

**if you ever try to leave me again**

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/78629256) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/78629256>.

|                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                             |
|------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Rating:          | <a href="#">Explicit</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Archive Warning: | <a href="#">Graphic Depictions Of Violence</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Category:        | <a href="#">M/M</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| Fandoms:         | <a href="#">Heated Rivalry (TV)</a> , <a href="#">Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                    |
| Relationship:    | <a href="#">Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| Characters:      | <a href="#">Shane Hollander</a> , <a href="#">Ilya Rozanov</a> , <a href="#">Hayden Pike</a> , <a href="#">JJ Boiziau</a> , <a href="#">Original Characters</a> , <a href="#">Svetlana Vetrova</a> , <a href="#">Yuna Hollander</a> , <a href="#">David Hollander</a>                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| Additional Tags: | <a href="#">Shane Hollander Loves Ilya Rozanov</a> , <a href="#">Ilya Rozanov Loves Shane Hollander</a> , <a href="#">Autistic Shane Hollander</a> , <a href="#">Anxious Shane Hollander</a> , <a href="#">POV Shane Hollander</a> , <a href="#">Shane Hollander Needs a Hug</a> , <a href="#">Soft Ilya Rozanov</a> , <a href="#">Hurt Ilya Rozanov</a> , <a href="#">Blood and Injury</a> , <a href="#">Injury</a> , <a href="#">Major Character Injury</a> , <a href="#">Blood</a> , <a href="#">Hockey Injuries</a> , <a href="#">Hockey</a> , <a href="#">Hospitals</a> , <a href="#">Medical Inaccuracies</a> , <a href="#">Graphic Description</a> , <a href="#">Established Relationship</a> , <a href="#">Anxiety</a> , <a href="#">Anxiety Attacks</a> , <a href="#">Medical Procedures</a> , <a href="#">Hospitalization</a> , <a href="#">Hurt/Comfort</a> , <a href="#">Angst</a> , <a href="#">Fluff and Angst</a> , <a href="#">Emotional Hurt</a> , <a href="#">Post-Book 2: Heated Rivalry (Game Changers)</a> , <a href="#">Post-Episode: s01e06 The Cottage (Heated Rivalry)</a> , <a href="#">Pre-Book 6: The Long Game (Game Changers)</a> , <a href="#">Original Character(s)</a> , <a href="#">Panic Attacks</a> , <a href="#">Good Friend Svetlana Vetrova</a> , <a href="#">Ilya Rozanov &amp; Svetlana Vetrova Friendship</a> , <a href="#">Svetlana Vetrova - Freeform</a> , <a href="#">Good Parent Yuna Hollander</a> , <a href="#">Good Parents David Hollander/Yuna Hollander</a> , <a href="#">Good Parent David Hollander</a> , <a href="#">Embedded Images</a> , <a href="#">Mixed Media</a> , <a href="#">Alternate Universe - Canon Divergence</a> , <a href="#">Coming Out</a> , <a href="#">They get to come out on their own terms</a> , <a href="#">Boston Bears   Boston Raiders (Game Changers)</a> , <a href="#">Montreal Voyageurs   Montreal Metros (Game Changers)</a> , <a href="#">Internet</a> , <a href="#">Twitter</a> , <a href="#">Mentioned Scott Hunter (Game Changers)</a> , <a href="#">Found Family</a> , <a href="#">Recovery</a> , <a href="#">Injury Recovery</a> , <a href="#">Nightmares</a> , <a href="#">PTSD</a> , <a href="#">Comfort</a> , <a href="#">Eventual Smut</a> , <a href="#">Like literally not until the last chapter</a> , <a href="#">Oral Sex</a> , <a href="#">Anal Fingering</a> , <a href="#">Anal Sex</a> , <a href="#">Fluff and Smut</a> , <a href="#">Emotional Sex</a> , <a href="#">Gay Sex</a> , <a href="#">Irina Rozanova Haunts the Narrative</a> , <a href="#">Mentioned Irina Rozanova</a> |
| Language:        | English                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| Stats:           | Published: 2026-01-31 Completed: 2026-03-04 Words: 56,772 Chapters: 10/10                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |

# if you ever try to leave me again

by [My\\_Chemical\\_Comeback](#)

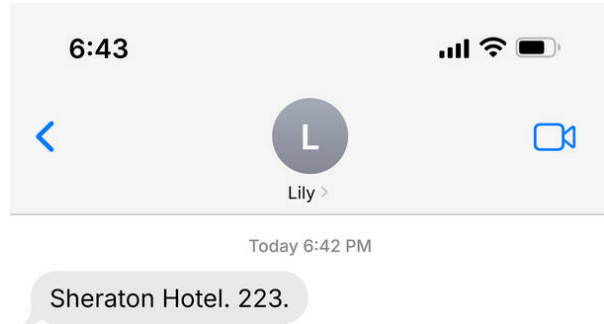
## Summary

Shane heard a strangled shout tear free from his mouth, and then his body was moving without his brain's input. He flew across the ice, ripping his gloves off and reaching for Ilya's throat. He wrapped his fingers around the warm skin, feeling the flow of blood pulse harder with each beat of Ilya's heart. His eyes raced across Ilya's face, desperately looking for a sign that his boyfriend was still with him. Ilya's eyes were wide and glazed, staring past Shane instead of at him. His face was losing color rapidly, turning a sickly shade of white that mirrored the ice beneath him. His mouth was open, loose and slack, mouthguard still jammed into his upper jaw. Shane watched in terror as Ilya grew limper in his arms.

---

During a Boston-Montreal game, Ilya's neck is cut by a skate, and Shane is forced to witness the love of his life bleeding out on the ice in front of him. All of the plans they have made seem to be slipping away before his eyes, right when they were so close to finalizing Ilya's transfer to Ottawa. As they race against the clock to save Ilya's life, Shane reckons with the secrets they have been forced to keep and fears that they might never get to live their truth out in the open.

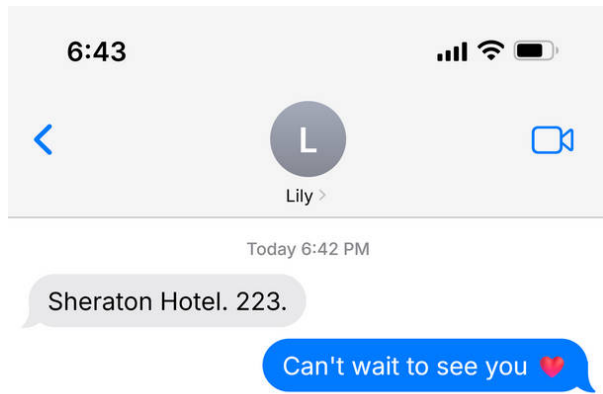
## Chapter 1: blood on the ice



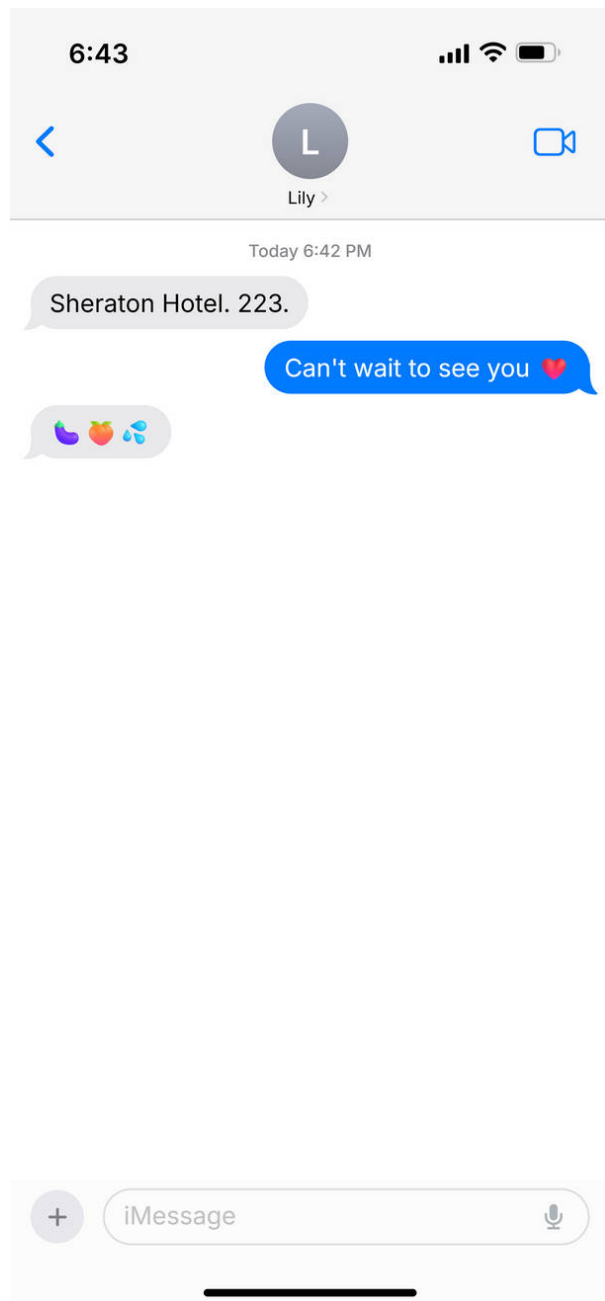
Shane smiled down at his phone, running one hand through his short black hair. It had been a while since he and Ilya had seen each other, nearly three months. It was the longest stretch of time that they had been apart in almost a year. Usually, if they didn't have a game together for a few months, they would find several weekends to meet up, either at Shane's place in Montreal, Ilya's place in Boston, or somewhere in between.

The past three months had been unusually hectic though, and between one thing or another, they had not been able to find a single weekend where they were both available. Shane felt like he was going crazy, and if the phone call they had shared the night before was any

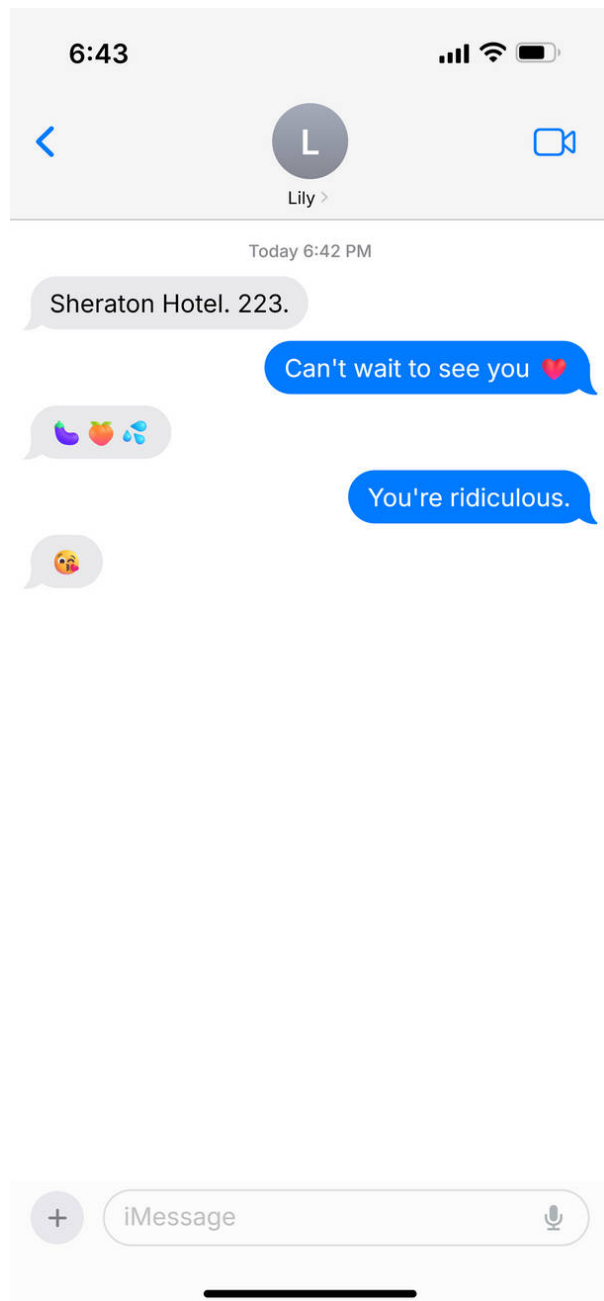
indication, so was Ilya. Shane smiled, his thumbs moving across the screen as he responded to Ilya's text:



His phone buzzed a second later:



Shane laughed under his breath, rolling his eyes as he replied:



“Ready for the game tonight Captain?” an eager voice asked beside him. Shane shoved his phone back into his locker and turned towards the voice. It was Jackson Vallières, a rookie who had joined the Voyagers that year. He was French-Canadian, from Quebec, freshly eighteen years old and eager to prove himself. Shane liked him, he was a nice kid, practiced hard and played hard, plus he stayed out of trouble.

Shane nodded, smiling at Jackson, “Yeah, it should be a good one.”

“We’re going to fucking *destroy* Boston tonight!” JJ crowed, slapping Shane on the shoulders, “Those motherfuckers won’t know what hit them!” He slapped Vallières on the shoulder too, grinning down at him, “You ready kid?”

“Yeah, for sure!” Jackson grinned at JJ, slapping a hand across his back.

JJ turned to Shane, “Come on Hollander! I know you’re excited to beat the shit out of Rozanov!”

Shane laughed, running a hand over his neck nervously. “Yeah JJ, it’s gonna be great.”

“C’mon guys, let’s go!” Hayden’s voice echoed across the locker room, waving to them from the door, “It’s showtime!”

----

As they made their way through the tunnel and into the arena, Shane took a deep breath. The crowd was loud, excited, the atmosphere electrified as bass-boosted music blasted throughout the arena. Lights flashed, strobing across the crowd as the players made their way onto the ice. Shane caught a glimpse of Ilya as he skated out, and he smiled in spite of his best efforts. Ilya caught his eye, flashing him a grin and a wink as he slid around the ice warming up. Shane began his own warmups, keeping Ilya in the corner of his eye as he skated.

When they came together in the center for the face-off, Ilya gave him another grin, “Ready to be destroyed tonight Hollander?” he asked with a smirk. To anyone who might have overheard, it was just Rozanov being his usual, asshole self, but Shane caught the double entendre intended for only him. He didn’t reply, trying to suppress his smile, conscious of the cameras on them. The puck dropped and Shane swooped in to win the face-off, taking off down the ice with Ilya close behind him.

The first period went perfectly, the Metros were playing like a well oiled machine. They moved down the ice in formation without hesitation, snapping the puck to each other with practiced ease. Shane scored two goals before the period ended, and he was feeling good. He loved getting to play with Ilya, they both played better when it was against each other. The fire of their competition brought out the best in both of them, and it was electrifying. Shane always loved being on the ice, but he never loved it more than when Ilya was there with him. The first period came to a close, the Metros gathering to celebrate their successes and regroup for the rest of the game.

And then in the second period, it happened. Ilya had the puck, flying down the ice, Shane chasing after him, gaining on him with every stride. Ilya swerved around a Montreal defenseman, narrowly avoiding a collision, quickly approaching the goal. Suddenly, JJ and Vallières came swooping in from opposite sides, so focused on Ilya that they didn’t see each other. None of the three had time to stop or avoid the collision, their bodies slamming together with a loud smack, JJ and Ilya skidding backwards across the ice, Vallières being thrown in the opposite direction.

Vallières’s leg kicked out as he fell, his skate catching Ilya beneath his chinstrap. His head jerked back, and he rolled onto his knees, sliding several inches forward on the ice. Vallières sat up, JJ lifted himself to his feet, and for one brief moment, Shane thought he was going to get up, and everything would be fine.

Then chaos erupted.

Ilya clutched at his throat with both hands, gloves scrabbling against the jet of blood that burst from his neck, splattering across the ice in a semi-circle as he rotated on his knees in a panic. He fumbled with the strap beneath his chin, ripping it open and tearing his helmet from his head, dropping it onto the ice with his bloodstained gloves. His hands returned to his throat, attempting to slow the flood erupting from his body.

The crowd screamed in terror, an agonizing wail rising through the stands, a dark contrast from the excited cheers and yells that had filled the arena seconds earlier.

“Holy fuck!” JJ yelled, waving frantically towards the bench for the medics. His eyes were wide, horrified, as he waved his arms in the air helplessly, “Help! We need help over here!”

Vallières scrambled to his feet, turning towards Ilya, his mouth dropping open in horror as he registered what was happening. “No, no, no!” he shouted, hands flying up to grasp at his helmet, knees buckling with shock.

Shane heard a strangled shout tear free from his mouth, and then his body was moving without his brain’s input. He flew across the ice, ripping his gloves off and reaching for Ilya’s throat. He wrapped his fingers around the warm skin, feeling the flow of blood pulse harder with each beat of Ilya’s heart. His eyes raced across Ilya’s face, desperately looking for a sign that his boyfriend was still with him. Ilya’s eyes were wide and glazed, staring *past* Shane instead of *at* him. His face was losing color rapidly, turning a sickly shade of white that mirrored the ice beneath him. His mouth was open, loose and slack, mouthguard still jammed into his upper jaw. Shane watched in terror as Ilya grew limper in his arms.

“Ilya!” he shouted, pressing down harder with his hands. The blood was still coming, flowing too fast, staining Shane’s hands like a scene from a horror movie, hot against his fingertips. His mind raced, desperately trying to latch on to some piece of helpful information.

*Clint Malarchuck, Sabre’s goaltender, 1989. Throat lacerated by the skate of Steve Tuttle. Saved by his athletic trainer Jim Pizzutelli, a former US combat medic, who reached into Malarchuck’s open wound and pinched off the bleeding artery.*

*Pinch it off. Pinch it off.*

Shane looked down into Ilya’s eyes, growing more glazed by the second. Before he could think too hard about it, he took a deep breath and plunged his thumb and pointer finger into the slash across his boyfriend’s neck.

Warmth enveloped his fingers, the sickening feeling of blood and flesh triggering a wave of nausea that he tried to push down as he pressed his hand forward. He probed around with his fingers, trying to ignore the feeling of the fluid and tissue squishing around his digits. He swallowed, fighting the urge to vomit, and pressed in deeper, searching for the spurting vessel.

His fingers brushed against a pulsing spot, and he gasped, immediately clamping down on it and pinching as hard as he could. The blood spraying from Ilya’s neck slowed to a steady trickle, tracing down his skin in glistening ruby streams that melded into the dark stain on the front of his jersey.

“Ilya?” Shane cried out, eyes locked onto his boyfriend’s face. “Ilya!” He shouted when he received no response.

Ilya’s eyes were starting to roll back in his head, and Shane could feel his body beginning to ragdoll underneath him.

“No, no, Ilya, please don’t do this,” he begged, “Please don’t do this to me.”

Distantly, Shane was aware that they were still on the ice, in front of 20,000 fans, both of their teams, commentators, cameras, and a live audience at home. He knew that his words might be picked up by the microphones, he was certainly shouting loudly enough. In the back of his mind he knew that this was wrong: they weren’t supposed to be obvious like this, they weren’t supposed to let anyone suspect anything, but he didn’t care. Not anymore, not when the love of his life was bleeding out in his hands.

The medics were on them then, being helped across the ice by both Boston and Montreal players. Shane looked up frantically as the Raider’s team trainer dropped down next to them, assessing the situation.

“Keep your hands right where they are, Hollander,” the trainer said, voice urgent, but calm.

Shane nodded, wordlessly. He had not been planning on moving his hands, at least not until he was sure that Ilya wouldn’t bleed out if he let up on the pressure.

“Rozanov? Rozanov? Can you hear me?” another medic was asking, moving behind Ilya to stabilize his head.

In response, Ilya promptly fainted, eyes rolling back completely, body collapsing backwards, crumpling like wet paper. Shane yelped, refusing to let go, body surging forward with Ilya, his fingers still clamped tightly around the severed artery. The medic swore, catching Ilya’s head before he could hit the ice.

“We need to get him out of here,” one of the medics was saying, “He needs an OR now!”

“Alright, let’s move,” another medic said, moving to stand behind Shane, “Hollander, you still with us?” The voice sounded like it was coming from underwater. “Hollander!”

Shane shook his head, clearing the fog that was beginning to settle over his brain. He couldn’t do this now. Not here, not now, not when Ilya needed him so badly. Distantly, he was aware that his whole body was trembling, shaking like a leaf, barely keeping him upright on his knees.

Swallowing, he took a deep breath, nodding, “Yes, yes I’m with you.”

“Good,” the medic looked right at him, eyes devastatingly serious. “You need to keep your hands right where they are, do not let go, do not let up on the pressure. Can you do that?”

Shane nodded numbly. He could do it. He *had* to. Swallowing, he shifted, getting his skates underneath himself, preparing to stand up. Ilya needed him to get this right.

“On the count of three,” the Bear’s trainer said, moving to support Ilya under his arms, “One, two, three!”

The medics and the trainers hauled Ilya to his feet, Shane rushing to stand up with them, grateful when he felt hands behind him, helping him upright. The hands stayed behind him, guiding him forwards as the medics rushed them towards the gate.

“You’re doing great Hollander,” the person behind him said, “Just keep your hands where they are and keep that pressure like we told you, okay?”

“Okay,” Shane managed to croak out, eyes still locked on Ilya’s face. He was distantly aware that they had left the ice, he felt the change under his blades as he shuffled forwards. The sounds of the crowd dulled as they entered the dimly lit tunnel, the sudden quiet ringing in Shane’s ears.

“This way, this way!” The medic gestured with his head towards an open door. Shane could see daylight spilling in from outside, blinding him, and he squinted his eyes against the harsh glare. A couple of blurry, dark shapes burst their way through the white light, rushing their way. As they drew closer, Shane recognized the figures of two paramedics and a stretcher.

“Deep laceration to the throat,” one of the medics panted out as the paramedics approached, “Severed artery, visual estimation 1 liter of blood loss.”

“Alright, let’s get him onto the stretcher,” one of the paramedics said urgently, reaching for Ilya.

“Wait!” the medic shouted, “He’s holding the artery,” he said, tilting his head in Shane’s direction, “This guy lost almost a liter of blood in under 15 seconds, if he lets go, it’s going to start again.”

The paramedic fixed her eyes on Shane, “Do you think you can hold it all the way to the hospital?”

Shane nodded, “Yes,” he croaked out. He hoped he could. He prayed he could. If he couldn’t...he wasn’t ready to think about that.

“Okay,” the other paramedic said, moving the stretcher behind Ilya and lowering it, “We need to move fast. When I say go, we’re going to move him, and you need to hold that pressure the whole time, okay?” His voice was calm, steady, and he looked at Shane like he had faith in him.

Shane nodded again, swallowing hard around the choking lump in his throat.

“Alright,” the paramedic nodded, “On three. One, two, three!” The paramedics grasped Ilya’s limp body and tugged him backwards onto the stretcher, the Boston medics moving out of the way as Shane shuffled alongside him, tripping over his skates.

“Shit,” one of the Raider’s medics said, “Hollander, you’re still in your skates.”

Shane shook his head, “I don’t care, I know how to walk in them.”

The male paramedic eyed his feet, “Those things will have to come off before we get to the hospital, maybe Josie or I can untie them quickly once we’re in the back and on our way.”

The female paramedic, Josie apparently, nodded, “I can get them, let’s move.”

Shane shuffled alongside the stretcher as they made their way out of the tunnel and through the door, squinting against the harsh glare of the sun as he stumbled his way outside. The paramedics steered the stretcher towards the ambulance, Josie letting go to yank open the double doors as they approached. She jumped into the back of the ambulance and grasped the top of the stretcher, looking at Shane.

“Alright, this is going to be the trickiest part,” she said, “We need to move slowly so that we don’t tug on that artery at all.”

“What do you need me to do?” Shane rasped out. He was distantly aware of the flashing lights of the ambulance in front of him, scattering flashes of colored light around him.

“We’re going to lift the head of the stretcher, and as I slide it in, I want you to step up alongside it. Try not to let your hand move around too much, okay?”

Shane nodded, fixing his gaze on Ilya’s face. He was *so* pale, almost blending in with the white sheet covering the stretcher beneath him. His curls were matted to his head with sweat and blood, forming red-stained ringlets around his face. Shane was struck with a wild urge to reach out and brush the curls away from his forehead, but he resisted, focusing on the task in front of him.

He felt the stretcher lift beneath his hands, and he shifted, stepping into the back of the ambulance, first with one foot and then the other, careful not to lose his balance on the blades of his skates. The paramedics slid the stretcher into place, jumping into the back and slamming the door behind them, Shane collapsing on the bench along the sides of the ambulance.

Josie pounded on the wall in front of them, peering through the small window to call to the driver, “We’re all in, let’s go!”

Sirens wailed to life and the ambulance took off down the road, jolting Shane forward slightly. Distantly he felt Josie reaching down to untie his skates, lifting first his left foot, and then his right as she pulled his feet free and shoved his skates into an empty corner. The red and blue lights flashed outside the back window as they flew down the street, and Josie turned her attention to Ilya, moving alongside her colleague.

The two paramedics buzzed around them, attaching wires and monitors, poking lines into his arms to run fluids into his veins. Shane paid no attention to them. His eyes were still locked on Ilya, on the whites of his eyes staring back at him behind half-lidded eyes, his skin still that sickly pale that Shane had never seen on anyone.

“Don’t you dare die on me Rozanov. You hear me? Don’t you dare,” he hissed between his teeth, lowering his head to whisper directly into Ilya’s ear.

He rested his head on the stretcher beside Ilya, clenching his teeth and trying desperately to stop the bile threatening to rise out of his mouth. The hit replayed in his mind over and over, the bodies slamming together, Vallières blade stretching out, slicing the soft skin of Ilya's neck. Ilya's body crumpling to the ground, rolling onto his knees, and then the look on his face when the blood had started pouring.

"Fuck!" Shane shouted into the stretcher.

"Sir?" Josie asked, "Are you doing alright there?"

"I'm fine," Shane responded through gritted teeth, "I'm fine."

"Okay," Josie replied, sounding unsure, "You need to tell us if you're not."

Shane nodded, his forehead rubbing against the sheet that covered the stretcher carrying his whole world.

"I will," he managed to rasp out. There was silence from Josie as she and her co-worker returned to work, speaking to each other rapidly, saying things that Shane couldn't understand:

*"BP 60/40, it keeps dropping."*

*"He's tachycardic, his heart-rate keeps jumping up."*

*"Push another gram of PXA."*

*"We need to get some pressure packing on the other side of that wound."*

Shane squeezed his eyes shut, trying to focus on holding a tight grip on Ilya's torn artery. His fingers were numb, and he was suddenly terrified that he might let go without realizing it, desperately clamping his fingers together tighter in an attempt to avoid it. He raised his head off the stretcher, opening his eyes to look at Ilya again. He looked even paler somehow, his skin nearly translucent.

Shane sucked in a shaky breath, leaning back down to whisper into Ilya's ear, "I love you Ilya, I love you so so much. Please hang on. Please."

As the ambulance raced towards the hospital, jolting along the bumpy roads with sirens blaring, Shane found himself praying to Ilya's mother:

*Please Irina. Please don't take him from me. Not yet.*

*I promise I will take care of him. I'll keep him safe. I'll keep him happy.*

*Just please, don't take him away from me.*

## Chapter 2: broken on the floor

### Chapter Summary

Shane stared down at his hands, painted with Ilya's blood. It had soaked into his skin, drying into a tight, sticky coating that made his skin crawl. He needed it off, he needed his hands to feel normal, the feeling was too much, too much, too much. Gasping, he reached for the sink handle, turning the water on as hot as it would go, plunging his hands under the steam and allowing the water to boil his hands. He fumbled for the bar of once white soap, now stained with red and pink streaks from the mess splattered on his skin. Scrubbing the bar across his skin frantically, he blinked away the tears that pricked at his eyes, threatening to spill over.

We were so close.

The thought slammed into him like a freight train. Ilya's trade to Ottawa had been finalized the week before, not yet announced, but all of the paperwork had been completed. They had celebrated with Shane's parents at their house the night that the final signatures were signed. Yuna had made chicken parmesan for Ilya, and he happily ate four servings, smiling to himself the whole time.

### Chapter Notes

Thank you all so much for your amazing feedback on Chapter 1! I'm so glad that people are enjoying this piece! I'm so sorry that it took so long to update, I got hit with a migraine earlier in the week so I missed a couple of days of classes and had a bunch of work to catch up on. Ugh, college, am I right? Anyway, I know I said this would only be two chapters but chapter two ended up being way longer than I planned, so you get three! I hope that's okay (although I assume it is haha), I figure no one is mad about more story! Chapter three will be out by tonight, I'm just finishing up some formatting issues and then I will post it!

Warning: This chapter contains depictions of a panic attack/autistic meltdown, mostly inspired by my own experiences. Please read with care!

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

The water rushed over his hands, red blood turning pink against the white porcelain of the basin. Shane stared at it as it swirled down the drain, leaving a faint stain behind, a delicate tint that made his eyes swim. Groaning, he rested his forehead against the cool stone on the lip of the sink, swallowing hard to push down a growing wave of nausea. Spit pooled in his

mouth and he let out another groan, lurching towards the toilet. He flung the lid open, spilling the contents of his stomach into the bowl. A bitter taste filled his mouth and he shakily reached for the handle, flushing and allowing the water to carry everything away. He stumbled to his feet, wet, bloody hands dripping all over the tile and forming little pools of water on the floor.

He stared down at his hands, painted with Ilya's blood. It had soaked into his skin, drying into a tight, sticky coating that made his skin crawl. He needed it off, he needed his hands to feel normal, the feeling was too much, too much, too much. Gasping, he reached for the sink handle, turning the water on as hot as it would go, plunging his hands under the steam and allowing the water to boil his hands. He fumbled for the bar of once white soap, now stained with red and pink streaks from the mess splattered on his skin. Scrubbing the bar across his skin frantically, he blinked away the tears that pricked at his eyes, threatening to spill over.

*We were so close.*

The thought slammed into him like a freight train. Ilya's trade to Ottawa had been finalized the week before, not yet announced, but all of the paperwork had been completed. They had celebrated with Shane's parents at their house the night that the final signatures were signed. Yuna had made chicken parmesan for Ilya, and he happily ate four servings, smiling to himself the whole time.

Shane scrubbed at his hands frantically, breaths coming faster and more erratically. As the water washing over his hands finally began to run clear, he reached for the paper towel dispenser on the wall next to him, pulling out a few scratchy towels and hastily drying his hands. He dropped the paper towels in the trash, surveying the mess in the bathroom. He had splattered bloody water all over the sink and counter and a loud sob tore itself out of his throat, followed by another, and then another. His knees hit the ground with a thump, his phone falling out of his pocket and clattering across the tile, the sound echoing in the small, empty room. Looking down at his phone, Shane realized that he had a pile of missed calls and voicemails. With a shaky hand, he reached out, swiping through the list:

09:45 PM

4G

Edit

All

Missed



## Recents



Search



Mom

mobile (1)

09:17 PM



Mom

mobile (2)

09:10 PM



Dad

mobile (1)

09:06 PM



Svetlana Vetrova

mobile (1)

09:01 PM



Hayden

mobile (1)

08:58 PM



Mom

mobile (2)

08:50 PM



Dad

08:47 PM



Favourites



Calls



Contacts

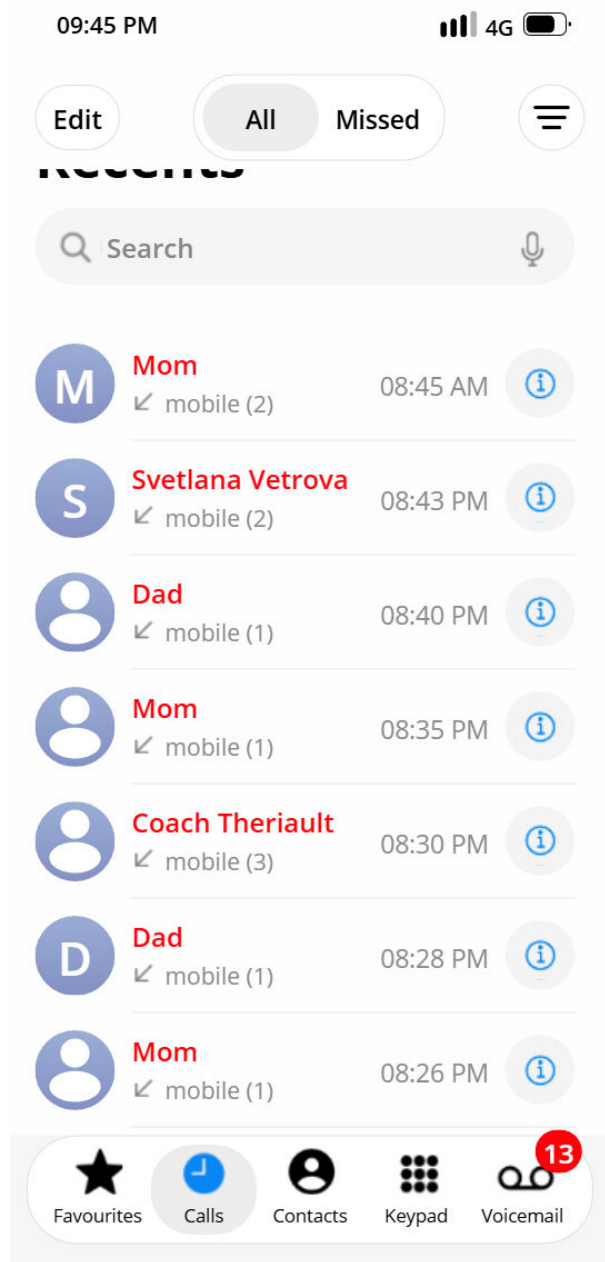


Keypad



Voicemail

13



He hit redial on the last call from his mom, raising the phone to his ear with a shaky hand. She picked up after the first ring, taking in an anxious breath as she answered,

“Shane? Shane, honey are you there?” Shane slumped against the cabinets, resting his head against a wooden door as his mom’s voice filled his ear. “Shane?”

“Here,” he managed to gasp out, voice trembling despite his best efforts.

“Oh honey,” his mom’s voice went softer, “We saw on TV. Where are you? How’s Ilya?”

“I...I don’t know,” Shane rasped, “They took him away when we got here, they wouldn’t let me go with him,” he let out another broken sob at the memory, Ilya’s limp, unconscious body

being wheeled away from him, leaving him standing stunned in the hallway, blood dripping from his hands and uniform.

“What hospital are you at Shane?” his mom’s voice was steady, grounding, and Shane leaned against the wall, pressing the phone tightly to his ear.

“Montreal General,” he managed to croak out, before dissolving into sobs again.

“Shane, oh Shane,” his mom’s voice got even softer and more soothing, “Take a few deep breaths with me. In and out okay?”

He tried to listen, tried to breathe along with her, but how could he breathe when he didn’t know if Ilya still was? The love of his life could be laying dead somewhere in the cold, sterile walls of this hospital and he was supposed to breathe? The buzzing in his ears picked up, his vision swimming with tears as he desperately gasped for breath. He dropped the phone to the floor, clutching at his hair with both hands and pulling as hard as he could. There was a wailing sound filling the room, and he wanted it to stop.

*“Shane! Shane!”* The voice sounded like it was coming from underwater, *“David! We need to go now!”*

The wailing continued, sharp and painful, the sound reverberating through his skull. He clapped his hands over his ears in an attempt to muffle it, but the sound seemingly grew louder, trapped inside of his head.

*“Shane! You need to breathe!”* The voice was talking to him again, familiar, comforting. He tried to listen, tried to take a breath, but his lungs wouldn’t cooperate. The wailing noise was deafening him, making it impossible to think, to breathe. His skin felt too tight, like it was suffocating him, trapping him under a layer of heat that he was desperate to escape. “Shane!”

*That’s mom’s voice.* He finally realized, trying to lock his attention onto the sound.

“Shane, can you hear me?”

“Uh, huh,” he managed, the horrible wailing sound breaking for a moment as he spoke.

“Shane, you need to take a deep breath, you’re going to make yourself hyperventilate like that.”

*Like what? What am I doing?*

“Can you breathe with me?” his mom asked, her voice breaking through the renewed wailing that had returned the second he stopped speaking, “With me Shane, in and out.”

He tried to listen, closing his eyes and focusing on the voice on the phone.

*In. Out. In. Out. In. Out.*

The wailing dissipated as he took in shaky breaths, the silence in the room a blessing to his overstimulated nervous system. Belatedly, he realized that *he* had been making those noises,

the desperate keening tearing its way out of his body without him even realizing it. He focused on his breaths, listening to his mother's voice as he slowly came back down to earth.

"Shane, are you with me?" his mom's voice was gentle, as if she was afraid he would break like a fragile vase if she spoke louder.

"I'm with you," he croaked out, letting out a shaky exhale as he spoke.

"Good, you're doing good Shane," her voice came again, "We're on our way, okay?"

"Okay," he whispered, reaching down to pick up his phone and pressing it to his ear with a trembling hand, "Please hurry."

"We're coming as fast as we can honey," Yuna reassured, "We're about two hours away. Will you be okay until we get there?"

Shane wasn't sure, but he knew that he needed to be. Ilya needed him to be.

"Yes," he managed, "I'll be okay."

"Are you sure?" his mom sounded unconvinced, he was sure that she could hear in his voice how rattled he still was.

"Yes," he said again, "I'll be fine. I need to calm down and go back out to wait for the doctors. He doesn't have anyone else here for him," his voice broke again at the end of his sentence, the reminder of Ilya's reality slamming into him like a freight train.

Shane had family coming for him, his phone was blowing up with notifications from people trying to support him, but Ilya had no one except for him. Well, not no one, he realized suddenly.

*Svetlana.*

She had called him, he remembered seeing her name in the list of notifications he had fumbled through. Ilya had put her number into his phone a few months before, "For emergency," he had said. At the time, Shane had hoped that it would never be necessary, but now he was glad that for once his boyfriend had thought ahead.

"I need to call his friend Svetlana from Russia," Shane continued, rubbing a hand across his forehead, "She called me a little while ago."

"Yes, you should call her," Yuna replied, "She's probably very worried."

Shane nodded, quickly realizing that his mother couldn't see him, "Yes, I will," he said, rubbing a hand across his face to clear his tears.

"Good," his mom's voice was impossibly gentle, "You can call me back afterwards if you need to, okay?"

"Okay," he scrubbed at his face again, "I will if I need to."

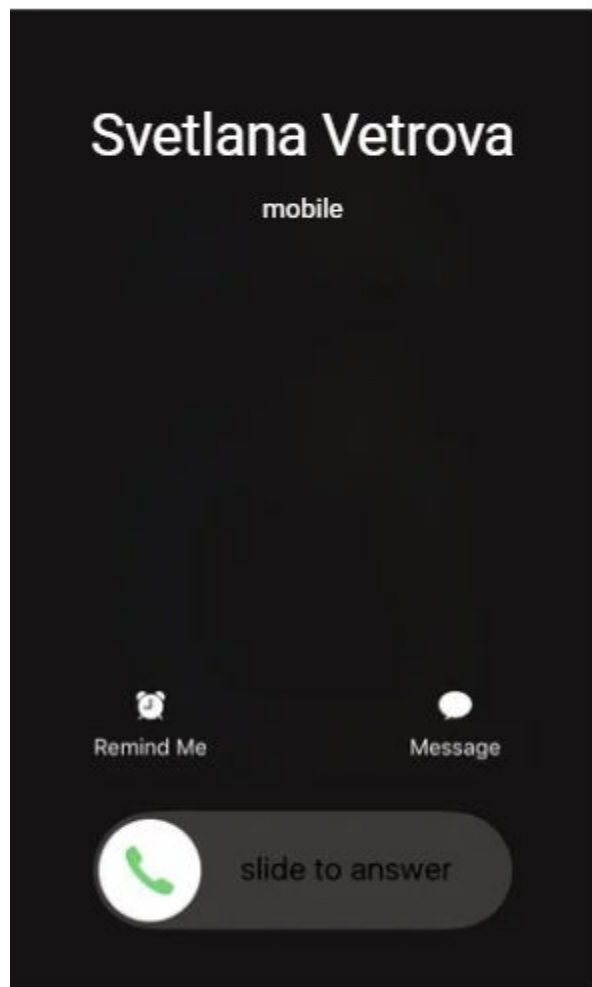
“Alright, sweetheart,” his mom said, “I’ll let you go then, but remember you can call or text me if you need to. Dad and I will be there soon.”

“Thank you,” Shane whimpered, cringing at how pathetic he sounded, “I love you guys.”

“We love you too,” Yuna said gently, “We’ll be there before you know it.”

“We love you Shane!” his dad’s voice came from the phone, sounding a little further away.

“Love you guys,” he repeated, before assuring his parents again that he would be okay and call if he needed anything. Satisfied, they let him hang up, and he stared down at his phone, eyes swimming as the call ended. Distantly, he remembered that he was supposed to be calling Svetlana, but he couldn’t get his hands to move. Before he could try to force himself, his phone rang again, startling him. He looked down at the screen and let out a relieved breath when he saw the name,



Fumbling, he reached down and swiped his finger across the screen, accepting the call.

“Hello?”

“Hello?! Shane Hollander!?” a woman’s voice, accented with the same Russian lilt as Ilya’s, came through the speaker.

“Yes, that’s me, I’m Shane Hollander,” he managed to splutter out.

“*Slava bogu!* I have been going crazy! No one will answer me! I call everyone! Raiders team, all players numbers I know, useless MLH numbers, no one tells me anything! How is he? What hospital? I will come.” The string of words took Shane a moment to parse through, his brain moving more slowly than usual.

“I don’t know much,” he rasped out, “He was alive when we got here, that’s all I know.”

“*Blyat!*” Svetlana swore, and Shane almost laughed, the familiar word that he was used to hearing from Ilya sounded somehow more threatening in her voice, “They won’t tell you anything either?”

“No one has come out to talk to me,” he replied, “They took him back as soon as we got here.”

Svetlana let out a string of angry sounding Russian that Shane couldn’t pick up, before taking a deep breath and mumbling something to herself under her breath.

“Okay,” she said, sounding determined, “I will be there in morning, my flight leaves in two hours.”

“You’re coming?” Shane asked, wincing at the unbridled relief he could hear coming through in his voice. The thought of having a familiar face for Ilya relieved some of the guilt he felt about his parents coming, and he knew that it would be good to have someone to translate the medical speak to Ilya if he woke up.

*When he wakes up*, Shane corrected himself. *When*.

“Yes, of course,” Svetlana said, “Ilyusha is an idiot but I will always come when he needs me,” her voice broke a bit on the end of her sentence, and Shane heard her try to disguise it with a cough.

“He’ll be okay,” he attempted, but it came out far less convincingly than he had wanted it to.

“He will,” Svetlana replied, sounding more certain than Shane felt, “He is stubborn, what you call, hard-head?”

“Yeah, yeah, hard-headed,” Shane responded, a small smile forming on his face in spite of himself, “That’s Ilya.”

Svetlana laughed slightly, “Yes, hard-headed. He has been that way since he was a boy.”

“I don’t doubt that at all,” Shane sighed, his voice wavering a bit despite his best efforts.

“You will text me if anything changes?” Svetlana asked, anxiety creeping back into her voice, “I have to leave for airport soon, but I will turn Wi-Fi on when on the plane just in case.”

“Yes, of course,” Shane promised, “I’ll text you the second I get an update.”

“Thank you,” she let out a breath, “Okay. I go now, have to pack. I will text you when plane leaves.”

“Okay,” Shane replied, “What time is your flight supposed to get in?”

“I think 9 in the morning Montreal time, I am flying from Moscow,” Shane could hear objects rustling in the background as she spoke.

“Are you landing at Montréal–Dorval?” he asked, trying to remember the closest international airport.

“Yes,” she responded, “I will come straight to hospital from there.”

“I’ll have someone come pick you up, just text me your gate when you know what it will be,” Shane said.

“Ah, such a gentleman,” she cooed, “No wonder Ilya is always going on about you.”

Shane felt his cheeks flush at her words, “I hope he keeps it appropriate,” he mumbled, running a hand through his hair.

Svetlana chuckled, “For the most part,” she teased.

“Oh God,” Shane groaned, humiliated.

She laughed, a real, full laugh, the warm, musical sound washing over him as he sat huddled on the cold floor.

“Don’t worry,” she chuckled, “He really does stay appropriate. He is too protective of you to speak about you that way.”

Shane’s heart squeezed in his chest painfully, a lump forming in his throat that he desperately tried to push down.

“That’s good,” he managed to croak out, swallowing hard.

“He loves you very much,” Svetlana said gently, “I am glad that I will finally get to meet the man who makes Ilyusha so happy.”

Traitorous tears slipped down Shane’s cheeks and he brushed them away quickly. He couldn’t afford to dissolve into tears again, not now, not when he had finally gotten himself calmed down.

“I’m glad that I will get to meet you too,” he responded quietly, “Ilya has said so many wonderful things about you.” He left out the fact that he had responded with jealousy to

many of those wonderful things, even if he had bit his tongue repeatedly, not wanting to seem like a possessive girlfriend.

“Well, I am not surprised,” Svetlana said lightly, “There are so many wonderful things to say.”

Shane chuckled, “I’m starting to see why you two get along so well.”

Svetlana laughed again, “Yes, we have much in common I suppose.”

Shane wiped his eyes again, “I’m glad.” He really was glad he realized, the jealousy that he had been expecting did not rise the way that it usually did. Ilya needed another familiar face, and he was suddenly glad that there was someone to fill that role. He also realized that he was desperate to be in the presence of someone who loved Ilya as much as he did, someone who could understand what he was going through.

“Me too,” Svetlana said gently, “I really do need to go now. I will be late to airport if I do not leave soon and if I miss flight I will have to cause international incident.”

“Alright,” Shane replied, clearing his throat, “Let me know what gate you’re landing at as soon as you know and I’ll have a car waiting for you when you land.”

