

Shane Hollander's PDA Agenda

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/78297091) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/78297091>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Heated Rivalry (TV) , Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov , Ottawa Centaurs Team Ensemble (Game Changers) , Scott Hunter (Game Changers) , Hayden Pike , Jackie Pike , Anya Ilya Rozanov's Dog
Additional Tags:	Post-Book 6: The Long Game (Game Changers) , Married Life , Ilya Rozanov Loves Shane Hollander , Shane Hollander Loves Ilya Rozanov , Hurt Ilya Rozanov , Ilya Rozanov Needs A Hug , Anxious Shane Hollander , Hurt Shane Hollander , Shane Hollander is a Good Husband , Protective Shane Hollander , Public Display of Affection , Canon-Typical Violence , Concussed Shane Hollander , Blood and Injury , Jealousy , Crying , Fluff , Hurt/Comfort , Whump , Ilya Rozanov Whump , Kissing , Depressed Ilya Rozanov , Communication , Shane and Ilya talk about their feelings in this one , Autistic Shane Hollander , Protective Ilya Rozanov , Supportive Ottawa Centaurs (Game Changers) , Good Friend Hayden Pike , Angst , Homophobia , Angst with a Happy Ending , Ilya and Shane are Anya's parents
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-01-25 Completed: 2026-02-12 Words: 20,844 Chapters: 3/3

Shane Hollander's PDA Agenda

by [virtual_typewriter](#)

Summary

It happens in an instant.

Over Ilya's shoulder, Shane sees the doctor and Wiebe give each other a look, and in a sudden bout of impatient anxiety, Shane ends up saying the words that come to ruin everything.

“Don't touch me.”

The effect is instantaneous. Ilya's hands fly to his sides, and Shane gets a front row seat as Ilya's heart breaks before his very eyes. Eyes dimming and lips trembling in slow, painful technicolor.

It causes Shane's heart to break, too, and he vows, immediately, never to see such a look cross his husband's face again.

OR Shane embarks on a mission to heal his husband's heart, one PDA at a time.

Chapter 1: First Year of Marriage (Shane's POV)

Chapter Notes

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

To no one's surprise, it happens in Toronto. The defenseman comes out of nowhere and before Shane fully registers what has happened, he's lying on the ice.

There's a flurry of activity around him, as the play stops and the medics hurry to check him over. He's vaguely aware of his husband screaming bloody murder from somewhere inside the penalty box, but Shane has little headspace to focus on anything except the excruciating pain across his abdomen.

It's towards the end of the Third Period, and Shane is carted off the ice and into an adjacent medical room. A few minutes later, Ilya comes bursting through the doors, making a beeline towards Shane's side.

The doctor has looked him over, by this point, and has concluded that probably nothing serious has happened. Shane is to go to the hospital for further checkups, but most likely the doctors will say the same. The pain, too, has been reduced to little more than a manageable throb and Shane, by all accounts, considers himself to be quite lucky.

Ilya, however, is not so easily persuaded.

He asks further questions, pestering the doctor and fawning over Shane simultaneously, continuing even as Wiebe enters the room, and the doctor relays the same message.

Shane, by now, wants nothing more than to leave the arena, get to the hospital and go home. He tries to tell Ilya as much, but Ilya ignores him. He's scared, Shane knows, ignoring his words and the doctor's, too. His fingers keep flitting across him, checking his head, checking his chest, checking his abdomen, whispering soft apologies as Shane lets out a hiss.

Over Ilya's shoulder, Shane sees the doctor and Wiebe give each other a look, and in a single, sudden bout of impatient anxiety, Shane ends up saying the words that come to ruin everything –

– *“Don't touch me.”*

Shane barely recognizes his voice, although it was certainly he that said it. His mouth which formed those words.

The effect is instantaneous. The room goes quiet like someone'd sucked all sounds from it.

As if they'd coordinated it, both the doctor and Wiebe turn away, similar embarrassed-looking hues spreading across their cheeks.

Shane doesn't notice, all his attention focused on Ilya. His kind-hearted, worried husband who freezes, hands flying to his sides as if he'd been burned.

Shane wants to take it back. Wants to explain that he doesn't actually mind Ilya touching him, it's just that he doesn't want others to see him do it. Doesn't want others to judge them. To take something that is precious and twist it into something ugly.

Shane, of course, has no idea how to convey this, and gets a front row seat as Ilya's heart breaks before his eyes. Eyes dimming and lips trembling in slow, painful technicolor.

It causes Shane's heart to break, too, and he vows, immediately, never to see such a look cross his husband's face again. He lifts his hand, pathetically, reaching for Ilya, but his husband doesn't see, his back turned as he asks the doctor another question.

Shane's heart stutters. He promises that he will do better. He will practice; he will make a plan; he will become so goddamn good at PDA that Ilya will grow tired of his touch once he's done with him.

Like he does with everything else, Shane throws his head into PDA planning with meticulous finesse. With lists and charts and diagrams. He creates a timeline and a list of potential PDAs, ranking them on a scale from "Small" to "Scott Hunter", wondering which ones might fit best within which particular contexts. With a burner account, Shane creates a vision board, and then, just to be thorough, he creates three more.

He plans and plans, and yet – he doesn't really get anywhere. After The IncidentTM, as Shane has decided to call that day in Toronto, Ilya makes sure to keep his hands to himself, and Shane... Shane lets him. And contents himself with the fact that Ilya's touch is one to indulge in behind closed doors only.

Ilya is, as always, perfect. He never says anything. Doesn't so much as indicate that he is unhappy with Shane or their life and the way they go about it. Perhaps he isn't.

Except Shane sees him. Sees the way he looks at their teammates with their partners, and Shane knows that his husband is jealous. To be completely honest, so is Shane. But on the best of days, his anxiety wins out and on the worst... he keeps picturing the Montreal locker room. Their sneers as they realized that his relationship with Ilya was true. As they realized that Shane had fallen in love with the enemy. With Ilya Rozanov.

Shane's most beautiful, kind-hearted, precious husband.

Shane cannot bear the thought of anyone in Ottawa ever looking at them like that. Looking at *Ilya* like that. Not when their lives are so much better than they ever have been. Not when Shane gets to play on the same team as his husband. Not when he gets to go home with said husband and fall asleep in his arms. Wake up next to him, too, never having to worry over goodbyes or when they will see each other again.

But Ilya trusts the team, and Shane trusts Ilya, and, so, Shane can be brave for him. *Wants to be brave for him.* For the both of them.

In the end, it isn't any of his lists that does the trick. In fact, Shane's ensuing actions aren't even mentioned on a list. No, when Shane finally breaks the bubble, it is because he cannot help himself. Because he is helpless in the face of his husband and that magnetic pull which has kept him in a chokehold ever since that cold, snowy day in Saskatchewan.

They are in the locker room, air filled with mindless chatter. The team is celebrating a win against Winnipeg, and it is, in itself, rather an inconspicuous night. The win was expected, and so, they aren't elated so much as they are content in the knowledge that these wins are now something they can trust in. The knowledge that they can trust themselves to live up to their own expectations and those of the people around them.

When he feels that first pull, Shane has just come out of the showers. Ilya was quicker than him, having been tapped for post-game interviews, and he's got half his suit on already when Shane pulls open his locker.

Ilya gives him a small smile, a quick acknowledgement of the fact that Ilya sees him. That Ilya is glad that he is here, that he loves him. He's humming a tune beneath his breath, something Shane doesn't recognize, but it makes his insides go fuzzy all the same. Reminds him of summers spent at the cottage, and slow mornings cooking breakfast side by side.

Shane returns the smile, a faint blush covering his cheeks, and Ilya's lips quirk into the smallest of smirks. Shane rolls his eyes good-naturedly, moving to pull on his own suit.

Harris's head pops into the locker room, asking Ilya and Hayes if they're ready. Both men nod, yelling out something in the affirmative. Then, Ilya turns to Shane, saying something else as he puts on his wristwatch. It's a Rolex, a deal he secured after their secret was out.

But Shane doesn't hear what Ilya says. Doesn't look at the Rolex, either, even though it is a truly beautiful watch.

No, Shane's attention is completely and utterly occupied by Ilya's tie. A tie that Shane's father gave to Ilya last Christmas, and one that Shane knows that Ilya cherishes. It's also, Shane notes, completely crooked.

Shane feels his fingers twitch at his sides, urging to reach out and fix it. Except Shane doesn't move. He feels frozen in place, eyes locked on that one conspicuous piece of clothing.

"Looks good?" Ilya notices Shane's gaze, fingers coming up to touch the fabric. Ilya doesn't look down, eyes fixed on Shane, and so, he doesn't fix it. He gives his husband another smile, and then he joins Hayes, heading towards the door. Towards the reporters.

Towards the cameras.

Shane knows that Ilya will be sad, later, when he sees it. Not due to vanity but due to it being *that* tie. Worried that he would have hurt Shane's father, as if Shane's father would ever take something like that to heart.

Shane feels like he's watching a movie in slow motion.

Ilya and Hayes join each other at the door, the latter saying something that makes the former laugh. They're slapping each other's backs, Ilya's hand reaching towards the handle, pressing down on it, and then –

“Wait!”

Several heads turn in Shane's direction, before he realizes that he has yelled the word for all to hear. Ilya turns, too, a small frown appearing between his brows, the telltale signs of worry making their way onto his face.

Shane licks his lips and then, before he has time to second-guess himself, he strides across the room in short, controlled steps, coming to a stop right in front of Ilya. His husband opens his mouth, undoubtedly to ask him whether everything is all right.

But Shane is on a mission. He ignores Ilya, opting instead to reach out, to grab hold of the tie to smooth it out, straighten it, making sure that it is absolutely perfect.

Once he's satisfied, he looks up, meeting Ilya's eyes.

His husband looks at him with a carefully controlled gaze. Shane sees a bit of confusion, too, but whatever he sees in Shane's eyes seems to satisfy him, and Shane watches in real time as Ilya's face softens, every feature relaxing into one of love.

Shane is nothing short of helpless as he leans forward and presses a kiss to his cheek. “It was crooked,” he whispers, and the smile that Ilya gives him is so warm, so open, that Shane thinks the sun would have trouble competing.

Shane leans back, and Hayes lets out an apologetic sound. “We should be going,” he says, but when Shane gathers the courage to look at him, he, too, has a smile playing around his lips.

“I'll find you after,” Shane says to Ilya, and Ilya rewards him with a wink, before the two disappear out of the door.

Shane gives himself a moment to pause, to prepare, but when he turns around no one is looking at him. Not because they're ignoring him, but because everyone has returned to their previous activities upon realizing that the matter did not concern them. The air is abuzz with that same mindless chatter, and Shane attempts to copy Ilya's tune, softly humming it beneath his breath as he returns to his locker.

Later, at home, when Shane and Ilya rewatch the interview, Shane notices that Ilya's hands keep straying towards the tie before he freezes and lowers them again, opting to fold them across the desk instead.

“Did not want to ruin artwork,” Ilya whispers. He presses a kiss to Shane's hair, and Shane tightens his hold around him. They're lying on the couch, legs tangled, Anya snoring softly somewhere behind him.

There are no signs of anxiety sneaking up on Shane.

In this moment, he feels nothing but utter bliss.

It becomes a habit, thereafter, Ilya asking Shane to straighten his tie. More often than not, they're crooked, and Shane suspects that Ilya does this on purpose, although neither ever comments on it. Shane is only too happy to be given an excuse to touch his husband, Ilya more than happy to be touched. It feels grounding, after games, and Shane comes to look forward to these moments.

It doesn't take long, however, for Shane to feel that he needs to up his game. He can't wait for a crooked tie in order to be able to touch his husband in public, and whether or not Ilya has caught on to what Shane's doing, he knows that he will let him set the pace. It is what he has always done, and this, it seems, is no different.

Shane consults his lists and his vision boards, wondering which action might be appropriate as a next step, but he isn't able to settle on anything. He doesn't have to stress for too long, however, as the next moment, like the first, presents itself spontaneously.

This time, they're in Bood's backyard. They've been playing together for about two months, and although it has turned chilly outside, it's not too chilly to engage in one last BBQ. They've been on the road for two weeks, winning more than even they had dared hope, and it is a cause for celebration.

The space is filled with Centaurs and their partners, and Shane cannot help comparing it to the gatherings with the Voyageurs. Partners had rarely been invited, and a considerable amount of alcohol intake was mandatory. He makes a mental note to talk to Jackie about it, wondering what that must feel like from a WAG perspective.

Shane, of course, is technically a player as well as a WAG, although his situation is rather unique. To be compared with Ilya's, only. At least as far as they are aware.

Like the first time, it all begins with a piece of clothing. Despite consulting the weather forecast several times throughout the day, the air outside felt colder than Shane had expected. It had resulted in no less than three conversations in the car over whether Shane should have brought an extra sweater or not. He doesn't understand why he didn't. He could have left it in the car or draped it across a chair.

Ilya doesn't say much, seemingly content to let Shane have the discussion all by himself, and, perhaps, secretly knowing that nothing he says will help dispel Shane's anxiety. He offers to turn around, several times, but Shane is still worried about his impression on the team. He doesn't want Ilya to turn around, doesn't want them to be late, doesn't want to seem like he doesn't care about Bood's invite.

