

Riding in Cars with Teammates

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/78987876) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/78987876>.

Rating:	Explicit
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Game Changers Heated Rivalry - All Media Types
Relationships:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov , Yuna Hollander & Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov , Yuna Hollander , Alexei Rozanov Andrei Rozanov , Grigori Rozanov , David Hollander
Additional Tags:	Alternate Universe - High School , Shane and Ilya are 18 , Alexei is 22 , Mpreg Male Pregnancy , Hurt/Comfort , Wealth gap situationship , Teen Pregnancy , Angst , Pregnant Shane Hollander , Autistic Shane Hollander , Shane Hollander Needs a Hug , Modern Setting , Class Differences , Ilya Rozanov Needs A Hug , Secret Relationship , Misunderstandings , Implied/Referenced Child Abuse , Ilya Rozanov Misses Irina Rozanova , Immigrant Ilya Rozanov , Slow Build , Angst with a Happy Ending , Unplanned Pregnancy , cryptic pregnancy
Language:	English
Series:	Part 2 of Riding in Cars
Stats:	Published: 2026-02-06 Completed: 2026-07-21 Words: 101,767 Chapters: 32/32

Riding in Cars with Teammates

by [Gh0st4](#)

Summary

Shane and Ilya are 18 and counting down to the NHL draft while playing for the same private school hockey program.

Until Shane realizes he needs to take a pregnancy test behind his family's back.

Chapter 1: Come Over

Chapter Notes

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

Shane

Can you come over?

That was all Shane could muster the courage to say to Ilya over text.

He was sitting at his desk in his neat bedroom, genuinely terrified after going down a pregnancy scare rabbit hole.

The Instagram reel his algorithm had decided to show him left him feeling shell shocked.

“Man, girls are so lucky they get periods” a guy started talking the second Shane swiped on the next reel with his thumb.

“They can KNOW if they might be pregnant.” the same guy continued. “I didn’t know until it was too late to get the abortion pill”

Shane didn’t know how any of that worked. It never occurred to him that maybe this applied to him too.

He ended up looking up YouTube videos. Even checking Quora. Every site gave him the same answer - since he didn’t have periods, he couldn’t know without having a test done.

He absolutely couldn't let his mother find out he was even thinking about it. His mother watched him like a hawk and micro managed every aspect of his life.

There was no way he could ask to go to the doctor alone without her noticing. And there was no way she wouldn’t check what he was getting at the pharmacy. She still believed he was vulnerable to trying to experiment with “strange supplements”.

Ilya texted back.

Ilya

Come over for what?

Is 8pm now?

He even double texted.

Shane didn’t know what to say. He could have seen Ilya in class in the morning or even at hockey practice after. But something in him wouldn’t let him rest or get back to his stupid assignment until he knew he had a backup plan.

Shane texted back.

Shane

Can we maybe just talk in your dad’s car please?

I’m freaking out

Ilya squinted at the text. He closed the shabby door to his room and decided to call Shane. His father didn’t really care about who he talked to that much, but he didn’t want his older brother to be all up in

his business.

Shane's phone startled him when it actually started ringing. He knew he wanted to see Ilya, but he wasn't sure if he was ready to actually pick up and talk to him yet. He felt so overwhelmed by the entire situation.

What if he was actually pregnant like the Instagram guy? He needed to get tested to be sure, right?

Shane felt himself spiraling. What if Ilya simply didn't care and decided to block his number and ignore him at school and at hockey practice?

Would his mother find out if he tried to do anything about this?

Maybe the clinic still kept everything related to teenagers over 18 confidential, but his mother would probably find out somehow. And the NHL would definitely have access to his medical records when he tried to get drafted after graduating.

Shane picked up but couldn't bring himself to say anything yet.

"Hollander?" Ilya's voice came from the other end of the line.

Shane's heart was pounding in his chest. For a second he wondered if he had just made the whole thing up. The idea of there being an actual risk to whatever they had been doing sounded fake when it was time to actually say it out loud. Saying it out loud felt real.

"H-hey. Ilya..."

His voice was shaking. And he knew Ilya could tell.

"Hollander you are having panic attack." Ilya exclaimed while standing in the middle of his room. "What is happening at 8 o'clock?"

Ilya knew that Shane's family and his entire life at home were... not stressful to say the least. He couldn't imagine what Shane might be worrying about. His parents encouraged and supported him as best as they could.

Ilya didn't get to enjoy that kind of support at home.

His father was constantly yelling about how Ilya wasn't making money from a part-time afterschool job like his brother did when he was his age. How he was wasting his time playing sports and chasing athletic scholarships at private schools when sooner or later a single injury could render him useless and make him a burden to the family.

Ilya mainly kept it to himself.

And he kept it to himself because he knew Shane wouldn't be able to relate and wouldn't know what to say. There was nothing Shane could say that would fix his situation at home. So he just enjoyed Shane's company. It was a nice distraction from his reality and made him happy.

"Can you please just get the car and come over?" Shane said in one breath as he exhaled. "I don't want to talk about this over the phone."

"Okay" Ilya said. "Maybe."

Ilya hung up and left his room. Asking his father for the car keys so late at night was probably not the best idea. He knew he would trap himself in another tirade where his father lectured him about how if he

has time to take the car this late then he probably has the time to work.

Ilya went to his older brother instead.

“Lyosha-” Ilya started as he opened the door to his brother’s room to talk to him in their native language *“Do you have the car keys?”*

Alexei looked up from his wooden computer desk, where he was smoking a cigarette and watching something on his computer.

“Why do you want the keys Ilyusha? Going out to fuck some Canadian whores?”

Ilya couldn’t tell if his brother was making fun of him or scolding him. Or maybe his brother was just joking around.

“You know,” his brother continued *“when I was in school the girls had to wait until I was done working.”*

Maybe it was a mix of all 3.

Ilya sighed and tried to be as non-confrontational as possible so he could get to Shane. Shane, who was his only escape from this family that clearly hated him and just wanted him to start earning money for them.

Shane, who lived a careless life and just had to focus on getting good grades and being good at hockey. Shane, whose mother made delicious dinner and warmly invited Ilya to eat with them whenever he came over to Shane's house.

“It’s for school. I need to get some things.” Ilya sighed. *“I can’t play around or I will lose my scholarship.”* that still came out a little confrontational even though Ilya was trying to sound as casual as possible.

Alexei threw the keys at him.

“Thank you.” Ilya said as damage control. *“I will be back soon.”*

Ilya went out quietly to avoid having to interact with his father and got in the car. He pulled out his phone and texted Shane.

Ilya

Have car, omw

Ilya put the phone down and started the car. He looked in the rear view mirror and backed out of the parking lot. He caught a glimpse of the back seat and suddenly remembered how it was so easy for them to just park the car somewhere and stay in the back seat for as long as they wanted when the weather was warmer...

But it was cold out now. He imagined just talking in the car in the middle of winter wouldn't be that much fun. Still, maybe he would still get some decent alone time with Shane if he comforted him through another crisis of thinking he might be gay or whatever was on his mind tonight.

Maybe he was an asshole for thinking that though.

But even if Shane was having a panic attack, it wouldn’t be the first time Ilya had wiped tears off Shane’s face and kissed him with the door to Shane’s room locked.

“God knows what this is going to be now”. Ilya thought to himself.

He contemplated lighting a cigarette as he drove out of his immigrant neighborhood and towards Shane’s suburb. But he also knew that Shane would complain about how he shouldn’t smoke and how he doesn’t like tasting the cigarettes on him.

Shane’s neighborhood looked nice and Ilya always felt like he stood out when he drove there with his dad’s car. This specific Wednesday night was no exception.

He parked in front of Shane’s home and texted him.

Ilya

I'm here))

He took his seatbelt off and leaned back in the driver's seat so he could wait for Shane more comfortably.

Chapter End Notes

I'm adding this note after being 12 chapters in to clarify that when Ilya uses Russian emoticons throughout this fic :) looks like this)) and :((looks like this((

They also use the short/diminutive names for each other (that you might have seen in other fics too) in his family because I'm trying to stay culturally accurate.

Bonus update (after being 23 chapters in): I'm slowly adding a workskin to this fic! [iMessage Skin](#) by Azdaema Codes

Chapter 2: Can We Talk?

Ilya

I'm here))

Ilya's text found Shane in his room, where he was still spiraling and watching yet another story time video made by another guy that had found out he was pregnant at a time when it was too late for his options to be as broad as he might have wanted.

Shane closed his laptop shut and headed downstairs in a hurry, trying to keep a straight face.

He couldn't believe Ilya was already in front of his house. It was almost like Ilya had managed to get there as fast as he could.

"I'm heading out for a bit!" Shane called out to his parents who were watching TV in their open living room.

His mother turned around and looked at him from the couch.

"Shane it's 8:30 PM on a school night" Yuna said back from the living room couch with concern in her tone.

Shane stopped but didn't turn around. He was never a good liar.

"Where are you going, bud?" his father turned around and chimed in too.

Shane knew both of them were watching him without even having to look at them. And he knew he had to play it cool so they wouldn't suspect anything.

If he really was pregnant he didn't want them ever finding out. And he certainly didn't want them finding out he had been sleeping with his friend this way.

"My friend... Ilya is outside." Shane said quietly while looking straight ahead at the front door. "We are just gonna talk about something"

Yuna moved her gaze away from Shane and gave David a look. A look that was supposed to remind David that Ilya was the athletic scholarship student that very clearly had problems at home. The same student that treated her low effort pasta like a gourmet meal.

Yuna used to think Ilya was a bad influence. But he grew on her over time and he seemed to be good friends with her son. Besides, she wanted her son to be around teammates that were passionate about hockey and could match the enthusiasm she fostered in Shane.

"You should invite him in." Yuna said to Shane while still looking at David. "We still have some dinner leftovers in the tupperware in the fridge too."

Shane felt like he wanted to scream.

He didn't want his parents overhearing this conversation. He couldn't understand why his mother couldn't just mind her business and keep watching whatever was on TV and just leave him alone.

"Okay." Shane said quietly.

He stepped out and immediately saw Ilya's car parked in front of his house. The engine was off and Ilya was just casually sitting in the driver's seat scrolling on his phone.

Shane approached the car slowly, glancing back at the living room window to make sure his parents hadn't gotten off the couch to observe what he might be up to.

Ilya only noticed him when Shane opened the door. He put his phone back in his pocket as Shane got in the passenger seat.

"My mom said you can come in by the way." Shane exhaled "But I just want to... talk first."

Ilya glanced at the same window to check if Yuna was watching them and quickly confirmed that she wasn't. He turned back to Shane expecting to hear what was actually wrong, but Shane was just staring straight ahead at the empty residential street in front of them.

"Okay. Hollander- Shane. What is wrong?" Ilya asked him as patiently as he could.

Ilya could tell Shane felt tense but he wasn't going to reach for his face even without Yuna watching. Not there and not then. He would have to drive off and park elsewhere for that.

Shane's neighbors were probably still up and they had a habit of not liking the car Ilya drove. Some of Shane's neighbors were even the kind that would call the police to report a "suspicious vehicle."

"What if I'm..." Shane couldn't bring himself to say it.

Ilya wanted to roll his eyes. Another identity crisis. Another thing he absolutely couldn't relate to.

Ilya was confident in his sexuality and his only problem was that his father would immediately kick him out if he even suspected he was taking the car to hook up with his "friend from school".

Shane was the one that was randomly having "I think I might be gay" crises in the car after hooking up with his male friend.

"What if I'm pregnant?" Shane blurted out.

Saying it felt heavy. Shane felt like he had just confessed to a crime.

Ilya was silent. He looked at Shane flatly like he was taken aback, but then his lips slowly stretched into a smile and he started laughing.

Shane didn't find it funny at all. He was already on the verge of tears.

"Come on" Ilya said while laughing. "You? You cannot be... pregnant" he kept his voice low just in case.

Shane had a habit of being very still when he was about to have a breakdown. He knew that his emotions always got way too intense way too quickly.

Shane looked ahead and the world felt like it was both too loud and muffled around him. Like time was moving way too fast and way too slow at the same time.

His mom could walk out to check on them at any point, and she would see him crying and snap him out of his thoughts, and then she would start asking him to explain himself and-

"Shane" Ilya's voice came from his left and reminded Shane how close Ilya still was. "Okay. Look at me."

He did. There was still a hint of “*not taking this seriously*” on Ilya’s face and even though Ilya had stopped laughing he was smiling in a way that didn’t feel pleasant or comforting.

Ilya realized Shane was about to cry and didn’t want the situation to escalate, so he adjusted his expression as best as he could.

“Okay.” Ilya continued less jokingly “Sorry. I am serious now, okay?”

Ilya glanced at the same window where they could check if Shane’s parents were watching them.

Nothing. No one was there.

He reached for Shane’s left cheek with his right hand. Shane didn’t seem to protest or panic about it, so Ilya quickly used his thumb to wipe away the tear that had pooled in Shane’s left eye and already seemed dangerously close to starting to drip down.

“Shane.” Ilya said reassuringly. “That can not happen. You are just having... panic attack.”

They hadn’t stopped to check if any of the neighbors were watching, but Ilya kept telling himself they were in Canada so it wouldn’t matter as much. Even if someone saw them, Ilya knew he would look like maybe he was just... comforting his friend.

Maybe comforting his friend in a way his father would find preposterous and lose his mind over if he saw them. But it was probably normal to Canadians.

Shane took a deep breath.

“You don’t know that” he said quietly as he exhaled.

Ilya blinked at him, not sure how to process what was being said to him. It felt like another moment where he understood the English meaning of each individual word but not the actual meaning someone was trying to convey with the whole sentence.

“What I do not know?” Ilya said with confusion in his tone.

Maybe his tone was too much. Maybe the way he talked in these situations came off as hostile or accusatory to Shane. He wondered if Shane would get mad and then not want to go up to his room and lock the door later.

Shane was finally talking. “That I cannot get pregnant.”

Ilya still didn’t take this seriously because there was no way that could actually happen. That wasn’t the plan. They were in their senior year, they were supposed to wrap up all the irrelevant classes and go on to be drafted.

Their lives were supposed to be set. Their private school had very extensive and rigorous athletic programs, and the school had all the right connections to get their student athletes into the NHL. They even pushed it, because it looked good for the school and really sold the athletic program to parents like Yuna Hollander.

Shane actually being pregnant couldn’t be real and couldn’t happen because it would completely shatter the world they lived in. It went against every possible plan they could have.

“I’ve never been... tested for it. Maybe I really can get pregnant.” Shane’s words conveyed defeat but he sounded frustrated too. “No one ever thought there would be any need to test me. And I can’t just go to

the doctor and do it.”

Shane felt like his whole world was on the verge of crumbling and even the one person he was trying to confide in wasn't taking him seriously.

The whole situation hit Ilya hard. He suddenly became alert in the same way he had to be alert every time something went wrong within his family and it was suddenly his responsibility to take the lead and fix everything.

He looked up and saw a shadow with long hair approaching Shane's living room window. Probably Yuna wondering what was taking them so long.

“Okay.” Ilya said. He looked back at Shane quickly. “It's okay. We make everything okay. Okay?”

A part of him still didn't believe Shane's sudden... panic attack? Pregnancy scare? Or whatever this was was.

But even if Shane was being irrational, of course Ilya had to be the one to take care of it. Ilya always had to take care of everything around him. That was another difference between him and Shane.

Whenever Shane had a problem, his family took care of it. All Shane had to do was ask for help.

Whenever Ilya's family had a problem, the responsibility fell on Ilya.

And whenever Ilya had a problem, he knew no one was coming to save him.

Ilya saw Yuna's shadow move away from the window and he knew she was headed for the door so she could come outside and check on them. She would be in front of his car within maybe a minute.

Which was a problem because Shane was sitting there and freaking out in his passenger seat. He couldn't let Yuna figure out why Shane was panicking at almost 9 PM on a random Wednesday.

Ilya looked at Shane.

“Okay. Shane. Look at me.”

He did.

“We fix everything, okay. No panic.” Ilya continued firmly in a way that was more reassuring than anything Shane could expect.

Yuna was already out the door and heading towards the car in her beige robe.

Shane noticed the movement and started snapping back to reality.

“My mom's coming” he said blankly without moving.

“I talk, okay?” Ilya said seriously. “Wait in car.”

Chapter 3: Yuna Hollander's Pasta Salad

Ilya opened the door and got out of the driver's seat, immediately switching to a different demeanor to face Yuna Hollander.

"Mrs. Hollander!" Ilya said cheerfully as he closed the door to the driver seat and he smiled at Yuna "Hello."

It took Ilya a couple of years to learn how to interact with his classmates' parents.

He eventually realized that a lot of their parents had weird connections so he couldn't exactly afford to make any enemies. If he was talking to an older adult, he had to act like he was at a networking event.

Even now in his senior year, he still wasn't perfect at sucking up to people, but he felt like he was doing okay with the polite smalltalk.

Some people already didn't like him because he came from an immigrant family and got to attend the school on a full ride athletic scholarship. He knew the dreaded "immigrants getting handouts" bias all too well.

There was never going to be anything he could do to change that. At least Shane's family didn't feel that way.

Ilya walked around the car to greet Yuna instead of continuing to talk from the other side of the car. Part of him did this so she wouldn't try to talk to Shane who was very clearly on the verge of tears and still spacing out in the passenger seat.

"What are you two up to?" Yuna said as she crossed her arms to keep her robe closed in the cold. "It's chilly out here."

Yuna didn't really mind Ilya parking in their driveway anymore, even though the neighbors did gossip about seeing a strange beat down car around their house at times. As long as her son was spending time with classmates that were passionate enough to earn athletic scholarships, he was probably hanging out with the right people.

Ilya was aware that he had earned her trust as much as he could. And he was painfully aware of how easy it would be to lose her trust.

"Is just... group presentation for tomorrow." Ilya inhaled through his teeth casually and stretched his lips into an awkward expression

"Oh" Yuna's eyes widened and she sounded concerned "Did Shane not do his project on time?"

"No, no" Ilya interjected and tried to chuckle casually "Shane panics because what I write has bad grammar and there is little time."

Ilya quickly realized that the excuse didn't exactly paint him in the best light, so he shrugged and tried to laugh it off even more.

"But is okay." he added as casually as he could. "We fix everything now."

Yuna knew that her son cared about everything being perfect and going according to plan, so the premise wasn't a surprise to her.

Ilya kept smiling at her, but beneath the facade he felt like he was walking on eggshells.

“Well perfectionism does run in the family.” Yuna said matter-of-factly. “You two should come on in. We have some leftovers in the fridge if you’re hungry.”

Yuna knew that Ilya appreciated her cooking far more than her own son and would certainly enjoy the tuna and pasta salad leftovers.

“Yes. Thank you.” Ilya nodded to her.

Ilya opened the passenger door for Shane and leaned down to talk to him. “Come on, Shane. We go plan inside.”

Shane stepped out of the car looking shell shocked. Yuna could tell he was on the verge of crying and had definitely been freaking out earlier, but she looked at him with empathy.

“Aw honey, I’m sure you two will fix whatever mistake your friend made.” Yuna said gently.

Shane felt like he could just choke on the oxygen he was inhaling. He took a sharp breath and kept looking down.

His mom took him by the arm and turned to Ilya.

“He’s gonna be alright, he just needs a second.” Yuna said as they started walking towards the front door together.

Shane didn’t say anything. He felt like he was walking on train tracks while a train was approaching. His mother already knew he was freaking out. Maybe she would buy Ilya’s group project story, but Shane knew he wasn’t really good at lying or keeping up with lies.

What if his mother decided to check on them as they were discussing this?

What if she found out?

They walked in and suddenly Yuna was talking to him again, keeping him somewhat grounded in reality. Her voice sounded both too distant and too loud at the same time.

“Shane, why don’t you go upstairs and have a minute?” She eased her gentle hold on his shoulders and ran her hands down his arms. “I’ll send your friend up with drinks, okay?”

“Okay” Shane said flatly, still spacing out.

Shane walked up the stairs slowly, his hand loose on the rail, and headed towards his room. Ilya watched Shane make his way up the stairs like he might somehow slip and fall any second. He was so busy observing Shane, he didn’t realize Yuna was already heading towards the kitchen to their right.

“Let’s see... we have some pasta salad here.” Yuna nudged Ilya with her words and he turned around.

Ilya realized Shane had already made his way upstairs safely and turned to Yuna. She had his full attention.

Ilya followed her into the kitchen and watched her pull a tupperware container out of the fridge. The name brand kind. They were definitely overpriced, but the plastic looked a lot sturdier than the containers Ilya had at home.

“Have a seat.” She got a plate out for Ilya. “We had some tuna melt sitting around earlier too, but Shane might have finished it in the meantime.”

“No, this is perfect.” Ilya said as he sat down. “Thank you.”

Ilya dug in and Yuna wondered if he had dinner at home. He actually did. Half a frozen pizza his brother had shoved into the oven and overcooked after work.

The food Yuna and David had was always prepared in such a way where they somehow used a lot more ingredients than his household would and still ended up with a meal that felt light.

“Is really good!” Ilya’s words sounded muffled and his eyes were closed as he devoured massive mouthfuls of pasta salad with his fork.

Yuna was glad, but the way Ilya enjoyed the type of leftovers they had thrown out so many times before made her feel all sorts of mixed feelings.

“Well it’s getting late.” She said as she put the empty tupperware container in the dishwasher.

“Try not to stay up too late so you two can get some sleep before the project presentation tomorrow. If you two are just fixing some grammar it shouldn’t take more than an hour or so.”

Yuna closed the dishwasher door.

“You can feel free to use the guest bedroom if you have all your things for tomorrow with you.” She added.

Ilya wanted to stay so bad. Shane’s home was so nice. And Shane’s home had Shane. He could wake up and have breakfast with Shane. He wouldn’t wake up to his dad screaming about something incoherent in their native language or arguing with his brother about something stupid again.

And if he stayed over, maybe they could just lock both bedroom doors and he could spend the night in Shane’s room again. Shane’s bed was more than big enough to fit both of them. Then they would wake up and they would have an actual proper breakfast downstairs. No yelling.

The no yelling part was probably too enthusiastic. Ilya’s dad was bound to call him in the morning screaming about how Ilya took the car and never came back. Then he would yell about how he can’t drive to work now because Ilya wants to “spend time with Canadian whores”.

Ilya had to turn down Yuna’s hospitality.

“No, my father’s car... he has to drive to work.” he said as he kept trying to down the mouthful of pasta salad he was chewing.

He wished there was some form of public transit that connected him to Shane. But such lines didn’t exist for a reason.

“Well alright then. You two better start wrapping up this project soon.” Yuna said as she started walking out of the kitchen.

Ilya finished the last of the pasta salad quickly and got up to put his plate away while still chewing. “Is really okay if we take drinks from fridge upstairs?” he asked.

“Of course. We should have some coke in the fridge waiting for you.”

Ilya froze as he put his plate in the dishwasher. She remembered. Or maybe Shane brought it up.

For a second he felt like an impostor. An impostor that had manipulated this family into being nice to him and including the drink he liked in their grocery shopping.

“Have a good night, Ilya”

Ilya rarely allowed himself to stop and process all his feelings anymore. But in that moment, he missed his mom so much.

He missed her when his father was being an asshole and he missed her when his brother treated him like shit. He missed her when he felt all alone. He missed her when he felt proud of himself.

He missed her when Shane’s mom was being nice to him. He was never going to escape the waves of grief that kept crashing into him as he went on with his daily life.

But he couldn’t afford to stop and feel that way right now. Shane needed to talk.

Ilya opened the fridge and grabbed a ginger ale for Shane. Then he noticed the coke cans Yuna had just mentioned in the back of the fridge. He grabbed one of those for himself too.

Ilya walked up the stairs with the cans and suddenly reminded himself that there was no actual project that was due tomorrow. He pulled the cover up story off so well he actually started believing it himself.

“Right. No project” he thought to himself. *“Hollander thinks maybe he is pregnant.”*

He still didn’t actually believe it. Shane had a habit of panicking too much.

Chapter 4: Serious Talk, Okay?

Ilya knocked and then opened the door to Shane's room while holding the drinks in his other hand. Shane was sitting at his desk with his browser open and his forehead resting on his arm against the desk.

Ilya put their drinks down on the desk next to Shane, but Shane didn't look up. He just kept staring at the floor blankly.

"Hollander." Ilya started "Shane."

Ilya reached to run his hand across Shane's back, but Shane's whole body felt stiff under his touch.

"You can sit on the bed" Shane finally said flatly. "I just need a second."

"Okay."

Ilya took his coke and put it down on Shane's little bedside table. He sat down and pulled out his phone to look at the time. It was getting late. He had to tell his brother this would take a little longer.

"Finishing a group presentation with classmates. I will bring the car back later." He texted Alexei in Russian.

At least the message would be there waiting for Alexei when he decided to spam text Ilya about how he takes the car for hours and has never even paid for gas in his life.

Ilya opened his drink. He took a few sips and exhaled, deciding it was time to try again with Shane.

"Okay. So why you panic like this tonight?" he said calmly.

Shane's house didn't have thin walls and his parents' bedroom was on a whole different floor but Ilya still decided to keep his voice down a little. He wished Shane could speak Russian so it could be their mutual secret language at Shane's house.

"I was taking a break from Calculus and I was scrolling on Instagram and some guy said girls were lucky because they got periods"

Ilya wanted to laugh again but he already saw how much worse that made everything when they were sitting in the car. So he kept a straight face as best as he could, even though Shane was still looking down instead of looking at him.

Shane continued "And he said he wished he got periods because when he found out he was pregnant it was way too late to take the abortion pill so he had to have the child"

"Okay." Ilya said. Okay. He could work with this. He inhaled slowly. "Hollander, this is just Instagram. Some guy making video for views."

Shane finally sat up and looked at Ilya from his chair.

"You have ginger ale on desk." Ilya nudged his head at the can on Shane's desk hoping it would cheer Shane up.

Shane didn't even glance at the drink and that was how Ilya knew this was actually serious for Shane.

“Right. But what if the same thing happens to me? Do you have any idea how much that would destroy everything I’ve worked for up until now?” Shane said angrily.

Ilya exhaled in frustration.

“Shane yes, but what this man has... it is so rare, please.” Ilya waved his hands in a way that meant to show Shane how random and absurd the whole situation sounded to him. “You are now having panic attack because... someone on Instagram is pregnant”

Shane felt betrayed by that remark. When Ilya said it would be okay in the car, he thought that maybe Ilya understood and wanted to help. Shane’s mouth was slightly open and it quivered a little when he tried to speak again.

“Fuck you.” Shane’s words almost caught between his lips as he huffed out.

Ilya felt taken aback.

But he decided he wouldn’t say anything. He decided to let Shane have it because he didn’t want to respond with anything he would regret saying later.

“Being good at hockey is rare.” Shane continued. “Getting full ride scholarships at 14 is pretty damn rare but it happened to you. Here you are 4 years in acting like our lives are so ordinary because you’re so damn used to it.”

Ilya didn’t like it when Shane tried to lump their lives under the same category. He knew Shane would go insane if he had to endure half the things Ilya had been through. There were things Shane would never understand no matter how hard he tried, and the fact that Shane was trying to bring this into a conversation about some Instagram pregnancy was starting to make him angry.

“Yes Hollander, you are right.” Ilya spoke slowly and his tone sounded bitter “My life, it is not ordinary.”

Shane already sensed where this was going.

They didn’t really talk about this. Even when Shane tried to understand, what he saw through his eyes was Ilya eventually getting frustrated and acting like what he was trying to explain was common sense. Even though it wasn’t common sense in the world Shane lived in.

Shane didn’t really know what to do in those situations. He would ask Ilya to clarify what he meant, and Ilya would angrily say something like “Because we are Russian!” that was not an explanation at all.

Shane understood where Ilya was coming from a lot more than he did when they met 4 years ago. But sometimes it just wasn’t enough.

“Yeah.” Shane said apologetically. It felt heavy. It felt like the times when they talked about Ilya’s mom being gone. “I’m sorry. But I’m freaking out right now. It sounds made up to you but you don’t know that because I’ve never been tested for this.”

“Okay.” Ilya accepted whatever form of apology Shane was offering because he just wanted to move on and get it over with. “So how you test?”

“You have to... I would have to see a doctor that can diagnose me.” Shane started explaining “But that’s out of the question. I can’t risk having anything like that in my medical record if I want to make it in the NHL.”

“Okay” Ilya sighed. He reached for his coke and took a long sip.

They both sat there and let the heaviness of the situation linger for a little.

“Can you test at home?” Ilya decided to humor the spiral Shane was going down so that he could maybe stop it.

“Ilya I can’t pay a doctor to come to my house and do the exams either, that’s still an actual nightmare and it would still end up in my medical records.”

“No” Ilya almost interrupted him “I mean pregnancy test. They are maybe one dollar. From dollar store.”

Ilya knew about this because his older brother went through multiple pregnancy scares with his girlfriend. The dollar store had pregnancy tests. That was where his brother got them.

Every time Alexei had to deal with this, he vented to Ilya about how if his girlfriend was pregnant she would have to move in with them, and Ilya would have to either watch the child or start working too now that he’s old enough.

“Okay.” that word came from Shane this time. “But my parents would find out and start asking questions. And I can’t just go to the store and buy one, my mom tracks my card purchases too.”

“Okay” Ilya said calmly as he kept drinking his coke “So I buy for you. With cash.”

Ilya truly did not care about such a purchase being linked to him any more than his brother did. He could afford to buy something from the dollar store for Shane.

Maybe he could even ask his brother if he had one laying around with the amount of times Alexei had grabbed a generic pregnancy test in the checkout lane when they went to the dollar store.

But then his brother would go on another rant about Ilya having fun and wasting his time with “Canadian whores” instead of finding a part time job after school. The usual spiel.

“Okay” Shane continued. This was starting to sound like a plan. “And how do we dispose of it?”

Ilya laughed and it felt safe enough to laugh this time. “Dispose” sounded like such a serious word. Like Shane was writing an essay, or confessing to plotting a crime in court.

“Maybe school bathroom. To start drama” Ilya said playfully “But negative test is too boring. I can throw in my trash. I see this from my brother’s girlfriend and no one cares.”

“Okay.” Shane sounded confident in this plan.

“Okay.”

Ilya stood up from the bed and went up to Shane, who was still sitting in his desk chair. He noticed the time on Shane’s desk clock. It was almost 10 PM.

Ilya opened Shane’s ginger ale and put it back down on his desk. “For you. To sleep well” He said teasingly.

“I don’t think I feel like drinking anything right now” Shane exhaled.

“Okay.” Ilya leaned down and wrapped his arms around Shane from behind Shane’s desk chair. “Maybe I make you sleep well instead.” he said against the side of Shane’s neck as he pulled himself closer.

“Jesus, Ilya” Shane wanted to protest, but he felt unable to move away “You didn’t even lock the door.”

Ilya spun Shane’s desk chair around slowly and leaned down so he could place his thumb against Shane’s cheek. Shane closed his eyes, and Ilya leaned in closer.

He briefly kissed Shane’s other cheek first, dangerously close to his parted lips.

“Okay” he said and Shane could feel the warmth of Ilya’s breath against his own face as Ilya talked. “Then you listen for steps for now. Then I lock door.”

Ilya balanced himself by placing his left hand on Shane’s shoulder and kissed him slowly while loosening the hand that was previously holding Shane’s face.

Between his own breath and Ilya’s breathing which was suddenly very audible to Shane, Shane didn’t trust himself to catch any footsteps approaching his room in time.

What if his mom decided to check on him? What if she decided to make sure he was ready to get a good grade on this supposed project presentation Ilya had just told her they had tomorrow?

He wanted to get up and lock the door himself but instead he could feel a lock of Ilya’s hair against his forehead. And he could feel Ilya’s audible breath as warmth against his face. And when he slowly kissed him back it felt like their lips were synced so perfectly at the exact same pace.

A loud noise started Shane out of his thoughts as Ilya’s phone started ringing and vibrating against his desk.

“Blyattt Lyosha!” Ilya exclaimed in frustration as he quickly reached for his phone and realized his brother was calling him. Shane recognized the name Alexei too.

Ilya pulled away from Shane’s chair with a quick “Do not talk.” and quickly added “Please.” just so Shane wouldn’t get upset over it.

Someone was shouting in Russian from the moment Ilya picked up. His brother was asking why the hell he was talking so long again.

“Lyosha, I already sent you a message saying I would be back soon.” Ilya said defensively, but the way he talked sounded angry as well “I don’t understand why you are calling to yell at me over the phone!”

Shane didn’t understand what Ilya was saying, but he never enjoyed hearing these phone calls. Even though it was one of the rarer times he heard what Ilya sounded like in his native language and how much his brother talked in such a similar way, even though their voices still somehow sounded completely different to Shane.

The aggressive talking didn’t last for too long and the call was over soon. Ilya sighed.

“My brother, he... decides he will get his girlfriend from her work now, with the car. To come to our house.” Ilya explained “Store closed and she is waiting.”

“Okay” Shane didn’t really know what else to say.

Ilya downed the rest of his coke from the night stand and then made his way back to Shane, who was still sitting in his desk chair.

Ilya leaned down and kissed his forehead.

“Okay. I go now.” Ilya sighed “Sadly I do not get you pregnant tonight, Hollander” he added jokingly, hoping it would cheer Shane up.

“Fuck you.” Shane responded “Not funny.”

Ilya chuckled with a quick exhale and ruffled Shane's hair before kissing the top of his head.

“Okay. I am sorry. We talk more.” Ilya said as he started to move away from Shane. “But now I go or my brother will kill me. Maybe he is so... PMS because his girlfriend made him pregnant too.”

Shane briefly laughed at that one because it took him by surprise.

“Asshole.” Shane breathed out, feeling defeated because Ilya actually managed to make him laugh in the end.

“Okay. I go. Good night, Shane.”

“Night, Ilya” Ilya didn't expect to hear that reply as he stepped out of Shane's room and closed the door from the outside.

It actually felt nice to hear it back.

Chapter 5: Blur

Chapter Notes

Thank you everyone that's been reading and leaving kudos as I've been proofreading and posting all the "Day 1" chapters from my google doc tonight 🥹❤️

They text more in this chapter so I wanted to clarify that the texts that are consecutive and one after the other are always from the same person. (EDIT: now their texts have a work skin!)

Ilya uses)) and ((because those are just the Russian variation of :) and :((

The lights in Shane's house were dim as Ilya walked down the stairs. Normally Shane would walk him out, but tonight Ilya felt like Shane probably needed to rest.

He wondered if it would be impolite to just leave their house without anyone locking the door. Maybe he could text Shane and tell him to lock the door after he left.

"Ilya!" Yuna's voice startled him from the living room couch where she was quietly reading a book near one of their tall lamps. "You two all done with that presentation?"

"Yes." Ilya responded quickly, still in a hurry to get to his brother as fast as possible now "We fix everything. And make plan for tomorrow. For presentation. Thank you for pasta." he said quickly. "But now I go, my brother will pick up girlfriend from work."

"Oh" Yuna exclaimed "She's working this late?"

"Yes. She was, yes." Ilya had to end the small talk quickly this time "Depends on shift. Good night."

"Good night, Ilya. Drive safe."

Ilya didn't have time to process how much those words meant to him this time. He stepped out into the cold and walked towards his car. He wasn't even back home yet, but he felt like he had just left Shane's world and stepped back into his own.

He got in the car and decided he needed to light a cigarette. Just maybe not in front of Shane's house, where Shane's mom could look out the window and see him smoking. He didn't want to disappoint her and look like a bad influence.

The drive home felt like a blur. The streets were more or less empty and everything just blurred together. The first cigarette he smoked blurred into the second cigarette he lit.

At least not smoking on the way to Shane's place was worth it, because he got to kiss Shane and Shane didn't stop him to complain about how he needs to stop smoking.

The rest of the night was a blur too. He parked the car. He went inside. Then his brother was yelling at him again.

Ilya was too tired to pay attention to it or defend himself again. His brother never mentioned he wanted to pick up his girlfriend later when he gave Ilya the keys, and Ilya could point that out again but he just

didn't care anymore.

It was always the same fight about how Ilya didn't even pay for gas. How he was the only one living in the house for free without paying rent and leeching off of the family instead of providing.

Like it was Ilya's fault he was still in school and there were simply not enough hours in a day to get up, take the bus, do a whole day of classes, do hockey practice for his athletic program, shower, take the bus home, do assignments, and SLEEP so he could actually play well the next day and keep his scholarship.

"She's still waiting for you. It's cold outside." Ilya said to his brother after some point. He just wanted the pointless conversation to be over so his brother could go get his girlfriend and Ilya could go to bed.

Alexei shoved past him as he headed out and it was finally over. He wouldn't have to listen to him or argue anymore. He could finally go to his room and be at peace.

He put on a hoodie and sweatpants as his pajamas because it was still winter and he didn't have the nice thermostat heating they had at Shane's house.

Shane. He told Shane they would talk more.

Ilya got under his thick blanket and pulled out his phone, and suddenly he didn't feel like he was just trying to fast forward through time anymore. He texted Shane.

Ilya

Are you sleeping?

Shane replied almost immediately. He was still sitting in his chair, at his desk where Ilya had left him.

Shane

No

Just finished the Calculus stuff for Friday

Ilya had completely forgotten about the Calculus assignment Shane said he had been working on before he saw the Instagram reel that freaked him out so much. But he didn't really feel like talking about Calculus. Shane was taking a more advanced math class and Ilya didn't really care.

Ilya texted again.

Ilya

Because I leave you cant sleep easy now))

Shane didn't expect Ilya to be so direct all of a sudden and it was making him flustered. He got up from his chair like some invisible entity might start reading his messages behind him and sat down on his bed, in the same spot where Ilya had been sitting an hour ago.

Shane texted back.

Shane

Fuck you

Maybe

Ilya smiled from his own bed. Talking to Shane wasn't going to be difficult now. He had seen far worse even when Shane wasn't fresh out of a major freakout. He was chewing on his hoodie string as he replied to Shane.

Ilya

You are so brave now
You kiss even when I don't lock door

Shane rolled to his side in his bed as he read that text. He just couldn't stop himself from moving for some reason. He texted back.

Shane

That was seriously such a bad idea

Ilya replied quickly

Ilya

Maybe)))

Ilya wondered if Shane would fold soon. Ilya always had to be the one carrying these conversations too. He continued.

Ilya

You are unlucky my brother calls me
Otherwise I lock door for you
So I do more than kiss you

Shane wanted to bury his face in his pillow and hide under his covers. Ilya had a way of distracting him from just about everything, including his problems.

Shane had a way of distracting Ilya from his problems too, but Shane never truly grasped how well he was doing it. He finally got another message from Shane.

Shane

Are we still going to the dollar store tomorrow?

Ilya replied quickly.

Ilya

Yes.
I take you to dollar store like date
Randeveu

Shane was laughing now. He had no idea where Ilya might have heard that word. Maybe if Ilya had said it in person he would have been a lot more shocked, but the fact that Ilya was placed in the lower level French classes showed a lot more over text where he could see Ilya's spelling.

He texted Ilya again.

Shane

Rendezvous*

Ilya rolled his eyes with a tsk and started typing back.

Ilya

Ok I take you to dollar store like rendezvous*****

Shane found that way funnier than he thought he might.

Shane

It sucks that you had to leave

Ilya sighed. He didn't want to think of that but it was fine. He wouldn't have to deal with any of that this next winter. He would have his own money, and rent out his own place, and have his own car.

That was what he kept telling himself even though he wasn't sure how realistic all of that was. He was a good player, but actually getting his independence so soon still felt like a dream he was using to cope.

He texted Shane back.

Ilya

Yes

Unlucky

You drink ginger ale when I leave?))

Shane actually ended up drinking the ginger ale Ilya opened for him while doing his Calculus problem sets.

Shane

Yeah

Ilya felt like he actually had the situation under control. Shane was actually being himself again. Ilya let the hoodie string fall out of his mouth and started typing again.

Ilya

Now ginger ale make you sleep well for me))

Before big rendezvous***** in dollar store tomorrow

Shane snorted while reading his last text.

Shane

How are we going to go to the dollar store?

Are you going to have the car?

Ilya sighed. Probably not. Maybe. He didn't know.

Ilya

Maybe

We see how to go tomorrow

Shane knew that the car might not be an option after the fight Ilya had with his brother over the phone earlier. He sighed as he texted Ilya back.

Shane

Okay

We will figure it out tomorrow

But we are still going, right?

It was just the dollar store. Ilya knew they could find a way to get there. Maybe they could just take the bus. He would have to check the directions from their school on his phone tomorrow. He was too tired to do that now.

Ilya

Yes

Tomorrow
I sleep now, without you for pillow((
Good night))

Ilya tabbed out of his texting app and double checked if his alarm was set for tomorrow. He put his phone to charge and made sure his power bank was charging too, in case they stayed out after hockey practice.

Shane locked his phone and put it down on the wireless charging stand on the nightstand next to his bed. Tomorrow was going to be a long day.

Chapter 6: The Big Morning

Shane woke up feeling like he had just had a bad dream. He couldn't remember why, but he felt like something bad had just happened.

As he came to his senses, he remembered what had happened the day before.

Right. They had to drive to the dollar store today.

He grabbed his phone from the wireless charger on the nightstand and checked if Ilya had texted him. Nothing other than the last good night text.

Maybe he should have said good night back.

Shane got up and started getting ready. His mom was probably going to offer to take him to school because she always worried too much when he wasn't feeling well. Shane wasn't sure how he was going to keep up the lie Ilya told her last night. He was bad at lying.

Ilya woke up in his own home to the sound of Alexei's girlfriend frying eggs while his dad and his brother sounded like they were talking about something serious.

It had been a while since anyone cooked any breakfast for everyone in their house. He usually had his first meal of the day during the lunch break at school. Or he would have a protein bar on the bus on his way to class. A lot of brands just handed boxes of them out to students at his school and he kept a handful of them in his backpack.

He checked his phone. No texts from Shane.

He didn't feel like getting up yet, but his dad and his brother were already arguing and he just wanted to leave so he wouldn't have to listen to it.

"She didn't have food ready for me before work," his dad commented bitterly "Now I have to go to work without eating or I'll be late. How is she going to be a wife to you one day if she acts this way?"

Alexei's girlfriend was Russian too so she fully understood what they were saying. Ilya didn't know how she was willingly putting up with this. She had all the free will in the world to just leave. To just break up with Alexei and have nothing to do with this family.

"How is she going to raise children for you in the future if there's no discipline and order in this house?" His dad continued.

Right. This conversation again.

Suddenly Ilya was reminded of his conversation with Shane the night before. The whole reason Shane had been panicking.

He walked out of his room and headed to the bathroom with his phone in his hands. He started texting Shane.

Ilya

Good morning)))

Big day for dollar store rendezvous now))))

His dad's voice broke Ilya out of the little escape he had with Shane. "And who are *you* talking to now?"

Ilya stopped and locked his phone. "What?"

His dad didn't usually care about who he specifically talked to.

"Lyosha told me you took the car until late again. And you should know that whatever girl you meet needs to be a good housewife one day. Something your brother clearly doesn't know."

Ilya didn't really know what to say to that. It was too early in the morning for this. At least his brother was the one getting on their dad's bad side this time.

"Eggs are ready" His brother's girlfriend interrupted their argument and started putting plates down on the dining table. Sunny side up and dripping cooking oil.

Ilya didn't want to sit at the table with them. He was hungry but he could just have a granola protein bar on the bus. He already knew that trying to get the car at any point today was going to be an absolute nightmare and the answer was probably going to be no.

"I have class soon. I have to go."

He decided that what he was already wearing was good enough. He had more clothes and all the hygiene supplies he needed in the gym bag in his locker.

He grabbed his backpack from his room and quickly slipped past the final remarks about how Alexei's girlfriend didn't make eggs on time.

The fighting didn't stress Ilya out anymore. This time it was just annoying and he just didn't want to be around for it.

Shane didn't feel too stressed to eat before class this time. All the avocado stuff his mom had out for him ended up making him feel somewhat better. They had a plan. And he had ginger ale waiting for him on the dining table.

Did they really have a plan?

Ilya had texted him good morning, but Shane didn't really know how to respond. Ilya did say they were still going to the dollar store but he never followed up with how they would actually get there.

Shane decided to give him a nudge over text. The text found Ilya on the bus.

Shane

Do you know how we are going to get there?

Ilya felt like this was a much bigger deal to Shane than it needed to be. He started typing, his phone resting on the backpack he was holding in his lap.

Ilya

I take you)

Shane looked at the message confused. He needed Ilya to clarify.

Shane

Did you actually get the car?

Your dad doesn't usually let you have it on weekdays.

Ilya inhaled reading Shane's messages.

Ilya

No

But is okay

I still take you after hockey

Shane wanted Ilya to explain what the plan was a little better than that. He started typing but his mom's voice startled him.

"Are you texting your friend?"

He slammed his phone face down on the table while instinctively locking his screen and looked up at her. "What?"

"Are you texting your friend Ilya?" Yuna continued, aware that maybe Shane was still stressed by having his routine interrupted last night.

Shane looked startled so his mom continued. "He said you two fixed the project and everything was fine when he had to leave. You both have your notes down, right?"

Shane was suddenly breathing manually. He hated lying. He was horrible at it.

"We were just planning stuff."

Yuna decided to stop prying because it was clearly making Shane more nervous about presenting their work in class later that day.

"I'm sure you'll do fine" she said "You should go get your things if you're done eating. I'll drive you to school"

Shane hoped she wouldn't try to talk to him about this on the way to class. He was already dressed so he got his things from his room quickly and headed for his mom's car.

He choose to sit in the back seat, hoping he would be able to hide from Yuna behind the passenger seat if she started asking too many questions.

She started driving and he braced for the worst.

"Really chilly this morning" Yuna said, exaggerating a shiver as she started driving. "You should get your warmer jacket from the trunk."

"I'm fine" Shane tried to brush her off. He didn't feel like talking.

Yuna kept driving and didn't say anything for a while. Shane didn't feel like scrolling on his phone because he was worried his algorithm might betray him in front of his mom. And he felt too nervous to keep texting Ilya around her because she had just noticed they were texting earlier.

