

How Did We Let This Happen?

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How Did We Let This Happen?

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Summary

Shane is upset with himself for potentially ruining what little time he and Ilya have together at the cottage, before the launch of the Game Changers camp, due to some stomach bug he can't seem to get rid of.

Or a year after the first summer at the cottage, Shane is spiraling once again, due to finding out he's unexpectedly pregnant.

COMPLETED! 3.8.26

Notes

I have been working on this for DAYS. It's finally done and ready to be posted. I made several edits and brought you this after the fact! I hope you enjoy it, and please stay tuned for the Epilogue to follow :)

Thank you <3

Kudos, Comment & Subscribe <3

Chapter 1: How Did We Let This Happen?

JUNE, 2019

“Are you sure you want to go?” Ilya asks, shutting the hatch on Shane’s Land Rover before climbing into the passenger’s seat. Shane is behind the wheel, ready to drive them to the cottage, where they plan to spend the first half of the summer together before the initial launch of the Game Changers Camp.

It’s their second year spending the summer together, and Shane would rather forfeit a playoff game than let a little upset tummy ruin his plans with his boyfriend...okay, maybe tossing away a playoff game is pushing it, but still.

If it’s some kind of bug, he should be over it in the next day or two- no big deal. He’s already been combating the nausea for a week now. It can’t stick around for forever. *Can it?*

“Yes, Ilya, I want to go. I’m already feeling a lot better than I have been. It was just a stomach thing.”

“Oh, just a stomach thing?” Ilya cocks a judgmental eyebrow at him. “You were vomiting on phone two days ago...did not sound like just a *stomach thing* to me.”

“It came out of nowhere, what do you want me to say?” Shane sighs, turning the engine over.

“Could have hung up the phone. I didn’t need to hear it.”

“I thought I did. Will you just drop it?” Shane sighs again, rolling his eyes.

Ilya hesitates, then shrugs his hands up, “You are sick and need to rest. Cottage could have waited.”

“I told you I haven’t thrown up since then. I’m okay.” He says, pulling out of Ilya’s private driveway. “Besides, I’m going to rest. That’s what the cottage is for.”

Ilya responds animatedly, with a frantic hand gesture, “No, the cottage is for you to suck my dick in private. Not spend it getting sick.”

Shane would like to argue that the cottage means so much more than just getting to suck each other off but figures it a moot point.

Shane furrows his brows, “Are you angry at me for being sick or something? Because last I checked, getting sick was kind of out of my control.” He questions, trying to find the reasoning behind Ilya’s attitude.

“No, I am not angry with you, *moy perets*.” Ilya explains, turning his attention out the window. “Just...worried.”

“*Perets?*” Shane smirks, “Pepper, right?”

“Ah, so you did study the list I sent you.” Ilya smiles mischievously at him.

“I did.” Shane confirms with a little nod. “See, if I was so sick, would I have been able to impress you with what I’ve learned?”

“Ah. Keep it up. I will see what else you’ve learned this week.” Ilya’s voice drops lower as he takes Shane’s hand into his, bringing it up to his lips for a quick kiss, then holding it for safe keeping in his lap.

They arrive at the cottage an hour later and Ilya helps Shane carry in the groceries they stopped off at the store for, along the way. They make plans to cook pasta and meatballs the first night and Shane has no problem telling Ilya he’ll be the one in charge of handling the meat- to which Ilya couldn’t help himself and cracked a joke about being very good at handling Shane’s meat.

“I’m gonna need you to not. We’ve barely even settled in and you’re already trying to get in my pants.” Shane shakes his head, leaving Ilya’s side so the other man can finish loading the fridge.

Shock settles onto Ilya’s face as he stares over at his boyfriend, “Oh, is that problem now? You don’t want me in your pants?”

Shane smirks, feeling the heat rising in his cheeks, “I didn’t say that-”

“Or my mouth around your dick?” Ilya continues.

“Of course I want you to- Oh my god, look, can we just finish this first?” He presses, gesturing to the bags of groceries cluttering the counter.

“Your face looks like this now.” Ilya says, holding up a ripe tomato.

“Shut up, okay? I haven’t been with you in weeks. I’m sorry if a stupid sex joke fucks with me.” He huffs out a contrite little laugh, keeping his head down to avoid giving Ilya the satisfaction of seeing just how flustered he is.

What Ilya said wasn’t even that clever, which somehow makes it worse. Because now Shane’s brain has filled in the rest all on its own, and the thought of Ilya handling him right now- well, shit. He hopes Ilya can’t tell he’s half-hard at the moment.

“Oh, *I know*.” Ilya nods. “Which means *I* haven’t been with you either...Not fair for the jokes to have all the fun, yes?” He crowds Shane’s space, pushing at the shorter man’s shoulder until his body naturally follows suit.

Shane reluctantly turns with a heavy sigh and blinks slowly up at Ilya. The taller of the two smirks as he drops his eyes to Shane’s lips, taking his chin between his finger and thumb. He brings their faces closer, hovering mere inches apart from one another.

“I think I should fuck with you too.” Ilya says with cool, minty breath that ghosts over Shane’s lips, teasing his currently overstimulated senses. Between Ilya’s cologne clouding the

air around him, the smell of his own laundry detergent on his collar, and the bag of cilantro beside him, it's hard to focus.

And Shane really wants to hold his tongue and just enjoy this moment, but he can't. If he keeps focusing on the smells around him, he knows he'll spiral, and he's trying- *really trying*- to prove to Ilya that he's fine. The sickness is behind him. They are going to have a good time, damn it.

So instead of feeding into Ilya's very obvious attempt to seduce him, Shane turns back to what he was doing and grabs onto anything else he can focus on.

Ilya is left standing there, a little stiff-legged, watching Shane do his absolute best to ignore him. It takes a moment, but eventually Ilya gets the hint and heads back to the fridge.

Guilt tugs at Shane's chest at how abruptly he shut him down, but he didn't know what else to do. He isn't sure why the need to jump his boyfriends' bones is stronger than usual, nor why the very thought of it is also making him feel a tad bit sick.

After a beat of silence between them, Shane attempts to guide the conversation into a more playful exchange, "By the way, it's... *fuck me*, not *fuck with* me. If you say *fuck with* me, it means you're getting one over on me."

Ilya perks up at the use of the words on Shane's tongue and turns to him with a furrowed brow, leaning his hip against the counter, "Getting *what* on you?"

An amused little grin clears any remaining signs of hesitation from his face, "Getting one over- means like a joke, or a prank." Shane tries to explain, while keeping his focus on stocking the fruit bowl.

"Huh. So, I should say *what* then?" Ilya asks, and Shane completely misses the playful tone in his boyfriend's voice.

"That you should *fuck me*."

"Okay." Ilya nods, quickly closing the space between the two of them, and hoisting Shane up onto his waist.

Shane's not proud of the surprised yelp that slips from him the second he's lifted into his boyfriend's arms, but after a second he doesn't give a shit because Ilya's kissing him and they're both so fucking hard it makes him dizzy.

Ilya's carrying him to the bedroom a second later, but Shane breaks the kiss before they can clear the threshold, "Mm, what about the grocer-"

"They'll be fine- this won't take long." Ilya chuckles, attaching his lips to Shane's neck, sucking a bruising mark over his throat. Shane moans, threading his fingers through Ilya's curls at the back of his head, tucking himself against Ilya as they disappear into the bedroom.

The first day at the cottage is traditionally Shane's *unpack, settle* and *chill* day...aside from the short-lived sexual interruptions now that Ilya is a part of that routine.

It doesn't take long for Ilya to fall in line with Shane either. They've spent enough nights together that Ilya knows how Shane's brain works when they're coexisting in the same space. Shane does things in a specific order, always the same way, building comfort piece by piece and Ilya has learned not to disrupt it. In fact he embraces it and does his best to help when he can.

Normally, they'd finish putting away the groceries, then most likely unpack their suitcases- so their clothes don't get wrinkled- and then eat a little lunch before moving on with their day.

But that's not what happened.

Shane fell asleep immediately following sex, which surprised Ilya quite a bit. It's not unusual for him to do so, but what was bothering Ilya about it, was that Shane seemed more than energized beforehand.

Granted, he did manage to coax a repeat performance out of the man, but still. He's knocked the hell out.

And has been...for hours.

After giving it some thought, Ilya decides it is probably Shane's body forcing him to rest after being sick for well over a week. He's still recovering from some mystery bug, so surely, it's just that.

It's dark out when Ilya finally hears the first signs of life coming from the bedroom. He doesn't move from the couch where he's watching NHL coverage of an old game, afraid of disrupting Shane if he's only getting up to use the bathroom before falling back asleep.

But then the door opens, and the soft shuffle of bare feet across the floor brings a smile to Ilya's face. His baby is finally awake.

"Feeling okay, sweetheart?" Ilya calls, keeping his eyes on the TV.

Shane appears beside the couch a moment later, all rumpled from sleep, eyes barely open. One hand is tucked up under his T-shirt, absentmindedly dragging his nails over his skin. "Mmm. What happened? Why did you let me sleep so long?"

"Let you?" Ilya looks up at him, puzzled, reaching out a hand. "I did not *let* you. You needed rest, *moya lyubov*. Come here, lie down. I will rub your head."

"No, it's okay," Shane says with a small smile. He claps Ilya's hand lazily before glancing toward the kitchen. "I actually need food. I'm starving."

"Then I will start dinner," Ilya says, clicking off the TV and rising quickly from the couch.

“I’ll help,” Shane nods, and Ilya takes his hand, leading them down the short flight of stairs and into the kitchen together.

Before anything else, Ilya pulls Shane into his arms, pressing kisses all over his face. Shane melts easily against him, resting his cheek against Ilya’s chest.

“I love you,” Ilya whispers. “You sleep okay?”

“I did,” Shane yawns, eyes closing as he lets himself be rocked. “I guess I needed it. Thanks for letting me do that... I’m just sorry I wasted a whole day.”

“Mm. No sorry. Is okay,” Ilya hums, kissing the top of his head. “We have three weeks together, huh? We have time.”

“It’s never enough,” Shane admits, his voice suddenly small.

“I know... I know,” Ilya mutters, holding him tighter.

“I just love you so much and-” Shane sniffs, and that gets Ilya’s attention immediately. “I don’t ever wanna be apart from you,” he confesses, his voice cracking as he breaks into a sob.

“Oh, sweetheart. Neither do I.” Ilya frowns, instinctively trying to pull back so he can tend to Shane properly, only to realize there’s no need. Shane clings to him tighter, burying his face in Ilya’s chest. All he needs is this. To be held. To be comforted.

“Oh, is okay, my love,” Ilya whispers, arms firm around him. “Is okay.”

“I’m sorry,” Shane hiccups. “I don’t know why I’m crying. I’m really killing the mood, aren’t I?”

“Is okay,” Ilya repeats gently. “Is okay to cry. Crying is good. Is what you tell me all the time, da?”

“I feel like such a fucking mess.”

“What makes you feel this way?”

“I don’t know!” Shane sobs, sucking in a sharp, shaky breath.

Ilya finally manages to ease him back just enough to see his face. It’s red, tear-stained, and quickly becoming puffy around the eyes. His chin is quivering as he attempts to hold back more tears and it absolutely breaks Ilya’s heart.

“Is... um,” Ilya says carefully, shaking his head. “Is about playoffs maybe?”

“No!” Shane scoffs weakly, rolling his eyes through more tears. “Well, I don’t know... maybe it had *a little* something to do with the playoffs the last time this happened, but not this time.”

“This is not first time?”

“No.” Shane shakes his head.

“When? How many?”

He shrugs, “Maybe three times in the last two weeks, give or take?” His voice wobbles. “I just get really emotional and I can’t stop it. It’s so stupid.”

“Is not stupid...Are you feeling sad?” He asks with heavy concern in his voice.

“No- that’s the weird thing!” Shane scrubs at his face, frustration evident in the way he pulls back from Ilya. “I cried the other day because I was *happy* about something. It just came out of nowhere. Like someone flipped a switch and I completely fell apart. It was so embarrassing.”

“Were you in public?” Ilya asks, more concern flickering across his face at the thought of someone seeing him like that.

“No, but-” Shane wipes his nose with the back of his hand, gaze dropping to the floor. “It was because... because I was able to stop my diet after we lost our spot in the playoffs.” He admits shamefully.

“O-oh?” Ilya tilts his head, clearly unsure how he’s supposed to react.

“It’s not funny, Ilya!” Shane snaps as fresh tears sting his eyes. “I don’t know what’s going on with me!”

“I know it’s not, *moya lyubov*,” Ilya says quickly, hoping the pet name helps to bring things back down a bit. “I didn’t laugh! You see me laugh at you?”

“You were *going to*,” Shane insists. “I can tell- you get that stupid look on your face because you think I’m *acting ridiculous*.” He mocks in an insanely horrible Russian accent. And Ilya should really be acknowledged for his efforts cause that was truly a test on his will power.

“What look?” Ilya protests. “I didn’t have look! Is my face!”

“Yes, you did!” He points a stern finger at him.

“Okay- okay,” Ilya says, holding his hands up in surrender, trying to calm him. “I had look! I’m sorry, but I did not laugh at you. I would never laugh at you when you’re upset. I’m very worried about you.”

Shane seems to hear him this time and manages to calm down some. He drifts over to one of the barstools and climbs up, resting his elbows on the counter. He drops his head into his hands with a deep sigh and groans. After a long moment of silence, he looks up, wincing a little as he says, “I’m so sorry I just yelled at you...I’m overreacting. I know I am, but I just couldn’t stop myself.”