In the end, they pull up to the house, and as Shane is about to start the discussion for a fourth time, Ilya takes off his sweater, pulling it over Shane's head before he has time to protest.

“There.” Ilya says. “Can’t have you getting cold.” He presses a quick peck to his lips and starts towards the house.

Shane splutters. “You’ll be cold,” he says, once he catches up to him, “It’s cold outside.”

“Not that cold,” Ilya says and to him, that seems to settle the matter. He waves to Barrett and Harris who are approaching from the other direction. Shane takes a slow breath. Then, he decides to leave it.

Except, it turns out, Shane is right. Two hours into the gathering, bellies filled with delicious food, Ilya is shivering. He doesn’t show it, in fact, Shane is sure that he is the only one noticing, but to Shane, this is all that he is able to focus on.

He’s in the middle of a conversation with Harris and Haas, but it’s been several minutes since he perceived what either one was saying. His eyes are trained on Ilya across the yard, sitting next to the fire with half a dozen players and their partners.

Again, Shane feels that magnetic pull, and before realizing what he is doing, he excuses himself, making his way toward the fire.

Ilya notices him as he walks around the pit, smile lighting up his face, even as he doesn’t break his conversation with Dykstra. He goes to move, too, to make room for Shane, but Shane shakes his head, stops him.

A look of confusion crosses Ilya’s face, smile briefly faltering, before Shane decides to muster his courage and plops down, not beside Ilya, but behind him. He stretches his legs, thighs coming to circle his husband, one hand sneaking around his front to tangle their fingers together.

Dykstra’s talking, now, replying to something that Ilya has said, and which Shane doesn’t follow. Shane is hyperaware of his husband, feels him stiffen, briefly, against him before tentatively leaning back, weight settling against Shane’s chest.

Shane gives his hand a squeeze, and Ilya positively melts against him, a small sigh escaping his lips as he does. Shane tightens his grip, makes sure his husband is comfortable, before parting his gaze to look around.

His eyes flicker from Centaur to Centaur, but, Shane is surprised to note, no one pays them any attention. Dykstra’s speech never halts, and the others are busy, engaged in their own conversations. Some of the other partners sit like Shane and Ilya do, and no one’s batting an eyelid.

Shane feels a slight rumble against his chest, and his attention returns to his husband. Ilya is talking again, and Shane detects the warmth in his voice. An easiness which wasn’t there before.

Emboldened, Shane lets his free hand trail across Ilya’s arms, reminding himself of his original mission. He moves his hand back and forth in an attempt to warm him. He wants to offer him his sweater, too, but knows that Ilya will refuse.

Once happy that his husband is warmer than before, Shane shifts his attention, hand coming to settle at the nape of Ilya's neck, fingers twirling around his husband's curls. Ilya lets out another noise, one most fittingly reminiscent of a purr, and Shane presses a kiss between his shoulder blades. The purr deepens, and Shane has to hide a smile.

Once the conversation reaches its natural conclusion, Dykstra rises and asks Shane and Ilya if they would like anything to drink. They thank him and, when he's gone, they stay like that for a few moments, silent, Shane's hand never stopping its small ministrations.

"Are you cold?" Shane asks, words spoken softly, for Ilya's ears only.

Ilya takes a moment to reply, mouth opening and shutting, before finally settling on a shaky breath.

"I've never been warmer," he whispers, fingers tightening around Shane's own.

Shane gives him another kiss.

Slowly, it becomes easier, hands touching and fingers caressing as they progress throughout the season. It's not obvious and never outside the circle of Centaurs, but it's *something*. It's definitely more than before the beginning of the season.

Still, it doesn't feel like enough.

Ilya has yet to instigate touches himself, seemingly content with whatever Shane is willing to give, and Shane has no idea how to address it. Shane wants to. Wants to let Ilya know that he is allowed to have this, to ask for it when he needs it. But he doesn't want to make his husband self-conscious. Doesn't want to make him think that he's expecting too much.

For the first time, this means that Shane decides to act out an item from the list. It's not one originally planned in those early days, but it's one that made its way on there after the BBQ in Bood's backyard.

It is, however, also a tricky one.

With no other way to explain it, it is a recreation of The Incident™.

The trickiness, of course, stems from the fact that it requires for Shane to be knocked down during a game and, so, isn't really something that is within Shane's control. He doesn't want to be knocked down on purpose, in fact, doesn't particularly want to be knocked down at all. But they *are* hockey players, and therefore Shane figures that it is bound to happen at some point. And when it does – Shane's plan is ready to execute.

Like most of Shane's plans, however, it goes to absolute shit.

To begin with, it happens, of all places, in New York. Against Scott Hunter.

Shane and Ilya are on fire. They're leading the Admirals 4-1, Ilya's chirps loud and boisterous and relentless in a way that Shane knows is bound to grate on Scott's nerves. On anyone's nerves, really, except the Admiral's captain looks more than normally annoyed. Shane considers asking Ilya to stop, but Ilya looks so happy, so carefree in a way he didn't for years, that Shane doesn't have the heart to do it.

They're on the power play, puck flying between them, when, suddenly, Shane feels himself being checked into the boards.

He doesn't think much of it, beyond the initial shock. In fact, for a moment he's almost happy, ready to be whiny and needy and begging for Ilya to hold his hand – after the game, of course, when the doctor will insist on another check-up. Except, when he looks for Ilya, he has trouble finding him, the entire world spinning as he pushes to sit.

He makes a pathetic grabbing motion with his hand, but when he's able to anchor himself it is Barrett, there, to steady him and ask him to stay where he is.

Shane scoffs, goes to tell him that he is fine, except Barrett winces, eyes straying towards the ice. Shane takes a moment, then follows his gaze and realizes that, perhaps, he isn't too fine. The ice beneath him has turned a shocking shade of red, and it turns redder still, as Shane ignores Barrett.

He looks around with renewed vigor, wanting to make sure that Ilya isn't hurt as well. It takes him a second, but when he finds him, he just about has time to see his husband throwing down his gloves, Scott's hands raising in an apologetic gesture. Then, the former's fist connects with the latter's face, and Shane can't hold back a wince, even though he's the one currently bleeding.

Ilya gets ready to strike again, when, head pounding, Shane lets out a whimper.

It is a dumb move on Shane's part as Ilya stiffens, gaze straying to look for Shane. A defenseman from the Admirals is quick to exploit this as he gets a hook in, and then, Ilya's the one going down.

Shane lets out a strangled noise, and then he's on his feet, ignoring both Barrett and Hayes, as they tell him to stay down until the medics arrive. Shane, however, is hyper-fixated on his husband, who's still lying on the ice.

Before he has time to think through his actions, his gloves join Ilya's and he makes an absolutely pitiful attempt to hit the defenseman. Scott intercedes, gaze remorseful, and he gives Shane an undeniably gentle push, letting him fall back across Ilya's prone form.

Ilya, somehow, manages to shield his head from further damage, probably, partly, helped along by Scott's directions, and the two stay down, the fight decidedly over.

Shane lets out an embarrassed huff which quickly turns into a groan, as he accepts that, yes, he really should have stayed down. He's just barely aware of Ilya's fingers flitting across his

face, and if Shane had ever had a plan in a situation like this, the memory of it has been successfully knocked out along with a substantial amount of his blood.

“You okay?” Ilya says, voice laced with pain. He fights his way upright, looking Shane up and down. The medics have arrived at this point, and they’re telling Ilya to get out of the way, except Ilya doesn’t move and with a couple of exasperated huffs, the medics begin to move around him.

“I’m fine,” Shane mumbles, then winces, “Head hurts.” His words trail off, and then Ilya’s there, closer, gently cradling his head between his hands. Shane lets out a soft hum and feels a short burst of victory although he has trouble remembering why this should be.

Ilya’s asking him to look at him, and Shane realizes that his eyes have closed. He wonders why that is, but things are starting to become fuzzy.

Ilya repeats the words, louder than before, and Shane gathers every ounce of strength to fixate on his husband. Ilya rewards him with a smile, but he is covered in blood and Shane frowns in return, ignoring a stab of pain as he does.

Ilya follows his gaze. “It isn’t mine,” he whispers, fingers trailing across his brows, his freckles, into his hair. “You’re going to be okay,” he adds, “Just look at me. You defended me.”

Shane feels a stab of humiliation. “Very pathetically,” he whispers.

“Oh no,” Ilya shakes his head, a few tears escaping his eyes as he does, “Was very sexy. Most sexy punch I’ve ever seen.”

Shane lets out a laugh, which quickly turns into a cough. Ilya shushes him, tells him to save his energy.

A few minutes later, Shane is placed onto a backboard. He briefly loses sight of Ilya and lets out another pathetic whimper before warm hands interlace with his, soothing words filling the air around him. There’s a kiss, too, he thinks, pressed to his temple, although he might have imagined it.

He’s reminded, inadvertently, of another incident like this. One where Ilya wasn’t allowed to follow. Remembers begging for the medics to let Ilya know that he was okay.

Shane feels a sudden jolt of happiness, however strange, relieved by the knowledge that no one will try to separate them this time. He hums softly, acknowledging Ilya’s words, his presence, silently urging him to continue as he’s wheeled into the back of an ambulance.

No one tries to make Ilya leave, and when Shane repeats that he is fine, he means it.

Despite the team being down not only Shane Hollander but also Ilya Rozanov, the Centaurs win the match, and they continue winning until they make it into the playoffs.

Shane has to stay on bed rest for a few matches, but mercifully nothing is broken, and when, finally, they win that decisive game, Shane is next to Ilya on the ice again.

Shane doesn't know if they have what it takes to win the Cup yet, but for this one night, no one's thinking of that. They have taken over a bar in downtown Ottawa, players and WAGs mingling in a happy, mindless cluster.

It isn't Shane's favorite activity on Earth, clubbing, but he knows that Ilya wants to go and who is Shane to deny him? Besides, he thinks the experience might have grown on him after he doesn't have to pretend that he enjoys being flirted with by strange women.

It's also, he figures, a good opportunity to amp up on the PDA. He's already seen his teammates do things with their partners which are definitely NSFW, and Shane figures that this is as good an opportunity as any to expand his repertoire.

Except, Shane isn't sure what to do. He considers asking Ilya to dance, except Ilya doesn't seem interested in doing this. At least, he hasn't asked Shane, and Shane has spent around 90 minutes wondering whether this is because he does not want to, or because he figures that Shane does not. So far, Shane hasn't mustered up the courage to ask him himself.

The problem is that Shane is a terrible dancer. Rose has told him this many times, dating back to when they were dating, and Shane doesn't wish to embarrass Ilya. He only ever wants Ilya to feel content and confident when they are together, and maybe he hasn't asked Shane because Ilya shares Rose's sentiments.

He's lost in thought when Lisa and Cassie plop down on either side of him.

"Girl." Lisa makes a gesture with her hand, and it takes Shane a moment to realize that he's the one being addressed. "You need to go claim your man."

"What?" Shane is confused.

"Take it from a fellow WAG." Cassie's voice is gentle but firm. "Some fans are relentless. Don't let them get away with it. They'll start unfounded rumors on Reddit."

Shane is utterly confused, looking from one to the other. He gazes absentmindedly at the dance floor, but Ilya isn't anywhere to be seen.

Lisa seems to sense his confusion, and she very gently nudges him to look across the bar, to a cluster of tables where Ilya has been cornered by a flock of women.

Shane gulps, clocking Ilya's discomfort even from across the bar.

Cassie and Lisa misinterpret his discomfort and hurry to reassure him.

"Oh, no, honey." Cassie speaks and Lisa shakes her head. "You have absolutely nothing to worry about – dude is *whipped*. That man is *in love*." Her voice slurs a bit, although her

confidence is not to be doubted. “We have never seen him so much as look at another person since he moved here.”

“Most of the time, he used to stare at his phone,” Lisa supplies, “And now we know why.” She gives him a playful nudge, and Shane attempts a smile which, he is sure, looks more like a grimace.

“However,” her voice sobers, and she leans in again, waiting until she has his full attention before speaking, “You need to show those fans that they cannot get away with this. Not with the two of you.”

“Not with a married man,” Cassie scoffs, “Not with a *Centaur*. That shit might work in Toronto or Montreal, but it does not work here.”

Shane looks at Ilya, again, and he can see him disappear further into his seat, too polite even as he itches to get away. For a moment, Shane doesn’t move. Then, a bout of protectiveness overtakes his instincts, and he downs his drink, Lisa and Cassie both whooping as he rises.

He’s oddly reminded of that time in the locker room, when he went to fix Ilya’s tie and felt an almost otherworldly determination overtaking him. It’s the same determination that he feels now, as he crosses the dance floor, not stopping until he’s reached Ilya’s table.

His husband looks at him, sends him a mildly panicked look, but Shane ignores it. Ignores the women, too, as he walks around them and straddles his husband’s lap.

Shane sees it again, that brief look of confusion, but it doesn’t stop Ilya from securing his arms around him, one going around to rest on his ass, to keep him from falling.