His mom broke the silence for him. "We should look through the jackets you have in the other cars too"

Shane exhaled in frustration. He didn't feel like talking, and he especially didn't feel like talking about what he was wearing. Sometimes his mom treated him like he was still a child. Like he couldn't even pick out his clothes by himself.

"I'm not cold. I'm fine." He said quickly.

“Yeah” Yuna said slowly from the steering wheel “You never wear those anymore”

Shane could not believe his mom was seriously about to lecture him about jackets when he was clearly stressed about something else. He decided he just wouldn’t say anything.

His mom continued.

“Maybe your friend could have one so we declutter the cars a little”

Oh. His mom was talking about Ilya now. The fact that she was bringing up Ilya startled him enough to make eye contact with her in the rear view mirror.

Shane had never really considered what she was saying. He didn’t even like those winter jackets. They were just sitting there so his mom would have something to force him to put on when she decided it was too cold out after they drove somewhere.

He didn’t know what to say. His mom was still talking and he couldn’t even see her full expression in the rear view mirror.

“He looked like he was going to freeze out there in what he was wearing last night”

His mom was babying his friend in the same way she had a habit of treating Shane like a child. But maybe she was right about Ilya. It wasn’t something he really thought about last night.

Shane wondered if his mom would still act this way if she knew what they actually did when she wasn’t looking. She probably wouldn’t.

“You should ask him today” Yuna said as she made the turn towards Shane’s campus and started slowing the car down “After you present your project.”

Shane felt ready to leave. His mom mentioning Ilya was already a lot and now she was bringing up the lie he told her last night again. The lie that Shane just couldn’t play along with even though he wanted to.

Yuna finally stopped the car in front of the main school building and Shane immediately reached for the door. Yuna was already turning around to talk to him.

“Well, good luck with your project!” she said both gently and enthusiastically this time

“Bye, mom”

Shane was already speed walking away from the car.

Chapter 7: Texting in Class

Shane was never the type of person to text during class, but Ilya's messages still showed up on his smart watch. He wondered if Ilya was trying to update him on their dollar store plan, so he checked the texts.

Ilya

Almost lunch
Can eat food but cannot eat you here)

Shane squinted at the tiny letters on his watch. He furrowed his brow as he started typing on the small watch screen to text Ilya back.

Shane

Are you trying to fuck with me in class?

Shane shot Ilya a death glare from across the room, but Ilya was chewing on his pencil and casually typing on his phone like he might be looking up something relevant to the lesson.

Ilya

No
Fuck with you after class)))

Shane wanted to throw his watch across the room and hit Ilya with it.

He wanted to say "Fuck off" and he wanted to call him an asshole, but at the same time he wanted to know the timeline for their plan. If Ilya was saying this, did that mean their plan to go to the dollar store was off now?

Did that mean Ilya still wasn't taking this seriously again? Shane typed on his watch carefully before hitting send.

Shane

What about the dollar store?
When are we going to go?

"Rozanov" their teacher's voice startled Shane more than it startled Ilya "Any interesting facts from the internet you might want to share with the class?"

Ilya looked up non-chalantly and Shane noticed that he was panicking way more than Ilya was. What if their teacher confiscated Ilya's phone and decided to go through all the texts they were sending each other in class? Did Ilya just not think of that?

"Maybe not interesting" Ilya said flatly "I don't understand word from lesson"

Shane wondered how Ilya could just lie so easily. He always just lied like it was nothing. Like he actually believed what he was saying.

"And what word is that?" their teacher pushed.

Ilya wasn't going to give in. He remembered their teacher mentioning something about "*royal disposition*" when the Royal family visits Canada. He remembered it because it reminded him of the way Shane had said they had to "dispose" of the dollar store pregnancy test.

“Many” Ilya said. “Dispose. I do not know this word.”

Shane could not believe his ears. Was Ilya quoting him right now?

“Right.” Their teacher decided to drop this and continue with the content “Disposition is a way of behaving. A way of doing things. But you can certainly feel free to look up any words you may not understand if it helps.”

“Yes” Ilya said with his locked phone still in his hand “I do that for lesson”

Ilya unlocked his phone and somehow kept texting Shane with a straight face, looking like he was deep in thought.

Ilya

We go after hockey)

I take you

Ilya wanted to text “I take you on randevou” too but he didn’t want to make Shane laugh in class. Even though he normally loved making Shane laugh, this was the one exception.

The fact that they were still going was comforting enough to Shane. He could just ask Ilya about the details later.

The bell rang a few minutes later and Ilya didn’t wait for Shane to join him on his way to the cafeteria. Shane speedwalked towards him to catch up.

“Okay. So how are we getting there?” Shane asked

Ilya realized that Shane would keep asking until he was sure they had a solid plan. At least he was just asking instead of having a full blown panic attack.

“We take bus” Ilya said finally, since that was realistically their only option “I check map for bus later”

Shane didn’t even know how to use the public transit system.

“Can’t we just uber?” Shane asked

Ilya glanced at him as they kept walking and raised an eyebrow “Take expensive uber when there is bus?”

Shane remembered that Ilya couldn’t just afford to uber when it was more convenient. If they wanted to uber, Shane would have to be the one to order the ride, and then his mom would ask about the charge on the card he used.

Shane didn’t want his mom to see the ride invoice and know where they were going. He suddenly remembered he had to stop his mom from trying to pick him up later.

He texted his mom as they waited in line to get their lunches.

Shane

I’m gonna hang out after hockey practice

Don’t pick me up

Yuna was always micromanaging him, so the fact that she had follow up questions wasn’t out of the ordinary.

Yuna

Are you going to your friend's house?

Shane actually felt uncomfortable at Ilya's house but they didn't want Yuna to explicitly know that and be weird about it. It had nothing to do with Ilya or Ilya's things and everything to do with Ilya's family. His brother was an asshole and constantly barged in to argue, and Shane just generally didn't feel welcome there.

He texted his mom back.

Shane

No

I'm going out.

He hoped that would suffice.

Suddenly the person in front of him moved away and it was Shane's turn to get his meal. They already had all his microbiotic diet goals down for lunch, so he got a pre-selected meal in his tray. Ilya got meatballs.

They picked out a small table at the end of the dining hall, hoping no one would try to join them or eavesdrop on their conversation. They put their trays down and Ilya sat down first, immediately digging into his food.

"Excited for dollar store now?" He asked Shane jokingly while chewing.

Shane rolled his eyes. "Fuck you. You know I'm still kind of freaking out"

Ilya wanted to tease him a little more, but still wondered if he might be crossing a line. He didn't want Shane to start freaking out in the dining hall.

"Hey, is okay" Ilya said as he put two meatballs in his mouth "I know dollar store like my house. Is not scary, you do not get lost"

Shane didn't laugh, so Ilya stopped teasing.

"My mom said you talked to her last night." Shane hadn't even touched his food yet

"Yes, she close door when I go" Ilya looked at him while eating his food "Sadly we do not lock door upstairs, but she still lock door downstairs"

Shane kicked him under the table. "Ilya we are in public" he hissed

Ilya laughed while still chewing "Yes, it is big secret to have door in house"

Shane looked around and noticed no one was within eavesdropping distance or looking at them. Ilya didn't have to check, because he already knew no one was around before he said that.

"What did you tell her when you left?" Shane asked him

"Nothing. That I go because brother want car. That project is okay and we fix everything." Ilya didn't even remember anymore. He left in a hurry last night and everything around him had already started blurring out of his perception.

Shane sighed. "Do you think she heard anything?"

Ilya stopped chewing for a second. “No”

“Okay” Shane exhaled. He finally felt like he could get to his food now, even though Ilya was already almost done eating.

“Do you want to stay here and go over the hockey practice strategies with me?” Shane said meekly, hoping he could finally have something to really distract him from his thoughts.

“Yes.” Ilya said as he watched Shane get his tablet out of his bag to show him something “But I stay because it is hockey, not because it is you” Ilya teased him.

“Fuck you.” Shane said with a weak smile “You’re clearly staying because you wouldn’t know how to dodge these puck stealing techniques if I didn’t show you.”

Ilya liked the energy he was getting from Shane. It was the first time he felt like they were both escaping whatever was deeply stressing them out in their lives together.

Chapter 8: Practice and Bus Adventures

Chapter Notes

Thank you for making it this far 

They text more in this chapter and I'm thinking of re-formatting all the texting in this fic so it's not confusing to anyone. (Edit: I ended up reformatting it and it feels so much cleaner to me now)

I genuinely can't believe I managed to write this much in maybe 3 days.

Anyway, I hope you enjoy!

Hockey practice went well until Ilya got slammed into the rink board hard enough for his helmet to bolt and start feeling like it might be coming off.

The team stopped for a second and Shane noticed Ilya taking his helmet off and holding the back of his hand up to his mouth to check for blood. He skated towards Ilya with his stick.

“Are you okay?” Shane asked him.

“Yes” Ilya took off his mouth guard and spat to get the faint taste of blood of his mouth. “Check if tooth chip again” He said as he exposed his front teeth at Shane.

Ilya had chipped his teeth playing before, and their athletic insurance covered getting them fixed almost immediately. Something about preventing worse injuries from the uneven edges. So it was purely technical for him at this point.

“Doesn’t look like it” Shane said “Your lip looks busted though”

“Okay, that is fine” Ilya put his mouth guard back in and adjusted his helmet back on. “Everyone, show is over come on” he yelled out and they all went back to practicing stealing the puck.

Ilya’s lip still stung a little as he showered after they wrapped up with practice. He ignored it and started thinking about what he might want to wear later. He didn’t feel like putting the same clothes he slept in back on.

He had a lot of random athletic clothes in his bag that he had gotten through his school. A lot of brands simply wanted to have good players seen in their clothes too.

He also had a clean pair of clean jeans there. He decided to wear those. The fabric felt thicker than all the sweatpants he had in his bag.

Ilya changed slowly, waiting for their teammates to leave and go home before he talked to Shane. Shane seemed to be doing the same thing. They were usually the last two people to leave anyway.

He put his CCM hoodie on, and realized the others had already left. It was time to talk to Shane.

“Okay.” Ilya said to Shane as Shane was tying his shoes in the locker room “We go now?”

Shane looked up at him from the bench, and noticed Ilya was wearing one of the branded CCM hoodies that also had the logo for their school's hockey program on it. He looked at Ilya mortified.

"You can't wear that." Shane said, like what he was saying was common sense.

Ilya didn't know where Shane was coming from. Another instance where he understood the words but not their actual meaning.

"What I can't wear?" he asked Shane confused.

"You can't wear that hoodie. It has our logo on it" Shane said sharply

Ilya stood there and looked at him, not sure what to make of what Shane was saying. "I cannot wear logo in dollar store."

Shane was frustrated. "Yes, because then people would recognize us"

Ilya wanted to laugh, but he didn't want to upset Shane. So he teased him instead.

"Mr. famous hockey celebrity" Ilya teased instead "Recognized at store"

Shane exhaled in frustration. "Can you please just wear something else?"

Ilya didn't want to argue because he had a tendency of just backing out of arguments when he didn't really care that much.

"Okay"

He went back to his locker and moved all the hockey equipment aside to get to his duffel bag again. He had an underarmour hoodie that didn't have any school-specific logos logos on the front because the big UA logo was taking up all the space.

It had the number 81 on the back though.

Ilya turned to Shane and showed him the back of the hoodie.

"Is okay to wear 81 to dollar store? Behind jacket?" Ilya said sarcastically

Shane looked at him from the bench. Ilya changed his hoodie quickly and put his coat back on.

He closed his locker and walked back to Shane. "Okay. We go now?"

Shane finally noticed that Ilya's coat didn't look thick enough for the weather outside. It looked like something that might work during the fall, but it was too cold for that now. He probably wouldn't have noticed it if his mom hadn't pointed it out, but it stuck out to him now.

"Are you cold?" Shane said slowly. He was starting to sound like his mom.

"What?" Ilya was confused "No." He couldn't think of what Shane might be getting at. "There is too much heating in changing room."

"No, I mean..." Shane wasn't sure how to say it. This felt so stupid for him every time his mom asked. "Your jacket. Are you going to get cold outside?"

"Shane, you are being grandmother" Ilya laughed a little and teased him, wondering if Shane was just too nervous to go now "First you don't like sweatshirt, now you don't like jacket"

Shane exhaled. Why did this feel so difficult? Ilya was still talking.

“Come, close locker and we go.” Ilya nudged him “Russians do not get cold”

Shane got up from the changing room bench and went up to his locker. He already had one of the skiing jackets from the car taking up space in his locker. His mom forced him to wear it to school two weeks ago even though it wasn't even that cold and he just dumped it in his locker afterwards.

“Do you want to wear this? So you're not cold?” He asked without looking at Ilya “I don't really use this jacket, my mom had it in the car and made me wear it.”

Ilya looked at the navy blue jacket Shane pulled out of his locker. The smile he was using to tease Shane dropped from his face.

No one had actually cared about what Ilya was wearing and whether he was warm since his mom passed. He wanted to be annoyed at Shane for making him feel all those emotions again.

He just wanted to have a normal day. He was supposed to take Shane to the dollar store and buy him his stupid pregnancy test. Then Shane would take the test, it would come out negative, and they could just hang out and have a normal afternoon together.

“Maybe” Ilya said. He didn't know what else to say.

“Here” Shane closed the locker and held the skiing jacket out for Ilya without looking at him.

Ilya sighed and took his jacket off so he could change into the one Shane was offering. It actually fit him.

“Smells like you” Ilya decided to tease him “Like girly flowers”

“Fuck you” Shane laughed.

Ilya shoved his other jacket in his locker and put his backpack back on. “Come, we go fast. Or we miss bus”

They made it out of the ice rink building and headed out of the campus so they could make it to the bus stop.

“Where is the bus stop?” Shane asked Ilya as he trailed along

Ilya was too busy noticing how different it felt to wear an actual proper winter jacket outside after such a long time. He had outgrown all the ones his mom had gotten him when he was younger, and no one cared enough to get him nicer ones after that.

He didn't have to speedwalk or stiffly keep his hands in his pockets just so he could stop himself from shivering anymore.

“Is close. I take you.” Ilya was following the map on his phone, and it showed them that they would need to take the bus from one of his usual stops to get to the nearest dollar store from their school campus.

“Okay”

Shane followed him. The fact that this was actually happening and they were actually going out to buy the dollar store pregnancy test somehow made him even more anxious.

They made it to the bus stop where other people were already waiting for their bus. "Is the bus going to be crowded?" Shane asked him

Ilya looked at him. "Maybe."

Their bus came within a few minutes and Shane was surprised that most of the people waiting didn't get on the bus with them too. Ilya tapped his public transit pass and moved a little further into the bus, looking for two empty seats where they could sit down.

He noticed Shane wasn't right behind him, so he turned around. Shane was still standing at the entrance.

"How do I pay?" Shane asked him.

Ilya didn't expect to hear that question. He remembered that Shane probably didn't own any kind of pass or public transit card. That didn't really occur to him earlier.

"With phone" Ilya went up to him, showing Shane that he could just use the card he had on Apple Pay on one of the ride terminals.

Shane's phone made the payment confirmation noise, and he moved away from the terminal awkwardly while the bus was already moving. He held onto one of the rails so he wouldn't fall, but Ilya was already a lot better at maintaining his balance on a moving bus.

"Come" Ilya said to Shane, "We sit there"

They made it to the middle of the bus, where they could be close to the exit. Ilya squeezed into the window seat and Shane sat down next to him.

"When do we get off?" Shane asked

"I tell you when" Ilya said casually.

"Okay" Shane said blankly next to him.

Ilya was being really quiet and doing something on his phone, and it bothered Shane.

He got a notification on his watch and wondered if it was his mom again. He looked at his watch. It was Ilya. Ilya was texting him right next to him.

Ilya

Don't talk on bus too much

The text felt like a slap in the face. Ilya was supposed to be there for him and keep him from spiraling. Now he was just acting distant. Shane glared at him angrily, and then looked back at his watch feeling pushed away.

So much for the "rendezvous".

Another text from Ilya.

Ilya

You look pretty for date
And smell nice)

Shane was too shocked to know what to say. He looked at Ilya but Ilya was still ignoring him in person, while sitting right next to him.

Shane got his phone out so he could properly reply to Ilya the way he normally texted when he was angry

Shane

What the fuck do you actually want from me?
You're sending me all these messages and you won't even look at me
I'm freaking out right now and you're just playing around
You tell me to stop talking and then try to hit on me

Ilya read all of his messages as they came up on his screen. He replied patiently.

Ilya

Sorry
I say this because no one else talk on bus now
Catches attention too much

Shane looked at the replies that showed up on his own screen as he sat next to Ilya. The whole situation felt stupid.

Ilya

Are you nervous still(

Their bus stopped again and Shane finally looked up as people around them started moving to get off as more people got on. He was suddenly very aware of the fact that there really were a lot of people on the same bus as them.

It felt really public. Shane started typing slowly now.

Shane

Yeah

Ilya's reply came almost immediately.

Ilya

There is ginger ale in dollar store too)

Shane snorted a little. The chuckle made him realize that he was actually somewhat pressing the side of his body against Ilya's. The bus seats were simply too cramped for there to be that much space between them.

Shane hesitated a little as he typed

Shane

Are you really okay?

Ilya looked at the message and then glanced at Shane, trying to read what he might be getting at from his face. He looked back at his phone and started typing.

Ilya

Yes? What you mean?

He hoped Shane wasn't about to bring up the whole thing with his brother calling to argue the other night. He didn't feel like talking about it.

Shane

You just got slammed into the board maybe a couple of hours ago and your lip still looks pretty busted

Ilya put his hand up to his mouth, and tried to feel if his lip felt weird with his fingers. Maybe his lips were chapped from the cold too and had started bleeding again.

He looked at his hand. No blood.

Ilya put both of his hands back on his phone and started typing again

Ilya

And what? You don't want to kiss me now? 😞

Shane felt Ilya's move his knee in a way that made his entire thigh briefly rub against Shane's on the bus seats.

He inhaled, trying really hard not to look. He texted Ilya

Shane

Not here

Ilya texted back.

Ilya

Just look at phone)

No one looks at you now

Ilya moved his foot so his shoe was touching Shane's. Shane froze at first and then slowly moved his own foot towards Ilya's too.

They stayed like that for a minute, with Shane not really doing anything on his phone. He was just staring at their conversation blankly.

"It's our stop" Ilya said as he suddenly moved his entire body up and put his hand on the rail while waiting for Shane to get up from his seat.

Shane looked up at him. "Okay"

They got off the bus. Shane looked around but still couldn't see the dollar store.

"Where is it?" he asked Ilya, but Ilya was already walking away from the bus stop

"Close." Ilya said "We walk 5 minutes"

Shane speedwalked towards him to catch up.

Chapter 9: The Store

Chapter Notes

I ended up going back and reformatting the texting in the whole fic so it's easier to tell what's being said over text and what's being said out loud.

Anyway, they finally made it! I hope you enjoy. 

Shane felt like his heart was going to burst out of his chest when he finally saw the big Dollar Tree parking lot. The actual store was further in and he could see multiple "Shop Canadian" maple leaf signs on the store windows.

Suddenly the fact that they were actually walking to the dollar store that had the pregnancy tests felt very real. It felt nerve wrecking.

It felt like when he really wanted to talk to Ilya after going down the pregnancy scare rabbit hole and then suddenly felt too scared to pick up the phone or actually start talking when Ilya called him.

"Can you slow down?" Shane said to Ilya from behind.

Ilya turned to look at him. Maybe he would have been annoyed if Shane started chickening out when they were still in the locker room after hockey practice, but freaking out like this in the store parking lot seemed pretty understandable to Ilya.

"Okay" Ilya said as he stopped and turned around so he was facing Shane.

Shane looked down at the ground and didn't say anything back for a bit. He looked like he was spacing out.

Ilya waited for Shane to have a second. Standing in the cold felt different. He was still not used to how warm he felt in this jacket while just standing outside. His body didn't even feel stiff.

"Do you want to wait outside store?" Ilya asked him patiently "And I go alone?"

Shane considered it for a second, but quickly decided that that didn't really work for him.

"No" he said quietly "I don't want to be alone."

Shane took a deep breath and exhaled. "I'm freaking out right now."

Ilya wanted to be patient with Shane, but he also knew they couldn't just stand in the parking lot for hours. Maybe they could find a place to sit down nearby, but that would probably cost money.

"Okay" Ilya started "So what we do now?"

Shane didn't know either. His vision didn't feel like it was focused on anything and he was breathing manually to stop himself from having a panic attack.

His parents weren't there to do all the talking and take care of everything for him. They couldn't be there because they could never find out about this. Ilya was still guiding him through everything. But Shane had to actually make decisions for Ilya to take the lead.

A car drove past them and startled Shane. Someone driving out of the parking lot.

"You want ginger ale?" Ilya asked him, feeling bad about seeing Shane looking like a nervous wreck in front of him.

Ilya hoped it would work. He wanted to see the Shane he liked and fell for again. The same Shane he saw earlier at lunch when they were discussing hockey strategies and it briefly brought the spark back in Shane's eyes.

Shane thought about it. "Not really"

Ilya sighed. He wanted to let Shane go at his own pace but doing that felt like they might end up just standing outside until the store closed.

Ilya made the decision for him.

"Okay. But we go take ginger ale inside now" He started "Then you leave and wait outside and I buy"

Shane was still spacing out a little. This felt too real now. And the plan still felt wrong.

"But they would see me with you." Shane sounded defeated when he protested "And they would know we went to the dollar store together."

Ilya looked at Shane blankly. Shane was being serious. He didn't know why Shane was so worried about that.

"Yes, then they want two autographs" Ilya tried teasing "from me, best hockey player and you, guy from team."

Shane finally looked up and glared at him. Shane didn't say anything, but Ilya was smiling.

"And if they do not see you with me, maybe they only ask me for autograph. Only one. Waste less time."

Shane wasn't laughing. Ilya wondered if he messed up with that remark.

"Not funny" Shane said sounding serious "They would know you're buying it for me."

Ilya started actually laughing even though he tried really hard not to.

"How they know this?" He tried to stop laughing and act serious but it was hard to stop himself from laughing when he heard Shane's thought process "Best hockey player cannot have girls?"

Shane kept glaring at him.

"Because we are going to the store together!" Shane said like it was common sense.

Ilya exhaled and ran a hand down his face. "And when my brother buy this whole store thinks he is fucking me? Because I am with him in store?"

"Gross" Shane interjected while looking away.

“It is how you sound” Ilya said as calmly as he could, trying not to laugh. “Two people go to store because they are gay. Because going to store is gay.”

Shane watched Ilya's hands move as he debunked Shane's thoughts. He thought about it. Maybe Ilya was right. Maybe he was overthinking it. Maybe it would be okay to just walk in and look around. They could get drinks, and they could just sit somewhere later.

“Okay” Shane said “I think I’ll be okay. We can go in”

Ilya waited for him, but Shane wasn’t walking yet. Ilya had to take the lead with this too.

“Okay” Ilya said, waiting for Shane to look up at him again. “Come, we go”

Ilya tried to turn and walk towards the store, but Shane looked like he was still upset. He was still looking down and not moving.

Ilya hoped he hadn’t ruined Shane’s mood with what he said earlier. Even if he thought Shane was being irrational, he still wanted to enjoy his afternoon with Shane.

Even like this, with the entire TikTok pregnancy scare situation, he still preferred going out with Shane over going home to his family. Ilya sighed and took a step towards Shane.

They were in a parking lot. It was public. But it was Canada. They were in a country where people weren’t absolutely dedicated to never showing a single emotion.

He wanted to reach for Shane. But Shane would probably still jump and freak out if he reached out to try to rub his shoulder a little right now.

Ilya reached for the phone in his pocket instead and started texted Shane while standing right in front of him.

Ilya

You dont want randevou in dollar store?{(

Shane looked at his smart watch. He read the message and then slowly looked up at Ilya.

“I already told you that’s not how you spell it” Shane said quietly, but he didn't sound as upset anymore.

“Hmm yess” Ilya felt like it might be safe to make a joke without upsetting Shane now “But I do not care about boring French word and boring French spelling.”

Shane didn’t laugh but his lips still curved a little. “I think you made progress in ESL though”

Ilya rolled his eyes and scoffed. Shane was talking about the English as a Second Language classes he was in. Those were actually a lot more extensive than the French classes he was in.

“Yes, English is to bully slow hockey player with stupid freckles when he play bad” he teased Shane.

“Fuck you” Shane was smiling now “You know I speak French too, right?”

“Yes, sad you do not speak Russian and only boring French” Ilya said sarcastically “Come, we look at boring French words on things in store”

Shane felt ready to go this time.

“Okay” Shane started walking first this time. Ilya only started walking after Shane did, to make sure he wasn’t leaving him behind like he accidentally did when they got on the bus.

The automatic doors slid open and Shane was greeted with a wide store. Ilya walked right in and Shane followed him.

It wasn’t as scary as he thought it would be. They had scarves and gloves in the front. It wasn’t like the pregnancy test boxes were waiting for them in the first aisle they saw.

“Should I get a shopping cart?” He asked Ilya

“We don't need cart” Ilya said.

Ilya grabbed a basket. He was already calculating what he could afford to get. He knew he had a \$5 bill in his bag, and the store had already raised its prices from \$1 to \$1.25 a while back.

That meant they could only get 4 things. Shane’s pregnancy test was one of them, so they could really only get 3 things.

The individual ginger ale drinks were another \$1.25. That was already half the money he had on him. He knew he had a few coins in his bag too, but he wasn't willing to risk it.

He could get two more things. He wanted them to look around and see if he could get something that could cheer Shane up a little.

Shane followed him without looking at any of the party decorations. The store was starting to feel overwhelming. Thinking about how they were going to go get the ginger ale didn't feel like an actual good distraction.

They made it past the birthday party supplies and found the drinks. Ilya immediately grabbed a ginger ale and put it in his basket.

“Look” Ilya said at Shane teasingly since he noticed Shane was being quiet again. “We find ginger ale in store”

They had coke too. But suddenly the \$1.25 price point for a single can felt like too much. He usually got the store brand from the bigger grocery stores for a lot less.

“Are we getting anything else?” Shane asked him.

Ilya thought about it. If he passed on his own drink they could safely get a snack. He had a water bottle in his bag anyway.

He noticed the chocolate chip cookies near the drinks. He grabbed the packaging, which also had the French translation on it, and held it out to Shane.

“Maybe we share this” Ilya said as he grabbed a pack of cookies "And you read big french word to be happy"

Shane looked at the packaging. He hadn’t had cookies in a long time.

“I don’t know if I can eat that” Shane said quietly “I’m on a macrobiotic diet”

Ilya wanted to roll his eyes. But he decided to be patient.

“Okay. Can you eat protein bar?” He asked as he put the cookies back on the shelf.

Shane thought about it for a second. “Yeah”

“Okay. Then you are lucky I have many in bag” Ilya said lightly.

Ilya was about to walk away from the aisle but Shane stopped him. “Wait”

Ilya turned and looked at him. Shane was looking away.

“We actually need to get... cups too” Shane said quietly.

The last part was almost a whisper. Ilya wasn’t even sure he heard what Shane had just said.

“What?” Ilya said to him. Sometimes his tone didn't exactly radiate patience when he didn't hear or understand things.

Shane should have been used to it by that point. But it still hurt to hear that back when he barely had the nerves to say this out loud.

“Cups” Shane said a little more loudly now.

Ilya looked at Shane’s face, but Shane wasn’t meeting his gaze.

“You want cup? Drinking from can is not okay?”

It didn’t make sense to Ilya because he knew Shane, and he knew he had never had an issue with just drinking out of the can before.

Shane felt like he wanted to disappear. He wanted to groan at that response but he could barely get himself to talk or make any sound.

That wasn’t what he meant. But trying to explain what he meant out loud in public felt like too much.

“That’s not-” Shane started but an old woman passed them with her cart and suddenly he felt like he was tripping over his words.

He kept hoping she wouldn’t stop and look at any of the items around them and she didn’t. She moved to the end of the aisle and made a turn, and Shane felt like he could try talking again.

“No” Shane hissed and whispered at the same time “I’m trying to say I need a cup for the... thing”

Ilya still didn’t know what Shane was trying to say.

“What is thing?” He furrowed his brows while leaning in to look at Shane more closely.

Shane almost flinched watching Ilya lean closer. He exhaled. Ilya was making this so difficult for him. He didn’t understand why they couldn’t just get the cups.

Shane remembered the way they talked earlier and pulled out his phone to text Ilya instead.

Ilya watched him unsure what to expect. Ilya glanced down at Shane’s phone and then back up at Shane, who was typing something really slowly

Ilya’s own phone buzzed in his pocket and he took it out to look at the notification. It was Shane. Shane was texting him right in front of him.

Shane

I need to pee in a cup

Ilya was even more confused. He wanted to say “What?” out loud again, but he decided to join Shane in the chat where he felt more comfortable. He texted Shane back.

Ilya

What?
Why you pee in cup?))
I don't understand

Shane exhaled audibly in frustration in front of Ilya. Ilya was making this so difficult. His typing sped up.

Shane

Can you please not make this so difficult?
It's for the thing

Ilya furrowed his eyebrows at his phone looking beyond confused. He looked up from his phone to look back at Shane but Shane wasn't looking at him. He was still looking at his phone.

Ilya decided to ask.

Ilya

What is thing?

Shane wanted to scream. He didn't understand why he had to actually explain this. He hoped Ilya wouldn't tell him to just use one of the cups he had at home because that sounded gross and disgusting.

Shane started typing again, finally feeling like he could get his words out over text again.

Shane

The thing we came here to get
I looked it up the other night
I need to pee in a cup

Ilya read Shane's messages, feeling unsure how to respond. He realized he didn't actually know how taking the test worked. Shane exhaled loudly enough for Ilya to hear and kept texting.

Shane

Please

Ilya looked at him. Shane was gripping his phone with both hands tightly and just looking at the screen.

“Come, we buy cup” Ilya finally said as he took the lead and started walking back to the party supplies

Ilya was still glancing back from the side of his vision to make sure he wasn't leaving Shane behind again. Shane put his phone back in his pocket and followed him.

The party supply aisle was colorful. The plates and cutlery were hanging and assorted by color, and Ilya noticed the cups that were sitting at the bottom. They came in all sorts of colors too.

Ilya turned to Shane, who looked like he was spacing out and just waiting for Ilya to get the cups.

“What color?” Ilya asked

Shane finally looked up at him, his eyes more attentive as he started focusing on the world around him.
“What?”

Ilya wondered if Shane was going to be too embarrassed to talk now too. It felt really difficult to get Shane to talk.

“Cup” Ilya said, hoping that word wouldn’t be too much for Shane. “What color you want?”

Shane finally started expanding his presence in the reality around them. He was finally looking at the cups. They had big party ones that came in 6 packs sitting there.

“I don’t know.” Shane said, but Ilya waited for him. Shane wasn’t even looking at the cups anymore.
“Blue”

“Okay” Ilya said as he took the blue party cups and put them in their basket.

That made 3 confirmed items they were getting. \$3.75. He could pick out one more thing before they checked out.

Ilya contemplated getting a drink for himself too but Shane was standing in front of him looking like he was barely there. He remembered how Shane didn’t even touch his drink when he opened a ginger ale for him the other night.

He wanted to get something that would lighten the mood too.

“Okay” Ilya said while still waiting for Shane “We go?”

Shane contemplated walking out of the store to wait for Ilya but the thought of walking out without buying anything and just standing there by himself made him anxious too.

He felt so stuck in this store.

“Okay, yeah” he said as he moved towards Ilya, who was standing still and patiently waiting for him
“Let’s go together”

Ilya started walking and Shane trailed along right behind him, almost like he was using Ilya to hide from the store. They passed the storage supply section quickly, and then passed all the cleaning supplies. Shane was barely looking at the items that flashed past them.

There was a sharp smell coming from the cleaning supply section where someone was opening the floor cleaners to check the smell. Shane looked down, hoping the person buying floor cleaners wouldn’t look at him.

They made it to the end of the aisle and Ilya stopped. Shane bumped into him from behind.

Ilya looked back at Shane and noticed that Shane looked absolutely terrified by the fact that they stopped. Shane was praying that he wouldn’t have to talk to him. He had hoped he would be able to just trail along and walk out of the store behind him.

Ilya didn’t want to push him. He leaned down to grab one of the kids sticker sheets that were laid out at the end of the aisle. He chose the one with small stars and smiley faces on it.

Shane didn’t really pay attention to what Ilya was getting. He just wanted to get out of the store quickly. He wanted the whole thing to be over.

“Come” Ilya said, instructing Shane to start following him again.

Shane kept looking at the ground as they approached the cash register. He felt like they were about to steal from the store. Ilya was going to pay for all their things, but something about the entire transaction felt wrong.

Ilya continued walking in front of Shane. He saw the pregnancy test box they came to get on the small aisles near the register. He reached and grabbed one casually, the way his brother had done it before. He placed it down on the conveyor belt and started taking all their other things out of the basket.

Shane felt mortified just noticing the box so close to them. It was sitting on the conveyor belt right next to his ginger ale. The sight made him want to run away and dash out of the store.

The cashier scanned their 4 items quickly and Shane braced for any remark she might want to throw at them.

Part of him felt like the cashier would call the police. He knew it was irrational and wouldn't actually happen, but being there felt so wrong. He actually felt like he was committing a crime.

He was hoping the cashier would just say their total and not say anything.

Ilya got his bag out and opened it so he could start putting all their scanned items inside. Shane's ginger ale was the first item to go inside his bag.

The cashier passed the pregnancy test box to Ilya after scanning all the other items and Shane felt like he had to use all the effort he had in him to control his breathing. He felt like people might notice his breathing and look at him.

The box was finally hidden away in Ilya's bag. He didn't have to look at it anymore. The cashier could just say their total now and then they could leave.

Shane felt like he was about to choke on the air he was inhaling when the cashier started talking. She was saying more words than a simple number.

"You find everything you need okay?" she said

Shane hoped she wasn't going to try to make a funny remark next. He didn't want anyone else to look. She wasn't even talking directly to him, but she was still basically talking about him. He couldn't handle it.

"Yes" Ilya said casually "Is okay"

Ilya already knew what their total would be because he had kept track of how much money they were spending during their whole time in the store. He took the \$5 bill out of his bag and handed it to the cashier.

"Alrighty" she said as she took the bill "Yes, that would be five dollars"

She put the cash in her register and quickly reached for the receipt that her system had just printed.

"Have a lovely day!" She chimed and suddenly she was turning to the next customer that had been waiting in line right behind Shane.

It was actually over. They could leave.

Chapter 10: Going Back

The sliding doors closed behind Shane and stepping out into the cold winter air made him feel like he could breathe again. It was actually over.

It was already dark out. Ilya kept walking out of the parking lot and Shane trailed along, until he suddenly realized he didn't actually know where they were headed.

"So where are we going now?" Shane asked.

Ilya looked at him. Shane was talking again. He had been waiting for Shane to take all the time he needed after noticing how much he was freaking out in the checkout lane.

"I don't know" Ilya said casually "Maybe we go back?"

"Back to our campus?" Shane asked.

Ilya looked at him. "Yes. Maybe we sit in locker room again."

Shane thought about it.

"To drink ginger ale" Ilya added.

It made sense. They could get access to the ice rink building with their student ID key cards. The school made it possible for them to get things from their player lockers at any point. Then his mom could come pick him up from the ice rink building without it looking suspicious.

Shane wished they could get the car again so they could just drive somewhere and sit in the back. But the way Ilya's brother yelled on the phone the other night was still fresh in his memory. He didn't want to suggest it.

"Come" Ilya interrupted Shane's thoughts "We take bus"

Shane started walking to make sure he was keeping up with him.

"Are we going to the same stop?" Shane asked.

"No" Ilya replied "Other side of street"

They kept walking. The streets looked a lot emptier than they did when they were walking to take the bus from their school.

All the people going home from work earlier were probably already back home having dinner. Ilya noticed that the bus stop was empty before they got there.

"Should we sit on the bench?" Shane asked like he was asking Ilya for permission.

"Yes" Ilya said as he got his bag off and sat down with his bag in his lap "Sit"

Shane moved towards the bench where Ilya was already sitting and sat down to his left awkwardly. Ilya slid closer to him so quickly that the bag in his lap ended up also resting against Shane.

Ilya started pulling his bag zipper open and being so close to the bag suddenly made Shane nervous. He didn't want to think about what they were keeping in the bag again so he quickly looked away.

Ilya pulled out one of the promotional protein bars he had and held it out to Shane.

“You want?” he said as he started slightly waving the protein bar at Shane.

Shane had no other choice but to stop looking straight ahead and at least glance to his right to see what Ilya was offering him.

It was the protein bar Ilya had mentioned in the store.

“Oh. Sure.” Shane said meekly.

Shane wasn’t reaching for the bar despite saying he wanted one, so Ilya decided to reach towards his hand.

“See, there is boring French word on protein bar” he said sarcastically as he took Shane’s hand and placed the protein bar in it. His touch lingered as he traced the French words to show Shane.

Shane’s hand felt loose under Ilya’s but quickly stiffened when he realized that Ilya’s touch was lingering for a little too long. Shane suddenly grabbed the bar and pulled his hand away.

“What the fuck are you doing?” Shane said sharply “We are in public!”

Ilya rolled his eyes and chuckled a little. “Come onnn” he said “There is no one at bus stop”

Shane exhaled in frustration and ignored Ilya. They were still practically touching with how close they were sitting. He didn’t feel like humoring what Ilya had to say. Ilya was always the one that took more risks and pushed Shane out of his comfort zone in terms of when and where it was okay to initiate things like this.

The only exception was Ilya’s house. That was the one place Ilya wouldn’t even try to cross the same safety boundaries Shane was envisioning. Thinking about it, Shane felt like Ilya was even more cautious than he was whenever they were at Ilya’s house.

Shane’s watch dinged to show him a new message and he finally noticed the time. It was already 6 PM. His mom was checking on him.

Yuna

Dinner’s almost ready

Should I pick you up or get you after dinner?

Shane knew that he would eventually have to go home again, but he didn’t realize it would have to be soon. He didn’t feel like being alone in his room again just yet.

He realized they would probably only spend another hour or so together. He decided to hold onto that hour he had to spend with Ilya like it was the most precious time in the world.

Shane didn’t know that that was exactly how Ilya felt when he was spending time with Shane. Ilya hated going home. He only felt like he was actually living his life when he was out of the house. And he only felt alive when he was playing hockey or spending time with Shane.

“My mom’s asking if she should get me soon” Shane told Ilya quietly.

Ilya didn’t know what to say. He had been hoping he would get to spend more time with Shane too.

It didn’t matter when Ilya went home as long as he didn’t miss the last bus back. Ilya’s family didn’t really care if he was staying out as long as he didn’t have the car with him. It was all down to when

Shane decided he wanted to leave.

“Do you want?” Ilya asked “To go home now?”

Shane exhaled a little and tightened his jaw in a way that made his lips look tense. Ilya noticed how Shane’s lips curved in the middle even when he looked stressed out.

Even like this, he still hoped he would get to be alone with Shane for a bit if they went back. He felt like it was probably selfish to think that so soon after Shane had a panic attack in a nearby parking lot.

But when he looked at Shane while basically sitting right against him, he couldn’t help but think how soft Shane felt against him. Every time they were alone Shane’s whole body was so much softer compared to when they would make contact while wearing all their protective gear on the ice.

Ilya looked at Shane’s face while waiting for a response. Suddenly he was thinking about how soft Shane’s face had felt right under his touch just the other day when he went to Shane’s house. How the stupid freckles he had actually rested on such soft cheeks. How his lips were just as soft and he could actually feel their little curves when he kissed him.

“No” Shane finally said “I want to go back to the ice rink building”

Ilya wondered if he shouldn’t push it just in case Shane still felt stressed. Maybe Shane wanted to take his stupid test in the locker room, but Ilya wasn’t going to ask.

Ilya watched Shane get his phone out and text his mom. He was sitting so close he could see the words Shane was typing on the screen.

Shane

Don't come get me
I'm hanging out

Shane put his phone back in his pocket.

“Okay” Ilya said “So we have proper date now. In ice building” he teased

Shane looked at him and laughed a little. “Fuck you.”

“Whoa!” Ilya exclaimed “You want to fuck me in ice building? Now?” he said jokingly while trying to sound shocked.

Shane shoved him away playfully “You’re such an asshole”

Ilya exhaled a single breath of laughter as he let Shane shove him and bounced his body back so he was even closer and leaning even harder against Shane’s side. Shane didn’t protest this time. He just looked straight ahead and let Ilya lean against him more.

The bus stop was empty anyway. They hadn’t seen anyone walk by the whole time they were there. Shane wanted to close his eyes and lean his head against the little space between them.

He decided to just close his eyes. Maybe Ilya was right in the parking lot. Maybe there was always some plausible deniability. Maybe if he just sat there without leaning his head towards Ilya they still wouldn’t be crossing the line of plausible deniability.

He felt insane for thinking that.

Ilya didn't really care about maintaining plausible deniability. If there were no people around the bus stop it wasn't that different from just parking the car in a place where there weren't any people around.

He nudged his knee towards Shane a little more. Maybe it was the fact that Ilya decided to wear his thick jeans and Shane was still wearing his sleek polyester sweatpants, but he felt like he was pressing his thigh against something so much softer.

Shane opened his mouth a little and Ilya heard him exhale through his lips, but he still didn't say anything. He wasn't protesting or pushing him away this time.

Ilya looked at the timetable. Their bus would be there soon.

"2 minutes" he said quietly "Then bus comes"

Shane opened his eyes. He wondered how Ilya knew exactly when the bus would be there.

"Okay" Shane said.

They sat there waiting quietly while Shane just looked at the street to catch their bus when it got there. He immediately jumped to get on when he caught a glimpse of the big lights approaching them.

Ilya got up to get on the bus casually, but Shane was already taking the lead. Shane got on in a hurry, hoping the bus wouldn't somehow leave without him. He pulled his phone out awkwardly and paid for his ride.

Shane quickly made his way to the middle of the bus and finally slowed down to turn towards Ilya, who was casually tapping his pass on the terminal.

"Where should we sit?" Shane asked like he was in a hurry.

Ilya walked towards him slowly and scanned the bus. It was nearly empty and most people were sitting in the front.

"Maybe we sit there" he said as he nudged his head towards some of the empty seats in the back.

"Okay" Shane said as he started walking in front of Ilya and quickly squeezed into one of the window seats in the back.

Ilya followed him and started sliding his bag off his shoulder. He grabbed the seat in front of where he intended to sit down so he could slide down next to Shane and placed his bag in his lap. Shane felt him sit down a lot closer than he expected.

Shane didn't say anything. He briefly looked at Ilya and then looked out the window, trying to look casual. He was still looking out the window when he felt Ilya move his knee closer and press his thigh against his even harder.

He couldn't bring himself to look. He watched the houses and parking lots the bus kept passing as he felt the side of his leg start to get warmer against Ilya.

His watch made a noise. He wondered if it was his mom asking when to pick him up again. They probably didn't have that much time left.

It was Ilya.

Ilya

Are you hard like me right now?)

Shane immediately looked away and moved his hand down. He quickly put his other hand over his watch to hide the message.

Shane kept looking out the window and Ilya watched him carefully while still holding his phone against his bag. He watched the red flush bloom under Shane's freckles as Shane tightened his lips in order to keep a straight face.

Shane knew that all the people in front of him couldn't see him, but he still felt like they were looking at them. Like they could probably hear his breathing. He took a breath that seemed too audible to him and started exhaling very slowly just in case anyone looked.

Shane noticed the driver in the rear view mirror. He wasn't looking at them because his eyes were on the road, but he could look at any second.

The wave of embarrassment washed over him and he finally took his phone out to text Ilya.

Shane
Not here

Shane kept looking at his phone. Ilya didn't move away.

Ilya
Okay
Not here))

Shane tried to clear his mind for a second. It felt like such a long day and it wasn't even over yet.

Chapter 11: Locker Room

Chapter Notes

I'm back! I wanted to do a spin-off Valentine's day fic set in the same AU but I ended up being so busy I just couldn't finish it on time and then it was just already way past Valentine's day. 😞

I decided to just keep writing the actual original fic for now. I noticed I mess up with the punctuation sometimes so hopefully I didn't miss anything this time.

Happy belated V-day. Enjoy! 💚

Shane actually started recognizing the area when it was time to get off the bus this time. He didn't have to wait for Ilya to tell him to know they were getting close and would need to get off the bus soon.

Ilya still got up first and flung his bag back on his back in a hurry. Shane got up and followed. They got off the bus quickly and started making it towards their campus.

"Come" Ilya practically jogged towards the ice rink building and Shane sped up to keep up with him.

Ilya was the one that made it to the ice rink building first. He leaned near the door and quickly slid his bag off his back to get his student ID card out of the front pocket so he could unlock the door with it.

Shane was rushing along behind him and made it just in time to see Ilya press his ID card against the card reader. The main door made a loud unlocking noise and Ilya shoved it open with his shoulder.

They made their way to the locker room and Ilya put his bag down on the bench while Shane closed the locker room door behind them.

"Very hot here" Ilya said as he started taking off the navy jacket Shane had given him.

"Yeah" Shane chimed in quietly as he took off his own jacket and put it down on the bench near Ilya.

"It's pretty warm"

Shane sat down further away from their jackets and Ilya quickly joined him along with his half-open bag. He pulled Shane's can of ginger ale out of his bag and handed it to Shane.

"Ginger ale is still cold" Ilya said as he reached back to close his bag before Shane could start panicking over what they had inside again.

Ilya saw the sticker sheet inside under the bright lights before he closed his bag all the way. He decided to take the stickers out before getting up to throw the bag in his locker. He just didn't want to risk making Shane nervous again.

He peeled off one of the bigger star stickers and turned towards Shane. Shane was still opening his can of ginger ale.

