

your love moves me forward

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/78495676) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/78495676>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Heated Rivalry (TV) , Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid
Relationships:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov , Shane Hollander & Hayden Pike
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov , Hayden Pike , Jackie Pike
Additional Tags:	Book 6: The Long Game (Game Changers) , POV Shane Hollander , References to Depression , Coming Out , Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov Relationship Timeline Reveal , Good Friend Hayden Pike , Emotional Hurt/Comfort , Shane Hollander Loves Ilya Rozanov , Ilya Rozanov Loves Shane Hollander , Angst with a Happy Ending , Autistic Shane Hollander
Language:	English
Collections:	Relationship Reveal HR , *Heated rivalry melts my heart*
Stats:	Published: 2026-01-28 Words: 5,849 Chapters: 1/1

your love moves me forward

by [justhockey](#)

Summary

“It’s not new,” Shane admits.

“The gay part or the relationship part?”

“Both?”

Hayden’s jaw slowly drops until he’s wearing such a goofy expression that Shane can’t help but laugh again.

(Or, Shane gets to come out on his own terms for once.)

Notes

Title from *Coeur D’Alene* by Movements.

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

Shane watches Ilya skulk out of his house in Montreal.

It's still dark outside. Ilya's got practice in Ottawa in just a few hours, and if he waits any longer to leave then the neighbours will be awake. They'd see him.

So Ilya kisses Shane goodbye, and blows him another as he tiptoes out the bedroom. Shane listens as he walks down the stairs, unlocks the door, then locks it behind him again as he leaves. He hears Ilya's car start up, and Shane holds his breath so he can listen to the sound of it driving away for as long as possible, before it finally fades into nothing.

He wants to crawl out of his own skin. Wants to jump in his car and chase after Ilya. Wants to scream it from the rooftops that he loves this man, more than anything in the whole world - even more than hockey - and that he's tired of hiding it.

God, is Shane tired.

It's been four months since Ilya signed with Ottawa, the season is only just getting started, and Shane already misses him more than he ever has done before. Now they've named this - now they get to call it what it has always been - walking away from Ilya feels even worse than it always has done. It feels like his soul is being ripped in two every time they part ways, like a vital part of him is missing whenever Ilya isn't at his side.

He'd crawl into Ilya's skin if he could, burrow beneath his ribs, merge their bodies into one being so he never has to be separated from him again.

Shane feels insane - absolutely feral with want, and affection, and love. He'd thought it was bad before, but it's got nothing on now; now that they get to call each other boyfriend and say *I love you*, Shane feels like he's bursting at the seams.

The last season with Ilya still in Boston was absolute agony. Shane is obsessed with him, that much has always been true, but it had been easier to suppress when he thought it was one-sided. Knowing that Ilya loves him just as desperately has made Shane feel like a wild animal that's been trapped in a cage.

He's spent his entire life hiding parts of himself - tucking away the most undesirable, most unpleasant pieces of him - to make himself more palatable for others.

(He doesn't do that around Ilya. Doesn't hide or pretend, or shapeshift into someone who's easier to love. He doesn't have to. Ilya just loves him anyway.)

He makes eye contact when he has to, even though it feels like spiders crawling up his spine. He goes to team events, and he smiles, and he pretends the noise and the lights aren't making his skin feel like it's stretching too tight over his bones. He takes pictures with fans who stop him on the street, even though their arms carelessly thrown around him makes his clothes feel itchy and his bones like lead.

He's an expert at pretending.

So Shane should be used to it, this mask pulled down over his face, but he's never hated it quite as much as he hates this. Never been so disgusted with himself for hiding.

Because with all the other stuff, Shane is hiding the ugly parts him; with Ilya, he's hiding the very best thing that's ever happened to him.

He groans loudly into the echoing silence of his empty bedroom. He pulls his arms out from under the covers, rubbing warm hands over his face. He digs his fingers into his eyes, pressing until he sees kaleidoscopes behind his eyelids. He's exhausted. Ilya got into Montreal late last night so they'd only managed to get a couple hours of sleep before he had to leave again.

Ilya had whispered, "*Go back to sleep, Shane,*" as he kissed him softly goodbye, but Shane knows he doesn't stand a chance. He can never sleep once Ilya has crawled out of bed, because it always feels too empty. Too cold. Too much like something important - something crucial - is missing.