“Hi,” Shane says. It’s all he says, before he leans forward, catching Ilya’s lips in a searing kiss. The sort of kiss that would make Scott Hunter blush.

For a moment, Ilya is frozen. It’s almost enough for Shane to pull back, doubt starting to creep into the corners of his mind, but then, Ilya makes an appreciative noise, moving to deepen the kiss. A few more seconds and he’s matching Shane’s fervor, the latter panting to keep up.

Both men ignore the offended sounds of the women, even as one of them goes so far as to attempt conversation.

Shane lets out an exasperated huff, fingers tightening in his husband’s curls.

“Sweetheart.” Ilya tries to make a soothing noise, pulling back even as Shane’s grip grows tighter. “I love you for this but – everyone can see.”

Shane knows that Ilya isn’t thinking of himself, when he says this, but of Shane. Shane, however, is also slightly drunk, and so, he lets out a confused moan, chasing his husband’s lips as they disappear. When he doesn’t find them, he presses his mouth against his neck, and Ilya lets out a tortured groan.

The women are leaving, by this point, but Shane has no intention of stopping. He doesn't want to share Ilya with anyone else. Doesn't want anyone in this building to think that they have a chance. They came here to celebrate – together – and no one gets to ruin that. *No one* gets to make his husband feel uncomfortable.

“Moya lyubov ...” Ilya is breathless, fingers trailing up and down Shane's back. “Let me take you home,” he whispers, “I cannot do here the things I want to do to you.”

For a moment, the scrape of Shane's teeth grows stronger.

Then, he pulls back. Considers Ilya's words.

It's a tempting offer, and a few months ago, Shane would have already been moving. But now... Now, Shane is settled with the knowledge that Ilya isn't going anywhere. The two of them are going to go home, together, be it now or another three hours from now. They don't have to rush out, don't have to make the most of every single moment before the sun rises. Tomorrow, Ilya will still be there. In the same city, in the same house. The same bed.

“Dance with me,” Shane says. He watches the look of surprise as it crosses Ilya's face, but it's a positive one, Shane thinks. His mouth is twitching as if he doesn't dare believe what Shane has just asked him.

“You mean that?” he says, eyes shining in the glow of the bar.

Shane nods, shyly. He can feel a blush spreading across his cheeks, but he repeats the question, Ilya's smile growing bigger as he does. “I mean it,” he says, “Unless you do not want to. I know I'm not as good as –“

Shane doesn't get to finish the sentence. Ilya hauls them both up, Shane's legs going around his husband's hips, before they're standing, and he can slip down without falling. He doesn't get the chance to say much else, however, before Ilya's hands are dragging him towards the dance floor.

There's a moment of hesitation, as they join the throng of bodies, Shane not sure what to do with himself. He doesn't recognize the song, but Ilya, as always, doesn't let him falter for long. He raises his hands, indicates that he should clasp them around his neck, and Shane follows the directive without pause. Once his hands are secure, Ilya lets out yet another smile, hands coming to rest, safely, around Shane's hips.

Ilya is gentle with him, as they begin to sway, making sure that Shane is with him, that he is comfortable.

Shane is inadvertently hit by a stark contrast, mind flitting to a memory of him and Rose, together, in a club, and Ilya's arms around someone else. He'd cried, that night, after he'd left Rose, big ugly sobs racking his frame as he'd imagined Ilya with someone else. Imagined someone else with his arms around them, his kisses across their skin.

Shane raises his gaze and without either of them speaking, he swears he can see Ilya thinking of that same night. He knows, now, that Ilya didn't leave with that woman. That he, too, fell

asleep with thoughts of Shane haunting his mind.

In the present, Shane presses closer, arms tightening around Ilya's neck. He isn't sure which one of them makes the first move, but another beat, and they're kissing, exchanging breathy moans beneath the flashing lights.

Shane knows that they're in public. Knows that anyone can look at them, knows that anyone can record them. But Shane doesn't think about that. Doesn't think about all the things that could go wrong.

In this moment, he thinks only of his husband. His love. He thinks of his arms around him, thinks of the safeness that ensconces him.

He might be crying, he thinks, soft tears trailing down his cheeks. They're tears of joy, but Ilya notices them all the same. He leans back a bit, lets his lips trail across his cheeks, catching them as he goes along. He whispers sweet nonsense against Shane's skin, Shane not entirely sure what he's saying, but it doesn't matter. Nothing matters except that Ilya is here, in his arms, and Shane is never letting go.

And if anyone's looking at them? They can keep looking for all Shane cares.

In the end, the Centaurs don't win. They make a good run for it, but the Admirals clinch a surprising win in the final round. In some way, Shane is happy for Scott, happy that he got to have more than one Cup. With his talent, he deserves it.

He thinks that Ilya is happy for him, too, although he doesn't verbalize it. He still hasn't forgiven him for the check against Shane, although it was a clean one.

When the season finally ends, all Shane and Ilya want to do is escape to the cottage. The year has been nothing short of incredible, although not without its challenges.

Shane, however, convinces Ilya to hold off a little longer. Ilya has been nominated for the Hart Memorial Trophy, and Shane wants him to enjoy it. Wants him to go to the awards and soak in his much-deserved attention. What he has done with the Centaurs is nothing short of incredible, and Shane wants to remind him as often as possible. Wants the world to see it, too.

It takes a while, and Shane has to pull out more than his fair share of tricks, but eventually they fly to Las Vegas. They enter the building, clad in similar tuxedos and hands intertwined, ignoring the paparazzi as they do.

Once inside, Ilya attempts to let go, but Shane doesn't let him. To prove a point, he grasps Ilya's hand in both of his, and Ilya gives him a peck to the lips.

Shane is happy to note that Ilya has finally gained the courage to instigate PDAs himself. They still haven't discussed that first night in Toronto, but Shane likes to think that Ilya

knows what Shane is feeling. Likes to think that Shane wants to do this for the both of them. *Needs* to do this for the both of them, even as he struggles to convey why.

The night itself passes mostly without incident. They know by now who's safe to talk to and who's to be avoided. To Shane's continued sorrow, most of his former teammates fall within the second category. Every time they come near them, however, Ilya is quick to distract him. He makes him laugh and blush and fluster in an endless loop so that Shane doesn't have time to be sad.

They talk to Scott Hunter and his husband, although Shane does most of the talking. He's slightly mortified to discover that, yes, Ilya plans on ignoring the Admiral despite the numerous apologies that he has sent Shane's – and Ilya's – way. Even despite the fact that he's signed up to coach the camps in Ottawa as well as Montreal this year.

Shane fully plans on confronting Ilya except shortly after, they run into the defenseman who'd hit Ilya, when Ilya had turned to check on him. Then, it's Shane's turn to go quiet, as Ilya turns up the social skills. He teases Shane for it, afterwards, and Shane finds that he doesn't care. No one gets a free pass to hurt his husband.

Eventually, it's time to sit down. They're mercifully surrounded by their teammates and their partners, and somehow, they manage to have a good night.

It becomes all the better when it's time to announce the Hart Memorial Trophy, and the presenters call out Ilya's name. For a moment, Shane can feel him stiffen beside him.

Shane knows that Ilya didn't really believe it. Didn't believe he'd ever win another trophy after moving to the Centaurs. Believed that that part of his career was over.

And Shane knows, too, that Ilya wouldn't have cared. That he would choose Shane over hockey any day of the week. Would let himself be sent down to the AHL if that was what it required for them to be together.

Shane forgot that once, but he has vowed never to forget it again.

As the applause overtakes them, Ilya turns to him, happy confusion clouding his face, and he leans forward, cradling Shane in his arms. Shane returns the hug, happy tears welling in his eyes, for his husband, for the both of them. For the fact that they get to share this moment together.

Their teammates are clapping Ilya's back, and then he rises, remembering that he has to go on stage and deliver a speech. He pauses for a second, turning to give Shane one final, dazzling smile, eyes so soft that Shane wonders, for the umpteenth time, what he did to get so lucky.

What he does next is pure instinct. It has nothing to do with lists or charts or vision boards. It is done, perhaps, a little defiantly, but Shane thinks that Ilya will forgive him.

He rises, and when his eyes lock on Ilya's, they are finally, blessedly, free from that confusion which has overtaken them since that day in Toronto.

His husband smiles as their lips meet, barely able to return the kiss, but Shane doesn't care. It is, without comparison, one of the best ones that they have ever shared. It might look terrible, but that is all right. Shane will try to outdo it next year when they win the Stanley Cup.

For a second, Ilya's fingers tighten around Shane's. Then, he lets go, gives him another peck to the cheek and turns, taking in the thunderous applause as he mounts the stairs.

Ilya's looking at Shane as he gives his speech. He barely hears a word of it, attention focused solely on the glow of his husband beneath the lights.

He'll watch it tomorrow, Shane tells himself. He'll watch it until it is forever ingrained in his brain. He'll frame the photo, too, and show it off to anyone who's willing to watch.

Chapter End Notes

My last fic was filled with Shane whump so I figured it was Ilya's turn. I hope you like it.

Chapter 2: Interlude (Shane's POV)

Chapter Summary

I want to thank you all for your very kind responses to this story. As promised, here is the second part which includes a much-needed conversation between our favorite husbands.

Chapter Notes

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

Ilya finds the papers on a Tuesday.

It's pre-season again, and the no-longer-newlyweds have spent a long, glorious summer coming off of the high of finally being able to play together. It has been somehow better than either of them could have imagined, and things have only grown all the sweeter with Shane's growing confidence in terms of PDA.

At least, this is Shane's own opinion on the matter. He still hasn't actually discussed the topic with Ilya. He has, however, noted that Ilya's smiles appear warmer and that they seem to stay on his face for longer periods of time. There's an easiness that Shane doesn't remember being there at the beginning of the previous season, and at night, when he goes to work out the knots in Ilya's shoulders, Shane imagines them being smaller, too.

It's not that everything is easy now. There are still outside forces working to sour their relationship. But the voices have grown more subdued. They are easier to ignore. Easier to shut out.

Shane is content with the knowledge that he and Ilya are happier than they have ever been, and he hopes that they will grow happier still in the coming year. And maybe, if they are lucky, next season will end with their first shared Stanley Cup. Lord knows that Ilya deserves to win another one. Shane still feels bad, knowing that his husband would have had at least one more if he hadn't given up playing for Boston to be closer to Shane.

Ilya, of course, never mentions this. Maintains that a Stanley Cup was a small prize to pay if it meant more mornings waking up with Shane safe in his arms. It doesn't dissipate the guilt, however, and Shane vows to do everything within his considerable power to let Ilya lift that trophy once more. Preferably more than once, but Shane doesn't want to be too greedy. Not when he's secured the greatest prize of all. The most perfect spouse on planet Earth.

Hayden will claim that that's Jackie, but Hayden is wrong. Shane is quite confident about that.

On the morning that Ilya finds the papers, however, Shane doesn't think of any of this. In fact, he doesn't think of anything at all. He's asleep, one of those rare occurrences on which Ilya is up before him. Usually, his husband must pull out all of the tricks in order to keep Shane in bed for another hour, but one year of marriage has softened Shane. Not a lot, but a little bit.

He's learning, slowly, that there are things to be gained in slow mornings spent next to Ilya. That unhurried quality time with his husband can be beneficial in ways that morning runs cannot. They're still learning, both of them, that they have time now. Time to indulge in each other's company in a way that they couldn't before. Back when time spent together was a luxury, not a given.

Unbeknownst to Shane, Ilya has risen early on this particular morning due to a troublesome night of little sleep. Ilya is still occasionally haunted by memories of his family, particularly of his mother. Ilya swears that Shane's now-permanent presence has done wonders in terms of decreasing his nightmares, but it hasn't managed to dispel them completely.

Once the sun had started rising, Ilya had therefore done so as well, heading down to their home gym in the hopes of quelling some of the uneasiness. Shane has been successful, lately, in convincing him to try yoga, and for the first time, the thought had seemed appealing, even without Shane's well-intentioned nagging.

What Ilya didn't know, however, is that Shane uses the cupboard with yoga mats to hide the things that he doesn't want Ilya to see. Things such as his folder with PDA plans. So, while Shane stays in their bed, catching up on much-deserved sleep, Ilya rifles through every single piece of paper, every vision board, every timeline, every list of PDA suggestions that Shane has made throughout the last year.

Shane hasn't spared much thought as to what Ilya would do if ever he was to find the papers. This, for the very simple reason that he had never intended for his husband to find them in the first place. However, if he did, he doesn't think he would have imagined the realization starting with the smell of coffee.

The sweet aromas spread throughout the bedroom, as Shane begins to stir. He's confused, at first, since coffee-making is usually one of his self-declared morning chores. Ilya likes a cup first thing in the morning, and Shane likes to be the one to make it for him. Occasionally, Shane will indulge in a cup himself, but mostly he just makes the one for Ilya. Rarely, however, do they serve each other coffee in bed, preferring to spend time downstairs in the open kitchen.