“I will text you as soon as I know,” she promised, “And Shane?”

“Yeah?”

“Thank you,” she took a deep breath, “Not just for the car. Thank you for being there for Ilyusha. I do not know what I would be doing right now if he was alone. I would be going more crazy than I am I think.”

“I wouldn’t want to be anywhere else,” Shane croaked out, more tears rising in his eyes. *Jesus Christ, what is happening to me?* “I’d be going crazy too.”

“I do not doubt that,” Svetlana said quietly, “Take care of yourself Shane, okay? Ilya needs you to do that.”

“I will,” he promised, “I will.”

“Good, now go drink some water and have snack if you can manage. I will be there in morning. Tell Ilyusha I will shout at him for scaring us when I arrive.”

“You can shout for the both of us,” Shane replied, a small smile pulling at the corners of his mouth, “I think he’s more scared of you than he is of me.”

“He should be!” Svetlana chuckled, “After all these years he knows what I am capable of.”

Shane’s lips quirked up a bit more, “Well, I’m glad you’ll be here to whip him into shape.”

Svetlana made a puzzled sound, “I would not whip injured man,” she said, sounding incredulous, “Yell, yes, but whip? No.”

“No, no, it’s just an expression,” Shane hurried to explain, “It means that you’ll make him do what he needs to do.”

She scoffed on the other side of the phone, “You Canadians and your stupid sayings. Makes no sense to me.”

She sounded so much like Ilya that it made Shane’s heart hurt, the little mannerisms that he had only ever seen on his boyfriend that felt foreign, yet familiar on someone else.

“Yeah, Ilya says the same thing,” he replied.

“Because he is smart man, most of the time,” Svetlana said.

“Most of the time,” Shane agreed.

Svetlana made a noise of affirmation, “Okay, this time I actually go, okay? I really cannot miss flight.”

“Yes, of course,” Shane said hurriedly, “Keep me updated on your flight details.”

“I will,” she promised, “Keep me updated on Ilyusha.”

“I will,” he promised back.

“Alright,” Svetlana sighed, “I will be there in morning then. Goodbye, Shane.”

“Goodbye, Svetlana,” he replied. He heard a beep as the phone disconnected and silence filled the bathroom again. Taking a shaky breath, he set his phone on the counter above his head, placed his hands on his knees and wobbled to his feet. Looking at himself in the mirror, he was taken aback by the pale, shocked look on his face. He had dark circles forming under his bloodshot, teary eyes, and his hair was sticking up wildly in every direction from his nervous fingers. He was still wearing his home jersey, the dark blue fabric stained with splashes of Ilya’s blood. Briefly, he considered trying to scrub the stains away, but the fabric was already drying and he knew it would be no use. Lifting the jersey, he peeked at his undershirt, his heart twisting at the bright red stains that littered the white fabric. The undershirt was even more wrecked, the light fabric doing less to disguise the blood than his dark uniform. He decided to leave it on for now, rather than showing off the more obvious stains.

Taking note of the puddles of water and blood that he had yet to clean up, he hastily pulled another pile of paper towels out of the dispenser, using them to mop up the mess that he had left on the counter and the floor. Before he left the bathroom he splashed some water on his face, attempting to clear his stunned expression to little success. He used his wet hands to try and smooth his hair a bit, sighing when most of it popped straight back up again. He wiped his hands dry on his uniform pants, took a deep breath, and opened the bathroom door.

The chatter of the hospital spilled into the room as the door opened, and Shane braced himself, gritting his teeth against the sudden barrage of sound. He stumbled back out to the waiting room, ignoring the startled looks that he received from an elderly couple sitting in the

corner. He collapsed into a chair, letting his head fall back against the wall. There was a TV in the corner, playing some game show, and the noise was not helping the pounding in his head. He closed his eyes, trying to focus on deep breathing, pushing down thoughts of the ice, blade meeting skin, blood spurting like a fountain.

*Fuck.*

----

He wasn't sure how long he sat there waiting, it could have been ten minutes or two hours. Time was blurring around him, his mind fixated solely on Ilya's fate. The hospital was cold and his jersey wasn't doing much to keep him warm; usually on the ice he was moving around enough that it didn't matter, but sitting here he found himself shivering, whether from the shock or from the cold, he wasn't sure.

"Shane Hollander?" a woman's voice rang out across the room, and Shane's head snapped up, searching for the source. His eyes landed on a short, middle-aged woman in a long, white coat, wearing a name badge and a stethoscope looped around her neck. She made eye contact with him and he sprung out of his chair, taking a step towards her.

"Me, I'm him. I'm Shane Hollander," he managed to stammer out, swallowing hard.

She gave him a gentle smile, reaching out her right hand to shake his, "My name is Dr. Fortin, I've been in charge of Mr. Rozanov's care this evening."

"Ilya?" Shane choked out, "How is he?"

"He is stable," Dr. Fortin responded, and Shane felt all of the air in his body leave in a rush. His knees wobbled and Dr. Fortin reached out to steady him, an alarmed look on her face, "Sir?" she asked.

"I'm okay," he croaked, blinking hard to clear the spots from his vision, "He's alive?"

"Yes," the doctor responded, guiding him gently backwards until he felt the back of his knees hit the chair behind him, "Why don't you take a seat."

He collapsed into the chair, swallowing hard and drawing in a few gasping breaths to center himself.

"He's alive," he repeated, some wild part of his brain afraid that he had heard her wrong.

"Yes," Dr. Fortin said again, "He is alive and he is stable."

Shane let out a sob, dropping his head into his hands. He felt the doctor sit down next to him, placing a gentle hand on his back, "You were the one who rode with him in the ambulance weren't you?"

He nodded into his palms, unable to lift his head or open his mouth to speak.

Dr. Fortin continued, “You did everything right. He lost a lot of blood, but your actions bought us the time that we needed to save his life.”

Shane exhaled shakily, “How much time?” he asked. A large part of him was afraid to hear the answer, but the rest of him needed to know.

“I’d say you got him here with minutes to spare,” Dr. Fortin said gently, and Shane felt all of the oxygen leave the room.

*Minutes.*

*Ilya had been minutes from death.*

*What if I hadn’t moved fast enough?*

*What if I hadn’t squeezed as hard as I did?*

*What if I hadn’t been able to find the artery?*

He could feel his breaths coming faster again, and he gasped, desperately seeking air.

“Sir!”

He felt a hand on his back, rubbing soothing circles across his skin and he tried to focus on the sensation, attempting to draw, deep, slow breaths into his lungs.

“Good, just like that, deep breaths,” the doctor’s voice said softly, and Shane nodded, trying to blink away fresh tears that had sprung to his eyes.

“I’m alright, I’m okay,” he managed to croak out, his breathing stabilizing a bit, “Sorry.”

“There’s no need to apologize,” Dr. Fortin said, “You’ve been through a harrowing experience today.”

Shane nodded, letting out a slow exhale. “But he’s going to be okay, right?” he asked.

Dr. Fortin gave him a soft smile, “He’s stable right now. He lost a lot of blood from a severed carotid artery, but we were able to stop the bleeding in surgery. I repaired the wound in the OR, he has about 300 stitches, both internal and external, but the bleeding has stopped. He got blood transfusions in the OR, and we’re giving him another bag right now, but he is awake and stable.”

Shane nodded again, his brain racing to process all of the information: surgery, carotid artery, 300 stitches, blood transfusion, *awake*.

“Can I see him?” he croaked, looking up desperately at the doctor.

She nodded, giving him a smile, “Yes, I’ll have someone come out in a few minutes to take you back to him. He’s in the ICU right now, but he can have one visitor at a time. You’re listed as one of his emergency contacts, correct?”

Shane nodded, affirming. They had put each other as emergency contacts in their phones a few months after they made things official. Ilya had recounted his experience after Shane's hit from Marlow, how afraid he had been that he wouldn't be let back to see Shane in the hospital, and how he had only been allowed because the receptionist recognized him as a rival captain. The look in Ilya's eyes as he recounted the story had twisted Shane's heart, and he had suggested the emergency contact idea without a second thought. Normally, they wouldn't be so reckless, but Shane knew that medical professionals were sworn to patient confidentiality, and the thought of being kept from Ilya or Ilya being kept from him had been enough to lay aside any fears about the idea. Now he was grateful that they had made the choice, as minor as it might have seemed to anyone else. It had been a big step in their relationship, one that Shane had hoped would never be necessary, but now that it was, he was sure that they had made the right decision.

"Good, then there won't be any trouble getting you back there," Dr. Fortin responded, confirming Shane's thought process.

He nodded again, afraid that he would burst into tears if he attempted to speak.

"A nurse will be out in a few minutes to take you back," the doctor said, standing up and placing a hand on his shoulder, "You did everything right today Mr. Hollander, remember that."

Shane looked up at her, "Thank you," he managed, fighting back the swell of tears that was threatening to overflow. She gave him another smile before turning and walking back down the hallway, leaving him alone with his thoughts and the elderly couple in the corner. He stayed there, staring at the floor until the nurse came into the waiting room.

"Shane Hollander?" she called, searching the room with her eyes.

Shane stood up, raising his hand and she nodded towards him, giving him a smile as he approached, "Shane Hollander?" she asked again.

"Yes, that's me," he replied, rocking anxiously on the balls of his socked feet.

"You're here for Ilya Rozanov?" she asked, looking down at the pile of papers attached to the clipboard in her arms. Shane nodded quickly and she grinned up at him, "Well let's go then," she said, waving her arm for him to follow, "He's been asking for you."

## Chapter End Notes

Please excuse any medical inaccuracies in this chapter, I am not a medical professional. I tried to research and make it as accurate as possible based on that research, but again, I don't have a medical background, so my research is likely sub-par at best. I figure most people probably aren't reading for medical accuracy but I wanted to make a note of that anyway haha.

Thank you so much for reading! Please let me know what you think, I really appreciate all of the feedback that I've gotten so far, it really motivated me to finish this piece when I wasn't feeling well! Thank you again and chapter three should be out by tonight!

Also, I do not speak Russian, so any Russian words that Svetlana uses are being translated using Russian language learning websites and articles about Russian swear words. If you speak Russian, please feel free to correct any mistakes!

Russian translations:

Slava bogu! - translation: "Thank God", used as expression of relief, similar to how it is used in English.

Blyat! - literal translation: "Whore", used similarly to how "fuck" is used as an expression of frustration in English.

## Chapter 3: as long as you're with me

### Chapter Summary

“Ilya,” he whispered, freezing with one hand still on the curtain. Ilya was laying in the bed, covered in blankets and sheets, practically smothered in a vast field of fabric. His face was still starkly pale against the white bedsheets, almost blending in if not for his darkened curls and the watery blue of his irises. His normally pink, plump lips were shriveled and dry, slightly cracked, and pale, almost the same color as the rest of his face. His tired, bloodshot eyes lit up as he saw Shane standing there.

“Moya lyubov,” he rasped, lifting a hand up to Shane with a small smile on his face. Shane felt the floor drop out from underneath him, everything else in the room disappearing as his gaze focused on the bed at the center of the room. His heart seemed to stop in his chest before picking up again at double-pace, pounding frantically beneath his ribs. Ilya frowned slightly, reaching his hand out more insistently, “Solnyshko, come here.”

### Chapter Notes

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

Shane followed the nurse down the winding hallways of the hospital, her shoes clicking against the tile as he padded along in his socked feet. He tried to focus on breathing as they walked, drawing in slow inhales and pushing out long exhales, attempting to slow his racing heart. As they approached a set of double doors, Shane noticed the words ‘*Intensive Care Unit*’ spelled out across the top of the doorframe. His heart skipped a beat, and he swallowed hard, trying to ground himself in the moment. Ilya was behind those doors, laying in a bed somewhere down the long hallway, waiting for him.

The nurse lifted a keycard to the pad beside the door, pressing it briefly against the electronic box and pulling back when it beeped. Shane heard the lock click and the nurse reached for the handle, pulling the door open and stepping through. She looked back over her shoulder to where he stood, frozen in the hallway.

“Sir?” she asked, giving him what he thought was supposed to be a reassuring smile. He appreciated the effort, but he wasn’t sure that any smile other than Ilya’s could reassure him right now.

He shook his head, jolting himself out of his daze, “Yes, sorry,” he mumbled, stepping forward and following her through the doorframe. She stepped aside to let him in, letting the door swing closed with a slam behind them that made him jump.

“Oops, sorry about that,” she said, giving him another smile, “It’s always louder than I mean it to be.”

“It’s okay,” Shane responded, attempting a smile back at her, “I’m a little jumpy today.”

“Totally understandable,” the nurse rushed to assure him, “You’ve had a very rough day.”

Shane nodded. Rough was one way to put it.

“Speaking of which,” the nurse continued, “Do you want me to get you something to cover that up?” she gestured towards his jersey.

Shane looked down, confused, until he remembered the blood, “Oh! Yeah, that would be great,” he responded, “I would take it off, but the undershirt is even worse.”

“No problem,” the nurse replied with a flap of her hand, “I can scrounge something up, I’m sure.”

“Thank you,” Shane said, hoping that the gratitude he felt was being expressed in his tone, “I’d really appreciate that.”

“For sure!” she said brightly, “Do you want to wait a second while I look?”

“Um, I’d really like to see him first, if that’s okay?” Shane stammered out, his heart picking up pace at the threat of being kept from Ilya’s side even longer.

“Of course,” the nurse reassured, “I’m sure you’re anxious to check in on him,” she motioned with her arm for Shane to follow her, “This way, just down this hallway.”

Shane followed her past several half-open doors, trying to avert his eyes when he caught glimpses of people lying on the beds, tubes and wires attached to their unmoving bodies. He felt his heart creeping up his throat again, fear rising as they continued walking. The nurse slowed to a stop in front of a closed door, Shane’s eyes locking onto the handwritten name plate beneath the room number: ‘*I. Rozanov*’. His heart leapt, and he had to reach for the wall to stabilize himself, hoping that the nurse wouldn’t notice. Thankfully, she didn’t seem to, giving him a smile and reaching for the door handle, “Right in here,” she said gently, cracking open the door and poking her head in.

“Mr. Rozanov,” Shane heard her call out in a musical tone, “You have a visitor here!” she pulled back from the door, gesturing for him to step inside, “I’ll go grab you something to cover that up with,” she said, pointing to his jersey. Shane nodded in appreciation, mouthing a silent ‘*thank you*’ in her direction, his voice seeming to have left him.

The nurse stepped back from the door, leaving room for Shane to walk past her, and he stepped forward with one shaky leg, pausing in the doorframe and taking a deep breath. His view of the room was slightly obscured by a half-pulled privacy curtain, but he could see the foot of the bed, and a pair of legs laying beneath the sheets.

“I’ll be back in a few,” the nurse’s voice came from behind him, and then he heard her footsteps clicking down the hall, leaving him alone. Slowly, he stepped through the door,

letting it swing closed behind him. He walked forward, using one hand to brush the curtain aside, taking in a sharp inhale as he finally laid eyes on the love of his life.

“Ilya,” he whispered, freezing with one hand still on the curtain. Ilya was laying in the bed, covered in blankets and sheets, practically smothered in a vast field of fabric. His face was still starkly pale against the white bedsheets, almost blending in if not for his darkened curls and the watery blue of his irises. His normally pink, plump lips were shriveled and dry, slightly cracked, and pale, almost the same color as the rest of his face. His tired, bloodshot eyes lit up as he saw Shane standing there.

“*Moya lyubov*,” he rasped, lifting a hand up to Shane with a small smile on his face. Shane felt the floor drop out from underneath him, everything else in the room disappearing as his gaze focused on the bed at the center of the room. His heart seemed to stop in his chest before picking up again at double-pace, pounding frantically beneath his ribs. Ilya frowned slightly, reaching his hand out more insistently, “*Solnyshko*, come here.”

The words jolted through Shane’s shell-shocked brain and he managed to get his legs to work, stumbling towards the bed. Knees shaking, he stepped forward, not daring to look away, afraid that Ilya would vanish if he blinked. He slid his hand into Ilya’s outstretched one, and felt the iron band around his heart loosen slightly at the contact.

“Breathe,” Ilya whispered, rubbing his thumb across Shane’s knuckles, “Breathe, *moya lyubov*.”

Shane hadn’t realized he wasn’t breathing, but Ilya’s words brought the burning in his chest to his attention. He took in a gasping, shaky inhale, stumbling further towards the bed, his free hand landing on the bedrail. He stared down at Ilya, taking in his matted curls, the oxygen cannula strung beneath his nose, his bloodshot eyes, sparkling gently with unshed tears. He was still *so* pale, unbelievably pale, so pale that Shane almost would have doubted he was even alive if not for the gentle finger running across the bumps of his knuckles.

His face was cleared of blood, which Shane was thankful for, he had seen enough blood to last a lifetime. A thick, white bandage was wrapped around his neck, plastered to his skin, hiding the wound from sight. Shane swallowed, staring down at the bandage, his mind flashing back to the ice: the blood, the jagged, torn skin, the screams of the crowd, the look in Ilya’s eyes, the way his flesh had felt around Shane’s fingers, the feeling of the love of his life slipping away in his hands.

“Are you okay?” he managed to force out, cringing at how stupid the question sounded as soon as it left his lips. Of course he wasn’t *okay*, he was lying in a hospital bed getting a blood transfusion. “Are you in any pain?” he tried again.

Ilya shook his head, smiling up at Shane with a dopey smile, “Nope,” he hummed, popping the ‘p’ sound dramatically, “Feel great.”

“Good,” Shane whispered, giving Ilya’s hand a gentle squeeze, “I’m glad.”

“You are okay?” Ilya asked, and Shane nodded, Ilya was looking up at him with his brows furrowed, concern apparent in his eyes. Shane tried to give him a reassuring smile, but Ilya’s

eyes swept down his chest and then widened. He let out a hoarse gasp, moving to sit up, "You are hurt?" he croaked, his eyes darting across Shane's body, looking for injuries.

With a start, Shane realized that he was still wearing his jersey, drenched down to his undershirt in Ilya's blood. The dark blue fabric had been stained nearly black with the amount of fluid covering it, splattering in sickening streams that ran down his chest towards his thighs.

"No, no, I'm not hurt my love," Shane said quickly, reaching out with his free hand to gently press Ilya back against the pillows, "I'm okay."

"But..." Ilya looked down at the blood again, still cataloging Shane's body with his eyes, searching for any sign that his boyfriend wasn't telling the truth.

"I promise," Shane replied, "I'm okay. It's not my blood."

Ilya looked up at him, confusion spread across his face, "Not your blood?" he repeated, furrowing his brow.

"No, it's not mine. I'm okay. I promise," Shane gave him a pleading look, squeezing his hand gently, "I promise."

Realization seemed to dawn on Ilya, and he sank further into the pillows, his eyes shooting back up to Shane's face, "Is mine?" he croaked out, his voice shaking.

Shane nodded, trying to scrunch the jersey forward to cover the bulk of the blood. *I should've just taken the nurse's offer and changed first*, he thought, *stupid*.

"I'm okay," Shane promised again, pressing his hand firmly into Ilya's, "I'm sorry. I should've changed first."

Ilya shook his head, looking back up to meet Shane's eyes, "Is okay," he croaked, "I wanted you here."

"I'm here," he whispered, leaning down to press a kiss to his boyfriend's damp forehead, "I'm right here." Ilya sniffled, and Shane pulled back to see tears forming in his eyes. "What's wrong baby?" he asked frantically, "Did I hurt you? Let me get the nurse."

"No," Ilya whined, reaching out to stop the hand that was reaching for the remote, "No call. I'm fine. Just happy to see you."

"Oh, Ilya," Shane murmured, leaning back down to brush his hand through Ilya's curls, "I'm happy to see you too."

"Was scary without you," Ilya cried, and saw the tears start to slip down his cheeks, "I woke up and didn't understand what anyone was saying. Words were too much," he gestured at his head in frustration, "I keep asking for you and they say 'Not yet', 'Not yet'. I think they say 'nyet'. I think they are not going to let you come to me," he started to cry harder, and Shane reached forward, desperately, trying to comfort him.

“Shane,” Ilya whispered, and Shane felt a gentle hand come up to cup the back of his head, “Come here *moya lyubov*.” The hand gently tugged his head forward, but Shane resisted, pulling backwards and looking up to meet Ilya’s gaze.

“I don't want to hurt you,” he whispered, furrowing his brows in concern.

“You won’t,” Ilya insisted, pulling his head down again, “Just rest your head with me for a minute.”

Shane allowed himself to be tugged forward, his head collapsing onto the pillow on the right side of Ilya’s face. Gently, he raised his left arm, cradling it around the other side of his boyfriend’s head, careful not to put any pressure on the bandage beneath his chin. His fingers landed in damp curls and the strands of hair between his digits, gently rubbing the scalp beneath. He turned his head to the side, pressing gentle kisses along Ilya’s cheeks and temple, up into his hairline, trying to ignore how cool his skin was to the touch, the taller man letting out a pleased hum at the attention. Shane allowed himself to be held there, ignoring the uncomfortable pinch in his back from being curled over the bed in such an awkward position. He would deal with it forever if it meant that he could be close to Ilya, somewhere he had been afraid he would never be again.

“Did I scare you?” Ilya rasped, voice hoarse and painful.

“It’s okay,” Shane whispered, “Don’t worry about me, okay?”

“I’m sorry,” Ilya croaked, opening his teary eyes to meet Shane’s, “You look scared.”

“I was scared,” Shane admitted, “But I’m okay now, okay?” he gave Ilya the best smile he could manage, ignoring the thundering of his heartbeat and the breathlessness that still held a vice grip on his chest.

“I’m sorry,” Ilya whispered again, blinking up at him.

“Stop saying sorry, baby,” he murmured, leaning in to press a gentle kiss to Ilya’s forehead, “There’s nothing to be sorry for, okay?”

Ilya hummed noncommittally, more focused on the affection being lavished on him, “Okay,” he whispered, eyes closed.

“Good,” Shane said, pressing another kiss, this time to one of Ilya’s eyebrows, “Then that’s settled.”

“Mhm,” Ilya murmured, opening his eyes blearily to gaze up at Shane, “You stay?” he whispered, reaching out a hand to grasp for his boyfriend.

“I’ll stay as long as they let me,” Shane promised, grabbing the outstretched hand between both of his, “I promise.”

“Good,” Ilya nodded, eyes sliding shut again.

“Are you tired?” Shane asked nervously, letting go with one hand to reach up and brush the curls away from the other man’s forehead.

“Very,” Ilya mumbled, not bothering to open his eyes, “They said drugs will make me sleepy.”

“Okay,” Shane murmured, despite his nerves, “Then just close your eyes, I’ll be right here when you wake up.”

“Good,” Ilya whispered again, eyes still shut, “I will be much happier that way.”

Shane continued to brush his fingers through his boyfriend’s damp curls, watching as his face relaxed and his breathing grew deeper and steadier, slowly drifting to sleep. His anxiety kicked up again at the sight of Ilya’s slack face, too similar to the way it had been in the ambulance. Before he could stop himself, he leaned down and pressed a kiss to Ilya’s cheek, the tension in his chest loosening a bit at the pleased hum his boyfriend let out when his lips contacted his skin. That was different than the ambulance. That was enough to keep Shane from spiraling completely. He stared down at the sleeping figure on the bed, lost in thought until he heard the door open behind him. He turned with a start, relaxing when he realized it was the nurse from earlier.

“I found you this,” she said, holding a folded piece of light blue fabric in her hands, “I can’t promise it’ll fit perfectly, but at least it’s clean.”

“Thank you,” Shane said, turning to take the clothes from her, “I really appreciate it, I know you have more important things to do.”

“It was no trouble,” she said with a smile, “I figure getting you out of those clothes will be good for you, but also for him, so it’s still important.”

Shane nodded, unconvinced, but grateful that she was being so nice about it.

“Is there somewhere I can?” he pantomimed lifting his shirt over his head.

“Oh! Yes, in there,” the nurse pointed towards a closed door in the corner of the room, “That’s the bathroom, feel free to change in there.”

“Perfect, thank you,” Shane said, turning towards the door, “I really appreciate it, nurse uh...” he squinted at her name badge.

“Penny,” she said with a smile, “My name is Penny.”

“Thank you Penny,” Shane repeated, returning her smile, “You’ve been great.”

“No problem!” she replied, “I’ll be around for a while longer yet, my shift doesn’t end until 5:00 and I’m Mr. Rozanov’s assigned nurse tonight, so you’ll see me around.”

“Thank you,” Shane said again, moving towards the bathroom door before another thought occurred to him, “Wait,” he called out as Penny started to turn to leave, “Am I going to have to leave soon? You know, visiting hours?”

She shook her head, “No, ICU patients at this hospital are permitted one person to stay with them 24 hours a day. We’ve seen that it brings a lot of comfort to them and helps them heal faster. The ICU can be a scary place and a familiar face can be a huge comfort. If more people want to visit, they can come starting at 8am tomorrow. We allow two additional visitors at a time from 8-8.”

Shane nodded, feeling the anxious knot in his chest loosening a bit more. He wouldn’t have to leave, wouldn’t have to be apart from Ilya again. One more thought occurred to him,

“Is it okay that he’s so tired?” he asked nervously, “He only managed to stay awake and talking to me for about five minutes.”

Penny nodded, “Perfectly normal,” she said, “He’s been through a huge ordeal today, and he’s still a little drugged up on post-surgical meds. He’ll probably be a bit more alert tomorrow, but don’t be alarmed if he sleeps through most of the night tonight. We’ll be coming in to check on him regularly, but if you see anything concerning, you can hit the call button on his remote, okay?”

“Okay,” Shane said, nodding again. He could follow instructions, he was good at that. As Penny turned to leave, he called after her again, “Thank you so much!”

“You’re welcome,” she turned over her shoulder to give him a smile, “Try and get some rest yourself as well, you’ve been through an ordeal too.”

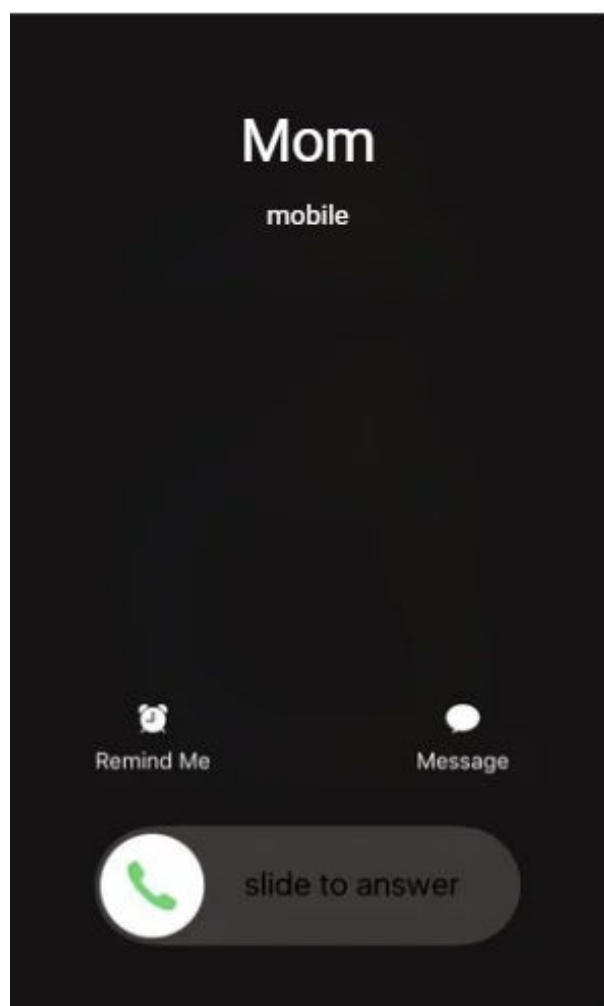
“I’ll try,” Shane promised. He wasn’t sure how much sleep he would actually manage to get, but he could at least try. Penny nodded at him and left the room, closing the door softly behind her.

With another look towards the bed, Shane made his way into the bathroom keeping the door cracked a few inches so he could hear anything happening in the room. Quickly, he stripped his jersey off, ignoring the metallic scent of blood as he pulled the cloth over his head and dropped it onto the floor. He would have to throw that one out, he had plenty of others, and he didn’t think OxyClean was going to cut it on those stains. With a sigh, he reached for the hem of his undershirt, wincing as the skin-tight fabric clung to his body, sticky with dried blood. He tugged upwards, trying to ignore the feeling of the blood soaked shirt unsticking itself from his skin. Once the undershirt was off, he dropped it on the floor beside his jersey and took in his reflection in the mirror.

His hair was still wild, his eyes still wide and exhausted looking. With his uniform gone, all that remained of the blood was faint stains on his chest and stomach, rings of faint pink that had soaked through his undershirt and into his skin. With a sigh, he reached for the sink, turning it on and wetting his hands, wincing at the cold water as he brought it up towards his chest. He shivered as it hit his skin, scrubbing with his palms to loosen the stains. The stains on his chest and stomach came away more easily than the ones on his hands had, the less concentrated blood washing away with the water. His skin looked clean, but he knew that he needed more than just water to be actually clean, so he reached for the bar of soap on the counter, unwrapping it and rubbing it between his wet hands to lather them. After he had scrubbed away any remaining pathogens on his skin, he dried himself with a scratchy, white towel and reached for the shirt that Penny had brought him.

As he unfolded it, he saw that it was a large scrub shirt, probably pulled from a staff locker somewhere. He made a note to get Penny a gift card for coffee or something -*nurses like caffeine right?*- as he pulled it over his head. Feeling cleaner than he had since he arrived at the hospital, he picked up his dirty uniform from the floor, crumpling the two shirts into a tight ball, hiding the bloodstains, and carrying them out of the bathroom with him.

Ilya was still sound asleep when he exited the bathroom, his monitors beeping steadily, his heartbeat still tracing a mountainous line across the screen. Shane stood there for a few minutes, just watching the monitor as it measured his boyfriend's heart, ready to leap for the call button at the first sign of anything amiss. After several uneventful minutes, he felt calm enough to approach the bed, lowering himself into a chair near one of the rails, stuffing his dirty clothes into a corner behind the chair. He sat there, eyes locked on Ilya's face until the ringing of his phone broke him out of his trance. He looked down to his lap and saw his phone lighting up with an incoming call:



He reached down and grabbed his phone, swiping across the screen to accept the call and bringing the device up to his ear.

“Mom?”

“Shane!” his mom let out a relieved sigh, “Are you okay? We’re fifteen minutes away.”

“I’m okay,” he whispered, trying to keep his voice down and avoid waking Ilya, “I’m in Ilya’s room.”

He heard his mom let out a breath in a whoosh, “He’s alive?” she croaked out, her voice beginning to shake.

Tears returned to his eyes and he rubbed them frantically with the back of his hand, “Yeah, yeah mom he is.”

“Oh thank God,” she exclaimed, “Oh, Shane, sweetheart, how is he?”

“He’s doing okay,” Shane croaked, “He’s stable. He’s a little drugged up still, but he talked to me for a few minutes when I came in and he’s sleeping peacefully right now.”

“That’s good,” his mom sighed, “That’s very good. And the doctors are optimistic?”

“It seems like it,” he replied, rubbing his forehead, “They seem to think he’ll pull through fine.” He could hear his mom relaying the information to someone on the other end of the phone, his dad, Shane assumed.

His mom’s voice returned, “That’s great news Shane,” she said, sounding calmer, “We’re 12 minutes away, so we’ll be there soon, okay?”

“Okay,” he said, “They’re not going to let you in right now, visiting hours don’t start until eight.”

Yuna scoffed, and Shane could picture her waving a hand dismissively as she spoke, “I don’t care,” she said, “We’re coming anyway. We’ll sleep in the waiting room.”

“Mom,” Shane protested, “You can’t do that, Dad’s back would hate him in the morning.”

“He’ll be fine,” she insisted, “We want to be there with you.”

“I’m planning on staying in Ilya’s room tonight and I don’t want to leave him. He’s allowed to have one visitor 24 hours a day, and I promised him I’d be here when he woke up.”

“That’s fine,” Yuna replied, “You can stay in the room and we’ll stay in the waiting room.”

Shane sighed, “Mom...”

“No, Shane,” she said firmly, “I need to make sure you’re okay.”

“I’m fine mom,” he pleaded, “Just please, get a hotel for tonight, and you guys can come and visit in the morning.”

“Not without checking on you first,” Yuna insisted, and Shane could tell from the tone in her voice that there was no point in arguing with her.

“Fine,” he groaned, rubbing his temple with a tense hand, “You can come and check on me first, *then* will you get a hotel?”

“We’ll think about it.”

He groaned again, “Mom...” he started, but she interrupted him again,

“We’ll think about it Shane. I just need to see you first.”

“Okay, fine,” he agreed, “I know you’re not going to get any sleep tonight anyway unless I let you.”

“That’s right,” she said, and Shane knew that she was nodding determinedly, “We’re 10 minutes away, will you come down and meet us in the waiting room?”

“Yeah,” Shane croaked out, “But only for a minute, I need to be here when he wakes up again. I promised.”

“Okay,” Yuna said softly, “We’ll see you soon Shane. I love you.”

*“I love you!”* he heard his dad call distantly.

“I love you too,” he replied, “See you in a minute.”

As he hung up the phone, he looked at Ilya and sighed,

“I won’t be gone long my love,” he whispered, bending down to press a gentle kiss to his forehead, “I promise.” Ilya didn’t stir, just let out a contented breath in his sleep at the contact to his skin.

Reluctantly, he stepped back, keeping his eyes fixed on Ilya the whole way out the door. He made his way down the hallway, padding softly across the cold floor in his socks, avoiding glances into the other rooms as he passed. He reached the double doors leading out of the ICU and stopped, remembering that he needed a key-card to get in. Turning around, he spotted a desk with a few nurses sitting behind it, typing rapidly on their computers. He cleared his throat as he approached, not wanting to startle any of them. One nurse, a young man with bright red hair and wire-framed glasses looked up at him as he approached and gave a polite smile,

“How can I help you sir?” he asked.

“Uh, I need to go down to the waiting area to meet with my parents quickly, will I be able to get back in here?”

The nurse nodded, “For sure man, just press the little red button on the left side of the door and I’ll buzz you in.”

“Okay, thank you,” Shane nodded, relieved that the process was relatively simple, “I’ll only be gone for a few minutes, but if he wakes up, can you tell him that I’ll be right back?”

The nurse smiled at him again, softer this time, “Absolutely,” he said, “I’m sure it’ll be fine, he’ll probably be asleep for a while yet. The hockey player, right?”

Shane nodded, “Yeah, yeah, that’s him. Thank you”

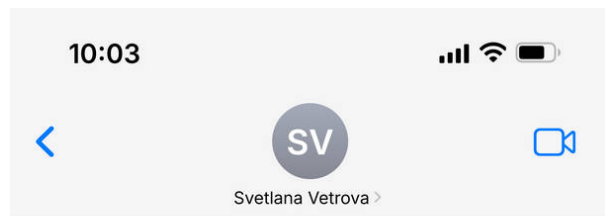
The nurse nodded back at him, “No problem man, don’t worry, he’ll be okay if you step out for a bit.”

“Thanks,” he said again, stepping towards the door, “I’ll be back in just a minute.”

“No worries!” the nurse called after him, and Shane gave him a nod and a wave of acknowledgement as he stepped out the double doors. As he made his way to the waiting room, he suddenly remembered Svetlana.

*Fuck! He thought. I promised I’d text as soon as I knew anything.*

Fumbling for his phone, he quickly unlocked it and opened his messaging app, opening a new conversation and typing ‘Svetlana’ into the search bar. He clicked on her name as soon as it appeared and began typing:



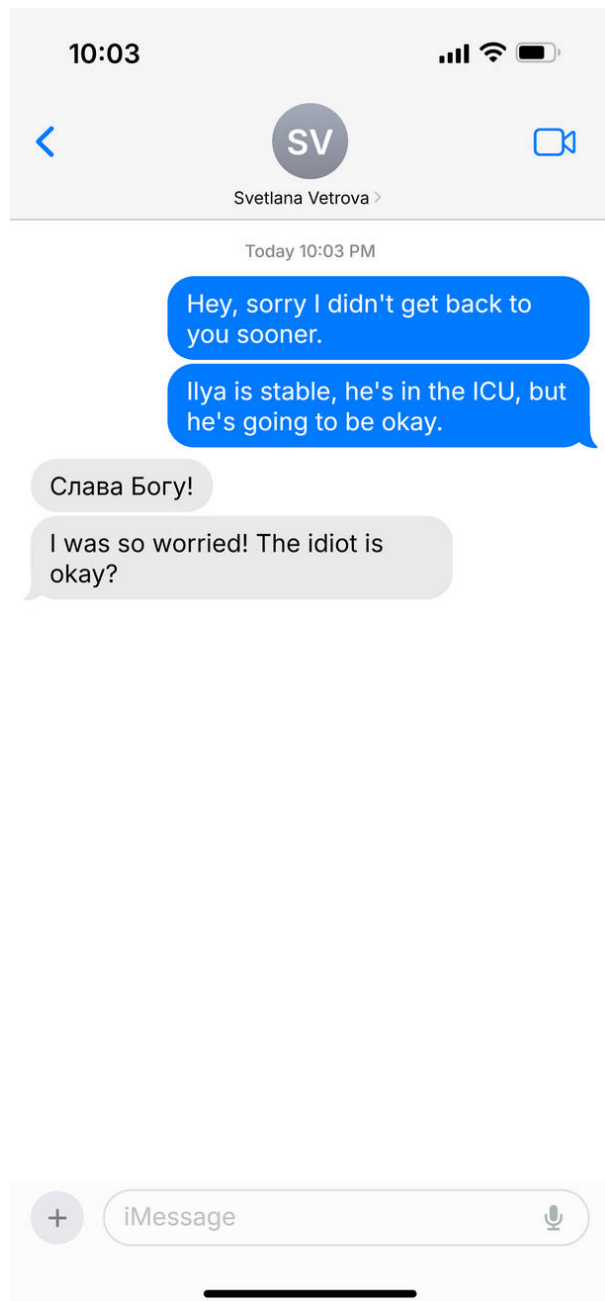
Today 10:03 PM

Hey, sorry I didn't get back to you sooner.

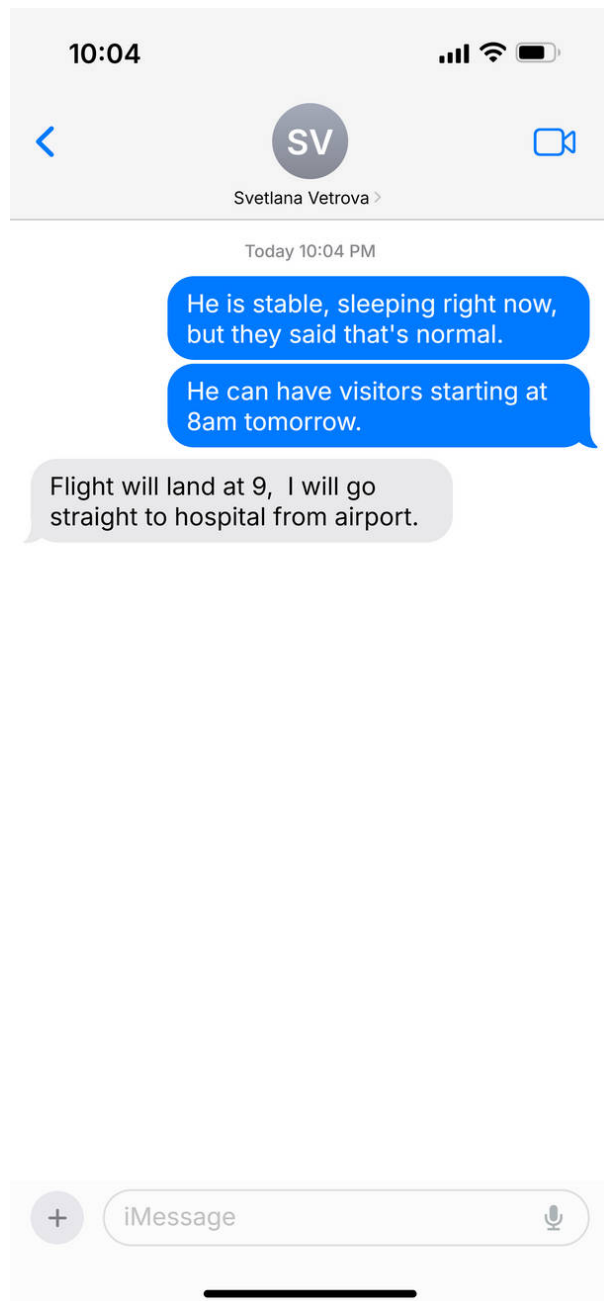
Ilya is stable, he's in the ICU, but he's going to be okay.



He had barely hit send when he saw the bubble pop up in the lower left-hand corner of his screen, indicating that Svetlana was typing. His phone buzzed as her message came through:



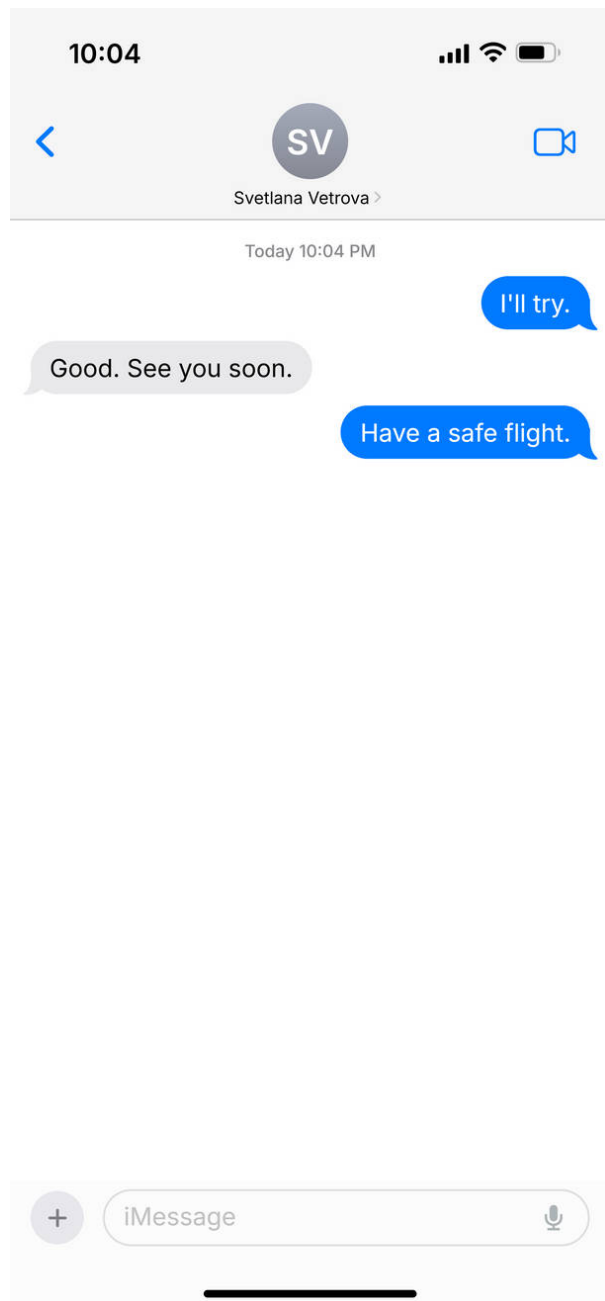
Shane scoffed lightly, a hint of a smile on his face as his fingers flew across the screen:



Shane wanted to tell her that she should probably rest after such a long intercontinental flight, but he knew it was no use. He certainly wouldn't be resting if it was him who was rushing across the world to see Ilya.



Shane scoffed again, but he knew she was right. He could picture the look on Ilya's face if he noticed his exhaustion.



He stared down at his phone in silence until a cry of his name broke his concentration.

“Shane!”

Looking up, he saw his parents racing down the hallway towards him. Yuna was running in the front, arms outstretched towards her son, David following closely behind, weighed down with multiple bags. Shane stepped forward as they approached, colliding with his mother and collapsing into her arms, sobs taking over once again.

“Oh Shane,” she murmured, pressing kisses to the top of his head, “We’re here baby, we’re here.”

He felt his father’s presence behind him, a solid hand coming to rest on the crown of his head, rubbing gentle circles.

“Let it out kid,” he murmured, “We’ve got you.”

Shane cried harder, tears streaming down his face and blinding him as he tried to speak. His knees began to buckle and he slid towards the ground, taking his mom with him, only caught by his dad’s hands gently lowering them towards the floor. He knelt on the cold tile, Yuna wrapping her arms around him tightly and whispering soothing things into his ear. His dad stood behind them, shielding them from view and gently running his fingers through Shane’s hair. He cried until he finally ran out of tears, sniffing aggressively to stop his running nose from ruining his mother’s sweater.

“I was a few feet away when it happened,” he sobbed, “I saw it. I saw the blood and I just moved. I don’t know how I did it but I just knew I had to stop it. I stuck my hand into his neck and pinched the artery off until the ambulance got to the hospital.”

“Oh Shane,” his mom whispered, pressing a kiss to the top of his head, “My sweet boy.”

“I thought he was going to die,” he wailed, “I thought I wasn’t fast enough and he was going to die right in front of me, and no one would ever know how much he meant to me.”

“Can you take a couple of deep breaths?” he heard his mom ask, and he nodded, taking a few slow inhales and exhales while she continued to murmur approvingly. Finally, he pulled away, wiping his face with both hands, continuing to breathe deeply and steady himself.

“He’s okay,” Yuna said firmly, her voice sounding more certain than Shane felt, “You *were* fast enough, okay? You did everything right, you did so well.”

He sniffled hard, nodding, trying to will himself to believe her words.

“It’s going to be okay,” Yuna whispered, “We’re here now, okay?”

