter. He hadn’t been careful enough. He couldn’t keep her inside of him longer and he had taken too long pushing.

“Shane no, don't cry. Look at me. Please.” Ilya cupped Shane’s sobbing face as he finally set his eyes on Ilya. “I’m so sorry!” Shane exclaimed between sobs placing his hands on top of Ilya’s.

Ilya hugged Shane tightly. “No. You have nothing to be sorry for. You were so brave and strong. You did nothing wrong sweetheart. This things happen, that is all.”

Ilya’s heart clenched feeling how his husband’s chest trembled from his sobs.

“Right now she is okay. She is with grandma and grandpa and in a couple of days we will all go home together.” Ilya said softly, trying to reassure him. He didn’t think he had ever seen Shane sob the way he was doing it in that moment. Shane cried like a child on Ilya’s shoulder. Ilya couldn’t help it and broke down as well embracing his husband.

It never occurred to them that they would be in such a situation, where their baby needed to be in the NICU. In every check-up the baby had been fine. They had seen her move and they got to listen to her heartbeat every chance they got. They had even booked some ultrasound appointments with the only purpose to see her. She was supposed to have been born okay.

The doctor had mentioned to Ilya that it was likely that Shane’s fall was the trigger of his pre-term labor. But that had been an accident, it hadn’t been Shane’s fault.

“I want to see her.” Shane pleaded to Ilya.

“Of course sweetheart. I will bring a nurse and we will go together.” Ilya said and let Shane go to get someone to help him.

“Don’t go.” Shane said, not letting Ilya’s hand go.

“Okay. I will stay.” Ilya calmly looked at the wall behind Shane’s bed and requested the presence of a nurse. Once she got there, she helped him transfer from the bed into a wheelchair. Ilya wanted to carry him to the wheelchair but Shane refused, expressing he just wanted some help to stand. Not even when he had his head concussion and fractured clavicle had Shane ever felt so sore and weak. He had to wrap his arms around Ilya’s neck to be able to stand. He then slowly and carefully sat on the wheelchair. The nurse got him ready to go and was about to push him but Ilya didn’t let her and offered to do that. He said he would take him, he knew the way. The nurse only accompanied them to the entrance of the NICU. Not after she rang a bell and said her request.

“The parents of baby Hollander-Rozanov are here to see her.”

Shane looked up behind him at Ilya. Ilya must have also liked the way his daughter was mentioned since he saw his own hopeful smile reflected on his husband’s face.

The door buzzed and the nurse held the door open for them while Ilya pushed the wheelchair inside the NICU. Ilya had already spent a good part of the morning in the NICU so he knew

where their daughter was. He pushed Shane towards that direction and halfway there, a nurse joined them.

“Hi! I’m nurse Aly and I’m taking care of your little one today. She’s doing a lot better! She’s responding good to oxygen. We also just gave her two ounces of milk, and she took it very well. She was sure hungry!” She said with a smile.

Shane felt happy to hear good news about his daughter, but at the same time he couldn’t help feeling there was more than just those updates.

The nurse opened the door to what it seemed to be her room. Ilya pushed Shane in and rolled him towards the incubator by the side of the wall. As he approached the incubator, Shane could feel his heartbeat racing from excitement.

Their baby girl was lying face up wearing only a diaper. Her arms and legs flexed towards her chest.

Ilya had already seen her before so he was mostly happy to get to see her again and now with Shane. But he also knew the shock of seeing her in an incubator with all those cables and especially her breathing tube covering pretty much half of her face. Ilya placed Shane as close as possible next to the incubator. He then stood next to him and placed an arm around his shoulders while Shane admired their baby girl.

When Shane had given birth to her, he hadn’t been able to hold her in a way he could see her face properly. Now although she had a big tube that covered the upper part of her face, Shane was able to see her features better.

Her skin was fair just like Ilya’s. Her hair was black just like his own. Also her eyes. Even though they were closed, under those gorgeous long eyelashes, he saw his own eyes in his daughter. Her cheeks and lips were a beautiful rosy pink. He continued admiring every inch of her in silence as he thanked God for letting him see her.

“Is she not the most beautiful baby you have ever seen?” Ilya said proud and happy.

Shane chuckled, he could feel his eyes welling up.

“She looks like you.” Shane stated.

Ilya let out a soft smile. “Only you think she looks like me.”

“No. Look at her.” Shane said letting out a gentle smile. “She only has my hair color and like you said my eyes. But everything else—“ Shane looked at her entire tiny body. “Her eyebrows are arched. And look at her plump lips. Also her fingers are long.” He said, sliding his finger under hers as her tiny hand opened, his thumb softly tracing over her fingers. He then looked down at her feet. “Her legs as well. Even the shape of her knees and feet.” Shane chuckled. “She looks more like you.”

Shane had memorized every single detail of Ilya’s body. Seeing his daughter was like seeing Ilya in baby form.

Ilya looked at his hand and fingers and then looked at his baby's, wrapped around Shane's finger. Just then did he realize that it was true.

Indeed, his daughter looked like him.

Shane was so happy to see again the baby that had kept him company the last couple of months. She was perfect. And god she was adorable. He couldn't wait to see her without all those wires and tubes around her. But right now he knew they were necessary. He could really see how fast she was breathing. Although Shane knew she had everything she needed, he still couldn't help feeling scared for her.

"You have to be strong okay? I'm right here." Shane said to his daughter and then looked up at Ilya next to him and back to their baby. "Papa and I will always be by your side okay? Always here." Shane said, softly stroking her cheek with the back of his index finger.

The baby girl blinked slowly, her eyes fluttering open until they found Shane. And there it was—that familiar shade of blue. The same blue as the love of his life. The loves of his life now.

Ilya bent down to get to see his daughter's eyes better.

"Hello sweetheart." He said to her lovingly in russian.

The baby then switched her curious gaze towards him. They were both moved to tears by the fact that she, as little as she was, was able to recognize them. "You need to get better okay? So we can go home and play together okay?" Ilya said in russian.

The sweet baby continued staring at them for a couple of minutes while her parents talked to her but then sleep overcame her and she fell asleep.

"She's beautiful." Shane said content and proud.

"Of course she is, just look at us." Ilya said, getting a quiet chuckle from Shane and also feeling immense happiness at finally being the three of them safe together.

The door to the room opened.

"Good evening. Mr. Rozanov, Mr Hollander." The doctor said approaching them. "I'm glad to see you are doing better Mr. Hollander. And also glad to see you got some rest Mr. Rozanov. Good to see you again." He said politely.

"This is Dr. Garcia. He has been taking care of—" Ilya made a pause. "Uhh—" Ilya looked at Shane feeling confused at first but then he felt completely embarrassed.

Shane also widened his eyes realizing the same thing that had crossed on Ilya's mind.

"That's okay. I'm sure you'll come up with a name in no time. I just wanted to take the opportunity that you are both here so I can update you on your baby's condition."