Shane sits up, eyes quick to land on Ilya sitting at the foot of the bed. His hair is wet, and he's dressed in casual clothing. He's obviously been up for a while, and when the two lock eyes on each other, Ilya offers him a soft, "Morning love," along with the coffee which Shane takes on auto-pilot.

"Is something wrong?" Shane asks.

Ilya's expression shifts. "Wrong?" he asks. "Can't husband bring other husband coffee in bed?" His expression is disturbingly neutral.

Shane's brow furrows. He takes Ilya in. He looks nothing short of stunning in the light that filters in through the window. He's opened the doors to the balcony, as he knows Shane likes, but there's a restlessness about him. Something that Shane can't quite put his finger on. And when Shane maintains eye contact, Ilya eventually breaks, looking down at the bed instead.

"*Baby.*" Shane's voice is soft, soothing. He places the coffee on the nightstand. "What's wrong?" he whispers.

Ilya looks up at the pet name. It's another thing that Shane has been trying out recently. Shane loves it when Ilya uses endearments to address him and he had figured that his husband might appreciate it, too.

Shane had thrown out the first one earlier in the summer, and Ilya's reaction had been one of pure ecstasy. It made Shane feel bad for not thinking of it sooner. He's still working up the courage to do it in public, but he's added it to the plan for the upcoming season.

"Do you like calling me that?" Ilya's question is quiet, unsure. So much so that it takes Shane a moment to realize that he didn't just imagine it.

Shane's first instinct is to brush it off, to tell him that it is a silly question. Of course he likes it, otherwise he wouldn't do it. But there's something so vulnerable in Ilya's face, as he looks at him, that Shane takes the time to think through his answer.

"Why do you ask that?" he settles on.

Shane can see Ilya's jaw working, like he's considering what to say. Eventually, however, he reaches behind him, pulls forth a binder that he'd kept hidden until now. Shane immediately realizes what it is, ice filling his veins as Ilya begins to open it.

"You weren't meant to see that," he blurts out, Ilya only momentarily pausing, before he pulls out the rest of the papers. He spreads them out between them, every careful file that Shane has spent hours pouring over spread before them, every vision board, every timeline laid out in the open.

"Moya lyubov," Ilya's voice is quiet, gentle, eyes searching for Shane's, "What is this?"

Immediately, Shane begins to feel the tell-tale signs of panic clouding his vision. He doesn't know what to say. Doesn't know what to think. Can't tell what Ilya's thinking.

"*Sweetheart.*" Ilya seems to sense his discomfort. "Please don't hide from me. I'm simply... what is word... curious?" He reaches forward, grabs Shane's hand in the comfort of his own. "I don't know what this means," he says, nodding towards the pile of papers, "What is this PDA?"

"You didn't google it?" Of all the things to say, that is what Shane settles on.

Ilya shakes his head, once, shortly. "I wanted to hear it from you."

"It means –," Shane pauses, takes a moment to wet his lips, "It means public display of affection."

Ilya makes a soft noise as if he'd guessed as much. "And you've been working on this?" Another nod towards the papers, "Since last year?"

Shane gives a curt nod. "Since Toronto," he whispers.

Shane feels immense guilt as he thinks back to that day in the medical room. Back to The Incidence™. To that day when he'd hurt Ilya so badly. Ilya who'd wanted nothing except to comfort him, to be with him while he was hurting as he'd vowed to do at their wedding. As they'd both vowed to do.

Shane doesn't want to hurt him again. Doesn't want Ilya to think that calling him baby is somehow a chore that Shane grinds through like he does any other training session.

Except, Ilya doesn't look hurt. In fact, his brow scrunches adorably, not seeming to understand the meaning behind Shane's words. "Toronto?" he repeats. "What does Toronto have to do with this?"

Shane tightens his fingers around Ilya's, seeks comfort in the warmth of his husband against his skin. "I told you not to touch me," Shane whispers, "I – I didn't mean it, but I was scared... I hurt you."

Shane meets Ilya's eyes, terrified of what he'll see there.

For a moment, his husband doesn't react. Then, his eyes widen in understanding, his entire body tightening as he realizes what he's saying. "*Shane*," he breathes, voice filled with pure devastation. "This is because of *that*?"

Shane nods, once, mortified as he begins to feel tears welling in his eyes.

Ilya clicks his tongue, clearly unhappy with whatever Shane has just told him. Then, he rises, and for a terrifying moment, Shane thinks that he is going to leave. Except, Ilya doesn't walk towards the door. He walks towards Shane's side of the bed, and suddenly he's sitting, warm arms pulling Shane against his chest.

For the briefest of moments, Shane is stunned. Then, he lets out a sob, fists coming to curl around the material of Ilya's shirt. Ilya plants small kisses to his hair, his temples, whispering sweet nothings that Shane can't catch through the ringing in his ears. Ilya's hands rise to brush the tears from his cheeks, hands lingering against his freckles.

"I hurt you," Shane cries, "I never meant to hurt you."

Ilya shushes him, hands drawing comforting circles against his back, trying to get him to calm down. "You haven't hurt me," he whispers, "You could never hurt me, sweetheart, understand? You're the one thing that never hurts."

"But you –" Shane pulls in a breath, "You looked so sad. I did that to you. To *us*. Your face that day –"

"Sssh..." Ilya's lips have come to rest against his cheek, breath warm and comforting against his skin, "Don't ever think that," he whispers, "Don't you ever think that I'm sad

because of you.”

“But I told you to go,” Shane protests, “*I* did that. I pushed you away.”

“You did.” Ilya nods. “But...” He quiets down, seems to consider his words carefully before continuing. He doesn’t pull away, doesn’t stop the comforting ministrations across his back. “I’m sad because you were scared, do you understand?”

Shane isn’t sure that he does, and Ilya lets out a frustrated noise. He pulls back a bit, lifts Shane’s chin so that he’s sure Shane hears him, that he understands him. “You were hurt,” Ilya says, “And I could see in your face that you wanted the comfort, but... you were scared to ask for it. To take it. I was angry because the world has made you scared to let me comfort you. Your own husband. I was angry at the world. Not at you. *Never* at you, my love.”

Shane’s breath hitches and Ilya lets his fingers trail through his hair, lets him process the words.

For a while, none of them speak. Then, Ilya takes a slow breath. “I know...” he starts, then stops again, seemingly unsure of how to proceed. And then – “I know that Montreal hurt you,” Ilya whispers, carefully gauging Shane’s reaction as he speaks, “I know they left scars. Scars that will probably never go away. And you are so brave –,” Ilya continues when Shane starts to shake his head, “*So* brave for leaving them, for coming here, for marrying me, but I need you to know that I understand. Understand that this is scary, this – PDA – you call it.”

Shane’s lips tremble, once again awed by how well Ilya knows him, how well he sees him, better than anyone else has ever done, even his parents.

“And sweetheart, *my love*,” Ilya lets his fingers brush against his freckles, lets them settle against his cheeks, “I don’t *ever* want to be the source of your discomfort, you hear me?” Ilya’s gaze burns, insistently, as he looks at him. “I don’t *ever* want you to do something that makes you uncomfortable because you think that it will please me. That would not be pleasing to me, you understand?”

“I – wait.” Shane cuts him off, but Ilya isn’t done.

“Promise me,” Ilya says.

Shane lets out a shaky breath, fingers tightening against Ilya, “It doesn’t make me uncomfortable, Ilya – *baby*, don’t ever think that - ”

“*Promise me*, Shane, please. I need you to.” Ilya sounds absolutely wrecked.

“I – yes, okay, yes, I promise,” Shane says, gently, soothing, “I promise, okay?” He lets his fingers trail up and down Ilya’s arms, comforting, trying to dispel some of his apparent distress, suddenly realizing the root of his uneasiness. Shane lets out a shaky breath before continuing. “But then you must promise to listen to me, too, okay?” He raises his hands, wipes away a stray tear as it escapes Ilya’s eye, “*Nothing*, do you hear me? *Nothing* that we have ever done has ever made me uncomfortable. Nothing. And when I call you baby, it’s

because you are –“ Shane’s voice breaks, “You are the most important person to me on this planet. Do you understand?”

Shane’s eyes meet Ilya’s broken ones, “I have done all of this because I *wanted* to. Because I – I didn’t want to hide anymore. Because we have spent eleven years hiding and that hurts more than anything that Montreal has ever done to me.”

Ilya doesn’t seem convinced, and so, Shane grabs hold of Ilya’s hand, squeezes it between his own. “I hold this hand because I want to,” he says. He leans forward, presses a kiss towards his cheek. “I kiss you because I cannot help myself,” Shane whispers, letting soft lips trail across his husband’s skin, “I touch you, *baby*, because sometimes it feels like I’m going to die if I don’t.”

It’s Ilya’s turn to let out a sob, lips meeting his in a messy kiss. They stay like that, for a while, exchanging soft reassurances as the sun rises. It doesn’t escalate, neither one ready to break the moment between them. Both wanting to stay within their bubble for just a little while longer.

Shane feels somehow easier than he has all year. Even after so many years together, it still surprises him how easy it is to communicate when they remember to do it. He supposes that this, too, is a byproduct of all those years they spent denying their feelings. He makes a mental note to work on this as well. He’s mature enough to know that half their problems would be solved quicker if only they weren’t so scared of hurting the other due to ungrounded fears.

Shane knows that it isn’t going to be easy, but he’s willing to do the hard things for his husband. Willing to always put in the work if it means that Ilya is there, smiling, when they go to bed at night. Shane has spent too many nights alone to ever want to take that for granted. Too many years listening to Ilya’s voice through tiny speakers, both trying to mask how much they missed the other.

When they finally do break apart, Ilya is the first to look around, to take in the mess of papers around them. Shane feels another stab of self-consciousness, but Ilya is, as always, quick to dissipate any uncomfortableness he might feel.

“You really did all of this?” he says, “Because you thought you’d hurt me that day?”

Shane doesn’t miss the wonder in his voice. “I thought you knew,” he says, sheepishly, “I thought you’d realized what I was doing.”

“I noticed... something,” Ilya says, “Noticed you were being more affectionate, but I didn’t suspect... well... this.” He lets his hand trail across the papers, fingertips stretching towards them but never quite touching. Almost as if he’s afraid to ruin them.

“But you like it?” Shane asks, wanting to be absolutely sure, “I haven’t made you uncomfortable either?”

“I love it,” Ilya assures him, tone of voice leaving no room for misinterpretation, “And I suppose I should have realized that you would do something like this. Is very... Shane-like.”

He gives him a fond smile, and Shane hums, once again wondering how he came to be so lucky as to be loved by this man.

“One thing I don’t understand,” Ilya says, catching hold of his hand again, tangling their fingers together, “Not everything is on the lists,” he says, “I read them,” he adds, “Twice, to make sure. But the ties and the bonfire cuddles and the awards kiss... None of that was on there.”

Shane feels heat rise to his cheeks, and Ilya’s brow furrows, briefly, before he lets out an incredulous laugh. “Spontaneous?” he asks, his answer confirmed as Shane turns, impossibly, even redder. “My spontaneous husband,” Ilya coos, tackling him onto the bed, as Shane shakes his head, attempts to hold in his own laughter.

“Is very hot,” Ilya reassures him, as Shane tries to hide his face, “My husband can’t keep his hands off me even in public.”

Shane scoffs, but Ilya isn’t done. “Can I help you?” he asks, eagerness overtaking his expression, “I think I saw some things that you haven’t tried yet. Putting hand in back pocket when walking through airport? I can help with that. Maybe try it out for you first.” He waggles his eyebrows.

Shane lets out an embarrassed groan, but he’s too happy to stop Ilya as he continues.

“I crossed out Hunter’s name,” he says, suddenly much more serious, “Hunter should not mark the top end of the scale. I added yours.” Ilya gives him a quick peck. “Kiss at NHL awards beats Stanley Cup kiss.”

“I’m not sure about that,” Shane protests, but Ilya shakes his head.

“Am sure,” he says, “And when we win Stanley Cup next year, we will beat Hunter’s kiss. They’ll have to cut away to commercials before I’m done with you.”

Shane’s toes curl in anticipation, and he leans forward to crash his lips towards Ilya’s. “I’m looking forward to it,” he whispers.

Chapter End Notes

I hope you liked their conversation. As always, I'd love to hear your thoughts in the comments.

Chapter 3: Second Year of Marriage (Ilya's POV)

Chapter Summary

You people are absolutely amazing. THANK you for your mind-blowing response to this story. Also, I'm having way too much fun with this, so here is their second year of marriage along with a shiny new list of PDA attempts on Shane's part. He's growing in confidence despite not always getting the results he's aiming for. Thankfully, Ilya is in the know now and ready to step in whenever Shane stumbles. For this reason, I also figured it'd be fun to follow along from Ilya's POV this time. Anyway, enjoy!

Chapter Notes

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

Spending Saturday night in a house filled with Voyageurs players is not, as one might put it, Ilya's idea of a good time. This, despite the fact that he's spent most of it so far hiding away in Hayden and Jackie's kitchen.

They are in Montreal to celebrate Hayden's 32nd birthday, and for some reason, unbeknownst to not only Ilya and Shane but also Hayden himself, Jackie had insisted on throwing him a bigger-than-usual party.