He nodded again, clearing his throat and giving her a small smile.

“Better?” his mom asked, smiling at him gently. He nodded, still sniffing, not yet trusting his voice. “I brought some stuff for you, and for Ilya,” his mom continued, reaching for the bags his father had dropped on the floor next to them. She rifled around the biggest bag, pulling out a pair of Shane’s old sneakers and holding them out to him,

“I saw that you left the ice in your skates and figured you probably wanted shoes,” she said. Shane nodded, taking the shoes from her.

“Thank you,” he managed to croak out, wiping his eyes again.

“I also brought you a sweater,” she continued digging through the bag, pulling out an oversized green sweatshirt and thrusting it towards him. As he held the soft fabric between his fingers, he realized that he was shivering, and he moved to pull the sweatshirt over his head, grunting frustratedly when he got stuck. He wiggled, pushing his head through the top of the sweatshirt and shoving his arms into the sleeves, humming appreciatively at the warmth that surrounded him. Standing up slowly and dropping into a chair, he reached for the sneakers, pulling them on and tightening the laces.

“Thanks mom,” he mumbled, giving her a small smile.

“Of course,” she smiled back at him before turning to the rest of the bags, “Everything else is toiletries and other necessities I thought you might need. I grabbed a couple of changes of clothes for Ilya too, he’s left a few things over at our house recently. I also brought you some snacks, I’m sure he’s going to be on a specific diet for a while, but you need to eat.”

Shane nodded wordlessly, grateful for the preparations but overwhelmed with the amount of information.

“You’re staying here with him tonight?” his mom asked gently, placing a hand on his shoulder.

“Yeah, I don’t want to leave him,” Shane replied, rubbing the back of his neck, “I just don’t want him to be alone.”

“Of course,” his mom nodded, “We understand.”

Shane shifted anxiously in his chair, looking up at the clock on the wall. It had been about fifteen minutes since he left the room, and he was eager to get back.

Seeming to read his mind, his dad stepped in, “Yuna, how about we let him get back to the room? We can go get settled in the hotel and try and grab a few hours of sleep before visitors are allowed.”

Yuna searched Shane’s face, seemingly looking for any sign that it wasn’t safe for them to leave.

“It’s okay mom,” he tried to give her a reassuring smile, “I’ll be okay. You guys should get some rest.”

“Are you sure?” she asked nervously, “I don’t mind sleeping down here in case you need me.”

“I promise,” he replied, taking one of her hands in his and squeezing it, “It’s only a few hours, and then you can come back in the morning.”

She nodded reluctantly, moving to stand up, “Okay,” she said slowly, “But I’ll leave my ringer on. If you need *anything*...

“I’ll call,” Shane promised, giving her a nod.

She nodded again, reaching for her husband’s hand, “Alright then,” she said, still sounding hesitant, “We’ll be back in the morning.”

Shane stood up, giving both of his parents a hug, “Thank you again,” he whispered into their shoulders, “I don’t know what I would do without you.”

They stepped back, his mom brushing his cheek gently.

“Of course kiddo,” his dad said, pulling him back in for another hug, “We’d move heaven and earth for you. Ilya too.”

Shane felt himself getting choked up again and he cleared his throat, fighting the urge.

“I love you guys,” he croaked out.

“We love you too,” his parents replied at the same time, giving each other a smile.

“Alright, I’m going to head back,” Shane motioned towards the doors.

“Wait, don’t forget the bags!” his mom called after him, and he reached down to pick them up.

“I’ll see you guys in the morning then?”

“See you in the morning,” his dad replied, giving him a final hug. Shane leaned in to give him mom another hug as well before turning back towards the door, giving his parents a final wave as he reached for the buzzer. He pressed the button, hearing a faint ‘*bzzzzt*’ on the other side before the lock clicked open with a beep. Reaching for the handle, he pressed it down and stepped back into the ICU.

## Chapter End Notes

Oops, I lied again! I know I said there was only one more chapter, but it ended up being over 10k words and that just felt like a little too much for one chapter, sooooo.....It's going to be four chapters instead of three! Do not fret, Chapter 4 is going up right after this one, so there won't be a wait this time! Please let me know what you think, I know this has been a rough ride for our boys, but things are finally looking up!

And yes, the "breathe" scene was inspired by the Carlos/TK hospital scene from 911 Lone Star. I've never seen the show, but I saw that clip and it wormed its way into my brain. It was honestly one of the main inspirations for this piece, don't ask why, I don't know why, haha.

Again, all of the Russian in this fic was translated using Russian language learning websites and articles, so if you speak Russian and there are any errors, please let me know!

Russian translations:

Moya lyubov - translation: My love

Solynshko - translation: Sunshine (term of endearment)

Слава бoгy! - translation: Thank God!

Lyubimyy - translation: Beloved



## Chapter 4: in the morning light

### Chapter Summary

Shane blinked slowly, clearing the sleep from his eyes with a grunt. He fumbled for his phone, turning it on to check the time, sighing when he saw the clock read 6:15.

Svetlana's plane would be landing in a few hours, the car that he had arranged for her was scheduled to be there by 8:15, just in case the flight landed early. Shane knew she was eager to get to the hospital, and was trying to do everything possible to accommodate her wishes. With a sigh, he set his phone down, looking up towards the bed, jumping slightly when he saw blue eyes blinking back at him.

"Ilya!" he gasped, leaping out of his chair and hurrying to the bed, "You're awake!"

"I've been awake," Ilya rasped, "I woke up at 5:50."

"Ilya! That was almost a half hour ago," Shane scolded, his eyebrows furrowing, "Why didn't you wake me up?"

"You were so cute sleeping," Ilya grinned up at him, "Wanted to watch you a little longer."

### Chapter Notes

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

Morning came slowly, breaking over the Montreal skyline with a faint glow that Shane had to shield his eyes against when they first opened. Despite his best efforts to stay awake all night, he had dozed off a few times, jolted awake every thirty minutes or so by nurses coming in and out, taking vitals, giving meds, and checking Ilya's bandage. His vitals had remained steady all night, but he hadn't stirred much, only giving annoyed grumbles and groans when the nurses came in to check on him.

Shane blinked slowly, clearing the sleep from his eyes with a grunt. He fumbled for his phone, turning it on to check the time, sighing when he saw the clock read 6:15. Svetlana's plane would be landing in a few hours, the car that he had arranged for her was scheduled to be there by 8:15, just in case the flight landed early. Shane knew she was eager to get to the hospital, and was trying to do everything possible to accommodate her wishes. With a sigh, he set his phone down, looking up towards the bed, jumping slightly when he saw blue eyes blinking back at him.

"Ilya!" he gasped, leaping out of his chair and hurrying to the bed, "You're awake!"

"I've been awake," Ilya rasped, "I woke up at 5:50."

“Ilya! That was almost a half hour ago,” Shane scolded, his eyebrows furrowing, “Why didn’t you wake me up?”

“You were so cute sleeping,” Ilya grinned up at him, “Wanted to watch you a little longer.”

“That’s not a good reason Ilya,” Shane sighed, but his heart squeezed as he spoke, betraying him. He reached out with his left hand, brushing it against his boyfriend’s cheek

“Very good reason,” Ilya murmured, leaning into his touch, “The best reason.”

“I should call the nurse,” Shane whispered, “Tell them you’re awake,” he reached for the call button, but Ilya grabbed his arm with a whine.

“No,” he pouted up at him, “If you call them, they come in here and poke me, distract me from looking at you and your pretty freckles.”

“Ilya,” Shane sighed, reaching for the button again, “It’ll just be for a minute, then you can look all you want.”

Ilya grumbled, but acquiesced, allowing Shane to push the button and tell the nurse that he was awake.

“Happy?” he moaned, after Shane had finished, “Now they come and ask a million questions, make my head hurt.”

“Ilya, they need to make sure you’re okay,” Shane gave him a pleading look, “Please? For me?”

Ilya groaned, dropping his head back against the pillow, “Unfair,” he said, pointing an accusatory finger at Shane, “You give me those big, sad eyes and I cannot resist.”

“It’s for your own good my love,” Shane murmured, leaning down to drop a kiss on Ilya’s forehead, jumping back when he heard the door open.

“Good morning Mr. Rozanov! How are we feeling today?” a cheery voice rang out from the doorway.

“Ugh,” Ilya groaned, closing his eyes, “Too loud.”

“Sorry,” the voice said again, and Shane heard the curtain behind the bed pull back. He turned to see a tall, lanky nurse standing in the doorway, his long, brown hair tied back in a bun. The man stepped into the room and Shane caught a glimpse of his nametag: *Donovan, RN*.

“Any pain? Nausea?” Donovan asked as he approached the bed. He fussed with the monitors, looking down at Ilya.

“*Nyet*,” Ilya rasped, “No pain, but throat is very dry. Scratchy.”

“That’s to be expected,” Donovan replied with a reassuring tone as he reached down to adjust one of the lines connected to Ilya’s IV, “Your throat is still healing and we’re keeping you off of food and water for a little while while we make sure you’re swallowing okay.”

“No water?” Ilya groaned, “Not even a sip?”

Donovan shook his head sympathetically, “Sorry, not yet. Doctor needs to clear you first. If your mouth is super dry I can get you a sponge and a cup, and your friend here can help you dab it on your lips. Ilya pouted, unsatisfied, but Shane jumped in,

“That would be great,” he responded, ignoring the sting that he felt at being referred to as Ilya’s “friend”. He knew it was necessary, it was what they had agreed on, it was what *he* had wanted. Something had changed over the last several hours, he realized with a start. He didn’t want to hide anymore. He had been holding Ilya’s life in his hands, and the fear of losing him had been compounded by the fear of losing him without ever telling the world the truth.

During the ride to the hospital he had played out every terrible scenario in his head: Ilya dying, his body being shipped back to Russia, to his brother who didn’t care about him aside from as a bank. Ilya buried in some unmarked grave in Moscow, -Shane just knew Alexei wouldn’t spring for an expensive tombstone- deep beneath the frozen ground in a country hundreds of miles away where Shane could never visit him. Shane, alone, unable to grieve, unable to explain to anyone why his rival’s death had destroyed him.

He shook his head, pushing the terrifying thoughts away.

*He’s here.* He reminded himself, *He’s alive.*

“I’ll go grab that for you then,” Donovan said with a smile, and Shane wrinkled his forehead, confused.

“Oh, the sponge!” he finally said, the conversation returning to him, “Yes, thank you! That would be wonderful.”

Ilya gave him a puzzled look but didn’t say anything, waiting until Donovan had left the room.

“You are okay?” he finally asked, when the door was closed and it was just the two of them again.

“I’m fine,” Shane attempted to reassure him, stepping towards the bed and brushing Ilya’s hair away from his forehead, “Just thinking.”

“About?” Ilya questioned, looking up at him expectantly.

“Lots of things,” Shane whispered, dropping a kiss to Ilya’s brow, “I’m just glad you’re okay.”

Ilya frowned back at him, pursing his lips and making a smacking noise, “Give me real kiss,” he pouted, pointing his lips at Shane insistently.

Chuckling, Shane bent down and brushed his lips across his boyfriend's, Ilya humming happily as their mouths met. He pressed a gentle, chaste, kiss against Ilya's mouth, a warm sense of relief washing over him as they collided. Reluctantly, he pulled back, Ilya whining and following his movement, chasing after him, "No," he whined again, "Don't go."

"I'm not going, baby," Shane whispered, dropping back into the chair, "I'm right here."

Ilya pouted at him through the bedrail, "More kiss," he pleaded, giving Shane his best puppy dog eyes.

"Later," Shane replied, "I don't wanna suffocate you."

Ilya scoffed, "Will not suffocate me, I am too strong for that. Come give me kiss."

With a sigh, Shane stood up, leaning over the bed and pressing another kiss to his boyfriend's lips, allowing himself to linger a bit longer this time. Ilya beamed at him when he finally pulled away, seemingly satisfied.

"Better?" Shane teased, poking a gentle finger into Ilya's sternum.

"Better," Ilya agreed, grinning back at him.

"Good," Shane plopped back into his chair with a sigh, keeping his eyes fixed on his boyfriend's face. The stark paleness that had swallowed his features the night before had been replaced with a light pink tint, still lighter than normal, but he didn't look so much like a corpse anymore. Shane was grateful for that, it made it easier to remember that Ilya was still here, still alive.

Ilya smiled gently at him, one hand coming up to grasp at something under his collarbone, his face dropping as his fingers brushed across an open space. He gasped, his eyes widening as his hands scrabbled across the empty skin on his chest.

"*Nyet, nyet, nyet,*" he whispered, face growing more frantic by the second, "*Gde eto?*"

"Ilya, Ilya breathe," Shane urged, stepping forward and reaching for his boyfriend, "What is it? What's wrong?"

"*Moye ozherel'ye, mamino ozherel'ye. Gde eto? Nyet. Nyet. Mama,*" his voice was cracking, desperate.

"Ilya, baby, I don't speak Russian," Shane pleaded, wishing more than ever that Svetlana was there, "In English my love, say it in English."

"Necklace," Ilya finally managed to pant out, "Mama's necklace, I lost. I lost it."

A rush of realization washed over Shane and he almost smacked himself for being so stupid, *of course*. Of course he was looking for the necklace.

"No my love, no," Shane replied frantically, moving to cup Ilya's face in his hands, "You didn't lose it, it's here, let me get it okay?"

Ilya nodded, tears threatening to spill out of his eyes, his lower lip wobbling as he looked up at Shane, desperate. His hands shot up to grab Shane's wrists, squeezing tightly as he tried to catch his breath.

"Can you let go of my arms, love?" Shane asked, not wanting to pull away suddenly and startle him, "So that I can go get it?"

Ilya nodded again, taking a deep breath and loosening his grip on Shane's arms, allowing him to step back and turn towards the cabinet against the wall. He remembered a nurse telling him that Ilya's belongings were in a bag on the top shelf, "Everything except for the skates and his jersey," she had said with a sympathetic look on her face, "The skates are with security, I know it sounds ridiculous, but unsecured blades in a hospital is a no go. The jersey had to be tossed, it was uh, unsalvageable."

Shane reached for the cabinet door, wrenching it open and fumbling for the plastic bag as soon as his eyes landed on it. He dug through the contents, pushing aside Ilya's uniform pants and the socks he had been wearing before his fingers closed around something cold and metallic.

"Here it is," Shane exhaled, pulling his hand out of the bag and opening his fist so that Ilya could see the necklace shining in his palm, "Right here." He moved towards the bed, starting to unclip the clasp when he noticed the flakes of dried blood covering the golden chain and crucifix, "Oh," he stopped, staring down at it.

"What's wrong? It's broken?" Ilya's voice sounded small, like a scared child and it snapped Shane out of his daze.

"No, no, my love," he reassured, moving closer to the bed with the necklace, "It's not broken, it's just a little...dirty."

"Give," Ilya held out his palm, wiggling his fingers impatiently when Shane hesitated, "Shane, please," he begged, his lower lip wobbling.

"Okay, okay," Shane moved forward, pressing the crucifix into his boyfriend's palm, "I can clean it up later for you."

Ilya nodded, sighing with relief as his fingers closed around the necklace. He brought it up to his face, pressing it against his lips and murmuring to himself in Russian. Shane caught the word "mama" and his heart twisted in his chest. Ilya must feel so alone right now, so far away from his home and everything that was familiar to him. He watched as Ilya held the necklace back so he could inspect it, turning it over in his hands until he was satisfied that it was still in one piece. Clutching it in his hand, he dropped his fist over his heart, letting out a deep breath and closing his eyes.

Shane swallowed, unsure of how to proceed. He looked up at the clock, sighing when he read '6:30'. Svetlana was still a few hours away, but she would be here soon. He hoped that could bring Ilya some comfort, bring him a piece of home.

"Shane?" Ilya's voice still sounded fragile, and Shane's focus snapped back to him.

“What is it Ilya?” he asked, reaching out with one hand to touch his boyfriend’s cheek.

“Will you lay with me?” Ilya looked up at him expectantly, and Shane’s heart twisted again.

“I don’t want to hurt you,” he started, but Ilya interrupted him, reaching out a hand in his direction.

“You will not hurt me,” he said, frowning, “I want you next to me.”

“Ilya,” Shane tried again, but Ilya whined and he stood up, motioning for Ilya to slide over, “Move slowly,” he said and his boyfriend beamed up at him. Shane sat on the side of the bed as Ilya shifted himself, grunting softly at the effort.

“Careful,” Shane cautioned, reaching a hand down to steady him.

“Am not made of glass,” Ilya grumbled, plopping back down against the pillows, but the pinched look on his face betrayed him.

“See, that hurt didn’t it?” Shane asked, raising one of his eyebrows at him.

“Didn’t hurt,” Ilya groaned, reaching towards Shane, “Just stiff. Now come here.”

With a sigh, Shane gently lowered himself onto the bed next to his boyfriend, adjusting his arms so that one could wrap up over Ilya’s head, the other crossing over his chest to reach for his hand.

“Better?” he whispered, leaning down to drop a kiss onto Ilya’s temple.

“Much,” Ilya sighed, resting his weight against Shane’s side, “Now we take nap.”

“A nap?” Shane spluttered, “I just woke up!”

“*Da*, and you still look like zombie,” Ilya rebutted, reaching up to poke Shane’s nose.

“I do not look like a zombie,” he protested weakly.

“Mm, little bit,” Ilya sighed, squeezing Shane’s hand in his, “But is okay. I like.”

Shane scoffed, “You like zombies?”

His boyfriend squinted up at him, “I like you,” he replied softly.

“I like you too,” Shane whispered back, “Now close your eyes, I thought you wanted to take a nap.”

“I do, but only if you nap too,” Ilya pouted.

“Alright,” Shane whispered, pressing another kiss to Ilya’s hairline, “I’ll nap too.”

“Good,” Ilya responded, seemingly satisfied, one hand wrapped in Shane’s, the other still tightly clutching his mother’s crucifix, “You will be here when I wake up?”

“Of course,” Shane murmured back, brushing through Ilya’s curls with his free hand, “If you sleep long enough, Svetlana might be here when you wake up too.”

Ilya’s eyes shot open and he looked up at Shane, “Sveta?” he croaked, “She is coming?”

Shane nodded, “Yeah, her flight lands around 9. I have a car picking her up at the airport.”

Ilya blinked, his eyes searching Shane’s face, “Really?” he asked slowly, “You arrange this together?”

Shane nodded again, “She called me last night, right after you got hurt. She must have been watching the game. She jumped on a flight as soon as she could, it left late last night.”

A slow smile spread across his boyfriend's face, “And you call car for her?”

“Of course.”

Ilya beamed at him, his eyes sparkling, “I love you,” he whispered, “Thank you.”

Shane blinked hard, pushing back his own tears, “Of course my love,” he whispered back, “It was no trouble at all, one phone call.”

Ilya shrugged, tucking his head back into Shane’s shoulder, “Was very sweet of you,” he mumbled. Shane sighed, dropping another kiss to Ilya’s head,

“Anything for you my love,” he murmured, “Now sleep.” Ilya hummed happily, closing his eyes and relaxing into Shane’s side.

Shane smiled gently as he watched his boyfriend drift back to sleep, turning his gaze back towards the window. The sun was breaking further over the buildings now, bathing the entire room in a warm, golden glow. With a sigh, Shane allowed his eyes to drift closed, sinking into the warmth of Ilya’s body next to him.

----

He was jolted awake by his phone ringing, and he jumped, wincing when Ilya groaned uncomfortably next to him at the movement.

“Sorry, sorry,” he murmured, reaching his hand out towards the chair beside the bed to fumble for his phone. His fingers closed around it and he swiped across the screen, accepting the call and pulling the phone up to his ear.

“Hello?” he rasped, clearing his throat.

“Shane?” his mom’s voice rang through the speaker, “Are you awake?”

“I am now,” he yawned, rubbing Ilya’s head gently as his boyfriend stirred beside him.

“How’s Ilya doing this morning?” Yuna asked, anxiety still lacing her voice.

“Hello, Yuna!” Ilya croaked, waving towards the phone.

“Ilya!” Shane heard his mom gasp, “David! He’s awake!” A rustling noise came from the other side of the phone and Shane smiled slightly as he heard his father’s voice in the background,

“Ilya, my boy! How are you feeling?”

Shane pressed the speakerphone button, moving to hold the phone between himself and Ilya, “You guys are on speaker now,” he said, “He can hear you.”

“Ilya!” Yuna said again, sounding relieved, “How are you? Are you in a lot of pain?”

“I am feeling good,” Ilya rasped, and Shane moved the phone closer to him, “Shane has been taking good care of me.”

Shane heard his parents chuckle on the other end of the phone, and he could picture them sharing one of their knowing looks.

“I’m sure he has, son,” David replied, “It’s good to hear your voice. You gave us quite a scare.”

Ilya nodded, his smile slipping slightly, “Yes, I am sorry for that,” he croaked, “It seems like I scared everyone.”

“You did,” Shane heard his mom sigh, “But it’s okay Ilya. It’s not your fault. We’re just so glad that you’re going to be alright.”

“I will be back and better than ever,” Ilya replied determinedly.

“I have no doubt of that,” Yuna said warmly, and Ilya’s smile returned, brighter this time.

“Thank you,” he said, uncharacteristically shyly.

“Visiting hours start soon, should we plan to head over?” Yuna asked eagerly. Ilya smiled but Shane frowned, looking up at the clock. It was 7:52, Svetlana’s plane would be landing in less than an hour if everything went according to schedule, leaving them a couple of hours before she arrived.

“You guys can come over,” Shane said, “But his friend Svetalana is supposed to arrive around 9 and I know she’s eager to see him, so you might have to step out for that.”

“That’s okay,” Yuna replied quickly, “We don’t mind. I brought a book, so I can just sit in the waiting room and read.”

“Okay mom, that sounds good,” Shane replied, “We’ll see you in a bit then?”

“Yes, about a half hour,” Yuna responded, “We’re almost ready to go, and then we’ll head over, it’s about a fifteen minute drive.”

“Alright, see you then, bye mom! Bye dad!” Shane held the phone in Ilya’s direction,

“Bye Yuna! Bye David!” he croaked happily.

“See you soon Ilya,” Yuna replied, and Shane heard the phone disconnect. He dropped it into the sheets with a sigh, smiling down at Ilya.

“You’re gonna have a busy day of visitors. Are you feeling up to that?”

“Yes of course,” Ilya responded dismissively, “I will be fine.”

“If you’re sure…” Shane started, but he was interrupted by a knock on the door.

“Knock, knock!” a cheery voice called from the doorway, “May I come in?”

“You will anyway,” Ilya grumbled, and Shane heard the voice on the other side of the curtain let out a short chuckle. The curtain was pulled back and a doctor that he recognized as Dr. Fortin entered the room.

“Good morning, Mr. Rozanov!” she said cheerfully, crossing the room to stand beside the bed, “It’s good to see you awake and in good company!” she gave Shane a knowing smile, and he realized that the two of them were still tangled together on the mattress.

Dr. Fortin seemed to notice the startled look on his face and she softened her smile, “Don’t worry Mr. Hollander,” she said quietly, “This hospital adheres to the highest standards of confidentiality.”

Ilya wrinkled his nose, “What does that mean?” he asked, confused.

“It means that any secrets our patients might have are safe within these walls,” she replied, not missing a beat. Ilya nodded slowly, seeming to also suddenly realize the compromising position they had been caught in.

“Do you need me to?” Shane gestured off the bed, asking if he should move.

“That might be best for right now,” Dr. Fortin nodded at him, “We’re going to take a peek at these stitches so we’ll need room to work.”

“Can he stay?” Ilya asked, eyes darting between Dr. Fortin and Shane, one hand shooting out to grasp at Shane’s arm before he could move off of the bed.

“As long as you’re comfortable with that,” Dr. Fortin replied, giving him a gentle smile.

Ilya nodded, “Yes, I want him here,” he croaked out, hand tightening around Shane’s wrist. He whined as Shane moved to lift off the of the bed, eyes shooting in his direction.

“It’s okay,” Shane soothed, “I’m not leaving, just standing up to give them some room, okay?”

Ilya nodded again, loosening his grip to allow Shane to stand, his hand tightening again as soon as he was settled.

“Alright,” Dr. Fortin said, motioning to a nurse who was entering the room, “I’m going to remove this dressing on your neck to take a peek at the stitches underneath, and then Jessica here will get you all bandaged up again. Sound like a plan?”

Ilya shrugged, eyes darting to Shane again, “It will hurt?” he asked. Shane could hear the nerves that he was trying to push down to maintain his tough, hockey player persona.

“It will probably be a bit uncomfortable,” Dr. Fortin replied, “But I promise we will move as gently, and as quickly as we can, okay?”

Ilya nodded, closing his eyes and Shane slid his hand into his boyfriend’s squeezing gently,

“I’m right here with you,” he whispered, and Ilya smiled in his direction without opening his eyes.

Dr. Fortin pulled on a pair of gloves, and the nurse, Jessica, pulled a metal tray up beside them. Shane swallowed hard as the doctor reached for the bandage, an alcohol wipe in one hand. He winced sympathetically as she began to rub the wipe across the edges of the bandage, slowly lifting the sticky adhesive with her other hand. Ilya grimaced, clenching his jaw and grunting quietly as the doctor worked, Shane rubbing what he hoped were soothing circles against the back of his hand.

His eyes stayed locked on Ilya’s throat as the bandage was slowly lifted away, revealing the long, red laceration underneath. When the white gauze and tape was fully removed, Shane felt his mouth dry. Ilya’s throat looked *mangled*. The wound stretched all the way from one side of his throat to the other, like someone had tried to cut his throat from ear to ear. The slice from the skate blade had been repaired with hundreds of tiny stitches, poking through his skin and tugging the torn edges together. Crusty flecks of blood stuck to his skin, sealing the stitches to his skin like a sickening glue. Shane had to look away, take a few deep breaths to settle his stomach before he looked again.

Ilya let out a pained gasp as the doctor used a different wipe to dab gently at his stitches, his eyes shooting open, “Hurts,” he groaned, squeezing Shane’s hand harder.

Dr. Fortin winced sympathetically, “I’m sorry,” she said quickly, leaning back, “This is the worst part, but we need to get this cleaned up a little bit.”

Shane reached for Ilya’s forehead with his other hand, brushing his curls gently, “It’s okay baby,” he whispered, leaning down to press a kiss between his boyfriend’s eyebrows, “You’re doing so good.”

Ilya hummed, closing his eyes again and waving his hand for the doctor to continue. She reached down again, continuing to clean the tender skin, Ilya letting out tiny whimpers and gasps with every pass of her hand. Finally, she stepped back, pulling her gloves off and smiling at the two of them.

“There we go!” she said brightly, “All done with that part!”

Ilya sighed, relieved, his shoulders relaxing into the bed, “No more touching?” he rasped.

“Almost no more touching,” Dr. Fortin said, reaching down to give him a gentle pat on the arm, “Jessica is going to get you bandaged up again, but that will be much faster and more gentle.”

Ilya nodded, closing his eyes again.

“Everything looks okay?” Shane asked nervously, shifting from one foot to the other.

“Yes,” Dr. Fortin assured him, “There are no signs of infection and it looks like the stitches are holding up beautifully. We’ll keep checking in on it, but so far I’m very pleased with his progress. I’m still not comfortable giving food and water, but if the next few hours go well, maybe we can try ice chips.”

Shane let out a breath he didn’t realize he’d been holding, giving Ilya’s hand another squeeze.

“You hear that Ilya?” he whispered, “You’re doing amazing.”

Ilya hummed in response, squeezing his hand back and Dr. Fortin smiled gently at the two of them, “Alright!” she said brightly, “Well, I’m going to leave you in Jessica’s very capable hands, and I will be back to check in with you before my shift ends!”

“Thank you,” Shane said, giving her what he hoped was a genuine smile, “We really appreciate it.”

She smiled back at him, giving him a nod, “Of course,” she said warmly, “Hang in there, Mr. Rozanov! You’ll be home before you know it!” With a wave, she turned towards the door, Ilya cracking one eye open to look at her, lifting his hand to weakly wave back.

Jessica approached the bed with a roll of gauze and a roll of tape, starting to explain the process of rebandaging the wound. Shane tried to listen as she spoke, taking in as much of the information as he could, but his mind was racing again. He took a deep breath, refocusing as she began to wrap the stitches under soft gauze, gently pressing strips of tape to the corners before covering the whole thing with a larger, clear bandage.

“There we go!” she said, smiling down at Ilya, “All finished!”

“Finally,” Ilya croaked, opening his eyes and giving her a small smile, “No more tugging?”

“No more tugging,” she replied, “Just try and get some rest and if all goes well, in a couple of hours we’ll get you some ice chips!”

“Hooray,” Ilya replied sarcastically, “I cannot wait.”

Shane opened his mouth to jump in, but Jessica just smiled back at Ilya, “I know it’s not any fun,” she said gently, “But I promise we’re doing it to help, not to hurt you.”

Ilya grunted in response, but gave her a small smile in return and Jessica turned towards Shane, giving him a smile as well.

“I’ll be back to check in on you in a half an hour or so,” she said, moving towards the door and giving them a wave as she opened it.

“Thank you!” Shane called after her.

“Of course,” she replied, turning her head over her shoulder, “See you soon!” The door closed behind her with a soft click and Shane turned back to the bed.

Ilya’s eyes were still open, and he was gazing up at Shane with a softness that made his heart hurt.

“What is it my love?” Shane murmured, pulling up the chair beside the bed and sinking into it, keeping his hand collapsed tightly in his boyfriend’s.

“I love you,” Ilya rasped squeezing his fingers, the soft look spilling out of his eyes.

“I love you too,” Shane replied, leaning down to press a gentle kiss to his lips, “More than anything in the world.”

“Mm, I think you love hockey more,” Ilya smiled up at him, but Shane felt his heart fall unexpectedly.

“That’s not true,” he whispered, feeling tears come into his eyes, “I love you more.”

Ilya’s eyebrows shot up, an alarmed look on his face, “No, no, *solnyshko*, I was only teasing. I did not mean it, please do not cry,” he begged, moving to sit up.

“It’s okay Ilya,” Shane croaked out, reaching out a hand to press him back against the pillows, “I’m sorry, I know you were teasing. I don’t know what’s wrong with me.”

Ilya frowned, still looking nervous, “You are still crying,” he said hesitantly, reaching for Shane with his free hand. Shane took it as he extended it towards him, clutching both of his boyfriend’s hands in his.

“It’s not you,” Shane whimpered, blinking hard to try and clear his eyes, “I just. I was so scared yesterday, on the ice.”

“I know...” Ilya started, but Shane hushed him.

“No, you don’t know Ilya,” he said desperately, “You were out of it before I even got to you on the ice. Do you even remember me being there?”

Ilya paused, thinking, before he slowly shook his head, “No,” he rasped out, “I remember hit, I remember sitting up, and then nothing.”

Shane let out a shaky breath, “Honestly, I’m glad that you don’t remember it,” he grasped his boyfriend’s hands more tightly, “Ilya, it was the worst thing I’ve ever seen on the ice. I’ve

never seen anything like that before and I just..." his voice broke with a sob and he tried to draw in a breath to continue, "I just...I couldn't believe..." he sobbed again, dropping his head, "I couldn't believe it was happening to *you*."

Ilya opened his mouth to speak, but Shane hushed him again, continuing, "I just kept thinking, not him, not *now*. Not when we were so close to finally..." his voice finally broke completely, sobs taking over, wracking his body as he curled forward, dropping his head to rest on the mattress.

"*Moya lyobuv*," he tried, but Shane continued,

"Not when we were so close to finally moving to the next step. I thought I was going to lose you. I thought you were going to die in my arms right there on the ice, and no one would ever know how much I loved you," he managed before breaking into sobs again.

Shane felt one of Ilya's hands tug away from his and he loosened his grip, afraid he was hurting him. He was about to lift his head up, apologize for how he was acting, when he felt Ilya's fingers tracing through his hair.

"I'm still here *solnyshko*, I am right here with you."

Shane nodded against the mattress, sniffing to stop his runny nose from spilling all over the sheets, "I know," he gasped out, "I'm just waiting for my brain to catch up I guess."

Ilya hummed, continuing to run his fingers through Shane's hair, not speaking, allowing him to let it out. With a sigh, Shane lifted his head from the mattress, looking up at his boyfriend,

"I want to come out," he said, reaching up with the hand not still clasped in Ilya's to wipe at his tears.

Ilya's eyebrows shot up, "Okay," he said slowly, "You want to tell team that you are gay?"

Shane shook his head, "No, well, I mean yes. But also," he locked his eyes with Ilya's, "I want to tell people, about us."

Ilya sucked in a breath, seemingly stunned, and Shane was suddenly terrified that he had gone too far.

"If you want to," he said quickly, lowering his eyes, "I know you have a lot more to lose in terms of Russia and your family, and I would never want to push you to make that decision. It should be *our* decision, not just mine, and I shouldn't be springing it on you like this, especially not now, when..."

"Shane, stop," Ilya interrupted his rambling, gazing at him lovingly. Shane swallowed, trying to catch his breath, his heart pounding in his chest. "I want to tell people too," Ilya whispered, his eyes soft and wet, "Is all I've wanted for months now. I just didn't want to push you."

Shane let out a gasping exhale, relief flooding his chest, "Really?" he asked, reaching to clutch at both of Ilya's hands again, "You mean that?"

Ilya smiled, a real smile, the one that showed his pearly white teeth, the one reserved only for Shane, "I do," he whispered, "I really mean that."

Shane surged forward to capture his boyfriend's lips in a searing kiss, momentarily forgetting to be gentle as he smashed their mouths together, releasing his hands to grab at the sides of his face. Ilya let out a pleased sounding gasp and sank back into the pillows, allowing Shane to take the lead, sighing happily, his newly freed hands trailing up his shoulders, his neck, and landing in his hair, tangling between the soft, black strands and tugging gently. Shane groaned as he felt his boyfriend's fingers scratching at his scalp, reluctantly pulling back before he fully lost control of himself. Ilya pouted up at him, hands still tangled in his hair, rubbing soft circles across the skin beneath.

"So then we tell people," Shane whispered, searching his boyfriend's eyes for any hint of hesitation.

"We tell people," Ilya agreed, giving him another grin.

Shane leaned back down for another kiss, allowing the feeling to wash away the stress and anxiety of the last twelve hours.

## Chapter End Notes

UPDATE 2/9: I am working on a continuation! I've really appreciated all of your feedback, you have motivated me to keep going and also given me ideas for possible additional chapters. There will be at least two more chapters, I'm hoping to have them out by this upcoming weekend, but please know that I am a working college student, so I have a busy schedule! Thank you again for all your feedback, and see you soon with chapter 5!

Original notes:

And we have finally come to the end! I hope this ending is satisfying, please let me know your thoughts! I'm considering possibly writing an epilogue, maybe centered around Svetlana's visit to the hospital, because I really enjoyed writing her interactions with Shane, but I'm not sure. Let me know what you think about that idea!

Again, all of the Russian dialogue was written using Russian language websites and blog posts, so it may not be the most accurate. I do not speak Russian, if you do, please feel free to correct me!

Russian translations:

"Nyet, nyet, nyet. Gde eto?" - translation: "No, no, no. Where is it?"

"Moye ozherel'ye, mamino ozherel'ye. Gde eto? Nyet. Nyet. Mama" - translation: "My necklace, my mama's necklace. Where is it? No. No. Mama."

"Moya lyobuv" - translation: "My love"

"Solnyshko" - translation: "sunshine" term of endearment

# Chapter 5: found family and a piece of home

## Chapter Summary

Yuna and David visit, Shane receives a call from Jackson Vallières, and Svetlana finally arrives.

## Chapter Notes

There's a bit more Russian dialogue in this chapter than in previous ones, please forgive me if it is butchered, I did my best to find accurate translations, but I am not a Russian speaker, so if you are, feel free to correct me! Since there's so much in this chapter, I decided to put in-text translations for some of the longer sentences so that you're not having to scroll up and down to translate while reading. Please let me know what you think of the format, if you like it, or if you prefer translations in the notes at the end.

Here are the translations for the shorter words:

Da: Yes

Lyubimyy: Beloved

Solynshko: Sunshine (term of endearment)

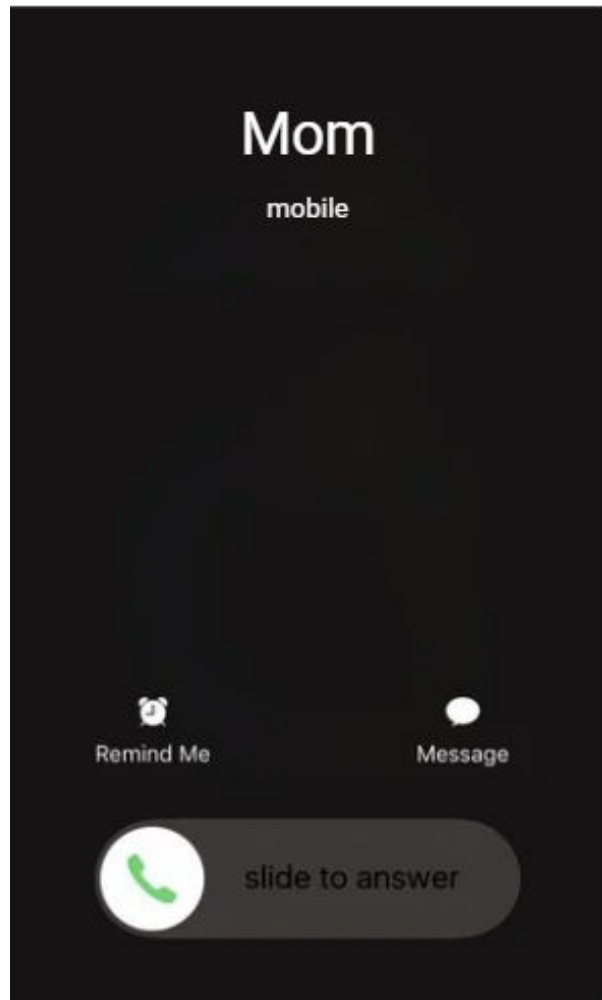
Mudaki: Assholes

Blyat: literal translation is 'whore' but it's used more like 'fuck' as an exclamation of anger

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

A loud ring from his phone startled Shane, making him jump slightly, catching Ilya off guard and causing the taller man to groan slightly.

“Sorry, sorry,” Shane whispered, wincing. He fumbled in his lap for his phone, finally managing to wrap his fingers around it and bring it towards his face:



Swiping at the bar on the bottom of the screen, Shane brought the phone up to his ear and cleared his throat.

“Hello?” he answered, rubbing at the back of his stiff neck with one hand.

“Hi Shane!” his mother’s voice came through the phone, “We’re in the parking lot. Is Ilya ready for visitors?”

Shane turned his gaze to Ilya, his head resting on the pillow in the bed next to him, floppy curls splayed out against the creased fabric, gazing up at him with glassy eyes.

“My parents are here,” he murmured down to him, “Are you up for a visit?”

Ilya’s eyes brightened, his cracked lips spreading into a smile, “*Da*,” he rasped, “Let them in, I know Yuna has been going crazy.”

“Hey!” Yuna laughed from the other side of the phone, “I heard that young man!”

“Sorry,” Ilya croaked, grinning and not looking sorry at all.

Shane looked down at him with a huff, rolling his eyes and giving him an extremely gentle tap on the arm. Ilya winced dramatically, pouting up at Shane with an exaggerated lower lip

“Yuna, your son is being cruel to me,” he whined towards the phone, giving Shane his best sad eyes, “Tell him to stop abusing me.”

Yuna let out a tiny laugh on the other end of the line, and Shane could picture her playfully rolling her eyes at Ilya’s antics.

“I’ll be up there soon to defend you Ilya,” she teased, and Ilya smirked at Shane, the shorter man rolling his eyes at his boyfriend.

He knew that his mother had a growing soft spot for the fiery Russian and despite her best efforts, he had won her over. Shane thought that it had started when Ilya insisted on helping her cook dinner during one of their first visits, tying on an apron without a second thought and stepping in to chop veggies. His mother had given him a surprised, questioning look, but Shane had just shrugged, taking a seat at the kitchen island to admire the scene. Ilya in an apron was fascinating, Shane had never seen him look so, *domestic*. He looked like he fit right in, standing comfortably in the Hollander’s kitchen, swiftly chopping onions and carrots and making pleasant small talk with Yuna. Shane had sat at the island the entire time, sipping a cold ginger ale and watching his mom and Ilya interact, his heart growing warmer by the second.

That had been a great night, one of the happiest Shane thought he had ever experienced. Watching Ilya chat about hockey with his mother and drink Russian vodka with his father, Shane’s heart had expanded until it burst into a warm, gooey mess. The final nail in the coffin was when they said their goodbyes and Yuna automatically leaned in for a hug, Ilya not expressing a single second of hesitation before also leaning in and wrapping his arms around her. Shane had almost fallen through the floor, the unexpected sight nearly knocking the wind out of him. His mouth had definitely dropped open in shock, gaping at the two of them until they stepped back, which Ilya teased him about all the way home.

“Shane?” his mother’s voice jolted him out of his remembrance, “Can we just come up or do you need to come down to meet us?”

“I think I need to come down,” he replied, trying to remember the policies that had been described to him by a nurse that morning, “You’re on the approved visitors list since you’re his backup emergency contacts, but it’s kind of a maze back here, you might need some help finding it.”

“Okay, we’ll meet you in the lobby sweetie! See you in a minute!” Shane heard the beep of the call disconnecting, and he lowered his phone, moving to stand up from the hard plastic hospital chair with a mild wince, feeling the muscles in his back twinge. His spine definitely didn’t appreciate him spending the entire night stuffed into a small hospital bed with Ilya, bent awkwardly around him to avoid injuring him.

“I’m going to go get my parents,” he smiled down at his boyfriend, “Will you be okay for a few minutes?” Ilya rolled his eyes, flapping a hand dismissively in Shane’s direction.

“Yes, go, I will be fine,” he croaked, “Will not fall apart in few minutes.”

“I know,” Shane murmured, dropping a hand down to rub at Ilya’s cheek, “I just don’t really like having you out of my sight right now.” Ilya leaned into the touch, blinking up at Shane with a small smile.

“I will be fine, *lyubimyy*,” he rasped up at him, “I promise.”

Shane bent down and pressed a gentle kiss to Ilya’s forehead, lingering a moment longer than was necessary.

“Okay,” he said, forcing himself to pull back and stand up, “I’ll be right back.”

“I’ll be here,” Ilya grinned up at him and Shane scoffed, turning towards the door. He hesitated a second longer, taking another glance in the direction of the bed before finally stepping forward and walking out of the room.

The chatter of the hallway burst into his eardrums as he moved forward, a dramatic contrast to the muted silence of the hospital room, only interrupted by the quiet beeps of the monitors still attached to Ilya’s body. Shane shoved his hands into the pocket of his hoodie as he walked, shivering slightly in the cold air. He waved at the nurses station as he passed, recognizing Ilya’s nurse for that day, Jessica, who had helped change his bandage.

“I’m going out to grab my parents and then I’ll be right back,” he said, pointing towards the door.

“No problem!” Jessica waved back at him, giving him a quick smile before returning to typing furiously on her computer. Shane pushed through the double doors, stepping out into the waiting room, searching for his parents. After a few minutes, he heard the elevator doors ding, and turned to walk in that direction.

“Shane!” he heard his mother’s voice call excitedly, waving at him as they stepped out of the elevator, his father once again carrying multiple bags. He scoffed, moving forward to lighten the load, grabbing a couple of the bags from his father’s arms, and grunting at the weight.

“Jeez, mom, what did you put in these?” he groaned, hefting one of the bags over his shoulder.

“Just some necessities for the two of you, and some soup for Ilya. Is he allowed to have liquids yet?”

Shane shook his head, frowning slightly, “No not yet,” he sighed, “They still haven’t cleared him for it, but they did let him have some ice chips. The nurse said maybe tonight.”

His mom frowned as well, looking down at the bags before shrugging, “Well, we’ll hang onto it until he can. It’s in the cooler, so it should be fine until tonight.”

“Okay,” Shane sighed, not wanting to start an argument over soup in the ICU waiting room, “Let’s go.”

He motioned towards the door with his head, already starting to move in that direction, his parents following closely on his heels. Trying to reach for the buzzer, he realized his hands

were full, and gestured in the direction of the panel.

“Mom, do you mind?” he asked, his mother quickly stepping forward to press the button. The door buzzed, unlocking, and Yuna reached for the handle, pulling the door open for Shane and his dad to step through before following them, clutching her purse tightly over her shoulder.

“This way,” Shane called back to his parents, already walking down the hall towards Ilya’s room, the two scrambling to follow. The family walked through the winding corridors, Shane already forging ahead without a second thought. He had walked this path at least three times already, and he had a feeling that he would remember the layout of the ICU for the rest of his life. His heart rate slowed as they reached Ilya’s door, leaning against the handle with his elbow to shove it open.

“I’m back,” he called out as he entered, “My parents are here.”

Ilya’s face lit up in a grin, smiling towards the three, “*Solynshko!*” he called happily, “You are here!”

“Yeah of course I’m here Ilya,” Shane said, shrugging the bags down towards the floor and reaching for him, “I’m right here.”

“Good,” Ilya hummed happily, nuzzling into Shane’s hand with an uncharacteristic sweetness. Ilya wasn’t as shy about PDA as Shane was, but he usually kept things pretty tame around the Hollanders. Shane looked up at the clock, noting that it was about the time that Ilya was due for his pain medicine.

“Did a nurse come in and give you something while I was gone?” he murmured down, brushing his hand through Ilya’s hair.

“Yes,” Ilya hummed happily, blinking up at him, “No pills, just liquid in my uh, what do you call the arm tube?” he squinted at Shane, translation slipping his mind.