Chapter End Notes

I still can’t believe how well this fic has been received. It was supposed to be only a 10k fic but I got excited and carried away to be as detailed as possible. I really didn't think many people would read it but I guess I was wrong. Sadly, we are only a couple of chapters away from the end. As always, thank you so much for your continued feedback and most of all your patience.

Chapter 9: Healing the Heart

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

"We took a look at her labs, x-rays and we've also been monitoring her vitals for the past twelve hours and we think she's dealing with RDS. That stands for Respiratory Distress Syndrome. What that means is that she is having some difficulty clearing out the fluid inside her lungs because they are a bit immature. We have already administered surfactant to her lungs improve oxygenation and we will monitor her during the night and see how she reacts to it."

Ilya and Shane shared a concerned look.

"So she does not have an infection or something like that." Shane asked.

The doctor shook his head. "No. RDS is usually seen in premature babies. Although most babies born at 36 weeks don't need time in the NICU, there are a few that do. They need a little bit of extra help dealing with the fluid leftover in the lungs which is your little one's case. It could take hours or days. In her case she's responding very well to oxygen, we'll see how she does during the night and maybe tomorrow we can slowly try to wean her off of it."

Shane and Ilya remained silent. They both saw worry and now frustration in each other's stare. Shane then sighed and looked up to the doctor. "So— it depends on how she responds?" Shane asked hopeful.

"There is nothing more we can do?" Ilya asked in a serious but yet sad tone.

"She's getting everything she needs right now. At this point, it's just a matter of time."

Shane's eyes went from the doctor to his baby. She was just a newborn and she had all these things on her so she could breathe. It was so unfair.

"She's so small."

"You'd be surprised. We've had babies half her size pull through. She might look tiny but she already is proving to be a tough cookie." The doctor was used to getting these reactions from new parents with babies in the NICU. But seeing the distraught faces of Hollander and Rozanov at the same time, that was something he never thought he'd see. He couldn't help feeling sorry for them.

"I mean— She's baby Hollander-Rozanov." The doctor said pointing towards the baby with his palm. "Strength and resilience run in her blood. Out of all the babies in the NICU, she's got really the best chances on her side."

The doctor said trying to cheer them up.

And it worked since the comment got a slight smile out of the new parents.

Once the doctor left, Shane remained thoughtful. He faced the incubator and put his hand back inside to gently caress her arm with the back of his fingers. His eyes welled up with tears again as he continued admiring every detail of his baby girl. He wished so bad there was something he could do for her. Anything.

Ilya stayed next to him, his hand rested on Shane's shoulder.

A nurse then approached them.

"Since she already ate she's ready to be held now. Who would like to go first?"

Shane and Ilya widened their eyes huge in surprise.

"We can hold her?" Ilya asked looking at Shane in disbelief, making sure he had heard right. She looked so frail and had so many things on her that they thought holding her wasn't even a possibility.

"Yes, of course." The nurse said very matter of factly. "I'm sure she'd like that as well."

The grin on Ilya's face reflected the joy in Shane's heart. They were going to hold their daughter.

"He will hold her first." Ilya said looking at Shane excited.

"Are you sure?" Shane asked.

"Yes. I held her first and in the ambulance too. Is your turn." Ilya said with a gentle smile.

He then carefully helped Shane sit on a soft recliner while the nurse got the baby ready to take her out of the incubator. Ilya was told to help Shane pull his gown lower so that she could place the baby on his chest.

Shane was already starting to get emotional. Shane was doing his best to hold back his tears, but the way his face crumpled gave him away.

"Is alright sweetheart." Ilya said, moved by Shane's tears.

Shane found himself only able to nod. Less than a day prior, he had really felt like he was going to lose his daughter. But now he was about to hold her.

The nurse lifted the baby from the incubator and carefully placed her face down on Shane's chest.

Shane closed his eyes speechless.

All the emotions were just so overwhelming. Even though her body was so tiny, it was so warm. He could feel her breathing on his chest. It took him back to when he first held her in the cottage. His body remembered. Shane's arms had been craving to hold his baby, and now they were once again wrapped around her. His baby was where she belonged, in Shane's arms. It was beyond him. He was in pure bliss.

Tears streamed endlessly down his cheeks from a mixture of happiness, relief and at the same time fear. As overwhelming as it was, feeling her on his chest kept him grounded. He felt whole, strong and powerful. As long as he had her and Ilya, everything would be alright.

Ilya also couldn't help shedding some tears as he saw Shane hold their daughter. He had almost lost him the night before. Even though they were both still recovering, seeing Shane and the baby together gave Ilya so much peace.

Ilya had never felt so fulfilled. He felt like he had everything he needed right there in front him. There was no other place he would rather be than with Shane and their baby. He was so happy he took his phone out and snapped some pictures of Shane and the baby. He wanted to remember that moment forever. He also got some selfies of the three of them and with the nurse's help they got better pictures.

Ilya took a minute to admire the pictures in his phone. Those were their first family pictures. They were real. It was something so small but yet so precious and meaningful to him.

He then got closer to Shane to take more pictures and record videos of their baby. She was so adorable and beautiful, Ilya was beyond proud.

Some minutes later a nurse approached them and addressed Shane. "Excuse me, but the nurse from your floor called. It's time for your antibiotic so you need to head back to your room."

Shane first frowned and then pouted. "Aww no—" He said pressing his hold on his baby a little bit tighter.

"But you can come back after you're done. You can come back whenever you want." The nurse said kindly.

As much as Shane didn't want to let her out of his arms, he understood he needed to get his own treatment administered.

But God, just the thought of letting her go felt so wrong. She was his. Shane could only nod to the nurse as she approached him and lifted the baby from his chest, placing her carefully back in the incubator.

Immediately Shane felt uneasy. He felt a loss.

With heavy hearts they both said bye to their baby and proceeded to leave the NICU.

"It sucks that we have to leave her." Shane said wiping off his tears with his fingers.

"I know." Ilya said, feeling the same way. "But you need your medicine to get better too."

"I know. It just fucking sucks." Shane said as Ilya rolled him back to his room.

Once they got there a nurse hooked him back to his IV and proceeded to administer Shane's scheduled antibiotic.

"I miss her already." Shane said.

“Me too.” Ilya said, pulling a chair to sit closer by Shane’s bed. “Is crazy, how I feel about her. I love her so much.”

“I don’t think I’ve ever felt this way for anyone before.” Shane said and looked at Ilya. “Not even for you. This is different.” He said placing a hand on his heart.

“Is the same for me. Is like part of my heart stayed in that room.” Ilya admitted.

They looked at each other and took a moment to let reality sink in. Shane then let out a quiet chuckle and smiled to Ilya. “We have a daughter. Can you believe that?”

“Yes, I can.” Ilya said playfully. “I saw her.”

Shane chuckled. “How are we going to do this?” Shane wondered out loud, still not fully believing their current situation.

Ilya had a very relaxed and happy expression on his face. “Easy. You and she get better then we take her home and raise her like we said we were going to do.” Ilya said very matter of factly.

Shane widened his eyes and let out a soft laugh. “Really?” His voice full of sarcasm.