Due to Shane's complicated relationship with the Voyageurs, Shane and Ilya had considered declining the invitation. In the end, however, their friendship with Hayden and Jackie had won out.

Ilya knows it hasn't been easy for them either, suddenly having to deal with such a hostile work environment, and Ilya continues to appreciate their unwavering support. Neither of them has ever said anything, but he sees it in their faces whenever Shane asks. To be honest, Ilya is surprised that Hayden even agreed to this party in the first place. If he is not entirely mistaken, he thinks Hayden might be considering a trade in the not-too-distant future.

"Babe." Hayden tries and fails to catch Jackie's hand as she flies through the kitchen. "Don't you want a drink?" He gestures at the table where he's standing with Ilya. Shane has disappeared upstairs, not that Ilya blames him, but he figures that one of them, at least, should try to hold down the fort.

Jackie gives Hayden a look not unreminiscent of the one Shane gives Ilya when he suggests skipping morning practice.

"Can't drink," Jackie tells him, "Busy."

When she's gone, Ilya raises an eyebrow and it takes Hayden a moment to realize what he's suggesting. "No way," he says, "She's just stressed out with party planning."

“Hmm.” Ilya accepts his explanation. For now. “You don’t want another baby?”

“Oh, I would.” Hayden lets out an easy laugh. “It’s Jackie who refuses to – and I quote – give birth to an entire team of hockey players. Which is extremely fair,” he adds, “She’s the one who has to do all the hard work.”

Ilya hums. “A whole team of Pikes,” he muses, “Must be nice.”

Hayden’s brow furrows. “What do you mean?”

Ilya feels the onset of a blush as he realizes what he’s just said. He responds with a shrug in an attempt to hide the longing in his voice. “Been a long time since I shared my name with someone I love.”

The look on Hayden’s face suggests that he’s not entirely successful. He’s mercifully spared from a response, however, when a warm set of arms sneaks around his middle. Immediately, the smell of his husband overflows his senses, soothing his emotions.

“Hello.”

Shane’s greeting is quiet, comforting. It’s something meant just for him, and Ilya can’t help leaning forward to press a kiss to his cheek.

Shane rewards him with a smile that makes Ilya’s insides go fuzzy. He still has trouble comprehending the lengths that Shane has gone to, to become comfortable with this, with showing his love in front of others.

Nonetheless, Ilya searches his gaze to make absolutely sure that Shane is fine. He finds nothing but warmth, however, shining forth from his husband’s eyes. Ilya lets out a small hum in response and gives him another kiss, this time on the lips.

“You two are sickeningly cute.”

Hayden’s voice cuts through the moment, and Ilya is only partly annoyed. When he looks at him, his face shines with amusement, and Ilya knows that he’s secretly pleased to witness Shane so carefree.

“You’re just jealous,” Ilya chirps, knowing that Hayden more than lucked out with Jackie.

“You wish,” Hayden scoffs, “Although I probably should go find my wife.”

“We’ll join you,” Shane says, although Ilya doesn’t miss the lines of worry making their way onto his face. He sneaks his hands around Shane’s and gives them a comforting squeeze.

“I’ll be right next to you,” he whispers, and Shane hums in acknowledgement.

The next hour passes mostly without incident. Shane and Ilya stay next to each other, and they make sure to converse mostly with Hayden and Jackie’s non-hockey friends. A few of the Montreal WAGs are safe to talk to, too, more than a few of which have reached out to

Shane to apologize for their husbands' behavior. It's not enough to heal Shane's scars, but it helps, and Ilya takes careful note of who is supportive and who is not.

They are nearing midnight when things take a turn for the worse.

Somehow, Shane and Ilya end up around a table filled mostly with Voyageurs players, Comeau leading the conversation. Ilya is only half listening, most of his attention trained on Shane. His husband is nursing a half-empty glass of champagne, doing his best to nod along, his eyes straying every so often. For this reason, it takes Ilya a few seconds to realize the shift in conversation.

Comeau has ended whatever story he was entertaining them with, and now he's addressing Ilya. "Notice I haven't gotten any invites for Hollander's birthday celebrations," he says.

Beside him, Shane stiffens, and Ilya levels Comeau with a tight smile. "We usually keep our celebrations private," he notes, "May is the middle of the playoffs, as you know." He isn't sure where Comeau is going with this, but Ilya refuses to be an active participant.

Comeau cocks his head to the side. "That explains it, I suppose." There's a beat of silence before he continues. "I was afraid you might have forgotten it or something."

Ilya feels his jaw tighten. "I don't know about you, Comeau, but I'm not usually in the habit of forgetting my spouse's birthday."

It's the wrong thing to say. Ilya knows it even before the words leave his mouth, but there's something about the other player that rattles his composure.

The smirk that spreads across Comeau's face is downright evil as he continues. "I'm not saying you'd do it intentionally," he says, "It's just that we all know about your other – *exploits*." His tone of voice leaves no room for misinterpretation. "It must be hard to keep the dates straight sometimes."

The table around them fills with laughter, and Ilya freezes with the shock of the insult. He doesn't get the chance to respond, however, as a loud crash interrupts all sounds of amusement.

It takes Ilya a moment to connect the noise with the sound of glass breaking. It takes him another to realize that Shane has crushed the champagne glass with his bare hand.

"*Sweetheart*." Ilya watches in horror as blood begins to trickle from between Shane's fingers. "Don't move," he tells him, reaching out to steady the injured hand, trying to keep Shane's grip from tightening further. He looks around, frantically, trying to find something to stem the flow, but he doesn't find anything, and no one offers to help.

Ilya is so occupied with Shane that he misses Comeau's mockery of the endearment. Shane, in turn, does not, and lets out an honest-to-god snarl.

"You say that shit about my husband again, and it's the last thing you ever say to me."

Shane's voice is loud, and for a moment, every single person in the room freezes, Ilya included.

Shane's hands are curled into fists, his knuckles deathly white against the flow of blood. Ilya is inadvertently reminded of his husband's, admittedly few, on-ice fights. He'd looked half as intimidating then as he does now.

"You hear me?" Shane is seething. "You say that shit again, Comeau, and I'll personally get you kicked out of the NHL!"

His breaths are coming in small gasps now, fingers continuing to clutch the broken shards. Ilya lets out a wounded noise. He coaxes him to slacken his grip, but his pleas fall on deaf ears. Shane, apparently, is not done yet.

"Have I ever – *ever*," Shane breaks off as he lets out a gasp, "*- ever* said shit like that about your family, huh? I was in your fucking *wedding*. And you just – you say something like that to my – to *mine* – my ..." Shane trails off, seemingly unable to verbalize the magnitude of the affront. Ilya's hand hovers weakly at his side, not wanting to overstep in the current setting, yet dying on the inside at not being able to provide his husband with the comfort he so desperately needs.

By this point, thankfully, Hayden has appeared on Shane's other side. He takes one wide-eyed look at Shane, another one at Ilya, and then the two of them lead him away, quickly but kindly, not stopping until they've crossed the hall and closed the bathroom door behind them.

"Jesus Christ, buddy." Hayden winces as Shane's injuries become visible beneath the lights. "What did you do to your hand?"

Shane is shaking, and Ilya isn't sure that he's entirely aware of where he is right now. Ilya keeps one hand clasped around his wrist, letting the other trail softly up and down Shane's back.

"You have an – what is word – emergency kit?" Ilya asks, the question directed at Hayden. His voice sounds muted even to his own ears, but he is spared having to wait for a response, as the door clicks open and Jackie rushes through.

"*Shane*," she says, eyes going wide at the sight of blood filling up the sink. "I have gauze," she adds. She deposits it on the counter and lets her own hand settle against Shane's back, missing Shane's flinch as she does. "I am so sorry, honey. J.J.'s kicking him out right now, don't you worry. You'll never see him in this house again. And Ilya –"

She looks at him, and Ilya shakes his head. "Can you –?" He trails off helplessly, and Jackie wastes no time unfolding the gauze. It's the sort of efficiency that comes with having four kids, Ilya supposes.

"I want to clean it," Jackie says, "But I think maybe we should leave that to the ER personnel." She sounds uncertain. "There's a lot of blood..." she trails off.

“I’ll take him as soon as his hand’s wrapped.” Ilya gives his husband a reassuring look, but Shane immediately starts to shake his head.

“I want to go home,” he says, “We shouldn’t have come here. I just – “ He lets out a hiccup, “I want to go home,” he repeats.

Ilya lets out a soothing noise as Jackie begins to wrap his hand. “We’ll go home afterwards,” he whispers, ignoring the fact that Ottawa is two hours away and that they were meant to spend the night in Jackie and Hayden’s guest bedroom. Ilya is sober. If his husband wants to go home, he’ll take him home.

“I’m sorry.” Shane lets out a gasp. “I ruined your birthday,” he says to Hayden. Hayden protests but Shane ignores him. “I ruined everything. And now – now...” He trails off again, hands shaking.

“You’re all right,” Ilya whispers, “We’ll go to the ER, and your hand will be as good as new.”

“That’s not – “ Shane’s face twists in frustration. It takes him a few tries to get the words out. “I don’t like it when people say that stuff about you.”

“*Moya lyubov...*” Ilya’s heart tightens in his chest. There’s nothing he wants more than to smooth out the lines across his face, to reassure him that all is well. “I can take care of myself,” he whispers.

“But you shouldn’t have to!” Shane’s voice rises, and Ilya resumes the patterns across his back, calming him as best he can.

Both Jackie’s and Hayden’s eyes are trained on Shane’s injuries, attempting to give them as much privacy as possible. It is admittedly an impossible task in the bathroom, and Ilya doesn’t miss the look of heartbreak that crosses both their faces.

“You shouldn’t have to put up with those – *insults*,” Shane spits out the words, “All they do is lie about you. They don’t – they don’t know you. The real you.” Shane’s ensuing look is so sad, so devastated, that Ilya is barely able to stand it.

“Honey,” Jackie’s voice is firm, but kind, “You need to keep your hand still for me.” She sends Ilya a pleading look as red spots begin to bleed through the fabric.

“Shane.” Ilya’s voice is firmer now, more insistent. “I am going to say something, and you are going to listen to me.” He lets his fingers trail across Shane’s chin, tilting his head, until his husband has no choice but to look at him. “You are the most important person to me in the world,” he says, “No one else compares, understand? Yours is the only opinion that matters to me, the only one I care about. And the only thing that’s able to hurt me? That’s the sight of *you* hurting.”

Shane lets out a sob, and Ilya shushes him. “I love the way you love me,” he whispers, “I love the way you protect me. But your pain, my love? That will never be the savior of mine.”

Ilya presses a kiss to his cheek, and then two more. He continues until his eyes are dry, and nothing but freckles adorn his husband's face.

By this point, finally, Shane's hand is wrapped. Ilya lets his arms encircle Shane, meeting Jackie's gaze across his shoulder. She gives him a small nod, and Ilya rewards her with a grateful smile. She shakes her head. *It's nothing*, she mouths, and Ilya presses his mouth into a thin line. It's definitely more than nothing, but he won't fight her on it now.

"We should get going," he whispers, briefly tightening his arms, as he feels Shane stiffen beneath him.

"I'll go check that the coast is clear," Hayden mumbles. He, too, receives a grateful look from Ilya before disappearing from the bathroom.

A few minutes later, he reports that the majority of the Voyageurs have cleared out. The only one left is J.J., and he stays uncharacteristically quiet as Ilya leads Shane across the living room floor.

Ilya knows that Boiziau regrets his initial reaction to their relationship. Regrets his reaction in the locker room, too, after Game Seven. Back when everything went to shit, and Shane was so deeply betrayed by the teammates that he had come to regard as family.

Yet, Ilya has difficulty forgiving Boiziau even as he encourages Shane to salvage the friendship. His husband needs friends, and Boiziau is trying, but that doesn't mean that Ilya isn't on his guard around him. That, however, is another fight not meant to be fought tonight, and Ilya settles for a small nod as they pass him. Boiziau looks like he wants to say something but stays mercifully quiet.

Another moment, and Ilya leads his husband out into the night. It's just them now, in their bubble, mercifully free from the judgment of others. He feels Shane relax beneath him, and Ilya takes comfort in that, even as he's unable to take comfort in little else.

Shane grows more careful after that night. It's not that he stops touching Ilya, but there's a carefulness to it now, one that wasn't there before. It's like he's afraid that his touch will subject Ilya to more harm than good.

It makes Ilya's heart break, to put it frankly, and he doesn't know how to fix it. Doesn't know how to convince his husband of the thrills he feels, whenever Shane is near him.

For this reason, their next trial comes sooner than Ilya would have liked, and despite being surrounded by their own teammates this time, Ilya is left to watch his husband suffer in silence.

They're flying home after a game against Buffalo when their flight is unexpectedly cancelled. There's a festival in the city and between that and the hockey game, there are no rooms to be had within a ten-mile radius.

The airport offers them a secluded room in which to spend the night, and management begrudgingly takes the offer.

With the exception of a few chairs, the room is empty, and the players spread out, leaning against walls or sprawling across the floor. Their coats and bags act as makeshift pillows, and all in all, it is a truly terrible night.

