

The Application

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The Application

by [Caraphernellic](#)

Summary

Shane desperately needs a job and applies to be a House Omega, not realizing it is for a member of the Russian mob.

Chapter 1: Prologue

Application for a House Omega

Duties may include but are not limited to:

Cleaning

Cooking

Providing company

Warming

Supporting the Alpha with anything he may need

Okay, not bad at all. Shane can do all of those things. He isn't sure what warming is, maybe it means cuddling? Also, the last one is quite broad but the salary listed is *really* good and it says it's a live-in position. Shane will be homeless soon if he doesn't find a job, so this would be perfect. With that kind of money and not having to pay rent anywhere, he could really make something of his life.

Now he just has to land this job.

He reads the rest of the job listing carefully, then fills out and submits his application. He's also required to submit photos of himself as well as two forms of legal identification. It's extensive, but it makes sense. If Shane is going to be potentially living in someone's home, they want to know what he looks like and that he's really who he says he is.

He sends it all off with a prayer.

Shane is actually quite surprised when he receives a call that they would like to interview him for the position.

He dresses in the nicest clothing he owns, which admittedly, is not very nice, and walks to the address he was given. It's a large, imposing building in the nice part of town. The door opens right as he approaches it and a man ushers him inside.

He's tall and dressed in an expensive looking suit, his face harsh and unfriendly. "Mister Hollander." He greets. He has a stiff accent, Russian, Shane thinks.

Shane follows him inside the fancy building, into a surprisingly plain looking room.

"Mister Hollander. You want to be House Omega?"

"Y-yes sir."

"You have experience?"

"No, I don't." Shane admits. He squirms uncomfortably in the chair. The man across from him is very intimidating.

"But you are comfortable doing the duties listed? You can do all?" The man presses.

"Yes." Shane says, a little more confidently.

The man considers him for a moment. This is the weirdest job interview Shane has ever had. Everything seemed normal with the application process, but now he gets the sense that this man has also never done this before. He never even introduced himself to Shane, just jumped right in.

“This is for my brother. He is important man, needs Omega to keep him on track at home so he can focus on work. Other Omegas who apply have been scared when I tell them who client is.”

Shane needs the money and the housing so badly, he wouldn't care if the client was Cookie Monster.

“Um. Who is your brother?”

“Ilya Rozanov.”

Shane stares at him blankly. Is he supposed to know who that is? “That's fine.” He says. Again, it doesn't really matter to him who it is.

The man smiles and it's lecherous. “Wonderful. You're hired.”

When Shane leaves, he stops at the library to use their computers. He hasn't been able to afford a computer or even a phone with internet in a while now. He types the name that the man gave him into Google and hits enter.

He blanches when he sees the results.

Shane just agreed to be a House Omega for a member of the Russian mob.

Chapter 2: Chapter One

Chapter Notes

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

It's fine, right? It'll all be fine. It's just a job. Shane will perform his duties and everything will be just fine. So what if the Alpha he's going to be working for is Bratva?

Shane's parents died in a car accident very unexpectedly a year ago. They had a small amount of savings, but most of it was used on their funeral. One funeral is expensive, let alone two. Most of their money over the years had gone to Shane's dream of playing hockey. He wanted to go pro after college.

He gave up on that when they died, something he still feels guilty about.

He couldn't afford to keep their house and live in it, so it was sold off. Shane had to get two jobs just to afford an apartment by himself. He spent his whole life either thinking about hockey or playing hockey, so he didn't have any friends. No one to split rent with, or even cry on their shoulder after he lost the two most important people in his life. He was utterly alone.

An Omega with no pack. So yeah, excuse him if he doesn't really care who this new Alpha is. Someone is better than no one.

He's behind on his rent at his current shitty apartment after the restaurant he was working at as one of his jobs got shut down by the health department. He was going to be thrown out at the end of the month anyway, so Shane is just getting a week head start. He packs up his meager belongings into an old duffel bag. He'd sold anything he had that was remotely nice for cash over the past year.

A car is picking him up to take him to his new home, arranged by Alexei Rozanov, the man who had interviewed him. Another member of the Russian Bratva.

A dark SUV pulls up right on time and a man steps out. "I am Mikhail." He says. He actually seems a little friendlier than Alexei, though Shane supposes that isn't difficult. Shane wonders what the new Alpha he will be working for will be like.

"This is all your bags?" Mikhail asks, taking the singular duffel bag from Shane and raising an eyebrow as he puts it into the trunk.

"Uh, yep. They said most things would be provided for me." Shane says awkwardly. Mikhail nods and opens the back door for Shane.

The ride is quiet. Shane watches out the window as they pass from the shitty part of town where he lived to the richest part of town. He's not at all surprised.

When they pull up to a house bigger than Shane has ever seen in his life, a literal mansion, he starts to get a pit in his stomach. This is really happening.

He follows Mikhail into the house, noticing the multitude of different security systems that he has to disarm as he does.

Shane is led to a sitting room. Or maybe it's considered a foyer, because it's pretty fancy. "Wait here. I will get Alexei." Mikhail tells him.

Shane sits with his hands clasped in his lap. He hears two voices talking, Alexei and another voice he doesn't recognize.

The two men stop in the entryway as they see Shane on the couch.

"Who is this?" The unknown one asks. He's very handsome. Is this Alexei's brother? Shane's new Alpha? Why doesn't he know about Shane? Hadn't Alexei done this at his direction?

Alexei smirks and gestures to Shane. "This is your new House Omega."

“You cannot be serious.”

Oh no. Shane’s stomach sinks. Did he really not know about this? His heart starts to race.

Alexei claps his brother- Ilya, that was his name- on the shoulder. “I am serious. You need focus. I bring you pretty thing. You’re welcome.”

Shane flushes and looks away. Oh my god. This is so embarrassing. Now he’s going to be sent away and he’s going to have to live on the street.

Ilya steps in front of him and gently grabs his chin with his thumb and forefinger. He tilts Shane’s face up so he’s forced to look at him. “You want this?” He asks.

Shane is frozen for a moment. Ilya speaks again. “You do this on your own free will?”

“We’ll be paying him. It’s a job.” Alexei pipes up from behind them.

“Y-yes.” Shane says, a little breathless.

Ilya considers him for a moment. “No tricks?” He lets go of Shane’s chin.

Shane shakes his head no. “I needed a job.” He takes a deep breath. “Please don’t throw me out. I’ll be so good.” He doesn’t care if he sounds pathetic.

Alexei claps from behind them and Shane jumps. “Is settled then!”

“Where is bags?” Ilya wonders. Shane looks pointedly at his singular duffle bag.

Ilya frowns but doesn't say anything. He grabs Shane's bag. "Come."

Shane follows him down a hallway. Ilya opens a door and turns to him. "You like?"

The room is beautiful, decorated in dark blues and whites and blacks. It looks like a fancy hotel room.

"Wow. All this for me?"

"Da. Is guest room. Can be your room."

"Okay, if you're sure." Shane agrees.

"I buy you more clothes." Ilya says, patting the duffel bag.

"No, you don't have to." Shane insists.

"You need more stuff." Then, "Alexei did this without telling me, but you need job, so you can stay."

"Thank you." Shane says gratefully, still embarrassed that he showed up here and the Alpha had no idea he was supposed to be working for him.

"You know who I am?" Ilya checks. Shane knows he really means *what* he is. A mob leader.

"Yes."

“He was only Omega who would accept.” Alexei says from behind them, appearing in the doorway. Apparently he has a habit of doing that. “All other Omegas were scared. Run away.”

Is that true? Shane didn’t know that.

“All except pretty Omega with freckles.” Alexei grins.

“Enough.” Ilya says. “Leave us.” Alexei walks away. “What is your name?” Ilya asks Shane.

“Shane. Hollander.”

“Shane Hollander.” Ilya repeats, as if tasting the syllables himself. “I am Ilya Rozanov.”

“I know.” Shane says. Ilya just gives him the smallest upward tick of his lips in response. “Should I call you Ilya, or Mister Rozanov? Or Alpha?”

“Whatever you wish.”

“Okay. Um, you can call me whatever too.” Shane shifts his weight awkwardly. “So, when should I start? Um, with the cooking and cleaning?”

“Ah.” Ilya scratches the back of his neck. “Tomorrow.”

“What should I do tonight?”

“Get settled.” Ilya gestures to the room. “I have work, but Mikhail will come talk to you tonight.”

“Okay.” Shane agrees. He watches as Ilya walks away.

He sits down heavily on the bed. What a strange day. To think that this is his life now. Living in a mansion with a Russian mobster.

He’d never thought of himself as the House Omega type. He thought of himself as too shy, too plain for an Alpha to want. He supposes this is a little bit of a different circumstance than if it had happened organically. It’s not like *he* was chosen. He was a skill set and nothing more. Still, Ilya was doing him a great favor by letting him stay and he wanted to do a good job for him. He wanted to prove himself worthy.

He unpacks his meager belongings and stores them neatly in the dresser. He finds an en suite bathroom and puts away his dollar store toiletries.

Mikhail knocks on the bedroom door about an hour later. “Mister Hollander.”

“Hi.” Shane says stupidly.

“Mister Rozanov asked me to give you information.”

Mikhail gives him a schedule, printed out with timestamps. It sends a thrill down Shane’s spine. He loves a routine and a schedule. “You are only responsible for Mister Ilya Rozanov. You do not need to serve Mister Alexei.”

“Okay.” Shane readily agrees. “Is there other hired staff I should watch out for? I don’t want to step on anyone’s toes.”

Mikhail shakes his head. “Just security and those who do business with him. Mister Rozanov is a private man.”

“Who did all of this before me?”

“He did.”

An Alpha who did all his cooking and cleaning himself and worked? From what he’d seen of it so far, the house was spotless. When did the man sleep? Maybe that’s why Alexei wanted to hire Shane, so that his brother could have more time to focus on other things.

There were details that Shane needed but weren’t on the sheet, but luckily Mikhail was nice enough to fill him in. How Ilya liked his coffee (black with one teaspoon of honey added in), when he liked it (first cup before his first meeting of the day and another when that meeting ended), and the meals he typically ate. It sounds like he wasn’t the healthiest, so Shane vowed to feed his Alpha more fruits and vegetables.

By the end of their talk, Shane felt prepared to serve Ilya and be the best House Omega he could possibly be.

Chapter End Notes

Yuna and David, I love you so much, I'm sorry you had to be dead for the plot.

Chapter 3: Chapter Two

Shane woke bright and early at 5am sharp. Despite the early hour, he felt well-rested. Even though he had been nervous and sleeping in a strange place, the bed was extremely comfortable, much nicer than anything he'd slept on in months.

The shower he'd taken before bed was also delightful. The water pressure was perfect and the pipes didn't clank and the water stayed hot the entire time.

Shane got out of bed now and promptly made it. Then, he headed for the kitchen to get started on Ilya's breakfast. The fridge was fully stocked and everything was great quality, which made Shane happy. He only wanted the best for the Alpha. He would request to buy some healthier options for the next grocery run, but he could definitely make do with what was available.

He made fluffy scrambled eggs with chives sprinkled on top, two strips of crispy bacon, and a side of tomatoes with spinach and onion sautéed in a pan. He finished the plate with toast points and a small bowl of cut up strawberries. He added all of this to a serving tray he'd found buried in a cupboard and set a fresh mug of coffee on it last.

Mikhail had told Shane where Ilya's office was, so he took the tray there, only a little bit nervous. It was 5:45am when he knocked on the door, 30 minutes before Ilya's first meeting of the day. Plenty of time for him to have breakfast and coffee before getting into business.

Ilya opens the door, already showered and dressed in a full suit and looking a little surprised to see Shane.

“Good morning, I have your breakfast and your coffee. Would you like to eat in here?”

Ilya's face still looks surprised as his gaze sweeps over the spread of food. “Da. Yes.” He holds the door open for Shane to come inside.

The room is large and imposing, with dark woods and a huge desk near the far wall. However, it is impeccably clean. Shane is sure Ilya spends most of his time here. “I hope this is to your liking. Mikhail told me you have no allergies.” Shane says, setting down the tray on the desk.

“Is perfect. Thank you.” Ilya says approvingly.

“Great. Well, I’ll-”

Ilya cuts him off. “Where is yours?”

“My what?” Shane asks.

“Breakfast.”

“Oh, I haven’t made it yet. I wanted to serve you first, before your meeting.”

Ilya looks at him with that same unreadable expression he’d given Shane when they first met last night. “Thank you. You eat breakfast before you do anything else today.” It’s not a request.

“Okay.” Shane says, surprised at the conviction in Ilya’s voice. “Let me know if you need anything else. I’ll be back at 7:15 with your second cup of coffee.”

He leaves the room, closing the door softly behind him. He makes himself some more scrambled eggs and toast and a bigger bowl of the strawberries. At 7:15 on the dot, he knocks on Ilya’s office door again with a new mug full of fresh coffee. He collects the tray of dirty dishes and goes downstairs to clean the kitchen thoroughly.

The lunch and dinner he prepares for Ilya is also given to him in his office. The man works long hours, if the schedule Shane was given is anything to go by.

Every time after he delivers a meal, Ilya insists that Shane go right downstairs to make himself something to eat as well. Shane is used to eating one meal of ramen a day, so by the end of the night, he's feeling stuffed.

He's proud of his first day though, the house is spotless and his Alpha has been properly fed on time all day. He feels satisfied in a way he hasn't felt in months.

~

The next morning, when he brings Ilya his breakfast, the man hands him a sleek black credit card.

“Buy things you need. Clothes. Hygiene products. Ah, blankets for nest.”

“What?”

Ilya shakes the card lightly. “Use this. If you need to spend more than ten thousand, let me know first.”

“Ten thousand dollars?” Shane feels faint. He takes the card from Ilya.

“Da. Get whatever you want. Just have to clear over ten with me.” He doesn't even blink.

“Um. Okay. Yeah. Okay.” Shane says stupidly.

“Eat your breakfast!” Ilya calls as Shane exits the room.

Shane stares at the card on the counter island as he eats. Mikhail comes in with a small box in his hand. "Here is phone." It's the newest iPhone.

"This is too much." Shane says immediately.

"You need smart phone. Boss says. You can shop online and access bank account. And for contacting."

Shane doesn't have anyone to contact, but he doesn't say that.

He logs onto the online banking app just to be prepared ahead of payday. It's been a while since he's checked his bank account, because he knew there was barely any money so at some point he stopped checking and hoping for more. However, this time he *does* see more than he thought.

Ilya had already paid him for his day of work yesterday.

This feels like a bizarre utopian world.

He feels bad about shopping using Ilya's card, but the man had seemed pretty adamant about it. Shane browses some sites and buys what he thinks is a respectable amount considering he already has some things.

He buys two new pairs of pants, two new shirts, a sweater, basic packs of socks and underwear, and some new shampoo and conditioner. He does not buy anything for a nest, as that seems excessive. He doesn't want to take advantage of Ilya. As is, he already spent almost \$300.

Shane peruses the massive library in the house later that evening. There are some hockey books there that he would love to read. He's browsing through one when the heavy library doors open. He looks up and is surprised to see Ilya.

"Hello." Ilya greets him.

"Hi." Shane says. "Is it okay that I'm in here?"

"Of course. This is your home too. Sorry to bother you, I wanted to talk to you."

Shane feels sick. Did he do something wrong? Is Ilya unhappy with him?

"You only spent \$280." Ilya says.

"I got some essentials." Shane says, shifting nervously.

"You did not get any nesting stuff. You bring with you?"

"No." Shane admits.

"This is necessity."

Shane flushes. Ilya's gaze and attention feels so heavy.

"It's okay." He insists, looking down at his feet.

“I would not be proper Alpha if I did not provide for you. You are Omega of my house and I will take care of you.”

“You’ve already done so much. You let me have this job.”

“What is your favorite color?” Ilya is scrolling on his phone now.

“I like blue, I guess.”

I buy bunch of things, if you don’t like, we will send back okay?”

Shane starts to protest again but stops when he sees the flat look on Ilya’s face. He’s really serious about this.

“Okay. Thank you.” He says quietly. “Um, you already paid me for my work yesterday. Was that a mistake?”

“No. You do work every day, you get paid every day. Is only fair.”

Shane nods. “Do you need me to get you anything?”

“No. I am going to up to bed.”

“Okay. Goodnight.” It is pretty late, Shane should probably go to sleep too.

“Goodnight, Hollander.”

Shane watched him leave, feeling weirdly fuzzy inside.

Chapter 4: Chapter Three

Chapter Notes

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

“Mister Hollander.”

“Come in, Mikhail.”

Mikhail pushes open the door to Shane’s room and starts bringing in boxes.

“What’s all this?”

“Your packages.”

Shane’s clothes surely could not have come in this many boxes. Oh wait- it might be the stuff Ilya had ordered for him. How *much* did he order?

He opens the boxes carefully, pulling out blankets of all kinds. Soft, silky, even weighted blankets.

How is he supposed to choose?

They’re all incredibly nice and obviously expensive. They’re from a boutique that carries only Omega specialty items.

He pets over them softly and reverently. He sits cross-legged on the floor, surrounded by all of these luxury items, feeling overwhelmed.

He ends up sitting there so long that he has to abandon the items for a while to prepare Ilya's lunch on time.

"Your items arrive." Ilya tells him.

"Yes, Mikhail brought them to me. The blankets are really nice, I'm having trouble choosing." Shane admits.

Ilya shrugs. "Don't choose. Keep all."

"I couldn't."

"You could." Ilya counters.

"Whatever you want." Shane says automatically.

"Is settled then."

~

Shane is getting ready to prep dinner when Mikhail strides into the room. "Mister Hollander. There will be no prepared dinner this evening. Mister Rozanov has informed me that he is expecting last minute guests and you are to stay in your room and keep your scent patches on."

Shane blinks. "Oh. Okay." He says.

"These are scary men, Mister Hollander. Please do as Mister Rozanov has said." Mikhail looks very serious.

Okay, that's not nerve-wracking or anything. Scary mobster Alphas are coming and Ilya wants to hide the fact that he has an Omega here.

Mikhail walks him to his room. "Lock door. Be quiet. I will come get you when is safe, da?"

"Okay." Shane agrees. His heart is racing. He turns off all the lights and triple checks that the door is locked. The scent patches he always wears are still in place.

He felt anxious, and worried, not for himself, but for Ilya. Which was ironic, because Ilya was a member of the mafia and much more capable than Shane would ever be. He ended up curled in the pile of the new blankets, not quite a nest, but something close to it. It was soothing for him. He laid there in the dark, with his cheek pressed against cool satin, for a long time.

Finally, a knock on his door. Shane flinched at the sudden sound.

"Hollander."

It was Ilya. Shane scrambled up and crossed to the door in a few quick strides. He opened the door, squinting at the sudden light.

Ilya's gaze sweeps over him. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah, I'm alright."

Ilya's posture relaxes a little. "I'm sorry. I was not expecting those men to be here today. I would have had Mikhail take you somewhere else if I had known."

