

Not According to Plan

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Not According to Plan

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Summary

While spending the summer in Russia, Ilya learns that Shane has mysteriously retired from the NHL. When he attempts to call, Shane's phone goes straight to voicemail...

Or the one where Shane finds out he's pregnant, retires and goes ghost, but underestimates just how much Ilya Rozanov loves him

Chapter 1: 2017 — March

Chapter Notes

Be nice, I'm just a girl 😊

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

“No. No. No. No.” Shane chants as he watches another pregnancy test turn positive, just like the other three lined up neatly on the bathroom counter.

His hands shake as he reaches for the last one in the box. It couldn't hurt to take another one just to be sure.

Maybe it's a bad batch? He tells himself. False positives are a thing. Hayden had told him so. He and Jackie had had a scare right after Amber was born, two weeks before his scheduled vasectomy.

He remembers Hayden calling him absolutely shitting-his-pants panicked about Jackie being pregnant again so soon after Amber. How he'd rambled on about how he didn't know how they were going to handle having five children when they could barely keep up with the ones they had.

Thankfully for everyone involved it had been a false positive. Jackie's period had started a few days later, and Hayden's vasectomy now ensured that there would be no more unexpected additions to the Pike family.

Shane knows better though. Knows that the outcome will be the same even as he rips open the last test, nose wrinkling as he dips the tip into his cup he'd peed into. He just needs to make sure.

He watches unblinking as the urine spreads, growing even more sick to his stomach as pink dye fills first one line and then the next confirming once again what he knows but doesn't want to be true—pregnant.

His vision blurs as he continues to stare at those two pink fucking lines hell bent on ruining his life and his career. How was this even possible? He and Ilya were always careful.

Always.

Shane always insisted they use condoms, not that Ilya ever minded. He knew that as long as he slept with other people—other women—that Shane would prefer they use them no matter what their tests said. Knew how much Shane hated the mess that going bare left behind. Hated the dripping and the stickiness, even though it made Ilya feral.

It shouldn't have been impossible, and yet there sat four tests that said otherwise.

“FUCK!” Shane sobs, shoving away from the bathroom counter to pace the cramped space, yanking at his hair as hot tears streak down his pale freckled cheeks.

Tap. Tap. Tap.

“Uh, Shane? Buddy are you ok? You’ve been in there a while.” Comes Hayden’s concerned voice.

Shane doesn’t say anything. He’s not even sure he could if he wanted to. Words were hard when he was this upset.

What would he say anyway?

“Oh hey, Hayden. Just having a mental breakdown, no big deal. Oh! By the way, I’m pregnant with Ilya Rozanov’s baby.”

Definitely not.

Another tap, the bathroom door cracks open just a touch.

“Shane, I’m really worried. Can I come in?”

He nods, not that Hayden can see, another sob hiccuping out of him as Hayden’s concerned face appears.

“Oh honey, come here,” Hayden says as he rushes into the cramped hotel bathroom, tugging Shane to his chest. “Are you ok? What’s wrong?”

Shane shakes his head as he snakes his arms around Hayden, pulling his best friend closer, fingers gripping onto the back of his shirt so tightly they ache, and he breaks. Knees buckling, as broken, wounded sounds escape him.

Hayden just shushes him as he guides them to the bathroom floor where he rocks them gently, hands rubbing Shane’s back in slow circles.

“It’s going to be alright, buddy.” Hayden murmurs as he presses a kiss to the top of Shane’s head. “I got you.”

Shane knows this. Knows that Hayden loves him and would do anything for him, but a part of him wonders if that will change when he learns about the baby. About *whose* baby it is.

That makes Shane cry harder.

How is he supposed to tell Ilya? They haven’t spoken since Ilya left for Moscow, haven’t seen each other since All Stars weekend in Tampa, when Shane had finally told Ilya that he has feelings for him, that he was gay. But Ilya had shut it down. Had tried to deny what was between them before taking Shane completely apart in bed.

Shane jerks back from Hayden at the thought, extracting his limbs from his best friend.

Holy shit. He and Ilya had made a baby in Tampa!

“Dude? Wha—”

“I’m pregnant.” Shane blurts out, cutting Hayden off.

“Uh yeah, no shit bud. The million pregnancy tests up there kind of gave it away.”

Shane snorts. “And oh my god you’re covered in snot. That’s gross. I’m so sorry.”

Hayden shrugs , “I’ve been covered in worse.”

Shane holds up a hand, “I don’t want to know.”

Hayden barks out a laugh. “I hate to break it to you buddy, but you’re about to find out.”

Shane buries his face in his hands and mumbles, “What am I going to do, Hayd? I can’t have a baby.”

“Then don’t.” He says with a shrug, like it’s the simplest thing in the world, and maybe to him it is.

Shane knows his options. They played through his mind each time those lines turned pink one after another. Knew that it would be quick, easy, and discreet. His agent, Farah, would make sure of it. No one but Shane (and Hayden) would ever have to know that the pregnancy ever existed.

Sure he would have to come up with some fake injury to put himself on the IR list for a game or two while he recuperated. Montreal could hold their own without Shane (he hoped), but he didn’t want to chance it. Especially with playoffs looming.

There would be speculation of course, there always was, but he could handle it. Mostly. No one would ever guess the truth though. For fucks sake, no one even knew he was gay (except for Ilya), let alone that he was a carrier (not even Ilya).

It would be so easy to pull the proverbial wool over everyone’s eyes, he knows this, but right now the choice feels like anything but easy.

But then there is the less favorable option. The life changing, career altering option that absolutely terrifies him. But that option isn’t the right one. Shane knows this. Knows that having a baby in his prime would be a mistake. Knows that being a happy little family with Ilya is not an option, but part of him wonders...

No. NO! He tells himself. That is not possible

Shane knows what he needs to do, but why does it feel so wrong?.

“Dude, I can literally feel you spiraling.”

“Hayd—“

“No, listen. I love you buddy, you’re my best friend and I support you no matter what, but I am not about to let the whole doom spiral,” he waves a hand in Shane’s direction. “you’ve got going on consume you. At least not in the bathroom. Can we please get off the bathroom floor and spiral in the very comfy beds in the other room? I can’t feel my butt.”

Shane snorts and wipes his face. “I guess.”

I genuinely have no idea what I'm doing. I honestly just started writing this last night because I got a brain worm (if that makes any sense) to write it.

Chapter 2: April

Montreal gets kicked out of the playoffs embarrassingly early. No one is happy about it, least of all Shane. He knows it's partially his fault. That he hadn't been playing well, that if he hadn't been so distracted...It saves Shane from having to fake an injury though.

Although he thinks an actual injury would be more preferable than feeling like he's crawling out of his skin while he sits in this cramped waiting room surrounded by all these happily pregnant people and their partners.

He fidgets with the bill of his ball cap again, pulling it down further to hide his face, knee bouncing as he prays that he doesn't look as conspicuous as he feels. Now that he's sat here for the last fifteen minutes pretending like he's waiting for someone instead of being one of the patients, he regrets not letting Hayden come with him.

If he's really being honest, he wishes Ilya were here. Ilya would crack jokes, probably flirt with a few of the pregnant women while he was at it, but they haven't spoken in months.

Shane knows he should probably reach out, but what would he say? He and Ilya are nothing, can be nothing. Ilya had made that abundantly clear in Tampa, but it did not change the fact that Shane so badly wants them to be something. He also knows that he should let Ilya know about the pregnancy, but what is the point when he still isn't even sure he wants to keep it?

"Landry?" A nurse calls from across the room, holding a clipboard and looking around the room. "Ross Landry?"

Shane jerks, forgetting for a moment that's him. It was Hayden's suggestion to use a fake name. The ball cap too. Anything to draw less attention since everyone knew who Shane Hollander was, Canada's golden boy.

All it would take was one person to recognize him and snap a photo. To share it on social media and rumors to start flying that Shane had gotten someone pregnant. Or worse, for there to be speculation on his carrier status.

"Sorry!" He scurries towards the nurse, giving her what he hopes is a shy smile as he crosses the room but is pretty sure it's nothing more than an awkward flash of teeth than anything else. "I'm here."

She offers him a warm smile, ushering him through the door. "Good Morning, Mr. Landry. My name is Sheila, and I'll be your nurse today."

"Hello." Shane says dumbly, tripping over his feet to follow the tiny woman.

"If you come with me we'll grab your weight. Have you gone to the restroom yet? We'll need to do a urine sample as well."

"Oh. Uh, no, I haven't."

"Great!" Sheila guides him to a small room with a scale, "Just step right up for me."

Shane does, eyes scanning the room taking in the miscellaneous medical supplies and one of those weird pregnancy posters that has the woman cut in half to show the body going through the different stages of pregnancy. It was kind of creepy.

The scale beeps and Shane jumps, wincing embarrassingly in Sheila's direction, though she pays him no mind. She's probably used to first time parents.

"Perfect! Now here," Sheila shoves a cup and a sanity wipe into Shane's hand. "Please fill the cup to the line if possible, and place it in the little window in the bathroom. They'll grab your specimen from there. When you're all done, meet me in room 7. It'll be on the left."

Shane nods. Urine samples he can do. He's probably peed in hundreds of little cups just like this one by now.

When he's done and his sample placed in the little window, Sheila waits as promised in room 7. She asks for his date of birth and address, and thanks him for filling out all the forms ahead of time before taking his vitals.

"I'm just going to step out for a second, but please remove your bottom half only, and use this to cover yourself." Shane stares blankly at the thin, and frankly useless, paper blanket Sheila hands him to cover himself before nodding.

She offers him another warm smile, leaving Shane flushed and embarrassed to strip out of his jeans and boxer briefs. Both of which he folds neatly and places on the lone chair in the small room, briefs hidden under the jeans, of course, and covers himself in what Shane is pretty sure is the same kind of paper they wrap sandwiches in at the deli down from his apartment.

Tap. Tap. Tap.

"All ready?" Sheila asks as she cracks open the door.

"Ye-ah," Shane's voice cracks. "I mean, yes."

"Now comes the fun part, Mr. Landry!" Sheila says as she wheels in the ultrasound machine, and dims the lights.

She gives Shane a brief rundown while getting ready—unnecessary because he's watched several YouTube videos on the subject, and knows that the first ultrasound is about to be uncomfortably invasive.

But even knowing the wand must be inserted, Shane still blanches at the sheer size of it. Sheila guides him through it though, being as gentle as the wand will allow.

"There we are," She murmurs, turning the screen for Shane to view.

There amongst the amorphous blend of blacks and greys and whites was a baby, sort of. It was more of a tiny wiggly gummy bear more than anything close to resembling a baby.



“Oh.” Shane gasps, vision blurring as tears well in his eyes.

“Baby is measuring 9 weeks 4 days, which matches the date you gave for conception.”

Shane says nothing, just continues to cry as Sheila points out its tiny head, and arms, and...

“Is that...”

Sheila hums in confirmation.

“Yep! That’s the heartbeat daddy! Here, give me just a second...” Sheila presses a button and the room fills with hummingbird quick whooshing. “156 beats. A perfectly normal heart rate at this stage.

I am so fucked, he thinks, So so fucked.

When Sheila finishes, she prints off several photos of the gummy bear for Shane, and lets him know the doctor will see him soon. Shane isn’t even sure if he responds, too busy running a fingertip over the photo in his hand, tracing the shape of his little blob.

Against his better judgment, Shane is in love. Sadly, this isn’t the first time. Probably not the last. Maybe bad choices are his thing now? Because all thoughts of termination flew out the window the moment he saw the wriggling bean that’s currently inhabiting his insides.

Shane loves hockey. He lives and breathes it. Has spent his entire life making sure he is the best, and he is, but this... This is better than hockey. Dare he say better than winning the cup?

Chapter 3: June

Chapter Notes

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

Ilya unhappily watches the Stanley Cup finals from the comfort of his living room sofa, one hand tucked into his joggers, the other holding a half full glass of vodka. It is possibly the most boring game he's ever watched.

And it should definitely be him on the ice, he thinks, not boring 100,000 year old Scott Hunter with this stupid boring face. Although, at this point Ilya is pretty sure he would watch paint dry if it kept him from packing for his first trip back home to Russia since his father died.

Pffftt. Home.

Russia has not been his home for many years. Has not felt like it since they placed his mother in the ground.

Ilya isn't even sure he knows what home is anymore.

Except for maybe Shane.

Not that Ilya has told him this. No, Ilya had been too scared when Hollander had told him how he felt at the All Stars game. Too overwhelmed by his father's illness and the guilt he felt at not being there for him, even though being home in Russia probably would have killed him. Too scared to believe that anyone as good and as kind as Shane Hollander could have feelings for him, could want him for more than just his body.

No, Ilya has never told Shane how he feels. Not in words at least. He's wanted to. Tried even, with tuna melts and ginger ales, and silly little chirps about how boring and predictable he is, But it was too much. He was too much, and Shane ran, even when he'd begged, and had proved Ilya's fears right.

Shane apologized, Ilya knows this. He wants to believe that Hollander could maybe love him the way he loves Shane, but... He *left*. Ilya wants to move past it, but god how it still feels like a punch to the gut when he thinks about it.

Besides, what kind of future could he give someone like Shane? There are no out players. Not in the NHL at least. Not where homophobic slurs are traded between teammates and rivals alike. All he could give Shane is secrecy, and Shane deserves more than that.

The roar of the crowd pulls Ilya from the downward turn his thoughts have taken, and he rolls his eyes when he sees that the Admirals have won. Watches as Scott Hunter is swarmed by his teammates, as he lifts the cup and roars back at the crowd.

But then boring Scott Hunter does something not so boring.

Ilya watches as Hunter skates toward the boards, waving at someone in the sea of screaming fans.

"What is he doing?"

The camera pans the crowd before zooming in on a confused but teary eyed man, then back to Scott who keeps waving.

Ilya sits up, vodka sloshing out of his glass as the man makes his way down the steps to Hunter, blindly patting the couch for his phone, scrambling to find where it's fallen between the cushions.

He winces at how long it's been since he's talked to Shane, since before his father died. Had not realized it had been months, but quickly types:

Are you seeing this?

He knows Shane is watching, because of course he is, but doesn't get a response.

What is he doing?

Still nothing.

The need to talk to Shane is unbearable because if what Ilya thinks is about to happen actually happens, this changes everything.

E v e r y t h i n g .

He fights the urge to call Shane, glancing away from his phone to see the man hop the boards, and wobble on the ice smiling and wiping his cheeks as Scott drags him closer to the team and their families.

He leans closer, mouth gaping as he watches Scott lean down smiling.

"Holy shit!" Ilya whispers as Hunter's lips touch the other man's. "Holy fucking shit!"

Did you see that?!

Shane still has not replied, but Ilya doesn't care.

He presses call.

The phone rings and rings, "Hey this is Shane, leave me a message and I'll get back to you."

"Hollander! Pick up."

Ilya calls again.

"Hollander, please. I need to talk to you."

And again.

"Shane..."

But Shane never answers. Never returns his calls or answers his texts. Ilya doesn't understand. Shane has never ignored him before.

He calls once more before boarding his flight to Russia the next morning.

It goes straight to voicemail.

Chapter End Notes



Chapter 4: June—Shane

Shane watches the Stanley Cup finals from the comfort of his parents' lake house living room, one hand tucked lovingly around his barely there baby bump, the other holding an ice cold can of ginger ale. It is possibly one of the most exciting games he's watched, especially since Shane is so proud of Scott for making it to the finals.

Part of Shane knows he should wish it was him on the ice, and a little part of him does. He'll always crave the cold blast of air when first walking into the rink and the crisp scent of fresh ice. The way his stick becomes an extension of his body, the way his eyes naturally focus on the puck. Shane would even miss the intense roar of the crowd, the way it fades into a barely there buzz while lining up the perfect shot.

For the longest time Shane has wondered what he would be without hockey—a grim thought. It has consumed him since he was three years old and put on his first pair of skates. He thinks of all the practices, the summer camps, all the nights he missed hanging with his friends, just so he could be the best. God, all the money and time his parents have funneled into his dream just to make him happy.

He knows his experience is not unique. That this is something all professional athletes must think about—who and what they will be if their dream suddenly gets ripped away. Shane knows how lucky he is. Has never once taken for granted his time with the Voyageurs, has never done anything that would cause unnecessary injury during the off season.

Because who even is Shane Hollander without hockey? Shane isn't certain he knows.

His mother's cheering and father's clapping pull Shane from the downward turn his thoughts have taken to focus back on the TV, and smiles when he sees that the Admirals have won the cup. He reaches for his phone, shooting a quick text over to the group chat he has with Scott and Vaughn, congratulating them on their win.

"I told you it was going to be Scott Hunter's year, didn't I?" Yuna nudges him and Shane nods with a chuckle, not looking away as he watches Scott being swarmed by his teammates, as he lifts the cup and roars back at the crowd.

"You're a witch!" David pointing at his wife. "A witch!"

Shane ignores his parents, watching as Scott skates around his team, slapping backs and hugging wives, leaning down to be tackled by one of his teammate's children in a hug. He spins the little girl around before putting her down and skates away from the growing crowd.

He stops, eyes scanning the crowded arena, a wide smile taking over his face as he spots what he's looking for.

Shane's phone buzzes in hand, and he glances down. Eyes widening at the text he's received.

Lily: Are you seeing this?

They haven't spoken in months. Not unusual for them, Shane knows this. They often go months without speaking, but it's different this time. He can't even tell you how many times he has picked

up the phone, fingers hovering over the keyboard, All the messages he's typed and deleted telling Ilya they needed to talk. All the times he's pulled up Ilya's contact but too scared to call.

The camera pans the crowd before zooming in on a confused but teary eyed man, then back to Scott who keeps waving.

"What is he doing? His mother asks as they watch Scott skate toward the boards, waving at someone in the sea of screaming fans.

"I don't know..."

"You think he's going to bring a fan down?" David asks, eyes still on the screen as he leans down to clear the glasses and plates on the coffee table.

"Oh here, honey, let me help." Yuna says following him into the kitchen.

Lily: What is he doing?

Ilya's text an echo of his mother's early question.

His fingers itch to respond, but Shane doesn't know how to reply.

He glances back at the TV, watching as the man makes his way down the steps to Hunter, the man hops the boards, and wobbles on the ice smiling and wiping his cheeks as Scott drags him closer to the team and their families.

Shane leans forward, mouth gaping as he watches Scott lean down smiling.

"Oh wow," Yuna says from where she leans against the doorframe drying a plate as they both watch as Scott's lips touch the other man's.

Shane's phone drops from between his shaking fingers to the floor.

"Did you know?" his mother asks, and Shane shakes his head.

He didn't, but maybe he should have?

Shane hears his phone buzz against the floor. Then again.

Buzzt. Buzzt. Buzzt.

He scrambles to pick it up, grumbling as he has to bend several times to reach thanks to his stomach.

Lily calling

Shane nearly drops his phone again. The call ends, but Ilya leaves a message.

Buzzt. Buzzt. Buzzt.

Ilya calls again.

Shane is shaking, his phone screen blurring.

Pick up, he tells himself. Just pick up.

Ilya leaves another message.

Buzzt. Buzzt. Buzzt.

Ilya calls again.

Another message.

But Shane never answers. Can't bring himself to, no matter how much he wants to. Is too scared that instead of talking about Scott and the Admirals win that he would just vomit everything out.

He turns his phone off before Ilya can call again.

"Honey, are you ok?" his mother's concerned voice has him glancing up quickly.

Shane forces a smile, tries to make his bottom lip stop wobbling.

"I'm ok, just tired. I think I'm going to head to bed."

"Are you sure?" Shane nods. "Well good night sweetie. If you need anything let me know."

"Night mom, dad."

"Night son!" David calls from the kitchen. "Love you!"

—

When Shane wakes up the next morning, it's still dark outside. He doesn't want to move, but the baby has taken up residence on his bladder and it's screaming for relief. He huffs, forcing himself out of bed, and with what is definitely not a slight waddle, Shane makes his way to the bathroom doing his best not to wake up his parents.

He sighs as he relieves himself, flushes and washes his hands but stops a moment to take in his reflection in the bathroom mirror. The Shane staring back at him is one he's still getting used to. His hair is longer, his freckles more pronounced with his time spent on the lake, his face fuller from the extra weight he's carrying now that is most definitely not at all caused by his Nutella obsession.

Shane turns to the side, taking in the subtle, smooth swell of his belly that has replaced what was once the flat washboard abs he so meticulously worked for in the gym to obtain, and smiles. He still struggles to accept the new body he's in most days, not that he hasn't been amazed at how much his body has changed and will keep changing.