It's December, just a couple of weeks out from Christmas, but it isn't cold as Shane peels back the covers and climbs out of bed. Ilya must have turned the thermostat up for him as he was leaving. The tenderness of such a small gesture makes Shane want to cry.

If someone had told Shane after the very first time he and Ilya met, that Ilya was just about the most thoughtful person on the planet, he'd have probably laughed in their face. But now he knows firsthand that Ilya is as sweet as they come deep down, behind all the walls he's constructed to keep himself safe. And Shane feels beyond grateful that he's one of the few people who are allowed past them - who are allowed to see the huge, soft heart, right at the center of Ilya Rozanov.

He goes about his morning routine almost robotically. Bathroom, wash his face, brush his teeth. Get dressed in the first pair of sweats and hoodie his fingers land on. The exact same breakfast he always has: overnight oats with banana, three sliced strawberries, and a slight drizzle of honey.

He feels half alive - like a working body and brain, but his heart just walked out the door and drove away.

It makes Shane restless. Antsy. It's not the first time he's felt like this after they had to part ways, and he knows it won't be the last, but something about this morning feels extra raw.

Ilya had been off last night.

Not in a way that would be noticeable to anyone else, but Shane *knows him* better than anyone else. He knows every version of Ilya there is to know, which means he's especially attuned to him when something is wrong. And last night, something was wrong. Not a big thing, like a loss or a team issue or anything like that. But Ilya was, for lack of a better word, *sad*.

He still kissed Shane like he couldn't breathe without him, still fucked him like he'd die if he stopped. He still held him afterwards like Shane was the most precious thing to exist. And he

talked, and he smiled, and he laughed, but there was something missing; the usual spark Ilya has, the brightness that usually shines from him like sunbeams, was gone.

If Shane looks back, he thinks it's maybe been dimming for a while.

He worries that Ilya is lonely now. He has a new team that he loves, and Shane's parents are close by, and he and Shane get to see each other more than they ever have, but still. Other than Russia, Boston is the only home Ilya has ever known. He's been building a life there since he was eighteen years old; he has friends there, and a team who could actually win, and the familiarity that only comes from carrying a place in your heart.

Ilya loves Boston, and he left it for Shane.

Shane has asked him about it, of course, but all Ilya ever says is that he's happy he moved to Ottawa - happy he gets to be closer to Shane. And Shane doesn't doubt that's true, he *knows* Ilya is happy that they get to steal more of each other's time now, but that doesn't mean he can't miss Boston, too.

Shane knows his boyfriend well enough to know that Ilya just doesn't want to admit to it because he doesn't want to worry Shane. He's got such a big, generous heart, and he doesn't want Shane to feel guilty or responsible for Ilya's sadness.

And he doesn't, exactly, because he'd asked and asked and *asked* if Ilya was absolutely *certain* he wanted to move to Ottawa. They would have found a way to make it work no matter what, Shane had assured him. But Ilya had promised him that he did want to move. That he would do anything to be closer to Shane.

But while Shane knows this was Ilya's choice, he can't help feeling a little bit guilty. Especially because Ilya has made all of these sacrifices while Shane's life hasn't changed a bit; he's still with the team that drafted him, in a city he loves, and he's still hiding Ilya like he's someone who doesn't deserve to be loved out loud. But he *does*. And though he knows Ilya is hiding too, that's mostly just because Shane isn't ready yet.

If he asked, Ilya would come out to the entire world tomorrow.

Before Shane can overthink his sudden, spur-of-the-moment decision, he grabs his keys and rushes out the door.

It takes him just over ten minutes to arrive at his destination. It takes him another ten before he finally works up the courage to unbuckle his seatbelt and actually climb out of his Jeep. He'd been staring through the windshield, gripping the steering wheel, drumming his thumbs so hard against it that he's surprised he's not bruised them. But he braces against the brittle winter chill, sucks in an icy breath, and stalks up the pathway.

Shane raises his hand, but before he even gets the chance to knock the door is swinging open.

He flinches backwards in surprise, Jackie yelps, and Ruby and Jade both wrap their arms around him in a hug so tight it feels like his ribs are caving in.

Jackie has a purse slung over her shoulder, two school backpacks hooked over one arm, and her phone, keys, and a thermos all clutched in her hands. She still manages to look completely in control, though, like not a single thing could possibly phase her. Well. Except for Shane appearing on her doorstep before 8am.