"It's okay." Shane tells him. He's mostly just glad that it's over.

Ilya wiggles his phone. "I will order pizza. What do you like?"

"Can we get veggie?" Shane asks shyly.

Ilya nods and they both go to the kitchen to wait. It's probably the most extended period of time they've had with each other.

They sit in mildly awkward silence for a minute until Ilya speaks. "This weekend, if you want to go out, you can do so. Mikhail will take you."

Shane really has nowhere to go, but maybe it would be embarrassing to say that, so he just nods. "What will you do while I'm not on duty on the weekends?" He asks Ilya. The idea of another Omega doing his duties makes his stomach churn unpleasantly. Even if he's only been on the job a few days, it feels like *his*.

"I do for myself."

Shane guesses that makes sense, since apparently he'd been doing it all for himself this whole time.

"I can do it. If you want. It would be no problem." Shane isn't even looking to get paid more, he just wants to help. It's not like he'd be doing anything else, anyway.

"You need to rest and relax. Is not good to work all the time."

Shane gives him a side-eyed look. "You do." He points out. Ilya has been working 12 hour days, if not more.

“Is different.” Ilya insists. Shane wants to protest more, but the pizza arrives. They eat together at the counter island. It’s a little comical, sitting here with a mob boss with his button down shirt sleeves rolled up while he munches on greasy pizza slices.

This is the first time Shane has eaten a meal with someone else since he’d arrived. Actually, come to think of it, he can’t remember the last time he had a meal with someone else at all.

It’s kind of nice.

~

Alexei is in Ilya’s office the following morning. Shane hasn’t seen him since the first day until now.

“Ah.” He leers. “I better go, time for you to get your morning warming, hm?”

“Goodbye, brother.” Ilya says stonily.

“Ignore him.” Ilya tells Shane as he sets down the breakfast tray. “He has no manners. I know you are just here with food, no warming.”

“I-I could do that.” Shane says, trying to build some courage. All he’s done here so far is cooking and cleaning, if there are other duties that Ilya needs, Shane can do them. He can do the cuddling thing. “If you wanted.” He adds. He’s sure his cheeks are aflame but he keeps Ilya’s gaze.

Ilya raises an eyebrow.

“If you just show me how.” Shane says. He walks a few steps closer to Ilya. His palms are sweating. “Should we go to the couch, or a bed, or something? Is there a certain position that works best?”

Ilya cocks his head. “Hollander.” He says steadily. “What do you think warming is?”

The question makes Shane suddenly unsure. “...cuddling?” He says weakly.

Ilya’s lips twitch into a smile. He’s obviously trying not to laugh. “Knot warming.” He says with a wry grin.

Shane blushes profusely. *Knot warming?* And he just offered that to Ilya. Oh my god. *And* he signed an employment contract with that in the terms. He’s such an idiot. He should’ve looked it up instead of assuming!

“Oh.” He says in a small voice.

“Do not worry about it.” Ilya takes pity on him. “Now go make your breakfast.”

Shane scurries away, absolutely mortified.

He’s still not over it when he brings Ilya his second cup of coffee, or his lunch. He can barely meet the other man’s eye.

That night, when he’s alone in bed in the dark, he decides to do some research. Basically this means he’s resigned to watching knot warming porn, but what if this is something Ilya really needs or wants? He’s already embarrassed himself by not knowing what it was or what he quite literally signed up for, the least he can do is be prepared now that he’s aware.

He had told both Alexei and Ilya that he could do everything on the job application, and he doesn’t want to be made a liar.

Apparently, there are two ways you can keep a knot warm. Orally, or-

Well.

The other available hole.

After Shane is done with the visual learning, he moves on to more actual biological research. Apparently, having somewhere warm to hold their knot is instinctual and can be comforting for Alphas. It can bolster their focus by satisfying a baser need. This can also be true for Omegas.

Interesting.

Shane finally puts the research away and goes to bed. He learned something new and he's that much closer to being the perfect House Omega for Ilya.

Chapter End Notes

Poor Shane

(Side note: eventually we will have some Ilya POV as well)

Chapter 5: Chapter Four

Chapter Notes

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

They fall into a comfortable routine. If Ilya's schedule is going to deviate, Mikhail gives Shane the schedule printed out on paper.

He still only does the cooking and cleaning for Ilya; neither of them has brought up the knot warming, or any other duties for that matter. Ilya seems nice enough, but he works so much that he and Shane don't get much of a chance to truly interact. Shane can only hope that he's actually being helpful to the man.

On the weekends, when Shane isn't on the clock, he either peruses the library or does a puzzle. Sometimes he watches a little tv. He has yet to venture out, even though Mikhail and Ilya have both offered multiple times.

A few weeks into the job, it's a rainy Saturday and Shane decides to spend all day holed up in the library with one of the nesting blankets. Ilya is working as usual, and Shane hasn't seen Mikhail or any of the other men he sometimes sees around all day.

It's just him in his comfy cocoon on the window seat in the library. He's quite happy in this spot, with the rain splashing against the windows and his blanket tucked around him. His eyes grow heavier as the afternoon wears on, and he finds himself sinking further and further into the cushion.

Shane must fall asleep, because the next thing he knows, he's blinking awake. Ilya is standing in front of him.

He sits up quickly, rubbing the sleep from his eyes. "Hi."

"Hello. I didn't mean to startle you."

“I didn’t realize I fell asleep.” Shane says, suddenly feeling vulnerable underneath the blanket.

“I was looking for you.”

“Is everything okay, do you need me for something?”

“I made dinner.” Ilya says. At the mildly confused look on Shane’s face, he amends. “For us.”

“Wow, okay.” Shane says. He checks his watch. It’s only 6:30, which is very early for Ilya to be done with work, even on a weekend. Ilya offers his hand and Shane takes it, allowing himself to be pulled up.

“You like new blankets?”

“Yes, they’re great. Thank you again.” Shane will come back for the one in the library later.

Ilya had made baked chicken, rice, and broccoli for dinner. He offers Shane a glass of wine, but he declines.

“So, um, how was your day?” Shane asks as they eat. Is that awkward to ask someone who commits crimes for a living?

“Was good. Usual. How was your day?”

“It was really nice. I was just reading.”

“And napping.” Ilya adds with a smile.

“Yeah, then I fell asleep.”

“You like to read?”

“Yes, I do. You have a lot of hockey books in the library. I love hockey, so I’ve been reading those, mostly.”

“I like hockey too. Is very popular in Russia.” He takes a sip of his red wine. “You play hockey?”

Oh, no. Maybe Shane shouldn’t have started the hockey conversation. He swallows hard. “I used to. For a long time, actually. I loved it.”

“Why did you stop?” Ilya asks, his brows knitted in confusion.

“My parents died.” Shane says, staring down at his plate. “I kind of stopped doing everything after that. I dropped out of college, so I couldn’t play on my team anymore.” Then he didn’t have time to do anything that didn’t involve earning money, and even then he could barely afford the cost of living, because he was a college dropout with no discernable skills and no prior experience so he had to take entry-level jobs, but he doesn’t say any of that.

“I am sorry.” Ilya says earnestly. “My mother died when I was young. My father died two years ago. It is hard, I know.”

“I’m sorry about your parents too.” Shane says, finally looking up at him. In this light, in this moment, Ilya looks young. He doesn’t look like a hardened Alpha mob boss.

“I am sorry about your parents, but I am glad you are here.” Ilya says.

Shane's chest fills up with pride and something else he can't name. "Really?"

"Really."

~

Shane sets down Ilya's second cup of coffee.

"Thank you." Ilya says. Then, he swears in Russian. He looks toward the door to the office, alarmed. He grabs Shane's arm. "Hollander. Under the desk. Be very quiet."

What?

Ilya tugs him, and Shane hears footsteps in the hall just outside the room. He ducks under the desk, in the space where Ilya's legs go. It's a huge, heavy wooden desk that's covered all the way across the front, so he won't be seen.

"Gentlemen." Ilya greets, stepping around the desk to shake the hands of whoever has walked into the room. "I was not expecting you in person this morning."

"We were in the neighborhood." A man says in English, but he's also Russian, given his accent.

Ilya sits down and scoots his chair in, and Shane shuffles over to accommodate his legs, but there isn't much room. He's forced to lay up against Ilya.

He thinks of the knot warming research he had done and promptly shuts that train of thought down.

The meeting is long and the men speak all in Russian. Sometimes it seems to get heated. Shane wonders if they're bad men and that's why Ilya wanted him to hide so they wouldn't know he was here. Or maybe there's no such thing as 'good' men in the mafia. Either way, Shane is glad for the scent patches he diligently wears that allow him to be undetectable.

It's early, and the space that Shane is hiding in is dark and cozy, and Ilya's legs are warm and solid. He finds himself drifting off, cheek pressed against Ilya's upper shin. At one point, he thinks he even feels Ilya's hand brush the top of his head soothingly.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all for the love on this story so far! The next chapter is longer and will be Ilya's POV! It will be up on Saturday, 01/24.

Chapter 6: Chapter Five

Chapter Notes

Ilya's POV!! Planning to do his POV every few chapters, I think.

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

~Ilya~

Ilya never wanted a House Omega. That's why he kept telling Alexei no every time he brought it up. They were helpful, yes, but they were also a liability. They could get hurt because of who Ilya is and what he does.

But then Alexei went and brought home a shy Omega with beautiful freckles who desperately needed a job and told Ilya that he would be so good for him. And he broke immediately and said he could stay.

And Shane *was* good.

He was punctual, he took pride in his work, and he seemed like he might even see Ilya as a person instead of a criminal.

He was sweet and didn't ask for much. Any other person in his position probably would've taken advantage, but Shane only ever asked for the bare minimum. Ilya had given him his black card for chrissake, and the man had only spent less than \$300.

It had delighted Ilya to buy the nesting items for him. It satisfied something inside him, even if it shouldn't. He was providing for an Omega, and he would get the best and only the best.

The happiness he felt the day the items were delivered and Shane was pleased with them was quickly dashed. Two men from another syndicate were coming by. Not exactly rivals, but

definitely not friends either. Dangerous men who could be unpredictable at times. The last thing Ilya wanted was for them to see Shane, sweet and pretty Shane. He didn't have time to get him out of the house, so he had to settle for telling him to lock himself in his room until it was safe to come out.

Ilya hated it.

But he didn't have a choice.

As soon as the meeting was over and the men were truly gone, he went to knock on Shane's bedroom door. His heart was beating rapidly in his chest.

After the knock, there was silence.

"Hollander." Ilya spoke so Shane would know that it was Ilya knocking on the door and it was safe to come out.

Shane opened the door, squinting at the sudden light.

Ilya's gaze swept over him automatically. "Are you okay?"

"Yeah, I'm alright." Shane looked a little tired, but fine overall.

The tension inside of Ilya had loosened a little. "I'm sorry. I was not expecting those men to be here today. I would have had Mikhail take you somewhere else if I had known."

"It's okay." Shane had said.

Ilya wiggled his phone toward him. "I will order pizza. What do you like?" It was late and they both needed to eat.

"Can we get veggie?" Shane had asked tentatively, as if Ilya would say no.

They sat in the kitchen in silence for a minute until Ilya spoke. "This weekend, if you want to go out, you can do so. Mikhail will take you." He doesn't want Shane to be chained to the house. He should have a life in the outside world, outside of this job.

Shane had nodded. "What will you do while I'm not on duty on the weekends?" He asked Ilya.

Ilya was surprised he didn't already know. He is new to having a House Omega, after all. "I do for myself." When he has time. Sometimes he eats one meal a day at midnight and the house becomes a mess, but Shane doesn't need the finer details. Things have definitely been so much better with him here, helping Ilya.

"I can do it. If you want. It would be no problem."

Absolutely not. Ilya is not monopolizing all of his time.

"You need to rest and relax. Is not good to work all the time."

Shane had given him a side-eyed look. "You do." He said pointedly.

"Is different." Ilya insisted. Shane is pure. Sweet, shy, and kind. He hasn't been tainted by the things that Ilya has, and he wants to make sure he never is. He needs a life outside of this place so he never becomes too ingrained. The pizza arrived and they ate in comfortable silence.

Ilya had never been so happy to eat greasy pizza after a long day.

The following morning, Alexei paid him a visit. Ilya was irritated- it was early, and he had meetings that morning, as usual. He didn't have time to be bothered by his older brother.

He jeered at Ilya, making crude jokes about Shane. Ilya ignored him, because acknowledging it will only make it worse. Ilya is a little brother, he knows this to be fact.

Shane arrived with Ilya's breakfast tray. "Ah." Alexei leered, looking between Shane and Ilya. "I better go, time for you to get your morning warming, hm?"

"Goodbye, brother." Ilya snapped. He'd had enough. He didn't want Shane to be uncomfortable because his idiot brother is making sexual innuendos. Alexei left, wiggling his eyebrows suggestively the whole way out of the room.

"Ignore him." Ilya told Shane. "He has no manners. I know you are just here with food, no warming."

"I-I could do that." Shane said. He shifted his weight uncomfortably. "If you wanted." He added. His cheeks were pink as he held Ilya's gaze. Ilya raised an eyebrow. They have never done anything even remotely sexual, but suddenly Shane is offering to sit on his knot? Ilya was missing something.

"If you just show me how." Shane kept talking. He walked a few steps closer to Ilya, closing the gap between them. "Should we go to the couch, or a bed, or something? Is there a certain position that works best?"

Ah. Ilya understood then. Shane did not know what knot warming is. It's something about what he had just described, it's not quite right for what the act is.

Ilya cocked his head. "Hollander." He said steadily. "What do you think warming is?"

Shane was quiet for a long moment. "...cuddling?" He said, his voice weak.

Oh my. Ilya was impossibly endeared. This beautiful, beautiful Omega thought that Ilya wanted to be cuddled. He unknowingly propositioned Ilya, thinking he was offering something innocent.

Ilya's lips twitched into a smile, he couldn't help it. He wanted to *giggle*. "Knot warming." He said with a wry grin. The look of absolute shock and horror on Shane's face made Ilya feel a little bad, but he couldn't just let the poor man think that warming meant *cuddling*.

"Oh." Shane said in a small voice. His cheeks were ablaze.

"Do not worry about it." Ilya took pity on him. "Now go make your breakfast.

Shane barely met his eye for the rest of the day.

~

And now, Shane was asleep on his legs like a little kitten.

He was curled up on Ilya's leather shoes, torso and face pressed into his slacks. Ilya has never seen anything sweeter in his whole life.

His hand had drifted into Shane's hair at some point during the last meeting, trying to ground him. To anyone else in the room, it just looked like Ilya had dropped his hand to his lap. He keeps his hand where it is.

Shane looks especially beautiful when he's sleeping. Ilya had found him asleep in the library a few weeks ago, tucked sweetly underneath one of his nesting blankets. That was the day Ilya had made him dinner and learned that his parents were dead too. His heart hurt for the boy who just loved hockey and wanted to be good.

Ilya looks down at him now, reluctant to wake him up. He runs his hand through the silky soft hair, indulging himself a moment. Shane snuffles and presses further into him. Fuck.

“Kotenok.” He says softly. *Kitten.*

Shane stirs, then jerks when he realizes where he is. He looks up at Ilya, his eyes wide. Ilya feels bad, he didn’t mean to startle him.

“Oh- I...I’m so sorry.” Shane rushes to say, scrambling up.

“Is okay.” Ilya insists. He grabs Shane’s elbows as the man stumbles in his haste. “Is okay.” He says again. “I’m sorry about that. Too many people coming unexpected lately.”

“I’m sorry I fell asleep, I can’t believe I did that.” Shane says, still apologizing. As if it wasn’t one of the best things to happen to Ilya in months.

“Please don’t be sorry.”

“Okay.” Shane says quietly, not meeting Ilya’s eyes. Ilya reluctantly lets him go and watches as he leaves the room, missing the warmth at his feet.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you enjoy! If you're going to be affected by any of the winter storms this weekend, stay safe and stay warm!

Next chapter will be up on Monday.

Chapter 7: Chapter Six

Chapter Notes

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

~*Shane*~

Ilya is going to be gone for a week. A business trip. Shane should not be as sad about it as he is. It's just...he's discovered how much he likes this whole arrangement. Having a strict schedule. Taking care of someone. Being *needed*. And call him a stereotypical Omega for that, but it makes him feel good.

It may have only been a few weeks, but he's settled into this routine and he likes it the way it is.

Even on the first day, the house feels too big and cold without Ilya. Shane is used to seeing him in the big comfy expanse of his office multiple times a day. He's staunchly not thinking of falling asleep on the man's legs there a few days prior.

Mikhail stayed behind for protection and company, and Shane knows there is security detail outside of the house as well.

By day three, he and Mikhail have played cards multiple times and Shane has moved on to trying out new recipes. Mikhail assures him that they're all good, but he really wants them to be impressive. He can start making them for Ilya when the man gets back.

"We could go out." Mikhail offers. "To store, or wherever you want."

"Maybe." Shane says noncommittally. Part of him doesn't want to break the bubble he's been living in and go back to the outside world.

"You will be safe with me." Mikhail insists.

“Yeah, I know.” And logically, Shane does.

~

By the time the seventh day rolls around, Shane is practically climbing the walls. He did not leave the house. He doesn't think it's because of that though- it's because it's been so long that he hasn't had anything mapped out for him that he *needs* to do. Before he came here, he had a strict schedule. Two jobs. He always had somewhere to be, something to do. Then he came here, and it was the same. Now, all of a sudden he's had seven days of freedom and his mind and body don't know what to do with that.

The place is spotless. He's almost finished with a three course meal for Ilya when he returns, which should be any minute now.

“Boss' plane was delayed.” Mikhail says, hovering in the doorway.

“Oh.” Shane says, looking at the timer on the oven. The food was almost ready.

“I have to go attend to some business, but I won't be far.” Mikhail says with a pitying smile.

“Yeah, I'll be fine here. Thanks.”

Shane changes the oven to the broiler. The minutes turn to an hour. Then two. He starts packing up the food. He hopes it all tastes just as good reheated. He sits at the formal dining table, alone. He blows out the candles he had lit, and feels stupid.

He flinches awake. Fuck, his neck hurts. Oh, he must have fallen asleep at the dining table, waiting. Ilya probably thinks he's a terrible House Omega, he's always falling asleep.

Footsteps, that's what woke him up. He scrambles up. The food! Ilya is back and the food isn't even ready. Shane rushes to the kitchen and gets there at the same time that Ilya is passing by. He looks exhausted. His suit is rumpled and his tie is unknotted and halfway off.

"I-I have dinner! Let me heat it up." Shane hurries to say.

"Ah. Is okay. Ate fast food on the way home. Long day."

Shane's stomach drops. Fast food? That's not healthy. "Oh." He says in a small voice.

"You should go to bed. Is late." Ilya says with a forced, tired smile.