He certainly does his best to not let the anxiety about what he puts in his body get to him. Tries not to think too hard about the amount of Nutella he eats, or the extra serving he eats when his dad chicken parmesan, or the stretch marks that are starting to form on his hips. He's happy that most days are good days, and that bad days don't make him spiral and restrict.

Shane pads back to the guest room he's been using while he's been waiting for the last of renovations to be done on his cottage not too far from here, and quietly closes the door behind him so as to not alert his mother that he's up.

If momager Yuna Hollander was one thing, Baba Yuna is another.

He loves his mother, he does, but from the moment he called his mother crying after seeing the baby for the first time, Yuna has turned into a force of nature. The coddling was nice at first, comforting in a way Shane hadn't felt since he was a child, but now? She drives him up the wall.

He climbs into bed, turning onto his side and shoving pillows between his legs and under his belly, and reaches for his phone. He takes a steadying breath and turns it on. His phone goes haywire. Notifications flooding in from Hayden and Jackie, the Voyageurs group chat, from Scott and Vaughn, and Ilya. So many from Ilya.

Shane clicks on their texts:

Lily: Are you seeing this?

Lily: What is he doing?

Lily: I know you are not so busy. Too boring to be doing anything fun

Lily: Call me

Lily: We need to talk

Lily: Shane, please...

Lily: My flight leaves soon, please call me

Then he plays the voicemails:

"Hollander! Pick up!"

"Hollander, please. I need to talk to you."

"Shane..."

"Hollander, why aren't you answering? You are ok, yes? Please call me."

A tear slips down his cheek as he listens to the last one, sent only an hour ago.

"Shane, I'm about to board the plane. I'm sorry it's been so long since we have spoken, I had not realized... I... Please just call me?"

He cuddles the phone to his chest and sobs.

Chapter 5: July — Ilya

Chapter Notes

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

Ilya does not remember much about his first week back in Russia. It's a blur of writhing sweaty bodies under neon lights in clubs that Ilya has no memory of going to, taking shot after shot until he can no longer feel his face or think about how much his chest aches at the thought of Shane, and waking up with his face pressed to his toilet seat, a worried Sveta watching on from the bathroom door.

He wakes up to find more unanswered text messages, mostly in English, but the ones in Russian leave Ilya even more embarrassed than the barely legible ones in English. He switches to his call log, scrolling and scrolling and seeing nothing but Shane's name.

The second week is not much better, only this time Sveta goes out each night with him, hovering over him like a mother hen and shooing away anyone who tries to come a bit too close to them on the dance floor. When Ilya is sufficiently drunk, she drags him home, forces him to drink water, then spends the night running her fingers through his curls with his head in her lap until he falls asleep.

When he wakes up he no longer checks to see if he has messaged Shane, has stopped calling too. Shane's silence still eats at him and the thought of him still makes his chest ache, but Ilya's embarrassment and confusion has slowly started to turn into anger. Shane can ignore him all he likes, but he will not be able to avoid him on the ice next season.

Ilya forces himself to get out of bed and head to the kitchen where he drinks a disgusting banana flavored protein shake and does not think at all about how Shane forced him to buy the idiotic protein powder because it fit into his macros or some bullshit before heading to his home gym run. Does not think about that night in the hotel gym all those years ago where they tried to outrun each other.

Ilya slows his pace to walk to cool down, chugging water as his phone goes haywire in its spot in the cup holder. He grabs it and swipes open the messages from Cliff.

Marley : HOLY FUCK

Marley: ROZ

Marley: LOOK AT THIS SHIT

Marley: *link*

Marley: Next season is going to be fucking aces man

He lifts the hem of his shirt to wipe his face and clicks the link, gut sinking as he scans the article.

After 7 seasons and 3 Stanley Cup wins, Montreal Voyageurs star center, Shane Hollander, has announced his retirement from the NHL.

On Friday, the 26 years old, who was second draft pick overall in 2009, released a statement that he will miss his time on the ice and could not be more thankful to have been a part of a team and organization like the Voyageurs.

In kind, the Voyageurs released a brief statement wishing Hollander well and that he would be sorely missed, followed by a montage of his time with the team on Instagram.

When contacted for more information, Hollander's agent, Farah Jalali, stated that Hollander was in great health, but has chosen to step back from playing hockey to pursue more anthropological endeavors.

Hollander has spoken several times about his plans for the future and his goal of opening an inclusive hockey camp whose proceeds would go towards funding better mental illness and suicide prevention services throughout Canada.

Ilya blinks and then reads again. Then once more. He knows his English has improved since moving to the States, but surely he misunderstood the article. Shane Hollander retired? At 26? His Hollander? Nyet.

Ilya: Fake news

Marley: 🤔🤔🤔

Marley: It's legit! Google it

So Ilya does because there is no way Shane would retire this young. Not unless something has happened.

He reads headline after headline, vague article after vague article about Hollander focusing on charity work, sees the gossip that Hollander must be hiding an injury (like he suspects).

He is so far down his rabbit hole that when he stumbles across a comment on ShaneHollander Reddit speculating that maybe Shane has finally settled down and started a family, he breaks out into a cold sweat.

It all makes such a sick sense to Ilya now. Why else would Shane ignore his messages, his calls? He has finally found someone he does not have to hide. It is not like he and Shane were together. There were no labels for why they had. It was just some fun, just two rivals letting off steam whenever they played against each other. It was never serious.

Ilya is suddenly shaking, his body so cold. A tingling sensation starts in his finger tips and spreads up his arms the more comments he reads about Shane getting married and starting a family. His knees buckle beneath him and Ilya collapses to the treadmill deck, and hits call before he thinks better of it, hoping that just this once Shane will pick up.

“Hey this is Shane, leave me a message and I’ll get back to you.”

Ilya roars, throwing his phone. Watches as it shatters against the mirrored wall in front of him. Just like his heart.

—

“Here.” Svetlana slaps the new phone into Ilya’s awaiting palm as she flops down on the bed beside him. “It’s all set up. Aaaaand I made sure all your contacts were ported over.”

She gives him a pointed look, and he can feel the way her eyes are boring into the side of his head, but he refuses to acknowledge her outside of a quiet thanks. She will not stop, he knows. He’s resigned to it.

After a moment, “Are we not going to talk about it?”

Ilya rubs his nose, still avoiding looking at her, and shrugs.

“What is there to talk about? Needed new phone.”

Svetlana whacks him in the arm, “Oh I don’t know, Ilyusha, maybe how I found you in your gym in the dark, phone broken into pieces, crying.”

Ilya sniffs, shooting her a glare. “I wasn’t crying.”

Sveta rolls her eyes, so sick of his shit. “Oook, Ilya, you weren’t crying.”

“I wasn’t.”

She holds up her hands, “I said ok.”

For the record, he *had* been crying. Even though she knows he’s too embarrassed to admit that. Just like she knows that he likes to pretend he does not have feelings, that nothing is ever serious and cannot hurt him. He thinks it is safer this way, to hide that he feels too much, too deeply. She hates it.

“Sveta...” He warns, and she smiles at him deviously.

“Ilya...”

Sveta sighs then, slumping back against the couch.

“I worry about you, Ilyusha.” She says softly, her hand sliding against the covers to meet his to lock their pinkies together. “I haven’t seen you like that since Ir—”

“Do not bring my mother into this.” Ilya bites out, yanking his hand away. It shakes as he drags it down his face. “Please.” He says softer. “Not mama.”

Svetlana rolls to face him, reaching out a hand to cup his face, her thumb stroking up and down his cheek a moment. Ilya leans into her touch.

“Fine, I’m sorry, but I know this is about Jane.” Ilya says nothing. “I saw his retirement post—”

“I don’t know what you’re talking about, Sveta. Jane is nothing to me. Was just fun.” Ilya shrugs like it’s not killing him to say it. “Is done now.”

Svetlana drops her hand and flops onto her back, barking out a laugh as she goes. “Ilyusha, I am not blind, nor am I stupid!”

“Is nothing! Can be nothing,” He sucks in a shuddering breath, deflating. “You know this.”

“I know nothing!” She raises her voice, annoyance lacing her words. “Things are changing, Ilya. Look at Scott Hunter—“

“I am not Scott fucking Hunter!” He yells.

God how he wishes it were so simple, as if he too could skate onto the ice and claim Shane with a kiss for the world to see, but the consequences are too many.

If he had Shane the way he wanted to, he could never come home. Could never visit his mother’s grave again, or watch his niece grow up. Sveta knows this. Knows there’s too much at stake, and yet she still wants the world for him.

Sveta says nothing for a moment. Just looks at him, mouth downturned and eyes so full of sadness.

“You deserve sunshine and happiness too, Ilya.” Ilya scoffs, a bitter angry sound. What does he know of happiness? “God, if he wasn’t already dead I would fucking kill that miserable bastard for making you think you are not worthy of love.”

Ilya looks away, his bottom lip wobbling. He feels Svetlana scoot closer, her soft curls brushing his neck as she leans her head on his shoulder. Her small delicate arms encircle him, and Ilya cracks.

He so badly wants to be loved. So badly wants to love Shane out loud and in the open. So badly wants to be accepted for who he is, but it is just an unobtainable dream that he will never be able to have. Knows that when it comes time to settle down, when he retires and comes back to Russia for good, that it will be Svetlana he marries, not Shane. Never Shane.

“We need you to listen to me.” Sveta starts. “You *are* good, Ilya. You deserve to love and to be loved in return.” She sighs. “I love you, you know this.” Ilya nods. “And you love me, but it is not the same... as how you love, Jane...” Ilya shakes his head, more tears quietly slipping down his cheeks. “I will always be here for you, Ilyusha, *always*. but you need to tell him how you feel.”

Ilya snuffles and wipes his nose against his shirt sleeve before leaning his head down to rest atop her curls, feeling more defeated than he’s ever been.

“You don’t know that.”

“I have called,” his voice cracks. “Every day for weeks I have called and he does not answer.” Sveta squeezes him harder and he snuffles.

“Oh, Ilyusha.”

“I don’t know what to do, or what I did. We talked in January, and then papa died and the playoffs. Is not unusual for us to go this long without talking, but he always answers.” Ilya bites back a sob. “Always.”

—

When Ilya wakes the next morning it’s to the violent assault of sunlight as Svetlana rips open his curtains while yelling, “Up!”

He groans, head throbbing and pulls a pillow over his face, burrowing further into his bed.

“Up!” Clap.

“Up!” Clap.

“Get uuuupp!” Clap. Clap

Ilya refuses to move, but this does not deter her. If anything his refusal to comply only spurs the tiny terror of a woman on further.

“Seriously, Ilyusha! Get up!” He hears her getting closer and then with a grunt his covers are yanked away. “We need to get to the airport.”

Ilya pulls the pillow away from his face to look at her, one eyebrow raised in question.

“Airport?”

“Da.”

“Sveta, why are we going to the airport?”

“I booked us a flight to Montreal.” She says so nonchalantly as she heads towards the pride and joy of his Moscow apartment—his walk in closet.

“You did what?!” Ilya jackknifes up in the bed, gaping as Svetlana disappears inside.

“I booked us a flight to Montreal?” Comes her muffled reply. Her disembodied head appears briefly, peeking around the doorframe with a smirk.

“Sveta...”

“Ilyusha...”

“This is a bad idea.” Ilya flops back on the bed with a groan, flinging an arm over his eyes.

This is possibly the worst idea that Sveta has ever had, and there have been quite a few in their two decades of friendship.

Sveta with her wild curls and sweet smile looked like an angel, but she was more of a menace than he was. Especially when she’s set her mind to something. Like fixing whatever is going on with him and Shane. She was normally just smarter about it.

“Probably, yes” she shouts to be heard, “But you like bad ideas, no?. Now get up!”

“No.” He doesn’t budge.

“Ilya...” Her voice grows closer.

He leans up onto his elbows, staring into his closet doorway. “I’m not going to stalk Shane Hollander, Sveta. That’s insane.”

“It’s not stalking...” She reappears, clothes thrown over one arm. “It’s more like facilitating a casual run in... On purpose.”

“He doesn’t want to see me, Svet.”

“Semantics.” She waves him off. “Now here, put this on.”

Chapter End Notes

So this is the last of what I had written, and there won't be any new chapters for the next couple days.

Fear not! I plan on writing another huge chunk this weekend.



Chapter 6: Ilya

Chapter Notes

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

Sleep on the flight from Moscow to Montreal has been next to impossible for Ilya, his body and his mind too restless. He spends most of his time occupying himself with scrolling through the secret folder on his phone staring at the pictures he's screenshotted from Shane's instagram, the rare few selfies that he had saved but promised to delete, and the one they'd taken all those years ago at their first awards show rookie year.

When the low battery warning on his phone pops up during his millionth time scrolling through the album, Ilya pockets it as he scoots further down in his seat trying to get comfortable. He reclines back, crossing his arms over his chest, closes his eyes and hopes for sleep. Only Ilya is not so lucky and his asshole of a mind takes this as the perfect time to create unfortunate scenarios where it's Shane's new lover who opens the door when he knocks.

Sveta, the demon woman, does not have the same issue. That is mostly thanks to the two glasses of champagne and the pill she popped on lift off—one he now regrets declining. She's curled up on her reclined seat, hands tucked under her chin, curls piled on top of her head in a messy bun, and eyes covered with the complimentary eye mask the flight attendant had offered.

Typically Ilya would either be asleep or several vodka tonics deep this far into a flight, but he politely declines every time Natalia, the flight attendant who lingers a bit too long when she comes by, offers to get him a drink. If it had been any other time, Ilya would be eating up her attention, but it's been months since he has been with anyone. Cannot stomach the idea of being with anyone other than Shane. Shane who will not answer his calls or reply to his texts. Shane with his stupid haircut, boring freckles, and weak backhand.

By the time they land in Montreal and settle into the hotel a few blocks from Shane's apartment, Ilya is mentally and physically exhausted but still too wired to sleep. He forces himself to choke down the steak and fries Sveta orders him from room service, but his restlessness is eating him alive. Making him feel as if he's crawling out his skin, his limbs feel too heavy and his chest too tight.

"I'm going to the gym." He tells Sveta who watches him from where she lays on the bed propped up on an ungodly amount of pillows. She's wearing one of the fluffy white hotel robes that Ilya has never actually seen anyone wear until now, and worrying at her bottom as she nods. He can tell she's worrying, but says nothing as he slips on his shoes, grabs a room key and his phone and heads out the door.

The gym is blessedly empty when Ilya arrives, he's not sure he could handle the smiling and the small talk that would be required of him when running into a fan, and grabs the nearest treadmill hoping that running out this excess energy will tire him out enough to sleep. It probably won't, but it's better than spiraling under the watchful eye of Sveta, who would definitely make him talk about his feelings before forcing him to lay down where he would toss and turn for hours before eventually succumbing to sleep.

While avoiding talking about how he's feeling is probably not the healthiest, but feelings were a weakness he was not allowed to show around his father and his brother, and so he took up running

to clear his thoughts. Ilya starts slow, every anxious worried thought disappearing with the steady rhythmic slap of his shoes on the deck. He ups the speed in increments until he's full on sprinting, and the only thing he can focus on is sucking air into his lungs.

As he finally slow down, chest heaving and lungs aching, body loose and his mind now calm and silent, Ilya, for the second time in as many days, thinks of the night of the draft so many years ago. Thinks of the way he and Shane had played a game of chicken on the treadmill, lungs and legs burning with the effort, both wanting to stop but too stubborn to not outdo the other.

He thinks about after. Where he and Shane collapsed on the floor, so close but not quite touching, sharing Ilya's water bottle and making awkward small talk. Of Shane's red sweaty face, and the way it made the freckles on his cheeks stand out. About the beads of sweat that rolled down his chin and neck, and how badly he wanted to follow them with his tongue. To press him into the floor and consume him.

Wonders that if he had kissed Shane that night, that maybe things would be different now. That he and Shane would not have played into the rivalry the media built up between them, that maybe they would have been friends. That they would have had more time together than just stolen hours here and there after games, and that it would have always been just them.

Ilya yawns as he makes his way back up to their room, the weight of exhaustion hanging heavy on him as he watches the elevator climb floor after floor. His jaw cracks with another yawn as he opens the door to their suite, the room dark as he steps in and makes his way to shower. He rinses off quickly, eyes barely able to stay open as he makes his way to the bed where Sveta sleeps starfished across it, beautiful face smooshed into the covers.

His last thought before falling asleep is that he hopes he hasn't made a huge mistake by coming here..

—

Ilya is too anxious to eat the next morning, just sips his iced coffee and bounces his knee while Sveta finishes getting ready for the day. He spirals a little while he waits, wondering if Shane will slam the door in his face—if he even opens the door at all, or have him escorted off the property. Shane does not like causing a scene, but the Shane he knew wouldn't screen his calls or texts either.

When Sveta swans out of the bathroom some fifteen minutes later, Ilya's coffee is gone and the caffeine appears to have had the adverse side effect of ratcheting his growing anxiety higher. His insides feel jittery, his heart pounding like it's trying to beat out of chest, and he's certain that if he were standing in front of Shane's door at this very moment and it actually opened, he may throw up. Coming here was a very bad idea.

A pillow smacks Ilya upside the back of his head, hard. He whips around and glares, rubbing the back of his head.

"What the fuck, Sveta?!" She shrugs.

"I called your name like three times and you did not move," She says tossing the pillow behind her and grabbing her purse

"And you resorted to violence because...?"

“Oh, my sweet Ilyusha, you have not seen violence yet.” She gives him a terrifying smile and bats her eyelashes at him, ‘Now snap the fuck out and let’s go get your man,’

Ilya huffs but follows, knowing that if he does not that Sveta will go see Shane on her own, and no one wants that.

Sveta pulls into the garage beneath the apartment building, parking in one of Shane’s allocated visitor’s spots before opening the door.

”Maybe you should wait in the car?” Ilya catches her arm as she goes to exit, and the look she gives him would make a weaker man shit himself. Ilya knew he fucked up the moment he said it and winces. ‘Right... Sorry.’

Svetlana sniffs and snatches up her purse, slamming the car door a bit too hard behind her, and stalks towards the row of entrances to the building with a toss of her curls. Ilya leans his head back and groans. She will not let this go. He will have to buy her a nice present. Something shiny and expensive. Or maybe take her on a vacation. Somewhere tropical and not at all because he loves the fruity little drinks with the cute umbrellas.

”I’m sorry,” he says as he jogs to catch up with her.

Sveta side eyes him and purses her lips, ignoring his apology with a wave of her towards the doors like, ‘Get on with it!’

He leads her to the door labeled 1919, and punches ‘8124’ into the keypad beside it. Unlike the many times he’s done it before the light does not turn green. He punches the numbers in slower. 8...1...2...4... Still red, He curses under his breath in Russian, runs a hand through his curls and yanks them in frustration. He tries one last time, smacking the keypad when it still does not turn green.

“He changed the code.” Ilya says as he turns to Sveta, shoulders slumping.

Shane really didn’t want to see him.

“Nope, none of that.” Sveta says, taking him by the shoulders. “This is just a tiny hiccup. We’ll go to the security desk and see if they can call him down.”

“He’s not going to come down if he knows it’s me.”

She gives him a shake. “Stop worrying and let me handle this,”

“Fine, but when he doesn’t come down I’m going to tell you I told you so.”

Sveta rolls her eyes. “Whatever, Ilyusha. Let’s goooo.”

Ilya watches her confidently stride towards the main entrance of the building, wishing that he could be as sure and confident as she was right now. But that was just Sveta. Always hoping for the best, and when things didn’t go according to her plan, then she made them.

Svetlana is already at the security desk when Ilya makes his way inside. From the way she’s staring down at the man, it’s not going good.

“And you’re sure?” He hears her say when he reaches the desk.

“Positive. The apartment is not currently occupied,” Ilya sucked in a breath, reeling from what he’s heard. “If you’re interested, viewings are by appointment only. You’ll need to contact Rebecca, our building manager. Her number is at the bottom of the card I gave you, and she’ll get that set up.”

Ilya does not remember Sveta guiding him back to the garage or putting him back in the car. Does not remember going back to the hotel, being undressed, or getting in the bed. He remembers nothing other than hearing, “The apartment is not currently occupied.” Still hears it, on repeat.

“The apartment is not currently occupied.”

”The apartment is not currently occupied.”

”The apartment is not currently occupied.”