“The IV?” Shane asked, fingers scratching gently at his scalp.

“*Da*,” Ilya grinned, “That.”

Shane heard shuffling behind him, suddenly remembering that they weren’t alone.

“Hey Ilya, you have visitors,” he said, stepping back and gesturing towards his parents.

Ilya’s face lit up again, “Yuna! David!” he rasped cheerfully, “You came!”

“Of course we did,” Shane’s mother said, moving towards the bed, “We needed to make sure you were okay.”

Ilya shrugged bashfully, “Am fine,” he croaked, “Everyone makes such big fuss.”

“Well you gave us quite a big scare,” Shane’s father said, stepping forward to lay a gentle hand on Ilya’s blanketed ankle.

“I’m sorry,” Ilya rasped, looking down at his lap.

“No, no,” Yuna jumped in quickly, “Don’t apologize, you didn’t do anything wrong. We were worried because we care.” She looked down at Ilya softly, reaching down to brush the back of her hand across his cheek, “Okay?”

Ilya nodded, “Okay,” he whispered, looking unsure. David pulled up a chair next to the bed, gesturing for Yuna to sit down, which she did, setting her purse on the floor beside her, keeping her gaze fixed on Ilya. David moved to stand behind her, resting a hand on her shoulder.

“How are you feeling?” Yuna asked, “Any pain?”

Ilya shook his head, “No, no pain,” he rasped, “They give me good drugs.”

Yuna nodded approvingly, “Good,” she said softly, reaching down to pat at his arm, “You let us know if it starts to hurt again, okay?”

Ilya nodded, and Yuna smiled at him approvingly,

Shane’s phone rang suddenly, and he looked down, squinting in confusion at the number he didn’t recognize. Cautiously, he swiped to accept the call and lifted the phone to his ear, “Hello?”

“Hi, um,” the person on the other end of the line cleared their throat, “Shane?”

“Yes? Who is this?” he asked, furrowing his brow.

“It’s uh… Jackson Vallières,” the voice said, sounding nervous, “I’m sorry to bother you, uh, I got your number from Hayden. He said you’re at the hospital, and uh…” his voice trailed off and he cleared his throat again. “I know you and Rozanov are friends, and I just uh…” his voice faded out again, “How is he?” he finally squeaked.

Shane took in a shaky breath, standing up and stepping away from the bed. He gestured apologetically towards Ilya, who was looking at him with confusion, and he pointed at the phone, “Sorry,” he whispered, pulling the phone away from his face slightly, “I just need to take this real quick okay?”

Ilya nodded, waving his arm and giving Shane a smile, mouthing, “Go on.”

Shane quickly returned his smile, ducking into the hallway and closing the door behind him.

“Jackson? You still there?” he asked, pulling the phone back up to his ear.

“Yeah,” the rookie whispered, sounding worse by the second, “Still here.”

“Hey, man,” Shane tried for a reassuring tone, “Take a deep breath, he’s going to be okay.”

He heard a rush of air through the phone as Vallières let out a whooshing exhale, falling silent for a moment before finally replying.

“Really?” he squeaked, sounding a little lighter.

“Yes,” Shane assured him, “He’s awake, cracking jokes, being his usual self.”

“That’s great,” Jackson sighed, and Shane could picture his shoulders sagging in relief. “I uh, I want him to know that I’m really sorry about what happened. I feel terrible about it.” His voice started to waver again, “I just uh, that was probably the scariest shit I’ve ever seen, and it was all my fault. It’s been playing in my head all night, I can’t stop seeing it. I just, I feel so guilty, I couldn’t stop thinking about it, I…”

“Vallières,” Shane cut him off, “Take another deep breath man. It’s okay.”

He heard the sound of the rookie trying to pull in some deep shuddering breaths echoing through the phone’s speaker.

“He’s going to be okay,” he said again, “It wasn’t your fault Jackson, it was an accident.”

“Everyone keeps telling me that,” Vallières muttered, “I guess it’s just hard to convince myself of.”

Shane nodded slowly, he could understand that. He was still struggling to convince himself that Ilya wasn’t going to drop dead, still trying to push away the questions that swirled around in his mind:

*What if I hadn’t gotten to him fast enough?*

*What if I hadn’t found the artery?*

*Could I have stopped it?*

*If I skated faster, could I have pushed him out of the way?*

“Everyone keeps saying it because it’s true,” Shane said firmly, shoving down the thoughts to focus on the shaken rookie, “He doesn’t blame you at all.”

Jackson let out another shaky breath, “He probably should,” he huffed softly, sounding sheepish.

“No,” Shane said firmly, “It was an accident. He knows it wasn’t your fault.”

The rookie sniffled and mumbled something on the other side of the phone, and Shane pressed the speaker closer to his ear, trying to hear.

“What was that?” he asked gently, still trying to focus on listening. The rookie didn’t respond, but Shane could hear the sound of muffled sobs coming through the phone. “Hey, Jackson,” he said, as kindly as he could manage, “Are you alone right now?”

“No,” Vallières sniffled, “I’m at my parent’s house, I’m taking the next few games off.”

Shane nodded slowly. He understood why the rookie wasn't eager to jump back on the ice, he could say that he was exactly itching to get out there either. Every time he thought about hockey, his mind returned to the moment of the collision, watching blood pour from Ilya's body, painting the surface of the rink in a slippery puddle that Shane knew would be haunting his nightmares for the rest of his life.

"That's good," he responded, "You need some time to process."

"Yeah," Vallières mumbled, "My mom said something about taking me to see a psychiatrist. Something about traumatic events, I don't know," he sounded uneasy at the idea.

"You should," Shane replied, "It might help you get through it easier."

Jackson made a non-committal noise on the other end of the line, "Yeah, I guess we'll see," he muttered, "I'll think about it."

"Good," Shane said, hoping that the rookie would actually listen to his mother's suggestion, "It sounds like a good idea."

"Yeah," Vallières replied, sounding unconvinced, "I guess so."

Shane glanced towards the clock on the wall, frowning when he saw that he had been in the hallway for almost five minutes.

"I'm sorry Vallières, but I need to go," he said, hoping that his voice sounded apologetic, "There's a lot going on right now."

"Yeah, of course," Jackson said quickly, "I'm sorry for taking up so much of your time."

"No, don't worry about that," Shane answered, "I'm glad you called, I've been worried about you." That was a lie. Not the part about being glad he called, he really was glad about that, but he couldn't honestly say that Vallières had crossed his mind for more than a second in the last 15 hours, his thoughts centered solely around Ilya.

"I'll be alright Captain," the rookie replied in an unconvincing tone, "Will you tell Rozanov how sorry I am and that I'm glad he'll be alright? I want to come visit, but I don't know if he wants to see me right now."

"I'll tell him," Shane promised, "He's probably not up for extra visitors yet, but I'll let you know when he is, okay?"

"Thank you," Jackson said, sounding a little lighter, "I really appreciate it."

"Of course," Shane replied, "Take care of yourself rookie, okay?"

"I will," Vallières answered, "Thank you."

"No problem. See you in a couple of weeks," he started to move towards the door, eager to get back into the room.

“See you then,” Jackson’s voice came through the speaker, “Bye.”

“Goodbye,” Shane answered back, “Hang in there rookie.” Pulling the phone away from his ear, he pushed the button to end the call, shoving his phone into his pocket, taking a deep breath and running his hand through his hair before walking back into the room. His parents were sitting in chairs on either side of the bed, talking softly with Ilya, the three of them looking up at him as he approached.

“What was that about?” his mom asked, a crease between her eyebrows.

“It was Jackson Vallières,” Shane said, approaching the bed, “He wanted to check on Ilya. He’s freaking out, he feels terrible.”

Ilya frowned, “He should not feel terrible, was accident.”

Shane nodded, “That’s what I told him,” he said.

Ilya nodded approvingly, “Good,” he whispered, mouth opening in a yawn.

“Does he have people to support him?” Yuna asked, furrowing her brows, “He’s still so young, and this is a lot for anyone to deal with.”

Shane nodded again, “Yeah he’s got his parents, and I’m sure the rest of the team are taking care of him. He mentioned maybe seeing a psychiatrist.”

Yuna bobbed her head approvingly, “That’s good. It might not be a bad thing for you and Ilya to consider too.”

“Mom...” Shane started before he was interrupted by a sound from the bed. Ilya let out a massive yawn, stretching his jaw so far it almost looked painful. His eyes were starting to droop closed again and Shane could tell that he was fighting to stay awake, but quickly losing the battle.

“Are you getting tired?” he murmured down at him and Ilya nodded, fixing his droopy eyes on Shane’s face with a distant smile.

“*Da*,” he rasped, “The meds, they make me tired.”

“That’s okay dear,” Yuna assured him, reaching down to pat his arm, “Get some rest, we’ll be here for a little while.”

Ilya nodded, already starting to drift away. Shane watched as the muscles in his face relaxed, his jaw going slack, his pouty lips parting slightly. He looked so young like this, so vulnerable and small, and it made Shane’s heart ache. Before he could stop himself, he bent down and pressed a kiss to Ilya’s forehead, ignoring the soft glances his parents shot at each other.

His mother insisted that he should nap too, thankfully dropping the therapist topic for the time being. Shane tried to protest, but she resisted, pointing out that they were there to watch over Ilya and promising to wake Shane up if anything changed.

He curled up on the small sofa that was tucked beneath the window, huddled beneath a thin hospital blanket. His mind was just starting to slide gently into sleep when he was startled awake by a sudden sound, jolting upright, the blanket falling away from his shoulders.

*“Il’ya! Il’ya Rozanov!”*

Shane heard angry shouts coming from the hallway outside the closed door. He tilted his head, trying to hear as the shouting continued:

*“Gde on? Ne trogay menya! Il’ya!”* (Where is he? Don’t touch me! Ilya!)

Ilya stirred in the bed, “Sveta?” he mumbled, looking confused.

“Svetlana?” Shane repeated back, standing up from the bed and moving towards the door. As he walked closer, he recognized that the shouting was in Russian, a woman’s voice. He reached for the door handle and wrenched it open, blinking in surprise at what he found. A tall, fashionably dressed woman with long brown curls was struggling against two burly security guards. They each had her by an arm, attempting to control her, but she was holding her own, twisting and kicking at them, spitting out what Shane vaguely recognized as curse words, words he’d grown familiar with from years of playing against Ilya Rozanov.

“Svetlana?” Shane asked again, this time directing it at the woman.

*“Da!”* she shouted, exasperated, “Will you please tell these *mudaki* to get their hands off of me?!”

“Sveta?” he heard Ilya rasping from behind him, attempting to yell through his swollen vocal cords.

“Ilya! Don’t shout!” Shane yelled back, “You’ll hurt yourself!”

*“Ilyusha!”* Svetlana shouted, *“Ya zdes’, no eti pridurki ne puskayut menya vnutr’!”* (I’m here, but these idiots won’t let me in!)

“Let her in!” Ilya croaked, “I want to see her!”

“Ilya!” Shane hollered again, “Stop yelling!”

He turned back to the security guards, squaring his shoulders and putting on what he hoped was an intimidating face, “Let her go,” he snapped, glowering at the taller guard who had Svetlana’s right wrist in a death grip, “She’s family, she’s here to see him.”

The guard glared back at him, “She pushed her way past two check-ins to get here. She’s not on the approved visitors list.”

*Fuck! How had he forgotten to find out how to get names added to the list?*

Shane swallowed, preparing to open his mouth again, when he felt a presence approaching behind him. He turned to see his mother stalking towards the door, a furious look on her face that nearly made him duck out of the range of her wrath.

“Take your hands off of her,” Yuna growled at the security guards, “She is his family, she *is* approved.”

The guard hesitated, shooting a nervous glance at his partner. Shane tried to contain his smirk. He knew his mom could be scary, he had watched 6’2”, 250 pound linemen duck out of the way when they saw her approaching. Yuna Hollander’s reputation preceded her in the Metros locker room, and apparently her powers extended to hospital security guards as well.

“Ma’am,” the guard finally said, carefully, “I’m sorry, but that’s not how it works. We need permission from the patient or his next of kin.”

Yuna whipped around, fixing her gaze on Ilya, “Do you want Svetlana to come in?” she asked.

“*Da!* Yes! Of course!” Ilya rasped, flailing an arm in frustration.

Yuna turned back to the security guard, crossing her arms and glaring daggers in his direction, “There,” she snapped, “He wants her here. Happy?”

The two security guards exchanged another glance, hesitating before releasing their grip on Svetlana, the woman stumbling forward with a curse. She jerked away from them as soon as they let go, ripping her arms free and examining her coat.

“*Blyat!*” she swore, angrily swiping at her sleeves and glaring at the men, already moving towards the door. Shane stepped aside, ready to let her brush past him, but she reached out and grabbed him, pulling into a tight hug. He let out a surprised squeak, freezing momentarily before hesitantly wrapping his arms around her, loosely returning the hug. After a few seconds she stepped back, and he saw tears gathering in her eyes.

“Thank you,” she whispered, looking up at him, “Thank you for saving my *Ilyusha*.”

Shane swallowed, ignoring the sting in his chest at the word “my”. He knew that there was nothing more than a deep friendship between Svetlana and Ilya now, but the pang of insecurity that he had felt when Ilya looked at him and said, “I could marry Svetlana” had returned. He pushed the feeling down, opening his mouth to respond,

“I wasn’t going to let him die out there,” he surprised himself with how shaky his voice was.

Svetlana nodded up at him, raising a hand to pat gently at his cheek, “I know,” she murmured softly, “You are good boyfriend, you would not let anything bad happen to him.”

*But I did,* Shane thought. *I did let something bad happen to him. He’s laying in this hospital bed because I wasn’t fast enough to stop the hit.*

He knew it was irrational, the collision had happened so fast that no one had time to do anything, JJ, Ilya, and Jackson didn’t even have time to swerve out of the way before they all smashed into each other. He was jolted from his spiraling by the taller of the two security guards clearing his throat.

“She can go in if the patient says it’s okay, but we need her to come down to the check-in desk at some point and sign in. She will still need to be added to the approved visitors list.”

Yuna flapped her hand at the guards, “We’ll get it taken care of,” she said coolly, “I think we’re all set here now,” she glared at the two men, daring them to disagree with her. The security guards shared another nervous look, before the shorter one spoke up,

“I’m sorry ma’am, but there’s a limit on the number of visitors that can be in the room at a time, hospital policy. Would you or your husband be willing to sit in the waiting room while she goes in?”

Yuna nodded, “Yes, we were told about that policy yesterday. As long as she’s allowed in, I have no problem stepping out.”

“I can step out too,” David said, walking towards the door, “Let them catch up in private.”

“Thank you,” Svetlana said, smiling at Shane’s parents warmly, “You have been a great help.”

“Of course,” Yuna replied, returning her smile, “We wouldn’t want to be anywhere else.”

His parents grabbed their coats, his mother stopping to drop a kiss on the top of Ilya’s head, and headed for the door.

“We’ll be just down the hall sweetie,” Yuna said, giving Shane a pat on the shoulder as she walked past him.

“Thanks mom,” he called after them, his dad turning to give him a wave, “Thanks dad!”

His parents disappeared down the hallway, and he turned to Svetlana, stepping aside and motioning for her to enter the room. She squeezed past him in the narrow entryway, her heels clacking against the floor as she walked in, turning to face the bed.

“*Ilyusha*,” she whispered, her face paling at the sight of her childhood friend. She froze, staring down at him and swallowing hard.

“*Sveta!*” Ilya croaked, “*Vy zdes’!*” (You’re here!)

“*Konechno, ya zdes’*,” (Of course I’m here) she said, crossing the room quickly to stand at Ilya’s side, “*Nichto ne smozhet razluchit’ menya s toboy*,” (Nothing could keep me from you). Reaching down with a thin hand, she rested her palm on Ilya’s cheek, giving him a gentle pat, making him scowl up at her.

“*Ty chto, proletela cherez ves’ okean tol’ko dlya togo, chtoby menya udarit’?*” (Did you fly across the ocean just to hit me?) he grumbled, giving her a small glare.

Svetlana scoffed, “*Ty menya napugal durak. Yedinstvennaya prichina, po kotoroy ya ne udaril tebya sil’neye, eto to, chto ty lezhish’ na bol’nichnoy koyke*.” (You scared me idiot. The only reason I didn’t smack you harder is because you are laying in a hospital bed)

*“Mne zhal’,”* Ilya said sheepishly, looking away from her intense gaze, *“Ya ne khotel tebya napugat’.”* (I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to scare you)

Shane watched as the two continued their conversation, Svetlana letting out bursts of rushed Russian words, Ilya responding slowly, still rasping hoarsely. He waited for the jealousy to return, expecting it to flare angrily at being shut out of the exchange, but it didn’t come. Instead, he felt his chest warm at the sight of Ilya relaxing, speaking more comfortably in his native language, feeling grateful that his boyfriend had a piece of his homeland here with him now.

“We should probably talk in English so we don’t leave your boy out,” Svetlana said in English, smiling in Shane’s direction, “He is my hero now Ilyusha, I think he might be stealing your spot.”

Ilya pouted dramatically, “He cannot steal my spot,” he whined, “I have known you longer.”

“Ah, but he was such a gentleman when you rarely are,” Svetlana replied dramatically, “How could I resist?”

Ilya scowled up at her, “Are you trying to steal my boyfriend Sveta?”

She laughed, throwing her head back as she did, her curls bouncing behind her. “I could not steal him from you even if I wanted to,” she replied, waving a hand in Shane’s direction, “The boy is madly in love with you.”

*“Da,”* Ilya rasped, looking up, “He is sweet boy.” Shane blushed, stepping towards the bed and taking hold of the hand his boyfriend had stretched out to him.

“Very sweet boy,” Svetlana agreed, “He arranged car to pick me up. I told him he is my new favorite.”

Ilya pouted again, glancing between Shane and Svetlana, “No fair,” he whined, “I am injured and you choose him as your new favorite.”

Shane snorted, leaning down to drop a kiss on Ilya’s forehead, “Don’t worry,” he murmured down at him, “You’ll always be her real favorite.”

His boyfriend blinked up at him, his eyes still bleary and drooping.

“Are you still tired?” Shane asked, rubbing a hand against his cheek, Ilya nuzzling into the touch like a cat.

*“Da,”* he yawned, his eyes already starting to blink shut, mouth turning down into a frown, “Hate it. Slept too much already.”

“It’s okay,” Shane murmured, pressing another kiss between his boyfriend’s eyebrows, “Your body is healing, you need rest.”

“It’s true,” Svetlana agreed, “Listen to your boyfriend.”

Ilya cracked his eyes open, looking between the two again, “You will both be here when I wake up?” he croaked.

“Yes,” they promised at the same time, Ilya smiling contentedly and letting his eyes slip closed. His breathing slowly evened out, his face relaxing as he quickly drifted off to sleep.

“He looks so small when sleeping,” Svetlana whispered, looking up at Shane with tears in her eyes, “I do not like to see him this way.”

Shane swallowed hard, nodding, “I know,” he choked out, his voice growing thick, “It’s really hard to see him like this.”

“*Da*,” Svetlana agreed, swiping at her eyes, “But he is strong boy, he will be fine.”

Shane nodded again, swallowing the lump in his throat. He heard a yawn from across the bed and looked up to see Svetlana covering her mouth, face scrunched up.

“Sorry,” she apologized sheepishly, “I didn’t get much sleep on the plane.”

“Why don’t you take a nap?” Shane offered, gesturing towards the couch, “He’ll probably be asleep for awhile, and I’m here to keep an eye on him.”

Svetlana hesitated for a moment, but nodded, standing up slowly from the chair, her eyes still locked on Ilya’s sleeping form, tucked under layers of sheets and blankets.

“You will wake me up if something is wrong?” she asked, turning her gaze to Shane.

“Yeah, of course,” he agreed, and Svetlana’s shoulders relaxed. She nodded again, letting out another yawn and turning towards the couch.

“Okay, I will nap.” She moved away from the bed, picking up the blanket that Shane had left on the couch and wrapping it around her shoulders. Grabbing her purse from the floor in front of her, she dug around for a moment, contents clinking, until her hands emerged holding her phone and a charger. “Is there outlet?” she asked, waving the cord in Shane’s direction.

“Yeah, there’s one next to the couch,” he gestured towards the wall next to her, sinking into the chair beside Ilya’s bed.

“Thank you,” Svetlana answered, leaning over the couch to plug her phone in. She fluffed the pillow that was tucked into the corner of the cushions, plopping her head down onto it with a sigh, curls flopping over the fabric. Yanking the blanket over her body, she rolled onto her side, closing her eyes with a soft sigh.

Shane stayed awake, watching over the two of them as they slept, the sun slowly rising in the sky, spilling more light in through the window and bathing the room in light and warmth. He closed his eyes, leaning into the glow, letting the heat warm the chill he felt deep in his chest.

Thank you all so much for your amazing support and feedback on the last four chapters! I have at least two more chapters planned, the next one should be out very soon, it's almost done. I really appreciate all of the love you guys have shown for this fic, it's really taken over my brain for the last few weeks, and I keep getting more ideas, so you get more chapters! I've also been experimenting with some mixed media in this fic, you may have noticed that the texts and phone calls have changed to images, and I'm planning to do more with embedded images in the upcoming chapters, so stay tuned for that! Thank you again, and please let me know your thoughts!

## Chapter 6: as rumors swirl around us

### Chapter Summary

The internet reacts to Ilya's injury and Shane's heroic actions as rumors start to fly. Ilya's recovery takes a setback.

### Chapter Notes

Hi everybody! This chapter is going to be heavier on the embedded images, please let me know what you think about the mixed media format! I wanted to try something new and include images for the social media posts to try and add a layer of realism to the storyline. Please note that I do not own these photos, all credit goes to the original creators and image credits will be tagged in the notes at the end.

These are all completely made up social media profiles, any similarities to any accounts active or abandoned is unintentional and entirely coincidental.

I'm doing in-text translations for the extended Russian dialogue in this chapter again, please let me know if it improves the reading experience or if it makes it worse! Again, I do not speak Russian, so if you do, please feel free to correct any of the dialogue in this chapter!

Short translations:

Nyet: No

Eto bol'no: It hurts

Bolit: Hurts

Muya lyobuv: My love

Lyubimyy: Darling

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



**Boston Raiders Official**

@boston\_raiders



Boston Raiders captain Ilya Rozanov has been taken to the hospital following a laceration to the throat sustained on the ice. The thoughts and prayers of the Raiders family are with him at this time.

Updates will be provided as they are available.

8:35 PM · Mar 13, 2018

**109K** Retweets   **10.4K** Quote Tweets   **589.1K** Likes





**Raiders Rule** @boston\_no\_1 · Mar 13

...

Prayers 🙏

💬 18

↻ 2

❤️ 523



**Jacob** 🏒 @raidersfan232 · Mar 13

...

Hang in there Rozanov! We are all rooting for you!

💬 10

↻ 2

❤️ 387



**goals to the wall** @nopucksgiven · Mar 13

...

Probably the worst hockey injury I've ever seen. Definitely praying for him rn 🙏

💬 8

↻ 6

❤️ 329



**Tim Robinson** @timrobinson · Mar 13

...

Gnarly. Reminds me of Malarchuk. Praying for a similar outcome for Rozanov 🙏.

💬 14

↻ 8

❤️ 281



**slapshot king** @powerplay87 · Mar 13

...

Kudos to Hollander for jumping into action so fast!

💬 11

↻ 3

❤️ 103



**LDY37** @hyd378 · Mar 13

...

Fr! You never would've known they were rivals by the way he reacted. Gained a lot of respect for Hollander today.

💬 12

↻ 3

❤️ 150



**jake the snake**

...

@jacob\_anderson3

who was watching the raiders game tonight?? craziest shit i've ever seen 🤔

8:37 PM · Mar 13, 2018

140 Retweets 48 Quote Tweets 481 Likes





**noah schipper**

@imwalkinhere82



yo can you even survive an injury like that???

[#ilyarozanov](#) [#bostonraiders](#)

8:39 PM · Mar 13, 2018

---

**186** Retweets   **29** Quote Tweets   **3.7K** Likes



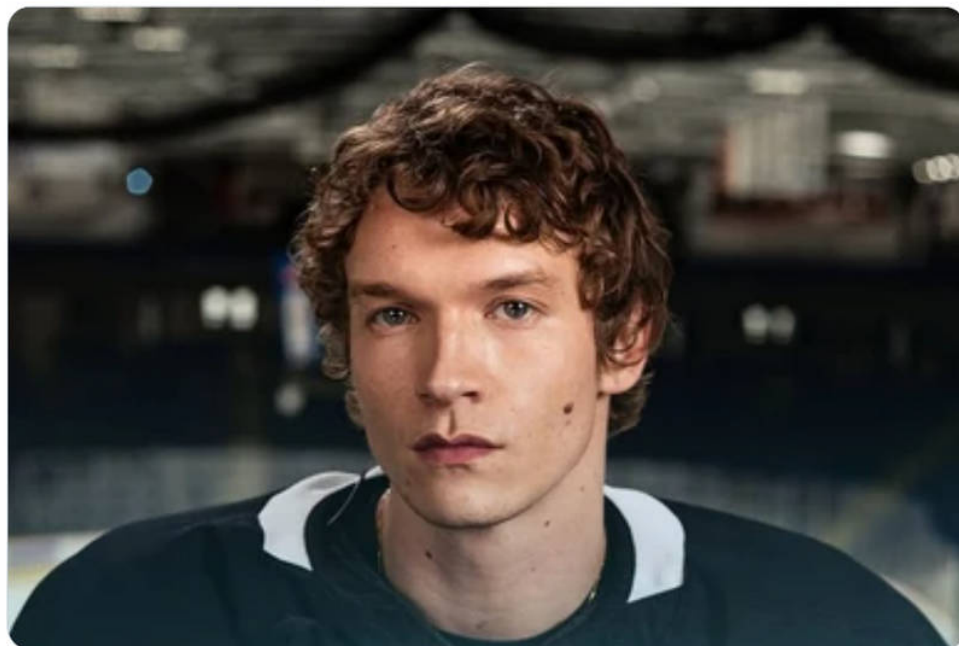


**Major League Hockey Updates**

@mlhockeyupdates



Boston captain Ilya Rozanov suffers severe injury on the ice, rushed to hospital in ambulance, status unclear.



8:40 PM · Mar 13, 2018

**186** Retweets   **79** Quote Tweets   **3.4K** Likes





**Jacob Lynkowski** @frozen\_fury · Mar 13

...

So scary...never seen that much blood on the ice before.

8



57



**big austin** @austin\_jackson · Mar 13

...

Fr. Big prayers for Rozanov rn.

4



32



**Raiders #1** @bostonlifer · Mar 13

...



1



22



**AD3** @AZ3897 · Mar 13

...

Yeah that was gnarly. I hope they were able to get him to the hospital in time.



17



**alex** @metros\_on\_top · Mar 13

...

I may not be Rozanov's biggest fan, but you never want to see someone get hurt like that. Massive respect to Hollander for jumping into action.

4



37



**AJ** @raidersrampage · Mar 13

...

Absolutely! I was shocked he got there before the medics did!

4



21



**raiders lifer** @raider\_nation · Mar 13

...

I was just surprised it was him. Don't him and Roz hate each other?

4



8



**alex** @metros\_on\_top · Mar 13

...

I mean they're rivals, but they're still human beings. No one wants to see a fellow player die in front of them. Of course he jumped in, you expect him to just stand there and watch the dude bleed out?

3



22





**Raider's Fan** 🏒  
@BostonPuck32



Massive respect to Shane Hollander for jumping into action tonight. It's not easy to know what to do in a situation like that. Prayers that Rozanov will pull through 🙏

9:32 PM · Mar 13, 2018

---

**310** Retweets   **214** Quote Tweets   **4.6K** Likes





**Boston Raiders Official**

@boston\_raiders



The Raiders team is happy to report that Ilya Rozanov is awake and talking in the hospital. A statement from his agent indicated that doctors expect a full recovery.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the Raiders and Metros medical staff who rushed to his aid, as well as the EMTs and paramedics who responded to the scene and all the talented staff at Montreal General Hospital who worked tirelessly to save his life.

The Raiders also wish to thank Metros captain Shane Hollander, whose quick intervention allowed medical staff to arrive and provide lifesaving aid. Putting aside rivalry to attend to a fellow player in a time of need is the kind of sportsmanship that makes the MLH great, and we commend Hollander for his actions.

[#81strong](#)

10:45 AM · Mar 14, 2018

---

**1.9K** Retweets   **738** Quote Tweets   **12.8K** Likes

---





**Noah Randolph**  
@noah\_randolph



Shane Hollander is a hero. The fact that he managed to stop an arterial bleed with his bare hands is crazy.  
Respect 🙏

[#81strong](#)

10:45 AM · Mar 14, 2018

**232** Retweets   **58** Quote Tweets   **1.9K** Likes



**Scott Hunter** ✓  
@scott\_hunter



Very happy to hear that Rozanov is stable and expected to be all right.

I have a great deal of respect for him on and off the ice, and I wish him all the best as he recovers.

[#81strong](#)

11:34 AM · Mar 14, 2018

**203** Retweets   **51** Quote Tweets   **7K** Likes





**hollanov truther**

@hollandergirl24



Shane Hollander spotted outside of Montreal General Hospital! Visiting his boyfriend perhaps???



① Shane Hollander is the captain of the Montreal Metros. It is not uncommon for the captain of an opposing team to visit an injured opponent as a show of respect and sportsmanship.

12:00 PM · Mar 15, 2018

**270** Retweets   **73** Quote Tweets   **5.2K** Likes





**Sammy** @icehawk23 · Mar 15

...

You "Hollanov" fangirls are absolutely unhinged. Leave them alone, Hollander visiting is completely normal, he's the captain of the team Rozanov was playing when he got hurt.

💬 17

↻ 10

♥ 153



**beam me up kory** @kory32974 · Mar 15

...

Fellas is it gay to visit an injured opponent?

💬 7

↻ 4

♥ 97



**A-dog** @aaron\_llyod · Mar 15

...

Imao the community note backing up your point

💬 3

↻

♥ 22



**matty matt** @matthew317 · Mar 15

...

I'm glad some people still have common sense 🙄

💬 2

↻ 1

♥ 30



**hollanov truther** @hollandergirl24 · Mar 15

...

does the opposing captain usually visit with an overnight bag???

💬 15

↻ 2

♥ 28



**JD** @jameson\_donalds · Mar 15

...

you don't even know if that's an overnight bag bro, it's probably just gifts from the Metros or some shit

💬 6

↻ 2

♥ 32





manifesting hollanov realness

@iceprincess39



my head cannon is that shane hollander is in montreal to confess his love to ilya after their shared traumatic experience

1:37 PM · Mar 15, 2018

38 Retweets 127 Quote Tweets 284 Likes



leo

@powerplay327



okay, I'm not saying I subscribe to the whole "hollanov" thing bc that's a little nuts, but genuinely, why is shane hollander still in montreal? don't the metros have a game in new york tonight?

2:04 PM · Mar 15, 2018

186 Retweets 29 Quote Tweets 3.7K Likes



Shane sighed, turning his phone off and dropping it into his lap. The media response and public speculation was starting to make his head swirl. Most of the attention had been overwhelmingly positive; commendations from fans and best wishes had been flooding in over the last two days. Shane's social media had been blowing up with comments and messages from Metros fans and Raiders fans alike, praising his quick actions and 'sportsmanship'. While most of the response was focused on Ilya's recovery, he had seen a few people speculating about the nature of their relationship, mostly being shot down as baseless speculation, but some of the posts were gaining traction.

Yuna had been on a full manager blitz over the last couple of days, Shane rarely saw her without her phone in her hand, typing rapidly or speaking intensely on the phone. She had

handled the calls from Theriault and the MLH, flying into a rage when Theriault insisted he be at the rink to attend practice for their game that evening.

“Are you seriously insisting that he return to the ice less than 48 hours after a deeply traumatic experience?” she had snapped into the phone, eyes blazing. Shane couldn’t hear Theriault’s response, but whatever it was, it was the wrong thing to say because the fire in Yuna’s eyes had raged into an inferno.

“I’m sure the media would love to hear that,” she had hissed into the phone, “I know a lot of journalists would be very interested to hear how seriously you take your player’s mental health.”

They had argued back and forth for a few minutes, but Yuna had come out victorious, getting Theriault to concede that Shane would have at least the next two weeks off, with an option of an additional week off if necessary. Shane had collapsed into her arms with gratitude when she hung up, suddenly overwhelmed with tears at the relief of not being forced to leave his boyfriend’s side and return to the ice where his life had almost ended.

Yuna had made all of the hospital staff attending to Ilya’s care sign NDAs, despite their assurances that the hospital would keep everything completely under the radar. Shane was still nervous that something would get out. As much as he wanted to come out, he wanted it to be on their terms, especially now.

It was the second morning since Ilya’s injury, sun just starting to peak in the sky, and Shane had barely left his side over the last 48 hours. His parents had managed to bully him into taking a shower in the cramped hospital bathroom, Shane scrubbing his hair and body at record time, bursting back out into the room and letting out a sigh of relief when he saw Ilya still sitting there, smiling back at him. His brain still hadn’t fully accepted the fact that his boyfriend wasn’t going to drop dead at any second and he preferred to keep eyes on him at all times. His parents had gone back to the hotel to nap, Svetlana arriving from her hotel at exactly 8:00, taking a seat on the couch and immediately falling back asleep. She still hadn’t quite adjusted to the time difference, napping in the room frequently, whenever Ilya was asleep.

A soft whine of pain brought Shane’s mind back to the cramped hospital room, his eyes immediately snapping down to where Ilya lay on the bed in front of him, shivering slightly. Shane stood up, his chair scraping painfully across the tile floor, the noise making him wince as he hurried towards the bed and reached a hand out towards his boyfriend, resting it softly on his arm. He frowned, Ilya’s skin felt clammy, small goosebumps rising up from his pale flesh.

*Come to think of it, he does look paler than he did this morning,* Shane noticed with a start.

“Ilya?” he asked, wrinkling his eyebrows in concern, gently jostling the man’s arm, “Are you okay?”

Ilya’s eyelids cracked open slowly, squinting like the light hurt. He raised a hand to shield his eyes, wincing at the movement.

“Feel...*plokhoy*,” he rasped, his lashes fluttering shut again, “*Menya...golova bolit.*”

Shane’s head snapped towards the other side of the room where Svetlana was curled up on the ugly, grey couch that sat under the window.

“What is he saying?” he asked, eyes searching her face desperately.

She frowned, her eyebrows coming together in a furrow, forming a crease. She stood up from the couch, walking towards the bed quickly and brushing a gentle hand across Ilya’s forehead.

“He says he feels bad,” she translated, “His head hurts.” She frowned again, “He feels warm, *da?*”

Shan looked back down to the bed, raising his hand from Ilya’s arm to press the back of it to the injured man’s forehead. The skin was hot against his flesh, and he yanked his hand back like he had been burned, his heart starting to pound in his chest.

“Yeah, yeah he does,” he agreed, “I think we should call a nurse.”

Svetlana nodded, already reaching for the call button, pressing it quickly with a long, polished fingernail and raising the remote up to her mouth, foot tapping impatiently against the floor as she waited for an answer.

“Hello?” a voice crackled from the remote’s tiny speaker.

“Room 514,” Svetlana snapped, “Something is wrong. He says his head hurts and he feels warm, looks pale and shaky.”

“Okay,” the voice said quickly, “Someone will be right in.”

The crackling on the remote stopped, and Svetlana dropped it back onto the bed, her attention returning to Ilya. “*Vse budet khorosho Ilyusha,*” (Everything will be fine, Ilyusha) she murmured, reaching out to brush a gentle hand through his curls, “*Ya zdes', tvoya Dzheyn tozhe zdes'.*” (I am here, your Jane is here too)

“*Chuvstvuyu sebya uzhasno,*” (I feel terrible) Ilya groaned, leaning into her touch. Svetlana frowned again, looking up at Shane, her eyes reflecting the worry that was coiling in his stomach. He swallowed hard, staring at Ilya, concern growing by the second. The door opened behind him and he snapped his head around, seeing Ilya’s nurse for the day, Nicholas, entering the room.

“How are we feeling Mr. Rozanov?” Nicholas asked, approaching the bed as he snapped on a pair of gloves.

“*Plokhoy,*” Ilya grumbled, scrunching his eyes closed, a hand coming up to clutch at his head.

“He says terrible,” Svetlana translated, chewing nervously on her lip.

“He’s been speaking in Russian since he woke up,” Shane said anxiously, “He wasn’t doing that yesterday.”

“Hmm,” Nicholas hummed, reaching for the pager clipped to his pants, “I’m going to call the doctor in to take a look, see if we can figure out what’s going on.”

He gave Shane and Svetlana a reassuring smile that neither returned, their eyes fixed intently on the pale, shaking figure in the bed. Nicholas worked around them, checking Ilya’s lines and monitors, readjusting the flow on his IV lines and running a digital thermometer across his forehead, his brow furrowing slightly when he pulled it away to glance at the reading.

“Everything okay?” Shane asked nervously, rocking back and forth on his heels.

“He’s running a bit of a fever,” Nicholas said calmly, “Not terribly uncommon with an injury like his. We’ll get the doctor in here to take a look.”

Shane paced anxiously for the next ten minutes while they waited for the doctor to arrive, keeping his eyes fixed on his boyfriend the whole time. Ilya was still shaking and sweating, still answering questions in short, pained bursts of Russian. Shane’s heart was picking up pace again, squeezing tightly with each beat, suffocating him. He tried to focus on drawing in one breath at a time, staring intensely at the shivering form on the bed, the cold, sinking feeling in his stomach returning with a vengeance.

When the doctor entered, the room became a flurry of activity. More nurses streamed through the door, buzzing around the bed and blocking Shane’s view of his boyfriend. He was pushed into a corner, craning his neck desperately around the bodies obstructing his vision, trying to catch a glimpse of what was going on.

“*Sheyn?*” he heard Ilya croak, “*Gde ty?*” (Where are you?)

“I’m here Ilya!” he called out, “Stay calm, let them check you out.”

“*Vso khorosho,*” (Everything is fine), Svetlana’s voice came from the opposite corner of the room, “*My s Sheynom zdes', vso budet khorosho,*” (Shane and I are here, it will be alright).

Ilya mumbled out answers as the doctors asked him questions, still speaking in halting Russian, Svetlana translating rapidly, her voice ringing across the room. Shane tried to take a deep breath, pressing his hand to his chest and focusing on slow inhales and exhales. His hands were twitching, skin crawling with the need to push through the medical staff surrounding the bed and take Ilya’s hand.

“What’s going on?” Shane directed the question at the nurse standing closest to him, bending over the bed to adjust some monitor or tube.

“He’s just running a slight fever,” the nurse said with a small smile, “We’re giving him some medication and checking the wound for signs of infection.”

On cue, Ilya yet out a yelp of pain, “*Nyet, nyet,*” he rasped, “*Ostanovis', ty delayesh' mne bol'no!*” (Stop, you’re hurting me!).

Svetlana, who apparently had a better view of the bed than Shane did, called back to him, “*Il'ya, stoy spokoyno, im nuzhno osmotret' tvoyu ranu,*” (Ilya, hold still, they need to check your wound).

“*Eto bol'no,*” Shane heard him cry, followed by the sound of the heart monitor increasing as Ilya thrashed on the bed.

“Sir, sir you need to hold still,” one of the nurses said, reaching down to restrain one of his wrists, “Please sir, we’re trying to help you.”

“*Nyet, nyet,*” Ilya wailed, “*Sheyn, ya khochu Sheyna,*” (Shane, I want Shane).

“He is scared!” Svetlana called over the noise, “Let Shane hold his hand, he will calm!”

The doctor looked between Svetlana and Shane, seemingly considering for a second. “Alright,” she said finally, motioning for Shane to come towards the bed, “Stand on his right side and hold that hand, we can work around you for now.”

Shane lurched towards the bed, shoving his way between two nurses and reaching down to grasp Ilya’s clammy hand in his own.

“I’m here baby,” he murmured, leaning forward so Ilya could hear him, “It’s okay, I’m here.”

“*Sheyn,*” Ilya gasped up at him, eyes brimming with tears, “*Bolit.*”

“Shhh,” Shane soothed, leaning down to drop a gentle kiss to Ilya’s sweaty forehead, “I know Ilya, I’m so sorry. Just a few more minutes, okay?”

Ilya whined, melting into the touch, eyes squeezing shut, giving a tiny nod. Taking that as permission to continue, the doctor reached back down to Ilya’s throat, gently peeling the rest of the bandage away, the Russian letting out a yelp of pain as the adhesive clung to his skin, tugging the flesh forward before releasing it with a snap.

“Sorry, sorry,” the doctor winced, looking down at Ilya sympathetically, “Worst parts over now.”

Shane’s gaze drifted down to the wound, breath catching in his throat when he caught a glimpse at it. The skin was red and slightly swollen, puffing around the thin black stitches, an opaque, yellow-clear liquid oozing out of the cut, crusting slightly around the edges. His gaze snapped up to the doctor, eyes trying to search her face, gauging her reaction. He couldn’t read any visible thoughts from her as she leaned in to inspect the skin.

“Looks like you have a slight infection here Mr. Rozanov,” she said, dabbing gently at the wound with a dampened piece of gauze, “We’re going to get this irrigated and redressed with some topical antibiotics and get some more antibiotics going in your IV.”

“Is it bad?” Shane asked anxiously, chewing on his lower lip. The doctor shook her head, looking up at him with a reassuring smile.

“No, very mild,” she assured him, “Not at all uncommon with an injury like this, it’s actually more unusual not to get a slight infection.”

Shane nodded slowly, not feeling entirely comforted by that. “So, he’ll be okay?” he asked haltingly, eyes darting back down to his boyfriend, who was blinking up at him blearily.

“His prognosis is still very good,” the doctor said, giving Ilya a gentle pat on the arm, “He’s doing very well all things considered. The IV antibiotics should start working relatively quickly, and we’ll get the wound cleaned and keep it uncovered for now so that we can keep an eye on it.”

“Okay,” Shane whispered, gaze fixed on Ilya’s pale face. He kept his eyes locked there as the nurses cleaned and sanitized the wound, wincing at the yelps of pain his boyfriend was letting out. When it was finally over Ilya was panting and shaking, his eyes screwed shut, mouth open as he let out tiny gasps.

“It’s done baby,” Shane murmured, leaning down to pressed a kiss to Ilya’s sweaty forehead, “You did so good.”

Ilya didn’t answer, just let out another whine, a tear slipping past his closed eyes and rolling down his cheek. Shane brushed it away with his thumb, murmuring soothingly to him as the nurses filed out of the room, one stopping briefly to speak with Svetlana, the woman nodding intently as they spoke. Shane kept his eyes locked on Ilya, the rest of the room fading away as he focused on his boyfriend. For the second time in three days, he had been absolutely certain that the love of his life was about to die in front of him. His heart was still pounding in his chest, and he tried to draw in a deep breath, a slow shuddering inhale that blew out of him in a rush. Groaning, he lowered his head to the bedrail, swallowing a wave of nausea that washed over him unexpectedly.

*He’s okay. He’s breathing. He’s fine.* Shane chanted the words in his head like a mantra, trying to focus on the feeling of Ilya’s hand in his, still warm, fingers twitching gently as he drifted off into a fitful sleep. Sniffing, Shane snaked his arm through the rail, sliding his hand across Ilya’s chest and splaying his fingers out, resting his palm against the center of his ribs. He could feel his heartbeat faintly through the skin, and he focused on the sensation, trying to match his breathing to the slow rise and fall of his boyfriend’s chest beneath his hand.

----

The rest of the day was torture, listening to Ilya whimper and groan in discomfort, calling out for his mother in Russian in a fevered delirium. Every time the word "mama" left his lips, Shane felt his heart splitting farther apart. In those moments, he found himself talking to Irina again, begging her, if she was still out there somewhere, to please bring some comfort to her son. He felt helpless, didn’t know what to do other than to try and calm him the best he could. He would out to soothe him with gentle brushes of his hand against his cheek, leaning down to murmur comforting words to him. Ilya would usually whine and relax into his touch, face relaxing for a moment before scrunching back up in pain. The doctors had increased his pain medication, but it didn’t seem to be cutting all of it, and Ilya was shivering despite the blankets that had been layered on top of him, fever still racking through his body.

Nurses came in and out every 30 minutes, checking his temperature and applying ointment to his wound, reassuring Shane each time that the fever was remaining steady, no signs of the infection worsening. He chewed on his lip nervously, forming a sore, the skin swelling over the hours until it finally split into his mouth with a small burst of blood.

He kept his parents updated over text, Yuna had been ready to rush across the street at the first sign of trouble, but Shane encouraged them to stay at the hotel. As much as he appreciated their support, his mother had fallen firmly into manager mode, which again, he appreciated, she was handling everything that was too much for him right now, but it was starting to get overwhelming. Shane's brain was still racing, and he wanted to focus solely on Ilya.

As evening fell, visiting hours came to an end and Svetlana was forced to return to the hotel, stopping to drop a kiss on Ilya's forehead on her way out, murmuring softly to him in Russian as he slept.

"You will text me if anything is wrong?" she asked Shane as he walked her to the door, wringing her hands anxiously around the strap of her purse.

"Of course," he reassured her, "I will keep you updated. Try and get some rest."

She nodded, leaning in to give Shane a tight hug, wiping her eyes viciously as she stepped away.

"Thank you," she murmured, stepping towards the door with a final glimpse towards the bed. As the door snicked closed behind her, Shane returned to his chair, dropping into it with a deep sigh. He tried to keep his eyes open, afraid to shut them, but exhaustion was flooding his body. For the next several hours he drifted in and out of sleep, waking briefly when the nurses entered to check-in before slipping back under as soon as the door snapped closed behind them. He was in a half dream state when he was startled awake by the sound of his boyfriend rousing in the bed next to him.

