

The Easy Way

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The Easy Way

by [MooMischief](#)

Summary

“Do not make me do work. I just retired.”

“You did. You’ve had an amazing career and you’re an amazing husband and, as my WAG, it’s my job to keep you happy. So I’ll make it happen. I’ll get you a baby. But, we’ve got to figure out logistics to get one.”

“We just do it the easy way.”

Notes

I just know they'd be into this.

This has gotten out of hand and is now a whole story.

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

Chapter 1

“Well?” He said, shucking his shirt off and grinning at Shane, arms spread wide in front of their bed. “Tell me again.” He said, unbuttoning his pants.

“Congratulations.” Shane said with a smile, pulling his own shirt over his head and throwing it into the laundry hamper.

He’d finished his year with a Stanley Cup, bringing Ottawa from a failing team to a dynasty. His teammates had cried and hugged him, he’d had a delicious dinner and convinced Shane to eat more cake than he’d had since their wedding.

He was retired.

The house was quiet when they finally arrived home and made their way upstairs. Anya was with Yuna and David, safe from the festivities of his party. They’d pick her up tomorrow before heading to the cottage for the summer.

Ilya prowled closer, “I think more.” He purred, hooking his thumbs into the loops on Shane’s pants and tugging on him

A breath of a laugh and Shane’s hands came to rest on his shoulders. “Fuck off, what more do you want? You already got a special ring this year.” From winning the Stanley Cup, with his husband.

But that wasn’t really what he wanted, especially not from Shane. “Oh Ilya, you are amazing.” He said, trying to overlay a Canadian accent over his Russian one. “Perfect on ice. Most beautiful.” He leaned down and pressed a soft kiss on his husband’s cheek. “I will miss you forever, and will quit hockey because I am worse than you.”

Shane barked out a laugh, his knee coming up to knock against Ilya’s. The reason he was retiring, or at least a year or two earlier than they’d initially discussed. “My knee works fine still, actually-“

Ilya knocked his own knee back, slotting his thigh between Shane’s legs and pressing up. “Shocking since you are on them so much.”

“Congratulations, moy lyubimiy.” Jesus Christ, he sounded so Canadian and clunky and Ilya thought he might come in his pants immediately. “You have won Cups, had an amazing career and you’re going out on top.” Shane said with a grin.

“And I am the most beautiful.” Ilya said, moving to mouth at Shane’s neck.

“Definitely the most beautiful.” Shane agreed.

“And have the biggest cock.” He pushed, thrusting his hips forward.

“And a huge 7 and a half inch cock.” Shane said mockingly and Ilya scoffed, pulling his head back with a glare.

“9 inches.” He argued.

“Don’t make me get the ruler again.” Shane retorted, pulling back and yanking his pants down and moving towards the closet.

Ilya smirked and pushed his own pants down, yelling after him, "And you will quit hockey so you do not win more cups than me."

"I already have more cups than you and I'm planning for at least two more." Shane yelled back. "But it will be nice to come home to you every night." He said with a shy smile as he came back to the room.

God Ilya loved him. Maybe from the minute he'd introduced himself to Ilya at the rink, the minute he'd seen his freckles and had an awkward handshake and, discreetly, checking out his ass as he walked away. The last few years, unhidden and uninhibited, had been perfect. It felt like they'd never been apart, not after being on the same team, and even with all the time they spent together Ilya always wanted more.

More time, more kisses, more touching, more everything.

He wanted everything with Shane.

"I will travel on roadies?" He asked, sliding himself onto the bed on the top sheet covering their bed. They'd learned a couple years ago to leave the blanket at the end of the bed until they were actually falling asleep to avoid excessive laundry.

"If you want." Shane offered, stretching his arms over his head, muscles going taut. "It could be fun to sneak around in hotel rooms again." He said, prowling closer and crawling onto the bed between Ilya's legs.

"I have better idea." Ilya said, hands coming to rest at the back of Shane's neck, scratching slightly.

Shane didn't respond, but his eyes went soft and he smiled at him.

"I will become most impressive WAG." He began, holding tight when Shane rolled his eyes and made to move away. "I make Irina foundation all year round," That made Shane lock back in as they'd talked about that extensively as something they wanted to expand on in retirement, "and I raise our 5 children." And now Shane's eyes were huge and confused.

There was a beat of silence and Ilya watched several emotions play out on his husband's face in rapid succession. "Five is a lot. I thought we agreed on two." He said eventually, eyes focused and assessing.

"I must beat Pike, you know this." Shane rolled his eyes but a smile crossed his face. "Better husband, bigger cock, more cups, more children."

"I think we stick with one to start." Shane said, but his eyes were still too focused when Ilya's cock was starting to get ready for his personal celebration.

Ilya narrowed his own eyes. "Two."

"Fine, two." Shane agreed, but his eyes were assessing, too calculating while they both laid in bed in their underwear.

"Three." Ilya argued further. Shane huffed out a laugh and laid his head down on Ilya's chest without responding.

"By the second you will be home too with bum hip-" He started

"I've got at least two years left-"

"But I want a baby now." He finished firmly. "I have been waiting forever to be a Papa. I finally have time."

There was a long beat of silence. They'd been together long enough for him to know that Shane was deep in thought. His breathing was controlled and his shoulders a bit tighter than normal even as he peppered kisses along Ilya's chest.

"You're serious." He finally said, head still buried in Ilya's chest.

Ilya hummed in agreement. "Papa and Daddy. Sounds so lovely, yes?"

"We should decide if we're going to do surrogacy or adoption." Shane said, popping up with pursed lips. "I mean I haven't really done the research because I thought you wanted to wait until we were both done, but I know they both take awhile. Do you know which one you'd prefer?" He asked but kept talking before Ilya could respond. "I mean if you really want more than one maybe we -"

"Shane." Ilya groaned, throwing his head back. "Do not make me do work. I just retired."

"You did." Shane agreed, crawling up until they were nose to nose. "You've had an amazing career, and you're an amazing husband and as my WAG," Ilya snorted, "it's my job to keep you happy." He teased, making Ilya grin too. "So I'll make it happen. I'll get you a baby. But, we've got to figure out logistics to get one."

"We just do it the easy way." Ilya said, dragging his hands up Shane's back, scratching as he pulled them down, eyebrows wagging.

That adorable little crease appeared between Shane's eyes and Ilya felt his cock harden. "I'm not letting you fuck some girl on the side to get a baby." He said, both in confusion and annoyance.

"Yuck." Ilya said with a sneer, the crease between Shane's eyes smoothly minutely. "No, Shane. You have our baby." He said, thrust up and rocking their hips together.

A beat of silence, complete stillness, and then Shane let out a breathy "What?"

Ilya continued to rock until he felt some of the tension leak out of his body. "I fuck you," He whispered, hands going down to squeeze his sides, sliding around to grab his ass, "and get you pregnant."

Fuck, it sounded even better when he said it out loud.

A shuddered breath escaped Shane and he pulled back. His eyes were wide and shocked, but his pupils were huge, freckles standing starchy against pink cheeks. "Ilya you know-"

Oh god, his husband thought he was an idiot.

"Don't be boring." He said, cutting him off, squeezing his ass tightly, pulling it apart. "Tell me I can, and I will." He said, sliding his hands beneath his husband's briefs and palming his skin. His cock was already butting up, not quite wet through his briefs but sticking to his skin.

"You will?" Shane breathed and Ilya fought down a smirk of success when his hips started rocking down against him. His plush lips parted, breathing a little heavier.

"I will do my best." He said, shifting them slightly until both of their underwear had been discarded to the end of the bed. "We will practice and practice and practice." He said, voice trailing off as his cock, now hard and wanting, nestled into the crux of Shane's thigh, mouth moving down to press open mouth kisses across Shane's collar.

"Ilya." Shane moaned, tension bleeding from his shoulders and neck tilting for better access.

Victory.

“Let me, Shane.” He continued, “Let me put baby in you.” He patted his side until Shane lifted and moved to lay on his back, opening his arms as Ilya slotted between his thighs, knees knocked up.

He kissed his cheek, his eyebrow, his nose, peppering kisses all along his face as his mouth trekked down his neck. “You want it, yes?” He asked, leaving a love bite right beneath his ear. It had been years since they’d had to hide, but they still tried to keep it professional in the locker room.

But there wasn’t a locker room for Ilya anymore and they had the whole summer between the cottage and camp for him to mark his husband to his heart's content.

“Of course I want it.” Shane said, his voice quiet and reserved. “I want it more than anything.” He admitted as his hips surged up, smearing wet against his stomach.

Ilya took another shuddered breath, kissing back up until their lips connected. “Then you should ask for it.” He whispered, grinning when Shane pinched his side and threw his head back into the pillows enough to glare at him. Ilya pulled his hips back, eyes alight when he felt Shane’s hips surge up to meet him.

“I thought you were offering.” He said, but even his pinched expression betrayed him, a twinkle in his eye and nose too scrunched. His hands began petting Ilya’s sides, pressing against years of toned muscle.

“Ah, yes,” Ilya agreed, pulling himself up on his palms beside Shane’s head, “But consent is important, no?” He said, smirking further when Shane rolled his eyes.

“I want a baby. Your baby. ” Shane said, cheeks pink but his own grin fighting on his face.

“And?” Ilya said, leading, swiping blindly towards their end table until his hands connected with a bottle of lube.

“Give me one.” Shane said, his throat working and eyes blown black with lust.

Ilya tsk’d, pushing his now slicked hand between them and grabbing Shane’s cock in hand, giving it a leisurely stroke and swallowing hard when Shane’s eyes fluttered shut and his mouth opened.

“You can ask better, sweetheart. Ask me nicely and I will give you anything.” Ilya teased, releasing his husband's erection and bringing his still slick fingers lower to circle his hole.

“Please.” Shane gasped, surging into the light touch. “Please give me a baby.” He said, eye rolling back when a finger breached him, teasingly sliding in to just the first knuckle before sliding back out.

Grabbing the lube again, Ilya pulled back, sitting on his heels and pushing his finger further inside. He drizzled more on fingers, covering Shane’s dick and balls and making everything wet. He added another finger, crooking them up and smirking as Shane’s eyes flashed open and his hand grabbing the sheets in a tight fist.

“God.” Shane groaned, reaching between them to grab his cock and give it a few strokes. Ilya wanted to swat him away but before he could say anything Shane released himself and grabbed Ilya instead, smearing the remnants of the lube on him and pulling at Ilya’s cock.

It felt suddenly like he was on the precipice. He never realized how close he was until Shane started touching him. His entire focus on the way Shane was groaning and grabbing and clenching on his fingers. He had to pull back from Shane’s hand but fuck if it wasn’t a hardship.

Ilya settled for shoving another finger into his husband and using his free hand to push Shane's hand away and tightly grab the base of his dick.

"Where do I need to come?" He asked, breathing heavily and thrusting his fingers harder.

Shane's head thrashed back and he threw his hands next to his sides, grabbing the sheets and breathing hard through his mouth. "What?"

"If you want my baby, where do I need to come?" He asked once he'd regained enough control to release himself, spreading his fingers apart inside Shane's hole before hooking them.

"Inside, fuck." Shane gasped and released the sheets to grab one of his shoulders.

Ilya let out a breathy laugh. "Then stop touching me and lay back." He said, sliding his fingers out and spreading lube across his dick. "You just need to take my come." He said, sliding deep in one thrust.

A wounded noise punched out of Shane and Ilya gave himself a second to compose himself. "You are so wet for me." He grunted out, sliding out just enough to push back in. "You want it."

"Yeah, fuck, I want it." Shane agreed, eyes half lidded in the way he always seemed to get when Ilya was inside him, even after all these years.

Shane surged up, pressing his lips to the corner of Ilya's mouth as he began thrusting forward, slow, measured thrusts, more grinding forward than anything else.

"Will fuck you so good." Ilya continued, pulling back a bit more, thrusting forward harder until Shane's head fell back with his lips parted. "Fuck you until it takes." He growled. Shane whimpered and nodded.

He wanted to go slow, take his time and savor the moment of his retirement and his husband and - fuck - he never thought he'd get Shane to agree to this. Not so easily, and readily, and beautifully moaning underneath him.

Sliding his hand down his side, he cupped the back of Shane's knee, pulling his leg up and pushing it towards his shoulder.

Thanks to every god above that Shane insisted on yoga.

"Do you feel me?" Ilya murmured, pushing hard, but keeping his thrusts shallow. He knew it wouldn't be enough for Shane - Shane loved it, almost punishing in its pace.

"So deep." Ilya said, hooking Shane's leg over his shoulder and pressing down. "Can you feel me?" He said, further bending his husband in half but also giving him the ability to press his hand into his stomach.

It wasn't possible, but Ilya always felt like he could feel himself through his husband's abs, pushing into his stomach and making his own spot there, his own place inside Shane that only he would ever be in - ever be able to fill.

"Fuck, you're so deep." Shane grunted, bringing his own hand up to hold his knee back, spreading himself wide.

"I need to be." Ilya said, "I need to be so deep, come so deep inside you."

Shane let out a whimper and nodded. "More." He begged but Ilya ignored him, continuing with deep but shallow thrusts. "Fuck, Ilya, please. Give me more." He said.

But there were no wet eyes, just red, bitten lips and no breathy moans. He was being too demanding, too active in his own head for the things Ilya wanted him to do - wanted him to say.

“No need to fuck you hard.” Ilya said with a feral grin, “Just need to come inside to make baby.” He finished.

Shane spasmed around him and he swallowed hard, shaking his head. “Give it to me.” He said, using his other hand to pull his other leg out and god, it felt like Ilya had gotten deeper inside him.

“You want harder?” Ilya taunted, “Faster?”

Instead of nodding as he expected – he’d gotten more than he’d expected from Shane even agreeing to this in the first place - his husband, his perfect, perfect husband uttered the best phrase he’d ever heard.

“I want you to knock me up.” Shane whispered, looking up at him through his lashes. “Get me pregnant, Rozanov.”

All the control he’d had felt like it snapped in two. He reared back and thrust forward hard, knocking Shane up the bed and into the pillows against the headboard. He pushed himself up to his knees, bracing one hand beside Shane’s head and leaned in.

“Fuck, yes.” Ilya growled, slamming forward. “Going to come inside you.” He said, slamming forward, his hips hammering down. He pistoned his hips, hand coming to grab the side of Shane’s face and forcing them to lock eyes.

“Do you feel me?” He demanded, adjusting his hips until he was hammering into Shane’s prostate, causing his eyes to roll back and his hole to flutter again. Shane nodded mindlessly, broken moans escaping him as he thrust harder. Ilya smacked his face a bit until his eyes fluttered open, unfocused on the world, but completely locked in on Ilya.

“You need it, yes sweetheart? Need me to come inside you?” Ilya said, his hips moving quickly, feeling Shane try to buck underneath him and failing with his legs spread as they were. Instead he kept nodding, mumbling please over and over.

He moved his hand between them, pressing against his stomach. “I will come here.” He growled, the back of his hand getting wet where Shane was dripping against him, his palm pressing against his stomach. “Fill you up. Fuck you so well everyone will see. See my baby in you.”

Shane let out a broken moan, jaw falling open and head tilting back. “Yes, want everyone to see, want everyone to know.”

“Everyone will know.” Ilya agreed, pushing forward hard and grinding in, a shuddering breath escaping his lips. “See you full of me and know that I fucked a baby into you.”

“God, yes.” Shane cried out, his hips pushing up and rubbing against the back of Ilya’s hand.

He wanted it to last longer, wanted to taunt Shane more, but god he was so close and his husband was begging for his come. Ilya moved his hand, grabbing Shane’s cock in hand and stroking it in time with his punishing pace, breathing hard when Shane began nodding.

“Please, fuck - Ilya - please, please.” He begged, pulling his knee harder as if he could split himself open on Ilya cock. Ilya kept pulling him, a twist at the top and a firm on the down.

Shane’s mouth opened in a silent scream and he erupted in Ilya’s hand. Ilya lasted four more thrusts before pushing himself forward as deep as he could, holding himself still, as he came inside his husband.

He leaned down to kiss Shane, feeling him breath heavy against his lips for a second before returning the kiss, releasing his lips enough to pull back and grin.

“Do you think it took?” He quipped, and Shane let out a laugh, releasing his leg and letting it fall down to the side.

“We’ll probably need more practice. And an adoption agency. Or surrogate.” Shane said, grimacing when Ilya pulled out and rolled onto his back.

“Practice is most important.” Ilya argued, swatting at him as Shane rolled off the bed and made his way to the bathroom.

“Change the-”

“Yes, kotik, we have been together for million years. I change sheets, you come back and then you tell me how we are going to get a baby.” Ilya said, using the sheets for a cursory wipe of his own body before standing and beginning to strip the bed.

Once the sheets were changed and they were both cleaned up, they lay under the blanket, legs tangled with Ilya’s hands scratching at the base of Shane’s skull.

“Surogacy or adoption?” Shane asked quietly.

“Adoption, I think.”

Shane nodded in agreement. “We can really test nature vs nurture on hockey skills.” He said, causing Ilya to chuckle underneath him. “So that’s our plan for the cottage this summer?” He asked.

Ilya nodded. “Research for baby, practice for baby, buy things for baby.” He listed off on his fingers.

“Baby, Baby, Baby.” Shane recited. “I don’t think we actually have to buy things until we submit the application and stuff. We also probably have to talk to social workers and do some background checks and -”

“Moy lyubimiy, it has been 10 minutes since I retired.”

Shane pinched his nipple and made his squirm. “I think we need a plan. This stuff doesn’t just happen.”

“Here is the plan.” Ilya said, brushing his hands away. “We go to sleep, wake up tomorrow, you suck my cock,” Shane hit him in the chest but didn’t disagree, “we go get Anya, and then you can research while I drive us to the cottage. Okay?”

Shane let out a heavy sigh, tilting his head up to capture Ilya’s lips in a soft kiss before nodding.

“Okay.”

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

5 people told me they'd read a second chapter so now I have 10 chapters outlined.
Whoops!

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

“Did you know there is a 27 hour course we have to take?” Shane asked, scrolling through google on his phone while Ilya’s hand tapped on the steering wheel.

“Nope.” Ilya answered, unbothered.

“That’s after the application. Do you want to do private or public adoption?”

“Whatever.” Ilya said flippantly, checking his mirrors as he . “I don’t care how we get baby, we just need him to come home.”

Shane rolled his eyes and looked up from his phone. “How do you know it’s a boy? What if we get a little girl?”

Ilya shrugged. “Then we get girl. I do not care, they are not so different when they are tiny. Just poop and pee and cry and cuddle.”

“And eat.”

“Yes and eat.” Ilya said with an eye roll.

Shane picked his phone up and began reading more. He privately thought he’d rather do a private adoption, probably open since the idea of not allowing a mother to see her child seemed unkind. But also, it would be their child, not hers. I mean technically it would be hers, they were raising it. No, that wasn’t right, it would be their child.

“Would you want to do open or closed adoption?” He asked, placing his phone down.

Ilya breathed heavily through his nose. “I do not know what this means.” He said, “Baby comes home and is ours.” He said, but it sounded more like a question.

It sounded so simple when he said it. “There’s more to it than that. Like, a lot more.” Shane said, locking his phone and closing his eyes.

“We can wait.” Ilya said with a shrug. “Baby will come when baby comes. We keep trying-”

“Ilya, you know it doesn’t happen that way-”

“Shane. You are panicking about nothing. We start with application and then they will help us understand.” He said reassuringly. “We are not first people to adopt in Ottawa.”

He knew his husband was right, of course he knew he was right, but it felt like it was Shane’s responsibility to get them a baby. Ilya would be the one raising it primarily until he decided he was

ready to retire, which he wasn't sure he ever wanted to as long as his hip kept up.

"Besides," Ilya said, breaking him out of his reverie, "I need to research in Russian, you can not translate some of these things."

Well, fuck that was definitely true.

"And I have to work with Yuna on Irina Foundation, if we are doing it all year round. Then also become queen of WAGs. This will fill in-between times."

Yeah, okay, that was true too. His mom had been so excited when Ilya had brought up the idea of making the Irina Foundation an all year round operation - after school activities, long weekend camps, scholarships. She had been so thrilled she'd already outlined several things that she had cajoled Ilya into looking at when they got Anya this morning.

"I hope they know we aren't seeing them for a few days after this - I can't deal with them showing up at the cottage for 'just a second' like they do every other year." Shane groaned.

Ilya smiled and reached over to squeeze his thigh. "Then you should not tell them about our baby, Yuna will come and start building nursery."

Shane grinned and placed his hand over Ilya's, giving it a squeeze. "What kind of nursery do you want? Should we do something like a color or a theme?"

"Give me some options." Ilya said, flipping his hand and lacing their hands.

By the time they reached his parents house, Ilya had decided they should do a teddy bear theme (for Russia, he'd argued) and Shane had decided they would need it to be in neutrals because they wouldn't know the gender of their baby before they started building it.

"Pink is fine for boy. His Daddy is gay." Ilya argued, coming out of the car.

Shane smiled and shook his head. "Blue would be fine for her too then?"

"Yes, because Papa and Daddy are boys. We do whatever color we want." He agreed, causing Shane to laugh and move past him.

"We're here!" He yelled, opening the door to his parents cottage.

Anya came bursting forward, running in tight circles around his and Ilya's legs until Ilya got on his knees beside her, wincing as his right hit the floor, before cooing at her in Russian, all but laying on the floor beside her as she licked at his face.

"Hi boys!" His mom yelled come over to give them a hug. "I know you want to get to the cottage-"

"Business first, I already told Shane." Ilya said, getting up from the floor and accepting a hug as well. "You have looked at possible rinks?" He asked, as Yuna nodded and led him further into the house towards the kitchen.

Shane breathed in deeply through his nose, fighting the urge to bury himself back in his phone and keep looking into adoption.

Because they were going to have a baby.

"You okay, buddy?"

Oh shit, when did his dad come in? He gave him a hug and grabbed the offered ginger ale in his hand.

“Yeah, sorry, just a lot on my mind.” Shane said with a smile that came out more like a grimace. He should probably not say anything. He still hadn’t even downloaded the forms they needed to complete. They would be at the cottage for the next two weeks which meant they couldn’t start dealing with the house updates they’d need, like baby proofing and picking a nursery and-

“How do you have a lot on your mind?” David asked with a chuckle. “You have two weeks off. Do you think the Centaurs won’t want you as their captain?”

Shane snorted. The centaurs had all but ripped the C from Ilya’s jersey and pinned it to Shane’s when he’d retired. Bood had been content to stay alternate and Troy had taken the other slot up after Shane had shifted up.

“No, just a lot of change, ya know? Now that Ilya's retired, there are so many things to do.” Would it be weird to ask his dad to use the printer? Probably, maybe not, but he’d have to tell him why.

“Your mother is thrilled.” David said, ushering Shane towards the couch and sliding a coaster in front of him. “She says the Irina foundation is her baby now that she's retired.”

Baby.

Shane let out a strangled laugh and nodded. “Ilya too, but not like a real baby. It’s just like a holding spot for a baby.” Shut the fuck up, Shane. “I think he’s more excited to a WAG than he is to head it up. He’ll probably let mom make most of the decisions.”

David hummed and a slight flush came to his cheeks. “So, have you talked about that?” He cleared his throat a bit. “A real baby? Now that he’s retired.”

Direct confrontation had never been Shane’s strong suit. He sometimes thought he’d still be in the closet if Rose hadn’t essentially demanded he come out to her. He was bad at it but he could normally downplay it, at least with Ilya or his mom. This was new though - coming from his dad was new.

His dad, quiet and happy, interested without being overbearing. His dad, who loved him and Ilya so much, had always given them complete support even when he didn’t know exactly what was going on. His dad who was point blank asking if they were going to start having children soon.

“Yeah, we’ve, uh, we’ve been talking about it. Thinking about it, I mean.” He stuttered out, trying to be chill and not focus on the fact that he had thought of literally nothing else for the last 24 hours.

It was still all he could think about as his dad’s eyes widened, a silly grin crossing his features as he fidgeted with his own can of ginger ale.

“Well that’s great! You know we are always here to help with anything you need.” David said with a smile, rubbing at his face. “Your mother is going to be so happy-”

“Maybe we don’t tell mom yet?” Shane half begged. “We haven’t even started the process and Ilya needs to do his side of research. It said it could take up to 5 years and I don’t want us to get all excited about it if it’s not going to happen until I retire.”

I’m not going to retire, he thought privately, not until we have a baby. Maybe not until we have the second.

David’s smile didn’t diminish, but he did snort. “Ilya is probably going to spill the beans in about 10 minutes. We’ll hear something break or a scream I’m sure.” He said, jerking his hand back towards the kitchen where Ilya and his mom were discussing something about the Irina expansion.

“He said we shouldn’t tell you guys yet either.” Shane said with a furrowed brow, but he knew that was probably not true. Ilya loved his family and loved the fact that they were a family. He would want them included in this process however it happened.

Yuna would be thrilled he was sure, but Ilya was right that she would also most likely try to force her way into their home both in Ottawa and also at the cottage to try to make the space for a baby. She would have ideas and plans, maybe even name suggestions or preschools or hockey camps to get them into immediately.

Except, there wasn’t a baby yet.

In fact, Shane still had to fill out the paperwork and find out which adoption agency they would want to use, and figure out matching, and find out about open versus closed adoptions and which one Ilya would want with his own issues with losing his mother too young.

Would he want the mother involved extensively? Would they be able to parent if the biological parents were that involved? Would it be easier to use a surrogate? Maybe they should just be asking Svetlana, she would probably do it if Ilya asked. But if they decided to use a surrogate, which sperm would they use? They both had issues that they probably wouldn’t want to pass down to children, but isn’t that what all parents dealt with? Maybe he should-

“Shane Hollander!”

“Four minutes.” David said with a laugh as Yuna sped walked into the living room, eyes wide and looking damp and a huge smile on her face.

Shane froze, swallowing hard. “He said he wasn’t going to tell you.” He offered weakly, sending a half hearted glare towards his husband.

Ilya strolled in behind her, thumbs hooked into his pockets and a smirk on his face.

“Whoops.”

Yuna let out a wet laugh and lunged forward, grabbing Shane tightly. He let out a long breath and hugged her back. “We haven’t even printed out the forms yet.” He said, patting her back. “He really jumped the gun mom, nothing’s even happened yet.”

Except his internal spiral, but they probably all assumed that anyway. A byproduct of a close family.

“Tell me your plan, I know you have one.” She said, leaning back and wiping dutifully at her and looking at him expectantly.

Shane took a deep breath, looking to Ilya for support. Ilya gave him a small smile but he also looked excited. “We’re going to do adoption, I think. We didn’t even really talk about surrogacy-”

“No surrogacy.” Ilya said with a firm look. Shane hesitated for a moment before nodding in agreement.

“And so we have to do the forms, and then find an agency we want to work with and then the classes and the training and the home visit. We want a baby, we think, but maybe a toddler. Depending on the situation I think open adoption. We’re going to make the nursery teddy bear themed.”

Yuna smiled so wide, Shane was worried her face may crack. “David!” She hissed, smacking backwards towards him. “Grandma and Grandpa!” She squealed, squeezing the hand he offered tightly before reaching forward again.

“I know!” He whispered conspiratorially, squeezing back and turning back to beam at Ilya.

“So I’ll take over for the foundation?” She asked, looking between her two boys. “You’ll be so busy with a new baby.”

Ilya ts’k’d and shook his head. “No, baby will take a long time, Shane said a year or two. In between I will work on the foundation and becoming Queen WAG.” He said with an eyebrow wag.

“Don’t you mean King?” David asked with a snort.

“No.”

“This is why I didn’t want to tell you.” Shane lamented, trying to glare at his husband but finding it hard to temper down his smile. “It could be years and we have to find a good agency, which could be hard because we’re gay-”

“You are gay, I am-”

“Not the point here.” Shane said with a flush. “It could be a long time, and with the season it might be hard to do all the training classes we need. We might not even qualify until the end of the season.”

Yuna didn’t seem to hear him, her face still a picture of joy. “A baby.” She whispered instead, pulling out her own phone and finding the website Shane had been obsessing over in the car.

“We looked into adoption.” David said, causing Shane’s head to whip towards him. “Very briefly.” He amended, which didn’t do much to calm Shane’s new spiral. “When we were trying for a second. We thought about IVF too, but both had so much red tape and potential complications.”

“I didn’t know that.” Shane said, the world feeling a bit blurred around the edges.

“It was over 30 years ago.” Yuna said with a small smile. “The rules were different, the medicine less successful. It was too much of a risk and I’m glad we didn’t.” She said firmly. “I ended up with my two sons anyway.” She said, eyes still locked on the screen.

Ilya moved then, walking behind the couch and grabbing David’s shoulder in a squeeze before moving to the arm chair beside Shane. “Yuna, can you believe he didn’t want to tell you?” Ilya asked, proving to be the biggest shit stirrer even off the ice.

“You were the one!” Shane said indignantly, but he couldn’t stop his grin when he saw Ilya’s face lit up with excitement.

“I love you.” Ilya mouthed at him, jerking his head forward to where Yuna and David’s heads were bowed over her phone, David’s lips moving minutely as he read the screen.

“This is much different than when we looked into it.” David said. “A lot more red tape, but I think that’s probably a good thing.” He assured, looking up.

“We’ll need to-”

“You will need to do nothing.” Ilya said, pushing off from his knees and letting out a whistle to call Anya to them. “Shane and I need few days to be done from season. You will look, we will look, and you come for dinner this weekend to compare notes. Yes?” He asked, moving towards the door and grabbing Anya’s collar and leash.

Shane stood too, feeling weightless and floating as he nodded. “You can come for dinner on Friday? We can talk more about the foundation stuff and-”

“Or we could come tonight and grill out, maybe have a fire and talk-” Yuna started before David cut her off.

“We’ll see you on Friday.” He said with a smile. “Enjoy a couple days off because this is about to be a lot of work.”

Shane let out a laugh and followed Ilya to the door. “The baby or the foundation?” He asked as he started to let them out.

“Silly Hollander, he is talking about me becoming Queen.” Ilya said with a huff as they waved goodbye and closed the door behind them.

Once Anya was secured in the backseat and they’d made their way to the main road, Shane reached over and punched Ilya in the shoulder. “You fucking asshole, we said we weren’t going to tell them!” He said with a laugh.

Ilya pretended to rub his arm but a smile was on his face. “Yuna kept saying ‘foundation is baby, foundation is baby’. I could not let her believe I think so small.” He argued back.

Shane tilted his head back and smiled. “God, you’re such a dick.” He said, glancing over with a small smile. “I love you.”

Ilya hummed. “Good, because I can not get on my knees without ice pack for probably 8 weeks.” He said, massaging at the joint. “It feels like fire on bone.”

He gave his husband a sympathetic pat. “Don’t worry. We have a padded bathmat in the bathroom and you can always blow me laying down.”

“Or you ride me every day. Good cardio and good practice.” He said, releasing his knee and reaching over to put his hand on Shane’s thigh.

“I’m sure you’ll figure out a happy medium.” Shane said, squeezing his hand. “Wouldn’t want us to miss out on any practice.”

Ilya laughed, gave his thigh a smack and grabbed the wheel with both hands. “They say you are boring, Hollander, but I know better. Little freak.” He cackled.

Chapter End Notes

we love a comment or a kudo or just a happy vibe sent my way. I've done like a lot of research on Ontario adoption.

Chapter 3: Nemesis

Chapter Summary

Ilya faces his arch nemesis (not Shane) and also maybe the most important person in his life (also not Shane)

Chapter Notes

Writing around having a toddler takes forever! Hope you enjoy!

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

Something warm and wet was tickling his neck. He groaned and tried to wiggle away, hoping for another couple minutes of sleep. The warmth went away, but it trekked a path down his chest, pulling the blanket with it as it went and causing goosebumps to erupt all over his arms. Ilya let his eyes peek open and he grinned down at his husband.

“Good morning.” Shane purred and then he was mouthing down Ilyas obliques and scraping his teeth on his hip bones. “Thought we could use some luck today.”

Ilya nodded, agreeing to whatever was needed to get his husband's mouth on his hardening cock. It wasn't a hardship to receive, and Shane was always eager to give.

He was mouthing at his cock now, leaving small licks, kissing down the side, his hand coming up to cradle his balls. “You will not kiss me without brushing my teeth, but you suck my cock first thing.” Ilya teased. Shane huffed out a laugh, pulling back to mock glare.

“Shut up and maybe I'll kiss you after, if you behave.”

Ilya mimed locking his lips, bringing his hands up to rest behind his head.

Shane shot him a grin before leaning down again and taking the tip of his cock in his mouth. He swirled his tongue, pushing into the slit before lowering his head down.

The hand cupping his balls gave a firm squeeze and the other beginning to pump his length in hand. His mouth descended further, taking more down as his throat. Spit began to slide down, making Shane's hand movement easier.

It had been almost 2 decades and Shane knew exactly what he needed to get off. If his pace was anything to go off, Ilya knew that Shane wanted this to be a quickie rather than a drawn out affair.

Ilya grabbed his husband's hair, pulling his mouth off and tutting at him. “Is not nice to rush me.” He scolded, using his other hand to grab his cock, tapping it against Shane's open mouth. “Should be luxurious morning.”

Shane pushed his tongue out flat, curling it against Ilyas cock. "Maybe I just miss you in my mouth." He said, his voice a bit rough. He leaned forward until his lips were flush against the length, lips pushing against him as he spoke. "We only have 10 minutes. Don't make me wait." He urged, pushing his head up and taking him in his mouth again, dropping further until Ilya hit the back of his throat.

Ilya wanted to tease him further but a quick glance at the clock confirmed his husbands timing. If he wanted to return the favor this would need to be fast.

"Slutty Shane Hollander, needs a cock in his mouth." Ilya groaned, moving his hand to the back of Shane's head and pushing him down farther. Shane groaned in approval, following the motion until he choked a bit, pulling back just enough to get his hand around him again, tugging in tandem with his hand.

Ilya tightened his fist in Shane's hair but didn't push or pull. Shane was seemingly content to control the morning, releasing his cock and pressing his hand against Ilya's hip to hold him still as he pushed his face down against his public bone.

A wrecked groan escaped Ilya's lips and he felt Shane moan around him in response. His mouth began bobbing in earnest, hand slipping around his hip to squeeze his ass.

Shane's fingers were wiggling and his mouth was bobbing. Ilya bucked forward, tightening his fist in Shane's hair as his orgasm crept up.

Suddenly there was a dry finger pressing firmly against his hole and Ilya bucked once as he exploded in his husbands mouth.

He fell back dazed, feeling Shane pop off crawling up his body and pressing their lips together for a heated kiss before flopping on his back beside him.

"You cheat." Ilya growled, swatting at him. Shane let out a breathy laugh.

"So why do I need luck today?" Ilya asked, but he knew the answer. He had a packed day today, something he thought he'd left behind when he'd retired but, fortunately or unfortunately, he was in the Hollander family and they didn't believe in rest.