"Is for you" Ilya said as he leaned towards Shane and placed the star sticker on his plain hoodie like a badge of honor "because today you are so brave" he said jokingly

“Fuck off” Shane rolled his eyes and took a sip of his drink “You don’t know how stressed I was”

“I know” Ilya said as he sat down next to Shane “That’s why I say you are brave” he kept teasing

Maybe Shane would have thought that Ilya was honest and maybe he would have genuinely believed it if Ilya didn’t have a track record of bullying him as a form of endearment.

“You’re such an asshole” Shane said to him as he put his drink down on the bench.

“Yes” Ilya said as he moved closer to him “I am asshole to you because you are too pretty”

He slid even closer towards Shane on the bench and looked at him intensely. Shane looked back at him without saying much.

“You are so very pretty.” Ilya said as he put his thumb on Shane’s cheek “And you have very pretty freckles.”

Shane looked away. Ilya peeled one of the small yellow star stickers off the sticker sheet in his lap and slowly placed it on the outer part of Shane’s upper cheek.

Shane flinched a little when he realized something was stuck to his face. He moved his face away from Ilya’s hand and reached to rub whatever was stuck on his face off. He looked at his hand and noticed that there was a little rolled up star on his palm now.

He scrunched up his face in confusion. “What are you doing?”

“I put star on you” Ilya said casually

“Why?” Shane asked

Ilya didn’t actually know why. He just wanted to see what Shane would look like if he put stars over his freckles. He didn’t exactly rationalize the things he did to Shane when they were alone, he just went along with whatever felt right.

“I don’t know” Ilya shrugged “Because you are pretty today”

Something about the way Ilya kept calling him pretty so much struck a nerve in Shane. It just felt unnatural. It started to feel off after he heard it so many times so quickly.

Shane was looking straight ahead at the lockers and his face gave away the fact that he wasn’t amused by Ilya’s act.

Ilya had called him pretty before. Sometimes it felt like Ilya was teasing him. Other times it felt like Ilya wanted him. But this time, pretty just felt like a word someone would use to hit on a girl.

“Did you mean what you said earlier when we were out?” Shane asked

Ilya paused with the sticker sheet in his lap and looked at Shane blankly. He couldn’t remember what Shane might be referring to.

“That I want to fuck you?” Ilya tried “Yes”

Shane finally looked at him with narrowed eyes. Ilya wondered what Shane was getting at.

“I mean when you said that you’re good at hockey so you can just get girls. And also get them pregnant”

Ilya was taken aback. His lower lip slid open and he wasn't sure if he wanted to laugh or get frustrated.

"When the fuck I say this?" he said to Shane with a small laugh, but his tone still sounded frustrated.

Shane looked down because it felt like all those times when they just weren't on the same page about things. It wouldn't be the first time he had asked something and Ilya just got frustrated because what Shane was asking seemed absurd to him.

"When we were in the parking lot" Shane continued "You said no one would know you're buying the box for me if we went inside together because you're just good at hockey so you can get girls easily and get them pregnant instead."

Ilya dropped the sticker sheet in his lap and inhaled sharply while lifting his hands up towards himself. He put his hands up to his face and slowly exhaled in frustration against them as he ran his hands down his face.

"*Gospodi...*" he said while exhaling.

It was just so absurd and out of the blue to him. He just wanted to have some alone time with Shane, and every single time he tried to initiate anything over the past couple of days something absurd would eventually come up instead. He was actually starting to lose his patience.

Now Shane was starting to sound like his brother. His brother who was also constantly accusing him of staying out late with their car so he could sleep with girls. And his dad who also accused him of being lazy and wasting his time on girls instead of working.

When in reality Ilya barely had the time to try to pursue any girl outside of his insanely busy schedule. Whenever he had a little bit of free time outside of class or hockey practice to spend with anyone, he mostly spent it with Shane. And out of all people, Shane was the person that was supposed to fully know this.

But now Shane was accusing him of chasing girls too. Shane, who saw him at school all the time and then went to hockey practice with him. Shane, who texted him while doing his stupid Calculus problem sets and immediately got a response and got Ilya to show up for him.

Shane, who Ilya was constantly trying to either visit or pick up with his dad's car, despite all the yelling and arguments that came out of getting the car.

He was starting to get genuinely frustrated with how much Shane reminded him of the fights he constantly had at home. And it was almost time for him to go home too. Maybe his brother would buy it if he told him he had hockey practice until late, but that probably wouldn't fly after a certain hour.

He wanted to be patient with Shane, but he couldn't be.

"Okay and when the fuck I do this, Shane?" he yelled out angrily and extended his arms out to show Shane how absurd that question sounded to him "When I am sleeping? I get girls in dream? And then in dream they are also pregnant?"

Ilya knew this conversation wouldn't even end with Shane. He was going to come home to another stupid remark about him wasting time with girls and not working. He already spent the \$5 he had in his bag on their trip to the dollar store so he would need to ask for money again soon, which was even worse.

What was even stupider to him in that moment was that he knew his family would just throw him out if they found out that there really were no girls and he was just spending time with Shane like this. It was

so stupid it was almost funny.

Shane didn't know what to make of Ilya's response. He felt like Ilya was just mad at him.

Shane felt like he was probably pushing it and crossing a line, but he just wanted to know.

"Well do you?" Shane said quietly

Ilya leaned closer to look at him while furrowing his brows in confusion, but Shane wasn't looking back at him.

"I do what?" Ilya asked, already feeling exhausted by Shane's questions.

Shane needed to exhale before continuing.

"Do you dream about girls?" he finally asked while still staring straight ahead at the lockers.

Ilya didn't know what to say. Maybe. Sometimes. Occasionally. It wasn't like he could control what kind of dreams he had. But he couldn't say that to Shane because Shane would take it the wrong way. And they had already escalated this enough.

"No" Ilya said firmly but more quietly, sounding slightly less annoyed

Shane looked at him and Ilya had to do anything he could to stop Shane from asking more stupid questions. He just wanted them to enjoy their time together again.

"I do not see girls in dream" Ilya continued "Instead I see nightmare. Nightmare about stupid boring hockey player on my team who is soooo bad. He plays so so bad it is so scary. And he makes puck scared of goal."

Shane turned his head and started looking at him.

"And he has scary freckles and his backhand is soooo weak it scares me soooo much because I think maybe we lose" Ilya was rolling his eyes and leaning back on the bench as he exclaimed

Shane's mouth curved a little, even though he still felt like he was starting to feel sad.

Ilya just wanted to let it go. He wanted them to move on.

"Come" he said to Shane as he held out his hands.

Shane wanted to ask him more questions. It didn't feel like the conversation was over at all. He still didn't know if Ilya would just stop spending time with him in a few months once they graduated and had more free time on the side.

He wanted to know what would happen once they got drafted and went their separate ways, probably playing for different teams.

And he didn't even know if those were even the questions he should be thinking of.

What if Ilya was wrong about him being irrationally scared of getting pregnant? What if the test came out positive and he couldn't do anything about it? What if Ilya went off to play in the NHL all by himself and abandoned him while Shane had to quit hockey and raise a child?

"Shane." Ilya was still waiting for him, but his voice just sounded distant to Shane despite how close they were sitting next to each other.

Thinking about all those things made Shane want to cry. He knew when to grit his teeth and hold it together in front of others. He always tried his best to calm himself down, but this time he didn't even notice when he had started holding his breath throughout those thoughts.

He didn't want to break down and start crying, but he just felt like he was already past the point of being able to prevent it.

Ilya didn't wait for him to come into his arms anymore. He leaned in and reached out to pull Shane close. Shane fell into his arms like a wounded animal.

Ilya was barely even taller than Shane, but he felt like Shane felt so small as he folded sideways into his embrace. He reached up with his hand and started gently running his fingers near Shane's ear to comfort him.

Shane didn't say anything. He chose to just bury his face into Ilya's chest. Ilya started talking from his chest and Shane could physically feel the way Ilya's voice came out of his chest.

"Unlucky you do not drink ginger ale I buy for you. Now you are sad." Ilya said.

The can of ginger ale was sitting forgotten on the bench next to Shane.

Ilya didn't exactly read his mind. But he still sensed that Shane had been feeling on edge over the past couple of days with the entire situation after he freaked himself out by scrolling on Instagram.

There were times when Ilya felt like he had to grow up so fast while the people his age that grew up in Canada were just so spoiled. Especially the people he went to school with. He used to feel that way about Shane.

Maybe he would have had absolutely zero patience for how emotionally fragile Shane felt at times at some point a few years ago. But after they ended up getting this close, he just didn't want Shane to get to the point of being emotionally fragile. He just wanted Shane to be himself again so they could have a good time together.

Looking back on how the past couple of days went, Ilya felt like no one in the whole world cared about how he was doing nearly as much as Shane did. Sure, he got nice food during his lunch break at school so he could be fed enough to play well. And sure, he got nice clothes and bags and hockey equipment from brands because he played well.

But it didn't feel like anyone actually saw him as a person. It didn't feel like anyone cared about how he was doing as a person outside of hockey where he just looked like a good statistic.

There was no one that would show up to personally make sure he was getting nice nutritious food outside of school when he was done with hockey practice. And there was no one to bring him a warm jacket that he could wear over all those expensive athletic clothes when it was time to leave the ice rink building and go home.

There was no one until he ended up getting close to Shane. And Shane was right there crying against him.

Ilya sighed and leaned his cheek against the top of Shane's head before lightly squeezing him a little closer.

"Okay" Ilya started "You drink ginger ale later. So you sleep well."

Shane didn't say anything. Ilya decided to continue, unsure whether what he had to say would make things worse.

"Then you take stupid test like boring man on Instagram." Ilya said "And you see it is okay"

He moved his hand away from Shane's ear and started gently stroking his back.

"Then I take you on better date. Maybe with car again."

He felt Shane's breathing stabilize under his hand as he ran slow strokes along the back of his ribcage. It felt like Shane wasn't trying to hold his breath anymore.

Ilya ran one final slightly quicker stroke up Shane's back and moved to place both hands on Shane's shoulders.

He started slowly nudging him up by the shoulders to look at him. Shane looked back at him this time, his cheek damp from crying against Ilya's underarmour hoodie. The same hoodie with the number 81 on the back that Ilya teased him with just a few hours before.

Ilya sighed a little and moved his hands from Shane's shoulders to hold his thumbs against Shane's cheeks. He felt Shane's face squish under his light touch. His face felt so warm from crying just now. And so much softer than his shoulders or his back. Ilya felt like Shane's skin was just melting under his touch.

Ilya moved his thumbs sideways and brushed the residual dampness off Shane's cheeks. He wondered if his hoodie was damp too. The material was pretty thick and he was already used to wearing multiple layers to stay warm.

Ilya wanted to say something just so Shane would start talking again.

"Now you drink ginger ale, okay?" Ilya said quietly

His words sounded a lot louder to Shane. The locker room suddenly felt so bright and wide and just open. He couldn't believe he ended up crying in a space that was basically borderline public. He couldn't believe he just let himself get pulled into Ilya's embrace in the same room all their teammates went to every day.

"Okay" Shane said quietly.

Chapter 12: Better

The locker room felt so silent Shane could have sworn he was starting to physically hear the bright lights above them.

“Here” Ilya said as he held out the opened drink that Shane had only taken a few sips of “Maybe is still cold for you”

Shane felt like he could finally fully notice Ilya in front of him.

“Thanks” Shane said as he took the drink in his hand without leaving the bench.

He felt like he was back in reality but something still felt slightly off. It felt like Ilya was almost mad at him without actually looking mad. He couldn’t rationalize why he felt that way.

His watch dinged. Someone was texting him. He wondered if Ilya was trying to text him while they were in the same room again.

Yuna

It’s getting late

Where should I get you from?

It was his mother.

He looked up at Ilya, who was patiently looking at him while leaning against the lockers now.

“My mom is going to get me now.” Shane said quietly.

“Okay” Ilya said as he stopped leaning back so he could start getting ready to leave too. “But finish ginger ale.”

“Should I tell her we are in the ice rink building?” Shane asked.

It made sense to Ilya, but he understood why Shane would want to check if it made sense to let her know where they were. Ilya knew he was usually the more careless one in comparison, but Shane still wanted reassurance from him so he wouldn’t accidentally slip up.

“Yes” he told Shane. “I think it is normal. Maybe she will think we practice hockey for fun.”

“Okay.”

Shane pulled out his phone and started texting.

Shane

I’m in the ice rink building

You can wait where you usually drop me off

Shane heard Ilya open his locker and start getting all his things out. He realized it was time for him to get up and start getting his own things too. He downed the rest of his drink and got up to put the can in the little trash can next to the bench.

Shane’s locker was further to the left, so he started walking towards it. Ilya’s voice interrupted him as soon as he started moving away.

“Here” Ilya said as he quickly took and held out the jacket Shane had given him. “Thanks for jacket.”

“Oh.” Shane said as he glanced at what Ilya was holding out for him. He almost felt embarrassed.

Shane didn’t know what to say. It was already difficult to bring this up to Ilya earlier and now he found himself having to do it again.

He wondered if maybe he said it wrong. He looked up again and saw that Ilya was still waiting for him to take his skiing jacket back. Shane realized he would have to say something again.

“I kind of wanted you to keep it” Shane finally said quietly. “You know, forever.”

Shane didn’t hear anything back and he wasn’t ready to look up at Ilya just yet. It somehow felt easier to say it if they weren’t looking at each other. He decided to continue while he still felt like he could say this.

“I told you I don’t really need it. And my mom said it was okay.”

Ilya froze for a second. He was still holding the jacket out for Shane, but Shane was back to getting things out of his locker. He knew Shane had a lot of jackets, but it somehow felt wrong to actually keep one forever.

“Are you sure?” he asked Shane.

For a second Shane thought about how Ilya might still hold onto this jacket even after they got drafted. Maybe he would still remember him then. He didn’t want Ilya to move on and forget him.

“Yeah.” Shane said from behind his locker door. “I want you to have it.”

Ilya couldn’t see him with the locker door in the way, and he felt like that made things easier. The fact that he wasn’t just borrowing this indefinitely but keeping it forever felt like a lot. But Ilya decided he would have to find a different time to feel whatever emotions were starting to come up beneath the surface.

“Okay.” Ilya said as he put the jacket back on “Thank you.”

Shane’s watch made a noise and Ilya decided whatever moment he almost got pulled into had to be over then. They were supposed to go their separate ways.

Yuna

Are your friends still with you?

Shane didn’t know what to say. He finally looked at Ilya again so he could get more texting guidance again.

“My mom’s asking if anyone is with me.” Shane said while looking right at Ilya. “Should I say yes?”

“If you want.” Ilya shrugged as he put more of his things in his bag. “Maybe we say Marlow and Hayden play too and already leave”

“Dude, no.” Shane said firmly as he furrowed his brows “That’s a horrible idea. I can’t just lie like you do. She would eventually find out they were never here with us.”

Ilya was used to sprinkling white lies around his family, so he just shrugged again as he zipped up his bag.

“She really care so much about what you do every day?” Ilya said as he closed his locker and turned to Shane.

“Yeah. I mean you’ve seen her.” Shane replied “She asks a lot of questions and basically keeps up with everything I do. I can’t really lie.”

“She can think we play hockey after class” Ilya told him. “We already do this. Is not a lie.”

“Okay” Shane said as he turned his attention back to his phone and started typing.

Shane

One of my friends is with me, yeah

Shane closed his eyes and took a deep breath before typing again.

Shane

We played hockey

Shane exhaled and sat down on the bench, still struggling to believe he managed to just lie like that. It wasn’t really a lie. But it felt so unnecessary.

His mom was already dragging out the lie Ilya had told her about their made up group assignment and he still had to keep up with it earlier that day when she drove him to class. It was already too much.

What if she started asking what class that assignment was even for? What if she asked him what they practiced in the ice rink building?

Shane remembered how Ilya got slammed into the board earlier that day. He could always say they just practiced dodging puck stealing attempts. They did actually do that. He wouldn’t just forget to keep up with what happened.

“Holy shit.” Shane said under his breath as he exhaled again while still sitting on the bench. “Okay.”

He felt like they had just pulled off a heist.

Ilya walked up to him ready to say bye for the day. “Okay. I go take bus now.”

“What? You’re leaving right now?” Shane asked quickly as he got up to talk to Ilya.

“There is bus in 15 minutes. Then one hour later, because it is late now” Ilya said like it was common sense.

Shane still had no idea how Ilya just knew when every bus would show up.

“I already told my mom you were with me.” Shane said. “If you leave it might look suspicious.”

Ilya laughed a little and smiled at Shane. “You overthink so much, Hollander. Like scared grandmother.”

“Shut up.” Shane said as he shoved Ilya a little. “That doesn’t even make any sense.”

“To me it make sense. You are like grandmother.” Ilya told him playfully “You want me to wait with you in boring locker room.”

Shane looked away and then looked back at Ilya more seriously. “Are you taking... all the stuff with you?”

Ilya felt like he was about to start walking on eggshells but he couldn't let Shane sense it. He just didn't want Shane to start freaking out again.

"Yes. All in my bag" Ilya said while giving Shane two thumbs up.

"Okay." Shane said quietly while nodding a little nervously.

Ilya wasn't sure how to proceed or if he was about to ask the right question.

"You want to take instead?" he asked Shane.

"God, no!" Shane exclaimed as he took a step back. "I can't really take anything like that home."

Just the thought of it felt like smuggling drugs into his house. He couldn't prove it, but he was sure his mom still went through his things every now and then.

Ilya felt like the tables had turned. Shane was the one that kept asking questions and trying to make sure they had a solid plan up until that afternoon. Now it felt like that responsibility fell on Ilya instead.

"So what you want to do?" Ilya decided to ask him directly.

"I don't know." Shane said quietly while looking down.

"Okay" Ilya exhaled and reached out his hand to rub Shane's shoulder a little, hoping that would stop him from spiraling. "Then we talk more later. And figure out."

He hoped that would be reassuring enough.

"Okay." Shane's voice sounded even more quiet as he gave Ilya two small nods in response.

They stood there in silence for a second. Shane felt like he could physically feel the weight of all the unanswered questions and all the plans they hadn't made yet.

Ilya found himself not really knowing what to say again. He could feel the same heaviness in the air just from the energy Shane was radiating in front of him.

"Come" Ilya told him as he extended his arms.

Shane actually walked into his embrace this time. It felt like walking into a duvet with all the layers they were both wearing by that point. He allowed himself to lean his head down and lightly rest it against Ilya's shoulder.

Shane could faintly feel the pressure of Ilya gently running a hand up and down his back through all the thick layers. It felt comfortable. He didn't feel so out of it this time.

"Does it still hurt a lot by the way? I might have some ibuprofen." he said to Ilya.

Ilya did not expect Shane to say that at all. He was so taken aback by the question that he placed his hands on Shane's shoulders and physically pulled back to look at him.

"What?" Ilya asked, a little more sharply than he intended.

Shane looked back at him. "Again you literally got slammed into the board earlier. And it's still very visible."

Ilya let go of one of Shane's sides and reached up to his mouth with his hand. It felt a little firm and the whole area around it was starting to feel pretty sore but it was nothing too bad. He had had way worse injuries before. Even Shane had seen him play with worse injuries before.

Shane's watch rang and startled both of them. He pulled back quickly and looked at the screen. His mom was calling him.

"Shit, okay" Shane said, sounding a little anxious as he shoved Ilya away. "Act normal."

Shane walked away a little and then remembered to turn back. "Don't talk. Please"

Ilya fought the urge to laugh but ended up grinning instead. Shane was starting to act like Ilya would whenever his family called.

"Hello?" Shane said as he held up his watch.

Ilya walked up to him and tried to loosely wrap his hands around Shane from behind so he could gently pull him back in, but Shane slapped his hand away. Ilya could hear Yuna's voice through the speaker, but he knew she couldn't see him.

"I'm almost there." Yuna said. "You think you can get your things and come out in a few minutes?"

Shane turned even more and walked further from Ilya so he could focus on the conversation better.

"Yeah. I'm almost ready." he said into his watch.

"Alright. Be there in 5." Yuna said back.

"Okay, see you." Shane said as he ended the call and put his arm down.

He turned to Ilya and Ilya already expected Shane to get mad about the way he just tried to pull him back from behind. Ilya raised his eyebrows and looked away while trying to give Shane his best "wasn't me" face.

"Do you want to come with me?" Shane said instead.

Ilya's expression changed the moment he realized he was being hit with a completely different question.

"Come where?" he asked.

"In the car." Shane continued like it was common sense.

"Okay..." Ilya said, not sure where Shane was going with that. "And then what?"

Shane thought about it. He didn't know.

"Maybe we could drop you off at your place?" Shane suggested.

Ilya chuckled a little. "Hmm... maybe you ask your mother this not me? How I go home if she says no?"

Deep down, Shane just didn't want to be alone for the car ride. The car ride that morning felt like a nightmare for him and he was sure Yuna had even more questions this late at night.

"Okay." Shane said, still sounding serious. "But do you want to come with me if she says we can drop you off?"

“Yes.” Ilya told him “I want.”

Shane felt a sense of relief. He knew the car ride wouldn't be a complete nightmare if Ilya was around to take over if he didn't know how to answer his mom's questions.

They grabbed their things and headed out. The winter air was even colder than earlier and hit their faces as they walked out the door. Shane stopped briefly to make sure the automatic door to the ice rink building closed behind them.

Ilya could already see some car lights illuminating the area near the campus entrance. It was probably Shane's mom. He was already mentally preparing to be on his best behavior.

Ilya slowed down to let Shane catch up and lead the way so he could follow behind politely.

Chapter 13: The Ride Back

Chapter Notes

I'm sorry the updates have slowed down, I was so busy. 😭 I'm actually sick right now but I have to update this to celebrate the fact that ao3 is no longer down!

Shane started speeding up towards the car and Ilya adjusted his pace right behind him.

Yuna spotted them approaching her car pretty quickly. She already expected Shane to come out of the ice rink building so she knew where to look.

It took her a second to recognize Ilya from afar. She wasn't completely sure which friends Shane had been hanging out with, but of course at least one of them had to be Ilya. They seemed to spend a lot of time together lately. She wasn't even sure if the "best friend" spot was still reserved for Hayden.

Yuna recognized the skiing jacket Shane had made a fuss about putting on a couple of weeks before too.

"Aww, that's nice" she said inside the car to herself, fully knowing that they couldn't hear her.

Yuna waved at them with a smile on her face, still not sure if they would be able to see her inside the car. Shane kept walking, but Ilya waved back behind him.

The fact that Shane's friend was wearing one of her son's old jackets this time actually felt nice. She didn't think the conversation she had had with Shane that morning would get to him so quickly with how distracted and frustrated he seemed.

Ilya looked so much more comfortable walking towards the car compared to how he walked out of his own car the day before.

As they approached her car, Yuna noticed that there was something else about Ilya that seemed different that day. He wasn't just wearing the skiing jacket Shane hated.

The smile he was trying to give her as he approached the car didn't seem to curve evenly. It was almost like he had a painful cold sore. And there were hints of bruising spreading down the side of his face.

Shane rushed and quickly opened the door to the passenger seat before Yuna could roll down the window and say hi to them.

"Can we drop off my friend?" Shane asked without looking at her.

"Of course." Yuna said cheerfully as she waved them in from the front. "Come on in, Ilya."

Shane closed the door to the passenger seat and turned to Ilya. "She said it was fine."

Ilya's lips stretched into a smile and Shane didn't see anything wrong with the way he looked in front of him.

"Okay." Ilya said quietly, barely holding in the urge to chuckle.

He wanted to tell Shane that he heard what his mom had just said too. But he chose to look at Shane with all the patience in the world. He was still smiling more than was probably fitting though.

Shane being so oblivious to the fact that Ilya could hear Yuna invite him into the car almost felt like comedic relief to the entire day they had together. But Shane looked so serious in front of him, it made Ilya decide that they could just move on and get in the car.

Shane opened the door to the back seat and quickly got in, scooting to the left to make room for Ilya.

“Get in!” Shane said sharply while looking at Ilya and quickly gesturing with his arm.

It was almost like Ilya was suddenly too far from him. Ilya followed and sat down next to Shane while looking towards the front.

“Good evening” Ilya said as he closed the door to the back seat behind them.

Yuna looked at him in the rear view mirror. If he had been further away she would have still assumed he probably had a cold sore. But up close it looked like his lip had been split open pretty recently. The scab looked suspiciously fresh. And the bruising seemed recent.

Yuna didn’t say anything back for a second. Something about their hangout suddenly seemed off to her.

“Hey, Ilya” Yuna said a little more flatly than she had hoped. She hoped the two of them wouldn’t pick up on it so they could enjoy the ride back.

Ilya suddenly felt enclosed in the small heated space of Yuna’s car. He felt very aware of the fact that he was literally wearing one of her son’s jackets in their car. But he wasn’t supposed to think about that. He was supposed to put on his networking act and handle everything for Shane.

And yet something about it still made him feel a whirlwind of emotions. He couldn’t pinpoint what it was. Maybe it was embarrassment. Maybe the embarrassment was mixing with that feeling he got when he felt like he had accidentally manipulated Yuna into being nice to him.

Part of him just felt like he didn’t really deserve any of it. Was she catching on to the fact that he had accidentally manipulated her entire family into being nice to him?

Yuna started the car and suddenly switched to an entirely different demeanor.

“You know, I am so glad that old skiing jacket fit you.” She started with her hand on the steering wheel.

Ilya wondered if she somehow read his mind. Or if he had somehow manipulated her into reading his mind and then being nice to him about it.

“At first it was a size too big for Shane when we went skiing a few winters ago.” Yuna continued as she turned the car around to drive away from the campus. “Then he just decided it was too heavy”

“It is heavy” Shane groaned back in frustration.

Shane couldn’t believe his mom was choosing to practically gossip about him with his friend right in front of him. He wanted to look at her but he chose to look at Ilya instead.

Shane hoped whatever look he was giving Ilya would be read as “*Whatever this is, do NOT side with her right now.*”

Ilya glanced at Shane and then looked back at Yuna. He didn’t say anything. He knew that he had to say “*Thank you*” soon, but Yuna was still talking and he didn’t want to interrupt her.

"I'm glad it fits you so well though." Yuna added "It was really just taking up space in the car."

Ilya felt the end of her words linger. It felt like his cue.

"Yes, thank you" Ilya nodded even though Yuna was looking at the road and not at them "It is nice."

Most people had absolutely no idea that he was still self-conscious about the way he talked. He felt it in almost every interaction, and he always felt it when interacting with older adults he deemed important. He wore the false confidence that got him through all the interactions with pride.

"So? How did that project presentation go?" Yuna said enthusiastically.

Both of them looked back at her in the rear view mirror. Shane looked away from his mom to look at Ilya.

Shane wanted to groan and point out that this was exactly why they couldn't just lie to his mom. He didn't feel like he could face her. He couldn't believe the lie Ilya had told her was something he still had to keep up with after all this time.

But Ilya felt ready to once again shove any feelings he had aside and take over.

"It is great too" Ilya responded enthusiastically. "Shane get best grade." He even put on the widest smile he could manage.

Shane wanted to glare at him for just casually dropping yet another lie like that. But he chose to stare down at the seat in front of him instead. Part of him wanted to kick Ilya for adding that last part.

What if she started asking what class it was for next? She kept up with his grades too.

"Well that's nice to hear." Yuna said. She was smiling back at them while watching the road.

Shane dreaded whatever was happening around him. He wanted Ilya to be there with him so he wouldn't be in the car alone. But whatever Ilya was doing felt like he was just skating away recklessly at high speed, about to metaphorically slam into his mom on the ice.

Yuna kept driving, giving Shane and Ilya room to bring up anything they might want to add. They ended up driving in silence for a few minutes.

Yuna kept occasionally glancing up and noticing the injury on Ilya's face. It stood out a little too much to her, but she decided to stick to her decision of not bringing it up to Ilya.

She would have to drop him off pretty soon anyway. They had already started entering his part of town.

"You know my parents had their first place around here somewhere when they first started out." Yuna said to Ilya, finally breaking the silence in the car.

Ilya froze and looked up. He could see her in the rear view mirror. All the networking formalities abandoned him. Why was he suddenly struggling with the demeanor he had practiced for years?

"What?" he blurted out. He suddenly sounded like he might as well be talking to Shane.

"Oh, yeah." Yuna continued casually as she drove, keeping her eyes on the road. "A slightly different part but still the same general area."

Ilya could not grasp the concept of Yuna, who was so well off in comparison, having a family that had any ties to where he lived.

“They moved shortly after I was born though.” She wasn’t sure how to continue “They needed a bigger house and just... wanted us to be somewhere where we could assimilate better. Be closer to nicer schools”

Ilya didn’t know what to say. This conversation felt too different. There was no social script that he could follow anymore.

“Even then some of the kids at those schools were just ruthless.” Yuna continued casually like she was talking about the weather. She met Ilya’s gaze in the rear view mirror and raised her eyebrows at him “Can’t do much about it.”

Ilya didn’t know what to say. He didn’t know what *ruthless* meant. He wasn’t sure if she was actually saying what he thought she might be saying.

“You just gotta keep your head high and you’ll be alright.”

Why did she have to talk to him like that all of a sudden? Ilya wanted to look away from her but he couldn’t because he knew that it was impolite. It wasn’t that he hated it. It just broke the entire persona he had built around interacting with these wealthy people that he deemed at least somewhat important.

It already felt like too much when Yuna talked to him like he was an actual person. And it made him feel things that he always told himself he didn’t have the time to feel.

He didn’t know what to say. But he was supposed to say something if an older adult was talking to him.

"Uh" Ilya said because there was nothing else he could think of in that moment. "Yes"

The whole ride felt more and more like a fever dream as time went on.

He had spent so long feeling like it was just him against the entire world. Like no one would ever truly understand so many things. He usually gave up on trying to be understood because it seemed pointless.

"Thank you" Ilya added, deciding his last reply probably didn’t suffice.

He knew Shane’s family didn’t automatically hate him because he wasn’t from Canada, but he also never made the connection that Yuna’s parents were immigrants too. The two concepts just never clicked in his head in that way before.

Ilya mainly thought about Shane, and for the most part Shane just seemed to have the same Canadian upbringing other people they went to school with had. Shane spoke English natively and spoke French perfectly and in Ilya’s head, Shane was exactly the type of athlete all the big teams wanted. Right?

But Shane was still half Japanese. Because his mom was Japanese. And her parents were also immigrants. It felt weird to put that in perspective. There was usually a very clear divide in his head when it came to these things and Shane’s family suddenly started blurring the lines for him.

They approached Ilya’s place and Yuna slowed down.

"Well, I guess we're almost there" she said.

Ilya decided it was time to actually snap out of the thoughts that were consuming him. He was wasting the time he had with Shane stuck in his own head.

Ilya looked at Shane and saw him quietly sitting to his left, looking at something on his phone. He dreaded going home so much in that moment. Getting dropped off was somehow harder than driving

home.

This drive back had Shane. But when Ilya drove back from Shane's house himself he had the time to smoke and mentally prepare. The switch didn't feel as sudden that way.

"Well, I'm glad you two had fun today." Yuna said as she started stopping the car. "Have a good night, Ilya."

Shane put his phone away and looked at Ilya without saying anything. Ilya quickly glanced at him, and then looked back at Yuna in the rear view mirror.

"Thank you for driving me." Ilya said "Good night"

Ilya started getting out and turned to Shane, who almost looked like a scared animal about to be taken to the vet. Shane looked back at him like he wanted to say something.

"Bye, Shane" Ilya started and gave him a little nod "We talk more soon."

Shane's eyes seemed like they almost widened and got even bigger. Why did Ilya have to say that? What if that just inspired his mom to ask more questions for the rest of the drive back?

Ilya wanted to give Shane more time to say something back, but he felt like their time together had just run out. He thought about how he should go. He didn't want his family to see that he was being dropped off.

He wanted to go to bed so the next day could come sooner.

"Okay" Ilya exhaled sharply, momentarily losing track of the fact that Yuna was in the car too. "I go now. Good night." he added quickly.

Everything Ilya said and did suddenly looked so rushed to Shane. It felt like all the times when Ilya's family would call him and Ilya would shove him away and tell him he shouldn't make any noise until the call was over.

"Shane, do you want to get in the front?" Yuna asked, but Shane was only partially processing what she was saying.

It felt like she was talking from a distance.

Ilya closed the door behind him and walked away without looking back. Shane scooted towards the door Ilya had just closed and opened it to get out. Ilya heard him but still didn't look back.

Ilya was already in front of his house. He had to be a different person at his house.

Shane let his final look linger and then turned away too and got in the passenger seat. And suddenly they were driving away from Ilya. Shane felt all alone and trapped in the car.

Yuna was already talking to him. Shane braced for the worst.

"Shane do you have some things you might want from the cottage?" she started "Your dad and I are heading over to check on the pipes"

"Uh" Shane started "No, I don't think so." He hoped the rest of the drive would be quiet.

"Did you two have fun?"

Shane felt trapped in the car with her. It was almost like she had been saving extra questions questions for him personally until she could corner him with them.

"Yeah." Shane said quietly. "It was fun."

Shane waited for her to ask more questions but they never came. He pulled out his phone and checked his messages, hoping Ilya would text him.

He wasn't even sure what he expected him to text about. There wasn't really anything specific Ilya was supposed to say.

The rest of the drive was pretty quiet. He kept his head down and just kept absent-mindedly looking at things on his phone.

He wasn't even paying attention to what he was looking at. He wasn't processing any of the things he kept moving his thumb over. He just wanted to look busy.

They were almost home. It would be over soon.

"Shane." Yuna said as they started pulling into the driveway.

Shane realized it wasn't about to be over.

Her tone seemed serious and Shane already started feeling like he was standing in front of a tunnel. Ilya wasn't there to take over anymore.

"I need you to tell me what happened." Yuna continued

Shane felt frozen in his seat. He somehow felt like he was being pulled into his own body. His vision somehow expanded and he saw his mom from the corner of his eye. She was looking right at him from the driver's seat. How much did she know?

He was supposed to watch his breathing. Maybe she didn't know everything. Was he breathing evenly enough? Every breath he took felt it was not enough and the next breath could not come as fast as he needed it. Was he breathing too loudly? Could she tell by looking at him?

"What?" Shane finally asked. He let out a quick breath that followed his question.

He tried to look at his mom. He couldn't bring himself to make eye contact but he still looked at her for the sake of trying to act normal. He felt like he was looking right past her. At the same time, her presence felt like a big noticeable obstacle that was preventing him from seeing anything.

"What happened?" Yuna said and Shane could already hear his ears ringing around her words "With your friend?"

Shane already went through this. Ilya told him what to say. He had a script. It wasn't a lie. He would still be telling the truth.

"We played hockey." Shane said mechanically. It almost sounded like a question.

He felt like he was completely switching off and just saying words, but it worked. "We practiced not letting others steal the puck."

Yuna already had her suspicions, but the fact that Shane seemed so nervous in front of her felt like a bad sign.

Her expression shifted, and she reached up to put her hand on Shane's shoulder. Shane flinched and did his best to avoid looking at her.

Yuna sighed and decided to try again while gently rubbing his arm to calm him down.

"No one is going to get in trouble. And you're adults now."

Shane wanted to run away. How could she just say that? Why did she say that? He felt like he was going to throw up right there in the passenger seat.

Yuna continued talking. He felt like her words were delayed by a whole second by the time he processed each one.

"Did your friend get hurt during hockey practice?" She asked

Shane felt like she was just digging for inconsistencies in his story. He felt like he would accidentally give everything away if he started talking and she would somehow figure everything out.

"I just want to know the truth." Yuna continued "It's not like anyone can tell Child Services anymore."

Shane felt like he was piecing the words he was processing wrong and not decoding their proper meaning. Did she know less than he thought? He had to answer before she started asking more questions about their day.

He had to follow the script guideline in his head. He had to recall facts about hockey practice and omit everything that happened after.

"Marlow slammed him into the board." Shane said and suddenly regretted mentioning that name even though he was telling the truth.

He felt like he had to keep talking before Yuna could start asking questions.

"His teeth didn't chip. I checked." Shane went on.

He knew there wouldn't be any inconsistencies in what he said as long as he kept telling the truth.

"Practice went well. He could play without bleeding. We had fun playing. We even discussed the strategies during lunch."

Shane didn't usually include that many details and the timeline he was describing seemed all over the place to Yuna. He usually gave more vague answers than what he was blurting out in the car in front of her.

Yuna sighed. Shane kept looking down and braced for what she might have to say next.

"Okay" she said as she let go of Shane's arm "I believe you."

Shane wondered if it was actually over. She was already talking again.

"Just know that your friend is more than welcome to spend the weekend at our place if he wants to."

Shane looked at her. Was she trying to trick them? Was she onto them?

He wanted to decode what she might be getting at but it was also so hard to look at her. She was the only one talking, and yet he felt like he somehow had to try to listen to multiple people simultaneously.

“You don’t have to stay in the hockey building if he doesn’t feel like he can go home next time.”

Shane didn't like the fact that she brought up the ice rink building they had just been in. Why couldn't they just spend time together without her turning it into a whole thing?

“Might be a good idea to let him know tonight in case he wants to pack a few things for tomorrow.” Yuna continued.

Shane realized she was done talking.

“Okay” Shane felt like this could be his escape. “I’ll go tell him.”

He practically rushed out of the car and headed straight for the door.

Chapter 14: Bone Broth

Chapter Notes

I may be sick but I am absolutely armed with medicine and I can sleep as much as I want! 🥲

RAAA 🤔

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

Ilya dreaded walking in.

He wondered if his father was still going to argue with his brother about the girl he was seeing.

She never even talked to Ilya. All he knew was that her name was Polina or something and she liked his brother for some reason.

He didn't want to get dragged into that discussion again. It was night so wouldn't be able to get out of talking to them by saying he had to go to class this time.

Ilya took a final breath before opening the door. It felt like crossing the border back to his reality again. Like some kind of portal that separated his life with his family from his other life where he played hockey and got to spend time with Shane.

He took one step in and the sharp cold against his face was immediately replaced with the humid smell of soup.

Ilya realized someone had been cooking bone broth as he took his shoes off. Were they still eating?

He put on his plastic slippers and tried to listen for hints that would tell him what others in the house might be up to. Someone was still eating. He could hear the sound of metal spoons hitting thin glass bowls.

Ilya was very aware of the fact that he couldn't just go to his room without facing his family first. He just wanted to get it over with.

He knew they already heard him coming in.

He decided to hang up his jacket in his room because the hallway already had too much dust. Not taking care of something Shane had given him just felt wrong. The jacket felt like a little piece of Shane that had made its way into his house.

He exhaled loudly as he turned around from where he had left his shoes. It was time to make his way past the kitchen where their dining table was.

The wooden door was already wide open.

"Ilyusha?" Alexei almost chuckled while adding white bread into the broth in his bowl "What is this? Got caught robbing a jacket store?"

Ilya stopped at the door frame. He turned to look at his brother. His father was there too. He didn't feel like humoring whatever his brother was on about.

"I had hockey practice until late." Ilya said casually. "They served dinner for the team after. I already ate."

He wanted to just keep walking but his father was right there eating the same broth across from his brother. Ilya knew that he couldn't just walk away without his father starting a whole tirade about being impolite and disrespectful.

"You see this?" His father started and spread his arms out to show off the big pot and the loaf of bread in the middle of the checkered red and white table cloth.

Ilya didn't reply. He knew it wasn't a question. He kept looking down at the table cloth and started noticing the bread crumbs that stood out against the red squares.

"It is finally getting to her head." his father continued. "She left food before going to work so the men of the house could eat."

Their father turned to look at Alexei, but Alexei looked up at Ilya again. He had a different conversation in mind.

"Look at you, Ilyusha. You get injured so much." his brother started "Do you realize that you could easily become disabled one day?"

Ilya wanted to walk away from whatever his brother was trying to deflect with, but he couldn't.

He knew it would just make the conversation worse and escalate everything. He just wanted it to be over. He just wanted to go to his room.

"What are we supposed to do when that happens?" Alexei continued "No extra money, just extra work helping you put the food we buy into your mouth?"

"I'm fine." Ilya almost interrupted him. "They give us good athletic insurance. If I break something the private doctors will fix me without a waiting list."

Ilya hoped what he just said succeeded at shutting down whatever his brother was trying to pull.

He looked at their father and was glad to notice that he had no intention of joining the discussion that Alexei was switching to.

"Yes, you get many nice things playing hockey" Alexei started bitterly instead "Nice clothes, nice jackets, nice bags. And you never share."

Ilya wanted to just let it go.

But part of him was dying to argue that he literally didn't even have a proper winter jacket for years. Most of the things he owned came from the hockey program and its partnerships. It wasn't something to brag about because he barely had much else.

The jacket didn't even come from the hockey program. But he couldn't let them know that.

"Enough, Lyosha." Their father interrupted. "What does he have to bring home to us? Skates and sticks so we can play games like children?"

Grigori put his bread down and looked up at Ilya. Ilya stood there giving his father his most serious look.

“What is going on with you lately?” his father asked. “You’ve been acting so strange.”

Ilya felt his phone make a noise. Someone was texting him. He decided he would check later when he was alone.

“You take the car and disappear in the middle of the night.” Grigori started “Then you come home late looking like you went to war.”

Ilya looked at the spoon that sat abandoned in his father’s bowl of broth.

“Just some things for school. And hockey.” Ilya said as casually as he could.

“Are you seeing girls from this school?” his father asked directly.

Ilya hated the fact that he was somehow back to having this conversation again. How did they even end up talking about this again?

“No” Ilya replied flatly. “I don’t have the time for that.”

His father lifted one of his hands slightly above the table. He lifted up one finger to make a point and Ilya noticed that there was a single bread crumb stuck to his sleeve.

He braced to be lectured about working again.

“You know, you should never finish inside a woman.” His father started instead “At least not at your age.”

Ilya felt like he just got punched in the stomach. Like his entire soul was trying to drop out of his body. It felt like that remark just came out of nowhere.

He couldn’t just zone out because the absurdity of that statement slapped him back into the conversation. Why did his father have to just say that out of the blue?

“I know.” Ilya said flatly.

He just wanted to leave already. This was somehow worse than getting yelled at over not working yet.

“Good.” his father continued as he picked up the slice of white bread he was eating with his broth again. “I don’t want to have problems with you.”

Ilya wondered if he was actually wrong about his family never really paying attention to what he did. Maybe he wasn’t really in any position to just throw Shane’s pregnancy test box in the bathroom trash can.

Ilya looked down at the red and white table cloth on the table. His brother was already back to eating his broth too.

“I have to go.” Ilya finally excused himself after realizing they were probably done talking. “I have to read something for tomorrow. Enjoy your meal.”

He turned away from the door frame and briefly closed his eyes before quickly opening them as wide as he could.

No one stopped him from walking away. Whatever that was was actually over. He made his way to his bedroom and closed the door behind him.

He could finally take off his jacket. It was still pretty cold in their house, but stepping in from the winter cold and keeping the same clothes on wasn't too comfortable when a skiing jacket was a part of the outfit.

He hung up the jacket on the little coat hanger on his side of the door.

He proceeded to put his bag down by his bed and lay down. He needed to decompress after everything that had just happened.

He got his phone out and remembered how someone texted him while he was talking to his father. The notification was waiting for him on the lock screen.

He drew the little pattern to unlock his phone and saw that it was Shane. Of course it was Shane.

Shane

Do you want to come over?

Ilya almost wanted to laugh a little.

They had just spent the entire day together. It felt nice but he also had no way of getting back to Shane. There was no way he was just going to ask for the car keys after that conversation.

Ilya

Now?

I can't

He remembered how he left Shane looking like a scared animal. He wondered if he was being too harsh by being realistic. He decided to text again.

Ilya

But tomorrow I will see you again

Shane was sitting at his desk, watching Ilya's replies finally come on his screen. He realized that this meant Ilya probably wanted to see him. He decided to ask more specifically.

Shane

No

Do you want to come over tomorrow

And spend the weekend here?

Ilya thought about it. The idea of getting to spend the weekend with Shane instead of staying home sounded amazing. But it wasn't like they could just do whatever they wanted. He started typing.

Ilya

Is ok to do this?

You asked?

Shane felt like he was about to start walking on eggshells. He hated how Ilya couldn't just focus on whether he wanted to do something. It was supposed to be a simple yes or no question.

Shane

My mom suggested it

Shane kept typing. He wasn't sure how specific he wanted to be. He decided he needed to be transparent so Ilya would know where his mom stood.

He still hesitated over the wording and wondered if he should even tell Ilya about the details. Was this part even necessary?

Shane

She thinks your dad hit you again

Ilya wasn't even sure how to feel about that message. At that point he just wanted to dodge saying anything to that.

Shane kept typing. Ilya watched the messages flood his screen and realized that he could actually dodge that specific message.

Shane

She kept asking so many questions after she dropped you off

I thought she was onto us

I told her we just played hockey but she kept looking at me and wouldn't believe me

Shane felt his shoulders tense up as he kept typing. He wondered if Ilya was even reading all of that for a second. But he felt like he couldn't stop talking until he got his response.

Shane

Anyway do you want to come over for the weekend?

My family won't be here

They're going to the cottage to get some things and check on the pipes

I asked my dad and he said they're going to spend the whole weekend there

We can do the test without them finding out.

Shane felt so stupid. He hated it when he somehow ended up texting a lot. It felt like a one-sided conversation. It felt like he might as well be talking to himself. He felt like he was probably saying too much.

Ilya thought about spending the weekend with Shane. He would have to think of an excuse at some point.

He usually told his family he was coaching someone else and it was a scholarship requirement or that a classmate's parents had simply invited him somewhere. He hoped it would still work.

Even if it didn't work and his family still ended up getting mad at him, it was a whole weekend with Shane. Shane would pee in his cup, everything would be fine, and then they could spend the whole weekend alone.

The wall of messages on the tiny screen he was holding in his hands kept illuminating the entire space around him. He realized Shane was probably desperately waiting for a reply.

Ilya

Maybe I come)

Shane felt like he was going to choke at the reply. "Maybe" wasn't enough. It didn't provide or confirm any solid plan. He almost wanted to get mad at how little Ilya said back after he sent him all those messages.