“You’re not overreacting, Shane,” Ilya assures him gently, which earns him a scowl from his partner.

“Okay, maybe little bit.” He pinches his fingers together with a smirk, “But your body does not feel good, and it’s making you, um...” He hesitates, brows knitting together. “What is word for when your emotions get...itchy?” He looks to Shane for the answer.

Shane blinks at him, “*Itchy?*” he thinks for a second, “...Are you looking for *irritated?*”

“Uh, no. I don’t think is the word I want,” Ilya frowns, placing his hands on his hips. “Is close, but longer, maybe? Is, uh, errat-buble...Um... irat-a-bubble?” He shakes his head in defeat.

Shane can’t help it- he openly laughs because the strange way *bubble* curls around Ilya’s accent breaks the last string of tension between them.

“*Irrah-tuh-bull,*” Shane annunciates through his laughter. “I’m irritable. And yeah- you’re right. I am.” He nods shamelessly.

“Irritable!” Ilya brightens immediately. “Thank you!”

“You’re so welcome.” He rolls his eyes, scrubbing a hand across his forehead.

Ilya starts for the fridge and begins pulling out ingredients, “I think food should help you. You are hungry and that makes a bad mood worse.”

“I guess.” Shane shrugs, watching his boyfriend gather everything they need. “Can I help you?”

“Of course, my love. You handle the pasta as planned.”

“Okay.” He sighs out a deep breath before wiping the remnants of the tears from his cheeks. Ilya stops what he’s doing for a second and pulls Shane into his chest when he’s close enough. They share a soft kiss, and Ilya brings him in for a silent hug before releasing him so he can do his part of the dinner prep.

Ilya opens the package of ground beef and the smell, although not rotten, stops Shane in his tracks. His eyes lock on the package and he takes one look at it before his stomach churns with disgust.

“Um, babe...do you think we can maybe skip the meatballs tonight?” Shane asks, swallowing hard. He’s unable to pry his eyes away from it, watching as Ilya digs a gloved hand into the packaging.

He stops mid squish to pull his gloved hand back. He stares at it, covered in pink meat, then pans over to Shane, “You don’t want them? I thought at the store you said-”

“Yeah, no. I know what I said, but I change my mind.” He grimaces, feeling the saliva pool in the sides of his mouth. “*Haarr-* Oh shit!” He claps a hand over his mouth and darts for the

closest thing to throw up in, which unfortunately is the sink. Ilya is rushing to be beside him, having stripped the glove into the trash and starts rubbing circles over his back.

“That’s it, let it all out.”

All that comes up is bile, since he hasn’t eaten anything since the morning and by time he’s finished, he’s trembling and a little light-headed.

Ilya walks him down the steps, into the recessed den and helps him take a seat on the couch.

“Just wait here.” He says, running back to the kitchen. He returns a few minutes later with a fresh can of ice-cold ginger ale, and a sleeve of crackers.

“Eat this. I don’t think pasta is good idea.”

“I don’t either.” Shane frowns, feeling a little extra disappointed since that’s all he’s been dreaming of for over a week now. He doesn’t get to eat pasta for months at a time, and the one chance he has to do so, his stomach goes and fucks it up by being less than cooperative.

After Ilya puts everything away, he sets Shane up like he’s building a comfy nest. His phone is placed carefully in his hands, a soft blanket draped over his legs, a fresh can of ginger ale placed in reach and soft pillows tucked around him. Finally Ilya settles back on the couch and pats his thigh, and Shane obediently drops his head into his lap with a small, exhausted sigh.

Ilya scrolls through his phone, thumbing past takeout places, mentally crossing off anything that could potentially set off Shane’s sensitive stomach. All the while, his other hand moves through Shane’s hair, massaging slow, practiced circles into his scalp. It visibly works in calming down his partner, so Ilya keeps at it.

Shane lies flat on his back with his phone held above his face. From the angle of it, Ilya can already tell he’s trying to self-diagnose through *WebMD*.

“What are you doing?” he asks casually, eyes flicking back to his own screen.

“Trying to decide if I have a brain tumor or-”

Ilya’s hand stills mid-stroke and he waits, “...Or?”

“...or stomach cancer,” Shane finishes grimly.

“Oh my god,” Ilya snorts, a laugh bursting out before he can stop it. “You do not have brain tumor or cancer. You make-believe sickness in your head.”

“I know what you’re trying to say, and I’m not a hypochondriac, okay?” Shane argues, pushing himself upright so fast the blanket slides off his lap. “And how would you know anyway? You’re not a doctor. I’ve hit my head so many times and it would explain the vomiting and the mood swings.”

“Mood swings?” Ilya’s brows knit together.

“Yeah. You remember the little episode I had in the kitchen an hour ago? That’s called a mood swing- which would explain the crying.”

Ilya shrugs as he stands, stretching his back as he rises from the couch. “I think is good for you. You don’t cry enough.”

“What?” Shane twists around to follow him with his eyes. “I cry *plenty*.”

“Mm, no.” Ilya shakes his head, gesturing toward his own chest, miming shoving something inward. “You keep everything inside. Like turtle.”

“Clam,” Shane corrects automatically.

“What?” Ilya’s eyebrows shoot up.

“It’s where the phrase *clam up* comes from—oh my god, forget it.” Shane flaps a hand in frustration. “I don’t hold everything in. I’m very open with you. At least I like to think I have been!”

“You are about certain things, yes,” Ilya says thoughtfully. “Not all. You always want me to be open, but it takes time for you. That is okay.”

“What?! That’s not—”

“Shane, Shane.” Ilya cuts in gently, holding up a hand. “I’m not arguing. I’m not trying to upset you. I’m stating fact. That is all. You don’t feel good. Let’s drop it.”

He shoots up from the couch, “I don’t feel well because I have a fucking tumor in my head!” Shane exclaims, thrusting his phone up like it’s the only form of evidence he can use to plead his case.

“What else could it be?” Ilya asks evenly, resting his hands on his hips.

Shane brings his hand down slowly, “What do you mean?”

He gestures toward Shane’s phone, “Your symptoms. What else could it be? Brain tumor, cancer- *what else?*”

Shane hesitates, eyes dropping back to his screen. “I don’t think the other ones apply.”

“Why not?”

“I don’t know,” he admits, shoulders slumping. “Because for one, I’m not losing weight. I’m actually super bloated... so, okay, maybe it’s not stomach cancer.”

“Shane.”

“I don’t know, Ilya!” His voice cracks. “I’m just tired of being sick, and tired of being tired. I just wanna feel normal again.”

“Then let’s go see doctor tomorrow.”

“No,” Shane says quickly. “I don’t want to waste another minute here that’s supposed to be spent with you, doing something else.”

“Oh,” Ilya says quietly. “So you will rely on doctor in your phone instead?”

“Ilya—”

“*Shane.*” He says this time with a touch more force in his voice.

“This is ridiculous.”

He shrugs, “Maybe. But let doctor tell you what’s wrong. I will go with you-”

“You will do no such thing,” Shane snaps. “If anyone sees us together-”

Ilya exhales sharply, scrubbing a hand over his face before lifting both palms in surrender. “Fine. Fine. Is ridiculous I can’t go with you to doctor.”

“You know why you can’t.”

“Oh, trust me. I do.”

They stand there in silence for a beat, eyes locked on one another.

Shane is the first to break eye contact, “...I don’t like it either,” he says at last, voice smaller now.

“Yeah,” Ilya hums, already turning away. “I know.”

“Where are you going?” Shane picks his head up to see Ilya walking away from him.

“To bed. I’m tired.”

“Ilya.”

“Goodnight, Shane,” he says over his shoulder. “Wake me if you need anything.”

“Fine,” Shane mutters lowly, collapsing back onto the couch with a sad, frustrated huff.

Two days later...

Things are much calmer around the cottage.

They talked out their feelings the second they woke up the other morning, Shane immediately apologizing for his attitude, only for Ilya to shut it down faster than the words could leave Shane’s mouth. He’d insisted Shane had nothing to be sorry for, pointing out that between feeling physically awful and being frustrated by it, he was honestly impressed Shane hadn’t been *more* upset than he had been.

Ilya, for his part, had felt terrible about how he left things the night before. The guilt followed him into sleep, and he'd spent most of the night waking every couple of hours, checking to see if Shane had come to bed. He was convinced Shane was staying on the couch when he hadn't seen him by two o'clock, but it wasn't until around three in the morning that he woke again to find Shane fast asleep beside him.

They made a deal to forget about it and move on. No sense in wasting any more of their precious time together.

Shane also agrees to listen to Ilya and make a doctor's appointment if things don't clear up within another week. He's certain they will, but it seems like a small enough compromise to help ease his boyfriend's worry. Ilya, thankfully, doesn't bring it up again.

So now, on day two, things are going pretty well.

Shane does wake with a mild headache and a touch of nausea, but nothing they can't manage with some ginger ale and toast.

Right after breakfast, Ilya decides he'd like to go swimming since the day is absolutely stunning. Shane agrees with that decision and promises he'll watch from the shoreline.

He still doesn't feel great, and just the thought of plunging his body into cold water makes his stomach cramp. Part of him would much rather crawl back into bed, but he smiles anyway and lets the day unfold. This is Ilya's visit too, and he doesn't want to ruin it for him.

"You don't want to come in the water with me?" Ilya smiles, taking Shane by the hips. He leans in and presses his lips to Shane's bare shoulder, dabbing light kisses back and forth over his collar bone until he reaches the crook of his neck.

He lets his head fall to the side automatically, allowing Ilya more space to kiss him, "Not really, *Mmm*, I'm afraid it might be too cold."

"I'll help warm you up." Ilya brings his lower lip between his teeth, giving Shane's hips a little shake.

"No thanks. I'll still watch though." Shane tells him with a content smile. "Go have fun." He pecks him on the lips, to which Ilya melts into it and brings his hands around to Shane's ass, giving it a tight squeeze.

"Hey," He yelps, shoving Ilya back playfully, "and don't drown cause I won't come in there to save you either."

The Russian winks at him as he trots backward toward the water, falling back into it once he's close enough. Shane watches and finds a place to sit close by, so he can observe Mermaid Ilya in his natural habitat.

After an hour of sunbathing and watching Ilya perform his best impression of a humpback whale, Shane calls to him that he's gonna go lay down. He might not be swimming, but his

head certainly is and his stomach feels a little crampy and unsettled for having only eaten toast.

Ilya watches from the water as Shane makes his way back up toward the house and freezes when he sees Shane stop short. His body is moving to get out of the water the next second when Shane claps a hand over his mouth and starts running.

He attempts to towel off but ends up dripping everywhere along the way. He'll have to clean that up before Shane sees it, but Ilya's sure that's the last of his concerns right now. The second he enters the cottage he hears vomiting coming from the bathroom.

His wet slides squeak as he jogs toward the hallway, coming to a slipper halt in front of the washroom. Shane is hunched over the toilet, violently puking.

"Go away." He groans, feeling Ilya's presence behind him.

"Noo." Ilya frowns, crouching behind him. "I'm not leaving you." He places a hand to Shane's forehead to steady him and lets the sickly man settle the weight of his head in his hand.

"Are you alright?" Ilya checks.

"It just came out of nowhere. I almost didn't make it..." Shane pants, leaning against the seat.

"But you did, so good for you." Ilya praises him and Shane can't tell if he's joking or not, so he chooses to ignore him.

Shane shifts around so his ass is on the floor, and his back is pressed against the wall.

"I researched some nausea remedies last night...it says I can take something over-the-counter for it...but I'm afraid if I try to drive, I'm gonna get sick again." He licks his lips, tipping his head back against the wall.

"I'll go pick whatever it is. Make me a list, and I'll go."

"Are you sure?" Shane clears his throat, pressing a hand against his stomach.

"Yes, Shane. Of course. You are sick, I am taking care of you, no?"

"Thank you," Shane sighs, "I love you." His voice thick with emotion, like he might start crying. He extends a hand and Ilya helps him to his feet.

Ilya takes the list Shane quickly scribbles out and starts at the top.

"Ginger drops," he reads aloud, squinting at Shane's neat, careful handwriting as he scans the candy aisle. He drifts slowly from one end to the other, eyes searching over rows of bags and wrappers. After a solid five minutes, he stops.

“I do not see ginger drops,” he shakes his head, dropping his hands at his sides, a little defeated.

Lemon drops. Peppermint drops. Honey candies. Something alarmingly red titled cinnamon drops, but nothing with ginger. He double-checks the aisle one last time, then the next one over, just in case they’ve hidden them somewhere obscure.

“Okay,” he sighs, consulting the list again. “Next.”

His brow furrows almost immediately.

“What the fuck is *that*,” he mumbles, mangling the words under his breath as he tries and fails to sound them out. “Keo...pet-pec...ate? Eme...em-et-rol?”

He grimaces, glancing back up at the aisle indicators like they might offer some assistance, but he comes up short. It must be a medication with that type of fucked up name, but what aisle would it even be in?

“...Fuck.” he says finally, more defeated than before.

At this rate, there is absolutely no way in hell he’s finding any of this on his own. He doesn’t want to bother Shane either in fear he might be asleep. Besides, he should be able to do this without help. He’s a grown ass man and has zero issues reading English at this point- but yet, he still can’t help but struggle sometimes.

It’s fine...this is why store clerks exist.

Ilya abandons the aisle and heads toward the front of the store, spotting an employee stocking shelves. “Hello,” he greets softly.