"You're going to see that rink today, with mom." Shane said, crawling over him until he burrowed himself in Ilya's shoulder. "Then lunch and then we have our first meeting with Kim." Ilya felt a wide smile cross his face.

The summer had been amazing, relaxing with Shane, a few random evenings with their friends visiting or them visiting their friends - the Pikes for two days, a dinner out with Rose, a facetime dinner with Sveta, evenings of puzzles and wine with David and Yuna - followed by their camps, and a lot of pouring over paperwork to be submitted to begin the process of adoption.

It had taken them a while to choose an agency. He didn't realize that the ones he'd found on his quick review had something called a morality clause - which Shane had explained to him was thinly veiled homophobia. They'd ended up going with one called Loving Family Adoption, which caused him to roll his eyes but then they'd started speaking to them and it seemed promising.

Their coordinator, Kim, had been a godsend over email but today would be their first time meeting in person. They'd go over their application and then start the conversation on next steps - next steps that Ilya was thrilled to start. There was a course they'd have to figure out around Shane's schedule, their home visits and classes for things like CPR and first time parents.

Shane seemed a bit more reserved, telling both himself and Ilya that these things took time, that to assume they'd have a baby magically in their arms in time for playoffs was unrealistic. But Ilya had

dealt with unrealistic situations - the main one was now pushing off his body and rolling onto his back beside him.

“Who’s coming to lunch today?” Shane asked, propping himself on his side.

Ilya’s grin went feral and he turned on his side. “Cassie. Lisa. Selena. Archie, that is Luca’s friend-”

Shane snorted and rolled his eyes, whispering friend under his breath like a secret, “- Katie, I do not know who she belongs to, maybe Myles, but she is short and blonde-”

“Most of them are blonde.”

“Caitlin will come, she found a sitter and of course my arch nemesis-”

“Ilya! He is not your nemesis-”

“Harris.”

Shane laughed and rolled his eyes. “He’s your best friend’s husband. He is also our good friend. And also, not to be territorial here, but I am your arch nemesis.”

Ilya turned stoic and shook his head. “He is current Queen WAG. Just like you were best player before me, he will be best WAG before me.”

His husband barked out a laugh, leaning over to press a kiss to his temple before rolling out of bed. “Are you going to tell them?” He asked.

They hadn’t officially decided if they would tell anyone else about their intention to adopt. They’d told those closest to them to have support on the home front, but Shane was hesitant to expand the circle, saying he didn’t want to get anyone’s, including their own, hopes up. Ilya thought they should take out a billboard - NHL husbands need baby, Call us - but he understood Shane’s hesitancy. That was something that Kim had mentioned to them in their emails. Adopting wasn’t easy and waiting for an infant would take even longer.

“I have not decided yet, but probably no.” Ilya offered, grabbing at his husband. “Come, you straddle my chest and I will blow you like this.” He offered, reaching out with one hand and patting his chest with the other.

“I took care of myself in the shower.” Shane said with a head shake, ignoring Ilya’s gasp of protest as he tugged on a shirt. “I have to get to morning skate, there is a new rookie I want to see on the ice. You’ll text me about the rink today, right?”

“Yes. I text you about rink, I text you about lunch, I pick you up after to meet with Kim.” Ilya recited, watching Shane pull his hair back from his face. “You do not do that again, Hollander. It is my duty as WAG to-”

“You have the address?” Shane asked, completely ignoring him.

Ilya smiled and nodded. “Is saved in my phone. I will have The Packet and your good pen.”

The Packet was just a manilla folder that held a copy of their application, a sheet of questions Shane had for the agency, and an outline Shane had made of a timeline he expected. Most of the questions had been answered in their emails but Shane was adamant that they get everything again in person.

“Good.” Shane said, coming back and kneeling over the bed to place a tender kiss against Ilya’s lips. “I love you, be careful on your knee today. I’ll see you after lunch.” He said as he pulled away and turned

to the door.

“Don’t make the rookie cry.” Ilya yelled after him, smiling to himself when Shane laughed. “Ya tebya lyublyu!”

“Ya tebya lyublyu!” Shane yelled from the hallway.

Anya jumped in the bed almost as soon as the front door closed behind Shane, wiggling her body up, tail thumping against Ilya’s side.

“Good morning my good girl. Papa will shower and then we go for a walk.” He said to her in Russian, giving her a few scratches before hauling himself out of bed and making his way to the shower.

His knee wasn’t destroyed though Shane seemed to think he was an invalid now. Ilya thought he probably needed to think that because for Shane, the only reason to not play hockey anymore was due to physical incapacities. It wasn’t really good, it ached when the weather changed and the gnarled scar on it wasn’t exactly the sexiest, but he had retired in time to not be benched - to go out on top.

After he’d showered and walked Anya he took a moment to check his phone, seeing a flurry of messages.

A text from Yuna with the address to the rink they would be viewing today along with the person they were meeting and their name. A firm, but friendly reminder that he should be dressed to impress as if they would say no to a project hosted by two of the most decorated NHL forwards in history.

More texts from the WAG group chat, Cassie reminding them of the time and place for lunch, followed by a text from Katie saying she wouldn’t be able to make it. Shame, Ilya was hoping to be able to report back on her to Shane. He hoped one of them would be able to figure out who she was dating - married to? - before they all had dinner together as a team.

The best of the bunch was a text from Shane, a selfie of him in his gear and a sweet smile on his face, captioned with “first day as a one income household.” Ilya hearted the message before stripping out of his shirt, unbuttoning his pants to expose a trail of hair on his stomach and flexing before taking his own selfie. He sent it back saying “Tonight we try to break my knee.”

He threw his phone on the bed as he made his way into the closet, looking for something he knew Yuna would deem “appropriate” for their meeting. He was less worried about making an impression at the rink and much more concerned about making sure he looked like a father.

Realistically he knew that they wouldn’t reject them if his shirt wasn’t perfect or his pants were a bit wrinkled, but he needed it to be perfect. Once the idea of a baby had taken root, it had become a bit of an obsession.

In an ideal world they would meet with Kim and immediately schedule all of their courses - both the ones they’d need to attend together and individually to account for Shane’s schedule. Then they’d meet someone who was looking for a family for their baby and immediately fall in love with them, and they’d have a baby in 8 months max, right after Shane won his next Stanley Cup.

Shane thought it would take 14 months, apparently decided based on a plethora of data he had tried to explain to Ilya and failed. But Ilya was used to Shane being reserved, more careful of his feelings. He would be excited for both of them.

He decided on a black shirt, one with a looser fit to avoid looking too sexy - he needed to look fatherly. A pair of jeans and a leather bomber jacket to wear in the rink. Simple, welcoming, and something that Yuna and Shane would both approve of.

He puttered around the house a bit more, turning on the dish washer, feeding Anya, and picking up his socks from the floor to appease his husband.

As he made his way out the door with the packet in hand, he made an impulsive decision, running upstairs to grab a Hollander jersey from their closet and tossing it in the passenger seat as he made his way to the rink.

He pulled into the rink, sliding off his jacket and throwing the jersey over his head. He made his way towards the rink, pressing a kiss to Yuna's cheek in greeting and taking a paper from her to look over.

It said things about the rink - size, rooms, capacity. Things he knew should matter but he couldn't focus on.

He introduced himself to the associate walking them through, jokingly showing off the jersey and winking when Yuna good naturedly rolled her eyes before diving into the facility.

The walkthrough itself was nice. The staff were eager to make a good impression, the promise of a hockey camp run by hockey living legends was a profitable business deal if nothing else. That, paired with an almost ensured increase in daily skaters and publicity was a no brainer.

Ilya was happy to let Yuna do most of the talking, throwing in a few quips here and there to prove he was listening even though he was miles away in his mind.

Kim had said today would just be to learn the basics, get an idea of what they could expect from the process of adoption. She wanted to talk about anonymity and how their specific practice normally operated.

She wanted to discuss a timeline.

Shane had reiterated as he read the email that it could take up to five years, minimum of a year in most cases, but Ilya was being optimistic. Logically he knew that even if Shane wasn't the expert that Kim definitely was. He knew he should trust their timelines but he'd already done so much waiting in his life.

Waiting for Shane, waiting to be out with Shane, waiting to play on the same team, waiting for citizenship, waiting for retirement.

Ilya was good at waiting for the important things so he was prepared to wait for this.

He also really wished he didn't have to.

The baby wasn't a necessity. Shane had made him promise, in the half joking but definitely serious way that Shane did, that the wait for a baby wouldn't make him regret it - wouldn't make him change his mind if it started taking years. Had made him promise that they would still be a whole family even if there wasn't a baby at all.

Of course it wouldn't matter if it took awhile - didn't happen at all even - he'd assured him. His life was full and perfect. It would just be more perfect with a tiny Shane. A little replica of his perfect husband, tiny freckles and big brown eyes and black hair and a too stern take on the world.

Shane had reminded him again, that he wouldn't actually be the parent so the baby wouldn't look like him but that wasn't what he had been trying to say.

He then tried explaining it in Russian, Shane stopping him a few times just to confirm translations. That seemed to make more sense to his husband, but he knew Shane was still anxious.

Ilya didn't want a replica of Shane but he wanted Shane as a father. Cuddling a newborn close and nuzzling little tufts of hair while Ilya made a bottle, babbling in Russian and English so their baby could be bilingual, getting a toddler on the ice for the first time with Ilya chasing and Shane yelling after them to be careful. Tears and hugs and love and family and them together as a unit.

Shane and Ilya, Ilya and Shane. Shane and Ilya and their baby.

"Right, Ilya? The extra room will help during breaks." Yuna asked.

Ilya nodded. "Will be better for summer I think, for break outs off the ice."

Yuna hummed and nodded, locking back in with the associate. He wasn't sure why they'd need it, but Yuna didn't seem to notice, noting things in her notebook before snapping it shut and smiling. "I think we've got this from here. We'll call you later this week if Shane wants to see it as well?" She asked.

The associate nodded, thanking them both with a firm handshake and walking them towards the door.

Once they'd made it outside, Yuna turned to him with a glare. "You didn't listen to a thing he said." She said reproachfully.

"Yuna. More important things today!" He argued, not pretending to disagree.

She let out a fond huff and brushed at his shoulders. "You shouldn't be nervous, didn't you say the woman was nice?"

Ilya nodded as he scratched his nose. "Not nervous - excited. I want us to just start, my clock is ticking." He joked, patting his stomach.

Yuna rolled her eyes and pulled him into a hug. "You'll call after, right? Let us know how it goes?" She asked.

"Of course." He enthused. "You will handle this baby and I handle getting human baby."

She let out a laugh and smiled at him. "You don't have to come to this part if you don't want honey. I can handle this and you can handle the actual teaching when the camps start."

He shrugged, unwilling to admit that this was something to distract him more than anything. Yes, he wanted to grow the camps and the foundation, yes it was important to both Shane and himself that this be a success.

But today, at this moment, he had much more important things to focus on. Namely a meeting with potentially the most important person in his life taking place at 3:30.

"Next time we will not schedule both meetings on the same day. I will be more focused." He promised.

Yuna seemed reluctant but agreed, giving him a hug goodbye and promising to send him the notes on this rink so he could go over it with Shane.

He grabbed his phone, sending a quick text to Shane and checking the time before putting in the address to the restaurant he was meeting the other WAGs.

Ilya: Rink is fine. I did not really pay attention. Yuna took many notes.

The response came quickly - a hearted message and a one word response.

Shane: Shocking.

He grinned at his phone before taking off towards the restaurant, Bad Bunny on the speaker.

As he parked, he made a split second decision to keep the jersey on. It would help him, he decided, stake his claim at Queen WAG. He made his way into the restaurant, saying a polite hello before seeking out his lunch dates.

“Ilya!” Cassie squealed from a circular table in the back. Ilya smiled at the hostess, pointing back towards the group of women and making his way towards them.

“Cassie! It is time for me to be inducted.” He said with a flourish, grinning when Cassie and Lisa laughed, ushering him into the chair beside her and pouring him a glass of water from the pitcher on the table.

“Where are the others?” He asked, giving a small wave to Caitlin at her spot beside Cassie, already sipping on a mimosa and beaming at him. He knew he wouldn’t drink, the idea of Kim smelling a whiff of liquor would make his husband murder him.

“Selena is just in the bathroom.” Cassie said, grabbing her own drink. “And I’m assuming you saw Katie couldn’t come. We’re just waiting on Harris and Archie.”

Ilya nodded, sipping from his water glass. “Do we know what Archie is calling Luca? Boyfriend or still just special friend?”

Caitlin laughed and leaned forward, speaking in a loud whisper. “He can call himself whatever he wants but Evan said Luca came in with scratches on his back that did not come from a cat.”

“But still an animal.” He said with an eyebrow wag, causing the woman to burst into a fit of giggles.

“He says that but Nick said Bood had a hickey the size of Vancouver on his neck this morning too.” Selena said, looking pointedly at Cassie who let out a giggle and flushed. “Hi Ilya.” She said, pressing a quick kiss to his cheek and sitting on the other side of him. “I think we all had a lot of fun having the boys home this summer, no need to tease the rookie WAGs.”

Ilya looked excitedly around the table. “This is what brunch is? Sex talk?” He asked, looking at the other women. “Shane would not like, I don’t think. He needs to be mysterious Captain.”

Cassie snorted and Caitlin rolled her eyes. “According to the boys you lost all ability to be mysterious as soon as you roomed together on roadies.”

“Bood said he’d learned a lot of Russian dirty talk last time he roomed next to you two.” Cassie said, smirking at him.

“Did he try it out on you? You must tell me.” He demanded. Before she could reply a young man walked up to the table, dark hair and green eyes, dressed in a loose linen button down, smiling shyly at the group.

“Hello, I’m Archie.” he said politely, smiling around the table. “Luca told me to follow the Russian accent.”

The women said hellos in response and Caitlin gestured to one of the open chairs. “You’ll probably be able to hear Harris over Ilya once he gets here. His laugh...carries.” She said with a conspiratorial giggle.

“Ah, this is only because I was not here before. I will be louder than Harris.” Ilya said firmly.

Selena let out a snort and Cassie rolled her eyes as she nodded. “I have no doubt.”

The waiter came over then, getting additional drink orders and putting in a few appetizers for the table before scurrying away. The table fell into quiet conversation, discussions on summer travels and visits.

“It was nice to go camping, but I wish Evan would accept that the twins aren’t great in tents. He always comes back looking worse than after a game.”

“Better than Zane. He tried to grill out with Milo and then started panicking when he kept changing the temperatures on the grill.” Cassie said with a fond smile.

Lisa let out a small laugh. “Wyatt came with me to the hospital a few times to visit the kids. I finally got off for a week and we went to Isaac and I swear we bought an entire comic book store for him.”

Ilya threw an arm around her shoulder. “You work too hard, Lisa. Let Wyatt pay the bills, yes?”

She let out a laugh and shrugged. “But if I get rusty, who is going to set his bone when he swears it’s not broken, just bruised.” She said with a fake glare.

“Is always just a bruise.” Ilya said confidently.

“So it’s not just a Luca thing?” Archie said with a questioning glance. “After the cup his entire side was black and blue and he still went for a 3km run.”

All of the women nodded, throwing out examples of their own husbands’ experience with injury. Ilya tried not to defend his previous teammates. Their wives knew them differently than he did, something he was going to have to adjust to. Both he and Shane had played injured. Hell, Ilya had played in the cup finals with a cracked rib and he knew Shane had fucked his hip and played three more games before the physio threatened to have Weibe bench him if he didn’t take at least two games off.

“So how long have you and Archie been together?” Lisa asked during a lull.

Archie blushed and scratched at his neck, where Ilya immediately noticed a bruise of his own, just south of his collar. He glanced out of the corner of his eye and saw Lisa had clocked it as well.

“About a year. He’s very private, said he didn’t want to introduce me and have Ilya scare me away.” He said with a grin.

“I was Luca’s first love.” He insisted, causing the women to laugh around him. “Ask him about his poster. He will tell you.”

The other man immediately grabbed his phone with a grin. “He told me to text him as soon as you brought that up. You lasted 7 minutes!” Archie said with a thumbs up before sending off his own text.

Ilya took that moment to check his own phone for a text. Shane had sent him a message telling him details on the new Rookie, Mason Wyles, who he said needed more work on his slap shot than someone in the NHL should. He sent him back a reminder to not make rookies cry.

“What’s the verdict from the Captain?” Caitlin asked with a grin.

“He better not have said anything about Wyles, poor guy looked like he was about to cry when he missed a second shot.” Harris said, bounding over to the table.

The women chorused a greeting and Ilya gave him a smirk. Harris said his hellos back, coming to give each woman a hug or peck before coming to Ilya with a wide smile.

“I’m so happy you’re here!” He cajoled, “No one else will talk shop with me.” Harris said, hitting him on the back before his eyes went wide.

“Wait!” Harris said with a loud gasp, pushing Ilya forward and staring at his back. “Are you seriously wearing Hollander’s jersey to lunch?” He asked before his eyes widened and he let out a loud laugh.

Ilya smirked, feeling victorious. Even if Harris was the Queen WAG before, Ilya would be usurpe him by the fact alone that his husband's jersey held a white block ‘C’ on the chest.

“Shane is most important member of Centaurs, I must represent his greatness.” Ilya said firmly, smirk in place, while the women around him argued.

“Hey! Luca is doing just fine!” Archie said, good naturedly.

“Boo!” Cassie yelled, much less happily.

Lisa snorted. “I think that’s normally the goalie.” Patently false but Ilya patted her shoulder consolingly.

“Ilya we can and will kick you out.” Caitlin said a glower.

Ilya held his hands up in surrender. “No! I am best! We will talk about sex and eat tapas and whatever else WAGs do.” He said, waving over the waiter.

He came by, taking orders and refilling drinks before rushing away to put their order in.

“What is a WAG anyway? Luca couldn’t really describe it.” Archie said, looking around with a flush on his cheeks. Ilya smiled to himself and leaned back, allowing Cassie to describe it.

“It means Wives and Girlfriends, but we’ve decided to make it gender neutral for at least the Centaurs.”

“Gayest team in the NHL.” Harris said with a grin, sipping a mimosa. “It’s basically the title we use for those of us who aren’t playing on the ice but still dealing with the aftermath. Plus, we all get together and plan all the outings.”

“We sit together during games.” Selena offered. “They have a family box and we take turns deciding who’s going to have to take their spouse to the doctor after the game.”

“And have wine nights when the boys have their team night.” Cassie said with a smile. “It’s kids free and sometimes the wine turns into tequila.” She said with a wink.

Ilya snorted and sipped his own drink. “Shane hates team night. LaPointe wanted him to eat chili and Shane told me he’d rather die.”

Harris barked out a laugh and looked at him with a grin. “It feels illegal to know that. Why didn’t he want chili?”

“Sensory nightmare, he said.” Ilya said, shaking his head. This was the best, he should have retired the minute Shane moved to Ottawa.

“Do you think he’d come with us instead? Is wine also considered a sensory issue?” She teased. It had been a running joke that Shane refused to drink during the season and on the occasion he’d have a beer he’d be flushed by the second bottle of beer.

Ilya shrugged but he wouldn’t mind asking. It would be another night he could steal Shane for himself. “Is he considered a retired WAG? Since his husband was the captain before?” Caitlin asked.

“No! I am Hollander-Rozanov WAG. Do not take this from me.” Ilya threatened.

“We’re in uncharted territory here bud, you’ve both been captain - hold it, you’ve both played - technically both WAGs.” Harris with a snicker. “But I don’t know if we can talk about your sex life if you’re both in the room.” He said thoughtfully.

Ilya sneered and grabbed at food being set on the table. “Why did I retire if he gets to be WAG anyway?” he pouted.

“Your knee?” Archie asked honestly.

“Your endorsements?” Selena offered, probably referencing that he’d been working on a Calvin Klein gig now that he was no longer controlled by a professional athlete's schedule.

The other women began throwing out other reasons, some ridiculous and some realistic, but the real reason would probably tip them over. He could tell them. They’d be thrilled, overjoyed. They’d be so happy for them. It was clawing its way out of his throat before he could stop it.

“We are trying for a baby.” He said, interrupting the most recent outlandish theory.

There was a beat of silence followed by several minutes of squealing and then they were all speaking quickly over each other.

“Are you serious?!”

“Ilya!”

“Since when!”

“How are you-”

“Ilya!”

All the other women were still talking, Lisa was shaking his shoulders. “Tell us everything!”

So he did, telling them about how he’d finally broached the topic with Shane after his retirement. About the application and the waiting and the excitement. He didn’t mention the meeting this afternoon, trying not to show how close they were to actually starting the process.

He’d even made a joke about trying which made the women cackle with glee.

“I don’t think Shane has the hips for it if I’m honest,” Harris joked, shooting him a smile.

Ilya scoffed and patted his own stomach. “I could be the mama! You don’t know.” He argued.

The women began cooing - yes of course, he’d be great - but Harris rolled his eyes and murmured directly at him. “Please, bottom eyes Hollander? Who are you kidding?”

It was nice for a moment, to talk to someone who was gay and not terrible at it. Shane was doing better but still seemed unsure how to actually be a gay man in a queer relationship - sometimes seeming so heteronormative Ilya had to remind himself that he regularly and enthusiastically asked to be fucked. Troy, who was inconceivably and also irrationally his best friend, was also terrible at being gay. Harris was not though, Harris was good at being gay and very nice.

Too bad he was also his arch nemesis.

He grabbed his phone quickly to send a quick text before looking up.

Ilya: Whoops.

His phone immediately began buzzing in his pocket but he chose to ignore it. Shane would definitely be telling him what he thought when he went home to grab him. He stayed at lunch, the conversation moving on from the baby after a few more promises to keep them updated and moving to Archie's job, and Caitlin's sister and Lisa's new knitting project.

Harris wasn't silent but he wasn't as loud as Ilya thought he'd be at the beginning, just throwing our quips here and there. It was nice to be surrounded by people and not talk about hockey just for a bit.

After they said goodbyes, with a promise to get together after the practice was fully underway, Ilya finally checked his phone.

Shane: Are you fucking kidding me?

Shane: Did they even ask?

Shane: No, definitely not. At least we like them.

Shane: Wait, did we like Archie? What's his deal?

Shane: Whatever. Don't be late. If we miss this appointment I'll kill you.

Okay so he was a little mad which wasn't unusual or necessarily unexpected but the multiple text was belaying his anxiety about the meeting so Ilya rushed to his car, checking his phone as he put in their home address and he saw another text that made him curse under his breath.

Troy: Congrats dude but ... you know that Harris was at that lunch and is coming to practice tomorrow, right?

Okay, so Shane may actually kill him because if Harris knew then the entire Centaur's team would know before the end of the day.

Fuck.

Well, too late now.

He drove home, giving a little honk once he was outside. Shane walked out, dressed in a blue button up and khakis and slid into the passenger seat.

"Please tell me you're dressed normally under the jersey." He said, buckling his seat belt and confirming the address was right on Ilya's phone.

Ilya nodded, adjusting to tug it over his head, tossing it in the backseat and grabbing his jacket. "I will look very good for Kim. She will pull baby out of her cabinet and hand her right over."

Shane furrowed his brow but then smiled. "A baby in a cabinet?" He asked.

Ilya smiled and nodded. "So tiny, in tiny folder. Pulled out just for us." He assured.

"And it's a girl in this scenario?"

He hummed in agreement, glancing at the directions.

"I thought you wanted a boy?" Shane asked, reaching over and grabbing his hand.

“I want tiny baby. I do not care the flavor.” Ilya stated. “We have Ilya or Iliana.” Shane snorted and gave him a squeeze.

Shane started to spiral, Ilya could tell from the tightening of his hand. “You know it’s not going to be that easy right? Like, this is going to take a long time-”

Ilya huffed and pulsed his hand. “Shane, moy lyubimiy, I do not care how long this take. 10 minutes. 10 hours-“

“More than 10 months, probably.” Shane’s hand was tightening again.

“Sweetheart, breath. It will happen at the perfect time.” Ilya said, rubbing his thumb over the back of his husband's hand. “Perfect baby, perfect time. Is only natural.”

“What if the baby isn’t perfect?” He asked. This was something else they’d discussed, what would happen if the baby they received wasn’t perfect the way everyone else thought it should be.

“Will be ours so will be perfect.” Ilya responded, just as he had before.

The office wasn’t sterile but it was definitely clean. A small section in the waiting room filled with blocks and toys next to a waiting room filled with padded chairs.

Shane was fidgeting, his hands shaking a bit as he patted down his pants and his knees bounced.

“Not an execution.” Ilya said, grabbing his hand tightly in his own. “We are just talking to Kim.”

“About our baby.” Shane said, a bit chewed out but also a bit in awe, like he couldn’t quite believe they were there.

Ilya smiled to himself and gave his husband’s hand another squeeze leaning back. “No probably just the weather, maybe if Centaurs will be good without very handsome perfect captain.”

“We’re going to be miserable with Myles.” Shane groused. “I know he’s 19 but I was better at 19.”

“Better than everyone except one person at 19.” Ilya consoled.

Shane knocked their shoulders together but a bit of the tension bled from his shoulders.

“Hollander-Rozanov.” A woman said, coming into the room. Shane bolted up, folder in hand, and Ilya pulled himself up as well, his knee cracking loudly enough that Shane looked down at him with concern.

“Ilya.” He said, pushing forward and shaking the woman’s hand. “And Shane.” He said, grabbing backwards until he came to stand by his side.

“Ilya and Shane, its so nice to meet you. Kim Burns. Follow me, we’ll chat in my office” She said after shaking their hands, leading them through a side door and down a hall of offices.

They entered a small room, a desk sat against the wall with a couch on the opposite wall. The walls had prints of families, multi-colored and bright. The couch wasn’t small but it was still a tight fit for two professional athletes. Once Shane finally settled, his back ramrod straight, Ilya grabbed his hand and began rubbing the back of his knuckles with his hand.

“So!” Kim enthused. “We’re ready to add a new addition to the family?” She asked, smile wide.

“Yes. You have our baby in that cabinet, right?” Ilya asked, gesturing towards the file cabinet in the corner.

Kim let out a giggle and Shane’s shoulders lowered a fraction of an inch.

“For applicants like you, I’d love to say yes but we’re in for a bit of a long haul with this situation.” She said sympathetically. “Let’s walk through your application first and then talk timeline.”

The application was the same for all Canadian adoptions, but the clinic itself had specific questions. The info sheet on their website made it clear they weren’t just placing kids, they were building families. They didn’t want to know just finances and safety, they had wanted personal references, testimonials, proof of a safe environment.

Once they had gone through all of the basics, Kim grabbed her own paper and began making notes. Shane also pulled out his own papers.

“On your application, you did not care about race or gender. Is that still true?” She asked with a kind smile but assessing eyes.

Ilya nodded and breathed deeply. “Just a baby. As soon as possible.” Shane elbowed him slightly before he spoke.

“But we’re not rushing. We want to do this right.” He said, half to Kim even as he stared pointedly at Ilya.

“Are you interested in looking at older children available for adoption?” Kim asked, checking something on her paper. “Babies tend to take longer to place, but the adjustment is easier.”

Shane bit his lip and shook his head. “We would really rather only look at infants. I think we’d prefer to wait longer if it meant that was an option. We think adjustment to a bilingual household is easier if they come into it before they even realize we’re speaking.”

Kim smiled and made a note before looking up directly at Ilya. “That means it will take longer probably over a year, maybe closer to two or even three.”

Ilya shrugged and squeezed Shane’s hand “You seem very good at your job. You can probably get it done in six months.” He said with a wink.

She laughed and shook her head. “But we want the best placement, not the fastest, right!”

Shane and Ilya both nodded quickly. Shane glanced at his paper as if to remind himself they’d already agreed on that.

“We probably won’t even be done doing the trainings within six months.” Shane said sternly, his squeeze back on Ilya’s hand a little firm.

Stop joking, it said. Ilya breathed deeply and nodded. “Perfect baby in perfect time.” He agreed. “Perfect does not mean fastest. Perfect for everyone else might not be perfect for us.”

Kim smiled and nodded, writing something on her paper. “Are you open to an open adoption or would you rather a closed adoption?”

They took a pause. This was something they didn’t necessarily disagree on but Ilya wanted the mother to be included as much as they wanted, wanted someone who gave them a child a chance to meet them

if they wanted - be involved in a capacity that felt natural. Shane didn't disagree, but he didn't want another parent in the equation. The baby was theirs.

"I think we'd prefer open." Shane finally said, the words coming out a bit as a question.

She seemed to sense their hesitancy and smiled. "We can talk about it a bit more, once you've done some of the course. Closed means no contact until they're 18 but open doesn't necessarily mean they want to move in. Some birth mothers don't want to be included in more than just a monthly or yearly update. Others want to take on an aunt or sister role if possible."

"I want them involved. If they want." Ilya said calmly. Shane scratched something on his own paper.

Kim wrote in a few more notes and smiled. "So then next steps will be the trainings. We've got probably 6 months of those, then the home visits. Then we have to wait for your perfect to be here. We can schedule them online -"

"Can we do them separately? If I have training or away games?" Shane asked, interrupting her.

"Some need to be done together but others are modules. You'll both need to complete them before we can take next steps but those can be done separately if you're on the road." She said, making another note.

Kim looked down her sheet before sighing and looking up. "The final question is about anonymity." She said, looking apologetic. "I know that perhaps putting your name on an application seems ideal - it'll probably make people more likely to be interested in placement with you - but I'd really suggest against it."

Ilya's brow furrowed and he gave her a questioning look. "So they will not know they are giving her to us?"

"They'll know they are placing their child with a family of two with a dog and no other children, but we will hold off on meeting any birth mothers until an agreement is in place." She explained. "You want someone choosing you based on how you'll parent, rather than on your name alone. Money and fame don't raise a child, the people involved do and we don't want people to make assumptions on your status."

Gay, husbands, NHL players, Ottawa's stars.

"If we tell them our names would we have the baby faster?" Ilya asked anxiously.

Kim shook her sadly. "We've had other high profile clients who've used their names. The parent will connect with them for the connection and then choose not to proceed. We've had other situations of having an open line of communication becoming problematic as the child ages."

Shane nodded and squeezed Ilya's hand. "We trust your judgement, right? You're the expert." He said leadingly, looking over at Ilya pleadingly.

Ilya sighed and nodded. "No billboard."

She gave them a small smile and jotted something down, smiling at the paper. "Well gentlemen, we are ready to go. I'll send you over the links to start and schedule your trainings. They take awhile--"

"We'll make time." Shane said firmly.

"I know." She said placatingly. "You'll have a lot of time to work on it over the next couple months. We'll meet again in a few months to check in, okay?"

With agreements and hand shakes. Ilya led Shane by the small of his back out of the room and into the car.

As Ilya slid into the seat beside him, he watched Shane deflate beside him, throwing an arm over his head and breathing heavily.

“So we go home and stare at your email until we see link?” Ilya asked, turning on the car and turning out of the parking lot.

Shane let out a wet laugh and nodded. “And then plan this year around CPR classes and learning how to acclimate a newborn to our home.”

Ilya smiled over at him and reached over to grab the back of his neck. “Then we get baby in time for playoffs.” He said, grabbing Shane’s hand and bringing it to his mouth.

“I can’t believe this is actually happening.” Shane said, wiping his eye for a moment before bringing their clasped hands to his lips as well.

Their eyes met briefly, both a bit wet but smiles across their faces.

“Okay, now call Yuna. I need good reason why I was so distracted at the rink.” Ilya said, releasing his hand.

Shane smiled and clicked the panel to call his mom.

Chapter End Notes

I’m not Canadian and I’ve never adopted so the information I have is based on google.

Comments and kudos are appreciated!

Chapter 4

Chapter Summary

Waiting is the hardest part and it hasn't even (truly) begun

Chapter Notes

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

“We never go out!” Ilya whined, pulling on his underwear.

“The regular season has started. I wouldn’t drink and I don’t dance. There is literally no reason for me to go out.” Shane said from their en-suite, applying some sort of cream to his face.

Ilya groaned and threw his head back. “You are being bad kind of boring.” He argued.

Shane snorted and applied something else to his skin. “Why don’t you go out with Barrett? I’m sure he’ll take shots with you.”

“I would not take shots. I am about to be a father, Shane.” Ilya argued, pulling himself up snug behind his husband.

“We’re not even done with the training courses.” Shane said with a huff, “If you want to go out and get shit faced with your friend you should. Just leave me out of it.”

Ilya snuffled into the side of Shane’s neck and whined. “Is not fun if you are not there. Barrett gets drunk and kisses Harris. No kisses for me. No cuddles for poor Ilya.”

Shane let out a chuckle and turned around in his arms, dislodging Ilya’s face from his neck and wrapping his arms around his waist. “Poor you.” He coo’d kissing the pout from his lips. “The answer is still no.” He said, patting his cheek and pushing around him.

Ilya blew a raspberry and followed him to their room, watching Shane pull the sheets down and settle into their now clean bed and grab his book. Anya was already snoring softly in her dog bed.

“What do I need to do to convince you?” He bargained.

“Make the entire experience different?” Shane offered, pulling on his glasses.

He made his way to the other side of the bed, flopping down dramatically and turning to face Shane. “What if I invite the WAGs? They are fun.”

“You already bullied me into wine night with them in, which again, don’t drink so not a great party for me. Not to mention the weird tension between you and Harris-“

“Is no tension!”

“He offered to get you a beer and you cursed him out in Russian and then bought a round for the centaurs!”

“I am richer than Barrett and Harris, I pay for drinks!”

“Ilya, dorogoy, he’s trying to be your friend, which he already was, and you’re making it into some rival thing which, again, is our thing.” Shane said, opening his book and beginning to read, glasses pushed onto his face.

Ilya sneered for a moment before pursing his lips. Galina told him that becoming a father meant he’d probably need to open up more to Shane. He would need to articulate his needs and wants because a baby could lead to more misunderstandings between exhaustion and the overwhelming changes. Their communication had come a long way since their secret had been exposed, but something’s just needed to be said instead of implied.

Unfortunately, because it was Shane, his beautiful perfect amazing Shane, he would need to be as direct as possible because his husband was unable to detect subtly.

“I am maybe feeling a little bad.” He admitted.

Shane’s book snapped shut, glasses tossed off his face, as he looked over worriedly. “Oh?” He asked, trying for nonchalant and missing by a mile.

“Not like that.” Ilya assured him, shuffling closer until he could pull him into his side and slot his head against his neck. Safest to avoid eye contact in these situations. “I know we said it would take a long time. I know, it has been very little. But I want my baby now. If I can’t have baby now then I want this win.”

Shane hummed and wrapped his arms around his back. “Sweetheart it hasn’t even been 3 months. We can’t even get the baby now even if there is one.” He said gently. “Being mean to Harris until we have one isn’t good. He didn’t do anything and Barrett mentioned he thinks you’re mad at him.”