"I-" Shane cuts himself off. What is he going to say? 'I missed you'? That's pathetic. They barely even know each other. It's not like Ilya is *his* Alpha or something.

He feels weird and small and he ends up forcing an answering smile and going to his room. He gets ready for bed methodically and crawls into his nest, berating himself for the tears that gather in his eyes.

~

In the morning, he wakes up extra early even though he went to bed late the night before. He wants to make Ilya an extra special breakfast since he's been gone. Not to mention the first meal he had when he came home was *fast food*. Shane shudders at the thought.

When he brings the breakfast to Ilya, the other man seems tired and preoccupied. It's not like Shane was expecting the welcome wagon, but it does feel weird to have Ilya be so closed off with him.

It's like that all day, and by dinner, things take a turn for the worst.

“I have to leave again tomorrow.” Ilya tells him, voice clipped and devoid of emotion. Shane’s stomach sinks.

“Oh. For how long?”

“Should be shorter. Maybe one day.”

Okay, that’s not that bad. Shane isn’t pleased, but he can work with that. He nods. “Are you...okay?” He asks tentatively.

Ilya looks momentarily surprised before he schools his face. “I am tired.” Ilya says. “But I am okay.”

Shane nods again, unsure of what to say. “I guess I’ll see you when you get back.”

“Goodbye, Hollander.”

~

Shane is working on a puzzle in the library the following evening when the door slams open, startling him. He jumps and a piece goes flying out of his hand.

“Sorry.” Dmitri, another one of Ilya’s men, one that Shane has seen but does not often interact with, is the culprit. “Boss is hurt. He’ll be here any minute.”

“What?!” Shane says, jumping up immediately. His heart lodges itself in his throat. “How bad is it?”

“I don’t know yet. I thought you’d want to know.”

“Thanks.” Shane says, following him out of the library and into the maze of hallways in the large house.

They get to the foyer just as a commotion is emerging. Ilya is speaking Russian, quickly and loudly, to a pack of men around him. He stops when he sees Shane.

Everyone stops and looks at him, and he feels embarrassed with their eyes on him. However, that feeling is bypassed by the worry he feels for Ilya.

He has a split lip and a bruised cheekbone, as well as what looks to be the remnants of a bloody nose. The way he’s standing suggests he also might’ve taken some rib shots.

“Who told the Omega?” Ilya snaps.

Shane flushes and Dmitri avoids his eyes when he says “I did, Sir.” Ilya speaks angrily to him in Russian.

Shane is irritated. He’s not some fragile Omega. He can help. He’s useful for more than a clean house or a good meal. Shane shoves through the small crowd and grabs Ilya’s wrist. “I’m cleaning you up.” He announces. No one else protests and Ilya goes willingly as Shane tugs him along, to the bathroom on the main floor that Shane knows has a first aid kit inside.

“Sit.” He instructs Ilya, pointing to the granite bench outside of the walk-in shower.

“I did not want you to see me. I did not want you to be worried.”

“Well I am.” Shane snaps. He grabs the first aid kit and inspects Ilya’s face. For his part, Ilya is quiet and lets him do what he needs to do. He dabs at the cut on Ilya’s lip with a wet paper towel. He tries not to think about how beautiful Ilya’s lips are.

“Your ribs. How bad are they?” Ilya looks surprised. He doesn’t say anything. “Let me see.” Shane demands.

Ilya stands and reluctantly unbuttons his shirt. His side is a mess of blue and purple. Shane sucks in a breath. “I need to feel if they’re broken.” He announces. He palpates Ilya’s side as gently as possible, but the man still winces.

“You should see other guy.” He says, but the joke falls flat.

“Not broken, but definitely bruised.” Shane tells him. Ilya is standing so close to him that their faces are right in front of one another. He must move too quickly and twinge his ribs because a small cry escapes his lips and he hunches over, swaying a little on his feet. Shane lays his palm flat against his ribs to steady him. “Woah, hey.”

For a brief second, Ilya presses his forehead into Shane’s shoulder. Insanely, Shane wishes more than anything in that moment that he could smell Ilya’s scent. They both wear scent patches all of the time. Everyone here does. It just makes sense. Shane is the only Omega in a house full of mainly Alphas and *all* dangerous men. They all wear scent patches to avoid giving anything away with their emotions. The only time Shane takes his off is to shower.

The moment is just that, a single moment, and then Ilya stands up and is back to being stoic. Shane doesn’t acknowledge his brief vulnerability.

“I don’t think you should go on any more business trips for a little while.” Shane says, putting away the first aid kit and not looking at Ilya.

Ilya makes an amused noise behind him and Shane looks up into the mirror, catching Ilya’s gaze. Shane doesn’t smile. He’s a little pissed, actually.

“Hollander.”

“Rozanov.” Shane sniffs. He normally calls him Ilya, so he’s probably giving away the fact that he’s mad, but he doesn’t care.

“I am sorry.”

“For what?” He’s still trying to pretend to be aloof.

“For treating you like employee and not like person. These past few days have been difficult. I should not have let it affect my attitude. I am sorry.”

It’s a surprisingly sincere apology. “I accept your apology.”

“You are very good House Omega. I do not want you to...feel sad.”

Shane looks at him for a long moment. He definitely feels *something* right now, but he doesn’t think it’s sadness.

Chapter End Notes

Shane is just a sleepy guy, okay?!

Not wanting to leave the house ever...he just like me fr. Also, I know he would fw puzzles, I just know it.

Next chapter will be posted Thursday! This is the last of my pre-written chapters so I'm trying to play catch up and get some more written before the next update. Also, thank you all for the love on Ilya's POV and for all the continued support for this fic <3

Chapter 8: Chapter Seven

Chapter Notes

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

Shane takes a deep breath and knocks on Ilya's office door. He knows the man is supposed to be free of meetings at this time.

"Come in." Ilya's voice says. Shane opens the door and peeks his head in.

"Um, can I talk to you for a minute?"

"Is everything okay?" Ilya asks immediately.

"Yes." Shane says. "I...well, I'm scheduled to go into heat soon." Might as well just spit it out. "I'm planning to go to a heat house, so you don't have to worry about me interrupting anything. I just wanted to let you know, because obviously I won't be able to work during that time. I'm sorry."

"No." Ilya says.

"No?" Shane echoes, confused.

"You will not go to heat house." Ilya spits the words out. "You will stay here, this is your home. I will leave."

"Oh. Are you sure?"

"I have one Omega on my staff. I could arrange to have him stay with you, if you are comfortable. Make sure you are eating, hydrating. Unless you have Alpha partner coming?"

“No.” Shane says quickly.

“Okay.” Ilya nods. “I make arrangements for security staff- they will stay outside- and Mr. Haas will be inside to help you.”

“That’s really generous of you.” Shane says honestly. He’d been nervous to use a heat house, even though the reputable ones were supposed to be very nice. Nothing beats your own nest and your own room.

“Is no problem.” Ilya shrugs. “When?”

“Next week.”

“You have supplies?”

Shane’s cheeks heat. “Uh, yeah.”

“If you need to order anything else, I can give credit card.”

“No, I’m really fine.” This will be his first heat when all of the new nesting supplies that Ilya had bought for him when he first came here. He tries not to think about the other *supplies* Ilya might be alluding to.

Ilya nods, watching Shane’s face closely. Shane feels hot under the attention. “Well, that’s all I wanted to say.” He finishes awkwardly. He feels Ilya’s gaze on him the whole way out the door.

Luca is really nice. He's younger than Shane had thought. He's Ilya's newest recruit, only about a year into the job. They officially meet the following day after Shane had talked to Ilya about his heat.

"I know it's awkward, but I promise I'll just make sure you're doing okay and nothing more, alright?"

"Thanks." Shane says earnestly. He's *really* glad it's going to be another Omega helping him out.

He's preparing for being off for his heat, getting things around the house ready, when he smells it. It's truly, purely an accident. He's not often in the wing of the house where Ilya's room is. He's never been in the man's actual room, because an Omega doesn't just go into an Alpha's den. It just isn't proper. Equally, an Alpha wouldn't just walk into an Omega's personal room either.

Shane is in the hallway, dusting, when a smell permeates the air. It's filtering under the door of Ilya's room. The man must have just showered and taken his scent patch off.

It makes Shane freeze. His knees shake. It's the best thing he's ever smelled.

The scent of rich coffee, fresh linen, something smoky. Spicy and soothing and cozy.

His senses go haywire. This close to heat, he's especially sensitive. He drops the duster he'd been using and it clatters to the floor.

God, he's never craved a scent so badly in his life. It smells like comfort and home and safety. He barely bites back a whimper. Shane snatches the duster and hurriedly leaves the hallway, despite every instinct he has screaming at him to turn around.

The sense memory of the scent sticks with him over the next few days. It haunts him. He tosses and turns at night, imagining that smell all around him. In his nest, on his skin. It's wrong, Ilya is his *boss*.

He says a polite goodbye to Ilya at the end of the week. He feels bad that the other man is leaving his own house because of Shane, no matter how many times Ilya assures him that it's fine.

The pre-heat ramps up on Sunday, and by Monday, it's in full swing. He feels fevered and his muscles cramp. Luca diligently brings him water and food outside his door. Shane has to drag himself out of his nest every time.

The blankets are great, the best nest he's ever had. He spent over an hour perfecting it before his heat hit him full blown. He hates that he has to soil them with his slick, but it's inevitable. This is maybe the neediest he's ever felt. His toys only grant him the most temporary relief, and then he's back to burning up. He's sweltering; sweaty, slick, and disgusting.

After day two, he can't bring himself to eat, no matter how much Luca begs. He can barely keep down water and some ginger ale. Shane just feels wrong.

He writhes in the nest, whimpering and crying for relief that's not coming. All he can think about is that scent. It's driving him mad. Out of his mind with want. If he could just surround himself in that scent, everything would be okay. He's sure of it.

Luca knocks on his door. "Shane! You have to eat!"

Shane mumbles in response. He can't eat. He can't think. Luca keeps pounding on the door. Shane drifts for a while. Everything is hazy. He feels untethered. Unmoored, like a ship lost at sea, or a balloon with the strings cut.

Finally, he can't take it anymore. He stumbles out of bed, hastily grabbing at blankets, effectively destroying his beautiful nest. He gathers them in his fist, dragging them. He unlocks his bedroom door and opens it.

“Shane?” Luca asks, already coming from down the hall. Shane ignores him. He limps determinedly through the maze of hallways.

He finally makes it to Ilya’s door, and he doesn’t hesitate. He turns the knob and it opens right away. Immediately, the scent floods his senses. It's an instant relief. Shane doesn’t feel one hundred percent, obviously, but he feels less like he’s going to burn up into ash.

He whimpers pathetically.

This is such a bad idea. Coming into an Alpha’s *den*, his *boss*’ den, but he needs this more than he needs air right now.

God, it’s mortifying how much he misses Ilya. He craves the other man right now. Not even in a sexual way- which yes, given the opportunity, that sounds amazing too- but his presence itself. His deadpan humor, his protective nature, his soft vowels. Shane would just feel so much safer if he were here.

He tosses his fistful of blankets onto Ilya’s bed, hastily arranging them into a messy, haphazard nest. He climbs into it and collapses, burying himself.

Chapter End Notes

Next chapter will be up Saturday!

Chapter 9: Chapter Eight

Chapter Notes

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

~Ilya~

Late on Wednesday, three, almost four days after Ilya had left Shane, his phone rang with Luca Haas' contact.

Ilya answers immediately. "What is wrong?" Is Shane okay? What if he *isn't*?

"Shane has been struggling. He's *okay*, but he's been struggling."

"Struggling?" Ilya repeats.

"It's been really hard on him. He hasn't been eating. He's been delirious. I've never seen someone have a heat this bad." Luca says softly.

Ilya's stomach drops. "What? Does he need doctor?" He hates the thought of Shane, who always makes him such delicious meals and works so hard, not eating. It bothers him. It's just wrong. He should be fed and happy and healthy like he always makes sure Ilya is. Especially when he's in such a vulnerable state.

Ilya already had felt wrong since he's been away from Shane, but this was a whole other level of disturbance. This was visceral, cutting him deep down to his core.

"Well, that's part of why I'm calling you. I would've said yes, but he's doing a little better now." Luca takes a deep breath, as if he's about to say something else and he's nervous.

“Spit it out!” Ilya snaps, which he’s sure to feel bad about later, but right now he’s worried about Shane.

“He made a nest on your bed.”

Ilya feels like he’s falling. He grips the phone tightly, his mind buffering. His inner Alpha roars ferociously, telling him to get back to *his* Omega.

Luca takes Ilya’s silence as a sign to keep going. “It seems to be helping him. Your scent. Please don’t be mad at him.”

Ilya feels many emotions right now, but anger isn’t one of them. Shock. Disbelief. Primal hunger.

“Should I come back?” He asks, uncharacteristically unsure. But Luca is also an Omega, and he can let Ilya know if it’s a good idea for him to come back or if that would seem threatening to an Omega in heat.

“No, I don’t think so.” Luca says. Ilya feels something like disappointment. What, had he been hoping the other man would say Shane needed him and that he should come right away? That’s a stupid thought.

Still, he hates the thought of Shane upset, in pain, uncomfortable, and so far away from him. It makes his inner Alpha whine and pace like a caged animal.

“Make sure he eats.” Ilya says sternly. “If he needs doctor, you call doctor first and then me.”

“Okay. I think he’s going to be fine now. I just wanted to update you.”

“Thank you. I’ll be back on Saturday afternoon.” It feels like a lifetime away.

“I’ll see you then, boss.” Luca hangs up.

Ilya feels discombobulated. His work doesn’t even feel important now, when he thinks about Shane needing help. He may be an Alpha, but he knows that heats aren’t just all orgasms. They can be painful and isolating for an Omega, especially one without a partner. Their hormones and their bodily functions go haywire.

If Ilya’s Alpha scent is helping Shane, then he’s glad. It didn’t have to mean anything.

He impulsively orders one of those fruit bouquets, some expensive chocolates, and an artisanal charcuterie tray from a place near his home for immediate delivery. Hopefully Shane will be enticed to eat some of it.

He’s rewarded with a photo from Luca about an hour later, of most of the fruit gone and a few pieces of the chocolate. His inner Alpha rumbles in satisfaction at the thought of taking care of his Omega.

He doesn’t even realize the internal slip up of the word ‘his’.

~

He returns on Saturday as expected, after getting the all-clear from Luca that Shane was officially done with his heat. He’s surprised to see Shane waiting for him in the foyer. He looks exhausted, but beautiful. A little extra pale but with a flush in his cheeks and a shine in his eyes.

“Ilya, can I talk to you?”

“Da. Here?” He basically just walked in the door.

“Um, wherever you want.”

“Let’s go to kitchen.”

Shane has a lot of nervous energy about him, and it’s making Ilya worried.

“How are you feeling?” He asks as they sit down in their usual spots at the counter island.

“I’m good. Yeah, good.” Shane says quickly. “Listen, Ilya, I have to tell you something.”

Is he going to quit? Did something else happen while he was in heat? Did one of the security personnel act inappropriately and somehow Luca didn’t know or didn’t tell him? A million thoughts race through Ilya’s mind.

“Something happened during my heat. Something...unforgivable.” Shane starts. His hands and his voice are both trembling. Ilya’s stomach bottoms out, but he doesn’t interrupt. “I want you to know I’m so sorry, and I know it was wrong, but I was out of my mind-”

“Is this about nest in my room?” Ilya cuts off, feeling hope and relief.

Shane gapes. “How did you know about that?”

“Mr. Haas already told me.”

“And you...you’re not mad?”

“Why would I be mad?”

“It was really inappropriate.”

“Eh. That is junk. You need Alpha scent to feel better, I have Alpha scent. Is not so bad. I am happy you’re okay.”

Shane looks like he’s ready to collapse with relief. “I cleaned your room really thoroughly after. The bedding. And I aired it out. So you should have no idea I was ever even there.”

Ilya can’t help but feel disappointed at that, but then he immediately feels like a pervert.

“I wasn’t going to lie about it!” Shane then hurries to say. “I just wanted it to be clean for you. Not disruptive to your Alpha.” He’s rambling now.

“Hollander.”

Shane shuts his mouth with an audible snap.

“Take breath. It is okay. I am more concerned with *you* being okay. How are you feeling?”

“Sore. Tired. I’m okay though. Luca did a good job. I didn’t make it easy on him.” As if Shane was supposed to make things easy for everyone, all the time, and never need anything.

Ilya nods, never taking his eyes off the other man. Tracing his features.

“I’m sorry, I haven’t started on lunch yet. I didn’t know if you...” ‘*Were going to fire me*’ goes unspoken. The lack of faith in himself and his value is exasperating.

“You like tuna melt?” He asks, standing up.

“You...you wanna make me a tuna melt?”

That’s how they end up chatting idly as Ilya cooks for him. Something that Ilya has found is that Shane is very funny. He has an unsuspecting dry, deadpan humor. Ilya enjoys his company.

His inner Alpha rumbles in satisfaction when Shane finishes the entire sandwich that Ilya made for him, plus the sliced cucumber on the side. Not wanting their time together to end, he takes a chance. “You want to watch movie?”

“Don’t you have work?” Shane asks tentatively.

“No.” Ilya lies. He always has work. There will always be something to do. Right now, he just wants to continue enjoying Shane’s company.

“Okay, yeah, let’s watch something.”

They end up watching a movie and a half before Ilya can tell Shane is waning. He must be exhausted from the ordeal he went through this week. Ilya knows it takes him time to recover from his ruts, so it must be similar.

He’s ashamed at the way he searches his entire room for even just a *hint* of Shane’s scent. He feels awful about it, but he just can’t stop himself. He’s wondered about the other man’s scent before, of course, in passing, but the idea of getting a whiff of his heat scent is very enticing and he can’t control himself.

He’s about to give up when he *barely* detects something. The very corner of his mattress. It smells incredible, and it’s definitely not something he’s smelled before. It must be Shane.

Ilya is spiraling, a low rumbling in his chest before he can stop it.

Mate. Mine. Omega. *Mine*.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all SO much for the love on the last chapter! I hope you enjoy this one too. No smut...YET ;)

I did really contemplate having Ilya come home to find Shane in his room but it just didn't seem to fit with everything else, so this is what I went with. Next chapter will be up Tuesday!

Chapter 10: Chapter Nine

Chapter Notes

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

~Shane~

Listen, Shane might not have a fancy degree, and he may be just the hired help for a massive organization, but he isn't *stupid*.

And something is going on with one of Ilya's men.

Mikhail, obviously, he knows the best. Then Luca, then Dmitri. There's another guy he sees around a lot though, Sasha. He's another security guy, but something about him prickles the hairs on Shane's neck.

"What do you know about Sasha?" Shane asks faux-casually. He's been seeing a lot more of Luca lately. The man is currently keeping watch over him as Shane cooks breakfast.

Luca hums. "Well, he and Ilya used to be a thing."

"*What?*" Shane says in shock, just barely avoiding dropping the spatula in his hand.