For Ilya and Shane, it becomes all the worse when Shane hesitates before settling down against a wall opposite Ilya. It's about fifteen feet away, but it might as well have been measured in miles.

Ilya, for his part, doesn't hold it against him. He knows of the internal struggle taking place within his mind. It doesn't matter that more than a few of their teammates quirk their brows at the sight of their separation. He knows that none of them would bat an eye at Shane and Ilya lying next to each other.

Not for the first time, Ilya curses the Voyageurs. He casts another look at Shane, sees the sadness etched across his face, and closes his eyes, readying himself for a night of little sleep.

About an hour passes before his phone vibrates, signaling an incoming message.

Shane: It's the first time

Ilya waits for Shane to elaborate except nothing else comes through. Ilya looks up to find that he is looking at him expectantly across the room.

Ilya: The first time...?

Shane: It's the first time since our wedding

Ilya's brow furrows. He can't decipher his meaning however much he tries.

Ilya: ???

Across the room, Shane lets out a noise of frustration. He returns to typing, attracting the attention of more than a few of their teammates, who are trying to sleep.

"You have got to be kidding me."

"Are you two texting each other right now?"

Ilya ignores Dykstra's question as his phone vibrates again.

Shane: It's the first time since our wedding I'll fall asleep without your arms around me

For a moment, Ilya just stares at the screen. Then, he wonders whether his husband is trying to kill him. Whether he has done something he shouldn't, something unforgivable, and this is Shane's twisted attempt at retaliation. Otherwise, how dare he write something like that and expect Ilya to stay away?

Except when he looks up, there's nothing but sorrow painted across Shane's face. Ilya sends him a desperate look, and Shane's expression morphs into one of regret.

Ilya lets his head fall back against the wall, wondering, not for the first time, how he's meant to survive this night.

They'd tried to spend one other night away from each other, their very first on the road together. Shane had insisted it'd be good for him to room with others to get to know his new teammates. He'd barely made it through his dental routine, however, before Ilya had come crawling with a knock on his door.

Shane had been mortified, of course, face resembling a tomato, and freckles looking downright delicious against his flaming cheeks. He had, however, also helped Bood pack his bags, so Ilya figured he hadn't been too sorry about the turn of events.

Since then, they hadn't attempted to sleep apart, and no one had commented on it.

"Roz... Hollzy... Go outside to talk, will you? Either that or turn off those screens."

Young's lying with an arm slung over his head, so Ilya doesn't know why he, of all people, is complaining. They do, however, put their phones away, although no more than a few minutes pass before another complaint is directed their way.

"Hollander – for the love of *god* – stop fidgeting."

Shane squeaks out an apology, embarrassment clear in his voice. Ilya stays where he is. This is Shane's boundary to cross, not his.

He settles for leveling an unimpressed look at Holmberg, who has the decency to look at least a little ashamed. Ilya loves his teammates, but anyone who upsets his husband walks a dangerous line.

When he looks up, he catches Shane looking at him again. There's longing in his eyes, but when Ilya gives him a reassuring smile, his husband looks away. Shane turns in an attempt to catch some sleep on his other side, and Ilya ignores the stab of hurt that courses through his body. He aches to reach out, to soothe the tension between those shoulder blades. But he doesn't. He lets his hands stay where they are, fingers twitching in the space between them.

Ilya lets out a slow sigh and ignores the looks of more than a few teammates who silently beg for him to intervene. He focuses instead on his own attempts at sleep.

Except sleep doesn't come. And judging by the sounds of Shane's breathing, his husband isn't getting any sleep either. Ilya recognizes it, even across the throng of hockey players, like a beacon, begging him to come home.

Another twenty minutes and Ilya almost gives in when, suddenly, there's a sound of footsteps pattering across the floor. Ilya holds his breath until the sounds come to an abrupt stop next to him. He's still leaning against the wall but opens his eyes, only to be met with the warmth of his husband's.

Shane opens and closes his mouth a few times, no sound escaping him. Then, he inclines his head, and Ilya opens his arms to him, no questions necessary. Shane nearly stumbles in his haste to reach him, and Ilya suppresses a sigh of relief as the familiar smell of his husband washes over him.

Shane's arms come around his middle, one leg moving to tangle between Ilya's outstretched ones. Shane leans his head against his chest, right above his heart, and emits a moan that's borderline indecent in the quiet of the room.

"Thank the lord."

The words are spoken by Barrett, but Ilya won't deny that he shares the sentiment. "Shut up," he says, doing his bit to discourage more teammates from voicing their opinions. He doesn't, however, miss the relieved whispers murmured in the room around them.

He moves one hand to tangle in Shane's hair, letting his fingers draw soft patterns across his scalp. Shane lets out a small hum. Then, his breathing evens out, and Ilya presses a soft kiss to his temple.

"Did he just – ?"

Chouinard, this time, leans forward to stare at Shane.

"I think he did," Dillon replies, voice equally in awe, "Can you show me that trick?" he asks, directed at Ilya.

Ilya tightens his grip, a protective look taking over his face as he tries to shield his husband from their prying eyes. "Go to sleep, will you?" The words are spoken, not unkindly, but firmly, telling them that enough is enough.

"You heard the man." Bood, this time, speaks up from the opposite side of the room, "One more word and you're all doing shuttle sprints tomorrow."

"But –"

"I don't care how little sleep you've gotten. One more word and you'll regret it."

All voices go mercifully silent after this. Ilya sends an appreciative look Bood's way before looking down to take in the sight of his husband. His face is turned inwards, nose scrunched adorably against his chest. There's a bit of light coming in from the window, accentuating his freckles, and Ilya resists the temptation to trail his fingers across them.

Ilya wouldn't mind staying up all night, he thinks, if this is the sight he gets to take in. He'd even take Bood's shuttle sprints and consider it a fair prize. Eventually, however, he feels his eyes begin to droop, lulled to sleep by the even sounds of his husband's breathing.

Being in the know now, Ilya is aware of most of Shane's attempts at public affection. The incidents at Hayden's house and the airport both being cases in point.

Sometimes, however, his husband manages to catch him off guard.

An example of this is the next effort of the year, which prompts a call from their local police station. Ilya, of course, doesn't know that this is a PDA attempt on Shane's part and – quite justifiably – spends the next thirty minutes losing his mind.

In Shane's defense, it wasn't meant to involve the police, a fact he'll apologize for many times in the months to come. This, despite Ilya's assurances that the ensuing chain of events happened through no fault of his own.

The call itself happens on a Friday.

Leading up to the phone call, Shane has left on a morning errand run, leaving Ilya home alone with Anya. It's a reasonably warm morning, and so, the door to the garden is open, letting in some much-welcome fresh air.

When the phone rings, Ilya almost declines the call. As a rule, he doesn't pick up unless he knows the number, but since Shane is not at home, there's that ever-present worry that something might have happened, and Ilya, God forbid, declines a call from the hospital informing him that his husband has been in an accident.

Of course, unknown numbers usually turn out to be telemarketers or journalists, but on this morning, Ilya flies up off the couch when an Officer Keys from their local police station requests to know whether she is speaking to Ilya Rozanov.

Ilya swears that his heart stops beating in his chest. Theoretically, he knows that this is impossible since he's still conscious, but he has no better words to describe the feeling.

He's not sure what he says but he must have said something because after what feels like a lifetime of terror, the officer informs him that she is in possession of his dog.

For a moment, Ilya freezes, a rush of overwhelming relief coursing through his body as he realizes that Shane is safe. He's probably cooped up in their local Loblaws, antagonizing over which brand of protein powder to buy after his favorite one went bankrupt.

Then, the words register and – “What did you say?” The words escape Ilya in a confused jumble, and he must repeat them before the officer understands him.

There's a rustle of papers on the other end of the line. Then, the officer continues. “I have a dog here, by the name of Appelby's Shooting Star, registered to one Ilya Rozanov. That is you, correct?” It takes a moment for Ilya to remember that Appelby's Shooting Star is Anya's official Canadian Kennel Club name.

Ilya's mouth has gone dry, and so, it takes him a few tries to confirm that this is correct.

"And you are Ilya Rozanov?"

Not a hockey fan, Ilya surmises. Out loud, he tells her that there must be talk of a misunderstanding. "I am home with my dog right now," he says.

There's another rustle of papers, before Officer Keys's words sound through the speakers. "You can confirm that you have eyes on your dog right now?"

Ilya looks around to do just that, except... Anya's dog bed is empty. This doesn't deter him, though, and he walks around the couch to check out her other hiding spots only... these are empty as well.

"One moment," Ilya says, and he exits the door to the garden, calling her name.

He ignores a sigh on the other end of the line, as well as the pit of unease that's beginning to form in his stomach. "She must be upstairs," he declares.

He doesn't know if he says the words for the sake of the officer or the sake of himself, but a few more seconds, and he's running upstairs, two steps at a time.

Sometimes, when Shane isn't home, Anya will sneak into their bed for a nap, and Ilya will let her, except now, the bed is empty.

"Sir..." Officer Keys is quite noticeably losing her patience, "You *are* the owner of Appleby's Shooting Star? A fluffy, little thing?"

Ilya bites his tongue before answering that her name is Anya and that, despite being unseasonably fluffy, she is most certainly not a *thing*.

Unwittingly, his mind goes to her previous owners, those who'd left her out in the cold. If Anya really is gone... Ilya bites his thumb. He can't stand the thought of Anya thinking that he and Shane would do the same thing.

"She is okay?" he manages to choke out. Then, he calls out her name again, half-heartedly, slowly accepting that Anya is not, in fact, in the house with him.

"According to the vet, she is safe and sound," Officer Keys informs him.

Despite the assurance, Ilya feels deeply uncomfortable.

How did someone manage to kidnap Anya? Did they take her from the garden? Did someone enter the house? Did Ilya forget to lock the door? The gate? More importantly, *why* would anyone want to kidnap her? What if someone had entered their house when Ilya wasn't home? What if someone had entered the house when *Shane* was home and taken *him*?

A terrible thought strikes Ilya. What if someone *has* taken Shane, and Ilya doesn't know?

“If you could come down to the station, sir, you can pick up your dog and take her home with you.” The officer’s voice cuts through the phone, and Ilya nods, too dazed for words, before realizing that Officer Keys can’t see him. He emits an unintelligible noise and hopes that she understands the sentiment.

Once they hang up, Ilya calls Shane, frustrated when it goes to voicemail. He tries him two more times while searching for his wallet and keys. Then, he leaves him a voicemail, and, for good measure, a text too, explaining what has happened.

Fifteen minutes later, he’s bursting through the doors to the station, just barely restraining himself from rushing the counter. He waits impatiently while the people in front of him complete their business. Then he dashes forward, puts both hands on the desk and requests to see Anya.

“Ah yes.” The clerk looks up. “Stolen dog, right?”

Another non-hockey fan.

Ilya nods, and the clerk picks up the phone to call someone. A few minutes later, a female officer appears from a hallway. *Officer Keys*, Ilya supposes.

She shakes his hand and asks him to follow her down the hall. Ilya does, looking anxiously around for any signs of Anya. When they finally come to a stop outside an office, Ilya can hear the excited padding of paws on the other side.

“She’s right in here,” Officer Keys says, before opening the door to let him inside.

The dog is unmistakably Anya, and Ilya just about manages a sigh of relief before she rushes towards him, tail wagging so enthusiastically that Ilya’s heart breaks a little.

“What happened?” he asks. He tries to comfort Anya who, quite frankly, is too excited considering the circumstances. Poor thing has no idea she’s just been dognapped.

“Vet flagged it,” Officer Keys replies, “It’s quite common, actually. A man entered the practice about an hour ago and tried to change her name and contact info. It is unfortunately a common way to steal a dog. Thankfully, the man was unsuccessful.”

“A man?” Ilya’s voice trails off. “What man? I don’t –“ Ilya is still confused, “How did he even get to her?”

He tries to tighten his grip on Anya, but Anya darts away, tail wagging. She runs to a door at the far end of the room and makes a little twirl in front of it. Then, she looks imploringly at Ilya.

The trick does nothing to lessen the fracture in Ilya’s heart. Shane taught her that trick over the summer, and she’s been proudly showing it off ever since. What if he’d never gotten to see it again?

“I assure you, sir, you have nothing to worry about.” Officer Key’s voice cuts through the jumble of thoughts. “The man is being questioned right this minute, and we’re going to

ensure that nothing like this will happen again.”

“But I *do* worry,” Ilya says, an edge of frustration to his voice, “Anya was home with me an hour ago. Are you saying this man was in our house? What would have happened if my husband was at home with her? How do I know that *he* wasn’t the target? What if – “ Ilya swallows and tries to temper his panic, “Who *is* this person?”

As if on cue, a voice rises on the other side of the door, and Anya lets out a small bark.

“Anya.” Ilya calls her name, but Anya doesn’t respond. Absentmindedly, he wonders how quickly a dog might develop Stockholm Syndrome.