“Just trying to be Queen WAG.” Ilya argued with a whine.

“You know that Harris doesn’t even know what that means? When I asked him about it, he thought you were talking about Cassie.” Shane offered. “You weren’t the best hockey player when you started-“

Ilya’s head shot up and he glared at him.

“You weren’t.” Shane pushed with a glare, grabbing his head and shoving him back into his neck. “Maybe you’re going about this the wrong way. If you walked into a locker room and demanded the C without knowing the team they’d probably beat the shit out of you on the ice.”

Ilya made a non-committal grunt but settled back. “Maybe you need to be friends with these women. Go to wine night and actually talk with them.”

“I am friends with Lisa.” Ilya said, because he was. Lisa was almost as perceptive as him and Hazy was one of his favorite Centaurs for a reason. Sometimes when he’d met up with the group they would sit together and mention the things they’d noticed - someone’s haircut that wasn’t very good, hickies someone was hiding, if it looked like they might have cried before they’d come and if Lisa knew why, maybe a fight or something else.

He sighed and leaned up, propping his head in his hand to look at Shane.

“Is harder than I thought. They talk about injury but I have played with bruised ribs, and I made the bruises. They talk about sex but their husbands are boring Shane. No one gives enough head. Some of them are knitting and then they talk about their kids and I just-“ He let out a deep breath.

Shane gave him a sad look. "We've got a lot more waiting to do. I wish we didn't but we do. Even if I could get pregnant I wouldn't stop hockey for at least 10 more years." He said, trying to make a joke.

Ilya smiled and gave a sigh. "Yeah, I know."

"What if you focused more on the foundation with mom? I'm sure she would be happy to include you in more planning." Shane offered.

He'd thought of this too but he simply did not care about it - at least not in the way Yuna did. She was thorough and meticulous. She was so like Shane in that way - things need to be right, perfected until there was no question on the expectation. She had also tried to include him in it, but even she knew his mind was miles away.

"It does not distract me." He settled on. "Yuna calls me when she needs Rozanov but she is much better at the details." He said. "Harris thinks I am mad at him?" He asked, feeling a bit guilty.

Shane hummed. "He keeps thinking it's about him being a WAG but still involved with the centaurs. He thinks you just miss the team."

Ilya clenched his jaw. "Probably that too." He admitted. "Is very different to not be on ice. To be sitting in the box."

It had been a bit jarring the first time he'd seen the team, his team, take the ice without him. More different to have Hollander splayed across his back instead of his own name.

The fans hadn't cared that he was retired, he still signed Rozanov jerseys and pucks, but the game was over. When they went off the ice - to press and debrief and showers - he'd puttered around talking to fans before just sitting there, waiting.

Lisa hadn't been able to come and the other WAGs had brought children they were running after, some already gone having taken a separate car. He wasn't necessarily lonely, not like when he'd originally moved to Ottawa but-

"A lot has changed for you." Shane said, interrupting his thought. "Maybe some structure would help. A routine."

Shane's favorite thing was routine. Breakfast, run, yoga, practice, sex.

"My routine could start with a club night out with my beautiful husband and the team." He said, steering the conversation back to the original thought.

Shane groaned and threw his head back, shoving Ilya off him. "You're not going to give up on this are you?"

Ilya smirked and moved again, pushing the book to the side and moving to straddle his husband. "Please come. Will help distract me." He needed.

"I still don't see what I'm getting out of this." Shane said, resting his hands on Ilya's waist.

"I will rim you until you cry." Ilya said, honestly it was a normal Tuesday, but still.

"That still sounds like something for you." Shane said with a snort. Ilya pursed his lips - he probably shouldn't have told him how much babbling, tears-in-eyes Shane turned him on.

"And I will be nice to Harris." Ilya said, feeling a bit worse that he had inadvertently hurt not only his best friend's husband but a true friend to them.

“And?” Shane asked.

“And I will make better friends with WAGs so I am not so alone. Also work on routine.” Ilya offered. He really should have started this conversation before they’d had sex - he would have had more leverage.

“And?” Shane said again, enjoying this way too much.

“What more do you want?” Ilya demanded, rolling his eyes.

“Deep clean the bathroom. Before we go, the bathroom is sparkling.”

Ilya groaned but nodded. “Fine, yes. Okay.”

“Fine, I’ll go.” Shane said, causing a wide grin to come to his husband's face. “But I’m still not drinking.” He finished, causing his husband to glower.

“You are lucky you are so pretty.” Ilya grunted but still leaned down to seal their lips before rolling back to his side of the bed and grabbing his phone to scroll before bed.

“I’m going to come, get a calmer Harris and a clean bathroom. I don’t think I need luck.” Shane said, grabbing his book again.

Ilya hit him with a pillow.

Luck was definitely on their side that a Saturday night game was followed by a day off just that weekend. It took very little cajoling of the Centaurs to agree to a night out - most of them eager for a night of no kids and too much drinking. It did take a bit more convincing to get them to agree to a club rather than Monks.

“We’re in Ottawa, are there even any clubs?” LaPointe had asked shucking off his gear.

Shane shrugged. “Ilya is sure there is at least one and he already booked a table.”

Bood whooped in excitement, tearing off his compression leggings and pulling off his underwear. “Hit the showers boys! Time for us to get fucked up!” He yelled, speedwalking towards the showers.

“You gonna drink tonight Hollzy?” Wyatt asked from his own stall, half undressed.

“Were you not at the game we just won? It’s still the season.” Shane said deadpanned, ignoring the boos behind him as he continued taking off his own equipment.

He wanted to break his rule tonight, but mostly because Ilya had seemed actually down. They didn’t talk about it, not really, but he knew that Ilya really wanted a baby and the wait was hard.

It was hard on Shane too, but he didn’t have much time to focus on it. Between practice, games, captain duties, and roadies, there was just enough time to complete courses when they were together but not much else. He’d noticed that Ilya was flagging a bit, working towards a goal without a timeline, but there was nothing to be done.

They both knew this was going to take time. Time that Ilya did not want, but they couldn’t magic a baby and try as they may, Shane could not get pregnant.

Sex was consistent, they'd always had an active sex life, and they hadn't really stopped when they'd been on a team, but even that had shifted. When Shane came home from road trips Ilya was frantic, almost like he thought Shane would somehow forget him in the 4 days they'd spend apart. He was clingy the next few days until he calmed down enough to be able to spend time in another room.

The sex though had taken a decidedly different form. Shane didn't mind the bit of discipline they'd come to enjoy in the bedroom - reveled in pushing himself and rewarded when he succeeded - but Ilya's dirty talk had shifted and instead of pushing Shane he tended to give and give and give. It was as if Shane was not boneless enough to avoid a shower he hadn't done enough.

There was still a bit of it, a bit of push and pull but Ilya seemed to think Shane truly could get pregnant if he tried hard enough - pushed deep enough, fucked often enough, avoided head and preferred penetration.

He never expected Ilya Rozanov to turn down a blowjob, but it has happened 4 times in the past two weeks. He would take Shane apart but then refuse the offer or he'd only allow it if he didn't come himself.

It was messier.

It was also probably the hottest thing Shane had ever experienced.

He didn't know why it worked him up so much - it wasn't like they were vanilla and their drawer of toys proved that - but using those toys now ended with Ilya deep inside him, pressing against his stomach with purpose.

But it hadn't worked, because Shane was a man and biologically - no matter how hard they tried - he would not be able to conceive.

In the back of his head, where his mind wandered and spiraled aimlessly down, he thought that if Ilya had ended up with a woman he'd probably already be a father. He would probably be one twice or even three times over at this point, a partner who was not a professional athlete able to stay home with kids like Jackie or Cassie.

It was stupid to think, and he knew that Ilya had and always would choose him, even before they were together. Ilya had told him it had ruined his game to have to close his eyes and think about Shane in the final months before tuna-gate (Ilya had dubbed the name and Shane hated it with a passion).

But Ilya told him he was feeling bad, and though he knew it hadn't meant he was depressed, it felt like a slippery slope.

So tonight he'd go out with the team, and nurse a ginger ale and take care of his husband as he surrounded himself with his found family in Ottawa.

"Shane, please drink tonight." Luca said, coming to stand beside him, already showered and mostly dressed. Shit, Shane needed to shower before Ilya got here.

Luca had been an integral part of the found family of the centaurs. When Shane had joined, a bit jaded and anxious, Ilya had taken him into the locker room and introduced him to every member of the team. He'd stopped at Luca Haas and a wicked smile came over his face.

"This is Haas. Haas, this is your other dad."

Haas had sputtered, eyes wide and frustrated as he made an outraged noise in the back of his throat.

"You are not my-"

“Is okay. You were confused at first, want to be with me. But only Shane is with me, so now you must focus on becoming second me. My protege-“

“Big word.” Shane said, trying to find a common ground with the newer members of the team by making fun of Ilya's antics. He was trying for a joke but looking at the no-longer-rookie Luca seemed horrified and also confused.

“Was in crossword with David.” Ilya said with a smirk. “Haas, this is your second dad. Shane, say hello to our son.” He said, pushing Shane forward.

Shane opened his mouth to speak but halted. Luca also seemed frozen.

“I am-“

“Luca had poster of me. Above his bed-“

“When I was a kid!” Luca said firmly.

“Is it still up in your bedroom at home?” Ilya asked.

Haas seemed to be breathing heavily and his face was bright red, but he didn't deny it.

“Right.” Ilya said smugly. “So we will move on from you being in love and we will be your dads instead, yes?”

Shane turned to gape at Ilya and smacked him hard in the chest. “You can't bully people into being your child!” He hissed. He composed himself and turned to stare firmly at Luca, trying to convey with his eyes that while - yes, he was with the menace beside him and yes, they were indeed married and also, yes, he was very much in love with him and thought he was the most amazing man in the world - he did not intend to actually become his parent based on this claim.

Luca still looked a mix between awe, anxiety, and embarrassment.

“It'll be good to be on a team with you Haas. I saw some of your plays last year and it'll be good playing alongside you.” He said putting out his hand.

Tentatively reaching his own hand out, Luca smiled and shook his hand. “I am excited to learn from you, Hollander.” He said sincerely.

Ilya whooped and placed his hand over their handshake, moving their hands up and down enthusiastically.

“Yes! We will have family dinner on Sunday. Haas, you bring the vodka, I will send you the right one to buy.” He said, grinning at both before pulling Shane away to introduce him to the rest of the team.

It was weird and awkward, but Haas showed up at their home on Sunday and then most other Sundays they were home, he was having dinner with them.

When Ilya made a joke about them being a family a few years later, Shane and Luca couldn't disagree.

“It's the season.” He said, unnecessarily. Luca had scored a goal tonight, he knew it was season.

“Ilya is sad.” He said quietly, eyes a bit worried. “I think it would be nice for him to celebrate a win with us. With you.”

Shane blew out a controlled breath through his nose and gave a weak smile. “I'll try.” He offered.

Luca's face lit up and he gave him a quick clap on the back in appreciation before turning back to his own stall.

Shane squeezed his eyes shut and sighed, making his way to the showers.

Ilya said he wasn't depressed, Shane had point blank asked this morning, and he'd assured him he wasn't. This was a different kind of sad, he said. But Shane didn't really understand what different sadness meant - sad was sad.

As he showered, he thought about what would truly happen if he drank tonight. It was something he'd been working on since he'd decided to loosen his diet when he'd joined the centaurs. Hockey was supposed to be fun, not entirely based on his control, so a snickers here or there or a beer with dinner wouldn't disrupt the season too much.

Shots with his team were decidedly not on the even-though-it's-not-intense-it's-still-performance-diet thing he'd been doing.

But maybe it would be worth it for the excitement on Ilya's face. He loved when Shane drank with them, even if he had a single beer while the rest of the team took shots. It would definitely cheer him up - thinking he'd broken the self control Shane prided himself on that Ilya so frequently broke down anyway.

God, he might ascend if Shane actually took shots tonight. He would be so excited. He'd probably fuck him through the bed - or try to convince him to go into a stall.

He weighed the options as he stepped into his underwear, knowing that Ilya held a bag of clothes for him to change into that he had also allowed Ilya to pick. He was hoping he'd brought actual clothes instead of a harness (which they didn't own but he wouldn't put it past Ilya to order it), but the button up he wore into the stadium would have to suffice if not.

"Hello! Captain is here!" Ilya yelled as he entered the locker room. The remaining centaurs cheered, coming to clap him on the back saying hello.

Shane rolled his eyes and held out his hand for the bag his husband held. "I'm actually the captain, assholes!" He yelled to the laughter of the room.

"Was a beautiful goal, and a beautiful assist between father and son." Ilya agreed, handing him the bag before making his way over to talk to Bood.

Shane heard Bood say something about them letting WAGs into the locker as he pulled out the clothing his husband had brought. There was a pair of his dark jeans, the ones that Ilya always picked when he had a chance, but there were two shirts.

A textured, jacquard, short sleeved, cream colored button up, and a sheer, long sleeve, black button up.

"Which one is mine?" Shane yelled over his shoulder, praying that his husband wasn't going to be an asshole tonight.

Ilya said something to Bood before coming over and wrapping his arms around Shane's middle, resting his chin on his shoulder. "You are being good sport so I let you pick. I will wear other one."

Shane breathed a sigh of relief, grabbing the opaque shirt and throwing the sheer one over his husband's head. "Get dressed, the rookies are already in their Lyfts."

"They are not famous enough to get in without me." Ilya said, extracting himself and whipping off his own shirt to shrug on the button up.

“They are also professional athletes.” Chouinard said.

“They are rookies. No one knows them.” Ilya said, buttoning up.

“People knew us when we were rookies.” Shane said, buttoning up his own shirt before grabbing his jeans.

“Not a similar bar, man.” Hazy said, toweling off his hair. “You guys should actually probably go, Roz is right, they won’t be able to get in.”

“Dude. It’s Ottawa.” Evan said.

Ilya let out a bark of laughter, shoving his discarded shirt in the duffle bag and pushing it into Shane’s stall.

“Ilya.” Shane admonished, buttoning his jeans and shaking out his shirt. “Don’t make my stall gross. It’s finally clean now that you’re not half in it.”

“Is fine!” Ilya said, grabbing his hand and tugging him away. “We will see you there!” He yelled behind him, the rest of the team chorusing that they’d see them in a bit.

Shane fell into step beside his husband, lacing their hands as they made their way to the garage. Shane had intended to drive tonight, since he’d planned on not drinking, but he thought of Ilya saying he was sad and Luca saying they should celebrate.

He thought about how worked up Ilya would be if Shane had a drink or two.

“Which shirt did you want me to pick?” He asked instead, waiting for the elevator to take them down.

“You pick white I see your arms. You pick black I see your chest. Win-win.” He said with a grin, squeezing his hand.

Shane let out a laugh and tugged him into the elevator.

“What do you think about calling a car instead of me driving?” He asked.

He was just lucky the doors closed before Ilya had him backed into a wall.

God Shane hated clubs.

It was loud and somehow both dark and bright. There were too many people almost touching him, making his skin itch.

“Bottoms up!” Boody yelled over the pounding music.

“Shane! Quick! Up on the table!” Ilya yelled.

“Fuck you.” Shane yelled back, throwing the shot back and grimacing. God, how Ilya sipped this from a cup he could never understand.

His throat was still burning but he couldn’t focus on it for more than a moment before his head was in his husband’s hand and his mouth was attached to his neck.

“You are so hot. So perfect. I want to eat you.” Ilya growled against his neck. Shane let out a breathless laugh, turning his head to the side.

Normally this would have been too much PDA. They’d made a conscious effort to keep the physical side of their relationship away from the rest of the team, only doing as much as sharing a room on the road to save a hotel room, but Ilya wasn’t on the team anymore, and Shane had had 3 shots in 30 minutes and his husband was so hot, so he ground his hips back and whispered, “Maybe you should.”

A wolf whistle broke them apart, Ilya jerking his head up to glare at the interruption before smirking. “Luca you can not watch. We are making you a sibling.”

The other Centaurs cackled and Shane pushed him away, stumbling over his own feet slightly as he shuffled himself in the booth.

It was nice that the other WAGs came, it didn’t seem as sad as Shane being unable to be away from his husband for one night - specifically after a win. Partners touching, kissing, yelling over music and laughing together.

“It’s not as bad as I thought,” Cassie half shouted at him, “considering we’re still in Ottawa.” She amended.

Shane snorted and rolled his shoulders looking out into the crowd. The club itself wasn’t as packed as others he’d been forced to go to, and the crowd was younger. The rookies were having a good time, several of them outside the booth and mingling with other people.

“Makes me feel old.” Luca said, eyes also tracking the rookies.

“I think your husband should make you feel older.” Ilya said, jerking his head towards Archie who was in deep conversation with Caitlin.

Luca elbowed him with a grin, “Not all of us got married the minute they met their boyfriend.” He argued.

“8 year situationship.” Shane argued. He’d heard the term from some of the rookies a few years back and it fit disturbingly well. Ilya said they’d been in love since 2008 so it didn’t fit. Shane sometimes didn’t know how to feel about that.

“Let’s dance!” Caitlin yelled, pulling some of the other women up by the arm and tugging them towards the dance floor. The other men in the booth watched them go before a few stepped out to grab more drinks.

Shane gave his husband a wary look but Ilya didn’t jump to join them and didn’t try to bully Shane into joining them either. He sat flush against his side, arm thrown over his shoulder and fingers drawing patterns on his shoulder.

“Good time?” Shane asked, his mouth feeling a bit numb - he really didn’t drink and two shots of Vodka had gone straight to his head.

“Perfection, kotik. I could not have a better night.” Ilya said, pressing a kiss to his temple.

“Even without the dancing?” He asked, because he knew that Ilya loved him but Ilya also loved to party and Shane decidedly did not.

Ilya nodded eyes bright and wide. “My husband is here, he has vodka with me.” Ilya said with a wide grin. “Now he will come with me to the bathroom -”

“Fucking - no, absolutely not.” The idea sounded phenomenal actually.

“Sorry we’re late!” A booming voice yelled over the crowd and Shane looked up to smile as Harris and Troy made their way into the space. “We had to get Chiron a good walk and dinner before we could come.”

“How is he?” Ilya asked much too seriously for a conversation about a dog. A dog they’d seen approximately two weeks ago - a dog he sometimes facetimed Troy to talk to.

“He’s tired now.” Troy said with a shrug, shuffling into the booth after Harris.

Harris smiled at the group, eyes landing on Shane with delight. “Well, Mister Hollander, someone broke their in-season drinking rule.” He teased.

Shane’s brows furrowed in confusion. They had just gotten there, how could they even tell.

“You’re touching Ilya.” Troy explained, glancing down at their laps and flushing slightly. “Like more than you do when you’re sober.”

Shane looked down and yeah, his hand was up high on Ilya’s thigh and he was squeezing it. And Ilya’s mouth was tilted against his face and he wasn’t moving away from it. In fact if he moved just an inch he could -

“Keep it PG, please!” Luca yelled.

Ilya threw back his head and laughed. Shane coughed and pulled back a bit in retaliation.

“I will get more shots for you, my love. Harris, you come?” Ilya said, standing abruptly.

“I don’t-“ Shane began.

“That’s a great idea, Ilya.” Troy said firmly, pushing Harris a bit to stand beside him.

Harris looked a bit uncomfortable and Ilya looked sure of himself in a way that Shane knew meant he was feeling guilty.

“Be right back.” Ilya said, kissing his forehead and leading Harris towards the bar.

The seat next to him was filled with Troy very quickly and he spoke low, as quietly as one could in a loud space. “You talked to him?”

The words didn’t make sense but Shane nodded.

Troy nodded to himself and sighed. “Harris has been beating himself up, he said we should make you a pie.”

Shane caught up and nodded. “He felt bad, when he realized.” Shane explained, looking past Troy to make sure his husband wasn’t on his way back. “Bring over Chiron for a playdate and it’ll be fine. No pie needed.” He said, patting his shoulder. He missed the first hit but landed the next two.

“Maybe you shouldn’t drink any more?” Troy asked.

The shots were hitting him then and for a moment he did wish that he wasn’t such a lightweight. Ilya didn’t seem phased but he’d probably had twice what Shane had and he was coming back with another drink in his hand.

Harris was smiling though, looking relieved and a little flushed and he slid across from Shane. Troy moved quickly to his side, letting Ilya slide back next to Shane and gave him the cold cup.

"I don't think I can." Shane whispered, trying not to be embarrassed that he already felt drunk. Ilya shushed him and pressed his mouth next to his ear.

"Is Ginger Ale. No puking while I fuck you." He said. Shane let out a grateful laugh and drank from his cup.

Shane knew Ilya had a one track mind when he only leaned down to give Anya a quick pat on the head before backing Shane up against the door.

"You are the hottest person." Ilya said, sealing their mouths and grabbing Shane by the side of his neck. Shane let himself melt at the contact, his own hands coming up to grip the shoulders of his husband's shirt.

It was a good thing Ilya didn't expect him to respond because his mouth was busy. He'd spent all night trying to sober up - trying to maintain some sort of professionalism - but at this moment he didn't really remember why.

Ilya wasn't his Captain anymore - he wasn't a professional hockey player anymore. He was his husband and all the other men had no problem being all over their own spouses.

"Should have been kissing you all night." Shane groaned as Ilya's mouth trailed down his neck.

"Mr. Professional. You would break his no touching rule for me?" Ilya said, his smirk pressed into the side of Shane's neck. His hips pushed forward, rubbing their clothes erections against each other.

Shane moaned as he bit into his shoulder and nodded quickly. "Wanted everyone there to know you were mine."

Ilya let out a breathy laugh. "You would not come to the bathroom with me." He said, "Could have had your mouth on me then."

"Didn't want to do it behind closed doors." He argued even though a tryst in the bathroom was never on the table for a variety of reasons. "Everyone else was kissing their wives and I-"

"- also wanted to kiss your WAG!" Ilya said with glee, pulling back and cupping his face. Shane glowered at him.

"Fuck you." He growled before tugging him forward again and sealing their lips.

From there it became a tangle of limbs, trying to fight each other towards their bedroom as Ilya threw his clothing along the stairs. Shane was unbuttoning his own shirt and pants but would not be contributing to the mess his husband was making.

When they got to the bedroom Shane quickly removed his clothes and tossed them towards the laundry basket before tackling his husband onto the bed.

Ilya grinned up at him, hands coming to rest on Shane's hips above him. His eyes were a bit hazy from the vodka, Shane's own cheeks flushed.

“Fuck, I love you.” Shane murmured, leaning down to seal their lips once more. Ilya tried to respond, but his muffled Russian fell further apart when Shane pushed his tongue into his mouth.

The night had been fun, but loud and boisterous in a way Shane didn't truly enjoy. This - laying in bed, straddling his husband, his hands squeezing at him - was the perfect way to celebrate their win.

“Need to fuck you.” Ilya growled out. “Vytashchi moy chlen.”

Shane shifted his hips backward, feeling Ilya's erection brush against him, still trapped in his briefs. He ground back, reaching backwards to tug the briefs down until skin met skin. His own cock leaked at the tip, smearing wet along his husband's stomach.

It was unnerving how every time still felt so electrifying. It had been over 15 years since the first time and it still made his pulse spike to feel Ilya here, touching, looking at him like he was the only thing in the world that mattered.

He reached over him, making Ilya complain for a second before he squeezed some lube on his fingers and let it fall beside them before reaching back to prep himself, ignoring his erection.

“I want to do it.” Ilya complained, slapping lightly at Shane's thigh.

Shane shook his head no, letting out a shuddering breath as he pushed a second finger inside.

“I want to look.” Ilya tried again, leaning up enough to reach behind Shane and grab at his ass. He was a bulking man but could quite reach his husband's probing fingers even while trying to tug him forward.

“Just wait, Rozanov.” Shane huffed, pressing his fingers harder and adding a third, swallowing hard as he scissored them quickly.

“I want-“

“I want you to shut up the fuck up.” Shane growled, pulling his fingers out with a hiss and grabbing the lube to slick up his husband's cock.

He shifted forward enough for Ilya to grab his own cock and slot it into place. The breath punched out of Shane as he slowly slid down his cock, one hand coming down beside Ilya's head and the other grabbing his chest tightly.

“God.” Shane moaned, shifting a bit and feeling Ilya's cock go deeper still. He took a steadying breath, unwilling to come just from the feeling of being so full.

“Ilya.” He corrected and Shane gave his nipple a mean twist.

Ilya groaned in response, bucking up. It wasn't fair to feel this good, even after so long.

“You've got great tits.” Shane groaned, squeezing at Ilya's chest again. Ilya let out a breathy moan and bucked up again. Dirty talk only really worked for him when Ilya did it, he always felt a bit awkward and unsure of it, but he knew he'd hit the mark.

Shane dug his knees in the bed and began to shift his hips. Ilya grabbed him by his face, pulling his mouth and heatedly pressing their lips together, biting at Shane's lips and licking into his mouth.

He started moving faster, bouncing harder, pulling back just enough to get enough air.

“Love fucking you.” Ilya growled, and Shane felt the shift before he was fucking up into him.

“Jesus Christ.” Shane groaned, giving his thighs a brief reprieve and letting his husband fuck up into him. God, it was never enough. Ilya could fuck him every minute of every day and it would never be enough. He was so full and aching hard and it would be so easy to just let go.

He wouldn’t.

Once he’d caught his breath, he pulled back, forcing his hips back and Ilya to let his legs fall back down.

“You’re my WAG, right?” Shane said, grinding down but not moving much.

A smirk crossed Ilya’s face and he nodded, hands grabbing at Shane’s thighs and moving up his torso.

“Then just let me do it.” He said before he began to bounce again.

It was an amazing feeling to look down at Ilya like this - mouth parted as he chased air, blue eyes disappearing behind pupils blown wide with lust, hair in disarray. Ilya’s hands weren’t idle, grabbing at anything he could reach, squeezing his side and chest and shoulder, hips trying to push up even as Shane pushed down.

“Fuck, I can’t-“

“Let me.” Ilya said eagerly, already looking ready to toss Shane off his lap and onto his back.

“Don’t.” Shane growled. “You’re just going to take it.”

Ilya moaned and nodded, eyes going half lidded. He laid obediently but his hips began to rock up, chasing the heat of Shane’s body as he moved. His hands kept moving, now thumbing over Shane’s nipples and grabbing at his neck again to bring their mouths back together.

He knew Ilya was close, could feel it in the twitch of his hips and the way his tongue seemed unable to stay in his own mouth. He also knew that Ilya wouldn’t come until Shane did first.

He pulled back until they were simply trading breath between them, grabbing Ilya’s hand from his face and pushing it down between their bodies and around his cock.

It wasn’t that he’d forgotten he was hard but feeling Ilya’s hand around him made his impending orgasm feel all consuming and coming on way too quickly.

“You’re going to come inside me.” He said, watching Ilya nod feverishly in agreement. “Deep.” He said, pressing his hips down and forcing his orgasm off for just another moment to make sure Ilya came too.

“Make sure it sticks this time.”

He came, ropes coming up to paint his husband’s chest, Ilya slamming up one, twice then coming with a wrecked groan.

Shane collapsed, his thighs screaming from an evening of hockey paired with the high intensity work out that was riding his husband. He let himself bask for a minute, pressing sloppy kisses along Ilya’s sternum before their mouths found each other once more.

He pulled back and smiled. “Shower?” He asked.

Ilya nodded, grunting when Shane finally dismounted and rolled quickly off the bed to avoid ruining the sheets.

They made their way into the shower, making out lazily under the spray before making their way back into their room.

Shane looked at the bed and sighed heavily. “Think they’re clean?” He asked, knowing the answer was no but feeling zapped of all energy.

“Clean enough.” Ilya readily agreed, pulling them into bed and tangling their legs as he pulled the blanket up over them.

He calmed himself to Ilya’s breathing, letting his heart rate slow. Just as he was falling asleep he heard Ilya whisper.

“The kitchen sink is leaking.” He whispered into the dark.

Shane let out a laugh and nuzzling into his husband’s chest.

“I’ll fix it in the morning.”

Chapter End Notes

I used to be better at writing smut but motherhood changes a woman.

Chapter 5

Chapter Summary

The boys take on girls night and Ilya talks to Galina

Chapter Notes

this chapter starts a bit silly - the world is on fire and I wanted something light hearted. I have no regrets

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

Shane wasn't dreading wine night but he wasn't really excited about it either.

He still thought it would be marginally better than what the team was doing - they had decided to go to a baseball game for some unholy reason and Shane was fine to miss that. It was more the conversation he had with Harris yesterday at practice.

He'd been getting dressed and ready to head out when Harris had called him into his office. At first he thought it must be some sort of media thing, something he'd never been subjected to nearly as often in Montreal as he was in Ottawa.

"Hey! I just wanted to say thank you." Harris said with a wide smile as Shane sat opposite him.

Shane gave a confused smile and shrugged. "I haven't done anything?" He half asked.

Harris laughed and shook his head. "No, I mean about talking to Ilya. It was nice to have you guys over last weekend without feeling like he was plotting to kill me."

Ah, right. His husband had in fact been properly apologetic and Troy had taken his advice and they'd spent last weekend at Troy and Harris's watching Anya and Chiron wrestle.

"So I wanted to return the favor and maybe warn you about wine night." Harris said, trying for nonchalant but Harris had never been nonchalant and was very bad at pretending otherwise.

"They're going to expect me to drink?" Shane said, thinking maybe faking an illness wasn't the worst idea.

Harris gave him a funny look. "What? No! I mean, they said they'd get ginger ale I think but some of the other ladies don't drink either. Lisa has to work early so she said she wasn't drinking either. She said something about loaded waters? Apparently they're some kind of, I don't know, fruity electrolyte water. I think she found it on a Mormon TikTok because why would you add so much-"

"Harris. Warn me about what?" Shane said, interrupting him. He wanted to go home and soak in his tub and have Ilya bring him hot tea.

“The women tonight are ya know, women.” Harris said as if that was new information.

“Yes. I mean except for us and Archie.” Shane agreed.

“And you and Ilya are together.” Harris said leadingly.

“Yes.” Shane agreed again, trying to figure out how the women who’d been at his wedding wouldn’t know he was married to a man.

Harris let out a sigh and looked a bit uncomfortable. “They’re probably going to ask about, ya know, dynamics.”

Jesus Christ.

He didn’t know if he should be relieved Ilya hadn’t said anything or dread that apparently that was falling to him.

“You mean Ilya hasn’t said anything about how we. You know?” He coughed a bit, “That’s surprising, honestly.” He said straight faced.

“No, he’s said stuff. And it’s not like it’s not obvious. They do know, obviously. I mean not obviously but, yeah kind of obviously. I mean more - I don’t know how to explain this. They talk a lot about gender norms if you know what I mean?” Harris asked, but the question seemed dusted with confusion.

Shane was more confused. Of course, some of the wives and girlfriends on the team worked - not everyone was satisfied staying home with their kids and he knew that most of his teammates’ kids hadn’t really gotten into sports like he had as a kid. “Okay, I guess. How do Ilya and I play into that?”

“Do you have any female friends?” Harris asked kindly.

“I have Rose and technically Svetlana.” Shane said. Svetlana was definitely more Ilya’s friend, and most of the time the Russian was so fast he couldn’t follow, but she was always nice to him.

“Okay, do you have any female friends who aren’t progressive movie stars?”

Well, no. Not really.

Harris laughed a little when Shane paused and shrugged a bit. “Well a lot of the time, straight women who are married to macho straight men need to kind of, align themselves with gay men. They like to assign gender norms to other couples.”

Shane looked blankly at him.

“You know - Man and woman? More like, husband and wife. They’ve got a lot of um, questions. For you. Specifically for you.”

Shane couldn’t help the small frustrated groan. “Did they do that for you and Troy?” He asked.

“Yeah but we’re a little different. I have a corporate job and Troy is The Athlete. It is more clean cut in their minds. You and Ilya are more of an anomaly.” Harris said apologetically.

Dread settled in the pit of his stomach. “What kind of questions?”

God, maybe he should suffer through baseball.

“Not anything bad!” Harris assured him. “I think they’re more confused because Ilya said - well he said he doesn’t do laundry because you don’t like how he does it?”

“He folds it wrong and he just puts everything on cold. He’d never used softener because we started dating. I had to get him dryer sheets.” Shane said, knowing that was enough of an explanation.

From Harris’s confused expression he was wrong.

“And you won’t let him load the dishwasher?” He asked

Shane nodded, still confused. “He puts the knives blade up, Harris. I almost lost a finger.”

Harris pursed his lips and looked a bit uncomfortable. “And that you do all your meal planning for both of you on Sunday?”

“Ilya would just eat shit all day if I let him. You’ve seen the McDonalds! I’ve seen the McDonalds! Sorry, I don’t really understand what you’re trying to tell me.” Shane said in exasperation.

“They kind of say you’re the wife and Ilya is the husband.” Harris blurted out. “I think Ilya tried to explain but he was drunk and he wasn’t making sense.”

“We’re both husbands.” Shane said firmly.

“Right,” Harris agreed, “but again, we are working with straight women in straight relations who clearly love gay men but aren’t exactly,” He paused, seeming to choose his words carefully, “Well they expect heteronormativity.”

Shane had never been good at heteronormativity.

“So they think I’m a woman?” He asked. Baseball was sounding better by the minute.

“What? No, they think you’re the wife.” Harris said as if that explained everything. “And honestly, the way Ilya talks about you, he might also think you’re the wife?”

Shane was definitely going to be talking to Ilya about this. “But wouldn’t Ilya be the wife? Since he’s home?” He asked. “I mean if we’re doing gender norms, he’s the one at home.”

“I mean yes, technically. Technically yes!” Harris assured. “But, I think that’s why there are questions about it. I just wanted to warn you so you could, ya know, prepare.”

“Prepare?” Shane asked, feeling heat creep up his neck.

“Shane, you’ve been a Centaur for 6 years. I know how you like to prepare for group outings.” Harris said, but Shane knew.

“Ilya told Troy.” He said straight faced.

Harris immediately looked over his shoulders, cheeks flushed and lips pursed as he shook his head.

“And Troy told you.”

“No! What?! He would never!” Harris said with a nervous laugh.

“Awesome. Great. Ilya won’t be at wine night because he’s going to be dead.” He said through clenched teeth.

“No! Seriously, Shane. It’s okay. Ilya will play it up if you’re uncomfortable, he’s got no problem jumping in-”

“You talked about this with him?” Oh yeah, he was going to lure Ilya to the cottage and kiss him and then attach cinder blocks to his feet and drown him in the lake.

“No, buddy,” Harris said softly. “I just know him. I just didn’t want you to go in and feel ambushed. WAGs night isn’t supposed to be high stakes, it’s supposed to be fun.”

Shane huffed out a half laugh. “It’s not really sounding like it’ll be fun.”

“It will be. I promise.” Harris assured. “I just wanted you to know if they start asking, ya know, more pointed questions.”