”Ilya?” Sveta runs her fingers through his hair. “I’m going to figure this out, ok? I’ll find him. It’s going to be ok.”

”He left, Sveta.” Ilya whispers brokenly. “Why do the people I love always leave?”

“I’m here,” Sveta says softly. “I’m not going anywhere.”

—

Ilya wakes a few hours later, Sveta’s small body still curled around his, her hands still tangled in his hair, and extracts himself slowly so as not to wake her. A quick glance at the clock on the bedside table shows it’s a little after 8pm on a Tuesday, and while not the best time to go out for a drink, he doesn’t care. He just wants to forget for a little.

He throws on his clothes from earlier, not caring that they’re wrinkled, grabs his hotel key and shoots off a quick text to Svet telling her he’s going to go get a drink before disappearing out the door. Ilya has already eliminated having a drink or twelve at the hotel bar. He needs to go somewhere smaller, quieter. Some place that he won’t be so easily recognized by Montreal’s rabid hockey fans. Some place where he can just be alone.

He finds what he’s looking for after walking a few blocks in the opposite direction of Shane’s apartment—a small, dimly lit taproom that offers privacy and surprisingly sushi. He heads inside skirting around tables filled with couples, and a giggling group of women sipping wine, and plops himself down at a seat near the bar.

When the smiling bartender makes her way over, Ilya brushes off her attempt at flirting, and gruffly orders three shots of vodka, top shelf and Russian, and a vodka tonic. She lays them out before him, and he tosses them back one after another in quick succession, not bothering to savor the cool burn of the vodka as it slides down his throat, and orders another while taking a deep pull of his drink.

“Oh my god, is that Ilya Rozanov?!” He hears someone hiss from somewhere behind him, probably from the table of women.

Someone shushes her. “Yes, now hush.”

”You should go say hi. Just to mess with Hayd—“

”Stop! No one is going to go bother him.”

He lifts his glass at that, before finishing it off and waving the bartender down for another.

Ilya isn't certain how long he's been there. Long enough for the tables around him to empty and fill again, and for a line of empty shot glasses to be stacked in front of him. He's looking through his phone, zooming in on one of his favorite photos of Shane—he's on Ilya's couch mid laugh, his freckles popping on his red flushed cheeks. A hand comes to rest on his back, and Ilya quickly locks his phone.

”Ilya, honey, are you ok?” He turns to see a beautiful brunette looking at him with kind, concerned eyes. She looks so familiar but he cannot place her. Has he slept with her before?

The brunette tosses her head back and cackles, “Oh god no.”

Either he said that out loud or the pretty woman can read his mind. Better to not think about Shane in case it's the latter. Belatedly Ilya thinks he should probably be offended about her laughing at the thought of sleeping with him.

“You definitely said that out loud,” She slides on the bar stool next to him, putting her purse and half full wine glass on the bar in front of her before offering her hand. “Jackie Pike.”

It takes him a moment, but his palm finally connects with her and he gives it a shake, both of them giggling when he jiggles her too hard.

“My condolences.” Ilya clutches his chest and gives her a sad face.

“You're funny.” Jackie cackles again and takes a sip of her wine. After a moment she says, “My question still stands, you know.”

“What question?” Because Ilya does not remember there being one.

“Are you ok?” She asks, propping her chin on the palm of her hand.

“Oh,” Ilya swirls the ice in his glass around for a moment before shaking his head. “No.”

“Want to talk about it?”

Ilya studies her for a moment, because yeah, he kind of does. Jackie is in the unique position of being a complete stranger to him, but a friend to Shane. And to Ilya that means telling her will be safe because as much he does not like Hayden Pike he knows he would never hurt Shane, and because of this knows that Jackie wouldn't either.

“I shouldn't.” He says, but Shane is already avoiding him, so why does it matter? “He will be so mad at me, but is already gone so why do I care? You keep secret anyway.”

“What? Who?”

Ilya leans over and whispers as quietly as he can manage, which happens to not be quiet at all, “Shane.”

Jackie rears back, eyes big as saucers and blindly reaches for her wine. She holds up a finger as she chugs the remainder of her glass, waving the bartender over for another.

“Shane?” She pants.

Ilya nods.

“Shane Hollander?”

Ilya nods again.

“My brother-husband Shane Hollander?”

“I do not know what this brother-husband means, but da, Shane Hollander. Short, dark hair, very cute freckles, but boring with weak back hand. You know?”

Jackie blinks. “He does not have a weak back hand.”

“Oook.” Ilya takes a sip of his drink. “Whatever you say.”

“What does Shane have to do with anything?”

“Everything,” Ilya says, tossing back the last of his drink. “Everything.”

Jackie opens her mouth to speak when the bartender returns with their drinks and an order of tempura battered mozzarella sticks they definitely did not order.

“On the house,” she says with a wink.

“Shane hates mozzarella sticks,” Ilya says as he picks up one to drag through the sweet chili sauce. “Says cheese should not be fried.”

“Yes! The absolute weirdo.” Jackie follows suit. “Do you know he doesn’t even like French fries?!”

“I know! Is what do you say—psychopath?”

They both dissolve into a fit of giggles at that and demolish the mozzarella sticks, shouting, “For Shane!” With each bite.

It’s while on their second order of delicious battered fried cheese that Ilya begins to tell Jackie everything. How they met in Saskatchewan during the World Juniors as teens, about their tension-filled moment in the gym after the draft, their very first CCM photo shoot, and in not so many words what came after.

He tells her about the secret meetings, like their night in Vegas. That Shane had pitched and almost purchased an entire building for them to meet up at until Ilya had referred to as a ‘fuck pad’ which ultimately had Shane change his mind. About the pain of Shane dating Rose Landry.

By the time he’s finished telling her everything, the bartender has cut them both off, and a car has been called. It’s then that Ilya realizes both he and Jackie have been crying into the last of the mozzarella sticks, arms around each other. Something he should probably feel embarrassed about, but he is too drunk to care.

When the car arrives, Jackie drags him along with her, refusing to let him walk back to the hotel alone. Something he is more than grateful for because Ilya does not remember how to get back.

Which is how he finds himself sprawled face down and drooling on the Pike's couch the next morning, unaware that two pairs of warm brown eyes stare down at him from identical faces pressed way too close to his own.

"Do you think he's dead?" Whispers the girl on the left.

The one on the right nods solemnly, "He sure looks dead."

A tiny finger pokes Ilya in the cheek. "Hey mister, are you dead?"

Ilya groans, cracking open one eye. The girls squeal and run away, screaming for their father.

"Daddy! Daddy! There's a dead man on the couch! There's a dead man on the couch!"

Ilya winces, thinking maybe the girls might be right. He feels worse than dead.

"Girls there's not a dead ma—Rozanov?! What the fuck?"

"Swear jaaarrrr." The girls sing-song together.

"JACKIE!" Hayden hollers. "JACQUELINE PIKE YOU HAVE SOME EXPLAINING TO DO!"

"Oh my god must you yell?" Ilya moans from the couch, tugging a cushion down to cover his face.

"Shut the fuck up, Rozanov! Why are you even here?"

"That's five dollars." One of the little girls says from where she peaks around her father's legs.

"Girls go to the kitchen." Hayden ushers them away. "JACKIE!!"

"Oh my god, what?!" Jackie pads into the room with a groan, messy bun wobbling.

"Babe, why the fuck is Ilya Rozanov on my couch?!"

"TEN DOLLARS!" Comes from the kitchen.

Jackie crosses her arm, "Because I brought him home."

"I see that, but why?"

"Hayden Alexander, do not take that tone with me! We were drunk and he was upset, I couldn't just leave him there."

Ilya snickers quietly behind the cushion he's hiding under.

"So?! You didn't think to—I don't know—take him back to his hotel?!"

"I don't need to explain myself to you," Jackie stalks forward and pokes her husband in the chest. "He was sad and he needed a friend!"

"He's not some stray, Jackie!"

"Meow," Ilya supplies unhelpfully from the couch.

“Shut up, Rozanov!”

“Hayden!” Jackie gasps.

“Daddy, can we have pancakes?” Says a little boy from the door doorway.

“Of course, Artie!” Jackie smiles sweetly down at her son. “Why don’t you tell Daddy what kind of pancakes you want.” Jackie shoots Hayden a glare, shoos him into the kitchen.

Ilya pushes himself up into a seated position, and groans as the room spins.

“I am so sorry about him,” she says plopping down on the couch. “I didn’t realize he was going to be such a dick about you being here.”

“Is ok.”

“It’s really not.”

The doorbell rings, and from somewhere in the house a baby cries, and Ilya wonders just how many children the Pike family has.

“Shit!” Jackie springs up and heads towards the stairs. “Do you mind grabbing that? I need to get the baby.”

Ilya nods, pushing away from the couch and making his way in the direction of where he thinks the front door is. The doorbell rings again, as he swings it open.

“Hayd—Oh!”

Ilya gapes, taking in the man standing on the Pike’s front porch.

The very pregnant man.

“Shane?”

Chapter End Notes

Ok, I lied.

I know I said I was going to wait to post but after finishing (shoutout to DrisD for being my sounding board) this chapter was too good to sit on.

Now, back to the writing cave I go.

Chapter 7: Shane

Chapter Notes

I'm a lying liar who lies and can't seem to sit on these chapters to save my life 😊

When the announcement of his retirement drops, Shane sits on the sofa in his brand new living room, his feet propped up as he soaks up the sun filtering in through the wall of windows facing the lake. He hears the chatter of Jackie and Rose as they help his mother finish unpacking his kitchen—something he'll have to organize later after everyone leaves, while Hayden and his father continue to unload the last of his things from the moving truck.

He had originally been relegated to unpacking the boxes for the dining area, until his mother had caught him yawning, sending him off to the couch with a bottle of water and a snack, instructing him to relax. And there Shane has sat for the last hour and a half, munching on carrots and hummus while stubbornly fighting the ever present exhaustion this pregnancy brings (and losing), hand curled around his belly.

He hates not being as involved as he would like to be, feels like an absolute useless waste of space if he were to be honest, and then feels worse for feeling that way at all. Even without being pregnant, he knows that Jackie, Hayden and Rose would be here helping him unpack, but the limitations of pregnancy still chafe. Shane knows he should be grateful. Male carrier pregnancies are higher risk than female, the toll of pregnancy harder on their bodies, but his has been surprisingly easy.

His morning sickness had been practically nonexistent, just a pressing nausea that, at the time, Shane had attributed to nerves surrounding the playoffs—something that Jackie had been infinitely jealous of. His blood pressure is excellent, his risk for the preeclampsia that plagues most male carriers low, and his weight gain, while higher than he would like, still within normal range.

He is measuring right where he should be—will be 22 weeks as of Monday, his round belly more pronounced, jutting out between his hips, the baggier shirts he has been favoring no longer able to hide it. He hasn't felt the baby kick yet though, something Dr. Anjali had warned him would happen thanks to his strong abdominal muscles and anterior placenta, but knows from his mother and Jackie that the kicks will feel like bubbles or tiny little nudges in his lower belly, small and easily missed.

Shane has still been avoiding Ilya, whose calls and texts have all but stopped. Knows that he isn't being fair to him, that Ilya deserves to know they made a child together, but he isn't sure he's ready for how Ilya will react. He's terrified that the man he loves, because he has come to realize that he is stupidly, ridiculously in love with Ilya Rozanov, will want nothing to do with him or the beautiful baby growing inside of him once he finds out.

Shane knows that this pregnancy was not according to plan. That he and Ilya have never been more than rivals who hook up, no matter how much he's longed for more. Knows that Ilya has no intentions of settling down until after he's retired, and when he does it will be with someone

beautiful Russian woman and not a man. Not *him*. Knows that Ilya would never jeopardize being able to go to Russia, to visit his mother's grave, just because he is carrying their baby.

Now that he is retired, Shane knows there is no longer any pressure to hide who he is, but he is still scared. Knows that when his fans learn of his sexuality and his pregnancy, that most will be accepting and happy for him. Knows that outside of the joy there will still be ignorant bigots who will burn his jersey and boycott supporting the Voyageurs by association. Knows that even some of his former teammates will think the same too—that there is no place for homosexuality in hockey. But Shane is so tired of hiding, no matter how terrifying coming out may be, and while he may be ready, he knows Ilya will never be.

Which is also why he has been so hesitant to tell him. Shane can't put Ilya on the birth certificate without outing him, and he would never do that to him. Hell, Shane hasn't even told anyone who the father of his baby is. Everyone, even his parents, are under the impression it was a drunken one night stand while in Florida. That he doesn't even remember his name. He hates lying to everyone, but he'll do anything to protect Ilya.

"Sweetie," Yuna calls, dragging Shane out of his thoughts. "We're almost done in the kitchen. Do you want lunch?"

"I'm ok," he shouts back, swinging his legs off the couch, the baby making its presence known by his incessant need to pee.

Shane groans and pushes off the couch, tugging down the hem of his shirt where it's ridden up. He needs to bite the bullet and go shopping for maternity clothes, and put Rose, who has been begging to take Shane shopping while she is in town, out of her misery. He hates shopping, would live in athletic wear or jeans and polos if he could. It's part of the reason why he had a stylist while in the NHL, and before that let his mother continue shopping for him.

When he finishes in the bathroom, Shane heads to the room that will soon become the nursery. He has been waiting to start decorating it until he finds out the gender—his anatomy scan scheduled for this coming Friday, but can already picture it in his head.

Can see himself sitting in the oversized comfy chair he ordered where it sits in the corner by the window, quietly nursing the baby while he looks out the window to the lake. Pictures the beautiful sage colored crib against the opposite wall, and the closet filled with tiny clothes. Shane pictures Ilya there too. Sitting on the floor by the chair, his chin resting on Shane's knee while he plays with the baby's toes, looking up at the both of them so adoringly.

The image makes Shane's chest ache, and he decides he can't keep putting it off. He has to tell Ilya this week.

—

After a delicious dinner of burgers cooked on the grill, of which the baby made Shane inhale two of and two helpings of pasta salad, everyone spends the rest of the evening around Shane's fire pit making s'mores. The following morning Hayden and Jackie head back to Montreal to pick up the kids from her mother's with a promise from Jackie to go shopping on Wednesday.

His parents spend Saturday at their cottage to pack for their trip back home to Ottawa on Sunday, leaving Shane and Rose to their own devices. Rose of course suggests a self care night, which is how Shane finds himself sitting on the couch in his pajamas, an oil treatment in his hair, some sort

of brightening mask on his face, and his feet shoved into plastic socks filled with goo that squishes unpleasantly between his toes that Rose claims will make his feet feel baby soft.

"It's so beautiful here, I hate that I have to be back in Montreal on Tuesday." Rose says from her place beside him on the couch, equally trussed up.

Shane hums, he loves it here on Lake Muskoka. Had spent every summer on this lake at his parent's cottage growing up, and then when he got drafted, spent his very brief weeks of freedom between the season ending and training camps starting there too. Had always known that when he eventually retired he would want to build his own cottage and move here permanently, and has owned the property his cottage now sits on since his rookie season with the Voyageurs. That plan had just happened a little sooner than he expected.

"Are you still filming that mutant movie?" He asks, fighting the urge to scratch his nose.

"Ugh, unfortunately, It's literally the dumbest thing."

"It can't be as bad as that FBI movie." Shane points out. Nothing could possibly be as bad as that.

Rose wrinkled her nose, cracking her face mask, "Oh god, I forgot you've seen that!"

"It was so bad."

Rose threw her head back and laughed, 'It really was.' After a moment she says. 'I still can't believe you're pregnant.'

Shane glances down at his bump straining the seams of his sleep shirt. "Tell me about it. Sometimes I forget until I catch a glimpse of myself in the mirror, and ope!"

Rose smiles over at him sweetly, before her grin turns devious, mask cracking further.

"And so soon after we broke up!"

"Oh my god,"

"Slutty little Shane Hollander!"

'Rose!'

"Hey, I support it. You know that!" She smacks his leg, "It's good to know you can loosen up every once and a while."

Shane flips her off. "I do know how—oh!" Shane starts, then feels something stirring in his lower abdomen.

Rose leans forward, concern etched as well as it can be on her stiff masked face. "Are you ok?"

Shane nods, pulling up his shirt to press his fingers into his belly, hoping to feel something else. "I think I felt the baby move,"

"OH MY GOD!" Rose squeals, and Shane feels it again. Just a barely there little nudge right below his belly button.

“Oh wow,” he murmurs, tears springing to his eyes. “Hi baby!”

“I can’t believe I was here for this!” Rose snuffles beside him. “Do you think I can feel?”

“You can try.” Shane grabs her hand and places it low on his belly.

Rose leans in close, fingers splaying wide as she talks to his stomach, “Hi baby, it’s your Auntie Rose” Shane chuckles. “I love you so much! I can’t wait to meet you and spoil you.”

Shane snorts at that, feeling another barely there little kick. “Did you feel that?”

Rose shakes her head, and gives his belly a little squeeze before letting go, “Worth a shot. But just know your belly is no longer safe from these hands.” Shane shakes his head as she wiggles her fingers. “You have been warned!”

The trip back to Montreal on Monday takes forever, made longer by his need to make frequent stops thanks to having a bladder the size of a pea now. Rose doesn’t seem to mind though, buying snacks and ridiculous souvenirs at the random hole in the wall service stations they stop. Her favorite, a pair of moose sunglasses with antlers in the corner of the frames.

By the time they reach her apartment, Shane is exhausted, his back is screaming at him, and once again he has to pee. He would love nothing more than a bath and to eat an entire jar of Nutella. Even better if he could eat said jar of Nutella while in the bath. Sadly, there is no Nutella, although Rose, equally exhausted from being cooped up in the car for the last eight hours, offers to run to the store and get him all the Nutella his heart desires.

Shane absolutely does not cry at the offer, but feels too guilty to accept, and after a bath eats the wonderful dinner of salmon, broccoli and rice Rose has thrown together. He does not at all wish that he was eating eating Nutella out the jar instead,

On Tuesday, he accompanies Rose on set, not allowed on until he signs an NDA, which he dutifully sends to Farah to look over before signing—it is not his first rodeo. He sits in the makeup trailer, eating pilfered snacks from craft services as he watches Rose get painted blue from head to toe while gossiping with her makeup artist. There is also an awkward run in with Rose’s friend and co-star, Miles, who upon seeing Shane’s belly laments at missing his chance. Shane chuckles awkwardly and forces a smile, napping in Rose’s trailer while she shoots her scenes.

When the reshoots wraps up late afternoon, Rose and Shane head back to her apartment, where try as hard as she might, her skin still has a faint blue tint after three showers, that ultimately foils their dinner plans.

“I look like a Smurf,” Rose whines, rubbing at her skin once again.

“But a very cute Smurf.” He says, biting back a grin.

Rose snorts and smacks his arm before throwing herself back onto her bed. “I was really looking forward to dinner.”

“There’s always tomorrow,” Shane shrugs.

“Yeah but tomorrow won’t be an exclusive invite only pop up ramen event now will it?”

“Well no, but we can still get ramen after shopping.”

“Fiiiiine! Ugh, I’m going to go shower again. I forgot how awful this fucking body paint stains.”

By the time Rose is finished with her fourth shower, Shane is curled around one of her pillows, snoring away as a documentary about Australian wildlife plays in the background.

On Wednesday morning, Shane is practically foaming at the mouth at the idea of breakfast at the Pike house. Hayden had texted him something about dealing with an unwanted houseguest and if he wanted pancakes. Shane—no, the baby—definitely wanted pancakes, and while under normal circumstances he would have avoided anything cooked by his best friend, Hayden excelled at pancakes.

“You’re literally drooling right now,” Rose laughs, playfully wiping at Shane’s chin as they pull into the Pike’s driveway.

He doesn’t spot an extra car in the driveway, so whoever had been over at Hayden’s must have left before they arrived.

“The baby really loves the idea of pancakes.” He swats her away.

“Oh the baby, huh?”

“Shut up and get out.”

Rose’s cackle follows him as he shuts his Jeep’s door none too gently, and waddle-walks as quickly as possible to the Pike’s front door.

Shane rings the doorbell, practically bouncing on his toes at the idea of a giant stack of pancakes topped with whipped cream and strawberries and syrup. He wonders if Hayden and Jackie have Nutella.

“Is it always this crazy?” Rose asks as she hears the screams of the children inside.

“Pretty much always.”

“Oh my god.”

He looks back at Rose as he rings the doorbell again, turning back at the sound of the door opening.