Ilya had no idea just how much that reply stressed Shane out. He propped himself up on his pillow and started chewing on his hoodie string.

Ilya

You sleep better with me))

He wasn't even going to tell himself it was selfish to think of that this time.

Shane furrowed his brows at the message in front of him. He wasn't really in the mood to have Ilya hit on him without actually planning everything first.

Shane
Okay.

Shane exhaled and shook his head slightly in one direction before typing again.

Shane
So you're coming?

Ilya replied quickly this time.

Ilya
Yes)

Shane felt like Ilya might actually cooperate in the planning process again this time given how fast he was answering his questions.

Shane
Can you pack everything tonight?
Bring the cups and the thing

Shane remembered how his mom also mentioned that Ilya would need to pack his own things. He wasn't sure if this was also obvious to Ilya or if he should point it out too.

Shane
And pack your bag so we don't have to go to your house

Shane still wasn't sure if that was specific enough. He decided to keep talking.

Shane
Get whatever you need for Monday morning
Bring more clothes

Ilya rolled to his side and laughed at how serious Shane sounded.

He could laugh as much as he wanted without accidentally upsetting Shane when they were talking over text. He started typing again while leaning on his side.

Ilya
Okay)

Ilya looked up from his phone and started thinking about what he might want to bring for a second.

He kept a lot of his clothes in the duffel bag in his locker so he could have clean things to change into when he showered after hockey practice. It also made it easier to grab things if he was going to Shane's place after.

But a lot of the clothes there needed to be washed. So did the clothes he had at home.

And he didn't exactly have the time to both do a wash cycle and leave them out on the drying rack. They would just be damp in the morning because it wasn't warm enough for them to dry overnight.

Ilya looked down at his phone again.

Ilya

Can I wash clothes at your house?

Shane didn't know why Ilya would ask that. He decided to reply with a question.

Shane

Do you know how to do that?

Ilya scoffed and just about rolled his eyes.

Ilya

Yes Shane I wash my clothes

I know how to wash clothes

Shane didn't know how doing laundry really worked because his mom still collected and did everyone's laundry. It never occurred to him that Ilya probably did his own laundry.

He actually felt bad for asking that question.

Shane

Okay

Sorry

I don't actually know how the washer works

Ilya didn't really care about it too much. He was already used to the fact that he did more things by himself than most people he knew.

He realized that out of all things he actually had no idea how Shane's pregnancy test worked so he tabbed out of the texting app to look it up.

He stared at the search bar for a second not sure what to write. He wondered if looking it up in Russian would somehow give him inaccurate results because they bought the test in Canada. He decided to look it up in English.

How to take pregnancy test

The results loaded quickly. He glanced at the first one.

Early Detection hCG test. Measures the presence of hCG, a hormone produced by the placenta.

The more he read the description the more he felt like he was being flashbanged with words. He had absolutely no idea what any of that meant written together like that.

Maybe Shane had some valid reasons to make such a huge deal out of this. He imagined that reading all of the serious text online was probably even scarier for Shane.

Ilya still couldn't wrap his head around the possibility of Shane being pregnant. It just didn't seem like a real risk. But he knew Shane would get upset if he didn't take this 100% seriously.

He decided to just watch a video where someone could show him how to use the pregnancy test instead. It was a lot easier to keep track of visual instructions. He went on YouTube instead.

Ilya lowered the volume on his phone before looking anything up just in case. The last thing he wanted was to have his father storm in and confront him over what he was watching.

He watched the video on low volume with the automatic captions on and felt like he was sticking his head in a part of the internet that was absolutely not meant for him.

“As you all know, my husband and I have been trying for a baby” the woman in the video said as she put her hands together on the screen. “And I figured I should make a tutorial on how I take these dollar store pregnancy tests.”

Definitely not a part of the internet Ilya belonged in.

"Ideally you'll want to wait until the morning to pee because that's the best sample to get" she continued.

Ilya kept watching feeling like he was somehow invading this woman's privacy by looking at the content she had decided to post publicly.

At least the visual instructions were easier to keep up with. He wondered if Shane had watched the same thing before.

“So” The woman continued after putting down a cup that was likely full of urine “Next you’ll want to open your packaging”

Ilya observed her and wondered if the order of these steps really mattered.

“And be careful not to get it wet on your sink or wherever you are in the bathroom. Your hands should be completely dry. Otherwise your result could be wrong.” she continued as she opened the plastic packaging that she had pulled out of the box.

That made sense to Ilya. Maybe there were specific steps he needed to follow.

He didn't want to deal with potentially messing it up and having to deal with Shane claiming a negative result wasn't real either and then having to do the whole trip all over again.

“You’ll want to dip this side in your cup” the woman said as she held the actual test up to the camera. “And keep it there for about 10-15 seconds”

Ilya looked at the strip she was holding up and squinted a little. The pregnancy tests actually looked very similar to the quick drug tests the hockey program had them do every couple of weeks.

He felt stupid for not realizing that most urine tests probably worked the same way.

He turned the video off. He already knew how the drug tests worked. They had done this countless times before.

He almost found it funny how he paid so little attention to his brother's trash that he never realized pregnancy tests were basically the same thing.

Ilya felt like it was actually going to be okay. He could tell Shane to just pretend they were doing another drug test. Then Shane would be fine. And then he would have the whole weekend with Shane. With no one around to bother them.

It felt so exciting to think about it. He decided to text Shane again and worry about the excuse he would tell his family later.

Ilya

Ok
But yes I will come))
We go together after hockey?

Shane still felt overwhelmed with worry watching the notification show up on the top of his phone.

He wondered if Ilya was on the same page as him. Maybe they had different ideas about what having the house to themselves entailed.

Shane wanted to bring this up but Ilya texted again first.

Ilya
And I will help you with cup and “thing”)

Shane stopped with his thumbs above the phone keyboard. He felt his lips start curling up into a weak smile.

For some reason he just felt like maybe everything would be okay as long as Ilya was there with him.

Chapter End Notes

Okay! This is probably the longest chapter in the whole fic but I feel like it needed to be a single chapter.

It's finally the end of Day 2 (Thursday) 😭 My Shaylas had such a long day...

I decided to stop adding quotation marks when writing the text messages because it just looks cleaner (especially with multiple consecutive texts). I'll need to go back and eventually edit the previous chapters but I'm going to sleep now lmao ok bye

Chapter 15: Coke

Chapter Notes

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

Ilya woke up to the sound of his alarm blaring right next to him.

“Nnhg stupid” he groaned quietly as he pulled the phone down under his thick blanket. He desperately wanted to muffle the noise a little before he finally managed to turn the alarm off.

His blanket slid away from his shoulder and he already felt like he was going to freeze. He bunched himself up around the phone and pulled his covers back up to his neck.

He just wanted to enjoy a few more minutes of rest before he actually had to get up and freeze in the morning cold.

It was Friday. Ilya kept thinking about how he couldn't wait to sleep at Shane's house later that day. Shane's house was so warm and his bed was so comfortable and spacious. And he was going to feel so cozy when he was finally bunched up with Shane under the soft duvet.

The phone he had somehow ended up hugging started buzzing against him. The text message notification sounds felt like they were way too loud even under the blanket. Ilya groaned a little more and rubbed his face down against his pillow.

He just wanted five more minutes of rest. But he wasn't going to get them. And to make things worse he started mentally feeling the weight of his father constantly calling him lazy and undisciplined.

He didn't want his father to be right.

Ilya dug around under the covers to find his phone again and stuck his hand out so he could check the time and the messages he was getting.

Shane was already wide awake and texting him while having breakfast.

Shane

Are you up?

My mom is asking if you want anything from the grocery store for the weekend

Ilya felt like it was too early in the morning. His eyes were barely even open and he found himself reading that with so much weight in his gaze.

He couldn't actually remember the last time someone had asked him if he wanted something from the grocery store.

Shane's family already had the brand name Coke he liked in their fridge for him and now they were asking him if he wanted even more than that.

Part of him felt horrible. Yuna probably thought he was polite and a good friend. He didn't think he was actually like that at all. It was an act he had learned to keep up with so he could handle older adults.

He knew she would probably hate him if she knew how he used to tease Shane just to get his attention and see him get a little angry. He didn't really do that as much anymore because he was too busy teasing Shane in other ways now. And that somehow felt worse in comparison.

Ilya had had so many people give him the “My parents said I can’t hang out with you anymore” line before. He never let anyone see that it got to him. He always acted like it was whatever and he didn’t really care.

But he really didn’t want that to happen with Shane. With everything they were doing he felt like wasn’t even just waking on thin ice. He was recklessly stomping on it around Shane’s entire family.

Ilya told himself to snap out of it.

He couldn’t make this about himself now. This was about Shane. And Shane was up and wide awake and waiting for him to text him back.

And despite everything, Shane just wanted to know what Ilya wanted from the grocery store. The same Shane that had multiple panic attacks over their dollar store trip wanted to know what Ilya wanted this time. Ilya decided not to think about it too much and started typing instead.

Ilya

Hmmm ginger ale for you
So you sleep better next to me))

Shane was sitting in front of the breakfast laid out for him, trying to figure out how to word his text without outright sending suspicious messages around his family. He looked around a little and started typing slowly.

Shane

You packed the stuff we bought right?

Ilya suddenly felt more awake. He figured he should probably watch what he was saying to Shane so Shane wouldn’t spiral.

He realized he had to actually start being more attentive with Shane. He didn’t want their day to be any more stressful than it was going to be. He exhaled a little and started typing back quickly.

Ilya

Yes
Don’t worry
And I read how to use this on internet last night
Maybe I don’t talk so much last night because I am reading)

Shane felt a little smile forming on his face. He wasn’t sure why but he instinctively tried to hold the smile back for some reason. The corners of his mouth started feeling tense against his face but he felt a sense of relief start washing over him.

Shane

You really looked it up?

Ilya wasn’t going to admit he didn’t actually understand what he tried to read because he knew that would freak Shane out. And “watched half a YouTube video” wouldn’t really make him seem like he was taking this seriously either. But he did actually look it up.

Ilya

Yes

Shane actually let himself smile without holding it back this time.

“Did your friend text you back?” Yuna’s voice came behind him

Shane felt so startled his expression immediately dropped and he quickly locked his phone and put it down on the table. He felt a sense of panic build up inside him, but he quickly told himself there was probably nothing bad she could have read.

Everything they just talked about was vague. He took a breath while trying to make sure it wasn't too audible. There was no way his mom would figure out what their conversation was actually about.

“Uh, yes” Shane said seriously while breathing so slowly he almost felt out of breath “Yes he did.”

“Well what did he say?” his mom continued as she made her way back to the dining table and started picking up some of the empty plates.

“Nothing.” Shane continued flatly while trying to act normal.

Yuna was confused about how Shane was acting, but she figured Shane’s friend might have said something else about not feeling safe at home.

“So he doesn’t want anything from the store?” Yuna continued, hoping it would remind Shane what she was actually asking.

“No” Shane said. His mouth suddenly felt too dry so he pulled his lips in a little before continuing. “He said you should just get ginger ale.”

Yuna already knew Shane was the one drinking all the ginger ale. Shane had already told her Ilya preferred Coke.

“Aww that’s very nice of him, Shane” she said earnestly while walking back to put the empty plates in the dishwasher. “We already have plenty of your ginger ale but we can get more of the drink he likes.”

“Coke” Shane continued from the table with a nod. “He likes coke. Coca Cola was really popular where he grew up.”

Yuna closed the dishwasher and looked back at Shane.

“We’ll make sure to get plenty of Coke then.”

Hockey practice ended up feeling like the highlight of Ilya’s day. He got to see Shane fully out of his shell on the ice again. He felt so energized that the high of it still lingered when it was time to hit the showers.

Ilya excelled at hockey in general. There was no language barrier holding him back. Everything he had learned growing up was more or less the same.

But getting to play with Shane was also a big part of it. Shane felt like a completely different person on the ice. He was so quick on his feet and he played with so much confidence. His moves were so calculated and precise that Ilya felt genuinely charmed.

Ilya didn’t blow dry his hair after showering. He dried it off with his towel as much as he could and let the loose waves air dry while he made his way to his locker.

He was so glad the school provided the towels and he didn’t have to wash those too. The idea of keeping wet towels with the rest of his laundry in his locker sounded like an absolute nightmare.

“Don’t forget your duffel” Shane called out from next to his own locker as he finished putting on his athletic hoodie.

Ilya was already grinning by the time he turned to look at Shane. He stood there in his towel looking back at Shane, who seemed completely immersed in their plan.

“Yes I will take” Ilya laughed a little while looking at him. “But first I need to wear clothes.”

“Right, yeah.” Shane nodded at him. His tone was still so confident. He almost sounded like he was still discussing hockey strategies.

Ilya loved seeing him like that. It was like he was slowly getting to have the version of Shane he knew and loved back. He didn’t feel like he was walking on eggshells around Shane this time.

He didn’t know that Shane was actually trying really hard to keep it together.

Every time Shane felt like he was on the verge of catastrophizing, he reminded himself that they had a plan. The next step was to get to their house. Ilya was there for him and taking him seriously.

“Right. Okay.” Shane continued out loud as he took a deep breath “Now we just need to get to my house”

Ilya decided to pick out his clothes quickly. He didn’t have to worry about layering up so he wouldn’t feel cold this time. He could just wear the black sweatpants he had in his duffel. The stretchy material actually felt so comfortable when he didn’t have to worry about feeling cold outside later.

“Yes” Ilya called out “We go to your house soon.”

He suddenly felt like he should probably hurry before Shane got anxious again.

He dug around for a T-shirt. The first clean one he pulled out looked a little too faded, so he put it back. He wasn’t going to go to Shane’s house wearing the worst clothes he owned. He wanted to look nice.

He found a plain black cotton tee that looked like it was actually in good shape and quickly put it on, careful not to let his hair get the collar wet. He also decided to wear the hockey program hoodie that Shane boycotted when they were about to head to the dollar store.

Shane decided to text his mom and ask her if they had already left. But he quickly realized that asking would probably sound really suspicious. He found himself starting to feel nervous, so he decided to draft his message in his notes app and see how it might look visually.

He pulled out his phone and noticed the notifications. His mom had already beat him to it.

Yuna

We are heading out Shane

You two should have enough drinks for the whole weekend in the fridge

Feel free to order a treat for the two of you if you get hungry later ❤️

Shane sat down so he could collect his thoughts and figure out if he wanted to say or ask anything. Ilya turned around again and noticed that Shane was just sitting on the bench and looking at something on his phone.

“You are ready?” Ilya asked Shane quickly.

“Not really” Shane said as he looked up from his phone “I need to get my bag. And put my shoes on.”

“Then go get bag!” Ilya exclaimed while nudging his head towards Shane's locker.

He hoped that wasn't too harsh for Shane. He couldn't really help how he sounded when he felt like he was in a hurry. He told himself he might need to slow down a little.

Ilya put his new jacket on and watched Shane make his way back to his locker.

“My mom said they just left by the way” Shane said from behind his locker door “So we should uber back to my place”

Shane grabbed his bag and realized Ilya wasn't saying anything back.

“I'm paying for it” Shane added “The uber I mean”

“Okay” Ilya said flatly from the distance.

Ilya actually felt good about the weekend ahead of them. He told himself the absurd pregnancy scare would be over by this time tomorrow. And they had the entire house to themselves.

Ilya finished packing everything quickly and pulled his duffel out of his locker in one movement. One of the hockey sticks that was shoved behind his duffel rattled against the metal locker loudly and quickly fell down right on Ilya's arm.

“*Blyat*” Ilya huffed out in frustration as he shoved the stick back into the locker with his forearm.

He was already holding both the duffel and his backpack in his hands, and now he even had sticks falling on him. It actually made him feel frustrated.

Shane peeked out from behind his own locker to get a full view of what had just happened.

“Are you okay?” Shane asked. It was almost like he had started asking Ilya if he was fine over the smallest things lately.

“Yes Hollander I am fine.” Ilya said in frustration as he put the bags down and zipped up the jacket Shane had given him. “Stupid stick fall on me.”

Ilya looked up while flinging his bag over his shoulder and saw that Shane was still leaning over his locker in his plain white socks. The sight just seemed silly to him.

“Now hurry please” Ilya said nudging his head toward Shane's feet. “You are just wearing socks”

Shane took his shoes out quietly and sat down on the bench. He probably would have looked calm to anyone else but Ilya knew that he was upset. And he regretted rushing him.

Shane just wished Ilya would be more patient with him. He wasn't even doing anything wrong. He started feeling like Ilya would probably just end up rushing him with everything later too. He tried to focus on tying his shoes but one of the laces slipped out of his fingers at the thought.

Ilya noticed it. He felt like he had just ruined something.

Shane was still trying to tie his Rebooks when Ilya approached him. He didn't look up but Ilya still looked down at him. He noticed how Shane's hair was already completely dry.

Ilya looked back to make sure everyone had left. He couldn't see or hear anyone in the locker room anymore, so he reached to gently adjust the top of Shane's hair.

“You play good today” Ilya said as he let the top strands of Shane's hair flow out between his fingers.

Shane looked up and saw Ilya's hand soothing his head above him. Shane got through hockey practice telling himself they would deal with the stress together later. But Ilya was still eager to talk about hockey.

And he was complimenting him. Ilya almost never complimented anyone on their playing. He was usually either teasing or outright telling people they played bad.

“You think so?” Shane said while trying to hold back the small smile that was forming on his face.

Shane knew he was a good player. But getting complimented by Ilya Rozanov required a whole new level of being a good player.

“Yes.” Ilya said as he let his hand fall off the side of Shane's hair and slowly brush against his face.

Shane couldn't believe Ilya wasn't trying to move on to teasing him yet.

“Others lose energy.” Ilya continued as he sat down next to Shane and moved on to stroking his cheek with the back of his hand. “But it is nice to see you skate so fast and score good goal when I pass”

Shane was suddenly smiling so much he felt his cheeks start tensing up against Ilya's hand. Ilya fixed a small strand of hair that was somehow loosely poking out over the top of Shane's ear

“I liked passing to you too” he told Ilya “especially when you swept the puck away and then just flipped it up and went for the top corner.”

Ilya was already sitting down next to him, waiting for Shane to finish tying his shoes. He decided he wouldn't tease Shane directly this time.

"Yes well it is smart to pass to me" Ilya shrugged as he watched Shane go back to tying his shoes. "I am good player and others play bad."

Shane laughed a little at that statement and Ilya looked down to notice that his shoes were already tied.

“You are ready to go?” Ilya asked him while placing his hand on Shane's back "Or I should wait for you?"

“No, yeah.” Shane told him quickly as he sat up.

He looked back and Ilya who was just looking back at him. Shane realized that he didn't really answer Ilya's questions.

“I'm ready. I'll get us a ride now” he added.

Chapter End Notes

I'm not as sick anymore!

Anyway thanks for keeping up with my longfic! ;__ ; I made this start on a Wednesday for a reason so I will probably go back and label the days at some point.

Chapter 16: Uber

Chapter Notes

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

Ilya walked towards their uber while holding his duffel away from Shane in his hand.

He always put the clothes that needed to be washed in plastic bags and separate compartments, but he just didn't want Shane so close to his laundry.

Shane was always really neat and clean when it came to just about everything. What if he thought being next to laundry was gross?

"I will put this in trunk" Ilya called out as they approached the car.

"Right" Shane replied firmly while trailing along next to him. "Okay."

Ilya turned towards the back of the car and opened the trunk. He was surprised to notice that Shane followed him instead of getting in the car and waiting for him inside.

"Make sure you remember to get the duffel from the trunk later" Shane said as Ilya closed the trunk in front of them.

"Okay" Ilya said like this was a game that Shane was overthinking. "Let's go inside car now."

They split ways almost hesitantly while heading for the two different back seat doors. Ilya went for the left side without thinking too much. He knew Shane always avoided using that door because "you're supposed to get in the car from the sidewalk".

Their driver confirmed their destination with Ilya and Shane looked out the window as they drove away from their campus. Just going back to his house felt a lot easier than going on their dollar store quest, but it still felt nerve wrecking.

Shane felt like they were about to do something that was horribly wrong, even though he couldn't rationalize why he felt that way.

It should have felt fine. Not only did his family know that Ilya was going to stay with him, but his mom had suggested it too. And she wanted them to order a nice treat too.

They drove in silence as Shane kept going over his mental plan for the rest of the day ahead of them. The sound of the car moving through the road felt both ambient and too sharp for him.

He felt something pooling in the pits of his stomach. The "later" he had been shoving to the back of his mind felt like it was somehow tailing their car as they drove to his house.

He dreaded it so much. Part of him just didn't want to know the results yet. If he didn't know yet he could just pretend everything would be okay.

But another part of him knew he had to know on time. The thought of having to quit hockey to carry a child seemed like an absolute nightmare to him.

“So...” Shane started awkwardly and his voice was barely above a whisper. He wondered if Ilya had even heard that.

Shane glanced to his left and saw Ilya’s bag sitting in his lap. The same bag that had his test and the blue party cups Ilya had bought for him. He wondered if the driver would figure out what they were hiding in there if the bag rattled wrong on the road.

The bag felt like it was taking up his entire vision from the side and Shane felt like he was spacing out again.

He couldn’t afford to start losing it in a stranger’s car. He had to hold onto any shred of sanity he could get.

“Are you hungry?” He eventually asked Ilya.

Their driver kept his eyes on the road. Shane felt like his voice sounded so loud inside the vehicle. He turned to look at Ilya and saw him casually looking at something on his phone.

“Hmm...” Ilya started as he looked up from his phone.

Shane felt like he was slowly being pulled back to reality as soon as Ilya started talking.

But even then, Shane found himself starting to feel almost embarrassed by how deeply intimate it felt to watch Ilya sitting next to him in his old jacket, completely zoned out as they were on their way to his house.

It was almost like they weren’t just hanging out. They were on their way to Shane’s house with a duffel full of Ilya’s clothes in the car. And Shane was just sitting there asking him if he was hungry.

It felt like so much more than hanging out.

“Do you want to eat?” Ilya decided to ask Shane “When we arrive?”

It almost felt domestic. Shane’s worries were still there and they still kept weighing him down in the back of his mind, but he still decided to enjoy the moment as much as he could for a second.

“I don’t know.” Shane tried to shrug lightly. “Maybe. Practice was kind of intense and I was thinking of ordering something”

Ilya knew his bag was packed with complimentary protein bars. But he figured Shane probably wanted a bigger meal than that.

“Okay.” he replied casually.

Ilya didn’t know what else to say. It wasn’t like he was the one that was in any position to order the food.

Shane waited for him to say something else too, but soon realized that the *okay* was all he was going to get. It almost broke the illusion of domesticity he wanted to just enjoy for a second. Ilya felt so distant to him in that moment.

Ilya didn’t really seem interested in talking about ordering food.

But it was all Shane was grasping onto to stop himself from spiraling about the stupid blue party cups. The same blue cups from the Pregnancy Test Store that Shane was supposed to pee into so he could find out if his teammate had knocked him up and absolutely destroyed his entire hockey career.

It felt so insane and so unfair to think about.

Shane forced himself to start breathing so slowly that the oxygen in the car felt like it was actually thinning.

Ilya realized that the silence was taking more than he might expect. He wondered if Shane just wanted to talk and expected him to say something else. It wasn't like they could talk about everything with a complete stranger in the car with them.

"So you will get... what?" Ilya asked. He felt like he might as well be trying to force a conversation about the weather "Nice pizza from restaurant?"

Shane's face scrunched up at Ilya's words. Pizza wasn't even real food to him. He wondered if Ilya even remembered anything about him.

"No" he said, trying not to sound upset. "My mom said we could both have a treat. Real food."

"Ah, yes." Ilya continued jokingly. "Of course real food. For Mr. Big Hockey Player's special diet."

Ilya couldn't remember the word Shane had used for the diet. But Shane smiled a little at the thought of Ilya remembering the little things he mentioned all the time. He felt like he was actually breathing again.

Ilya put his phone in his pocket and scooted a little closer to Shane.

"Okay" Ilya said as he looked down at the phone that Shane was holding in his lap. "So we look at food."

"Okay" Shane said as pulled his phone up and nervously watched Ilya get even closer from the side of his vision.

Shane opened the Uber Eats app and suddenly felt Ilya pressing right against his left side. He immediately looked up at the rear view mirror to check if the driver was looking at them, but his eyes were still on the road.

"What the fuck are you doing?" Shane hissed at him under his breath. Ilya was just close enough to hear it.

Ilya looked at him but Shane was too nervous to look back.

Shane could feel Ilya's eyes on him but kept his gaze just under the rear view mirror. He wanted to be able to catch even the smallest glance the driver might want to shoot their way.

"Hollander I am fucking hungry" Ilya replied like it was the most serious thing in the world. "I want to look at food."

Shane felt so overstimulated in that moment he felt like he was forgetting how to breathe. Ilya reached towards Shane's phone and placed his hand over Shane's so he could tilt the phone toward himself.

Shane froze at how direct the touch felt against his hand. The tips of Ilya's fingers felt so much colder than the back of Shane's own hand. It made the touch feel so much more noticeable and so much more direct than just Ilya pressing against him through layers of clothes.

Shane's hand ended up right behind the passenger seat with Ilya's hand still firmly placed over his.

Ilya scrolled through the list of places Shane had already saved as favorites and each swipe of his thumb felt like it was gently caressing Shane's hand in the process.

Shane felt so zoned out he wasn't even processing the restaurants in front of him. He couldn't believe he was barely paying attention to whether their driver was looking at them. He wondered if Ilya was actually paying any attention to what he was scrolling through too.

Shane felt like he could no longer physically feel anything around him. The fact that Ilya moved his hand so slowly made the touch linger and feel so much more amplified.

Shane knew they needed to stop. Their driver was right in front of them.

He straightened himself and looked out the window before locking his phone and quickly moving his hand away so he could put his phone back in his pocket.

"Let's uh... look at food later." Shane said seriously while still looking out the window. "We're almost there"

Ilya looked at him before realizing that was his cue to pull away.

"Don't forget to get your duffel out of the trunk when we get out." Shane continued while still keeping his eyes on the houses they were passing.

Ilya scooted back and nodded at him. "Okay."

Their driver had already started slowing down. Shane wasn't wrong about them almost being there. Ilya quietly accepted the fact that Shane would ignore him for the rest of the ride and looked out his own window until the driver finally stopped.

"Here we are" their driver said casually before repeating Shane's address to them.

"Thank you." Ilya nodded at him before being interrupted by Shane.

"Go get your duffel." Shane said seriously like everyone else in the car might forget.

Ilya got out of the car and watched Shane head straight for the front door. He wanted to say something but decided to just quietly go behind the car and get his duffel alone.

He grabbed the bag and closed the trunk quickly. Shane was already even further away so Ilya sped up, hoping he would still be able to catch up with him.

Shane walked forward even faster and Ilya watched him open the door and quickly slam it behind him before Ilya even made it to the porch.

Ilya jogged towards the door so he could get inside as fast as possible. Part of him hoped Shane had closed the door on him so quickly because he just didn't want the heat to get out of the house.

The warm welcoming air engulfed Ilya the second he walked in. He decided to close the door quickly so the warmth wouldn't get out too.

Shane lost it as soon as Ilya closed the door behind them. He turned around angrily while Ilya was trying to kick his shoes off and lifted his right forearm so he could slam Ilya against the door.

"Why the fuck did you think it was okay to touch me in the car?" Shane yelled out as Ilya flew back and hit the door behind him.

It completely caught Ilya off guard.

He was no stranger to having Shane push him back the second a door closed behind them, especially if they were going to be completely alone. But the pure aggression behind the shove hit him very differently.

He ended up dropping the duffel on the floor as he got pinned against the door. He briefly looked up feeling absolutely terrified that they might have accidentally damaged the doorframe, but it seemed fine.

“He cannot see there.” Ilya replied defensively without trying to fight him off. “I know this because I drive too.”

“But he could see me.” Shane shouted back angrily “You can’t just try to make me flustered in front of other people.”

“You were... flustered?” Ilya asked. He didn’t know what that meant but he was trying to figure it out based on the context.

“Shut the fuck up!” Shane yelled back as he shoved Ilya back even harder with his forearm.

“Okay.” Ilya apologized calmly “Sorry.”

Shane wouldn’t budge. He shook his head and looked away from Ilya.

“I am sorry.” Ilya repeated as he reached for Shane’s hand. “I thought maybe you will relax if I do this.”

Shane felt Ilya’s cold fingertips on his own hand again. But he couldn’t admit that he would have normally enjoyed it.

Shane felt like he was actually losing his mind from all the stress. He relaxed the force he was using to pin Ilya against the door and looked down.

“Maybe. But not there” Shane said before exhaling loudly.

He lowered his arm and realized how close they were standing. He wasn’t even hungry. He was just grasping for anything that would distract him from the reality he was faced with.

“I’m sorry I’m just... really fucking stressed out” Shane continued.

He slumped forward against Ilya feeling like he just wanted to go completely non-verbal. Ilya moved his arm up behind Shane’s back so he could gently guide him into a more comfortable position against him.

“Do you want to sit?” Ilya asked him, his palm moving ever so lightly against Shane’s back.

Shane nodded against him. They were both still wearing their jackets and he felt like he might as well be pressing against a duvet.

Ilya let him stay there for a little longer before gently trying to nudge Shane’s shoulders off of him. Shane wouldn’t budge yet.

“You want to sit.” Ilya said as he rubbed Shane’s shoulder a little. “But you are trapping me against door.”

Shane moved away a little but wouldn’t look at him yet.

“I will hug you more when you sit too.” Ilya told him calmly.

“Okay” Shane replied quietly.

He moved away without glancing up at Ilya and stood there for a second. Ilya felt like he was no longer trapped against the door but he still didn't really have that much room to move.

"I... uh" Shane started, feeling like he needed a second to gather his thoughts. "I think I want to go to my room."

And yet he just stood there motionless.

"Okay." Ilya told him as he finished kicking his own shoes off "But we need to leave shoes here."

"Right. Yeah" Shane continued as he felt himself slowly snap out of it.

He felt like he was actually seeing the world around him again. And he started noticing that it was too hot inside for the jackets they were wearing.

"Let's leave our jackets here." he told Ilya as he started unzipping his jacket.

Shane took his jacket off and turned towards the coat hanger. He watched Ilya reach up and hang up the old skiing jacket he had given him the other day.

Something about it stirred so many emotions inside Shane. He used to hate seeing that jacket so much. But now seeing it meant that Ilya was at his house.

It meant that Ilya was at his house, about to spend the whole weekend with him alone and help him take a whole pregnancy test behind his family's back.

The idea of it just felt so intimate. He knew that most people just did this alone without any help from their boyfriends.

Shane suddenly felt like he was mentally choking at the word boyfriend in his own head. Ilya wasn't even his boyfriend. He had never let himself think of Ilya as his boyfriend before.

He felt like he had accidentally crossed a line with his own thoughts.

Maybe he really was going insane from all the stress.

Shane felt so embarrassed by his train of thought he started looking around so he could think of literally anything else. His eyes landed on the duffel that was left forgotten on the floor.

"Let's leave all the bags in my room" Shane said as he turned to make his way towards the stairs.

"Okay." Ilya teased behind him "Mr. Leader. Mr... Manager."

Shane turned around and saw that Ilya was smiling at him. He wanted to find reassurance in it. But whatever was pooling inside him and weighing him down somehow wouldn't lighten up from it so easily.

Chapter End Notes

This chapter and the next one were originally supposed to be one chapter but I just realized how insanely long they are together while proofreading.

I've been writing stuff for this fic out of order (this is Friday and I even was writing some of the Sunday scenes the other day) and I write random parts for this fic in my notes app without realizing how long the chapters are actually getting like that ;___;

On the bright side this means that I'm going to upload the next chapter very soon! Probably later today or tomorrow!

Chapter 17: The Calm

Chapter Notes

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

Shane sat down on his bed and watched Ilya leave his duffel in the corner of the bedroom.

They had made it back to the same room where they started this whole plan. Ilya couldn't wait to end it.

He turned around and saw how absolutely wrecked Shane looked sitting on the edge of his bed.

"You want protein bar?" Ilya called out to Shane while walking towards him.

"No." Shane said flatly "I don't think I'm actually hungry."

Ilya sat down next to him and put his backpack by the side of the bed. He leaned closer and pulled Shane in from the side, keeping his promise that he would still hug him if they sat down.

"You want ginger ale?" Ilya asked him slowly.

Shane folded against him and leaned into his embrace. Ilya's arms were just loose enough to allow him to move comfortably.

"Maybe later." Shane replied as he leaned even closer and kept adjusting himself in Ilya's embrace.

Shane considered having the drink at some point. But in that moment all he wanted was to be close to Ilya. Just close enough so he could find a shred of comfort outside of all the stress that kept consuming him.

He laid down and pulled Ilya back. Ilya met him at eye level on the bed and Shane adjusted himself so he could rest his head against his chest.

They rarely got to be completely alone in a way where they wouldn't have to worry about making noise. Shane knew he would have normally been all over Ilya by now. But this time he just wanted him for the comfort of it.

Shane pulled back slightly and decided to rest his head on Ilya's arm so he could look at him.

"I don't know if I can really use the bathroom right now." Shane admitted.

He thought about how stupid it was to stress over just peeing in a cup like that. Like he hadn't done it countless times before.

Ilya stroked little strands of Shane's hair away from his forehead.

"Okay." he said reassuringly while continuing to adjust Shane's hair "You go when we wake up."

"What?" Shane asked and his face scrunched up a little in confusion. "Go where?"

Ilya could not believe Shane was the one to misunderstand something like that this time. It was almost funny but he had to stop himself from laughing or joking about it.

"To bathroom." Ilya elaborated casually while trying his best not to laugh. "Woman on internet says this."

Shane remembered how Ilya had told him that he actually researched this. Part of him actually started to feel baffled by how much effort Ilya had put into all of this for him. He hadn't even stopped to look at the bigger picture until that point.

Shane nodded a little before placing one arm across Ilya so he could pull himself back towards him. Ilya turned towards him too and pulled Shane in even closer.

"And I will come with you." Ilya said while Shane stayed buried against him. "Like nurse that checks for drugs."

Shane didn't say anything. Ilya paused a little, not knowing if the joke was landing.

"If you want." Ilya added as he placed the side of his face against the top of Shane's head. "Or you go alone."

"I mean..." Shane considered the idea. He didn't want to be alone at all. "Just don't look. That would be too weird."

"No Hollander, I will not look." Ilya pulled back and rolled his eyes jokingly while laughing a little "Maybe I am drug nurse but not that drug nurse. What is her name?"

Shane looked back at him laughed a little this time too. "Paula or something."

"Yes, I am not like crazy fucking Paula." Ilya scoffed a little more seriously.

Shane found himself laughing sincerely. Ilya watched Shane's face light up in front of him. He wasn't even trying to hold it back.

For a second Ilya felt like he felt like he was so close to having Shane back. He had never seen Shane stress this much for days at a time before. The whole pregnancy scare was getting to Shane so much that Ilya felt like he was actually losing the person he liked so much.

But Shane was still right there in front of him. He was the same person when they played hockey and he was the same person when he started laughing again.

Shane found himself looking back at Ilya too.

Shane brought a hand up to Ilya's face and placed it on the side of his jaw. He ran a thumb across the faint bruising. He expected to feel hints of firmness and swelling, but Ilya's skin actually felt really soft under his thumb.

"Do you feel better?" Shane asked him quietly.

Ilya shrugged. He had suffered much worse injuries before and Shane knew that. He had seen him end up with bruised ribs and chipped teeth and much worse swelling and bruising before.

But he found it cute that Shane cared so much now. The way he was laying down in front of him just wanting to know if he was in pain.

"Shane I did not even chip tooth" Ilya said jokingly. He didn't want to seem like he was laughing at him, but it was still a little silly.

"Yeah but you somehow freaked my mom out." Shane told him.

Ilya's chest sank a little as Shane reminded him that his family actually cared about him that much. Shane being worried was one thing, but his family offering him a place to stay because they were

worried about him was a whole thing that he didn't feel ready to process.

"Lucky you." Ilya said sarcastically instead "And now we are alone in your house all weekend."

Shane laughed a little again. Ilya felt like Shane's usual self was actually materializing right in front of him again. He didn't even realize he was smiling back at him.

"No but seriously" Shane continued as he sat up on the bed. "You feel better right?"

Shane was actually making eye contact with him this time. Ilya sat up on the bed so they could meet at eye level.

"No" Ilya said sarcastically "Obviously I am dying."

Ilya watched how his joke drew laughter out of Shane again. He stopped to take in the sight in front of him. Shane was sitting right in front of him on his comfortable bed and laughing at his stupid little jokes.

It was the happiest Ilya had felt all week.

"Oh no" Shane said jokingly "Dying from a bruise. Anything I can do to help?"

"Maybe I will not die if you kiss me" Ilya continued just as playfully as he started breaking eye contact to lean against Shane "Like... what is her name?"

Ilya hoped he wasn't crossing a line with all the walls Shane had been putting up recently.

"Who? Fucking Nurse Paula?" Shane laughed as he watched Ilya lean against his shoulder.

"No!" Ilya was so taken aback he actually ended up pulling back to look at Shane. "Fairytale woman with dwarves. *Belosnezhka*. What is her name in English?"

"Fucking Snow White?" Shane ended up asking louder than he thought he was about to. He could not believe what Ilya was saying.

"Yes." Ilya kept rolling with it solely because he wanted the moment to last as long as it could. "Like Snow White."

"That's actually so fucking stupid." Shane admitted. He chuckled a little but still felt baffled.

"Yes well" Ilya said as he leaned forward against Shane's shoulder. "I am lazy you know, maybe I am also stupid."

Shane was the one to reach up and put his hand through Ilya's hair this time. Ilya felt like he could actually die under his touch.

The way Shane's fingertips gently caressed his scalp as they made small movements through the wavy strands of his hair. It was everything to him.

He would have shown up a billion times even if this was all he would ever get.

And he still would have shown up even if he didn't get any of this just knowing he might see Shane smiling and feeling happy again.

Ilya knew he would have to call his father to let him know he wouldn't be back all weekend pretty soon. It was already starting to get late and he still hadn't gotten to it because he had been so busy with Shane.

But he just wanted to stay there with his eyes closed and enjoy the feeling just a little longer.

Shane brought his hand back down and started nudging Ilya off of him. Ilya just about groaned in protest. He didn't want Shane to push him off yet.

"Not yet. I am so tired." Ilya argued while trying to lean back towards Shane.

"Too bad." Shane said as he managed to nudge Ilya off of him.

Ilya just wanted to rest a little more. He kept finding himself just wanting to rest a little all day. He felt so drained. He had been looking forward to just bunching up against Shane for so long.

Maybe he really was lazy. He just didn't feel like sitting up yet.

Ilya didn't have time to open his eyes and realize what was happening before he felt Shane putting his hand on his shoulder and pressing his lips against his.

It felt so gentle and Shane kissed him so slowly Ilya felt like Shane might vanish into thin air if he tried to escalate in any way.

He let himself enjoy how much more amplified every single sensation felt when they actually kissed this slowly.

For a second he could let himself believe Shane actually liked him as more than someone he was just hooking up with. Ilya smiled a little as he kissed Shane back.

Ilya let his thoughts wander and he suddenly felt like Shane was actually treating him like a princess in distress. The thought of that made him genuinely laugh right against Shane.

It was so funny he realized he had to stop because he was laughing so much it made it impossible to kiss properly anymore.

"Wow, I really am like princess to you" Ilya finally said as he pulled back

He realized he was laughing so much he couldn't even properly kiss Shane back anymore.

Shane stopped to look at him for a second.

"Fucking asshole." Shane said as he pushed Ilya back.

"You like me" Ilya laughed as he fell back down against Shane's pillows.

"Yeah no shit" Shane said as he leaned down and bunched himself up against Ilya.

Ilya just wanted to take in the feeling. He wanted to remember all of it so he could fondly remember this memory when he was back in his own bed and sleeping alone again.

It wasn't even just about the sex. He just liked being close to Shane. He would do anything to just feel this close to Shane.

He constantly told Shane he wanted to have sex with him because it was the only desire he felt he was allowed to express so freely. But he didn't just want to sleep with him.

He wanted to sleep against him. He wanted to sit leaning against him. He wanted to hold him and play with his hair. He wanted to rest in Shane's lap and feel Shane's fingers running through his own hair too.

Except everything had to line up for Shane to act like he wanted the same thing.

Ilya knew that Shane wanted him sexually. But outside of that it felt like a gamble. It was basically a coin toss for Ilya, Shane might let him be affectionate or he might tell him to fuck off and push him away.

Ilya always acted like he could just bounce back from it because he had to. He could never tell Shane how that actually felt. And he couldn't even tell anyone else how he felt about Shane.

"It is nice when you are happy again." Ilya said quietly while pulling Shane in even closer like he might vanish or run away any second.

Shane turned his head further towards the hoodie with their stupid hockey logo that Ilya was wearing.

"I'm not." Shane admitted "I just wanted to relax with you for a second."

"Me too." Ilya told him. "But I think tomorrow you will be happy again."

Ilya would have normally told himself the whole situation was stupid. He spent days believing that Shane was just panicking for no reason.

But this was real to Shane. And all the stress Ilya had been put under wasn't just real but also slowly piling up inside him. He imagined it was probably even worse for Shane.

"Sorry I shoved you earlier." Shane admitted. He almost felt guilty looking back on it.

"Shane" Ilya laughed a little "I am pushed in hockey every day."

Shane felt an even stronger pang of guilt. He felt completely unable to admit that he did actually worry when Ilya crashed a little too hard on the ice too. He always made sure Ilya was fine in some way.

Even if Ilya immediately got back up, Shane would keep glancing over to watch how he played afterwards.

And if it took longer than usual for Ilya to be back on his feet, Shane would always skate over to check on him.

But maybe admitting that was too much. Ilya would probably call him a grandmother or whatever new creative insult he had up his sleeve now. Russians didn't actually get hurt, or so Ilya had told him.

"Yeah." Shane finally mustered up a response. "We both get shoved all the time. It's a part of the game."

Shane felt Ilya's fingers against the back of his head again. The touch felt so comforting it made him feel like maybe everything would be okay.

And maybe if he said his worries out loud, Ilya would make sure they wouldn't come true.

"I think it will actually kill me if I have to stop playing." Shane finally said without thinking about it too much.

He said it so quickly it felt like a single rushed breath coming out of him.

"You will play." Ilya told him. "Draft is soon. In summer."

"What if I have to miss the draft because of this?" Shane continued.

Those words felt so bitter in Shane's mouth. It was like saying his fears out loud made them so much more real too.

Ilya felt the weight of Shane's words deep in his core. He had been counting down to the same entry draft for years too. He was finally old enough to be eligible.

He could finally have his freedom in a matter of months.

He knew it was everything to Shane too. Even if Shane needed this for very different reasons.

"I will not let you miss draft." Ilya said seriously. "Then competition is boring."

He could have told Shane that the cut off age for entry drafts was 20 and that he could still try the year after. But he knew that would still sound like a death sentence to Shane. Ilya knew he personally wouldn't be able to handle another year of waiting either.

Shane had so many worries piling up inside him. Even if his pregnancy test ended up negative, that still meant they would go their separate ways in a matter of months.

"What are you going to do?" Shane started as he turned his head a little to look at Ilya "After we get drafted and everything?"

Ilya felt Shane's hair brush against his neck. Shane's hair felt soft even when he wasn't using his hands to play with it.

"Hmm" Ilya started while playing with his own ear "I will move. To new house"

That answer wasn't enough for Shane. Ilya seemed so casual about it.

Shane wanted to be hopeful. He just wanted to believe that if he kept asking, he would get at least some reassurance that they wouldn't just go their own ways in a few months.

Shane found himself breathing manually again. He had to watch his breathing so he could sound casual. He wondered if Ilya could feel his breath when they were so close to each other.

"Is there... something else you want to do?" Shane asked awkwardly while still trying to sound confident.

"I want to buy nice car too." Ilya replied.

Shane looked down at the duvet cover they were laying down on. The plain nautical pattern seemed too colorful and distracting in that moment. He gathered the courage to try again.

"We are probably going to end up playing for different teams" Shane said. "We both prefer playing center."

Shane couldn't let himself spiral in the middle of this conversation. He exhaled slowly and tried not too inhale too quickly while waiting for Ilya's reply.

"I think so, yes." Ilya said "Maybe we both play center. But you are good wing too."

"Will you still talk to me?" Shane asked, almost choking on his own words "If we are facing off against each other?"

Ilya noticed the faint shakiness in Shane's voice this time.

“Yes” he teased and pulled Shane closer “I will talk to you in face off. And say I will beat you with hat trick”

“What about after that?” Shane continued.

“What you mean after?” Ilya asked as he finally turned to look at Shane.

Shane didn’t really feel ready to make eye contact up close yet.

“Let’s say we play against eachother and I get to see you again.” Shane said quickly while still looking away.

“And you lose game against me?” Ilya continued jokingly.

“Asshole. Whatever. Even if you win” Shane stammered, trying to get back to the point he was trying to make “What do you think will happen off the ice after that?”

Shane felt like he had just said so much. He almost felt out of breath from talking. He decided to just stop for a second and wait for his response.

“This is why I buy fancy car” Ilya told him as he reached over to place his hand over Shane’s cheek.

Shane didn’t say anything. He just closed his eyes and let Ilya continue with whatever car fantasy he wanted to talk about instead. It wasn’t like Shane was supposed to even care.

“So when you cry because you lose, I wait in fancy car outside.” Ilya continued as he kept stroking Shane’s cheek with his thumb.

Shane opened his eyes and Ilya moved his hand back behind Shane’s ear so the touch wouldn’t feel too close to Shane’s vision.

“Maybe I wait in car with ginger ale for you.” Ilya said playfully “To say sorry I am better center and make you cry so much.”

Shane shoved him a little and Ilya let his hand slide down to Shane’s waist.

“Fucking asshole” Shane said while trying to hide the fact that he wanted to smile.

Ilya looked at him and noticed Shane was smiling a little.