“Yes. Is simple.”

“Her room is still not ready. Where is she going to sleep? We need to clean it up and we also have to wash her clothes.” Shane said thinking about all the things they were supposed to do after they got back from the cottage.

Ilya lowered his glance and looked up at his husband with an eyebrow raised. “Are you really going to let her sleep alone in her room?”

Shane thought about it for a second, his mouth slightly open. “No.” He said as if the alternative, that he had just mentioned, was a sin.

“We don’t need to worry about her room. We just move the crib to our room. We already have a lot of things for her. We will be okay.” Ilya said pressing Shane’s hand reassuringly.

Shane stared into his husband’s eyes for a couple of seconds nodding slowly and then looked away.

Ilya noticed how the grip Shane had on his hand weakened as his hand began to tremble.

“Talk to me sweetheart.” Ilya knew Shane enough to know there was something wrong.

Shane looked back at Ilya, his eyes were now shimmering. “If I don’t think about anything else I just think about her and I get so scared.” Shane’s voice broke mid-sentence.

Before Shane realized it, Ilya was already lying on the bed next to him with his arms around him cradling Shane’s head towards his chest.

“She will be okay.” Ilya said as he felt Shane’s head tremble from his sobs. “The doctor said she’s strong like us. So she will be fine.” Ilya said kissing Shane’s hair.

“If something happens to her—” Shane said between sobs.

“She will get better.”

“I didn’t want this to happen!” Shane exclaimed sobbing as he pressed and pulled Ilya’s shirt in his fist tightly.

“I know, sweetheart. I know.” Ilya said, embracing Shane tighter.

They stayed cuddling together on Shane’s bed until Ilya made sure Shane calmed down.

During that time, Ilya received a call from Shane’s parents asking him how Shane and the baby were. After they had seen the baby, they went out to grab something to eat and also bring something for Ilya and Shane. They were on their way back to the hospital.

Just as Ilya got off the bed to stretch, Shane’s doctor came in to examine him. Afterwards, the doctor explained to Shane what his current situation was. Once they were finished, Shane thanked the doctor who left shortly after.

Ilya looked at Shane. He looked lost in thought.

“You look so much better already.” Ilya said placing a hand on Shane’s cheek as he kissed his lips.

Shane let out a slight smile and looked at his husband. It was the first time he saw large dark eyebags under those gorgeous blue eyes. His eyes also looked puffy, red and the most noticeable, exhausted.

“You haven’t slept. You should get some rest too.” Shane said concerned for his husband.

“I slept enough.” Ilya said frowning.

“You should go back home for the night and get some sleep.”

Ilya looked at Shane like he had three heads. “And leave you and the baby here alone? Is that what you want?”

Obviously Shane didn’t want that but Ilya looked so tired.

“I don’t think my mom would mind staying.”

Ilya approached Shane and caressed his cheek with the back of his index finger. “I’m not going anywhere. I want to be close to you and her.”

Shane wondered what had he ever done to deserve him. “I love you.”

“Ya tebya lyublyu” Ilya replied.

Half an hour later, Shane's parents arrived to his room. They found Ilya passed out on the couch and Shane resting on his bed. Yuna and David were so glad to see Shane doing better. They had been very scared for him when they saw him being pulled out from the ambulance. While they were talking, Ilya woke up startled, as if he had forgotten they were in the hospital. Yuna and David greeted him and gave him the food they had brought for him. Ilya hadn't realized how hungry he had been until he smelled the fettuccini alfredo which he devoured in a matter of minutes. Shane was only able to get a couple of bites from his own dish, he wasn't so hungry.

Yuna told them that she had already taken care of everything in the cottage. She had sent the people that usually looked after it when they were not there, to take care of the cleaning and making sure it was locked. She also told them to bring Ilya's car over to Ottawa.

They still asked them if they needed help with anything else.

Shane and Ilya were so grateful for their presence in their lives. They did need some help.

Shane mentioned they still needed to get the baby's clothes washed and her room tidied up. Shane had also mentioned that they also needed to babyproof the house. But when he said that, Yuna and Ilya shared a look and then explained to Shane that babyproofing the house would not be necessary until a couple of months later.

"She looks like you Shane." David said proud.

"I think she looks more like Ilya."

"She has your eyes and your hair." Yuna mentioned. "But who knows? Babies change a lot the first couple of months. You were blond when you were born."

"Really? I didn't know that." Shane said confused.

"We're going to go see her right now before we leave. We'll be back tomorrow morning." Yuna said approaching his son and giving him a kiss on the cheek.

"Okay. Thanks for everything mom." Shane said.

Yuna then approached Ilya and hugged him. "You should also get some rest. You haven't slept all day." She said giving him a kiss on the cheek.

"I will sleep tonight."

David said bye to Shane, then approached Ilya and hugged him too. "Get some rest son. Thanks for taking care of Shane— and the baby."

"I will. Thanks for coming." Ilya replied.

"No problem." David said before closing the door behind them.

Once they were gone, Ilya cleaned up the room a bit and went back to lie down on the couch. Exhaustion was really trying to get over him since as soon as he lay flat he felt his eyelids

extremely heavy.

Shane noticed too how hard Ilya was trying to keep himself awake.

“Can you turn off the lights please?” Shane asked Ilya.

“All of them?” He said standing up to turn them off.

“Yes, please.”

Ilya turned off the lights and went back to lie on the couch. In less than two minutes Shane heard Ilya’s deep breaths as he had passed out from exhaustion.

Shane had wanted to go see the baby with Ilya after they were done eating but just seeing how Ilya struggled to stay awake during his parent’s visit was sad for Shane.

Ilya had gone through so much the night prior, he deserved a good night’s rest. Shane knew Ilya would quickly fall asleep once the lights were all off. He was also starting to feel a bit tired.

He pressed some buttons to get the bed flat and after about five minutes they were both completely asleep.

The following morning, they were woken up the by a nurse entering the room to check Shane’s vitals. They both woke up startled. The nurse had to reassure them everything was alright. Shane had his blood drawn and shortly after they brought him breakfast. He still didn’t have much appetite but after Ilya insisted, he took down a couple of bites.

They were both eager to see the baby but a nurse told them that first the doctor had to come to check Shane and also inform him about his lab results from the morning.

Time had never passed so slow for the both of them. It took two hours for the doctor to come back with the results, examine him and say everything was good with him. Sadly, he mentioned they would have to wait another hour for the orthopedics doctor to visit him to inform him about his ankle. They had taken the x-ray in the emergency room and since there was no fracture they told him he would get his ankle evaluated in his room. They had to wait an extra hour for the doctor to come, check him, confirm he had sprained his ankle and finally bandage it to keep it stable.

Once they were done with Shane, they could finally go to NICU and see their baby.

They were both so excited to see her again.

They went into her room and just like the day before. She was still inside the incubator with her large breathing tube around her head. As excited as they were to see her, it sucked to see her with all those things on her.