She’s tiny, maybe four-foot-eleven at best, with a head full of gray hair and glasses perched low on the bridge of her nose. She turns at the sound of his booming voice, clearly startled and her eyes land somewhere around his waist before slowly traveling up the length of his body to his face.

Ilya smiles warmly, hoping to look less threatening, than he’s sure he already looks to this older woman.

She blinks up at him. “Oh- um. How can I help you, dear?”

Ilya clears his throat and looks back down at the list with a sigh.

“Could you, um... help me find these things?” he asks, holding out the slightly crumpled paper, pointing to the names he can’t pronounce. “I am having hard time figuring out what they are.”

She takes it from him, pushing her glasses into place in order to read the list. She flicks her eyes up at him once, then back down at the paper.

“These are medications for upset stomachs,” she explains with a simple shrug, going to hand the paper back to him.

Judging by the blank look on Ilya’s face, this does absolutely nothing to help him. Her smile turns knowing, fond even and before Ilya can take the paper back, she pulls it back toward herself.

“Follow me, honey,” she says, already starting toward a different aisle. “I’ll take you right to what you’re looking for.”

Ilya exhales in relief and follows without hesitation. “Thank you,” Ilya says quickly. “It’s... for someone else. I don’t want to get wrong things.”

“Of course, dear,” she replies kindly. “Follow me.”

Ilya falls into step behind her, taking note to the aisle number in case he ever needs to return for more.

“Where are you from, honey?” She asks curiously. “Your accent is pretty thick.”

“Oh, um. Russia.” Ilya tells her with a twitch of a smile.

“I thought I recognized it.” She wags a finger back at him. “My sister-in-law is Russian.”

“Ah.” Ilya nods along. He really hates small talk mostly because he’s never been very good at it, and right now he’s too focused on finding these things for Shane, that he’s having a hard time relating to this stranger.

She walks him halfway down aisle six and points to the shelf. “Here we are. This is that one,” she says, tapping the paper lightly with a finger before glancing back at him with a warm smile. “And Emetrol is right here.”

Then, casually, “May I ask- are you shopping for your wife?”

Ilya hates the way he finds himself hesitating to answer. He knows it’s risky to admit to having a boyfriend, where someone might be able to recognize him, so he takes the safest route and replies, “Uh, yes,” then fumbles, “Well, not wife. Girlfriend.”

“Ah.” She brightens. “That’s what I thought.” She taps the box of Kaopectate in his hand. “Is she expecting? Because she shouldn’t take this if she is. Emetrol is fine, but-”

“S-sorry...*expecting*?” Ilya cocks his head, leaning in on reflex. He pulls back, eyes shifting as he tries to understand. “What you mean?”

“Oh, I mean, is she pregnant by chance?”

His eyebrows shoot up. “What? Ah- no, no, no, no.” He shakes his head quickly, letting out a nervous laugh as his hand comes up to rub the back of his neck. His ears burn bright red at the thought, “He-” He flinches. “She is just sick. Upset stomach, and-”

“Oh!” She waves it off gently. “I’m sorry. I only asked because of what’s on your list. I lived on ginger candies when I was pregnant with my daughter. I was sick for weeks.”

Ilya nods slowly, absorbing that. “Right...” he says, thoughtful now, checking over the list. “...She has not been feeling so good for weeks.”

“And you’re sure she’s not pregnant?” She squints an eye up at him.

“I...don’t know.” Ilya swallows, fingertips going numb.

“Well, listen. Just to be safe. Maybe stay away from the Kaopectate anyway, and go with this,” Ilya doesn’t answer, just watches as she reaches for a familiar pink bottle and sets it gently into his hands.

“This helps with nausea too,” she says. “Very safe.”

“Safe?” Ilya repeats.

She smiles, with a wink. “Just in case...let’s find the other things on your list and get you back home to her.”

Ilya nods slowly, something uneasy, but not necessarily unpleasant settling in his stomach as he follows her to the next aisle.

Ilya arrives home about twenty minutes later with a bag full of the contents on Shane’s list and maybe a little more than anticipated. It’s quiet, so he assumes Shane might be asleep. He starts carefully unpacking the items onto the counter, trying not to make a sound.

“Ilya?” Shane’s voice cuts through the quiet, startling him. Ilya jumps with a sharp gasp, slapping a hand to his chest.

“Jesus,” he hisses.

Shane sits up on the couch, rubbing his eyes. “Sorry...dozed off and didn’t hear you come in. Then I heard something and got nervous.” He explains, rising from the couch.

“Is alright,” Ilya says, nodding, returning to the bags.

“Manage to get everything?” Shane asks, yawning while surveying the counter as he pads over.

“Yes...um...also bought one more thing. Not on the list.”

“Oh, well, that’s okay,” Shane chuckles, “You’re allowed to buy other things, ya know.”

Ilya exhales softly, cheeks warming at the thought. “No, I know. It’s...for you, though.”

“A surprise?” Shane leans in on his forearms, noticing Ilya’s hand still buried in the bag, guarding whatever the mystery item is.

“Uh, sure. You could say that.” Ilya shrugs, dropping his eyes.

Shane hesitates, “Well...can I see it?”

Ilya nods slowly, locking eyes with Shane again, “Yes, but I have to explain first...so you don’t get mad.”

Shane furrows his brow. “Why would I get mad? It’s not like you bought cigarettes...did you?”

“Ah, no. No cigarettes. But I don’t know,” Ilya admits nervously, the tips of his ears going pink. “You might get mad.”

“What is it, Ilya? Just- fucking show me!” Shane demands.

Ilya cautiously pulls the item out of the bag and Shane’s eyes go right to the rectangular box in his boyfriend’s hands. It’s mostly white with soft pink accents and as soon as Ilya slides it across the counter toward him, he reads the bold letters across the front: **FIRST RESPONSE PREGNANCY TEST.**

Shane stares at the box, mouth slowly falling open. His fingers twitch against the counter, unsure if he wants to touch it or fling it across the room. He glances at Ilya once, then back down at the box, eyes wider than before.

When he looks up at Ilya again, his expression has twisted into a confusing mash of anger and maybe a little embarrassment.

“What the fuck, Ilya?” he finally snaps, voice sharp and tight.

Ilya exhales, running a hand through his curls, “I’m not asking you to take it right now, but-”

He shakes his head, “Hold on. Back up. You think *I’m pregnant?*” Shane interrupts, leaning back slightly with his hands planted on the counter.

Ilya gestures awkwardly with his hands, “Maybe. Probably. I don’t know. Is why I bought it- so we can find out.”

“*You don’t know*...so that’s why you bought it?” Shane’s eyes narrow, incredulous.

The Russian tries to make sense of what Shane has said, but can’t, “Your question confuses me,” he admits, shrugging.

Shane groans, scrubbing his hands down his face, “Oh my go-this is fucking crazy. I’m not pregnant! Of all the things that could be wrong with me, why in hell do you think I’m pregnant? We *always* use protection!” Shane gestures wildly, almost knocking a glass off the counter. He catches it mid-air, placing it back down gently.

Ilya hesitates, debating if he should make something up to salvage the situation, but decides telling the truth is just easier and the safer bet. “The lady who helped me at the store...she asked if you were because of the items on list.”

“I’m so confused...she asked you if I was pregnant because I asked for stomach meds?” Shane’s voice cracks slightly. He paces the short length of the counter now, eyes staying fixed on Ilya.

Ilya chuckles loosely, scratching the back of his head.

Shane freezes, one hand hovering mid-gesture, “What’s so funny about that?” his face scrunches up in annoyance.

“Well, actually, she asked if my *girlfriend* was pregnant. I said I don’t know.”

“*Your girlfriend?* Somehow that makes this so much worse and I don’t know why.” He lets the hand drop, then drags both palms down his face with a heavy sigh.

“I didn’t tell her you were man, so what?” Ilya questions earnestly.

“That’s just a ballsy thing to ask...and kind of rude, if I’m being honest.”

Ilya shrugs, scratching absently at his cheek. “She was nice. She just wanted to be sure the meds were okay, just in case.” He makes a small, vague gesture toward Shane.

“In case of *what?*” Shane scowls, his patience dangerously thin.

“Just in case there is a baby. What you asked for could hurt them or something.”

Shane blinks, “...Hurt them?” He says, barely above a whisper. Shane’s expression goes a little distant as his hand comes to rest against his lower stomach. He seems to be lost in thought, until Ilya makes his way over to him and places a hand on Shane’s arm.

“Why don’t you just take it to see...cannot hurt, yes?” Ilya suggests gently. “I will be right there with you.”

“Ilya,” Shane swallows hard, bunching the fabric of his shirt in his hand. “I can’t be pregnant...I think it’s something else- it has to be.”

Ilya can see the fear settling over his boyfriend’s face but fights every instinct to wrap him in a hug. Shane seems to be a bit overstimulated at the moment, and the last thing he needs is to feel closed in.

Ilya makes do with a gentle caress on the arm, like he’d been doing, “But you could be, *moya lyubov*. You’ve been so sick, and the mood swings, and when I touched your chest last night, I could tell it hurt you.”

Shane furrows his brows, crossing his arms and ignoring the way he winces a little. “So suddenly you’re an expert on pregnancy symptoms?”

“No,” Ilya replies just as softly, stepping closer to his boyfriend, who may or may not be a flight risk at this point. “I looked it up in the car before I came home. I don’t think you have brain tumor... I think... you’re having a baby. *Our* baby.”

Shane drops his arms at his sides and Ilya swear he can hear Shane's heart hammering in his chest. The words seem to be sinking in now, and he can't seem to take a deep enough breath. "You're really serious about this...you actually think I'm pregnant?"

"Yes... I do," Ilya says firmly, stepping even closer. He gently places his hands on Shane's shoulders, looking him dead in the eye. "I think you should at least find out if it's a yes or no. Then we will know for sure and can move on if it's not."

Shane swallows hard, face devoid of any clear emotions.

"Talk to me, *moya lyubov*...please don't be upset with me. I'm only trying to help."

Shane attempts another deep breath, falling short. He grabs Ilya's arms, giving them a light squeeze. "I'm...I think I'm too scared to find out. What if I am? Then what, Ilya? What are we supposed to do?"

"If you are, we do it together, yes? No big deal."

"It is a big deal though." Shane shakes his head, jaw tight with anxiety. Ilya reaches over and grabs the box, depositing it into Shane's hands.

"Look, let's go find out- then worry, yes?"

"O-okay. Yes." He exhales slowly.

"Good. Let's go to the bedroom. Has bigger bathroom."

Shane only manages a simple nod, letting Ilya guide him the entire way to the bedroom.

Shane is sat on the closed toilet lid, knees spread with his elbows braced on his thighs, holding his head in his hands. Across from him, Ilya leans against the wall, still as a statue. He's standing with his arms folded tight over his chest and his hands securely tucked under his armpits while his eyes bounce between Shane and the white stick on the counter. It's test window displays two very bright pink lines.

A positive test.

It's been quiet, not a single word spoken in the last ten minutes and Ilya's just been watching Shane unravel slowly. From the second the lines started to form, to the loss of color in his face, Shane has gone mute. Neither of them clearly knowing what to say.

Ilya certainly does not. He's never been in this situation before. Not with any person he's ever slept with and definitely never with Shane.

But they can't sit like this forever. They have to talk about it. So Ilya attempts to break the silence, "Shane--"

Shane immediately interrupts, "How the fuck could we let this happen, Ilya?" Shane groans. He drags his hands down his face hard enough to pull his skin with them, then shoves them

back through his hair, leaving it sticking up in every direction.

Ilya presses his lips together, gaze dropping to the floor for a second before he lets his head tip forward with a small sigh. "I don't know..."

"You don't know?" Shane snaps, shooting to his feet. He paces two frantic steps, then stops short, hands flexing at his sides. "How did we even get here? We've been so careful, have we not?"

Ilya lifts one shoulder in a helpless half-shrug. "I thought so, yes...maybe not, I don't know." He sighs, staring back blankly at Shane, "Maybe condom didn't work. Was old or something."

"So you think we used an expired condom?" Shane demands. "How's that possible- we go through them like crazy!" He exclaims, only realizing the absurdity of what he's just said. He can't help the blush that creeps up, leaving the tips of his ears a little warm.

"I am just saying is possibility, that's all." Ilya explains, avoiding Shane's damning eye contact, feeling a little too much like a bug under a microscope.

"Ilya." Shane's voice cracks on his name. Ilya's eyes snap back to Shane and his heart clenches from the terrified look he's giving him. He knows Shane getting pregnant isn't solely his fault, but he can't help but take the blame personally. Whatever he did wrong- however it is he screwed up caused this and now Shane's scared and probably livid as shit with him.

Shane has also never looked at him like this. He likes to think he's always been Shane's safe space, but now he looks like a lost, frightened puppy and it's breaking his heart.

Ilya bites the inside of his cheek, debating what he should say, but he's not sure what Shane wants to hear right now. Does he want sympathy or comfort? Does he want Ilya to apologize for fucking everything up? Does he want Ilya to leave, maybe, so he can figure this out on his own? Maybe Ilya's a little scared too, but for other reasons.

"...I-I would never use bad condom with you." Ilya assures him, and he hates how defeated he sounds, but that seems to work in his favor because Shane is no longer looking at him like he purposefully messed up. Instead, he looks sympathetic towards him.

There's a defined crack on the surface of Shane's expression. His brow softens and his hands relax at his sides. "No, I know...of course you wouldn't." He shakes his head, dropping his eyes to the side.

Ilya takes a deep breath, pulling a hand down over his mouth, "Is very confusing...I know."