“Maybe I come to other games too when you play. To bring ginger ale.” Ilya told him.

Shane looked back down at the duvet.

“And what if I can’t play?” Shane said, feeling like the mere thought of the possibility was actually suffocating him. “Will I ever see you again?”

“What? You are scared you lose every game?” Ilya teased him.

“No.” Shane started. He wanted to gulp so he wouldn’t choke on his own saliva, but his throat felt so full.

“What if I have to stop playing because I’m... you know.” Shane admitted.

“Then we fix everything.” Ilya told him as he moved his arm up to Shane’s back from his waist. “So you play with me again”

“Would you actually?” Shane said while looking up at him with so much worry in his eyes.

“Yes.” Ilya said confidently.

Shane wasn’t sure if Ilya was just saying that or if he actually knew how he could make sure Shane could keep playing.

Every possibility Shane had tried to run through felt like a dead end because of the medical record trail.

“How?” Shane finally asked. “I don’t think we can pull that off without anyone finding out.”

“Shane I have to prove I am better fucking center.” Ilya rolled his eyes at him “How the fuck will I prove I am better center if you do not play?”

Shane knew Ilya was trying to cheer him up, but he needed Ilya to be realistic for a second.

“You could probably get away with it. It wouldn’t go on your medical records but I-” Shane said while trying to keep the bitterness out of his tone.

“We see tomorrow.” Ilya interrupted him so he could stop Shane from spiraling. “When I give you blue cup.”

Shane stopped talking. Ilya wondered if interrupting him like that was a mistake.

“Tomorrow I am... drug nurse” Ilya continued with an exaggerated sigh hoping it would make Shane laugh “Not hockey player. One day when you are best center in the house because I am just nurse.”

“Okay” Shane said in defeat. “But what if it’s bad?”

“I think it is fine.” Ilya told him. “But if it is bad then we fix.”

“How?” Shane insisted. “How could you possibly ‘fix’ me being pregnant without anyone finding out?”

Every possible solution he had tried to come up with himself always ended up feeling like a dead end that would get between him and the NHL draft.

A positive pregnancy test didn’t just sound “bad”. It sounded like a fucking death sentence.

“For now, I don’t know.” Ilya sighed. “But if it is true I will figure out.”

Shane didn’t seem too sure about it. But Ilya had figured out how they could deal with everything so far.

He lowered his head against Ilya and felt Ilya’s fingers in his hair again.

“I go get ginger ale now” Ilya sighed as he kissed the top of Shane’s head. “And I have to call my father.”

He was trying to give Shane a heads up, but Ilya found himself feeling like he also needed a second to mentally prepare before pulling away.

“Can’t you just text him?” Shane protested.

“No.” Ilya said before pressing his lips together and shaking his head lightly. “I can text my brother. But my father is... old fashioned. He thinks it is impolite.”

“Can you just text your brother then?” Shane insisted.

“Sometimes.” Ilya said while shrugging “But lately he is... jealous or something. Probably talking nonsense about me.”

“Okay” Shane admitted defeat, but he still didn’t pull away.

“I will come back with ginger ale for you.” Ilya said while pulling Shane closer for a few seconds longer.

He kissed the top of Shane’s head again before finally pulling away. Shane watched Ilya get up and suddenly felt like his source of comfort was being taken away from him.

Ilya looked back at him and knew exactly how Shane felt. He wasn’t looking forward to talking to his father either.

“Should I wait for you so we can order food together?” Shane asked.

“A, no.” Ilya told him lightly. “What you want to eat, I will eat too.”

Chapter End Notes

They absolutely deserved to catch a break 😭

[Sticky note workskin by La_Temperanza!](#)

Chapter 18: Fridge

Chapter Notes

I have decided to italicize things that are spoken in Russian even when the dialogue is written in English because I feel like it makes more sense and would also emphasize what Shane probably isn't following if Ilya is speaking Russian in front of him.

This will make a lot more sense in the next chapter 😭 but I hope it makes sense in this one too.

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

Ilya made his way down the stairs with his phone in his hand. He absolutely dreaded talking to his father.

He was at Shane's house. And being at Shane's house always felt like a little escape from the other life he had at home.

Having to talk to his family on the phone always ruined the immersion for him. He hated that he had to be the one to call, but it was a lot better than getting angry calls from his family in front of Shane later.

He just wanted it to be over. He wanted to be able to get Shane's drink and go back to Shane.

Ilya let out a brief sigh and dialed his father's number as he made his way to Shane's kitchen. The ringing filled him with so much dread.

It was even worse once the ringing stopped. Hearing his father's voice made him feel as uneasy as ever.

"Yes?" Grigori said on the other end of the line.

Shane's kitchen suddenly felt so cramped to Ilya.

"Father" Ilya started as he walked towards the kitchen counter. *"I just needed to tell you I'm coaching the younger students this weekend. Scholarship requirement."*

Ilya always felt like he had to move around when he was in the middle of a stressful phone call. Or at least stay as far from Shane as possible if he had to talk to his family while at Shane's house.

"And are they paying you to do this?" his father said flatly.

"No." Ilya replied. *"It's a requirement. To maintain the financial aid."*

"Sounds like a waste of time. When are you coming back?"

Ilya stopped for a second so he could lean forward and rest against Shane's kitchen counter. Having this conversation somehow felt harder than the one he had just had with Shane.

"Monday night." Ilya finally said. *"After hockey practice."*

"Monday?" his father asked with his most surprised tone.

Just that single word felt like smoke coming out of his speaker. But Ilya knew he had to stay composed. He had to play his cards right so his weekend with Shane could work out.

"Yes. We have to coach all day and the bus schedule is bad on the weekends." Ilya said quickly. *"I'm staying with another teammate who is coaching so his family can drive us."*

There was a pause between them and Ilya felt like the silence stretched out for way too long.

"You know, your brother-" Grigori started.

"I know he's been saying things about me lately" Ilya exclaimed defensively. *"but I honestly don't know why he thinks any of that."*

Ilya shook his head while leaning down against the counter and let his forehead down against his free palm. Of course his brother had said something again.

He held up his head and just looked forward. Shane had a bear-shaped honey bottle on the counter. Something about it just fit the household so well.

"Ilya." his father said sternly.

It wasn't even just the tone. His father was using his full name when talking to him.

Ilya knew that was a bad sign. Something sank even further in his chest but he didn't let himself take his eyes off the honey bear in front of him.

"You do not interrupt when I am talking to you. Is that understood?" his father continued.

Ilya closed his eyes. He didn't think twice before responding.

"Yes, father." he said. *"I apologize."*

He opened his eyes again. It was like the same bear-shaped honey bottle was sitting there, keeping him company through the conversation. It was all his vision was allowing him to process.

It was somehow a reminder that he was still at Shane's house and Shane was right upstairs waiting for him. A reminder that his conversation with his father would eventually be over and then they could try to have a good time.

"Good." his father said. *"Don't bother asking for anything this weekend since you want to be disrespectful."*

Ilya knew his father's words didn't warrant a response. All he could do was stay still and wait for his father to finish.

"I will deal with you on Monday." Grigori said before finally hanging up.

It was bad but it was finally over.

Ilya slumped even further against the kitchen counter. He laid his forearms down and gave himself a second to rest his head down against one of them.

He knew that it was his fault the conversation had gone downhill. He should have known better.

He could have done it so much better. He usually knew how to deal with his family. But he felt so mentally drained.

He was slipping up around his father. He was acting childish with his stupidly-accented “Really??” in front of Yuna. And he was saying the wrong things to Shane and upsetting him.

He felt like he had been spending every waking moment watching what he was doing lately. And he was burning out and suddenly doing everything wrong.

He just wanted to rest a little, even if it meant just laying down and not having to think so much anymore. He just wanted to lay down and finally hold Shane in silence.

And Shane was waiting for his drink upstairs.

Ilya pushed himself off the counter and told himself to get it together. This wasn't the time for him to mope in a quiet corner of Shane's house or let any feelings get to him. His feelings were that made things worse at the end of the day.

He made his way to Shane's fridge and opened the door. He already knew that Shane's family kept the ginger ale on one of the bottom shelves. He instinctively reached down to grab a can, almost like he was running on autopilot.

His hand froze when he actually processed what he was looking at.

He just about suffocated at the sight in front of him. The light illuminating from the inside of the fridge suddenly felt too bright for him.

Shane's house always had an ungodly stock of the ginger ale Shane liked. Ilya knew they probably had even more in the garage. And he knew that he could expect to see a few cans of coke.

He had seen them last time. And he already dealt with how that made him feel.

But he wasn't ready to be met with the sight of the drink shelf divided down the middle with Shane's cans only taking up the left side. Shane's family had stocked the entire right side of the shelf for him.

And not only had they stocked the entire right side of the shelf for him, they had also left a little yellow post-it note with his name on it.

For Ilya!
=)

The note killed him from the inside.

He had not cried in years. And he wasn't going to let himself cry. But he suddenly felt dangerously close to tears.

He knew that wasn't Shane's handwriting. Shane's handwriting was a lot messier than that.

The handwriting was neat and thoughtful in a way that reminded him of the little notes his mother had left in his field trip lunches when he was a child.

Ilya knew Yuna had left the post-it note there. For some reason she was determined to go the extra mile for him without knowing how much grief it stirred up inside him.

He closed the fridge and turned around to bring his hands up to his face. He pressed them against his face feeling like he would actually lose his mind if he didn't hold his head tight enough.

“What the fuck am I doing?” he said to himself, his quiet voice muffled against his hands.

He let his hands slide down and suddenly he somehow looking at the stupid honey bear again. It felt like the bear was staring back at him, fully aware of everything he was hiding.

He was in too deep. He felt like he had gone way too far with whatever he was doing.

It wasn't just messing around with Shane. He had taken it so far that now Shane was sitting upstairs irrationally freaking out over the possibility of being pregnant with their child.

She should have hated him.

And he knew she would hate him if she knew the whole truth.

Ilya straightened himself. His lips parted and he inhaled so loudly he could feel his breath shaking in his mouth as the oxygen made its way to his lungs.

He felt like something was stuck in his throat. A variety of cream soda cokes. And cherry coke. They had stocked a little bit of almost every variety for him.

He held onto the fridge door while inhaling. His nostrils suddenly felt too tight. Like the air couldn't really reach him on time.

He had told Shane that Coca Cola was really popular in Russia. But if he was being honest most of the flavors he was seeing didn't even exist in Russia.

It felt so stupid to let something so miniscule hit him so hard. He closed the fridge and turned around to gather his thoughts. He had to snap out of it.

He felt so scared to blink. He felt like if he blinked too hard or closed his eyes for too long he might actually start crying.

He went back to the fridge and quickly grabbed Shane's ginger ale. He couldn't bear to actually indulge in choosing a drink for himself, so he just grabbed the closest one he could.

He told himself this was about Shane again.

Ilya couldn't make it about himself.

Shane decided to get his phone and just repeat one of his recent food orders. He wasn't really that hungry. Getting the food just felt like an annoying chore he needed to get to.

His heart sank when he saw multiple messages from his mother on his screen. The sight was absolutely terrifying to him.

He hoped his parents hadn't decided to come home early. The phone screen suddenly felt so bright in his hand. He unlocked his phone and anxiously went through the messages.

Yuna

Shane I saw you got back home
I got the invoice email for the ride
Did you two eat anything yet?
It's already past dinner time

Shane wished he could show Ilya just how insane his mother acted. She wasn't just watching everything he did, she was treating him like a child that needed to be reminded to eat.

Shane exhaled in frustration as he started typing. He just wanted them to be left alone. He shouldn't have to deal with his mother if she's not even in the house with them.

Shane

We're fine mom
I was just about to order food
But I don't need to be reminded to eat

He felt so annoyed having to get her off his back. Shane tabbed out of the texting app to go over his list of recent food orders but Yuna's replies came almost immediately.

Yuna

Don't forget to order something for your friend too!
Hope you're both having fun ❤️

He swiped the messages away and kept looking at the recent orders of food he already knew tasted good and didn't conflict with his diet.

He immediately stopped when he saw the order for a chicken avocado wrap he had tried recently. The wrap tasted so good and it was full of crunchy greens.

The memory of the light sauces mixing with the chicken and greens made him remember that he did actually have an appetite and he did actually want to eat with Ilya before bed. Shane quickly added it to his cart.

He remembered how Ilya had just told him he would eat anything Shane wanted, so he went ahead and added another chicken avocado wrap to his cart for Ilya too.

Shane eyed his cart. He only had two wraps there and it felt like such a small order.

Maybe Ilya was hungrier than him. Shane knew that Ilya always ate way more of his mom's cooking than anyone else did whenever he came to their house. He wondered if Ilya would want to have a second wrap after finishing this. Maybe Shane would feel hungry enough to eat more later too.

He went ahead and pressed the + symbol until the number of wraps hit four.

He eyed the final order. Four chicken avocado wraps. He knew Ilya loved having fries but the place Shane was ordering from didn't serve junk food. He went back to look at the extras on their menu.

He realized they had potato wedges so he went ahead and added a large portion to their order too.

But Ilya also seemed to eat a lot of tuna. Maybe he preferred tuna. Shane scrolled back up and added a tuna wrap to his order too.

He felt so stupid. He was definitely overthinking their order.

He just wanted Ilya to have something he actually wanted to eat too, but Ilya wasn't there with him to confirm if this was what he wanted. And Ilya did mention that he was "fucking hungry" on the way back.

Shane exhaled and added a second tuna wrap to his order. He placed the order quickly so he wouldn't have time to overthink his choices anymore.

Just as Shane finished ordering, he heard Ilya coming back up the stairs. He wondered if he should have just waited for Ilya to finish his phone call.

The door to Shane's bedroom was wide open. Ilya did his best to straighten himself and give Shane a grin from the hallway as he walked towards his room. He held up Shane's drink gently, careful not to shake it too hard on his way.

"I am back" Ilya finally said from the door frame "With ginger ale for you."

Shane felt like he actually wanted the drink this time. He eyed how cold the can looked in Ilya's hand with all the hints of condensation on the outside. He knew it would taste refreshing.

Ilya sat down next to him on the edge of the bed and finally handed him the ginger ale. Shane took it immediately.

"How did it go?" Shane asked while opening his can "Your phone call I mean."

Ilya opened his own can too. It was the first time he had noticed what flavor he had actually grabbed. It was cherry coke.

"Not good" he told Shane lightly with a shrug, hoping it wouldn't sound heavy. "But is still okay. I am staying."

Ilya went back to his drink. He hadn't had cherry coke in a while since they usually just got the store brands with their groceries. It was nice to have it again.

Shane wanted to say something in response but he knew Ilya probably wanted him to drop it. This was one of the things Ilya didn't really want to talk about.

"I got us food." Shane said and suddenly felt the urge to clear his throat after his last sip. "You like wraps, right?"

"A, you got wraps" Ilya said enthusiastically before taking a longer sip of his drink. "Yes, I like. Reminds me of you. Shane Hollander-style dinner."

"But you do like eating wraps, right?" Shane asked again. "And I got you potato wedges too. Since they didn't have fries. I wasn't sure if you'd like those."

Shane felt like he was probably talking too much. It was almost embarrassing to admit to overthinking their food order so much.

He looked at Ilya to search his face for reassurance that the food would be fine. Ilya lifted up his free hand and brought the back of his hand to Shane's face so he could run one of his knuckles down Shane's cheek.

"Yes." Ilya said while chuckling a little. "It is nice food."

It was funny to see Shane stress over it so much. Ilya knew that Shane preferred lighter food. But Shane didn't seem to understand that Ilya didn't really have such strong preferences when it came to eating.

"Okay." Shane said quickly before lifting up his drink to finish the rest of the can.

Ilya watched Shane get up and lick off a bit of soda residue from his mouth before pursing his lips even more tightly. Shane put the empty can on his desk and turned back to Ilya.

Shane took a breath and prepared to be serious again.

The fact that his mom had texted him reminded him that their time together was still limited. His parents wouldn't be gone forever. Shane had to take his stupid test as soon as he woke up. And he had to feel

absolutely ready.

“I think I want to see it.” Shane said while looking down at Ilya who was still on the edge of his bed.

Saying that out loud felt like such a big deal to Shane. He felt like he was taking such a big step.

He looked straight ahead at Ilya. Shane couldn't even process anything else in his room in that moment. He felt like he had just stepped into a little side world where nothing else existed anymore.

He felt so anxious. But it wasn't completely taking over him this time.

It almost felt like he was standing on the ice with Ilya, about to secretly discuss some strategy that would secretly break every possible rule they had to play by.

Ilya felt so dumbfounded. He had absolutely no idea what Shane might be getting at. It felt like Shane's words were coming out of nowhere.

“See what?” Ilya asked.

“The box” Shane replied with forced determination in his voice. “We don't have that much time. I don't want to freak out in the morning.”

It was genuinely surprising to hear Shane say that. Ilya wondered if the determination would last of if Shane would just shut down in front of him if he went along with this.

Ilya had put so much effort into calming Shane down. And it was already getting so late. He wanted them to just enjoy a cozy meal in this house where no one usually yelled and go to bed together.

He wanted them to have a good time. He wanted Shane to laugh at his jokes. He didn't want Shane to spiral again.

“You are sure?” Ilya asked him seriously while holding his almost-empty drink in his hands. “You want to see this?”

Shane couldn't let himself chicken out of it this time. It wasn't like they were at the store or in the ice rink building or in the car with someone else. No one would see him holding it.

“Yeah.” he said with a nod. “I'm sure.”

Shane still felt so exposed standing in front of Ilya and saying that. There was no one there with them. And he had already told himself no one else could see him. But he still felt like he was talking to an audience for some reason.

“Okay.” Ilya said. “Wait.”

Ilya brought his drink up to his lips and downed the final sips of cherry coke so they wouldn't accidentally end up spilling the drink later. He scooted towards the bag he had left against Shane's bed and reached over it to leave the can on Shane's nightstand.

Ilya pulled the bag towards himself and Shane felt like they were about to take out something they had stolen from the store. It felt so wrong. The mere fact that they now owned any of those things now felt illegal.

But Shane knew he had to push through it. He watched his breathing. Ilya's bag was somehow taking up his entire field of vision from so far away and the metal zippers he was opening sounded so loud.

But Shane stood there and waited.

Ilya snapped out of absentmindedly pulling the zippers open and suddenly felt something in his chest drop when he remembered Shane had slammed against the door while he still had his bag on him.

He had been so busy only worrying about checking if they damaged the door and making sure Shane calmed down, he had forgotten to check if anything in his bag broke.

He hoped nothing from the dollar store ended up getting damaged. He absolutely couldn't afford to go back to square one.

He quickly dug through his belongings and yanked up the set of party cups so he could spin them in front of himself. He furrowed his brows as he inspected them, making sure none of them had cracked when fell back against the door.

Seeing Ilya switch to acting so serious while deep in thought over the cups genuinely scared Shane.

"What are you looking at?" Shane asked him, doing his best to hide the fact that he was getting nervous too.

"Nothing." Ilya said, now completely sure that the cups had been sturdy enough to withstand the weight of him falling back. "You want this too?"

He held the set of cups out to Shane, still wrapped in their crinkly see-through plastic packaging.

They sounded so loud to Shane and they looked so comically large in front of him. Ilya held them out so seriously and Shane felt so nervous looking at them again.

They were just cups. But it felt like they were breaking so many rules just having the cups. Like they might as well be about to plan a secret beer pong party while his parents were at the cottage.

Shane walked towards Ilya and sat down on the bed next to him. He looked over to his left and took the cups gingerly, hoping he still looked confident about it.

Shane felt like he had so many lamps in his room in that moment. And they all somehow felt like they were pointed at him.

Ilya looked at him. He felt like they were playing with fire. Shane didn't even seem to register the fact that he was looking at him.

"You can see later too." Ilya said cautiously. "If you want."

Ilya just wanted to go back to how they had been maybe an hour ago. When Shane was still laughing at his jokes about stupid nurses and children's books.

Shane felt like he might as well be in the middle of a hockey game. He couldn't back out anymore. He had to push through and make it out on the other side without fumbling.

He told himself it was like a final round of practice before a big game. He turned back to look at Ilya but quickly realized he still couldn't fully face him.

"I just want to see it" Shane said while looking at Ilya's hands which were still firmly holding his bag up from the side of the bed.

"Okay" Ilya sighed.

He hoped they would still be able to eat their wraps in peace after this.

Chapter End Notes

I decided to cut this here because I didn't want this chapter to end up being over 4k words.

I will try to post the rest of their Friday together tomorrow!

Chapter 19: Different Car

Ilya exhaled before digging deeper into his bag to find Shane's test box.

It definitely didn't look picture perfect when he took it out. The cardboard edges had gotten crushed in his bag, but he figured it was probably fine.

He already knew that the actual stick was double packaged because that was what he saw in the YouTube video he had watched.

"See, it is just box" Ilya tried to say lightly, hoping there wouldn't be any hint of dismissal towards how Shane must be feeling in his tone.

Shane felt like Ilya might as well be taking a gun out of his bag.

He tried to look away but it was like something kept moving his vision back to Ilya's hands.

Ilya casually flipped the box around to check just how crumpled it actually was before turning to Shane. He was almost startled to see just how intensely Shane was eyeing his hands.

"Yeah. It's... just a box." Shane said before pursing his lips and looking back up at Ilya.

Shane couldn't believe he was actually looking at Ilya all of a sudden. He was even making eye contact with him. Part of him just felt so embarrassed by everything.

"I put this back now?" Ilya asked him.

He observed Shane's expression. Shane's eyes had narrowed around the flush that had risen up to his face in a way that Ilya wasn't sure how to interpret.

This felt like so much more than walking on eggshells to Ilya. And it didn't just feel like playing in fire.

He had seen Shane have multiple freakouts over this. He felt like he was holding an active flamethrower and standing on a loose eggshell that could crack at any point.

"No" Shane told him seriously. "Don't put it back yet."

"Okay." Ilya replied.

"Can you uh" Shane continued while trying to hide any hint of anxiety in his tone again "Can you give that to me for a second?"

Ilya stopped before complying.

"You are sure?" he asked Shane.

"Yeah" Shane said before pursing his lips again.

His mouth felt so dry he felt like he had to lick his lips before he could start talking again.

"I don't think I'll freak out this time." Shane added.

Ilya briefly made eye contact with him and Shane looked back down at the duvet. The air Shane was exhaling felt so heavy coming out of his lungs.

“Okay” Ilya said seriously before moving his arm to put the box down on the duvet between them.

Shane felt like Ilya might as well be offering him a cigarette. Which was ironic because Ilya had never even offered Shane a cigarette despite the fact that he actually smoked.

Shane took the box in his hand and Ilya watched him like he might accidentally trip and fall off the bed.

“You are fine?” Ilya asked him lightly.

He normally would have made a joke or said anything that would try to show Shane it wasn’t that bad. But he absolutely couldn’t afford to slip up and mess this up.

Shane rattled the box a little to see how its contents would shake. Ilya watched him carefully and waited for Shane to take the lead with whatever he might want to say.

Actually holding the box felt so bizarre for Shane.

He was sure he had seen that exact same box online in one of the many YouTube videos he ran into while going down this rabbit hole.

It was so pink. He felt like they had actually stolen it and it wasn’t meant from them.

"This feels so weird." Shane mused out loud.

Ilya didn’t say anything. It was actually outright bizarre to him. But he didn’t want Shane to know that.

Something dropped even deeper in Shane’s stomach. It was like the full weight of what they were doing was actually hitting him.

“I don’t think I can do this” Shane said while furrowing his brows and shaking his head.

Ilya tried to look back at Shane and offer at least a shred of reassurance, but Shane’s eyes seemed like they were completely incapable of actually focusing on anything.

Shane wasn’t even processing anything in front of him anymore.

“Can you uh-” Shane continued before stopping to lick his lips so he wouldn’t somehow choke from how dry his mouth felt “Can you actually do this for me?”

“Okay” Ilya said quickly. “Yes. Like drug nurse, yes?”

It didn’t help at lightening the mood at all.

“I mean, not like come in the bathroom with me” Shane continued nervously “Can you do the actual test if I just give you the cup? Because I don’t-”

“Okay. I will do it.” Ilya said seriously before shrugging. "It is fine."

“Okay.” Shane nodded. He found himself continuing with smaller nods as he realized this might actually work out. “I’ll just... fill the cup for you and you’ll do it right?”

“Yes” Ilya replied quickly. “And I can put this back now?”

Ilya felt like he absolutely needed to get that box away from Shane. He held out his hand and Shane looked at it like Ilya's hand was the most out of place thing in the world.

‘Uh- yeah.’ Shane complied. ‘Maybe just leave everything on the nightstand. So we have it ready when we wake up.’

Shane handed the box back to Ilya and watched him leave it on the nightstand near the empty can of Coke. Ilya grabbed his can and got up to throw it in the trash can in the corner of Shane’s bedroom.

Shane tried to watch Ilya carefully, but his eyes landed on his bedroom window. Someone’s headlights were slowly starting to illuminate the sidewalk near his house.

He looked out the window more carefully and saw a car stop and park right in front of his house.

‘Oh fuck, someone’s here’ Shane exclaimed as he jumped off the bed.

He ran his hands through his hair and spun around the room anxiously. He started pacing frantically but then quickly decided to lean down and burry his head against the duvet cover. He felt like he was actually going to shut down.

‘Fuck!’ Shane yelled out but his voice came out muffled by the duvet.

He knew he shouldn’t have ignored those final texts from his mom. If his family was already back that meant that all the privacy they could hope for was gone.

There was no fucking way they could both just lock themselves in the bathroom and there was no way Shane was going to walk around the house with that cup.

‘Shane’ Ilya said as he placed a hand on Shane’s back. ‘I think it is food.’

Shane tried to take a deep breath but he found that the duvet under his face felt like it was going to suffocate him.

He pulled back a little so he could actually breathe.

‘You don’t know that.’ Shane said back, his voice less muffled now. ‘What if my parents came back?’

Ilya took his hand off Shane’s back and turned around to casually glance out the window again.

‘It is not them’ he told Shane. ‘Car is different.’

Shane exhaled and slowly got up so he could have a look too. Maybe Ilya was right. The car looked nothing like any of their cars.

‘Okay.’ Shane nodded as he straightened himself. ‘Can you uh, go get the food? I’ll be right down, I just need a second.’

Ilya made his way down and opened the door to quickly grab the brown bag their food was in.

He immediately noticed how heavy the order looked. He wondered if Shane really just ordered wraps and potato wedges. It felt like a lot more than that.

Shane made his way down nervously just in time to meet Ilya in the kitchen.

‘Shane, this is so much food.’ Ilya laughed the second Shane made his way to the kitchen.

Shane sat down on the dining table quietly and watched Ilya take the wraps out of the brown bag to examine them.

"I just... wasn't sure if you would like the chicken one." Shane said with a small smile as he looked down at his hands "You usually make things with tuna."

Ilya examined the writing on the aluminum foil their wraps were individually packaged in. The restaurant had labelled them with a marker. Ilya assumed C would be chicken and T would be tuna.

Six whole wraps still looked like way too much food to him. But it meant they would have something ready in the morning too.

"Chicken is nice. But if you want tuna you can eat tuna. Does not matter to me." Ilya said with a shrug.

"I just thought you liked tuna because you used to carry all those tuna sandwiches" Shane said quietly.

Ilya didn't feel like explaining that it really just came down to convenience. Tuna was cheap and came in cans that didn't go bad as easily. Even the food bank had tuna.

"So you want chicken?" Ilya said as he turned around to grab plates for them from Shane's cupboard.

Shane looked down at his glass of water, unsure how to process the fact that Ilya was setting the table for him.

"Yeah" Shane nodded. "I've tried the chicken one. It's really nice."

"Okay." Ilya said almost jokingly. "I will try chicken too since you buy four."

Shane kept looking down as Ilya placed a plain white plate in front of him. He then watched Ilya put his own plate on the other end of the corner so he could sit next to him.

Shane couldn't tell why, but it felt so different. It was completely different from watching his parents put the plates down. He was actually observing it this time.

"I'll get us drinks" Shane said as he got up, refusing to let himself overthink the situation and how it suddenly made him feel.

Shane quickly made his way to the fridge and Ilya was actually glad he wouldn't have to open the fridge again just yet. He would need at least a second to mentally prepare first.

"Oh, wow" Shane exclaimed as he opened the fridge "Sorry, my mom's just so fucking embarrassing sometimes."

Shane reached down to crumple up the note Yuna had left for Ilya's drinks. He quickly hid it in his pocket and went to grab their drinks before closing the door with his elbow.

Shane felt absolutely embarrassed for his whole life. He made his way back to the table and quickly put their drinks down before sitting down and looking at the wrap Ilya had put in his plate.

"Sorry" Shane continued frantically while looking down at his plate. "I didn't tell her to do that. She just gets really weird sometimes."

Ilya looked at him as he casually bit into his wrap and opened the can of plain Coke that Shane had just given him.

"I think it is nice." Ilya said while chewing.

"The food?" Shane asked as he started taking the aluminum off of his own wrap. "Yeah, it's really good."

“No.” Ilya said casually. “Your mother. She is nice person.”

Ilya took a long sip of his soda before taking another big bite of the wrap he was holding. Shane didn’t respond. He just kept looking down.

“She’s just... too much.” Shane exhaled.

“I know.” Ilya told him. He shrugged and shook his head a little. “But... she is nice.”

Shane didn’t really know how to respond to that. He looked at Ilya and saw that Ilya was already more than halfway done with his wrap. Ilya always ate so much faster than him.

“The potato wedges should still be in there too if you want those” Shane said before finally taking a bite of his own food.

Ilya immediately reached for the bag so he could take the potato wedges out. Shane found himself smiling a little before taking another bite.

Ilya opened the potato wedges and excitedly rubbed his hands together before getting up to grab a fork. They were the good kind with all the nice spices too.

"Do you want fork too?" Ilya called out to Shane.

"No, I'm good." Shane replied "They're all yours."

Ilya sat back down and dug in, grabbing multiple wedges with his fork before absolutely devouring them.

Shane kept eating and realized he didn’t really feel like having a second wrap later. And they had four whole wraps left.

“What should we do with the rest of the food?” Shane asked.

“We put in fridge.” Ilya said like it was the most obvious thing in the world.

“Don’t you think it will get stale by tomorrow?” Shane continued. “The wraps could get soggy.”

“No.” Ilya shook his head while chewing. “If you want we can toast on your...”

He couldn’t remember the word because he didn’t usually talk about appliances outside of his house. He decided to just point out what he was referring to.

“The stove?” Shane asked.

“Yes. The stove.” Ilya continued. “But it is good from fridge too. Tuna is nice from fridge.”

Shane didn’t look too sure about it so Ilya decided to drop the suggestion. He could eat the wraps himself without having to convince Shane.

“Or I will make something else for you.” he told Shane.

Something about the way Ilya had said that so casually made something pool in Shane’s stomach in a way that felt so comforting.

“You want to... make food for me?” Shane asked quietly.

He tried to hold back the smile that was trying to sneakily creep up across his face. It was just food. It wasn't a big deal.

He didn't want Ilya to think it was a big deal to him.

"Maybe we make juice smoothie you like too." Ilya continued. "There is fruit."

Shane had to change the subject before Ilya realized just how all of that was making him feel.

"Do you want to do your laundry now when we finish eating?" Shane asked.

"I don't know." Ilya said casually, moving his lips into something between a pout and a frown before lightly shaking his head. "Now I just feel... lazy. So maybe I will wash clothes tomorrow."

He knew Shane had a dryer too. His laundry would be ready in a matter of hours anyway. It wasn't like he had to leave the clothes out to dry this time.

"You can just wear my pajama pants again if you want." Shane suggested.

"Okay." Ilya said as he finished the last of his potato wedges and downed the rest of his drink. "Thank you."

He was actually looking forward to wearing matching pajamas with Shane again.

"Okay." Ilya exhaled "You eat. I put food in fridge now."

He got up quickly and put the bag with the rest of their wraps in the fridge, doing his best to avoid looking down at the shelf of drinks that Yuna had stocked for their weekend together.

Shane watched Ilya go back to the table to clean up. The way he did it looked so intentional to Shane. Like Ilya had already had to clear the table like this countless times before.

Shane followed Ilya with his eyes as he quickly disposed of the aluminum foil and rinsed his plate and fork before putting them in the dishwasher. He grabbed a napkin to run against his mouth and threw that in the trash too.

Shane was almost done eating too. Ilya went back to the table and stopped right behind him.

"You can take the plate." Shane said right before he put the last piece of his wrap in his mouth.

Shane felt Ilya's arm move against his shoulder as he reached for the plate. He swallowed the rest of his wrap and cleared his throat.

It wasn't just the fact that he could feel Ilya unintentionally touching him. What actually made him nervous was how bright and open the entire room felt. They were in the kitchen of all places.

They were all alone in the whole house but they were still in the kitchen.

"You did not open ginger ale?" Ilya noted.

Shane moved his hand to take his drink and open it.

"I uh, I guess I forgot." Shane said back before clearing his throat. "I usually take a lot longer to finish my food."

Ilya took the plate and pulled back. His arm moved against the top of Shane's arm again and he could physically feel Shane stiffen right in front of him. It felt just like all the times when Ilya would try to initiate anything beyond closed doors and Shane would immediately perk his head up and start looking around.

But Shane had to be aware that no one was going to show up here, right?

"Drink ginger ale" Ilya said as he walked back towards the sink. "I will clean."

Shane opened his drink and took a long swing. He didn't even have to look at Ilya to observe him. He kept drinking and suddenly found himself listening to all the little noises that painted vivid pictures of what Ilya was doing.

He heard the sound of more aluminum rustling against the plastic trash bag. Then he heard the sound of water splashing against the plate Ilya had just taken from him. He even heard how the plate crinkled as Ilya placed it in the dishwasher.

And then he heard Ilya walk back and stop right behind him.

Shane decided to try to finish his drink so they could get up and leave the kitchen. But before Shane knew it, he could feel Ilya's hands gently rest down on both of his shoulders.

"Shit uh," Shane started "Hold on, I'm still drinking this."

He still had his can of ginger ale in his hand. He raised it as slowly as he could so he could take another swing. He felt dangerously close to spilling his drink with the way Ilya was trying to put his arms on him.

"Yes, I have eyes to see this." Ilya said jokingly as he glided his thumb against Shane's right shoulder. "Drink. I will wait."

Shane had no intention of putting his drink down before he was done with it. His lips had already formed the perfect seal around the opening of the can.

He knew that he would absolutely end up either choking on his sips or spilling the drink all over himself if this escalated any further before he was done with the can.

"You are very cute like this." Ilya tried explaining as he observed the way Shane gulped down his ginger ale. "Just happy to drink can."

Ilya took one of his hands off Shane's shoulders so he could run them through the back of Shane's hair.

"Very soft hair too" Ilya continued musing out loud.

Ilya moved his hand just enough to be able to feel Shane's quickening pulse on his palm while still keeping his fingers buried in the back of his hair. He let the warmth of Shane's bare neck seep into his palm.

"Okay. I'm done" Shane said as he put the empty can down on the table. "We can go now."

Ilya took a step back to let Shane stand up from his seat. Shane turned around and found himself standing right in front of Ilya. There was barely any space between them.

Ilya realized that Shane had no intention of freaking out or trying to push him away.

“Maybe we stay here, hm?” Ilya said as he moved his hand up to place it against Shane’s flushed cheek.

He ran the back of his finger knuckles against Shane’s face slowly enough for Shane to feel like Ilya was touching nerves that he never knew existed on his face.

“Maybe you will relax more” Ilya said quietly “Now after second ginger ale.”

“We’re in the kitchen” Shane said quietly while using every last drop of will power to avoid making eye contact.

“And no one is here.” Ilya told him.

It was definitely the last place Shane wanted to do this, but he couldn’t bring himself to push Ilya away. He finally gave in and looked up at him.

Ilya observed the way Shane’s lips stayed slightly parted. The way his eyes looked like they were struggling to stay fully open. The way Shane looked completely flushed standing there and looking at him.

“I want to see.” Ilya said slowly “If you are hard like me right now.”

Shane felt like any shred of rational thinking he might have had was about to leave the room. Part of him just wanted Ilya to fuck him right there in the kitchen. Not that they had the things they needed.

Thinking about the logistics made Shane remember that he didn’t actually want them to have sex like that. That was exactly how he ended up having the whole pregnancy scare in the first place.

“Maybe we should talk” Shane’s voice came out so much breathier than he thought it would. “This feels like a horrible idea.”

“Maybe you think idea is bad.” Ilya said teasingly. “But probably your dick thinks it is very nice idea”

He placed his hands on Shane’s waist and guided them underneath the hem of fabric. The warmth of Shane’s body crept into his hands as soon as his hands landed on the bare skin on the sides of his waist.

Shane hadn’t even noticed how deep the breaths he had been taking were.

But Ilya had. He kept hearing Shane exhale through his mouth and it made him want to lean even closer just to hear his breathing. Shane would occasionally exhale in a way that almost sounded like a whimper and it absolutely drove Ilya insane.

“Can we uh-” Shane started, barely keeping track of his own sentences “Can we just talk first?”

Ilya’s hands kept caressing the sides of Shane’s waist in eager motion like they had every right to belong there.

“We are talking, yes.” Ilya said quietly, close enough for Shane to be able to the warmth of his breath right against his flushing face.

Shane wanted Ilya to come closer more than anything in the world. He just didn’t want them to have unprotected sex again.

“I uh” Shane tried to establish what he wanted to say before his brain left the room “Can we not-”

Ilya pulled away just enough to look at him. Shane looked so flushed right in front of him, his freckles scattered across the hint of red on his cheeks. He pulled one hand up to stroke Shane’s cheek just so he

could feel how warm it would feel under his touch again.

“You want to stop?” Ilya asked him.

“No” Shane panted out quietly. “Maybe we can just... do it like before or something?”

That felt like enough confirmation for Ilya to continue. He pressed his thumb against Shane’s lips briefly, wondering if he should try parting them with it.

“But I don’t-” Shane attempted to speak but found himself getting interrupted by the feeling of Ilya’s other hand steadily gliding right across his erection through his clothes. “Jesus. Stop, I-”

Ilya stopped. He realized Shane sounded like he was fighting for his life.

Shane slumped down against Ilya’s shoulder so he could try breathing more steadily.

Ilya tried to nudge Shane off of himself so he could search his face for hints that could show him what was wrong. Shane found himself with just enough room to pull back and grip the edges of the table behind him with his hands.

“This is okay?” Ilya asked as sincerely as he could.

“Yeah.” Shane said quickly, feeling like he had very little time to gather his thoughts. “But I just-”

“You want to stop?” Ilya suggested, hoping the question would make it easier for Shane to admit he changed his mind.

“NO! Maybe.” Shane blurted out in frustration “Stop interrupting me!”

Ilya stopped talking so he could let Shane try to finish.

He noticed how hard Shane was gripping the table behind him. He placed his hands down on top of Shane's stiffening knuckles, hoping the touch would help Shane relax.

“Okay. Sorry.” He said as he started gently gliding his thumbs along Shane’s knuckles. “Now I listen and you tell me.”

“I’m trying to say” Shane continued a little more steadily “I don’t want to do any of the more serious stuff right now, okay?”

Ilya furrowed his brows in confusion. He couldn’t tell if that was just a saying or a term he wasn’t familiar with.

“What is serious stuff?” Ilya asked.

Shane scoffed and exhaled in frustration before turning his entire head to look away. He shook his head lightly and then looked right back at Ilya so he could try to explain.

“Like.” He tried to verbalize his thoughts in a way that wasn’t outright embarrassing. “I don’t want you to put it in.”

“Okay.” Ilya said flatly. “That is all?”

It wasn’t like it was a big deal. But he could tell that Shane still had something to say from the way he kept pursing his lips like he was gathering the courage to admit something he had been holding back.

“I mean” Shane cleared his throat before continuing “I like it. I just don’t want us to do that if you’re not going to use protection.”

“Okay” Ilya shrugged before looking around to see if he might be missing something about the rest of Shane's body language. “So just this? That is everything?”

He stopped talking and waited for Shane to take the time to say anything else that might be on his mind.

“I’m serious this time.” Shane insisted . “Don’t try to convince me it’s fine just because you’re not having unprotected sex with other people.”

“Shane.” Ilya laughed out before realizing Shane needed him to sound serious. “We will not do this now. We can do what you like.”

“Really?” Shane said with genuine surprise in his tone as he looked at Ilya.

Ilya straightened his expression and looked at Shane with his most dumbfounded look.

“Yes!” Ilya exclaimed like it was the most obvious thing in the world. “What the fuck is really? If you do not want, then I will not do it. You think I am stupid or what?”

Shane felt like he was about to start laughing at how Ilya looked and sounded in front of him but he held it back just enough to smile instead.

“Okay.” Shane snorted at him.

“Now I can suck your dick or what?” Ilya asked sarcastically.

Shane found himself unable to hold back his laughter. He hoped he didn't look like an asshole straight up laughing at Ilya over that.

“Maybe not in the kitchen.” Shane laughed out. “We should probably go upstairs if you want to do that.”

“Okay. Mister I follow rule” Ilya said jokingly. “Thinks sucking dick is for bed.”

“Shut up!” Shane snorted out before shoving him “Fucking asshole. Don’t make fun of me like that.”

Ilya refrained from making another joke. Shane hopped off the table and found himself stuck in the small space he could have in front of Ilya.

“Let’s do it in the guest bedroom.” Shane said “We won’t have to change the bedsheets before going to bed that way.”

“Okay” Ilya said jokingly “Very serious plan.”

Shane scoffed and grabbed his arm instead. He pulled him away from the table and eventually dropped Ilya’s arm as they rushed up the stairs.

Their feet pounded against the wooden steps as they ran up.

Chapter 20: Like Before

Chapter Notes

This chapter is entirely explicit and NSFW. I ended up rewatching the show with some friends last weekend and remembered just how sexual their relationship really is.

I'm also changing the fic rating because of this chapter.

You can skip this entire chapter and move on to the next one if you just want to get back to the plot.



They made it up the stairs and turned towards the guest bedroom where Shane's family thought Ilya would be staying.

It was such a perfect idea. It wasn't like they could just leave the room spotless when Shane's family got back anyway.

Shane made his way to the room first and quickly turned around to look at Ilya. He already expected him to be right behind him.

He didn't have much time to look because Ilya immediately grabbed him and just about tackled him towards the bed.

It felt so much more direct to just rush against Shane without all the protective padding they wore on the ice. Shane fell back laughing, genuinely amused by the way Ilya had managed to unexpectedly knock the air out of him.

"Fuck, you really slammed into me" Shane laughed out.

"Yes maybe because I play hockey good and you are bad and fall." Ilya teased him.

"Shut up." Shane said jokingly "You should stop talking."

Shane suddenly found himself looking at the door as Ilya continued climbing on top of him from the side of the bed.

The door to his bedroom stood wide open this time. The entire space around them felt so wide and open. It felt almost uncanny.

Ilya was about to kiss him when he noticed how distracted Shane looked. Shane wasn't even looking up at him.

He followed Shane's gaze and noticed that Shane was looking right at the door they had left wide open. Ilya leaned down to kiss the cheek that Shane had turned towards him instead of trying to go straight for his lips.

"No one is here" Ilya said while exhaling against the soft skin that he was pressing his face down against.

Shane could feel Ilya's words right against his cheek. He hadn't even realized just how close their bodies were until that point. His breath felt so warm it made Shane feel like his entire face was starting to flush.

He wanted Ilya more than anything in that moment. But his brain kept telling him that leaving the door wide open was just plain reckless.

Ilya moved to straddle him in a way that perfectly aligned their erections right next to each other. The sensation of Ilya moving against him suddenly made Shane completely forget about the door.

"Fuck that feels really good." Shane panted out as he turned his full attention back to Ilya.

Ilya felt Shane instinctively grinding against back against him as he kept straddling Shane's welcoming body. It was almost like the friction of the fabric made the sensation even more intense.

Ilya couldn't believe how quickly Shane folded about the door. They used to always lock the door behind them.

But in that moment Shane felt like the door was more distant than ever. And he felt like any rational thought he might have had until that point was already out the door.

If they wanted to lock the door they would have to stop. And Shane didn't want to stop. He didn't want them to ever stop doing this.

"Do you want to close door?" Ilya asked him, steadily maneuvering his hand between their bodies.

He lifted Shane's shirt up just enough to be able to reach his bare waist. His skin felt so warm and Shane welcomed his touch so eagerly it made Ilya feel like he was losing his mind.

"I-" Shane attempted "Fuck."

The pace Ilya was grinding against him with made Shane feel like his entire brain was melting inside his own head.

It was the perfect combination of steady and just slow enough to allow Shane to fully process every single sensation as it spread through his entire body.

He still had all his clothes on. And yet he somehow felt so exposed.

Ilya kept his eyes on Shane's face. He loved the way Shane's expressions kept changing as he pleased his dick by rubbing his own against it.

He loved way Shane looked absolutely flushed. The way his lips were parted just enough to let the little whimpers that usually blended just under his breath come out this time.

It was hotter than anything Ilya could hope to see on the internet, but Shane didn't know that.

The fact that he could physically feel just how warm Shane's body felt at his waist alone felt absolutely intoxicating. He already knew other parts of Shane's body would feel even warmer once he started pulling more of his clothes down.

"Fuck, you are so-" Ilya's voice felt so labored before he stopped to decide on a word "good".

He would have called him gorgeous. Pretty. Beautiful. There were so multiple words in the English language that could describe just how Ilya saw Shane when he was absolutely blooming under his touch.

But he still had to be careful not to mess up his word choice. Especially after Shane had reacted so negatively to Ilya using those words for him because it made him wonder if Ilya was just thinking about women outside of what they did.

"Yeah" Shane panted out before breathing out way more audibly than he thought he would. "It feels really fucking good"

Ilya could tell just how good it felt for Shane from his breathing alone. Shane stopped fighting the urge to close his eyes and used his arms to pull Ilya down just close enough to kiss him.

It felt exhilarating. Their lips clashed together and Shane outright moaned right against Ilya's mouth.