“Hayd—oh.”

His eyes widen as he takes in the sight of a very rumpled and hungover looking Ilya Rozanov standing barefoot in the doorway.

“Shane?”

Chapter 8: Ilya

“Ilya?” Shane gasps. “I—Wh-what are you doing here?”

Ilya says nothing, just takes Shane in for the first time in months, looking so different from the man he last saw in January.

Shane’s hair is longer, curling around his ears and the nape of his neck, his face fuller and cheeks rounder, and freckles standing out against his sun-kissed skin. He is positively radiant, and Ilya has never so badly wanted to envelope him in his arms and never let go, but...

His eyes trail down, taking in the increased fullness of Shane’s pecs, down further to where Shane’s arms protectively curl around a sizable baby bump.

“Uh, guys...” a feminine voice interrupts their stare off. “Can we break whatever this is up and go inside?”

Ilya flicks his gaze up and over Shane’s shoulder, just now noticing that he has someone with him. Resists the urge to curl his lip as he spots Rose Landry, but steps back allowing Shane and Rose pass, closing the door behind them.

Shane toes out of his shoes, shooting furtive glances in Ilya’s direction, something he would normally find cute.

Shane clears his throat, “Uh, Ilya this is—“

Ilya cuts him off mid introduction. “Da, Rose Landry.”

“Ilya...”

“What?”

“Don’t be like that.”

“I am being like nothing.” He shrugs, waving in Rose’s direction. “Is Rose Landry, your ex girlfriend. I know this.”

Rose smirks and glances over at Shane, her hand coming to rest on his forearm. “I’m going to head to the kitchen.” To Ilya, “Nice to meet you.”

Ilya snorts, and they both watch her walk away.

“That was uncalled for.” Shane hisses as he glares, his crossed arms pushing up his now ample chest.

Not for the first time Ilya thinks Shane looks like an adorable little angry kitten.

“Mmm, no.” He says. Shane scoffs. “You have ignored me for months and then show up here with your ex girlfriend. Very called for.”

“Oh my god, Ilya! I’m gay!”

Ilya huffs out a bitter laugh and mutters, “Not too gay to fuck Rose Landry.”

“I heard that!” Rose tosses over her shoulder as she waltzes through the kitchen door.

“Do you have any idea how ridiculous you’re being right now?”

“No, I think it is you.”

“Me?!” Shane gapes at him.

“Mooooom, Uncle Shane and the dead man are fighting!” Comes a little voice from behind them. Ilya turns to see one of the girls from before peaking around the doorway to their left.

“Ruby, get back in here and eat your breakfast!” Pike hollers from in the kitchen. The little girl disappears with a squeak.

“Let’s talk in here,” Shane says as Ilya turns back, tugging him into what looks like a barely used formal dining area.

Ilya pulls a chair out and sits, watching as Shane starts to pace, wringing his hands as goes.

“I don’t know where to start.” He says briefly glancing at Ilya as he makes a turn.

“The truth, yes?” Ilya waves at his stomach. “Is mine?”

Shane halts, eyes snapping to Ilya’s, his cheeks growing red. “That isn’t funny.”

Ilya shrugs nonchalantly, feels anything but. “Am not being funny. Was not serious between us. I slept with other people, you know this.”

“I am well aware,” Shane replies bitterly.

“You have had others, yes?” Shane looks away and nods. “Is simple question then: is the baby mine?”

If Ilya had been asked before this moment if he had ever contemplated becoming a father, he would have burst into laughter. Him? A father? No.

Ilya knew that all he was good at three things: fucking, hockey, and being an utter disappointment to his family. He would never bring a child into the Rozanov family. Would not subject them to his father and his brother and their too high expectations and hateful words.

But now? Looking at Shane, who Ilya loved very much, feels like he may die if Shane is having a baby with someone else. If he were to build a family, there is no one else in this world he would rather it be than with Shane. Would give him the whole entire world if Shane would let him.

“Yes,” Shane whispers, his arms coming to wrap around his bump again.

“Were you ever going to tell me?”

“Of course I was.”

“When, Shane? When were you planning to tell me? After the baby was born? Or was I not supposed to know?”

“I’m sorry,” Shane’s voice cracks. “I was going to tell you this week, after the anatomy scan.”

“Another thing you would rob me of?” Ilya’s chest aches at the thought, even more so as he watches Shane curl in on himself further

“I was so scared...” Shane resumes his pacing. “Still am, actually.” He looks at Ilya. “How was I supposed to tell you I was pregnant when our last conversation was you telling me we could be nothing more than we already were? You were still in Moscow when I found out. Would you have even answered the phone if I had called?”

Ilya says nothing, because as much as he wants to tell Shane yes, he’s not so sure he would have, just pushes out the chair beside him.

“Exactly,” Shane says, taking his silence as confirmation, before taking a seat. “I wasn’t even sure I was going to keep the pregnancy. Carrier pregnancies aren’t easy—hell no pregnancy is, but I was more worried about my career at the time than telling you.” Shane laughs bitterly, pinching at his eyelashes as more tears threaten to fall. “I had to come to terms with the fact that if I continued with the pregnancy that I would have to: one, come up with an injury believable enough to keep me out the entirety of next season, two, would have to heal from a c-section and get back in as close to as good of shape as I was pre-pregnancy on top of getting used to being on the ice again, and three, then figure out how was I supposed to be away from the baby I gave birth to for weeks at a time to play the game that I love.”

Shane leans back, rubbing his bump lovely, chin wobbling. “I went to that first appointment planning on telling her I wanted to terminate, but then I saw the baby, and nothing else mattered—“ His voice breaks. “Not even hockey. I always thought that it would be hard giving up my dreams... Hockey has been everything to me for so long, but dreams change. I realized I would rather give up everything and retire than spread myself thin and miss out on watching my baby grow up,” He glances over at Ilya and licks his lips. “By the time I’d had everything sorted out, you’d just been knocked out of the playoffs and it had been months since we last talked and I just didn’t know what to say. And then Scott brought Kip onto the ice, and here you were all of the sudden blowing up my phone like my entire world hadn’t been turned upside down, and I ignored you.”

A tear slips down his cheek. “I know I’ve been such a selfish asshole. You have no idea how much it’s eaten at me not telling you. I wanted to, so badly, I just didn’t know how this would work,” He huffs out a wet laugh. “I still don’t. We live in different countries, neither of us are out—“ he waves a hand in Ilya’s direction. “You can’t be, and I wasn’t going to be the reason you could never go home again.”

“Shane—“ Ilya tries to stop him, hand hovering but not quite touching him as the words continue to flood out of Shane.

“So I asked myself, what was worse? Not telling you or telling you and wrecking your whole life.”

“Shane—“ He’s gasping now, tears streaming down his face, and Ilya cannot stand to watch him hurt like this.

“But then you stopped calling, and I hated it but I knew I made the right decision not saying anything. And then I was in the nursery, and I could see you there. I could see us, and we were so

happy.” Another sob hiccups out of him. “I was going to tell you, I swear I just—“

Ilya pushes away from the table, dropping to his knees before Shane, his shaking hands coming to cup his wet cheeks. “Moye solnyshko, breathe.”

Shane sucks in a shuddering wet breath, and even with his red face and puffy eyes, and the tears caught in his lashes, he has never been more beautiful. And even though Ilya is so angry at him for making choices for him, for keeping their baby a secret, he has never been more in love with Shane Hollander than he is right now.

He presses up and kisses Shane on the forehead, “Ya,” then his left cheek. “Tebya,” then his right. “Lyublyu.”

Shane’s eyes flutter open, confusion in his warm brown eyes. “What?”

“I love you,” Ilya whispers, finally pressing his lips to Shane’s “I love you so much, but I am so angry with you.”

Shane gasps, “Holy shit.”

Ilya pulls back, searching Shane’s face. Does he not feel the same?

“Is ok if you do not—“

“I love you too!” Shane launches himself at Ilya, pressing wet tearful kisses all over his face and neck. “So much. I’m so sorry.”

“I know, moye solnyshko,” Ilya murmurs into Shane’s neck, squeezing him tighter. “I know, just please don’t keep things from me again.”

Shane pulls back to look at him, his eyes brimming with tears again. “I swear Ilya,” He seals his promise with a kiss. “Never again.”

Ilya deepens the kiss, pulling Shane as close as the bump between them will allow. His chest still aches at how much he’s missed, but for the first time in months, he feels lighter.

“Daddy, why is Uncle Shane kissing the dead man?” Ilya breaks off the kiss, pressing his forehead to Shane’s and laughs.

“Uncle Shane is doing what?!” Hayden skids around the corner into the dining room, taking in Ilya on the floor with Shane in his lap. “What is happening right now? Have you been crying?”

“Hayd—“ Shane starts, attempting to untangle himself from Ilya, who only tightens his hold on Shane more.

He rounds on Ilya. “Goddamn it, Rozanov, get your hands off of him! What did you do?!”

“Oh my god, stop. It’s not what you think.” Shane says exasperatedly, giving Ilya a shove. “Get off.”

Ilya grumbles, reluctantly letting him go to help him back to his feet.

“Don’t lie, I can tell you’ve been crying! What did this fucker say to you!?” He advances on Ilya.

“Ilya didn’t do anything!” Shane shouts, stepping between them. “I made me cry!”

“What?” Hayden gives him a confused look.

Shane glances back at Ilya, who shrugs and gives him a nod.

“I was telling Ilya about the baby.”

“Ok..?” Hayden gives them a confused look. “I think Rozanov can tell you’re pregnant, bud.”

“Oh my god,” Shane mutters, dragging a hand down his face.

“Is mine.” Ilya says, stepping closer to Shane, his front pressed tightly to Shane’s back, his large palm coming down to rest on the curve of Shane’s belly. Shane looks up at him and his entire face lights up at the contact.

Hayden glances between them and busts out laughing, “Holy shit, good one.”

“What is so funny? I did not tell joke, Pike.”

Hayden sobers. “You can’t be serious.” He looks at Shane. “You hate him!”

“I really don’t.” Shane’s hand comes to rest on top of Ilya’s. “I kind of love him.”

“Bullshit! Since when?”

“Their rookie season,” Jackie supplies as she strolls into the dining room, a baby strapped to her chest, and a plate of pancakes in each hand. “Figured you guys might be hungry.”

“Rookie season... ROOKIE SEASON?!” Hayden shouts, sinking into the chair closest to him.

“Was summer before,” supplies Ilya as Hayden rounds on his wife.

“Not helpful,” Shane mutters as Ilya pushes him in the direction in the seats they’d vacated.

“Wait, how the fuck did you know that?”

Jackie shrugs. “I mean it wasn’t hard to put two and two together after talking to Ilya last night.”

Hayden just gapes, mouth opening and closing.

“So, you’re telling me you two have been in love this whole time?”

Shane and Ilya both laugh and shake their heads.

“No, not at all. Is recent.” Ilya replies, scooting closer to the table.

“Wait, wait! What about—“

The doorbell rings, cutting Hayden off.

“I’ll get it,” Jackie says as she places the plates on the table before them.

“But what about Lily? The girl you used to see every time you were in Boston?” Shane and Ilya trade glances, and it clicks for Hayden. “No... You’re shitting me. He’s Boston Lily!” Shane nods.

Hayden buries his head in his hands. “God I need a fucking drink.”

“Tiillllyyaaa,” Jackie sing-songs from the foyer. “I come bearing gifts.”

A moment later a very annoyed Sveta appears.

“Sveta? What are you doing here?” Ilya asks around a mouthful of pancake. *“How did you even find me?”*

“I tracked your phone dumb ass.” She stalks forward and whacks him with her purse. *“I wake up to find you gone, and then you don’t answer my texts?!”*

Whack.

“Sveta, stop!” Ilya raises his hands to protect his head.

“Do you have any idea how worried I was?!”

Whack.

“Don’t ever do that again.”

Whack.

“Ok, ok! Fuck!”

“Dick.” Sveta glares at him before straightening, giving her curls a fluff.

He definitely owed her jewelry and a vacation for this.

“Uh...” comes a voice from the doorway. “What the heck did I miss?”

“So much,” Jackie whispers to Rose. “Sooo much.”

“I am so sorry to interrupt everyone’s breakfast,” Svet says, switching back to English. “This one disappeared last night and wasn’t answering my texts.”

“That’s my fault,” Jackie says with a wave. “We were having a moment over fried cheese.” Ilya snorts. “Are you hungry? We have pancakes.”

“Oh I would not want to impose more than I already have.”

Hayden pushes back from the table in a rush, “No, no, please sit. Anyone who can hand Rozanov his ass like that is more than welcome in my house.”

“Oh my god, Hayd!”

She smirks at Ilya, *“I like him.”*

Ilya gasps, *“You take that back! He is terrible skater.”*

“No.” Sveta takes the seat Hayden offers and slides closer to the table. “*Are you not going to introduce us?*”

“*Is it necessary after that entrance?*”

Svet raises her eyebrow and pins him with a glare.

“*Fine!*” Ilya clears his throat and switches to English. “Shane, this is Svetlana Vetrova, my best friend. Sveta, this is Shane Hollander.”

Sveta smiles sweetly, “A pleasure to finally meet you, *Jane*.” The tips of Shane’s ears go pink.

“*Sveta, leave him alone*. You have met Jackie, wife of Montreal’s fifteenth best player Hayden Pike —“

“You fuck!”

“—and that is,” Ilya sighs, feeling very put upon. “Rose Landry.”

Sveta turns to the auburn haired beauty beside her, her smile turning sultry. “So very nice to meet you,”

Ilya frowns, *that* is most definitely going to be trouble.

Chapter 9: Friday

Chapter Notes

TW: mentions of blood, mentions of possible pregnancy complications

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

Shane still hates the OBGYN's waiting room. That has not changed the farther his pregnancy has progressed, and he's come to regret all those times he had wished for Ilya to be there because just as he had assumed, Ilya draws far too much attention. He does not even bother with attempting to conceal his identity, something that Shane still tries to do, flirts with the women at the front desk, and charms the heavily pregnant woman on the loveseat across from them by playing with her little girl that was two seconds away losing her shit before Ilya stepped in.

OK, he doesn't really regret bringing Ilya along, not after seeing how good he is with kids. Jade, Ruby, and Arthur loved him, although Amber was a harder sell—the Pike's adorable youngest child did not like strangers. He had played with them for hours, and by the time Shane, Rose, Jackie and surprisingly Svetlana, went out to go shopping, Hayden had begrudgingly warmed up to Ilya, their chirping almost friendly.

"Landry?" Shane hears the fake name he has continued to use be called, and when he pushes himself up to stand, Ilya stares at him incredulously.

"Landry?" He hisses as they head to where the nurse is standing. "You cannot be serious."

"I panicked, ok?! It was the only name I could think of when I was filling out the paperwork."

Ilya sniffs, looking none too pleased. "Mhmm."

"Still gay, Ilya." Shane says exasperated but secretly loving how jealous Ilya gets.

"Still fucked Rose Landry," Ilya mutters grumpily.

Shane elbows him, shooting him a glare before smiling and greeting the nurse.

"You know the deal, Mr. Landry. I need to check your weight and then get a urine sample." Shane nods, waddle-walking as fast as he can to the scale. "And who do we have with you today?"

Ilya smiles broadly at her, thumping his chest, "I am Papa."

Shane melts at Ilya's words.

"Well, so happy you could join us for the big day!" The nurse—Lena, he belatedly remembers, says as she motions for Shane to step on the scale.

The scale beeps, and like always he refuses to look at the number, anything to combat the spiraling about his weight and the way his body has changed, and steps off to grab the cup from the nurse's

outstretched hand.

“It looks like Dr. Anjali has you scheduled for blood work as well, so just head back here when you’re done.” Lena mentions as she busies herself pulling out supplies.

Ilya pales as he watches her, but Shane says nothing, his bladder threatening to burst momentarily overriding his concern for Ilya’s reaction.

When he’s done and makes his way back to the lab room, Ilya has turned decidedly more green since his departure, his eyes unmoving from where Lena has set out several collection tubes, tourniquet, and the packaged butterfly needle.

“Are you ok?” Shane asks as he comes to sit in the padded chair, rolling up his sleeve just like he’s done what feels like a hundred times before.

Ilya flicks his gaze to Shane and nods, trying to force a smile and failing.

“Just a couple of vials,” Lena says cheerfully as she wraps the tourniquet around his arm, the elastic snapping softly against his skin.

Ilya flinches at the sound.

“You don’t have to watch.”

“I’m fine.”

“You don’t look fine...”

“It’s ok if you want to step out for a minute, hon.” Lena says as she swabs the inside of Shane’s elbow, the sharp scent of alcohol wafting in the air.

Ilya says nothing, just shakes his head and holds his arms over his chest.

Shane rolls his eyes. Stubborn as ever, he thinks.

Until the needle comes out.

It’s not even that big, but when it flashes under the light something inside Ilya goes cold, and as the needle slides into Shane’s arm, his vision tunnels.

Shane does not react at all, his eyes not leaving Ilya who sways as he stares down at the needle in Shane’s arm.

“Stop looking at it!” He hisses.

“I’m not—” Ilya’s hand shoots out to grip onto the counter.

“Ilya!” Shane shouts, resisting the urge to flinch.

Lena glances over at Ilya, “You doing ok, hon?”

“Fine.” Ilya hisses out through clenched teeth, wondering all of sudden why the floor has started to wave and buckle beneath his feet.

"Baby, look at me." Ilya's eyes snap up to Shane's, his cheeks pinkening. He's never called Ilya that before. "Breathe. I'm ok. It doesn't hurt."

Ilya nods, swallowing hard as the nurse removes one vial and replaces it with another. He drags in a deep breath and instantly regrets it, the too heavy scent of antiseptic and the underlying metallic bite of the room filling his lungs.

"Why didn't you tell me you were afraid of needles?!"

"I am not." Ilya forces out, his world tilting as he watches the bright red of Shane's blood lashing the inside of the tube.

"Oh, fuck! Ilya!"

"Sheila!" Lena shouts, "He's going down!"

Someone comes running, Ilya can barely register the sound of shoes slapping tile and Shane's panicked voice rising, as a chair is shoved into the back of his knees. He sits down hard.

"Here you go," comes a soft, friendly voice from beside him, raising his arm to press something cold into his palm. "Put this on the back of your neck, head between your knees."

Ilya complies, "I'm fine."

"It happens all the time," Sheila says, giving him a pat on the shoulder. "You need anything else while I'm here, Lena?"

The nurse shakes her head, removing the needle from Shane's arm. "All done," she says, pressing a folded up piece of gauze against the bend of his arm.

Ilya lifts his head cautiously, watching as she tapes the gauze down and helps Shane stand.

"You good?" he asks, making his way to Ilya, way too amused.

"I am perfectly fine, Hollander."

"Mhmmm. Says the man who almost passed out."

"I did no such thing!" Ilya protests weakly.

Shane reaches up and runs his fingers through his curls. "You hate seeing me hurt," he says quietly.

It isn't a question.

"Yes."

"Ilya, I've been doing this alone for months—"

Something inside Ilya shifts, aches. His embarrassment replaced by something heavier, angrier. He pulls back.

"Da, not by my choice."

“I know...” All hints of teasing in Shane’s voice are gone now, nothing but guilt and sadness. “I’m sorry.”

Ilya knows Shane is sorry. Knows that he did what he thought was best, but it doesn’t stop the hurt from bleeding in.

“Is fine, Hollander. I am here now.”

“Ilya—”

“Before we head back, I brought something for the new Papa!” Lena’s cheery voice cuts in, a juice box offered in Ilya’s direction. “Drink up, Papa Bear!”

Shane snorts, “Oh my god!”

Ilya glowers, taking the juice box from the nurse with a nod. “I don’t think I need this.”

“Oh, you absolutely do.” Shane takes the juice box from him, poking the straw through the top. “Drink.”

Ilya leans forward, eyes locked on Shane’s as his lips wrap around the straw, his cheeks flushing such a pretty pink as Ilya starts to slurp the tiny juice box down. He pulls back with a smirk, enjoying how easy it is to rile up Shane.

“All done?” Lena asks, and Shane nods distractedly. “Perfect! It’s time to see that little nugget! Follow me.” Ilya stands slowly, ensuring that the floor is once again solid, before following.

“I still can’t believe you almost passed out! You literally broke Dallas Kent’s face in that game against Toronto during the playoffs.”

“Is different.” Ilya sniffs.

“How?”

“She stabbed you.”