Pointed questions were what he’d given Ilya when he’d gotten home. He needed to know what Ilya had told them.

“That you are the only one to fold laundry.”

“You do not let me load dishwasher.”

“You give amazing head and they should take notes.”

The last one had earned him a smack but he didn’t really understand how the women had extrapolated those things into him being the ‘wife’ in his marriage. They were both men, they were both husbands. It just wasn’t connecting.

“Relax lyubimyy, is supposed to be fun. Low stakes.” Ilya said, pulling out of their driveway. Wine night was at Cassie’s and apparently Zane had cooked them food before he’d left for his own night out.

“I still don’t understand how I’m the wife.” He argued, trying to get the idea out of his head.

“Maybe because you let me fuck you anywhere I want and also sometimes cry when you come?” Ilya asked.

Shane squeezed his hand hard where it rested on the gear shift.

“I’ve played with your ass too.” He argued.

“Ah, yes. Did not tell them about that.”

“So you can talk about fucking me, but when you beg me to rim you, somehow you demure away from it?” Shane said with a scoff.

“What is this word? Demure?” Ilya said, sounding it out.

“Nothing you will ever hear again, I promise.” Shane said, releasing his hand.

Ilya laughed and turned his hand over so their fingers could intertwine, squeezing their palms together. “Will be fun. You will get to spend time with Lisa. Harris is there. They are my favorites.”

“Pretty sure you’re not supposed to have favorites.” Shane said as he leaned back in his chair, forcing his shoulders to relax.

“They all love you, Shane. We have been here a long time.” He reminded him.

Shane hoped he'd be able to remember that when he was quietly, awkwardly sitting on a couch sipping a ginger ale and avoiding being seen.

The idea was squashed immediately when their arrival was met with squeals and hugs. Shane didn't hate hugs but he also wasn't really one to initiate them. Harris just gave him a wave, looking again apologetic which immediately meant his hopes of being ignored were not going to happen.

"Shane! We have so many questions!" Cassie said, herding him into the kitchen.

As promised there was Lisa, holding what looked like a huge glass pitcher of something sparkly and filled with ice and fruit. His teeth hurt just looking at it.

His face must have shown something because Lisa laughed and grabbed him a ginger ale from the fridge, patting him on the arm. "Good luck, cowboy," She said with a grin. Shane took the drink and gave her a confused look.

"I told them how much you like riding my dick." Ilya said at full volume.

Shane wondered if there was a way to melt into the floor.

"We said there was no way! It's exhausting up there." Caitlin said with a laugh.

"My husband loves it. Like his second cardio." Ilya bragged, squeezing Shane's side.

Yeah, definitely too many people in the room to murder his husband now. He'd have to plan how to when he got home.

"Ilya." He said sternly.

"Relax, Shane." Harris said with a smirk. "If that's got you tied up, the evening is going to be a nightmare."

Yes. Yes it definitely was.

"It explains the thighs." Katie said, her eyes roving up and down Shane's legs.

"The best." Ilya purred. "I want him to squish watermelon with them. He said maybe for my birthday."

Jesus Christ.

"Leave Shane alone." Cassie said with a laugh. "I want to hear how you've domesticated Rozanov." She said ushering the group into the living room.

Some took the floor but there was clearly a gap in the couch meant for Shane specifically. Ilya took the space beside it, patting the space and grinning at him. Lisa perched beside Ilya on the arm of the couch and grinned at him too.

It felt like walking to an executioner chair.

He sat himself down gingerly, sipping from his can and looking around the group. He didn't say anything else but the women didn't seem deterred, talking over each other and passing wine glasses.

Once everyone had a drink and the conversation had lulled Harris tapped his cider bottle and held it aloft.

“To Shane, for being a good sport and good secondary Hollander-Rozanov WAG.” He cheersed. The other women giggled and lifted their drinks.

“Thank you, Shane!” Selena sang.

“Thank you, Shane.” Ilya said quietly, more firmly at his side before pressing a kiss to his temple.

“We have to know, Ilya. How did you convince Shane to do all the laundry?” Caitlin asked.

Shane looked at Harris who pursed his lips but said nothing.

“I want to do it?” Shane half asked. “Ilya isn’t very good at it so it’s easier if I just do it.” He tried to explain.

“Weaponized incompetence?” Selena said with an empathetic look.

“Hey!” Ilya said with a growl.

“What is that? No.” Shane said with his brow furrowed. “I mean he knows all the rules now - I made a chart for him. He can do it whenever, but I like it. The folding and sorting. He does it if I’ve had a bad game or something.”

“I am good husband! Shane washes and folds, I put away. Good system.” Ilya said, snaking his arm around Shane’s shoulder.

Shane nodded. “We split everything really. Ilya does the cooking during the week. I do the dishes.”

Ilya put his hand up to cover half his mouth and spoke in a false whisper. “He hates how I put them in dishwasher.”

“Knives go DOWN Ilya.” Shane said, pinching his thigh. “I’ve been almost stabbed too many times.” He said solemnly, causing some giggles.

The doorbell rang and called Cassie away but it seemed the women were far from done. “Ilya does all the cooking, though? He said you did all the meal planning.”

“We do it together mostly, but I’m still playing so I have a stricter diet. We decide together and then Ilya does the shopping so he can get his disgusting processed -“

“Oreos are good for you!” Ilya argued.

“-and I know his heart won’t give out because he’s had a vegetable at least once a day.”

“You need to incorporate more apples!” Harris cheered, clearly trying to pull the focus away from Shane.

It didn’t really work.

The questions kept coming even as a few more women joined and Archie came in, giving Shane a sympathetic smile.

Who deals with the cars? Ilya did all the maintenance he could without a lift (Shane will not let me put one in our garage) and Shane did most of the driving (Ilya doesn’t follow any traffic laws, including red lights).

Who mows the lawn? Shane. He has special grass shoes stained green.

“Who fixes things around the house?”

Ilya screwed his eyes and looked at Shane. “I want to pay someone, Shane says ‘no, I will fix it. Why spend money on handy man.’”

“I am a handy man. I can tighten a sink.” Shane argued, relaxing a bit into his seat when Ilya rolled his eyes and gave his shoulder a squeeze.

They split the cleaning. Ilya did the day to day vacuuming to account for Anya’s hair and regular mess. Shane had a schedule of deep cleaning to make sure the house maintained a level he felt was acceptable.

“I wish I could come home from work to a vacuumed house.” Selena said. “Nick comes home and makes more of a mess.” She lamented.

“Luca has a house cleaner,” Archie said, “He has them come once a week to do a deep clean.”

Caitlin gave him a confused look. “Doesn’t Luca live alone? How much mess can he make?”

“He’s a boy.” Katie said conspiratorially.

Caitlin pointed a bit wobbly at Shane. “Shane is a boy and he cleans!”

“Yeah but Shane is also a wife!” Katie argued.

Harris coughed as the other women laughed.

“I’m not a wife.” He said firmly, watching Ilya nod in agreement.

“I am the wife!” Ilya said in annoyance. “I sit at home and get pretty - I work out so I am sweaty when Shane get home -“

“That doesn’t really sound appealing.” Katie said with a scrunched nose.

“It is.” Shane heard himself saying before his cheeks heated and the women around him laughed again.

“Also Shane isn’t a wife, he’s a husband.” Archie said firmly. “Men can’t be wives. I mean - maybe they can, but Shane and Ilya are definitely just husbands.”

“First husbands of Hockey!” Harris chimed in.

“I’m just not sure I’m understanding the division of labor.” Cassie said. “If Ilya is home but you split things equally, it feels like you’re getting the short end of the stick.” She said sympathetically.

Shane felt his face go a bit slack. “Ilya works all the time?” He said looking over at Ilya who was grinning. “Didn’t you just do that ad for Calvin Klein? And you’re working with mom on the foundation. You’ve built all the furniture for the nursery.”

Ilya smirked at him. “Shane would be much angrier if he was not playing hockey.”

Shane nodded in agreement.

“Also the Cens would be very bad again.”

That was met with boos and jeers.

“What about with a baby?” Katie asked.

The arm on his shoulder tensed and Shane tried to melt against his side a bit. Lisa, Shane noticed, placed a calming hand on Ilya's other arm.

"Shane will carry them." Ilya said, voice full of vibrato.

"Ilya." Shane said with a flush and the rest of the room laughed.

"But I will do most while he is on roadies." Ilya said, a small smile on his face. No one but him and Lisa seemed to notice it was a bit sad. "Yuna wants to move in for few months -"

"Which we are not doing because neither of us are giving birth." Shane said firmly. It was an age-old tradition in Japanese culture but Shane and Ilya would both be able bodied and not in need of the replenishing foods that normally existed in tandem with a mother living with them.

Also, he didn't really want to share a house with his mother and his new baby. He wanted to exist with his family, in their own bubble.

"She will come and stay a few nights a week. We already decided." Ilya said flippantly.

"Who is we?" Shane asked, turning to look at his husband.

"We will need to sleep, sweetheart." Ilya said, rubbing his shoulder. "A few nights off will be good. Like, night nurse who won't steal Rolex."

"God I wish I'd had that." Caitlin said with a sigh. "I'm grateful for the NHL, I swear." She said firmly, looking directly at Shane and then Harris. "Thank god for the NHL because of money," she reiterated before flopping back on her hands. "but we have no family in the area. I wish my mother-in-law had been willing to come stay with us but also she's the worst."

"Hear, hear!" Katie said, downing her glass of wine before reaching forward to refill it.

"Zane's mom came for a few weeks." Cassie said with a sad smile. "Breastfeeding was so hard, I don't know if I could have figured it out without her."

The rest of the room lamented the woes of breastfeeding, Katie flushing.

Lisa sat silently and Shane watched her face. She looked impassive, like a mask was firmly in place. He knew the feeling.

"All I'm saying is, the lactation consultant is the most important part of it all. Without Lynn, I'd have been lost." Selena said.

"My sister said the one who works in her office is great. She's a pediatrician and they have the first check-up in tandem with them to get everyone off to a good start." Archie said.

"We work with a good one at the hospital too." Lisa said, chiming in kindly but subdued.

"Shane, take notes." Ilya said seriously.

"I will not be breastfeeding." He said, trying not to snort.

"Why not? You have great tits." Ilya said, making a show of glancing down at Shane's chest.

All of the women laughed and Shane grimaced.

Thankfully the conversation moved onto different topics and Shane could see how easily the women interacted.

He could also see how Ilya maybe didn't feel so included.

They talked about their jobs and the headaches of coworkers. About partners coming home with injuries. About managing a household while their partners were away.

They talked about staying at home with their kids.

It was when the kids came up in conversation that he felt Ilya stiffen beside him. Lisa must have noticed too because she stood and looked at him expectantly. "I think I need a refill, want to come?" She asked.

Ilya stood and Shane followed immediately.

As they made their way into the kitchen Lisa let out a heavy sigh and poured more of her sparkling drink.

"I want a baby." She said helplessly.

"Me too." Ilya said, clinking his glass with hers.

Shane watched them both take a deep drink and then share a knowing look.

"Are you guys also...?" Shane asked leadingly.

Ilya looked questioningly at Lisa who gave a half shrug and small nod.

"They have been doing fertility things." Ilya said, his voice low.

"IUI at first. Now we're trying IVF." Lisa supplied, sounding sad. "We've been trying for 3 years. 2 years without medical help. It's exhausting and disappointing but Wyatt and I think it's worth it. Or it will be."

"I told her about Kim. Maybe talking to her." Ilya said, with a hopeful smile. "She will bring us our baby so maybe she will help you too."

Lisa squeezed Ilya's arm and drank again. "Maybe." It was said in the way anyone else would say no.

Shane didn't know what to say so he said the only thing he could think of.

"I'm sorry."

Lisa gave him a sad smile. "Ilya says that the right things will happen at the right time. I'm choosing to think he's right." She said with finality, walking back into the fray of wine night.

Shane looked at Ilya and saw him staring pensively into the wine glass. He stepped forward and grabbed his hand.

"Ilya--"

"Not tonight." Ilya said, cutting him off before leaning forward to press a kiss to his lips, chaste and sweet. "Tonight we are one of the girls." He said before walking back to the living room.

Shane didn't know what else to do besides follow.

“Have you talked to Shane?”

Galina didn't ever beat around the bush and while Ilya normally appreciated it, he hated that he knew his answer wasn't right.

“There is nothing to talk about.” Ilya said dismissively. “We have the home visit in a few weeks and then it is just more waiting. What good would it be to tell him?”

“We talked about this, Ilya.” Galina said patiently.

Ilya ran his tongue along his teeth but didn't speak.

“Shane may be feeling something similar. It's been five months and this is just the beginning.”

Just the beginning.

They hadn't even been fully approved yet. That would come next month during their home visit and Kim would tell them if they'd become an approved adopter.

“He was prepared for the wait. He's been telling me about the wait. It would be unfair of me to complain about it now at ‘just the beginning’.” He finished mockingly.

“You knew too, unless you truly thought you'd be able to get a man pregnant.” Galina reminded him.

“This is a long, arduous process. It's normal that it is taking a toll on your mental health.”

“I'm not depressed. I'm taking the stupid pills. I promised him I would and I am.” Ilya snapped.

Galina regarded him for a moment before speaking. “And if you were depressed? Even with the pills? Does that mean you should stop taking them?”

Ilya huffed out a no.

“We talked at length before we started medication - about side effects and reactions and how although the medication helps, it does not cure. Do you remember?”

Of course he remembered. He'd told Shane his dick would probably no longer work - Shane had rolled his eyes and told him it was a risk he was willing to take.

There was some dry mouth in the beginning, a rolling nausea as they increased the dosage, but the side effects had been minimal.

“Ilya, your diagnosis doesn't define you. That doesn't mean it doesn't impact you. You're dealing with a very difficult situation with no end date and you don't handle ambiguity well. It is okay if you're experiencing a low.”

“What is the point of pills then?” He growled out.

“To slow the descent, to keep you up enough to ask for help.”

She wanted him to ask for help from Shane.

“You know it is harder. For me, for us.” He gestured between them.

It was a reason he'd picked a Russian therapist in the first place. The fact that they could speak in his mother tongue was primary but Galina knew Russia, probably better than he did - she was able to return without the threat of persecution. She could visit her childhood home.

He hadn't seen his mother's grave in years.

"But you're already here. You've been here, doing the work, working towards stability for you and your family - both as it is now and how it will be in the future." She said, "Have you suddenly become less Slavic since we began our sessions?"

Ilya didn't answer.

"Have you revisited the conversation about surrogacy?"

Ilya pursed his lips and nodded. "We talked about it. I don't want to pass on my genes and Shane said it would feel like becoming a father without me. He will only do it if I'm the donor and I won't do it. So, no surrogacy."

It had been a long conversation, when Ilya realized that most of adoption was waiting and praying. With surrogacy there was more to do - picking a surrogate, selecting a donor, tests and shots and implantation. There was waiting but it was in short bursts over 9 months. It was trackable and concrete.

"He said maybe for the next one." He amended. "But at this point it feels like there will not even be one to start."

Galina didn't speak for a moment and the statement sat heavy between them.

"What are you doing?" She asked.

"Sitting in a chair and talking to you." He spat back.

She gave him a blank stare and he sighed. "Catasrophizing."

"In a perfect scenario, what will happen?" She asked. This had always been a theme, a way for her to make a point to him when he was being stubborn.

"Shane gets pregnant and we have a tiny perfect mix of us before playoffs." Ilya snarked.

"In a scenario based in reality." Galina reiterated.

"Kim comes, we're approved and the baby is already in the car. She is tiny and looks just like Shane." The other parts went unsaid. He would be a father. They would be exhausted and covered in baby fluid and he would be happier than he ever had.

"Worst case?"

"We never get a baby. Shane resents me for refusing to do surrogacy and I resent Shane for not being willing to be the donor. I'm alone while Shane plays hockey and he decides that without a baby he doesn't want me anymore either." Ilya said, the fight melting out of him.

"Realistically, what is going to happen?"

"Waiting." Ilya said miserably.

“Waiting.” Galina agreed. “Ilya, talking to Shane will alleviate a lot of your anxiety and I worry if we don’t get ahead of it, you’ll start to feel depressed.”

“And if I already am? Maybe. A little bit.” He asked, even though he knew.

Galina looked at him calmly and he knew she knew too.

He would have to talk to Shane.

Chapter End Notes

Next time: we talk to kim and we talk to Lisa

Chapter 6

Chapter Summary

Kim comes to visit, Ilya and Lisa get lunch

Chapter Notes

I know where this is going but I'm not sure how we're getting there. Stick around to find out!

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

Ilya was stress cleaning.

It was something that Shane had done frequently enough over the course of their relationship for him to recognize the signs. It had started with his normal vacuuming routine - around the living room twice, sweeping the kitchen and halls and vacuuming the subsequent hair that followed, followed by a wipe down of the kitchen.

Easy, unassuming, totally normal.

But then the windows looked streaky, the way they do when a dog is frequently nosing at a door to go in and out. Then the finish on the sink looked a little too printed - splash back from water or oiled fingers etched into the surface.

He'd taken a shower, to wash away the feeling under his skin. It had worked until he realized that the steam had made the bathroom mirrors streak too, and the sinks had small smatters of toothpaste left behind and if he was already scrubbing he could skip a day or two ahead of Shane's schedule and clean the toilets as well.

The sheets, changed only last night, looked a bit too wrinkled, like they would be rough on his skin - unwelcoming.

All of these things were normal enough. A deep clean that, while not necessary, wasn't out of the ordinary.

What was out of the ordinary was kneeling on the floor of an unused room, scrubbing at already clean baseboards after changing sheets in a crib that had never been used and disinfecting a changing station that hadn't seen a single diaper.

That was where Shane had found him after morning practice. Folding and refolding the baby blanket over the lay-z-boy rocker they'd picked in the corner. The blanket, a pale yellow, almost disappearing in the neutral beige of the chair itself.

"Did you clean?" Shane asked, his eyes roving over the room even while his face stayed blank.

Ilya didn't say anything, placing the blanket as elegantly as he could over the arm of the chair - picking it up again to lay across the back instead. Anya was sniffing around the room as Ilya and Shane hadn't opened it much since the initial installation of furniture and laundry.

"The entire house smells like disinfectant." He spoke again.

"Is cleaning illegal now? Should we call police?" Ilya asked off handedly, finally happy with the placement of the blanket and standing back to admire the room.

Shane stepped into the room and Ilya thanked every god above that they agreed shoes didn't belong in the house - something Shane had apparently been concerned about until they began cohabitating. Something about the first time he'd been to Ilya's apartment and not having to take his shoes off.

"It's perfect." Shane said, grabbing Ilya's arm when he went to adjust the blanket again. "Let's go have some lunch. Have you eaten?"

Ilya grunted out a no and reluctantly followed Shane from the room, checking the time on his phone and swallowing hard. "Kim will be here in half hour. We need to keep kitchen clean."

He followed his husband down the stairs and breathed a sigh of relief when he saw a take out bag sitting on the counter. It would probably be some sort of salad but at least they could simply wipe down the counters again if anything spilled.

When Shane finally opened the bag, taking out two salads, Ilya groaned. "Shane, this is for a rabbit. Do I look like a rabbit?" He harrumphed.

"There is fried chicken in yours. Plus enough cheese and ranch dressing to drown a cat. I'm sure you'll survive." He said blandly, moving around to grab them forks and taking a seat at the counter.

Ilya sat beside him, opening his own container and sighing that his husband knew him. Though Shane's salad was very green and colorful, with onions and corn and other vegetables, Ilya's was in fact full of breaded chicken, parmesan (both shredded and in crisp form), croutons, and smothered in ranch. Anya sat at his feet, eyes wide and staring eagerly at the food in his lap, as if she would gladly take it if he didn't want to eat.

"Is nice to know you love me." He agreed, eating his own salad.

The silence wasn't heavy, but they'd been together almost two decades and Ilya knew when Shane was thinking. The silence was loud and loaded and Shane was clearly counting how many bites he was taking, his fingers tapping on the table.

Ilya let the silence linger perhaps a moment too long because Shane finally broke his staring contest with his bowl and looked up. "We cleaned yesterday." Shane said. Yes, they had, there wasn't a reason to respond.

There was another beat of silence.

"I thought you'd be happy today." Shane said again.

"I will be happy when she says yes." Ilya said through a sigh. "What if she comes and is bad. We have no gates. Coffee table has corners."

"We agreed the gates didn't matter if we were adopting an infant." Shane said. "Do you want to try to put them up now?"

Ilya rubbed at his nose and shook his head.

It was silly but he was absolutely dreading having Kim in their home.

On one hand, it would be either the beginning or the end of this entire thing.

They'd completed the courses, taken CPR and infant training courses, prepped their entire house as if Kim was delivering the baby today. If they didn't get approved then they'd truly done everything in their power to succeed.

It also would mean the work they'd done would have been for nothing.

But if they did get approved, it also meant nothing. Not nothing, but not much in Ilya's mind. They still had to wait for the baby - or rather an expectant mother who was willing to hand over their newborn and preferably, still want to interact with both them and the baby without motherhood in the equation.

This was the beginning but it also wasn't.

It wasn't the end, but also not the middle.

It was limbo and ambiguity and he hated that - the not knowing, the waiting.

The fucking waiting.

"Ilya, once this is over we'll be on the list. We'll be an option. We'll have a chance." Shane said, placing his hand on Ilya's shoulders and rubbing his back. "It's just the beginning."

"We've been at the beginning for six months." He said, wincing when his voice sounded small and sad. Anya let out a whine and circled around the counter looking for crumbs that didn't exist.

Shane pushed back from the island, moving until he was standing between Ilya's thighs and cupping his face.

"Sweetheart," Shane murmured, "This is the beginning but it's also the middle. We have to do more waiting-"

"The fucking waiting. All the time the waiting." Ilya growled in Russian, trying to pull his face free.

"Yes. The waiting." Shane said, holding his face firm. "Ilya, it's fucking terrible."

It felt like the first time Shane had said it out loud and he felt a weight lift off his chest.

"Is awful." He said, his eyes feeling suspiciously wet.

Shane hummed and sealed their lips with a gentle kiss. "Awful." Shane agreed as he pulled back. "But we're one step closer after today. We can ask more about timelines, and if they've had any potential mothers. We can find out when we can meet a potential parent, see if we're a good fit."

"Do you have list of questions?" Ilya asked, rubbing at his eyes without displacing his husband's hands.

A flush came over Shane's face and he pursed his lips. "I do if you didn't move it when you were stress cleaning the house." He answered.

Ilya let out a sigh, leaning forward for another kiss before pulling back. "We will finish eating and find it together." He said.

Shane looked pensive for a moment, eyes searching Ilya's face before nodding and returning to his lunch.

They ate quickly, Shane disposing of the trash while Ilya once again wiped down the already clean counter. He followed Shane into the living room where there was indeed another manilla folder, tucked between the books on the coffee table.

While they looked over the list, Shane very studious, Ilya took a moment to study Shane. His perfect beautiful Shane, who knew he was struggling and trying not to push - trusting Ilya to tell him if things were getting too bad, bad enough that he should be telling him.

He should tell him.

But Kim would be here soon and there was enough pressure on the day. Adding to it the mounting tension Ilya felt in his chest, the heaviness he had to fight getting out of bed in the morning, his conscious effort to brush his teeth if only Shane would continue to kiss him every day - those things could wait.

They would go away once he had his baby, anyways.

A knock rang through the house, followed by the sound of their doorbell, interrupting Shane's question and causing Ilya to freeze. Anya rushed forwards toward the door, yipping excitedly.

The affliction didn't seem to extend to Shane. He quickly closed his folder, setting it on the table and making his way quickly towards the front door.

Ilya forced himself up, taking a steadying breath before walking behind his husband.

"Shane, Ilya, hi. It's good to see you both again." Kim said kindly, toeing off her shoes at the entrance of their home. She leaned down to give Anya a quick pat and Ilya forgot to ask if she was okay with dogs.

She didn't even seem to notice, eyes studying the pictures in the foyer.

He was proud of this space. Before Shane had come to Ottawa, it had felt very bare. Some basic artwork, eventually followed by pictures of Anya, a shoe rack, hooks for coats.

Now it was filled with photos.

The foyer only had photos of family. Smiling at the cottage with Anya between them, Shane and Ilya in the C and A at the rink, at camp holding the cup. When someone walked into the house it was clear that there was a family here.

Shane, Ilya and Anya. A family that still felt incomplete.

They led her through the house, showing her their space and the space they'd created for a baby. The photos on the wall expanded, including pictures of David and Yuna, Shane with Rose, Ilya and Sveta, the centaurs at a barbecue. Ilya and Shane and Ilya and Shane and Ilya and Shane.

The nursery had been a labor of love. Shane was adamant that they should stick to neutrals even though Ilya argued that blue and pink weren't gendered. In the end the room was filled with soft green and yellows, a squishy beige rocker in the corner beside a wood crib that had felt like it weighed more than both of them combined. A long dresser that had a top space with a changing table, already prepped with newborn diapers and wipes and creams. A polka dotted rug, black out curtains with green tassels, a picture of a bear and giraffe hugging on the walls.

Kim didn't seem overly critical, complimenting their home, her eyes roving for - Ilya didn't know what, maybe a knife on the floor or drugs in the kitchen. Whatever she was looking for she didn't find.

Ilya had cleaned. The house was perfect.

As they made their way into the living room, Shane stepped away to grab them some water and Kim opened up her own folder, thick and leather bound with a pad of paper inside and a pen tucked into the middle. Anya settled at Ilya's feet, for once abiding by Shane's rules of leaving room for humans on the couch. Maybe she also knew to be on her best behavior.

Shane returned and passed her a glass, sitting flush beside Ilya and grabbing his own folder. His shoulders were tight and back straight.

"I know we had our initial briefing and talked a bit before, but now I want to hear about Ilya and Shane. We have your financial records and your references - they've all been lovely to speak to - so now I need to know about you. Your marriage, your childhood, your parenting styles." Kim listed.

Ilya swallowed hard and began tapping at his knee.

"And nothing leaves this room?" Shane asked, eyes widening slightly when Kim's eyes narrowed. "We're happy to disclose," he assured her, "But there are pieces of our relationship we have kept from the media and would prefer they were kept that way." He explained.

Kim let out a small smile and nodded. "They're for your file and file alone. We will share general information once a match is made, but it won't be public. It's not HIPAA but we value your privacy." She offered.

Ilya let out a breath and nodded. "Where should we start?"

"Tell me about your relationship. The beginnings and middles and how we ended up here." Kim asked, poised with her pen to take notes.

The beginning.

"We met for the first time in 2008, at the International Prospects Cup." Shane said.

A cold back ally, a lighter that wouldn't click. An awkward handshake. Then another.

"You were competing?" She asked.

"We've always been competing." Shane said with a smile. "Ilya has always been the only person who could keep up with me on the ice. I felt challenged and wanted to know him."

Kim smiled to herself and made a note. "Love at first sight?"

Shane said no at the same time Ilya said yes.

Their eyes met and Shane's eyes softened at his gaze.

"We were connected. Immediately." He clarified, eyes never leaving Ilya's. "But we didn't officially begin dating until 2017."

"We were together casually beginning in 2009." Ilya said, ignoring the pinch at his thigh from Shane. "Long time to admit that it was worth fighting for, longer to figure out how to fight."

Kim hummed and gave them a sad smile. “I wish I was more surprised but, well, you’ve seen morality clauses. With hockey I can only imagine that complicated it more.”

Ilya grunted a response and Shane gave a curt nod.

“And you got married in?”

“2021.” Shane said, “The summer before I officially transferred to Ottawa.”

“We won our first cup in 2022.” Ilya said with a grin. “Will you write that? We have 8 Stanley Cups combined?” He asked, trying to see over the top of the leather.

Kim laughed and nodded, making a show of sounding out 8 Stanley Cups as she wrote.

“So you’ve been married for 6 years, together for almost two decades. Why now?”

So they were just starting, good.

“I retired this year. My knee is not so good and I did not want to be benched.” Ilya said, patting his knee.

“Go out on top.” Shane agreed.

“Not on stretcher.” Ilya said firmly. “We have always wanted kids, since before we got together I wanted to be a father, more when I would be a father with Shane.” Ilya said, snaking his arm over his husband’s shoulder, trying to rub at some of his tension. “We have time now, no more travel for me and no need for nannies or Yuna and David to watch them for weeks.”

Shane nodded. “It didn’t feel right to add to the family if we’d miss weeks at a time.” He agreed. “My mom and dad are great but it’s not really raising our own child if someone else is doing it without us here.”

“And Yuna and David, those are your parents, Shane?” Kim asked, looking up at them as she took notes.

He nodded and placed a hand on Ilya’s knee. “Yeah but they like Ilya more.” He said, some of the tension bleeding from his shoulders. “Apparently Ilya and my mom are already planning for her to move in and help with some overnights.”

“Much easier to share the load when neither of you are breastfeeding.” Kim said with a smile.

“I’ve tried to convince Shane to try, but he says no.”

Shane’s spine went ramrod straight and he turned to hiss at Ilya. “What is wrong with you?”

Ilya stiffened too, anxious that he’d just blown their chances but their moment was broken when Kim let out a laugh and shook her head. “Probably would be a pain to pump during a game, might just want to stick to formula.”

Ilya grinned, turning back to Kim and ignoring his fuming husband. “Yuna and David will help but we already have line of people wanting to babysit.”

Kim’s smile widened and she looked back to her pad. “So who else is on the list? To babysit?” She asked.

Shane blew out a breath and laughed. “Who isn’t? The entire Centaur team including the communications team and the coaches. JJ and Hayden when they come to visit, Rose and Svetlana threatened to buy entire stores worth of clothing.”

“Kate down the street and her kids want to meet her when she come. The lady at Russian Deli, she asks when the baby is coming to give me extras. I tell them no one is waiting more than me, but do they listen? No! They want baby now.” Ilya said with a grin.

“What about your family, Ilya?” Kim asked, still writing.

Ilya froze, his breath caught in his chest. Shane had prepared him for this, told him Kim would ask questions about family and childhood. He’d assured him it wasn’t a trap but part of a bigger picture.

“My parents are both dead. My brother is in Russia and we do not speak.”

Kim hummed and wrote, “Is it hard to be without them during this process?” She asked.

Ilya ran his tongue along his teeth as he shook his head, stopping for a moment and sighing. “My mother would be happy and love Shane. Love our baby. My father and brother are, or were,” he paused for a moment, searching for the right descriptor, “very old fashioned. Would not support me and Shane together and baby would be worse.”

“Was it hard? Growing up in Russia? It must have been very different.” Kim asked, stopping her writing to look directly at him.

He swallowed hard and nodded. “The bisexual was not a problem, I just did not tell. But other things were very hard. My mother took her life, to escape maybe. I came here to escape. My brother and father stayed there and did not change.”

“Was there abuse in your household growing up?” She asked, but still didn’t return to writing, looking at him directly with soft eyes.

Honesty. Not a trap.

“Yes. Very high expectations, they were-“ he couldn’t find the word Shane always used to say when he explained the crushing weight of expectations when met were changed.

“Unattainable.” Shane offered.

Ilya nodded. “You meet goal and turns out goal was twenty steps higher. Nothing is ever enough.” He breathed hard through his nose. “Lots of yelled, throwing things. Sometimes hitting when I was too little to fight back.”

He swallowed hard and blinked his eyes harshly. “Not mama though. She protected me as much as she could. Took me skating, took me to ice cream. I wish she could see where I am now.”

“What do you think she’d think of you becoming a parent?”

“She would be happy.” Ilya said, coughing a bit to clear the tension in his chest. “I want our baby to feel about me like I felt about mama. Always love. The love that never leaves.”

Kim smiled sadly, but didn’t push. “And you, Shane?” She asked, turning her attention. “You’ve been in hockey your whole life. What was it like growing up with the expectation of greatness?”

Shane was stiff beside him but his shoulders lowered a fraction. “My mom and dad are incredibly supportive.” He said, his answer sounding rehearsed to Ilya’s ears. “I loved hockey, it’s still my

favorite subject. They pushed me to be a good role model so that's what I became. I'm happy with the way things turned out."

A non answer. A media answer.

Kim didn't seem to notice or if she did she didn't mind, nodding and turning back to make notes on her paper.

"Do you think those expectations were fair?"

Shane stilled for a moment. "No, not particularly, but at some point it stopped coming from them and started coming from myself. I think they would've let it go if I'd said I'd wanted to stop. I didn't so they didn't, they just supported me."

"Sounds like Yuna and David are excited to be grandparents." She finished out. "Are there any other kids in your life?"

"The Pikes are here when our schedules line up." Shane said. "They're all a bit older but we've been in their lives since they were little. Plus the baby will come to camp with us and those ages range from 4 to 12."

"The team has many kids. They come to things with their parents. Kids and dogs are always welcome."

Almost always. No one brought their kids to Monks but Ilya thought that probably went without saying.

"Ah yes, your little Anya." Kim coo'd as Anya perked up at her name. "Do you have a plan for her?"

Ilya looked at her in confusion. "She will live forever." He said firmly.

Shane sighed and reached down at their feet to give her a pat. "She's great with kids, even babies. We've done a lot of training with her too. Normal things but some more advanced too. She has a special crate in our room that's built out like an apartment, she knows that's her own space."

"How does that work while you're on the road? Does she stay with your parents?" Kim asked.

"She goes to dog hotel." Ilya said, "She still goes sometimes, when we go away for weekend trip. They know her well, treat her like princess."

"Ilya watches the cameras religiously." Shane said with a fond smile. "He called them once to tell them she needed to go out. We watched them answer as they opened her door."

"I noticed your cross." Kim said, inclining her head towards Ilya. "Are you religious?"

Ilya tossed his head side to side. "Maybe, but no. It was mama's. Made me feel like she was with me when I was--"

He stopped for a moment and swallowed.

"Makes me feel like she is with me. Always."

Shane squeezed his knee again. "That's kind of been our approach. Less about a god - maybe, maybe more about being connected to the people around us."

Kim wrote more and nodded along.

“What does your normal day look like?” She asked, smiling up at him.

“Shane says routine helps with the waiting.” He said with a huff and Kim gave him a sympathetic look. “Wake up, walk Anya, breakfast and gym. Sometimes groceries, sometimes cleaning. My hobby for long time was hockey so I sometimes watch tapes, give Shane ideas for plays. He comes home from practice and we make dinner and watch HGTV so he can get his real estate fix.”

It sounded kind of sad when he said it out loud. And lonely.

“You work with mom on the foundation. You have those brand deals. You went to Boston a couple of weeks ago to see Svetlana.” Shane supplied.

It didn’t really help.

“And you Shane?” Kim asked, pushing forward.

“I’m pretty bound by the Centaurs schedule. Practice, games, media events. Me and Ilya normally have breakfast together if he wakes up with me and we work out together.”