Luca snorts at his reaction. "Yeah. A long time ago. I don't think it was more than just... *physical* though. Why do you ask?"

Shane debates whether to say anything to the other man. "He weirds me out." He finally says after a long moment. He already didn't like the man, and now the thought of him being intimate with Ilya is even worse.

“Has he said anything to you?” Luca worries.

“No.” Shane says honestly. “It’s just my instincts.”

Luca nods. “Are you going to say anything to Ilya?”

“Probably not yet.” Shane says, mulling it over. “I don’t really have any proof.”

“That’s fair. Keep me updated?”

“Yeah, I will.”

~

Shane doesn’t think he’s being very stealthy, but then again, who would expect the House Omega to be spying on them with binoculars?

So far, he’s seen nothing out of the ordinary. Sasha does his duties, takes a few smoke breaks, laughs and chats with the other men.

But Shane is not convinced.

He and Ilya have gotten closer since the day he came home and made Shane the tuna melt and they watched a movie. He can’t really explain it, but something changed between them that day. They’re friendlier, less polite and professional.

Maybe it has something to do with the fact that Shane literally nested in his den, in his *bed*.

However, their newfound closeness is another reason why Shane wants to have hard evidence before he goes to Ilya and accuses one of his men of being corrupt.

“Hollander.”

“Hi.” Shane looks up with a smile. It’s Saturday evening, the other man must be done with work.

“Movie night?” Ilya proposes hopefully.

“Sounds great.” Shane confirms. He carefully places his bookmark inside the book he had been reading.

Ilya tracks the movement, seeming to notice the book for the first time. “Am I interrupting?” He worries.

“No, not at all.” Shane promises. He’s genuinely looking forward to more time with Ilya.

“I like glasses.” He says. Shit, Shane had forgotten he was even wearing them.

“They’re for reading.” He mutters, taking them off.

“They are cute.” Ilya states simply.

They are *not*. They’re extremely nerdy and Shane wishes Ilya had not seen them. “Do you want me to make popcorn?”

“Da. Let me show you something first.” Ilya takes him to the den at the back of the house where they had watched a movie last time. It’s a cozier room than most of the house, less

about wealth and modernity and more about actual comfort. This time, however, the plain, practical couch has been replaced by one of those giant ones where all the pieces can be deconstructed and moved to make a huge rectangle reminiscent of the shape of a bed.

Shane gasps and clutches Ilya's forearm.

"You like?" Ilya asks, a slightly nervous edge to his voice.

"I love it!" Shane says genuinely. He's never seen one of these in person. It looks so comfortable.

Ilya smiles at him. He has a really nice smile. "Get your blankets if you want. I will pop the corn."

Shane smiles at Ilya's verbiage for the popcorn. He does go get one of his blankets, because he finds it impossible to watch tv without one. He snuggles into a corner of the couch setup, happy as a clam when Ilya comes back with a big bowl of popcorn and a cold ginger ale for him.

It's domestic, sitting there in the dark and chatting and laughing together, hands occasionally brushing in the popcorn bowl.

"I think this is good for you." Shane says tentatively when they're cleaning up for the night.

"Hm?" Ilya says.

"Taking a break. Relaxing."

"You are probably right." Ilya agrees. "Is good for you too."

“I don’t work as hard as you. It’s different.” Shane waves him off.

“You do important work too, Hollander.” Ilya insists. It’s making Shane’s cheeks hot. He shrugs, trying to brush it off. “You don’t know how nice it is to have you here. I did not want House Omega at first, is true. Now I do not know what I would do without your company.”

“And my food?” Shane teases, deflecting. He’s blushing profusely right now.

“You. Without *you*.”

“It’s only been a few months.” Shane breathes out. He’s only been here a little under three months, even if it feels like a lifetime. Another life entirely from his previous one.

“Does not matter.”

Shane could never take a compliment, and now, coming from an extremely handsome Alpha that he knows for a fact also smells amazing, it’s very overwhelming. Not in a bad way, but he’s extremely flustered right now. He looks down at his hands. “Thank you.” He says softly.

“You are welcome.”

~

Numbness. The intense grief. The feeling of being so *alone* and desolate.

Shane screams.

He jolts awake when his bedroom door slams open. He can see several figures in the doorway, the very first one being Ilya, brandishing a weapon.

The lights flip on and it shocks Shane even more than the noise of the door banging open.

“Hollander, what is going on?” Ilya asks, eyes scanning the room for threats, gun still held out in front of him.

Shane is so mortified. He shrinks into the bed. It’s been a long time since he’s had nightmares about his parents. Since before he came here, for sure. He doesn’t know whether it’s been his sneaking around, looking for information on Sasha that brought it on, like a stress trigger, or maybe things in his life are just too good right now and his mind wanted to remind him of just how easily it could all be taken away.

That feeling, he’d almost forgotten the feeling. Of having his pack ripped away, of being so utterly alone. He feels sick with it now, the dream still clinging to him like a dark cloud.

“Ilya.” He gasps out. His face is wet with tears. He just wants Ilya. “P-please.” He pleads, reaching a hand out of the blankets. Ilya is still hovering in the doorway, since he’s in an Omega’s private space.

Maybe the Alpha puts the pieces together that there’s no *real* threat, because he dismisses his men.

“You sure you want me to come in?” He checks.

“Please.” Shane knows Ilya is being polite, but he already feels pretty pathetic at this entire display. He’s one more check-in away from begging.

Ilya comes in and crouches on the floor by where Shane is still curled up, a trembling mess.

“Nightmare?”

Shane nods miserably. He rubs at his sternum. His chest aches deep inside. “Hurts.” He mumbles.

“Hurts? You need doctor?” Ilya asks worriedly.

“No. Hurts like sad.” Shane whispers.

“Oh, malysh.” Ilya’s gaze is tender.

Shane reaches for him, knowing that if he’s denied, he will be incredibly embarrassed. Ilya doesn’t deny him though. He sits on the bed next to Shane and pulls him in, wrapping his arms around him. Shane is glad for it, because he feels like he’s going to break into pieces at any moment.

He lets himself be held. He wishes he could smell Ilya’s scent, his real scent. Shane rubs his cheek against Ilya’s shirt.

“I will make tea.” Ilya says into his hair. Yeah, that sounds good right now. A warm beverage to ground him. Ilya stands up and pulls Shane with him, looking down at him. He doesn’t say anything, just *looks* at him. For some reason, it feels intense.

“Come.” He says after a minute of silence. Shane wraps a blanket around himself and trails after him. He sits at the counter island and watches Ilya prepare the tea. No sugar in his, just a small amount of honey in the bottom of the mug.

“I have nightmares too.” Ilya says, not turning around to face him. Shane thinks that’s on purpose. Ilya stares down at the mugs as he speaks. “About my mother.”

“I’m sorry.” Shane says sincerely. “I know it can be hard. People don’t understand unless they have a dead parent.”

Ilya nods. “I wish you did not understand.”

Shane swallows the sudden lump in his throat. “Do you want to watch something?” He shouldn’t change the subject, Ilya is trying to open up to him right now, but he just...can’t. He’s too fragile right now. If he loses any more pieces, he’ll disintegrate.

They head for the new sofa. The gray light of early dawn is streaming in through the windows, but Ilya draws all the shades. He puts on something mindless that neither of them pay attention to.

After he finishes his tea, Shane curls up. He doesn’t fully fall asleep, but he dozes in a half-aware state.

Ilya stays with him the whole time.

Chapter End Notes

Nice 1.5k chapter for you! Plus the classic nightmare trope!

I also wanted to say, I am a card carrying member of the dead parent's club just like our boys here (I only have one dead parent though). I wanted to extend my heart to anyone else who is in the club and remind you that you're not alone.

Next chapter will be up on Thursday (:

Chapter 11: Chapter Ten

Chapter Notes

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

"We should go into town this weekend." Ilya suggests. "Would be good for you to get out of the house."

Shane knows exactly why the other man is suggesting this. He hasn't been quite the same since the nightmare earlier this week. He still feels a dark cloud hovering over him. He feels upset and restless. He hasn't slept more than four hours a night since the bad dream incident. The only time he feels marginally better is when Ilya is around.

"Maybe." He responds. By maybe, he means probably not. He feels like if he leaves, it will break the bubble, the spell he's under here. Like maybe it will all disappear. It would probably sound stupid to anyone else, but that's how he feels.

"Hollander. Do you want to join me in the office today?"

Shane looks up from where he had been staring down into his coffee mug like it might hold the answers to the universe. "What?"

"You could join me while I work."

That- that actually would be really nice.

"Okay." He agrees, feeling suddenly shy. He follows Ilya to the office. He isn't sure what Ilya had in mind, but his gaze wanders to underneath the desk again. He remembers the comfort of the small, dark space with Ilya's warmth. Would it be weird if he asked to go there again?

Ilya must follow his gaze, because he says "You can sit there if you want. Do not have to, but if you want."

Shane bites his lip, considering. Finally, he nods. Ilya smiles at him and grabs a cushion from one of the armchairs in the room. He puts it under the desk for Shane, which is sweet.

He gets into the space, immediately feeling a little more settled. It gets amplified when Ilya sits down and his legs enter the space as well. Shane keeps a pretty tight lid on his animal instincts, but he can't deny that his Omega loves a small, comfy space, as well as the presence of a protective Alpha.

"Can I..." He trails off, leaning against Ilya's legs again.

"Da." Ilya's big palm lands in his hair. Fuck, that's nice. That's so nice.

Shane closes his eyes. He's exhausted. Maybe now that he's safe and with Ilya, he can actually sleep.

~

Shane blinks. Woah. He really did fall asleep. He yawns.

"Hello, sleepyhead."

Shane looks up to see Ilya peering down at him.

"How long was I out?"

"Almost four hours."

"Oh my god!"

Ilya smiles, amused.

“I’m supposed to be working.”

The smile drops from Ilya’s face. “You needed rest.” That’s definitely not a lie.

“Thank you.” Shane says.

“Let me order something for lunch. No fast food. Something healthy.”

Something in Ilya’s demeanor makes Shane agree. “Okay.”

They eat sushi together in the kitchen. Ilya *never* takes a lunch break outside of his office.

“You know I’m okay, right?” Shane says tentatively.

“Am I so...” Ilya’s brow furrows. “Clear?”

“Transparent.” Shane corrects gently.

Ilya nods.

“I just don’t want you to worry.” Shane says. “I’m okay, I promise.”

“We are friends, yes?”

‘Friends’ almost seems like too small of a word on paper for what they are, but Shane supposes that it’s accurate, technically speaking.

“Yes.”

“Friends worry about each other.”

“Yeah.” Shane acknowledges quietly. “Yeah, they do.”

~

Shane wants to prove to Ilya that he’s okay and ease some of his worries, so he agrees to go on an outing on Saturday.

He wakes up early, unable to sleep in even a little bit because of the nerves fluttering around in his stomach. For some reason, he has the urge to take his time when getting ready, even though Ilya sees him every day. There’s a tiny voice in the back of his head that is telling him that he needs to look good so that people think he is the perfect, beautiful Omega for Ilya.

It doesn’t matter that he just works for the man, other people won’t know that, right?

Dmitri drives them and accompanies them, a few feet behind. Shane hasn’t been out in the world in so long that everything seems so much bigger, brighter, and louder than he remembers. He hadn’t even asked where they were going, but now he can clearly see that it’s an Omega boutique. He gives Ilya an unimpressed look, and the other man pretends not to notice.

“I don’t need anything else.” Shane tells him. Ilya ignores him and holds the door open. Shane sighs and walks in.

“Welcome in!” A pretty saleswoman greets them immediately, overenthusiastic. She looks only at Ilya, even though *Shane* is the Omega. Shane wants to bare his teeth at her, but he refrains.

“Hello.” Ilya responds politely.

“Are you looking for anything in particular?” She asks sweetly.

Shane is about to roll his eyes and walk away and leave them to flirt when he feels Ilya take his hand.

“Whatever he wants.” Ilya says confidently. Shane looks down at their conjoined hands and fights a blush.

“Of course.” The saleslady says, but she sounds a little more strained now. It satisfies something in Shane, just a little.

They wander the aisles together, Ilya holding a basket with his other hand. So far, the basket is empty. There are a lot of pretty things here, pretty and soft things, but Shane doesn't *need* anything. The only thing he needs is for Ilya to never let go of his hand.

Still, evidently this makes Ilya happy, so he obliges. He sniffs at a bottle of overpriced bubble bath. It *does* smell pretty good.

“You like?” Ilya asks.

“You smell.” Shane says. He has the sudden urge to get Ilya's approval of it.

Ilya sniffs and nods. He takes it from Shane and puts it into their basket. Unfortunately, they do let go of one another's hands. Ilya wanders away with the basket, and Shane keeps looking aimlessly. This store is huge. He pets some fuzzy socks with mild interest.

Before he realizes it, he's accidentally stumbled into the lingerie section. He stops, blinks.

Does Ilya like his Omegas in lingerie? He wonders. It's a stupid thought. He's a *House Omega*. Not a mate. Besides, a lot of this stuff isn't really his style. He doesn't like anything too scratchy or restrictive. He prefers his comfortable boxers and pajamas, soft cotton.

He's too plain and boring. Ilya deserves a pretty Omega who wears things like this. He resolves to go find the other man and say that he's ready to leave, suddenly in a weird mood.

Ironically, he finds Ilya in the pajama section. "These are nice." He says, holding up a matching set. Nothing flashy, dark blue cotton pants and a matching shirt with buttons. White piping.

Exactly something Shane would wear.

He stares for a moment.

"This is what you like?" Ilya asks.

"Yeah." Shane agrees. Ilya smiles, pleased, and tosses two sets into their basket. In the end, Shane ends up with the two pairs of pajamas, the bubble bath, and *three* pairs of the fluffy socks.

When they leave, movement catches Ilya's eye. Shane looks too. A building at the other end of the parking lot has dogs running around in a fenced in backyard.

"Is it a rescue?" He asks.

Ilya nods. He seems to be transfixed.

“You like animals?” Shane asks.

“Da. Very much.” Ilya says, looking over at him.

“We could go look.” Shane says. “It could be fun.”

Ilya agrees, and they walk across the parking lot to the building. The place is alive with barks and meows alike.

“Can I help you?” A woman at the front desk asks.

“We’re just looking, if that’s okay.” Shane tells her.

“Sure, feel free to look around.”

They walk down a hall filled with kenneled animals. “Awh, look at all these babies.” Ilya coos.

Shane grins. A cute scruffy dog jumps on the fence of its kennel when Ilya walks by. He stops.

“Hi beautiful girl.” He reads the information taped to the front of the crate. “Any.”

“She’s cute.” Shane remarks.

“She’s a great dog. She’ll probably be out of here soon, snatched up.” The woman from the front desk says from behind them.

“Can we see her?” Shane asks. “Out of the kennel?”

Ilya looks at him. Shane shrugs. The woman unlocks the kennel and Anya comes trotting out. She really is so cute. She jumps on Ilya happily.

“She likes you.” Shane tells him.

“I like her too. Such a good girl.” Ilya says, petting her head. It’s funny to see this scary member of the Russian mob be reduced to a puddle by a cute dog. Shane crouches to pet her.

“She’s really soft.” He remarks. He looks up to see Ilya watching them. "I think we should bring her home." He says boldly.

Ilya breaks out into a smile. "Da. I think so too."

~

A little while later, and Anya is officially Anya Rozanov. They take her to a pet supply store on the way home, where Ilya spends far too much money spoiling her. He's already talking about taking her to the local pet spa soon too. Shane likes that they did this together, it's like their a weird little family unit. It feels nice.

It was a really great day.

Chapter End Notes

A fluffy chapter with an introduction to our girl, Anya! In my opinion, the story gets a lot juicier from here after this fluff-filled chapter.

I have the entire story mapped out at this point and it should be 17 chapters in total!
Next chapter will be up on Saturday.

Thanks again for all of the love and for those of you who also shared your experience of being in the dead parents' club <3

Chapter 12: Chapter Eleven

Chapter Notes

SURPRISE! I tricked you! You get this chapter a day early (:

This is also:

The biggest chapter of the entire story so far at 1.8k words

One of my favorites so far!

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

~Shane~

“Omega!” A voice calls.

Shane turns around.

“Give me a Coke.” Ironically, of all people, it’s Sasha. Shane wordlessly gets one out of the fridge and gives it to him.

Sasha smirks. “You really do take orders like this, ah?” He snaps his fingers. Shane doesn’t even crack a smile. He turns back around to finish cooking Ilya’s lunch. He’s making egg salad sandwiches with homemade chips in the air fryer and it takes a decent amount of prep work.

He doesn’t realize that Sasha is still hovering behind him.

“You know, Ilya had many Omegas back in Russia.” He says, apropos of nothing.

Shane almost jumps, but holds back, not wanting to give the other man the satisfaction at having startled him.

“Okay.” He says blandly.

“It does not bother you?” Sasha continues.

You bother me, Shane wants to say, but doesn’t.

“You’re quiet.” Sasha observes. He really is rather annoying.

“I’m working.” Shane reminds him. Just then, he hears a low growling. Anya stands at the entrance to the kitchen, eyes locked on Sasha and hackles raised.

“You let a mutt in your kitchen?” Sasha says with thinly veiled disgust.

“She’s not a mutt.” Shane snaps. Which, ironically, she is technically a mutt, but Shane knows Sasha was saying it in a purposely derogatory way and not in reference to her actual breed.

He’s never heard Anya growl at anyone so far. At least she and Shane are on the same page about not liking Sasha.

“You’re late.” Mikhail appears behind Anya, staring straight at Sasha. He says something else in Russian that sounds like a reprimand.

Sasha grabs his can of Coke and finally leaves the kitchen.

Shane looks at Anya. “Good girl.”

Having Anya for company has been really nice. When everyone else is busy, he has a companion. She does spend a lot of time with Ilya in his office too, but she comes to join Shane periodically throughout the day as well. Shane has started taking her for daily walks around the large property.

This time, he decided to take her on an evening walk, since he was pretty busy with cooking more time consuming things during the day today. Ilya has been working late every night this week, so Shane had really wanted to make him extra hearty and fortifying meals.

As they walk, Shane sees a few large shipment trucks pull up around the back of the house. He's rarely out walking when they show up, although he knows by now that they come every few days or so with boxes.

Shane has no idea what's in the boxes, he's never asked. Sometimes he thinks it's probably better that he doesn't know.

It's because he's distracted and watching the trucks that he isn't watching where he's going. He accidentally steps in a dip in the earth and wrenches his ankle.

"Shit!" He swears as he does down, falling sideways and then landing on his butt. Anya stops immediately. "Ah." Shane winces as he lifts up his pant leg to take a look at his ankle. He doesn't think it's broken, but it definitely could be sprained. It hurts and is starting to swell up already.

Anya trots over to sniff him.