“Oh my god, Ilya...” Shane snorts. “How are you going to handle delivery?”

Ilya stops, genuinely horrified as he realizes that Shane will have to have a c-section. Which means more blood. Shane’s blood.

“You’re going to be absolutely useless, aren’t you?” Shane laughs harder.

Ilya scowls. “I will not be useless.”

“Mhmmm.”

“I will not.”

“What if you faint again?”

“I did not faint!

“You definitely fainted.”

Ilya stops Shane just as they reach the room, his hand coming up to rest on Shane's belly.

"It does not matter if I faint or not, as long as I am there."

Shane softens and nods, his hand coming to cover his as he rises up to press a soft kiss to Ilya's lips.

—

This room is much dimmer, quieter.

Ilya finds the soft hum of the machine and the soft click of keys relaxing despite how anxious he is, still trying to wrap his head around the fact that this is the first time he'll get to see their baby. Twenty two weeks, almost twenty three, and had Ilya not run into Jackie, he might have missed this.

Shane reclines back on the table as the technician gets everything set up, rucking his shirt around his chest as he waits. His palms rubbing up and down his bump as he watches Ilya stiffly beside the exam table, his hands fisted at his side. It's so cute how nervous he is, Shane thinks to himself, before the guilt of this being the first time he's been here sets in.

"You two ready?" The technician asks, scooting closer to the table. Shane and Ilya both nod.

The squirt of gel on his bare stomach makes Shane flinch, it's cooler than last time, and he winces.

The technician notices, offering an apology. "I am so sorry, this is a new bottle and I didn't have time to warm it!"

"Alright Daddies, here we go!" she says pressing the wand against Shane's stomach.

The screen flickers with gray static and shifting shadows. Ilya squints, trying to make sense of it, heart thudding too hard, too fast.

"Here is baby's head," the tech says, outlining it with the cursor, and suddenly it isn't abstract anymore.

He sees a face. The small, perfect curve of a forehead, the gentle slope of a nose, and the faintest shape of lips.

His breath leaves him in a broken exhale. "That's..." Ilya's voice cracks. He clears it, tries again. "That's our baby?"

"It sure is! Measuring right on track for almost 23 weeks," the technician says.

Ilya presses a hand to the edge of the table, unsure if he's allowed to touch Shane, needing something to ground himself as he stares at the most perfect thing he's ever seen.

On the screen, the baby moves. A stretch. A turn. A tiny hand lifting toward its face. Thumb going into its perfect little mouth.

He makes a sound—half laugh, half sob. "*Oh my God.*"

The image of their baby's face blurs as Shane hears Ilya choke out something in Russian, his voice thick with emotion.

"And here's the heartbeat." The galloping sound fills the room, hummingbird fast and oh so strong.

Ilya reaches for Shane blindly, their fingers locking, and he squeezes.

"I missed so much." Ilys says softly. Not angrily, just wrecked, tears streaming down his face.

Shane looks away, blinking away tears as he stares up at the ceiling, "I'm so sorry." he whispers brokenly. "So so sorry, Ilya."

He missed the first flutter. The first appointment. The first moment that Shane had found out he was carrying something that belonged to the both of them. He hated it. He hated that he had ever let Shane think that this was nothing more than fucking. That he had made Shane doubt whether he would be there for him when he needed him the most.

"It kills me that I missed this." Ilya murmurs. "That you went through all of this alone."

"Well, I'm sorry that I made the choice for you, but I didn't know how you would react." Shane swallows, wiping away a tear with his free hand. "I didn't want you to feel trapped."

The technician clears her throat, "Sorry to interrupt, but were you wanting to find out the sex of the baby?"

Shane looks over at Ilya, "Up to you."

"Please," Ilya nods, leaning down to press a kiss to Shane's forehead before turning back to the screen where their baby is currently sucking its thumb.

The technician adjusts, the image flickering, and huffs out a laugh. "Baby is being very cooperative this morning. If you take a look here," she points between the legs. "You will see a very distinct lack of male genitalia..."

"A girl?" Ilya says hoarsely.

The technician nods, smiling.

"A baby girl!" Ilya whoops, then stops. It hits him all at once. "Oh my god, we're having a daughter."

He bends down, pressing a kiss to Shane's goo-covered belly. *"Hello my little princess, it's Papa. I am here now and I am not going anywhere ever again."*

The baby kicks at whatever Ilya is whispering to her in Russian, and Shane gasps. "Did you feel that?"

"Da. Right there." He presses another kiss to his belly. "Moya printsessa is strong."

Dr. Anjali steps into the room not too long after Shane wipes off his stomach and gets back comfortable on the table.

"Good to see you again, Shane. I see you brought company this time."

“Dr. Anjali, Ilya. Ilya, Dr. Anjali.” Shane nervously introduces the two as Dr. Anjali offers Ilya her hand.

“The proud Papa I presume?” Ilya nods, beaming at her from the chair beside Shane. “Very happy to meet you. Since this is your first visit, I’m sure you have plenty of questions.”

“Da. Yes.”

“I expect nothing less,” she says with a chuckle. “Before we jump into that, I just wanted to let you know that everything still looks great.” She turns to Shane. “I know you hate talking about this part, but your weight is still good, not gaining too fast. Urine and blood work both look fine, although there was a little protein in the urine this time but that’s not uncommon. I’m not too concerned since your blood pressure is still excellent, but we’ll keep an eye on it at your next visit.”

Shane nods, once again grateful for how smooth his pregnancy has gone.

“Also, congratulations on your little girl! How exciting!”

Shane swears Ilya’s chest puffs at the mention of their daughter, and he can’t help the smile that overcomes his face.

Their daughter.

Holy shit.

Shane still isn’t sure it’s sunk in yet.

“The ultrasound looked great, by the way. Baby girl is measuring 22 weeks 6 days. Heart, lungs, and liver are growing and functioning as they should. She’s perfect!”

Shane finally relaxes at that.

“Now, enough of me talking. What questions do you have for me?”

“Carrier pregnancies are rare, yes?”

Dr. Anjali nods. “About 15% of the male population is able to carry.”

“And is risky?” Ilya asks.

“Well, all pregnancies are susceptible to complications, but carriers do have a rougher go of it usually. Shane is actually fairing surprisingly well. There have been no signs of preeclampsia, which is common in both carrier and female pregnancies, or concerns of growth restriction. Shane’s amniotic fluid levels are actually a little higher than average, which just means baby has more cushion in there, and she’s measuring as she should.”

“And what should we watch out for, with the uh... pre—pre—what is the word again?”

“Preeclampsia.” Dr. Anjali supplies kindly.

“Da.” Ilya rolls the word around on his tongue. “Preeclampsia.”

“You and Shane will want to make note of any vision changes—blurriness, spots or flashes. Severe headaches, rapid swelling of the face and hands, intense upper abdominal pain on the right side, or if you notice any sudden weight gain as well. Again,” Dr. Anjali reiterates. “There are no concerns as of yet, but things can change and very quickly. Is there anything else?”

Ilya pulls out his phone. “I read that preterm labor is common.”

“It can be. IUGR—Intrauterine Growth Restriction is typically the cause of that—baby is measuring in the lower percentile of where they should, sometimes it’s due to infection, or health related issues to the carrier or mother. Again, not a concern at this time for Shane.”

“Ok,” Ilya nods, happy with what she’s said. “Sex is ok?”

Shane buries his face in his hands, “Oh my god, I want to die.”

Dr. Anjali chuckles. “I see no problems with you two having a healthy and satisfying sex life through the rest of Shane’s pregnancy. There may be some discomfort as his belly grows, spotting is also common, and nothing to be concerned about, as is Braxton Hicks after a strong orgasm.”

“Kill me now.” Shane murmurs into his hands. “Please!”

“Anything else?”

“No, that was all.”

“In that case, I will see you two in four weeks!”

Shane rounds on Ilya the moment the door closes behind her. “Seriously!?”

Ilya shrugs. “Is important.”

“I can never show my face here again, oh my god.”

“What? You think she does not know you had sex? How else is baby made?”

“Shut up, let’s go.”

Chapter End Notes

Sorry for the delay in posting, the kiddo and I had been knocked out with the flu. Hopefully once I’m backing feeling entirely human, I’ll get back to posting more often again

Chapter 10: August

Chapter Notes

TW: homophobia, mentions of blood and labor

“I think I’m going to be sick,” Shane says as he leans bent over the back of the couch. “Oh fuck,”

“Hollander, relax.”

“Don’t tell me to relax!” Shane snaps. “It’s not your parents we have to tell.”

Ilya knows Shane says it without thinking, but fuck does it sting.

“If only I had parents to tell.”

Shane snaps up, a horrified look overtaking his face, tears pooling in his eyes. “Oh my god, baby I’m so sorry. I didn’t think—“

“Hollander, sweetheart, is ok. I know you did not mean to.” He wraps Shane in his arms.

“God I am such a fucking asshole.” Shane snuffles into his chest. “I’m so sorry. God why do you put up with me?”

“Good lay.”

Shane jerks back, “Oh fuck you.”

“Maybe later if you are nice, yes?” Ilya smirks and Shane gives him one of his angry kitten glares. “Feeling better?”

“Yes, you asshole.” Shane pecks a kiss onto his lips. “I really am sorry though.”

“I know, sweetheart.”

“I wish we could tell her.”

“Me too. She would love you, and her.” Ilya’s hand comes to rest on Shane’s bump between them. “Very much.”

“You think?”

Ilya nods. “She would love you like I love you.”

“Say it again, in Russian.”

“Ya tebya lyublyu.” Ilya murmurs, as he leans forward, hand cupping Shane’s cheek, thumb brushing over those freckles he loves so much.

The kiss starts soft, just lips brushing. Then Ilya's hand slides from Shane's cheek into his hair, holding him there gently, deepening it without rushing.

It's not desperate or frantic like most of their kisses are. It's slow and intentional. The kind of kiss that says I'm here and I'm staying.

Shane melts into it, one hand sliding up over Ilya's shoulders and into his hair, fingers gripping the curls at the nape of his neck as he deepens the kiss. Their tongues brushing in slow unhurried strokes.

"Oh!" Someone squeaks from behind them.

Ilya and Shane rip apart, whirling to find a stunned Yuna and David Hollander standing in the cottage doorway. Shane absolutely should have prepared them better. He realizes this now as he takes in his mother's wide eyes bouncing between him and Ilya, and his father's raised eyebrows.

Instead, he had texted: Can you come to the cottage? It's important.

Clearly not thinking that his poor choice of words would have Yuna and David rushing to the cottage like their lives depended on it. Thinking back on it, saying it was important did sound more serious than he had intended it to be.

This was definitely not how he had wanted to tell them. Isn't sure why he expected just this once for his parents to knock before entering his home. Because Yuna? Yuna doesn't knock. She never has. Much to Shane's dismay, as she had caught him in so many compromising positions as a teenager.

No one says anything, and Shane is positive his entire nervous system has exited his body.

"Uh..." is all he can manage.

Yuna blinks once, twice, then very calmly says, "Someone better start explaining."

—

"So," Yuna says, pausing for a moment to blow over her cup of tea. "How long have you two been a thing?"

Shane stares awkwardly into his mug, wishing he were anywhere but sitting at his kitchen table after being caught kissing Ilya.

"A while."

"All Stars?" David asks, obviously doing the mental math.

"Uh, no. Before that."

Ilya says nothing, just glances at Shane then his parents.

"How much longer before that?" Yuna asks, taking a sip of tea.

"Rookie season." Shane mumbles, not able to look her in the eye. Ridiculous given that he's twenty-fucking-six years old, but still somehow scared to disappoint his mother.

“What?”

“Rookie season, Mrs. Hollander.” Ilya replies. “Well summer before, actually.”

“And you’ve been together all this time?”

Ilya huffs out a laugh, taking a sip of his own scalding tea. “No, is recent.”

Yuna squints at Ilya a moment, “And you’re the father, I assume.”

“Yes.” No hesitation on his part. Just yes.

“I thought you said you didn’t know who the father was?” David asks, not unkindly.

Shane straightens, immediately defensive. “I lied.”

“Yes, clearly.” Yuna sighs. “This complicates things a bit.”

Ilya reaches out for Shane then, hand resting reassuringly on his thigh, meeting Yuna’s watchful gaze as he does.

“You’re not panicking.”

Ilya snorts. “I’m scared shitless.”

Shane gasps, “Ilya!”

“And you love him?” She asks.

Ilya glances away from her, his eyes tracing over Shane’s face as he answers. “Yes.”

Shane’s breath catches at the admission, and his cheeks flush as he smiles.

It’s David who softens first after that.

“Oook then,” he says slowly. “Are you staying?”

“Yes.”

“Even in September.”

“Yes.”

Shane gapes, “But training camp—“

“I told my agent to speak with Boston about going on IR for next season,” Ilya says casually, as if he just didn’t flip Shane’s world upside down.

“What?! When?!”

“Wednesday.”

“But that was before—“

Ilya nods. “Da.”

“Ilya, you can’t!”

Yuna stays quiet, silently approving, arm crossing.

“And after next season?”

“I will ask for trade.” He tells her.

“Ilya, you—you—no!”

“Sweetheart, it’s already decided.”

“Where would you go? Montreal is out of the question.”

“As if I would ever play for Montreal!” Ilya scoffs.

“Hey!” Shane huffs.

To Yuna and David, “Toronto, maybe? Ottawa? Neither is ideal but I am not ready to retire.”

“Not even for Shane?”

“Mom! I would never ask that of him.”

She shrugs, “I had to ask.”

Ilya thinks for a moment, choosing his words carefully. “I would, if Shane asked of me. I would retire today, but he will not let me.”

“Do your teammates know?” Yuna asks.

“No.”

“Does the league know?”

“No.”

“Do your parents know?”

“Mom!”

“What? It’s a simple question.”

“They are dead.” Ilya says flatly.

Yuna softens, “Oh... I’m sorry. I didn’t know.”

“It’s ok, is not public knowledge.”

”And if you’re outed?” David asks.

Ilya shrugs. “Is always possible. Have already spoken with my agent about this as well. Statement is already drafted.”

David nods approvingly.

”You’ve really thought this through.”

”Yes.”

Yuna turns to Shane then. “And you’re happy.”

It’s not a question, not really. Shane smiles in a way he hasn’t in months.

“I am.”

David exhales slowly.

Yuna hums then nods. “Ok.”

Shane blinks. “Ok?”

Yuna finally smiles then asks, “Ilya, how do you feel about Chicken Parmesan?”

He grins and rubs his belly, “My favorite.”

—

For the second time in as many months a moving truck sits out in front of Shane’s cottage. This time his home is not only overrun by his parents, the Pikes and their rambunctious brood of children, and Rose. This time there is Ilya, and Svetlana, and most surprisingly of all—Cliff Marlow, who had embraced Ilya and Shane’s relationship and pregnancy with a, “HA! I KNEW IT!”

Shane leans against the porch railing, one hand under his belly, content in the realest way possible. His new dream—building a life with Ilya and watching their daughter grow, of bedtime stories, pancake breakfasts, and smores after dinner takes shape in his mind as he watches box after box enter through the front door.

“You sure about this?” he asks, leaning back into Ilya’s chest as his arms come to wrap around him.

Ilya doesn’t hesitate. “Da, Hollander.” No dramatic flair, no grand words. Just precise and calm.

His hands slide over Shane’s bump, coming under the swell of his belly to cup and lift. Shane moans as the pressure on his hips and lower back lifts. “Oh my god,”

“Should I be offended?” Ilya asks, pressing a kiss to the side of Shane’s neck.

“Hmm?” Shane hums, blissed out.

“That you moan louder when I do this than when I’m buried inside you.”

“Oh my god, Ilya!” Shane swats at him. “My parents could hear you!”

“So you do not deny it?”

Shane grins up at him mischievously, “Right now this is way better than sex.”

“You wound me, Hollander.”

Shane snorts, relaxing back into Ilya soaking up as much of this pressure free time as he can.

Of course it is over too soon, Ilya and Shane called back into the cottage—so full of noise and in complete disarray. Shane takes it all in happily. The stacks of boxes and piles of hockey gear, and suits in garment bags.

“You’re really moving in.” Shane says quietly.

“I have lived here for weeks, Hollander.”

“Yeah, but it’s real now.”

Ilya sets down the last of his things, a small weathered trunk and crosses the room to Shane.

“It has always been real to me.” He says, resting his hands on Shane’s hips—thumbs brushing over the curve of his stomach absently, the gesture second nature.

Later, when they are alone in bed, well after the sun has set and the longer smells of cardboard and pine and David’s homemade pizza fill the air, they lie in bed facing each other.

Shane is so content he could purr, as Ilya’s fingertips trace over his skin. As unhurried touches turned fevered and wanting, as slow kisses turn hungry.

The easy silence is broken by Shane’s moans and sighs, as Ilya’s lips trail down his neck, pressing nipping kisses into his shoulders and down his chest, as hands wander over his belly and down to where he aches.

Ilya teases with barely there touches, making Shane gasp as he slowly kisses down his body, to his hips and the juncture of his thighs. And then beg as Ilya takes him apart with his wet mouth and slick fingers.

When Shane is spent and over sensitive, fingers yank at Ilya’s curls. He slides behind him, groaning low and deep as he enters Shane. Their bodies pressed close, Ilya curled around his back, hand resting on his bump, he loses himself in a fantasy he never imagined would turn into real life.

—

In the morning Shane wakes to whispered words in Russian, and the soft press of Ilya’s lips to the stretch marks that started appearing a few weeks back.

First on his hips then spreading across the swell of his lower belly, soft red-brown lines branching like lightning across his skin. Of all the changes his body has been going through, Shane minds these the least.

“I don’t mind them.” Shane says voicing the thought. Ilya looks up at him, resting his chin on Shane’s hip. “I didn’t expect them though.”

Ilya is quiet for a moment, then presses a slow, gentle kiss to one of the marks. Not rushed or teasing, no intent behind them other than to worship the body before him.

Shane inhales sharply. “Ilya—”

“These,” he says quietly, brushing his thumb along one of the faint lines, “are proof that you’re growing our daughter.”

Shane’s throat tightens as the word lands softly between them. Daughter.

He and Ilya have a daughter.

Ilya traces another mark with his lips, slow and intentional like he’s memorizing them.

“They’re beautiful,” he says after a moment.

Shane huffs. “I think you might be a bit biased.”

Ilya hums pressing another kiss to Shane’s skin, “Extremely.”

And then another and Shane exhales shakily. “You really don’t mind them?”

Ilya looks genuinely confused.

“They’re part of you,” he says. “And you’re carrying my whole world.”

He shifts up the bed and kisses Shane’s mouth slowly. Soft and unhurried, his hand over Shane’s stomach.

“Thank you,” he whispers.

Shane smiles sleepily.

“For what?”

“For showing up at the Pike’s house so I did not have to keep stalking you... For making me a father... For this.” He motions around the room, before giving Shane one last kiss. “Now get up! We have lots to do today!”

By that he means that Shane will do a lot of griping about not being able to do anything but watch while everyone helps Ilya unpack and meld his and Shane’s life together at the cottage before they head off to their first birthing class. Something that Shane is not even remotely excited for.

Luckily the class is on the smaller side, and Farah had already been in contact with the instructor about getting the other attendees to sign an NDA—which, surprisingly, no one had declined.

Shane knows that coming here is a mistake the moment he sees the folding chairs arranged in a semi circle around a table where a plastic pelvis and a very creepy and hyper realistic baby sits.

Marjory, the woman running the class, ushers them in with a smile, instructing them to sit wherever they like, and that there are snacks and drinks if they would like any, as the room fills up with other expecting parents and partners.

Things go further downhill when Shane realizes that he is the only carrier in the class.

Ilya is suspiciously calm beside him, laser-focused as Marjory begins the introduction into the stages of labor. Most of this Shane ignores because his body will not dilate like she describes.

It isn't until he notices Ilya clutching the sides of the folding chair for dear life that he focuses back in. Marjory and her pelvis, now almost fully dilated, that he forgets his unease.

"Ilya..." Shane says concerned but gleeful. "You're pale again."

"It's the fluorescents."

Shane snorts, "Oh my god, was that a Twilight joke?"

"Now, when we reach ten centimeters—"

"Ten?" Ilya blurts before he can stop himself.

Several couples turn at his outburst, and Shane nearly bites through his lip to keep from laughing.

"Yes," Marjory says pleasantly, bringing the pelvis and crowning rubber baby. "Ten."

Ilya says nothing, just blinks at the plastic pelvis in front of him.