“I go to practice with him sometimes. I am going on their road trip soon. Sometimes I help Coach on the bench.”

“Sounds like you’re both pretty bound by the Centaurs schedule.” Kim said with a laugh. “He handles the home front and you handle the actual playing.”

Shane smiled and nodded. “He’s always been my biggest supporter even when he was my rival-“

“I have been obsessed with Shane Hollander since I was 17. He was all anyone talked about - Hollander this and Hollander that - I wanted to know what all the talk was about.” Ilya said, trying to defend himself.

“And now you talk the most.” Shane teased, grinning at him. “But it’s been that way for me too. We always knew we’d be together, at the top. I don’t think either of us could have imagined how together we’d be.”

“I always suspected.” Ilya said, wagging his eyebrows.

Kim laughed a bit and smiled kindly at both of them. “So Ilya will be home full time and Shane will be traveling?”

“I’ll play hockey until I can’t.” Shane said, eyes locked on Kim and pointedly ignoring Ilya. “I think I’ve got three - five years at most, until my shoulder gives out. When that happens we’ll both be home full time.”

Ilya felt his chest tighten quickly. Shane didn’t talk about retirement. Not in such concrete terms. It was the first time he’d mentioned it without a joke or some flippant remark of retirement in his 40s.

“In a perfect world, do you think you’d want more than one?”

“I was an only child. I think I’d have liked a sibling. I’d like the opportunity to give my child that option.” Shane said, his shoulder relaxing. “It’s easy to imagine if Ilya is their father.”

Ilya swallowed hard and nodded. “More than one, less than four.”

Kim laughed and closed her folio, leaning back a bit and shaking her hand free of a cramp before clasping them in her lap.

“In a perfect world, what does your baby look like?”

They looked at each other, Shane swallowing hard before letting out a nervous laugh. “I want a little boy, with curly brown hair and blue eyes.” He locked his eyes on Ilya’s they moved quickly as if to memorize the color. “I want them to be loud or, maybe that’s the wrong word. I want them to be passionate, kind. I want them to care carefree. I want them to be happy.”

“Ilya?” Kim prompted after a few moments.

“A baby girl. She will have freckles.” Shane let out a wet laugh. “I want her to be sweet. I want her to be able to speak her mind, always say what she wants. No frills.”

Kim hummed and Ilya wrenched his gaze away from Shane to look at her.

“Is that all? Do you have her in your car? You are not supposed to leave them in car, Kim. That is baby rules 101.”

“Ilya.” Shane admonished, but he rubbed at his eye for a moment and grabbed at his own folder.

“No babies on the horizon yet.” She said apologetically. “But I can safely say a baby would find a loving home here. Now we just have to wait for one.”

“How long does that take? Now that we’re approved?” Shane asked, pen poised over his own paper.

Kim tossed her head a bit. “Since you’re looking for an infant the wait time is increased a bit. We don’t even show potential mothers your file until they are 20 weeks. Then we can know about any abnormalities, sometimes gender. I know you mentioned that disabilities weren’t disqualifiers but some genetics aren’t compatible with life. It’s better to know that before placements are already decided.”

“How do they decide? The mothers, how would they choose us?” Ilya asked.

“We’ll create a profile for you based on my questions today. Some mothers prefer closed adoptions, some prefer a religious household. We compile your profile and then they review.”

“But they won’t know it’s us.” Shane said.

That was a concern they’d both shared after their initial conversation with Kim. An interest in an open adoption could be leverage for a mother - something more drawn out or a promise just to ensure they’d get to meet them before taking the opportunity away. Kim had mentioned potential financial complications.

“They won’t know more than you’re two men looking for a baby.” She assured them, “They won’t know it’s you until we do our first mediated session for introductions. Well do those sessions monthly but you’re more than welcome to interact outside of that if you’d like to know more about them. With your interest in open adoption, and their willingness, it can sometimes help with the transition.”

“Can she change her mind?”

Kim regarded Ilya for a moment before nodding. “When the baby is born, they speak to a social worker that is assigned by the hospital. I’ve only seen it twice but it does happen.”

It felt like being shot in the chest.

“Can they change their minds once they pick us?” Shane asked. “Like once they know it’s us - Ilya Rozanov and Shane Hollander - can they decide they don’t want us?”

“Yes.” Kim said plainly. “Your fame could be a deterrent but I think we’re getting way ahead of ourselves.” She said simply. “We’re now at a point of waiting. We’ll probably do another couple home visits over the course of the wait, and we’ll have monthly calls to confirm interest-“

“There is interest.” Ilya said firmly.

Kim smiled and nodded, “And every month we’ll confirm it. As soon as we have a match I will let you know.”

“Will you let us know about potential mothers?” Shane asked.

“Not until you’re chosen. We’ll keep you on file as a potential secondary option once you’re matched in case it falls through, but once you’re matched we try to keep it a closed circuit.”

Ilya let out a heavy sigh and rubbed his nose. “So more waiting.”

“Yes, more waiting.”

“Excuse me, you are most beautiful woman I’ve ever seen. I think I will die if I do not have lunch with you? Will you save my life?”

“Lucky for you, I’m a doctor. Unlucky for you, I’m married. In fact, it looks like you are too.” The woman said, looking at the ring adorning his finger.

“Ah, yes.” Ilya said dramatically, “In love with boring Canadian with fat ass. Luckily he is a millionaire and gives good head.”

“What a coincidence! My husband is also a millionaire with a fat ass.” Lisa said with a grin, gesturing towards the seat opposite herself in the small restaurant.

Ilya slid in, putting his hand to his forehead dramatically. “Is also boring Canadian?” He lamented.

“Not boring, no.” Lisa said with a grin, “But he does have a life size Batman suit that cost about as much as a car.”

“Sedan or Maserati?”

“Sedan.” Lisa said with a grin.

Ilya grinned back and poured himself some water from the pitcher on the table. “How is Hazy? He was too busy for me last time I was at practice.”

“He’s okay. He spread his hips too far at the last game so he’s on physio but it hasn’t taken him out of play yet.”

“And you?”

“I’m okay. We had an egg retrieval a few days ago so now we wait again.”

Ilya bit at his lip and nodded. “More waiting.”

“Always with the fucking waiting.” Lisa agreed.

It wasn't often that he got to have lunch with Lisa. She was a WAG, but she was also a doctor at the hospital and her hours weren't ideal for random lunch dates on a Tuesday - even less likely that Hazy wouldn't steal her away the moment their schedules aligned.

Today was a rare day. Shane and Hazy had an afternoon practice, which meant they were both free to enjoy each other's company without missing out on time with their spouses. It was also a good time to get together without other WAGs, not that he didn't like them.

Well, most of them.

Lisa was definitely his favorite, maybe only after Harris, but Ilya thought that Harris didn't really count, a revelation after deciding he would need to compete with him as queen WAG (the queen WAG was clearly Cassie and she would be usurped). They had been working together before he'd even become a WAG and now he was part of their family because he was married to Troy.

Fuck, he should probably call Troy. They hadn't had a boys night in awhile - he'd been very focused on baby and baby making and maintaining a routine so he didn't drown under a weighted depression that he felt was barely at bay.

Ilya looked over the menu. Shane would tell him to get a salad, maybe some salmon. He was definitely getting a cheese burger. The waiter came over and took their order.

"She texted me."

When he looked back at Lisa her eyes were bright and she was grinning.

"What did she say?" Ilya said excitedly.

Lisa grinned and opened her phone, scrolling for a second before opening a text thread and clearing her throat.

"Hey Lis-"

"Lis?" Ilya asked with a snort. "She forgot your name is Lisa?"

"I think it was meant to, like, make us sound like we're friends. She was trying to butter me up, you'll see."

Ilya grinned and nodded at her to continue. Lisa cleared her throat and read on, "Could you ask Hazy to maybe give Myles a win? I think he's feeling bad about his shots." She finished with a laugh.

"Is hockey." Ilya said questioningly.

"Is hockey." Lisa agreed, trying to sound out his accent.

"He will be bad if our goalie goes easy on him. Bears won't go easy to help his feelings." Ilya said again, his brow furrowing.

"I know that." Lisa said with a laugh. "I'm sure Myles knows that, too."

"So why even ask?" Ilya demanded. "He should be working on his bad slapshot, not begging girlfriend to annoy the goaltender's wife."

"Here's the thing, I don't think she asked him. I think she just saw her boyfriend being sad and is trying to help."

Ilya groaned and threw his head back. "I thought he played in college. She should know."

"They weren't together in college. I'm pretty sure they met right before he was drafted."

Ilya straightened up and pulled his hand down his face.

"She is the worst." He said very seriously.

"God she's awful." Lisa said, tossing her head back with a laugh.

"Shane and I have talked too. I told him to tell Myles they should break up - tell him she is no good. He says he won't do it, not captainly." Ilya said, pretending to snore at the end.

Lisa laughed and sipped at her water. "Did you ever do that?" she teased.

"Yes, of course." Ilya said with a grin. "Twice on Bears. I also outlaw the no sex during play off rules."

"So stupid!" Lisa agreed.

"So stupid." Ilya said solemnly. "Some still did and they were worst players. Couldn't handle their stick - either of them."

Lisa laughed and thanked the waiter when he placed their food in front of them. Ilya immediately put a fry in his mouth, groaning with delight. "Much nicer to eat with you than Shane." He said, eyeing her plate of pasta.

"Shane's a hockey player in his late thirties. He's fine to eat his broccoli and ground beef. Are you guys still arguing about it?" She asked, twirling her noodles.

"Not really, no." Ilya said. "Not about that." He added, picking up his burger.

"But you are? Arguing?"

"Is not arguing." Ilya said after he chewed his bite. "Is more-" He stopped himself and swallowed hard. "The waiting is very hard. He is so focused on hockey but I am just at home, waiting for our baby, waiting for him to come home, waiting for lunch with pretty doctors."

Lisa gave him a sympathetic smile as she ate her own pasta. "I get that even though I have the hospital." She said, sighing heavily. "Me and Wyatt have been getting it a bit more too. It's not even about the baby! Just stupid disagreements that end with us not speaking for hours."

"We want the same thing, we should not be fighting about salad tongs." Ilya agreed.

"My mom said it's easiest to fight with the people we love, especially because we know they'll love us no matter what." Lisa said sadly. "It's just frustrating and the longer it goes the worse it feels and the worse I feel the more we fight."

Ilya chewed on his burger and nodded. Shane and him didn't really fight but the tension was higher, especially on days after a bad practice or a bad game. Shane was quick to snip and Ilya, having sat with anxiety that seemed to gnaw at his chest even on the best days, was quick to snipe back.

They didn't yell. Ilya vowed not to yell, not to become his father, but there were nights the lights were shut off harshly. Nights where they settled pointedly on their own ends of the bed, waking in the night to find themselves entwined in the morning, as if they knew instinctively that although they were mad before bed they would need each other more in the morning.

Mornings containing apology smoothies and apology pastries. Soft kisses with murmured apology.

But the end wasn't on the horizon. They were sitting in limbo, waiting for a mother to choose them just like Lisa and Hazy were waiting for a healthy egg to be implanted.

They were in limbo without anything to anchor them except each other.

Chapter End Notes

comments are appreciated!

Chapter 7

Chapter Summary

Shane really wants a baby.

Chapter Notes

I'm sorry it's been so long! The AO3 Author Curse got me. Mom's got cancer, my spine is forever curved and chronic pain for life ("advanced for 34" "I'm 31" "Worse then"), and my boss is the worst. It's a shorter chapter than I'd have liked but I can't write smut right now. Hopefully back to normal after surgery tomorrow!

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

“You good, man?” Bood asked, patting Shane on the shoulder.

He gave him a smile and nodded but he was definitively not fine.

He was, in fact, hard.

Hard at a barbecue that was for some reason still taking place even though it was fucking February in Ottawa. He was surrounded by his teammates and sipping a ginger ale - and hard.

Because his fucking husband was holding a baby.

Not just a toddler, or even a small child. No, Ilya was holding a newborn, an infant, maybe 4 months old if Shane could guess. His eyes were open and searching, mouth latched onto the bottle Ilya was feeding him.

Ilya was fucking cooing at him in Russian.

Sure, no one else understood. In fact Shane only understood a handful of the sentences himself, but what he did understand made his heart beat too fast.

“A perfect little man. Eat more, you will be a better defenseman than your father. You will meet my baby when they come. They will be cuter than you, I’m so sorry to say. I won’t tell your mommy though, I think she would beat me up.”

Then he was speaking very quickly and Shane lost track, locking in only when he heard his name.

“My Shane, he is going to be the best daddy. He will go to work and then come home and we will do cuddles and kisses and bath time. Our baby will be so so perfect, just like you.”

It was so sweet and Shane’s heart was beating very quickly.

And he was hard - at a barbecue - surrounded by his friends, who were also his co-workers. His husband was whispering to an infant belonging to one of their defensemen, telling it about their baby and how he wanted Shane to be a dad.

Fuck, Shane needed a baby.

Normally when Shane wanted things he could take the necessary steps to achieve those goals with a very clear outcome. He could outline steps to achieve the goal.

You want to play in the NHL? Practice. Games. Tape review. Conditioning. Cups.

You want to marry your arch rival turned love of your life? He transfer teams. Build a charity. Get engaged (preferably not after a brush with death, but who could help these things?) Make a plan for summer and come out and get married.

Sure, both of those things had variables. The Voyagers had been assholes and he'd basically been written off for being gay before the Ilya thing had even come out. Hayden and J.J. had tried but he'd noticed several members rolling their eyes when they ran drills and Shane made demands, avoiding him in the locker room or showers.

And yeah, marrying Ilya hadn't been easy. First the fall out of Ilya's transfer, then the decision to move up their coming out completely derailed by fucking Brad, then transferring teams and playing together.

The thing with those goals were the steps and outcomes were clear. Regardless of variable there was a degree of certainty that came along with the situation.

$A + B = C$.

The formula was there.

The problem with waiting for a baby was that they'd done the formula but nothing had happened.

In theory, they would have a baby sometime in the future. Kim would call them and they'd meet a biological mother who was interested in them adopting her child. Ilya wanted an open adoption, he didn't want to take her away from her flesh and blood. Shane didn't particularly care, but he would do that for Ilya since he'd been against surrogacy which would have had a much more concrete timeline.

Shane didn't really care about himself being a father. He wanted to, obviously. He wanted to be a dad when Ilya was the other father. He wanted to raise Ilya's kids.

Ilya didn't want to be a donor, his fear of passing on his genetics enough of a factor that he wouldn't even entertain it. It had broken Shane's heart but he'd agreed, because even though his dreams were of a tiny crooked smile and curly blonde hair, he would forgo that to see Ilya be a father comfortably.

That had started a conversation about Shane being the donor, which he wasn't really interested in either. He didn't want a tiny Shane, he wanted a tiny Ilya. Honestly, he wanted a tiny mix of them, maybe with Ilya's curls but Shane's color, he knew Ilya wanted his freckles, Ilya's eyes but Shane's nose - since he didn't really know what Ilya's looked like as a child, it had been broken so many times on the ice.

So, the decision had been adoption and they'd completed all the steps, but it was now 10 months since they'd started the process and they were just waiting.

Kim called once a month - a check in. She'd ask about their schedule, about the centaurs and Ilya's hobbies.

“Are you interested in adopting when a potential match is found?”

Yes. Obviously, please god.

“Are you only considering an infant placement?”

Yes. They would not budge. A newborn or nothing.

Nothing felt daunting and also constant. Every day he'd religiously check his email, as if Kim wouldn't call if there was a potential match. He found himself looking up daycares in the area and deciding if he should get on a wait list for a baby that didn't even exist. He had to force himself to focus on hockey instead of home because at least in the rink he had a modicum of control.

And Ilya was getting depressed.

He was going to have to bring it up soon but Ilya was lying about it, like he was embarrassed to be upset about there being no baby. Like he thought Shane wasn't a mess because of the lack of baby.

In those moments he wished that Ilya could actually get him pregnant, because he was clearly a crazy person. He had literally written out a statement and looked paternity leave in Ottawa, looked into what the PWHL did when one of their players was pregnant.

Because Shane was a fucking crazy person and was about 3 days away from paying an Etsy witch, something Rose had introduced him to, to somehow break the laws of science and allow his husband to get him pregnant.

And again, he was fucking hard at a barbecue while Ilya passed a now sleeping infant back to its mother.

His eyes scanned the yard for a moment, eyes lighting up when he caught Shane's eye and sauntering over to him.

“Did you see the baby?” He enthused, pulling him into a tight hug. “We should steal him.” He whispered into Shane's ear.

“Yeah, maybe.” Shane agreed, wrapping his arms around his husband and tucking his chin over his shoulder.

Ilya hummed, rocking them slightly before stilling. “Are you hard?” He said with a snort.

“You were holding a baby.” Shane defended, refusing to move his hips either forward or backward.

“We can not fuck in the bathroom again, sweetheart. I can not protect you in the locker room this time.”

“We're not going to fuck in the bathroom. We're going to say goodbye and then go home and fuck in our bed. Like reasonable adults.”

Ilya gave him a squeeze and pulled back, patting his cheek. “You get Anya and I will say goodbye.” He said, pressing a quick kiss to his lips before turning back and loudly announcing their departure to the rest of the team.

Shane busied himself, collecting the leash and then collecting Anya. She was older now, a bit more gray around the muzzle and more willing to sit near food than romp around the yard, so wrangling her didn't take twenty minutes and a chicken bone.

Once they'd waved goodbye, Shane got her into the back of his car and slid over to the driver seat, smirking when Ilya slid in beside him and wagged his eyebrows.

"How do you want me?" He purred, rubbing Shane's thighs. "Over the counter? In the shower? Against the wall? On the floor?" He said, licking at his teeth.

Shane snorted and adjusted his pants before adjusting his mirrors and pulling out of the driveway. "We're in our mid-thirties. I want you in bed, preferably on a towel so we don't have to change the sheets so I can pass out after."

"Romance is dead!" Ilya cajoled, but he smiled, placing his hand on top of Shane's on the gear shift. "I tell you my secret." He said quietly, leaning over and whispering loudly. "My knee is locking a lot tonight, would not be able to get off the floor."

Shane turned his hand upside down and locked their hands, giving him a squeeze.

The drive was mostly quiet, Ilya humming along to the radio and Anya panting quietly in the backseat. Shane pursed his lips and let out a sigh.

"I'm sad." He said bluntly.

Ilya stilled beside him, the moment silent before he released Shane's hand and cupped the back of his neck.

"Tell me." Ilya demanded, though his thumb brushed against Shane's cheek.

Shane swallowed hard, his throat tight. "I want a baby, too, ya know?" He said his voice sounding wet. "And I saw you tonight with that baby and I want it so badly I feel like I'd do anything to get."

"We are waiting." Ilya said softly.

"And waiting is fucking terrible." Shane said with a huff. "And I know you're miserable and I'm miserable too and I just-" he took a fortifying breath, "I need you to know that it's terrible for me too, the waiting. I know I don't get sad, depressed, the way you do, but I need you to know this is agony. The waiting and waiting, getting sadder the longer it takes. We joke about getting pregnant but if I could? I'd fucking - I'd quit hockey."

Ilya sucked a hard breath through his teeth.

"If it could work and I could get pregnant, I'd quit hockey to have a baby. I want our baby so bad I'd do almost anything."

His eyes were wet, he knew that. He could feel his lashes clumping up uncomfortably and he knew his hands were shaking a bit on the steering wheel. He took a steadying breath and glanced over at Ilya who looked absolutely wrecked. His teeth locked on his lip, eyes over flowing and nose sniffing.

"Sometimes I feel very alone." Ilya said quietly. "You still have hockey, and you still have our team. Sometimes I feel maybe like I am only one waiting."

Shane choked out a laugh and shook his head. "You know how my phone will always ring when you call? I set that for Kim too. Every time she sends me an email, or a text, my phone is so loud I can hear it on the ice. Just in case."

"I would call you immediately."

“I would leave in the third period, 1 down. I would leave in overtime.” Shane said firmly. “I would do almost anything to at least know. To at least have a plan that isn’t just hoping and waiting. We have enough money, science should figure out a way I could just carry the baby myself.”

Ilya let out a laugh. “If science can do it, then I should carry our baby.”

Shane let out a groan and grinned. “God you’d be so sexy and also the most annoying pregnant person in the world. I’d be obsessed with you.”

“More than normal?” Ilya teased.

“Wouldn’t even compare.” Shane confirmed. “I’d do everything. I’d rub your feet and go out at 2AM for pelmini and figure out how to make borscht, and find those gross pickles you like. Fuck I’d love it. I don’t think I could love you more, but I think I’d find a way.”

Ilya brushed his thumb along Shane’s cheek again. “I am taking the pills. And I talk to Galina but - is sometimes not enough. Sometimes is hard to get out of bed, wish you could just stay in bed with me until we hear from Kim. It is coming even though I am fighting it.” He admitted.

“I’ve told you before that it doesn’t matter to me. It does but, it doesn’t change anything between us. We’re together, forever. No matter what.” Shane said, reaching up to hold Ilya’s hand.

“I’m sorry.” Ilya whispered, and Shane heard the tears without looking.

“I love you.” Shane said. “No matter what, we’ll get through this. I just, I wanted you to know that I’m sad too. Every day we don’t have them, I’m sad too. And I know it’s different but you’re not alone.”

They pulled into their driveway and Shane shut off the car before turning to face Ilya.

“If you’re sorry, then I’m sorry too.” He said softly.

“Is not the same.” Ilya argued without any force.

“Feels the same where I’m sitting.”

Ilya let out a huff and pulled his hands away to wipe forcefully at his eyes.

“This is very not sexy, Hollander.” He said with a grimace.

“I’m going to go bring Anya inside and get her set up in her room.” Shane said, leaning over the center console to kiss Ilya. “And then you’ll meet me in shower for an apology blow job and then you can eat my ass. Would that be sexy enough?” He asked.

Ilya nodded, eyes firm. “I will put two towels down in case.”

Shane snorted and let himself out of the car dutifully walking Anya around the house for a moment for a last minute bathroom break before letting her into the house.

By the time the alarm went off in the morning, Shane was already out of bed and the dirty towel from the night before was in the laundry basket.

Ilya slapped at the phone before pulling Shane’s pillow over his head and sighing as the smell of his shampoo washed over him.

“Ilya.” A soft voice said, an indeterminate time later. “You have to wake up, I have a surprise for you.”

“You can blow me without me waking up.” Ilya grunted from under his pillow.

“Dude.” Another voice huffed.

Ilya slowly pushed the pillow off his head and sneered at Troy. “Why are you in my bedroom at 8:00 AM. I am no longer a Centaur, I am not paid to see your ugly face this early.”

“First of all, go fuck yourself. Second of all, it’s 10.” Troy but back.

“I let you sleep in.” Shane said, leaning down to press a kiss to his forehead. “Troy came by to bring you to brunch. He missed you.” Shane mocked.

“You’re both fucking assholes. Ilya, get out of bed.” Troy said, throwing a pair of pants at Ilya’s legs.

“These are Shane’s.” He grunted, but pushed himself up, pressing his lips to Shane’s, even as he grimaced at morning breath, before standing up and making his way towards the closet.

Once he’d emerged fully dressed and made his way downstairs, he found Harris and Troy both sipping coffees and Shane having a cup of hot tea.

“Double date?” Ilya asked, pouring himself his own cup of coffee before making his way to the fridge for his flavored creamer.

“Nope.” Harris said, popping the P for emphasis. “This afternoon skate is optional and I’m going to the spa so I asked Shane if you and Troy could have a play date.”

“I’m not a toddler.” Troy grumbled.

“And I thought maybe it would be a nice break from your routine. Unless you and Troy wanted to do some conditioning.” Shane said with a shrug.

“Do I want 3 plates of bacon or for my muscles to be so tight I cry?” Ilya said, pretending to weigh his options in his hands. “Barrett, can we go to that buffet? With the-“

“Fuck, the one with the meat bar? Yes.” Troy said with a dreamy expression. “They had the, what was it? Million dollar bacon?”

“Brown sugar and bacon. Was gift from god.” Ilya agreed. “You will be okay without your A?” Ilya asked, coming over to crowd Shane’s space. “It is late in season, maybe he needs work on his corners-“

“Fuck you, my corners are fine.” Troy snapped, but there was no heat as he sipped his coffee.

“They are not. Shane told me.”

“It’ll be good for him to have a break. It’s late in the season, don’t want him burning out.” Shane said, wrapping an arm around Ilya’s waist.

Ilya hummed, drinking from his own cup. “So you and Harris are having brunch too?” He said.

Shane groaned and Harris scrunched his nose.

“What? Is good. Big strong tops will go eat many meats and you will probably eat lots of fiber?”

“Again, and I really feel like I shouldn’t have to disclose this, we are verse.” Harris said with a sigh.

“Harris.” Troy said firmly.

“Verse bottom is still mostly bottom, Harris.”

“Ilya.” Shane snapped.

Harris and Ilya stared blankly at each other before Harris snorted and rolled his eyes and Ilya grinned.

“Come Barrett. Maybe we will come back and all have orgy together.”

“Abso-fucking-lutely not.” Troy said, following as Ilya led them out of the house.

As soon as the door closed, Harris burst out laughing. “I really appreciate you for putting up with him.”

“Sorry.” Shane said with a half shrug. “I didn’t bring it up.” He said defending himself.

“I don’t understand how he’s able to just say that stuff. I grew up queer, I was out for years, and some of the things he says off the cuff would make every person in my friend group blush.”

“Yeah but you’re used to it.” Shane argued.

Maybe not the best thing to be, if he thought about it. It was a strange, creepy thing for your captain to be able to congratulate you on a blow job at morning skate or tell you to use more lube during conditioning.

“It’s a testament to the centaurs that he never was slapped with a sexual misconduct complaint.”

“It’s fucking hockey,” Shane said with a snort, “just occasionally more gay.” He acquiesced.

Harris smiled and leaned back, cupping his mug with both hands and looking over Shane. “So why did we send them away? I’m happy to have you to myself without making you do a video, but I’ve got to be honest brown sugar bacon sounds divine.”

Shane hummed and went about collecting the other half empty coffee cups. “I just need someone to keep an eye on him when I’m not home.” He said, “and I know that you travel with us sometimes but he’s - he’s struggling.”

“With the baby thing.” Harris finished.

“With the baby thing.” Shane confirmed.

There was the sound of water washing out the coffee before Harris spoke again.

“And you?”

Shane looked up from his place by the sink. “I can’t be here while I’m on the road?” He asked.

“No, I mean, and are you? Struggling with the baby thing?” Harris clarified.

“No.” He said directly.

Harris narrowed his eyes. “Shane.”

“I’m not - I mean, no I am - but not like him. I have hockey, I have the team and my routine and my schedule. I’m not just waiting here the way he’s waiting.”

“But you’re still waiting.” Harris said kindly. “Bud, I think I’d be more concerned if you weren’t struggling a bit.”

Shane steadied his breathing, in for two, out for two, a body check and then again.

“I’m fine.”

“Shane.” Harris said and although Shane was drying the mugs he could hear the eye roll.

“I’m not allowed to be struggling.” Shane said, shrugged and placed the now clean mug in their cabinet. “I’ve got distractions and Ilya knows how much it sucks and how much I’m - upset - that it hasn’t happened but -“ he stopped.

“Shane, saying it sucks more for Ilya isn’t fair to you.” Harris said consolingly. “This is a very hard situation to be in.”

Shane sucked his teeth. “But you’ll watch him anyways, because I asked you to.” He asserted.

“I’ll watch him because we’re friends now that he’s joined the anti-Katie club.”

“Is she that bad? She just seems, kind of, dumb?” Shane half asked, turning around and grabbing his own mug.

“She’s not just hockey dumb, she’s WAG dumb, which is worse for most of us.” Harris said with a laugh. “Archie is hockey dumb but he also hasn’t basically said that we should be in the stands instead of the family room so people know the players are taken.”

Shane seemed to short circuit for a minute. “I don’t understand?”

“Why she wants to be in the stands?” Harris asked.

“I mean, yeah? We’re technically at work. We’re not trying to pick up people wearing our jerseys.”

“Not even when you were 19?” Harris asked incredulous.

“I was fucking my rival when I was 19. And also very deep in the closet.”

“And unable to tell when people hit on you? Or is that new?” Harris teased.

“Fuck you.” Shane bit back with no heat.

“Well, Katie wants to sit in the stands, which we do occasionally, but then she got mad that people kept asking Ilya for his autograph and the section missed a good assist from Myles. It was really awkward after because then Ilya started commenting on your goals and assists and it-“

“Jesus.” Shane said, rubbing at his eye.

“Right.” Harris said, nodding emphatically. “Plus she is just - really young. I mean, a lot of the new WAGs are young, but she seems really young.”

“Myles isn’t good enough to have an annoying WAG.” Shane stated.

“That poor kid.” Harris lamented, pushing his own cup away. “But we’re not talking about Katie or Ilya - yes, I’ll watch him! - we’re talking about you right now.”

Shane sucked his teeth and squared his shoulders. “There isn’t anything to talk about.” He said firmly.

“But you’d tell someone if there was?”

“Yes.”

“Someone other than Ilya, who you just said was also going through it.”

“Sure.” Shane agreed to move the conversation forward. “But right now, we’re about to go into March which means a lot of roadies to the Cup and I need someone to watch Ilya until we’re actually in the finals.”

“Is he travelling with us?” He asked.

Shane nodded and smiled. “He’s coming to every game we play, home and away. He’s excited.”

“And we’ll win the Cup again?”

“We will if I have anything to say about it.”

Chapter End Notes

Good news is the rest of the story is fleshed out. Not sure on Chapters but definitely sure on timeline!

Chapter 8

Chapter Summary

Shane and Ilya meet an angel (or two)

Chapter Notes

There is no schedule, just vibes. It's still coming just slow and steady.

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

They didn't win the cup.

The Centaurs had made it to the second round of playoffs but lost in game 6 to the Bears. It had stung, especially because it was Shane's first season as Captain. He knew that he hadn't failed the team - sometimes the other team scored more goals which, always, meant winning a game. But that didn't mean he wasn't upset at himself.

Then came the flurry of post season - media, and photos, and tape review. It meant barbecues at Boods, brand deals, and trips to the hospital to kids who were just excited to meet NHL players, current Stanley Cup holders or otherwise.

Once they'd made it to the cottage, Ilya finally felt himself exhale, if only for the few weeks before they started camp.

The depression wasn't better but it wasn't worse, a blessing of the medication he diligently took. Routine hadn't helped the way it helped Shane, but meeting with Galina helped him keep time.

17 months, 9 days since they'd started the process of adoption. They had a call with Kim in 6 days, the 15th of the month, the same questions to be asked.

"Are you interested and committed to adoption?"

Yes.

"Are you only considering an infant placement?"

Yes.

It had been a bit of contention with Yuna and David. They offered that the wait could be less if they were willing to deviate a little, a young child, maybe even a teenager.

But Ilya had a vision in his mind. A vision of a whiny cry at two in the morning, shuffling the baby out of bed and into arms, Shane changing a diaper and feeding a tiny bottle of formula, Ilya swaddling the baby again before snuggling back into bed with a tiny baby between them.

Their tiny baby, safe between them, little fits of sound in sleep and wiggling arms.

Galina had said that he should recount the things he was grateful for instead of the things he was missing. She'd made him make a list of each.

Things he was missing: their baby, his mama, the ice and his team.

Things he was grateful for: the team group chat, Shane, Yuna and David, Anya, camps, brand deals, the foundation.

The group chat he assumed he'd lose when he left the Centaurs. It was meant for team meetings, lunch plans, practice schedules. Even if the off season it was for talking about prospects and potential trades for the upcoming season.

He assumed that they probably still had one for that, even though a few of those questions made it to the one that he was in, but the one he talked in included Harris and none of the newest Rookies he'd never played with. The messages were more about movies or TV shows, barbecue dates and foods requested, still lunch plans but also just dinner plans between whoever could join.

Eventually he thought it would fizzle out, people wouldn't want to keep up with two group chats but every time he thought it a new message would pop through. Harris saying he was bringing Chiron over for a play date and then someone else asking if they could get his thoughts on a play, dinner with Hazy or Dykstra, evenings of playing with children to give their mothers a break.

It was amazing to be surrounded by them, especially the WAGs when Shane wasn't home.

He wasn't naive enough to assume the influx in lunches and drink invitations hadn't been somehow influenced by Shane towards the end of the season. His Shane, always worrying, trying to help without exactly knowing how, but seeing a problem and wanting to fix. So yes, Harris occasionally worked on their kitchen island while Ilya practiced a new recipe that would taste good even fitting into Shane's macros. It had also followed a nice lunch with Archie while Ilya told him about Luca's rookie year, a night of babysitting with Cassie and Selena, a tearful night with Lisa after their first IVF transfer failed.

He was supported by the Centaurs even without being on the team.

That wasn't even mentioning the amount of texts and visits he received from David and Yuna - invites to watch the game with them, dinners, negotiations for brand collaborations. The summer had brought perhaps a few more dinner invitations than normal, a weekend of planning that had previously only taken a few hours.

Sometimes he felt guilty that he wasn't as involved with the foundation as he felt he should, but Yuna had crushed that thought, saying she called him in when he was needed and until they started their year long programs in a year he could leave the logistics in her capable hands.

His fathers voice sometimes filtered through, words of laziness and uselessness - a kind of disapproval for missing milestones he didn't even know existed.

Yuna seemed to sense those days, sending him a brand deal contract to "review" or sending him something for the foundation that needed his signature. Sometimes just telling him to come over and having Shane's baby book open.

"You're not ignoring your responsibilities, you just don't have as many." Shane had said, petting his head as they slept in one morning.

Blunt and almost rude, but exactly what Ilya needed to hear.

It was the first time in his life that he hadn't had to strive to be the best, he simply had to be.

It had been over a year since his own retirement and he was finally feeling settled in the mundane. Not enjoying it all the time, that would be unrealistic Galina had said, but settled into it.

That wasn't to say he hadn't been grateful when the season had ended a bit earlier than planned and he had Shane to himself. The summer had been idyllic even without a baby.

It wasn't that easy, he knew.

Even a bulking Shane, one who would eat six meals a day and be able to bench press him one handed, would not distract him entirely from the lack of baby.

But it would be easier if he was to wake up to Shane sneaking back into bed after a run, or coming back with coffees for them both.

It had been much easier to wait with Shane by his side.

Their call with Kim would come in a few days and a few days after that they'd return to their schedule, run by the NHL and the Centaurs specifically.

These were the moments he missed his mama most.

He imagined telling her about Shane. She would probably be worried, because of Papa, but in his mind she was here and he was still gone. She was safe in Canada, in a nice apartment with big windows and plants in the window. He would go to her house and they'd have tea and eat treats. Shane would come over after practice and Ilya would show his mother how he made chicken parm now. They would talk about the baby, and Ilya's WAG ranking and the Centaurs chances this year.