“Shane? What’s wrong?” She asks, glancing behind Shane as if she’s waiting for something else to jump out at her.

“Nothing, nothing,” he reassures her as he hugs the girls back. “Sorry. I know it’s early, I just - needed to talk to Hayden.”

Her brows pinch together slightly, but she doesn’t question him.

“Oh, okay, well - girls, let go of him, he can’t breathe - I’m just about to take the twins to school,” she explains, “and the other two had a sleepover with my parents. Hayden has just woken up, you can head on in.”

“Are you sure?”

“Of course,” she says, smiling softly and reaching out to briefly squeeze Shane’s arm.

“Thanks. Do you, uh, need help?”

Jade and Ruby are now racing towards the car, calling out, “Bye, Uncle Shane,” with almost creepy synchronicity, while also trying to elbow each other out the way. It’s par for the course for the twins, even first thing in the morning when most people are barely even conscious yet. He loves it - loves *them*.

Loves kids in general, really, even though he’s not always sure how to act around them. He thinks about them sometimes, though. What it would be like to have a family with Ilya. What their life could look like in the future, if only they were brave enough to reach for it.

“Oh no, I’m good,” Jackie insists, drawing Shane out of his daydreams. “You head on in to Hayden. Thank you, though.”

“Yeah, of course. I’ll see you later?”

“Bye!” She calls over her shoulder as she rushes after her girls.

Shane shakes his head, both afraid of, and jealous of, the chaos that comes with having children. He thinks Ilya would be a wonderful dad; he hopes he gets to see it someday.

He sees Jackie and the twins off, waiting until they’re safely driving down the road before he steps into the house and closes the door behind himself. He loves Hayden and Jackie’s house - the way it’s always just a little bit messy, but only in the way a truly lived-in home is. It always feels like family.

He’s only been inside a moment when he hears his best friend’s voice calling out.

“Babe? Did you forget - oh.” He startles when he sees Shane in his entry way. “Shane?”

“Hi. Sorry. Jackie let me in as she was leaving with the girls.”

“No, no. It’s fine. Come on, I was just making coffee,” Hayden says as he waves Shane further into the house, then disappears.

Shane toes his *Reeboks* off and places them neatly on the shoe rack by the door. He traipses after Hayden, meandering through the hallway and dining room, then coming to a stop in the kitchen. Hayden is already behind the island, pouring an ungodly amount of sugar into what is clearly his first coffee of the morning. There’s a second cup - *World’s Greatest Uncle* printed on the side of it - that’s been placed in front of one of the bar stools for Shane.

He takes his assigned seat, wrapping both of his icy hands around the hot mug of coffee. Hayden leans back against the counter, peering at Shane over his cup as he takes a sip.

“So, uh. Is everything okay? It’s like, really early, man.”

Shane winces. “Yeah, I know. Sorry. I just needed to talk to you about something.”

Hayden’s eyes widen as he lowers his cup. “Fuck. You’re not dying are you?”

Shane almost spits out his coffee, the laugh he lets out catching him - and Hayden - by surprise.

“No, god, Hayden. I’m not *dying*.”

“Are you being *traded*?”

Shane fixes him with a *be serious* look. Of fucking course Shane isn’t being traded; he’s the captain of the Voyageurs, he’s lead them to two Stanley Cups, and he’s the best player in the league. There’s no way in hell Montreal would get rid of him. At least, not *now* there isn’t. Maybe if they knew about him then things would be different, but.

His dad always tells him not to go borrowing trouble, so. He pushes that to the back of his mind for now.

“Right, no. Of course you’re not,” Hayden scoffs. “So...what *is* going on, then?”

Shane chews nervously on his bottom lip, then he takes a sip of coffee - no sugar or creamer - just to keep himself busy.

He knows what he wants to do, he just hasn’t quite figured out what to *say*.

He’d spent the whole drive here - and the subsequent ten minutes he spent sitting in his car out front - convincing himself not to turn back around and just go home. He was too busy freaking out to plan anything, and now that he doesn’t have a plan he feels like he’s floundering.

Shane doesn’t do spontaneous.

Ever since he was a kid he's needed familiarity, and routine, and a clear, concise plan for how things are going to go. Sometimes, when he was a kid and plans used to change too quickly for him to prepare properly, he would simply lose the ability to speak. He just couldn't force the words to come out of his mouth no matter how hard he tried. And while it's not quite as severe as that now, he still doesn't like being caught off guard.