Ilya looks at his phone again, wondering why Shane still hasn’t answered him. It adds to his growing feeling of unease, a feeling which doesn’t dissipate as Anya keeps twirling in front of the door. The voices on the other side grow louder still, and if Ilya didn’t know any better...

Before Officer Keys gets the chance to stop him, Ilya crosses the space, gathers Anya in his arms and opens the door. On the other side, he finds a square room, dim with a single light bulb casting shadows across its inhabitants.

It takes Ilya a moment to realize what exactly he’s looking at, and then –

“Shane?” Ilya’s voice sounds uncertain even to his own ears, but it is indeed Shane who turns in his chair, eyes darting between himself and Anya. The latter lets out a content little growl upon seeing her dad, and Ilya has to reel in her excitement as she squirms in his arms.

“Sir...” Officer Keys has followed him, “I understand that you are upset, but you *cannot* be in here.”

“*Anya...*” Shane’s voice sounds breathless, shoulders slumping in obvious relief at the sight of her. Then, he turns his attention to Ilya, eyes filled with pure frustration. “Babe,” he pleads, “You need to tell these – *people* – that I have not attempted to kidnap our dog.”

Ilya blinks a few times, mind reeling. From Anya’s supposed kidnapping to Shane’s apparent arrest to the fact that Shane just called him *babe* in front of people, he isn’t sure what to say. As troubled as he is by the sight of Shane in here, he’s also immensely relieved to find that a stranger hasn’t forced their way into their home.

“*Ilya.*” There’s a desperate edge to Shane’s voice. “Get me out of here? Please?”

And that – is something he can do.

Ilya must check himself as a sudden surge of protectiveness overwhelms him. It feels blinding in its intensity, growing only bigger as he takes in the scene in front of him. “What’s going on here?” he asks.

Shane and – an interrogation officer, Ilya thinks – are sitting on opposite sides of a steel table, his husband’s fingers fidgeting in front of him. There’s a single piece of paper clasped within his hand, and he seems to hold on to it as one would a lifeline. He keeps darting nervous

looks towards Anya, who has begun to whine, clearly adding to Shane's distress. This, in turn, does nothing to pacify Anya, who continues to whine, aching to provide Shane with the comfort he so obviously craves.

"Excuse me." The interrogation officer looks at Officer Keys, eyes darting between her and Ilya. "What is he doing in here?" He raps his knuckles against the table, and Shane flinches.

It takes every bit of Ilya's self-control not to react. In his arms, Anya lets out a howl, paws moving helplessly in an effort to bridge the gap between herself and Shane. Shane turns to look at her again, a pained look on his face.

Ilya takes a steadying breath before turning towards the officer. "You say this man has kidnapped this dog?" He flinches at the sound of his accent, but caught between Shane's distress and Anya's torment, he's thankful that he manages to get the words out at all.

"That is correct, sir." The interrogation officer nods. "Although the legal term would be stealing seeing as she is not human."

Ilya goes to protest but doesn't get the chance. At the same time, Shane's face morphs into one of complete indignation, tearing his gaze away from Anya to glare at the officer. "Anya is part of our family." He lets out an angry huff. "I did not *steal* her. I took her to the vet. That's all I did." Shane sends a pleading look in Ilya's direction as if he's afraid Ilya might be thinking the same thing.

Ilya tries to send his husband a reassuring look. It causes him physical pain that he cannot go to comfort him, but judging by the look of the interrogator, he should not move closer right now. Especially not with Anya behaving the way she does. Ilya tries to soothe her, but their fluffball is having none of it.

"Listen." He keeps his voice neutral in an attempt to appease the officers. "I am afraid you have made a mistake. This man is my husband. This is our dog. Our *shared* dog. Shane's, too. He has every right to take her to the vet."

The man at the table pauses for a bit, lowering his gaze to the papers. "According to the vet's registry, this dog belongs to you alone." His eyes look up to meet Ilya's. "And Mr. —" He has to consult his papers again, "Mr. *Hollander* here is distorting the truth. He took her to the vet this morning in an attempt to change her registered name as it is stated in the Canadian Kennel Club."

Ilya throws a confused look in Shane's direction, but his husband is still looking at the officer, who continues without preamble.

"This name change would involve not only her official papers but her chip as well. You would have been unable to reclaim her, had Mr. Hollander been successful in his endeavors."

Ilya is glad that he's holding Anya, otherwise he might have been driven to tear his hair out. "As I just told you, *Mr. Hollander* and I share this dog. He is perfectly within his rights to change her name." He ignores his own confusion as to why Shane would do this and focuses instead on the task at hand. "If my husband is not listed as an owner, then I will change this

as soon as possible. Right now, if you'll let us go." He puts extra emphasis on the plural pronoun.

The officer seems to hesitate, and Ilya tries a different tactic.

"I am grateful," he says, surprising himself with how easy the lie rolls off his tongue, "Very grateful that you worry about our dog. But there has been a mistake here. My husband took her to the vet this morning to change her name. That is all. He did not – steal her." The word sounds dirty in his mouth.

The interrogation officer and Officer Keys share a look. "Does this mean that you won't press charges?" he asks of Ilya.

Ilya lets out an exasperated sigh, accent thickening with the effort. "Yes, I won't press charges," he says, "Now may I *please* take my husband and our dog home?"

For a long while, no one says anything.

Ilya looks at Shane whose knuckles have turned white with how tight he's clutching the paper. It makes his scars stand out, and Ilya's hands itch to reach out and soothe the tension.

Then, just as Ilya's patience begins to falter, the officer deflates, waving his arm in a defeated gesture. "Very well," he says, "It seems there's been a misunderstanding. We apologize, Mr. –" He consults the papers yet again, "Hollander. It seems you have done nothing wrong, and you are free to go."

Shane rises from his chair so quickly that Ilya has to rush forward to steady him. He wastes no time, either, thrusting Anya into his arms. His husband is quick to tighten his grip around her, ignoring every self-imposed hygiene lesson as he presses quick kisses all over her face. Anya's tail begins to wag, and Ilya catches more than one apology whispered against the warmth of her fur.

He sends Officer Keys a dirty look, not attempting to mask his thoughts as to who should be doing the apologizing here. She stays quiet, however, and so does he, letting his hand come to rest against the small of Shane's back. He can feel the anxiety thrumming beneath his skin, and now that they're free to go, Ilya is quick to coax him out of the room, hand never wavering as he does.

"Let's get out of here," he mumbles. Shane lets out a small hum, all his attention focused on Anya as Ilya leads them out of the station.

When they finally reach the parking lot, Ilya opens the door for him and helps him secure his seatbelt as Shane refuses to let go of Anya. Once he's sure that they're both tugged in, he closes the door and jogs around to the driver's seat. He settles in beside them but doesn't turn on the engine.

He Ilya shifts in his seat so that he can look at Shane. His husband has taken to drawing small patterns across Anya's back, and even as Ilya tries to catch it, Shane refuses to meet his gaze.

“Sweetheart.” Ilya makes sure that his voice is as gentle as possible, not wanting to add to Shane’s already growing anxiety. “Do you want to tell me what happened in there? Why did – how did you end up in there?”

Unwittingly, an image of Shane being stuffed into the back of a police car enters his mind. He does his best to dispel it, not sure that he can keep the anger out of his voice unless he does. He doesn’t want Shane to think that any of this is in any way directed at him.

“My car is still at the vet’s,” Shane says, in lieu of an answer, and Ilya reaches out a hand to rest on his knee. When Shane doesn’t pull back, Ilya gives it a squeeze.

“Bood or Hazy can help me retrieve the car later,” he says, “For now, I’m more worried about you. Moya lyubov... walk me through it, will you?”

Shane’s eyes are still trained on Anya who is now snuggled contentedly against his chest. She has buried her nose in his sweatshirt, emitting small snores as she dozes off.

“I just – “ Shane’s face screws up in frustration, “This isn’t how it was supposed to go.”

No shit, Ilya thinks. First thing in the morning, they’re finding another veterinary practice. Then, maybe he can get Yuna to sue their asses. Knowing Yuna, it won’t take a lot of convincing.

Next to him, Shane’s fists clench in frustration, right one still holding the paper, and Ilya reaches out to stop him. “Whatever happened you can tell me.”

“It was meant to be a surprise,” Shane mumbles.

“What was, sweetheart?”

“The name change.”

The name change. It seems the officers were right about that, at least, although Ilya has no idea why Shane would wish to do this in the first place – and without talking to Ilya about it.

However, what Ilya told the officers was also true. Anya is just as much Shane’s as she is Ilya’s, and if Shane wishes to change her name, then he has all the right. Knowing his husband, he must have had a good reason to do it.

Ilya squeezes Shane’s hand between his own. “We can go change the name together when you’re up for it.”

Shane lets out a snuffle, and Ilya’s heart clenches. He’s not in fact sure that it *is* possible to change a dog’s CKC name, but if Shane went to these lengths to try, then it must have been important to him.

“What do you want to call her?” Ilya asks.

At first, Shane doesn’t say anything. Then, his hand begins to uncurl from around the paper that he’s clutching. He extends his hand, slowly, indicating that it’s all right for Ilya to take it.

Ilya does, carefully unfolding it.

There's a lot of legalese on the page, so it takes him a few seconds to understand what he's looking at. Once he does, his world comes to a complete standstill.

In his hands, he's holding a petition to change Anya's CKC name to **Anya Hollander-Rozanova**.

It feels like the breath has been punched from his gut. Ilya can't look away. His eyes stare at the name until spots cloud his vision and he must remind himself to blink.

Quietly, Shane's voice filters through the ringing in his ears.

"I heard you at Hayden's birthday party," he says, "Before – you know. I didn't mean to eavesdrop, but you sounded so sad when you said you had forgotten what it felt like to share a name with someone you love."

Ilya looks up to meet Shane's eyes, and Shane stumbles on. "I went to change our names – Anya's and mine both. I didn't want you to feel alone," he adds, voice small but determined, "I never want you to feel alone."

Ilya literally has no words. "You – changed your name?"

Shane nods. "A couple of weeks ago," he whispers, "But the vet didn't have an opening until today."

There's a line of worry, Ilya notes, nestled right between his eyebrows. Ilya wants to obliterate that worry as soon as possible. He opens his mouth to do just that, to reassure him that he has *nothing* to be worried about, but he finds that he cannot. Words are failing him in both his languages. His chest feels tight. It feels like his heart is expanding. Like it cannot possibly contain all the love that he has for this man.

Shane bites his lip. Then, hands shaking, he reaches for his wallet and pulls out his driver's license. When he shows it to Ilya, the words **Shane Hollander-Rozanov** stand out in shiny, black lettering.

For a moment, Ilya stays frozen. Then, he leans forward and presses his lips to Shane's in an uncoordinated mess. The angle is awkward as Anya is pressed between them, still sleeping after all the excitement of the morning. But Ilya doesn't want to change a thing. He tries to pour every single emotion into that kiss, letting out an involuntary sob in the process.

"*Baby...*" Shane whispers the word against his skin, lips picking up tears that Ilya didn't realize were falling. Ilya raises his hands to tangle in Shane's hair, letting out a shuttering breath as their foreheads meet.

"I'm sorry I messed it up," Shane says, and Ilya lets out a wounded noise, "It seems you cannot change CKC names. At the very least not without the owner present." He gives a hollow laugh.

“You haven’t messed anything up,” Ilya says, “Absolutely nothing, you hear me? You’re perfect, my love, absolutely perfect. And you *are* Anya’s parent, don’t you ever doubt that.”

Their eyes meet, breath mingling in the space between them. “You’re sure?” Ilya asks, searching Shane’s eyes for any signs of doubt, “You’re sure you want to share my name?” He tries to temper the hope, even as it simmers beneath his skin. He doesn’t want Shane to do this unless he wants to. Unless he’s absolutely certain.

Ilya’s worry, however, turns out to be unfounded. He watches as a determined pout overtakes Shane’s features. “I’m sure,” Shane says, words trailing off before adding, “And so is Anya.”

Ilya lets out an incredulous laugh, happiness bursting forth from every pore.

“I don’t know why I didn’t think of it sooner,” Shane says, “I should have done it after the wedding. Would have wanted to,” he adds, “If only I’d thought of it.”

“Don’t you dare apologize,” Ilya whispers, “It was a chaotic time. Wonderful, but chaotic.”

“And you’re okay with it?” Shane asks, that line of worry once again making its way onto his face, “You don’t mind that I took your name without asking?”

Ilya’s fingers rise to smooth the skin across his brow. “What’s mine is yours,” he whispers, “And it’s beautiful. Hollander-Rozanov. Most beautiful name I ever heard.”

Shane hums. “Promise?” he whispers.

“I promise,” Ilya says and presses another kiss to his lips. He lowers his head to give Anya a kiss as well. She settles further into Shane’s arms but doesn’t wake.

“Anya Hollander-Rozanova,” Ilya says, lips curling around a smile, “It sounds like the name of a princess.”

“I think so,” Shane says, a shy smile overtaking his features. There’s a blush spreading across his cheeks, accentuating his freckles, and Ilya thinks he might die with how much he loves him.

“All right.” Ilya leans back and turns on the engine. “We need to go right now.”