It was maybe mean, to his heart. Meaner still when he thought of her grave alone in Russia, unable to see her son.

Galina said it was normal to mourn her more during this process. That it may hurt even more when their baby was here and she was not.

He was leaning on Yuna to be the best grandma, something she'd shown she wanted to be - planning to stay with them when their baby came, bringing dinners and setting up playdates.

She would be great but would not replace mama.

It would be a heartbreak, again, when the time came.

But for now, he would enjoy his bulked up Shane, with deep divots in his muscles and every part of him more defined and thicker. Ilya had convinced him to take a nap together after his morning workout and he was enjoying the view of Shane laying naked on his stomach, one arm tucked under his pillow and the other swatting at Ilya's side.

"Ilya." Shane mumbled. Ilya continued to press kisses to Shane's shoulder, grabbing his swatting hand and pressing it back to the pillow.

They had a scant few days left before he would lose Shane to hockey and he intended to make the most of them.

He continued to kiss, his other hand pressing down Shane's back before throwing the blanket off his lower half and continuing his descent.

“Your ass is huge.” Ilya said appreciatively.

Shane hit him a bit harder and glared from buried in the pillow. “Fuck you.”

“You do not understand Shane. When you retire I will make you bulk always.” Ilya said earnestly.

“Will you crush little watermelon between your thighs for me?” He asked, squeezing at his thighs.

“I still don’t get the appeal.” Shane said, his face creased from the pillow as he finally lifted his head.

Another thing to be grateful for - a sleep rumpled Shane.

“I will like and you will like because I like.” Ilya said with a leer, pressing their lips together quickly before moving back to kiss his back.

His phone buzzed on the table but Ilya ignored it. Nothing could be more important than Shane relaxing under his mouth.

Ilya pulled himself back just enough to lean further down, kissing a path down Shane’s spine, biting at his side while his hand came up to palm his ass again.

Shane hummed, his hips shifting in the way he did when he was getting hard.

“Get a towel.” He grunted, stilling his hips.

Ilya hummed but continued his descent, only stopping when Shane thrust his hand into his hair and tugged him up, a jolt of pain going straight to his cock.

“I will do laundry.” Ilya bargained, his hand still squeezing, traveling into the cleft of Shane’s ass.

Shane shuddered but didn’t release his hair. “Towel. Then you can put your cock wherever you want.”

“My tongue too?” He teased, fingers ghosting of Shane’s hole.

He shuddered and nodded, only releasing Ilya’s hair when he finally made his way off the bed.

As he came back, patting Shane’s side until he rolled enough for Ilya to place the towel along the bed before settling back on his stomach.

“I think I can get three.” Ilya said, moving to straddle the back of Shane’s thighs, kissing his shoulder.

“Two on my tongue and one on my cock.”

A shiver ran down Shane’s spine and he lifted his hips. “One on your tongue, then the other two.” He said, shifting again in the way Ilya knew meant he was grinding himself down on the mattress.

“Only one? Maybe you come 4 times.” Ilya teased, his mouth moving down Shane’s back, teeth scraping against his shoulders as he made his way down.

“Sounds like you want me to die.” Shane said, his back twitching under Ilya’s mouth.

“I will make it easy for you.” Ilya admonished, shifted as he finally made his way to the small of Shane’s back.

Shane shuddered, his hips jutting backward. “I need to be able to walk.” He half argued, sighing when Ilya’s tongue started licking at the dimples at the base of his spine.

Fuck, his husband was a work of art.

“I will carry you.” Ilya said shifting again so he could leave kisses and bites against Shane’s ass, soothing a sharper bite with his tongue. Shane didn’t argue, but did shift his hips again and Ilya felt a sense of accomplishment.

“Just relax, moy lyubimiy. I will take care of everything.” He said lowering his mouth between Shane’s cheeks.

If there was one thing Ilya was best at, it was taking care of Shane.

Second was probably his ability to give head. Eat Shane out until he cried and came on his tongue.

Hockey was on the list somewhere.

“Ilya.” Shane whined, wiggling his hips back.

He started with one long lick, then another when Shane shuddered and pushed his hips down harder.

Ilya brought his hands up, spreading Shane’s cheeks wide and spitting on his hole. Shane groaned, fisting his hands on the pillow and titling his hands up.

Ilya settled himself between Shane’s thighs and brought his mouth down, spending a minute just kissing between licking at his entrance. He wiggling the tip of his tongue inside, feeling Shane clench on his tongue before relaxing.

“Oh, fuck, Ilya-“

There was a phone ringing now, loud and annoying, but he was just getting started.

“Wait, Ilya, stop-“

Ilya would not stop, digging his tongue deeper, scratching his teeth against his rim just enough to sting.

“Ilya, fuck. Red! That’s Kim’s ring.” Shane yelled, heaving and pushing his hips back hard.

Ilya immediately jumped back, scrambling to the side of the bed and grabbing Shane’s phone, looking wildly at Shane.

Shane was heaving, face red and sweat collecting at his temples as he jerked himself on his knees, cock flush against his stomach.

He stared at the phone in his hands, eyes sliding back to Shane’s in panic. “She’s early! 6 more days.” He hissed in a whisper, as if Kim could hear them through the phone.

“Answer!” Shane heaved back. “Let me catch my breath.” He said, closing his eyes and forcing breath through his nose and out his mouth.

Ilya took his own heaving breath, swiping to answer before promptly putting the phone on speaker.

“Hello?” The voice spoke through the phone.

“Hi, Kim! Shane is just,” he looked over to Shane deep breathing, “in the bathroom.” He settled on. “I thought our call was on the 15th?” He asked.

“It was scheduled, yes, but we’ve had something come through I wanted to talk to you about.”

Ilya’s heart stopped and he stared wide eyed at Shane who’s eyes snapped open to stare back at him.

“Ilya?”

“Yes! Yes, Shane is here now, too.” He said, trying to maintain his composure.

“Great! Hi, Shane. So, I just need to confirm, are you still committed to the adoption of an infant?” She asked.

Shane sucked in and laughed. “Yeah, we’re definitely committed.”

His eyes looked wet. Ilya felt his own eyes wet as well.

“We’ve had a mother look over your file and she is hoping to discuss placement with you. She’s just passed 21 weeks and is ready to discuss the process with you if you have some time in the next week.”

A beat of silence and then Ilya was yelling, gasps and cheers as tears began streaming down his face.

“We will come now. Is she there? Tell me about her.” Ilya said, his voice shaky. “When can we meet her?”

Kim let out a soft chuckle on the phone.

“No questions about gender? That’s normally the first question in placements.” Kim teased, giggling.

“No! God, I don’t care what flavor-”

“Gender.” Shane said with a laugh.

“Kim, are we getting our baby?” Ilya breathed out. “This is not mean trick?”

He felt manic, his skin was vibrating and his heart was beating so fast he felt like he could barely breath.

“Not a trick, but not a guarantee.” She reminded. “Anna has to be comfortable with the placement. There are some things needed to be discussed before we cement the process, but we’re on the right track.”

“Anna.” Ilya breathed out, feeling like he was hearing the name of an angel.

“Do you guys have a few minutes to decide on a time to come to the office and meet her? I’ll need to send you some prep information as well for you to review before we meet.”

“Yes, yeah, of course. I’ll grab our calendar.” Shane assured, grabbing Ilya’s phone in one hand and his own in the other, speaking with Kim to coordinate their meeting.

After agreeing to a meeting date in 4 days time, and discussing the documentation they’d be receiving, and two more confirmations that it was real, Ilya hung up the phone and stared at Shane.

Shane who had buried his face in his hands and was shivering.

“Shane.” Ilya said, voice rough and eyes overflowing again. “Shane, it's happening.” He said, laughing again.

Shane let out a wet laugh and nodded into his hands. “Holy fuck. Fucking shit. Jesus fucking Christ.”

“Good, get all the cursing out before our baby comes.” Ilya said, scooting on his knees onto the bed and pulling Shane’s head out of his hands.

“Our baby, Ilya.” Shane wept, voice cracking and tears falling. “Ilya, we might actually be getting our baby.”

“Anna will love us.” He said confidently. “She will meet us and be so excited to have perfect parents for her baby and then we will have our baby.” He said, wiping fervently at Shane’s face eyes.

“Our baby.” Shane whispered, his face crumpling again before he threw himself at Ilya hugging him tightly.

Ilya let out a breathless laugh and held him tightly.

He’d had to convince Shane not to wear a suit. Then again to not wear his emotional-support-blue button up.

He’d finally gotten him into a nice thin striped button up and dark jeans, putting himself in a long sleeve Henley and jeans as well.

They were sitting in the parking lot of the building, both fidgeting and staring at the building.

“Do you think that’s her?” Ilya asked for the 7th time, watching a woman walk into the building.

Shane swallowed, fingers tapping on his thigh nervously. “Maybe.” He answered dutifully as he had every time before.

Ilya glanced at the clock again.

11 minutes until their appointment.

Shane was fidgeting still, neck stretching and knee bouncing and shaking the entire car. Anxiety was pouring off him in waves.

But Ilya felt completely calm.

Once the excitement had worn off he’d felt almost blank. Not unhappy but disbelieving, unsure if he’d just imagined the entire phone call.

There was no positive pregnancy test to look back on, no bump on Shane’s stomach, no knowledge besides Anna’s name and a document provided by Kim that essentially said ‘do not overwhelm a pregnant woman’. It wasn’t real yet. He didn’t know if it would even feel real until the baby was in his arms.

He hoped they had freckles.

9 minutes.

“We go now.” Ilya said, thanking god that it had passed the 10 minute mark they’d agreed to wait for.

Shane shot up, pushing the door open roughly and standing from the car, rolling his shoulders and shaking his hands.

Ilya swallowed hard and got out as well, grabbing Shane’s hand as they made their way into the building. Shane was all but vibrating beside him, eyes staring straight forward and focused and Ilya checked them in at the front before herding his anxious husband into the chair.

As they sat beside each other, Ilya grabbed his hand, lacing their fingers and giving a squeeze.

“How are you not freaking out?” Shane huffed with a laugh. “I thought I’d be the one talking you down.”

Ilya smiled and gazed at his husband with soft eyes. “It doesn’t feel real. Like maybe this just exciting dream.”

“Definitely not a dream.” Shane said with a grin, eyes scanning the room to see a few pregnant women sitting around, another couple on the other side.

Ilya hummed and shrugged. “I want to see her.”

“Anna Michaels.” Shane said, voice as awed as it had been when they first heard it.

Hearing it again made Ilya’s stomach clench, butterflies erupting as a wild giggle escaped him.

“Our angel Anna.”

Ilya looked up and saw Kim pushing through the door, smiling at them. She waved them back and they hurried to stand and follow her.

“Ilya, Shane, good to see you again. Did you get a chance to go over the information I sent you?” She asked as they walked towards the back of the building.

“We are on our best behavior.” Ilya promised holding tightly to Shane’s hand.

“Anna is excited to meet you.” Kim said kindly, pushing past her office and towards what looked like a conference room.

She entered first, holding the door open behind her. Ilya took a fortifying breath and pulled Shane with him through the door.

Anna was nothing he’d expected, but that was mostly because he had expected an empty room.

Sandy blonde hair cut to her shoulders in soft waves, pinned back at the temple. Her nose was straight and curved down at the tip, eyes a light green wide and lined with black mascara. Her lips were a bit chapped, as if she’d been chewing on them repeatedly, her hands curling on the table in front of her.

Beside her sat a woman in her 70s, gray hair pinned in a bun, but the same green eyes. Her face was wrinkled but they lit up when they fell on the pair.

“Anna, this is Shane and Ilya. Shane and Ilya, this is Anna and her grandmother Mila.” Kim introduced.

Anna stood quickly, pushing down her dress and Ilya saw it.

Not much, but there was a bump. There was proof of life. Proof of their baby.

“Chert voz’mi.” breathed out, his eyes swimming. Shane elbowed him gently in the side and moved forward with an outstretched hand.

“It’s nice to meet you Anna, Mila.” He said, shaking both of their hands. Mila looked about ready to burst into tears, half heartedly shaking Shane’s hand and watching Ilya with eyes bright.

“You shouldn’t curse in front of the baby, they can hear inside you know.” Mila said in Russian.

Ilya's eyes lit up, looking excitedly at Anna who was looking between them in relief. Shane's face snapped to him with a scowl.

"I told you not to curse at all! We don't know what languages people speak." He growled out in Russian and Mila let out another laugh.

"Oh we picked well, baby girl." Mila said, wiping a bit at her eyes and rubbing Anna's shoulders.

Shane elbowed him again, a bit rough and Ilya stepped forward quickly to shake their hands. "Hello, Hi." He said with a wet laugh. Mila shook his hand firmly before settling back into her chair with a little huff. Anna took her own seat more gently, hands coming to rest on her stomach.

A bump.

Their baby.

"I'll ask the rest of the conversation take place in English." Kim said with a small laugh. "I could do French too, if you'd prefer."

"English, please." Anna said firmly.

Ilya and Shane took their seats, Shane looking at Kim while Ilya watched Mila intently.

"I will get your number after." Mila whispered in Russian and Ilya nodded eagerly.

"English, babushka. Kim just said." Anna hissed.

Kim smiled at both pairs. "Thank you both for coming so quickly, I know schedules can be hard this time of year. Before we start, I always like to remind both parties that this can be a hard conversation. If it gets too much we can take a break and after the conversation we'll discuss fit individually to make sure we're all on the same page."

"Can I just start then?" Anna asked, shoulders squaring.

Kim coughed a little and nodded, gesturing.

"How long have you been waiting for a baby?" She asked.

Shane swallowed hard. "17 months."

"17 months 13 days." Ilya said. "But we have always wanted to be parents."

"But you didn't want to do surrogacy? You're probably rich enough."

Ah, so she did know them. To be fair Ilya had recently done an Ad with Calvin Klein and Shane's face was on every NHL billboard in Ottawa.

"Ilya didn't want to be the donor and I didn't want to feel like I was becoming a father without him." Shane said, placing his hand on top of Ilya's on the table.

"Would you? If you wanted more than one?" She asked firmly.

"Yes." Ilya said. Shane looked sharply at him but Ilya stayed firm. "I want them to have maybe sibling or two, want them to have the big happy family I didn't have. This waiting was hard but it will be worth it. The next one could be the same or the other way, I do not care about the mechanics."

“Would you love them the same? Even if you had one that was genetically yours?” Anna said, eyebrows furrowed.

“Anna, I will tell you a shocking secret.” Ilya said with a grin. “Shane can not get pregnant and neither can I.” He said in a dramatic whisper. “No matter what, one of us does not get genetics involved. Anya is genetically a dog but she is still my first daughter.”

She seemed to deflate a little and nodded to herself. “I didn’t know it was you, when we picked you.” She said a bit defensively. “I didn’t know you could - provide, or get a baby that way.”

“We didn’t try that way.” Shane offered. “This was always our first option.”

“Mine too.” Anna said with a laugh, reaching over to hold her grandmother's hand.

“Why adoption?” Shane asked kindly. Ilya briefly wondered if that was on the allowed list.

“I love them. I want you to know that when I say this because I sound selfish and -“ Anna started, interrupted by her grandmother.

“Not selfish, sacrificing.” The older woman said firmly.

Anna took a fortifying breath before speaking. “I have my entire life ahead of me. I’m about to be a second year, and I’m planning to transfer to McGill in year three. I want to work as a curator in a museum. I want to go on dates and fall in love and have a life and they’re - just not part of that. Not for me. Not right now. I would resent them - I already kind of do. But they deserve a life and I think you could give them the kind they deserve.”

“What kind of life do you want them to have?”

“Cousins, and dogs and family movie nights and ice cream dates and trips. I want them to feel loved, all the time.” Anna took a shaky breath and squared her shoulders. “I don’t - I can’t do that.”

“Do you want to know them?” Ilya asked, studying her wet eyes.

“Yes, yeah I mean that’s why I picked you. I want to visit and bring chocolate and trinkets but I want to be like an older sister or like an aunt. I don’t want to be a mom, maybe not forever, but definitely not now.” Anna said with a wane smile. “I want them wanted in a way I don’t and won’t. Not right now.”

“Her father?” Shane asked.

“Not in the picture.” Mila said sternly.

The room tensed and Ilya bumped his knee against Shane’s under the table when he felt him freeze.

“How do your parents feel?” Shane asked again, eyes glancing briefly at Mila.

“My parents passed away when I was young. It’s been me and babushka since I was 4.” Anna said, squeezing her grandmother's hand.

“And how do you feel?” Ilya asked the older woman.

“I will still be babushka.” She said firmly. “It is Anna’s life and I want her happiness above all else. But I will be in my baby’s life until mine is no more.”

“You will like my mom.” Shane said with a relieved smile. “She wants to be a grandma but would like someone to share in spoiling.”

“Yuna can make plemeni now. I taught her.” Ilya said proudly.

“Does she like herring?” Mila asked with a grin.

“No, but neither does Shane and we keep him anyways.” Ilya said, bumping his shoulder with his husband, who scowled.

“I eat the pickled vegetables!” Shane argued, nudging him back.

“What about your mother?” Mila asked, looking at Ilya who tensed under the stare.

“My mama passed when I was twelve, my father years ago. I have a brother but we do not speak.” He answered.

“He is still in Russia?” She asked, eyes looking quickly between Ilya and Shane’s hands before sliding back to Ilya’s face.

“He is police. In Russia. My father was too.” Ilya said, squeezing Shane’s hand. “We do not speak.”

Mila nodded a sympathetic look on her face. “You can be our family instead.” She assured.

Ilya felt like his heart was about to beat out of his chest. Here was a Russian grandmother, who heard his Russia and didn’t balk, who saw him hold hands with his husband and didn’t sneer. Perhaps the gods have given him two angels, rather than just Anna.

“I’m sorry but we can’t make promises like that.” Kim said, kind but firm, interrupting Ilya’s thoughts. “I’d appreciate us focusing a bit more on family dynamics.”

“Tell me about your life. What kind of life would she have?” Anna said with a nod.

Shane froze beside him and it took Ilya a few moments to catch up before he swallowed hard.

“She?” He asked, his voice feeling tight.

Anna looked at them in confusion. “Didn’t she tell you that? 22 weeks tomorrow. Girl. Healthy from the scans and -“

Shane let out a laugh, squeezing Ilya’s hand tightly in his own. “No, I mean she tried but we were - we were so focused on the baby we didn’t really ask.” He wiped at his face, pulling at the wide smile.

“In my defense, I did try to tell you but-“ Kim said with a laugh.

“No. Is better to find out this way.” Ilya said with a laugh. He turned to look at Shane with bright eyes. “My love. A tiny girl. I told you, I knew she would come. Our little solnyshko.”

“You still can’t change the paint in the nursery.” Shane said, taking a deep breath and turning back to Anna.

“Sorry, I’m sorry. Uh, okay. I’m still on the Centaurs. Training camp starts next week and then obviously I’m on the road for work.”

“I will stay home with her for as long she can. Yuna says babies need to go to daycare for development but I will wait until she’s ready.”

“And Yuna wants to be involved?” Mila asked.

“She’s going to stay with us for a few weeks at first, once the baby - once she comes home.” Shane said.

“She will stay with us when Shane is on the road too. For a little bit.” Ilya said. “Shane does not need to breastfeed so we will be rotating at night but will be good for us to have help at first.”

Shane elbowed him hard in the ribs for that.

Anna barked out a laugh and grinned. “Yeah, I don’t think Shane’s milk will come in, in time. A lot of work to pump on the road.”

“She understands, Shane.” Ilya teased. Shane rubbed his tongue along his teeth and glowered at him.

“What about other kids? If your brother is in Russia, do you have any siblings?” Anna asked, looking at Shane.

“I have Hayden, he might as well be my brother.” Shane said with a smile. “He’s got four kids but they’re older. Ruby and Jade already said they wanted to babysit.”

“He is planning to retire this summer or next, maybe. Then they will be closer.” Ilya offered.

“That’s not even counting the Centaur kids.” Shane said with a fond smile.

“Every two months is another baby shower. Why do they need baby showers? Their contracts are public, we know they do not need us to buy a doona.” Ilya said with a mock scoff.

“Plus all of the kids at camp. Once she’s old enough she’ll come with us even if she’s not the ice.” Shane offered.

“Will the baby be in the spotlight?” Mila asked.

Before Shane could respond Anna interrupted.

“Will I have to be in the spotlight?” Anna said a bit frantically.

“No.” Ilya said firmly. “Maybe you are long lost cousin I found here. Maybe you are friend of one of the rookies. You will be there as a friend not as...” he trailed off and Shane rolled his shoulders.

“There is a level of publicity that comes with us.” Shane said truthfully. “But that wouldn’t extend to you other than maybe birthday party pictures. She will be posted, I know Ilya’s social media enough to know she will, but we never have to mention you at all if you don’t want us to.”

Anna relaxed for a moment, her shoulders dropping. She pursed her lips and her chin wobbled. “I don’t want people to look and say ‘how could she just give up her baby’.” She wiped at her eyes quickly and let out a laugh. “Sorry, the hormones are crazy.”

“Not crazy. We can keep you out of everything if you want, but I want you in her life if you want to be.” Ilya said, “I do not want this to be a reason you don’t trust us.”

Anna let out a snort and looked at him. “Ilya you called out a doona by name. You have a gaggle of kids ready to meet her. You have enough money to give her everything I can’t. I just - I want to be 19, ya know? I don’t want to be a mom. Is this where you thought you’d be at 19?”

Ilya looked at Shane, his eyes already locked on his face. He rubbed his thumb along his husband's knuckles before bringing his hand up to his lips. "I always hoped." He said.

Shane smiled and looked back at the women across the table. "When I was 19 I was recently drafted to the NHL, having a deeply inappropriate relationship with my supposed rival. My life looks a lot different than I imagined but having the choice was important."

"Since you were 19?" Anna asked, eyes moving quickly between the two.

"We would prefer that stay between us." Ilya said, "You can know everything but some things we keep out of the public eye."

"You were still going back and forth then, to Russia?" Mila stated. "Very dangerous."

"I stopped going back when we committed." Ilya answered. "It is why I haven't gone back since and never can again."

Mila swallowed, "My brother was the same but he could not leave." She said, but didn't elaborate. She didn't need to.

"So tell me then. The things I can't find out on Wikipedia." Anna said, leaning back and sighing. "I want the worst parts. I want to know everything."

"About our relationship or us?" Shane asked.

Anna gave a noncommittal shrug and Shane breathed deeply.

There was a beat of silence.

"Ilya wants to co-sleep and I think it's a terrible idea." Shane blurted out.

Kim's eyes narrowed while Ilya threw his head back dramatically.

"We agreed!" Ilya groaned, "Yuna said she did with you. I did with mama."

"It is normal in Russia." Mila said.

"It's against safe sleep standards in Canada." Kim said, and Ilya noticed then she'd been taking notes. "They make you sign an agreement to not do so in the hospital."

Anna waved her hand. "I slept in my parents bed until I was 3."

"It really isn't supposed to-" Kim said.

"Kim, we are learning. Tell us more." Anna said, interrupting her.

Ilya shrugged. "Shane can fall asleep anywhere in any position but he does not move once he's asleep. Like dead body." He said with a grin.

"Ilya leaves his socks everywhere. I mean, like I've found them on our desk." Shane shot back.

"Shane has organized our spice cabinet alphabetically."

"Ilya sings in the shower, badly."

"Shane refuses to hire handyman. He still mows our lawn."

“We can mow our own lawn!” Shane argued but he was smiling.

“I want to start a garden in the spring.” Ilya said. “Maybe try to plant peppers or something.”

“You killed the basil in our window sill. Twice.”

“Maybe I need outside! Plants need wilderness!”

Shane snorted and smiled. His eyes look a bit glossed and he knocked their feet together under the table.

“I’ve pictured Ilya as a dad since I was 24. Normally with a vague image of a woman, but somehow the baby always looked like a mix of him and me.”

“This baby won’t look like a mix of you. Just me and a one night stand.” Anna said with a huff.

“Does he know? Do you think he’d-“

“He will not be on the birth certificate and he has no claim.” Kim said firmly.

“But could he-“

“Shane.” Kim said. “The adoption process is thorough. These things have already been discussed and he is not part of the process.”

The message was clear - drop it.

“What about you two? Not the marital spats.” Anna said with a grin.

“We’ve been in each others lives since we were 17. Casually together since 19 and officially committed in 2017, married since 2022.” Shane recited. “He’s my biggest rival and my biggest cheerleader.”

“We played against each other most of our careers. Then together for the rest. We have always been together in some way. Now we will have another person to be beside us.” Ilya said, glancing down at Anna’s stomach.

“Ilya still comes to all my games. Sometimes they sit in the stands and I swear the fans are more excited to see him than watch the game.” Shane said with an eye roll.

“Moy solnyshko will be in the family box with us. We will get her a Hollander jersey to go with my WAG jacket.”

“WAG?” Mika asked with a smile.

“It stands for wives and girlfriends, which doesn’t fit really for the Centaurs because there are also husbands and boyfriends but -“

“I am trying to find better name.” Ilya said, rolling his eyes up, “but there is annoying girlfriend who only wants to be WAG.”

“You can’t talk about her like that.” Shane hissed.

“Why? She is the worst. They need to know best and worst part of the game.” Ilya said back in an overly exaggerated whisper. He cleared his throat, “I am working on becoming queen WAG but there are lots of very strong people in the group. Is constant battle but I will win this year.”

Anna laughed, eyes wide and bright. “How will you win? Do you have to compete? Might have been easier to stay on the ice.” She teased. Ilya was grateful to see she had leaned back in her chair slightly, hand resting protectively on her stomach.

“Is a masterclass in strategy.” Ilya said seriously. “I schedule brunch, I have one-on-one time with the important people, I have strongest women on my side. I have advantage as husband of the captain but people do not always respect that.”

“Obviously.” Mila said, humor clear in her voice.

“He makes us host wine nights where everyone gets a babysitter and they all get drunk and fall asleep on our couches.” Shane said, with a fond smile.

“And I bring best gifts to baby shower-“

“Like a doona.” Anna offered.

Ilya tsked at her and shook his head. “Doona is too small. I bring boxes of diapers and extra wipes. Sometimes different formula for them to try. All babies do at first is poop and eat. They need basics when they are too tired to go to the grocery.”

Anna bit her lip and nodded, eyes welling with tears that she hastily wiped away. Mila reached over and grabbed her hand tightly.

Mila was grinning at him. “So you’ve been together your whole lives.”

“All the most important parts.” Shane agreed.

There was a moment of silence. Kim cleared her throat and set her pen down.

“I think this was a good first meeting. I’m going to confirm interest with both parties and then we can discuss what comes next.” Kim said standing.

Ilya and Shane stood as well, and Ilya’s knee cracked as he stood causing a quick grimace. He hadn’t realized how long they’d been talking or he’d have stretched it more during their conversation.

He knew Shane had noticed from the supportive hand on his elbow but when he looked up Anna was smiling at him.

“You think you’ll be able to get on the floor and play with a baby on that bum knee?” She asked, eyes bright, hand rest protectively on her stomach.

Ilya’s eyes zeroed on her stomach before quickly looking up and locking eyes.

“I will do anything for my girl.” He said, probably a bit too seriously for the moment.

They said goodbye and left the room, led by Kim. “I will call tomorrow and we’ll confirm interest on both sides.”

“Do you think it went well?” Shane asked, still buzzing beside him though he hadn’t dropped Ilya’s hand.

“It’s hard to say with these things.” Kim said vaguely. “I will be in touch tomorrow and we can see how it goes, okay?” She asked.

It was a bad answer but Ilya could tell they wouldn’t be getting a different one.

They said goodbye and made their way out of the office, sliding into the car in silence, Ilya fiddling with the music as Shane turned on the car.

“It went well.” Ilya said, looking at the side of his periphery towards Shane.

“She doesn’t like the publicity.” Shane said instead, reversing out of the parking lot.

“Ah, but babushka loved me. Anna was being mean. This is Russian love language.” Ilya said confidently.

Shane huffed, “A Russian infant with blonde curls. I think I might be god's favorite.”

Ilya laughed and smirked at his husband. “Good because I am definitely still favorite son.”

Shane hit Ilya’s shoulder as they got onto the road home.

When Kim called the next day to give them Anna’s number and told them they’d like to proceed, Ilya let himself believe it was real.

Chapter End Notes

I have very vague information on how these conversations take place via google so let’s all remember our manners and that this is in fact fanfiction. Would love some comments and kudos!

Chapter 9

Chapter Summary

Anna comes for a visit

Chapter Notes

I'm sorry this takes forever to update but I hope this chapter is a nice little reprieve from the angst of your other fics (I know they help with mine lol)

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

Ilya was chewing on some toast, pretending not to notice when he dropped a few crumbs on the floor for Anya to excitedly lap up.

His phone dinged on the table and Ilya smiled as he check it.

Lisa: We have reached 12 weeks with a healthy heartbeat and the right size. My entire body has ascended.

Ilya: Is ascended good? Do you need me to come?

Lisa: Very good. Wyatt is here and we're crying. Need you to get your baby first and lie to me about how great it is.

Ilya smiled, taking a moment to look at the ultrasound picture Anna had sent over, the tiny curve of an outline of a nose poking out against a very distinct little face.

Ilya: she is already perfect. Sleeps through the night. Only cries to eat.

Lisa: I also cry when eating right now, so I feel her.

Ilya winced, shoving a bite into his mouth. Lisa told him she had thrown up at least twice a day, morning and night, ever since she'd tested positive. He'd sent some ginger chews that Amazon reviewers promised would help with the nausea.

Ilya: did the candies help?

Lisa: NOPE! Zofran helps when I can keep it down. The nurses at work let me pop one before I eat.

Ilya: should I beat up your baby?

He giggled to himself, bringing his plate to the sink and letting the tap run over it.

Lisa: Once he's outside I will let you give him a stern talking too.

Ilya: but doctor is not worried? About the no eating?

Lisa had told him she'd also lost weight, only about 7 pounds but he always envisioned a person gaining weight when they were pregnant, hearing she was losing had given him a bit of anxiety.

Lisa: he said as long as I keep down the water I will be okay. I'm taking vitamins to keep him safe.

Ilya: he can not date my daughter

Lisa: technically we don't know if he's a he yet at all.

Ilya: she can also not date my daughter.

Ilya grinned at his phone, making his way towards the sliding back door to let Anya out into the yard.

Lisa: no dating a Rozanov, got it. Should we also tell Shane?

Ilya: Shane was told to not date Rozanov and married him. Bad example.

Lisa: Wyatt is worried about the nausea though. The doctor said it should slow down soon but he started researching HG and is now freaking out.

Ilya: is bad?

Lisa: basically the last 12 weeks but the whole time. 🤢

Ilya grimaced, grabbing his coffee cup and letting himself out the back as well.

Ilya: I will give him lecture when he comes out. Not nice to make mama so sick.

He settled himself into a chair to watch Anya sniff the ground around him. His phone buzzed again in his hand but he closed his eyes, letting the sun burn his face for a moment.

Shane was meeting with Wiebe this morning to go over some power play opportunities. A perk of being a captain, at least for Shane, was that he had a say in directing the plays. He knew that Shane was eager for another cup which was great for the team but probably a bit overwhelming for Wiebe - at least he'd gotten a taste last year but Ilya knew that it was a very different style of leadership than Ilya himself.

Ilya was good for disagreeing with refs when they blind sided a call and very good at motivational speeches in the locker room. Shane was good at strategy and nitpicking missteps.

His phone buzzed again and he lifted it up, squinting at the screen before almost dropping his coffee cup.

Anna: I had a dream about her room last night. Would it be insane to come over and see it?

He took a steadying breath and set his coffee cup down gently beside himself. He quickly flipped to his text thread with Shane and typed quickly.

Ilya: Did you see Anna's message? I am going to tell her any time.

The bubbles appeared before he'd even put his phone down. Then they disappeared and reappeared twice more before a message came through.

Shane: any time is fine. I want to be there if I can. I don't want to stop her from coming because of practice.

His heart hurt for a moment. Shane was still working, would continue to be working when their baby arrived, and he'd missed a couple moments with Anna.

Granted, those moments had been a random FaceTime where she'd aggressively told Ilya that she did not want the baby named after herself or Mila before promptly bursting into tears. Another when she'd called just to yell about some sort of course she was meant to take that had filled too quickly and she'd have to wait until she got to McGill.

They'd texted in a group chat, something that had been okayed by Kim, and it was sporadic.

Ilya wasn't quite sure what to say to Anna or Mila even, and spent most of his time replying when they messaged first.

"There isn't a clause on luck." Galina has said when he'd said he was waiting for it all to be taken away. "The situation is good and you can be grateful without planning for everything to fall apart."

It wasn't that he was planning for things to fail. Well, it was mostly not that. It was that the entire thing felt too perfect.

Shane had reminded him that it hadn't been perfect - that it had taken over a year to meet her, that there was still a birthing process for Anna and probably a lot of deep feelings that would come with it. He had gently reminded him of the days that Ilya had refused to get out of bed, body weighed down by the waiting.

Depression didn't go away. It was something Ilya didn't struggle with anymore, or rather not as deeply as he had. Medication helped. Galina helped. Knowing that their baby was coming helped.

But it was still hard some days. Shane was back into practice and captains meetings and games. He was still lonely.

Ilya was still sitting on the deck at 11:30 because it didn't seem worth it to go for a run because Anya was happy to lay on the deck and sunbathe.

Ilya was still waiting.

Ilya: whenever you want. I can send you Shane's schedule so he will be here too. Mila too?

His phone lit up in his hand and he quickly answered.

"I told you not to give her parameters." Shane said into the phone, the background noise changing as his phone connected to Bluetooth.

"Para-what?" Ilya asked.

"She should be able to come even if I'm not home." Shane said, rather than answer. "I don't want her to feel like she can only come if we're both home. I'm not- I'm not always home and I don't want her to not want - she needs to know we're here for her and the baby *whenever* she needs. Not just when the centaurs are free."

"Sweetheart, she is always welcome. You want me to say this in writing?" Ilya asked fondly. "This is her first time coming over. She would not want to come without us both. When you are on roadies she will come sit with me and we will scream at you through the TV, but now you are home and it will be fine."

Shane let out a heavy sigh and groaned. “I just want her to, I don’t know, I want her to move in and I can stare at her stomach and maybe make her breakfast and talk about schools and take her to appointments and-“

“I am actually your husband and you do not do this for me.”

“You’re not pregnant. We’ve been trying.” Shane snarked back.

Ilya laughed and looked at Anya who had stopped sniffed the backyard to come lay beside him. “I would like to be pregnant I think. You would take good care of me.”

“I’d take the *best* care of you.” Shane said firmly. “And I’m trying not to be a fucking psycho about this but, Jesus Ilya, Hazy is telling me about Lisa and then Harris is saying he’s thinking about surrogacy and all I’m thinking about it baby, baby, baby.”