This? This is off guard. This is so off guard that Shane's skin feels prickly and he can hear the humming of the overhead lights and the refrigerator.

"Shane?" Hayden prompts him, quiet and unhurried like he can tell Shane is starting to spiral.

"Yeah. Sorry. Just - this is kinda hard to talk about."

"Buddy, not to rush you or anything, but. You're really starting to worry me."

Shane looks up, catching the concerned expression on his best friend's face. He hates it - hates that he's turning this into such a big deal when, realistically, he knows it doesn't need to be. It's just...Shane has never done this before. Not really.

Rose came out to Shane *for him*, and his dad walked in on him and Ilya so Shane kind of felt forced into addressing the situation before he was ready to. He's never done this on his own terms before now. He's never made the choice to sit someone down and tell them that he's gay. That he's in love with Ilya Rozanov.

And it's...it's a fucking lot, okay? Terrifying in a thousand different ways.

Because what if Hayden hates him after this?

He won't. Of course he won't. He uses pride tape on pride nights, and he was close to tears when he called Shane after Scott Hunter came out, and his own brother is gay, for fuck's sake. It's not the gay part that Shane is really worried about. It's the Ilya part.

And that - that's more terrifying, honestly.

Shane loves Ilya so much that, sometimes, it physically hurts. Like an actual pain in his chest, lodged just beneath his ribcage. Because with Ilya, it's the kind of love he honestly thought was just a myth - a lie sold to people to add some kind of meaning to their lives. He hadn't believed in it before Ilya, he hadn't thought it was possible. And now he's overflowing with so much of it that he doesn't know where to keep it all.

So the thought of Hayden having a problem with Ilya specifically? Well. That makes Shane want to crawl out of his skin.

But the Ilya part is *why* Shane is doing this.

He can't come out yet. He wants to - he *will* - one day, but he's nowhere near ready for that yet. He can come out to Hayden, though. To a few of the people he trusts most in the world.

He can't stop hiding Ilya so thoroughly, as if he's Shane's shame instead of his joy.

Ilya had been trying to get Shane to tell Hayden for a while, now. "*About you, about me, whatever you want,*" Ilya had said, just because he wanted Shane to have someone other than his parents to talk to about their relationship. Shane had pushed back, refusing until he was blue in the face.

But he's ready now. Mostly. Kind of.

"I'm--"

He pauses, scrunching his eyes closed for a moment, like that could somehow help prepare him for this. Then he takes a deep breath and tries again

"I'm gay."

The announcement hangs in the air between them for one second, two, three. Then:

"Oh fuck, is that it?" Hayden asks, sighing in what seems like relief.

Shane can feel his own eyes widen in surprise, and he can't stop the laughter that bubbles out of him. Hayden grimaces, an expression of instant regret crossing over his face.

"Oh my god," Shane laughs.

"I mean - shit."

It's Hayden's time to pause now. He pinches the bridge of his nose between his finger and thumb, mutters *fuck* under his breath, then finally meets Shane's eyes again.

"I'm happy for you, man. So fucking proud. Of course I am. I just, y'know, thought it was something *bad*."

Shane's laughter fades into a soft, appreciative smile. Of course him being gay is the absolute best case scenario, given how much Hayden must have been catastrophising. It's hilarious, and endearing, and Shane feels a sudden wave of gratitude for his best friend.

"So...me being gay isn't *bad*, then?"

"Fuck off. Of course it isn't, you idiot. I'm - thank you," Hayden says, quieter now. "Thank you for trusting me with that."

Shane looks down at the dregs of coffee in his cup. He shrugs his shoulders a little, suddenly incapable of making eye contact. He feels a little too vulnerable - a little too *visible* - right now. It's a weight off his shoulders, though. One of them, at least. Now it's time for the second one.

"I'm sorry I didn't tell you sooner, I just--"

"Hey, no," Hayden interrupts. "You don't ever have to apologise for that, okay? You don't owe anyone anything, not even me."

Shane nods appreciatively. “Yeah, okay. Thanks.”

An awkward silence settles around them. Not because Hayden is being weird, but because *Shane* is. He’s avoiding eye contact, dragging his empty cup back and forth over Jackie’s marble island. There’s clearly something more he needs to say, Hayden can obviously sense it from a mile off, but Shane is fucking terrified and Hayden doesn’t want to push.

It’s just...right now, this is good. This is easy. But in a moment it might not be.