Shane huffs out a humorless laugh, pacing now, "It's not though- I mean, yeah how this happened is a fucking mystery, but babies are made by having sex. We both had sex, Ilya... we both...fuck-" he cuts himself off as he paces. He plops back down on the toilet lid and joins his hands at the back of his head, threading his fingers together. He tucks his elbows

close to his face and closes his eyes. He begins rocking his body front to back, attempting deep, calming breaths but they come faster and more stressed each time.

“Shit...shit, shit, shit. *Fuck*.” Shane gasps out, squeezing his head a little tighter between his arms. “Fuck, Ilya. This is such a big fucking deal. I don’t know what to do. I-I-I don’t know how we’re supposed to handle this!”

Ilya squats in front of Shane, placing his hands on the other’s knees, “Together. We handle it together.”

“But how!” Shane drops his arms, letting them land hard in his lap. His eyes are filling with tears as he looks to Ilya for answers. “Do you even realize what having a baby would *do*?”

“To us?” Ilya questions, brows knitting in genuine confusion.

Shane lets out a broken sound and slaps his hands hard against his thighs. “Oh my god, you are *so* infuriating sometimes!” His voice jumps in volume. “To everything, Ilya! Yes, to us- but also to our families, to our careers!” He explains animatedly.

“To your family, maybe- mine, I do not-”

“Whatever, yes, *my family*. But they are *your* family too,” Shane exclaims, and Ilya is surprised by the way his heart flips at that sentiment. “But that’s not the point. If we have a baby everyone will know about us! Are you ready for that, cause I sure as hell am not!”

Ilya holds his hands up at his spiraling boyfriend, “I hear you. I do, but listen-”

“I can’t even believe you’re not as freaked out about this as me? You’re so fucking calm!”

Shane explodes, storming out of the bathroom, bare feet thudding against the floor as he makes his way out of the bedroom and down the hall.

Ilya pushes up from the floor and races out after him, “Shane, wait- Shane!”

Shane continues to pace nervously until he finds a more open space to panic, which happens to be the main dining area.

His hands fly up to his head as he tracks across the room, breathing hard. “I’m over here *freaking out*,” he says, voice shaking, “and you’re not even the least bit excited!”

“I’m very confused...you also want me to be excited?” Ilya furrows his brows, stepping closer.

Shane whirls around to face him with a heaving chest and glassy eyes. “*Excited* can also mean loud or upset! Okay? Not happy or whatever!” He gestures wildly with his hands.

“Okay, okay.” Ilya reaches to take his hands, to be the grounding force in his moment of need. “But I’m not upset.” He tells Shane calmly, shaking his head. “I’m scared like you, yes, but I’m not upset.”

“How are you *not* upset? I’m gonna throw the fuck up, Ilya!” His voice breaks fully now as the tears stream down his cheeks. His body becomes too heavy to hold up all the emotion, causing him to fold forward with his hands braced on his knees. He sucks in a sharp breath, then snaps upright again, clawing at the collar of his shirt like it’s strangling him.

Ilya recognizes what he’s doing- or trying to do at least. When Shane panics like this, clothing becomes a trap. He doesn’t hesitate and steps in, grabbing the hem of Shane’s t-shirt. He yanks it up and over his head in one smooth motion, tossing it onto the lounge chair behind him.

“*Moya lyubov*,” he hums, hands already back on Shane’s arms. “Please. Take deep breath. You need to relax.”

Bare-chested now, Shane seems to get a fraction more air in his lungs with each breath he takes. He grabs onto Ilya’s forearms, digging his fingers into the muscles.

“Oh god, Ilya...we can’t have a baby,” his bottom lip trembles, “This is- this is a fucking nightmare!”

Ilya’s eyes drift briefly around the room, a flicker of something like grim amusement crossing his face. The space feels haunted by déjà vu. They’ve been here before...same room, same panic, but over something that now feels laughably small by comparison. If they’d known then that Shane’s parents would become two of the most unwavering, supportive constants in their lives, that moment might’ve felt different. But they hadn’t.

Back then, it had been catastrophic to Shane. But this? This is an entirely different scale of panic.

Ilya shrugs, “Maybe it won’t be so bad. Coming out was easy-”

“Seriously? Ilya this isn’t anything like coming out. Having a baby has so many more layers to it.”

“I know, I know, but-”

“But what, Ilya? Why aren’t you freaking out like I am?”

“Because...I...” Ilya trails off, the words quickly escaping him.

His gaze slips to the side as his jaw tightens. He has to be careful with his next words. He knows Shane and knows this is the complete opposite of what he wants to hear right now, but it’s the truth. He really shouldn’t sugar coat it, not when it’s this serious.

He wets his lips, teeth catching briefly on his lower lip before he finally looks back at his boyfriend.

“I love you, so much...” he says quietly. “And I’m not upset about having a baby with you because...it’s something I want to do. I want to have a family with you, Shane.” He exhales softly through his nose, his hands smoothing over Shane’s arms, trying to find a comforting pace. His shoulders lift slightly as he says, “I know is not good time, but-”

“No,” Shane answers immediately, the word surprisingly sharp on his tongue. “It’s not a good time at *all*.”

He pulls away, pacing like a trapped animal, words spilling faster the longer he goes. “I mean for Christ’s sake, Ilya- you just signed with Ottawa last year, our first week of camp starts in three weeks, and I still live two fucking hours away from you because Montreal is my home until I retire.” A manic little laugh squeaks out as he drags a hand down his face. “And no one on the team even *knows* we’re together!”

He spins back around toward Ilya, eyes wild. “And when they do find out? I hope to god they take it as well as my parents did, but you and I both know that’s not gonna happen.” His voice climbing higher, “*Especially* when I have to explain to them that the reason they’re losing their captain for the season is because I’m having *your* baby. They are going to lose their fucking shit on me- do you understand that?”

His own words seem to hit him all at once. “Oh my god. It-It’s too much,” Shane chokes out a strangled laugh, pressing his hands over his face. “It’s too fucking much, Ilya.” His hands come down and brace hard against his ribs like he’s trying to keep himself together. “I’m gonna die. I feel like I’m gonna die!”

Ilya’s eyes drop to Shane’s waist, and his hands reach out for him before he even realizes he’s doing it. “Hey,” he says, low and level-headed. “Okay, okay...hey, Shane, you’re not dying. Shane!” He calls loudly the second he watches Shane’s expression go blank and a single tear trail down his cheek. “Fuck, Shane. Breathe for me.” He gives him a little shake at the hips.

“Come on. I know is scary, but you have to think of the baby. You’re not breathing which means they are not breathing.”

Shane’s breath stutters before he starts gasping, unable to take a full breath again.

“Look at me,” Ilya urges firmly, yet his tone stays soft. “You are safe. You are at home. You’re with me. Nothing bad is happening to you right now. Breathe Shane, please!”

He presses a warm hand firmly against Shane’s bare chest, feeling his heart pounding against his chest wall. His next breath only comes out as a pained wheeze.

“Okay.” Ilya thinks fast and pulls his own shirt from his body. He grabs Shane and wraps his arms around him, pulling their chests together. Skin to skin tends to help Shane best when he feels like he’s losing himself, Ilya has come to learn. So in moments like this, when Shane feels like he’s drowning and the boat is sinking around him, Ilya holds him tight and reminds him he’s not alone.

“You must come up for air, yes?” Ilya says, pressing a kiss to his shoulder. He feels Shane nod loosely against him, and starts them off, “Come, count with me. One, two...three. Out loud, do it now.” He stiffens his arms, causing Shane to gasp.

“Four,” Ilya continues on until Shane meets him at number five, “...Six, seven, eight, nine, ten...” They count together slowly. It takes them until they reach twenty-six for Shane’s breathing to start leveling out again.

“Good, you did so good, *moya lyubov*.” He presses his forehead to Shane’s, staying there until Shane’s breathing finally slows, each inhale less labored than the last. Only then does he pull back to look at him. “We will figure something out. One thing at a time, yes? You and me... Yuna and Dav-”

“Oh shit, my parents,” Shane groans, his head flopping back dramatically. Ilya’s hands tighten instinctively on Shane’s waist, steadying him before he can tip over. “How are we even going to explain this to them?”

“They do know how babies are made, yes?” Ilya says seriously. “We don’t need to explain. They should know how it happened.”

The words hang there in the air as a deafening silence fills the room. Shane freezes, blinking a few times before he slowly tilts his head down. He’s staring at Ilya now, trying to decide if he’s joking.

“...Ilya.”

“What?” Ilya asks, genuinely confused now. “Is true.”

A short, breathy laugh escapes Shane before he can stop it. It surprises them both. He presses his lips together, shaking his head, then lets out another small huff of laughter, shoulders finally relaxing.

“I hate you,” he mumbles, though there’s no heat behind it. He brings his hands up to scrub at his face, then drops them before laying his head against his boyfriend’s shoulder. “You’re such an asshole, you know that?”

Ilya relaxes instantly, relief softening his features. “I do, sometimes.” He chuckles.

Shane exhales, picking his head up. He looks into Ilya’s soft, loving eyes and brushes the backs of his trembling fingers over his cheek, “You know I don’t mean that... You’re the most generous, patient, loving man I know.” he says, voice still a bit unsteady.

Ilya quietly pulls Shane against his chest, hold him tightly. “To you maybe...I’m asshole to everyone else. Especially Hayden.”

“Stop it.” Shane chuckles, though his voice is still quite shaky. He exhales sharply, burying his face in Ilya’s chest the next minute. “I love you so much...I’m just having a really hard time with this.”

“I know. Is okay.”

“It’s really not okay...*I’m* not okay. I’m freaking out.”

“I know, is okay to be not okay. Is still very new.”

“Very new.” Shane agrees with a nod.

“We will figure it out, yes?”

“How?”

“I don’t know, but we will. We always do...” He says, burying his face in Shane’s neck. Shane holds onto Ilya tighter, finally taking a deep, calming breath.

Ilya carries with him a glass of ginger ale with ice, along with a plate of lightly buttered toast to the den. He deposits the plate on the coffee table, and hands the drink directly to Shane.

“Thanks.” Shane nods to him as he takes the glass. He takes a small sip, then cradles it securely in his hands, waiting for Ilya to take a seat. Once he’s settled beside Shane on the couch, Shane reaches over and places his hand on Ilya’s leg. The contact makes Ilya turn immediately, his expression softening with concern.

Shane speaks up, “I’m sorry for acting crazy earlier.”

“Shane-”

“No, please...” Shane closes his eyes for a moment, licking his lips. When he opens them again, Ilya can see the fresh tears collecting on his lash line. “I’ve never felt this out of control before, and it really scares me.”

Ilya covers Shane’s hand with his own, thumb brushing a slow, reassuring line over his knuckles, “I know it does. It is very scary feeling.”

“Yeah.” Shane nods, jaw tensing a bit, “It is and I was freaking out- I *am* freaking out, but it’s better now... or at least a little better.”

“Okay,” Ilya says quietly, not trying to rush him. His body is angled in, actively listening and waiting to hear more of Shane’s concerns.

“But about what you said earlier,” Shane hesitates, eyes dropping to where their hands are joined. “When you told me you would want to have a baby with me... is that really something you’d be okay with? I mean, considering where we’re currently at in our lives?”

Ilya takes a second to think about his answer before he confidently nods, and squeezes Shane’s hand, “Yes, I would. In heartbeat.”

“Seriously?” Shane questions, a little taken aback by Ilya’s certainty.

Ilya’s voice is warm when he says, “Yes, Shane. I love you. I know plans we made about waiting to tell everyone would change, but I don’t care. I’d have you and our baby. I’d be happiest man alive.”

There is a part of him that wishes he could meet Ilya in the middle, and be as sure about this as he is, but he just can’t. Not right now. Not when the thought of telling his teammates that he’s dating Ilya Rozanov *and* having his baby makes him want to hop a plane to South America and never come back. It’s not fair, but it’s his reality at the moment. All the warning signs are going off, telling him not to do it. That this is the worst possible time to not only come out about their relationship, but to also have a baby.

He still feels like his points are valid. They still live over two hours away from each other, Ilya just signed with a new team, and Shane was hoping to win another cup this year- or at least try to, but he won't be able to do that if he's on a medical leave.

It's a lot to think about, and right now, Shane does not have the energy nor the mindset to do so.

Shane clears his throat and leans forward to place his glass on the coffee table. He turns his body more toward Ilya and takes his hands, making sure to hold strong eye contact when he starts speaking.

"Okay, here's what I'm going to say. I'm running on adrenaline and fear right now, which is historically not the best decision-making combo. I cannot, in good conscience, make any life altering decisions tonight...not until I've had some time to really think about it. I might need a few days to absorb everything before we can talk about this again."

Ilya nods, "I understand, and I would want you to make right decision for you."

"Yeah, but this involves you too. I need you to be honest...Is there a chance you could resent me if I make the decision not to continue with the pregnancy?"

Shane can see the hesitation on Ilya's face. At first, he's pretty sure that whatever he's feeling on the surface is nothing but pain, having to think about them not continuing the pregnancy, but he's quick to bury those feelings deep down, like usual. He shakes his head as soon as the fog clears, giving Shane a glimpse of false hope.

"No, of course not. Is what you want, so it's what I want."

"Bullshit." Shane snuffles, shaking his head. "I know you love kids, Ilya. This could be a deal breaker for you; You just don't know that cause it's not happening yet." He expresses sadly.

Ilya gives Shane's hands a tighter squeeze, "But I also love you and I would want you to be happy. Children deserve two parents who love them the same...I wouldn't ask you to have baby with me unless you truly wanted to. But I am not going to hate you or leave you just because you don't want a baby right now." He says, holding Shane's gaze until he relaxes a little.