"Yeah, I'm clumsy." Shane sighs as he pets her back. "Alright." He mutters to himself, heaving his body up. Shit. It really hurts to put weight on his ankle. Unfortunately, they're pretty far from the house. He tries to hobble along a few steps, but the pain is excruciating.

Shane bites his lip, looking at the house, then at Anya. This is not going to be good, but it might be the only choice he has. He sits back down.

And he waits.

Ilya is working, but he'll probably notice Shane is gone eventually. Hopefully.

"Go get help!" He tries to tell Anya, gesturing toward the house. She stares at him, then lays her head on his lap. Shane doesn't know if he wishes she would go to the house without him or if he's glad she's staying with him.

At least the sunset is pretty as he sits there and watches the sun disappear.

It gets pretty cold after dark though. He hadn't really dressed for it, because he thought he would be out here for 45 minutes tops.

Shane never carries the cell phone Ilya bought him, and he's never wished he did until this moment. It mostly stays in his room, because he never leaves and he has no one to contact, so why would he need it?

Well, apparently for emergencies, like right now.

"You can have my bones after I perish out here." Shane sighs, scratching Anya between her ears. "You're going to have to cook though. And get coffee for your papa. I'll have to give you the whole schedule."

Shane estimates that they've been out here maybe two hours, maybe a little longer if you count the time that they spent on the walk to the back of the property in the first place.

It's pretty chilly out now, and he shivers even with Anya's warm furry body laying across him.

Suddenly, Shane sees flashlight beams sweeping through the darkness. They're coming for him!

"Shane! Shaaaane!" Multiple voices calling.

"I'm here!" He yells back, but he thinks they're still too far away.

"Hollander! Shane!" That's Ilya. He called him Shane.

At the sound of her papa's voice, Anya goes running.

"I'm here! I'm over here!" Shane calls out again. He gets to his feet and starts hobbling forward. "Ilya!"

Anya is barking now and the beams of light are getting closer.

Shane stops moving, the hobbling and hopping isn't really getting him very far.

"Shane?" A flashlight finally hits him. Anya runs back, circling him and barking.

"Hi." Shane says dumbly, giving a little wave.

"Oh, Shane!" Ilya runs up to him, gathering him in his arms. "What are you doing? I was so worried. I couldn't find you."

"Careful." Shane says, hanging onto Ilya too. "My ankle. I hurt my ankle. I'm sorry, I couldn't make it all the way back to the house."

“You are hurt?” Ilya says. He sets Shane down carefully and crouches down to look at his ankle. Shane leans against him for support. “How long have you been out here?” Ilya asks, looking up at him. The others are now gathered around them a few feet away.

“Um, maybe two hours?”

“Two hours.” Ilya repeats, his voice faint. He turns to his men and starts speaking rapidly in Russian. He sounds angry.

Suddenly, Ilya stands up and scoops Shane up into his arms in a bridal carry in the same motion.

“Mikhail is calling doctor right away.” His voice sounds strange.

Shane leans his head against Ilya’s collarbone. “Anya kept me company.” He says. “She’s such a good girl.”

Ilya doesn’t say anything. Shane keeps talking, telling him about the sunset, about being ready to give Anya the schedule so she can take over his duties for him. Through it all, Ilya stays silent.

They’re inside now, and Ilya keeps carrying him, bringing him to the den. He sets him down on the big sofa so gently. His jaw is set and his eyes are stony.

Shane’s stomach drops. “Are you mad at me?”

Ilya’s expression immediately softens. “*No*. I am mad at myself. You were out there, hurt, needing help, and I was in here working. I am supposed to take care of you.”

“Your work is important.”

“*You* are more important!” Ilya stresses. Just then, an unfamiliar man walks in and Ilya growls, coming to stand even closer to Shane.

“Boss, it’s just the doctor.” Luca says softly, appearing behind the man.

“I know.” Ilya snaps.

The doctor checks him over and concurs that it’s just a bad sprain, nothing seems to be broken. It gets wrapped up and iced and Shane will have crutches.

Shane is more disturbed at the thought of not being able to work than he is about his ankle. He was so stupid, walking around in the near dark. Being nosey and then twisting his ankle like a clumsy fool. He caused everyone to worry and made Ilya upset.

“I’m sorry.” He whispers after everyone has left the room and it’s just he and Ilya again.

“Is my fault.” Ilya spits. He’s still visibly distressed. Shane doesn’t like it.

“I’ll make up the time I’m missing somehow.”

“What?” Ilya asks, looking confused now.

“Work.” Shane says like it’s obvious.

“Shane.”

Shane still can't get used to that. Shane instead of Hollander. He's starting to feel even more upset. Ilya has been so kind to him from the start, so understanding and accommodating. He's been working so hard and he needs someone taking care of the house and the meals so he can focus on that. His lower lip wobbles. "M-maybe I can cook sitting down."

"I don't care about the meals!" Ilya bursts out, and Shane flinches. He feels raw with all of the emotion tonight.

"Well I do!" He retorts. "You don't understand, Ilya!" He scrubs a hand over his face. "Life just isn't like this, not for me. I don't just get a break. I want to help, I like to help. I *need* to be helpful." He doesn't want to feel like some kept Omega. He was hired to do a job and he wants to do it.

Shane was somebody, once. He could've made something of his life. He had a family and long term goals. He was smart and good at hockey. He was going to get a degree, maybe go to the NHL. Goals, dreams, plans. He wasn't the same person anymore, not by a long shot.

But he could still be useful.

"Do not get upset, please." Ilya's voice is much softer now.

Shane snuffles pathetically. "Too late." He mutters petulantly. He's pouting.

The doctor comes back in briefly to hand him a bottle of painkillers.

"I was so worried." Ilya says after he leaves again. He isn't looking at Shane, his gaze distant. "No one knew where you were. I could not find you."

Guilt churns in Shane's chest.

"You don't know what it was like for me, in those minutes. I thought you were gone."

Shane is an asshole for staying out there and an asshole for yelling at Ilya a minute ago.

“Then I find you, and you are hurt, and you had been sitting there, *waiting*, while I am in here...” Ilya shakes his head. “I understand you want to help me, Shane. You can help me by indulging me. You taking care of yourself is helping me. Do you understand?” He says the last sentence pleadingly, finally looking at Shane.

I think I do, Shane thinks to himself, looking back at the Alpha in front of him.

Chapter End Notes

I want to preface something to set some expectations. To be honest, I am planning for ONE chapter of smut in this story (I won't spoil WHICH chapter it is). I wanted to let you all know that now so you aren't expecting more down the line. I hope this information is not terribly disappointing.

For no reason at all, I am reminding you of a few specific tags...*tapping Slow Burn, Idiots in Love* (I'm winking badly as I do this)

Next chapter will be up Monday (another day earlier from how I've usually been posting) and will be Ilya's POV again. Hope you all like this one and have a wonderful weekend! <3

Chapter 13: Chapter Twelve

Chapter Notes

This is a MONSTER chapter, 2.2k words! Enjoy!

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

~Ilya~

Ilya has had a lot of communication with other factions this week that have resulted in him working late every night. It's been tiresome to say the least. Then tonight, there's a weapons shipment coming in, which he'd put Dmitri in charge of.

The one bright spot in his day was seeing Shane while he delivered his coffee and meals. He really was a great cook, he spoiled Ilya. His Omega was wonderful.

Actually, now he has two bright spots- Shane as well as Anya. They are so cute when they're together, it makes Ilya's heart clench.

He loses track of time for a while, between staring at his computer screen and phone calls. Finally, he decides to stop when his eyes are burning. It's nearly 9pm, and he's been working since 7am. Running a large criminal organization is exhausting.

He decides to see if he can find Shane to say goodnight. The other man should still be awake right now.

Ilya checks the library first, just in case the man is relaxing before bed. Then he tries the kitchen. He knocks on Shane's bedroom door. No answer. Maybe he's in the bath or something.

Ilya goes to his own room and gets ready for bed, then comes back to Shane's room and knocks again. It's been almost thirty minutes, surely the man is done with his bedtime routine by now.

"Hollander?" No answer. Ilya is starting to get an uneasy feeling. He pushes the door open and peers inside. No Shane and no Anya.

He calls all of his men on the grounds. "Have you seen Hollander?" No one can give him an answer on the last time they saw him. Ilya is beginning to panic.

He had a shipment come in today, what if one of the men saw Shane and wanted him for themselves?

It's strange that Anya is missing as well though. Surely they aren't out on a walk in the dark? Ilya demands everyone begin looking for Shane *now*. He searches the house again himself, desperately hoping that Shane is somewhere around any corner.

When that doesn't yield results, he grabs a flashlight to start searching outside. "Hollander! Shane!" His heart is pounding and his hands are shaking. His Omega, where is his Omega? He has an unshakable feeling of dread inside him.

The others are not far behind him, also calling out. Abruptly, Anya comes running up to him out of the darkness, and Ilya's heart is now in his throat. She's alone.

"I'm here! I'm over here!" Suddenly Shane's voice comes out of the darkness too. "Ilya!"

Anya starts running ahead of him now. Ilya moves faster. "Shane?" His flashlight beam finally lands on the other man. He's just...standing there. Anya runs up to him and circles him, barking.

"Hi." Shane says, giving a little wave. Ilya has never seen a more beautiful sight than him, in one piece, just standing there.

“Oh, Shane!” Ilya runs up to him, gathering him in his arms, unable to help himself. “What are you doing? I was so worried. I couldn’t find you.”

“Careful.” Shane says, hanging onto Ilya too. “My ankle. I hurt my ankle. I’m sorry, I couldn’t make it all the way back to the house.”

Ilya’s heart drops from his throat into his stomach. Shane is *hurt*. He was out here alone and he was injured. “You are hurt?” Ilya repeats. He sets Shane down carefully and crouches down to look at his ankle. It looks swollen and is an ugly red-purple color. Shane leans against him for support. “How long have you been out here?” Ilya wonders.

“Um, maybe two hours?”

“Two hours.” Ilya repeats, his voice nothing more than a croak. He turns around and starts scolding the others for not being aware of Shane’s location for *two hours*.

But the truth is, the horrible truth, is that he’s just as much to blame.

Ilya stands up and scoops Shane up into his arms in a bridal carry in the same smooth motion. He holds the Omega close to his chest. “Mikhail is calling doctor right away.”

Shane leans his head against Ilya’s collarbone. “Anya kept me company.” He says. “She’s such a good girl.”

Ilya doesn’t say anything, how can he? He’s so furious and disgusted with himself. He has failed at the most basic task of being an Alpha- protecting his mate. Shane keeps talking, telling him about the sunset and joking about being ready to give Anya the schedule so she can take over his duties for him. Through it all, Ilya stays silent.

Ilya brings him to the den. He sets him down on the big sofa gently.

“Are you mad at me?” Shane asks tentatively.

Ilya’s eyes flick to him immediately. “*No*. I am mad at myself. You were out there, hurt, needing help, and I was in here working. I am supposed to take care of you.”

“Your work is important.” Shane shrugs.

Ilya’s emotions are far too high tonight to hear Shane be self-deprecating, as he usually is. He really doesn’t understand how special he is. “*You* are more important!” Ilya stresses. Just then, an unfamiliar man walks in and Ilya growls, coming to stand even closer to Shane.

“Boss, it’s just the doctor.” Luca says softly, appearing behind the man.

“I know.” Ilya snaps. He does know that, it’s the doctor *he* hired, after all. He just feels extremely on edge with anyone being near Shane right now. He watches closely as the doctor checks him over. He concludes that it’s just a bad sprain, nothing seems to be broken. It gets wrapped up and iced and Shane will have crutches.

“I’m sorry.” Shane whispers after everyone has left the room. He sounds upset.

“Is my fault.” Ilya spits. He’s repulsed by his own lack of care for someone so important to him.

“I’ll make up the time I’m missing somehow.” Shane says.

“What?” Ilya asks, confused.

“Work.” Shane says like it’s obvious.

“Shane.” Ilya is exasperated. He hadn’t consciously decided to switch to Shane instead of Hollander, but it feels right.

Shane’s big brown eyes are tear-filled as he looks at Ilya. “M-maybe I can cook sitting down.”

The meals. He’s so worried about the meals when Ilya is about to lose his mind about his well-being. “I don’t care about the meals!” Ilya bursts out, and Shane flinches. Ilya immediately feels bad for raising his voice, but he’s just so frustrated right now. This night has been an emotional disaster.

“Well I do!” Shane fires back. “You don’t understand, Ilya!” He scrubs a hand over his face. “Life just isn’t like this, not for me. I don’t just get a break. I want to help, I like to help. I *need* to be helpful.” He’s distraught and Ilya hates it.

“Do not get upset, please.” Ilya pleads.

“Too late.” Shane mutters with a sniffle. He’s pouting. It looks unfairly adorable. Ilya has to look away.

Ilya knows Shane has an internal drive to be helpful, but he needs Shane to see things from his point of view too. “I was so worried.” Ilya says. “No one knew where you were. I could not find you. You don’t know what it was like for me, in those minutes. I thought you were gone.” Even now, the memory of that feeling shakes him. The deep pit he had felt at the idea that Shane wasn’t here anymore. “Then I find you, and you are hurt, and you had been sitting there, *waiting*, while I am in here...” Ilya shakes his head. “I understand you want to help me, Shane. You can help me by indulging me. You taking care of yourself is helping me. Do you understand?” He says the last sentence pleadingly, finally looking at Shane. He needs Shane to understand. Ilya could honestly care less if Shane never cleaned a thing or cooked a single other meal ever again. He’s past the point of trying to convince himself that Shane is just a House Omega on his staff and nothing more.

Now, Ilya is here, alone in his big bed, staring at the ceiling. He will not sleep tonight, no matter how exhausted he is. He knows that.

Ilya knew from the moment he smelled a trace of Shane's scent that he was his mate.

He has not said anything to anyone, most of all, Shane himself.

It's complicated. It shouldn't be, but it is. Ilya isn't a good man. Shane isn't safe with him.

That much is clear.

He wanted it not to be true. He thought for a while that maybe he could covet him and spoil him and protect him.

Things have been different between him and Shane ever since the other man's heat, but especially since the day that he had a nightmare. Ilya will never forget the way he sought comfort from him specifically.

Shane doesn't even know that they're mates, but he unconsciously seeks out Ilya for protection.

Omega instincts are different from an Alpha's. Shane probably feels very connected to him, but he might not realize exactly why, at least not yet. They are more vulnerable and it takes more time for their trust and emotional bond to build. Ilya doesn't really know what it feels like for an Omega, he can only know that he is positive that Shane is compatible as his mate.

He obviously hasn't expected that. He hadn't expected anything that came with having Shane in his life, truthfully. He never expected to feel the way he does about the other man, so he'd relented when Alexei first hired him. He would've protected him just the same as just an employee, of course, but now there were feelings involved. Shane was unsafe just by being

associated with him, no matter how much protection Ilya or his men provided. He was now associated with the Bratva.

Ilya had been fooling himself to think otherwise.

Their movie nights and their outing and their adoption of Anya had fooled him, but now Shane had gotten hurt and Ilya had failed him. It didn't matter that it was a simple accident unrelated to Ilya or his business. One day, it would be related.

Ilya lays there for at least two hours, unable to fall asleep, before he decides to get up again. He goes to the kitchen for something to drink, surprised to see the light is already on.

Shane is standing there, back turned to him. Anya is with him. She normally sleeps with Ilya, but since Shane is injured, she hasn't wanted to leave his side.

"Hi." Ilya says quietly.

Shane turns around. "Hi. Did I wake you?"

"No. Could not sleep."

"Me neither." Shane nods with a sheepish smile.

"I could make tea." Ilya suggests. Shane loves a warm beverage to cozy up with.

"I was actually thinking hot chocolate." Shane says conspiratorially, like it's scandalous. To him, it probably is scandalous to have chocolate after midnight. Shane is funny like that. Ilya loves his quirks.

“Okay.” Ilya agrees. “Show me.” He knows Shane well enough to know he has a whole process, this won’t be just powdered hot chocolate from a canister.

That’s how they end up with Shane leaning against the counter, peering over Ilya to watch him stirring the melting chocolate like a hawk. He’s very particular about his methods. Ilya insisted on doing it because of Shane's injury. He tried to get the other man to sit on the counter next to him, but he looked appalled.

“I can’t put my *butt* on the countertop, Ilya.” Ilya had rolled his eyes. So Shane leans, his crutches less than a foot away.

“Good?” Ilya asks, looking to Shane for confirmation of his stirring skills. He’s teasing, but Shane nods seriously. Ilya smiles to himself.

“Let me just get...” Shane leans out of Ilya’s space and stretches for something. “Oh!” He almost falls, but Ilya catches him with an arm around his waist.

“Thanks.” Shane mumbles. He holds a glass jar of mini marshmallows in his hand. “I was just trying to grab these.”

“Use crutches.” Ilya reminds him.

Shane huffs in annoyance.

“Maybe you just want big strong Alpha to catch you?” Ilya teases, just to see Shane blush.

Shane ignores him and takes the lid off of the jar, eating a mini marshmallow. “The tiny ones are the best.” He announces. He reaches down to give one to Anya. It gets stuck on her nose, and Shane downright *giggles*. He apparently wasn’t expecting that, because his eyes go wide. He looks at Ilya and they both start laughing.

They watch Anya lick the marshmallow off and eat it. “Should be done now.” Shane says, looking into the pot. Ilya pours it for them into two mugs, and Shane tops it off with the marshmallows.

“Goryachiy shokolad. (горячий шоколад).” Shane says softly, his pronunciation careful. *Hot chocolate.*

Ilya stares at him in shock.

“I’ve been trying to learn a few things. I hope that’s okay.” Shane says bashfully. “Mikhail has been helping me a little.”

Ilya is speechless. His hand comes up to cup Shane’s cheek. “YA tebya ne zasluzhivayu.” (Я тебя не заслуживаю.) *I don’t deserve you.* Shane is staring at him with those big doe eyes, and Ilya is helpless and pinned under his spell. He leans down and presses their lips together in a sweet kiss. Their mouths move in sync, like they’ve been doing this for years rather than for the first time. Shane tastes like marshmallow and something that’s uniquely him.

They pull away to breathe each other’s air. Ilya never wants the moment to end. Shane buries his face in Ilya’s chest, and Ilya just holds him. The moment is too fragile to be broken with words.

The hot chocolate is lukewarm at best by the time they get to it.

Chapter End Notes

Our poor, poor self-deprecating boys.

Next chapter will be up Thursday! (Need to give myself time to catch up with writing ahead again).

Chapter 14: Chapter Thirteen

Chapter Notes

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

~Shane~

It's been three weeks now, and his ankle is mostly healed. He's back on light duty. He spent most of his time off learning Russian or obsessing over the night Ilya kissed him.

They haven't kissed since then. It doesn't matter how long it's been, Shane can't get it out of his mind. Ilya hasn't brought it up and Shane is a little scared to push. What if Ilya regretted it or thought it was a mistake? Shane would rather remember it as the best moment of his life than have the memory tainted.