Ilya had a way of always matching the pace Shane wanted to kiss at. But it was almost like Ilya was guiding him too. Shane found himself slowing down just enough to make even the kissing feel so much more intense under Ilya's lead.

He felt like he might actually be losing his mind. He groaned against Ilya's mouth and Ilya could feel the way the sound travelled from Shane's chest all the way to his own lips.

Ilya pulled back just enough to look at Shane.

"You are very loud when no one is here." Ilya whispered, making Shane feel outright embarrassed by how much louder his mere breathing felt in comparison

Ilya leaned down and kissed the side of Shane's jaw. Shane moved his hands up into Ilya's hair and pulled him so close that Ilya could feel Shane press his warm face against his own.

"Fuck, Ilya" Shane huffed out as he exceeded the pace Ilya was grinding against him with on his own end. Shane started pressing against him even harder.

The fabric of the athletic clothes they both wore was both stretchy and comfortable enough to allow Shane to feel every single sensation he craved. Shane knew his dick had already ended up leaking against multiple spots inside his underwear.

He wondered if Ilya was already dripping inside his own underwear too. He slid his erection against Ilya's body more firmly and he felt like he could feel even more of Ilya's larger shaft against his own.

Ilya took the hint and instinctively matched the new pace Shane was aiming for.

Ilya relaxed his right arm so he wouldn't have to prop himself up as much and buried his face against Shane's neck.

"It is nice when you are so loud." Ilya attempted to whisper but it came out as a much louder huff instead.

"Shows me how good you feel." Ilya continued, his breath coming out even harsher this time "Even when I only put my cock on yours."

Shane felt like the way Ilya's words landed on his skin introduced whole additional sensations that travelled from his neck down his entire body.

Shane could have sworn those words somehow ended up pooling in his groin.

"Oh fuck" Shane gasped out as he pulled Ilya even closer and buried his entire face against the side of his neck.

He let his other hand reach out to grasp Ilya's back and bring even more of his weight against himself. Shane barely felt like he had room to breathe and yet he couldn't even process how loud he sounded while gasping for breath.

The fact that he now had more of Ilya's weight pressing down on him meant that there was even more pressure and friction between them.

"Fuck, Ilya I might actually-"

Shane gasped out before continuing to let out a few more erratic breaths.

Ilya felt the way Shane's entire pelvis pressed up even more firmly against his own and wondered if he would be able to feel any of Shane's load through all the layers of fabric between them. The way Shane's dick kept sliding underneath his weight had definitely changed.

"Fuck" Shane exhaled against Ilya's chest.

Ilya made every effort to match the slowing pace Shane kept changing as he continued to ride out the rest of his orgasm.

"Holy shit" Shane continued as he tried to give himself room to breathe "I can't believe we just did that"

"I can" Ilya said as pulled back to kiss Shane's cheeks before their flush subsided "You can come hands free"

"It's not hands free!" Shane protested "You were literally dry humping me! That's not what it means!"

"There is no hand" Ilya said slowly "And also there is no door." He continued as he looked to the side to the door they had left wide open

"Oh fuck" Shane said in embarrassment "I can't believe we just left the door open this time"

"Yes, lately you are very brave" Ilya said playfully "First you kiss even when I don't lock door"

Shane braced for the wave of embarrassment he knew that Ilya had absolutely every intention of subjecting him to.

"Then you come so loud when door is open too" Ilya continued in a way that made Shane wonder if Ilya was teasing him or just trying to outright embarrass him.

Shane wanted to bury his face against Ilya just to hide away but Ilya had already moved too far to his side. Shane moved his own body sideways so he could adjust even closer against Ilya.

"But this makes sense" Ilya continued casually "because you say you want to fuck like before"

Ilya found himself absentmindedly playing with Shane's hair while looking up at the ceiling.

"And before, this is what you do in car too." Ilya continued. "Very loud."

"Oh my GOD, stop!" Shane yelled out before pulling back so he could get away from whatever Ilya was trying to do.

"You also liked sucking my dick in car" Ilya said a little more suggestively "Maybe you should also do this now."

Ilya moved just enough to make Shane aware of the fact that he was still fully hard right against his thigh.

He took Shane's face into one of his hands and ran his thumb against Shane's warm cheek.

"Your face is very red." Ilya started "Very hot like this."

"Hey fuck you, you're blushing too" Shane said defensively.

"No, no." Ilya interrupted him dismissively "I do not do this. Russians do not blush."

Ilya pulled Shane in just enough to be able to meet his lips with his own and make Shane drop the subject. He kissed him just passionately enough to remind Shane just how much he wanted this underneath all the embarrassment he was feeling.

Ilya pulled back so he could look at Shane who was smiling stupidly and barely keeping his own eyes open just inches away from Ilya's face.

"I want to see how red your face is" Ilya continued stroking Shane's face with his thumb as his words became increasingly eager "When my dick is in your mouth"

He moved his thumb enough to press it against Shane's lips. They felt completely different against the skin of his thumb compared to how they felt when they were kissing.

It reminded Ilya just how soft and warm Shane's lips really were. How they would feel when Shane started taking his dick in his mouth. How his mouth would feel even warmer engulfing his tip and going down his shaft.

Shane moved down like he could read Ilya's mind and gouge exactly what he wanted to feel.

Shane placed all his weight on his knees and started trying to tug down on Ilya's waistband. His movements felt clumsy all of a sudden. It almost made him feel insecure about what he was doing.

"So hot when you are there" Ilya told him. "Makes me very hard for you."

Ilya lifted his hips up off the bed and hooked his own thumbs into both of his waistbands so he could help Shane successfully pull his clothes down.

Shane hadn't realized that Ilya had managed to hook the waistband of his underwear in the process too. He was shocked when he suddenly saw Ilya's entire dick out in plain sight.

He was already dripping in front of Shane, his bare erection eagerly waiting to feel Shane's touch again.

Ilya felt like he was going insane. He reached down and placed his hand on his shaft so he could start stroking himself right in front of Shane's face.

He knew that even just jerking off in front of Shane would feel absolutely amazing. He was already so close from all the grinding that pushed Shane over the edge. Shane would get to not only watch just how much Ilya loved getting off to him, he would also get to watch his load come out right in front of his eyes.

Just thinking of that made Ilya drip out another small spurt of precome.

Maybe if his load shot up hard enough instead of just dribbling out this time, some of it would even end up getting on Shane fucking Hollander.

"Fuck, this is so hot" Shane admitted breathlessly before leaning in and taking Ilya's dick into his mouth.

Ilya couldn't believe he was actually getting to have this again. He didn't even have to wait until the morning to prove Shane that there was nothing to worry about.

Shane was matching everything he wanted to do again. It almost felt like they had some undying telepathic bond.

Ilya kept stroking and angled himself so he could guide his dick further into Shane's mouth. It felt just like how he had remembered it. It was so warm and the little breaths Shane was huffing out somehow made his mouth feel even warmer.

Jerking off into Shane's mouth took the sensation to a whole new level. Stroking his own dick like that felt absolutely amazing. But Shane's mouth was also moving to enhance the sensation Ilya felt from stroking his shaft.

He moved just enough to let the tip firmly glide against the ridges on the roof of his mouth.

"Fuck, Shane" Ilya huffed out quietly, almost like the words came out without him even thinking about them.

Shane felt absolutely entranced in all of it even though he had just finished. He managed to process the fact that Ilya had just said his name just enough to realize that Ilya was actually thinking about him.

Ilya wanted to look at him when Shane was blowing him. And Ilya really kept focusing on the fact that it was Shane that had his mouth around his dick.

Shane became increasingly aware of the fact that Ilya wasn't just absentmindedly enjoying this and imagining he was getting a blowjob from anyone else. Ilya wanted it to be him.

And he really wanted to be fully aware of the fact that it was Shane that was blowing him.

Shane could taste the way Ilya was leaking into his mouth. He took more of him in so that the ridges on the back of his mouth aligned with the ridges around Ilya's tip even better.

Shane moaned at the lingering taste of precome that had no intention of fading away anytime soon. Ilya felt like he could no longer even lose his mind because his mind was already long gone.

His shaft had enough length for him to pleasure himself exactly how he wanted right into Shane's eager mouth. And Shane's mouth was already so full from barely taking half of his length in.

Ilya could feel how Shane was salivating inside his mouth in response, his warm mouth already significantly more lubricated compared to when Shane first took his dick in just a minute ago. The increasing amount of spit was making his dick glide even faster against both his lips and the textures inside Shane's mouth.

Every time Shane moved ever so slightly back on his shaft, Ilya could feel Shane's frantic breath against the traces of spit he was leaving on his shaft. It made it so much easier to jerk off in a way that made the skin glide right back into Shane's lips.

"Fuck, I will come soon" Ilya warned him frantically as he kept stroking himself into Shane's mouth.

Shane didn't pull back. Instead he moaned audibly as he sped up with the way he was gliding Ilya's dick in his own mouth.

Ilya's heads up made Shane increasingly aware of how wet the inside of his own underwear was. Shane wondered if he had somehow ended up tasting some of his own load while blowing Ilya.

It was probably impossible with all the layers of fabric that kept their erections apart when Shane finished. But maybe some of it could have miraculously ended up on Ilya's dick like it would when they did that without any clothes on.

Shane groaned in pleasure at the thought.

Ilya realized that he would actually get to finish inside Shane's mouth. Not because of how much he craved the feeling of releasing his load inside Shane. But because Shane was the one that wanted to feel it in his mouth just as much.

"Fuck, Shane-" Ilya panted out as that thought started pushing over the edge.

Shane immediately felt a spurt of warmth hit the roof of the back of his mouth before it spread down on his tongue.

Shane moved his tongue to help himself down the initial spurt before he could accidentally risk making it messier.

Shane gulped around his around dick as Ilya was still riding out his orgasm and it made Ilya feel like Shane had just sucked the ability to think out of him.

It was definitely a billion times hotter than just jerking off in front of Shane. And it was certainly more unique than fucking Shane.

But then there was the way Shane's hole frantically twitched around Ilya's dick when he blew his own load all over himself while getting fucked.

"Fuck" Ilya blurred out, pushing away the memory in favor of looking down at how Shane had just taken his entire load in his mouth with the most flushed and entranced face he could possibly have.

Shane had managed to carefully slow down just enough to match exactly what Ilya needed throughout his entire orgasm.

It was actually insane. Shane actually wanted to blow him with the clear intention of making the experience as pleasurable for Ilya as possible.

Shane released Ilya from his mouth and Ilya let his dick fall back on his thumb.

"Wow" Ilya panted out as he came to his senses "Maybe you should suck my dick more. I forget you are so good."

"Maybe." Shane said back.

Shane ended up smiling when he realized he could still fully feel the aftertaste of Ilya's load as he talked.

Ilya reached for Shane so he could attempt to bring him closer and ended up gently grabbing his arm.

"Come here" Ilya said while smiling back at him "Just don't break my dick please"

Shane laughed at Ilya's warning and moved to lay himself down against Ilya's side. He took all his weight off the knee he was lifting up, careful to avoid accidentally end up kneeling Ilya in the groin.

He ended up bunching himself up against Ilya's side and Ilya moved his arm to adjust Shane into the most comfortable position they could both be in.

"You're so full of shit." Shane teased Ilya with a smile as he looked at him. "You definitely blush when we do this."

"Wow! Crazy." Ilya said as he rolled his eyes "First you swallow my cum and then you talk like me!"

"Fuck off!" Shane shoved him just lightly enough to ensure that he wouldn't actually push Ilya away from himself "You swallowed mine first"

"Hmm yes." Ilya said "Sad that I cannot do this today because you immediately finish if our dicks are touching"

"Okay, shut the fuck up." Shane said as he started propping himself up.

"Noo, stay." Ilya protested before immediately pulling Shane back against himself "You are so warm."

Ilya quickly pulled his sweatpants back up so he could turn to his side and bunch himself back against Shane too. Shane's body always felt so warm against his. And his skin somehow always felt so soft too, even if Ilya was feeling it over multiple layers of clothes.

Ilya felt so comfortable. He felt like he could just fall asleep right there against Shane.

"I should shower." Shane said seriously.

The way his underwear felt so drenched inside his sweatpants was slowly becoming more uncomfortable than exciting to him.

Ilya let his face flop down against the sheets as Shane moved away from him.

"Can you wash my clothes too?" Shane asked him.

He waited for Ilya to look up at him but Ilya just buried his face even harder against the mattress.

"Yes, later." Ilya mumbled back. "Tonight just give me your pajamas. I want to sleep."

"Okay well. you should probably shower too." Shane said "But you can just wait for me to shower first if you need a second to uh, come to your senses"

Shane finished what he was saying with a small nod that was barely there and then briefly glanced away. It felt genuinely embarrassing to remember that Ilya was probably still slightly basking in the aftermath of post-orgasmic bliss.

"Okay" Ilya said as he rolled around so he could look up at Shane. "Give me kiss if you go"

Shane let a small smile take over him before leaning down and lightly kissing Ilya. It was meant to be a brief peck. But the way Ilya slowly moved his own mouth against Shane's a solid couple of times made Shane absolutely follow Ilya's lead with it.

Ilya stopped and Shane decided it was time for him to pull back.

"Okay, well" he tried to say confidently "I'm off to shower"

Chapter 21: Secret Language

Shane grabbed the laundry hamper in his bathroom so he could leave all the clothes he needed to take off inside.

"Jesus." he exclaimed in embarrassment as he started undressing.

He straightened himself so he could look away from the very clear evidence of what they had just done. He absolutely could not let anyone in his family see his clothes like that.

At least Ilya knew how to do laundry. It was going to be a lot easier than trying to secretly wash all of that off with hand soap in the sink.

Shane told himself that he absolutely had to ask Ilya to show him how to do the laundry himself one of these days.

Shane showered quickly and made his way back to his room. His stomach dropped at the sight of all the dollar store things they had left on the night stand.

It reminded him that there was still a lingering worry he had been trying to push out of his thoughts. But maybe it would be okay. They had agreed to deal with it as soon as they woke up.

Shane had to put all the effort in the world into pushing the thought away again and letting it be tomorrow's problem.

He changed into his pajama pants quickly but Ilya ended up walking in while Shane was still busy putting on a loose tee he could sleep in.

"Okay" Ilya's voice came from behind Shane "Can you give me your clothes?"

Of course it didn't take Ilya long to shower and brush his teeth before he made his way to Shane's room too.

They were both used to taking quick showers after hockey practice, even though they had a habit of intentionally dragging their showers out so the rest of the team could leave the locker room before them.

"Oh" Shane exclaimed as he turned around "I left all the clothes in the hamper in the bathroom. That's the really dirty laundry one."

"What?" Ilya exclaimed in confusion "Oh so now I should wear dirty clothes too? Very polite to guest, Shane" he continued sarcastically.

"Oh. Fuck, sorry" Shane shook his head as he opened the part of his closet that had the sleepwear shelves "Just grab whatever you want."

Shane realized what he was offering a second too late. Maybe that would end up sounding way too intimate. Maybe it was crossing the line between "I like getting off with you" and "Maybe I do actually like you a little too much."

Shane decided to stop talking and just lay down before he could make things weird.

"I'm pretty tired" Shane said before clearing his throat "Just make sure you uh, turn the lights off before you get in bed."

He absolutely needed to make sure he was looking away while Ilya was changing. He had to try to be normal about this.

Shane got under his covers and made sure to leave just enough space for Ilya to be able to sleep comfortably without them touching if he wanted.

Ilya had been looking forward to sleeping bunched up against Shane the whole day.

Shane's house was warm enough to let them sleep however they wanted. And he definitely didn't need to put on multiple layers just to lay down.

But the most exciting part was how comfortable and calming it felt to fall asleep right against Shane's body. Not even just because of how warm and comfortable it felt to have Shane pressed against him.

But because Ilya could also heal Shane's breathing. He could hear all the little breaths that reminded him that Shane was right there next to him and that Shane would be the first thing he would see when he woke up.

"Get the lamp for me too if you can" Shane said quietly.

Shane watched the wall lazily as the lights started to go out in his bedroom.

He heard Ilya get near the bed and then the light coming from the final lamp on the nightstand was gone too.

Shane could not afford to think about what they had on the nightstand. He was glad his room was pitch black. He could try to get some sleep before the morning ahead of them.

Before Shane knew it, all the rustling behind him culminated in Ilya pulling him in from behind and pressing his entire body right against Shane's back.

Shane felt like he could melt into how comfortable it felt.

Ilya wished he could just spend every night like this. He was already on the verge of falling asleep.

He couldn't imagine having to go back to sleeping at his father's house. He decided to pretend that this was actually his forever.

If he could pretend for long enough he could let himself be happy before he had to zone out just to get through what it was actually like to live with his own family at home.

There had been many times Ilya had wished Shane could speak Russian. Times when Ilya struggled to explain something and times when he wished it could be their secret language that they could use to talk about things no one else could know.

But in that moment he was glad Shane couldn't understand Russian. Because he could say technically just say all his feelings out loud and they would still stay a secret.

Ilya took a breath and pulled himself closer towards Shane.

"You are truly everything I have." he whispered against Shane's back hoping the fabric would muffle what he was saying even more.

Ilya couldn't believe he actually got to say that. As long as he kept speaking Russian, Shane would never have to feel or process the weight of how he actually felt.

He felt like so much weight was being lifted off his shoulders just being able to say some of these things out loud for the first time.

Maybe in another world, they could have had a normal relationship.

One where Shane wouldn't push off half his attempts at affection. One where he wouldn't feel a mountain of guilt eating him alive every time he interacted with Shane's family.

One where their moms bonded while watching their junior hockey games and showed up to cheer them on together.

A relationship where the guilt wouldn't eat Ilya alive at the mere thought of Yuna's existence.

A relationship where his own mom would get to meet Shane and be kind and loving to him in a way that Shane wouldn't find overbearing.

Maybe they could even move in together one day in such a lifetime. Maybe he would have gotten to experience a reality where the day they had just spent together was just another Friday.

Somewhere out there, there was probably a timeline where this really was their forever.

He held Shane from behind like he was the most precious thing in the world.

"I love you so much."

It was the first time he had admitted it out loud. And it was the first time he had allowed himself to truly stop and let all these feelings overwhelm him without pushing them away.

He felt Shane stir in his embrace and part of him regretted saying that. He felt like he had gone too far and ruined something.

"What?" Shane said tiredly as he turned around to face Ilya.

"Nothing. Just sleep, Shane."

"I thought I heard you say something." Shane insisted.

Shane tried looking at Ilya in the dark. He could barely see his face, but he could already tell that Ilya needed the sleep a lot more than he did.

"Maybe I am falling asleep." Ilya said mumbled, already exaggerating how tired he felt. "Whole day I feel very tired."

Shane didn't really buy it. But he also didn't know what to make of the situation. They were laying right against each other and he still felt like there was suddenly a whole wall between them.

There were always things Ilya didn't want to talk about. And Shane knew this was going to be one of them.

"I'm... really glad you're here with me right now." Shane said before bringing himself closer towards Ilya.

It was careful. It was admitting just enough. There was no way it could have been too much.

Ilya lifted Shane's arm so they could sleep facing each other more comfortably. Shane ended up folding so much that Ilya's head ended up resting against the top of Shane's hair.

“Rest with me for now.” Ilya said quietly before kissing the top of Shane’s head. “Tomorrow is big day for you.”

“Yeah.” Shane said quietly.

Shane buried his face against Ilya and tried to bury all his worries deep down so he could finally rest too.

And of course, Ilya somehow aligned himself so Shane could feel even more comfortable in response. Shane found himself feeling even cozier than he had felt getting hugged from behind while laying on his pillow.

“Good night, Shane.”

Shane usually hated those words, especially when they came from his parents. He used to think they were so infantilizing.

But hearing them from Ilya while feeling so comfortable against him actually felt nice.

“Good night, Ilya.”

Shane’s house was the only place where Ilya would hear that. There was a sense of calmness and normalcy that came with simple things like saying good night.

Ilya usually had to go home to his family after Shane said good night. But this time was different.

Ilya already felt like he was dozing off against Shane. It was the most peaceful he had felt in a while.

Chapter 22: Lines on Small Sticks

Chapter Notes

Okay.

Now that they both know they love each other, we are finally starting the arc that most of the male pregnancy fics tend to start with.

Let's go 🙄

Ilya woke up feeling like something was happening way too close to him.

He rolled down against the pillow he was using and tried to ignore whatever was happening around him for a second.

It still felt unfamiliar to be able to move around as much as he wanted without feeling like he was going to freeze.

“Are you up?” Shane’s voice came from right next to Ilya’s head.

It sounded so loud and yet somehow distorted. Ilya decided to roll back and face Shane.

“No” Ilya mumbled as he curled up even closer towards Shane.

Ilya felt Shane’s voice come right from his chest as he talked.

“You’re not up but you're talking to me?” he said stiffly.

“Hollander please” Ilya whispered in protest “I’m sleeping. This is so many words.”

Shane had a habit of always waking up so early it actually made Ilya feel like he was lazy in comparison. It didn’t usually make a difference because it wasn’t like they both had to be up the second Shane had decided he wanted to use the bathroom.

Ilya buried his face against Shane and tried to wrap his arms as tightly around him as he could.

Shane actually made a great shield when it came to hiding Ilya’s face away from the light in the room. And his body was so comfortable to rest against too.

Ilya felt like he could actually fall back asleep any second.

“It’s already 7 o’clock.” Shane said seriously.

Ilya could physically feel Shane’s voice beaming out of him. There was no way Shane would let him go back to sleep.

Ilya rolled away from Shane and squinted from all the light he was faced with. It was still fairly dark outside, but the lamp next to Shane’s bed felt like it might as well be personally targeting him.

“Please. Shane.” Ilya protested, his eyes still partially closed as he tried his best to actually look at Shane. “Maybe 10. At least 9”

Shane pursed his lips and started shaking his head with a scoff. He was already sitting up against the bedframe. He felt like they were wasting so much time.

“You said we would do this when we woke up.” Shane insisted, suddenly feeling more frustrated. "And I'm just sitting here waiting for you to get up so I can go to the bathroom."

Ilya didn't want to argue with him. He had agreed to it, and he had every intention of following through. It was just that he had forgotten just how structured Shane's days usually were.

“Yes.” Ilya told him, barely finding the muscle strength to keep his eyes half-open. “And it's... what time now?”

“Seven.” Shane said seriously. “Seven fifteen.”

“Okay” Ilya said as he rubbed his face. “We will go now.”

Shane sat up even straighter and waited for Ilya to actually get up. Ilya didn't even have to look at Shane to know he was glaring at him behind the silence.

Ilya forced himself to start straightening himself against the bed frame too. He couldn't tell if he was just tired or actually had a headache.

“Okay. I am at work now.” Ilya said as seriously as he could through his visible lack of alertness. “Hopefully you are not using drugs.”

It took Shane a second to register what the joke was even supposed to mean. He didn't really find it that funny, so he just kept looking at Ilya without saying anything.

Ilya exhaled a lot more loudly than he hoped he would.

“Okay, go.” Ilya said like he might as well be admitting defeat and nudged his head forward “I will come with everything.”

Shane pursed his lips and nodded a little before finally kicking himself off the bed. Ilya followed behind more slowly, stopping to grab Shane's cups and pregnancy test box from the nightstand.

The house felt really quiet. Ilya was so used to hearing noise around him from the moment he woke up.

The silence felt deafening to both of them as they made it out of the room and walked down the hallway.

Shane closed the bathroom door behind them. The space felt so much smaller from the moment the door was shut. Shane felt like he was trapped inside the bathroom with Ilya.

“This is really weird” Shane said while slightly shaking his head.

“I don't think it is weird” Ilya reassured him “We do this for drugs.”

Shane kept looking down at the floor. Ilya couldn't decide if he should try to comfort Shane or try to give him the space to take the lead.

Ilya felt like it was way too early in the morning to navigate this. But getting it over with so early meant that everything would just go back to normal sooner.

They could have a normal weekend together. Maybe Ilya could even go back to sleep if Shane decided to go on one of his morning runs after this.

“Okay. Just like doing the drug panel I guess.” Shane said while still keeping his eyes on the floor.

He saw Ilya’s hand move into his vision as Ilya tried to hand him the blue party cup. It looked so comically large in front of him. Shane suddenly felt like it wouldn’t be that easy to imagine that this was just a routine drug test.

“That looks... nothing like the cups we usually use.” Shane said quietly.

Ilya watched Shane keep his gaze down on the cup. He hoped Shane would at least look up soon.

“Okay well, maybe I am lazy nurse” Ilya shrugged and rolled his eyes like it would make the immersion more believable.

Shane finally looked up at him.

“I come to work in pajamas.” Ilya continued jokingly “And I don’t bring good cups. Maybe later you complain to my boss.”

Shane scoffed out anxiously and took the cup from Ilya’s hand.

Ilya watched him take the cup towards the toilet.

“Don’t look” Shane called out seriously. “That would be way too weird.”

“Okay” Ilya said flatly.

Ilya made his way to the side of Shane’s bathtub so he wouldn’t have to stand. He sat down against the bathtub with his feet down on the floor to maintain his balance.

He felt like he might actually be getting a headache. Or maybe it was just the fact he had just woken up.

Shane turned around to face him again.

“Can you actually go get your clothes?” Shane said

“What?” Ilya asked him.

Ilya felt like he had just woken up all over again. He didn’t know why Shane would ask that.

“I don’t know. You wanted to do laundry. And maybe you can wash my clothes from last night too.” Shane said quickly as he stiffened and looked away from Ilya.

“Wash clothes right now?” Ilya asked.

“Or maybe you could just wait outside?” Shane continued “The fact that you’re right behind me is stressing me out.”

“Okay, it is no problem.” Ilya said casually. “I will wash clothes.”

He used his hands to push himself off the side of the bathtub and started walking towards the door.

He considered stopping for a second as he passed Shane but quickly reminded himself that Shane needed space and didn’t want him there.

It felt like such a delicate use of time.

Ilya could have gone down to at least get a glass of water, but then Shane would probably panic about how he wasn't back yet.

He got the laundry bag out from the inside of his duffel and checked to make sure he had everything he wanted to wash.

He walked back and decided it was probably smart to knock on the door before walking back inside.

"Can I open your door?" Ilya asked casually after knocking.

"Yeah" Shane called out "You can come in."

Ilya walked in and saw Shane standing in front of him like it might as well be his job to greet him.

Ilya stopped and blinked once before turning to the side to actually put his clothes in the washer.

He emptied the bag into the drum quickly and grabbed one of the pods that Shane's family kept next to the washer.

He remembered how Shane also left the outfit he wanted to wash in the hamper near the washer. He grabbed that pile too and threw it in the drum with his own laundry.

He usually used liquid detergent at home and the small pod he had added suddenly felt like way too little detergent. He decided to throw in a second pod before closing the washer in front of him.

"I just left the cup by the bathtub, by the way." Shane said nervously.

He hoped Ilya was actually listening to him.

"Okay, wait." Ilya said while pressing buttons on the machine.

Shane heard the sound of the washer starting and watched Ilya made his way to the tub. Ilya made it seem so easy to just casually do a whole load of laundry.

Ilya took the pregnancy test box and opened it. He put the printed instructions away because he knew he didn't need them.

Recreational drug use was strictly against the terms of his athletic scholarship. He remembered exactly how the quick drug test worked. Two lines and you're in the clear. One line and you're getting kicked out of the program over a positive drug test.

Pregnancy tests looked the same so there was no reason for this to be different.

The box was definitely way too big for the tiny strip inside of it. He took out the smaller packaging the actual test was in and tore it open.

He looked up at Shane to make sure Shane wasn't about to have a panic attack while waiting for him to finish.

"Do you want to sit on toilet?" Ilya asked him casually without thinking about it too much.

"What?!" Shane exclaimed as he scrunched up his face "No, gross"

Ilya didn't feel like explaining that he meant to tell him to just put the lid down. It didn't really matter that much and Shane probably thought that was gross too.

"Do you want to sit on bathtub?" Ilya suggested instead as he rested his body against the edge of the tub again. "Like me?"

Shane decided that sitting against the bathtub was probably going to feel a lot less intense than just standing there and waiting.

"Maybe." Shane said quietly before sitting against the bathtub so he could face Ilya as he observed him.

Shane still kept most of his weight on his feet. But it felt better to at least lean on something.

Ilya dipped the strip into Shane's cup and Shane looked away.

Ilya watched the liquid go up the cheap test slowly while holding it by the end. There was no plastic casing, but he still did his best to avoid making a mess.

He took it out of the cup and tried to wipe the back of the strip against the edges a few times before holding it up.

"Okay. We wait now." Ilya tried to say casually.

He hoped that keeping Shane up with what was going on was making the whole thing less nerve wrecking than just sitting there and waiting.

And he hoped the test would actually work. There had been a few when Ilya had been asked to redo his drug tests because no control line showed up.

Ilya felt like he would actually lose his mind if nothing showed up and Shane started asking him to go out and buy another one. Just the thought of that briefly started making his headache worse.

He desperately wanted them to go back to having a nice weekend together. They had cold tuna wraps waiting for them in the fridge. And he could reheat the chicken wrap Shane liked or make him a morning smoothie or literally prepare anything with all the ingredients Shane's family had laying around.

The test line finally showed up. Ilya took his eyes off the test and looked up at Shane for a second.

"It is working" he told Shane with a grin.

Shane glared at him nervously. What was that even supposed to mean?

"What?" Shane said, almost sounding angry. He looked angry too.

Ilya watched the liquid trail go up go on the test screen. The first pink line was already there. He knew it was a control line. He knew the test would be invalid if that line didn't show up because the drug tests worked the same way.

"Nothing." Ilya said lightly to avoid upsetting him. "Line that says it is working. Like when they don't throw away test for drugs."

"What?" Shane asked, unable to follow what Ilya was trying to say "What are you talking about? What kind of line says that?"

"Control line." Ilya told him. "Means test works. It is good thing."

Shane remembered the single time one of drug his tests had to be redone. He didn't see how the fact that the control line was showing up would be anything even worth mentioning.

If anything it just made him feel even more nervous about the fact that any lines were actually showing up on his test.

Ilya decided to stop talking. One line was already there. Now he just needed the second one to appear. That was how they knew their drug test results were acceptable and they could go.

The second line was taking so long it actually made Ilya feel like Shane might not be as irrational as he thought. The liquid moved so slowly Ilya actually found himself feeling slightly nervous about it.

But he wasn't going to tell Shane that.

"Well what the fuck does it say?" Shane said seriously as he started noticing the way Ilya's expression was changing.

"Nothing." Ilya said as calmly as he could "I am waiting."

"Okay" Shane stated "Well tell me what it says when you see it!"

He looked upset.

"Okay" Ilya said flatly, focusing his attention back on the stick he was holding "When I see I tell you."

He could have sworn he noticed the faint hint of a second line forming and then wondered if it might be some kind of dent. He squinted and moved his face closer and watched the color slowly deepen even more.

"Ah" Ilya said a little more enthusiastically. "Okay. Maybe I see."

Ilya watched the two lines even out to the same color and it solidified his belief that they were actually in the clear.

The athletic program staff always said two lines meant they were in the clear. They could finally move on and go back to how things were before all of this.

Ilya still wasn't fully awake but the relief he felt was just as intense. He looked back at Shane and a grin was already spreading across his face.

"Okay" Ilya finally said jokingly "Now you don't have to be boring like old grandmother."

Shane furrowed his brows. "What? I don't even know what that joke means."

Ilya decided to just turn the stick towards Shane, still careful not to make a mess around them or get anything on his clothes.

"See" Ilya started "You have two so this is fine. You just panic because of nothing."

Shane looked at what Ilya was showing him. He felt like the entire world had started shrinking around him.

"What the fuck?" Shane said, almost to himself as he glared at the result.

Was he looking at it wrong? He wasn't wearing his reading glasses. But he couldn't be looking at it wrong because Ilya had just told him he saw two lines too.

The stick looked so small in his hands and yet Shane somehow felt like it was all he could see. He couldn't even hear anything around him.

It felt like whatever Ilya was saying had faded away at some point. Shane couldn't even remember the last word he heard come out of Ilya.

"What the actual fuck, Ilya?" Shane yelled out as he looked back up at him.

He felt like he was stuck in a nightmare that he couldn't wake up from.

Maybe it really was a nightmare. Maybe if he did something he would manage to wake up, and he would find himself in his bedroom and this day would start from the beginning.

"Shane, it is not real." Ilya said almost jokingly.

He almost wanted to hand the strip to Shane so he could see it more clearly but he was worried that Shane would get upset about how unhygienic that was.

"What the fuck is wrong with you?" Shane yelled out as he pushed himself off the side of the bathtub. "The fuck does that even mean?"

Ilya wondered if it was too soon to start with the grandmother jokes. Maybe he should have waited a little longer.

"You are so fucking stupid" Shane said sharply.

Ilya decided to let him have it. He had let both his father and his brother have it so many times before. At least Shane deserved to be upset at the joke a lot more than they ever did.

"No, you are actually so fucking stupid." Shane continued as he started pacing around the bathroom. "Holy shit!"

It wasn't anything Ilya hadn't heard before.

"Unbelievable." Shane panted out while shaking his head through the shock. "You're fucking unbelievable. And all of this was YOUR stupid fucking idea."

Ilya felt like he was losing track of what Shane was saying. Maybe he had instinctively started zoning out again. He decided he probably shouldn't do that with Shane.

"I don't understand?" Ilya said when he realized Shane had paused long enough for him to be able to talk.

He wasn't sure how to react anymore. He had never seen Shane act like this before.

"Just fuck off" Shane yelled out before storming out. "Leave me the fuck alone"

He rushed out of the bathroom and slammed the door, leaving Ilya inside.

Ilya stayed in the same spot on the bathtub. He could hear the sound of Shane rushing further down the hallway.

Then suddenly the sharp sound of Shane slamming the door to his bedroom filled the bathroom Ilya was still standing in.

He didn't know what to do. All he was left with was the sound of their clothes spinning in the washer.

Ilya found himself feeling like the washer was everything he could pay attention to.

Shane's bathroom looked nothing like his, but he felt like he was back home for a second. The yelling. The sound of doors being slammed.

The small irrelevant noises that suddenly had his full attention because he would rather be listening to anything else. The urge to just stay in the bathroom for way longer than was necessary.

It was just like being back home again.

Chapter 23: Knock

Shane didn't feel like he was at home at all. He felt like he was both inside his own house and somehow far away from home at the same time.

He made his way to his room and immediately crashed on his bed. He couldn't even perceive anything around him. Everything looked so sharp all of a sudden.

Even the air around him felt sharp.

He felt like he couldn't do anything. He could barely breathe. He could barely notice anything around him. He could barely think.

He couldn't even cry.

The light coming from the lamp on his nightstand felt way too bright. And yet he somehow could even navigate his surroundings enough to turn it off.

He grabbed his duvet and pulled it over his head so he could hide from the world around him.

If this was actually a nightmare he would wake up soon.

He was already right where he was supposed to be. He would wake up in his bed and everything would start over and everything would go differently.

He already felt like the world around him was disappearing. And it felt like a good thing. If the world around him was disappearing it meant that it wasn't actually real.

Maybe he would actually wake up soon.

A noise came from the side of Shane's bed. It was almost like something real was coming into his life again.

It took him a second to realize it was his phone. And someone was texting him again. He wondered if it was his mom.

The light in his room just about blinded him when he finally felt ready to read his messages.

Ilya

Sorry((
I should not joke
Was not very funny(

Shane watched the words on the screen blur in front of him. He finally felt like he could start crying. He couldn't pinpoint what it was but it finally pushed him over the edge.

He exhaled and finally felt like he wasn't just holding his breath anymore. No one was in his room. He could break down as hard as he wanted.

Ilya felt like everything around him was so wide open. He stood in the bathroom, still unsure what to do.

He contemplated just retreating to the guest bedroom, but he knew he would still feel on edge there too.

He just felt too uncomfortable. It felt like something bad had just happened. He knew that he would just sit on the bed and do nothing.

But he couldn't just stay in the bathroom forever.

The worst part was that he couldn't even go home. It wasn't just the fact that whatever was waiting for him at home would be infinitely worse than dealing with Shane's breakdown. And it wasn't that it would make the "hockey coaching" excuse seem fake.

His father had already made it abundantly clear that he wasn't welcome home early. Shane's house was the only place where he could stay.

Maybe he could have asked someone else if he could stay at their house. But it would be asking for too much. And no one was supposed to know his private life outside of how good he was at hockey. It would just make him look messy and weak.

Their clothes kept spinning as the wash cycle reached its final spin cycle. The drum got even louder and Ilya felt like the washer was the only thing actually waiting for him in the moment.

He decided he would still give Shane some space.

He couldn't just leave their clothes in the drum. He had made that mistake with his own laundry before and he ended up having to do a whole new wash cycle.

Ilya finally moved from the side of the bathtub to make his way to the washer. He felt like he would actually get shot if he somehow walked wrong.

The timer on the little washer screen felt menacing. It felt like it was looking right back at him.

The 3 minutes left felt like an eternity. But it was even weirder to consider the fact that half an hour had already passed.

Ilya reached for his phone. Just pulling his phone out of his pockets felt wrong. His pajama pants only had pockets because they were Shane's and Shane had let him wear them.

He was still wearing Shane's clothes and Shane was mad at him. It didn't just feel out of place. It felt horrible.

The texting app was waiting for him the moment he unlocked his phone. There was nothing. He couldn't even know if Shane was ignoring him. Maybe he just hadn't seen the messages yet.

Ilya decided to try again.

Ilya

I will dry clothes now

Maybe we make smoothie juice later

If you want for breakfast

He watched the row of messages grow on his side of the chat and something about it just felt really out of place.

He decided to at least wait a little. Maybe Shane would hear the new notifications and read what he had said this time.

The washer started beeping in front of him and finally pulled Ilya out of his thoughts again.

He finally felt like he could move a little more freely without feeling like he might step on a landmine.

He decided to just use his hands to put the clothes in the dryer. Shane probably had some weird basket system that Ilya had no intention of trying to follow at 7 in the morning.

It shouldn't have been a big deal. But the fact that Shane's clothes were there in the pile with his felt like a big deal.

Ilya did his best to pay as little attention as he could. If he couldn't notice Shane's clothes as he handled them then it wouldn't matter. It wouldn't make him feel anything and then they could just go on with their day.

Starting the dryer cycle only took a second and suddenly Ilya found himself checking his phone again.

Nothing.

He felt like he actually messed up this time.

He finally opened the bathroom door and made his way down the stairs. He really wanted a glass of water. Maybe could get something he could bring to Shane too.

The entire house felt so empty. It almost felt uncanny.

Ilya poured himself water from the tap and he could feel every single noise he was making almost echo throughout the house.

Shane's entire room felt uncanny to Shane too. He regretted checking his phone.

He regretted reading his messages.

He hated the fact that Ilya had decided to text him.

The fact that he had messages from that day just made the day seem more real. Every single message was a reminder that he could no longer hold onto the shred of hope that he might actually wake up from this.

He just wanted to stay under his duvet and feel hidden away from the world around him. But he didn't feel as hidden anymore.

He was spiraling underneath the same covers this time. It felt like he had opened a portal that was just sucking him further and further away from the routine and reality he knew.

He suddenly heard a knock that felt far too distant and too loud at the same time.

It startled him to the point of actually looking out to see what was happening.

“Do you want to eat?” Ilya asked on the other side of the door.

Shane didn’t want to answer. The fact that Ilya was trying to talk to him like nothing was wrong actually made him even angrier.

“No.”

It came out sounding flat even for a single word. But Ilya could tell he was angry just from the way he had said it.

It took Ilya a second to figure out what he might want to say next. It didn't feel like there was much he could say.

“Okay.”

He felt like he wasn’t allowed to open the door. Like Shane would probably yell and tell him to leave again. But all his things were in Shane’s room too.

If Shane wanted him to leave he could at least get his bag. Maybe he could take the bus to the library. The library had bean bags to sit on.

“Can I open your door?” Ilya asked.

Nothing.

It was somehow worse than at least getting another “No.”

Ilya exhaled before finally reaching for the doorknob. He wondered if Shane had locked the door too but quickly realized that he could easily open the door.

The entire door suddenly felt way too light. Like he had to control how fast he was pushing it so it wouldn’t swing wide open.

He wondered if Shane would just yell at him again the second the door was fully open.

Shane watched the door open like he was trapped in his own bed. He kept glaring at the growing space between the door and the door frame like a wild animal might come out and jump at him any second.

“Shane?”

Ilya walked in and Shane glared at him like he hated him more than anything in the world.

Ilya looked right back at him. He noticed how absolutely horrible Shane looked.

Shane looked like he might as well be sick. Ilya wondered if Shane looked like this whenever he was home sick with the flu or had a cold.

He wondered if he liked having soup in bed and if having someone bring him a bowl made him feel better.

Ilya exhaled against his will as he walked closer to Shane. It still felt like too early in the morning for all of it.

“Okay. Yes. Sorry.” he said as sincerely as he could. “Maybe grandmother joke is... not very funny.”

He flattened his lips into a thin line and waited for Shane to respond. Shane kept looking at him like he had just said the wrong thing again.

Ilya looked away and shook his head a little before looking at Shane again.

"I know" Ilya tried more carefully "Today is very big and stressful for you."

Shane wanted to tell him to go away. Big and stressful couldn't even begin to describe it.

But he found himself unable to move. He felt like he couldn't actually face anything in the outside world. Not even someone that was standing right in front of him.

If anything the fact that Ilya was there and trying to talk to him was starting to make him feel even worse.

"You want ginger ale?" Ilya asked, hoping he could use the most gentle tone he had in him. He just wanted things to be back to normal again.

Something inside Shane snapped.

"Oh fuck off with the ginger ale." He finally exploded.

Shane hadn't even realized he was actually sitting up straight.

He finally processed the fact that he was looking right at Ilya. And everything around him was open and real again.

He felt like he wanted to throw up. But he simply didn't feel nauseous enough to throw up.

"For once" Shane continued firmly "Can you not act like giving me some drink will magically fix everything so you can go back to trying to fuck me again?"

Ilya had never seen any of Shane's meltdowns go this far or even last this long.

"No-" Ilya started but he simply could not find the words through the complete shock he felt "Shane-"

Ilya felt like he needed to take a breath before trying to talk to Shane again. Even just talking to Shane felt like being out in a mine field.

Ilya decided to try sitting on the side of the bed, keeping as much distance between them as he could. Shane didn't seem too happy about his decision. He briefly glanced at Ilya and scoffed before shaking his head and looking away.

Ilya hoped he wasn't about to admit to too much.

"I like you." he said sincerely "It is really nice to spend time with you."

Shane didn't say anything. He didn't even want to talk. Part of him wished Ilya would just leave and go home and yet another part of him felt terrified by the mere thought of being left all alone in his house.

What could he even possibly do alone? It was only a matter of time before his family got back. It was only a matter of time before the entire world somehow found out.

Of course Ilya could just get away with it and go on with his life. He could do the draft, get his signing bonus, move out, and buy all the stupid cars he wouldn't shut up about.

All of Ilya's problems would actually go away in the end.

It felt so fucking unfair.

"I joke because..." Ilya found himself stopping for a second to make sure he was choosing the right words at 8 in the morning. "I think maybe you will laugh. Maybe less scary if you laugh."

Shane felt like he might actually start crying again. He looked away and brought his lips as close together as he could, hoping they would not betray him and quiver.

Literally when? When did this even happen?

He started instinctively recounting all the times they were together. Definitely not the night before. That was too recent and also literally impossible.

Maybe a couple of weeks ago. Maybe the other month. Maybe even a few months ago.

He completely understood what people online meant when they said girls were lucky they got periods. At least they had some kind of timeline to follow.

Maybe the video he saw was really meant specifically for him. Maybe his algorithm could smell it on him.

What if the whole world could smell it on him?

"I don't know." Ilya continued talking like it was an admission of guilt "But it is early now. Maybe... only 8 o'clock."

Ilya shrugged and let his lips fall into a faint pout as he kept talking "There is time to do nicer things. So whole day is not bad."

Shane felt like whatever Ilya was trying to say was actually making him sick.

"How the fuck are you so casual about this?" Shane said under his breath while staring off into the distance.

Ilya looked at him. Shane was still mad at him but at least he was actually talking to him again.

"It's so fucking easy for you." Shane continued quietly while shaking his head. "You get to actually fucking do it. You're just going to leave and get all your nice cars-"

"What?" Ilya interrupted him. He could not believe they were about to have the same conversation for the billionth time in the same week.

"I will not leave!" Ilya said more assertively. "We will play sometimes. I don't know."

He exhaled before trying to continue so he wouldn't come off as too harsh.

"You can buy cars too." Ilya continued a little more casually. "Say hi in parking-"

"Shut up!" Shane interrupted him. "You said you would figure it out for me. And your big plan is 'just play'? That's really fucking it?"

Shane finally looked at Ilya like he expected an answer. Like maybe Ilya would actually show up for him like he promised he would.

Ilya followed Shane's words with absolute disbelief. He couldn't even catch up to what the fuck Shane even wanted from him. He tried so hard. He spent his entire week trying so hard and nothing was ever enough.

Of course they were just going to play for whatever team wanted them. That was always the plan.

Ilya felt like he was barely holding onto his last shred of patience.

Shane could see it in his face and it felt like the utmost betrayal.

"I can't just fucking play because you fucking-" Shane started but he found himself unable to finish the sentence.

He felt like his voice was betraying him too. He felt like he would actually break down again if he said it out loud. Saying it out loud would mean admitting it was actually real.

"I just want to fucking play too." Shane said more quietly like there was barely enough oxygen around him. "But now I can't-"

"Yes you can!" Ilya yelled out defensively and extended his hands out to make a point. "Nothing is wrong, please!"

He went through so much trouble to disprove this wild theory Shane had.

From planning out their entire dollar store run, to even spending all the cash he had left on Shane. He even went through all the trouble of playing drug nurse for Shane at 7 in the morning on a fucking Saturday.

It was so stupid.