"Is a lot."

"It's supposed to be," Shane mutters.

Marjory moves on to terrorize the rest of the couples with close ups of the baby descending the plastic canal. By that point, Ilya is not the only partner paler than Edward Cullen.

Shane does his best not to laugh, but he can't help it, not when Ilya looks like he's about to shit himself.

"My labor isn't going to be like that, you know." He says after he calms down. "I have to schedule a c-section." Ilya pales further. "I can always ask my mom to be in the room instead."

"No!" Ilya barks. "Only me, no one else."

"You sure? You look like you're going to die."

"I am not going to die."

"You almost died over bloodwork."

"That was different."

"How?"

"There was blood."

Shane grins menacingly. "There will be blood there too. Lots of it."

Ilya opens his mouth to retort but Marjory claps, drawing their attention again.

“Now, partners let’s work on encouraging the laborer through their contractions.”

“I can do this!” Ilya says immediately, seizing onto something anything other than the topic of blood.

Shane shifts in his chair, his face suddenly serious.

He clutches his stomach, “Ilya! It’s starting.”

Ilya blinks, and Shane grabs his arm, fingers digging into his bicep.

“Ilyaaaaa.” he gasps dramatically. “It’s a contraction.”

Every head in the circle swivels in their direction and Ilya freezes as Shane whines convincingly.

“Shane?” He hisses. “Is this real?”

Shane pauses his panting and winks before going back to clutching his stomach.

Ilya looks betrayed.

“Breathe with me,” Shane says, gripping his bicep tighter, absolutely committed to the bit. “It hurts.”

Ilya glares at him before shifting closer.

“Ok,” he says, voice steady despite how much he wants to throttle Shane. “Ok, sweetheart. I’m here.” His hand comes to the base of Shane’s spine and rubs gently. “Breathe.”

Shane inhales dramatically, breathing labored as he glances at Marjory who nods approvingly.

“Excellent you two. Beautiful job supporting, Ilya.”

Shane looks over at Ilya and grins.

“All that and you didn’t pass out. I’m proud.”

“Who knew you were so dramatic, Hollander?”

“I learned from the best.”

“Pike is terrible influence.” Ilya says with a smirk.

Shane smacks his arm. “I meant you and you know it!”

It isn’t until the class is over that what Shane has been expecting to happen all night does.

“Shane Hollander, right?” Asks a middle aged blonde woman with a smile that doesn’t quite reach her eyes.

“Ah, yes.” Shane says as he steps out of the bathroom, eyes darting around her to find Ilya.

“I hope you don’t mind me asking,” she says and Shane bites back a sigh.

Shane forces polite a smile. "Sure."

Her gaze drops to his stomach. "So... how does that work?"

"Like most pregnancies do."

She laughs, sharp and unfriendly.

"Well, I just mean, won't it be confusing?"

"For who exactly?" Shane asks, keeping his tone even and calm.

"For the baby," she lowers her voice. "Growing up with...all this." She gestures vaguely in the direction of Ilya.

"I'm not sure I understand the point you're attempting to make."

The woman tilts her head, giving him a saccharine smile. "Growing up without a mother."

Ah, there it is.

"I'm not sure why that would be confusing as she'll still have two loving parents."

She very clearly does not approve of his answer.

"Won't that be difficult with his lifestyle?"

"His lifestyle?" he repeats calmly.

"You know? Always traveling, a different woman in every city..."

Shane stiffens. "You may not like my choice in partner or understand our family," he says evenly, voice louder than he intended as the room goes quiet. "But you will respect it and me."

The woman holds up her hands, "I didn't mean anything by it, I was just curious."

Shane gives her a small, tired smile. "You and I both know you did, but word of advice: next time try minding your own pregnancy and get your nose out of mine."

The woman scoffs as Shane excuses himself, heading for the door.

Ilya meets him half way. "You okay, sweetheart?"

Shane nods, but his eyes are glassy, tears fighting to escape now that Ilya is here.

"I hate that she made it sound like we're doing something wrong."

Ilya leans forward and presses his forehead gently to Shane's. "We're not."

"I know, I do... I just hated how she made me feel."

"No one gets to make you feel small," he says quietly. "Not here. Not anywhere."

Shane reaches up and cups his face. "I love you."

“I love you too, sweetheart. Now let’s go home.”

Chapter 11: September

Chapter Notes

TW: being outted without consent, panic attack

It happens on a Tuesday. An oddly ordinary day for one's entire world to implode.

Ilya is in the kitchen when his phone starts vibrating, watching Shane do yoga out on the dock as he prepares the tuna melt—Shane's latest craving—he knows will be asked for as soon as he comes inside before they start tackling the nursery.

He's just placed it in the oven when his phone starts vibrating again. Wiping his hands on a dish towel, Ilya swipes open his phone eyebrows raising at the number of texts, Twitter and Instagram notifications.

He opens the most recent, a text from Marlow.

Marley: fuck roz

Marley: *link*

He taps it, the page loading slowly and then he scrolls through photo after photo.

A blurry long-lens photo of Ilya carrying boxes into the cottage. Another of the moving truck in the driveway. The third one knocks the breath of him—Shane in profile, on the porch, his rounded belly unmistakable. Another grainy zoomed shot of Ilya and Shane exiting the birthing center after that god awful class. Of Ilya kissing Shane as he helps him into his Jeep.

From there Ilya heads to Google, clicking link after link.

STAR CENTER GAY SCANDAL. ROZANOV SECRETLY LIVING WITH PREGNANT MYSTERY MAN?

HOCKEY STAR EXPECTING BABY WITH MALE PARTNER? SOURCES CONFIRM SHOCKING SECRET PREGNANCY

HOTSHOT HOCKEY STAR OUTED: SECRET RELATIONSHIP WITH PREGNANT PARTNER EXPOSED

INSIDE THE SECRET COTTAGE ROMANCE THAT SHOCKED THE LEAGUE

He doesn't react at first. Just stands there, his hip cocked against the kitchen counter, dish towel thrown over his shoulder cool as a fucking cucumber. His hands begin to shake as the articles shift towards Shane, dissecting him, their relationship, and his pregnancy.

FROM CENTER ICE TO THE CENTER OF A PUBLIC SPECTACLE: INSIDE SHANE HOLLANDER'S SECRET PREGNANCY

ONLINE REACTIONS POUR IN AFTER HOLLANDER-ROZANOV PREGNANCY PHOTOS SURFACE

SHANE HOLLANDER: THE MAN BEHIND THE BUMP

BRAVE OR RECKLESS? MEDICAL EXPERTS WEIGH IN ON HOLLANDER'S RARE PREGNANCY

Ilya only feels rage at the photos and articles using Shane and their baby as canon fodder. Does not register the back door opening, or the pad of Shane's feet against hardwood until he's in the kitchen.

"Ilya, can you make—" Shane pauses at whatever he must see on Ilya's face and asks, "What's wrong?"

Ilya doesn't know how to say it gently, just turns his phone slowly in Shane's direction, watching as Shane's tanned face leeches of all color as he reads the article on Ilya's screen.

Shane inhales sharply, "Oh." is all he says before his knees buckle.

Ilya tosses the phone on the counter behind him and lunges, catching Shane under his arms before he hits the tile, sinking them slowly to the floor.

"Sweetheart?" Ilya asks softly, tilting Shane's face up to look at him.

Shane looks through him, gaze unfocused, unable to respond. He feels as if he can't breathe, like his lungs are heavy and he can't pull in enough air. He's shaking, full body wracking tremors as his hands come to claw at his chest.

"I can't—" He wheezes. "I can't—"

Shane is panting now, rapid gasps that catch in the back of his throat. He's hyperventilating, he knows this. Can feel his heart in his throat, pulse racing like it might burst. It feels wrong.

Wrong wrong wrong.

"I can't breathe," he chokes out. "I can't br—"

Ilya freezes as he watches Shane fall apart, his own panic crawling up the back of his throat like acid, waiting to consume. Not now, he thinks, later. He forces his own breathing to slow, palm coming to rest against his rabbit fast heart.

"You are." He inhales slowly. "Breathe with me."

Shane shakes his head violently. "Please... I can't..." he pants. "Something's wrong." His hand flies to his stomach, his fear deepening. "The baby—"

"Is fine." Ilya murmurs, palm sliding down to rest on the curve of Shane's heaving belly. "You are having panic attack, Hollander. That is all this is."

Shane sucks in another ragged breath, voice cracking, “Ilya—”

Ilya leans forward, pressing his lips to Shane’s forehead as he drags him into his lap.

“I am here, moya lyubov.” He says. “I am here, and you are safe. The baby is safe.”

Shane breaks, sobs hiccuping out of his trembling body as his fingers dig into Ilya’s arm hard enough to hurt, hard enough to bruise.

Ilya welcomes it. Finds the pain of Shane’s nails digging into his skin grounding. Wishing he could leech the pain from Shane’s body into himself.

“That’s it. moya lyubov. Let it out.” Ilya strokes a hand up and down Shane’s back, as he repeats. “I am here.”

Shane does not register the front door slamming open, or the sound of feet bounding through the living room, but Ilya does.

“Shane—” Yuna shouts, halting just inside the kitchen as she takes in the two of them on the floor. David standing behind her, face drawn. “Oh my baby.”

She falls to her knees beside Ilya, shaking hand reaching out slowly to brush Shane’s hair back away from his face.

“Mom.” Shane sobs, arm reaching out for her but unwilling to let go of Ilya.

Yuna comes willingly, her arms encircling them both, and Ilya fights the urge to cry. He has not been held in a mother’s arms in a very long time. Wishes that it were for a different reason.

David lowers himself down on the other side of Ilya, their shoulders touching, his blue eyes sad and watery as he watches his son fall apart.

“You ok?” He asks quietly.

Ilya shakes his head.

“I’m sorry, son.” He says, patting Ilya on the shoulder.

Ilya’s eyes close and he nods once, too afraid to speak. Afraid that if he opens his mouth that the sob he’s been holding back will come out, and he can’t have that. Not when Shane needs him to be strong.

Yuna pulls back as Shane’s breathing slows, but he stays slumped against Ilya, exhausted and unable to let go.

“I’ve already spoken with Farah,” Yuna says as she pushes herself up off the floor, switching from concerned mother to manager. “She’s spoken with Ilya’s agent, Barry, and they’re working on a way to spin this.”

Ilya grunts, thinking back on the articles that had called his career into question, dissecting every interaction between him and Shane on and off the ice, as if loving a man and starting a family with him had any sway on how well he can play hockey. As if their love and the life they created was

wrong just because it did not fit into the stereotypical heteronormative box in the way other NHL players had.

She's pacing their kitchen now. "News outlets are trying to push your relationship with Shane and his pregnancy as a scandal. That your secrecy was due to you living a double life."

Shane starts trembling again.

"The longer you two put off making a statement, the more validity it gives their claims, no matter how untrue." She sighs. "Several of your sponsors have already threatened to pull out because of the controversy."

"We were outed without our consent!" Shane says quietly, voice thick and broken.

"I know honey, but image is everything."

Ilya hums. "I will call Barry. Are you ok to get up, moya lyubov?"

Shane clings to Ilya tighter for a moment before pulling back. "I'm... Yeah."

Ilya presses a kiss to his freckled cheek. "Up you go." he says, passing Shane off to Yuna before he grabbing his phone and heading towards the backdoor, David following behind.

The glass door slides shut behind them and Ilya deflates, bracing himself on the porch railing. David says nothing, just stands beside him, hands in his pockets as they stare out at the calm lake before them.

"I don't know what to do, David." He says after a moment, voice shaking. "I knew it was a possibility that this could happen, but..." Ilya curses in Russian. "I should have known someone would take photos and sell them. This would not have happened if I had come out sooner--"

"You were protecting Shane." David cuts in gently.

Ilya laughs once, sharp and bitter and humorless. "Such wonderful job I did." He looks over at David then. "They circled his stomach, like evidence."

David's jaw tightens. "I saw."

Ilya feels himself starting to slip, his control fraying now that he's no longer near Shane, no longer needing to be strong for the both of them.

"I am used to being hated, have enjoyed it. But Shane..." His vision blurs as he looks away from David. "He has never been treated like this. Has always been 'Golden Boy', yes?" Sees David nod out of the corner of his eye. "They would not be doing this if it were not for me."

The first tear falls then and Ilya releases a shuddering breath, hand coming up to his curls to yank.

"He went months without anyone knowing, and because I was too selfish to leave him alone..." Ilya's voice breaks. "They hate him, treat our daughter like she is a mistake. Like he trapped me."

David's eyes flash at that. "Anyone who thinks Shane trapped you does not know my son, and has never seen the way you two look at each other."

Ilya lets out a shaky breath. "I should have come out years ago."

"That wasn't safe for you then."

"I don't care."

"Yes, you do," David says firmly. "You had reasons."

Ilya's voice lowers. "I was afraid... Of losing sponsors, and contracts, of being the first..."

"And then Scott Hunter." David supplies and Ilya nods.

"Da, then Scott Hunter made room, but I thought I could wait and now Shane is paying for my fear."

David doesn't hesitate, he pulls Ilya to him, enveloping the much larger man into his arms. "No," he says quiet but firm. "He is paying for the world being full of hateful bigots who do not understand that love and family comes in all different shapes. Not because of you, or anything you did or didn't do."

Ilya's shoulders shake as he clings to David, letting all his fear and frustration bleed out.

"Shane knew the risks," David says once Ilya pulls back to wipe his face on his shirt sleeve. "Knew what the backlash would be if he stayed in the NHL, it's part of the reason why he retired. I know he had planned on coming out and announcing on his own terms, but it's honestly surprising he's made it this far before the news broke."

Ilya still can't help but blame himself. If it were not for him, Shane would still be able to come out on his own terms, announce the pregnancy the way he wanted and not be torn apart by gossip magazines and news outlets. But Ilya had been selfish and hurt. Had missed Shane too much. Had seen Scott Hunter kiss his boyfriend and wanted the same. And now look at the mess they were in.

"Stop." David says softly, grabbing him by the shoulders and giving him a shake. "None of this is your fault. Now call Barry and come up with a game plan."

Ilya nods, pulling out his phone. He stops, looking back at David as he heads toward the house. "Thank you."

"You don't have to thank me for caring, kiddo."

—

While Shane sleeps curled into this side, Ilya posts the statement his agent had drafted Instagram, only after Farah and Yuna had tweaked it to their approval, and tags Shane's rarely used profile.

As current and former NHL players, Shane and I are no strangers to having our lives under the microscope—public careers come with public attention. However, that did not give blanket consent to out our relationship, pregnancy, and sexualities without our permission.

This morning, I was excited to start working on my daughter's nursery, and instead I have read article after article ripping apart my sexuality, my relationship, and my partner, and have had to deal with the fall out of what this means for our family, our future, and my career.

As someone born and raised in Russia, where hostility towards and the criminalization of queer people is very real, privacy has never been about luxury but a matter of safety—for myself and for the people I love. Not disclosing my bisexuality was not me being deceptive to the league, my team, or fans. It was an act of self-preservation.

I am not ashamed of my bisexuality, nor am I ashamed of my relationship with Shane or our daughter. Our relationship, while private, is not some scandal, and I will not apologize for loving Shane, or for our becoming parents, nor will I accept any narratives that frame our family as controversial.

At this time our focus is on our family and bringing our beautiful daughter into this world, one we hope will grow and change with her, and accept that a love like ours is not something to expose or ridicule.

– Ilya

He turns off his and Shane's phones, sticking both in the drawer of his bedside table, and turns off the light.

Tomorrow will be better.

—

It's a little after midnight when a sharp kick to the ribs wakes him. Shane shifts with a wince, uncurling himself from Ilya to find a better position, something he knows is next to impossible this far into his pregnancy.

Their daughter kicks again, harder this time, and Shane hisses, pressing down on the tiny foot shaped lump digging into his ribs. "Stop that! Those are my ribs."

She only presses in harder.

He sighs, sleep is futile. He rolls over, left arm out to blindly pat for his phone when he remembers that Ilya had taken so he couldn't doom scroll. Well, jokes on him, because Shane was going to do it anyway.

He slips out of bed, making a brief detour to the bathroom, before padding silently around their bed and easing Ilya's bedside table drawer open. He grabs his phone, watching Ilya as he does, holding his breath as Ilya shifts in his sleep, arm flopping over to reach for a Shane that is no longer in their bed.

When Ilya settles, Shane waddles to the living room, powering on his phone. It buzzes incessantly. Text after text from Hayden and Jackie, Rose and Svetlana, and some of his former Voyageurs teammates. Missed calls from his mother, he assumes from when she first found out, and Farah. So many missed calls from Farah. Then the notifications, from Instagram and the Twitter he has but never used.

He doesn't know where to start. It's too late to respond to texts, and the idea of opening Instagram and Twitter alone is terrifying, but his need to know outweighs how awful of an idea this probably is.

Shane settles into the couch, cocooning himself in one of the many soft blankets thrown over its back, and takes a centering breath.

“Ok.” he says on exhale, thumb hovering over the Instagram icon. “I can do this.”

Their daughter kicks again, softer this time, as if letting Shane know she’s there for moral support. He smiles, rubbing a hand up and down his belly as he opens it.

The first thing he sees in his feed is Ilya’s post, 5 millions likes and counting in the few hours since Ilya has posted. He clicks on the comments, chewing on his thumb nail as he scrolls.

Most of the comments are supportive.

@hockeymom1978 As a mom with a gay son who plays hockey — thank you. Truly. This means more than you know. 

@bearsfanforlife We don’t care who you love. We care that you win games and seem happy. Congrats to you and Shane 

@lgbtsportsalliance Representation in professional hockey is powerful. Thank you for speaking clearly and without apology

@prouduncleenergy Your daughter is already so lucky

@nhlfan_since05 Privacy is not deception. That hit. Well said

@canadianqueerkid I almost quit my junior team last year because I thought there wasn’t a place for someone like me. Thank you for showing me I don’t have to choose between the sport I love and the person I am.

@canadianqueerkid Also congratulations on your daughter. She’s going to have the coolest dads
in the league

@sportsbro21 Didn’t expect this from you but respect

Then less so.

@bears8181 Hope this doesn’t distract from the season.

@hockeymom1978 Straight players have wives and babies all the time and they’re never called a distraction... Why does it matter now?

@brochacho78 Focus on hockey. Why make this public?

@canadianqueerkid Because someone else made it public without their consent. Can you not
read???

@bostonbearsforever10 The league is going downhill. I miss when hockey was just about hockey

@brogunj2031 That poor kid

@bearsfanforlife Poor? She has two parents who clearly love her. Be so fucking for real dude

@goalie_girl33 The only thing harmful here is comments like yours.

The notifications keep coming, and Shane spends the next two hours scrolling through them all, tears on his cheeks as he reads post after post in support of not only Ilya coming out, but of their relationship and pregnancy as well.

Of course the comments were a bit of a minefield with people losing their minds over Ilya and Shane being together, but the bigoted assholes did not outweigh the support he and Ilya were getting.

But people were happy for them. Were proud of them.

Behind him floor creaks, announcing Ilya's presence before his sleep deepened voice cuts through the darkened room. "Shane? Sweetheart, are you ok?"

Shane snuffles and wipes at his cheeks. "Couldn't sleep."

Ilya lifts the cover and settles in beside him, pulling Shane to his chest, chin resting on the top of his head, hand on his belly.

"So you stole phone and snuck out here instead?"

Shane gives a wet laugh as he presses closer to Ilya. "Yeah."

"You've been crying."

"Yeah."

"Bad crying?"

"No." Shane shakes his head. "Just...overwhelmed."

Shane feels Ilya nod. "Is a lot."

"I hate that this was stolen from us." he says after a moment. "I had a plan."

"You and your plans."

Shane sighs after a moment. "I just wanted to have a baby, to exist like everyone else does."

"Is very hard when you are Shane Hollander, Canada's Golden Boy."

"I had a plan," he says again. "I was going to make a post after she was born, and it was going to be so cute, and now..." He waves his hand around.

Ilya hums. "Not everything goes according to plan."

"Clearly."

"Is no point in worrying, moya lyubov."

"I'm not... Not really. I just hate that we didn't get to do it on our own terms."

"I know, sweetheart." Ilya presses a kiss to the crown of his head. "Me too."

Chapter 12: 35 Weeks

Chapter Notes

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

The nursery is everything Shane dreamed it would be all those months ago when he pictured him and Ilya and the baby here.