"Shane," Ilya rasped, and Shane's head shot up, eyes popping open immediately, sleep leaving him as he lurched towards the bed.

"What's wrong?" he asked anxiously, eyes searching his boyfriend's face, "Are you okay?"

Ilya nodded slowly, the corners of his mouth lifting slightly, "You are pretty," he rasped, eyes sparkling in the low light of the room, "Freckles glow in the moonlight."

"That doesn't make sense Ilya," Shane frowned, leaning down to brush at his hair, "Freckles can't glow."

"Yours do," Ilya hummed, tilting up into the touch.

"Wait," Shane said, suddenly realizing that they had been having an actual conversation, "You're speaking English again."

Ilya frowned, wrinkling his eyebrows at him, "Was I not speaking English before?"

Shane shook his head, “No baby,” he murmured, “You’ve been speaking Russian all day.”

“Hm,” Ilya shook his head, “Did not realize. What happened?”

“You spiked a fever,” Shane replied, reaching to press the back of his hand to Ilya’s forehead, sucking in a breath when he felt the skin damp under his touch, feeling much more like a normal body temperature than it did earlier, “But I think it might have broken now. Do you feel cold?”

Ilya shook his head, shifting slightly in the bed, “No, not cold. Feel damp though, all sweaty.”

“That sounds like your fever broke,” Shane said, reaching for the call button, with a shaky hand, “I’ll call your nurse to make sure.”

“You are okay?” Ilya asked, frowning at him, “You are shaking.” Reaching out, he took hold of the hand holding the remote, wrapping his fingers around Shane’s wrist, pressing his fingertips against the inside, resting against his pulse. “Heart is racing,” he murmured, blinking up at Shane.

“Yeah,” Shane croaked, nodding, “It’s been a rough day.”

Ilya frowned deeper, gazing deeply into his eyes, “I’m sorry,” he rasped, “I keep scaring you.”

Shane shook his head, reaching down with his free hand to brush at his boyfriend’s cheek. “No baby,” he whispered, “Don’t apologize. It’s not your fault.”

Ilya’s frown didn’t lessen, but he didn’t argue, allowing Shane to press the button and summon the nurse.

Stacey, the night nurse who had introduced herself to him a few hours before, entered a few minutes later, brushing through the curtain and approaching the bed.

“Well hello there Mr. Rozanov,” she said with a smile, “You’re looking more alert.”

Ilya nodded, “Yes,” he rasped, “Head feels less...fuzzy.”

“Good,” Stacey nodded, leaning down to run a thermometer across his forehead, “That’s good to hear.” The thermometer beeped and she pulled it back to look at the reading, giving Ilya a smile, “Looks like your fever has broken. That explains why you feel less fuzzy.”

Shane sighed with relief, the knot in his chest undoing itself slightly. He smiled down at Ilya and felt his heart skip a beat when Ilya returned it, his eyes looking clearer and more focused. Stacey got Ilya changed into a dry hospital gown, tossing the sweat soaked one into the dirty linen bag next to the trash. After adjusting his IV and starting a new bag of antibiotics, she left the room, telling them to press the button again if they needed anything.

Ilya settled himself back against the bed, sinking into his pillows, face looking less pinched and more comfortable than he had all day.

“Feeling a little better?” Shane asked, pulling his chair up beside the bed and taking his boyfriend’s hand again.

“Much,” Ilya rasped, smiling at him. Shane returned it, avoiding a glance down at his still uncovered throat. The sight of the wound still churned his stomach, his mouth drying every time he caught a glimpse of it. Ilya frowned, seemingly noticing something on his face. “You are okay?” he asked him, repeating his question from earlier.

Shane nodded, trying to look convincing, “Of course.”

Ilya shook his head, “Don’t lie *muya lyobuv*, you are bad liar.”

Shane snorted, averting his gaze so that Ilya couldn’t see his eyes, “I’m fine, really,” he croaked.

“Shane,” Ilya sighed, reaching up to take ahold of his chin and turning his boyfriend to face him, “Please do not lie to me. I can see that you are not okay.”

Sniffling, Shane blinked hard, trying to stop tears from falling down his cheeks. “It was scary,” he admitted, meeting Ilya’s gaze, “I thought I was going to lose you again.” His voice cracked, a sob forcing its way out of his mouth and his chest heaved, his body collapsing forward towards the bed.

“*Lyubimyy*,” Ilya murmured, moving his hand to wrap around the back of his head and tangling his fingers through his hair, “Come here. Lay with me.”

“Don’t want to hurt you,” Shane grumbled, “Your neck isn’t covered up.”

“Come here,” Ilya insisted again, “I will be fine, just lay beside me, don’t have to touch my neck.”

Shane opened his mouth to argue again but Ilya gave him a pleading look, and he stood up from the chair, sitting slowly on the bed and gently raising his legs to rest beside Ilya’s. He shuffled next to his boyfriend gingerly, Ilya reaching over to interlock their fingers as Shane rested his head on the pillow next to him. He hummed happily, rubbing his thumb against the back of Shane’s hand, sinking into the bed with a sigh.

“I’m sorry *moya lyobuv*,” Ilya murmured, turning his head to look at Shane, squeezing his hand, “I do not like to see you look so sad.”

Shane sniffled, trying to give his boyfriend a small smile. “I’ll be okay,” he whispered, “It’s just been a hard day.”

Ilya nodded, “Yes,” he agreed, “But I am okay now, yes?”

“Yes,” Shane whispered, turning his head to look at him, “We’re both okay.” He tried to keep his voice steady, tried to ignore the tremor in his heart despite his words.

“Good,” Ilya whispered, “Now you go back to sleep.”

Ilya scoffed, “Shane you sleep like statue, never move a muscle. Is a little scary honestly. Will be fine.”

“Shane,” he said insistently. “Sleep. I know your back hurts from being curled up in chair all day.”

“I always worry about you,” Ilya yawned, “I am sleepy now, don’t argue with me. Go to sleep.”

Ilya nodded, “Deal,” he whispered, closing his eyes and leaning into Shane’s lips. “Now sleep.”

Laying back, Shane stared up at the ceiling, listening to Ilya's breathing grow slow and steady beside him as he slipped back to sleep. He yawned, trying to fight off the rising tide of tiredness, but it was a losing battle. His eyes slipped shut, drifting off beside his boyfriend.

I'm sorry for the all the angst, I promise things will start looking up for the boys in the next chapter! Thank you all so much for reading and for all of your feedback, it keeps me motivated and I really appreciated all of you! Please let me know your thoughts on this chapter and the mixed media, I had a lot of fun creating it. The next chapter should be out soon, thank you again for all of the support!

Image credits:

1. @boston\_raiders profile: [https://game-changers-series.fandom.com/wiki/Boston\\_Bears](https://game-changers-series.fandom.com/wiki/Boston_Bears)
  2. @boston\_no\_1 profile: [@boston\\_no\\_1 profile: https://game-changers-series.fandom.com/wiki/Boston\\_Bears](https://game-changers-series.fandom.com/wiki/Boston_Bears)
- @raidersfan232 profile:  
[https://static.vecteezy.com/system/resources/previews/016/929/153/non\\_2x/hockey-player-silhouette-design-athlete-sign-and-symbol-vector.jpg](https://static.vecteezy.com/system/resources/previews/016/929/153/non_2x/hockey-player-silhouette-design-athlete-sign-and-symbol-vector.jpg)
- @nopucksgiven profile: <https://unsplash.com/photos/a-canadian-flag-with-a-red-maple-leaf-on-it-GsGpAva2mSM>
- @timrobinson profile:  
[https://static.vecteezy.com/system/resources/previews/007/923/326/non\\_2x/modern-](https://static.vecteezy.com/system/resources/previews/007/923/326/non_2x/modern-)

professional-grizzly-bear-logo-for-a-sport-team-vector.jpg

@powerplay87 profile: <https://unsplash.com/illustrations/a-cartoon-of-a-hockey-player-on-the-ice--xzYLH-mRpg>

@hyd378 profile: <https://unsplash.com/photos/sea-under-white-clouds-at-golden-hour--IMlv9Jlb24>

3. @jacob\_anderson3 profile: <https://unsplash.com/photos/ice-hockey-players-on-ice-hockey-stadium-GXQP77GIIsIU>

4. @imwalkinhere82 profile: [https://unsplash.com/photos/a-group-of-people-playing-a-game-of-ice-hockey-W35u\\_L1l8HA](https://unsplash.com/photos/a-group-of-people-playing-a-game-of-ice-hockey-W35u_L1l8HA)

5. @mlhhockeyupdates profile:

[https://substackcdn.com/image/fetch/\\$s\\_!EG5l!,f\\_auto,q\\_auto:good,fl\\_progressive:steep/https%3A%2F%2Fsubstack-post-media.s3.amazonaws.com%2Fpublic%2Fimages%2F15e60efa-8b24-40bb-ba52-f7d26c132fb0\\_2940x1654.webp](https://substackcdn.com/image/fetch/$s_!EG5l!,f_auto,q_auto:good,fl_progressive:steep/https%3A%2F%2Fsubstack-post-media.s3.amazonaws.com%2Fpublic%2Fimages%2F15e60efa-8b24-40bb-ba52-f7d26c132fb0_2940x1654.webp)

Heated Rivalry casting photo: [https://heatedrivalry.fandom.com/wiki/Ilya\\_Rozanov](https://heatedrivalry.fandom.com/wiki/Ilya_Rozanov)

6. @frozen\_fury profile: <https://unsplash.com/photos/ice-hockey-players-on-ice-hockey-arena-u5lPj3-f0XI>

@austin\_jackson profile: [https://unsplash.com/photos/man-in-blue-and-white-ice-hockey-jersey-holding-black-and-green-hockey-stick-I7vvGfJ\\_DMk](https://unsplash.com/photos/man-in-blue-and-white-ice-hockey-jersey-holding-black-and-green-hockey-stick-I7vvGfJ_DMk)

@bostonlifer profile: [https://game-changers-series.fandom.com/wiki/Boston\\_Bears](https://game-changers-series.fandom.com/wiki/Boston_Bears)

@AZ3897 profile: <https://unsplash.com/photos/a-lake-surrounded-by-trees-with-mountains-in-the-background-7VotVatHM7Q>

@metros\_on\_top profile:

<https://ih1.redbubble.net/image.6009765860.8059/st,small,507x507-pad,600x600,f8f8f8.u1.jpg>

@raidersrampage profile:

<https://www.tiktok.com/@cocochinelo/video/7587215453999615262>

@raider\_nation profile: [https://game-changers-series.fandom.com/wiki/Boston\\_Bears](https://game-changers-series.fandom.com/wiki/Boston_Bears)

@metros\_on\_top profile:

7. @BostonPuck32 profile:

<https://www.tiktok.com/@cocochinelo/video/7587215453999615262>

9:@noah\_randolph profile: [https://unsplash.com/photos/surfer-holding-surfboard-on-cliff-overlooking-ocean-waves-\\_sfkIIInPw9Y](https://unsplash.com/photos/surfer-holding-surfboard-on-cliff-overlooking-ocean-waves-_sfkIIInPw9Y)

10. @scott\_hunter profile: <https://www.out.com/gay-tv-shows/heated-rivalry-scott-hunter-kip-gradys-relationship-timeline#rebelltitem5>

11. @hollandergirl24 profile:

<https://www.threads.com/@alexandraparkerx/post/DScETTNIKxi/they-kept-in-the-mid-game-helmet-kiss>

Hudson Williams in NYC: <https://x.com/hudsonwphotos/status/2011457165966590347>

8. @icehawk23 profile: <https://unsplash.com/photos/man-wearing-green-and-white-ice-hockey-jersey-while-playing-doivHPaG-Vw>

@kory32974 profile: <https://unsplash.com/photos/gray-scale-photo-of-human-face-sMPRCsoUM4A>

@aaron\_lloyd profile: <https://unsplash.com/photos/silhouette-of-man-standing-on-water-during-sunset-zq45uQkUeZE>

@matthew317 profile: <https://unsplash.com/photos/people-playing-ice-hockey-XHTBZpRBoi0>

@jameson\_donalds: <https://unsplash.com/photos/a-hockey-player-is-sitting-on-the-ice->

qL17dN5B3So

9. @iceprincess39 profile: <https://www.washingtonblade.com/2025/12/11/heated-rivalry-review/>

10. @powerplay327 profile: <https://unsplash.com/photos/a-hockey-goalie-kneels-in-front-of-the-net-8bjeUy7S-G8>

## Chapter 7: home at last

### Chapter Notes

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

The following three days passed in a blur, time ceasing to exist outside the four walls of the hospital room. After being photographed entering the hospital on the third morning following a short trip to his parents' hotel room to nap in a real bed, Shane had refused to leave the building, barely leaving the room outside of the few times his mom forced him to go to the cafeteria and eat some actual food.

The infection had started to heal, antibiotics doing their job, and Ilya was starting to stay awake for longer periods of time, holding a full conversation with Shane's dad about hockey statistics two days after his fever broke. He was still raspy, the swelling in his throat still obstructing his vocal cords, making him sound like he had a bad case of laryngitis, but the external swelling had continued to decrease, making the stitches look less like they were about to slice through his skin. The wound hadn't been re-covered since the doctors discovered the infection, and Shane still wasn't completely unbothered by it, but he was able to actually look at it without feeling like he was about to faint.

On the first day after the fever broke, Ilya was doing well enough that he was moved from the ICU to the PCU, which Shane was encouraged by. By the second day he was down to a regular med-surg floor, no longer considered critical. There weren't quite as many monitors attached to him now and his face had regained most of its usual hue, though his cheeks weren't quite as pink as they usually were. He had big dark bags under his eyes no matter how much he slept, Shane knew he wasn't getting good sleep being woken up regularly for checks and medications, and the exhaustion was starting to show on his face.

Svetlana arrived religiously at 8:00 every morning, entering the room in a flurry of perfumed air and cheerful chatter, making sure to switch between English and Russian to not leave Shane completely out of the conversation. He encouraged her to speak in Russian to Ilya as much as she wanted to; even though English had returned to him, he was continuing to speak slowly, translations seemingly still difficult for his drug-addled brain.

Early on the afternoon of the third day following the fever, Svetlana had returned to the hotel for a shower and a quick nap, leaving Shane and Ilya alone in the room during the day for the first time since she had arrived. Ilya was just starting to doze off when Jacob, his physical therapist entered the room.

"Hello!" he called cheerfully as he threw the curtain aside, "Are you ready to do some more laps?"

Ilya groaned, blinking his eyes open and holding up a hand to shield his face, "Oh no," he grumbled, "Not you again."

Jacob laughed cheerfully, "Well good afternoon to you too, Mr. Rozanov."

“Ilya,” the Russian man grumbled, moving to scoot himself into a sitting position.

“Ilya,” Jacob corrected, “Ready to get up and at ‘em?” he asked playfully.

Ilya wrinkled his forehead, “Do I have a choice?” he rasped.

Jacob smiled down at him, moving to lower the bedrail, “I can’t force you to do anything,” he said gently, “But I know you’re eager to get out of here, and the more you get up and move around, the faster we can do that.”

The wrinkle between Ilya’s brows didn’t even out, but he nodded begrudgingly, “Fine,” he croaked, moving to shift his legs off the side of the bed. Jacob moved to assist him, helping him sit up and scoot until his legs dangled over the edge, steadying him by his shoulders.

“Alright?” he asked, once Ilya was fully sitting up, supporting his body weight.

“Yes,” Ilya croaked, nodding slowly, his eyes darting around the room, looking for Shane. He stepped into his boyfriend’s field of vision, standing against the wall, out of the way but close enough that he could see him, giving him a small smile that Ilya shakily returned.

“You’re doing great,” Jacob encouraged him, “Let me get the belt around your waist, and then we’ll go for a couple of laps around the floor, okay?”

Shane gave him an encouraging nod as Jacob leaned down to fasten the gait belt, watching Ilya slowly lift himself to his feet with a grunt. The physical therapy team had been working with him over the past couple of days, starting by getting him to sit up fully unsupported on his own, a movement that had drained all of the blood from his face the first time they tried it. He had wobbled like he was about to pass out and Shane’s heart had nearly leapt out of his chest, the image of Ilya’s crumpling body being caught by a medical assistant sending him crashing back to the ice, to watching Ilya collapse in a puddle of blood. The physical therapist had caught him and gently lowered him back to the bed, encouraging him that it was okay and they could try again once he caught his breath. He had progressed from sitting to standing to finally taking a few shaky steps with a person supporting him on both arms. Yesterday, he had even managed to walk a full lap up and down the hall, grumbling in annoyance when he finally collapsed back into bed.

As Jacob helped Ilya to his feet, Shane shuffled backwards to give them more space and give himself a better view. Ilya’s face was focused, concentrated but not pained, which eased the tension in Shane’s shoulders a bit. He seemed to be moving more easily than the day before, taking a few confident steps forward, looking up to smile at his boyfriend standing in front of him. Shane returned the smile, giving him an approving nod.

“You’re doing good Ilya,” Jacob encouraged, “Ready to do a couple of laps?” Ilya nodded and the two shuffled towards the door, Shane hurrying to open it for them, following them as they started their slow trek down the hall.

Ilya wasn’t leaning on Jacob as heavily as yesterday Shane noticed, and his steps seemed more sure. Ilya’s difficulty standing and walking had alarmed Shane at first, concerned that there was a spinal injury that the doctors had missed, but they assured him that Ilya had

received a full workup when he arrived and that there were no neck or back injuries. The weakness and dizziness was due to the blood loss and infection, a doctor had patiently explained, his body still weak and recovering, not used to movement after several days spent mostly lying in a hospital bed. The explanation had made sense, but it was still alarming to see his strong, professional athlete of a boyfriend wobbling like a baby deer on his feet.

Today he seemed less like a deer and more like his usual self, making it all the way down to the end of the hallway before needing to pause for a break. Jacob let him catch his breath for a moment, holding onto the belt as Ilya leaned against the wall, holding onto the rail that stretched the length of the hall. Shane kept his distance, letting them work but making sure Ilya could still see him if he looked up searching for him. As Ilya straightened up and started to slowly make his way back towards him, Shane gave him thumbs up and he rolled his eyes with a huff, but a smile was tugging at the corners of his lips.

“Almost done with your first lap!” Jacob cheered, “You’re going for record time today, huh?”

“I am record breaker,” Ilya responded, giving the physical therapist a lopsided grin, “Always have been.”

Now it was Shane’s turn to roll his eyes, shaking his head in mock disapproval at his boyfriend but he knew that Ilya being cocky was a sign that he was feeling better, something that made him feel more assured.

“One more lap,” Jacob encouraged, “Then I’ll let you rest for a bit.” The two turned and made their way back down the hallway, Ilya stopping to take a moment holding the rail about halfway down, before slowly finishing the walk to the wall and turning back to head to the room. His knees were wobbling slightly as they made their way through the door, Jacob supporting him with one hand on the belt and the other wrapped securely around Ilya’s right arm.

“Great job,” he said, guiding Ilya to sit on the bed, the taller man plopping down on the mattress with a huff. “You did good today,” he said as Ilya slid down onto the bed, adjusting himself on the pillows, “I really didn’t have to help hold you up at all, you were doing all the hard work.”

“Still felt shaky,” Ilya croaked, his brows narrowing in frustration.

“That’s normal,” Jacob said, giving him an encouraging smile, “But you were pretty steady on your feet, not a whole lot of wobbling until right there at the end.” Ilya nodded slowly, considering.

“Is normal that my legs feel so weak?” he asked, a disbelieving look on his face, “Why? Nothing is wrong with my legs.”

“No, nothing is wrong with your legs,” Jacob agreed, “Your body is just still healing from the blood loss and the infection you have going. You’re moving a lot better than you were the first day that we worked together. You’ll be back on your feet in no time.”

Ilya nodded slowly, not looking entirely convinced, but the crease in his forehead smoothed slightly.

“I’ll be back tomorrow to work with you again,” Jacob said, giving Ilya a smile, “Try and get some rest today, and remember to hit the call button for the nurses if anything feels different, okay?”

“Okay,” Ilya rasped, giving him a tiny smile, “See you then.”

Jacob headed for the door, and Shane called after him as he left, “Thank you!”

“No problem!” Jacob called back, giving him a small wave as he stepped out of the room, letting the door snap softly closed behind him.

Shane turned back towards the bed where Ilya was gazing up at him with a sleepy look on his face.

“Are you tired?” he asked, moving to pull up his chair in the usual spot beside the bed.

Ilya yawned in responded, nodding his head, “Yes,” he croaked, “Stupid physical therapist makes me tired.”

“The exercises are good for you,” Shane said, leaning down to brush his forehead, “You want to get back to moving around don’t you?”

“Yes,” Ilya nodded slowly, “I just...I do not like that I can do so little. It makes me feel, what is the word? When you can’t do something and it makes you angry?”

“Frustrated?” Shane supplied.

“Yes, frustrated,” he replied, snapping his fingers at the correct word. “Is, embarrassing, you know? I am strong hockey player, and can barely walk down the hall.”

Shane sighed, frowning slightly, “I’m sure it’s very frustrating,” he tried, attempting to put himself in Ilya’s position, “But you shouldn’t be embarrassed. There’s nothing wrong with needing a little bit of time to recover.”

Ilya scoffed, shaking his head dismissively. “My father would not agree,” he mumbled, so quietly that Shane almost missed it. He felt like the floor dropped out from under him when the words registered. Ilya rarely talked about his father, but from the little he had told Shane, he knew that Grigori had not been the most empathetic or caring of parents. It was obvious from what he had gathered that Ilya’s father’s influence had cast a shadow over nearly every aspect of his boyfriend’s life, but he somehow had failed to consider the way it would overshadow this as well.

“Ilya,” he whispered, leaning forward to tangle his hand through his boyfriend’s curls, “Then your father would be wrong.”

Ilya didn’t respond, but he didn’t pull away from his touch, so Shane continued, “It’s okay to be hurt. It’s okay to need help. I know you’re a big tough hockey player who doesn’t show

any pain, but it's okay to be vulnerable in front of me. Okay?" he lowered his hand to tug on Ilya's chin as delicately as he could manage, ever so slowly tilting his face towards him. "I need you to believe me," he whispered, trying to plead with him through his eyes, "Please."

The other man didn't respond for a moment, just sniffled softly, moisture gathering on his lashes that he quickly tried to blink away. After several tense seconds, he nodded slowly, "I will try," he rasped, meeting Shane's gaze with teary eyes.

"Thank you," Shane whispered, leaning forward to drop a gentle kiss on his boyfriend's lips, Ilya pressing back desperately, tangling their mouths together with an intensity that made Shane draw in a sudden breath. He let himself be pulled into the kiss for a moment, allowing himself to float in the sensation that was *Ilya*, before he reluctantly drew himself back, smiling at the way the other man's lips chased after his.

"Don't want to smother you," he murmured against Ilya's mouth, pulling away slightly to let him get some air.

"You're not," Ilya grumbled, pressing their lips more firmly together, "Just kiss me." He reached up, pulling Shane's head towards him, the shorter man nearly toppling over onto him, dropping his arms down to catch himself before he hit the bed.

"Ilya," he gasped, "Be careful." He received another kiss in response, relenting and kissing back for a second before pulling away and moving to adjust himself, "At least let me sit up so I'm not about to crush you," he argued, and Ilya relented, allowing him to lower himself down to rest on the edge of the bed, leaning forward to gently rejoin their lips.

Ilya hummed happily, leaning back into the pillow and sighing softly through his nose as Shane pressed gentle kisses into his mouth. After a few more moments, he leaned back, smiling down at the man lying on the bed beneath him, looking a little dazed.

"Better?" he teased, moving his hand to brush an errant curl out of his boyfriend's face.

"Much," Ilya sighed happily, blinking slowly like a happy cat. He let out another yawn, eyes starting to droop, and Shane smiled, moving to sit up.

"Take a nap," he whispered, "I'll be right here." Ilya nodded, already starting to drift off. Shane stayed beside him while he slept, watching the gentle rise and fall of his chest and the hands of the clock slowly turning the early afternoon away.

Around 3:00, Dr. Singh, the doctor assigned to Ilya's care on the med-surg floor, entered the room, shuffling through a large pile of paperwork on a clipboard. She flipped the curtain back as she entered, and Ilya startled awake, rubbing at his eyes with the back of his hand.

"How are we feeling today Mr. Rozanov?" the doctor asked as she stepped towards the bed, giving him a smile, "Any pain?"

"Ilya," he corrected quickly, shaking his head in response to her question. "No," he croaked, "No pain, I feel good."

“Good,” Dr. Singh murmured, stepping forward to inspect the stitches around his neck, “How are the stitches feeling? Any discomfort?”

“A little itchy,” Ilya rasped, tilting his head slightly from side to side, “But not too bad.”

Dr. Singh nodded, “That’s normal,” she assured him, “Unpleasant for sure, but temporary. Once the stitches come out it will feel much better.”

“How long will that be?” Ilya asked hoarsely, and Dr. Singh squinted at the wound, considering.

“Probably within the next week or so,” she replied, “We’ll want you to keep the wound uncovered, and then come to the med-surg clinic to have them removed. The infection is healing nicely, and the wound looks like it is closing up well, so it shouldn’t be long.”

“So if I come back to get them removed, that means I go home?” Ilya asked, eyes looking hopeful.

Dr. Singh nodded, giving him a smile, “Yes, I think you are ready to go home Ilya,” she said, “We’ll get started on your discharge paperwork and get you out of here in a few hours. How does that sound?”

Ilya’s mouth split into a grin, wider than Shane had seen in days, “Good,” he rasped, “Sounds good.”

Shane’s heart skipped a beat, and he felt his breath leave him in a rush, “He can go home today?” he asked hoarsely, barely believing the words as they were spoken.

Dr. Singh gave him a nod, “Yes,” she assured him, “It might take a little bit to get everything sorted, but we’ll have him out of here by tonight.”

Shane smiled, the first real smile he thought he had given in days, “Thank you,” he said, nodding towards Dr. Singh, “That’s amazing.”

She smiled back at him, giving him a nod as she moved towards the door, shuffling through her papers again, taking out a few and handing them to Ilya. “I’ll have a nurse come in and give you all of his discharge instructions and medications to take home. They’ll also get you set up with a physical therapy center and get that appointment scheduled to remove the stitches.”

Shane nodded, taking note of all of the information and filing it quickly as she spoke, “Thank you,” he called after her again.

“You’re welcome!” she responded as she stepped through the door, disappearing down the hall in a hurry, clearly on the way to her next patient.

Shane turned back towards the bed, smiling when he noticed Ilya beaming back at him.

“Happy to be going home?” he asked, dropping into the chair beside the bed and taking his hand. Ilya nodded, squeezing Shane’s hand in his as he took it.

“Happy to be going to *your* home,” he hummed happily, “Glad that you will be there.”

“I’m all yours for the next two weeks,” Shane promised, giving him another smile, “Maybe more if my mom can bully Theriault into it.”

Ilya frowned, “You shouldn’t miss too many games,” he argued, “Is too close to the playoffs.”

“I don’t care about the playoffs right now,” Shane responded, waving his free hand dismissively, “I’m focused on you right now.” Ilya’s frown deepened, and he squeezed Shane’s hand tightly.

“I will be fine,” he continued to argue, “Your mother will come down and fuss over me, we will watch you win cup on TV.” Shane shook his head, opening his mouth to respond but Ilya pouted at him, giving him his best puppy dog eyes.

“Please,” he begged, “Don’t let me ruin your season.”

“You’re not ruining my season,” Shane protested, “I *want* to stay.”

“Is still my fault!” Ilya insisted, moving to sit up, “You want to stay because of *me*!”

“Of course I do!” Shane responded, squeezing Ilya’s hand back, “I love you, and you almost died! I was scared out of my mind and I’m not ready to let you out of my sight yet,” he stared deeply into Ilya’s eyes, pleading with him to understand. “Please,” he begged, “Don’t make me leave you yet.”

Ilya paused, eyes widening at the look on Shane’s face, “Okay,” he soothed, reaching out to brush at Shane’s hand with his cheeks, brushing at tears that he hadn’t even realized were leaking out of his eyes, “Not yet.”

“Thank you,” Shane huffed, leaning down to drop a kiss on Ilya’s forehead, “Thank you.”

He heard the door fling open behind them and he sniffed, jerking away from the bed and wiping at his eyes.

“Hello!” Svetlana’s voice called cheerfully from the doorway, apparently well rested from her nap, “How is little *Ilyusha* feeling today?”

“Shut up,” Ilya grumbled, flapping a hand towards her, “You are so cruel to me.”

“Ahh,” Svetlana sighed, crossing the room and dropping her purse onto the couch, “We are feeling sensitive today then.”

Ilya rolled his eyes, “If it would not tear my stitches I would throw pillow at you,” he rasped in her direction, Svetlana just laughing at the threat.

“Did doctor come yet? What did she say?” she asked, approaching the bed and resting a hand on the rail.

“I get to go home today,” Ilya croaked up at her, giving her a toothy grin.

“Ilya!” she gasped, reaching down to give him an incredibly gentle smack on the arm, “Why did you not tell me as soon as I came in?”

“Because you come in teasing me,” Ilya pouted, clutching at his skin dramatically with his hand dramatically where she had tapped him, “And now you hit me!” he glared up at her. “Shane!” he called, turning his head to pout at his boyfriend instead, “Tell Sveta to stop beating me.”

Shane snorted, shaking his head at their banter, “You two are something else,” he muttered, stepping towards the bed to grin down at Ilya.

“So what did the doctor say?” Svetlana asked again eagerly, looking between the two of them. Shane looked down at Ilya, giving him the option to answer, but his boyfriend gestured towards him, indicating that he wanted him to respond to the question.

“She said that he’s doing great, stitches are healing nicely and the infection is clearing up. They’re going to get us some discharge paperwork, and the nurse is going to come in with instructions and meds and they said we’ll hopefully be out of here by tonight.”

Svetlana smiled, nodding happily, “That’s amazing Ilya,” she said, looking down at her friend, “You finally get out of here.” He nodded, returning the smile,

“Yes,” he croaked, “Am ready to go. The food is terrible here.”

“Well you’ll still have to be on a modified diet when we get home,” Shane jumped in, remembering the papers that Dr. Singh had handed Ilya. His boyfriend had handed them right to him, knowing that he would pour over them in excruciating detail, and he had. One of the important notes that was mentioned was a soft food diet, and Shane was already planning a recovery meal plan in his head, stacked with nutrients that he knew Ilya would grumble endlessly about.

“Oh no,” Ilya whined, the grumbling already apparently starting, “Sveta, you have to save me,” he looked up at her, begging, “He is going to make me eat rabbit food!”

She snorted, giving him a pat on the shoulder, “Don’t worry,” she said, “Is not forever.” He groaned, dropping his head against the pillow dramatically.

“This is terrible,” he moaned, “You are both ganging up on me!”

Shane laughed as he reached for his phone, moving to text his parents the good news and ask them to drop a few things off at the condo for them:

3:45



Mom >



Today 3:45 PM

Hey Mom! Good news, the doctors said Ilya will be released by tonight!

Thank goodness! That's wonderful news sweetie!

What time did they say? Do you want Dad and I to come help you get packed up?

They didn't give us a solid time, just said sometime tonight.

I was actually wondering if you guys could pick up a few things at the store and get the condo set up?

Of course! Just send me lists of what you need and we'll get right on it!

Thank you so much Mom, you're the best. I'll get the lists together and send them to you.

You're welcome honey, it's no trouble at all!



iMessage



He could hear Svetlana and Ilya bickering in Russian behind him as he typed up his lists, frantically trying to catalogue everything in his fridge and pantry in his head, and remember whether or not he had clean sheets to remake his bed. He skimmed the paperwork from Dr. Singh again as he worked, making sure he had included everything that he thought he would need:

3:57



Mom >



Today 3:57 PM

Okay, I think this is everything we'll need from the store:

- Gatorade (blue glacier is his favorite)
- Coke (cans are fine)
- Chicken broth
- Rice
- Canned soup (he prefers potato, chicken noodle, or tomato)
- Advil (the 200mg capsules)
- Square gauze pads
- Medical tape

I think that's everything we'll need for right now, I can always order more groceries later if we need.

Would you mind also changing the sheets on my bed? It's made, but I'd rather have clean sheets for him to lay in if possible.

Of course honey!

Is there anything else?

I don't think so Mom, thank you



iMessage





3:57



Mom >



Today 3:58 PM

I don't think so Mom, thank you again. You and Dad have been amazing.

Of course sweetie, we love the two of you. Like I said, it's absolutely no trouble at all.

Thank you anyways, we both really appreciate it. I love you guys too.

Love you too!



iMessage



He clicked his phone off, refocusing on the noise of the room. There was more food he wanted to order, things to fit the meal plan he had mentally created, things that he knew Ilya would complain about, but he didn't want to send his parents running all over town. The basics would work for now. Svetlana and Ilya were still arguing, although they had switched to English, but he didn't pay the specifics of the argument too much attention, just allowed the words to wash over him as he lost himself in thought. He was grateful, if that was the right word, that Ilya had gotten hurt in Montreal. If it had to happen, at least it happened right on his own doorstep, in a city where he had a permanent living space, somewhere they could go together while he recovered. He had been nervous about bringing him back to his apartment, afraid that they would be spotted, either by his neighbors or by reporters snooping around, trying to find out why he had mysteriously vanished from the ice for several weeks.

In the interest of privacy, he had decided that the condo would be a safer bet. Somewhere that was familiar and comfortable for both of them, but still private, still secluded enough that they hopefully wouldn't have to worry about prying eyes. The conversation of coming out had been broached briefly a few times since he had brought it up, but the infection and the ensuing chaos of the hospital had put it on the back burner. Shane hoped that they could restart the conversation once they were settled into the condo, not tonight, maybe not even tomorrow, but soon.

----

Around 7:30, a nurse entered with the final discharge paperwork for Ilya to sign, guiding him through each page, explaining the information and telling him where to place his signature. He quickly signed each one, setting the pen down with a huff when they were finally finished.

"All done!" he rasped, "I can go home now?"

The nurse laughed, moving to gather up the paperwork, "Almost," she promised, "We just have a few more things to get sorted, and then we'll get you out of here." Ilya grumbled, his eyes sliding across the room to where Shane was perched in his chair.

"This is taking too long," he whined as the nurse made her way out of the room. "What are they waiting for now?"

"Just a little bit longer," Shane assured him, "They still need to come in and give us all of your instructions and get your follow ups scheduled."

Ilya groaned, flopping deeper into his pillows, but he managed to remain relatively patient over the next 15 or so minutes while they waited for someone to come and get him registered for his appointments. Someone from scheduling came into the room at 7:45, and Ilya sped through the process of getting his appointments set up, clearly eager to get the process completed as soon as possible.

----

By the time a nurse arrived to give them final instructions around 8:30, Ilya was practically vibrating out of his skin, and Shane felt like he was right there along with him.

“Ready to get out of here?” she asked cheerfully as she entered, Ilya letting out an exaggerated groan.

“Yes!” he grumbled, “Is it finally time?”

The nurse laughed lightly, moving to slide the bedrail down, “It’s time,” she said, smiling down at him, “Can you get dressed on your own or do you want help?”

“He can help me,” Ilya said, gesturing towards Shane with a wink, “He’s very good at it.”

Shane blushed, cringing in embarrassment. Ilya had been taking full advantage of the confidentiality of the hospital setting, flirting openly in front of various doctors and nurses who had been unlucky enough to encounter him while he was in a good mood.

“Ilya,” he groaned, “Stop it.” Ilya just smirked at him, but didn’t continue, seemingly deciding that he had embarrassed his boyfriend enough.

The nurse pulled a wheelchair into the room, stopping briefly to go over the list of medications and wound care instructions with Shane and Svetlana, Shane listening intently, taking mental notes of everything, grateful that there were written instructions going home with them as well. As the nurse set a bag of medications on the table next to the bed, he took note of the wince Ilya gave when he caught sight of them. Shane frowned, saving that to ask about later, nodding when Svetlana offered to go down and pull the car around for them.

“I’ll step out while you get changed,” the nurse said, gesturing to where Ilya was sitting in the bed, “Just open the door when you’re ready and then we’ll head downstairs.”

“Thank you!” Shane called after her as she stepped out, turning towards the cabinet where he had stashed the bag of clothes from his mom. Opening the door he pulled the bag down, making sure that all of the other shelves were empty. He set the bag on the chair next to the bed, rifling through the contents and pulling out a pair of Ilya’s dark grey sweatpants and a long sleeve raiders t-shirt. “This look good?” he asked, gesturing at his boyfriend with the clothes.

“*Da*,” Ilya gave him a crooked smile, “Very fashionable.”

Shane snorted, gesturing for Ilya to lean forward so that he could undo the hospital gown. Ilya grinned, leaning forward, wiggling his hips against the bed slightly.

“Undress me Hollander,” he rasped, wiggling his eyebrows.

“Shut up,” Shane snorted again, reaching back to undo the ties that held the gown together, ignoring how Ilya’s grin grew as the fabric fell off of his torso, “Only you would be horny while laying in a hospital bed.”

Ilya shrugged, “Cannot blame me. Second sexiest player in MLH is undressing me.”

“Second?” Shane spluttered, “Who’s the first?”

“Me,” Ilya grinned up at him triumphantly and Shane scoffed, rolling his eyes.

“I should’ve known that was going to be the answer,” he grumbled, focusing on helping Ilya pull his arms through the sleeves of the t-shirt.

“Is okay Shane,” Ilya mumbled as the fabric was pulled over his head, muffling him, “Second best is still very good.”

“Shut up,” he grumbled again, trying to gently tug the shirt over Ilya’s head, “Hold still, I’m trying not to catch your neck on the top of this shirt,” he huffed, stretching the opening so that Ilya’s head could fit through without any fabric touching his skin and tugging it gently downwards. Ilya cooperated, allowing Shane to pull the shirt down and over his torso, grinning up at him the whole time.

“There,” Shane grumbled, “Your shirt is on. Can you do the pants by yourself?”

Ilya shook his head, raising an eyebrow at him, “No,” he rasped, his eyes twinkling, “Need help.”

“Fine,” Shane rolled his eyes, “But I’m literally just sticking them on your legs for you, you can pull them up.” He pulled the covers back, rolling the sweatpants up in his hand so that he could poke one of Ilya’s feet through the legs at a time. He tugged the pants up to his boyfriend’s knees and then stood up, gesturing for Ilya to pull them up the rest of the way, which he did, giving an exaggerated pout.

Shane just rolled his eyes again, moving to open the door and let the nurse in.

“All set in here?” she asked as she entered, smiling at Ilya.

“Yes,” he replied eagerly, “Let’s go.”

She laughed softly as she pulled the wheelchair up to the side of the bed, stepping forward to help Ilya stand up and lower himself into it carefully. Shane started to gather their bags from where Svetlana had packed them neatly in the corner, looking around the room to make sure he had everything.

“Ready?” he heard the nurse ask, and he looked over to see Ilya settled in the wheelchair with the nurse standing behind him, an eager look on his face.

“Yeah,” he croaked, suddenly overcome with emotion. He blinked hard, willing himself not to burst into tears in front of someone he had just met, “Let’s go.” Moving forward to open the door for the two of them, he stepped aside, giving the nurse room to push the wheelchair out of the room and following them down the hall. They made their way to the elevators, Shane stepping forward to press the button for them, waiting anxiously as he watched the numbers on the screen above the door climb until it reached their floor. The elevator dinged, the doors sliding open slowly, and Shane followed Ilya and the nurse into the elevator, squeezing through the doorway sideways to fit with all of the bags.

He kept his eyes fixed on Ilya as the elevator brought them down to the first floor, his boyfriend looking back up at him with a soft smile. As the floor beneath them jolted to a stop, Shane swallowed hard, blinking back more tears. The doors slid open and he stepped to the side again, allowing the nurse to push Ilya through the opening and into the lobby of the hospital.

As they made their way through the lobby and stepped out of the building, Shane was suddenly grateful that it was nearly 9pm. He hadn't considered the fact that they might be spotted on their way to his apartment, but he was suddenly grateful for the cover of darkness that the night provided them. Svetlana was already waiting by the entrance with Shane's car. She hopped out of the car as they approached, rushing to open the passenger side door, giving Ilya a beaming smile.

"Ready to go home, *Ilyusha*?" she asked, practically grinning down at him. He nodded up at her, reaching out his hand and gesturing for her to help him up. She laughed, "Oh come on Ilya, I can't lift you," she stepped back, allowing Shane to move into her place, lifting Ilya up with one hand braced on each forearm and helping him towards the door. Svetlana hurried to the other side, moving to hop into the driver's seat and help from the inside as Shane and the nurse moved Ilya towards the vehicle.

Getting Ilya settled into the car was a delicate process, Shane hovering in the open door like his boyfriend was about to topple out as Svetlana leaned over the driver's side to help tug Ilya into place. Once he was resting comfortably in his seat, Shane reached over to pull the seatbelt down, careful to avoid brushing any part of the strap over his throat.

"Comfortable?" he asked, peering down at his boyfriend through the door, squinting against the dim light of the entrance, hospital lights gleaming against the inky blackness of the night.

"Yes," Ilya croaked, giving him a smile, "Very."

Shane nodded, "Good," he said, returning the smile and moving to close the door. "Hang tight, I'll be around in just one second." He shut the door behind him and turned to the nurse who had helped them down.

"Thank you so much," he said earnestly, "You all have been so amazing. Just, thank you for everything."

"Of course!" she smiled at him, "It's always great to see a patient off on their way home."

Shane smiled, waving at her as he walked around the car, stopping to let Svetlana out of the driver's seat and sliding into the seat in her place as she walked to the back seat and jumped in. He looked back at her in the rearview mirror, smiling briefly at her before turning his gaze to his boyfriend in the seat beside him.

"Are you ready to go home?" he asked, blinking away the tears that threatened to cloud his vision.

Ilya smiled, reaching across the console to take his hand and giving it a warm squeeze, "*Da*," he rasped, "Let's go home."

## Chapter End Notes

Things are finally looking up for these two! Is it realistic that Ilya gets to go home after five days? Idk honestly. Clint Malarchuk, who had a similar injury in the 80s, was back on the ice within eleven days, so maybe it's not entirely out of the question. I am not at all a medical professional so please forgive any medical inaccuracies here.

Thank you so much for reading! I really appreciate all of the feedback and love that this fic has been receiving, I've been absolutely overwhelmed by how nice everyone has been about it! Please let me know your thoughts on this chapter! I have at least one more chapter planned, but honestly it might stretch into two, because there's a bit to cover still.

The next chapter should be out relatively soon, but please know that I am a working college student and it's midterms this week, so I have a busy schedule, but it's already in progress, so it shouldn't be too long. Thank you again for the support, I really appreciate it!

## Chapter 8: in the dark of night

### Chapter Notes

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

Shane awoke with a start, his heart racing. He could hear the sounds of his boyfriend whimpering and crying next to him and he whipped around, peering down at the body lying beside him in the bed. In the darkness, he could see that Ilya's eyes were closed, apparently still asleep, but his face was not peaceful. His features were twisted up in a pained grimace, his fists clenching against the mattress, his broad frame trembling. Chewing his lip, Shane debated trying to wake him up, not wanting to startle him more or risk making the nightmare worse.

Over the past four days, Ilya had been plagued by nightmares every night, waking up sweating and shaking at least once, if not multiple times each night. Shane had tried waking him up the first time, but that only resulted in Ilya waking up screaming, flailing his arms wildly in every direction, forcing Shane to duck out of the way, narrowly avoiding a fist in the jaw. When Ilya had realized what had happened, he had broken down in tears, apologizing repeatedly for nearly hurting his boyfriend. It took Shane almost twenty minutes to calm him down, repeatedly assuring him that he wasn't injured, and that it hadn't been his fault. When Ilya finally relaxed, he had been far too tired to talk about the dream, and by the next morning, he couldn't remember.

The next night had repeated in a similar fashion, Ilya startling awake, nearly clocking Shane in the chin, crying in his arms, and falling back asleep before they could talk about it. On the morning of day three, Shane had tried to broach the topic again, only for Ilya to shrug it off.

"Probably just from the medicines," he had said, "Maybe I should stop taking them."

This had launched them into a low scale argument about following doctor's orders that had ended in a stalemate, no real ground made. Shane had let the topic go for the time being, but he was growing increasingly concerned each night that the cycle repeated. On the third night, Ilya had managed to tell him that he had been on the ice in his dream, but that was all Shane could get out of him before his breathing had started to pick up in panic again, and they had dropped the subject. Shane had been researching, reading about nightmares, trauma, and post traumatic stress, articles that were only increasing his anxiety about the entire situation. They were now on night four out of the hospital, and things didn't seem to be improving at all.

Just as Shane was about to attempt to wake his boyfriend up, Ilya jolted awake with a gasp, his eyes flying open, arms flailing towards his throat. He lurched forward, sitting up and leaning forward towards the bed, panting hard. Shane reached for him, pressing a gentle hand to his back.

"Ilya?" he asked softly, "Are you okay?"

"Fine," Ilya croaked, "Go back to sleep."

“Are you sure?” Shane questioned, scrunching his forehead, “You’re breathing really hard.”

“Am fine,” Ilya rasped again, “Just had bad dream.”

Shane shifted himself to sit up beside him, placing a hand softly on his boyfriend’s leg, careful not to startle him. “Take a couple of deep breaths,” he murmured, “You’re okay. You’re safe.”

Ilya nodded, trying to draw in a few slow, gasping breaths, his chest heaving dramatically with each forced inhale.

“Good job,” Shane murmured soothingly, rubbing soft circles against his skin, “You’re doing great.”