"I showed you." Ilya continued like he was barely holding onto his sanity "You have two. Two is good, now please-"

"What the fuck do you mean two is good?" Shane yelled back "Did you actually fucking read how this works?"

Ilya didn't really follow what Shane was getting at. But he decided to just be honest instead.

"Yes!" Ilya said almost immediately like he had to defend himself "I was reading!"

He could immediately tell that Shane didn't believe him. The look he was giving Ilya made him look beyond pissed off.

"But also it's so many difficult words." He admitted in defeat. "And maybe if I read this in Russian it is different in Russia. I don't know."

He had absolutely no intention of admitting he watched half a YouTube video before he decided it was fine.

Shane kept his eyes narrowed at Ilya. But for a second he felt like his eyebrows loosened a little.

"And I am so tired because I do so much for everyone every fucking day." Ilya continued. "But I try because for you this is serious. And I just want nice days with you."

Maybe it wasn't as gentle as Shane would have wanted it. But it really was sincere.

“Two is bad.” Shane told him as directly as he could.

Ilya already felt exhausted.

For a second he wondered if Shane actually wanted them to have a child together so they would have a reason to talk even if they played for different teams. It didn’t make sense but what Shane was saying didn’t make sense either.

“No.” Ilya said flatly.

“Yes!” Shane scoffed out while shaking his head. “Two is really fucking bad, Ilya.”

Shane felt like he was barely talking. Like just saying that might push him off the edge and make him shut down any second.

“When we do this for drugs one is bad and two is good” Ilya said like it was the most obvious thing in the world.

“Oh my god you are unbelievable” Shane scoffed out as he looked away. “It’s not the fucking same!”

Shane stopped so he could actually take a second to breathe. He had to actually hold it together.

“It’s the other way around.” Shane continued with a little more composure as he looked down at his carpet. “One is good and two is bad.”

Ilya didn’t say anything back. Shane didn’t feel like he had it in him to look at Ilya and see if he was even paying attention.

Maybe he needed to explain it better. He felt like he was on the verge of spacing out but he had to push the words out of himself.

“One line is negative.” Shane continued quietly and every sentence felt like a statement. “Two lines is positive.”

Still no response.

The fact that he felt like he was talking to himself was absolutely nerve wrecking. Shane felt like he was fighting for his life. He finally turned to face Ilya.

“So yeah. Two is really fucking bad.” Shane breathed out anxiously while actually making eye contact.

Oh.

Ilya felt like he was witnessing a train he never saw coming speed past him right in front of him.

Like the gust of wind was no longer there but he was still coming to his senses and processing what he had just heard.

Watching Ilya’s expression change somehow freaked Shane out even more.

There had been very few times when Ilya felt like he truly had no idea what to do next. He was usually quick on his feet and always knew how to take care of everything.

“You are serious?” he asked Shane, like he might have somehow misheard everything Shane just said to him.

Maybe he misunderstood something.

“Yes!” Shane said back in frustration. “Fucking look it up if you don’t want to believe me!”

“Okay.” Ilya said seriously. “Wait. I will check.”

Shane watched Ilya pull out his phone and scoffed at the sight.

“Fucking unbelievable.” Shane said as he shook his head.

He actually wanted to see it for himself. Like the fact that Shane was telling him wasn’t good enough.

Shane felt like he was running in overdrive. Like he couldn’t even afford to panic because he was too busy being angry. It was almost weird to feel that way when it was anything outside of playing hockey.

Ilya squinted at his phone as he kept reading. It felt like too many words but he skimmed through them. Positive. Negative. Invalid. He could have sworn it was the exact same thing until he read it more carefully.

A positive test result is indicated by two lines, one in the control region and one in the test region.

He brought his phone closer to his face so he could make sure it was reading it right.

Two lines.

He took his eyes off his phone and looked back at Shane. Shane finally felt like they might actually be on the same page. He almost wanted to thank the stupid phone for making Ilya finally listen to him.

“Yeah!” Shane scoffed out nervously. “So what the fuck do we do now?”

Chapter 24: Scary Calls

Chapter Notes

I did not do enough research on PP Ottawa before planning this timeline so I had to change how PP Ottawa actually works to fit my fic 😭😭 Sorry if the mpreg fic is even more unrealistic than needed I guess 😭

Also semi-big update: This fic has workskins now! I went back and edited most of their texts and I'm about to add a workskin for the post-it note.

Anyway I plan on trying to experiment with multimedia stuff a little more so I hope it doesn't feel like a jumpscare. Enjoy!

Ilya waited a second before responding. Saying it out loud felt like admitting defeat. It felt like admitting to letting Shane down.

He couldn't say it to his face.

"I don't know..." he told Shane while keeping his eyes on the space between them.

They were sitting on the same bed and yet the space between them felt so vast.

"Of course you don't know what to do" Shane shook his head as he let all his frustration out. "And I fucking asked you the other day. And you just interrupted me and brushed it off because didn't even care that you didn't know."

Ilya couldn't face him just yet. He couldn't bear to look at Shane and admit that he did actually brush that off.

Ilya kept looking at the edge of the bed where Shane's duvet cover spilled over the sides of the bed. It was a plain nautical pattern which was almost funny because he knew Shane didn't even like boats.

He suddenly realized he might as well be dead to his family.

His brother was already suspicious of what he might be up to. And just trying to talk to his father about spending the weekend away from home because of mandatory coaching had gone so horribly.

He felt like they would actually kill him if they found out.

"Fuck!" Shane yelled out as he got off the bed and started pacing around his room. "This is an actual fucking nightmare, Ilya!"

Ilya would have gotten up to try to calm him down a little. But in that moment he felt like even Shane wanted him to stay as far away as possible.

"Okay." Ilya said apologetically as he finally looked at Shane. "Sorry. I said we figure out."

Shane kept pacing around his room. The fact that Ilya didn't seem like he could just step in and take the lead this time made Shane even more anxious. Ilya seemed to know everything when it came to the dollar store plan. And now everything was just falling apart in front of them.

"Then what the fuck do you propose we do?!" Shane said as he turned back to look at Ilya again.

Ilya wondered if he could just get up and talk to Shane at eye level again. Their conversation didn't feel productive at all. Sitting there and being yelled at just felt like being lectured back at home again.

"I will think." Ilya said slowly. "Maybe I go smoke outside and come back... 5 minutes or something?"

"No!" Shane interjected. "Fuck you, you don't get to just go relax and then come back smelling like shit!"

Ilya scoffed out at the remark.

"Okay!" Ilya argued back in frustration. "Don't yell!"

Shane kept looking at him angrily. It was already too late when Ilya realized that he had ended up yelling back at Shane too.

"Sorry." Ilya continued a little more lightly. He stood up so he could walk a little closer to Shane. "I will help. But we should not yell."

Ilya looked at him like he just wanted everything to be okay. But Shane looked back like he had all the anger in the world because Ilya couldn't make everything okay.

"What do you want to do?" Ilya tried to ask as patiently as he could.

"I don't know what to do!" Shane said back, careful not to actually yell this time "That's why I'm asking you."

Ilya looked at him seriously. He felt insane even thinking about it.

"Okay, now is really bad but..." Ilya started "in June I get money from hockey team."

Ilya looked around so he could figure out how to string his words together. Shane kept looking right at him in a way that made Ilya uneasy. He couldn't figure out what Ilya was even getting at.

"Okay?" Shane said like he was waiting for the actual solution his problems to follow

Ilya took a breath before saying it out loud.

His father would actually kill him. Especially after the whole conversation he tried to have with Ilya about sleeping with girls at his age.

"I will move to new house so..." trying to say it felt like chewing on sand "if you have children"

Shane felt like he was in the trenches of overdrive. Whatever Ilya was trying to say felt like a smack in the face.

"Why the fuck would you even say that?!" Shane yelled out "I told you I just want to play too!"

Ilya exhaled and looked around frantically like nothing he could possibly say would ever be enough. So much for not yelling.

“Okay well I am just telling you.” Ilya exhaled in defeat. “I don’t know.”

Ilya didn’t just feel like he was walking on eggshells anymore. He felt like every single eggshell he was stepping on was just cracking under his feet.

He put his hand over his eyes and started rubbing his face in exhaustion before deciding to sit back down. He needed to sit down.

It was way too early for all of this.

“You have to find a drug dealer.” Shane said firmly.

Ilya rubbed his face one last time before letting his hands drop to his sides. His eyebrows felt like they had just shot up against his will and he felt like he had somehow ended up overextending his neck just by looking at Shane.

“What?” he asked Shane like he might have just misheard everything. Maybe he couldn’t follow what Shane was talking about because he was going insane too.

Ilya hadn’t even realized that his mouth stayed parted even after he was done talking.

Shane pursed his lips and looked back at Ilya with the most serious expression he could pull. He started making small frantic nods at him like he actually had a plan. It actually scared Ilya a little.

“Yeah” Shane said confidently.

Ilya stared back in awe. He didn’t even know what to say anymore.

“This guy online-” Shane stammered “He was talking about how the doctor wouldn’t let him have some pills because it was too late, yeah?”

Ilya wasn’t sure he was even following what Shane was talking about.

“Plan B or something. Maybe the dealers have them too.” Shane continued continued pacing around the room. “So I’ll give you the cash for them and you’re going to buy them.”

“What the fuck, Shane?” Ilya said with repulsion spread accross his face “No!”

“Well that’s probably the only way I can still play!” Shane insisted

“No!” Ilya exclaimed as he jumped up to get closer to Shane “Are you crazy?”

Whatever Shane had in mind sounded like the scariest thing in the world.

“How the fuck you play if you fucking die, Shane?” Ilya continued seriously “Take pills from drug dealer? Stupid idea!”

He felt like he was being so harsh. But he would have done anything to stop whatever train of thought Shane had. It felt wrong but he reached for both of Shane’s hands like that would somehow stop him from going through with such a wild idea.

“It’s the only way no one would find out.” Shane continued more quietly.

It had been six whole years. Six whole years should have been plenty of time to get over his mother’s death but it just wasn’t. But he simply couldn’t afford to even consider the idea of losing someone else in a similar way.

“No!” Ilya tightened his grip on Shane’s hands before immediately loosening it and placing his thumbs over Shane’s knuckles instead. “I will think. But we will not do this.”

It absolutely terrified him. He didn’t know if Shane could see it in his face. Maybe he just looked angry.

Shane wanted to keep arguing but he felt so tired. He felt like Ilya was outright taking the only choice he had away from him.

Shane heard a noise and immediately pulled his hands away. His phone was ringing on the nightstand where he had abandoned it.

“Fuck.” Shane exhaled like he was already struggling to breathe. “I can’t. I can’t talk to whoever that is right now.”

Ilya walked over to the phone for him. He looked down at the nightstand and saw Yuna’s face looking right back at him from her contact photo.

“Your mother is calling you.” Ilya said quietly.

“Of course she is.” Shane exhaled like he was barely holding it together.

He just wanted to have a second where he could pretend everything would be fine again. Maybe he could pretend it was another dream again.

Shane walked right up to his bed and knelt down on the floor just so he could rest his head against the edge of the bed.

“I can’t deal with her.” Shane said quietly “It’s too much.”

His words came out muffled against the duvet. He wished he could just go back to hiding under it again.

“I talk, okay?” Ilya said slowly.

He waited for Shane to say something but Shane didn’t respond. Ilya inhaled before picking up.

“Shane?” Yuna asked on the other side of the line.

The speaker was loud enough for Shane to be able to hear her too. Her voice felt like it was crawling up his back. He didn’t know why but he felt like she would somehow figure everything out.

“Mrs. Hollander.” Ilya responded as neutrally as he could. “Good morning.”

Shane couldn’t look at him. But Ilya tried to smile just in case Shane looked over. He had already handled talking to her during pretty stressful situations before.

“Oh.” Yuna said as she quickly realized it wasn’t Shane that had picked up “Ilya is that you?”

“Yes, me.” he continued with a hint of enthusiasm. “How are you?”

“We’re great.” her voice sounded a lot less enthusiastic to Ilya for some reason “Where’s Shane?”

Hearing his mother look for him was actually making Shane’s heart rate spike. He couldn’t talk to her. He didn’t want her to try to talk to him.

He wished she could just leave him alone for just a single day so he could deal with his own problems.

“Shane is outside. Running. He left phone here in kitchen.” Ilya said casually while looking right at Shane “And I am making food.”

Shane shot Ilya a look. He couldn't believe Ilya's solution was to just lie to his mother again. The detail about the food seemed completely unnecessary.

“Aw well that's very nice and responsible of you!” Yuna said cheerfully in a way that felt like it shot right into Ilya's soul. “Hope we stocked everything you two need.”

“Yes. Thank you.” Ilya said a little more slowly and suddenly found himself feeling like he needed to clear his throat. “Thank you for drinks too.”

“Of course!” Yuna continued “I saw Shane placed a pretty big order last night too.”

“Ah, yes.” Ilya actually felt slightly startled by the fact she was remotely keeping track of what they were eating. “Wraps are good. Maybe we eat for lunch too.”

He hoped he was actually handling the conversation well. He had never doubted himself about it this much. He had only been up for less than a couple of hours and the day already felt so long.

“Are you two handling everything okay over there?”

The question hit Ilya harder than it should have.

“Yes.” he even faked his smile even though he knew she couldn't see him. “This morning we wash clothes too.”

He didn't know why he even said that. Listing the things he had done around the house usually kept him out of trouble in his own home. But maybe Yuna would think it was weird. Maybe she would even find it suspicious.

“Aw, well thanks for helping Shane with the laundry!” Yuna said back “You two just let us know if you need anything.”

It somehow felt like too much to Ilya too, just in a very different way. Not in the same way Shane would describe.

“Thank you.” he said “Enjoy your day”

“You too, Ilya.” Yuna continued “Say hi to Shane for me when he gets back from his run.”

She was the first to hang up.

Ilya felt horrible. It took him a second to accept the fact that the conversation had just ended.

Maybe she would actually end up finding out this time. Maybe this would be the last time she would be this nice to him.

“Okay...” he said as he finally put Shane's phone back on the nightstand.

It was actually painful to consider the possibility of Yuna never being nice to him again. But he couldn't afford to think about that.

Because this wasn't about him. It was about Shane.

And Shane was sitting on the floor, slumping against the edge of his bed so he could rest his forehead against his forearm and block out all the light around him.

Ilya walked over to the bed and slowly sat down close to him. He wasn't sure if Shane even wanted him this close. But he still decided to try.

"Do you want to eat?" Ilya asked slowly as he placed his hand on Shane's back.

Shane didn't reply. He didn't feel like doing anything.

"And I check what to do on internet" Ilya continued slowly "when you eat."

Nothing.

Ilya reached to briefly run his fingers through the top of Shane's hair. Almost like he just wanted to adjust the thick strands that had decided to stick out of place.

Shane had no intention of replying. Ilya exhaled louder than he thought he would.

"Okay. Maybe no food." Ilya said seriously as his fingers slid across Shane's scalp. "I check what to do now. And we make plan, okay?"

He pulled his hand back so he could start looking things up on his phone and noticed that Shane didn't feel like responding.

"You can sit on bed too if you want." Ilya continued "Maybe more comfortable than floor."

Shane heard him but still felt completely unable to move.

"I need a second" Shane forced himself to say "Please leave me alone."

Ilya didn't say anything back. He figured Shane probably wouldn't want to have to process any more words from him. He sat back on the bed and pulled his attention to his phone, still keeping an eye on Shane from the corner of his vision.

He didn't even know what to look up first.

Shane decided to trust him. He decided to forget the fact that Ilya was actually horrible at looking up anything about this. He decided to forget about his confession about there being "so many difficult words".

He wanted to convince himself they would actually figure it out.

Because Ilya did actually show up for him. Even if it wasn't enough he still tried. Maybe if he tried hard enough it would actually work out.

"Okay." Ilya started "I know what we do now."

Shane finally looked up. His face slid out from behind the forearm he had been keeping against the bed and he looked even more exhausted than Ilya expected he would.

"We go downtown. To this place." Ilya said as he turned his phone towards Shane. "And they tell us."

Shane regretted looking at what Ilya was showing him. He felt like he had just seen something horrible.

He felt so uncomfortable. The logo felt like it had eyes that were just staring right back at him. Almost like it was mocking him too.

“Are you out of your mind?” Shane exclaimed, feeling he couldn’t even inhale enough oxygen in one breath “That’s the plan you came up with? We go downtown and just start telling people?”

“No!” Ilya said defensively “We just talk. We don’t tell them your name.”

Shane shook his head frantically.

“If you want to talk to them so bad then maybe you can call them.” Shane insisted. “But I’m not going.”

“Okay” Ilya exhaled. “I will try.”

Shane almost wanted to leave the room. He felt like whatever Ilya was doing was too much. He saw Ilya actually tap their phone number and he wanted to look away but he just couldn’t.

He felt like they might as well be calling the police.

Calling the police to get help with a crime.

“Planned Parenthood Ottawa, how can I help you today?” the voice was loud enough for Shane to hear it too.

It somehow happened so fast. Ilya had just dialed the number and someone was already talking to him. Hearing those words felt like hearind nails scrape accross a squeaky surface.

“Hang up.” Shane said seriously as he started reaching for Ilya’s phone.

“No!” Ilya said as he pushed Shane’s hand away. “Sha-”

Ilya couldn’t finish because Shane immediately jumped to place his hand right over Ilya’s mouth and stop him from talking. There was no way he would let Ilya say his name out loud with someone else litening on the other end of the line.

He pushed Ilya down on the bed and shot him a wide-eyed look like he might somehow manage to telepathically communicate the point he wanted to make.

“Is everything alright over there?”

The voice made them feel like they had just been caught red-handed.

Shane pulled back just so he could get further away from Ilya’s phone. Ilya straightened himself back up like it would help him talk more easily. He looked at Shane but Shane wouldn’t look back at him.

“Yes.” Ilya said with an exhale. “Sorry. You are scaring my friend.”

Shane did actually look back at him this time. He hoped the way he looked at Ilya would let Ilya know that he didn't approve of what he had just decided to say. He absolutely hated everything about this phone call.

"You're good, no need to apologize." the staff member on the other end said gently.

Her voice made Ilya feel like maybe things wouldn't be as bad as they seemed.

"I know calling us can certainly feel very overwhelming for a lot of people." she continued "Can I know the reason for your call today?"

Ilya realized that he had been so focused on how calming her voice sounded he had forgotten to actually follow what she had been saying.

He took a second to try to process what was actually being said to him.

"Tell her to give you pills!" Shane hissed at him, aiming to be just quiet enough so the microphone wouldn't pick up on his voice.

Ilya glanced at him before trying to talk to the receptionist again. He still didn't know what she had just said. He felt like he probably needed to pay more attention so he could follow.

"Do you have pills?" Ilya asked her.

"Are you calling to discuss birth control options or would you like to look into getting emergency contraception through us?"

That felt like even more words. Ilya had absolutely no idea what any of that meant. And he was sure it had nothing to do with not paying enough attention this time.

"Ah. I-" Ilya tried but he found himself looking over to Shane hoping Shane would help him follow the question.

Shane looked back at him in a way that confirmed that he had no idea what any of that meant either. Ilya looked away just so Shane wouldn't get mad again.

"A.. I don't know." Ilya said back into the phone. "I don't know this... words. Sorry."

"That's okay!" the staff member said as she decided to speak a little more slowly for him. "Are you calling about your friend?"

"Yes." Ilya said with a little more relief. He could actually understand what she was asking this time. "But he does not want to talk with you."

"Gotcha." she said back. "Does your friend want to avoid getting pregnant in the future or does he think he might be pregnant right now?"

"I think yes" Ilya said "On internet it says two lines is yes. Opposite from drugs."

Shane felt like he wanted to disappear just hearing him say that. Ilya didn't hear anything on the other end of the line for a second. He wondered if he worded that correctly.

"Sorry, not sure I'm following" the receptionist said slowly "Are you saying your friend took a home pregnancy test?"

"Yes." Ilya continued. "We buy this from Dollar Tree."

He wondered if saying where he had gotten it from would somehow reveal some new insight. Maybe it really mattered. Maybe it was somehow different.

“Okay. And is your friend over the age of 18?”

“Yes.” he felt like it was going so well. He could actually understand what she was saying this time.

“Well in that case the best thing for your friend to do would be to come in for an ultrasound so we can see how things are going and discuss his options.” she continued “You are certainly welcome to come in as well! Do you know when you’ll be available?”

Ilya wasn’t sure what that meant but he understood the part about actually having to go in person. That meant they were back to what he had initially planned too.

“Can we go now?” he asked.

“We typically only accept visits Monday through Friday, 9 AM to 5 PM.” she continued “Would you be available on Monday?”

It completely overlapped with their schedules.

“Ah. Then no.” Ilya said apologetically “We have class. And then ho-” he stopped for a second before Shane could try to jump on him again “other thing also for class.”

“Alright well in that case I could try to squeeze you in later this morning.” she continued “Is there a name your friend would like to go by?”

Ilya stopped to look at Shane who just kept staring at him and shaking his head. He didn’t even have to tell Ilya that he couldn’t give out his actual name. Ilya knew that Shane would actually kill him if he did that.

“Hayden.”

“Oh my fucking God” Shane scoffed out as quietly as he could and turned away like it would somehow block out the nonsense Ilya was spewing.

“Alright well, if you can make it before noon we should be able to squeeze you in today.” she continued as positively as she could after overhearing Shane’s reaction. “Does that sound good to you?”

“Yes.” Ilya said. “Thank you”

“Alright, well enjoy the rest of your morning. See you soon!”

Ilya put the phone down and looked at Shane again.

“Why the fuck did you tell her my name was Hayden?” Shane huffed out at him.

“I don’t know!” Ilya responded quickly “Hayden is normal Canadian name.”

“And you told her we were going!” Shane continued “I don’t even want to go!”

“Okay then maybe I go listen to sound and she tells me. I don’t know” Ilya said “Maybe you wait here.”

Ilya tried to check the directions to Planned Parenthood Ottawa on his phone. He hoped there would be a bus he could take from Shane’s house.

“No.” Shane said “I don’t want to be alone right now.”

“We can take bus to McDonalds.” Ilya suggested “Place is close to McDonalds bus stop.”

Shane considered it. The idea of just waiting at McDonalds didn’t seem as overwhelming as just being left all alone in his house.

“Maybe you get burger. Or ice cream” Ilya suggested “And wait for me?”

Shane glanced at the map on Ilya’s phone. There were multiple route lines that somehow connected, but the numbers really stood out to him.

1 hour 32 minutes

He remembered their last bus ride. How the bus felt exposed and full of people. How he had to watch how he acted while on the bus. How he couldn’t even talk because Ilya told him it would draw too much attention.

“I can’t” Shane shook his head. “It’s too much”

“Yes maybe scary.” Ilya told him. “But you are brave.”

“We would have to uber.” Shane said quietly “But we can’t use my account. My mom looks at all the invoice emails.”

“Then what?” Ilya asked.

What Shane was describing sounded like a dead end to Ilya.

“Can you get it?” Shane asked him.

“A-” Ilya shook his head as he realized what that entailed “No.”

“Look I’ll pay you back!” Shane insisted “It’s just so we don’t use my account!”

“I don’t have money, Shane.” Ilya said “How you give back money that does not exist?”

Shane wondered if it was actually hopeless. Maybe he could let Ilya go by himself. But that meant he would be left all alone for hours.

He didn’t know how he would breathe being left to just suffocate in his own thoughts.

“Have you ever crashed your dad’s car?” Shane asked quietly.

“What?” Ilya almost laughed at the question.

He couldn’t figure out where that was coming from.

“No. If I crash car he kills me probably.” Ilya answered almost playfully. “Then I am dead, not in your house.”

“You’ll have to drive.” Shane said seriously.

He looked at Ilya like he was trusting him with the entire world. But Shane actually sounded serious.

Ilya didn't want to explain why trying to get the car was just another dead end. And Shane asking about him crashing the car still made no sense to him.

"I can't." Ilya said while shaking his head "Right now is just... bad."

He didn't know how to continue. Just thinking about it filled with dread. Dealing with this new set of problems was already stressful but he absolutely couldn't afford to also think about his own problems with his family at the same time.

"My father is really angry now." he tried to say it as simply as he could but the words still felt so dry in his own mouth. "So we can't ask for car."

It felt horrible. He thought about how he could have just used his own car if this whole ordeal went down just a few months later. It was one of the first things he planned on buying too.

"So you'll drive the SUV." Shane said with forced confidence. "I know where the keys are."

Shane felt like everything they had planned and done up until that point might as well be illegal. Every single line had already been crossed.

Ilya couldn't believe what he was hearing. He wondered if Shane was actually joking.

"And you mother will murder me." he told Shane like he was almost warning him.

"She's probably gonna kill both of us if she finds out what we were doing!" Shane insisted like his life depended on it. "You have to drive!"

Taking Shane's lead sounded like a horrible idea. But Ilya felt like he had no other choice but to do what Shane wanted. Maybe going through with one unhinged plan would stop Shane from considering other even more dangerous ideas.

He just wanted Shane to feel like it would be okay.

"Okay." Ilya immediately felt like he was agreeing to something horrible. "I will drive."

Chapter 25: SUV

Ilya stopped to grab the tuna wraps from the fridge.

He preferred having at least some kind of food on him in case he got hungry. He hated randomly getting hungry while he was out.

He usually had a good stock of promotional protein bars in his bag, but taking the wraps along sounded like an even better idea.

He had no intention of eating in the SUV. Just the thought of taking the car made him feel horrible and leaving crumbs all over the place in the process felt like a nightmare scenario.

But he knew he was going to get hungry. Maybe he could eat in the waiting room if Planned Parenthood expected him to wait.

“Put this on” Shane’s voice came from behind him.

Ilya turned around and immediately felt Shane put a baseball cap over his hair. Ilya didn’t have the time to react before Shane reached to also put sunglasses on him.

Ilya’s face tensed up but he tried not to move too much so Shane wouldn’t somehow poke him in the eye.

“What is this?” Ilya asked him, his eyes still shut but almost peeking out at Shane.

The fridge door stood wide open behind him and the door alarm started beeping.

Ilya felt like so many things around him suddenly needed his attention. He pushed the fridge door shut with his foot to stop the beeping and opened his eyes from behind the sunglasses so he could pay attention to Shane.

“So people don’t recognize us.” Shane said “I’ll wear the same thing.”

Ilya watched Shane put another pair of sunglasses on his own face. Shane’s eyes disappeared behind the dark lenses but Ilya could still read his expression through them.

Ilya took in how serious Shane looked, not really knowing what to say. Shane finally nodded, fully confident in the idea that their disguises would actually work.

“Can you grab me a drink too?” Shane asked, voice full of forced determination.

Ilya was almost surprised Shane wanted a drink after he had just told him to "fuck off with the ginger ale" earlier that morning.

“Okay.” Ilya said as calmly as he could.

He turned his attention back to the fridge and used the food order bag to pack the tuna wraps. He made sure to put their drinks in there too.

He actually felt nervous. And he only let himself admit that he was nervous because he didn't want to admit he was genuinely terrified.

Going to Planned Parenthood felt like a big deal to him too. But stealing Yuna's car to do it somehow felt like an even bigger deal.

He felt like he would be betraying whatever was left of Yuna's trust. He felt like he was about to play with fire again.

Shane stood there in the kitchen and observed every single move Ilya made. Ilya suddenly felt so watched. Like he had a boss that was watching him do his work in the room.

"Maybe clothes are dry now, yes?" Ilya commented, almost like he was asking for Shane's permission to go back upstairs and change.

It was almost starting to feel like Shane was executing the plan he had put together like an important game strategy. Like he was some sort of authoritative team captain.

"Maybe" Shane said flatly. "But we need to go."

"Do I go put on clothes now?" Ilya said it out loud when he realized Shane wasn't going to pick up on the hint.

"Don't change." Shane insisted without moving. "We'll go like this."

Ilya blinked at him and almost extended his neck to make sure he was actually looking at Shane properly.

"In pajamas?" Ilya asked him.

The more the day went on the more surreal it started feeling for Ilya too.

"Yeah." Shane nodded "We wouldn't normally go out like this. No one will assume it's actually us."

Ilya looked concerned. "Okay. But I think outside... is cold now."

Shane could not believe how much Ilya sounded like his mother in that moment. He was not about to let Ilya try to poke any holes in his plan. If Ilya had a better idea he could have tried to take the lead first.

"And there's heating in the car. What's your point?" Shane asked him seriously.

Ilya didn't know how to respond. Shane's plans felt so much more volatile than any of his own.

He didn't know how to tell Shane that he just didn't want to get cold if he was going to be the one running all the errands.

"Can I get hoodie from dryer at least?" Ilya said as lightly as he could "To wear under jacket."

Shane looked like him like Ilya had suggested something that really annoyed him.

"I'll give you one of my plain ones" Shane exhaled, face partially scrunched up like he was frustrated. "Yours have weird hockey logos on them."

"Okay." Ilya said lightly like he just wanted to agree with him.

He knew he had absolutely no right to argue against it if he didn't want Shane to lose it again.

Shane came back quickly and Ilya got a plain hoodie with the surprisingly comfortable fabric from him. Shane put a pair of boots he rarely wore on and opened the door that led to the garage from the inside.

Ilya put his shoes on as fast as he could and quickly followed Shane to the garage with his new jacket in his hand.

It almost felt uncanny. He had never been to their garage before and he found it weird that you could actually enter from the inside too.

“Here” Shane stopped and turned around and Ilya almost walked into him. “The keys.”

Ilya’s hand lingered as he took them. Shane didn’t have it in him to jerk his hand back, but he didn’t let his expression soften.

Ilya chose to ignore how cold and distant Shane felt in that moment.

He pressed the button to unlock the door and got in the car. He immediately noticed that it was much higher off the ground. He had never been in the driver seat of a car that looked like it.

Everything felt off. He realized he needed to adjust his seat. As he kept looking around he realized he would need to adjust the rear view mirror too.

But he felt absolutely terrified to do it because he wasn’t sure if he could re-adjust them afterwards to make the car feel untouched.

He heard the passenger door open to his right and watched as Shane sat down in the passenger seat.

“Is this a Jeep?” Ilya asked him because he didn’t know what else to say.

It was the worst version of Shane he had seen in his entire life. He looked tired and hair was all over the place.

“What?” Shane scrunched up his face at the question “No.”

Ilya watched Shane put his seatbelt on in the passenger seat. He watched the way Shane looked sitting there in a plain hoodie and his plaid pajama pants.

He started noticing how Shane's pajama pants clung to his legs unevenly as they made their way down to the winter boots Shane had put on.

Shane looked anything but ready to go out. But the fact that he got to see Shane that way somehow felt so intimate to Ilya.

“You look nice” Ilya said lightly, almost like he wanted to make a joke just to lighten the mood “Perfect clothes if you want American date in McDonalds”

He wondered if pretending they were just going to get ice cream would make Shane feel more at ease.

Shane exhaled. He didn’t feel like humoring whatever Ilya was trying to pull.

“Not now, please” Shane said with exhaustion in his voice without even looking at Ilya.

Shane opened the glove compartment and dug around before pulling out a small pack of plain green face masks. His family had stocked up on them during lockdown and they used to always keep clean ones in the cars so they could have them at hand when they needed to run somewhere.

“Maybe you should put this on too” Shane said as he pulled out two masks.

Ilya took the mask from Shane and watched as Shane nervously maneuvered the loops of the mask underneath the frames of his sunglasses.

Shane's nervous breathing immediately started fogging up the lenses. He scoffed and pulled the mask down a little so he could free his nose and breathe over it.

"Maybe later." Ilya said. "I need to see street to drive."

Shane didn't say anything. But Ilya couldn't stop looking at the little strand of hair that had ended up poking out over Shane's ear. Almost like they were trapped between the frames of the sunglasses he was wearing and the loops of his mask.

Shane didn't notice how his hair felt because everything about his surroundings already felt off. It was his idea, but even just being in the car felt uncanny to him.

Shane usually sat in the passenger seat when his mother drove him too. But the fact that Ilya was there with him in the driver seat made it feel so... unusual. Like he was in a car that might as well not even belong to his family.

Shane jumped when he felt something touch the side of his face.

It was Ilya's hand. Suddenly the car felt much wider than just the tiny space around his seat.

"What are you doing?" Shane asked as he pulled even further back towards the window.

"I am fixing your hair." Ilya scoffed out "Why you run away like this?"

Shane let out a heavy breath and almost rolled his eyes in frustration. He didn't usually have a problem with Ilya tried to mess with his hair. But he hated it when his mom did the exact same thing in the car. And in that moment, it felt like the type of touch he didn't like.

"Can you just drive and do whatever it is you need to do to get the Plan B?" Shane huffed out seriously, his mask shifting under his chin as he talked "You're acting like my mom."

"You are scared?" it was almost a question. But it also felt like a statement coming from Ilya.

"I'm not!" Shane's body stiffened as he tried to shut down the suggestion.

"Is okay to be." Ilya continued. "It is scary."

"I'm not scared!" Shane insisted.

"Aha. Okay." Ilya found himself almost laughing at that statement. "You are not scared you are pregnant. And now we steal car too. So maybe a little scary, yes?"

Shane narrowed his eyes at Ilya. He had been trying to breathe so slowly so he wouldn't lose it. He wanted to shove Ilya for actually calling him pregnant out loud. Hearing it in that moment just made him even more frustrated.

"Are *you* scared?" It almost sounded like an accusation when Shane said it.

"Hmm... you think?" Ilya lifted his eyebrows like the point he was trying to make should have been obvious.

Shane tried to really look at him this time. "Are you?"

Ilya needed a second to decide how to respond. But Shane continued before he could come up with something witty.

"What? Russians don't get scared or whatever you usually say" Shane almost sounded like he was mocking him too.

Ilya exhaled but still tried to deliver what he wanted to say as light-heartedly as he could.

"Hmm my father wants to kill me probably." he said jokingly, almost like he was discussing game strategies. "But maybe he will not, maybe your mother kills me first."

Shane paused for a second. What Ilya had just said made him feel something he couldn't exactly name.

"Maybe now they become friends and kill me together, I don't know." Ilya continued sarcastically with a shrug, like laughing about it would make it easier.

Shane stayed quiet. What Ilya was trying to talk about somehow felt too loud. It somehow made things seem even scarier.

"But you know, like you say Russians don't get scared. And you are also brave so..." Ilya trailed off and then proceeded to blow a raspberry at Shane.

Shane felt a faint speck of spit hit the side of his cheek. Part of him couldn't help but feel like that was absolutely disgusting. He immediately wiped it off.

But part of him somehow found comfort in what Ilya had just said.

It almost felt nice for a second. The fact that Ilya was driving him somewhere where they needed to be. Driving him to something serious that Shane despised.

Shane suddenly didn't feel like he was toughing it out alone. He felt like they were in it together.

Ilya let out a breath and started adjusting the seat. He tried to make a mental note of how he would readjust everything back once they were done with the car.

Shane looked away.

He kept looking away as they drove too. Like maybe trying not to think about where they were headed would make it easier.

Ilya had never driven a car that felt so high off the ground. It almost felt disorienting. It was like something about his muscle memory just didn't fall into place.

He even found himself slightly doubting his ability to drive.

"Do you want to hold my hand?" Shane asked him quietly "Since you're so scared."

The fact that Shane was talking almost startled Ilya. He had been driving so carefully and trying to watch out for everything around them.

But he could afford to hold Shane's hand.

"Hmm yes. Terrified." Ilya said sarcastically while still keeping his eyes on the road.

Before he knew it, Shane reached for his hand and actually grabbed it with his own. It happened so suddenly it almost startled him.

Ilya glanced over and noticed that Shane was still looking down while gripping his hand. He let himself relax into the touch, despite how aggressive the grip on his hand felt.

“Your hand is very soft” Ilya joked.

“Shut up.” Shane said quietly.

Shane tried to slow down his breathing but something in his lungs betrayed him and forced him to take a much quicker breath that shook as he inhaled.

Ilya felt it. And he felt Shane’s grip on his own hand tighten even more.

Ilya hesitated for a second before saying it.

”Well, I like this. To hold your hand”

They had never just held hands anywhere that felt this public before. Sure, they had cuddled behind closed doors before. And they had hooked up in the car Ilya drove.

But they had never held hands in that car either. Even when it was parked somewhere where no one could see them.

Ilya adjusted his hand around the death grip Shane seemed to be aiming for. He moved just enough so could start running his thumb along Shane’s hand, hoping it would become less tense under his touch.

There had been so many times when Ilya wished they could just do the little things every other couple he saw seemed to enjoy. But he had never realized how much he wished he could do this too.

Shane’s hand seemed to slowly relax into his as Ilya continued stroking it with his thumb. And for a second he could pretend everything was normal.

They were holding hands in the car. They were going to get ice cream together. They would go home and enjoy the rest of the day and sleep in the same bed again.

“I’m hungry.” Shane said like he was stating a fact.

“McDonald’s is close.” Ilya said as he drove. “Soon you can buy burger and wait for me. Then later we get ice cream.”

Shane felt like he was trying to talk with rocks in his lungs.

"I don't want to go to McDonald's" he said quietly. "I hate the burgers there."

“There is tuna wrap in bag.” Ilya told him “If you want.”

Shane pulled his hand away so he could check the paper bag their food had arrived in. He had forgotten he even had a drink in there too.

“Okay.” Shane said. “I’ll just eat this now. Then I can keep my mask up when I wait for you in the parking lot.”

Ilya felt like he wasn’t really following the plan.

“Which parking lot?” he asked “Outside from McDonald’s?”

“No.” Shane said quietly. “I don’t want to go to McDonald’s.”

Ilya tried to process the changes Shane wanted to make to their plan like he might need to re-route the entire trip.

“I just... don’t want to be left alone like that right now.” Shane exhaled next to him. “I’ll just come with you and wait in the parking lot.”

Saying that felt heavy. It felt like agreeing to a lot. But Shane felt like he could do it.

“You are sure?” Ilya asked him.

Shane let out a breath. He tuned out everything around him so the words could come out more easily.

“Yeah” Shane’s voice sounded heavy coming out of his chest as he tried to breathe “You’ll go in, listen to whatever sound they want, get the Plan B, and then I’ll take it with the ginger ale in the car.”

It sounded like a foolproof plan to Ilya too.

“Okay.”

Chapter 26: 1221 Sunset Ave

Chapter Notes

Okay so PP Ottawa is actually a super weird location, I literally had to alter how I wanted to write this after researching the actual place even more.

I'm not sure about the layout of the building so I just winged that.

I eventually decided to slightly alter the address too because having the actual address in my fic felt weird. 🦋

Shane watched nervously as they passed the McDonald's in downtown Ottawa.

Just driving past the big M arch felt like missing an important turn. He knew he didn't want to be left all alone in a random McDonald's. But telling Ilya he would rather wait in the Planned Parenthood parking lot suddenly seemed like an insane decision.

And now they were going through with the insane decision he had made at the height of his cortisol spike.

"Maybe we eat ice cream later." Ilya said as he noticed that Shane was anxiously looking back through the side-view mirror. "When we go home"

He decided to just offer Shane the comfort of a silly ice cream date through it all. And it could be fun. Because deep down, Ilya just wanted them to somehow try to have a nice day together.

Shane still couldn't believe they were actually driving to Planned Parenthood together. They were driving to a place that had other people inside. And they were going to park the SUV right there for everyone to see too.

And then Ilya was actually going to go inside and tell people about things no one should have ever found out about. Holy shit.

"If you want." Ilya added, noticing that he wasn't getting any reply from Shane, who was suddenly breathing very audibly in the passenger seat.

"No. It's fine." Shane shook his head lightly and then looked up at the road in front of them. "I'm full from eating the tuna wrap."

Part of Shane wished they could have just stopped the car at McDonalds for a second. He hated the food there, but he wouldn't mind just sitting in the parking lot for a little.

They could have... talked there? Except he wasn't really in the mood to talk either. He wasn't even sure what he wanted. He just knew he wanted to slow down.

It just felt like everything was happening way too fast. The drive was a lot shorter than the bus route he had seen on Ilya's phone.

He had just finished eating, and suddenly the drive was almost over.

“Is nice, yes?” Ilya asked just to avoid letting the silence take over again. “Tuna from fridge?”

Shane almost flinched at how loud those words sounded coming from right next to him. He felt like so many things were happening at once.

He felt like he was fighting for his life trying to stay sane and now Ilya was persistently talking to him too.

“Yeah...” Shane said quietly. “It’s okay.”

“I like this too. Tuna is nice food.” Ilya said as he eased the car into the parking lot.

Ilya suddenly realized he was actually really hungry too. And walking into some building and just eating food he had brought with him suddenly sounded like a really stupid idea.

“Maybe we make nice lunch with tuna. Or chicken.” Ilya went on “You like chicken too.”

Shane felt like Ilya was saying too many things but he somehow mustered up the courage to look up and inspect their surroundings. They had parked the car near a large building with the number 1221 on it.

Was that where they needed to be?

“Okay.” Ilya told him “You will sit here and watch car?”

Shane let himself move a little more and looked around to check if he had somehow failed to notice the actual Planned Parenthood building, but it was nowhere to be found.

“Where’s... the place?” he asked Ilya.

He felt so confused. He had been bracing for the moment Ilya would just leave him in the Planned Parenthood parking lot so long. He remembered the weird logo that looked like it was staring right at him so vividly and now he couldn’t spot it anywhere.

“Inside.” Ilya told him “1221 Sunset.”

Ilya had seen the picture of the building while checking how to navigate there. It was just another responsibility that silently fell on him. Shane had no idea how Ilya knew where the place was.

“What? Oh” Shane said like he was almost disappointed.

The building almost looked like a business center. Shane expected it to be so much worse than that. He expected it to look like a hospital or at least have some kind of sign that would tell the whole world why they might be there.

“Okay.” Shane added quietly.

He actually let himself relax a little. He finally felt his shoulders drop down. There was nothing that could give away the actual reason he was there.

For all people knew, they were out so they could go to the bank or whatever else was inside the building.

They certainly looked like they might try to rob a bank too. Shane quickly started realizing that what he had decided to wear might be overkill.

“I will leave key so car is warm, okay?” Ilya told him as he started getting ready to get out of the car.

So was really it. That was as scary as it was going to get. Shane almost couldn't believe it. He still felt so disoriented.

"Uh." Shane tried to say something but he was still somehow struggling to figure out how to respond. "Okay. Sure."

"Here is hat." Ilya said as he took off the baseball cap Shane had put on him earlier. "Maybe they will think I am stealing if I wear hat inside."

It wouldn't have been the first time he had been wrongfully accused of being up to no good. The fact that Shane had made him leave the house without changing out of his pajamas wasn't going to help either.

He placed the hat in Shane's lap but Shane wasn't really looking at it.

Shane felt like he wasn't really looking at anything around him. He still needed time to wrap his head around the fact that they were actually there.

They were actually there and he was somehow... okay.

"Okay." Ilya exhaled. "I go now."

A gust of cold winter air made its way inside the car as Ilya got out. Shane didn't even react to it. He just sat in his seat and watched as Ilya disappeared behind the doors of the building.

Ilya didn't look back. He hurried in because he quickly realized that the pajamas Shane had given him were way too thin for the weather outside.

He felt disoriented too. He quickly realized he had no idea how to actually navigate the building. And the maps on his phone couldn't help him anymore.

He was at the right address and he was inside the right building. And yet there were absolutely no signs that could direct him to the Planned Parenthood location he was trying to go to.

He eventually decided to get his phone out and dial the same number he had called before.

At least Shane wasn't there to panic and jump on him this time.

"Planned-"

"Hi, sorry" Ilya interrupted her like he was in a hurry "Where are you?"

Ilya didn't hear anything back for a few seconds until the staff member finally decided to speak again.

"Excuse me?" she finally said, like it was one of the most confusing calls she had taken in a while.

"Sorry." Ilya shook his head before pinching the bridge of his nose, almost like that would help him formulate his thoughts better. "This place. Planned Parenthood, yes?"

"Yes, you are speaking to Planned Parenthood Ottawa. May I know the reason for your call today?"

"I am in your building." Ilya said while looking around. "1221 Sunset."

He didn't hear anything on the other side of the line and he realized he was expected to explain what he was trying to ask a little better.

"Your coworker tells me to come here today. For pills." Ilya continued "Where are you?"

There was a sense of urgency in his voice that he didn't realize was there until he was done talking.

"Oh. Okay, right." The staff member on the other side of the line continued. "We're located on the 4th floor. Feel free to take the elevator in the lobby."

Ilya noticed the elevator a few steps down the hallway.

"Okay" he said "Thank you."

He hung up and made his way to the elevator. He realized he needed a second to figure out what he needed to say. He wasn't even sure how he would explain what they needed.

The actual place ended up being a lot less overwhelming than he expected. And a lot smaller too. There wasn't much to see other than a hallway with a counter that also happened to have a couple of chairs and a pamphlet stand.

But it was still nerve wrecking.

Ilya walked up to the counter feeling like he was about to confess to a crime.

"Hi." he said with a small nod. "Good morning."

His eyes landed on the name tag of the person in front of him and he felt like the world was mocking him in that moment.

Shannon.

He couldn't argue that Shannon was just a normal Canadian name too. But it felt like a joke.

"Hey! I think we spoke on the phone earlier" Shannon said back. "Glad you could make it."

And in that moment, Ilya felt like he was actually handling it.

Shane felt like he was actually starting to get bored in the car. With Ilya gone, he had no idea what was actually happening. But if Ilya was inside, he was probably handling it.

The lack of information actually felt boring instead of nerve wrecking this time.

He was just parked in front of some business center, waiting for Ilya in the SUV. It felt like one of the times when he would have to tag along while his parents ran errands around Ottawa.

Ilya's messages snapped him out of the boring little escapism fantasy he could have hoped to indulge in.

Ilya

What is pill name?

I forget sorry(

She is asking me what to give?

Shane exhaled and looked out the window just so he wouldn't have to look at his phone for at least a few seconds. He hated how seeing that message made him feel.

And he absolutely despised typing what he had to say next.

Shane

Just tell her to give you Plan B.

He locked his phone and tried to push all the thoughts about their messages away.