From the floral wallpaper with tiny wildflowers in shades of blush and cream and lavender, to the sage green crib with its fitted sheet in soft cotton cream, washed twice because Shane cannot help himself, and the beautiful mobile above it—little carved birds and clouds suspended on nearly invisible glittering threads.

A low dresser in the same sage color as her crib sits against the adjacent wall, a changing pad on top, with baskets tucked underneath filled with diapers and wipes and diaper rash cream, drawers overfilled with impossibly tiny clothes, all obsessively and neatly folded.

His big beige overstuffed chair by the window overlooking the lake, a sage and ivory throw blanket draped over the back, and a pillow embroidered with tiny flowers in its seat. A small round table beside it holding a lamp with little gold moon and stars on its shade, a stack of baby books waiting to be read, and a framed ultrasound photo of their daughter in profile, tiny thumb in her mouth.

A beautiful plush rug in cream beneath everything, soft enough that when Shane walks in barefoot he can't help but curl his toes into it, and near the door hangs a small wood name plaque shaped like a cloud, her name in swirling golden letters.

And as Shane stands there in the doorway, one hand resting on his belly, the other on his lower back, he can't help but wish she were already here. Small and sleeping against his chest, big comfy chair creaking gently as he rocks her.

Ilya slips in behind him, pressing in close to Shane's back, chin resting on his shoulder as his arms come around his waist, palms giving his belly a little squeeze.

"Is perfect, moye solnyshko."

"It is." he agrees, leaning into Ilya. "I can't wait for her to be here."

Ilya hums, "Me too."

"I keep imagining her in there, ya know? Like I'll walk in one day and she'll just... be."

"Soon." Ilya says gently.

"Are you nervous?"

"Me? No." He says with a shake of his head. "Russians do not get nervous."

Shane snorts. "Just like Russians do not faint?"

"We don't!"

“Mhmmm.”

Ilya digs his fingers into Shane’s ribs making him laugh harder. “Of course I am nervous.”

“Do you think she’ll be a good sleeper?”

“Probably not, no.”

“Great.” Shane murmurs as turns in Ilya’s arms, his own going around Ilya’s neck, his belly keeping them from being as close as he would like to be. Ilya leans down, meeting him halfway for a gentle kiss.

“I can’t wait to see you hold her.” Shane says against his lips, feeling as Ilya smiles.

“I already do, do I not?”

Shane shakes his head, “I mean like... For real. I can almost picture it... You scooping her up in the middle of the night, half asleep, and hair all a mess.”

“I do not get hair mess.”

“You absolutely do. Your curls go poof.” Shane makes a motion with his hands.

“No.”

“Yes.”

“No.”

“Ye—” Ilya shushes him with a kiss, slow and warm, the kind that makes Shane’s toes curl.

He pulls back, before resting his forehead against Shane’s.

“I hope she looks like you. All that dark hair and freckles, and those pretty brown eyes.” Shane’s breath wobbles slightly at that. “I want to teach her Russian,” Ilya continues, softer now. “And show her how to skate.”

Shane snuffles.

“I can’t wait.”

—

The baby shower is at his parents home in Ottawa, their backyard dressed for fall. Pumpkins line the walkway, soft plaid blankets drape over patio chairs, and string lights zigzag over head glowing warm despite it being early afternoon.

There are tables in shades of sage and blush and cream, with tiny glass jars filled with dried flowers and eucalyptus, some with mini pumpkin place cards with names written in gold, others piled with covered platters of finger foods and cake.

A sage and cream plaid ‘Welcome Baby’ banner hangs between two trees.

Everything smells of cinnamon and apple cider, and has Shane feeling like he's cocooned in a warm autumnal hug.

Yuna is in her element, bossing around the catering staff, making last minute changes on how she wants things set up, when she notices Ilya and Shane arrive.

"Isn't it perfect?" She says, wrapping Shane in a hug.

He nods, eyes wide as he takes it all in,

The Pike's arrive not too long after, their children filing in behind them like a small parade, Arthur tripping immediately over a decorative gourd as Ruby asks when they can have cake.

"Remember what I said in the car, girls!" Hayden says as they approach.

"Don't smother your brother in the ball pit." They say in unison, before running off towards the ball pit his mother had rented for the family's with children.

Shane and Ilya trade a look.

"You have no idea how many times we have to remind them of that." Jackie says, bouncing Amber on her hip.

Hayden finally looks away from the girls, stopping in his tracks as he takes in Shane.

"Holy shit, bud."

Shane narrows his eyes immediately. "Hayden... Choose your words very carefully."

Ilya, cup of cider midway to his lips, slowly lowers the cup, glaring daggers at him,

"You're fucking huge!" Hayden says, engulfing Shane in a hug that picks him up off his feet before releasing him.

Jackie smacks him. "Oh my god, Hayden!"

"What?" He looks at Jackie. "He is!"

"You don't say that to pregnant people!"

"What? He looks good! Massive, but good."

"Shut up!" Jackie hisses.

"Massive..." Shane processed that a moment before he looks to Ilya, "Am I really that big?"

Ilya glares at Hayden over Shane's shoulder, "No, moya lyubov."

"I meant that respectfully."

"Please explain to me how one can be respectfully massive, Hayd."

"Like... Ummm... Majestic?"

Shane places both hands dramatically on his hips... Well, where he thinks his hips are.

"I am creating life, not a fucking boat."

"You're creating a d-man more like it," Hayden says, horrified and impressed all at once.

Ilya steps forward, jaw clenching. Shane stops him with a hand. "She is perfectly sized," he says firmly.

Hayden squints at him.

"She?"

"Yep."

"Holy shit." Hayden pulls him into another hug.

"You have four kids, why are you acting like this is the first time you've seen a pregnancy before?"

"Yeah I know, but it's you."

"...and?"

Hayden shrugs, "It's different."

"What? How?"

"It just is."

"Pike, you are idiot." Ilya murmurs into his cider.

Before Hayden can say anything else, Rose steps through the gate, left arms laden with bags, her right stretched out behind her. Svetlana follows, fingers linked with Rose's.

Shane glances over at Ilya who frowns.

"Oh no."

"Oh yes!" he says gleefully.

Rose spots them immediately as she places the bags on the gifting table, her face beaming as she drags Svetlana behind her towards their group.

"Look at my precious glowing pumpkin!"

"Rude!" Shane says with a laugh as Rose throws her arms around him.

From behind, "Oh, so she can make a comment about how big he is, but I can't?"

"Shut up, Hayden!" Whack.

"You look stunning!" Rose says as she releases him.

Svetlana swoops in next, pressing kisses to both of his cheeks. "She does not lie. You glow."

—

The shower is winding down. Empty cups of cider, crumpled napkins, and missed bits of wrapping paper are being rounded up and tossed into garbage bags, as sticky, tired children are bundled into coats by their parents. Goodbyes are said, cheeks are kissed and hugs are given, the bump patted and rubbed.

Shane is exhausted but happy. sitting in one of the patio chairs his mother had forced him into near the heater, a plaid blanket tossed over his legs. One hand absentmindedly rubbing his belly as he sips the last of his cider as he watches Ilya tosses one of the girls, Jade, he thinks, over his shoulder, helping Jackie and Hayden wrangle their exhausted children out to the car.

He's pushing himself up to stand when it hits. Low and tight, nothing like the Braxton Hicks he has been experiencing for the last few weeks. No, this one steals his breath. Twenty long seconds and then it fades. Shane exhales slowly and heads for the backdoor.

He makes it halfway before another hits and he has to brace himself against it, bent at the waist, one hand flat on his belly the other on his thigh, head bowed and breathing slow and deep.

This is how Ilya finds him.

“Shane?”

He does not answer, can't. Just shakes his head as Ilya reaches for him.

“Oh,” he groans out as the contraction eases. “You can touch me now.”

“What's wrong, sweetheart?”

“Contraction.”

“What?!” Ilya's voice rises as he helps Shane into the house.

“It's fine, that was only the second one.”

“Since when?”

“Uhhh like last 5 minutes-ish.”

Ilya's heart drops straight to his stomach. “Shane...”

“It's fine.” He stresses. “I probably just over did it. Can you get me some water? I'm going to go lay down for a—”

Another contraction slams into him mid-sentence, harder. He folds forward instinctively, hands slapping onto the kitchen counter, fingers turning white as they dig into the marble.

A low moan leaves him.

Ilya rushes over to him, hand coming to Shane's lower back like he'd learned in the terrible birth class, rubbing in soft but firm strokes.

“I'm calling Dr. Anjali.” Ilya says as Shane tries to breathe through his third contraction.

“No—”

“This is the third one, moya lyubov.”

“We need to start timing them first.” Shane says after it eases, still gripping the counter.

Ilya pulls his phone out with shaking fingers. “We start on the next one.”

The backdoor opens, “Boys—” Yuna pauses, taking in Shane’s bent over position and Ilya’s worried face. “What’s wrong?”

“Nothing mom, I’m fine.”

“Contractions.” Ilya says, narrowing his eyes at Shane.

“How many?” Yuna asks Ilya.

“Three.”

“How close?”

“We don’t know.”

Yuna nods, “Ok, let’s get Shane to the couch, and have him lay on his left side. I’ll grab him some water.”

“Mom, it’s fine.”

Yuna ignores him, talking over his head as she and Ilya hover over him as they head into the living room.

“Did you bring his hospital bag?”

“I am literally right here.” Shane grumbles.

“In the car,” Ilya answers instantly.

“Good. I’ll be right back.”

“You’re both being very dramatic.” Shane says as Ilya helps him down onto the couch.

“And you are not being dramatic enough, moya lyubov.”

“It’s too early to be—” He can feel another contraction building. “Time.”

Ilya pulls out his phone and presses start on the stopwatch. “It’s ok, I’ve got you.”

Shane can’t answer, even if he wanted to, just grits his teeth as it rolls through him, stronger than the last. He bends, forehead nearly touching Ilya’s shoulder, fingers digging into his forearms as the contraction wraps around him like a vice, spreading low in his back, his stomach pulling tight like a vice.

He moans, low and guttural.

“It’s ok, sweetheart. You can do it.” Ilya murmurs as he rubs Shane’s back. “Breathe with me. In. Out. In. Out.”

“Another one?” Yuna asks as she comes in with a glass of water.

Ilya nods.

“I’ll call Dr. Anjali for you.” She says as the waves releases Shane as suddenly as it came.

“I can’t—” Shane pants, collapsing forward into Ilya.

“You can.” His voice is steady, but inside he is chaos.

Shane lifts his head, eyes glassy and a little unfocused, sweat darkening the hair at his temples.

“I-I’m scared.” His voice shakes.

Ilya cups his face gently, tilting Shane’s head up just enough for their foreheads to touch.

“Me too, but we are doing this together, yes?”

“You’re not the one having the baby.”

“Maybe not, but I will be the one holding you through it.”

Shane smiles weakly at that.

“Bad news.” Yuna says, stepping back into the living room. “Dr. Anjali is out of town.”

“What—“

“I know, honey. I’m sorry. The nurse did say that if the contractions are five minutes apart or less that you should head in to Labor and Delivery for monitoring.”

“But... No... I can’t...”

“Shane—“

He cries out as another tightening begins—faster than before, his body trembling under the intense pressure in his lower back and pelvis.

He buries his face against Ilya’s chest again, gripping him like an anchor.

“Okay,” Ilya murmurs steadily into his hair. “That was a strong one.”

Shane nods weakly as it releases him, his whole body loose and shaky.

His mother is already grabbing keys, her and David heading for Shane’s Jeep.

“Let’s go!”

Everything is moving faster than Shane would like, but inside the circle of Ilya’s arms, time feels thick. Heavier and focused.

Another contraction begins and Shane exhales slowly.

“Stay with me, moya lyubov.”

“I’m...” Shane grunts. “Trying...”

And this time as it builds, Shane leans into it. Breathes through it. Rises the cresting wave and pushes through.

Because this isn’t a maybe anymore.

This is their daughter.

And she is coming.

Chapter End Notes

It’s tiiiiime (almost)

Chapter 13: Labor

Chapter Notes

TW: labor, mentions and depictions of c-section, mentions of fetal distress, mentions of blood and surgery.

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

The ride to the hospital is a blur. Shane cannot stop shaking—full body, adrenaline fueled shakes that wrack through him contraction after contraction. His teeth are chattering, his limbs weak and hard to control, and he is both hot and cold at the same time—much the same as he feels during a panic attack.

Only this is not a panic attack, those he can handle, this is his body in labor, and he feels wholly unprepared.

He's between Ilya's legs, half curled against him in the backseat of the Jeep, who is doing everything he can to calm Shane. Rubbing his back, and wiping away the sweat that threatens to fall into his eyes as he tries to get Shane to match his breathing. But Shane can't. All he can do is whine and pant while it feels like their daughter is trying to rip her way out through his insides... Which, he guesses, she technically is.

Shane hears his mother speaking with someone at the hospital, the worry in her tone, but loses focus when another contraction slams into him. Shane arches forward with a broken gasp, unable to breathe as the pressure inside him builds. Immense and downward crushing pressure, followed by the sensation of being split open from the inside, of something enormous pressing against bone and muscle and nerves all at once.

He screams, and can feel the energy in the car shift as his father accelerates and his mother and Ilya converse in tight quiet voices.

He tries to center himself, to breathe the way Marjory taught him. Deep inhales followed by slow exhales. But Shane feels as if he is spinning out of control, and that's what breaks him. His body is doing this violent and unstoppable thing and there is not a single fucking thing he can do to slow it down. It's terrifying.

His vision tunnels and his ears ring, his heart pounding so fast it makes him dizzy.

"I can't—" he croaks out, barely above a whisper. Shane can feel himself weakening, exhaustion eating at him with every surge of his contractions.

"What moya lyubov?" Ilya asks, pressing a kiss to Shane's sweat soaked temple.

Shane licks his dry lips and tries again. "I can't... They're too close."

Too close, too strong, too much.

They arrive at the hospital in what feels like seconds, but Shane knows it's been at least twenty minutes since they left his parents home, time blurring as his body has warred against him.

The Jeep has barely stopped before doors are flying open and nurses are coaxing Shane out from between Ilya's legs and into a wheelchair.

"I can walk—" Shane tries to get out as his feet touch asphalt, but a contraction hits mid-sentence and he folds in half, teeth clenched and he moans low.

"No, moya lyubov." Ilya says, rubbing Shane's lower back, and his knees threaten to buckle. "You need the chair."

Shane nods, too spent to protest as Ilya and the nurses guide him to the chair on shaky legs.

She wheels him away, through brightly light hallways past the waiting room. Questions follow, so many questions, but Shane can only breathe as his stomach tightens and the pressure threatens to swallow him whole.

"How far apart?"

"Two minutes." Yuna replies as she keeps pace with Ilya and the nurse wheeling the wheelchair.

"Is this his first?"

"Da."

"Pain scale?"

This only Shane can answer. "Ten." He pants.

They get him through triage quickly, then to a room where they help strip him out of his clothes and into a gown. An IV is started and pain medication administered, as monitors are strapped to him, showing his and the baby's vitals, Shane begins to relax for the first time in what feels like hours. Ilya does not flinch, and Shane almost comments, the haze of pain relief distracting him from giving Ilya shit.

The contractions are still there, his stomach tightening and releasing, lower back aching with each wave, but the pain is less sharp and Shane takes what feels like his first deep breath since this whole ordeal started.

He's propped up in the hospital bed, hair damp against his forehead, lashes heavy. His hands still shake every few minutes when another tightening grips low and deep, but now he can breathe through it without crying out. Ilya hasn't left his side, any closer and he would be in the bed with him, which Shane thinks isn't such a bad idea.

When the doctor knocks softly and steps in, his mother is wiping his forehead and offering him ice chips, his father pacing in small, controlled lines by the window.

"Good evening, everyone? How are we holding up?"

Shane winces and shrugs as noncommittally as one can when in pain and fighting a body that is actively trying to evacuate a baby through a too small hole.

He finally settles on, "I've been better."

The doctor laughs at that, pumping hand sanitizer in her hand as makes her way over to his bedside.

"I'm Dr. Grayson." She extends a hand. "I've spoken with Dr. Anjali and have gotten up to speed with your birth plan with her. She and I had hoped you would be able to labor a little bit longer, just to give you two some time to rest,, but after watching baby's heart rate during these last few contractions, we think it's in your and baby's best interest to have a c-section soon rather than later."

The medication makes everything feel slightly distant, like he's underwater, but Shane nods and grips Ilya's hand tighter.

She continues, "We've booked an operating room, and you and Papa will be heading for a c-section shortly."

Shane blinks. "So, this is it?" he asks softly.

"This is it," she confirms with a nod. "You've worked incredibly hard, Shane, but this is the safest next step."

Ilya's fingers tight around Shane's hand as the Dr. Grayson explains the process, but he's stopped hearing her after the words 'spinal block' left her mouth and he spirals.

Shane.

Surgery.

Incision.

Curtain.

Blood.

He swallows hard. Knows that he should say something, ask questions, but Ilya can't think beyond seeing Shane laying on the operating table, a curtain blocking the view of his belly.

"Is she ok?" Shane asks, drawing Ilya out of his head.

"She's ok." Dr. Grayson says. "And we're going to keep it that way."

Shane nods, and the doctor squeezes his shoulder, letting him know the nurses will be in shortly, before stepping out of the room to prepare.

She's barely stepped out the door when a soft knock comes. No time for Ilya to spiral further as nurses start to filter in.

"Ok, Shane," one of the nurses from when they first arrived says. "We're your delivery team. I'm Lauren, in case you don't remember." He hadn't, nor had Ilya. "This is Debbie and Caroline, we're going to start getting you ready."

Debbie begins adjusting the IV line as Lauren starts talking about consent forms, surgical checklists and mentions that an anesthesiologist will be in soon to place the spinal block.

Ilya watches as Shane signs and nods when and where he should, unsure how he's even soaking up half the information Lauren is spitting in his direction, the last of it being signed as the anesthesiologist comes in.

The nurses work efficiently, helping him into a sitting position. Shane shifts awkwardly to comply, his belly heavy and tight, still contracting, as he swings his legs over the side of the bed. Caroline smiles at him, moving to support his front, as warm fingers quickly begin to untie the back of his gown.

"Alright, Mr. Hollander. I'm Dr. Beckford, I'll be your anesthesiologist today." says a short man with kind eyes. "Now, if you could please round your back for me, like an angry cat," Ilya snorts at that and Shane shoots him a glare.. "Chin to chest."

Shane complies, flinching as the cold antiseptic swab touches the center of his lower back.

"You'll feel a small pinch..."

Ilya steps into Shane's line of sight, "Deep breath, moya lyubov."

Shane inhales, wincing as he feels the needle pierce his skin and then pressure at his spine. Surprisingly, there is no pain, just a deep pushing sensation.

"Stay very still," Dr. Beckford murmurs, doing his best to stay still as another contraction starts to rise, his stomach tightening.

"I can't—" Shane panics.

"You're ok," Ilya whispers, his own voice trembling as Shane's eyes widen. "You're doing so good."

The pressure increases, and then Shane feels a warmth slowly spreading down his lower back. Liquid heat pouring down past his hips, to his legs, which he can feel growing heavier and tingly.

"My feet feel weird."

"That's perfect." Dr. Beckford says. "That means it's working."

Within seconds, the weight in his legs intensifies. Not pain, because they do not hurt, just strange, like they no longer belong to him.

The nurses help him lie back, lifting his legs back onto the bed.

"Now, we just need to test the level. Tell me when you can feel this." Dr. Beckford asks, swiping a cool swab across his belly.

"Ummm... I feel something?"

Another swipe just a little bit higher.

"Now?"

"Cold, but not much else."

The doctor nods and then makes an adjustment. “How about now?”

Shane focuses. “Nothing.”

He can feel the press of the doctor swiping the swab on his skin, but nothing else.

“They’re gone,” he whispers.

“Perfect!” Dr. Beckford claps his hands. “I will see you two in the OR.”

Shane nods, offering him a nervous smile.

—

Both Ilya and Shane are calm as they wheel Shane out of the room and down the hallway, stopping briefly just outside the double doors while the team finishes prepping inside. His team of nurses move around him with brisk efficiency, checking lines, adjusting monitors, before guiding Ilya away to suit up for the OR.

Inside the small changing area, everything feels surreal as he takes the pale blue scrubs, disposable cap, and shoe covers. His hands shake as he dresses, limbs tangling as he pulls the scrubs on too fast.