Her doctor approached them. “She spent the night okay. We tried to wean her off the oxygen, and we could say it’s looking favorable because she doesn’t need as much oxygen as yesterday, but she still needs to have it. Her breathing rate has also improved. As you can see

she’s not struggling as much as yesterday. She took her feeding tube out on her own but we didn’t put one back because she was able to drink from her bottle successfully. She’s definitely moving in the right direction. We’re going to see how she does tonight, but she really is improving.”

Both Shane and Ilya felt so relieved to hear the doctor’s words. Their baby was getting better.

This time Ilya got the chance to hold her first. He took his shirt off and sat in the recliner while the nurse carefully placed the baby on his chest for skin to skin.

Shane hadn’t considered he would fall in love with his husband all over again at the sight of him with their newborn baby girl. She looked even smaller as she lay on her papa's broad and toned chest. Ilya looked at her with so much love. Seeing them together made Shane feel that everything they had went through, all the difficulties and complicated situations they had overcome, had finally led them to this moment.

And it had all been absolutely worth it. Shane’s heart was full of love for his husband and daughter.

Ilya felt so much joy having his daughter on his chest. Her warmth and the way her tiny chest moved as she took each breath made him feel so much serenity. A couple of happy tears escaped the corners of his eyes.

Shane took out his phone and got some pictures of Ilya and the baby as well as selfies.

A nurse then approached them with a tiny bottle.

“It’s time for her milk, would you like to feed her?” She offered.

“Yes. I want to do that.” Ilya said eagerly.

The nurse helped him switch the position of the baby so that she was now laying on the crook of Ilya’s arm. Her arms and legs were so thin, and her hands were just so tiny. She seemed so frail to Shane.

The nurse gave the bottle to Ilya, who proceeded to carefully place the bottle on her mouth. As soon as the bottle made contact with her lips, the baby begun sucking it eagerly.

“She is hungry.” Ilya said smiling.

“She has very good appetite. She got a couple of bottles in during the night, after she removed her feeding tube.” Said the nurse with a hint of amusement.

Ilya looked so proud.

“She definitely has your appetite.” Shane said smiling.

Ilya watched fondly as his daughter drank her bottle. *“Are you going to eat like papa?”* Ilya said to the baby in russian.

At the sound of Ilya's voice, the baby slowly began to open her eyes, revealing gorgeous blue orbs. "*You are, aren't you? We're going to eat pasta and other yummy food together right?"* Ilya was now only speaking to his daughter in Russian.

The baby stared back at her papa as she drank her bottle. *"You are the most beautiful baby girl in the world. My sweet baby."*

Shane could understand just a couple of words of what Ilya had said. But seeing the way their daughter looked at Ilya with so much attention when he spoke, for a moment he really thought she understood him.

When Shane had been pregnant, every day Ilya would get to the level of his belly and talk to the baby in Russian. Ilya's voice and language probably did sound familiar to her.

The baby was close to finishing her bottle. She took her tiny hands towards her face finding the tube that supplied her oxygen. Ilya and Shane watched as she desperately tried to pull it off of her. They were amazed by how a tiny baby could do such a thing yet heartbroken because she was not comfortable with that horrible tube.

Her frustration peaked when she finished her bottle and she started crying.

"It's okay baby. It's just for a little while until you get better."

A nurse came by and helped Ilya place her into a seating position so he could burp her. As Ilya rubbed her back, he felt so accomplished by the sound of each and every burp. Shane and Ilya looked at each other with huge grins on their faces. They really couldn't wait to bring her home. After a couple of minutes they saw the baby dozing off until she finally fell asleep. Her tiny face looked even smaller as it was cradled between Ilya's thumb and index finger.

Ilya chuckled and looked at Shane. "She's full."

"She's full and happy now." Shane said as he watched Ilya accommodate her back into the crook of his elbow. "You're good." Shane said raising his eyebrows.

"Is easy." Ilya said nonchalantly.

Afterwards it was Shane's turn to hold the baby. Shane still couldn't put into words all the emotions that went through him as he held his baby in his arms. It was so much love.

They stayed with their daughter for about an hour until a nurse came to tell them Shane had to go back to his room for his medication.

Shane was so annoyed by it. It took all the strength he had in him to let go of his baby.

"It fucking sucks." Shane said grumbling as Ilya pushed his wheelchair out of the NICU.

"The most important thing is she's getting better." Ilya said, not sure if trying to reassure Shane or himself.

Shane nodded.

Once back in his room, he was hooked up to his IV to receive his treatment. Shane then rolled to his side giving his back to Ilya. The Russian once again immediately noticed there was something wrong.

"Are you okay?"

"No." Shane made a pause. "I hate, *hate*, leaving her there."

"She needs to stay there sweetheart. So she gets better."

Shane turned around and lay on his back placing a hand in the middle of his chest. "My chest hurts when I think she's there alone. It feels like I'm missing part of my heart and soul. What if something happens to her and we're not there?"

"The nurses are there and they will tell us if something is wrong."

"It's easy for you to say. Just yesterday she was inside me. She was with me. We were together. We were one." Shane said upset. "I *need* to be with her." Shane's voice trembled.

Ilya could see how mad and sad Shane still was for the baby. As much as he wanted to soothe him, he had to reason with him. "She is safer there than with us right now Shane. She needs oxygen. We can't give her that."

"Fuck!" Shane raised his voice frustrated as his face crunched up.

"She's getting better sweetheart." Ilya insisted.

Shane then looked at his husband's eyes. He saw so much concern and sadness in them, he forgot for an instant he was just as concerned and sad as he was about their baby.

"I'm sorry I'm just so worried." Shane apologized.

Ilya placed a hand on Shane's shoulder and rubbed his arm up and down gently. "Your dad said that never goes away." Ilya said as he rubbed his own chest with his free hand.

"Did he?"

"Yes. Yesterday he was very worried for you."

Shane widened his eyes and then sighed.

"David said they will come in the afternoon." Shane seemed distracted. "Shane?"

"I can't get the doctor's words out of my head."

The evening before, the doctor had come and talked to Shane about his condition. There was a part of the conversation he couldn't get out of his head. *"Mr. Rozanov mentioned you suffered a fall down the stairs and shortly after your water broke. It is likely that in that moment the placenta detached to some degree and caused the painful contractions you experienced from the beginning. It would also explain the post-partum bleeding. Thankfully,*

the placenta was attached enough that it didn't affect the baby. Otherwise the outcome would have been completely different."

"It really was my fault wasn't it?" Shane said upset.

"Shane please stop saying that. It was not your fault." Ilya sighed. "The fall was just an accident."

All of a sudden Shane widened his eyes huge as plates in realization. "What if it wasn't the fall? We had sex the night before."

Ilya's eyes widened in surprise for a second because he wasn't expecting that reply. He quickly regained his composure and chuckled.

"Did you mention that to the doctor?" Shane asked concerned.

"No." Ilya said confused. "You want me to tell him?" Ilya said with a slight smile.

Shane thought about it for a second and then shook his head. "No. Although— No."

Ilya let out a soft laugh and went to hug his husband.