When his breathing started to even out, Shane motioned for him to lie back down, curling up next to him and gently tugging his boyfriend forward so that the taller man could rest on his chest.

“Do you want to talk about it?” he asked softly, glancing down to gauge the look on Ilya’s face.

The other man shrugged, pulling his shoulders up towards his ears.

“Were you dreaming about the ice again?” Shane asked carefully.

Ilya nodded slowly, frowning like he was remembering something unpleasant.

“Was it about the injury?” Shane posed the question cautiously, worried that he might be pushing too hard while his boyfriend was still coming down.

“*Da*,” Ilya rasped, closing his eyes and burying his head against Shane’s chest.

“Do you want to talk about it?” Shane asked, noting that Ilya seemed more alert than he usually was after one of his nightmares.

He shrugged again, chewing on his lip, “I don’t know,” he finally whispered, “I don’t want to upset you.”

Shane’s eyes shot down to his boyfriend’s face, “I don’t want you to worry about upsetting me,” he replied quickly, “Is that why you’ve been avoiding telling me about your dreams?”

Ilya nodded slowly, “Was scary for you,” he protested, “Don’t want to bring up, what do you call it? Trauma.”

Shane frowned, “It was scary for me,” he admitted, “But it was scarier for you. You’re allowed to talk to me about it, I don’t want you to think you need to keep this stuff to yourself.”

“I don’t want to bother you with it,” Ilya argued, “You have done enough for me already.”

Letting out a shocked huff, Shane moved to reach for the light beside the bed, flicking it on and sitting up slightly, Ilya's head sliding off of his chest and onto the pillow. He raised himself up into a seated position, staring down at his boyfriend, who was looking up at him nervously, dark blonde curls splayed across the pillowcase.

"Ilya," Shane started, meeting his gaze, "I'm not doing any of this because I feel bad, or because I feel forced, or guilty, or anything like that. I'm doing it because I love you. You're my boyfriend, and I care about you. I want to make sure you're okay. I love you and I love taking care of you. Can you try to believe that?"

The other man didn't respond for a moment, turning his eyes away and staring at the bedsheets, picking at the fabric anxiously. Shane noticed tears gathering on his lashes and clucked his tongue, leaning down to gently pull his boyfriend up into his arms.

"It's okay Ilya," he whispered, turning his head to the side to press kisses into the mop of curls, "I'm here. I've got you."

Sniffling, Ilya buried his head into Shane's shoulder, turning to murmur into the skin of his neck, "I don't want you to regret giving up so much of your season," he cried, and Shane's heart twisted in his chest.

"Ilya," he sighed, "Listen to me. I *want* to be here with you, okay? I'd be going crazy if I wasn't. Believe me, nothing could ever make me regret being here with you right now."

His boyfriend didn't respond, still trying to bury his face into his shoulder, so Shane continued, "I swear," he whispered, tilting his head to press another kiss into Ilya's curls, "Please believe me."

"I will try," Ilya rasped and Shane nodded, knowing that was the best he was going to get for the time being.

"Do you want to talk about the dream?" he asked, brushing a hand carefully through his boyfriend's curls. Ilya shook his head, rolling onto his back to look up at him.

"I'm tired," he croaked, eyes already starting to droop, "We can talk about in morning."

"Okay," Shane whispered, turning over to flick off the light and lay down beside him, "In the morning."

"*Da*," Ilya yawned, eyes blinking closed, "Good night."

"Good night," Shane whispered, watching as his boyfriend's eyes slid closed, face relaxing as he drifted off to sleep. He tried to close his eyes and follow him, but any tiredness had left him, he was wide awake. Staring up at the ceiling, he listened to Ilya's slow breathing, felt the warmth of his body pressed into his side, and waited for morning.

----

At six am, the alarm next to the bed went off, beeping insistently, and Shane fumbled to turn it off, Ilya groaning and grabbing a pillow to shove over his face, shielding himself from the

noise.

“Sorry,” Shane murmured, wincing slightly at the stiffness in his back as he sat up and stretched his upper body. Swinging his legs off the side of the bed, he stood up, reaching towards the ceiling, feeling the muscles in his torso pull as he moved. Groaning, he stumbled towards the bathroom, flipping the light on and closing the door behind him. He stared at himself in the mirror, taking note of the dark bags under his eyes, poking at them with his pointer finger as though that would make them disappear. Untying the string of his sweatpants, he stepped towards the toilet, lifting the lid and tugging the fabric down to relieve himself. Washing his hands with steaming hot water, he let the warmth wash over his skin for a few moments, keeping the sink turned on for longer than necessary, before reluctantly turning the faucet off and reaching for the plush hand towel beside him.

He ran his tongue over his teeth, wincing at the gritty coating covering his bite. As he reached for his toothbrush, he heard the door creaking open behind him, turning to see Ilya shuffling his way into the bathroom.

“Hey,” Shane said, surprised, “You’re up early.”

Ilya shrugged, stepping into the small room and moving towards the toilet, “Stupid alarm woke me up,” he grumbled, “You wake with birds.”

Shane hummed softly in response, leaning forward so that Ilya could squeeze behind him. He wet his toothbrush as Ilya tugged his pants and underwear down, keeping his eyes fixed on the sink in front of him as his boyfriend peed. They had gotten more comfortable using the bathroom in front of each other during the last several days, the condo had multiple bathrooms, but they were only making use of one, it was just more practical. It made Shane feel like they were a married couple, comfortable and secure with each other. He wasn’t sure if the thought excited him or terrified him more. Probably the first one.

They finished up in the bathroom and Shane headed out the door towards the kitchen, Ilya trailing behind.

“You’re not going back to bed?” he asked, turning to look at the taller man behind him, “You usually just go back to sleep after I wake up.”

Ilya shrugged, still padding down the hallway after him, “I don’t know, just didn’t feel like going back to sleep I guess.”

Shane nodded, deciding to drop it, “Are you hungry?” he asked, “I can make you a green smoothie.”

Ilya groaned, throwing his head back, “No,” he grumbled, “I’ve had enough of your rabbit food. I need real food.”

“Ilya,” Shane protested, “Your throat is still healing, you’re still on a soft food diet.”

His boyfriend flapped his hand dismissively, “Is fine, my throat feels fine.”

Shane looked at him flatly, "Ilya," he tried again, "You know what the doctor said..."

"I don't care what the doctor said!" Ilya exploded, waving his arms angrily, "I am sick of being treated like patient! I am grown man, I can eat what I like for breakfast!"

"Ilya," Shane started, but his boyfriend shot him a glare, and he snapped his mouth shut, sighing and rubbing at the back of his neck anxiously.

"I am not fragile," Ilya continued, "I do not need hovering."

Shane swallowed, trying to ignore the sting of the words, "I'm not trying to hover," he said carefully, "I just want to make sure you're okay."

"I am fine!" Ilya croaked loudly, "I tell everyone I am fine and no one listens to me! Not you, not Sveta, not Yuna or David. You all tiptoe around me like I am fragile, and I am not!"

"We know you're not fragile," Shane replied, looking at his boyfriend pleadingly, "But you *are* still healing. We worry because we care. Let us take care of you."

"I do not need taking care of," Ilya responded dismissively, flapping his hand, "I am grown man."

"I know that you *can* take care of yourself," Shane said softly, "But you shouldn't have to do it all on your own. It's not a weakness to accept help from the people who love you."

Ilya didn't respond, but he turned his head, and Shane heard him sniff quietly. The hood of his sweatshirt was pulled up, covering his face from view, but Shane could see the sloping outlines of his nose and lips, peeking past the fabric.

"Ilya," he said softly, his boyfriend grunting in response, "Do you remember how much you waited on me when I twisted my ankle a few months ago?"

The hooded head nodded slowly, so he continued, "Did you do that because you felt like you had to, or because you wanted to?"

"Wanted to," Ilya croaked after a moment of silence, sounding frustrated.

"Exactly," Shane replied, taking a small step towards him, "You did it because you love me, and I was hurt, and you wanted to make things easier for me. Is it so hard to believe that I feel the same way about you?"

"Is not the same," Ilya responded softly, still avoiding his gaze.

"How?" Shane asked, taking another step forward, "How is it different?"

"Because," Ilya huffed, exasperated, "You are good, you are precious, you deserve to be taken care of. Me?" he gestured towards himself frustratedly before dropping his arms limply by his sides, "I am not good, not special. I am lazy, don't work hard enough, I get angry, I push you away. I don't deserve that kindness."

"Ilya," Shane sighed, moving towards his boyfriend to close the distance, laying a gentle hand on his chin and turning the taller man to face him, "Please don't talk about my boyfriend like that."

Ilya rolled his eyes, huffing again, slightly more amused this time, "You are so corny," he grumbled, but a slight smile was tugging at the corner of his lips.

"It's true," Shane continued, "I wouldn't let anyone else talk about you that way, I'm not going to let you talk about yourself like that either. You can express how you're feeling, but don't say those things about yourself like they're facts."

Ilya didn't respond for a moment, still avoiding Shane's gaze, "I will try," he said finally, flitting his eyes to meet his boyfriend momentarily before they darted back to the opposite wall. Shane swallowed, remembering the similar response he had received the night before when he asked Ilya to believe that he wanted to stay.

"You *do* deserve kindness," Shane insisted, "You are not a bother, you are not a burden, and I *want* to take care of you. Okay?"

"Okay," Ilya grumbled, still sounding unconvinced. Shane decided to accept that, not wanting to start another argument.

"Thank you," he said, forcing himself to smile at his boyfriend. "How about breakfast? I can make you a chocolate banana smoothie instead of the greens?" he stepped backwards, gesturing towards the kitchen.

"*Da*," the other man croaked, turning to move in that direction as well. "Sounds better, less rabbitiness."

As Shane blended bananas, milk, cocoa, honey, protein powder, and yogurt, Ilya settled himself on the kitchen island, watching his boyfriend move about the kitchen. Shane poured the smoothie into a tall glass, poking a straw into it and sliding it across the counter. Ilya pulled the straw into his mouth, taking a small sip and giving Shane a thumbs up.

"Good?" he asked, shooting a smile across the kitchen from where he was washing the blender.

Ilya nodded, slurping up another mouthful through the straw and swallowing quickly, "Tasty," he rasped, "Much better than greens."

Shane laughed, rolling his eyes, "The greens are good for recovery," he pointed out, Ilya just nodding along sarcastically, a small smirk on his face.

After cleaning the chocolate from the blender, Shane made himself a green smoothie and an egg white omelet, settling down beside Ilya where he had made himself comfortable on the couch. He was flipping through the channels, not paying much attention to what was on. As Shane sat down, Ilya dropped his feet onto his lap, and he let out a groan of frustration, shooting a look in his boyfriend's direction.

“Ilya,” he complained, “I’m eating, that’s gross.”

“Fine,” Ilya huffed, pulling his feet down slightly so that they rested on the side of Shane’s legs, “Better?”

“A little,” Shane grumbled, setting his smoothie on the table beside them and poking into his omelette with his fork.

Ilya went back to playing with the remote, flipping through channels until he finally landed on ESPN. A documentary about American football was playing, a sport that neither of them followed much, but Ilya settled on it, dropping the remote into his lap and watching with divided focus, spending most of his energy on trying to jostle Shane as he balanced his plate precariously on the couch. He shot scowls back in his boyfriend’s direction, muttering under his breath as he finished up his omelette, setting the plate on the table and gesturing for Ilya to lift his feet.

“Alright your Highness,” he snarked, “Your footrest is ready.”

Ilya didn’t reply, just gave him a toothy grin, lifting his feet to plop them onto his lap. Shane rolled his eyes, turning to watch the documentary still playing on the screen. It was relatively dull, not something that he would usually watch, and he found himself drifting off to sleep, still tired from the few hours of interrupted rest he had gotten the night before.

He awoke about forty-five minutes later to the sound of fast, sharp breathing beside him. He shot up, turning to see Ilya still sitting beside him, eyes fixated on the TV screen. Shane turned to look at the screen, breath catching when he caught sight of the image splayed across the display. His own body was kneeling on the ice, hovering over Ilya’s crumpled form as medics raced towards them. None of the words he was speaking could be made out over the sound of the crowd, but you could see his lips moving frantically, eyes fixed on Ilya’s face. As his gaze drifted further down the screen, he could make out the smears of blood that stained the ice, forming a massive red puddle around the two of them. Fumbling for the remote, Shane snapped the TV off, turning back to reach for Ilya.

“Hey,” he murmured, trying to keep his voice calm, “Can you take some slow breaths for me?”

The other man didn’t respond, still staring ahead, eyes fixed on the dark screen, chest rising and falling rapidly.

“Ilya,” Shane said, insistently, moving to crouch in his field of vision, kneeling in front of him on the couch, “Breathe with me,” gently, he reached for his boyfriend’s right hand, tugging it up, and placing it on the center of his chest like he had done so many times over the preceding days. “Like this,” he murmured, taking exaggerated, slow, breaths, encouraging the other man to copy him.

Ilya’s breathing continued to come in shaky gasps, Shane still murmuring softly to him, trying to help him copy the rise and fall of his chest. Slowly, he started to come down, ribs heaving less, breaths coming a bit more evenly. He blinked, the glassy look in his eyes starting to slowly clear, darting back and forth until they landed on Shane’s face.

“Shane,” he gasped, and Shane leaned forward, placing a gentle hand on his face.

“I’m here,” he replied softly, “You’re safe, you’re with me in the condo.”

Ilya nodded shakily, letting out a whooshing breath, “Sorry,” he rasped, “I didn’t mean to.”

“No,” Shane interrupted, “Don’t you dare apologize, it wasn’t your fault. I’m sorry, I should’ve known they would still be talking about it. I should have changed the channel.”

Ilya shook his head, “Wasn’t your fault either,” he croaked, “I could’ve changed the channel.”

“Did you want to?” Shane asked, looking up to meet his gaze.

“Maybe,” the taller man croaked, “A part of me didn’t want to see, but a part of me did.”

Shane nodded, swallowing, “Do you want to talk about it?” he asked, shifting to sit beside his boyfriend on the couch.

“I don’t know,” Ilya croaked, “Sometimes I do, most of the time no.”

“What about right now?”

“Maybe. I don’t want to upset you.”

“It won’t upset me,” Shane insisted, scooting closer to him on the couch, “If you want to talk about it, we can talk about it.”

Ilya sniffed, nodding slowly, “I just, when I saw, on the screen. I felt like I was back on the ice. I smelled the blood, I heard the screams, I saw you skating towards me.” he shook his head, breath catching, “I didn’t understand what was happening.”

Shane swallowed, taking in the information, “Has that happened before?” he asked.

Shaking his head, Ilya ran a shaky hand through his hair, leaning back on the couch, “No,” he croaked, “Not while I am awake.”

“But the nightmares?” Shane questioned.

“About the accident,” Ilya confirmed, “I do not know if it is memory or if it is brain creating memory, but I see it happen. I see blade coming, I feel it slice my neck. I feel blood, I *hear* it. I hear it hitting ice. Sounds like rain,” his hands rose up, clutching the hair at the back of his head, palms covering his ears.

Leaning forward, Shane pressed a gentle hand to his back, careful not to startle him, rubbing soft circles over his skin, “I’m still here,” he murmured gently, “You can stop or keep going, whatever you need.”

Ilya nodded, opening his mouth to keep talking, “I see Boiziau standing over me, yelling. I feel like I am going to faint, everything going black on edges. I know I am going to die, I

can't stop the blood with my hands. It just keeps coming, feels like hose spraying out of my neck. Then I see you coming, racing towards me with terrible look on your face. You catch me, and then nothing," his voice broke, and he leaned forward, burying his head in his knees, breath picking up again.

"Breathe," Shane whispered, "I've got you." They stayed like that for several minutes, Ilya curled in on himself until the heaving of his chest started to even out, slowing to a more normal rate, though his body was still quivering slightly.

"Are you with me?" Shane asked after several moments of silence, letting out a small sigh of relief when his boyfriend nodded, shifting slightly to slowly sit up. He leaned back against the couch, letting his head fall back, exposing the still healing stitches that lined the laceration on his throat.

"Should we be done talking about it for now?" Shane asked, and Ilya nodded, eyes slipping shut. "Okay," Shane murmured, leaning down to drop a kiss onto his forehead, "Are you getting tired?" glancing at the clock, he could see that it was about 11:00, Ilya had been awake for almost five hours, about the length of time he had been able to stay up before needing a nap in the past several days.

"*Da*," he nodded, yawning slightly, "Maybe I nap on couch."

"Are you sure?" Shane asked, frowning, "The bed might be more comfortable."

"Will be fine," Ilya murmured, sliding down to rest his head on a decorative pillow behind him, "I'm sick of laying in bed, I want to lay out here."

"Okay," he agreed, leaning down to brush the curls out of his boyfriend's face, "You sleep there, I'm going to do a little cleaning up in the bedroom."

Ilya nodded, clearly already starting to drift off to sleep, so Shane dropped a kiss on the top of his head, reaching into the basket beside the couch to pull out a thick, knitted throw blanket over the dozing figure, making sure to cover his feet. As he made his way towards the bedroom, he shot a final glimpse over his shoulders, relaxing a little when he saw that Ilya was still curled up comfortably, starting to snore slightly. Making his way down the hallway, he pushed his way through the half closed bedroom door, moving to strip the sheets off of the bed. As he worked, piling the sheets up towards the bottom of the mattress, he felt a lump growing in his throat. He swallowed hard, trying to ignore the feeling, gathering the pile of sheets and blankets into his arms and stumbling down the hallway to the laundry room.

Dumping the dirty laundry into the washer, he paused, leaning over the machine, breathing heavily. Trying to take in a slow deep breath, he was startled to realize that he couldn't, the air catching in his chest, lungs refusing to inflate. Wheezing, he leaned further over the machine, his forehead clunking against the cool metal with a hollow thud. Distantly, he could hear the sound of his breathing, loud and gasping, filling the laundry room. His knees started to buckle out from under him and he slid down the front of the machine, turning around to press his back against it, bending his legs towards his chest and resting his forehead on his knees, frantically trying to get air. As he tried to breathe, his mind kept supplying him with

flashes of the images assaulting him: Ilya's skate sliding through a puddle of blood as he rotated frantically on the ice, trying to tear his helmet off, Shane dropping to his knees in front of him, tearing his gloves off and shoving his hands into the pouring wound, the way the life went out of Ilya's eyes as he collapsed, flicking off like light switch being turned off.

"Shane! Breathe!" a voice broke through the rushing in his ears, the smell of perfume suddenly assaulting his overwhelmed senses. He coughed, trying to pull away from the offending scent, startling when he felt a hand holding his shoulder in place.

"Shane!" the voice called again, and he blinked, eyes focusing on Svetlana's face hovering above him, "Are you with me?" she yelled, shaking his shoulder slightly.

"Yes," he croaked, hands coming up to cover his ears, "Please don't yell."

"Sorry," her voice dropped into a loud whisper, and she lifted her hand off of his shoulder, shuffling back from where she was crouched beside him, "Are you okay?" she asked, a concerned look on her face.

Shane nodded, warm, red, embarrassment flooding his face, "Yeah, sorry," he replied sheepishly, "I guess I just freaked out a little."

"I gathered that," Svetlana nodded, moving to sit beside him, smoothing a well-manicured hand over her black pants, "What happened?"

He shook his head, rubbing at the back of his neck with his hand, "We were watching ESPN earlier, and they were playing the clip of his injury," he explained, "Ilya saw it, I was napping, but when I woke up, he was freaking out, I saw what was on the TV and I turned it off, but he had already seen it. He like, went back to the ice in his mind or something. He wasn't responding to me, just staring off into space. When he came back he said that he had been seeing the injury happen again."

Svetlana hummed, eyebrows furrowing, "Has this happened before?" she asked, "This, going back to ice in his mind?"

Shane shook his head, "No, not while he's awake," he responded, "He's been having nightmares every night, and he finally told me that he flashes back to the injury in those, but said it's never happened during the day before."

"Hm," Svetlana looked off, thinking, "And what about you, has this, panic happened before?"

Shane nodded, "It's been happening more since the injury," he admitted, "I've always had these, 'attacks' I guess, but they've definitely gotten worse since he got hurt."

She nodded, looking down at him seriously, "I think the two of you need head doctor. What's word in English?"

"Psychiatrist," Shane replied, nodding slowly, "Yeah, I know. I tried to suggest it to Ilya but he didn't really seem to want to talk about it."

Svetlana scoffed, flapping a hand, “Of course not,” she replied quickly, “He is Russian man, and he is Grigori Rozanov’s son. These two things do not go together with *psychiatrist*.”

Shane nodded, thinking about everything he had been told about Ilya’s father and his upbringing, “So what do we do then?” he asked, crinkling his forehead, “You’re the one who suggested it.”

“I did not say it would be easy,” she interjected, looking at him like that should have been obvious, “But I think between you and me we can convince him to at least try. I know many tricks, and I’m sure you do too.”

Shane nodded slowly, wiping at his eyes with an embarrassed sniff, “Sorry,” he mumbled, looking up at Svetlana nervously, “Didn’t mean to make you deal with it.”

“I do not mind,” she assured him, “You’ve had hard time lately.”

He nodded again, moving to stand up, Svetlana rising beside him. Turning to switch the washing machine on, he glanced back in her direction.

“Is he awake?” he asked.

“Slightly,” she bobbed her head from side to side, “He woke a little when I came in, but I think went back to sleep.”

Shane made his way out of the laundry room, stepping aside to make room for Svetlana in the hallway. As they made their way towards the living room, he could see Ilya laying blearily on the couch, blinking slowly up at the ceiling.

“Waking up?” he asked softly, approaching the couch. Ilya tilted his head to the side, giving him a smile.

“Yes,” he mumbled, “Feel much better than I did this morning.”

“Good,” Shane nodded, sliding onto a chair next to the couch, “Svetlana’s here,” he motioned in her direction.

“Ah, yes,” Ilya turned to look at the woman lingering in the entrance to the room, “*Mne pokazalos', ya slyshal, kak vy voshli.*” (I thought I heard you come in.)

“*Da, zavtra mne nuzhno letet' obratno v Moskvu, poetomu ya khotel yeshche raz uznat', kak u vas dela,*” (I have to fly back to Moscow tomorrow, so I wanted to come and check in with you again, see how you’re doing.) she replied, stepping towards the couch.

“*Da, tebe nuzhno vernut'sya k ottsu, verno?*” (Yes, you have to go back to see your father, right?) he asked, shifting to sit up.

“*Da,*” she rolled her eyes, “*Mne by ochen' khotelos' ostat'sya, no yesli ya propushchu yego den' rozhdeniya, menya budut beskonechno rugat',*” (Yes. I wish I could stay, but if I miss his birthday, I’ll be yelled at endlessly).

*“Ne volnuysya, so mnoy vse budet v poryadke. Tebe pora idti,”* (Don’t worry, I’ll be fine. It’s time for you to go), he replied, giving her a smile.

“Oh really?” she laughed, switching to English and turning to Shane, “Your boyfriend is trying to kick me out, says it’s time for me to go.”

“That’s not what I meant!” Ilya protested, “I just don’t want you to miss father’s birthday.”

Shane snorted, shaking his head at the two of them as he headed towards the kitchen, “Be nice you two,” he teased, “I’m going to go make something to drink, do either of you want something?”

“No, I’m okay,” Ilya responded, at the same time that Svetlana replied,

“Tea, please.”

Shane nodded, heading towards the kitchen to put the kettle on the stove, leaving the two of them to talk. As he returned to the living room holding a cup of tea, Svetlana stood to take it from him, moving to a chair with a table, perching the cup on a coaster.

“I talked to your boyfriend about head doctor,” she said, gesturing in his direction, “He says he will think about it.”

Shane turned to look at Ilya, who was sitting slouched on the couch, looking grumpy.

“Yeah?” he asked, moving to sit beside him, balancing his mug on his knee, “I think it would be a good idea.”

Ilya grumbled, waving a hand, “I said I would think about it, no need to gang up on me.”

“I’m not trying to gang up on you,” Shane protested, “I just think it’s something to consider.”

“I already said that I would,” Ilya replied, and taking notice of the edge in his voice, Shane decided to drop it for the moment, allowing his boyfriend to enjoy his last visit with his childhood friend before she returned to Russia.

He was immensely grateful that she had been able to stay as long as she had, but he had to admit he was a little nervous about what things would be like without her there during the days. The two of them had been alone together before of course, but they hadn’t spent a full day alone together since the injury, and Shane was a bit nervous that he would start to get on Ilya’s nerves without the other man being able to have a break from him. They had about a week and a half left before he was expected to return to practice, and Shane feared that his caretaking would overwhelm his boyfriend in that time frame. Ilya already grumbled about his overbearing nature, and as much as he knew it was just the way his boyfriend was, he couldn’t help the sting of insecurity that the complaints brought up.

Sighing, he pulled himself back, refocusing on the room around him and trying to listen to Ilya and Svetlana as they talked. He smiled as Ilya laughed lightly, sounding more like his usual unrestrained self that only came out around a few people, Shane being one of them.

Pushing down the insecurities and anxieties for the time being, he listened to his boyfriend laugh and talk with Svetlana, allowing the lull of the conversation to pull him in.

## Chapter End Notes

I know having the injury on the TV might seem weird, in my mind I was imagining it as like an ESPN special report on the injury or something. I don't know how much blood they would actually show in one of those, but I'm pretty sure they aired clip from the Clint Malarchuk injury in a documentary unblurred, so it's not completely out of the question.

Thank you so much for reading! I'm sorry about the little mini break I took, I didn't mean to go so long without updating, but it was my midterms week and then I caught a cold, so I've been studying and recovering the last few days.

I have at least one more chapter planned, focusing on their coming out, but there is a decent chance that it will be split into two, a chapter 9 and an epilogue, so the total chapter count will probably end up being 10. There's going to be some more mixed media in the upcoming chapters (probably the epilogue), so stay tuned for that! Please let me know your thoughts on this chapter, I'm hoping to have chapter 9 out by tonight or tomorrow, and this fic should be finished by the end of the week! Thank you all for your support, I appreciate all of your comments and feedback, and see you soon with the next chapter!

# Chapter 9: i want to tell the world you're mine

## Chapter Notes

This a little fluffier, I felt like I tortured the two of them too much in the last few chapters. There's a little more angst than I originally intended, but I tried to keep it a bit lighter.

There's more mixed media in this chapter! I wanted to add more, but boy, creating fake social media posts is extremely time consuming! Hopefully this will suffice, I feel like I have come up with as many unique usernames and screen names as I possibly can, and don't even get me started on collecting all of the profile photos from stock websites, and randomizing likes and replies for all of the comments, haha. These are all completely made up social media profiles, any similarities to any accounts active or abandoned is unintentional and entirely coincidental.

\*Sorry if the internet speak sounds more 2026 than 2018. 2018 feels like a long time ago and I struggled to remember exactly how people were speaking online then, haha.\*

Please let me know your thoughts on this chapter! I have one more coming, planning on mostly fluff (maybe smut?? haven't decided yet), but we're finally drawing to a close. Thank you so much for reading, the support on this fic has been absolutely amazing and I appreciate you all so much!

Please note that I do not own these photos, all credit goes to the original creators and image credits will be tagged in the notes here and at the end because they didn't all fit at the end.

----

iMessage images created using: <https://postfully.app/tools/text-message-generator-v2/>

Instagram posts created using: [10015.io/tools/instagram-post-generator](https://10015.io/tools/instagram-post-generator)

Twitter posts and replies created using: [tweetgen.com](https://tweetgen.com)

Image credits:

1. Hollander profile pic: <https://www.hbomax.com/shows/heated-rivalry/50cd4e99-04ee-427b-a3b4-da721ed05d9c/cast-and-crew/shane-hollander>

Connor Storrie and Hudson Williams for NYT: (no you can't see Hudson's earrings, shhhh shut up 😊) <https://x.com/connorstupdates/status/2003538290667061592>

2: Rozanov profile pic: [https://heatedrivalry.fandom.com/wiki/Ilya\\_Rozanov](https://heatedrivalry.fandom.com/wiki/Ilya_Rozanov)

Hudson Williams and Connor Storrie: (ignore Connor's earrings, we can just pretend Ilya got his ears pierced. I also spent too much time trying to make sure Hudson's tattoos were covered up) <https://www.instagram.com/p/DOfArboAIpV/>

3. @metrosmaniac24 profile:

[https://pbs.twimg.com/profile\\_images/1981452710650990592/OK6kxF3W.jpg](https://pbs.twimg.com/profile_images/1981452710650990592/OK6kxF3W.jpg)

Helmet kiss: [https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?](https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcQ6szNSviOFxUW-y_0t7at_HV6ytBrattIpyA&s)

[q=tbn:ANd9GcQ6szNSviOFxUW-y\\_0t7at\\_HV6ytBrattIpyA&s](https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcQ6szNSviOFxUW-y_0t7at_HV6ytBrattIpyA&s)

4. @mlhnews profile:

[https://substackcdn.com/image/fetch/\\$s\\_!EG5l!,f\\_auto,q\\_auto:good,fl\\_progressive:steep/https%3A%2F%2Fsubstack-post-media.s3.amazonaws.com%2Fpublic%2Fimages%2F15e60efa-8b24-40bb-ba52-f7d26c132fb0\\_2940x1654.webp](https://substackcdn.com/image/fetch/$s_!EG5l!,f_auto,q_auto:good,fl_progressive:steep/https%3A%2F%2Fsubstack-post-media.s3.amazonaws.com%2Fpublic%2Fimages%2F15e60efa-8b24-40bb-ba52-f7d26c132fb0_2940x1654.webp)

MLH News post: <https://www.teenvogue.com/story/inside-heated-rivalry-the-gay-hockey-romance-series-changing-queer-tv-exclusive>

@raidersrule295 profile: [https://game-changers-series.fandom.com/wiki/Boston\\_Bears](https://game-changers-series.fandom.com/wiki/Boston_Bears)

@bostonboy347 profile: <https://unsplash.com/photos/ice-hockey-players-on-ice-hockey-field-dQMG1BsJCuA>

@jason\_leclarc profile: <https://unsplash.com/photos/silhouette-of-person-spreading-hands-Vlr-KKzL2eg>

@sammy328 profile: [https://unsplash.com/photos/a-man-standing-in-between-two-tall-buildings-HKneKWs\\_aHc](https://unsplash.com/photos/a-man-standing-in-between-two-tall-buildings-HKneKWs_aHc)

5. @hollanovaholic profile: [https://game-changers-series.fandom.com/wiki/Shane\\_Hollander](https://game-changers-series.fandom.com/wiki/Shane_Hollander)

6. @hannahbanana profile: [https://unsplash.com/photos/silhouette-of-woman-under-orange-sky-lqqpMXO\\_8Tc](https://unsplash.com/photos/silhouette-of-woman-under-orange-sky-lqqpMXO_8Tc)

Hudson Williams and Connor Storrie for NYT (full shoot): <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/23/arts/television/heated-rivalry-connor-storrie-hudson-williams.html>

@ilya\_on\_ice profile: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ilya\\_Rozanov](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ilya_Rozanov)

@metrosgirl37 profile: [https://heatedrivalry.fandom.com/wiki/Shane\\_Hollander](https://heatedrivalry.fandom.com/wiki/Shane_Hollander)

@brittneylee32 profile: <https://unsplash.com/photos/silhouette-of-woman-running-during-golden-hour-55bVEzGVnzY>

@metrosexual profile: [https://heatedrivalry.fandom.com/wiki/Shane\\_Hollander](https://heatedrivalry.fandom.com/wiki/Shane_Hollander)

@tigerlily327 profile: <https://unsplash.com/photos/a-person-with-a-braided-hair-44f5MHVKxvI>

7. @suzybaby profile: <https://screenrant.com/heated-rivalry-biggest-questions-answered-hbo-show/>

Heated Rivalry All Stars still: <https://www.gaytimes.com/culture/heated-rivalry-connor-storrie-and-hudson-williams-signed-on-for-season-3/>

@canadadryordie profile: <https://x.com/plsjuststopugh/status/1999550941792485385>

@gia\_simon profile: [https://stock.adobe.com/search?k=frog%2Bdrawing&asset\\_id=461040351](https://stock.adobe.com/search?k=frog%2Bdrawing&asset_id=461040351)

@hollanov4life profile: <https://butwhytho.net/2025/12/heated-rivalry-season-1-review/>

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

“What time does your flight land?” Ilya’s voice rasped over the phone.

“We’re supposed to get in around 7:30,” Shane responded, tucking himself further into the corner of the airport that he was hiding in, “I’ll text you as soon as we land.”

“Okay,” his boyfriend replied, “Have safe flight. I love you.”

“I love you too,” Shane murmured, “I’ll see you soon.”

“See you soon, goodbye.”

“Goodbye,” Shane heard the sound of the phone disconnecting and he sighed, shoving the phone back into his pants pocket and straightening up. He was on his way back to Canada from Seattle, on his layover waiting for his connecting flight to Ottawa. The airport was packed, crowded with families trying to corral their rowdy kids, businessmen in suits sprinting down the moving walkway, elderly travelers pushing carts loaded with luggage, backs hunched as they walked slowly towards their gates, and eager family members waiting for reunions with arms full of flowers.

The Metros had been knocked out near the end of the second round of playoffs, late enough in the season for it to not be a complete embarrassment, but early enough that they hadn’t made it to the finals, something that Shane tried not to let sting. He was mostly just grateful that he wouldn’t be forced to be away from Ilya any longer, that they would have uninterrupted time together until training began in September.

It was mid-May, nearly two months after the accident. Shane had returned to the rink a little over a month earlier, exactly two weeks after Ilya was released from the hospital. Yuna had tried to get him more time off, but Theriault had held his ground, insisting that he return as soon as possible.

His first time stepping back onto the ice had nearly sent him into a full blown panic attack, triggering a lengthy conversation with his therapist. After the conversation with Svetlana, Shane had managed to get Ilya to agree to at least try seeing someone, and they had found him a good therapist based out of Ottawa so that he wouldn’t have to switch when he moved to the Centaurs. She was Russian-speaking, which made Ilya feel slightly more at ease, and her understanding of his cultural background had made their initial meeting go much more smoothly than he had been expecting. Ilya had agreed to make weekly appointments with her, and Yuna reported to Shane that he had been attending faithfully, and that good progress seemed to be getting made.

Shane felt like he had made some progress with his therapist as well, being able to play without having a panic attack every night was not a small thing, and his overall anxiety was starting to improve slightly, despite the additional stress that being separated from Ilya caused. He knew that he was still having nightmares, even though his boyfriend reassured him that they were improving. Yuna kept him updated on any episodes of anxiety or flashbacks that she had noticed, which were relatively few, at least from what she could tell, but Shane’s anxiety was not comforted much by that.

Ilya’s transfer to the Centaurs was still going ahead, he had initially been nervous that the deal would fall through after his injury, but a phone call from Coach Wiebe a week after the accident had reassured him that his place on the team was still held for him.

“I will be ready for training in September,” Ilya had promised, nodding his head determinedly, “I promise.”

“Just take care of yourself Rozanov,” Wiebe had replied, the response muffled against Ilya’s ear as Shane listened in from the couch, “I have no doubt you’ll be ready to go in September, but don’t rush to get back too quickly if you’re not ready, okay?”

Shane knew that Ilya was disappointed to miss his last few games at Boston, but it didn’t seem to bother him as much as he had expected it to. The Raiders had come to visit him at the condo a few days after he was released from the hospital, a visit that Shane had ducked out for, leaving Svetlana to supervise. They had decided to tell the team that the condo was hers, and that she was taking care of Ilya while he recovered, not wanting to risk telling an entire team before their planned coming out and have someone sell a story to a tabloid. The visit had gone well, the team was upset to hear that he would be transferring, but Ilya told him that they had taken it relatively okay all things considered.

“They were surprised,” he had told him, “Asked me if hit knocked my brain loose, but were mostly just happy that I am okay.”

Shane was still worried about the massive sacrifice his boyfriend was making, leaving the team that had drafted him, transferring to a less accomplished team, uprooting his entire life, moving to an entirely different country, all for *him*. It was exhilarating and it was terrifying, and if he thought about it for too long his heart started to feel like it was about to pop.

An alert from his phone jostled him back to the buzzing of the airport, and he looked down to see that his boarding time was approaching. With a sigh, he hiked his bags up higher on his shoulders, making his way towards the gate where his next flight would be departing.

----

When the plane landed, Shane rushed through customs, hurrying to grab his bags and make his way outside to where his dad had told him he would be waiting. As he exited the front doors of the airport and stepped out into the brisk Ottawa afternoon, he craned his neck around the crowds of people rushing in and out of the building, trying to catch a glimpse of his father.

Ilya had been staying with his parents since Shane returned to Montreal, moving into Shane’s old bedroom at their family home in Ottawa. He had protested when the Hollanders proposed the plan, but Yuna and David had insisted, swearing that it would be no trouble at all. Ilya had come up with multiple arguments as to why he would be an imposition, but they had finally managed to convince him, for which Shane was immensely grateful. Knowing that Ilya had people around to make sure he was okay, to take him to his physical therapy appointments and regular therapy appointments, and most importantly, to keep Shane updated. The knowledge that Ilya was safe in Ottawa with his parents was what had allowed him to keep his mind at least mostly focused on finishing the season, *mostly* being the key word.

“Shane!” David’s voice rang out over the chatter of the crowd, and Shane caught a glimpse of him making his way in his son’s direction, squeezing his way through the flow of human traffic streaming past them.

“Hey Dad,” Shane said as he approached, stepping forward to give him a hug, hindered slightly by the bags he was carrying.

“Here, let me grab one of those,” his father said, reaching out to grab the duffel that he had clutched in his left hand.

“Thanks,” Shane sighed, flexing his bicep as the weight of the bag was removed, “I appreciate it. I took a hard check into the boards in our last game, my shoulder is still a little tender.”

“We saw that,” David murmured as he turned and started heading towards the parking lot, “Ilya and your mother almost jumped out of their skin.”

Shane winced, imagining the reaction that his mother and boyfriend had when they saw him flying towards the boards. He had made a point to pop up onto his feet as quickly as possible, giving a wave towards the nearest camera to reassure the audience that he knew he had at home, making sure to hide the wince from the pain that shot through his shoulder as he rose to his feet.

He had worn a neck guard to every game he played after the incident, partially to keep his mom and Ilya calm, but mostly to keep himself calm. He had also joined a coalition of players who were pushing to make neck guards a requirement, which Ilya had also joined, receiving a great deal of media attention. The MLH was still dragging their feet, but the players were hopeful that a policy would be instated with continued pressure.

“Was Ilya okay afterwards?” Shane asked nervously, “I made sure to text him after, let him know I was okay, but I know it probably rattled him more than he let on to me.”

David nodded, “He was okay, he calmed down when he saw you get back up. If it rattled him more than that he didn’t say, and I didn’t notice anything off.”

“Good,” Shane sighed, relieved, “I was worried it might trigger a flashback for him or something.”

“It didn’t seem like it did,” David said, shaking his head, “He was upset when you went down, but as soon as you were on your feet he was back to normal.”

Shane nodded, feeling a little reassured, though there was still a tinge of lingering guilt for the anxiety he knew his boyfriend had experienced. As they made their way to the car, he listened to his dad chat about their month: how Ilya had been helping his mom cook, how he’d been working on puzzles and the NYT crossword with David every day, that the nightmares seemed to be improving, and so on. The overload of information was starting to blur together in his brain, but the noise was soothing, familiar and comforting after weeks of crowded locker rooms and being packed together with teammates in narrow planes and buses.

----

As the car pulled onto the familiar drive leading towards his parent's house, Shane felt nervous excitement building inside of him. He twisted his hands together in his lap, looking out the window, watching the trees whoosh by as they approached the driveway. His father pulled the car into the garage, pressing the remote to close the door behind them and motioning for Shane to go inside.

"Go on," he smiled, "I know you're anxious to see him, I've got the bags."

"Thanks Dad," Shane replied, quickly returning the smile and turning to hop out of the car, making his way up the garage steps and opening the door.

As he stepped inside the smell of garlic and salmon cooking filled his nose, a sure sign that Yuna Hollander was cooking a special meal for his return. He made his way through the small entryway, stepping into the kitchen, his smile growing when he saw Ilya sitting at the kitchen island, focused on chopping something while his mother stirred a pot on the stove.

"I'm home," he called out, stepping into the kitchen and waving at the two of them.

"*Moya lyobuv!*" Ilya called, shooting a wide grin towards him. He pushed his stool back, standing up and walking towards Shane, who took note of the fact that there was no waver in his step with great relief.

"Hi, honey!" his Mom turned from the stove to wave at him, giving him a big smile, "We're glad you're here."

"I'm glad to be back," he murmured, leaning into Ilya's arms as he approached, wrapping his right arm around his boyfriend's back and leaning into the hug, "I missed you," he whispered, pressing a kiss onto Ilya's temple.

"I missed you too," Ilya whispered back, turning to drop a soft kiss onto Shane's lips, "I'm happy you're home."

"Me too," Shane mumbled, his mouth muffled against Ilya's. He gave his arm a squeeze, pressing a final kiss to his lips, and pulled back to face the stove, "That smells great Mom, thank you so much for making it."

"Of course," she flapped her hand towards him, "No trouble at all, and Ilya did most of the prep work."

"Really?" Shane turned to him, raising his eyebrows, "Did you actually do it, or did you just stand in the kitchen while Mom worked and then took all the credit?"

Ilya gasped, mouth falling open in mock shock, "How dare you?" he cried indignantly, "Yuna, do not let your son question my honor like this!"

Shane's mother laughed, shaking her head at the two of them, "He really did do all of the work, Shane," she said, "He marinated the fish, chopped the veggies, and got the rice washed and in the cooker."

“Ha,” Ilya stuck his tongue out in Shane’s direction, “I told you,” he teased, leaning towards him like he was about to lick his face.

“Gross!” Shane yelled, leaning back with a disgusted look on his face, “I don’t want your slobber all over me.”

Ilya raised an eyebrow, opening his mouth to make a remark, but Shane put a finger up, gesturing firmly towards him, “Don’t,” he warned, tilting his head in his mother’s direction, his boyfriend just laughing, giving him a kiss on the cheek and returning to the veggies he was chopping on the kitchen island.

“Go on,” he gestured with the knife towards the stairs, “I know you want to get upstairs and shower before we eat. Get all the plane air off.”

Shane nodded, smiling slightly to himself at how well Ilya had gotten to know him over the years, “Yeah,” he replied, rubbing his neck with the back of his hand, “A hot shower sounds good, I’m sore from being crammed into two planes for ten hours.”

Ilya frowned slightly, his gaze dropping to Shane’s arm, “How is your shoulder?” he asked, concern written across his face.

“It’s fine,” Shane reassured him, “Just a little stiff, but nothing torn or even strained.”

The taller man nodded, but his eyebrows didn’t unfurrow, “What about your ribs?” he asked, setting the knife down and leaning forward on his stool to prod gently at his boyfriend’s chest. Shane winced slightly as his fingers brushed across his ribcage, hissing and jolting back, causing the valley between Ilya’s eyebrows to deepen, “Broken?” he asked, moving to grasp the bottom of Shane’s sweatshirt to lift up.

“No, not broken,” Shane reassured him, pushing his hand down, “Just bruised, I swear. Doctor checked me out.”

Ilya’s frown didn’t lessen, and Shane sighed, lifting his sweatshirt himself to show him, “See?” he murmured, “Just a nasty bruise, but I’m okay. Promise,” he stepped forward, planting a soft kiss on the other man’s lips, drawing back slowly and brushing a gentle hand across his cheek, “Okay?” he asked.

Ilya nodded, swallowing, “Okay,” the tension on his face relaxed slightly, seemingly more reassured.

“Good,” Shane murmured, stepping back, ignoring the fond smile that his mother was shooting in their direction, “I’m gonna go shower now.”

“Have fun!” Ilya called after him as he made his way up the stairs, waving a hand down at him as he climbed his way up to the bathroom.

----

He felt cleaner and less “airplaine” after a hot shower, scrubbing his hair and body thoroughly to remove any lingering recycled air from the flight. As he made his way down

the stairs and into the living room, he could hear the clink of plates in the dining room, interrupting the chatter spilling out into the house.

Stepping into the dining room, he smiled when he saw Ilya arranging plates around the table as his mother filled the glasses with a pitcher of water. His father was walking in from the kitchen, carrying a bowl of salad and a platter of salmon, and Shane stepped forward to take one of the dishes out of his hands, but he waved him away,

"It's fine," he assured him, "Just sit down, everything is ready."

Reaching down, Shane pulled out the chair in front of him, settling himself against the plush cushion and scooting forward, careful not to scrape the legs of the chair against the floor. Ilya dropped into the chair next to him, nudging him gently with his elbow as he sat,

"Hi," he whispered, leaning towards Shane to press a kiss onto his cheek.

"Hi," Shane murmured back, giving him a soft smile, "How are you feeling?"

"Good," Ilya responded, nodding slowly, "I don't take pain meds anymore, and I am getting stronger in physical therapy, they said I can do some basic skating whenever I feel ready."

"Do you feel ready?" Shane asked, careful to keep his tone neutral as he reached to take the bowl of rice that his dad passed in his direction.

Ilya nodded, dropping a piece of salmon onto his plate with his fork, "*Da*," he smiled towards him, "I have felt ready for few weeks now."

Shane's eyes widened, a little surprised, "Really?" he asked, "You didn't mention it."

Shaking his head, Ilya popped a chunk of fish into his mouth, chewing slowly before he answered, "Did not want to go on ice without you," he mumbled as he swallowed, "Wanted to wait for you to get back, and didn't want to distract you before season was over."

Shane spluttered, "That wouldn't have distracted me!" he protested, "That's good news, what do you think, it would have ruined my passing skills or something?"

"Your passing skills were already suffering," Ilya teased, waving his fork towards his boyfriend, "Did not need my help."