Ilya smiled and leaned back, putting the phone on speaker and laying it on his chest with his eyes closed. “Yes. Lots of cousins for our little Mishka.” Ilya said, snickering to himself when Shane groaned.

“Just because there are bears in the room doesn’t mean she’s going to be named that.”

“You said you wanted Russian name. I give you many and you don’t like. We can name her Kale, after your favorite thing.”

“My favorite thing is you.” Shane huffed. “Asshole.” He said as an afterthought.

Ilya’s phone buzzed on his chest and he read the message, knowing Shane wouldn’t check his messages when he was driving.

“Is he home today? I’m done with class and could come over.” Ilya read, his heart racing. “I will tell her come today. You are done, now, right? I get you for the rest of the day?”

Shane swallowed loud enough that Ilya heard it through the phone. “Yeah. Yes. All day at home. It’s laundry day.”

Ah, Wednesday. He liked watching Shane fold laundry while Ilya stroked his cock on their bed until Shane finished. He would watch Ilya and fold, calmly put all the laundry away and then jump him

Their afternoon was going to need to be reworked.

“You will fold when she leaves.” Ilya said firmly, writing back they were free all day and sending the address.

“Don’t need you getting a boner in front of her.” Shane agreed. “Still fucking weird.”

“You should not fold clothing so sexy. I am only so strong.” Ilya said, staring at the sent message on his phone. It wasn’t his fault that Shane made folding laundry look like a strip tease.

Shane let out a laugh. “I’m pulling up now. Can you put out some of those chips she said she liked? And make sure we have ice for the water?”

Ilya nodded as if Shane could see him, pulling himself out of his chair and moving back towards the kitchen. He grabbed the two bags of chips Anna had off handedly mentioned she’d craved the last time they’d talked and put them on the counter, dutifully checking the freezer for ice because Lisa had said that ice cold water was the only kind she kept down.

“Do you think you can blow me before she gets here?” Ilya asked, tucking his phone against his ear and grabbing bowls for the chips.

“Fuck you.” Shane said blandly.

“Shane it has been so long.” Ilya whined.

“Less than 5 hours actually.” Shane said as the phone disconnected.

The lock on the door turned and Anya came sprinting into the house from the backyard, nails clacking as she slid towards the front door as it opened. Ilya opened the first bag of chips and emptied half of it into the bowl.

“Hello, pretty girl. Did you go for a run?” Shane cooed from the front door, the sound of him setting his bag down and toeing off his shoes.

“No, papa sat on the back deck and tanned.” Ilya yelled towards the front door. “I promise her that daddy will take her later.”

Shane came into the kitchen and snagged a chip from the bowl. “I already did my cardio.” Shane said back, moving to the fridge and grabbing himself a ginger ale.

“Like you have never wanted to do more cardio.” Ilya said, rolling his eyes, moving forward to crowd into Shane’s space.

He brought his hand up to cup Shane’s cheek, resting his other hand on his hip. “Hi.” He said softly.

Shane moved forward, capturing his lips in a gentle kiss before leaning back and smiling at him. “Weibe told me he liked me more than you.” Shane said back, grinning when Ilya dramatically fell backwards, clutching his chest.

“Betrayed! In my own barn!”

“My barn now. Complete with two new power play rotations.” Shane said, reaching forward to grab him around the waist and haul him back up. He leaned forward to kiss him again before pulling back with a grin. “Hi.”

Ilya pressed a kiss against his cheek before pulling away and moving towards the living room, folding a blanket that had been left along the couch and returning the remote to its rightful spot on the arm of the couch.

“Did she say how long she’d be?” Ilya asked as Shane looked through the messages on his phone.

“She just thumbs upped the message. So I’m assuming soon. Did you talk to mom today?” Shane asked.

Ilya nodded, straightening a pillow and coming back to the kitchen to sit at the island.

“We have meeting this week with a donor. Their daughter is going to be on The Charge next season and wants to ask about diversity, maybe recommend a charity we should sponsor.” Ilya said.

Shane hummed, thumbs moving quickly over his screen. “Scott is coming to Ottawa in a couple weeks. Wants to get dinner.”

“Why does he not text me?” Ilya asked with a sneer.

“Because he loves himself?” Shane retorted, looking up to grin at him.

Ilya smirked back. “I will text Kip.” He said confidently.

Before Shane could respond the doorbell interrupted them.

Shane’s eyes widened exponentially before he shut them tightly, took a deep controlled breath and opened them again.

Ilya grinned widely and jumped from his seat, following a barking Anya to the door.

“Hello, hello!” Ilya said, ushering Anna inside and taking the jacket she had over her shoulders. “No Mila today?” He asked, hanging the jacket on a hook by the door.

“No, she’s at bridge. She said she’d maybe come next time.” Anna said, smiling at him and waving at Shane as he made his way into the foyer. “Sorry for just coming over without notice, I just had this weird dream and - it’s weird, I don’t know how to explain it.”

“No need to explain, we’re glad you came.” Shane said, leading her into the kitchen.

Anna let out an excited hum when she saw the snacks, moving towards the bowl and grabbing a handful. “You’re the best.” She said through a mouthful as she leaned forward on the counter.

Ilya laughed and came to stand beside her, grabbing some chips too. “You said they were good. We wanted to try, too.”

A lie. A big fat lie. Shane had crinkled his nose and Ilya had grabbed a bag of Doritos.

“I hope I’m not interrupting.” She half apologized, chewing on her chips.

“No, just had a meeting this morning. Today’s just laundry day.” Shane said, awkwardly leaning on the opposite side of the island.

“Kinky.” Anna said with a grin.

“See! She understands.” Ilya said, slapping the table.

Anna looked over at him with a confused glance. “Well, I was joking but that’s an interesting concept. How can laundry be kinky?”

“You do not have very hot husband, you will understand.” Ilya said somberly.

“I’ll understand when folding laundry is kinky?” Anna asked with a chuckle.

Ilya opened his mouth to answer but a quick hissed “Ilya!” Had his mouth snapped closed.

Shane had his hand over his eyes and Ilya mouthed ‘later’ to Anna who rolled her eyes.

“Do you want the whole tour?” Shane asked, and Ilya tried to hide his giggle at the accent.

She bit her lip and winced. “No, I mean *yes*, but I really need to see her room first. And maybe see her clothing?” She asked, curling in on herself.

“Yes, of course. Mishka’s room first.” Ilya said, nervously rubbing her back and looking at Shane in terror. Shane looked back equally wide eyed.

Anna took a breath, her shoulders relaxing as she nodded seemingly to herself. “Mishka?” She asked, giving Ilya a half hearted grin.

“We’re having trouble deciding on a name.” Shane said, sending a stern look at Ilya. “That was the one he came up with this morning.”

Anna laughed and pulled herself up from leaning on the counter. “Show me the room?”

Ilya stood, gesturing his arm for Shane to lead the way as they made their way upstairs, past two closed door that Shane pointed out as their bedroom and a linen closet.

“This is her room.” He announced opening the door and leading them in.

It looked like it had for about a year at this point. Pale green walls, almost white with a beige rocking recliner in the corner, a yellow blanket folded in a neat square resting on the back. A wooden dress with a changing table on top, already stocked with wipes and a handful of diapers and butt paste, a matching wooden crib with nothing but a fuzzy bear sitting in the corner.

“Her clothes?” Anna asked softly, making her way into the room. She ran her hand along the blanket, eyes roving at the ABC print on the wall along with a water color painting of a giraffe next to a water color of an elephant.

Ilya moved into the room. “We have newborn things here. We washed them when we got them but maybe again before she comes. 9 month and up are hung in closet.” He said pointing towards the closet door.

Anna moved again, opening the closet door, hands coming out to touch the things in the closet, fingers running across pants and shirts with tags still on them, snagging 2 of the same sweater in different sizes. She pulled them out and laughed, holding it up in front of her.

“Why do you have all of this? You didn’t even know when you’d get a baby, right? What if you have all winter clothes and your baby is 9 months in July?” She said with a wet laugh.

“Anna, I tell you big secret.” He put his hand in front of his face to guard his mouth from Shane, talking in an over exaggerated whisper. “I marry a very rich man and he is a bit - what is the word? neurotic? - so we have lots of fancy clothes that will probably be for wrong season or wrong size.”

Anna let out a laugh when Shane growled at him. “Not on the list.”

Ah right, the list of things to talk about specifically said not to discuss financial standings.

Anna waved him off, carefully putting the sweaters back. “Shane, I grew up in Ottawa, I have seen both of your faces on billboards since I was 9. And, I know this is shocking, but your salaries are public information.”

“We’re still not supposed to talk about it, which Ilya *knows*.” Shane said with a flush creeping up his neck.

“Anna picked me because I am Russian, money is not why.” Ilya said, but shrunk back a little. He needed laundry folding Shane today, it would help him get enough energy to go for a run.

“I actually picked you because you’re gay.” Anna snarked with a grin, moving to sit in the recliner.

“I am bisexual.” Ilya said with a pout.

“She’s saying she picked me then.” Shane said with a smirk, leaning against the closet door.

“No, no. She wants strong Russian. She is just confused, pregnancy brain, you know?” Ilya said, making a crazy motion at his hand.

“Ilya!”

Anna let out a loud laugh and leaned her head back.

“I actually picked you because your application seemed like you actually liked each other.” Anna said, staring at the ceiling.

Shane pursed his lips and looked at Ilya, clearly warring with himself for a moment before he spoke. “I don’t think most people would go through adoption if they didn’t love each other.”

Ilya moved to lean back against the crib and shot a look at Shane. “No one loves like us.” He argued.

Anna hummed in agreement. “Your love story reminded me of my mom and dad.” She said softly, rubbing gently at her stomach before tilting her head back to to them.

“They were high school sweethearts. Babushka said mama brought him home in junior year and basically said, ‘this one is going to be my husband’. This huge redhead, more freckles than skin, being chastised by my babushka who was switching from yelling at her daughter in Russian for bringing home a huge man and my grandfather sitting with a glass of vodka staring straight into my poor dads soul.”

Anna looked sad but was smiling. “Dedushka was silent the whole time, and when my mom finally sent dad home, he stood up, kissed my mom on the forehead and said ‘Da pomozhet tebe Bog, yesli tebe popadetsya ryzhiy’.

Shane looked in confusion at Ilya who was smiling so wide.

“God willing you get a gingie.” Ilya explained with a manic giggle.

“God *help* you if you get a gingie.” Anna corrected with a wet smile.

Shane’s breath stuttered and he laughed, “Is there something bad about redheads?” He asked, clearly not understanding the joke.

“They are loud, and passionate. Have lots of strong opinions and feels. Very loud.” Ilya listed, counting on his fingers.

“So what’s your excuse?” Shane snapped back, eyes widening as if he’d realized he’d been snarky in front of Anna.

But Anna started clapping and gesturing between them both. “That!” She yelled, hands coming again to rest on her stomach. “Everyone else had a cookie cutter love. Something hallmark would stamp with approval and say ‘wow, they’ve clearly been destined for this, better give them their perfect baby.’”

“So you love our tragic backstory?” Ilya asked. “You see two men pine for years and then be aggressively in love-“

“I was never aggressive! I wasn’t the one who referred to you as My Husband in every press conference!”

“- and decide, yes, they take care of my baby for me.” Ilya finished, flipping Shane the finger.

Anna bit her lip. “More like I thought she belonged with you because life isn’t always perfect.” She grabbed the blanket over the back of the chair and rested it in her lap. “My parents met when they were 17, got married at 19 and had me at 22. They were crazy and so in love. My mom was trying to teach my dad Russian, but his pronunciation was awful. He tried to talk to Babushka once and she couldn’t understand a word he said.”

“Shane’s is also bad.”

“You said it was fine!”

“I lie because you are very, *very* pretty.”

Anna looked at them with wet eyes. “And they bickered like this all the time. Like their favorite thing was just being together and making sure each other were as happy as possible. Even when they fought, it was like they had to sit together to be mad because they didn’t want the other to be too lonely during a fight and I just -“

She swallowed hard, stroking the blanket reverently before lowering it and resting her hand on her stomach, fingers splayed wide.

“Then they died, and I thought I’d find someone like that for me. But, I got pregnant from a drunken one night stand with a TA who promptly left the course and blocked my number.” She said, “And that’s messy in its own way because of power imbalance, but turns out he’d done it to a few other women in my grade. No one else kept the baby but I thought she deserved someone like my parents.” She finished with a shrug.

Shane moved into the room, sitting himself gently in front of Anna on the ottoman. “I’m going to say something and I need you to ignore Ilya for a minute.”

Ilya made an outraged noise in the back of his throat but stayed quiet.

“I don’t know if we’ll be as great as your parents.” The raw honesty made Ilya want to yell that they would be perfect because it would be them.

“We’ve wanted it for a long time, since at least 2017 for me-“ his eyes shifted to Ilya for a moment before locking back on Anna. “- but we have never wanted anything more than this. I’d give up anything for Ilya. I almost quit hockey, when we first got outed, because I would pick him over hockey.”

“It does not sound serious when he says it, but trust me is like telling an alcoholic to drink grape juice.”

Shane ignored him, eyes still locked on Anna. “We may not be perfect, but we are going to love her so deeply. Ilya and I are generational talents because we have never done anything half assed in our lives. She’s going to be terribly spoiled, and probably in skates as soon as she can balance, and I’m already ready for when I’m teamed up on for a second dog.”

He took a fortifying breath. “And I can’t thank you enough for giving her to us. Even if it’s because we bicker, or he’s Russian, or I’m gay. No matter what, we’re going to be the best parents we can be, because we always try to be the best at everything we do.”

Anna nodded, reaching forward to grab Shane’s hand and placing it on her stomach, laying her hand over top and pushing down.

He stilled completely, jaw working over time before he slammed his eyes shut in a way that Ilya knew meant he was about to cry.

“I think she likes your voice.” She said quietly, using her free hand to wipe her eyes.

Ilya moved slowly closer, placing his hand on the back of Shane’s neck and squeezing.

“Okay?” He asked, gently.

“I can feel her.” Shane whispered, eyes shining when he looked up at Ilya. “Holy shit, Ilya. She’s real.” He said, his mouth spreading into a wide smile.

“She is real and woke up during your monologue.” Anna said with a giggle. “I think papa gets a turn, yeah?” She said, lifting her hand up.

Shane left his hand for a moment longer before nodding, grabbing Ilya’s hand and handing it over to Anna.

She grabbed his hand, pressing it again to her stomach where a thump hit back.

Once.

A shift and then two in a row.

“Oh my baby.” Ilya said, his heart beating fast and eyes welling with tears. “Oh my girl.”

“She’s not my baby.” Anna said softly, “I’m just keeping her safe for a bit. Eating my weight in spicy ramen and McDonalds sprite.”

Shane looked a mix between awe and horrified.

“We will take good care of her.” Ilya whispered. “You will be here for all of it if you want.”

Anna hummed. “Maybe not at first. I know it’ll be hard but it’s easier, a bit, knowing how much you already love each other. It’s easy to imagine you loving her just as much.”

“We do.” Ilya said fiercely, “and we love you too, for giving her to us. And Mila for wanting to spoil her with us.”

“Ilya.” Shane whispered, reaching to hold onto Ilya’s elbow.

There were a few more shaky breaths, some wet eyes wiped before Anna pushed Ilya’s hand away and braced herself to stand up.

“Enough.” She said firmly, both to herself and them. “Show me the rest of the house.” She demanded.

Ilya grinned and gestured towards the hallway, linking his hand with Shane’s as they left.

“Harris. Is funny.” Ilya said stoically.

“Funny doesn’t make it appropriate for social media.” Harris retorted, rolling his eyes and leaning back onto Troy’s chest.

“Cassie agreed!” Ilya cajoled, jostling Shane in his lap to grab the chips from the table.

“I don’t have to sit in between you and the chips.” Shane said, trying for the third time this night to get out of Ilya nap.

Ilya growled, wrapping his arms around Shane's waist. "Stay. Barrett needs to know he has no chance."

"Dude!" Troy groaned, gesturing towards Harris on his chest. "My Husband is literally on top of me. No one is coming for Shane."

"I mean, he was named one of the most influential gay men this year in Vogue." Harris said, "I'd shoot my shot if--"

"Hey!" Troy yelled.

"Harris. Stop. We have just rec- reconsole?"

"Reconciled." Shane offered, trying to slide off Ilya's lap.

"If you do not stop, I will handcuff us together." Ilya said seriously. Harris let out a booming laugh and Troy rolled his eyes.

Shane sighed and leaned back.

"Harris." Ilya said seriously. "We should rename."

"I've offered WHAGBS." Harris defended.

"Is bad."

"It's not great." Troy said with a wince.

"I thought you liked WAG?" Shane asked, turning back to Ilya.

"But WAP is much funnier." Ilya pouted.

"You said we should play it at home games when they showed us on the Jumbotron." Harris said with an eye roll.

"It's a song?" Shane asked.

Troy groaned and threw his head back. "Jesus Christ dude."

"Shane, I am begging you. Please listen to music." Harris giggled.

"He would not understand words. He has never made a pussy wet." Ilya argued.

"Oh go fuck yourself." Shane growled, trying and again failing to pull himself away from Ilya.

"Why would I when your pussy is always so wet for me?" Ilya asked innocently.

Shane's eyes narrowed and he glared down at Ilya. Ilya was grinning up at him with excitement.

A beat of silence passed and then Harris burst out laughing.

"We know too much about each other." He said eventually.

is the end important to the story? no. But it was important to me and that's what matters

Chapter 10

Chapter Summary

Last time: we've met Anna and Mila, they've seen the room, and now it's time to meet the support system.

Chapter Notes

It's been forever but my life has been ✨ horrible ✨
Moms cancer metastasized (boo)
Found out I was pregnant (yay!)
Had a miscarriage (MASSIVE Boo)
Almost bled out from said miscarriage (BOOO TOMATO TOMATO)
Have to laugh or I'll literally die.

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

“Slow down, Hollander.”

“Why? Gonna come, Rozanov?”

“Yes, maybe.” Ilya said, squeezing the base of his dick.

Shane was standing at the end of the bed looking absolutely divine. His hair, a bit fluffy after a quick rub through with a towel, shirtless with sweatpants slung low on his hips. His budding erection pressing up against the heathered material.

And he was dutifully folding one of Ilya's t-shirts with military precision.

“I thought that one got hung up.” Ilya asked, still squeezing.

“I know better than you do.” Shane said with an eye roll, setting the now folded shirt on the growing stack.

Ilya groaned and nodded aggressively. “You do. You know our laundry so well.”

“You're an absolute freak.” Shane said with a laugh, pressing his hand to his own cock before shaking his head and returning to folding.

“They say we are freak for freak on twitter.” Ilya said, resuming his stroking.

“How am I the freak in this scenario!” Shane argued, looking at him incredulously.

“You are also hard.” Ilya offered, jerking his head to Shane's cock.

Shane rolled his eyes. “I'm hard because my husband is literally jerking off at me.”

“Is my signature move.”

“So what’s mine?” Shane asked, adding another t-shirt to the folded pile.

“Crying while I fuck you and coming hands free.” Ilya answered automatically.

“Does twitter know about either of those things?” Shane questioned with wide eyes.

“No, no, that is only for me.” Ilya placated. “They would know if you let me release our sex tape.”

“Can’t have a sex tape and our baby.” Shane said forcefully.

Ilya nodded in agreement. “I can not wait to have our baby.” A wistful sigh escaping his lips.

“We won’t be able to do this when we have a baby.” Shane pointed out, sliding a button down onto a hanger.

“Not at first,” Ilya reluctantly agreed, “but then she goes to school and you are retired and on Wednesdays we have special Papa and Daddy time.”

“Where I fold laundry and then we fuck about it.” Shane deadpanned.

“Yes. You are very smart.”

Shane was clearly trying to suppress a smile, rubbing at nose and turning with now donned hangers towards the closet.

“How do you want me? Behind you? On top of you? Beside you?” Ilya yelled, beginning to stroke himself slowly again.

“Inside me, preferably.” Shane snarked from the closet.

Ilya let out a booming laugh and brought a hand behind his head. “Obviously. But first you must leave the closet. I thought you did this before but now you went back in.”

“Is that a gay joke?” Shane asked, an eyebrow cocked as he left the closet, shucking off his sweats and folding them.

“Was funny, yes?” Ilya teased with a wolfish grin, eyes roving hungrily over his husband's body.

“Fuck off.” Shane huffed, prowling towards the bed grabbing their now empty hamper and putting it in its place.

“Shane, come! I am dying!” Ilya begged, wrenching both arms up and making a grabbing motion.

Shane smirked at him, crawling up the bed and slamming Ilya’s arms to his sides.

“Maybe I’m not ready, yet?” He said, settling his knees over Ilya's hips and grinning down at him.

Ilya blew a raspberry and looked between their bodies. “You should probably tell your cock.”

Shane let out a laugh and settled himself fully on top of him, arms still held down tightly, burying his head into Ilya’s neck and shifting their hips together in a slow rock.

“God, I love you.” He whispered into Ilya’s neck.

Ilya purred beneath him, wiggling to try to get out of Shane's hold on his arms. "Me more. Let me show you how much."

"No." Shane hummed, pressing a soft kiss against Ilya's neck before pulling back. "Leave your hands there." He commanded quietly before bringing both hands up to cup his face.

"I love you. So much." Shane said quietly, leaning forward to press their lips together. Ilya slid his tongue along Shane's lips, trying to force his way through but Shane pulled back.

"Let me." Ilya whined, bucking his hips up but obediently leaving his hands on his sides.

"No."

Shane moved then, pressing a soft kiss to his cheek, then up to the corner of his eye, his forehead, the spot just beside his ear, a spot on the side of neck. He pulled back, eyes searching Ilya's face for a moment before repeating his kisses on the other side of his face.

"You're unreal." Shane whispered after leaving another long kiss on Ilya's lips. "You're so perfect and every day you get more perfect."

Ilya swallowed hard, leaning up to capture his lips again, pulling back just enough to grab a few pecks and pull back. "I am not."

"You are." Shane argued, a furrow in his brow. "You make everyone around you better - braver. You make me feel like I can do anything because I have you on my side."

Shane pulled back, settling his hips over Ilya's and tracing his hands down his arms. "You've been making me meals so I eat enough during the season. You cleaned the house the other day without me asking. You love me - so loudly every minute of every day." His voice sounded tight.

"No tears, Shane. Is sexy time." Ilya choked out, his own throat tight, eyes pricking.

"No tears." Shane agreed, taking a fortifying breath. "You're just - you're just the best husband, best person ever. And I'm grateful that you're going to be our baby's dad. I'm so grateful that you're going to make our family."

"Not without you, my love. Never without you." Ilya said, ignoring Shane's instruction and bringing his hand up to cup Shane's cheek.

"Mama! Mama!" Ilya cheered when Lisa entered their house.

Lisa took a gracious bow, pulling with her a bag, Wyatt trailing behind her with a cooler.

"How is my boy?" Ilya asked, wrapping her in a hug once she came towards him.

"I'm great!" Wyatt beamed.

Lisa smiled fondly at him and shared an exasperated look with Ilya. "Everyone is good. He's perfectly on point for 20 weeks." She pulled back and looked around their home.

"This is a nicer set up than your wedding." She remarked, "At least there are chairs."

Ilya laughed, and pushed her towards the couch. "Mama's get to sit on comfy couch. Go!" He said, taking the cooler from Wyatt and beginning to unload the random drinks that Lisa was apparently demanding now that she was eating more, and drinking every type of electrolyte known to man.

They weren't celebrating Lisa today, but she was the only other pregnant person in attendance that they knew of.

It was true that the house was decked out. It was early November and cold enough outside that the event was brought entirely inside. Ilya had mentioned they could borrow Bood's outdoor heaters if they wanted to use the backyard too, but Shane had started spiraling about Anna being out in the cold and the idea had been dead in the water.

Anya had sniffed nervously at the balloon arch, jumped back as Ilya and David had hung a banner saying 'Welcome Baby Hollander-Rozanov' over the fireplace. They'd bought pink plates with white polka dots, white solo cups with a sharpie next to them so people could claim their own, and two sheet cakes to feed an entire NHL team of men who were in season.

Anna and Mila would be there soon, but Anna had demanded she not be in the center of attention. It had taken a bit of convincing to have her agree to come at all, but Shane had convinced her on the basis of seeing the support system their baby would have once she'd arrived. Anna had given very clear rules though - she didn't want to open presents, she wanted the entire focus on them, and she did not want anyone touching her stomach.

Yuna and David as the only exception.

They had met Yuna and David a couple months prior. Mila and Yuna had sized each other up for about 7 minutes before Shane had easily placed a baby book in his mother's lap and led Anna outside to sit around a fire pit.

By the time they'd come back inside, Yuna, Mila, and Ilya were cooing at a baby Shane and discussing the intricacies of newborn life.

Ilya knew that Mila and Yuna texted now. No longer fearing the other would take coveted grandparent time but rather excited to share it together. David was happy to chat with Anna about McGill with the caveat that it had been several decades since he'd attended - and the finance department was its own beast.

The family had slotted together quite well. Perfect.

Well, almost perfect.

Ilya imagined bringing home their little bundle and Anna coming over every week to sit with them and watch her grow but Anna had gently told him she wasn't planning on coming around for a few months.

Shane had nodded dutifully and pulled Ilya away before he could argue.

"Postpartum is hard. Probably harder when you have to see and leave the baby over and over again." He'd whispered.

"And you know this?" Ilya huffed with a glare.

"My mom said she couldn't shower without the curtain half open and my dad holding me so she could see me." Shane said, swallowing hard. "It's not fair to make her see her and not let her keep her."

So, Ilya had begrudgingly agreed, although Mila had made it clear she would be there as often as she was welcome - saying she'd bring them dinners as soon as they were ready and offering a pack-n-play in her condo whenever they were ready for a night off.

Yuna was still planning to stay over but had offered Mila one of the remaining guest rooms without consulting Shane and Ilya. Luckily for them Mila had declined the offer, citing a comfort in her own home.

They were ready to be involved in one way or another once the baby was here. An aunt and a grandmother built in without blood.

But they'd both been very clear, today was meant to be a celebration of the addition to their household - their baby - and they were an extension of the family rather than a parent.

"Ilya, Bood's bringing the wings, right?" Shane asked, rounding the hall and making his way into the kitchen. His eyes scanned the bowls on the table as if the 4 people who'd come would have managed to eat an entire bowl of chips in 2 minutes.

"Yes, some plain, some barbecue and some extra spicy for Anna." Ilya recited. "And Caitlin is bringing cheesecake. Harris is bringing cider. Cassie said she will bring extra sides. Selena is bringing her children and husband."

"And the pizza is scheduled?"

Ilya held up his phone, dutifully pulling up the app and showing Shane the little car that was on its way. "On the way. All kinds, enough to feed your team."

"Our team." Shane argued on instinct.

"*Your* team." Ilya assured. "I am old news now, just hot WAG."

"You came to practice two days ago and told Chewy his defense was like a colander." Shane said with an eyeroll, pecking him on the cheek and moving away when the doorbell rang and Anya began barking.

"I remembered the word!" Ilya laughed, grabbing himself a beer from the cooler and yelling hellos when some of the team began filtering into the house, followed closely by the pizza delivery

It only took about 10 minutes for the rest of the guests to arrive. Jackie came in, carrying a tray of cupcakes and trailed by Hayden holding a 24 pack.

"You bring cheapest beer in Canada to welcome my daughter?" Ilya asked, looking at the box in Hayden's hands.

"I've been a captain for a few years now, Roz. I know the cheap stuff makes them feel like they've drunk a lot and not make you have to pour them into a cab." Hayden said, beginning to unpack some of the beers into the cooler.

"No one here will drink that much. We are celebrating my new baby."

"Our new baby." Shane said, sliding up to him. He grabbed him by the side of his neck and whispered in his ear. "Mila just got here and said Anna is outside and freaking out. Please go."

Ilya nodded in his hold, leaving as Shane pulled Hayden into a hug.

He stepped outside, closing the door behind him and significantly muting the noise of children and families yelling inside.

Anna stood bundled in a coat, tongue running nervously along her teeth, arms rubbing at her arms, staring blankly at the house.

“Is not so cold inside.” Ilya said in lieu of greeting.

“No but it’s loud and filled with people who are going to want to touch my stomach, and ask my due date and *judge me* for giving up my baby.” She said, eyes welling with tears.

Ilya moved forward slowly, reaching an arm out to bring her into his arms. “No one will do this.”

“Maybe not out loud.” Anna said, burrowing into his chest. “They’re going to be so-“

“No, Sestryonka, they will not.” Ilya said quietly.

Anna let out a shaky breath at the pet name and her shoulders shook.

“Everyone inside knows Shane and me have wanted a baby for long time. Since before some of them joined Centaurs. Maybe since before they were born.” Ilya teased.

Anna smacked him in the flank but her shuddering had subsided a bit.

“You are giving us our baby, yes, but we are celebrating me and my baby. Well, Shane is getting baby too but is mostly mine.”

Anna let out a laugh and pulled back to give him an incredulous look. “I’m going to tell him you said that.”

Ilya shrugged, pulling back enough to place his hands on her shoulders.

“Today you are just my sister, who happens to also be pregnant. Bood made extra spicy wings for you, we got disgusting chips you like -“

“It’s the baby! Not me-“

“You are just our guest today, Anna. Come inside before you freeze.” He said firmly, moving to her side and wrapping his arm around her shoulder.

It took a few tugs but she fell in step beside him and let herself be led into the house.

Once the door opened again, the noise hit them like a wall. Kids yelling, babies giggling, boisterous hockey players yelling over each other, dogs barking and the click clack of nails running along the floor.

“I don’t know if I can-“ Anna said with a stammer.

“But you will.” Ilya helped her out of her coat. “You will go sit with Sveta and she will speak to you in Russian and you will practice so you can help us talk to moy solnyshko when she arrives.”

Anna groaned and looked at him through narrowed eyes. “Did babushka put you up to this?” She growled.

“She is here too. Go ask her.” He said, hanging her jacket and pushing her towards Shane who was all but bouncing on his toes to greet her.

Ilya watched her join the fray, a nervous smile at Svetlana after a tight hug from Shane. He was happy to notice that most of the Centaurs didn’t even seem to look her way as she entered.

Actually, now that he looked they all seemed to be actively looking in a different direction.

“Did you tell them to ignore her?” Ilya asked as Shane came to stand by his side.

“I told them if they made her uncomfortable in any way I’d check them so hard during practice they’d be sent down to the AHL.”

“You can not break your shoulder too early Shane, we will need your money when the baby comes.”

“It’d be worth it.” Shane said, wrapping an arm around Ilya's waist and taking in the party in front of them.

Ilya threw his arm over Shane’s shoulder and pressed a hard kiss at his temple. “We do some games?” He asked.

Shane nodded. “Yeah. Moms already handed out all of the things to get it started. Everyone’s been asking her name.”

“Game is to guess! Is cheating if we just tell them!” Ilya argued with a wide grin.

“And you’re ready? To tell them?” Shane asked.

Ilya sighed and moved to pull Shane into his chest with a tight hug. “I’m ready. Almost time to meet our girl.”

Shane beamed up at him, pressing a kiss to his cheek and moving further into the room.

“Has everyone filled out the sheet?” Yuna yelled out, grabbing the papers as people lifted them in the air.

“I thought it was bad luck to tell the name before the baby was born?” Katz said, passing his paper forward. “My mom didn’t even tell anyone she was pregnant before like 6 months.”

“Different customs.” Connors said through a mouthful. “I’m like the 4th Donald in my family.”

“Your mother is very boring?” Ilya said, working his way around children on the floor and making his way onto the couch, pressed tight against Lisa’s side.

“It’s tradition! Don’t they do that in Russia?” He argued.

Ilya swayed his head. “Yes and no. We are not following that tradition.”

“We didn’t pick a middle name either.” Shane said with a shrug, taking his own seat in one of the folding chairs on the other side of the room.

“Dude, everyone has a middle name.” Boyle said with an eyeroll. “It’s like a law.”

Shane shut his eyes and breathed heavily. “Boyle, I don’t have a middle name.” He said through a sigh.

“And you’re perfect as just Shane.” Yuna said, grabbing the last few papers waving in the air.

She tried to shake the papers into a more orderly stack before clearing her voice to get the attention of the room.

However, she was surrounded by about 35 grown adults and at least 20 children who seemed to be running around the floor in impossible patterns.

Ilya brought his fingers to his mouth and let out a loud whistle. "Listen to Yuna!" He yelled when the sound had quieted.

"Thank you, Ilya." She said with a smile.

"The boys didn't want a big party, but I guess every party is big when you're dealing with a hockey team." There were a few chuckles around the room at that.

"The sheet you just filled out is for guessing things about the baby, like her weight and due date and most importantly..." she said leadingly.

The room was silent for a few beats.

"Her height?" Luca asked quietly.

"Jesus Christ." Archie whispered beside him, patting his thigh as he yelled out, "her name!"

"Yes!" Yuna cheered. "Would anyone like to share their guesses?" She asked.

"She's coming on February 6th, at 3:46AM, 8 pounds 4 oz and her name is going to be Melanie!" Lisa said proudly.

Wyatt cheered and nodded. "She's a doctor, she knows these things!"

The room erupted in disagreements almost immediately.

"She is Russian! She will be here exactly on her due date -" Svetlana leaned to her side and whispered to Anna who snorted and whispered back before Svetlana cleared her throat, "on February 2nd."

"The first are never on time." Cassie said with a sympathetic glance. "Everyone said Milo would be early but he was 2 weeks late."

"The twins were 3 weeks early!" Jackie argued. "I also think her name is going to be Rose."

"Never." Ilya growled.

Shane rolled his eyes and kicked at him with his leg. "She couldn't even be here. It's also been like 10 years."

"She will have a Russian name." Mila said loudly, "something strong - Sofia, I think."

Anna rolled her eyes. "She's going to be Iliana."

Ilya shot her a delighted grin, which she shyly returned, before he dramatically threw his head back. "Shane said no, said she would be too beautiful and we would have to lock her in castles with dragons."

"Asshole, you wanted to name her Shayna." Shane said with a laugh.

"What about good old fashioned Lily?" Hayden said with a snicker.

"No, Jane is *much* better." Zane added with a wink.

"No Irina?" Selena asked.

Ilya shook his head with a soft smile. "The foundation is for mama. This is for us." He said, eyes warm on Shane.

“So what, we have to just wait for the baby to come? I wanted to get her a WAG jacket.” Harris half whined. “I’ve been customizing one for her since we found out.”

“So many rhinestones.” Troy said with a shudder.

Yuna pursed her lips and smiled at the group. “Well boys, would you like to announce?” She asked.

Shane looked over at Ilya with a grin. Ilya’s eyes were bright and he was nodding excitedly.

“Yeah, okay.” Shane agreed.