"See, you say shit like that and it makes me want to have all the babies with you." Shane lets out a wet laugh, flicking tears away from his eyes. "I love you too, Ilya. I just need a second to think."

"You can have as many seconds as you need. I will be right here, waiting to know next steps, da?"

"Da." Shane nods, meeting Ilya in the middle for a quick peck on the lips.

"Do not cry, *moya golubka*, everything will be okay." He says, thumbing away a tear on Shane's cheek. Shane nods, curling into Ilya's side as the taller man welcomes him in.

Shane can't sleep. It's three in the morning and he's been doomscrolling for hours. At first, the need to pee woke him up around twelve, but then upon climbing back into bed and laying down, he became a little nauseous.

So now he's sitting up with the covers pulled over his lap as high as they will go, while he watches Ilya snooze beside him. He's still got his phone in his hand, but he hasn't looked at it in over ten minutes. His brain is still reeling with all the unnecessary information he's acquired about birth and pregnancy.

His search history is definitely all types of fucked up now and he's sure his socials will be paying for it by morning, but he honestly doesn't care.

The first thing he researched were OBGYN's in his area, as well as family planning clinics that perform early ultrasounds and...well, abortions.

Then he fell down a rabbit hole of pregnancy related questions, followed by being subjected to the horrors of birth injuries and paternal death rates. So that became quickly enough of that.

A majority of what Shane was looking up wasn't even negative to begin with. It was mostly just him trying to find anything to support his decision to wait for when the time is right.

Unfortunately, most articles and comments from parents kept saying the same thing: There will never be a right time to start a family. You could wait years for your financial situation to balance out (which is not a problem for them), or even for the right career path to align with your goals (also not a problem for them). It was silly to think he could find anything remotely close to support his hyper specific situation.

And his initial goal in researching all of this hadn't been to find reasons to *never* have babies because that's not what he wants. He wants them. *God*, does he want them. Especially with Ilya.

Just...not right now?

But *why*? Because his team may not approve?

The thought of that being the reason for all of this doubt sours something in his mind.

Every single one of his teammates, time and time again, gets to be openly happy and celebrate with their wives, girlfriends and kids. Meanwhile Shane keeps his head down and his heart quiet. All because he feels he has to follow some unspoken, bullshit rule that says *they* don't get that. That they aren't allowed to love each other out loud because they play for rival teams.

All because of a manufactured rivalry the NHL decided to coin during their rookie season. He's lying awake at three in the morning, seriously weighing the idea of aborting their baby because of *that*?

Oh. Oh my god.

The realization hits him so hard he unexpectedly sucks in a sharp breath, like he's been punched square in the gut. His stomach flips violently with something dangerously close to anger and his hand flies down to his belly, pressing in over where he supposes the baby might be nestled inside him.

And shit, it's not like Shane's never won a Cup before. He's won several. The novelty has worn off enough to know it doesn't define who you are as a player. Sure, it's a reward for hard work paid off, but still. If anything, winning a Cup *after* having a baby? That sounds way more kickass than winning one in some regular, forgettable season. A comeback season win would mean so much more.

His heart starts to flutter excitedly in his chest, hopeful and wild beneath his breast.

Holy shit.

Is he... is he actually going to have a baby?

Is he *actually* going to have *his and Ilya's* baby?

His mind runs away with it before he can stop it. He imagines a baby with curly dark hair, and freckles scattered across soft, chunky cheeks. Their smile, crooked like Ilya's and maybe they might even have Shane's eyes. A tiny human made from their decade-long love.

All of that, with the love of his life. And the world finally getting to see the beauty of their love. Not only emotionally but physically too.

They can be happy the same way everyone else gets to be happy and the thought might be terrifying, but it's also quite thrilling.

Holy shit. They're having a baby.

Shane clamps a hand over his mouth, stifling the happy sob that tries to escape his chest. His eyes burn with fresh tears and he hates waking Ilya, but he thinks in this particular moment, he won't mind.

Shane scoots down in the bed, curling his body over his boyfriend's. He slips a hand up beneath Ilya's arm, spreading his hand across the warm, familiar expanse of his bare chest.

"*Ya... tebya,*" Shane snuffles, voice catching as he presses a kiss to Ilya's cheek, "...*lyublyu.*"

The Russian stirs, rolling toward him with a sleepy, crooked grin and half-lidded eyes. He whispers the sentiment back in Russian, lips already pursed in expectation. Shane leans in and kisses him, but his snuffles instantly give him away.

Ilya is awake immediately. "What's wrong?" he asks, quickly pushing himself upright, panic evident in his voice.

"Nothing, it's just..." Shane swallows, "I think I made my decision."

"What?" Ilya's brows knit together, his mind still foggy with sleep.

“I wanna do it, Ilya.” Shane exhales shakily, tearing up. “I wanna have our baby.”

Ilya blinks slowly in the dark, trying to comprehend what Shane has just said to him. Then he notices the tear tracks on Shane’s cheeks, illuminated by the silver glow of the moon, and reaches a hand out to touch his cheek.

“*Moya lyubov*,” he whispers, voice soft but steady. “Are you sure this is what you want?”

Shane turns his face into Ilya’s palm, covering his hand with his own. “Yeah,” he says, nodding. “It’s what I want.” His voice breaks. “I’m so sorry, Ilya. I’m so sorry it took me so long to-”

“*Shh. Shh*, no.” Ilya cuts him off gently, forehead pressing against Shane’s. “No, Shane. You do not apologize.”

“I just, I feel so fucking guilty for even thinking those thoughts,” Shane says, and then the dam breaks. He’s sobbing and Ilya is holding his face in his hands.

“My love,” Ilya hums, pulling him fully into his chest, holding him tightly. “It is okay. Please, do not be hard on yourself.”

Shane clutches at him. “I want a family with you,” he says through his tears. “I want this baby. I want us to be happy, and to openly love each other. Fuck everyone else.”

Ilya can’t help the little giggle that escapes him. He leans back just enough to look at Shane, searching his face. “Are you sure you’re ready for this?”

“More than ready.” Shane lifts his head, eyes red and shining. “Ilya, we’ve been hiding for so many years. We deserve to be happy too.” His voice softens. “I want to be happy too.”

“Then let us be happy, my love...let’s have a baby.” He smiles as his own tears stream down his cheeks.

Shane throws himself into Ilya’s arms, “Let’s have a baby.” He repeats, laughing through his never-ending happy tears.

Stay Tuned for the Epilogue...

Chapter 2: Epilogue

Chapter Notes

AHH she's finally done!!! I'm so glad I could complete this, this weekend for you guys! <3 I appreciate your patience as I got it done. I hope you loved this story as much as I did.

Some general housekeeping- I don't speak Russian and I don't really have any moots who speak it, so if anything is wrong here, please just either suggest how to fix it, or ignore it all together. Much love to you all.

Please leave a comment to let me know what you thought! <3

Kudos are also appreciated!

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

Several months later...

Shane rolls out of bed that morning- quite literally.

He carefully gets to his feet with as much dignity as someone as pregnant he is and lets out a pained groan. He works his way to a standing position, pausing every few inches until his back straightens out- well, *arches*- and his bare belly settles heavily between his widened hips.

Oof, that definitely feels even wider and heavier today.

Shane immediately shifts into a mocking tone of voice, "Oh, yeah, Ilya- "*Let's have a baby.*" His face scrunches in discomfort as he waddles to the bathroom that's on the other side of the bed. "Fuck you." He grumbles, to absolutely no one but himself.

Ilya offered to change sides with him during the pregnancy so he didn't have to walk as far to the bathroom, but Shane refused, saying that if he were to change sides he wouldn't sleep as well.

Even though sleep went out the window months ago anyway.

He pauses, turning to brace himself at the foot of the mattress while he breathes through a tight, aching sensation coursing through his lower half. He's gotten quite used to the feeling, especially as he's gotten closer to his due date.

He's officially thirty-eight weeks as of two days ago...with *twins*.

Learning they were expecting twins at their first appointment was truly a shock. Neither of them had even thought of the possibility that there could be two, but there they were, front and center. Shane couldn't believe his eyes and at first, Ilya was speechless but seemed to come around a lot faster to the idea than his partner.

It took a few good weeks for Shane to get used to the idea that he'd be growing two babies instead of one, but once the nerves settled, excitement replaced worry. They told his parents shortly after, who were very supportive once their own initial shock wore off, and then some of their closest friends.

Hayden, having only recently been in the know about Ilya for a short time, was not as accepting at first- purely out of worry for his friend. But after getting to witness Ilya in action and see how loving and supportive he is toward Shane, he let off a bit.

Especially when the Metro's were less than supportive of their relationship.

It all happened so quickly. Shane announced his long-term medical leave to the NHL, then privately came out to his team about why he'd be going out for the season. Before they knew that Shane's partner was Ilya, they were excited for Shane to be having a baby with his "secret" partner. They claimed to have no problems with picking up the slack while he's out and even assuring him that he'd be welcomed back with open arms whenever he's ready to return.

But then...once they discovered it was Rozanov who knocked up Shane, all the players aside from Hayden, immediately changed their tune.

Suddenly, their support turned into hateful comments about how problematic Shane's absence would be and how him going off to have a baby with Rozanov was costing them a chance at the playoffs and a cup this year.

The hatefulness didn't stop there. He got a lot of:

"What the fuck, dude. Was this all a fucking plan to secure a cup for Ottawa?"

"Is this why Rozanov signed with Ottawa, to be closer to you?"

"Did you purposely open your legs to give him an excuse to win this year?"

"Have you been giving Boston games this entire time?"

"You didn't just fuck it up for yourself, you fucked this up for everyone on this team!"

"Some Captain you are. No way we can trust you after this!"

"You should just retire- you're never gonna be able to play the same."

"You don't have a place here with us anymore."

You don't have a place here with us anymore...

Just like that, he was no longer welcome back. That hit harder than anything else. He gave them everything he had for years. He gave them all he ever was, and to turn around and exile him from Montreal felt like the biggest stab in the back. The worst kind of 'fuck you'. All because of his love for Ilya.

It wasn't a matter anymore of *if* he could come back- they didn't even want him. It hurt to know his team couldn't see his relationship the way he did. He begged, like a fool for them to understand, but no one- other than Hayden- gave him the time of day.

Even J.J. brutally beat him down with his own words. He couldn't understand why Shane had to lie all this time and even after pointing out that his reaction alone to the news was exactly why he stayed quiet all these years- J.J. couldn't see it. He couldn't accept the situation without getting angry or placing blame on Shane alone.

So, he left.

He officially cut his ties with Montreal and is now a free agent whenever he decides he's ready to return to Hockey. Ottawa already told Shane he's welcome to sign on, but Shane feels its best to see how postpartum treats him before promising anything. Two babies are a different story in terms of recovery, but honestly the comeback will be just as good- if not better.

Any day now, maybe today judging by the uncomfortable feeling in his back- they are to welcome two little girls into their lives.

They settled on names somewhere between Shane's sixth or seventh month. Baby A is Katarina, who Ilya has been calling Kat in casual conversation and Akiko, Baby B, who Shane has nicknamed Kiki, pretty much since the minute they decided on the name.

And they couldn't be any more excited or ready to meet them if they tried. The nursery is complete as of a few weeks ago- paint, décor and all, but it really doesn't even matter because the girls will be sleeping in Shane and Ilya's room for a while. But it felt good to have it done. The rest of the house is as clean as it can be and ready for their arrival, all thanks to Shane's uncontrollable need to nest. Ilya did his best, all throughout the pregnancy to make Shane rest, but these last few weeks have been a challenge.

He just can't seem to sit still, despite every bone and joint in his body protesting his every move.

At the latest appointment to check on the girls' positions, Shane was relieved to find out that both girls were successfully head down- which he can certainly feel as they drop lower each day. It was touch and go there with Kat for a bit, but she eventually turned. Her head had been annoyingly tucked up in Shane's ribs, on the right side, his entire pregnancy.

It wasn't until one morning that he woke up with relief and could actually breathe for the first time in months, that he knew something changed. Since then her feet have been non-stop jabbing him, but he would take that over the bowling ball resting against his diaphragm.

His body has been fighting to survive these last couple months as his babies grow bigger and even though everything is right on track and babies are healthy, he's really struggling to hang in there. He's not so sure his body was truly made to carry two big babies at once, but he's managing as best as he can.

"Okay," he grunts, one hand automatically cradling the underside of his stomach. "I'm gonna need you girls to decide what we're doing here cause you tried this last week, and I do not want to get sent home again." He lets out a deep breath, rubbing at his belly. He pushes upright again and finally makes his way to the bathroom.

Nothing but an insistent pressure has been going on for weeks now, but last week Shane could have sworn his Braxton hicks were getting too close together and that it might be true labor.

Come to find out, after five hours of monitoring, it was not. So they were sent home with instructions not to come in unless one or more of the following situations is occurring: the contractions are five minutes apart, his water has broken, he hasn't felt the babies move or he's bleeding.

But right now he's not sure what he's feeling cause it's definitely different from what he felt last time. It's been coming and going since three in the morning, but he refused to acknowledge it or tell Ilya because he rather not drive himself insane wondering if it's officially time.

He waddles out into the hallway and makes his way slowly toward the kitchen. The house smells like coffee, but it's quiet. Normally, Ilya would be playing soft music while emptying the dishwasher from the night prior or cooking breakfast- which Shane was somewhat hoping for, but there was no one to be found in the kitchen or the living room.