He's dropping off Ilya's lunch tray when the man stops him. "Shane."

"Yes?" Something in Ilya's tone makes Shane pause. Maybe he's going to bring up the kiss or something?

"I am going into rut soon."

Oh. Wow, is he going to ask Shane to spend it with him? I mean, they'd kissed, and they've gotten so close, and-

"I will let you decide if you're comfortable with me staying in my wing of the house for it or not."

Wait, what?

“What?” Shane says dumbly.

“You can decide if you are okay with both of us staying in the house or if you would be more comfortable leaving, or even me leaving.” Ilya continues.

Shane’s stomach sinks. His gut feels sour.

“Just let me know in the next few days.” Ilya keeps going, oblivious to Shane’s inner turmoil. Shane nods and flees the room. He feels an extreme rush of emotions. He feels intense embarrassment at the thought that he even had the idea that Ilya would ask him to help him through his rut. *Of course* he wouldn’t. What, because they kissed *one time*, Shane thought they would shack up? He’s an idiot. He also feels the harsh sting of rejection, hot and sharp in his chest.

His inner Omega whines inside him, upset and pacing. Shane tells it to shut up.

~

Shane is miserable. His Omega is constantly whining and crying for its Alpha, but Shane is actively avoiding Ilya whenever possible. He feels stupid at his reaction and this is making all of this worse.

He’s pathetic. An Alpha is kind and courteous to him and kisses him once and he thinks he’s mate material?

Shane has no right to be pissed at Ilya, but he is. He’s extremely hurt and he’s having a hard time acting like he’s not. He really cares for Ilya and he’d been starting to think that maybe the other man felt the same. Apparently he was wrong though. That’s his own fault.

“Shane.”

Shane stiffens but doesn't turn around. "Yeah?" He tries to look busy. "Do you need something? I can bring it back to the office."

"I can get it. I came to grab a Coke, and I wanted to ask you if you are okay."

"I'm fine." Shane says quickly.

"You won't look at me." Ilya states.

Shane closes his eyes. Fuck. So they're having this conversation. His gut churns. He turns around with a fake smile plastered on. "Yes I will. See?"

Ilya looks unimpressed. He drums his fingers on the countertop. "Is this about the kiss?"

"No." Shane says, because really, it isn't. That was weeks ago, anyway, why would he suddenly decide to get pissy about it now?

"You're upset. Have been all week."

"Why would I be upset?" Shane lies.

Ilya sighs.

"I have no reason to be upset." Shane sounds like a brat and he knows it, but he can't stop. "I mean, if you don't want me, it's fine. You're not obligated or anything." He's not being fair.

"What?" Ilya looks shocked now and somehow that makes Shane madder.

Shane slams a can of Coke down in front of him. “Nothing.” Ilya looks like he’s about to say something else, but Shane keeps talking. “Anyway, I’ve decided I’m going to leave while you have your rut. So you don’t have to worry about me.”

“Okay.” Ilya says, resigned. Things are awkward and stilted between them in a way they haven’t been since Shane’s first day here.

He hates it.

He finishes cleaning up the kitchen and goes to his room. He presses the call button on Luca’s contact.

“Can you book me a hotel room? Starting tonight?”

~

Shane packs his bags for 8 nights away from home. It’s going to feel so weird being away from this place for so long. He’s not looking forward to it, but he feels like he has to do this. He’s going a day early, and then he’ll stay until Ilya’s rut ends, which could be up to a week, depending.

He knew better than to try to book his own hotel, so he had Luca do it. Something that was Bratva approved. Luca would be accompanying him in an adjoining room.

The place was nice, certainly nicer than any place Shane had ever stayed before. He arranged his blankets on the bed and told himself that everything was fine, and that he didn’t even feel sad.

He wonders if Ilya found what he left for him yet.

He was nervous about it, but it felt like the right thing to do. He scented a few articles of clothing and put them outside of Ilya's den. He'd acted like an asshole and he wanted to at least partially make it right. Ilya's scent had helped him so much when he was in heat, maybe his scent would help Ilya too.

Maybe he was embarrassing himself or stepping out of line.

Shane and Luca eat dinner together in the hotel restaurant that night. Shane hasn't ate out in so long, it feels very strange to him.

"Mr. Rozanov really cares about you, you know." Luca says quietly to him.

Shane looks up from his plate. "I really care about him too."

"You don't have to talk about it with me if you don't want to, but are you guys fighting?"

Luca is the closest thing Shane has to a friend, unless you count Ilya himself. Maybe he should talk to him about this, get things off his mind.

"Kind of. I don't know." Shane sighs. "He unintentionally hurt my feelings and then I kind of lashed out at him. It wasn't really fair of me."

"Everyone makes mistakes." Luca says. "I'm sure Ilya won't hold it against you."

Shane shrugs half-heartedly.

"You make him happy. I haven't known him as long as some of the others, but I know that for a fact."

Shane feels his cheeks get warm and he feels butterflies in his chest. “You think so?”

“I know so.”

“I feel bad about the way we left things.” Shane admits.

“Well, he’ll be a little busy, so don’t worry about it. He’s probably not even thinking about it.” Luca jokes.

“Yeah.” Shane snorts. A part of him feels weird when he thinks about Ilya spending his rut alone. It feels *wrong* in a way he can’t articulate.

He and Luca part ways after dinner.

Shane reads in bed until his eyes are too tired to keep going and then falls into a restless sleep. He tosses and turns in the unfamiliar bed with all of the unfamiliar sounds outside his door. He wishes he had spent the additional night at home, but it’s too late now.

The following morning, he decides he wants to walk to the coffee shop down the street from the hotel. He’s feeling antsy and like he just needs to get out.

“You don’t have to come with me. You can take some time for yourself.” Shane tells Luca. He feels bad that the other man has to spend every waking moment with him.

“Boss would have my head on a stake if anything happened to you.”

Shane snorts. “What’s going to happen? I eat one too many muffins at the coffee shop?”

Luca shrugs. Then he hesitates. “Well, I was contemplating stopping at this bookshop down the block...”

“Go for it.” Shane encourages. “We can set a time to meet back up here.” Luca semi-reluctantly agrees.

The coffee shop has a cozy vibe and Shane is immediately glad he came here. He orders a flat white and a blueberry scone. He’s reading and sipping his coffee when his instincts alert him to something. The hair on the back of his neck prickles. He looks up from his book and scans the coffee shop.

Shane does a double take.

Sasha is here.

Sasha is here, and he’s sitting with a man from another faction. Surely that’s abnormal.

Shane is sure that is Ivan- he doesn’t recall what other faction he is from, but it’s surely not theirs. He’s seen him a few times though, and he’s very memorable because he has a facial scar and striking blue eyes.

Why would Sasha be meeting with someone from another branch without Ilya present?

Shane watches them speak to each other, not daring to move for fear of them noticing him. It’s weird that they would be meeting up in a public place like this, but maybe that’s the point. Hiding in plain sight. It won’t draw attention if it’s not under any suspicious circumstances.

However, Shane *is* suspicious. This seems very strange and not just because he doesn’t like Sasha. His instincts didn’t alert him for nothing. This is the proof he needs to bring to Ilya.

His coffee is cold by the time the other men leave, because he didn't dare move an inch, but he doesn't care. He has five minutes to get back to the hotel to meet Luca.

Shane decides not to share what he saw with Luca. He can't trust anyone right now, unfortunately. He's only going to tell Ilya and let the other man decide if he thinks this is something worth taking action on.

Chapter End Notes

DON'T HATE ME FOR THIS! Slow burn, remember? And trust me, I have a plan.

I am going to try to keep a similar posting schedule, but things are popping off at my job. Next chapter will still be up Saturday and I will put in the notes of that chapter when to expect the following one!

Chapter 15: Chapter Fourteen

Chapter Notes

Chapter fourteen on the 14th, I like it! Happy Valentine's Day, I love you all!

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

~Shane~

Shane is so incredibly happy to be back home. He unpacks first before going to knock on Ilya's office door. He's a little bit nervous for several reasons.

"Come in." Ilya calls.

Shane steps inside. Ilya looks handsome, he always does, but he's clearly exhausted. He's pale and drawn. Shane imagines he looked similarly after his heat.

"How are you?" He asks softly.

"I am good." Ilya says shortly. He clears this throat. "Thank you, for the clothing."

Shane wills his cheeks not to pinken, but he can feel the heat of them anyway. "I'm sorry for the way I acted before I left."

Ilya seems to soften a little, and then he hesitates too, a rare sight. "You...you had said something about me not wanting you." He looks right at Shane. "That is not the truth."

Shane feels a little breathless at the admission.

“I kissed you, this is true. I did not ask you to join my rut, this is true. It is too soon. I did not want to pressure you. Plus, you are working here. It is complicated.”

Shane nods. He feels frozen in place.

“It is complicated,” Ilya repeats. “But I want to figure it out.”

Shane feels slightly faint. Is this real? Is Ilya saying what he thinks he’s saying?

“We can talk later though.” Ilya smiles gently.

Shane nods, then has a moment of snapping back to reality. “I really need to talk to you about something else actually. It’s important. It’s work related. Do you have a minute?”

Ilya is quiet aside from a few clarifying questions as Shane goes through everything regarding Sasha from start to finish. His suspicions all the way down to seeing him with Ivan.

Shane takes a deep breath after. “I think you should let me be a part of this. I can trick him into confessing everything.”

“No.” Ilya says immediately, unflinchingly and without giving it any thought.

Shane balks. “It would be perfect! He would never expect the *House Omega* is working with the boss of the entire operation.”

“I said no.” Ilya snaps.

Shane is getting irritated now. What, he's not good enough to be a part of the takedown? Ilya would have nothing if it weren't for him. He would have had no idea that Sasha was even up to something. "Well if you don't *permit me*, I'll just do it anyway." Shane shoots back, crossing his arms. He's not just some fragile Omega, he can help.

He and Ilya glare at each other for a long, silent moment.

"Okay. But you do *exactly* as I say." Ilya says finally. Shane smiles sweetly.

~

Ilya invites Sasha to a meeting a few days later. Predictably, he stops by the kitchen first to bother Shane. All according to plan.

Shane feigns being annoyed. He slides him a can of Coke.

Sasha smirks at him. "Always in the kitchen like a good Omega."

That was a perfect segue. Shane shrugs. "There's not much else for me to do." He lies.

"Ah, Ilya does not let you have any fun?"

Shane bristles slightly as Ilya's employee calling him by his first name, but he ignores it.

"I wouldn't mind doing more." Shane says. "Get my hands dirty a little, earn some more money. This job is a lot more boring than I thought, considering it's for the Bratva." Lies, lies, all lies.

Sasha looks at him thoughtfully for a long moment. Long enough that Shane wonders if he was too obvious and the jig is up.

“Ilya is quite boring.” He says. “Not like me.” *Oh, please. Spare me.* Shane thinks, but he pretends to look interested. “Ilya is always playing it safe. I like to get my hands dirty. Take risks.” Sasha scoffs.

Shane isn’t sure there is anything about being in the mafia that is considered ‘playing it safe’.

“Like what?” He asks, tilting his head and widening his eyes. He’s not above using his Omega traits for nefarious purposes, okay?

“Ah.” Sasha backs up a step and shakes his head. “You are loyal to Ilya.”

Which is ironic, considering Sasha works for Ilya as well and should definitely also be loyal to the man.

Shane forces a snort. “You didn’t hear?” This part sucks.

“Hear?” Sasha echoes.

“I thought we were close, but then he had his rut without me.” Shane forces out.

Sasha gives a grin then, and it’s positively lecherous. God, how did none of them see it before? He’s such a creep. “So you are looking to teach him a lesson then?”

“Yeah. Yeah, I am.” Shane says.

“I should have thought of this earlier. Buddy up with the House Omega.” Sasha says. They’re in Ilya’s office together. Ilya has conveniently vacated the premises.

God, Sasha is so stupid, Shane can’t help but think.

“So, what, we just look for some information and you take it to Ilya’s competitor?” Shane says.

“Pretty much.” Sasha shrugs, shuffling some papers around. “I don’t suppose you know his computer password?”

“Definitely not.”

“What about this one?” Shane says. He hands over a paper.

When Sasha sees it, his expression drops immediately.

Got you. It reads.

Ilya steps into the office, stoic and silent and full of silent rage. He looks terrifying. He holds a handgun trained on Sasha.

“Leave.” He commands of Shane. He had insisted Shane not be in the room for this. Shane edges out of the room somewhat reluctantly. He really wanted to be here for the end of this.

“You think you can scam me?” Ilya says, his voice as sharp as a razor.

“Sir, I...” Sasha stumbles over his words. He looks at Shane, catching him as he’s exiting.
“Bitch set me up!”

“Do not call him that.” Ilya roars. Then, “Leave NOW Shane.”

Shane catches Sasha being slammed up against the wall just as he leaves. Luca and Dmitri are waiting for him. “Come.” They lead him away. Shane doesn’t think they know exactly what’s going on but they must have been instructed to come and get him.

Shane flinches when he hears the gunshot a few minutes later.

~

He’s cozied up in his nest, staring at nothing, when there’s a knock on his door.

“Come in!” He calls.

Ilya peeks his head in. “You are sure?”

Shane sits up. “Yes.” Ilya looks normal, not a hair out of place. “Everything okay?” He asks tentatively.

“Da.”

“I’ve been thinking.” Shane says. “Sasha doing this, is it my fault? He’s been taking your information to your rival for months, and I’ve been here for months...maybe I distracted you.” Maybe Shane was too needy. With his heat and his ankle and everything else.

“No.” Ilya says fiercely. “Is nobody’s fault but mine and his. I am the boss, the Pakhan, I should have noticed.”

“Is everything going to be okay now?” Shane asks.

“I think so.”

Shane looks at him, standing there so stoic and unflinching after presumably just having killed a man. Ilya is so strong all the time. He stands up and wraps his arms around the other man.

Ilya melts into the embrace.

Mate. Shane’s mind supplies. My mate.

Shane mentally runs through everything that has happened over the past few months. All the ways he’s been kind to Shane, all of the ways he’s protected him. Made sure he had exactly what he needed. The way his Omega felt both when he was alone during his heat and when Ilya was alone during his rut. It’s like Shane’s inner Omega is holding up a neon sign.

Mate.

He pulls back a little and looks up at Ilya, only to find that he’s already looking down at him.

“You know that you don’t need to protect me from everything, right?” Shane says. “I might be an Omega, but I’m not fragile. I want us to be in everything together.” He takes a deep breath. “I know it’s been a long day, but can we have that talk now?”

“You know now.” Ilya states.

Shane is surprised. “Do...do you?” Has Ilya known they were mates already?

“Yes. I did not want to overwhelm you or pressure you.” He sweeps a gentle thumb on the freckles underneath Shane’s eyes. “I knew you would figure it out.”

“Then why didn’t you want me for your rut?” Shane whispers. He still can’t quite fit that puzzle piece into the big picture. If they’re mates, why didn’t Ilya want his Omega during his rut?

“I did.” Ilya says seriously. “I wanted you very much.”

“I don’t understand.”

“We kissed one time.” Ilya says with a soft, patient smile. “It was a great kiss. But I want to court you, Shane. Not jump into bed because of biology.”

Honestly, that makes sense. It still hurt Shane at the time, but in hindsight it makes sense.

“I missed you so much.” He breathes out. “It hurt to be away from you.”

“I know. I felt it too.” Ilya admits. “I had only your sweet scent to keep me company.” They’re still staring a hairs breadth away and Shane never wants to leave this circle of warmth and comfort.

“Will you let me court you, Shane?” Ilya asks. They both already know Shane is his, yet he’s still asking. Shane’s stomach flutters.

“Yes.” Shane takes a deep breath. “Kiss me again.”

Ilya cups his cheeks and bends down to press their lips together once more. It's sweet and right and everything Shane has ever wanted. Apparently those feelings didn't dissipate after the first kiss.

~

Ilya is serious about courting Shane. Over the coming weeks, they eat dinner together in the dining room almost every single night, unless Ilya really can't get away from work.

He hand delivers Shane flowers- to his bedroom door, which Shane thought was both adorable and hilarious- he kisses him sweetly, they walk Anya together, they have their movie nights.

Ilya never makes Shane feel like he's taking him away from his work, he's always one hundred percent attentive.

Shane from a few weeks back, who was so hurt and ran away to a hotel room, would never believe how things are now. So much has changed.

Of course, because things are going so well, Shane wakes up gasping from another nightmare.

His chest is tight and aching. His mind is once again in that dark and lonely place. The only thing he can think about is Ilya.

He gets up. It's late and Ilya is most likely asleep right now, it could be a very bad idea to climb into his Alpha's bed at this hour, considering he's a mob boss and might think he's an intruder.

However, Shane feels like he'll die without the comfort, so he decided to take his chances. The walk to the wing of the house with Ilya's room feels long and desolate. They haven't yet graduated to the stage in their relationship of sharing a bed.

He pushes open the door of Ilya's den slowly. The smell hits him and he's instantly relieved. "Ilya?" He whispers.

The man sits up. "Shane?"

"Can I come in?"

"Of course."

Shane tiptoes in. "I need you."

"What is wrong?"

Shane wants to cry, suddenly. His eyes burn. He sniffles pathetically.

Ilya reaches for him and tugs him down onto the bed. "My Shane."

"I'm sorry." He whimpers. He buries his face in the conjunction between Ilya's neck and shoulder. This is the purest and strongest he's ever gotten to smell his scent. Coffee and linen and spice enter his system and help to calm him down. He suddenly realizes that he hadn't been sleeping with a scent patch on either.

"You are safe." Ilya tells him. He scents him, their first time properly scenting one another. Ilya's nose runs gently down the length of his neck, seeking out the scent gland there that's currently pumping out pheromones. Shane does the same, greedily filling his senses with the scent of his mate.

Shane lets himself be maneuvered to lay down on the big bed next to him. He feels so comfortable and safe.

“I didn’t know it could be like this.” Shane whispers.

“What could be like this?”

“Anything.”

They snuggle together, the dark feeling inside Shane slithering out like oil. He feels like he’s been replaced with cotton candy instead, pink and fluffy and sweet.

He’s surrounded by the scent of his mate and laying in the comfort of his arms. He’s surprised to feel himself drifting back into sleep. When he wakes again, it’s to suffocating warmth and familiar stickiness.

His heat.

Chapter End Notes

LOTS happening in this chapter. Next one will be up on Tuesday, it will be Ilya's POV and will include his thoughts on some of the things that happened here, so if you were missing that, have no fear.

Chapter 16: Chapter Fifteen

Chapter Notes

Here's the deal! I originally planned to cut out a bit during Ilya's POV here, but I ended up...not. Admittedly, it might be a bit redundant to the last chapter. I went back and forth with myself and decided to keep it in anyway. That being said, I am posting this AND another chapter right after that is all brand new.

Enjoy!