"Breathe Shane. We will get over this and go home together. The three of us. Right now she needs her treatment and you need yours too. After you are done we go home." Ilya said serious but then gave him a playful look. "When she's older she will tell you too *'Relax daddy"*"

Shane looked at Ilya with desire to strangle him but then he let out a soft laugh. He was right. They were going to be okay.

"I am relaxed. I'm cool." Shane said full of confidence.

Ilya looked at him with an eyebrow raised like he wasn't making any sense.

Later that morning Yuna and David came by to visit them. They had gone to Shane and Ilya's house and were getting it ready for the baby. They brought Ilya's car to the hospital and gave him the keys. They spent some time together and then went to the NICU to visit their granddaughter. Then they got back to Shane's room to say bye since they had to go back to finish getting the house ready for the baby.

During Shane and Ilya's afternoon visit to the NICU they were informed that they were going to try to wean the baby off the oxygen. That was really good news but at the same time it was nerve-wracking.

They got back to Shane's room and to decrease their anxiety, they tried talking about baby names.

"We liked Yekaterina." Ilya said.

"You liked that name. It's too long, her last name is already long." Shane refuted.

During Shane's pregnancy, whenever they had the baby name discussion they could never agree on a name. They always ended up bickering that either Ilya's options were ridiculous or Shane's alternatives were boring.

"Yekaterina Ilyinichna Hollander-Rozanova." Ilya chuckled. "Ok, no. Russian name is ruled out. Too long. She will get bullied."

"How do you feel about Irina?" Shane suggested in a soft and careful tone as he stared at him expectant of his reaction.

Ilya froze. His expression hardened and he remained silent.

They had previously discussed considering Ilya's mom's name for their daughter. But back then, Ilya's response to Shane's suggestion of the name Irina, had been exactly the same. Ilya looked conflicted. Shane knew Ilya was still in the process of healing wounds from his childhood. But Shane wondered if maybe after seeing the baby, Ilya had changed his mind.

Ilya looked away from Shane and became lost in thought.

"I—" Ilya began to say but Shane interrupted him.

"We don't have to use it if you don't want to. I was just—"

"I loved my mom." Ilya said in a serious tone. "But when I think of the name Irina, I only think about her." Ilya said with genuine sincerity. "And now I think of the foundation too."

Shane extended his hand and Ilya placed his own on top of it.

Ilya intertwined his fingers between Shane's. "Our baby deserves her own name. She will be her own person. She will have her own story. I want that for her."

Shane's heart clenched but then softened. "That's beautiful." Shane said pressing his husband's hand. "So…" Shane made a pause and sighed. "For the time being she's still baby Rozanov-Hollander."

Ilya frowned confused. "You said Rozanov-Hollander."

"Yeah." Shane said nonchalantly.

"Not Hollander-Rozanov?" As perceptive as Ilya was, he had to make sure he had heard this one right. The entire pregnancy Shane had been completely adamant on the baby having his last name first. It wasn't even a discussion.

Ilya had used it as an excuse to insist and annoy Shane. He really didn't care. He would just go along with whatever Shane wanted. Especially because he had witnessed first-hand the toll the pregnancy had taken on Shane.

Now Ilya stood dumbfounded by what Shane had just said.

“I know what I said about it.” Shane admitted, looking at him fondly and slightly embarrassed. “But I want her to have her papa’s last name first. I want the whole world to know that Ilya Rozanov’s daughter is the sweetest and kindest Rozanov of all. Just like her papa.”

Shane could see how Ilya’s eyes became shiny and his jaw began to tremble.

It was impossible for Ilya to hold back his tears after what Shane had just said. He needed him in his arms now. Ilya got on Shane’s bed while Shane scooted to a side to make room for him. Gently, Ilya lay down next to him. Shane placed his arms around Ilya’s neck and cradled his face towards him.

“Ya tebya lyublyu” Shane whispered.

“I ya tebya lyublyu” Ilya replied and sobbed.

-.-.-.-.-.-.-.-.-.-.-.-.-

The following morning, Shane woke up to an empty bed. He rubbed his eyes and looked around the room for Ilya.

Shane froze.

Next to the bed there was a translucent bassinet. And inside there was a baby, who Shane undoubtedly recognized as his.

Chapter End Notes

So sorry for the late update. I had many things going on last week (among them german lessons and a sick relative) that I didn't have time to finish the chapter. To make up for it this chapter is longer. I hope you enjoyed it.

The way it's going, next chapter might be the last one.

I am considering writing a continuation but now with details from TLG (which I have now read and loved). There were many things I wanted to add from TLG to this fic but to keep it spoiler free I held back. If there is to be a continuation it would be in a separate story and it would definitely include TLG details which I'm dying to write about.

I'm also thinking of writing an alternative ending to this story in which everything goes worst-case-scenario wrong. Heart-shattering ending.

I'd love to hear your thoughts on this.

Also feel free to suggest a name for baby girl Rozanov-Hollander. It has come to my attention that hook-up names sound weird for a kid. What's your take on this? Because right now I have absolutely no idea what could be the baby's name.

Ahhh! I wish I had more time I could spend writing. Anyway... see you in a couple of weeks!

Chapter 10: Our Little Family

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Shane stared at the sleeping baby inside the bassinet in disbelief.

As he pressed the button to get the bed at an angle, he could feel his heartbeat begin to race at the sight of his baby girl next to his bed.

She had nothing around her face anymore. She was peacefully sleeping loosely wrapped in a white blanket with her arms on each side of her face only wearing a pink hospital beanie.

Shane pulled the covers away and sat on the edge of the bed. He couldn't take his eyes away from his baby.

Ilya got out of the bathroom and noticed Shane was awake. "Good morning." Ilya said with a soft smile approaching him. He found Shane's dumbfounded expression funny and adorable at the same time.

Ilya had woken up about an hour earlier. Since he couldn't go back to sleep he decided to go to the NICU and check on the baby. He was not expecting to find their baby in a regular bassinet, without her breathing tube and with no cables attached to her chest. Ilya was informed that she had been breathing on her own pretty much the whole night and she was doing wonderful. She could now join her dad in his room.

Ilya felt so many emotions in that moment. He was happy, proud, relieved and so excited and eager to see Shane react to finally having the baby with him.

He told them the nurses he wanted to take the baby as soon as possible to Shane's room to surprise him. Ilya had indeed succeeded. Shane was speechless staring into the bassinet.

"Ilya—" Shane whispered. "Is that really her?" Shane now looked at his husband's eyes, stunned. "Is she okay?"

Ilya held Shane's hands and kissed his forehead and then his lips. "She's been breathing on her own the whole night. The doctor said she is good to stay here. Nurses will come from time to time to check on her and she will have to go back for the night. But they said we can have her here the whole day." Ilya said looking at Shane, who was still processing the situation in front of him.

"Thank God." Shane whispered closing his eyes momentarily while letting out a long sigh. He then tried to stand up to get to the bassinet.

Ilya gently stopped him. "No. Go back to bed. I will give her to you."