He's proud of himself for not panicking and decides to check if Ilya's keys are on the hook by the door. Upon his investigation he finds that Ilya's sneakers and keys are missing.

Ah, he clearly has stepped out. To where, still remains a mystery, but he's sure to turn up soon.

"Papa could have at least left us a note, huh?" Shane smirks, rubbing his belly. He glances down at his stomach and feels the girls shifting under his hands. It brings a smile to his face until his stomach growls, and he remembers the task at hand. He turns back around and heads for the kitchen.

Shane moved into Ilya's house, that he bought shortly after signing with Ottawa, in September. It's spacious and has beautiful views, but most importantly big enough for their expanding family. Shane loves the place. It's cozy and homey and feels like theirs. Pieces of themselves have been woven together over the last couple months, turning the house into a home.

And soon, their babies' new home.

The girls stretch, becoming more awake inside him and Shane knows he needs to savor these moments because soon enough, he's not gonna get to feel their little kicks anymore.

It's bittersweet, but he's more than ready for this to be over. In the beginning months he used to love counting kicks and feeling the soft flutters, but now his belly just feels tight and it's a little painful whenever they decide to kick or test the limits of their confines.

And much like their daddy, they are always starving. Shane's eyes are way bigger than his stomach most days though. He'll want to consume a huge meal, but four or five bites in he's too full. It's frustrating and has brought him to tears on many occasions, but soon enough he'll have his body back to himself and won't be at the mercy of the two hungry gremlins in his belly.

Well, kind of. He plans to breastfeed, which he's been told will bring on a whole new type of hunger. He knows it's going to be important to the process to nourish his body, but he's also looking forward to losing some of this belly.

He's honestly huge. Bigger than he thought he would ever be while pregnant, but with two large babies, it was bound to happen. They are estimated to weigh almost seven pounds each already, landing them in the eightieth percentile according to his doctor.

He blames Ilya and his giant Russian genetics for this. He's afraid to think what one baby would have weighed by itself at this point, especially knowing he could have carried it much further than he will with the twins. He's not allowed to go past Friday, if he doesn't have them by then.

His doctor is concerned about his fluid levels dropping too low if he goes any longer, so it's best to induce before anything serious can happen to him or the babies.

Shane waddles around the kitchen counter and opens the fridge in search of something to eat for breakfast. He's craving something savory but wouldn't mind a touch of something sweet to go along with it. He's not very good at bringing his own cravings to life though, so he hopes that Ilya gets home soon.

He's a wizard in the kitchen when it comes to making whatever Shane is craving. Shane's not sure how he does it, but he's more than grateful for it.

Yesterday, Ilya made him pancakes piled high with fruit. The twist was that Shane wanted one pancake with marshmallow fluff spread on it and the next one with Nutella. The girls went absolutely nuts over it. Ilya has voiced the fact, many times, that he can't wait to actually cook for their babies and it warms Shane's heart to see how excited he is to be a dad.

It's been quite the transition for both of them as they prepare to become parents, but they can't wait. Shane just wants to hold his babies in his arms and finally meet the four feet that have been terrorizing his insides for months, while Ilya is just excited to meet his new best friends. It will be such a privilege to be the first faces their babies see every morning and the last faces they see at night.

Ilya's honestly so excited to do all the fun papa stuff with them and start family traditions. He's even excited about changing diapers, which Shane couldn't be happier to hand over to him. He can't wait to experience life through his babies' eyes and Shane finds the way Ilya talks about becoming a father as something so beautiful.

As much as Ilya can't wait to be one, Shane can't wait to watch Ilya become one. There was a moment where Ilya worried about potentially being a bad father because he didn't grow up with the best example, but having David around has helped him see he can be the father for his babies that he never had.

"What do we think, ladies? Eggs?" Shane asks, pulling the carton from the fridge. "Should have a little protein this morning. *Oof*." He receives an eager kick on his right side in response, which triggers an equal reaction from the left.

"I'll take that as a yes." He smiles as he rubs a hand over the swell of his belly, pushing back at the tiny feet kicking his ribs.

He stops suddenly, just short of the counter, when a contraction squeezes his belly tight. He manages to place the eggs down before he can drop them and turns to grip the counter. He holds on with one hand, while the other supports his belly.

"Ooh, oh, okay...that's a painful one." He winces at the height of it. He pants through it and takes note of the time on the microwave when it finally ends. He gives himself a minute before continuing to make breakfast.

It's a struggle to bend or squat anymore, so getting a pan out of the cabinet is a bit of a challenge.

He's surprised when he has to stop halfway down when another tightening rolls through him without warning. He gasps as the pain intensifies quickly and grabs the counters edge again with both hands to support himself. He closes his eyes and focuses on the deep breathing exercises they practiced at Lamaze until it passes.

He gulps, holding his belly in his hands, "Oh man," he hisses at the residual pressure lingering. "Okay, that's definitely not good...shit." He grunts, leaning his hip into the counter. He rubs soothingly over his belly, trying to take survey of what's going on in his body. His back feels like a rubber band pulled taut, his hips are screaming and the pressure in his groin might just be a warning sign to get moving. The contractions should not be this close together, so soon.

It's officially '*fuck the eggs*' and find Ilya time.

He makes his way back to the bedroom to find his phone and just as he gets his hand around the small device he's hit again with an intense wave of pressure followed immediately by crushing pain around his torso.

He half collapses against the bed, wrapping an arm across his belly, "Oh my- fuck, fuck, *ow*." He barely squeaks out, rolling onto the bed. "Holy fucking shit that hurts. Crap, Ilya where the fuck are you!" He yelps helplessly, pushing his head back into the pillows.

When it passes, he makes quick work of getting Ilya's contact up on his phone and calls him.

"Fuck- Ilya you better answer your god damn phone!" Shane swallows hard. He gently glides his fingers across his belly, afraid to press too hard, and feels the girls protest his supine position. "Holy shit, holy shit-" He clenches hard as the pain closes in on him again.

"This is so fucked." Shane panics, arching his hips up off the bed, whimpering at the painful surges coursing through his middle.

When Ilya finally picks up, Shane barely registers the distant sound of his voice.

"Ah, good morning, my loves. How did you all sleep?"

Shane drops the phone beside his thigh as he brings both hands up to cradle his aching belly.

"Oh my god," Shane cries out pathetically, dropping a hand to the comforter beneath him, strangling it in his fist. "This isn't happening. This isn't happening."

"...Shane? Hello? Shane...What is happening?!" Ilya hollers into the phone. *"Shane, answer me! Are you okay!"* He follows up with.

"Gah- Ilya, please come home!" Shane cries out, still unaware his boyfriend, who is breaking every traffic law imaginable at the moment, can hear him.

"I'm almost there! Fuck! Hang on, I'm coming!" Ilya shouts into the phone in Russian.

By the time Ilya gets home, Shane has gone through two more contractions leaving his entire body covered in a sheen of sweat.

"SHANE!" Ilya calls out as he races through the front door of the house, eyes already frantically searching for him.

"Ilya?" Shane whispers weakly to himself, picking his head up upon hearing his name. "Bedroom!" Shane shouts. *"Gah, Christ, I'm in the bedroom!"*

Ilya comes to a halt in the doorway and his eyes lock onto him. "Shit. What happened? Was only gone one hour!" He exclaims, moving around to Shane's side of the bed.

"Ilya." Shane sobs, reaching for him.

"Shane, *moy lyubimyy*, I'm here! I'm here!" His hands reach for the pregnant man. He braces a hand over his belly and his other across Shane's forehead. "Are you in pain? Does something not feel right?"

Shane pants, shaking his head. "N-no...contractions. Bad ones. I think I'm in labor. It's fast, the contractions are close. We have to go."

"O-okay." Ilya nods, surveying how tense Shane's body is. "Can you sit up?"

“I think so.” Shane nods, swallowing thickly. Ilya helps him swing his legs over the edge and pulls him by the hands into an upright position.

Shane’s hips settle heavily into the mattress, his belly resting low in his lap. He spreads his knees as far as he can to make room and keeps his hands pressed against his belly. Another contraction starts up, stronger than the last and he sucks in a sharp breath as he braces for it.

“Ow, ow, wait.” He cries, leaning forward until his head rests against Ilya’s chest. “Oh god, Ilya this is so painful.”

Ilya smooths his hands over the top of Shane’s back, keeping a steady, gentle pressure. “Breathe, Shane,” he mutters softly. “Slow...Da, like that.” He praises, when Shane gets a handle on his technique. Having Ilya there magically helps slow his brain down again, long enough to realize he’s still in control.

Slowly in through the nose and out through the mouth. The tightness fades, leaving that familiar pressure behind. He pulls back and glances up at Ilya with tears in his eyes.

He pouts up at him, chin quivering, “Where were you?”

Ilya can’t help but frown at him, taking his face between his hands, “I went to store, my love. We were out of milk. I’m so sorry.” He says, brushing his fingers through the damp fringe plastered to Shane’s forehead. “I’m here now, da? We go to hospital, and we have babies. Yes?” He presses a kiss to Shane’s lips.

“Yeah.” Shane nods confidently, though Ilya can tell he’s scared shitless. Ilya reaches over and grabs a large t-shirt off the top of the dresser, that barely fits over his belly anyway and helps him into it.

“I think,” Shane says quietly as Ilya pulls the shirt down, “today is definitely the day. I very much doubt I’m getting sent home this time.”

Ilya’s mouth curves into a soft smile as he pulls Shane to his feet, “I think so too,” he says, holding the pregnant man steady as they walk toward the door. “Babies seem ready.”

“Yeah, I don’t know if I am though.”

“Not to worry. We are very much ready to meet them.” He says, rubbing a hand over the tight swell.

“I can’t believe this is finally happening...It hurts, a lot. I thought it would take longer for it to hurt like this.”

“Da, I know, but you are so strong and you are going to do so good.”

“Thanks...I appreciate it...I do, but I’m still scared.” Shane groans, holding his back as he waddles out into the hall.

“I know. We talked about this, is okay to be scared.” Ilya calls to him as he turns on his heel, almost forgetting to grab the hospital bag just inside the door to the bedroom. “I’m here with

you now. You are not alone, sweetheart.” He assures him, pressing a hand to his back as the pregnant man waddles slowly to the front door.

Ilya quickly does a once over of the house to make sure everything is locked up, put away and turned off.

Shane is standing by the door, swaying with his hands beneath his heavy belly.

“Ilya, come on!” Shane cries out.

“One second!” He calls out from somewhere in the house.

“Oh, fuck.” Shane grunts, turning to face the hall table. “*Ah, ah, ah-*” He plants his hands on the cool marble and starts shifting side to side. “Shit, ow, ow. Ilya, fucking come on!” he growls through the contraction.

“Coming, coming!” Ilya jogs with the large duffle bag swinging over his shoulder and takes Shane’s hips in his hands. “Okay, let’s go. Nice and slow.” He guides him out.

Shane grabs the door frame for support, taking a second to breathe deeply before continuing on. He clears the threshold and with Ilya’s help they make it down the stairs of the porch and over to Ilya’s car.

He recently upgraded to a family car. A very reliable, in Shane’s words, SUV. It took a lot of convincing, but he managed to find something he didn’t hate.

Ilya opens the back door and chucks the bag in, then helps Shane up into the passenger seat.

“Shit, Ilya, this really hurts.” Shane whines as Ilya backs out of the driveway. “It shouldn’t hurt this bad, should it? What if something’s wrong!” He belts out, practically squirming in his seat, visibly the most uncomfortable he’s been the entire pregnancy.

“Focus on something else.” Ilya says earnestly with a shrug.

“What else could I possibly focus on right now?!” Shane snaps, “Are you fuckin’ serious, Rozanov?” he glares at him incredulously.

Ilya takes a deep breath at the mention of his last name and keeps his eyes on the road, “I-I don’t know. I’m sorry. I’m just trying to help.”

“Unhelpful. So unhelpful!” Shane demands, lulling his head to the side.

The rest of the twenty-minute car ride is tense. Shane is half-reclined in the passenger seat, one hand gripping the sleeve of Ilya’s shirt, the other braced under his belly. His breathing is far from calm, but it is more focused on working with the contractions.

Meanwhile, Ilya drives like he’s escaping the cops as if he just robbed a bank and his knuckles are white from how hard he’s gripping the steering wheel. His eyes keep flicking constantly between the road and Shane, growing more concerned by the second.

“Shit, shit, shit...*ooow*.” The pregnant man writhes in his seat.

“Next one coming?” he asks, voice unintentionally clipped from his nerves.

Shane nods enthusiastically, his body physically moving with the pain.

“Yeah,” he grits out hard. “Yeah- yes- already here!” He exclaims. “Shit, we have to call my doctor.” He pants in and out, rubbing firm hands over his belly.

“She will understand we didn’t have time.” Ilya waves a dismissive hand in the air.

“No, I want *my* doctor to deliver me, Ilya- not some rando that doesn’t know anything about me!” He pants hard, “I had a birth plan, dammit!”

“Shane- let’s get to hospital first then worry about doctor. Okay?”

“Holy shit!” Shane suddenly screams, hips rocking instinctively against the seatbelt. “Oh my God, Ilya- it’s worse. It’s getting fucking worse!”

The contraction hits harder than the last. It clamps down, deep and relentless, dragging a broken sound out of his chest. Shane can’t help the howl of pain that leaves him at the height of it.