~Ilya~

Ilya holds the scented clothing tightly in his fist, shoving it up against his nose. *Shane scented clothes for him.*

He feels want course through him so strongly that it feels like a physical sensation.

If this is how Shane felt during his heat alone, then it's exponentially worse than Ilya thought. He aches deep inside him, feeling like a piece of him is missing. Ilya uses his usual toys to get him through, but it's more like putting aloe on a burn than anything. It provides temporary relief, but it always comes back with a vengeance.

He feels deeply unsettled and unsatisfied, but still, he knows he made the right choice.

However, he is still bothered by Shane's reaction. He doesn't begrudge the fact that the other man wanted to leave the house while Ilya was in rut, but he does feel upset about the way they left things. Shane had seemed sad and distant from him right up until the day he left.

He thought Ilya didn't want him. That was the furthest thing from the truth, but Shane needed to come to the realization that they're mates on his own terms.

By the time his rut subsides, Ilya is exhausted and missing Shane fiercely. He wishes he could just see the other man or hear his voice. He can't wait for him to be home. The scent on his clothes is now stale after almost a week of Ilya using them for comfort and offers no reprieve anymore.

He feels empty and weak. The day that Shane comes home, he waits for him in his office, although he's not able to focus much on work. When he hears Shane's knock on his door, he sighs in relief. "Come in." He calls.

Shane steps inside. "How are you?" He asks softly. He looks a little nervous. Ilya had almost forgotten how beautiful he is. It steals his breath for a moment.

"I am good." Ilya says shortly. If he were to say any more than that, it would be a lie. He clears this throat. "Thank you, for the clothing." He would be remiss not to thank Shane for that.

Shane blushes beautifully. "I'm sorry for the way I acted before I left."

Ilya softens, then hesitates. He needs to say this. "You...you had said something about me not wanting you." He looks right at Shane. "That is not the truth."

Shane looks stunned at the admission.

"I kissed you, this is true. I did not ask you to join my rut, this is true. It is too soon. I did not want to pressure you. Plus, you are working here. It is complicated." Ilya has thought about this a lot. There are definitely things they need to work out, like if he is going to keep Shane on as officially hired staff. He doesn't mind continuing to pay his mate in the least, but he has a feeling Shane might.

Shane nods. He still looks bewildered.

“It is complicated,” Ilya repeats. “But I want to figure it out. We can talk later though.” Ilya smiles gently. He didn’t mean to bombard Shane with all of this as soon as he got back, it just came out.

Shane nods, looking serious all of a sudden. “I really need to talk to you about something else actually. It’s important. It’s work related. Do you have a minute?”

Ilya is silent as Shane explains his initial suspicions about Sasha as well as everything leading up to seeing him consorting with Ivan at a coffee shop when he was away during Ilya’s rut. It all makes sense, it makes complete sense, and Ilya is as equally proud of Shane as he is furious with himself.

He is the leader of the Montreal division and he was letting one of his men steal his information right out from under him. Who knows how much Ivan’s Ottawa division now knew about his weapons trading?

Sasha was always a jealous bastard, and he never could get past the fact that Ilya moved on from him. Ilya should have never trusted him. Now he’s paying the price.

Shane takes a deep breath after he finishes. “I think you should let me be a part of this. I can trick him into confessing everything.”

“No.” Ilya says immediately, unflinchingly and without giving it any thought. He cannot possibly allow his mate to be further involved in this mess.

Shane balks. “It would be perfect! He would never expect that the *House Omega* is working with the boss of the entire operation.”

“I said no.” Ilya snaps. He’s pissed off at himself and he can’t stomach the thought of Shane in danger.

Shane crosses his arms. “Well if you don’t *permit me*, I’ll just do it anyway.” Shane snarks.

He and Ilya glare at each other for a long, silent moment. Ilya looks at him, with his big brown eyes that are hardened by his resolve. His Omega is so smart. Shane has gotten this far on his own. It wouldn't be fair for Ilya to take him out of it now. If Shane believes he can do it, then he can. Plus, he definitely doesn't want him jumping into this on his own.

"Okay. But you do *exactly* as I say." Ilya says finally. Shane smiles sweetly. Oh, his Omega is trouble.

~

Ilya invites Sasha to a meeting a few days later.

"I should have thought of this earlier. Buddy up with the House Omega." Sasha says. They're in Ilya's office together. Ilya has conveniently vacated the premises.

Sasha is so stupid, Ilya thinks. It makes him even more furious that this idiot had pulled the wool over his eyes for months.

"So, what, we just look for some information and you take it to Ilya's competitor?" Shane says. Ilya is waiting just around the corner now, listening to their conversation.

"Pretty much." Sasha says. "I don't suppose you know his computer password?"

"Definitely not."

"What about this one?" Shane says. He hands over a paper. Ilya almost wants to snicker when he thinks of what it says.

Got you. It reads.

Ilya steps into the office, stoic and silent and full of rage. He holds a handgun trained on Sasha.

“Leave.” He commands of Shane. He had insisted Shane not be in the room for this. Shane edges out of the room.

“You think you can scam me?” Ilya says, his voice as sharp as a razor. All of their history, and Sasha has the audacity to take his trade secrets to a competitor. It’s disgusting. If a man has no honor and loyalty, he has nothing.

Sasha looks scared and pathetic. “Sir, I...” Sasha stumbles over his words. He looks at Shane, catching him as he’s exiting. “Bitch set me up!”

“Do not call him that.” Ilya roars. How dare he say that about his Omega. Then, “Leave NOW Shane.” Shane should not be here for this next part.

Luca and Dmitri are waiting for him in the hall to take him away to another part of the house.

Sasha begs for his life, makes up a bunch of futile excuses, but Ilya doesn’t hesitate as he pulls the trigger. It’s a shame to get his office so messy.

He calls Mikhail to clean it up.

~

After taking a minute to breathe and settle his adrenaline, Ilya goes right to Shane’s room. He knocks on the door.

“Come in!” Shane calls.

Ilya peeks his head in. “You are sure?” He checks. Maybe Shane will be frightened and will not want to see him right now.

Shane sits up. “Yes. Everything okay?” He asks tentatively. Ilya walks into the room.

“Da.” Ilya says plainly.

“I’ve been thinking.” Shane says, biting his lip. “Sasha doing this, is it my fault? He’s been taking your information to your rival for months, and I’ve been here for months...maybe I distracted you.”

Ilya feels terrible that Shane would try to put the blame on himself. “No.” He says fiercely. “Is nobody’s fault but mine and his. I am the boss, the Pakhan, I should have noticed.”

“Is everything going to be okay now?” Shane asks.

“I think so.” Ilya really hopes so. He really doesn’t want this to turn into a bigger mess than it already is.

Shane looks at him. He looks contemplative for a moment, before he stands and pulls Ilya into a hug. Ilya immediately melts into the embrace. Their hearts beat together between them.

Something has just shifted.

Ilya can tell- he doesn’t know exactly how, but he realizes that Shane has just put the pieces together. Ilya looks down at him, at his sweet face and his beautiful freckles.

Shane pulls away slightly and looks up at him too.

“You know that you don’t need to protect me from everything, right?” Shane says. “I might be an Omega, but I’m not fragile. I want us to be in everything together.” He takes a deep breath. “I know it’s been a long day, but can we have that talk now?”

“You know now.” Ilya states. Shane is bringing up the conversation that he started a few days ago because he knows that they’re mates. Ilya’s heart starts to beat faster.

Shane looks surprised. It’s endearing. “Do...do you?”

“Yes. I did not want to overwhelm you or pressure you.” He sweeps a gentle thumb on the freckles underneath Shane’s eyes that he admires so much. “I knew you would figure it out.”

“Then why didn’t you want me for your rut?” Shane whispers. His poor Omega looks so confused and sad. Ilya will forever hate that he had to put this expression on his face.

“I did.” Ilya says seriously. “I wanted you very much.” He’s never wanted anything more in his life.

“I don’t understand.”

“We kissed one time.” Ilya says softly. “It was a great kiss. But I want to court you, Shane, not jump into bed because of biology.” He’s laying all of his cards on the table here. It’s now or never.

“I missed you so much.” Shane says. “It hurt to be away from you.” Ilya’s soul twists hearing the words.

“I know. I felt it too.” Ilya admits. “I had only your sweet scent to keep me company. Will you let me court you, Shane?” Ilya asks. He holds his breath as he waits for the answer.

“Yes.” Shane takes a deep breath. “Kiss me again.”

Ilya cups his cheeks and bends down to press their lips together once more.

Ilya feels *right* for the first time in his entire existence.

~

Life is a whirlwind lately. After Sasha’s betrayal and Shane’s realization that they’re mates, Ilya feels like his life is changed in so many ways.

He dedicates a lot of time and energy to courting Shane. It’s important.

Shane is the most important thing in his life.

It was hard, *more* than hard, for Ilya to accept the fact that he was putting Shane in danger by being in his life. Especially when everything went down with Sasha. Shane had adamantly demanded to help, and Ilya couldn’t say no. However, it made him realize that Shane was more capable than he was giving him credit for and that he had the right to make his own decisions. Just because Ilya wanted to protect him didn’t mean that he had to coddle him.

Shane had earned the right to be a part of the takedown of Sasha. Ilya would much rather formulate the plan *with* Shane than have him do it on his own, so that’s what they did.

Ilya still felt foolish that he sat back and let one of his own men betray him and take advantage of him. He’d been so wrapped up in everything else that he hadn’t even realized it. It was pathetic. He dreaded the time when Alexei found out. However, all of that was in the past now, hopefully for good. Ilya can focus on courting Shane and nothing else.

They eat dinner together in the dining room almost every single night, and Ilya spoils him with flowers and attention. They’re spending a lot of time together, more than ever, but they

still have not done more than kissing. They also have not yet shared a bed, however, when his bedroom door cracks open one night, he knows exactly who it is.

“Ilya?” Shane whispers.

Ilya sits up, immediately on high alert. “Shane?” His mate smells distressed. That wonderful scent is no longer hidden by scent patches, but it is masked beneath distress.

“Can I come in?”

“Of course.” Ilya squints in the darkness.

Shane tiptoes in. “I need you.”

“What is wrong?” Ilya reaches for him automatically and tugs him down onto the bed. “My Shane.”

Shane snuffles. “I’m sorry.” He whimpers. He buries his face in the conjunction between Ilya’s neck and shoulder, near his scent gland.

“You are safe.” Ilya reassures him. He’s pretty sure Shane had a nightmare again. Ilya runs his nose gently down the length of his neck, seeking out the scent gland there that’s currently pumping out pheromones. Shane does the same. Their first time scenting each other and it feels amazing. Ilya feels so close to him, emotionally, in a way they haven’t quite reached before.

“I didn’t know it could be like this.” Shane whispers.

Ilya isn’t sure he knows what Shane means. “What could be like this?” He asks.

“Anything.”

At the admission, Ilya holds him tighter. He has to agree. He’s never felt like this with anyone else, and he knows without a doubt he never will. Shane is his mate for life.

He wants to finish their courtship, formally bond, and have a mating ceremony. He wants everything with Shane, forever.

They fall asleep intertwined, and when Ilya wakes up, it’s to the smell of pine, vanilla, and a hint of maple. It smells divine. He nuzzles into Shane, then his eyes shoot wide open.

He is in rut, and Shane is in heat.

They’re mates who slept in the same bed together for the first time, without scent patches on, and it triggered early heat in Shane and early rut for Ilya.

Chapter 17: Chapter Sixteen

Chapter Notes

Another Ilya POV back to back!

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

~Ilya~

“Ilya.” Shane murmurs. Ilya looks at him. His eyes are glassy and he looks half out of his mind already.

“Shhh.” He comforts Shane with a hand on the back of his neck. It’s not ideal timing- Ilya didn’t necessarily want their first time to be in the throes of rut/heat. But he’ll be *damned* if he doesn’t take care of his Omega, if he doesn’t make him feel safe and cared for before they get into anything further.

“So hot.” Shane slurs. “I’m burning.”

“You’re in heat.” Ilya says gently. He can feel his rut, but it’s almost like it’s in the back of his mind. It’s trying to push through, but Ilya is more concerned with Shane’s well-being right now. “I’ve got you.” He assures. He squeezes Shane’s nap and kisses his nose.

Shane climbs on top of him, rolling Ilya onto his back with Shane looming over him. He’s hot and *wet* in Ilya’s lap. His eyes roll back involuntarily.

“It wasn’t supposed to be like this.” Shane murmurs. “I’m sorry.”

“Do not be sorry. It is us and it is perfect.” Ilya says firmly. “I will take care of you, do you trust me?”

“Please, I need it.” Shane mumbles. They kiss, hot and deep. It’s passionate, and miles away from the chaste and sweet kisses they’ve shared so far.

Ilya gets lost in it, but then Shane starts whimpering.

“What is it?”

“I need...I need something inside, *please*.” He begs.

“Okay, okay. Please tell me if I hurt you. You say stop, I stop.” Ilya’s hand trails down Shane’s spine and down the back of his pajama pants, where they’re already soaked through.

Shane moans already and Ilya has barely touched him. His fingers find Shane’s wet and open hole, and he carefully slides one inside. He fingers him as Shane grinds on him, the friction between their hard cocks is divine. They’re less kissing than they are panting into each other’s mouths. Their first orgasms bring slight relief to both of them, just enough for Ilya’s head to become clear enough for him to call Luca.

Luca drops off water bottles, Gatorade, and Shane’s nesting blankets outside the door and promises to take care of Anya while they’re indisposed.

Shane builds them a beautiful nest. Time passes in a haze of blissful orgasms with his mate. When Shane sucks him off for the first time, he cums so hard that he sees stars. However, it comes time where Shane is begging and pleading for a knot. He needs it, and both of their biology does as well. It’s not that Ilya is *against* it in any way, but he’s truthfully a little nervous. He wants this to be absolutely perfect for Shane.

“Alpha please.” Shane whispers. Ilya kisses his way down Shane’s body, then back up, finishing at his lips once again.

“I love you.” He says sincerely.

“Holy shit.” Shane breathes. They stare at each other, wide eyed for a moment.

Then, “I love you too.” Shane says. Ilya can tell by the look in his eyes that he really means it. He lines himself up and pushes inside. They both gasp at the same time. It hits Ilya that this is his beloved- this is the rest of his life.

“You’re amazing. You feel so good, you take it so good.” Ilya groans.

“Keep going, I need it, I need it.” Shane mumbles. He’s practically delirious with his heat and his pleasure.

“You have it. You have me.” Ilya promises.

~

They’re in the bath during a lull in the spikes of their cycles when Shane turns to him.

“I think you should stop paying me.”

Ilya had a feeling this was coming, it was only a matter of time. “If that is what you want.” He says, gently washing Shane’s skin.

“It is.” Shane says firmly. “I still want to do my duties around the house, but because I want to, not because I’m an employee.”

“Okay. Then you are fired.” Ilya jokes.

Shane giggles. Then, “What made you change your mind about me helping with Sasha?”

“I realized that you are capable of making your own decisions.” Ilya says honestly. “You were right, when you said I cannot protect you from everything. I have to let you make your own choices and support you. We are mates, we are in everything together. Although, I do not wish you to join the Bratva.” He admits.

Shane nods against Ilya’s chest. “Actually...I was thinking maybe I could go back to school. Part time.”

The news makes Ilya’s heart swell with joy. He thinks that’s a wonderful idea, and he tells Shane as much.

“We could really do this.” Shane says. “Get officially mated. Have a life together.” He sounds in awe. Honestly, that’s a pretty apt description of how Ilya feels too.

“Yes.” Ilya agrees. He can see it. He and Shane, years from now, old and gray with a cottage on the lake. Ilya’s life of crime left behind.

“I love you.” Shane says again. Ilya will never get tired of hearing it. He tightens his hold on Shane, admiring the way the soapy lavender bubbles of their bath mingle with their scents.

“I love you too.” He presses a kiss into Shane’s damp hair.

Their heat and rut lasts four additional days. The morning of their first day out of it, Ilya wakes up and rolls over, immediately reaching for Shane. His arm hits only cool sheets. He opens his eyes. He would almost be alarmed, but he can smell the scent of food wafting through the room. Shane must be cooking. Coming off of a heat and his Omega still can’t resist taking care of him. He smiles and shakes his head.

Ilya throws on some clothing and pads down to the kitchen. Anya follows, having come around the corner. She had vacated Ilya's room during Shane's heat. Luca has been feeding her and walking her on their behalf.

"Good morning, pretty girl." Ilya coos.

He's surprised to find the kitchen empty and the food half cooked on the stove. Maybe Shane had to use the bathroom or something? He waits for five minutes before he starts to grow concerned.

The all too familiar feeling of fear at Shane being missing hits his chest. He follows the same protocol as the last time, looking around the house first and then calling all of his men. Ilya desperately hopes that for some reason, Shane is outside again, even though Anya is with him.

An hour passes. Then two.

Shane is gone.

Ilya lets out a roar that rips from his chest. His mate, his mate is gone.

He knows Shane would never leave on his own, and all his stuff is here. Someone took him.

Ilya is missing something, he has to be. He wracks his brain, but it's so hard to think right now.

His chest feels like it's caving in. Shane has been in his life for a little under a year but he can't even remember his life before him. Shane was such a bright light. He was everything to Ilya. He would give up everything he has- the power, the money, the mansion, just for Shane to be alright.

Ilya had killed Sasha as a message to Ivan and his faction. But to kidnap Ilya's mate? This was an all out war now.

Chapter End Notes

Dun dun dun

I'm sorry for being evil >:)

Also, I ended up not going too heavy with the smut. It isn't really the focus of the story. Next chapter, (17) will be up on Thursday! As planned, this story is sadly winding down. After this one, I anticipate three chapters left <3

Chapter 18: Chapter Seventeen

Chapter Notes

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

~Shane~

Shane blinks and looks around. His head feels foggy.

Why does it look like he's in jail? It's a small concrete room with a metal toilet and literal bars as the front wall. He's currently laying on a small, shitty cot that can barely be considered an actual bed.

He sits up, and the memories hit him.

Spending his heat with Ilya, being so happy. The candid way they'd talked about their relationship and where things were going. Then he woke up early the morning that his heat ended and got out of Ilya's bed. He'd gotten up with the intention of cooking breakfast before Ilya woke up.

He sipped some tea as he waited for the food to cook, and then...nothing. His memory is blank.

No, that's not right.

Someone came into the kitchen.

Shane sucks in a sharp breath.

~Ilya~

This is the worst day of Ilya's life.

He will never forgive himself for letting Shane be taken. He can't stop wondering if the other man is hurt, or if he's scared. Ilya will not stop until he finds him. He has every single man on his force looking for him. They are combing through every known location associated with the Ottawa division.

He's silent on the car ride to Ottawa, glued to his phone as he reviews information. Mikhail is driving.

"Shane is strong." Mikhail comments. "He will be okay."