“I’m, uh. I’m seeing someone.”

Hayden slaps his hands down onto the kitchen island, a wide grin stretching across his face as he says, “No fucking way? Who?”

“You might wanna tone down the excitement,” Shane tries to warn him.

Hayden just scoffs. “My chronically single, newly gay best friend just told me he’s in a *relationship*. I’m not toning *anything* down.”

“It’s not new,” Shane admits.

“The gay part or the relationship part?”

“Both?”

Hayden’s jaw slowly drops until he’s wearing such a goofy expression that Shane can’t help but laugh again. He gets it, the shock. Aside from his brief, not-quite-a-relationship with Rose, he has been - as Hayden so kindly pointed out - *chronically single*. (Except for the whole loving Ilya for a decade thing, of course.) So Hayden’s surprise isn’t entirely unwarranted.

“Shane. Buddy. My most dearest friend,” Hayden says. “Who the fuck are you?”

It’s said with so much love and awe, that for an embarrassing moment Shane worries he might cry. Hayden is chirping him like he always has done, treating him no differently now than he would have done before Shane came out to him.

It’s such a relief that the next part of Shane’s confession slips out almost without his permission.

“It’s Ilya.”

Hayden blinks at him.

“What is?”

“The relationship,” Shane explains. Then, “My boyfriend.”

Hayden nods quickly. “Right. Right. Ilya who?”

Shane rests his elbows on the island and leans forward, raising his eyebrows at Hayden. Hayden's face remains blank and unchanging, and Shane can't tell if it's genuine confusion or just desperate, wilful ignorance.

"How many Ilya's do you know?"

The question is, of course, rhetorical.

"You mean..."

"Yes."

"Ilya?"

"Yes."

"Rozanov?"

"That's the one."

"*The* Ilya Rozanov?"

"Is there another?" Shane queries.

"Holy fucking shit."

Shane holds his breath. He's not sure what to expect.

The rivalry between Montreal and Boston is like a jersey you slip on the moment you become a part of the team, and you never really take it off. It doesn't matter that Ilya plays for Ottawa now, he's still Boston's Rozanov. Still the most impossible, snarky, mouthy player you could ever face on the ice. Still a goddamn menace who loves to taunt everyone, but Hayden has always been one of his very favourite targets.

Shane knows it's not malicious because he knows Ilya. The teasing and the chirps are exactly that, but while Ilya tends to leave the drama on the ice, most of the players he pisses off carry it with them. Ilya doesn't hate Hayden, not in the slightest, he's just an easy target because he always responds. He's a little like one of those yappy, reactive dogs when it comes to Ilya.

Shane is a little bit terrified that this might be the thing that pushes Hayden over the edge.

Hayden, who hasn't moved a millimetre in a good minute and a half. Hayden, who is staring at Shane with a look of absolute shock-horror on his face.

"Hayden."

"Yeah, no. I'm here. I'm good."

"Are you sure about that?" Shane asks because, well, Hayden doesn't *look* good. He looks like he might be about to keel over.

“Yeah. Yeah, I’m just, y’know. Processing.”

“Processing. Right.”

The thing is, Hayden is his best friend.

He was the first guy who reached out to him when he was drafted by the Voyageurs, even though he’d only been on the team for a season himself. He was the first friend he made in the locker room, the first person who invited Shane over, the first teammate to care about more than just Shane’s hockey. Hayden and Jackie and the kids are such an integral part of Shane’s life, that he can’t imagine what it would look like without them. But.

Ilya is the love of his life.

Shane was seventeen years old and completely terrified he wouldn’t live up to the world’s expectations when he first met Ilya. But Ilya was the first person to never expect a goddamn thing from Shane.

He never wanted Shane because he was *Shane Hollander: Hockey Player*, even though they’ve always loved to compete against each other. Ilya has only ever wanted the real Shane, *his* Shane - the version that is awkward, and neurotic, and obsessive - and he has never found him lacking.

He loves Ilya more than anything. He loves Ilya more than hockey. And he can’t bear the thought of hearing Hayden badmouth the man that he loves on any kind of personal, non-hockey level.

So he doesn’t ever want to have to, but if it came to it there would be no hesitation: he would choose Ilya every time.

“That’s...”

Shane steels himself. “What?”

“Unexpected?”

Shane snorts, loud and obnoxious. “Yeah, I guess so.”