Ilya’s hand flies off the wheel for half a second, reaching for Shane, but he forces it back into place. “Breathe, Shane. Breathe. In-”

Shane can’t talk through this one. He pants, short and sharp, eyes squeezing shut as the pressure and pain moves down low into his pelvis.

Ilya swallows. “How far apart are they?”

“Shut up, please shut up,” Shane barks out hoarsely. “Just drive!”

“We are almost there, *moya lyubov*, I promise.” He tells the laboring man who honestly couldn’t give two shits about anything anymore.

The incessant pressure in his groin suddenly gives way in the form of a warm gush of fluids between Shane’s legs. It soaks through his sweats, pooling against the seat.

Shane tips his head back, feeling the weight of his babies settle into a new position, “*Ahh*, shit. Think my water just broke. I’m soaked.” He announces, closing his eyes as his hands rest high on his belly.

Ilya’s gaze snaps toward Shane, then drops down to see the growing dark patch at the front of his gray pants. His eyes snap back to the road as he mutters, “shit,” under his breath.

Shane nods once, breath already hitching as another contraction starts building almost immediately behind it.

“I don’t-” Shane begins to say, cut off by the intensity of the contraction. “Fuck. I don’t think they’re waiting till we get there, Ilya.” He lulls his head loosely against the seat, vocalizing roughly through the pain.

“What do you mean...Shane, what does that mean?” He asks hurriedly.

“Means I think I’m closer to giving birth than I’d like to admit! *Argh*, fuck these pains hurt so fucking bad.” Shane bellows, holding his belly tight as his hips twist against the pain.

Ilya blinks, “As in-”

“I think I might have to push with the next one.” He warns him.

“You are not pushing,” Ilya says firmly, even as his own voice shakes. “Do not push.”

“I don’t think I have a choice!” Shane grunts, eyes wide. “My body just- it-” As he tries to explain himself his entire world shifts when the next contraction slams into him. It’s hard enough that he cries out, low and guttural. His hips lift off the seat. The urge to bear down is undeniable now.

“Shit, it’s happening!” he warns. “Oh shit, it’s happening- I can feel her! Pull over!”

“I see hospital,” Ilya says tightly. The emergency sign looms ahead like a beacon. “Two minutes- we will have babies there. Keep them inside, whatever you have to do!”

Shane laughs manically as he fights his body’s desire to push. “I wish I had two minutes!”

Another wave hits and Shane has gone non-verbal. He can’t help it this time- he bears down slightly, a choked sound escaping him as his belly squeezes down around his babies, clenching into a firm peak in the center.

Ilya glances over at him again when he goes silent, only to see Shane tensed up and going red in the face. “What are you doing?!”

“*Gah*, I’m pushing.”

“Shane, no!” Ilya’s voice cracks in desperation. “Stop pushing! We are almost there.”

Shane doesn’t listen- he can’t. His body is taking the wheel now and all Shane can do is scream at the sensation of his first born making her way into the world. The look Shane gives Ilya is not one of shock, but one of pleading. Pleading for help as this baby forces her way into the world.

The hospital entrance comes into view. Ilya doesn’t bother parking properly. He swings into the emergency drop-off, slamming the car into park before it’s fully straight.

“We are here,” he says victoriously, already unbuckling and scrambling for the door handle. “Shit, Shane, don’t push anymore. Let me get someone!”

“I can’t stop it, Ilya! Please just go get help, get help- oh shit!” Shane cries out, trying to anchor himself against anything he can in the car.

Ilya leaps out of the front seat and is running toward the entrance to the emergency room. Shane, in the meantime, manages to push his door open, but his body doesn’t want him to move. They’re doing this here. He’s gonna have a baby in the emergency room parking lot.

Fucking, great.

He folds forward with a broken sob as the next contraction hits and all he can do is cry out for his boyfriend.

“Ilya!”

The pressure between his legs is overwhelming and he knows without having to be told that his first baby is getting ready to crown.

“Oh God,” he breathes. He shifts forward in the seat and attempts to pull his pants off his legs. He’s too big to manage it himself and decides it doesn’t matter at this point; he just has to focus on getting her out.

“Ilya!” His voice cracks as he calls out again, panic slicing through it. “Ilya, she’s coming!” He screams, gripping the doorframe. “Fuck, somebody help me, please!”

He braces a hand on the dashboard and tries to swivel his body out. He manages between pushes, but the moment his feet hit the pavement another contraction rips through him. His knees buckle and he somewhat falls back into the car seat.

The urge to push takes over like instinct and his body bears down before his brain can argue.

“*GAHH-FUCK!*” he hollers, gripping the doorframe and the car handle. “Don’t, don’t, don’t. Please wait for help!” He tries to reason with his body.

It’s too late.

A strangled cry tears out of him as his knuckles go white around the door handle, and his other hand grabs hastily at the seatbelt, pulling it into a locked position.

A second later, Ilya is running back toward the car, dragging two nurses and a wheelchair with them.

“He is out here! He cannot wait! Babies are coming!”

They rush up to the car just as Shane cries out again, his body trembling.

“Please, please you have to help me, *AHH-*” he chokes. “I can feel her, she’s coming out!”

Ilya’s face drains of color.

The nurses don't hesitate. One of them moves fast, voice calm and practiced. "Shane, is it? I need you to stop pushing if you can."

"I'm not, I'm not trying to I swear!" Shane sobs, tears streaming down his face. "My body's doing it, I can't stop!"

Another contraction crests. Harder than all the rest. Shane's head falls back against the car frame as he bears down involuntarily, an animalistic sound ripping from his throat.

The nurse's expression sharpens as she notices the wet stain on his pants growing darker and larger by the second.

"We're not making it upstairs," she says quickly. "We're delivering right here."

Ilya makes a strangled sound, one of disbelief and urgency at their decision.

"What the fuck do you mean right here? We go in there, we're at hospital!" He demands.

"Mr. Rozanov, your husband is crowning. We don't have time to move."

For fucks sake- they made it to the hospital, did they not? He did it- he got Shane here. Why can't they just bring him inside!

"I'm pushing!" Shane yelps as he moves to widen his stance. "She's right t-ther-AHHH." He throws his head back, crying out as he bears down.

The nurse drops to her knees and yanks his sweats and boxers down in one swift tug while another nurse stands by holding up a large white blanket as a makeshift privacy shield.

"Okay, Shane, are we ready to meet your first baby?" The nurse places a blue gloved hand against his trembling thigh.

"I can't-" Shane sobs, shaking his head. "I can't do this-"

"Yes, you can, Shane!" Ilya steps closer. "You already are, she's almost here, sweetheart. One more good push." He tells him.

"He's right, Shane. Give us one more good push and you get to meet your baby."

The next contraction takes him completely by surprise and his body folds inward as he bears down with a force that steals the air from his lungs. There's no choice in it now, her head stretches him to the point of almost tearing.

His body drops into a half squat, and the nurse is quick to support the head as it pops out of Shane. A sharp, tearing cry rips from him and then a sudden, overwhelming rush of adrenaline helps him get the baby the rest of the way out.

Warmth floods down his thighs as fluids splash against the pavement beneath his feet. The nurse's hands move quickly and steadily as they catch the first twin.

There's a half-second of stunned silence as they all stare at the infant in the nurses' arms, still connected to her father and then a piercing cry fills the quiet space.

"Oh, oh my god." Shane pants, staring at his newborn daughter. "Holy crap...I just did that."

The nurse holding the sheet, looking on at him proudly, nods with a bright smile. "You did!"

"Shane!" Ilya gasps, breaking into a shocked laugh, "You- she's...oh my god." He slaps a hand over his mouth as tears pour from his eyes.

The nurse lifts the tiny, slippery and pink baby just enough for him to see. "It's a girl." She announces. She's got a head full of dark hair and probably the cutest button nose he's ever seen. She's beautiful.

Shane chokes on a sob, and the overwhelming feelings surrounding the moment finally catch up to him. His knees almost give out from the relief alone and before the baby can be placed in his arms, they quickly get him settled in the wheelchair that's been lined with a towel.

Shane winces as he takes a seat and feels a bit dazed as they place her against his chest. She's warm and a little slippery in his arms, but absolutely perfect. He's got a protective hold on her as they wheel him away from the car.

He laughs wetly through his tears as he looks down at her little scrunched up, crying face. Ilya is close by, not wanting to be away from either of them for even a second. The nurse holding the blanket drapes it over Shane for privacy and begins wheeling him toward the emergency room doors.

"Let's get you both inside before baby B decides to show up out here too." She says kindly, touching Shane's shoulder.

"Hi," he whispers to his baby. "Hi baby...hi, Kat." He says, snuggling her close. Then he remembers Ilya and turns his head in every direction, searching for him.

"M-my boyfriend. Where is Ilya?" Shane panics.

The nurse touches his shoulder again to calm him, "Don't worry hon, he's just parking the car. He can't leave it in the emergency bay. He's coming right back. He won't miss the second birth, I promise."

The relief from the first birth is fleeting. He's hit with a strong cramping sensation that quickly turns into a contraction. The nurses in the triage room, that were waiting there for them, make quick work of transitioning Shane to a gurney and getting Baby A's cord cut and transferred to a warming bed.

"Where are they taking her?" Shane nearly throws himself off the bed to watch where she's going.

"Just to get checked over, don't worry. She's right over there- she's not leaving the room. Let's focus on getting her sibling delivered, okay?"

Shane is being hooked up to all kinds of machines, and an ultrasound is being performed to get a read on Akiko's position. She's still head down and engaged, but her heart rate is a little too slow for their liking. For now, she's doing fine, so they tell Shane he's still good to deliver her in triage, but they have to act fast.

Shane begins explaining, "My doctor- Doctor Healey. She's in-"

"We know Dr. Healey. We've called her and let her know the situation. She's going to meet you upstairs after we get you delivered." The on-call doctor tells him. "You're in good hands Shane. You and your babies are safe."

Just as another contraction ends, Ilya rushes into the room and immediately up to Shane. He takes his hand, and presses a kiss into his damp hair, whispering soft reassurances. The intense hustle and bustle continues around them and Shane barely focuses on it anymore.

It's not so much a big deal when a single baby is born outside hospitals walls, but with two- there seems to be a little more involved. Shane is very popular all of a sudden- which is clear by the number of people rushing in and out of the room.

"Where is Kat?" Ilya asks, realizing their first-born daughter is nowhere in sight.

"Over, *hoo*, there." Shane pants, squeezing Ilya's hand tightly. "Oh shit, okay, I think I'm ready! I think she's coming."

The doctor settles between Shane's legs and instructs a nurse and Ilya to hold back his legs. Shane gives it all he's got and starts the pushing process to bring baby B into the world.

Shane exhales shakily on the release of the first push. He's no less overwhelmed in this hospital room than he was giving birth outside, and so, so tired.

"I don't think I can do it." Shane begins to cry. "I'm so tired."

Ilya holds Shane's hand close to his heart, "Sweetheart, you can do it. You did once before, yes? You are so strong, and so brave." He assures him, petting back his damp hair.

"It hurts." Shane whimpers. "It hurts and I-"

"Shh, shh, is almost over. After she is out, you get whatever drugs you want...yes?" Ilya turns his head toward the nursing staff, eyes wide and intimidating.

"Uh, yeah. Whatever he needs to make him more comfortable." The doctor nods. "Uh, Shane, we're gonna try to push again, okay? If we don't deliver soon, I'm gonna have to send you up to the OR."

Shane perks up at the mention, snapping his attention to the man between his legs. "*Surgery?! No. NO. I can do it. I swear!*"

Shane gears up to start pushing again, Ilya and the nurse each taking a leg.

Ilya leans his body closer to Shane's, "Okay, push hard. *Da?* You got this, Shane. *Davai!*" Ilya coaches in his ear.

Shane nods, curling up into the push, breathing through it the way they practiced. As she begins to crown, Shane can't keep himself from crying out around the feeling of being stretched again.

"Ah, shit." Shane pants as he lets the push go, only to curl right back into the next. "*Gaa-shit!*" He yelps. "Holy shit, how did I do this before? It hurts so much." He exclaims, tossing his head back. Ilya has his arm around Shane's back, keeping him hunched forward.

"Da, da, good! You can do this, push, Shane! Push!"

In the background, their first born begins crying again. A sweet, high-pitched wail that just about breaks both of their hearts.

"Is she okay?" Shane closes his eyes a moment, taking a much-needed break.

"I think so, probably." Ilya replies, trying to get a look at her from over his shoulder. He can't see much, but he can tell the nurses are doing something with her.

"Go check on her?" Shane pants, holding the underside of his knees.

Ilya shakes his head, "Ah, no. I'm not leaving you until she's out. Kat is fine. She is with nurses. Is you I need to worry about right now."

Shane winces at the pressure in his bottom, "I'm...shit, I'm f-fine-*ARGH!*" He curls over his belly, bearing down hard.

His next break between pushes, Shane opens his eyes and turns his head toward Ilya, "I'm exhausted." He exhales heavily, pressing his face into his boyfriend's chest.

"I know, you are doing so good though." Ilya swallows, brushing hair off of Shane's face. "Give it another try. Almost done, she's so close."

Shane nods and tries again, and again. Her head is taking forever to come out. Finally they decide to turn him onto his hip, which should help open him up a bit more. A few more pushes and her head is finally out, followed by a gentle downward steering tug by the doctor who manages to help her break free.

"Another girl, congratulations!" They say as the screaming infant is placed in her father's arms for only a few short seconds.

"We wanna get her checked as soon as possible. Her heart rate was dropping toward the end." The nurse says, allowing Shane to kiss Kiki's head before they whisk her away.