Shane almost protested since he wanted to hold his baby so bad. As quickly as his body allowed him, he lay back to bed. Ilya then covered Shane's legs with a blanket and

accommodated some pillows behind him so that he was comfortable. Shane pulled down his hospital gown so Ilya could place her on his chest. Ilya saw so much eagerness and love in Shane's eyes, it was adorable.

Ilya then positioned himself by the bassinet and proceeded to carefully grab the baby with both hands, just like the nurses had taught him in the NICU. One hand behind her head and one hand behind her bottom.

Shane saw how Ilya lifted their baby with so much care and love. Shane had only seen Ilya made such an adoring expression while staring at him, but not to anyone else. But there he was, Ilya was puckering his lips cooing their baby girl while he brought her to him.

Ilya carefully placed the baby face down on Shane's chest, who tenderly wrapped his hands around her warm tiny body.

"My baby girl."

She fussed a bit at first, but when Shane talked to her and patted her back, she calmed down. Shane looked down at her, she was so precious. She didn't have any of those awful tubes and wires around her little face bothering her anymore. She seemed serene. He could feel her breathing on his chest. Once again Shane felt whole. Complete.

Ilya's heart was also full. He climbed on Shane's bed and lay next to him. He then leaned his face into Shane's and together they admired their baby. They had been longing for this moment, ever since they found out they were expecting. It almost felt like everything they had gone through, from the day they met, was meant to happen so that they arrived to this exact moment.

There was a baby in their little family now and she was the living proof of the love they had for one another.

They were in pure bliss.

If the nurses hadn't come in, they would have continued to just stare at her for hours. It was time for Shane's medication and also for the baby's feeding.

While Shane received his IV medicine, a nurse showed them how to properly feed the baby, burp her, grab her, change her diaper and swaddle her. Ilya's face hardened while he focused on every single word the nurse said. Shane would only see him that serious when paying attention to the coach.

She also told them they could dress her now. Ilya was so excited he immediately took out the baby's clothes from their hospital bag and proceeded to dress her up.

The baby mostly slept, she was such a calm baby. When she ever complained and threatened to cry, Ilya would talk to her in Russian. She would stare at his papa for a while, look at her surroundings and then she would calm down and go back to sleep.

Shane was in awe. He had never seen his husband interact with another person, other than him, with so much love. It made him fall in love with him all over again. Ilya had already given him so much. Although giving birth had been one of the hardest things Shane ever had to go through, he was happy he had been able to give Ilya a daughter.

Ilya dressed the baby up in a beige long sleeve onesie and pants and then placed an adorable darker beige knitted button jacket. Although it was newborn size, he had to roll up the sleeves a bit to free her tiny hands. Before he put her beanie on, he passed his fingers through her hair admiring her curls. They were just like his. He then wrapped her loosely in a white blanket with a print of tiny pink ribbons all over it. After snapping a couple of pictures and taking a short video, he picked her up and faced his husband with a huge proud grin.

Shane laughed at how sweaty Ilya's face was. Although he had looked like he had been effortlessly taking care of the baby, at the same time he must have felt concerned and tense to do it properly and carefully that his face was drenched in sweat.

Ilya handed the baby over to Shane who was on the bed laughing his ass off. "You are sweating like you played overtime."

Ilya laughed. "She's so little and delicate. I am scared to be too rough and accidentally hurt her." He said grabbing a towel nearby and wiping the sweat off his face.

Shane received the baby accommodating her in the crook of her elbow. "You would never hurt her." Shane said, admiring his baby. She was the most adorable thing he had ever laid eyes on. Especially now that she was wearing a cute almost oversized outfit that made her look even smaller.

He could see a bit more of himself in her now. Her eyes were just like his. Shane then pulled the beanie up a bit and saw her tiny black curls. He caressed them with the tip of his index finger, playing with them. He then grabbed her little hand and placed his finger in the middle of her closed fist.

He had never felt this type of love before. It was so pure.

Ilya went to the bathroom to wash his hands and face and got back to Shane. Seeing Shane holding their baby made him incredibly overjoyed, he had to take some pictures. Ilya didn't know it was possible for life to get even better. He couldn't help briefly thinking how at one point in the past, life only seemed to get worse. But now it was the complete opposite. It was really happening, and he was loving it.

He approached Shane and gave him a kiss on his temple and stayed there leaning on him, enjoying Shane's warmth and scent. Ilya then looked down at their baby.

"What should we name her?" Shane asked, not parting his eyes from her.

"I was about to ask you the same thing."

"All the names we discussed don't feel right." Shane said turning to face Ilya. "She doesn't look like an Olivia or a Sofiya."

Ilya shook his head.

“Not even Emma or Anna.” Shane added.

“There goes our whole list of names.” Ilya said. They really had narrowed their list down to those four.

“It should be something special. Something meaningful.” Shane said thoughtful.

“Something boring, yes?” Ilya teased.

“Okay. What do *you* suggest?” Shane raised his eyebrows.

Ilya sighed and looked at their sweet baby. She was sleeping so peacefully in Shane’s arms. All he ever thought when he saw her was just how much he loved her.

“*Lyudmila*.” Ilya said with a soft smile staring down at his daughter and placing a hand on the side of her head. “It means loved by people. Beloved.”

Shane’s jaw dropped letting out a soft gasp. His eyes went from Ilya to the baby. “*Lyudmila*.” Shane looked at his husband next to him perplexed. “I like it.”

Ilya felt something warm inside his chest. It was making him emotional. He looked at their daughter and indeed it was a fitting name.

“Lyudmila Rozanov-Hollander.” Ilya said proud.

Saying and hearing her name brought so much joy to both of them.

“It sounds good.” Shane said pouting with puppy dog eyes. “Do you like it Lyudmila?”

The baby unexpectedly stirred in Shane’s arms, her tiny eyelids fluttered for a few seconds as she tried to open them. Little by little was she able to open her eyes and reveal her gorgeous blue orbs.

“Do you like your name Lyudmila?” Ilya asked her in Russian.

The baby’s stare went from Ilya to Shane for a moment until she closed her eyes again to go back to sleep.

“I think she likes it.” Shane said smiling.

“I think so too.” Ilya chuckled.

There was a knock on the door. It was Yuna and David. They were very surprised to see the baby in Shane’s arms. They had only been able to see her through the incubator.

Yuna was moved to tears and David was ecstatic to finally see their two sons with their baby as a family. Yuna hugged and kissed Shane while David went to Ilya and embraced him.

Being the five of them for the first time together in one room, felt very special for each of them.

Yuna needed a minute to calm herself down. After a warm hug from David, she regained her usual composure. “Does she have a name yet?” Yuna asked excited, wiping the trails of her tears with a tissue.

Shane and Ilya nodded and looked at each other.

“Her name is Lyudmila.” Ilya said proud. “It means beloved.”

Yuna placed her hand on her chest and looked at David with upturned brows holding in her tears. “That’s beautiful.” Yuna said placing a hand on Shane’s cheek.