"Shut up," Shane groaned, giving Ilya a small shove, "You're such an asshole."

"You love me," Ilya smirked, poking his tongue out in his direction.

"I do," Shane mumbled, flushing red as he picked at his his plate, "Even though you're an asshole."

He heard his parents snort and he flushed a deeper shade of red, continuing to dig through the pile in front of him.

“Eat your rabbit food,” Ilya said, gesturing towards the rice, salmon, and veggies filling his plate, “Made it just for you, to fit meal plan.”

Shane lifted a piece of salmon into his mouth, nodding appreciatively as the flavor hit his tongue, “It’s good,” he mumbled in Ilya’s direction, “You did a good job with it.”

Ilya shrugged modestly, “Was nothing,” he replied, “Just did the marinade, Yuna did the cooking, made it taste good.”

“It was a joint effort,” Yuna chimed in, giving Ilya a bright smile, “He’s been a fantastic kitchen helper over the past month.”

“Really?” Shane asked, looking between the two of them, “I never thought of you as much of a chef,” he directed to his boyfriend, who gasped in mock offense.

“Insutling,” he groaned, giving Shane a dramatic pout, “What, you think I can only make tuna melt?”

“No,” Shane spluttered, “I know you know how to make other stuff, you just never *do*.”

Ilya shrugged again, “Never really buy many groceries for place in Boston, not usually there very long, so don’t want to keep too much around.”

Shane nodded, “That makes sense I guess,” he agreed, “Probably why your diet consists mostly of takeout and frozen pizza.”

“Alright you two,” his mom jumped in, “Stop chirping at each other and eat your food, it’s getting cold.”

Ilya snorted, but the two of them obeyed, digging into the food on their plates, drifting into a discussion about the playoffs and the upcoming season, Yuna interjecting questions and suggestions from time to time, David mostly just listening, chewing slowly and nodding. Shane felt himself relaxing slightly as he let himself get lost in the conversation, leaning slightly towards Ilya, allowing their shoulders to rest against each other.

----

Two days later, they made their way to the Centaurs arena, which would be Ilya’s home turf starting in September. He had asked Coach Wiebe for permission to use the ice for a couple of hours that afternoon, to get used to the feeling of the ice under his skates again before he got too rusty. Wiebe had readily agreed, telling Ilya to use the ice as much as he needed over the summer to get back on his feet, arranging a team trainer to come and work with him a couple of times a week to get him ready for the season. This first session would be just him, no trainers or other team members hanging around.

Shane tagged along, a little nervous about the possibility of being spotted together, but Wiebe had told Ilya that the arena would be mostly empty, maybe only a few janitorial staff in the offices, but probably not anyone near the ice. The rest of the Centaurs were already home with their families, the Ottawa team had been knocked out of the playoffs early on, so the

arena would be mostly free until the rookies arrived in early September, aside from the occasional kiddie class or promotional event.

As they laced up their skates on the bench, Shane kept glancing over at Ilya, trying to read the emotions on his face. He couldn't see anything other than the stony confidence that usually filled his boyfriend's features right before he stepped on the ice, the same gaze that he had seen filling the big screen at games countless times.

"You ready?" he asked, standing up and motioning towards the ice with his head.

Ilya grinned up at him, "*Da*," he replied, standing up on steady legs and stepping towards the rink, "I bet I am still faster than you, even after two months off."

Shane snorted, "In your dreams, Rozanov," he shot back, "I could skate circles around you any day."

"Prove it," Ilya goaded him, raising his eyebrows in challenge, but Shane shook his head.

"Not today," he replied, "We're supposed to be taking it easy today, remember?"

Ilya sighed dramatically, letting out an exaggerated huff, "So boring Hollander," he teased, "Always following rules."

"When it comes to your safety, yeah," Shane grumbled back, stepping out onto the ice, still hovering near the gate.

"So protective," Ilya winked at him, giving him a crooked smirk, moving forwards, pausing before he crossed onto the ice.

"Here goes," he exclaimed dramatically, grinning up at Shane with a cocky smile, but the other man caught a flash of nerves in his eyes.

"You okay?" he asked, furrowing his eyebrows slightly.

Ilya nodded slowly, his eyes fixing themselves on the rink, "A little scarier than I expected," he admitted, an unusual concession of fear from him, a slight waver creeping into his tone.

"Hey," Shane stepped towards him, reaching for his right hand, and giving it a squeeze, "It'll be okay. Just you and me, we'll take it slow."

Ilya nodded again, fixing his face into a more determined look, "Slow," he agreed.

"You've got it," Shane encouraged, trying to keep his voice natural so Ilya wouldn't accuse him of babying him, "C'mon Rozanov, show me what you got."

Moving slowly, Ilya slid forward onto the ice, taking a few cautious glides forward. Shane felt his breath catch in his throat, overcome by a crashing wave of anxiety.

"Okay?" he asked, as Ilya steadied himself, skating forward cautiously. He nodded, slowly taking in a shaky breath, looking up to meet Shane's eyes.

"I think so," he replied, "Little unsteady, but not too bad."

"Good," Shane shifted slightly on his skates, "Just take it easy, I'm here with you."

"Am not a baby," Ilya huffed, rolling his eyes a little, "I can do it."

"I know you can," Shane rushed to correct himself, "I'm not saying you can't, just, I know it can be a little nerve-wracking. I almost passed out the first time I got back out the ice a few months ago."

Ilya nodded slowly, "I think it helps that is not a game," he said, sliding forward a little easier now, "Doesn't feel as dangerous with just us on ice."

"Yeah," Shane agreed, "Doing it this way was a good idea." He watched as his boyfriend skated forward, moving a bit faster.

"Careful," he cautioned before he could stop himself, belatedly biting his tongue in an attempt to silence the words. Fortunately, Ilya didn't grumble at him again, just nodded, focusing on pushing himself across the rink, making his way towards center ice. In a few strides, he crossed into the face-off circle, turning around to grin at Shane.

"Okay?" Shane asked, trying to get a sense of where his boyfriend's head was at.

"Okay," Ilya confirmed, giving him a smile, "Feels good."

"Good," Shane replied, shoulders slumping slightly in relief.

"Well?" he asked, gesturing with one arm, "Come on."

Gliding forward, Shane met him in the middle of the ice, taking the hand that Ilya held out to him.

"What are you doing?" he asked, interrupted by a yelp when Ilya suddenly grabbed him by the wrist, pulling him forward, "Careful!" he scolded, "You could've knocked me over!"

Ilya scoffed, rolling his eyes, "Please," he huffed, "You are better skater than that, give yourself some credit." Before Shane could respond, he leaned forward, capturing his lips in a warm kiss, pulling the shorter man's body towards him, tangling his fingers through the back of his dark black hair, which he had grown out slightly during the playoffs. Letting out a surprised exhale, Shane started to pull back, but was stopped by Ilya's arms, gently holding firm to his biceps.

"It's okay," he mumbled against his lips, "Just you and me here."

Swallowing, Shane nodded hesitantly, trying to push down the nagging fear that this was something they were not supposed to be doing. After years of sneaking around in hotel rooms, hiding in stairwells to make phone calls, using codenames and telling countless lies to family and friends, kissing in public, in the middle of a rink no less, lit up the part of his brain that screamed, *Danger! Danger! Secret exposed!*

He shoved the alarm down as far as it would go, willing himself to focus on the feeling of the ice beneath his skates, the cool air of the arena around them, the warmth of Ilya's body pressed against his, the smooth, soft skin of his lips brushing against his own. He melted into the kiss, parting his lips to allow Ilya to press his tongue into his mouth, tangling gently with his, pressing warm against each other as they stood at center ice, their bodies melding together in a tight press that Shane was reluctant to pull back from.

"You still want to do it?" Ilya murmured against his lips, disconnecting them slightly so that he could speak.

"Do what?" Shane asked, furrowing his brows in confusion.

"Tell everyone," his boyfriend looked down at him, a sudden vulnerability in his eyes, "About us. You said in the hospital, and we talked about it few times, but I wasn't sure if you changed your mind. If you still want."

Shane shook his head quickly, "No," he replied emphatically, "I didn't change my mind. That's still what I want."

"You're sure?" Ilya asked, voice soft, "You are ready for that, no matter what happens?"

"I'm ready," Shane whispered, leaning forward to press their lips together again, "I want to tell the world you're mine. No matter what happens."

----

They had planned their coming out carefully, Yuna arranging a private photoshoot for them in late May, spending weeks researching a photographer to find one who fit her sky-high expectations and could be sworn to secrecy until the photos were released. As much as Shane wanted to come out, he had balked at the idea of a photoshoot, wondering aloud to his mother if it was too much.

"Nothing too flashy," she had assured Shane when he expressed reservations, "Classy and tasteful."

*Classy and tasteful*, Shane had thought sarcastically as the photographer posed them, positioning Ilya so that he was draped over his back, one arm wrapped protectively around his shoulder. He felt a bit silly in the outfit the stylist had picked out, it wasn't his usual look, an oversized black jacket and a button up white shirt, unbuttoned nearly down to his waist, disappearing into the top of his loose, striped dress pants. Thankfully he had a thin undershirt beneath it, but he still felt more exposed than he was used to.

Ilya looked fantastic, of course, which was what he was trying to focus on. Wearing a long black turtleneck that covered the scar on his neck from view, open sleeve cuffs revealing a stripe along the seams, and a large watch buckled onto his left wrist, he looked put together and classy, tasteful, like Yuna had promised. Shane didn't feel quite *as* tasteful himself, but he was trying not to think too hard about it, focusing on getting the photos taken so they could go home.

The photoshoot went off relatively smoothly, and by the time it was over, he was exhausted, ready to go back home and sit in a dark room, decompress from all of the flashing lights and awkward positions he had been contorted into over the past couple of hours.

As they made their way home, he shifted anxiously in his seat, looking over at Ilya where he sat beside him on the passenger's side.

"Photoshoot went okay, right?" he asked, shooting a glance in his boyfriend's direction.

"*Da*," Ilya agreed, nodding, "Pictures looked good, very sexy."

Shane groaned, "Sexy, is not what we were going for Ilya," he protested, sighing heavily.

Ilya shrugged, "I cannot help it," he replied, "And neither can you, when you get grumpy you have that sexy smouldery thing going on."

"I do not!" Shane groaned, "Is that really how it comes off? That was not what I was going for."

His boyfriend laughed, reaching over to pat him on the leg, "Don't worry *solnyshko*," he assured him, "I am teasing you. Yes, photos are sexy, that cannot be helped, but they are still very, what did Yuna call them?"

"Classy?" Shane supplied, unconvinced.

"Yes, classy," Ilya agreed, "Very classy, not showing lot of skin, respectable."

Shane snorted, a smile tugging at his lips in spite of his reservations, "That's your definition of classy?" he asked, "Not showing a lot of skin?"

Ilya shrugged, "What can I say?" he grinned over at him, "I am a simple man."

Rolling his eyes, Shane refocused on the road, trying to push aside his anxieties about the photos, focusing on the end goal.

----

As much as he was frightened to finally reveal the secret he had been trying so hard to keep from the world for the last decade, the thought of not having to work to keep it any longer was liberating, and as they had approached the set date for the announcement of their relationship, Shane had been fighting back a rising tide of fear, excitement, anticipation, anxiety, and joy. The conflicting emotions had left him feeling exhausted, and he was ready to finally be able to breathe again.

He hadn't wanted to blindside his teammates, especially Hayden, so he made sure to tell them ahead of time, traveling to Montreal to see Hayden in person, the conversation that he was frankly most nervous about. Ilya had offered to come with him, but Shane had declined the proposition, nervous that Hayden might just try and finish off what Vallières had started if his boyfriend didn't behave himself, which he sincerely doubted he would be able to do around Hayden Pike.

Hayden had responded much how Shane had expected him to, staring dumbfounded at his friend, mouth hanging wide open for the better part of a minute before he finally managed to form words,

“Shane, buddy, I, what?” he had spluttered, shaking his head like he was trying to shake the words out of his brain, “What are you telling me right now?”

“Ilya Rozanov and I are in a relationship,” Shane repeated, twisting his hands nervously in his lap, “It’s been official since last July, but we’ve been uh, messing around, since our rookie season. Well, the summer before.”

“The summer before??” Hayden spluttered again, standing up and putting his hands on top of his head, pacing across his living room, careful to avoid the toys scattered across the carpet, “So this whole time, you guys were?” he gestured with his hands, flailing his arms randomly before dropping them to his sides, defeated, staring at Shane in disbelief.

“Yeah,” Shane replied, rubbing at the back of his neck, “The whole time.”

Hayden dropped back into the chair, letting out a loud exhale, “Holy shit,” he leaned forward, resting his arms on his knees, “So the rivalry was?”

“Real,” Shane answered, “I mean in the sense that we both really enjoyed competing against each other, and I think we both always played our hardest when it was against each other,” he stopped, cringing at his own phrasing.

Hayden tilted his head to the side, considering, “Wait, was it like some kind of weird, *foreplay* for you guys?”

“What??” Shane spluttered, jerking backwards in his seat, “No, it wasn’t like that, it was just,” he trailed off, thinking about it.

“Just what?” Hayden asked, staring at him.

“I don’t know,” Shane attempted, groaning, and Hayden’s eyes grew wider.

“Oh my God, it *was*!” he hissed, “Shane Hollander, you little freak, I never would have thought you had it in you.”

“Shut up!” Shane hissed back, “It really wasn’t like that.”

“Uh, huh,” Hayden nodded apparently disbelieving, “I guess this explains why you always got so squirrely when I tried to set you up with Jackie’s friends,” he trailed off, getting lost in thought before his eyes snapped back in Shane’s direction, “Wait,” he started, “What about Boston Lily?”

Shane stared at him incredulously, waiting for it to dawn on him. Hayden just stared back, apparently waiting for an answer. Shane raised his eyebrows, tilting his head, letting Hayden work through it on his own.

“Oh. My. God.” he said finally, about 30 seconds after Shane thought he would have surely figured it out, “Boston Lily, Ilya Rozanov. Jesus, Hollander, that is the lamest code name ever.”

“Well it fooled you,” Shane protested, “You didn’t even figure it out when I laid it out for you.”

“Can you blame me?” Hayden asked incredulously, “I mean come on Shane, who would have guessed that? Your rivalry is like the most famous thing about your career.”

“Jeez, thanks,” Shane snorted, and Hayden’s eyes widened,

“No, that’s not what I meant,” he groaned, dropping his head into his hands, “Fuck, I’m messing this all up. I just meant that for your whole career it’s been Hollander vs. Rozanov, you know? It’s just a lot to wrap my head around all of a sudden.”

“Yeah, I know,” Shane muttered, “I’m sorry to spring it on you like this, I just, wanted to tell you before anyone else, you know?”

“No, it’s okay,” Hayden rushed to reassure him, “I’m glad you told me. I mean, I’m shocked, obviously, but I’m still glad you told me.”

Nodding, Shane swallowed hard, feeling a little more at ease, though his heart was still pounding in his chest.

“So, Ilya Rozanov, huh?” Hayden asked, tilting his head at him, “You sure about this?”

Shane laughed, nodding his head, “Never been more sure of anything in my life,” he replied firmly, giving Hayden a gentle smile.

His best friend whistled, raising his eyebrows, “Damn, Hollander,” he said, eyes widening in surprise, “I’ve never seen you like this before.”

“Like what?” Shane asked, not quite sure of what exactly he meant.

“So, like, confident in something,” Hayden shrugged, “You’re usually pretty wishy washy.”

“Wow,” Shane laughed, shoulders relaxing, “Getting a lot of compliments from you today.”

“C’mon Shane, I’m trying here,” Hayden whined, “You just sprung something absolutely insane on me, you gotta give me a second to process.”

Shane raised his hands, surrendering, “Alright,” he conceded, “You can have a second to process. Just, don’t keep being weird about it, okay?”

“Of course,” Hayden promised him, “I mean, I hope you’re not expecting me to sing Kumbaya with the guy or anything, but I can be pleasant,” he said, giving Shane a grin that was anything but reassuring, but he let it go.

“Wait,” Hayden said, sitting up and staring at him intently, “If this has been going on your whole career, then you guys were together when he got hurt in March.”

Shane nodded again shocked that this was only just now dawning on his best friend.

“Jesus, Shane,” Hayden sighed, “I can’t even imagine what that was like for you. I mean, that was awful for all the guys who were on the ice that day, I think a couple of them are seeing therapists over it. But, I had no idea what it was actually like for you,” he stared at him, his eyes full of sympathy and sadness, and Shane looked away, swallowing hard.

“Yeah, it was rough,” he croaked out, “It was a lot, for sure.”

“Yeah, no wonder you needed a couple of weeks off,” Hayden said softly, “Damn, man, I wish you would have told me what was going on.”

“I’m sorry,” Shane sighed, “I wanted to tell you, I really did, but then he got hurt, and there was so much going on. I didn’t want to try and push him to tell everyone right away, not when he was healing. I hated not being able to talk to you about it.”

“I’m glad you did,” Hayden replied genuinely, “You can talk to me about anything man, I hope you know that.”

Getting the news out to his best friend had made him feel less alone, more supported, another person in his corner that he knew was on his side. Telling his team had been a little more tricky, attempting to gather them all in person during the off season was impractical, so he had settled for a carefully crafted message in the team group chat:



Today 11:36 AM

Hey guys, I have some news I wanted to share with you all before it becomes public knowledge later this week. I haven't spoken to many people about this yet, but I think it's important that you all know before it comes out.

I'm gay and I've been in a relationship with Ilya Rozanov since last summer. I'm sorry to have kept this from you guys for so long, I'm sure you can understand that it's an extremely complicated situation, and it took some time for us to figure out how to handle it.

Our rivalry has always been somewhat exaggerated, but the competition was real and the relationship has never interfered with my performance on the ice, and it never will.





Today 11:36 AM

I want you all to know that this team is my focus and I will continue to keep it as my top priority. I know that we can come back stronger than ever next season, and I'm looking forward to seeing you all again in September!



11:38



Metros >

Today 11:38 AM

Taylor

T

Whoa, not at all the message I was expecting this morning.

Mitty

M

Damn Captain, I mean thanks for telling us first. Congrats, I guess. Hope you know I still fucking hate boston though.

JJ

Holy shit Hollander really?

J

I mean congrats, but damn, crazy shit.

Drapeau

D

The fuck Hollander?

Couillard

C

Don't be an ass Drapeau. Good for you Hollander, as long as you play the same, it's all cool with me.

Berkes

B

Congrats man

Laine

Rozanov??? Never would've

+

iMessage



11:38



Metros >

Laine

Rozanov??? Never would've guessed in a million years. Hey, whatever makes you happy, man. Congrats.

Comeau

You've got to be fucking kidding me man...

Schneider

Don't start, Comeau, we don't need your shit. Happy for you Hollander.

Stedlund

Yeah, shove it Comeau, he was nice enough to come to us with it first. Congrats captain, all the best.

Beaulier

Damn capitaine, that's wild. Good for you.

Wilson

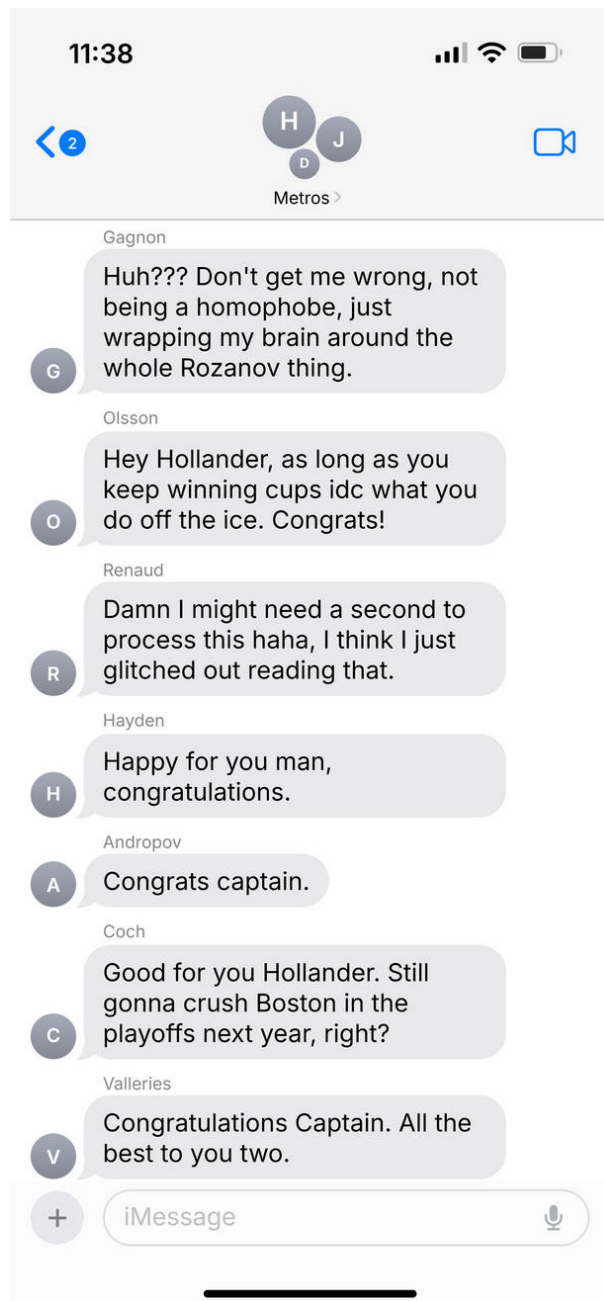
Congrats Hollander. Didn't expect this to start my morning today!

Gagnon



iMessage





The response had been about what he expected, a little bit of anger, lots of confusion, but mostly, tentatively, supportive. He knew he could depend on most of them to at least ignore it, and several members of the team had reached out to him privately, expressing their support, which was comforting. He tried to focus on that instead of on the members who had expressed less than thrilled reactions.

Theriahult had been a different story entirely, barely suppressing his anger when Shane told him he was gay, flying into a complete rage when he revealed his relationship with Ilya Rozanov and told him that they planned to announce it to the world. He had cursed up a blue streak, threatening to sue for breach of contract, threatening to bench him until he “pulled his act together”, threatening to trade him, fire him, get him blacklisted from the league. Yuna had allowed him to get through his rant before unleashing the lawyer that she had brought to the meeting with them, who swiftly laid out Canadian anti-discrimination law for the coach, promising that the Hollanders were prepared to sue all the way to the top of the MLH if they

needed to. At that point the Metros lawyer had stepped in, corralling Theriault into the back room for a quick conversation from which the coach had emerged with an angry, tense look on his face, gritting out that Shane was entitled to his own personal relationships, and that the team would not take any action unless the relationship “interfered with his on-ice performance”, a phrase that sent a chill through his spine.

His lawyer had jumped in then, and the room had faded into a dull buzz as Shane tried to keep himself from dissolving into a panic attack in Theriault’s office. From the debrief his mom gave him after the meeting, his lawyer had made it clear that any retaliatory measures from the team would be met with swift legal action, and the team’s lawyer had reassured them that the Metros did not intend on violating any anti-discrimination laws, seemingly holding Theriault back, at least for the moment.

Their conversation with Commissioner Crowell had gone over a little better, certainly less hostile. The overall atmosphere of the room was more professional, but the conference table was crowded; it was a joint meeting with Shane, Ilya, their management teams, both of their lawyers, Yuna, and several members of the MLH legal team. Shane had barely managed to stay grounded throughout the conversation, gripping Ilya’s hand tightly throughout the entire hour-long meeting, trying to keep his mind focused on the room around him. Crowell hadn’t been thrilled, but he was careful with his wording, not threatening them with any retaliation, but making it clear that the relationship needed to stay off the ice.

“I don’t need any accusations of cheating in my league,” he grumbled, “We don’t need a scandal right now. Just don’t let it interfere with your game.”

They had both assured him that their performance on the ice had never and would never be impacted by their relationship, though they left out the fact that their history stretched all the way back to the beginning of their careers. Crowell had nodded curtly before dismissing the meeting, and Shane had left feeling slightly less rattled than he had when he left his meeting with Theriault. Yuna and the lawyers had agreed that while not fantastic, the meeting had at least gone relatively well, and he was able to walk back to the car with Ilya feeling a little more reassured.

The conversation with Coach Wiebe had been much more pleasant from what Ilya described to him. He had even congratulated the two of them, which neither Crowell or Theriault had even come close to.

“Maybe I should transfer to the Centaurs too,” Shane had joked, surprised when Ilya whipped around to look at him.

“Would be nice to be in same city all year,” he said, stepping towards him to grab him gently by the waist.

“I was kidding Ilya,” Shane protested, sighing when he saw the exaggerated pout his boyfriend was giving him, “It *would* be nice to be in the same city all year,” he reassured him, “But my contract with the Metros isn’t over until next year, and I don’t know that the league is ready for a boyfriends on the same team yet.”

“Fine,” Ilya had acquiesced, “But maybe someday,” he waggled his eyebrows, Shane just rolling his eyes with a slight laugh. He didn’t bring it up again, but he had to admit, the idea of getting to finally play on the same team with Ilya full time had nestled itself neatly in the back of his mind.

----

Their coming out statements had been carefully crafted, mostly by their management teams, with their final stamp of approval. Ilya had edited his slightly, adding his own “flair” as he put it, but he allowed Shane to read over it and give his agreement. They had decided to wait until the playoffs ended, which landed them right at the end of June. Yuna had pushed for an earlier date, wanting to capitalize on the potential Pride month aspect of the reveal, but Shane had shut her down, arguing that he didn’t want to pull any focus away from the finals and didn’t want to overshadow the cup winners. She had rolled her eyes at this but patted him on the cheek,

“So sportsmanlike,” she told him, “Fine, we’ll wait until after the season ends.”

A few days after Shane returned from the playoffs in May, he had driven Ilya out to the cottage, Jeep packed with supplies for the summer. His parents would be coming up to their house nearby in early July, which meant that they had complete privacy for the next couple of months. He had felt like he was dreaming on the drive, stealing small glances at his boyfriend every couple of minutes, barely able to believe that they were finally here. It still felt somewhat surreal that Ilya was even breathing, still able to smile back at him when he caught him looking in his direction when just weeks before he had been holding his life in his hands.

The quiet of the cabin was an oasis after weeks of hospitals, parents in and out, meetings with lawyers, coaches and managers, plane rides, bus rides, practices and games. The weeks between May and June had blurred together into a comfortable routine, the two of them waking up tangled together in the sheets every morning, eating breakfast on the deck before Ilya’s physical therapist arrived and Shane headed down to the gym to work out during their session. They spent a lot of time laying by the lake, Ilya still wasn’t cleared for swimming, but he liked being near the water, and Shane would often find him lounging in a chair by the shore, letting the water lap over his feet gently. He felt like he was living in an alternate reality sometimes, afraid that he was somehow dreaming this all up and Ilya had really died on the ice in his arms. When the thoughts got too overwhelming, he would find the raised, pink skin of the scar that stretched across his boyfriend’s throat, sometimes even pressing his thumb gently against the side of it, reminding himself that this was real. Ilya was real, he was real, *they* were real.

By the time late June arrived, they were fully settled into the cottage, the rest of the world fading around them. The date they had set for their coming out arrived bright and sunny, and they had interrupted their usual morning routine, sleeping in and eating breakfast late, Ilya insisting that they deserved to “soak in” the day.

Shane swallowed hard as he looked down at the photo that filled his screen, finger hovering over the ‘post’ button. The photos had turned out better than he had expected, he had to admit that they *did* look good. His mother was already fussing over which one she wanted to have

printed and framed for the living room wall, a conversation which had left Ilya beaming with pride the last time it was discussed.

After years of deleting any pictures that had been exchanged over text, and never daring to even snap so much as a selfie together outside of the scripted one at the 2014 MLH Awards, having a full set of photos of the two of them was a surreal feeling. Shane had stared at the pictures on his phone in the encrypted folder sent over by the photographer for hours when they had first arrived, embarrassed by the tears that kept springing into his eyes.

Ilya had been snapping photos all month, collecting as many as he could, apparently making up for lost time. Shane grumbled, but a small, mind you very small, part of him found it incredibly endearing. In typical Ilya Rozanov fashion, he had decided to take his own approach to the coming out, selecting several candid photos to add to his post along with the photos from the shoot. Shane had almost protested when Ilya showed him his draft of the post, but seeing the hopeful look in his boyfriend's eyes, he relented, and over the next few days, the photos grew on him. They were the first photos that they had been able to take without the fear of exposure hanging over their heads, secluded in privacy at the cottage, more comfortable than Shane had felt in years.

His boyfriend shifting on the couch pulled him back into the moment, looking down at Ilya where he was tucked against his side, putting the finishing touches on his post.

"Ready?" Ilya asked, turning to look at him.

"I think I'm as ready as I'll ever be," he replied, tapping his finger against the side of his phone, "Are you ready?"

"Of course," Ilya grinned, "Let's tell the world."

Shane leaned down to press a kiss firmly against his lips, pulling back and returning his boyfriend's smile,

"Let's do it then," he replied, looking back towards his phone and pressing his thumb firmly over the 'post' button.



**shanehollander** • 45m  
Ottawa, CAN



354,032 likes

**shanehollander** Ilya Rozanov and I have been in a committed relationship since July of last year. We have kept our relationship private i... more

[View all 12,340 comments](#)

**hockeyfan892** Didn't see this one coming! Congrats guys!



**hollanovtruther74** omg omg omg



*Post text:* "Ilya Rozanov and I have been in a committed relationship since July of last year. We have kept our relationship private in the interest of preventing public attention and speculation from distracting from what is truly important in our careers, which is our

performance on the ice. Our relationship does not and has never interfered with our games, our rivalry on the ice will continue, even though the off the ice coverage will change.

Hiding such an important relationship has come with a great deal of personal turmoil, and we have decided we are ready to share this part of our lives with the world. Thank you to all of our fans who have supported our careers over the past decade, we each look forward to many more years with our respective teams, continuing to play the sport that brought us together."



**ilya\_rozanov** • 19m  
Ottawa, CAN



273,156 likes

**ilya\_rozanov** Yes the rumors are true, Ilya Rozanov is a taken man. Shane Hollander and I have been in a relationship since last summe... more

[View all 11,027 comments](#)

**raidersno\_1** Whoa what??? This is crazy 🤯



**hollanovdefender4evr** actually screaming rn



*Post text: "Yes, the rumors are true, Ilya Rozanov is a taken man. Shane Hollander and I have been in a relationship since last summer, something that we decided to keep private to not overshadow our performances on the ice. Our relationship has never affected the way that we play, and I plan to continue destroying Hollander in future games."*

Keeping this secret has been tiring for both of us, and we are ready to let the world know. I am grateful to have him in my life, and I am grateful to hockey for giving me the chance to meet him."



shane hollander protection service

@metrosmaniac24

...

and i almost let you guys gaslight me into thinking this meant nothing???? never listening to anyone ever again!

[#hollanovconfirmed](#) [#vindication](#)



1:42 PM · Jun 22, 2018

102 Retweets 30 Quote Tweets 3.4K Likes





MLH News

@mlhnews



Metros captain Shane Hollander and Raiders captain Ilya Rozanov "have been in a relationship since July of last year" according to a post on Hollander's Instagram account. A post on Rozanov's account confirmed the news.



2:02 PM · Jun 22, 2018

5.4K Retweets 511 Quote Tweets 18.7K Likes





**Raiders Rule** @raidersrule295 · Jun 22



I've been staring at my screen in shock for the last ten minutes.

5

16

259



**puck for life** @bostonboy347 · Jun 22



same 🤔

3

14

137



**sam the man** @sammy328 · Jun 22



you being homophobic lil bro? 🤔

4



145



**puck for life** @bostonboy347 · Jun 22



nah man, idfc who rozanov sticks his dick in as long as he keeps winning cups

12



62



**Jase** 🏈 @jason\_leclarc · Jun 22



oh that's not...

4



83



**puck for life** @bostonboy347 · Jun 22



stfu you know what i meant 🤔



23



**Hollanovaholic**



@hollanovaholic

wait so this means they were dating when Ilya got hurt??? oh my god, my poor babiessss 🤔🤔

2:10 PM · Jun 22, 2018

166 Retweets 34 Quote Tweets 1.7K Likes



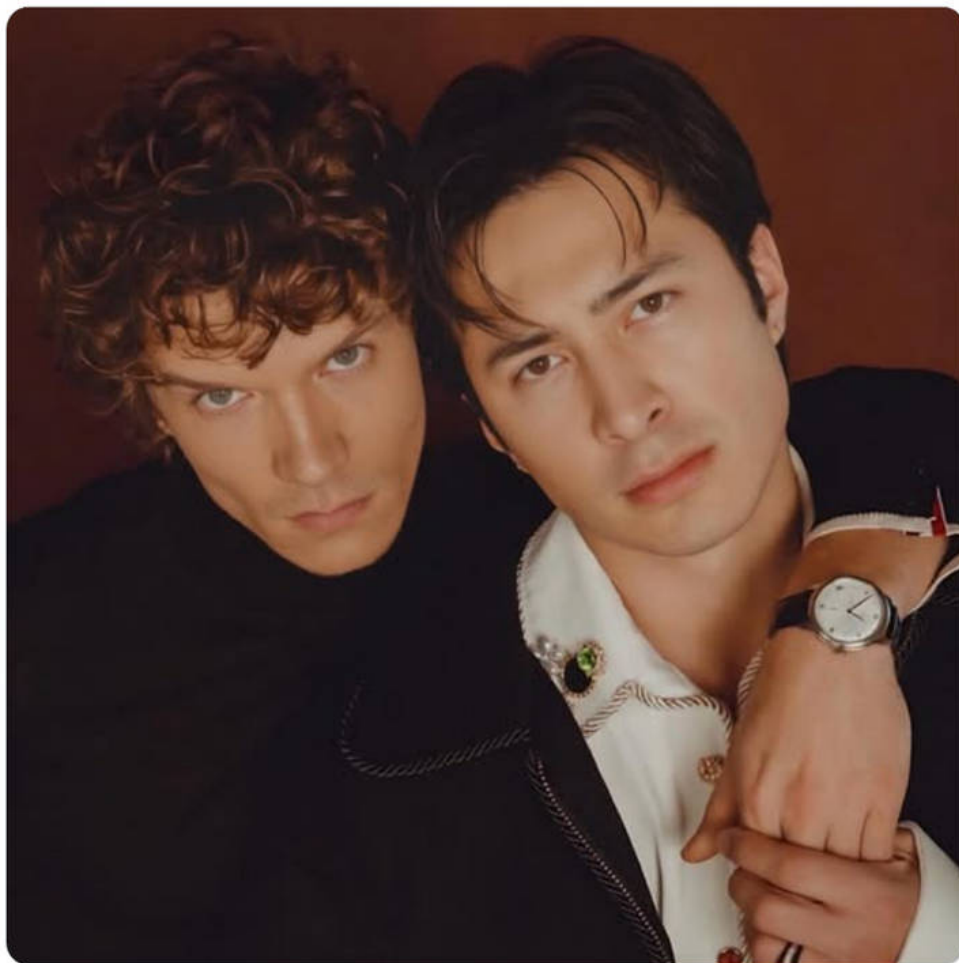


**hannah** ❤️

@hannahbanana



this picture is killing me. ilya looks like he's about to murder anyone who looks at his man sideways 😭



2:32 PM · Jun 22, 2018

**439** Retweets   **12** Quote Tweets   **8.3K** Likes





**ilya ice queen** @ilya\_on\_ice · Jun 22

...

he's got his arm LOCKED around Shane in like pretty much every photo they posted from this shoot lmao

9

27

293



**shane hollander security squad** @metrosgirl37 · Jun 22

...

It is every photo lol. Exhibit A:



7

58

398



**shane hollander security squad** @metrosgirl37 · Jun 22

...

Exhibit B:



9

52

306

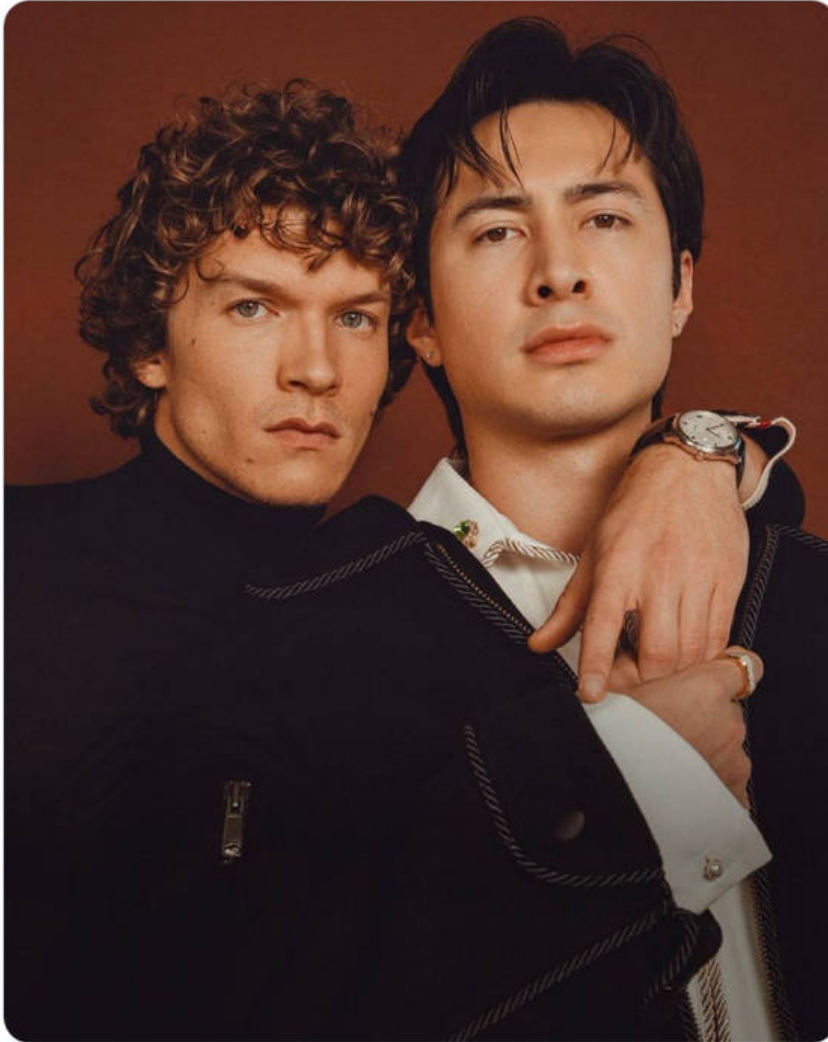




**shane hollander security squad** @metrosgirl37 · Jun 22



Exhibit C:



💬 8

↻ 41

♥ 327



**britt** @brittneylee32 · Jun 22



omg protective king

💬 2



♥ 92



**metros girlie** @metrosexual · Jun 22



they're so cute 🥺

💬 1



♥ 84



**lily** 🌻 @tigerlily327 · Jun 22



they look sooo good together too!!!



♥ 65





hear ye hear ye, hollanov is real!

@suzybaby

...

catch me overanalyzing every interaction these two  
have had over the last decade



2:40 PM · Jun 22, 2018

491 Retweets 78 Quote Tweets 2.5K Likes



pass me a ginger ale @canadadryordie · Jun 22

...

same, i'm turning into a detective over here

3

4

27



gia 🤔😞 @gia\_simon · Jun 22

...

me too 🤔 i'm literally rewatching the all star game from last  
year rn

1

2

14



vindicated hollanov stan @hollanov4life · Jun 22

...

i'm glad it's not just me

1

10





Montreal Metros Updates

@metros\_updates



Montreal Metros captain Shane Hollander announces romantic relationship with Boston Raiders captain Ilya Rozanov.



2:46 PM · Jun 22, 2018

10.2K Retweets 3.1K Quote Tweets 79.5K Likes





**metros #1** @metrodomination · Jun 22

...

wait what? I'm so confused bro 🤔

💬 32

↻ 72

❤️ 974



**raiders on top** @boston\_champ324 · Jun 22

...

same dude. this is the craziest shit that's ever happened in the mlh. good for them but still insane

💬 12

↻ 29

❤️ 754



**MLH4ever** @mlhfan328 · Jun 22

...

good for them? nah, we don't need this, it's gonna screw everything up.

💬 20

↻ 5

❤️ 201



**puck maniac** @hockeyfanatic · Jun 22

...

how????

💬 10

↻

❤️ 215



**MLH4ever** @mlhfan328 · Jun 22

...

they're rivals man! what if they start throwing games for each other?

💬 19

↻ 5

❤️ 97



**Levi** @hattrickhawk · Jun 22

...

Oh grow up, they're professionals. why are you automatically jumping to assume the worst?

💬 6

↻ 4

❤️ 127





**hollanov is real biatches**

@iceprincess39



this photo from ilya's hard launch photo dump, you guys  
i can't handle itttttt ❤️😭



2:52 PM · Jun 22, 2018

**2.5K** Retweets   **834** Quote Tweets   **15.7K** Likes





**juniebug** @montrealgirl24 · Jun 22

...

this one too 🥺



💬 4

↻ 12

♥ 253

🔗



**hollanov is real biatches** @iceprincess39 · Jun 22

...

yesss like staaaahpppp!!! my heart can't take it!

💬 1

↻

♥ 73

🔗

**juniebug** @montrealgirl24 · Jun 22

...

i mean come onnnnn 🥺❤️ have you ever seen either of them look so happy?????



💬 3

↻ 11

❤️ 197

📤

**jonas** @puckislife32 · Jun 22

...

wtf happened to hollander's shirt?

💬 2

↻

❤️ 51

📤

**hollanov is real!!!!** @rozyfangirl81 · Jun 22

...

i have a theory 🤔

💬 3

↻

❤️ 81

📤

**samantha** @sammybee · Jun 22

...

girl, not your profile ALREADY being a pic from the photo dump lmao

💬

↻

❤️ 10

📤



**Gay Sports News**

@gay\_sports\_news



MLH players Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov announce that they are in a relationship.

The two are only the second and third players in the MLH to come out since Scott Hunter became the first openly gay MLH player in 2017, and are the first MLH players to publicly appear as a couple.

3:05 PM · Jun 22, 2018

---

**6.8K** Retweets   **702** Quote Tweets   **19.5K** Likes

---





live laugh ilya rozanov

@raidersfangirl7



do you guys think this is when it started??

[#hollanov](#) [#mlhawards2014](#)



3:23 PM · Jun 22, 2018

491 Retweets

66 Quote Tweets

3.4K Likes





**aliyah** @ontarioqueen219 · Jun 22

...

nah girl, i think this photoshoot is when it started



3

7

97



**live laugh ilya rozanov** @raidersfangirl7 · Jun 22

...

there's no way! that was yearsssss ago!

6

42



**sarah** @sarahbear · Jun 22

...

i mean, didn't ilya's instagram post basically imply that they've been on and off their whole careers????

4

64



**hollanov confirmed and i am living** @claire\_marie · Jun 22

...

may i submit this to the council for evidence?



3

83



## Chapter End Notes

8: @metros\_update profile: [https://game-changers-series.fandom.com/wiki/Montreal\\_Voyageurs](https://game-changers-series.fandom.com/wiki/Montreal_Voyageurs)

Heated Rivalry press conference: <https://www.today.com/popculture/tv/rachel-reid-heated-rivalry-show-interview-rcna247427>

@metrodomination profile:

[https://www.reddit.com/r/heatedrivalry/comments/1q5xkwc/heated\\_rivalry\\_is\\_magical\\_thank\\_you\\_for\\_daring\\_to](https://www.reddit.com/r/heatedrivalry/comments/1q5xkwc/heated_rivalry_is_magical_thank_you_for_daring_to)

@boston\_champ324 profile: <https://www.tiktok.com/discover/shane-hollander-wallpaper-ideas>

@mlhfan328 profile: <https://www.harpersbazaar.com/culture/film-tv/g69610908/heated-rivalry-cast-characters/>

@hockeyfanatic profile: <https://unsplash.com/photos/a-hockey-goalie-kneels-in-front-of-the-net-8bjeUy7S-G8>

@hattrickhawk profile: <https://unsplash.com/photos/man-in-black-and-white-ice-hockey-jersey-okv1c9JkrzI>

9. @iceprincess39 profile: [https://game-changers-series.fandom.com/wiki/Heated\\_Rivalry\\_\(TV\\_Series\)](https://game-changers-series.fandom.com/wiki/Heated_Rivalry_(TV_Series))

Connor Storrie and Hudson Williams sleeping: (I had to crop the vape out of Conner's hand haha) <https://www.instagram.com/p/DSAbT1IjpdB/>

@montrealgirl24 profile: [https://www.freepik.com/search?](https://www.freepik.com/search?format=search&last_filter=query&last_value=girl+sketch&query=girl+sketch)

[format=search&last\\_filter=query&last\\_value=girl+sketch&query=girl+sketch](https://www.freepik.com/search?format=search&last_filter=query&last_value=girl+sketch&query=girl+sketch)

Hudson Williams in Heated Rivalry jacket:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DSAbT1IjpdB/>

Hudson Williams and Connor Storrie from Storrie's instagram:

<https://x.com/connorstupdates/status/1999937203171127492>

@puckislife32 profile: <https://unsplash.com/photos/a-man-in-a-red-jersey-skating-on-an-ice-rink-4GitSsLhegA>

@rozyfangirl81 profile: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DOfArboAIpV/>

@sammybee profile: <https://unsplash.com/photos/a-woman-standing-on-a-beach-at-sunset-qdsrN7XwLtE>

8. @gay\_sports\_news profile: [https://www.istockphoto.com/vector/raised-rainbow-arms-with-trophy-gm1369001065-438854495?](https://www.istockphoto.com/vector/raised-rainbow-arms-with-trophy-gm1369001065-438854495?utm_source=unsplash&utm_medium=affiliate&utm_campaign=srp_photos_bottom&utm_content=https%3A%2F%2Funsplash.com%2Fs%2Fillustrations%2Fgay-sports&utm_term=gay+sports%3A%3A%3A%3Aca72ca7e-f3aa-4e89-8ad3-ad7c700c19dd)

[utm\\_source=unsplash&utm\\_medium=affiliate&utm\\_campaign=srp\\_photos\\_bottom&utm\\_content=https%3A%2F%2Funsplash.com%2Fs%2Fillustrations%2Fgay-sports&utm\\_term=gay+sports%3A%3A%3A%3Aca72ca7e-f3aa-4e89-8ad3-ad7c700c19dd](https://www.istockphoto.com/vector/raised-rainbow-arms-with-trophy-gm1369001065-438854495?utm_source=unsplash&utm_medium=affiliate&utm_campaign=srp_photos_bottom&utm_content=https%3A%2F%2Funsplash.com%2Fs%2Fillustrations%2Fgay-sports&utm_term=gay+sports%3A%3A%3A%3Aca72ca7e-f3aa-4e89-8ad3-ad7c700c19dd)

8. @raidersfangirl7 profile: [https://game-changers-series.fandom.com/wiki/Shane\\_Hollander](https://game-changers-series.fandom.com/wiki/Shane_Hollander)

Awards show picture: <https://www.episodicmedium.tv/week-to-week-the-cold-reality-of-heated-rivalrys-award-hopes/>

@ontarioqueen219 profile: <https://www.istockphoto.com/vector/print-gm2164735013-584991371>

Heated Rivalry promo:

@sarabear profile: <https://www.istockphoto.com/vector/girl-with-butterflies-and-flowers-doodle-drawing-vector-illustration-gm1159228294-316914684>

@claire\_marie profile: <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/12/23/arts/television/heated-rivalry-connor-storrie-hudson-williams.html>

Helmet kiss: [https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?](https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcQ6szNSviOFxUW-y_0t7at_HV6ytBrattIpyA&s)

[q=tbn:ANd9GcQ6szNSviOFxUW-y\\_0t7at\\_HV6ytBrattIpyA&s](https://encrypted-tbn0.gstatic.com/images?q=tbn:ANd9GcQ6szNSviOFxUW-y_0t7at_HV6ytBrattIpyA&s)

# Chapter 10: epilogue: the cottage, again

## Chapter Summary

WARNING: About 5,000 words of this is just straight up smut, I know it's a bit of a pivot from the rest of the story, but I wanted to try out something a little new with it!