"I hope she's okay." Shane pouts, watching helplessly as they take his screaming daughter across the room to be with her sister.

"She is crying- is good sign." Ilya comforts him.

“Can you go be with them now? They need you, babe. They need their papa to keep them safe.” He says, gently pushing Ilya away.

“Okay, okay. I will go. I love you.” Ilya nods, patting Shane’s hand comfortingly before kissing him and stepping away to watch over their babies. He could see the unshed tears in Ilya’s eyes before he stepped away, but he can’t focus on that right now. He thinks he might be going into a bit of shock.

“Oh my God,” he mutters hoarsely. “I just had a baby in a parking lot.”

“You did perfect,” the nurse assures him fiercely. “She is perfect, they both are.”

The new dad begins to spiral, “I should have gotten here sooner. I should-”

“Shane, take a breath, honey. Everything is okay. Your babies are here, your husband-”

He shakes his head, “Boyfriend. We’re not married.” And why that felt important to correct, he’s not sure, but that’s where his brain is at right now. He’s trying to remain calm as they finish delivering him, but all he can think of is his girls and whether or not someone saw the whole thing go down. The last thing he needs is twitter exploding with pictures of him giving birth outside the hospital.

The placentas detach beautifully, and during the massage to stop his bleeding, he begins feeling a little woozy. “I feel like I might pass out.” He winces, gripping the gurney’s handle bars.

“We’re almost done here, and then you can go up to your room to rest. Okay? Give us five more minutes.”

Shane puffs out a steady breath, then closes his eyes, “The babies...they’re coming too?”

“They are going to make a pit stop at the NICU and spend a little time with the specialist there, but they shouldn’t be too far behind.”

He opens his eyes again, a bit frantic, “NICU? Wait, you said they were perfect. Why do they-”

“Just a necessary precaution with twins.” She tells him, and his gut is telling him something about that doesn’t feel right. There is something they’re leaving out for his sake, and he hates that.

“Ilya!” Shane calls out for him in a rush. He looks beyond the nurse that is helping him and can tell Ilya is tense as he watches the team working on their daughters. He doesn’t have to say much cause his body language is giving him away. He’s scared about something.

His fists are clenched tightly at his sides and he’s looking between both warming beds with equal levels of apprehension, that Shane has never seen in him before.

“Ilya!” Shane shouts again, which draws the Russian’s attention back to him. “Are they okay?” He asks through a wobbly voice.

Ilya glances back at the doctors before he offers Shane a tight nod. He's not sure what's going on, but they tell him he's getting moved before he can ask.

His boyfriend appears torn between staying with the girls and going with Shane. Before he's able to leave the room alongside him, Shane tells him to stick by the girls- to make sure they are okay. He'll be fine on his own for a bit, even though he wishes he could have Ilya too. Sacrifices have to be made though and he's more than okay with the fact that it's for their babies.

"But you need m-" Ilya reaches out for him.

Shane takes his hand, squeezing gently due to the constricting nature of the IV cover on his hand. "They need you more. It's okay, honey. Stay, please. Call my mom...she's gonna wanna be here." Shane tells him as they begin wheeling him down the hall.

Ilya swallows, his brow drawn together as he calls after Shane. "Okay. I will call her. I love you- I will call her!"

Shane closes his eyes and pulls the blanket higher on his lap, "I love you too." He whispers.

Shane has been in his own room for about two hours now, getting poked and prodded, which means he's also been separated from his family for that long.

Ilya has been in the NICU with the babies, and the nurse informed him that his mother has been called and is on her way.

So when there is a knock at the door, Shane isn't surprised that it isn't Ilya, but in fact his parents. Yuna is carrying pink, frilly gift bags and balloons, while David has a beverage carrier with coffees in one hand and a bag full of food containers in the other.

"Oh, honey." Yuna pouts, seeing the distressed and exhausted look on her son's face.

"Mom." Shane breaks into a sob, reaching his arms out for her. She throws everything she's holding on a nearby chair and runs to him. She takes a seat on the edge of his bed and pulls her son against her chest.

"I know...I know...Ilya told me everything, you don't have to talk about it. Just rest." She says, petting the back of his head.

"It all happened so fast."

"I know, that's what he told us. I'm so sorry you had to go through that honey...but hey," She pulls back, taking his tear-stained face in her hands. "It's over and your girls are here, right?"

"But they're in the NICU." He frowns at her with big, sad eyes. Fresh tears build along his lash line, and a single blink pushes them over the edge.

"Ilya said they are perfect, sweetheart. The NICU doesn't mean they are in danger. You had twins, they like to be extra cautious about that. Relax for me- for *them*." She says, swiping

her thumb over his cheek. She turns to her husband and in a hushed tone asks, “Can you get us a cool wash cloth, honey?”

“Of course.” David says and finds the bathroom inside the room.

Yuna looks back at her son, smiling softly at his troubled expression. “You did so good today, sweetheart. Those girls are so lucky to have such a brave daddy.”

Shane swallows hard, placing his hands over his mother’s, “I’m exhausted...and I’m starving.”

“Dad brought you some breakfast. Ilya said you didn’t have time to eat this morning before everything happened.”

“No.” He shakes his head. “But I don’t think I can eat. My stomach.” He presses a hand to his bloated belly. “...I want to see my babies, mom.”

David returns with the cloth and places it at the back of Shane’s neck. He relaxes at the sensation and finally lets out a deep, relaxing exhale.

Yuna admires her husband’s tenderness and squeezes Shane’s hands, “Ilya said something about another hour of monitoring and then he will be coming up here with them. Let’s eat... you’re gonna need your strength to hold those girls.” She says, moving to collect the containers.

David chuckles, “We understand you have some healthy girls on your hands.”

“What do you mean?” Shane furrows his brows.

“What did Ilya say, dear?” she looks to David, “Baby A is seven pounds, nine ounces?”

“Yes, and Baby B was, I think, seven pounds and four ounces.” He waves a hand in the air, “Or something of that nature.”

“You were carrying over fourteen pounds of baby, Shane. You’re incredible. I’m not surprised though; you’ve always done the impossible like it’s nothing.”

Shane can’t help the surprised laugh that escapes him at the news of his giant twins. No wonder his back hurt like hell with all that weight! It’s a miracle his hips didn’t give out. He knew they were going to be big, but he didn’t think they’d make it past seven pounds before birth.

Shane manages a few bites of food and then works with a nurse who comes in to check his pad and assist him to the bathroom. She wants him to try to urinate before they introduce any more liquids. Yuna and David offer to wait in the family area just outside the ward until he’s finished. They figure he’s already had enough of his privacy invaded for one day, the least they can do is give him space during the aftermath.

When he returns from the bathroom, he’s ecstatic to see Ilya standing by his bed waiting for him. His smile is warm and he’s just as relieved to be reunited with Shane after their time

apart.

“Ilya!” Shane dissolves into a puddle of tears for the millionth time that day. Ilya takes the hobbling man into his arms and holds him close, tucking his face into the crook of Shane’s neck.

“Mm, it’s been while since I’ve held you this close, huh?” Ilya chuckles in Shane’s ear. Shane breathes an exhausted sigh of relief, being able to hug his boyfriend chest to chest for the first time in months. Those distant hugs were brutal when all Shane wanted was to be as close as humanly possible to the love of his life.

He presses his soft, squishy belly into Ilya’s and smiles at how perfectly he fits in his embrace again.

“I missed you.” He mumbles into his shirt.

“I missed you too, *moya lyubov*.” Ilya replies with a tender kiss to Shane’s cheek. “Ah, but I have surprise.” He says, patting Shane lightly on the back.

“Huh?” Shane pulls away to look up at his boyfriend. He finds Ilya beaming and staring at something over his shoulder. Shane turns and gasps at the clear bassinets being rolled into the room.

“Oh, oh my god.” Shane presses a hand over his mouth to stifle the sob that nearly escapes him at full volume. He’s holding Ilya’s hand in a vise-grip as the nurse pushes the babies toward them.

“You have some visitors who really wanna meet you.”

“I really wanna meet them.” Shane cries, grabbing onto the bassinets as soon as they are close enough. He peers inside and can’t contain his joy at finally getting to see his babies up close. They are all cleaned up, swaddled and snoozing away.

Shane gasps upon seeing Kat’s little face that appears to have splotchy blue and purple coloring across the bridge of her teeny nose and brow line.

“Oh my god...w-what happened? Is she okay?” He panics, looking to Ilya for answers.

He nods, stepping closer to get a look, “Ah, yes...doctor said is perfectly normal. Will go away in time.”

“What is it?”

“She’s uh...” Ilya seems hesitate to explain. He shrugs a shoulder, with a subtle tilt of his head, “She’s bruised.”

He gasps again, “Bruised?! From what?” Shane exclaims, laying a large hand over the soft bundle.

“From being born. She came very fast, and that can cause bruising.”

The nurse standing by tells him, “It happens a lot with fast deliveries. She’s okay, it will clear up in a few days.”

“Does it hurt her?” He asks, voice small and full of fear for his fragile newborn.

“It shouldn’t, it’s just discoloration.” She assures him. “It’s not affecting her negatively at all, don’t worry.”

Shane nods, though he doesn’t seem convinced. He brushes a finger lightly over her cheek and frowns at her little face.

“I’m sorry, baby...”

“It’s not your fault, Shane.” Ilya is quick to remind him. “Is just something that happened. You didn’t do it on purpose.”

“If I had just woken you up this morning...she would-”

Ilya takes him by the shoulders and turns his body to face him, “Have probably had the same thing happen. Shane, listen to me. Is not your fault- you hear me? She is fine. She is beautiful and it’s not forever.”

He hesitates to agree and looks back at his babies. He admires their tiny faces for a moment, realizing with great satisfaction that he does in fact have the most beautiful babies he’s ever seen. “They are pretty beautiful, aren’t they?”

“So beautiful. Kiki looks most like you, I think.”

“She does?”

“Yes, look.” Ilya smiles, pulling the blanket down a little to show more of her face. She squirms in her swaddle, coos for a second then settles in with a small yawn. She looks to have the same low set bridge to her nose that Shane does and her little pouty lips curve in the same places as his.

“Does Kat look more like you then?”

“Don’t know yet. She has very cute nose though. Like button.” Ilya smirks, booping the little feature on his daughter’s face.

“Yeah, I thought that about her too.”

Shane is in awe of the beauty before him. He almost can’t believe he grew these two angels with his own body. It’s surreal to know they are both a perfect mix of him and Ilya. Sharing their genetics and hopefully one day their personalities too.

Shane leans into Ilya, wrapping his arms around his boyfriend’s waist as he continues to admire their babies.

“We made these...these are our babies, Ilya.”

He smiles soundly, holding Shane close, “Da, they are...how did we get so lucky?”

It's hours later, after all visitors have left and just Shane and Ilya remain. They are finally getting much needed alone time with their girls.

Shane just finished tandem feeding for the first time, and both girls have fallen asleep in his lap. He has them tucked into each of his sides like little footballs and refuses to let them go for even a second.

Ilya sits close by, gathering a spoonful of food to feed to Shane. He waits until Shane is ready for another bite and spoons it into his mouth.

“Good, yes?” Ilya asks, trying to gauge Shane's reaction to the takeout he bought for him.

“Mm, very.” Shane mumbles as he chews. He swallows, then tips his head back against the pillows, admiring the incredible man sitting across from him. “Thank you for feeding me...I didn't want to have to put them down yet.”

“Of course...anything for you, my love. You feed them, and I feed you. Is the rules.” He shrugs, gathering another bite on the spoon. He brings his eyes back up to Shane to see if he's ready for more food and freezes at the love drunk stare Shane's hitting him with.

“What?” Ilya giggles.

“I'm so in love with you.”

Ilya grins, “And I'm so in love with you...and our babies. Another bite?” He offers, holding up the spoon.

Shane doesn't respond, just keeps smiling at his boyfriend's dedication to taking care of him.

“Shane?” Ilya raises an eyebrow.

“Marry me.” Shane asks and Ilya immediately drops the spoon into the container.

“What?”

“You heard me, Rozanov.” Shane smirks. “*Marry* me...I wanna be able to call you my husband when people ask. I want everyone to know you're my choice forever.”

“Shane.” Ilya hesitates. “Are you sure?”

“Yes. I've never been more sure about anything in my entire life.” He furrows his brows right then and looks down at the sleeping babies in his arms. “Well, other than deciding to have these two cuties...but yes, I want to be married to you. Forever.”

“Forever is long time.” Ilya gulps subtly, holding back tears. “You sure you want that with me?” He teases.

“It is- which is why I want to spend it with the person I love the most.”

Ilya’s brow knits in thought, and soon he’s placing the container of food on the side table next to the bed. He stands and hovers over Shane and their babies, dipping down slowly to press his lips against his.

Inches away from his face he whispers, “I want to spend forever with you too...yes, I will marry you.”

“Yeah?” Shane’s goofy, tired grin brightens his entire face.

“Da. Of course.”

“Wow...engaged and a new dad to twins, all in one day...what could top this?”

“Mm, would have to be something even more exciting than what happened today.” Ilya laughs, brushing his huge hand over Kat’s soft head of hair.

“Yeah, no. I think this is good. I actually don’t think it gets better than this.” He says, smiling down at their children.

He tips his chin up, eyes half lidded as he stares longingly at the father of his girls, “Hey...I love you.”

Ilya takes Shane’s chin between his finger and thumb, planting his lips against his in an unhurried, lasting kiss.

They press their foreheads together, “Mm, *I will love you forever.*” He says in Russian.

Chapter End Notes

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<3

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