Ilya had most definitely been unexpected. He was the biggest surprise of Shane’s life, but that was a long time ago now. And while he still finds ways to surprise Shane all the time, nothing about loving Ilya is surprising anymore. He thinks that anyone who truly knows Ilya would have a hard time *not* loving him.

“Listen, he’s-“

“-holy shit. Holy fucking *shit*, Shane. *He’s* Boston Lily.”

Shane grimaces. Apparently he hadn’t given Hayden enough credit, because he hadn’t even considered he would pick up on that.

Ever since Ilya signed with Ottawa, “Boston Lily” has mostly faded away. Hayden will catch her name on Shane’s phone every now and then when they’re rooming together, but now that Shane doesn’t disappear every time they go to Boston, Hayden hasn’t been bringing her up. Shane foolishly thought it would go unnoticed.

“Oh, uh. Yeah.”

“But that’s - Jesus, Shane. It’s been *years*.”

Shane nods. This is the part his parents had found the hardest to wrap their heads around. The timeline - the sheer amount of time they’d spend dancing around each other, and hiding each other, and loving each other in silence.

“Since rookie year, actually,” Shane clarifies. “Well - the summer before.”

“You have got to be joking me?” Hayden gasps, but Shane just silently shakes his head.

“How? And what about Rose? Were you-“

“We weren’t exclusive, or anything. And I wasn’t seeing him while I was with Rose. It was just casual until last year. But now, well. Now it’s serious.”

Now it’s dreams of a white picket fence, and a dog, and children. It’s a future laid out ahead of them, that before they’d only ever imagined in secret, not even daring to share it with each other for the fear that it would make things too real.

It’s a life they want to create together on solid, steady foundations; something built to last.

“And he’s - I mean. You’re happy, right? He’s good to you?”

It’s maybe the sweetest thing Hayden could have possibly asked, and Shane feels himself melt a little, with relief and gratitude and affection for his best friend. He nods his head with total confidence.

“Yeah,” he says. “I’m happier with him than I’ve ever been before. He’s good to me, Hayden.”

“You promise?”

“I promise,” Shane vows, laughing quietly. “He’s - I don’t know. Kind of perfect, honestly.”

If Hayden is taken aback by that, he doesn’t show it. He simply nods his head in understanding, like everything Shane is saying makes perfect sense.

“You love him?”

Shane’s smile is so wide that his cheeks are starting to ache when he says, “More than anything.”

“And he loves you?”

“More than anything,” Shane repeats, because he knows that it’s true.

There’s nothing Ilya wouldn’t do for Shane, nothing he wouldn’t give up. He moved countries for Shane, and left the team he won the Stanley Cup with for a team that couldn’t buy themselves a winning streak. Ilya knows that when the time comes for them to finally come out publicly, he will never be able to go home again; he knows he will be cutting his last ties to Russia.

And Ilya - his sweet, gentle, loving Ilya - is willing to do all of that and more for Shane. Because he loves him, and because Shane loves him right back.

“Okay,” Hayden says, nodding his head. “Well, fuck. Come here then.”

He rounds the kitchen island and makes a beeline for Shane, who swivels sideways on his stool just in time for Hayden to crash into him. He throws his arms around Shane in a crushing hug, and it’s so sincere and kind that - once again - Shane finds himself close to tears.

He scrunches his eyes closed to stop them falling, then he hugs his friend back. It’s not a quick hug, either. Hayden lingers, holding Shane in a way he doesn’t think they’ve ever done before. This isn’t a no-homo hug, not a chore that Hayden feels obliged to fulfil. It feels a lot like acceptance, and the relief of that is entirely overwhelming.

“I’m so happy for you,” Hayden says, his voice thick with emotion.

“Yeah?”

“Yeah,” he confirms. “You’re a good judge of character, so if you think Rozanov is a decent guy, well. Who am I to argue?”

“Thank you,” Shane whispers. It’s a better reaction than he had dared to hope for.

“Crap. Is he gonna kill me for this hug?”

Shane laughs. “Maybe. He’s kinda possessive.”

Hayden pulls away in an instant. He throws his hands up as if in surrender, slowly backing away from Shane like Ilya is standing there, pointing a damn gun to his head. It makes Shane laugh, and so Hayden laughs too, and the moment feels so free and light and easy.

There’s a weight that’s been lifted from Shane, and he can’t wait to tell Ilya all about it. He’s always the first person Shane wants to share good news with.