“Home?” Shane gives him a hopeful look, and Ilya is only partly apologetic when he shakes his head. “Soon,” he promises as Shane’s face falls. “We need to make a stop along the way.”

Another frown appears on Shane’s face. “I don’t think I’m in a state to drive right now,” he says.

“We’re not getting your car,” Ilya says, as he pulls out of the parking lot, “Bood will do that later. We’re going to city hall.”

“City hall?”

Ilya hums. “I don’t want to be left out of the Hollander-Rozanov household.”

Shane's breath hitches, and Ilya reaches for his hand. "City hall and then the jeweler's. I want it engraved on our wedding rings."

"In that case –" Shane's voice shakes, and Ilya tangles their fingers together, giving them a reassuring squeeze, "You need to go to ServiceOntario," Shane says, "Take the left up here."

"Left it is."

Ilya knows that there is a ridiculously big smile taking up most of his face, but he doesn't attempt to restrain it. He sneaks glances at Shane as he drives, and Shane tells him to mind the road, reminds him that Anya is in the car with them.

That night, when they go to bed, there's an interim driver's license folded into Ilya's wallet. It carries the name **Ilya Hollander-Rozanov** and it's waiting to be replaced with a real card. He decided to get rid of his middle name in the process, lifting a weight he didn't know he was carrying.

Next to the driver's license, there's another piece of paper requesting a name change for Anya. He'll have to see who to bribe in the morning to make it real. Shane wants it, and whatever Shane wants, Shane will get. Ilya will make sure of it.

For now, he tightens his hold around Shane's middle. He's not as close as he usually is, Anya nestled safely between them. Shane didn't want her to wake in the night, scared of being separated from them.

He looks at his husband in the dim light of the bedroom. Tonight, Shane's nose scrunches in his sleep, not unreminiscent of the way Anya's does. Both have been asleep for a while, but Ilya is content to lie here, reveling in the fact that his family is safe in his arms. He's made an emergency appointment with Galina in the morning to talk everything over, refusing to let the fears of the day fester.

For now, though, Ilya lets out a peaceful sigh. He could get used to this, he thinks. And if one day they make room for a crib in the corner, Ilya would not complain about another Hollander-Rozanov taking up space in the room. Preferably more than one, but he'll let Shane decide on that.

Things calm down after the vet incident. They avoid any further run-ins with the Voyageurs, there are no more flight cancellations, and no one gets arrested again. Shane does, however, end up in the hospital.

For the second year in a row, he sustains an injury right as the playoffs start. This one, thankfully, is less serious than the previous one, but it still means that Shane's sitting out during their first two games. As there isn't talk of a head injury, he is, however, allowed at the arena this time, meaning that he gets to cheer Ilya on from the comfort of the team bench.

Shane claims that he isn't cheering on Ilya specifically, that he's there to cheer on their whole team, but Ilya knows what Shane looks like when he's lying.

It still thrills Ilya that he gets to have Shane at his games now. For so many years, Ilya had no one to cheer on him. Svetlana would come, occasionally, but the one person Ilya wanted above anyone else was always painfully absent.

This was, of course, natural due to the nature of their relationship and their conflicting schedules, but it didn't make the pain any easier to bear. For this reason, seeing Shane sitting on their bench, eyes trained on him, still sends a thrill through him. Later, he'll tease Shane about forgetting to pay attention to anyone else, and Shane will blush as he denies it.

For now, though, he's soaking in the attention, making sure not to miss a single play with Shane's eyes trained on him. He scores two goals during the first two periods, and after each one, he blows his husband a kiss, taking in the dopey look on his face each time.

They're about to start the third period when Shane beckons him over.

"Any notes?" Ilya can't help the smirk that crosses his face.

Shane rolls his eyes. "You're playing a perfect game, asshole, stop fishing for compliments."

Ilya clicks his tongue, smile growing even wider. "Such a mouth on you, Hollander."

"You like it."

"Maybe I do."

Ilya really hopes his opponents aren't looking at him right now. His usually cold on-ice exterior is currently replaced by an undoubtedly love-struck expression. He can't find it in himself to care too much, however, with the way Shane's looking at him right now.

"Seriously though." Shane's voice turns sober. "You're playing absolutely beautiful."

For a second, Ilya's lip begins to wobble, and he knows that *that* cannot happen before the end of the game. Therefore, he lets his hand rest above his heart, hoping to convey everything that he's feeling.

Shane's eyes go soft, and he gives him a small nod, shows him that he understands.

Ilya clears his throat. "I should go back out there," he says.

"You should." Shane nods again.

"You need to get better," Ilya adds, "I miss playing next to Shane Hollander."

"Again with the Hollanders." Shane gives him an amused smile. "Did you hit your head when I wasn't looking?" He makes a show out of checking him over, and Ilya frowns, not understanding what he's saying.

Then, Shane steps back, turns around and – *oh*.

There, displayed on the jersey for all to see, is the name **Hollander-Rozanov** spelled out in the trademark font of the team's jersey.

"That's not the one you were wearing earlier." It's all Ilya can think of to say. Shane got dressed, before they left for the arena, and Ilya would definitely have noticed if he'd been wearing that earlier.

"I had Harris make it for me." There's a pleased expression on his husband's face, and it doesn't fade even as they're beginning to attract the attention of the arena.

Ilya is distantly aware that people are cheering, some of them letting out wolf whistles and catcalls, too. He tunes it all out. Shane looks so proud of himself that Ilya wants to eat him up. Wants to freeze this moment and cherish it until the end of time.

"Can't believe you're making me play a whole other period with that on your back."

Shane's smile turns, if possible, even brighter. "If you're lucky, I'll keep wearing it when we go home tonight."

Ilya's mouth goes dry, all coherent thoughts escaping him.

Although they've both been Hollander-Rozanovs for a few months now, they'd decided to keep playing under their former names. 'Hollander' and 'Rozanov' were obviously shorter, and with the two of them on the same team, they didn't want to add to the confusion on the ice.

This, however, is making Ilya rethink all of their previously laid-out plans. He sees it in Shane's eyes, too, and his husband shoos him away before Ilya gets the chance to become even more distracted.

"You have a game to win," he tells him, and then, because his husband is a little brat, he adds, "I want a hat-trick."

"Oh, you do, do you?"

Shane nods, and Ilya wiggles his brow. "Better go score my husband another goal then."

"You better, Hollander-Rozanov."

"I'll do my best, Hollander-Rozanov." And then, just for good measure, he presses a kiss to Shane's cheek, ignoring their teammates' teasing as he returns to the ice.

Two minutes later, he scores the goal.

As they enter the awards for a second year in a row, Ilya tries not to let it bother him too much that they missed their chance at the cup again. He knows it bothers Shane immensely, and Ilya figures that one of them should keep a cool head. At least in public.

It's a small mercy that Hunter didn't win it either, and so, Ilya suffers through a conversation with him before they have to sit down. Shane thinks it's absolutely ridiculous, but Ilya still hasn't forgiven him for his check against Shane the previous year.

Hunter knows this, and, Ilya thinks, respects it too. He'd revealed last summer at the camps that he probably wouldn't have forgiven him either, if the roles had been reversed, and Ilya had landed Kip in the hospital, however unintentionally.

"You made one hell of a run for it."

Ilya glares as Hunter shakes Shane's hand, and he makes sure to grasp Kip's for just a little longer. He doesn't miss the look of amusement that flashes across Hunter's face, and Ilya's scowl grows, if possible, even bigger.

"Thank you."

Shane is, as always, polite, but he doesn't miss the change in Ilya's mood. With his other hand, he gives him a reassuring squeeze, and Ilya once again revels in the fact that he gets to hold Shane's hand in public. A part of him wonders if the feeling will ever go away. A part of him hopes it never does.

Shane continues to make small talk, and Ilya is only too happy to listen. At some point, a few of their teammates join the circle along with Hayden and Jackie and J.J.

It's nice, Ilya muses, to be in public like this and surrounded by friends.

However, as the saying goes, all good things must come to an end, and they do a bit too soon for Ilya's liking.

It's the sudden tightening of Shane's grip that first alerts Ilya to the fact. It gives him a few seconds to compose himself before he looks up and sees that Comeau has joined their circle.

Immediately, the mood shifts. Hayden's and Jackie's faces go uncharacteristically tight, and so does J.J.'s although he's better at hiding it. Shane's gaze fixates somewhere on his left shoe, and Ilya is the only one of the party willing to look up and meet Comeau's eyes.

Hunter and Kip along with the Bood and Hayes remain utterly confused as they look between their friends and the newcomer.

"Rozanov." Comeau gives him a small nod before turning to Shane. "Hollander... Long time, no see."

Shane shifts his weight so that he's leaning against Ilya, and Comeau's lips twist into a taunting smirk. Ilya, in turn, bares his teeth, and Comeau lets out a delighted laugh.

Hunter, who's quick to realize what's happening, takes a small step forward. "Comeau," he says, voice pleasant despite the look on his face, "Bad luck this year, huh? Second year you haven't made it into the playoffs. That's rough, man."

While Ilya's grateful for Hunter's attempt at distraction, he also knows enough of Comeau now to know that this won't help their situation. He can feel Shane's nails digging into his palm and knows that he's thinking the same thing.

Ilya is torn. He wants nothing more than to whisk his husband away, to hide him from the pains of their world, but he also knows that this is not going to go away. And as long as Shane stays his ground, Ilya won't force him to leave.

Beside them, Comeau lets out a humorless laugh. "That's funny," he says, "I was just about to say the same to Hollander."

Ilya is about to retort that his husband has just made it into the playoffs for a fifth year in a row, but Shane squeezes his hand before he gets the chance.

"You think there's something wrong with my playing?" Shane asks.

Ilya holds his breath as he waits for Comeau's respond. The man doesn't disappoint.

"I think you've been the best for so long that you haven't noticed your game's been lacking," he says.

"Is that so?" There's a dangerous lilt to Shane's voice, one Ilya hasn't heard since that day in Hayden's living room. "Enlighten me, will you?"

Hayden and J.J. have started fidgeting, and beside them, Jackie looks downright murderous. Hunter keeps looking at Ilya, silently asking him if he should step in, and Hayes and Bood are still confused, although it's clear that by now, they have branded Comeau as Public Enemy Number One.

"Well..." Comeau gives an impatient shrug, reveling in his audience. "It's simple, isn't it? You've played professional hockey for thirteen years now. For eleven of those, you have been nothing short of excellent, but for the last two you have been somewhat..." His eyes cut to Ilya's. "*Softer.*" He looks back at Shane. "You would agree, no?"

Once again, Comeau has managed to stun Ilya into complete silence. Looking around, however, he can see that the feeling is mutual. In fact, the only person who appears to be unfazed is his husband.

He straightens beside him and doesn't so much as quiver as he answers his former teammate. "It is true," Shane says, voice steady even as his cheeks redden with rage, "I *have* been playing professional hockey for thirteen years. However..." His voice trails off, letting Comeau stew before he continues, "There's something else I've been doing for thirteen years, too."

It's all the warning Ilya gets before Shane grabs his face and presses their lips together.

For a moment, Ilya is stunned. Then, he feels his husband's tongue press against his lips, and Ilya decides *screw it*. He snakes his arms around Shane.

If the fucker wants a show, he'll get one.

Shane lets out a gasp as Ilya replies with like-minded enthusiasm, dipping him in the process. Shane's hands sneak into his curls, anchoring himself, as he gives as good as he gets. Ilya moans into the kiss, and he is – very distantly – aware that Comeau lets out an indignant sputter. Mostly, he's aware of Shane though, and the way his fingers trail across his scalp. *He's going to leave marks*, Ilya thinks, and he hums into the kiss, encouraging him.

When they finally pull apart, Comeau is gone. They are met, instead, with the stunned faces of those around him. Ilya ignores them all in favor of his husband.

Shane, Ilya notes, looks absolutely wrecked, and he reaches out a hand to wipe at his lips, knowing he'll be mortified tomorrow if any pictures make their way into the media.

It turns out, however, that the kiss isn't the reason that their audience looks so stunned, but rather the fact that –

“Thirteen years?”

Hunter looks absolutely stunned as he looks at them. “You’ve been doing *that* –” he waves an arm between them, “For *thirteen* years?” Beside him, Kip puts a comforting hand on his shoulder, but Hunter doesn't seem to notice.

His sentiment, it seems, is shared by more than a few people around them, all of whom have paused to listen.

“Well...” Ilya trails off as his trademark smirk makes its way onto his face. “We’ve been doing other things, too.” He wiggles his eyebrows, and Shane has enough presence of mind to elbow him in the ribs.

“On that note...” Ilya turns to his husband, ignoring Hunter and the others around him. “Do you want to get out of here?”

At first, Shane looks at his husband like he's grown another head. Then, any signs of indignation morph into ones of pure relief, and he nods. “You lead the way,” he says.

Ilya smirks. “Your wish is my command, Mr. Hollander-Rozanov.” He grabs Shane's hand and turns his back to their audience.

This time, as they leave, Ilya feels nothing but happiness coursing through his veins.

Still no Stanley Cup kiss! Please forgive me.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!