The nurse, Debbie, he remembers, chuckles from behind him. “First baby?”

He nods. “Da.”

Her face softens, “You’re doing great Papa Bear.”

Ilya does not feel great. He feels like everything he knows has flipped upside down.

Debbie hands him a mask once he’s finished shoving his curls underneath, and when he’s done Ilya stares at himself in the small mirror beside the door. His normally tan skin is pale, his eyes are red rimmed and too wide.

“You can do this.” he mutters to himself in Russian. “For Shane.”

He takes a steady breath and then another, nodding as Debbie asks him if he’s ready.

In the hallway, Yuna and David are bent over Shane’s bed, talking to him quietly. Ilya pauses, giving them a moment, wishing his own mother was there to comfort him the way Yuna and David are Shane. God how he misses.

Yuna leans in and kisses Shane’s temple as Ilya makes his way over.

“We’ll be right outside.” She says, chin wobbling as she smiles glances away from Shane to give Ilya a reassuring smile.

David squeezes Ilya’s shoulder as he walks past, “You’ve got him.”

The nurses unlock the wheels, and Shane grabs Ilya’s hand as they push through the OR doors.

Shane shivers in the too cold and too bright operating room, cold air brushing over his arms as they settle him fully onto the table. A drape goes up, blocking his lower half from view. All he can see now is the bright ceiling lights and the masked faces moving around him.

Someone guides Ilya to the chair beside his head, his gloved hand coming up to find Shane's without hesitation.

"I'm here, moya lyubov." he says, voice low and steady. So calm.

"You didn't pass out." Shane says after a moment.

"I told you I would not."

"You ready, Shane?" Dr. Grayson's head pops up over the blue drape.

Shane nods, even though he's not. Even though he's terrified.

"Remember, you'll feel some tugging and pushing, but that's normal. If anything feels off, or wrong, don't hesitate to say something. Ok?"

Shane swallows past the lump in his throat. "Ok."

"Alright daddies! Let's have us a baby!"

The surgery begins and Shane feels nothing from the ribs down. No pain, just firm tugging movements that rock his heavy body.

Ilya keeps his eyes locked on Shane's, not even glancing in the direction of the drape.

"You're doing so well," he murmurs.

Shane lets out a shaky breath. "It feels so weird."

"I will take your word for it."

There's more pressure. Stronger now. The table trembles slightly with the effort of it.

Dr. Grayson calls, "Oooh, look at all that hair!"

Shane's heart lurches, eyes darting to the drape.

"Is she—?"

"Almost." Dr. Beckford gives his shoulder a pat. "Almost."

Then comes a deeper, sustained pressure, like someone is pressing heavy on his chest. Shane gasps, fingers grasping Ilya's so tightly they turn white.

"I can't breathe—"

"You are breathing," Ilya says immediately, bringing his face closer. "Look at me."

Shane focuses on his eyes.

“You’re doing so well, moya lyubov. Our daughter is almost here.”

She tries to smile, but freezes at the sudden, intense pulling sensation. Then a wet slippery sound reaches his ears.

Everything in the room pauses, silence permeating.

And then the most beautiful sound Shane has ever heard.

A warbling cry. Sharp and alive.

A tear slips down Ilya’s cheek, as he leans forward to press a kiss to Shane’s cheek.

“You did it, my love. You did it! She’s here.”

The cry comes again — louder this time.

“She’s perfect,” someone says warmly.

Shane breaks, a sob ripping out of him before he can stop it. Tears leaking down his cheeks and into his ears.

“Oh my god,” he breathes. “Oh my god.”

Ilya sobs with him still whispering in rapid Russian as the sounds of suctioning and toweling and angry baby noises fill the air, and then a small, pink, squirming bundle is lifted just high enough over the drape. Dark hair plastered to her head, tiny fists flailing as she screams.

Yurina.

“She’s beautiful.” One of the nurses says.

Shane nods, staring at the most beautiful thing he’s ever seen.

“It’s her.” He whispers.

Ilya lets out a broken sound, something between a laugh and a sob.

“Da, Hollander, that’s her.”

They lower her out of sight again, her angry screams echoing and Shane’s tears keep coming, silent and unstoppable.

“I can’t believe she’s real.”

“You made her real,” Ilya answers, pressing a trembling kiss to his temple.

A moment later, the nurse returns, bringing Yurina down to Shane’s chest above the drape and all he can see is her adorable scrunched face. When she’s placed against Shane’s skin, she quiets almost instantly, looking exactly like a furious little kitten.

Her cheek comes to rest just below his collarbone, and Yurina blinks.

“Hi, Yurina.” he whispers through tears. “Hi, sweet girl.” Her screams turn to sniffles, as she nuzzles into him.

Ilya leans in, one hand still gripping Shane’s, the other hovering uncertainly before finally brushing gently over Yurina’s tiny head.

She is impossibly small. Impossibly perfect.

“She has your nose,” Ilya murmurs, his finger softly dragging down the swoop of her tiny nose.

“And she’s loud like you,” Shane replies softly, voice thick.

Ilya laughs wetly, fingers trailing over her cheek.

The surgeons continue working behind the drape, stitching, closing, but all that exists now to Shane is the weight of their daughter on his chest, the cute snuffling sounds she makes as she turns her head instinctively toward Shane’s chest.

Yurina lets out a tiny sigh.

And in the middle of the bright, sterile operating room, machines humming and surgeons finishing their work, nothing else matters.

Just the three of them.

Together.

Chapter End Notes

To my Eastern European friends who may potentially read this and think, “Wow, Yurina? Shit choice. Stupid Americans.”

It has been brought to my attention that this name is trash, and I suck.

IM SORRY!

I literally chose it because it means ‘lily’ in Japanese and it was a reference to the whole Lily/Jane thing. I wasn’t trying to be a culturally offensive shitbag, I swear 🙏

Chapter 14: Epilogue

Chapter Notes

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

Yurina's 1st Birthday!

Streamers in sage and blush hang from the beams, as balloons in matching shades crowd the ceiling. The banner David insisted on ordering stretches slightly crooked across the fireplace: YURINA IS ONE!

There's music playing, the Pike children running through the hallways and out the back door, and the kitchen island buried somewhere under the ridiculously large pile of gifts. It smells like frosting and candles and whatever Yuna brought in a slow cooker.

And in the middle of it all—Yurina, in a fluffy confection of a cream dress with puff sleeves and tiny little shoes she absolutely refuses to keep on, balanced on her Papa's hip, observing the room like the little queen she is.

Ilya looks nothing like the man scared shitless in ill fitting blue scrubs and wide terrified eyes. He's happier now, settled in a way he never thought he could be, living a life he never dreamed he could have, with a family he loves and who loves him in return.

Ilya is back on the ice, back in the league, but closer to home. Playing for his new home team in Ottawa Centaurs, a struggling team that hasn't seen a cup in decades— a move that shocked sports media but made perfect sense to anyone who knew him.

He will forever be thankful for Boston, and misses Cliff more than he ever expected to, but he wanted to be home. Wanted to see Yurina grow up here, wanted to keep Shane close to his family.

He presses his nose into Yurina's curls, inhaling like it's oxygen.

"She looks exactly like you," Ilys says to Shane,, studying her profile as she stares intently at a balloon.

Shane, currently crouched in front of them trying to rescue a gift bow from her mouth, snorts. "She does not."

"She does."

Yurina turns toward Shane's voice, her warm brown eyes crinkling as she smiles at her Daddy, chubby little arms reaching for him. Her curls bounce wildly as she wiggles, dark and untamable and unmistakably Ilya's.

"She has my hair," he says, deeply satisfied.

Shane rolls his eyes. "You bring that up constantly."

"Because it is important."

Yurina grabs a fistful of Ilya's curls to prove the point, but he doesn't complain, not even when she tugs.

Guests crowd the living room. Yuna is taking photos like she's covering a red carpet event, while David has somehow become the designated balloon wrangler. Rose and Svetlana are absolutely together and absolutely flirting in the kitchen while pretending to argue over who bought the better gift—Sveta of course, while Hayden is telling someone loudly that Yurina already has better balance than half the rookies he's seen.

"Don't you dare," Shane warns when Hayden presents a miniature hockey stick wrapped in tissue paper. "She's one,"

"Gotta start 'em early, bud," Hayden replies with a grin.

Ilya shrugs for once agreeing with Pike.

"She can barely walk!"

"She can skate before she can walk."

As if on cue, Yurina slides down from Ilya's arms and attempts an aggressive toddle toward the coffee table, making it three steps before dramatically sitting down on purpose. Everyone applauds and she grins, displaying her four tiny teeth.

She points at a toy across the rug and Ilya immediately bends and hands it to her, and David laughs as he watches. .

"She's already got you."

Ilya doesn't deny it. "She deserves everything."

And he means it. The contract, the move to Ottawa, the interviews, the press conference about "wanting to be closer to family", none of it felt as important as this moment.

Her curls. Her laugh. Her reaching for him without hesitation.

When it comes time for cake, Yurina sits in her high chair like a tiny empress awaiting tribute, eyeing the lone flickering candle with suspicion

Shane leans in. "Blow it out, baby."

She looks to her Daddy, curled head tilting, before slamming her fist into the frosting, cackling maniacally as she does. Pink icing goes everywhere. On her dress, on the tray, on Ilya's sleeve. Ilya throws his head back and laughs, full and unfiltered.

"She is chaos."

"She gets that from you." Shane shoots back.

Ilya pulls Shane close with his free arm, frosting and all, a smug smile on his face.

“Oh I know.”

Say I Do

It happens at the cottage. The lake is as smooth as glass that morning, quiet and bright and impossibly calm. The wooden dock has been cleared, a simple arch sitting at its end, wrapped in soft white florals and greenery. Nothing overdone, nothing flashy. Just simple and understated.

Yuna cries before anyone even walks down the aisle, while David pretends he's fine until he very obviously isn't. Rose and Svetlana sit in the second row, fingers laced together, whispering commentary like they're at a sporting event as the other guests filter in.

Ilya stands at the end of the dock in a tailored navy suit, hands clasped in front of him. He has played in championship games, has lifted trophies in front of thousands, but he has never been this nervous.

The music changes, and Yurina appears. Two years old now, in another tiny dream dress with soft tulle, a flower crown that keeps sliding sideways because she will not stop touching it. She carries a small woven basket, tossing lumps of rose petals as she ambles her way down the aisle.

She stops, distracted by a rock. The entire wedding pausing while she squats mid-aisle to examine it before she toddles the rest of the way, abandoning the basket halfway down the dock.

“Papa!” she squeals, running for Ilya who scoops her up without hesitation, suit and all, pressing a loud kiss to her cheek.

“Hi, moye solnyshko.”

She immediately grabs his face and squishes, smacking an overly wet kiss to his cheek before beaming back at the crowd behind them, very pleased with herself.

Then Shane steps forward, and everything stills. He wears a simple cream suit, soft and warm. The wind moves gently across the lake and through his hair, and he looks at Ilya like this is the only place he has ever meant to stand.

Ilya's eyes fill instantly, he doesn't try to stop it.

Yurina pats his cheek. “Papa cry?”

“Yes,” he says, voice unsteady. “Papa cry.”

—

The ceremony is simple, no grand speeches or handwritten vows, just promises of forever and a future spent loving each other. And when they kiss, it isn't hungry or dramatic, it's slow and sure and certain.

Yurina, still in Ilya's arms, squishes her face between theirs and yells, “Me too, Papa!”

The dock erupts in laughter and applause. Rose wolf-whistles, and Svetlana shouts something in Russian that sounds approving and mildly inappropriate. Yuna sobs openly now, while David hugs

her and pretends he's not crying. Hayden and Jackie and their children shouting beside them.

And later, when the reception is close to ending, and the lake flows golden in the setting Sun, Shane and Ilya are also dancing, a sleepy Yurina pressed between them.

Shane has never been happier, with his husband and his daughter, his entire world wrapped up in one quiet moment.

"We did good," he says as they sway softly.

Ilya smiles, "Da, Hollander. We did."

Yurina Turns 5

The cottage is louder than ever, not just because it's Yurina's 5th birthday, but because there are balloons everywhere, glitter permanently embedded in the hardwood, and Shane is eight months pregnant and trying to supervise chaos while sitting down like a king who refuses to abdicate control.

A glittery banner stretches over the fireplace: YURINA IS FIVE! Pink, silver, and icy blue snowflakes hang from the beams. The theme is still figure skating royalty. Yurina insisted.

And in the center of it all—Yurina Hollander-Rozanova. Five years old, in sparkly pink and blue dress, competition hair, and dramatic posture.

"I need space for my spin," she announces, clearing a path in the living room, and everyone is happy to oblige.

Life looks different now for Shane and Ilya. Shane runs his hockey camp full time, summers packed with kids yelling "Coach Shane!" and parents thanking him for teaching more than just skating. And Ilya? Two Stanley Cups with the Ottawa Centaurs. Two. Much to the surprise of the hockey world.

There's a framed photo from his first win in the hallway, Ilya lifting the Cup, with Yurina on Shane's hip in a tiny Centaurs jersey, all three of them beaming at the camera. It made national headlines for about twelve hours.

Right now, Ilya is kneeling beside Shane, one hand instinctively resting on the side of his belly as Yurina performs a very ambitious living-room routine.

"She has your face," Ilya murmurs, watching their daughter attempt a dramatic spin, a big smile on his face.

"She has your stubbornness," Shane replies.

As if on cue, Yurina wobbles mid-spin, refuses to fall, and powers through anyway, sticking the landing. Mostly. Everyone cheers and Yurina bows, then she marches over to Shane and presses both hands carefully against his belly.

"He will skate too," she informs them.

Shane huffs a laugh. "He hasn't even been born, Yuri."

“He will,” she insists, and the baby shifts under her palms as if in agreement, a slow, visible roll across Shane’s stomach. .

Yurina gasps.

“He moved!”

“He’s dramatic already,” Ilya says proudly.

Shane arches a brow. “That’s your genetics.”

—

Rose and Svetlana arrive hand-in-hand, still deeply in love and slightly inappropriate. Hayden’s kids are older and louder, immediately asking Yurina when she’s joining hockey instead of figure skating.

“I am an artist,” Yurina replies with grave seriousness.

David mans the grill outside, while photographs everything, especially the way Ilya hovers when Shane stands up.

“You need to sit,” Ilya tells him for the fiftieth time.

“I’m fine.”

“You are carrying my son.”

Shane smiles softly at that. Son. It still makes Ilya look stunned when he says it. He kneels beside Shane again, palm warm and protective over the curve of him.

“You’re tired,” he murmurs quietly.

“A little.”

“You should rest.”

“I will, after cake.”

—

Cake this year is an ice rink with a fondant skating version of Yurina and, at her request, a tiny blue bundle near the edge labeled “Baby Brother.”

When everyone sings, Yurina sings louder than anyone else, and when she blows out the candles, she squeezes her eyes shut extra tight.

“I wished for my axel,” she announces afterward.

“And?” Shane asks.

“And for him to be nice,” she adds, patting his belly again.

Ilya laughs under his breath.

“He will be terrified of you,” he predicts.

Yurina just smiles.

Niko Turns 1!

The cottage is chaos again, but this time it’s blue balloons tangled in the rafters, and a banner that reads: NIKOLAI IS ONE! There’s glitter, because Yurina insisted that every party needs glitter, even if it’s “technically for boys.”

Shane is standing in the kitchen doorway holding Nikolai on his hip, bouncing him gently while pretending he is not the softest person in the room.

Nikolai Hollander-Rozanov with his round cheeks and serious eyes, head full of thick, dark curls that refuse to be tamed, cheeks dimpled as he smiles at his sister who’s making silly faces at him from across the room.

“He has your smile,” Ilya says quietly, watching Nikolai chew the edge of a paper plate.

Shane snorts. “He has your chaos.”

As if on cue, Nikolai launches the plate dramatically across the room, and Yurina gasps.

“Niko!” she scolds, hands on her hips in full five-year-old authority. “We do not throw.”

Nikolai blinks at her then laughs, a deep, delighted belly laugh that makes everyone in the room melt instantly.

—

The living room is packed. Yuna is filming everything like it’s documentary footage, while David is supervising gift assembly. Rose and Svetlana show up with an unnecessarily expensive ride-on toy that Nikolai immediately ignores in favor of the box, while Hayden’s kids youngest tries to teach Nikolai how to clap “properly.”

Yurina hovers, having appointed herself Vice President of Nikolai, feeding him bites of banana and puffs, wiping his chin with intense focus, and glaring at anyone who gets too close.

“That’s my brother,” she says proudly every five minutes.

Ilya crouches on the rug with them, letting Niko climb over his knee like it’s a mountain, head bent towards Niko who grabs a fistful of Ilya’s curls, naturally.

“You see?” Ilya says proudly to Shane. “Genetic.”

Happy Ever After

Yurina is eleven, which means she moves through rooms like she owns them, long limbed and confident posture, reminding Shane so much of Ilya, but quiet and focused in the same way he was as a child. She keeps her hair pulled back into a sleek skating bun, even when she’s not at the rink, and he finds himself missing her wild curls.

Nikolai is five, and absolutely feral in comparison. Loud and wild, scraped knees and busted elbows, always talking, always running. His hazel eyes bright, his cheeks freckled, and curls wild and unkept.

His children could not be more different.

It's Saturday morning, and Yurina is at the dining table doing homework with the kind of focus that makes Shane proud.

"I'm not redoing it," she mutters. "It's already perfect."

From the living room, a crash, followed by: "I'M OKAY, DAD!"

Shane doesn't even look up. "Nikolai."

Silence, then tiny feet sprinting. Nikolai barrels into the kitchen wearing a Centaurs jersey three sizes too big, socks mismatched, curls wild. He's holding a hockey stick that is definitely not meant to be inside.

"Papa said I can practice!"

"I said gently," Ilya calls from somewhere down the hall.

Nikolai beams. "I'm going to be best, like Papa."

Yurina glances up, unimpressed. "You're five."

"I'm almost six."

"You're five."

Shane hides his smile.

Yurina has grown into herself in a way that still makes Ilya stop and stare sometimes. She looks like Shane, soft smile, expressive eyes, but she carries herself like Ilya. Steady. Grounded. Competitive in a quiet way.

She's deep into figure skating now, not just a hobby. There's early mornings, private coaching, blistered heels and laser focus. She ties her skates herself, no longer needing her Papa. Corrects her own posture, and critiques her own spins.

The one time Ilya attempted give her advice and she blinked at him and said, very politely:

"Papa, this is not hockey."

He had yet to recover.

Nikolai, on the other hand, worships hockey the way some kids worship superheroes. He sleeps with a mini stick the Pike's gifted him. has strong opinions about goalie masks, and thinks his Papa

has “a lot of trophies but probably not enough.”

He also insists on telling everyone he meets, “My Papa won two Stanley Cups.”

—

That evening, they’re all outside.

Yurina is practicing off-ice jumps on the patio, counting under her breath.

“One, two—”

She lands slightly off and scowls. Resets.

Ilya watches quietly, hands in his pockets. He doesn’t interrupt. He knows that look. It’s his look.

Nikolai drags his net across the driveway, dramatically narrating to himself.

“And he shoots— AND HE SCORES!”

Shane sits on the steps, just watching all of it like it’s a movie he gets to live inside.

Yurina lands the next jump clean, perfect. She exhales slowly, satisfied but pretending she isn’t, and Ilya claps.

Nikolai immediately abandons hockey to sprint toward her.

“Do it again!”

She ruffles his curls. “Later, chaos monster.”

“I am not chaos.”

“You are entirely chaos.”

He considers this. “Ok.” Before running off again.

And later that night, after showers and negotiations about bedtime and exactly one more glass of water, the house quiets.

Nikolai falls asleep sprawled sideways across his bed, clutching a stuffed bear in a Centaurs jersey, while Yurina reads in bed.

In their bed, Ilya lies back and exhales. “They are so big,” he says softly.

Shane nods. “I swear they were just babies.”

Ilya turns his head toward him. “Kolya still is.”

“Barely.”

They lie there, listening to the faint hum of the fridge, the quiet breathing down the hallway.

Eleven and five. A figure skater with discipline and fire. A hockey-obsessed gremlin with curls and boundless confidence. Two entirely different kids, both unmistakably theirs, and the house feels full in the best possible way.

Chapter End Notes

I never expected this little brain child of mine to get as much attention as it did, but I am beyond thankful for all the people have ready, commented and given kudos!

I hope you love my version of Shane and Ilya as I do.

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