“I should head back home,” Shane says. “But thank you. For listening. For understanding.”

“Hey, I’ve always got your back, man. Always. Okay?”

And Shane doesn’t doubt it. Not for a single second.

He's just stepping back through his front door when his phone starts to ring. *Lily* flashes up on the screen, and Shane's heart flutters and stumbles like he's still a seventeen year old kid with a dumb crush. It takes him back to an alleyway in Regina, a gym in Toronto, a locker room in LA.

He hopes Ilya never stops making him feel that way.

He quickly shuts the door behind himself, then scrambles to answer the call before it drops.

"Hey. Hi. Did you make it back okay?"

"Hi, sweetheart," Ilya greets him, the familiarity of his accent settling over Shane like a warm blanket. "Yes, I'm home. Leaving for the practice soon."

"I miss you," Shane confesses.

He hadn't meant to say it, but it slips out anyway. He always misses Ilya when they're apart. Whether it's been minutes, or days, or weeks, he misses him. It's a feeling that lingers, clinging to his skin and invading his lungs like smoke.

Sometimes Ilya is literally inside Shane and he still misses him. Still wants to find a way to get closer.

"I miss you too. So much."

"I have to tell you something."

Shane blurts it out hastily, and he practically *feels* Ilya freeze from a hundred miles away. He can hear his breath stutter through the tinny phone line. Shane hates that; he hates that Ilya hasn't unlearned his survival instincts yet. He's constantly bracing for impact, convinced bad news is always just around the corner.

Shane can't wait for the day when Ilya truly realises he isn't going anywhere. When he realises that Shane won't *ever* walk away from him.

"Okay. What is it? Is something wrong?"

"No. No, nothing is wrong, I promise," Shane reassures him. "I just, fuck. I just came out to Hayden. Like, twenty minutes ago."

There's a quiet intake of breath, as close to a gasp as Ilya ever gets. Then:

"Shane. I am *so* proud of you."

The honesty in Ilya's voice is so overwhelming. Shane can literally *hear* the awe and the pride, and it makes his heart ache because they're too far away from each other. He wants Ilya right here with him. He wants to crawl onto his lap - bury his face in Ilya's neck and have Ilya hold him so tightly that Shane can barely breathe.

"It went okay, yes? Or do I have to kill Pike?"

Shane laughs. “No, it went really well. He’s happy for me. For us.”

“I am so glad. It is what you deserve.”

It’s what they both deserve, Shane thinks. The least of what they deserve, honestly.

Next time they’re together - really together, in person - he’ll let Ilya know that he can tell someone, as well. Svetlana, maybe, or one of the Centaurs that he’s become close to. It’s wouldn’t be fair to ask Ilya to keep their love a secret when Shane has people who know, people that he can lean on. Ilya should have that too.

“I thought you weren’t ready?” Ilya wonders carefully. It had been a contentious subject for a while.

“Me too, but. You left, and you had to sneak out of the house like a secret, and I just. I wanted to tell *someone* about you. I needed someone to know.”

“*Shane.*”

“You’re everything to me, Ilya. I love you so much, and I’m so happy that I get to be with you,” Shane says. “I’m not ready for everyone to know yet, but. I don’t want to hide you, either.”

“I love you,” Ilya whispers, his voice cracking under the weight of his emotions. “I love you so much.”

Shane wants to reach through the phone and hold him. He wants to get in his car and drive to Ottawa, even if he only gets ten minutes with Ilya. It would be worth it. Everything, all of it - the secrets, and the hiding, and the travel, and the lack of sleep - will always be worth it. Because, at the end of the day, he gets Ilya.

He gets to love him for the rest of his life.

And one day it won’t be like this. One day - when they’re ready, when they’re braver - they won’t ever have to be apart again.

“Can I come see you?”

Ilya lets out a bark of laughter. “My love, I just left.”

“I know. I don’t care. We don’t fly out to LA until 9pm. There’s enough time.”

“Are you sure?”

“Yes. Please.”

He needs to see Ilya, to kiss him, to feel his heart thumping against Shane’s chest.

“Then yes,” Ilya says. “Please come.”

Shane doesn't even hesitate. He sets out to be reunited with his heart, while imagining the day that he never has to part from it again.

Shane thinks that moment might be coming sooner than they had planned for.

End Notes

realised shane never once gets to come out on his own terms & have a positive reaction so i immediately had to fix it :)

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