Ilya jumped up, walking carefully over the cups, plates and children on the floor, coming to Shane’s chair and pulling him up.

“On February 2nd-“ Ilya began.

“Or the 6th!”

“Or January 21st!”

“On February 2nd you will...” Svetlana said loudly.

“On February second we will be welcoming our baby girl to this world.” Ilya said to resounding applause.

“And her name will be?” Anna asked, eyes wide.

“Her name will be Yeva. Yeva Hollander-Rozanov.” Shane said, smiling warmly at her.

The room erupted in cheers again and Anna smiled at them, her eyes wet.

“Alright!” David yelled over the commotion. “Next game is fastest diaper wrap. Who wants to go first?”

Chapter End Notes

Can’t write smut but can still write a loving family excited for a baby!

Chapter 11

Chapter Summary

Yeva arrives

Chapter Notes

I know it's been forever - this chapter is barely edited, but I want to finish so badly. I hope it brings you joy!

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

New Years had come and gone - a quick midnight kiss followed closely by Shane leaving on a roadie that had Ilya groaning on Yuna's couch while David poured him a coke in the kitchen and Yuna discussed the meals she'd been planning to make while she stayed with them.

Because this was happening.

There was only a week remaining before Anna was due, but somehow every person had an opinion on either the baby coming early in a horrific way or coming two weeks late and needing to be forced out via induction.

To say that Ilya was on edge was an understatement. He'd taken to calling Anna every day and not very subtly asking her if she was contracting. Mila had come into the room on one of their calls and yelled that he wouldn't know the beginning of labor by the tone of her voice and only to call if there was a dinner invitation.

Which of course meant that he was currently in the grocery store after finding a recipe with enough protein to support Shane this late in the season, while tasting good enough that anyone not trying to consume 3000 calories a day would enjoy.

He'd found a recipe for Medovik and was excited to try it himself. He may have over sold his abilities to Mila when she'd offered to bring her own, but he refused to let her contribute. It was probably not smart to tell her the recipe was from his mother when in reality it was from Russiaskitchen.com.

So he was on a mission and would not be distracted or deterred. Shane had left for a morning practice and Ilya had spent the last 10 minutes deciding if he was better off going to a Russian grocer for honey since the tiny bear mocking him from the shelf would probably not be up to snuff.

His phone buzzed in his pocket and he set the bear down with a glower before pulling his phone out. It was much too early to be Shane, but Yuna knew he was coming to the store and might ask him to pick something up.

Instead it was a text from Anna.

Anna: Raincheck.

Fuck.

Ilya glared angrily at the bear on the shelf, sure that the deity that inhabited the plastic prison was responsible for this.

Then his phone chimed loudly and his shoulder slumped in defeat. He took a heavy breath and brought his phone to his ear.

“Babushka, do not cancel on me too. I am at the store now getting things for Medovik. I can eat an entire cake but Shane would be very mad, I think.” He joked.

Mila huffed a laugh and he heard her scurrying around in her apartment. “Ilya, you need to come now.” She said, instead of answering.

“Where?” Ilya asked, pulse in his throat as he threw his shopping cart to the side and made his way to the entrance of the store.

“Ottawa general.” Her voice sounded distant now, as if she’d put herself on speaker phone, the pattering in the background getting louder.

“She is okay?” Ilya huffed out, pulling his coat around himself tightly and pressing his face down in the phone at his ear and sliding into his car.

“Yes, but labor started. She thought it was back pain but the doctor told her to come in and she’s 5cm dilated and contracting.” Mila said, her voice coming out louder as she brought the phone back to her ear. “Get there soon, I am collecting some of her things from home and will meet you.”

“She said she did not want me in the room?” He half asked, connecting his phone to bluetooth and putting in the address.

Mila snorted, “She changed her mind. You and Shane need to come.”

“Practice just started, he will not have his phone for two hours.” Ilya bemoaned, reversing out of his spot and following the map. “Should I wait for him?” God, Shane would kill him if they both missed the birth of their child.

“Then leave him a message and get here now. He can come after.” Mila said off handedly. “She needs you there, you go before the baby comes.”

Ilya briefly slammed his eyes shut. “What if Shane misses it? The baby will be here without him, and then he will be widow because he will murder me.”

Mila let out a loud laugh and he heard some shuffling before her phone seemed to connect to her own car. “No, the baby will not in an hour. Come now, baby will not be here for a while.”

“You said she’s contracting,” Ilya argued, merging onto the highway.

“Yes,” Mila said and Ilya could swear he heard her eyes roll. “I have had a baby, you have not. She has a long way to go. Come now and call Shane.”

“I am on my way.” He said, looking into the backseat to confirm that yes, the carseat they’d installed 6 weeks ago had not magically disappeared. He’d have to trust the baby bag they’d had stashed in their trunk was still there, but maybe he should take a hard turn to hear it slide to the other side.

“As soon as you can Ilyushka.” Mila said, “We will be waiting.”

Ilya said his goodbyes and took three deep breaths, fighting the urge to close his eyes while he continued his drive and reaching out to press Shane's name on his phone.

It rang through and Ilya let out a groan as "You've reached Shane Hollander, I'm unable to receive your call at this time..." Spoke through the phone.

He growled and angrily pressed the end button before pressing Shane's name again and repeating the process.

On the third time, he was about to hang up when suddenly heavy breathing answered his phone.

"Shane!" Ilya yelped out. "You are supposed to be on ice?"

"Yeah," Shane huffed out. "But the ring tone, and three times. Are you okay? Did you slide off the road?"

"What road?"

"Ilya!" Shane growled, "Practice is about to start and you've called so many times they called me back from the ice. Are you okay?"

Ilya let out a little giggle, before bursting into a fit of laughter. "Shane is the best day of our lives! Shower and come."

"Come where? I can't skip practice this late in the season and - and, can you stop laughing and explain?"

"Shane, Yeva is coming!" Ilya said, eyes feeling misty as he giggled. He wiped quickly at his face, fingers brushing against his smile. "Baby is coming and she wants us there! We get to be there, so now we go."

"She wants us there?" Shane breathed, then there was crashing, the shucking of gear and jeers from his teammates still in the locker room. "I've got to - Hazy, tell Wiebe I need to talk to him - yeah, like right now - Yeah, thanks - Ilya are you sure? Like 100% sure she wants us there?"

"Babushka calls and tells me to come and bring Shane if I feel like it, so I'm feel very mag-"

"Magnanimous." Shane laughed. "Oh go fuck yourself. Fuck, I have to shower and fuck - Wiebe's here. I'll call right back. Hey, coach, Ilya called and I-"

The phone cut off and Ilya wiped at his eyes before dialing again.

"Hi, did you pick up the carrots for me?" Yuna called through her phone.

"Ah, no. Instead I am going to hospital to meet a baby. Maybe you come in a few days and meet her too?" Ilya teased, wondering if his face would be in a perpetual smile for the rest of his life.

"Oh god!" Yuna yelled, something crashing. "Okay, good. You're going now. Do you have the bag? The car seat? Where is Shane, does he know?"

"Yes, yes, he's talking to coach now and then he comes too." Ilya said with a laugh. "We will text when we know more. Mila says will be awhile, no rush but also rush. You can get Anya?"

Yuna let out a laugh that also sounded a bit wet. "Yes of course. Ilya listen to me." She said, taking a deep breath. "Tell her to get the epidural." She said seriously.

"Is on her birth plan. Epidural, safe Anna and safe baby, no Ilya and Shane. She only changed last part I think." He said with a giggle.

"She wants you in the room?"

"Mila says yes. We will go and if she changes her mind we will leave." He was saying the right things but god he hoped she did not change her mind.

Yuna hummed, another little giggle escaping her. "Yeva is coming home, I just - oh, David! Anna is in labor!"

There was muffled conversation through the phone before Yuna returned. "Yes, okay. We're on standby. You tell us when and we'll be there. Once you have the bag let us know if you need us to bring anything else."

"Yes, okay. Love you, bye bye." Ilya sang.

God, his heart was in his throat and the GPS said it would be another 10 minutes and he wanted to teleport instead. His baby was coming, a few days early, not 3 weeks in a horrific way. She was ready to come and be in their lives. She was-

His phone rang and he answered.

"Okay, I'm in the car." Shane heaved into the phone, a blinker sounding in the background. "GPS says 24 minutes. Will you, can you wait for me? So we can go in together?"

"Okay." Ilya said with a giggle. "Shane, Yeva is coming!" He breathed. "It is real and she is coming and will be here and- fuck, Shane this is happening."

"Yeah, it - Yeah, it is." His voice sounded wet too. "Fuck, we can't be crying when he go in there. We've got to keep it together."

"Mila says we have time. Not much, but enough to get there and have tears dry."

"Like you're not going to sob when Yeva is here."

"We do not cry. Never have before." Ilya said flippantly, causing Shane to bark out laughter on the other end of the phone.

"Right, of course. That's us." Shane let out a deep sigh and Ilya heard another blinker noise in the silence.

"When do you need to be back at games?" Ilya asked quietly, mind whirling.

Shane hummed, "Coach said he could give me two weeks. It's not long but it's also not..." He trailed off.

Ilya pulled into the garage, turning off his car and pulling the phone to his ear. "You think you're getting the cup this year?" He asked.

"You know we're not. Maybe we could get a wildcard spot, but with me out for two weeks - Barrett and Bood can work with Luca but that'll mean the entire second and third lines will shift and they're - they're good, we're good but-"

"Entire team does not rest on your shoulders, Shane. You are allowed to be here."

Shane huffed and Ilya saw his car slide into the open spot beside him. “No where else I’d rather be.” Ilya heard him muffled through the window and clearly through the phone.

He hung up and let himself out, moving quickly to Shane’s driver side and wrapping him in a hug as soon as his feet had touched the pavement.

“Any?” Shane asked, voice muffled against his shoulder.

“Yuna has her.” Ilya mumbled into the crown of his head.

“Carseat?”

“Still there.”

“Holy shit.” Shane said weakly, pulling back and cupping Ilya’s cheek. “Let’s go have a baby.”

Getting into the room wasn’t as hard as finding the labor and delivery ward. Mila had given their names and clear instructions that they were allowed back as soon as they arrived.

“This fucking sucks.” Anna bemoaned on the bed, hand flexing on her stomach as it tightened. Ilya was relieved to see that it didn’t look as painful as he’d been expecting.

“Language.” Mila tutted from her place in the chair by the window. She gave Ilya and Shane a wave as they entered, a sudoku book tucked in her hand.

“I’m about to push a watermelon out of me vagina. I can yell if I want.” Anna groused, eyes squeezed tightly and pushing out a hard breath.

“Hello, *Sestryonka*. Yuna says get the shot.” Ilya said, coming to her side and looking at the various tubes and wires connected to her hands and stomach.

“I got the shot.” Anna snarked, “There is still a fucking bowling ball in my stomach making a break for a hole that is much too small.”

Ilya snorted and looked over to see Shane looking at the board on the wall, hands fidgeting by his sides.

“Do you like the nurse?” He asked, “How’s her heartbeat? Did they tell you how long it would be? Do I need to go get you anything?”

When there was no response Shane turned around and looked at the grins in the room. “Right, hi. How are you feeling?” He said, cheeks flushed.

“I’m perfect, thanks.” Anna said with a snort. “Turns out an epidural needle isn’t so horrifying when you’re in the middle of a contraction.”

Shane hummed, coming over and grabbing her hand tightly. “How far along are you now? Sorry we’re late.” He said with a shy smile.

“8 centimeters and my water broke.” Anna said with a heavy sigh, squeezing his hand in return. “The nurse said she’s going to have to check me a bit more frequently now.”

“Could be an hour or 10.” Mila said from her place, eyes still locked on the little book in her hand and pencil being worried by her teeth.

“Thank you, Babushka.” Anna all but snarled.

Mila tutted. “This is what you get for having unprotected sex-”

“A little late for that.” Ilya quipped.

Anna opened her mouth to retort before hissing through her teeth, nostrils flaring and gripping Shane’s hand tightly. “Fucking, fuck.” She growled through clenched teeth.

“I thought the shot helped.” Shane said, patting their clasped hands with his free one. “Should I call someone?” He said, glancing up at Ilya who shrugged with wide eyes.

“It helps with the pain, not the pressure.” Anna grunted, falling back with a huff and looking at Mila. “Time?”

“Closer. I will go get Joy.” She said, standing and tossing the little book into the chair. Ilya waved to her as she passed before swatting at Anna’s leg and settling himself on the corner of the hospital bed.

“Honest now.” He said, petting at her knee.

Anna huffed and laughed. “Terrified. I probably need another little jolt from the thingy -” She said, gesturing to a button, connected to wires, connecting to a machine with numbers that meant absolutely nothing to him, “- but I’m just kind of ready. My body hurts and my, my heart hurts a little.” She said softly.

Ilya felt a strange bout of panic, as if Anna was about to say she wanted to keep her, that they weren’t actually going to get their baby. Instead, they’d not only lose their baby but also who Ilya now felt was an extension of his own family in Mila and Anna.

Shane hummed and brushed a hand over Anna’s crown.

“You will always have her.” Shane said softly. “Even when we have her, you’ll always have her too.”

Ilya swallowed and looked up at her, his throat tight and chest too full. “We will not take her, you know this? She is ours but she is also yours.”

“It’s not that.” Anna sniffled. “She’s yours, she has always been yours. It’s just-” She stopped her a moment, huffing and breathing heavily before settling again after a minute or two. “I’m grateful she has a family, and I’m grateful it’s not just me. She’s just - it’s been *just* us - I want her to have *you* but I also want her but I just-” She cut herself off abruptly.

The moment sat for a second, a bit stilted and a bit heartbreaking.

“Is big emotional day.” Ilya offered. “You will have her too, Toyt Anna.”

“Toyt Anna.” She breathed, closing her eyes. “And Papa Ilya and Papa Shane.” She said, eyes opening to show wet lash lines, her lips pursed.

“No, no. Papa and Daddy.” Ilya said, biting his lip and looking at Shane. Anna smiled, her eyes closed tightly before her teeth snarled and her legs twitched in pain. “Is good day for us, not so good for you.” He chirped.

“No, it’s a good day.” Anna said with a smile, eyes still wet as the moment passed. “Yeva gets to go home.”

Shane opened his mouth to speak but slammed it close as a buoyant woman entered the room, dressed in light pink scrubs, wide smiles and crows wrinkled at the corner of her eyes.

“Hello, Anna! I hear we’re getting closer together. I need to take a quick peak and see where we are.” She said, sliding into a rolling stool and moving her legs up. “I’m Joy, I’m on duty for Ms. Anna for the next 4 hours. Is the father here?” She asked, looking quickly between Ilya and Shane before ducking down on a stool.

“Both of you shut your eyes right now!” Anna yelped, legs slamming shut when the nurse went in between them.

Shane dutifully slammed his eyes closed, Ilya rolled his eyes and closed his as well. “I have seen a pussy before.” He uttered, ignoring the hissed *Ilya* from across the bed.

“Not one that's pushing out a baby.” The nurse said with a laugh.

“I saw a video in health.” Shane said quietly.

“Is why you’re gay?” Ilya asked.

“Jesus fucking Christ, Ilya. The nurse literally has her hand-”

“They’re both the father. Fathers’ I guess.” Anna cut him off, the sound of sheets rustling as she presumably allowed the nurse to check her again. “They do like each other, I promise.”

“How lucky to have such a lovely support system for you.” Joy replied with a laugh. “We’re getting close to the end here. I’d be very shocked if I wasn’t here for the birth of Ms. Yeva.”

“So I should be done in 4 hours?” Anna asked. “The contractions are taking me out a bit, maybe I need more of the pain meds?”

Joy hummed, moving towards the computer in the corner and worrying her lip as she began scrolling through the log. “You probably are feeling pressure more than pain but it does look like they’re coming close together. If you want, you can press the button for more but it means someone will have to hold your legs while you push, they may be too numb to move.”

“When will I be pushing?” Anna asked, swallowing hard.

“Sooner than you’re ready for, but exactly on time.” Joy said with a smile.

“I didn’t use an epidural when I had your mother.” Mila sucked at her teeth at the end of the bed.

“Boys, open your eyes.”

Ilya’s eyes flew open and he moved quickly towards the computer. “Can I see?” He asked excitedly.

Joy snorted and showed him some sort of graph that he couldn’t understand. “This shows when the stomach is contracting, which helps once the epidural is up and running. I’m going to go check in with the doctor about your status. Dad, would you like a job?” She asked.

“Sure.” Shane answered, hand still tightly closed around Anna’s.

Joy looked in confusion at Ilya and then back at Shane.

“Ah, he is Dad. I am Papa.” He said, trying to not bounce on his toes.

“Okay, Papa. If the pressure doesn’t stop before I get back, you come get me.” She said, kindly.

Ilya nodded eagerly, looking smugly at Shane. "I am helping." He sang.

"Shane is also helping." Anna said, holding up their joined hands. Shane grinned and stuck his tongue out.

Ilya moved around the room, rolling a stool up under Shane's legs and kicking at the back of his knees until he sat before moving back to the monitor and staring intensely.

"I don't think you have to stare at the machine." Anna said, settling back after pressing the button for her epidural. "I still feel the pressure."

"Even with the epidural?" Shane asked, his thumb rubbing over their entwined fingers.

Anna nodded, sucking at her teeth. "It doesn't hurt, more like pressing really hard down like..." She trailed off.

"Feels like you're pooping." Mila said briskly, "You are lucky it is going so fast, my labor was 20 hours."

"Jesus Christ." Shane whispered in horror.

"No epidural." Ilya added solemnly.

Anna groaned and glared at Mila. "Yes, you're so brave. But looks like I'm speed running this shit." She barked through gritted teeth.

"Lucky girl." Mila said with a soft smile, coming to her other side and pressing a kiss to the side of her head. "You will bring our Yeva here safely, if it happens in 10 minutes or 4 more hours."

"I'm voting for somewhere in between." Shane offered, watching in fascination as her stomach tightened against the gown she wore.

"I'm thinking closer to 10 minutes." Mila said, wincing when Anna yanked her head to look at her in horror.

"What?" Anna hissed.

Mila bit her lip and looked over to Ilya, eyes scanning the computer as if it had the key to the universe. "I think Ilya's job is more for show, my dear."

Ilya scoffed. "No, I am helping."

"Ilya," Mila said kindly, "They do not go get the doctor until we are at the end. We are at the end."

Anna slammed her eyes shut and groaned. "I - fuck, I don't know if I can do this."

"Too late for that, *dorogoy*." Mila said. "The question is where you want us."

Before she could answer, the doctor came in flanked by Joy and another nurse.

"Hello Anna, I'm Dr. Wilson. According to nurse Joy we're 10cm and 100% effaced. You know what that means?" He asked, gesturing towards the stool Shane sat in until he stood and pushed it towards him, still holding tightly to Anna's hand.

"Holy shit." Anna said, eyes wide as the doctor settled between her legs and pushed between her legs. "I thought you said before the end of your shift." She accused, eyes narrowing at Joy as she hissed

again.

“Within the next half hour is before the end of my shift.” Joy said kindly. “Papa, thank you for watching the machine, but I think we need you over here now.”

Ilya rushed over, standing beside Anna’s leg and looking at the doctor. “What do you see?” He asked, trying to peak over the curtain before Anna growled behind him.

“I swear to god, Ilya. Keep your fucking eyes up here.”

“I see the start of a head. We’re going to need to start pushing here soon to avoid any complications.” Dr. Wilson said, standing and letting the new nurse help him into a surgical gown and gloves.

“Wait, like right now? I can’t feel my legs!” Anna yelped, and true to her word, her legs seemed boneless floppy.

Mila moved slightly back, pulling Ilya by the back of his shirt until he stood towards her hip. “Come, this is why there are two of you. One for each leg.”

Shane’s eyes went wide and he looked at Anna whose eyes were equally as wide. “This is happening.” Shane whispered. Anna looked at him with wide eyes but didn’t respond, just looking anxiously between her legs.

Shane went to let go and Anna whimpered. He looked back and then at Joy. “Show me how with one hand.”

“It’ll be heavy,” Joy offered, “Her legs are basically dead weight.”

“He’s the Captain of the Centaurs, he can hold a hand and a leg.” Anna insisted hysterically.

“I can hold a leg and a hand.” Shane assured, squeezing her hand in his.

Joy smiled kindly and nodded. “Alright Papa and Dad, I’ll show you how to start and then you hold okay?” Joy said, showing them quickly how far back to hold her legs before moving back beside the Doctor.

“Alright Anna, When I tell you, you need to bare down as hard as you can for 10 seconds. I’ll count them down for you. Ready?” He asked.

“Not fucking really.” Anna snapped, but slammed her eyes closed and breathed hard through her nose.

“Okay, ready! Anna, bare down now.”

Ilya wasn’t sure what Anna was doing but her entire torso jerked forwards, shoulders by her ears and mouth screwed shut in concentration as the doctor counted to ten before encouraging her with a “Good job! The next one is going to come fast so catch your breath.” Dr. Wilson said.

Anna fell backwards breathing hard.

“*Breathe through them, darling. It will help, I swear it will.*” Mila said softly in Russian. Ilya looked back to see her rubbing Anna’s shoulder comfortingly.

“It feels like there is a bowling ball pressing on every organ.” Anna heaved out.

“*Yes, I know. But she will be here soon. Who are you doing this for?*” Mila asked kindly. “*Who are we doing this for?*” She asked again after a beat.

Anna's eyes began to water. "Me."

"Right. We are doing this for Anna and her future. Yeva gets to go home with your brothers and we will see her when we want and Anna will get to do what Anna wants."

"Anna wants this to be over." Anna heaved out.

Before Mila could respond the doctor was yelling for her to bare down again and the process repeated.

It somehow felt like hours as the doctor called for pressure and relief several more times. Anna was getting more exhausted by the minute and Shane looked like he was staring down 7th Game of the Stanley Cup finals. Determined and focused between where the doctor was hunched and holding tightly to Anna's hand.

"She's right here Anna. I need you to bear down and count to 10." The doctor said. Anna nodded and jerked her head forward, stomach tight and legs held apart. The doctor hit ten and Anna fell back panting on the bed.

"I can't." Anna panted, eyes slammed shut. "I can't do this."

Shane leaned his head down so his face sat just beside her. "Anna, listen to me." He said firmly and Anna forced her eyes open to look at him. "You are doing something to incredibly hard, and it hurts and it's so scary but you're fucking doing it. No one else is doing this, it's all you and it's been you. You've cared for her and kept her safe and you will get her here safely because you are strong and you are brave. You can do this. Break my fucking hand, curse us, and god and everyone else in the world if you need to, but you can fucking do this."

Anna swallowed hard and nodded. "Okay."

"Okay." Shane agreed, adjusting his grip on her leg.

"Okay Anna, another big one. You're doing great."

Twice more that happened before the doctor was speaking loudly. "Last one, I swear. She's here, Anna. Yeva is here."

Anna yelled as he bared down once more and a shrill scream echoed around the room.

"Boys keep her legs up." Joy said firmly, but she was moving quickly to place the most beautiful and disgusting thing on Anna's chest.

"Holy shit." Anna said in shock, moving her hands to cradle the baby covered in fluids to her chest.

"Oh my darling girl, you've done it. Look how beautiful she is." Mila said wetly, pressing kisses to Anna's forehead.

"Holy shit." Shane echoed, eyes locked on the screaming newborn in Anna's arms.

There were things happening, people speaking and moving but it seemed like everyone's eyes were on the tiny screaming bundle in Anna's arms. It couldn't have been more than a few minutes. Ilya knew logically that there may have been tearing, the delivering the placenta. There were still things being done.

But there was Yeva, fresh in the world and screaming with Anna who was looking at her with huge eyes.

“It’s okay my love. My baby, it’s okay. You’re here and you’re safe.” She was quietly, bouncing her arms carefully.

In a moment it all seemed to end. Joy instructed them to lower her legs and came to calmly collect the baby and move her to the other side of the room for measurements and a wipe down.

As she was taken from Anna’s arms, she left out a heavy breath and relaxed completely into the bed. The crying had calmed substantially as the nurses helped get Yeva wrapped up.

“I don’t want to hold her again.” Anna said quietly, looking only at Mila. “I don’t want her in the room. Is that allowed? I don’t want her- I can’t - I need her out of here.”

Shane was already moving quickly, speaking in hushed voices to the nurse. Speaking to Yeva.

Ilya felt his throat close tightly and moved closer to Anna and held her hand, pressing firm kisses to her cheeks and feeling tears drip down his face.

“Thank you. I can never thank you enough.”

Anna began crying and nodding. “Please, go. I will - Go. I’ll talk to you soon.” She promises before turning and burying her face in Mila’s outstretched arms.

Every moment after blurred.

Them standing in a hallway, Yeva in a rolling bassinet beside them as they found a room in the maternity suite for them. Doctors coming in, forcing them to sign papers that didn’t make sense in the moment, hearing her kitten cry and feeding her the tiniest bottle with the tiniest bit of formula.

Tiny Yeva, wrinkled and pink, a tiny tuft of red, uneven hair on her head, eyes scrunching and mouth pursing. Yawning and exhausted from her journey into the world.

“Holy shit.” Shane whispered when they moved to their own room, Ilya lowering himself carefully into the arm chair by the window with Yeva in his arms, Shane settling in on the arm by his side.

Ilya didn’t have words, in either language he knew, so he just nodded.

Little Yeva was swaddled tightly, something he knew Shane would want explicit instruction on before they left. He’d imagined a tiny finger curled around his finger, wide eyes staring deeply into his own. Something wild and deeply moving.

It turned out watching a tiny bundle of baby squish and yawn, eyes closed to the world, tucked into the crook of his elbow and arms tucked tightly to her sides was doing the same thing.

“She’s so perfect.” Shane whispered again, his voice cracking. “She’s just so fucking perfect.”

“My most perfect little Yevka. We are so happy you’re here.” Ilya said in Russian, eyes wet.

“So happy.” Shane agreed, pressing a firm kiss to Ilya’s temple.

Chapter End Notes

my delivery was quite literally the opposite of this so I chose to give Anna the experience

my friend had, 6 hours of labor and 30 minutes of pushing on her first baby.

Chapter 12

Chapter Summary

The End

Chapter Notes

Thank you to everyone who's stuck through this with it's terrible schedule and fluff on fluff.

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

“You can do it Yeva - yeah, okay - almost, yes! That’s it!” Shane half yelled, crouched over as Ilya sat on the opposite side of the room. Anya was in her dog bed, watching the entire process with absolutely no enthusiasm.

Yeva was bouncing on her knees, feet wobbling as she jolted forward a step, then two before promptly falling forward on her hands.

Shane braced himself, aware that the fall could cause a giggle or a scream depending on the hour. She had already been up for an hour, which technically meant they’d have a bit more time before she would be cranky enough for a second nap, but didn’t always mean she was in a good enough mood to face plant.

He held his breath for a moment, before she rolled neatly onto her back and let out a giggle.

“Thank god.” Ilya muttered before surging forward and blowing a raspberry on her belly.

Shane fell back and leaned on his hands. “She was up for like 2 minutes that time.”

“Yes, two whole minutes of wobble and only two steps.”

“Ilya, she’s one. Like, as of today, she’s one”

“I was on skates at one.”

“No the fuck you were not.” Shane said with a laugh, moving to blow his own raspberry on the side of Yeva’s neck, red curls brushing against his nose.

“Language, Hollander. There are babies present.” Ilya admonished, lifting his head with a grin.

Shane rolled his eyes and glanced up. “Sorry, I’ll get you earmuffs to handle your delicate sensibilities.”

Ilya snorted and pressed forward to smack a kiss on his cheek before leaning back. “Your parents are coming to get her?” He asked, rolling himself up and scooping Yeva into his arms.

“Yeah, soon. Then we have 3 hours to set up before the entirety of Ottawa descends on our house.”

“Ah, no. Set up will be fast.” Ilya said peppering kisses against Yeva’s cheeks until she began squealing.

Shane looked down at his watch, confirming that his husband did not know how to read a clock. When he opened his mouth to retort, the bell rang before he could speak.

“Ah! Grandma and Grandpa are here malysh.” He coo’d, walking around Shane and grabbing her diaper bag before moving to follow Anya towards the front door.

Shane’s brow furrowed, glancing again at his watch before he moved to follow his husband to the front of their house.

“I promise, we will bring her back in one piece.” David said with a huff.

“You will call if-”

“Ilya, we have watched her before. I actually remember you asking me to watch her just 3 days ago because you said Anya was having an ‘attention emergency.’” Yuna said with a laugh.

“Anya needed Papa time! But now she is one whole year old. She is changed woman.” Ilya argued as he handed David the bag and Yuna, Yeva.

Shane moved forward to press a kiss to Yeva’s cheek and hug his mom. “Thanks mom, you’ll come back around 4?”

“We’ll come back around 4 or after she wakes up from her nap.” David assured.

“But not before 4, yes? I have big plans, lots of decorating.” Ilya said, wrapping an arm around Shane’s waist and dragging him back into the house.

David snorted and nodded. “Sometime after 4. Party starts at 4:30?”

Ilya nodded. “They are coming in an hour to set up the house-”

“Who is they?” Shane ask, eyes snapping to his husband.

Yuna laughed and moved towards the car with a yelled, “Good luck, Ilya!” behind her.

The door closed and Shane turned, leveling his husband with a glare.

“We are setting up the party.”

“No, we have hired big company to come and set up the party.” Ilya said, grabbing at the elastic of Shane’s sweats.

“It’s her first birthday, Ilya. We should be setting up.” Shane argued, exasperated. “Ilya we shouldn’t-”

“What? Should not spend some of our millions of dollars to not have the house to ourselves for a few hours?”

Shane glared for a moment longer before huffing and leaning into his husbands chest. “What did you have in mind?” He uttered against his collar bone.

He felt Ilya's satisfaction, but it was short lived before he was hoisted up, instinctively wrapping his legs around Ilya's waist as he moved them towards the stairs.

"Your knee, you idiot!" Shane growled, holding tightly as Ilya carried him up the stairs.

"We must have a very important conversation. Knee will be fine." Ilya declared as they reached the bedroom, tossing Shane to the bed with a bounce. Ilya looked at him eagerly before tossing his shirt off.

Shane glowered at him from the bed and laughed. "Do I need to be naked too?" He asked, even as he sat up to take off his own shirt.

Ilya smiled and nodded. "Is important for our conversation."

Ilya moved forward when Shane was undressed, crowding his husband against the bed and straddling him. "What is today?" He whispered.

"January 27th." Shane answered.

"One year ago we got Yeva and she is the best. Has always been the best. Is the most perfect girl. The most perfect time of our lives."

It was true and not. Yeva had colic and jaundice. She'd been under a weird UV lamp in the hospital and hadn't slept for the entirety of the two weeks Shane had taken to be home with her. It had taken them over a month to find the right type of formula to use, the best burping techniques and several very anxious calls to a pediatrician who kept saying 'this is normal' which did nothing to alleviate the anxiety.

Then Shane had come home after the Centaurs hadn't made the playoffs, and several months of spending time with Yeva and Ilya, no morning skate, just brand deals and camp and barbecues and family. Yeva was calmer, happier, smiling wide and gummy, gnawing at his knuckles and drooling on everything.

When Shane had come back at the beginning of the season, he knew his time was coming to an end. He'd missed three weeks of the season with a separated shoulder and knew Terry, the team doctor, had a lot to say about the speed in which he'd returned to the ice.

That didn't even account for the fact that three weeks on IR had been some of his favorite of the season. Yeva still wasn't sleeping through the night, but the stretches were closed to 5 hours than 2 and he could wake up with her, feed her a bottle or try a new puree and sit with Ilya on the floor while they did tummy time together.

It had made the idea of retiring so much more appealing than Shane had ever thought before. Now Yeva was one, had transitioned into her own crib and was sleeping at least 10 hour stretches.

It was the best and worst time of his life.

Shane didn't want to be on the ice for another season - Shane wanted to never be off the ice again. He didn't want to miss anymore time with his daughter - he knew she wouldn't remember enough of this time to realize he'd been gone.

Instead of saying any of that, he just said. "It's the best day of our lives, yet."

That was clearly the answer Ilya wanted as he ground his hips down. "And I have the best news for us today. The most perfect answer."

“What’s the question?” Shane asked.

Ilya ignored him and instead cupped his face in his hands and gave him a pleading smile. “I want another baby.”

There was a beat of silence before Shane snorted and began laughing. “Are you actually insane? She is barely one.”

“Exactly one.”

“Exactly! She is one year old. She barely fits into 12 month clothing and you want another one? What happened to sleeping?”

“I will sleep when I’m dead.”

“Ilya.” Shane huffed, wrapping his arms around Ilya’s trunk and rubbing his hands up and down his back. “Are you having a crisis?”

“No, just very very sick. Baby fever. Is curable, but will take 9 months.” He pouted.

Shane groaned and threw his hands to the side. “It took longer with her. We’d have to the entire process again, and I don’t think I have to remind you how fucking terrible that was.”

Ilya nodded, pursed his lip and looked anxiously down at Shane. “Maybe I get pregnant?” He asked haltingly.

Shane’s eyes went wide and he looked at Ilya like a scared animal. “You know I don’t-”

“No, not - not that. Maybe this time we do the other way. Pick donor and do the IVF.” Ilya said before taking a fortifying breath. “Maybe I was sperm and we pick an egg and then we just do the medicine for that.”

Ilya’s english was disintegrating, which meant he was nervous. Shane thought his heart had stopped completely.

“You said before-”

“I was talking with Galina.” Ilya said, interrupting him. “She says I could pass down or not. She says me being willing to - to talk about things is important. Will mean better support if things are not - if baby is like me.”

Shane swallowed hard and nodded. “I could try too. If you want. We could both do it, find an egg donor and freeze. Do half you and half me and just, fuck I need to do more research. I wonder if you can freeze eggs and have someone else be the surrogate? Maybe we could do different people? I don’t, I need to look into this. Can you-”

“No I can not. We are not doing research. We are going to agree to have another baby and then I am going to fuck you until you get pregnant too.” Ilya said firmly.

Shane grimaced and bit his lip. “Can you give me one more year on the ice? Next season - I think my shoulder is done. Next season is the end of it and I’d like to be there, for this next one. Can you give me another year?”

A smile bright and wide lit up Ilya’s face and his eyes misted. “Yes, moy lyubimiy. Big retirement party and then fucking until we have a baby.”

“Still not how it works.” Shane said urgently, pulling Ilya down until their lips crashed together.

Chapter End Notes

I'm going to be honest, this isn't how this story was meant to go. There was a lot more I wanted to go into it (obviously same premise but more deep). I hope you enjoyed this fluff piece! The next one I write is going to be my own emotional hell.

End Notes

toying with the idea of a second chapter with Shane actually doing the research and Ilya working on the Irina foundation expansion (with more trying on the side) - if you want it let me know!

Second (and third and fourth chapter) are in progress.

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