David went around the bed back to stand next to Ilya and gave him a side hug. “Very fitting.”

There was a knock on the door and Shane’s doctor walked in. Yuna and David decided to leave the room for a moment to give them some privacy.

The doctor proceeded to examine Shane thoroughly while Ilya softly bounced Lyudmila in his arms.

“You are healing wonderfully Mr. Hollander. We want to do one more day of IV antibiotic and tomorrow we can switch to pills so you can go home.”

Ilya and Shane looked at each other with a huge grin. Ilya looked down at his daughter. “We can go home!” He said to her in Russian.

Shane caught that and asked the doctor. “Uhm— Is she also okay to go home tomorrow too?”

The doctor widened his eyes. “Oh, I think that depends on her treating doctor. He should be coming soon to inform you more about that.”

The doctor left the room and in came Yuna and David. They both looked at the now grim expressions Shane and Ilya had on their faces while they stared at their sweet Lyudmila.

“What did the doctor say?” Yuna asked eager.

“Shane is good to go home tomorrow.” Ilya replied.

“Oh! That’s good right?!” Yuna said happy, she was a bit confused looking at her sons’ concerned faces.

Shane had his thumb in his mouth and was nervously biting his nail. “We don’t know if she is also coming with us or has to stay longer.”

“Oh—” Yuna said, giving David a concerned look.

“Has the pediatrician said anything?” David asked.

“Doctor said he should be coming soon.” Shane replied. They all now stared at the baby in Ilya’s arms.

“But she looks a lot better than before.” David said. He would never forget the moment she took a turn for the worse in the emergency room. That had been terrifying.

Ilya continued bouncing her gently while slowly pacing the room. “She looks perfect.”

Yuna saw Shane’s eyes getting glossy. “You know what? Let’s not get ahead of ourselves. She looks like she is ready to come home but we’ll see what the doctor has to say about that. We do want to take home a healthy baby, don’t we?”

Shane let out a long sigh and nodded.

“Alright now.” She said making her way to Ilya. “It’s my turn to hold her. I’ve been wanting to hold this baby for a long time!” Yuna said extending his arms to Ilya, who gently handed the baby over to her.

“Oh! Lyudmila.” Yuna said bringing the baby to David, who was also moved by the sight of his wife holding their granddaughter. For a moment, it took David back to when they had Shane and Yuna held him for the first time. Especially since the baby looked like him.

Shane and Ilya’s chest also felt fuzzy at the sight of Yuna and David admiring their daughter. Shane saw his parents in a new light now and Ilya just loved seeing them adoring his daughter.

They all took turns to hold her throughout the morning.

They noticed Lyudmila was a quiet baby. If she fussed, it was because she needed something and Ilya immediately took care of it.

While Yuna and David were taking care of the baby, Ilya helped Shane take a shower. Shane didn’t even need to lift a finger. With the head of the shower in one hand and a small towel in the other, Ilya washed every inch of Shane’s body. Shane felt Ilya pass the soap soaked small towel through his belly.

“I can’t wait to get back to practice.” There was no baby inside his belly now but it was still very swollen.

“Maybe later. You need to rest now.” Ilya said passing the towel through Shane’s hips.

“I need to get back to shape.” Shane said, feeling self-conscious of his body.

Ilya stood facing Shane, his gaze was soft, but there was unmistakable desire behind it. “You are beautiful.” Ilya said, softly passing the small towel through his belly again and making his way upwards to his chest. “I love all of you.” He said finally reaching his neck. “Your body grew and gave birth to our daughter. You are perfect.” Ilya said in a gentle and loving tone.

Shane's cheeks flushed, allowing a timid smile to form on his lips. "Does that make me cooler?"

Ilya chuckled. "Not the way you think, but yes. Maybe."

Ilya helped Shane put on a diaper, get dressed and carefully held both of his hands in front of him to help him walk back to bed. Never in his life had Shane felt so sore and his ankle was also bothering him a bit too. Once he was back in bed, as if she had felt their presence, Lyudmila started fussing.

"I think she got bored of us." David said as he gently bounced her.

Ilya approached him and David passed the baby to him. "Sweetheart. Are you hungry? Do you want daddy?" Ilya said to her in Russian.

She was now full on screaming. Everyone was impressed at the volume of her cries, they were high-pitched, loud and far stronger than expected for such a tiny baby.

"Oh my goodness." Yuna exclaimed with a smile, covering her mouth impressed.

"Her lungs sound okay to me." David said delighted.

"Give her to me." Shane said extending his arms.

Ilya handed over the baby to him and went to get a bottle. "It is time for her bottle." Ilya said looking at his watch and handing the bottle over to Shane.

"Here you go baby." Shane said placing the bottle on her mouth. At first the baby shook her face rejecting it, but Shane insisted until she settled and received the bottle. She looked at her surroundings with curious eyes while she sucked her bottle but her gaze was mostly directed towards Shane. He loved that.

There was a knock at the door. It was the pediatrician.

Yuna and David left the room for a moment while the doctor proceeded to examine Lyudmila.

Shane and Ilya were tense. They wanted to bring their baby home more than anything.

"She is doing really good. She has definitely improved really quickly. We're going to keep her in the nursery tonight, we'll monitor her oxygen levels and if it all looks good she can go home tomorrow."

Both Shane and Ilya shared a look, then they looked back at the doctor and nodded.

As the doctor left, Ilya gave the baby back to Shane so he could continue feeding her.

Yuna and David went back in.

"So? How did it go?" Yuna asked.

“If all is good, she can come home tomorrow.” Ilya said with a serious expression.

“That is good news! Isn’t it?” Yuna said smiling.

“Yes.” Ilya said with a voice full of doubt, not sounding optimistic at all.

Shane could feel a chill run through his entire body. He became so anxious his eyes turned glossy. While gazing at his baby suck her bottle, he didn’t think he would be able to endure it if they had to go home and leave her in the hospital.

Yuna and David could tell Shane and Ilya were both anxious. It was the first time they saw the always confident Ilya so doubtful and worried. They could understand though, after what they had gone through, why they were so nervous and scared for their baby.

Yuna approached Shane. “I’m sure she will do great dear.” Yuna said passing a hand through her son’s tense shoulder trying to reassure him.

Shane took a deep breath and while staring at his sweet baby, nodded. “I hope so too.”

David also placed a hand on Ilya’s back and rubbed it reassuringly. “She’s baby Rozanov-Hollander. I’m sure we'll bring her home tomorrow.”

Ilya turned to face his father in law. David saw Ilya’s serious expression soften and felt his shoulders relax. Ilya gave him a resigned nod.

“She has been so strong. She will be okay.” Ilya said, regaining back his usual confidence.

They spent the day together as a family. Ilya got to practice his newly learned diaper changing skills several times. He wouldn’t let Shane take care of that. Shane did mostly all of the feedings and sometimes he would burp her because Ilya wanted to do that as well. Afterwards Lyudmila would fall asleep on someone’s arms. She spent the whole day either in her parents’ or her grandparents’ arms.

Yuna and David stayed until late afternoon.