Shane *is* strong, and he's smart, but he's still in the hands of ruthless men. The one solace Ilya has is that Shane has not already been killed. They may not yet be formally bonded, but Ilya would know if his mate was...*gone*. He would know.

That's a good sign, but a confusing one.

They search warehouse after warehouse in Ottawa, and all have been abandoned. Ilya is assuming they knew he would be coming.

By the time the sun is setting, they are no closer.

"Pull over here." Ilya tells Mikhail, gesturing to an open field. Mikhail raises an eyebrow but does as he's been directed.

Ilya steps out and walks into the tall grass. He tips his head back, stares up at the sky, and screams.

He bellows, he howls, he cries, he lets out all of the emotions that have been bottled up inside him. When he's finished, chest heaving, he gets back into the car without a word.

They rent out rooms at a hotel in Ottawa that night, but Ilya doesn't sleep. Instead, he does something he has not done in years, and he prays to his mama up above.

~Shane~

Shane still feels like trash. Like he's wading through water. He must've been drugged. It's a while before he can get his body to cooperate with getting up. He stands at the bars. "Hello?"

"You're awake." Another voice answers. "I'm Hayden."

"Where are we?" Shane asks. "What's going on?"

"You must have pissed off the Bratva. I did." The man says. He sounds like he might be close to Shane's age.

"Ivan." Shane breathes out.

"Yep." The man sounds far too cheery for the situation they're in.

"My mate is the Pakhan for another faction. The Montreal branch. He'll be coming for me." Shane says. "I'm Shane, by the way."

Hayden whistles at Shane's admission that Ilya is his mate. "Nice, dude."

"How long have you been here?" Shane wonders.

“I’ve lost track. A few weeks, I think?” Hayden says. The echo of his voice sounds like he’s probably in a similar holding cell right next to Shane’s.

“Have they been torturing you?” Shane wonders, horrified at the thought.

“No, not in the traditional sense. But I’m bored out of my skull.” Hayden sighs. “They bring one meal a day, that’s it. At least I have you to talk to now.”

“This seems weird.” Shane thinks aloud. An aggressive mob but they don’t torture or kill, just kidnap? After Ilya killed Sasha to send a message? And who knows what Hayden did.

“I don’t know, man.” Hayden says. “I just woke up here one day like you.”

Something is missing here. Shane just needs to figure out what it is.

~Ilya~

He’s half a pack of cigarettes and two strong black coffees deep by 6am the following day. He’d quit smoking years ago, but now was as good of an excuse as any to pick it up again.

His phone rings and he answers it immediately.

Unfortunately, it’s Alexei.

“I don’t have time for this.” He snaps. “Shane is gone.”

“Because of your fuckup, Ilya!” Alexei roars back.

“I know I fucked up!” Ilya responds, his voice desperate. “I let one of my own men siphon off me like a leech. Then I killed him and didn’t expect the retribution. But he’s my mate, Lyosha.” Ilya hasn’t called his brother by his nickname since they were kids, but it slipped out now.

It’s quiet on the other end, and Ilya almost thinks his brother has hung up on him.

Then, “Okay.” His older brother's voice is steely. “Okay, Ilyusha.”

Ilya didn’t realize how much he needed his brother at his side until this very moment.

“I’ll be there soon.” Alexei promises.

Several hours later, Alexei has joined Ilya back at his hotel room.

“Tell me the facts.” His brother says simply.

Ilya lays everything out for him, everything that has happened that he purposely neglected to tell him. It wasn’t that difficult to hide- Alexei works in the same faction but a different branch. He and Ilya have butted heads for years over his choice to move drugs instead of weapons.

“Have you noticed anything else...” Alexei waves his hand in the air. “Strange?”

Ilya frowns. “Well yes, but Sasha has been taken care of.” He assumed anything else over the last few weeks was residual.

Alexei shrugs. “I am just saying, brother. This person came in your house. With all of your security. With your dog. You never heard Shane yell or struggle.”

Alexei is right. What he's implying...this is someone he knows. There's another rat amongst them. He suddenly straightens up.

He knows who it is.

~Shane~

"What did you do to Ivan?" Shane asks Hayden curiously.

"Stole from him." Hayden admits sheepishly. Shane can almost imagine the expression, even though he can't see the other man.

"What?! You stole from a mafia boss?!" Shane exclaims.

"I didn't *know* he was a mafia boss. I worked at one of his convenience stores. I didn't even know it was a cover." That makes more sense, but still, ballsy. "My mate is pregnant." Hayden admits. "And we don't have much money. I know I shouldn't have done it, but I was desperate."

"I'm sorry." Shane tells him sincerely. He remembers all too well what it was like to be broke and desperate. He tells Hayden as much, leaving out some of the finer details of his story.

"But your mate..." Hayden says, trailing off.

"We met after all of that. *Because* of all of that, really. We're not officially mated and bonded yet."

"You really love him, though." Hayden states matter of factly. Jeez, is Shane that easy to read even though he can't be seen at all, only heard through concrete and bars?

“Yes, I do.” Shane says softly. He has no idea how long he’s been missing, but Ilya must be out of his mind. Shane longs for the other man. He didn’t necessarily feel that scared right now, and maybe he should, but he knows Ilya is coming for him.

“Can you have him bust me out too when he comes to get you?” Hayden jokes.

“Yes.” Shane says seriously. “Of course.” He would never dream of leaving Hayden behind, and he barely even knows him.

“Thanks man.”

“Tell me about your mate.” Shane says.

~Ilya~

“I will give you one chance to tell me where Shane is.” Ilya says stonily. He doesn’t want to play games anymore.

“He’s safe.”

“That’s not what I asked.”

“He’s at the old Ottawa jail. I didn’t hurt him, I promise. I like Shane. He’s a good kid. This was just to appease Ivan.”

“You will take me to him right now.” Ilya says. Then, “How long?” Ilya asks flatly. Before they get going, he wants to know how long the man he used to consider a genuine friend has been betraying Ilya.

The man in front of him sighs. “Months. Six? Maybe eight?”

“Why?”

“I owed Ivan. From a long time ago. He came to collect.”

“You could have told me.” Ilya says. “Instead, you betray me.”

The man looks right at him, with no excuses on his tongue, only resignation in his eyes.

“You knew you would be next to die after Sasha.” And he did this anyway.

The man nods.

They start walking out to the car. Ilya calls Mikhail on the way, he will drive them.

“Ivan threatened my family.” The man says. As if Ilya will now feel bad for him, when he *kidnapped* Ilya’s *mate*. “I had to do it. But I promise I made sure Shane was safe. I know that will not change the outcome here, but I want you to know that.”

He and Ilya get into the backseat of the vehicle.

“You are on borrowed time now, Dmitri.”

Chapter End Notes

Our first dual POV! I was trying to build suspense.

Bet you didn't see that coming! (Hopefully)

Next chapter should be up on the regular posting schedule on Saturday. If I'm REALLY pressed for time, it will be up Sunday instead. Two chapters left, I can't believe it.

Chapter 19: Chapter Eighteen

Chapter Notes

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

~Ilya~

The car squeals up and Ilya is out of it before it even fully stops.

“Shane!” He screams, running inside. “Shane!” Dmitri has promised him that Shane wasn’t hurt, but he wouldn’t count on that until he saw the man with his own two eyes.

The building is old, abandoned, and run down. The door is rusty and practically crumbling as Ilya throws it open.

“Ilya!” Shane sounds echoey. Ilya looks at Dmitri, who has now joined him, for confirmation on which hallway houses his Omega. He points, and Ilya takes off running again. He skids to a stop in front of an old cell that houses someone, but it is most definitely not Shane. The man blinks at him.

“Shane is next door.” He says, jerking a thumb to indicate the cell next to his.

“Ilya!” Shane comes up to the bars. Ilya wants to collapse with relief. He looks normal, unscathed. Not a scratch on him.

“How do I open this?” Ilya asks Dmitri. The man hands him a key.

Shane looks between them.

“I will explain later.” Ilya says. His hand shakes as he inserts the key into the lock on the door.

Shane throws himself at Ilya as soon as they get the sliding bars open.

“Oh, Shane.” Ilya whispers, closing his eyes.

“I’m okay. I’m okay.” Shane is saying. He pulls back too soon for Ilya’s liking and pecks him on the lips. Then he looks to Dmitri. “Do you have the key for the other cell?”

Ilya is confused. Shane must see it on his face because he says “We’re taking Hayden with us.”

“Who is Hayden?”

“That’s me.” The man from behind them says. Ilya looks at him and he gives a dorky wave. It actually reminds Ilya of Shane.

Dmitri hands Shane the key and Ilya watches, still a little dumbfounded, as he opens the other cell and lets Hayden out.

“Let’s get out of here before Ivan shows up.” Shane suggests.

“Too late.” A voice says. His accent is a lot stronger than Ilya’s. Everyone in the room freezes.

Ilya shoves Shane behind him. “I’m here to collect what’s mine.” He tells Ivan.

Ivan raises an eyebrow. “And the Pike boy?” That must be Hayden.

Ilya shrugs.

“And you.” Ivan says, focusing on Dmitri now. “You double-crossed me. You know the consequences.”

“I am a dead man either way.” Dmitri says simply.

“You’re all dead.” Ivan says.

Hayden whimpers. Ilya isn’t even worried. He’s sure Ivan has men outside, but so does he. And they’re better.

“This is very boring.” Ilya says, fake-yawning. “Bye-bye now.” It’s better to get into a shoot-out in open space than in a building, so he’d like to at least *try* to get outside before the guns come out. He tugs on Shane and they make it a few steps closer to the door before he hears the click of a gun. He sighs, whipping around and pulling his own piece from his hip.

Ivan grins. This is what he wanted. Maybe taking Shane was a trap all along.

A few things happen in rapid succession.

Ivan moves the gun from Dmitri to Shane. Ilya quickly steps in front of Shane and growls.

Then, several shots ring out.

Ilya blinks. He's crushing Shane into the floor. He frantically assesses his surroundings. Shane is unscathed and so is he. The Pike boy seems to be as well.

Dmitri lays dead right in front of him. So does Ivan.

Alexei stands in the doorway with his own weapon drawn. "Go now, brother."

Ilya scrambles up and pulls Shane with him. The Pike boy follows.

Mikhail is waiting in the driver's seat. Other vehicles are squealing up. A mix of more of Ilya's men and Ivan's. They won't be happy when they see that he's just been killed.

Mikhail high-tails them out of there, the tires crunching as they speed over the dirt and gravel.

Ilya realizes he's practically squeezing Shane as he holds him. He looks down and his gaze meets wide brown eyes. Shane is clearly upset. Who wouldn't be, after that display?

"I was...I was gonna..." Shane mumbles, dropping his gaze to stare unseeingly at Ilya's chest.

Ilya puts a finger under his chin and lifts his face. "What is it?"

"I was going to beg you not to kill Dmitri. I know he betrayed you, but it's not the same like it was with Sasha. He protected me. He took me, but he was lying to Ivan. He wasn't torturing me."

Ilya's chest feels tight.

“He jumped in front of us.” Shane says. “He took a bullet for us.”

All the air is sucked out of Ilya’s lungs. He hadn’t even realized. Everything had happened so fast. Ilya had shoved Shane behind him, planning on taking the bullet himself, but then Dmitri saved them both. He took the bullet knowing it would kill him. His act gave them an additional split second and allowed Alexei to arrive and kill Ivan.

Ilya didn’t say anything else, just continues to hold a sobbing Shane close to his chest. Pike is sitting silently, wide eyed. He’s probably in shock.

Mikhail takes them to the safe house. Ilya hasn’t had to hide out in a long time, but he was prepared with this cottage anyway. It’s a few hours’ drive, but it feels like a short amount of time to Ilya. He’s lost in his head in a way that everything seems hazy and out of touch.

“Sir. We have arrived.” Oh. The car has stopped and no one moved.

“Thank you, Mikhail. You’re dismissed to your room.” Ilya tells him.

“Do we have a room for Hayden?” Shane asks. His eyes are still swollen and red but he’s stopped crying.

“Yes.” Ilya says absently. He grabs their go-bags from the trunk. Mikhail had really been prepared. Ilya will need to thank him properly later on.

Shane and Hayden trail closely behind Ilya as they go inside. Ilya can hear them talking quietly. He takes their bags to the room that is normally just Ilya’s that he will now be sharing with Shane.

“Pike. Here is guest room.” He points to a room at the end of the hall. It is stocked with everything a guest might need. The brand new clothing hanging in the closet should fit him. Probably. “Let me find out what is going on, then you can call home.” Pike may be a

stranger, but he is someone that Shane at least marginally cares about, and Ilya is sure he likely has a family somewhere.

“Thanks, um, Sir.” Pike stumbles over his words.

Shane enters the bedroom. “I like the cabin.” He says quietly. Then, “Is Anya okay?” The ordeal they just went through, and Shane is worried about their dog. It’s sweet, in a sad way.

“She is okay. She is safe.” Ilya confirms.

“Is there food here?” Shane asks.

Suddenly, Ilya is horrified. What if they hadn’t fed Shane? What if he’s been starving this whole time? He’d said Dmitri wasn’t torturing him, but that was bare minimum. That doesn’t mean he’d been keeping up with basic needs. “When did you last eat?” He asks frantically.

“This morning.” Shane says. “A bowl of bland oatmeal and a banana.” Okay, that’s not terrible. “I want to make something for everyone though.”

“Shane.”

“Please, I just want some sense of normalcy right now.” Shane pleads with his eyes.

Ilya takes Shane to the kitchen and shows him the stock of non-perishable food. The cottage is considerably smaller than the house they live in back in Montreal, but it’s comfortable and it works for what they need it for.

He stays in the kitchen as Shane cooks, watching him. They don’t speak. There’s much to say, but Ilya suspects they’re both so drained from the events of the past few days that they’re letting it slide for the time being.

Ilya is so grateful that Shane is okay, and he's *here*, and Ilya can do something as mundane as watching him prepare food.

Dinner is a strange affair, but they all manage. Afterward, Shane makes himself and Ilya a cup of tea and they take it outside on the back patio. It overlooks a small lake. It's peaceful, the dusk sinking into a navy sky. Crickets chirp and insects buzz around them. It's a vast contrast to everything that has happened over the last several days.

Ilya admires his mate as he sits with his legs pulled up and both hands wrapped around his warm mug.

"This is nice." He murmurs. Ilya agrees. "We could get a cabin of our own one day. Live in it full time." Shane says dreamily. "I think that would be perfect. We could do this every day."

They both share a glance, and Shane clarifies. "Just *this* part." Ilya smiles and they both chuckle a little.

Alexei calls when they're cleaning up the dishes. Ilya takes the call in his bedroom while Shane gets ready for bed.

"The job is done." His brother says in lieu of greeting. "I had to kill a few more, but most wanted to defect anyway. No order in that faction." He curses Ivan in Russian. Yes, mobs were generally cruel, but they still ran on order and rules. It sounds like Ivan disregarded that, and his men were fed up. Most of them wanted out.

It likely meant that it wouldn't send adjacent factions after them either, which was great news.

Ilya is tired. He feels significantly older than his late twenties. His mind flashing a picture of Shane, curled up and cozy on the patio a short while ago. Still dreaming of a future with Ilya. Ilya wants that too. A long life with Shane, a future home that they pick out together.

Peace.

He can't have that if he continues.

"I want out." He says to his brother.

Chapter End Notes

This is the last 'normal' chapter! The next one will be the FINAL chapter and it will be an epilogue. To be honest, I'm not sure of how long that one will be, I'm going to get out what I had planned and see where that takes me. That will be up on Tuesday.

I hope you all have a great weekend and thank you so much for sticking around for this story (:

Chapter 20: Epilogue

Chapter Notes

Don't say I didn't warn you that I wasn't sure how long this would be. This is definitely quite short in comparison to every other chapter aside from the prologue, and I hope that isn't terribly disappointing.

It's the end of the road for our boys in this universe <3

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

~One Year Later~

Shane pushes open the door, immediately seeing Ilya leaning against his car in the parking lot, waiting for him. He smiles and makes his way over. Ilya greets him with a kiss. Anya pokes her head out of the few inches of open window.

“Hi.” Shane greets both of them warmly, reaching in the pet Anya.

“How was class?” Ilya asks. He always asks, and he always genuinely cares about Shane’s answer.

“It was good. I got an A on that last paper.”

“I knew you would.” Ilya says smugly. Shane rolls his eyes, but there’s no heat behind the gesture.

They climb into the car and Ilya starts them on the familiar path home.

It hasn’t been easy, getting to this point. They had stayed at the safe house for almost three months after the day Shane was rescued from the jail. Hayden went home and was happily

reunited with his mate, who had their pup about six months ago now. Shane still sees them regularly. They even call him their pup's Uncle Shane.

Ilya and Shane had stayed at the safe house just to be sure that things were truly going to blow over in the way they hoped. Ilya gave up his title as Pakhan to his brother, but it wasn't a quick or easy handoff. In fact, he was really only out of the life in any capacity the past two months. The transitional period was long and arduous, but both he and Shane had been enjoying the newfound freedom the last few months.

Shane was no longer the House Omega, but *Ilya's* Omega. They were planning on having an official mating ceremony next year.

Ilya had bought them a beautiful cabin in the Muskoka Lakes region of Ontario and they had started moving in after leaving the safe house. Shane started college again this fall. In other words, things were good. They were *great*.

They even had Mikhail, Alexei, and Luca over for dinner on the regular.

Ilya was taking a break from working right now while he figured out his next move. Shane had gotten him very into puzzles in the meantime.

They arrive home to the cottage and Shane immediately heads for the window seat in the living room. Ilya had had it custom-built for him after they bought the house. It's even bigger and more comfortable than the one in the library at Ilya's old house. In fact, there's room for two plus Anya.

Shane tugs Ilya onto the cushions with him. This is his favorite way to unwind after a long day. Ilya goes willingly, and of course Anya joins them too. Shane and Ilya cuddle together with Anya between them. Shane watches a loon fly by the window. The sun is starting to set, painting the sky with pinks, golds, and dusty lavender.

They're going to start dinner soon- they cook together most of the time, now- and maybe do a puzzle afterward. They will go to sleep in the same bed, warm and safe. They will get to wake up in the morning side by side. Maybe they will go on a run. Maybe Ilya will make

Shane a cup of tea. Maybe Anya will convince Ilya that she needs her own scrambled eggs again.

The possibilities are endless, but the one thing for certain is that they will be together. They are building their forever one day at a time.

Chapter End Notes

Cue the long, sappy author's note. First, THANK you to every single person who has followed this story, left comments, kudos, bookmarked, etc. As an author, it truly does mean the world. I think I can confidently say that this is the most love a fic of mine has ever gotten out of over a decade of posting here! <3

I had so much fun with this story and I really am sad to let it go and end it off. However, I plan to keep writing and posting. My next Hollanov fic is already in the works- it will be a matchmaker Ilya AU (non-A/B/O verse), so please stick around to see that if that is a topic that interests you.

Really, just thank you all for your support.

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