## Chapter Notes

I am so sorry about how long it took me to publish this final chapter, I've had a really rough couple of weeks but I finally got around to finishing it, and I hope it satisfies! As I mentioned in the summary, a lot of this is smut, so I apologize if you were hoping for mostly comfort, but there is still some of that as well! I've never published any fics with smut before so I apologize if it is terrible, please let me know your thoughts!

Here are Russian translations for this chapter, again I don't speak Russian and these translations were compiled using Russian translation websites and Reddit, so if you do speak Russian and notice inaccuracies, please feel free to correct them!

Moy kotenek: my kitten

lybumiyy: beloved

Moya lyobuv: my love

Ya tebya lyublyu: I love you

Bozhe: God

Bozhe, ya tak sil'no tebya lyublyu: God, I love you so much.

Okay, bye see you at the end!

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

“Shane, where are you *moy kotenek*?” Ilya’s voice rang out down the hallway to where Shane was standing in the bedroom, carefully folding clean laundry and arranging it in his meticulously organized dresser.

“I’m in the bedroom,” he called back, listening for the soft thuds of Ilya’s footsteps as he approached. They had been tucked away in the cottage for two weeks since their public coming out, riding the wave of public attention, mostly positive, although there were still the people who were upset about it. Shand was trying not to think about them too much, trying to focus on the little time they still had alone together before the season started. He was comforted somewhat by the knowledge that Ilya would be only a couple of hours away this time, instead of a plane ride and a border crossing away. Although he did have to admit to

himself that the thought of Ilya stepping back onto the ice, zipping through bodies moving at a dangerously fast pace made his heart beat so hard he thought it was about to crawl up his throat. That was something to talk about in therapy next week, definitely.

He was pulled from his musing by a kiss on the back of his neck and a pair of strong arms wrapping around his body, giving him a tight squeeze. He grunted slightly as the embrace compressed his chest, Ilya had clearly regained all of the muscle he lost following his injury, but Shane was no weakling himself, so he wiggled, leaning forward and puffing his shoulders out, breaking free of his boyfriend's grip. He heard Ilya huff amusedly behind him, and he gave a tiny swat over his shoulder with the t-shirt he had been folding before he was distracted.

"Knock it off," he grumbled, "Why are you trying to crush me?"

"Mmm, you are just so crushable," Ilya hummed, leaning back in to press another kiss against the back of his neck, sending a shiver down Shane's spine.

"You're distracting me," Shane huffed, although his lips quirked upwards slightly, betraying him, "I need to get this laundry folded."

"If I really wanted to distract you, I would have tried different approach," Ilya protested, moving around him to lean against the dresser, a dangerous smirk on his face.

Shane rolled his eyes, giving him a gentle slap on the chest as he went back to folding the t-shirt.

"Just a few more minutes," he said, attempting to continue his task as Ilya persisted in distracting him.

"Why are you folding laundry anyways?" he whined, "Is almost 11 at night, you are neurotic man."

"I'm doing it now because *someone* distracted me when I was supposed to be doing it earlier," Shane said pointedly, tilting his head in his boyfriend's direction. Ilya had been incessant when he tried to fold laundry that afternoon, whining that they were supposed to be relaxing, insisting that Shane come and lay with him out by the lake. Reluctantly, Shane had given in and followed him out to the chairs they had set up along the shore, rolling his eyes halfheartedly when Ilya pulled him down onto his lap, tucking the back of his head into his chest.

"Now we relax," he had murmured, and started rubbing Shane's neck gently, relaxing him to the point that he had forgotten all about the laundry until it was time for dinner, and then Ilya had insisted that he needed to eat, dragging him into the kitchen and depositing him on a stool while he cooked for them. After dinner they had sat on the couch and watched a movie, and by the time Shane had actually gotten around to folding the laundry, it was almost his scheduled bedtime.

"I could distract you again this time," Ilya smirked, standing up from where he was leant against the dresser and grabbing Shane by the hips, tugging him towards him.

“No,” Shane grumbled, placing a hand firmly against his chest, “Please let me finish, I only have a couple of shirts left.”

With a dramatic huff, Ilya leaned back, gesturing with his hands for Shane to continue, “Go on,” he replied, “I know you will not be able to relax at all tonight unless you do.”

“Thank you,” Shane sighed, and returned to folding, Ilya keeping his promise and patiently holding his hands at his sides until he finished, sliding the drawer shut with a satisfied exhale.

“There,” he said, stepping back from the dresser and looking at his boyfriend, “Now you can distract me as much as you want.”

With a grin, Ilya straightened up and stepped towards him, placing his hands firmly beneath his chin and pulling him in for a searing kiss. Shane gasped as their lips met, raising his arms to grasp at the other man’s waist, closing his eyes and letting him take the lead. When he felt Ilya’s tongue poke forward, he opened his mouth, letting their tongues slide against each other, the kiss quickly turning heated and desperate. Ilya’s hands slid underneath his thighs, gripping tightly and lifting upwards. Shane gave a tiny hop, wrapping his arms around Ilya’s neck and allowing himself to be hefted up into the other man’s arms.

They stumbled towards the bed, mouths working desperately against each other, tongues struggling for purchase in the other’s mouth. Shane felt himself tumbling down as Ilya let go of him, collapsing into the mound of soft, white luxury bedding that covered the king size bed. Ilya was back on top of him before he had even fully landed, clamoring over him and pressing their bodies together, muscles rolling against each other as they tumbled down. Shane moaned as Ilya’s tongue thrust its way into his mouth again, his hands sliding up his body to grip at his hips. He bucked upwards into the touch, trying desperately to gain as much sensation as possible. Ilya let out a low groan, reverberating against his lips, and his mouth turned up into a smile.

“Enjoying yourself there Hollander?” he murmured, smiling down at him with an infuriatingly smug grin.

“Shut up,” Shane grumbled, recapturing Ilya’s lips in a searing kiss.

He lost himself in it, letting himself float away on a cloud of contentment and pleasure. His hands slowly slid up under Ilya’s shirt, the hot skin of his palms burning against the flexing muscles. He groaned, rolling his body upwards into the sensation, his boyfriend letting out a small gasp against his lips.

“Enjoying yourself there Rozanov?” he smirked, throwing the other man’s words back at him.

Ilya rolled his eyes, not bothering to justify with a response, he just kissed him harder, sliding his tongue into Shane’s mouth to hear him moan. He could feel Ilya’s hands squeezing at his hips; the tight press of his fingertips was almost painful, and he hoped that there would be marks in the morning to remember this by.

Ilya pulled back, panting, his mouth slick and shiny with spit. Shane stared back at him, taking in the scene that filled his vision. His boyfriend's curls were ruffled and messy, sticking up in awkward directions. His pale skin was flushed, cheeks glowing a gorgeous pink that Shane was resisting the urge to tease him over. Seemingly growing uncomfortable under his intense gaze, Ilya leaned forward again. Shane felt hands scrabbling at his shirt, and he lifted his arms, helping the process along as Ilya wrenched the fabric over his head, folding it carefully and dropping it onto the bed before leaning back down to recapture his lips, running both of his hands firmly up his toned stomach, fingers ghosting over his sides as his palms slid up towards his pecs, grabbing and squeezing. Shane let out a gasp against his lips and he pulled back, looking down at him smugly.

"Ilya," he panted, grabbing a fistful of curls and tugging, attempting to lower his boyfriend's mouth back to his own. The taller man resisted, leaning down to press kisses to his jaw, sliding down his neck and across his collarbones, working his way down the other man's chest. With a smirk, he pressed an open mouthed kiss over one pec, and then the other, stopping to drag his tongue across the bud of each nipple as he worked his way across the expanse of skin.

"Fuck," Shane gasped, tilting his head up into the touch, "Ilya."

The taller man hummed, sounding pleased with himself as he continued trailing his mouth down his boyfriend's body, Shane bending up into the touch with each press of his lips. He groaned as Ilya traced his tongue down the line of faint hair that ran down from his bellybutton and into his jeans, dipping softly underneath the fabric of his waistband.

"Ilya, wait," Shane protested, tugging gently on his boyfriend's hair to tug him backwards.

"What?" Ilya muttered, looking up at him confused, huffing when he noticed the concerned look on his face. "Shane, is fine," he assured him, "Doctor said it was, remember?"

Shane groaned in embarrassment, covering his face at the memory. He still couldn't believe that Ilya had *actually* asked his doctor if he was cleared to give blowjobs yet. The serious look on his face would have been funny if Shane wasn't so humiliated.

The doctor hadn't even seemed phased, responding to the question like it wasn't at all an unusual one.

"That should be fine," she had said, nodding professionally, "Just be careful, take things slow."

Ilya's devious grin could have lit up an entire city block, as could Shane's beet red face.

"Is okay Shane," Ilya said again, "I will be careful, okay?" he fixed his boyfriend with the most pleading face he could manage, "Please?" he begged, "Has been so long, you know I will make you feel good."

Shane swallowed, trying not to let his nerves overtake him. He knew that the doctor had said it was okay, but the thought of hurting Ilya was absolutely unbearable. The throbbing

between his legs was also starting to grow unbearable, and he was torn between the two, finally letting his body win out over his anxious mind.

“Just be careful,” he whispered, reaching down to rub a thumb over Ilya’s cheek, “I don’t want you to hurt yourself.”

His boyfriend gave him a massive, toothy grin, “I will be careful,” he said when he saw the look on his face, “Promise.”

Shane nodded, letting his head fall back on the pillow as Ilya reached to grasp the buckle of his belt, sliding it over the thick leather and letting it fall open. Shane groaned, letting his head sink further into the pillow and Ilya smirked up at him.

“Gonna make it there?” he teased.

Shane didn’t answer, just panted up at the ceiling, which only made Ilya’s smug smile grow wider.

“Words, Shane,” he purred, “I need to hear your words.”

“I’m good,” Shane croaked, still staring up at the ceiling, “Please don’t stop.”

With a cheshire grin, Ilya leaned forward, dropping a quick kiss onto Shane’s lips before making quick work of ridding him of his pants and boxer shorts, leaving him fully exposed. He heard the fabric rustling as Ilya folded the material, placing it neatly on top of the shirt that he had placed on the bed earlier.

Bending down, he pressed a kiss to the Shane’s thigh, sticking his tongue out and trailing it along the skin, tracing upwards until he paused to suck one of his balls into his mouth, swirling his tongue as Shane arched upwards at the sudden suction, hand flying down to tug at the mop of golden curls that was nestled between his legs.

Chest heaving, Shane tried not to make too much noise, not to sound so desperate, but he was starting to lose the battle. It had been months since he had had Ilya’s mouth wrapped around him, and now that it was within reach, he had to bite his tongue to stop himself from begging. He let out a whimper as Ilya opened his mouth, pulling away with a ‘pop’, and grinning down at him.

“You going to beg for me, Hollander?” he teased.

“Fuck you,” Shane panted, but his mouth curled up into a small smile, “I’m not going to beg for shit.”

“Mmm, I think you will,” Ilya hummed, leaning down to lick a stripe up his cock, Shane gasping and thrusting upwards into the sensation, chasing more. The other man just pulled back, smirking, clearly amused with himself, “Well?” he purred, lowering his hand to wrap around Shane’s erection, pumping it slowly.

“If I remember correctly, you were the one begging just a minute ago,” Shane gasped, rolling his hips into his boyfriend’s grip, groaning when he felt a strong hand grab him by the hip, pinning him to the bed and restricting his movement.

“Ah, ah, ah,” Ilya scolded, ignoring the pleading look that Shane was shooting towards him, “Hold still,” he tightened his grip, resuming a slow pace, lowering his head to drop gentle kisses onto the hip that he wasn’t pressing into the mattress.

“Ilya,” Shane moaned, eyes screwing shut, mouth falling open.

“Words,” Ilya murmured, leaning down to lathe his tongue across Shane’s hipbone, licking a strip towards his cock, where his hand was still slowly jerking him off.

“I’m using words,” Shane panted, reaching down to grasp at the sheets, bunching the fabric into his fist. He opened his eyes, looking down at his boyfriend pleadingly.

“Hm, not the right words,” Ilya whispered, meeting Shane’s eyes as he leaned forwards, wrapping his mouth around the head of Shane’s dick, rolling his tongue across the skin before quickly pulling away, ignoring the tortured whine that erupted from his boyfriend’s throat.

“Ilya,” Shane gasped, hips bucking upwards despite the grip that the other man was still holding on his hip, “Please.”

“Closer,” Ilya smirked, leaning down to tongue at Shane’s erection again, sliding his arm across his stomach, pressing him more firmly into the mattress.

“I don’t know what you want,” Shane whined, throwing his head deeper into the pillow in frustration.

“I already told you,” the other man practically purred, “I want you to beg for me.”

“I am,” Shane groaned, opening his eyes to stare at the ceiling, “I said please.”

“Not good enough,” he could hear the smirk in Ilya’s voice even without looking at him, “Close, but not quite.”

Shane gasped when he felt a warm mouth wrap itself around the head of his cock again, tongue darting out to tease at the slit.

“Fuck, Ilya,” he moaned, hands flying down to tangle in his boyfriend’s hair, desperately trying to prevent him from pulling away again. He cried out when he felt the warmth retreating as Ilya pulled back yet again, leaving him panting and pleading on the mattress. “Please,” he groaned, tugging on the taller man’s curls, “I’m begging you.”

“Shane, Shane,” Ilya tutted, “Not very creative.”

“Oh, fuck you,” Shane gasped, head shooting off of the pillow to glare at the man lying between his legs, “Now you want creative?”

Ilya just smirked back at him, shrugging playfully as he reached down to wrap his fingers around his dick again.

“I know you know how,” he hummed, tongue darting out to tease at the slit again.

“God,” Shane groaned, eyes sliding shut, head falling back against the pillow. He swallowed hard, shoving his pride aside before he opened his mouth again.

“Please, Ilya,” he whined, rolling his hips as best he could, “Please suck my dick, I want your mouth so bad.”

“There we go,” Ilya smirked, sounding annoyingly pleased with himself, “Such a good boy.” He bent down, rolling his tongue across the head of Shane’s dick, fist pumping slowly at the base as the other man gasped and keened on the mattress. He pulled away in what felt like less than a second, a half sob tearing its way out of Shane’s throat as he thrust his hips forward, chasing his boyfriend’s mouth.

“Ilya,” he cried, lifting his head up to glare at him, “Why?”

“I want more,” Ilya hummed, still stroking his cock gently, fingers barely pressing against the skin, “You beg so prettily and I am greedy man.”

“You are greedy,” Shane agreed, groaning, “You’re unbelievable.”

“Yes, you’ve said this before,” Ilya grinned up at him, “I am unbelievable at sucking your dick,” he punctuated his remark with a gentle squeeze of his hand, ignoring the gasp that Shane let out at the sensation, “So beg me nicely, and I will give to you.”

Shane was starting to lose any remaining grip on his pride, panting and grinding his hips against the bed. He almost forgot to be embarrassed when he opened his mouth and said,

“Please baby, I need your mouth so bad. Give it to me, please, I’m begging you,” he could hear the pathetic whine in his voice, he almost sounded like he was close to tears.

He was expecting another snarky remark, so the strangled gasp that tore out of him when Ilya’s mouth wrapped around him again, immediately sinking all the way down, was completely out of his control. He groaned, fighting desperately to hold still, to stop himself from thrusting forward into the warm embrace of his boyfriend’s mouth, tongue flattened against the base of his cock, looking up at him with watery blue eyes.

“Holy shit,” he gasped, fingers tightening in golden curls, “Fuck, Ilya.”

His boyfriend hummed softly, eyes popping open to look up at him, hollowing his cheeks and sucking hard, watching Shane’s mouth fall open further still, a strangled moan tearing its way out of his throat.

“Fuck,” he cried again, tugging harder the hair tangled between his fingers, “Be careful.”

Ilya rolled his eyes, huffing annoyedly, but Shane just looked down at him, pleading with his eyes and he relented, giving him a nod of assurance.

“Okay,” Shane panted, leaning back and brushing his hand across his boyfriend’s forehead gently, “Just go slow.”

Ilya nodded again, letting his eyes flutter and resuming his task with obvious enthusiasm. Shane yelped, both hands fisting in Ilya’s hair as his head bobbed up and down, nearly gagging himself each time he swallowed him down to the base. He could feel his climax building up on him with embarrassing speed, months of nothing more than jerking off in the shower and a few handjob when Ilya was feeling good had lowered his stamina to the point that he felt like a desperate teenager again.

“Fuck, Ilya,” he groaned, tugging on his curls in an attempt to pull him off, “You’re gonna make me cum.”

His boyfriend’s eyes popped open, quirked an eyebrow up at him as if to say, “*Isn’t that the point?*” He continued sucking and rolling his tongue, ignoring Shane as he tried to fight off the rising tide of his orgasm.

“Ilya,” he whined again, “Please, I don’t want to cum yet.”

The other man slowed, but didn’t pull off, continuing to suckle gently on the head of his cock, making Shane gasp, eyes rolling back in his head, the change in sensation almost sending him off the edge.

“I want to cum with you inside of me,” he whimpered, flushing red at the admission.

Ilya pulled off of him, the sudden lack of warmth leaving him gasping as the other man surged upwards, capturing his lips in a searing kiss. Shane moaned into it, the firm press of Ilya’s stomach against his erection was dizzying, and he could feel the line of his boyfriend’s cock hard and solid against his thigh, still contained behind denim fabric. Running his hands down broad shoulders and over the line of Ilya’s waist, Shane tucked his fingers into the waistband of the taller man’s pants, slipping beneath his boxers and tugging, pulling forward until their hips collided. He groaned at the contact, Ilya taking the opportunity to slide his tongue into his mouth, flicking around possessively before pulling back to stare down at him, eyes hungry.

“That what you want?” he rasped, lips swollen and shiny with spit, “Want to feel me inside of you when you cum?”

“Please,” Shane gasped, rolling his hips upwards, pleased by the way Ilya’s breath stuttered at the contact. With a groan, the taller man reached down, taking a hold of him by the waist, preventing his body from continuing to gyrate against him. “Please,” he gasped again, tipping his head back.

“I will give you anything you want *solnyshko*,” Ilya murmured, bending down to press a kiss to his exposed throat, “Anything.”

With a whimper, Shane wriggled to free his arms, reaching down to fumble at his boyfriend’s belt, attempting to free him from his denim prison. Ilya chuckled against his neck, pulling

back and shifting onto his knees to undo the belt himself, tutting softly at the whine Shane let out when they disconnected.

“One second,” he cooed, reaching a hand down to pat at one of Shane’s thighs, “So impatient.”

Unable to respond, Shane just rolled his eyes, ignoring the grin that Ilya shot in his direction. He swallowed as his boyfriend wiggled his hips, tugging the fabric of his jeans down over his thighs, his erection more obvious through the thin fabric of his boxers. Before he could stop himself, Shane leaned forward, sitting up and reaching for Ilya, pressing an open mouthed kiss right above where the tip of his dick was leaking, forming a small damp patch on the fabric.

“Shane,” Ilya growled, hands lowering to tangle into his hair, “Fuck,” he let out a low groan as Shane mouthed down the length of his cock, tonguing at the skin through his boxer shorts.

Shane’s mind was drifting away into a pleasant hum, thoughts growing thick and clumsy as he slipped deeper, the room disappearing, leaving him surrounded by nothing but *Ilya, Ilya, Ilya*.

Sliding his fingers underneath the waistband of his boyfriend’s underwear, he tugged the fabric down, Ilya’s erection bouncing free of the fabric and bumping against his lips. Without a second thought, he leaned forward, wrapping the head into his mouth and swallowing as deep as he could manage, nearly gagging himself and having to blink hard to clear the tears that sprung to his eyes.

“*Blyat*,” Ilya hissed, fingers tightening in the short strands of hair at the base Shane’s neck, “Fuck, Shane.”

His eyes slipped closed, his mouth dropping open, soft Russian curses falling from his lips as he rocked forward slowly, clearly trying to hold himself back. Reaching out and taking a hold of Ilya’s hips, Shane tugged forward, forcing his cock further down his throat, a muffled moan springing out of his mouth at the feeling. Ilya’s eyes shot open, staring down at him as if he were something precious, gaze completely awed.

“So good for me,” he groaned, rocking his hips forward with more force, Shane letting out another strangled moan, spit starting to slip out of the corners of his mouth.

“So good,” he groaned again, still staring, eyebrows furrowing together. With a pleased hum, Shane let himself sink into the feeling, forgetting his original goal as he met the slow thrust of Ilya’s hips, swallowing hard to push him deeper into his throat.

“Fuck, Shane,” Ilya groaned, tugging at the dark strands of hair tangled between his fingers, “Stop, stop.”

He pulled off with a gasp, air whooshing into his lungs as the obstruction in his throat suddenly disappeared.

“Are you okay?” Shane croaked, looking up at his boyfriend with concern, panic starting to build in his chest, “Did I hurt you?”

“*Nyet, moya lyobuv,*” Ilya reassured him, taking in a deep shaky breath and rubbing soothingly at the back of his head, “You just need to stop if you still want me to fuck you.”

Shane grinned, fear slipping away and being replaced with a warm glow of pride.

“On your back,” Ilya murmured, leaning forward to give him a gentle push.

Shane collapsed onto the bed with a huff, letting his arms splay out by his sides, tangling his fingers into the sheets beneath him. He closed his eyes, letting himself sink into the pleasant buzz that vibrated under his skin, anticipation coiling in his stomach. The sounds of Ilya rifling around in the bedside table quieted as he found what he was looking for, sliding the drawer closed with a muted slam that made Shane jump slightly.

“Sorry,” Ilya murmured as he made his way back across the bed, dropping a quick kiss onto Shane’s forehead.

“It’s okay,” Shane hummed, letting his legs fall apart, Ilya settling between them comfortably, propping himself up on his elbows to look down at him, the intensity in his gaze making Shane’s heart rate kick up a notch.

“Ready?” Ilya murmured, bending down to kiss along his chin and jawline, stopping to nibble gently at the skin where his jaw blended into his ear.

“Please,” Shane gasped, arching his back into the sensation, hearing Ilya chuckle softly.

“Okay, *lybumiyy,*” he whispered, dropping a kiss onto his lips before leaning back and reaching for the items he had dropped on the bed beside them. Shane heard the cap of the lube bottle snap open and he settled himself back against the pillows, drawing his legs up so that his knees were bent, feet resting against the mattress. Ilya settled between his thighs again, lower this time, so that his face was level with Shane’s belly button, wrapping one arm beneath his thigh, the other hand sliding back between his legs.

“Okay?” Ilya whispered, and Shane nodded enthusiastically, unable to form a verbal response. He felt a slick finger probing against his entrance and he bit back a gasp, letting his muscles relax against the gentle intrusion. His head rolled back as the finger slid forward, pressing inside of him carefully but insistently, a firm, constant pressure that calmed the buzzing beneath his skin.

“Okay?” Ilya asked again, his warm breath ghosting over the skin of Shane’s toned stomach.

“Yeah,” he croaked, nodding eagerly, “So good.” He focused on breathing, trying to keep his muscles as relaxed as possible as Ilya slowly pressed his finger into him. It was good, but it wasn’t enough.

“I can take more,” he groaned, rocking his hips down, gasping as Ilya’s finger crooked against a new angle, a small jolt of pleasure shooting up his spine, “There,” he gasped,

“Please.”

With a smirk, Ilya straightened his finger, ignoring the whine that Shane let out.

“Shh,” he soothed, “I’ll give you more.”

Shane felt a second finger pressing against his entrance and he blew out a breath, rolling his hips again, and groaning when it forced Ilya’s second finger up to the first knuckle.

“So impatient,” Ilya chuckled, pressing a kiss to his stomach, Shane only nodding frantically.

“Yes,” he groaned, “I am. So hurry up.”

Ilya chuckled again, but he obeyed, spreading his fingers apart slightly as he pressed deeper, Shane gasping lightly at the stretch.

“Still okay?” Ilya asked again, looking up at him with hooded lids.

“Yeah,” he croaked, “Please, more.”

He floated away on a wave of pleasure as his boyfriend continued to press his fingers in and out of him, the sensation scratching an itch deep beneath his skin that he hadn’t been able to satisfy in months. When Ilya crooked his fingers forward again, Shane gasped, back arching off of the mattress as he felt his climax suddenly approaching.

“Ilya,” he moaned, “I’m ready, come on.”

“Okay,” Ilya hummed, stretching his fingers apart a few more times before withdrawing them, reaching for the small foil packet that he had left lying on the mattress.

Shane let his head fall back against the pillow as Ilya tore it open, rolling the condom on and reaching for the bottle again, squirting some onto his fingers. Shuffling forward on his knees, he reached for his cock with a glistening hand, groaning softly as he ran his hand over himself, coating his erection in lube.

Shane swallowed as Ilya settled on top of him again, pressing a kiss against his collarbone before sliding up to press their foreheads together.

“Ready?” he asked, voice sounding strained.

“Yes,” Shane gasped, nodding enthusiastically, “C’mon, please,” reaching down, he grabbed hold of Ilya’s ass with both hands, tugging him forwards, groaning as he felt the tip of his cock pressing against his entrance.

Chuckling, Ilya pressed a kiss to his lips, swallowing the moan that fell from his mouth as he finally pressed into him.

“Fuck,” Shane gasped, muffled against his boyfriend’s lips, “Mmfm.”

Ilya surged forwards, deepening their kiss and drowning out any of the sounds that were leaving his lips. Shane could feel Ilya's hands gripping his hips tightly, tugging him forward as he slowly slid into him, inch by inch. Impatient still, Shane rolled his hips, groaning happily when he felt Ilya's pelvis collide with his, arching his back against the stretch of taking him all the way to the base.

"Shane," Ilya moaned against his lips, mouth falling open slightly.

"Fuck me," Shane insisted, rolling his hips again, "Please."

With a groan, Ilya began to rock his hips forward slowly, head sliding down to rest against the mattress beside Shane's, allowing his gasps and moans to fully fill the room. Shane felt his eyes rolling back in his head as Ilya tilted upwards, changing the angle and nailing his prostate in a firm thrust.

"Ilya!" he gasped, fingers scrabbling against his boyfriend's shoulders, seeking purchase, no doubt leaving bright red streaks behind.

"That's it, *moya lyobuv*," Ilya groaned, turning his head to press messy kisses to the side of his face, sliding down to rest his head against the crook of Shane's neck, "Let me hear you."

"Ilya," Shane moaned again, boneless as the taller man picked up his pace, grinding against his prostate with each thrust, sending sparks of pleasure through his limbs, a breathless gasp pressed out of his body every time he was rocked forwards.

Ilya was still moaning softly against the skin of his neck, pressing his face more firmly into the soft expanse. His grip on Shane's hips was tightening, pulling him down to meet each thrust, the hard muscles of his abs rubbing across Shane's cock where it was trapped between them, the feeling adding to the pleasure that was coursing through his veins. He wanted it to last forever, wanted to stay in this moment, with Ilya pressed against him, breathing heavily into his ear, pressing increasingly sloppy kisses to the skin of his neck as his thrusts became more and more desperate.

Each snap of Ilya's hips sent a jolt of pleasure through his body, ricocheting up Shane's spine and spilling out down his limbs, a frantic pace that he could hardly keep up with, taking in a gasping breath to fill his lungs before the air was quickly punched out with the next precise thrust, hammering directly into his prostate.

"God," he groaned, squeezing his eyes shut, "Fuck, you're so deep." With a whine, he buried his head deeper into the pillow, letting Ilya continue to pound him into the mattress. He couldn't remember the last time he had been so desperate, so eager to feel every inch of his boyfriend's cock buried inside of him, driving him more insane with every thrust.

"Fuck, Shane," he heard his boyfriend groan, his tongue flicking out to lap up a trail of sweat that was tracing its way down his neck, "Are you close?"

Belatedly, he realized that he was. He was well on his way to tipping over the edge by the time Ilya's words reached his brain, and all he could do was nod frantically, another strangled

moan tearing out of his mouth as Ilya's hips thrust forwards again, grinding deep inside of him and sparking showers of stars behind his eyelids.

"Cum for me," Ilya gasped against his neck, mouthing desperately at the skin.

Shane felt his boyfriend's teeth scrape gently across the side of his neck, tracing over his pulse point and he snapped, back arching as he came with a loud moan, coating both of their stomachs in his release.

"Fuck," Ilya gasped, rolling his hips as Shane shook through the aftershocks of his orgasm. He moved like he was going to pull out, but Shane wrapped his legs around his back, locking his ankles together and tugging him forwards, the taller man nearly collapsing on top of him.

"Shane," Ilya groaned, opening his mouth to continue, but Shane just shook his head, tightening his grip with his legs and leaning forward to press their lips together.

"Inside," he moaned as the new angle pressed Ilya's cock even deeper, "I want you to cum inside of me."

Groaning, Ilya leaned forward into the kiss, resuming the frantic thrust of his hips as he chased his climax, lips parting until the kiss became sloppy, just panting desperately against Shane's lips.

Gasping, Shane let his head fall back, his overstimulated body quivering with each thrust, the pleasure sharp, almost bordering on painful. It was excruciating, and it was incredible.

He could feel Ilya growing more desperate, burying his face back into his neck as he moaned against the skin, chanting softly in Russian as he tipped over the edge. Shane could feel his cock twitch inside of him as he released, collapsing on top of him with a last, strangled moan, hips still rolling softly, as he gasped for air, coming down from his climax.

"*Bozhe*, Shane," Ilya groaned as his breathing started to return to normal, turning to press a messy kiss against his lips, "You kill me."

Shane snorted, bringing a hand up to tangle through his boyfriend's curls, damp from the exertion.

"You killed *me*," he whispered back, tilting his head to press his lips to Ilya's sweaty forehead, "I don't think I can move."

"Me either," Ilya sighed, leaning into the kiss, "Legs don't work anymore I think."

Shane snorted again, tugging gently at his curls, "You have to get up," he grumbled, "I'm all sticky."

Ilya rolled his eyes but acquiesced, slowly pulling back, both of them wincing as he slid out, oversensitive and tender.

"I'll be right back," Ilya murmured, pressing a kiss to his lips and rolling over, standing up on slightly wobbly legs and making his way towards the bathroom.

Shane heard the sound of the water running, and he lay back, letting his breathing even out as Ilya worked. In a few moments he heard footsteps returning from the bathroom, and he saw Ilya returning, a washcloth in his hand. He had removed the condom and cleaned himself before he returned, his cock starting to soften slightly between his legs.

With a huff, he dropped back onto the bed, leaning forward to drop another kiss onto Shane's lips before leaning down, rubbing the washcloth gently across his softening dick, the shorter man letting out a gasp at the sensation.

"Sorry," Ilya hummed, swiping the cloth backwards to clean between his legs, "I tried to use warm water."

"Is okay," Shane slurred, his tongue feeling heavy in his mouth, "Just sensitive."

"Going to fall asleep?" Ilya murmured, bending down to press a kiss to his clean stomach, the sensation sending a shiver up Shane's spine.

"Mhm," he hummed, eyes already starting to drift shut. He heard Ilya chuckle next to him before the mattress creaked as he stood up, walking back to the bathroom to deposit the wet washcloth into the laundry hamper.

Shane shivered at the sudden lack of warmth next to him, one hand stretching out in the direction of the bathroom, craving the press of Ilya's skin against his. The sudden emptiness felt like a cold chill, and he found himself shaking by the time Ilya made his way back into the room.

"Oh, *lybumiyy*," he heard his boyfriend murmur as he returned, bare feet padding gently across the hard floorboards, "I'm here."

Shane felt a warm hand slide into his own, fingers curling protectively around his palm as Ilya slid back into the bed next to him, tucking him under one arm, letting Shane's head rest on his chest.

"You are okay?" he asked quietly, sounding worried.

"I'm okay," Shane croaked, "Just cold."

With a hum, Ilya reached down to pull a blanket over both of them, making sure to tuck it carefully around Shane's body, cocooning him in warmth, the shivers starting to die down.

"You were so good for me," Ilya whispered, dropping a gentle kiss onto his forehead, "So beautiful."

Shane hummed, the warmth spreading into his chest, thawing out the last bit of lingering chill inside of his body. They lay together for a few minutes in silence, Ilya's hand brushing softly through his hair before the soft rumble of his voice broke through the quiet room.

"Feeling okay?" he asked quietly, tilting Shane's head up to face him.

“So good,” Shane whispered, “You wore me out,” he let out a yawn, eyes scrunching shut at his mouth dropped open.

“Sleep,” he heard Ilya mutter, as one of the hands in his hand slid down his neck and settled between his shoulders, rubbing soft circles against his skin.

“I love you,” he whispered back, eyes already starting to drift closed.

“*Ya tebya lyublyu,*” the soft reply drifted through his ears as he faded away into sleep.

----

When the soft morning light started to break in through the large picture windows of the cottage, Shane stirred beneath the sheets, blinking dazedly at the beams of light spilling over the bed. A glance at the clock told him that it was already 8:30, over two hours later than he normally liked to wake up.

At this moment though, he could hardly bring himself to care. Not when he had woken up with Ilya still curled against his side, mouth still soft and slack with sleep, curls mussed and falling over his closed eyes, his pale eyelashes fluttering gently above the sharp line of his cheekbones.

Before he could stop himself, Shane reached out, sliding his fingers gently through the curls obstructing the taller man’s face. He ran his hands softly through his boyfriend’s hair, gliding their way down his face, sliding past his chin, brushing over the scar on his throat.

His fingers ran over the cool metal chain hanging around his neck, and he traced it gently, one hand coming up to cradle the pendant in his palm. He stared down at the cross for a moment, lost in thought. He still couldn’t quite believe that he got to have this, that *they* got to have this. These mornings together, waking up in *their* bed, just the two of them, no coaches, no teammates, no media to bother them. He couldn’t believe that he got to call Ilya his boyfriend, and that it wasn’t a secret to hide from the world anymore.

Most of all, he couldn’t believe that Ilya was still there, still warm and breathing next to him, a pink flush of exertion still marking his cheeks. Mere months before Shane had sat curled in the back of an ambulance, holding his severed artery between his fingers, praying desperately to his boyfriend’s long-dead mother to spare her son’s life.

The memory brought tears to his eyes, the reminder of his helplessness, his fear, the way that Ilya had looked on the stretcher beneath him, pale and cold, jersey stained from the massive rush of blood that had spilled out of his body and onto the ice.

Pressing the cross more tightly into his palm, Shane closed his eyes, attempting to halt the tears attempting to fall past his lashes.

*Thank you,* he thought, *Thank you for bringing him back to me. Thank you for trusting me with him. I will take care of him for you Irina, I promise.*

Feeling Ilya stirring next to him, he released his grip on the necklace and opened his eyes, the pendant falling back against his boyfriend's skin, resting above his heart, where it always sat. Ilya let out a soft hum, his eyes flickering slightly before they opened, irises still bleary with sleep.

When he saw Shane looking down at him, his mouth turned up in a small smile, which fell when he took note of the teary eyes staring back at him.

"Shane?" he croaked, "What is wrong?"

Shaking his head quickly, Shane blinked to clear the tears from his eyes, "I'm okay," he assured him, "I was just thinking. Sorry."

"Is okay *kotenok*," Ilya murmured, "Don't apologize. What has you thinking so hard?"

"You," Shane whispered, nuzzling into his boyfriend's chest, trying to bury himself in the warmth beneath him.

"And that makes you cry?" Ilya frowned, looking displeased with the answer.

"It's not a bad cry," Shane rushed to assure him, "I was just feeling a little extra emotional this morning."

"Not a bad cry," Ilya repeated, running a hand lazily through Shane's short, dark hair, "Like when I make you cry in bed?" his eyebrows quirked up, a mischievous smirk taking over his features.

Shane snorted, slapping him lightly on the stomach, "No, you asshole," he laughed, "I was actually being very romantic."

Ilya's face softened, smile growing less teasing and more gentle, "Oh?" he asked, "Tell me."

Groaning, Shane buried his face deeper into the soft flesh of Ilya's pecs, trying to avoid his face.

"Shanneee," Ilya called, attempting to tug him up from his chest with a gentle pull on his hair, "Don't be shy, *moya lyubov*, tell me."

Reaching up to cradle the pendant that hung around Ilya's neck again, Shane stared down at it, trying to formulate his thoughts. When he looked up, his boyfriend was gazing down at him, eyes soft and loving, taking in the scene in front of him.

"Tell me," he whispered again, "Please."

"It's not a big deal," Shane whispered back, but Ilya just frowned down at him.

"Please," he begged, "It worries me when you cry, I need to know that you're okay."

"I'm okay," Shane promised, "I was just thinking about the accident."

Ilya's frown deepened, looking up at Shane, "That does not sound like good crying," he replied hesitantly, looking a bit confused.

"It was," Shane insisted, reaching down to rub a hand across his cheek gently, "I was saying thank you."

"To who?" Ilya asked, looking even more confused. Shane swallowed, hesitating before he answered.

"Irina," he whispered, taking notice of the way Ilya's eyes widened when he said her name, and he swallowed, worried that he was saying too much.

"My mama?" Ilya whispered, reaching up to cup his cheek softly, Shane leaning into the touch immediately, "Why my mama?"

He didn't sound angry, he didn't sound sad, he just sounded amazed, and Shane continued talking before he could stop himself.

"I prayed to her, your mother, in the ambulance after you got hurt," he said, sniffing slightly.

"You did?" Ilya asked, looking almost awed, "What did you say?"

"I begged her to let you stay," he whispered, gazing up at his boyfriend with glassy eyes, "I promised her that I would take care of you, keep you safe and happy if she gave you back to me. And she did. She kept you safe for me and then gave you back to me. So I was saying thank you."

Ilya didn't respond for a second, staring back at him wide-eyed with his mouth hanging slightly open. Shane shifted nervously, afraid that he was crossing a line.

"Sorry," he muttered, averting his eyes before quickly flicking them back in the other man's direction, "I wasn't trying to be disrespectful to her, I was just so scared, and she was the only person I could think of that I could ask to protect you for me..."

Before he could continue rambling, Ilya's mouth smashed into his, kissing him desperately, like he was trying to swallow him whole.

"Shane," he whispered reverently when they pulled apart, "My Shane."

"Yours," Shane promised, leaning forward and wrapping his arms around his boyfriend's neck, burying his face in the soft expanse of his skin and breathing in his comforting scent, "All yours."

With a sniff, Ilya pressed a kiss to his forehead, hands coming up to cradle the back of his head, fingers tangling gently through his hair, whispering softly in Russian. After a few moments, he cleared his throat, looking down at Shane with tears in his eyes, blinking rapidly.

"She came to me," Ilya whispered, "While I was knocked out, in hospital. I could not see her, but I knew that she was there. Could hear her, smell her, felt that she was near."

Shane swallowed hard, letting himself process the words. He stayed quiet, sensing that the other man wasn't finished speaking yet, but he slid one hand gently through the tight curls that curled across the back of his neck.

"Was so nice to hear her voice," Ilya murmured, his eyes sliding shut, "Had been so long."

He sounded wistful, impossibly young, and Shane felt a surge of emotion flooding his body. Leaning up to press a kiss to Ilya's chin, he stroked softly at the curls tangled between his fingers, letting the wave wash over him, waiting for the other man to continue. Questions swirled through his mind, but he bit his tongue, not wanting to trample on the emotional vulnerability his boyfriend was allowing him to bear witness to.

"Thought it was a dream," Ilya whispered, eyes still closed, voice still soft and open, "But it felt so real."

"Do you still think it was a dream?" Shane murmured, pressing another kiss to his chin.

"*Nyet*," Ilya murmured, eyes opening slowly, sparkling with unshed tears, "I think she heard you. She told me I could not go yet, it was not time. I had to stay, I was still needed here."

Shane took in a sharp inhale, blinking back tears of his own. He wanted to believe it was true. He wasn't usually someone who spent a lot of time thinking about death and the afterlife. He didn't even know if he believed in a life after death, it had never been something that took up much space in his mind until the accident. When he had suddenly found himself praying to a woman who had been dead for nearly fifteen years.

For Ilya though, Shane knew things were different. Ever since he was twelve years old, he had a reason to hope and dream for an afterlife. He had someone waiting for him, someone he needed to believe he would see again.

They hadn't spoken much about Ilya's spiritual beliefs, and Shane didn't know him to be a very spiritual person, despite the cross he wore around his neck. The cross's significance to him did not fall in Orthodoxy, or in Christianity, but in his mother, in his love and commitment to her and her memory. In a way, his own religion, his own belief, his own form of spirituality that he had carried over so many years, tucked right beside his heart, pressed against with every beat and pulse.

"I think she did too," Shane whispered, voice thick with emotion, "I think she answered me." He leaned in, pressing a firm kiss to his boyfriend's lips, salty with the tears that spilled from both of their eyes.

When they finally broke apart, they didn't move far, just rested their foreheads together, breathing each other in, not speaking. After a few moments of silence, Ilya pulled back slightly, tilting his head up to drop a kiss onto each of Shane's cheeks, smoothing away his tears with the soft press of his lips.

"Sometimes I think she brought you to me," Ilya whispered, fresh tears springing up in his eyes, "She knew how much I needed you."

A sudden sob broke out of Shane's chest, and he buried his face into his boyfriend's chest, as if hiding his face would somehow prevent the other man from seeing his emotions breaking loose. He opened his mouth to try and respond, but found that he couldn't, so he settled for pressing wet, frantic kisses to Ilya's neck, trailing up to his jaw before recapturing his lips, pulling him back in, another sob spilling free, swallowed up by Ilya's mouth against his.

He let his body sink into the bed, feeling Ilya roll over to hover more closely over him, raising his hands to cup gently at Shane's chin, thumbs brushing soft circles against the skin. They lay there for several minutes, pressed together, lost in the kiss for several moments before Ilya leaned back.

"*Ya tebya lyublyu,*" Ilya whispered as he pulled away, nuzzling his head into Shane's shoulder, pressing his lips gently across his collarbone as he intertwined their hands, wrapping their fingers tightly together.

"*Ya tebya lyublyu,*" he replied, sure that his pronunciation was still terrible and half convinced that Ilya was about to make fun of him for it, but he didn't. He just buried himself deeper into his shoulder, taking in a deep, shaky exhale, before tugging his head back suddenly and kissing Shane again, the intensity nearly tearing the air from his lungs. Gasping, he sunk into it, allowing himself to be taken away in the surge of love that he felt pouring over him.

"*Ya tebya lyublyu,*" he heard Ilya whispering again, pulling back slightly to murmur against his lips, "*Ya tebya lyublyu. Bozhe, ya tak sil'no tebya lyublyu.*"

"Ilya," Shane whispered back, "Ilya, Ilya. I love you. I love you."

They fell quiet, arms still wrapped tightly around each other, exhales mingling together as they lay intertwined under the sheets.

*Thank you,* Shane found himself thinking again, *I won't take this for granted. I swear. I'll love him until my dying breath.*

## Chapter End Notes

We have finally come to the end!!! This fic has occupied like 85% of my brain capacity over the past month and I'm half relieved to be finished and half sad that the journey is over! Please let me know your thoughts!

My semester is getting really busy, and I'm a writing student who gets burnt out from all of the writing I do for classes, so I'm not sure when I will next be publishing fics, but please know that I have a literal list of ideas, so stay tuned for possible future posts! Thank you again for the unbelievable support that you have all given to this story, it really means the world to me and has made this whole journey super fun. You guys are the best!



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