Ilya was lying on the couch with the baby on his chest when a nurse came to take her back to the nursery for the night.

It broke their hearts to watch her go. The room felt so uncomfortably empty without her. Shane couldn’t help shedding a couple of tears.

“Sweetheart.” Ilya lay next to him embracing him.

“I know she will be taken care of but why does it feel so terrible to not have her close?” Shane said with a pained look.

“I know. It feels like forever ago was just the two of us.” Ilya said. “And that was just, what? Three days ago?” Ilya said uncertain.

He wondered how had they lived just the two of them. What was life like before their baby?

They couldn't remember.

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The following day they woke up very early. Ilya went to the NICU while Shane impatiently waited in his room.

Ilya came back pushing baby Lyudmila in her bassinet.

"Oh. My baby!" Shane said excited at the sight of his daughter. "What did the doctor say?"

Ilya pushed the bassinet next to Shane's bed. "The nurses said the doctor was busy with another patient and said I could take her." Ilya shrugged his shoulders.

"Really?"

"Yes. So I just brought her." He said smiling.

"That must be good right?" Shane said extending his arms towards Ilya.

"I think so too." Ilya said picking up the baby and greeting her in Russian. He then passed her over to Shane, who immediately felt relief to have her back in his arms.

About an hour later Shane's doctor came and told him he was getting discharged. They both greatly thanked him and signed all the paperwork so he could go home.

It felt bittersweet for both Ilya and Shane since they didn't know if they would be taking the baby with them.

A couple of hours later, finally the pediatrician came.

"I'm sorry I couldn't give you information this morning Mr. Rozanov but we had a little one that took a really bad turn and we had to take care of him."

"No problem." Ilya said fully understanding.

Shane's chest crumpled a bit at the thought of someone else's baby struggling and held his daughter closer to his chest.

The doctor proceeded to examine baby Lyudmila. This time Ilya and Shane were a bit taken aback by the way the doctor held her to examine her. He was very through.

"As expected of baby Hollander-Rozanov, she's good to go home."

"Yes!" Ilya couldn't help doing a little fist pump in excitement.

"Thank God." Shane said looking up and sighing in relief.

They were both smiling ear to ear, thrilled to hear the doctors' words.

“Thank you so much Doctor.” Ilya said extending his hand to the doctor and giving him a strong and firm handshake that the doctor felt all the way to his shoulder.

“Thank you so so much.” Shane also said extending his hand to shake his hand too.

“You’re welcome. I will see you in her routine check-ups. Have a safe trip home.”

Once the doctor left, they both celebrated as if they had won the Stanley cup. Shane bounced her excited in his arms to the point he woke Lyudmila up and she started fussing.

“Oh baby, I’m so sorry.” Shane apologized now bouncing her softly. But it was too late, baby Lyudmila had started crying.

Ilya took the baby from Shane’s arms and started pacing and bouncing her around the room while talking to her in Russian. “We’re gonna go home and we’re going to have so much fun. We have someone very special who wants to meet you too! You are going to love it!”

The baby started calming down and stared at her papa with a frown that later softened when she went back to sleep.

They called Yuna and David to tell them they could bring the car seat because they were all coming home. They were both ecstatic for them.

They were so eager to go home they got their things ready fairly quickly.

Yuna got to Shane’s room bringing the classic ‘It’s a girl’ balloons. She told Ilya to go to the parking lot because David needed help setting up the car seat.

While Ilya was gone, Shane and Yuna changed baby Lyudmila into a fluffy pink jumpsuit that had bunny ears in the hoodie so that she remained warm.

About half an hour later Ilya and David returned to the room with the car seat.

“Awww. My baby is a bunny!” Ilya said, looking at his daughter with pouted lips then letting out a loving laugh.

Shane passed Ilya the baby. Ilya’s hands were big enough to securely grab her below the armpits. He lifted her up and gave her little kisses on her cheek before carefully placing her in the car seat.

She looked so adorable and even tinier in her car seat.

Yuna had her phone out and was recording and taking pictures of every moment. A nurse came with a wheelchair and David helped Shane get on it while Ilya placed a cover on the car seat to protect the baby from the cold Canadian winter weather.

David went to bring the car to the front door and called them to let them know he was ready and waiting for them.

The three of them put thick jackets on. Ilya left the room first with the baby in one hand and a backpack on. He looked back every once in a while to check on Shane and Yuna.

Even though they were both wearing a cap, a couple of people were able to recognize them. They looked mostly surprised and excited to see them leave with their baby.

Shane and Ilya were in such good mood they smiled and nodded politely to the people that congratulated them as they passed by.

Once they reached the front door, David was waiting for them outside.

They exited the hospital and David quickly opened the back door of the SUV.

“I hope the car is warm enough” David said.

“Is okay.” Ilya said placing the baby in the middle seat until he felt and heard a click from the seat. “Alright! She’s good!” Ilya then quickly took his backpack off and threw it to the back. He then got off and left the door slightly open to not let cold air in.

The nurse placed Shane by the car’s door and Ilya helped him get in and sit next to the baby.

“Are you okay?” Ilya asked Shane as he got comfortable in the seat.

“Yeah I’m good. Can you close the door? It’s cold.” Shane said shivering.

Ilya gently closed the door and then opened the front door for Yuna. He turned, thanked the nurse and went around the car to get into the back seat, opposite to Shane.

Once Ilya was in, they all looked at each other for a second, pretty much letting reality sink in. The baby was finally here and now they were about to bring her home.

“Dad, can we go?” Shane was the first to speak.

The four of them laughed for a moment as the car began to move. “Sure! Let’s go home.” David said.

Yuna started to talk about the things she and David had done to their house to get it ready for the baby but Shane and Ilya were not really paying much attention to her.

Ilya unzipped the cover of the car seat and pulled it back, revealing a fully asleep baby Lyudmila.

Shane’s eyebrows turned up admiring how cute his daughter looked. When he turned to face Ilya, he had the exact same expression of adoration on his face.

Ilya and Shane looked at each other as they intertwined their hands together over their daughter’s lap.

“We’re bringing our daughter home.” Shane said excited, still feeling it was all so surreal.

Ilya pressed Shane’s hand tighter. He loved him so much. He had given him a family.

“I can’t wait.”

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so much for your time and patience. I hope you have enjoyed this story as much as I have writing it.

I also wanted to let you know that I have decided to publish the two stories based on this one which I mentioned last chapter.

One is called "For you, my Love." The first two chapters are pretty much the same as in this story but it has an alternative ending which includes MCD. I am warning you! Don’t even dare to read it if you are satisfied with this ending. I have ugly cried several times writing that thing.

The other one will be a continuation to this one, with mostly domestic content of Ilya and Shane raising their daughter, usual issues of first time parents, interactions with close people and very likely a second baby. It would have TLG spoilers, shorter chapters and sporadic updates since I don’t have much time anymore. That is going to be my distraction until next season and book are released.

Once again, thank you for making it here. I had so much fun writing this story. Hope you liked it too!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!