He looked out the window again but he wasn't really looking at anything. All his attention was focused on the hand he was holding the phone in.

He wondered why his phone hadn't buzzed with another message that he could freely be annoyed about. And he found himself wondering if Ilya had seen his message yet.

Shane decided to text again.

Shane

I brought cash too if you need it.

He kept looking at their chat this time. He almost felt like nothing existed outside of him and the small screen he was holding up to his face.

He no longer felt like he was just parked in front of some building waiting for whoever he was with to finish running errands.

This felt important. And it was one of the few times when Shane had felt like an errand truly depended on his input.

Something dropped in his stomach when he finally got a response.

Ilya

She says she cannot give me

Shane started typing immediately.

Shane

Why the fuck not

Just come down I'll give you the money for it

Shane felt like time was actually slowing down this time and it actually made him feel on edge. He needed Ilya to reply faster. His thumbs fidgeted in the air lightly as he impatiently waited for a response.

Ilya

No

Does not cost money

Just she cannot give us this pill

Shane felt like the blood was draining from his hands but luckily his thumbs were right where they needed to be and he could immediately start typing.

Shane

Why

Did you even listen to the thing you needed to hear

He almost found himself getting angry at Ilya. Ilya was supposed to be the one that knew the plan. And yet Shane had somehow been left to plan the way they would get there.

And now Ilya was somehow fumbling their plan inside the fucking building.

Ilya

Nothing happens if you drink this pill

That is what she tells me

It felt like an actual nightmare.

For a second Shane wondered if he would somehow end up in the same situation as the guy he had seen on instagram a few days ago. It felt his phone had decided to show him that video just to tell him it was already over.

Ilya

Maybe you do something else
But you have to come here too

Shane replied almost immediately.

Shane

No

But Ilya wasn't going to let him back out.

Ilya

Yes(
But it is fine
No one is here just person from phone
She is nice

Shane scrunched his face up at the last message. He couldn't tell why, but the fact that Ilya was all alone with some girl that was apparently "nice" almost made him feel jealous.

Which was stupid, considering that trying to remember why Ilya was actually there somehow made him feel even worse.

He just wanted to wait in the car and have Ilya take care of everything and then come back. Why couldn't it be as simple as that?

Ilya

I come to car now

"Bullshit." Shane huffed out anxiously.

So Ilya was just going to come back empty handed. It almost felt like a joke. There was no way Shane was actually talking to the same Ilya that seemed to know exactly what to do just a few days ago.

Shane shook his head with small frantic movements as he reached for what was left of his drink in the cup holder.

But he quickly decided he didn't even want his drink. He wanted to tell Ilya what should have already been obvious.

Shane

I told you I don't want to go a billion times
What part of that do you not understand?

Shane decided he didn't even care about what Ilya had to say. Ilya could either solve this for him or admit that he didn't even care about what Shane wanted to do.

He locked his phone but quickly noticed a familiar silhouette making its way out of the building. Shane decided to just look away so he wouldn't have to watch Ilya approach the car.

He just wanted to ignore him.

Which became increasingly difficult as Ilya approached the door to the passenger seat.

"Oh for fuck's sake" Shane breathed out quietly because of course Ilya had to go straight for the passenger door.

Ilya peaked through the window and saw Shane sitting there with his arms crossed and looking straight ahead like he might actually be mad at him.

It felt like a blow to the stomach.

All he wanted was to do this as normally as possible and maybe do something nice afterwards. Without any fighting. Without being mad at each other.

He knocked on Shane's window before opening the door to the passenger seat because it just felt like the courteous thing to do in that moment.

"Come" Ilya said.

Shane felt the cold winter air hit his face from the side. He was no longer enclosed in his little space inside the car and the air he was breathing somehow felt sharper.

"No." Shane said firmly. "Let's just leave."

Ilya exhaled and looked around like he was just trying to figure out what to say rather than actually look at anything.

"Okay and if we leave... nothing is fixed." Ilya told him. "And then you just panic again."

The words hit Shane even harder than the winter air had.

"She is nice" Ilya continued carefully.

"Yeah well if she's so nice why don't you go fuck her instead?" Shane said bitterly while looking straight ahead.

His voice came out much sharper than he thought it would. Shane realized he was actually starting to get cold with Ilya holding the door open for so long.

Ilya stopped for a second and then actually started laughing. He had expected Shane to say literally anything other than whatever he was suggesting.

"What?" Ilya said, doing his best to sound like he wasn't actually mocking Shane.

Shane finally looked at him. He couldn't believe Ilya had the audacity to laugh in the middle of all of this.

"I think she likes girls maybe." Ilya said as Shane practically scolded him with his eyes. "And I am not girl so..."

Shane couldn't tell if Ilya was joking.

“What?” Shane said and his lips moved like they couldn’t afford to be anywhere close to his teeth.

“What?” Ilya replied more casually, unsure what else to say.

“You think she likes girls?” Shane said, almost in an accusatory way.

“I think, yes.” Ilya said almost jokingly. “Probably.”

Shane shook his head lightly and shut his eyes like he might actually be getting a headache.

“What the fuck are you even talking about?” Shane said without opening his eyes.

“Come.” Ilya reached for his arm, half-expecting Shane to swat his hand away “I show you inside.”

His hold was light and he felt a sense of relief when he realized that Shane had no intention of shoving him away..

Shane finally opened his eyes as Ilya put his hand on his upper arm. Ilya noticed he was actually shivering under his clothes.

“Take jacket too.” Ilya said lightly. “You will get sick like this.”

“Oh my god.” Shane rolled his eyes at him in frustration. “You sound like my fucking mom right now.”

“Hmm yes. Your mother.” Ilya said sarcastically “We steal car, she kills me one time. You get sick, she kills me two times. Now come.”

“Fine.” Shane agreed. “Close the door so I can get ready, it’s cold.”

Ilya let go and closed the door for Shane just so he wouldn’t somehow ruin the possibility of Shane not resisiting for once.

He made his way around the car so he could open the passenger door and get the keys from the car.

“What are you doing?” Shane asked him ask he looped the plain surgical mask back over his ears.

“Keys. To lock car.” Ilya raised his eyebrows at Shane like he was stating a very obvious fact. “Or someone steals car. Then your mother kills me three times.”

Shane decided to ignore what Ilya had just said and got out as soon as he felt ready. Ilya locked the car behind them and made sure to double check if the passenger door was actually locked just in case.

Ilya was surprised that Shane didn’t resist going inside after he got out of the car. He wondered if the cold was what was making Shane hurry towards the building too.

He took a second to take in how Shane looked in front of him. With his pajama pants and his thick winter jacket, Shane almost looked like he was just going outside to get another food order.

And he was glad Shane had decided to abandon the hat and the sunglasses too. That would have attracted far more attention.

Shane looked up from the plain green carpet in the business center, and realized he had just been blindly following Ilya inside.

“Where is it?” He asked through his mask.

Shane realized that Ilya just had his face in full view for everyone to see. It actually made him nervous.

They weren't just showing up to Planned Parenthood. They were showing up to a Planned Parenthood where some girl had apparently told Ilya she liked girls.

Being seen there sounded like a death sentence.

"Ah, you are lucky I know now." Ilya said light heartedly, almost like he was glad that Shane was talking to him. "I can show you."

Shane wasn't sure what to make of the response, but he followed Ilya to the elevator.

"See, no directions." Ilya said as he pressed the button to call the elevator "No one can find place. Even me. I have to ask on phone."

Shane wondered if someone else would show up in front of them when the elevator door opened. He looked down at the space where the elevator met the hallway carpet.

The elevator made a noise and Shane tensed up as he braced to look up and see someone else in front of him. Ilya didn't seem to have those worries because he proceeded to just walk in.

"Come." Ilya said from the elevator, just so they could continue talking.

He knew that as long as they were talking, Shane would stay at least somewhat present and wouldn't randomly decide to run away.

Shane hurried in, suddenly worried that the elevator might close and leave him all alone in the hallway.

Shane watched as Ilya reached to press the number 4 and heard the doors start to close to his side. They sounded way too loud from the inside. And the space they were suddenly confined in seemed so small.

"Okay." Ilya exhaled, suddenly worried about how Shane might react later. "Do not jump on me when she is talking."

Shane looked up at him like Ilya had just said something that made absolutely no sense.

"What?"

"Shannon." Ilya continued "When we talk on phone you jump on me. But don't jump now. Maybe they tell us to leave if you jump like this."

Shane narrowed his eyes to get a better look at Ilya. Almost like trying to see Ilya better might help him make sense of what Ilya was saying.

"Who the hell is Shannon?" Shane asked.

Ilya inhaled way too sharply through his mouth, already expecting Shane to get mad over the fact that he had just mentioned a girl again.

"Person from phone. She is nice, when she talks about you." Ilya said quickly "She likes girls, I think."

Somehow hearing all of that was still beyond overwhelming to Shane.

"Right." Shane said like he just wanted Ilya to stop talking. "Okay."

Chapter 27: Ultrasound

Chapter Notes

I wrote some parts of this chapter two whole months ago and the fact that I'm actually posting this part of the story now feels so unreal to me. Thank you all for the support along the way! ;___;

This feels like a second Big Reveal. I hope you all enjoy.

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

“Hi” Ilya nodded as they both made their way in “Good morning, again.”

Shane trailed behind him in matching plaid pajama pants, not really sure what to look away from first.

“You’re Hayden, right?” Shane heard someone say, and he quickly realized she was talking to him.

He looked away. Hearing that felt so stupid. A disgusted expression spread across Shane’s face. He just wanted to leave.

Ilya knew exactly what Shane looked like underneath his mask. He knew his expressions well enough to be able to recognize them even when most of Shane’s face was hidden.

“And it’s alright if you would prefer to use any other name too.” she continued gently.

It wasn’t the first time the staff at Planned Parenthood Ottawa had seen someone show up looking like they wanted to hide from the whole world. They were trained to be patient and try to make sure people coming in could be as comfortable as possible.

Shane didn’t reply and it suddenly made Ilya feel responsible for him. Like he was supposed to be the one to take over from there.

“Maybe I talk?” Ilya said carefully as he turned to Shane. “If you want.”

Shane could barely bring himself to look at them. And he could barely bring himself to talk to Ilya.

Ilya wished he could at least reach for him in any way. Even in a way that didn’t necessarily seem like anything more than checking on a friend.

But he knew that Shane would absolutely lose it if Ilya tried to touch him in front of another person.

“Uh, maybe... yeah.” Shane said absent-mindedly, like he wasn’t really processing the world around him. “Sure.”

“Feel free to sit down if this is too much.” Shannon said to him “You can have some water from the water cooler too.”

“No, I’m okay.” Shane told her. He just wanted to push through what was happening and get it over with.

He decided he didn’t want to know what she looked like. Just in case he saw her around Ottawa at some point. He didn’t want to be able to recognize the person that knew.

“I know this can feel like a lot, but we take our confidentiality policy very seriously.” she told them, almost like she could read Shane’s mind.

Ilya looked between her and Shane slowly, trying to see if Shane could actually follow what that meant.

“No one will have to know you were here unless you choose to tell them.” She re-phrased what she wanted to say in a simpler way.

Something about that eased Shane’s nerves. He decided it was okay to look up at least a little. He saw her colorful lanyard that held her name tag and it reminded him of the nurses that tended to work with younger patients.

She liked keeping pins on her lanyard. Shane had never seen someone decorate a lanyard like that. He wondered if it felt heavy.

One of the pins had a cat on it and it caught Shane’s attention. He could somehow tell so much about her just from her pins. She liked cats and she liked Halloween. And she apparently, loved her girlfriend.

“Can you give us the pills now that I’m here too?” Shane asked quietly.

“Right, so... you can’t exactly take that pill at this point.” Shannon started talking awkwardly and her lanyard moved a little as she talked.

Shane didn’t know what was wrong. But he felt like something might be wrong.

“As I was trying to explain to your friend, you certainly have options.” she said as patiently as she could “But we would need to have an ultrasound done so we can know what those options are.”

“And I can’t just... take that pill? I can’t even try to see if it will work?” Shane said as he kept clinging to the option he felt was the safe choice.

“There’s another set of pills you might be able to take.” Shannon told him. “Some people call them Plan C. But you’ll still need to do the ultrasound to see if that’s an option.”

“Okay. I mean... yeah.” Shane started slowly “That’s why we came here. The sound.”

He paused a little and then turned to Ilya hesitantly. “He came up to listen to it.” Shane said.

Shannon remembered why she needed to be more specific when talking to teenagers. Especially when she was talking to men.

“An ultrasound is an exam.” she said, trying to be as clear as possible.

“Do you... only do it in English?” Shane asked her.

“We... definitely have a technician that speaks English, yes” she said “And it’s not invasive at all so don’t worry.”

Shane swallowed. Another person. Another person that would find out.

“I-” he started but he found himself unable to continue.

“You still get to keep all your clothes on. You’ll just lift your shirt up and they’ll put a device on your skin to get a look at what’s going on inside.” she elaborated.

Shane still had his jacket on, but thinking about that made him feel cold in its own way.

“They get to see inside of me?” he asked quietly.

“Yes. You don’t have to look yourself if it’s too much.”

“Can I come too?” Ilya asked “So he is not alone.”

Shannon turned back to look at him.

“You can. It’s nice to get moral support with these things.” she said warmly. “Especially if you’re both comfortable with it.”

“Yeah, I want him to come.” Shane said breathily, almost like he was forcing himself to sound confident and determined.

“I’ll get the technician for you.” Shannon told them. “Feel free to have some water while you wait.”

Ilya carried both of their jackets in his hands when it was time for them to be escorted into another room.

Shane couldn’t believe any of it was actually happening to him. He was barely breathing. Every time he talked, he felt like he was delivering a line instead of talking to an actual person.

The air smelled so sharp and sterile around him as they went into a different room. They had to meet another person. He wasn’t sure if he was ready to meet another person yet.

“Can you talk too?” he asked Ilya nervously.

“Okay.” Ilya told him as he carried their things behind Shane. “I will talk.”

They walked in in their matching pajama pants and matching hoodies. They had both noticed how obvious it was by that point and it looked absolutely ridiculous to Shane.

Shane felt like he was spacing out but Ilya took over and greeted the technician.

She talked to Ilya about things Shane found completely pointless. Like how cold it was outside and how it was nice that the building had parking.

Ilya talked for the most part and Shane didn’t have to say much. He just had to lay down and try to stay as calm as possible.

“You can hang up your coats over there.” Shane heard her say as he laid down.

Shane watched as Ilya hung up their jackets from the bed and he knew the technician would start talking to him soon.

Ilya walked to the side of the bed Shane was already on. He felt like he needed to be closer to Shane. He wanted Shane to be able to look to his left and see that he was right there for him.

“Can you lift your shirt up for me?” the technician finally said.

Shane felt so dazed from trying to ignore everything around him. The fact that she was looking right at him and talking to him almost made the space around him shrink.

“I’m going to put this gel on you so we can do the ultrasound.” she continued “It might be a little cold, but it’s not going to hurt.”

“I- Okay.” Shane said.

“You might want to move your clothes a little more.” she told him. “You wouldn’t want them to end up getting damp in this weather.”

Shane adjusted the waistband of his pajama pants so it was slightly lower down his waist. He proceeded to pull his shirt and his hoodie up a little higher than before, hoping that would be better.

“Is this fine?” he asked nervously.

She nodded. “That’s great.”

Shane winced when the gel finally hit his skin. It did feel cold. She brought a device with a long cord to his stomach and started moving it accross his skin.

It didn’t hurt. But if felt unpleasant. And he felt cold.

Shane looked away. He turned his head to his right so he could look away from everything.

“I won’t make you look.” his technician said. “But you can let me know if you want to see.”

Shane shook his head.

“I want.” Ilya interjected to Shane’s left. “I want to see.”

He didn’t know what exactly he was supposed to see or what it would look like. But he wanted to see. He was the one that was supposed to keep up with everything when it was too much for Shane.

“Okay.” she nodded. “If it’s too much I can always tilt the screen away from you. Just let me know.”

“Okay.” Ilya nodded back. “Yes.”

He looked at Shane who looked very visibly uncomfortable. Shane shivered a little at some point and Ilya wondered if he was cold. Maybe he felt scared. But Ilya couldn’t ask him. Not when someone was in the room with them.

The image on the screen kept moving and it caught his attention.

It looked similar to TV static distortion at first. It reminded Ilya of the old Soviet-era TV he had seen at his grandmother’s house as a small child.

The image moved as she ran the device accross Shane’s stomach. Just like the times Ilya had seen his grandmother mess with the antenna to get the signal to work properly. One of the only memories he had of her.

“Okay. There we go.” their technician said.

And suddenly the picture no longer looked like messy static.

Holy shit.

Ilya felt like the air he was inhaling had suddenly started feeling heavy in his chest. He could see the monitor and he immediately understood what all the staff members meant when they said that looking might be a lot.

“Okay.” she said “So your home test results were definitely accurate.”

Shane looked around frantically. His technician looked neutral and he knew it was because she was just doing her job. She had seen whatever she was looking at countless times before.

But he saw the way Ilya looked at the screen.

And he saw the way that both of them just knew something that Shane didn't know.

"What's on the screen?" he asked Ilya, like it was urgent information that he absolutely needed to know.

Ilya looked absolutely flabbergasted. He wasn't sure what he expected. But he definitely didn't expect a moving image. He didn't expect what he saw to look like a small infant. A small infant that had arms that were moving on the screen in front of him.

He watched the screen so intensely. His eyes somehow looked both narrowed and wide at the same time.

His lips had parted open looking at the screen without him noticing. And his expression stayed the same even when he finally turned to look back at Shane.

"A-" he said, unsure what he should say to Shane. "Like television."

Ilya knew that Shane definitely wouldn't want to see. And he understood why it would be way too much to Shane. Maybe even describing what he had just seen would make Shane have a panic attack about it.

"It lets us see the fetus. We can see how the development is coming along that way." the technician finally answered Shane's question.

"Can I take photos of this?" Ilya asked and Shane shot him a look.

"I don't want to see that." Shane scoffed out, almost like he was annoyed with them. It sounded gross to him. He didn't even know what that would look like. It probably looked weird.

"We don't typically encourage taking photos inside" their technician said as she noticed Shane's reaction. "Especially if someone isn't comfortable with it."

"I will not show to you." Ilya told Shane reassuringly.

Shane hesitated and took a second to think about it.

"I could print out a picture for you, if your friend is okay with it." the technician suggested.

Ilya turned to Shane, who looked like he was very clearly upset. He could almost imagine what his face looked like beneath his mask.

His lips were probably parted, judging by the way the mask moved slightly as he kept breathing. He wondered if Shane could even breathe well like that.

"Can I take?" he asked Shane slowly.

Shane was barely looking at anything around him. He just wanted to cry but the fact that they were out in public meant he absolutely had to keep it together.

"I will not show to anyone, maybe only hospital." Ilya told him more reassuringly.

Shane looked at the technician. The screen was turned just enough so he wouldn't be able to see it despite the fact that it was visible to Ilya from the side.

“Would it say my name on it like xrays do?” Shane asked.

“No.” she told him neutrally.

“Okay.” Shane said “That’s fine then.”

Shane had been so dazed he realized he had actually forgotten that she didn’t even know his name.

She did something on her machine with her other hand but Shane couldn’t even see it.

“Can I have the pills now?” he asked.

The technician knew that she would have to deliver the news. She wasn’t sure if Ilya truly understood what he was looking at.

“I would say you’re about... more than five months along?” she said “But gestation periods do tend to be shorter for male carriers. You’ll probably be looking at eight months at most since you’re not using the last menstrual cycle as a reference point.

That was definitely way too many words. Way too many sentences even. It sounded like a complex math problem. Shane couldn’t understand why she was saying that or what she was trying to say.

Ilya didn’t understand about half of what she had tried to say. His mind went blank with how quickly she was talking and her word choice wasn’t helping.

Five months.

More than five months.

Shane couldn’t believe it either. There had to be some kind of mistake.

“There’s nothing there” he breathed out, looking down at his stomach. “I don’t think that’s right”

Could it have actually happend over five months ago? He tried to rewind the timeline in his mind like he was trying to recall important information. It was January, so more than five months would mean... some time in August?

Which kind of made sense. They did spend a lot of time together after Ilya got his full license that summer.

But that still seemed like a lot. It was probably more recently, right?

“Well your body is a lot larger than many women’s bodies. Women that show more also tend to have a uterus that’s positioned further up.” she told him “You could start to show soon, but you might only look slightly bloated if anything.”

Shane shook his head like he expected a different explanation.

“A lot of things will be different for you.” she continued “We can give you a brochure later if you’d like. It could be helpful to read it.”

“No” Shane said “I don’t think I want to read it. That’s too much.”

“Maybe you give to me.” Ilya interjected “And I read.”

Having it on paper actually seemed easier to him. And he could just look up all the words he wasn't familiar with.

Shane wanted to argue but he couldn't argue with the fact that it would be helpful if Ilya also knew more things about this. Ilya was horrible at looking things up and Shane knew he wouldn't be able to bring himself to do it alone.

"It can be useful to know what to expect," she continued. "Based on what I'm seeing you're probably due around early April. Maybe even late March."

Shane exhaled into his mask and he felt his breath rise up towards his own eyes.

"Okay. Now that you... know." Shane shook his head before finally asking "Can I... have the pills now? The Plan C."

It felt like delivering a line. He didn't want to be a part of that conversation anymore but he needed to ask.

His technician realized that he wasn't exactly following what she had implied since he kept defaulting to the same option. She knew she needed to be a little more direct with him.

"I'm sorry," the technician started slowly and Shane wished she would just say what it was.

He had to brace for what she might have to say. Another instance where they just kept talking to him like he was clueless without explaining anything.

"Unfortunately we can't do that," she continued and Shane felt like the words were echoing around him.

He didn't feel like he was actually in the room in that moment. He felt like he was stuck in a fever dream that was turning into an absolute nightmare.

If they couldn't do it then was there somewhere else where he could go?

"You cannot?" Ilya asked on his behalf "Where can he go? For pills?"

And part of it weighed down on him. He didn't know why he wanted to look. He wished someone would have explained why he might not want to look better.

He had a picture that he was going to get later. But the picture would never move like that. It would never move its arms up in that way.

"You can only do that in the first trimester," she said gently "This is almost a third trimester pregnancy judging by the development."

That was too many complicated words for Ilya to follow and even Shane didn't know what she was trying to say. She noticed that they weren't exactly following and expected her to explain better.

"Terminating the pregnancy anywhere would be illegal," she decided to elaborate. "But you will still have options after delivery."

"What the fuck?" Shane mouthed with shallow breaths.

Ilya heard the tone behind his whisper. He moved closer to Shane, but he wasn't going to reach for him

"We should leave," Shane said frantically. "I can't be here."

Ilya didn't know where that somewhere else could be. His own head was spinning trying to process the conversation that had just unfolded in front of him.

"Okay." Ilya told him in a way that seemed both confident and gentle. "Soon. We will go."

Their technician handed them some tissues to dry off with and Ilya took them. He would have helped Shane dry off but he knew that Shane hated it when Ilya touched him in front of other people.

Even if it was something as simple as helping him clean up.

"You should dry. Then we go." Ilya said instead and suddenly he was talking to Shane in a tone he couldn't remember using with anyone else. "Or you will get sick like this."

"Would you like to know the gender?" she asked them "We ask everyone, so don't feel pressured. I can also write it down for you so you can decide later."

Ilya looked at Shane, who had no intention of making a decision. As far as Shane was concerned, he didn't want them to talk about this.

"Maybe you give to me, yes?" Ilya said. "With photo and things to read."

He remembered how hungry he had felt earlier, how much he had been dying to finally eat the tuna wrap he had brought along in the paper bag they had left in the car.

And all his hunger was somehow gone in that moment. It had been replaced by something heavy that had spread through the pits of his stomach.

"If you have any questions, I could answer them before you go too." the technician told them.

Ilya definitely had questions. Questions he didn't know how to phrase but desperately needed an answer to.

Was Shane going to be okay? What happens next? What did he need to do? He was dying to just have someone he could actually ask what to do.

"I think is... too much for him now. Sorry." Ilya tried to say "But I don't know, what to do like this. So I want to ask some things."

No one ever came to save him. And yet he would have shown up to save Shane a hundred more times.

But it was so much. He felt like he was carrying the weight of the world trying to make sure everything would be fine.

Because it was no longer just about Shane being sad or upset. Shane was... carrying their child. He had seen the picture but he still couldn't believe it.

And Shane was going to have to have their child. Shane just wanted to play hockey and now he was stuck having a child.

"Can he play now?" Ilya asked and Shane lifted his elbows up in the bed to hide everything around him. He crossed his arms over his face so he could hide away in a little space he could pretend was just his own.

Shane desperately wanted to stop Ilya from elaborating but he also needed that answer more than his privacy in that moment.

“Sports. With me.” Ilya said. “Can he play too?”

“Well it’s definitely a good idea to stay active if he can, as long as it doesn’t get too much.”

“What is... too much?” Ilya asked.

He wanted to know. He was going to be there when Shane played anyway. He could make sure Shane wouldn’t get hurt.

“Too much strain. Or falling. What kind of sport is it?”

Ilya hesitated for a second. He looked back at Shane who still had his arms crossed over his face, elbows up in the air.

“Can I tell?” he asked Shane. “So we know.”

“It’s hockey.” Shane huffed out in defeat “And I have a really important thing coming up in June.”

“Hockey is... a contact sport.” she said with concern in her tone.

“He is really good.” Ilya said “He is team captain so, very important.”

“Are you sure you wouldn’t be able to put the contact sports on hold for a little bit?” his technician insisted.

Shane finally looked up. The way she had said it just sounded so condescending. Almost like she was infantilizing him and trivializing how important it was for him.

“I don’t think you understand how important it is.” His words sounded bitter. “And it’s a lot more important than... whatever this is.”

“You would have to be careful.” she said “You’ll have to remember you might be due around the end of March, maybe early to mid April. You can’t risk going into labor on your own. You’ll need a C-section to ensure a safe delivery.”

“So he can play.” Ilya said, almost like he was siding with Shane in an argument. “Until end of March. He plays with me, I can watch.”

“That’s fine. But he won’t be able to play for some time after the delivery. He needs time to recover from the incision.”

“What?” Shane asked breathily. “So I’m just going to get benched because of this?”

Ilya looked at Shane and then frantically looked back at their technician. “How long?”

The tension in the room felt so heavy. It felt like they were waiting for such an important announcement.

“About a month. If you have the C-section in late March, that means you could play as early as the beginning of May. If you schedule it for some time in April, you’re probably looking at mid to late May at most.”

Shane shook his head in small frantic movements.

“Okay.” Ilya said “And he can play in June?”

“I’ll probably play like shit after not playing for so long.” Shane crossed his arms over his head even tighter.

“No-” Ilya said immediately so he could stop Shane from spiraling. “You are good. You will not play like shit.”

Shane sat up and shook his head frantically.

Because this meant every single fear he had was still coming true. Not playing well enough was just as bad as not making it to the draft.

And there was absolutely no way he could hide any of this from both his family and his medical records.

He felt like he was barely breathing.

“Okay. Hey-” Ilya leaned a little so he could talk to Shane at eye level. “I think we go now, yes? Home.”

Shane kept staring straight ahead and shook his head when he turned to look at Ilya. The look Shane gave him absolutely broke his heart.

Ilya could have put his hand on Shane’s back. Or he could have hugged him the way he had hugged him in the locker room before. He could have taken Shane’s hands and rubbed his knuckles in that way that always seemed to make Shane calm down.

But he couldn’t do any of that there. Because that wasn’t what Shane wanted.

“We drive home now. Then we plan more alone, okay?” Ilya said instead.

And he said it in a way that was supposed to be just as gentle as any kind of touch he had in mind.

Shane got off the bed so he could leave the room. Ilya followed, quickly grabbing their jackets from the coat hanger.

“Thank you.” Ilya said. “One minute. Then I come back.”

He made sure Shane was fine before leaving him in the waiting room. There were chairs for Shane to sit on and leave their jackets on.

Ilya went back inside after reassuring Shane that he would be back soon. There were still things he needed to get from there. Their technician sat on a small circle-shaped chair and got up as soon as he walked in.

“Here’s your brochure. It has a lot of things about what you can expect.” She said slowly. “I put your picture in the envelope too. If you decide you want to know the gender, you can check the folded note inside.”

She talked slowly enough and he could actually follow this time, even though she technically did give him a lot of instructions. He took everything from her carefully, like he might accidentally drop the things that were being handed to him.

Shane had woken him up so early and he didn’t even get to eat. He could only run on stress for so long.

“You’re doing great, by the way” Ilya heard her say.

He looked up from the things he was holding.

The way she talked to him took Ilya by surprise. He didn't know how to respond. He hadn't heard someone say such encouraging words in such a long time.

He was used to hearing things like "Great shot, Rozanov." and he usually defaulted to just saying he was the best, which got a laugh out of people in response.

He got praised over how well he played. But never like this. Never this gently. Never in a way where he felt like he was expected to reply sincerely, without a cocky mask of forced confidence.

"It's really rare to see someone your age show up for every little thing like this. You seem like you're dealing with a lot." She exhaled. "But you're doing a great job."

Ilya felt like he was shrinking in front of her. He looked away because his mouth suddenly felt dry. He pursed his lips before his mouth finally moved again.

"Thank you." he said.

"I just thought you needed to hear it." she told him. "You can feel free to call us if you have more questions."

"Okay." Ilya said quietly. "I will call. Thank you."

The way he talked to her almost broke her heart. She had seen a lot of things in her line of work. And she knew how to detach from her feelings. But she sincerely hoped they would be okay.

"You can take this paper to the counter to process your payment." She said as she carefully placed another sheet of paper on top of the things Ilya was already holding.

His heart suddenly dropped.

"How much?" he asked and his throat felt dry when he said those words.

Because whatever amount that was, it was going to be more than he could afford.

His life was set up in a way where almost everything was covered for him. His athletic insurance covered all his medical expenses. His scholarship covered his tuition and his gear. Even his public transit pass.

He really only spent money on little things here and there.

"They'll let you know at the counter." she told him. "There are multiple ways you can pay and our funding already covers some of the fee for you. Our staff can help you figure something out if it's too much for you right now."

And suddenly the idea of going to the counter filled him with dread. He hadn't even considered the possibility of not being able to afford all the things they had been asking for.

He wondered if he had to pay extra because he had asked for the picture and the brochures.

It felt like the most horrible timing.

"Okay" Ilya said dryly, like his mind was already elsewhere. "Thank you. Enjoy your day."

"You too." she said warmly behind him but Ilya was already walking out. "Get some rest this weekend."

Chapter End Notes

The foreshadowing was there from the first chapter so I think we all knew. 🙄

This is the longest chapter and I can't believe I'm posting almost 5k words. I did my best to fix any typos and punctuation mistakes when proofreading. I just really needed someone to be nice to Ilya too after all of this. 💚

Chapter 28: Open

Chapter Notes

Thank you all for the support!  I hope you all like where this story is going.

Please feel free to let me know if you see any typos!

“Hey-” Ilya said gently as he crouched down in front of the waiting room chair that Shane was sitting on.
“Hey.”

Shane looked back at him blankly. He felt so tired and he wished they could just go home. He didn’t want to be around other people. Especially not people he didn’t really know.

Ilya saw his tear eyed expression and it absolutely broke his heart. He had never seen Shane look so anxious before. He looked like he might start shivering any second. Almost like a wounded animal that was afraid of the whole world.

“We go soon, okay?” Ilya said reassuringly with a little nod. “Home.”

Shane nodded a little, his hands nervously resting in his lap. He started noticing how cold his hands felt as they brushed against each other.

They had heating at Planned Parenthood but he still felt so cold.

It pained Ilya so much to see him like that. Shane still had his plain mask on and his breaths sounded so shallow when Ilya heard him breathe against it.

“Do you want to hug?” Ilya asked him quietly. “I think she will not tell, hm?”

Shane shook his head slowly without saying anything.

Because he didn’t care if Shannon liked girls or if she felt comfortable enough to wear pins that told everyone she loved her girlfriend. It didn’t change anything.

They couldn’t do that in front of others because that would be crossing a line. Because that wasn’t something they were supposed to do. And he felt like anyone else could walk in and see them.

“Not here.” Shane finally said and his voice was barely above a whisper.

“Okay.” Ilya nodded back quickly. “Not here.”

He held on to it like it was a small promise they had just made. Because deep down, Ilya felt like he needed it too.

And at that point he knew he couldn’t ask Shane if he could at least take his hand so they could hold hands like they had in the car.

He couldn’t even ask if it was okay to run his thumbs over Shane’s eyes and wipe them just enough to make sure Shane could at least see well.

“Not here.” Ilya repeated more reassuringly. “Later, okay?”

Shane ran the back of his hoodie sleeve across his eyes as he nodded back to Ilya in response.

Because Shane had been telling himself those exact same words. Not there. Later. He could not afford to lose his composure. He would process what had just happened later.

They would figure it out later.

He had absolutely no idea what to do but he was desperately clinging to the idea that they would somehow figure it out later.

Ilya cleared his throat a little like that might somehow get rid of the guilt he felt.

“We have to pay also.” he told Shane quietly like he was confessing to something. “Before we go.”

Ilya couldn’t describe or pinpoint how he felt but bringing it up to Shane felt horrible.

Because they weren’t just going out to get a few things from the dollar store this time. They had to cover the expenses for a medical exam that Shane wanted to take anonymously.

It killed him to think about how much easier it would have been if this had happened just a few months later. He would have had his signing bonus. He would have had his own money.

And he would have had his own car. He would have had his own place where Shane could stay and recover from the shock in private for as long as he wanted.

Sometimes it felt like a dream that he was just using to cope with the life he had at home. But having that little mental countdown kept him sane through his worst days. He had to keep telling himself it was really going to happen.

And yet realizing he basically had nothing in the real world reminded him that all of those things were just hopes he had for the future. Hopes that might be taken away. Not a reality he actually existed in.

For the first time in years, Ilya actually felt small in the world again. He felt like he was too young for what he was dealing with.

“Do you have cash still?” he asked Shane.

And it felt awful to ask Shane for money. Especially in that moment. Especially for something like the medical appointment he had taken him to.

He wished he would have been able to at least pay for this too. He felt like it was the least he could have done.

“Uh, yeah.” Shane said absent-mindedly as he sniffled a little. “How much do you need?”

And it weighed down on Ilya because the way Shane said that just seemed so casual. And he didn’t even know how to reply yet.

“I don’t know.” Ilya said with an exhale. “I think Shannon tells us.”

“Okay.” Shane said flatly.

Ilya looked around to see if she was still at the counter.

Shane thought about how he didn’t want to be left all alone again. But at the same time, he didn’t want to talk to any of the people that worked at Planned Parenthood anymore. He wanted to leave.

He wanted them to leave together so they could be alone again. Because he wanted to actually talk without having to hold so many things back.

“Let’s just go pay and leave.” Shane said and Ilya could have sworn he caught a glimpse of him shivering for a brief second before he started getting up.

Ilya watched Shane get up and start putting his jacket on. He watched Shane hold it together like he might lose himself any second.

They walked up to the counter together with Ilya leading the way and looking back at Shane to make sure he was right behind him.

“All done with the ultrasound?” Shannon asked them cheerfully.

She had seen them sit by the water cooler and take their time and she knew that Shane needed it. But she also had her way of trying to bring a sense of normalcy into most conversations.

“Yes.” Ilya said as he put the stack of things he was holding down on the counter. “How much money should we give to you?”

She took the paper and briefly glanced at all the other materials Ilya had been holding. He wondered what she might be thinking.

Shane watched her pause as she looked over the paper and wondered if she was judging him. He knew the report probably said more than he wanted her to know.

He looked away because the way she was holding the paper started to make him feel anxious. She could have been anyone.

“Would you like to keep your appointment anonymous?” she finally asked. “We won’t collect any personal information if you do.”

“Uh. Yeah.” Shane said absent-mindedly without really looking at her.

She nodded at him but Shane couldn’t see it.

“Okay, I just need to sign your form too” Shannon continued.

Ilya glanced to his side to check on Shane. He could tell he wasn’t doing that well just from the tone of his voice, but he felt like looking his way would somehow comfort Shane.

“The fee is going to be \$185.” she finally said and Ilya felt like she had just smacked him across the face.

He turned back to make sure he had heard that correctly. It sounded like so much money to him. So much money for something that barely lasted fifteen minutes.

He was probably right about them being charged more because he had asked to have the picture and the reading materials.

“Okay.” Shane said flatly like he wasn’t really thinking about it. “Wait.”

Ilya watched as Shane reached into his inner jacket pocket to get the cash he had grabbed from his drawer. He took out a few folded bills, and quickly separated \$200 so he could put the bills down on the counter.

Except he was standing further away from where she was actually sitting and the angle made it impossible for her to reach the money. Ilya smiled awkwardly and pushed the two hundred dollar bills towards Shannon.

“Should we pay for photos too?” Ilya asked her as he watched her handle the cash and start taking out change for them.

“Oh, you got pictures too?” she asked in an upbeat way like she was almost surprised to hear it.

“A, yes.” Ilya said with a nervous laugh, like he somehow needed to explain himself “Just one, I think. How much should we pay?”

“The print outs are free of charge.” she said as she put their change down “What made you decide to get one?”

She asked because she knew that not a lot of people wanted ultrasound photos from their location. And as much as she wanted to believe that Ilya was a nice person that genuinely cared, she wanted to make sure he wasn’t going to use it to guilt and manipulate Shane.

She watched as Ilya picked up their change and handed it back to Shane. His hand lingered as he put the money down in Shane’s hand and Shane didn’t try to pull away this time.

Because Shane needed it too. It was the closest they could get to holding hands again without it crossing a line they had both set in their own heads.

“Ah, I don’t know. Just... it’s interesting.” Ilya said awkwardly as he turned back because he wasn’t sure how to put his thoughts into words. “I want to see again later.”

It seemed sincere enough, but she still decided to make sure.

“Alone, right?” she asked. “You should probably be careful with it. Especially if it’s too much for your friend.”

Shane kept looking away because he knew she was talking about him. And it almost annoyed him because he didn’t even know what it looked like or what they were talking about.

“I know. I will only show his doctor maybe.” Ilya said reassuringly. “If they ask me.”

Shane wondered if it looked gross.

They talked about it like it was some kind of really gnarly x-ray that might freak him out if he actually saw it.

“Alright, well-” Shannon said “here’s your report back.”

Ilya took it and started sorting his little stack of papers right on the counter. Somewhere between the stress and the lack of proper sleep his movements had started to feel clumsier than ever.

He wanted to make sure he wouldn’t drop anything. Everything they had handed to him seemed important.

“If you have any questions or just need advice you can always reach out to us free of charge.” she told them. “There’s an extension number at the back of your brochure, but you can also call the same number you used.”

“Okay.” Ilya nodded. “Thank you.”

She turned to Shane like it was her final chance to try to get to him.

“I know it can feel like a lot to ask some things out loud but you can always send us an email too.” she said more gently. “You don’t have to use your real email address.”

Shane had been standing there waiting for Ilya to finish so they could finally go home. He didn’t feel ready to talk to her again.

“Okay.” he said quietly.

Ilya turned to look at him for a second and then turned back. He felt like it was up to him to wrap it up so he could take Shane home.

“Thank you.” he nodded to Shannon again. “You are really nice with him. And me also. Have a good day.”

He felt like he would remember her name. He liked her name. It seemed like a joke at first but he actually found it fitting after all of it.

She was nice. She was nice in the same way Shane was nice.

“Of course” she said with a small smile. “Enjoy your day.”

She smiled in the same way that Ilya had seen Shane smile so many times before. He wished he could see him smile again soon.

“Yes. You too.” Ilya nodded back as he carefully took their things from the counter.

He turned to Shane with an exhale to signal that it was time for them to leave. Ilya started walking slowly, giving Shane time to follow him.

They walked to the elevator quietly with Ilya leading the way.

Shane felt like he wasn’t actually there in that moment. It felt like all those times when they had played an important Junior Hockey game and he had to block out all his thoughts just so he could have a clear objective in mind.

And in that moment, the objective was making it to the elevator.

He entered carefully and yet quickly enough to make sure he wouldn't somehow get left behind if the elevator decided to move on its own.

“So-” Ilya started mindfully as the elevator doors closed, almost like he wanted Shane to tell him what he was expected to do next.

“Yeah.” Shane said quietly. “Maybe here.”

Ilya pulled him in from the side cautiously like Shane might decide to shove him off this time too. But Shane didn’t push him off. He slumped against Ilya lifelessly like he had actually given up on everything.

“Fuck.” Shane breathed out over Ilya’s shoulder. “What the fuck do we do now?”

Ilya held him even closer because he felt like he was so dangerously close to somehow accidentally ruining everything.

He felt so on edge throughout the entire morning and the last thing he wanted was for them to somehow end up arguing again.

“We will see.” Ilya chose his answer carefully.

He had so much to say to Shane beyond just a simple answer. He wanted to tell Shane he loved him and he wasn’t going anywhere. That he loved him so much he would literally do anything to make sure things would be okay.

But at the same time he couldn’t. Because he felt like saying it and crossing that line would just make things so much worse.

He wished there would be a way to say all those things without actually saying them.

So he tried to adjust Shane a little so Shane could at least feel a little more comfortable as he embraced him. He tried to be so gentle with it. Feeling Shane move against him so lifelessly weighed down on his entire heart.

He could have promised Shane they would do something nice later. But he wasn’t sure if there was anything he could even do to cheer Shane up at that point.

Ilya squeezed Shane in carefully, like he might somehow hurt him by hugging him too hard. He pulled back just enough to kiss Shane’s forehead before pulling him in even closer.

It could have been the stress but in that moment he felt like he loved Shane so much it might actually kill him.

“We should uh” Shane started as he pulled away “We should go home.”

He took a deep breath and finally mustered the courage to hit the elevator button for the first floor.

Ilya watched the floor numbers go down on the screen like it was a countdown.

They walked in silence until they finally made it back to the parking lot. Ilya still couldn’t believe they were driving one of Yuna’s cars. Approaching it just to get in the driver seat again felt so wrong to him.

She was going to hate him so much.

They got in the car and everything felt so much more quiet all of a sudden. Ilya wondered if he should say something or wait for Shane to start talking first.

Shane put his seatbelt on and waited a little. He finally took his plain surgical mask off and exhaled in frustration.

“There’s no way my mom won’t find out about this now.” Shane said bitterly “I can’t just disappear and have surgery behind her back in a few months.”

He wanted to be mad at Ilya because part of him still believed that this was Ilya’s fault. But Ilya was also the one that stood by his side through all of it. Ilya was the one that wanted to hold him. And Ilya was the only person he could ever talk to about this.

“Sorry.” Ilya exhaled apologetically. “Maybe I tell her. Then she is angry at me and not you.”

Shane shook his head.

“I don’t want her to know it was you” Shane said inattentively. “That’s too weird.”

Ilya wasn’t sure how to feel about that. Part of him wanted to rationalize why Shane would make that decision. It could have been because Shane wanted to protect him, but Shane was never the one that

made sacrifices.

It was always Ilya that put himself on the line for Shane.

“Okay.” Ilya said, trying to stay as casual as he could. “But you are also really bad liar. So maybe I still talk with her?”

Maybe Shane thought it was just embarrassing to be associated with him in that way. A lot of people wanted nothing to do with him for many different reasons.

“Maybe.” Shane said quietly. “Just... don’t tell her you had anything to do with it.”

Shane thought about how Ilya was really good at handling conversations with his mother. He had handled so many conversations with Yuna for Shane before. He could almost imagine Ilya handling this conversation too.

“And we do not tell her we steal her car.” Ilya said, almost like he was warning Shane. “Then she still kills me. So we do not talk about car.”

“Okay. Whatever.” Shane said, like that was the last thing on his mind in that moment.

Ilya wondered if he was doing something wrong. He exhaled very audibly, like he had intentionally taken a very deep breath. There was a hint of an “oof” to the way he exhaled.

Shane had never heard anyone sound like that while nervous. It was probably something that was more specific to Ilya’s native language.

“Okay. I will plan with you.” Ilya said. “But maybe we continue home, yes?”

Because he had noticed how Shane looked completely stiff in the passenger seat. He wanted Shane to be somewhere where he could feel more comfortable too.

And he had already promised Shane he would hug him later.

Ilya started the engine and the car immediately came to life. The heating turned on and the warmer air started making its way towards Shane again.

Shane felt like he still wanted to say something. He wanted to say so many things. But at the same time, he just felt so numb after the entire visit.

“Can we just-” Shane started but he felt like he couldn’t figure out how to phrase it.

He didn’t know how to phrase the enormity of what he wanted to ask for.

Ilya eased his foot on the brake and turned towards Shane with one hand on the steering wheel. He didn’t want to leave the parking lot if Shane wasn’t done talking.

“Can we just start saying what we really think?” Shane said.

“Okay. Yes.” Ilya said lightly. “Now I think we should go home. Because you want to be home, no?”

He wasn’t wrong about Shane wanting to go home.

Shane chose to keep ignoring the way Ilya kept saying home to refer to them going back to his house together. Because he figured Ilya was probably completely unaware of what his word choice implied.

Because Ilya was saying that like he lived there too. Like he wasn't going to leave anytime soon even though that was far from the truth.

"And what about you?" Shane asked. "Aside from what I want. What do you want to do right now?"

"I want to plan with you." Ilya told him like everything could just be fine and normal for a second.

"Home. Where we are alone. If you want we can hug again too."

Shane shifted in his seat a little. Because Ilya didn't really answer the way Shane needed him to but he still called it home again.

Part of him was just dying to be sure about what the future held for them. That answer wasn't enough but being at least a little honest was a start.

"And I want to eat. Usually I eat bars from promo box" Ilya continued casually. "But now my bag is in your house."

And there it was. Ilya was calling it Shane's house again. It reminded Shane that Ilya would eventually leave. And the thought of Ilya leaving scared him more than ever.

"Why don't you just eat the other wrap here?" Shane asked him quietly in a way that was almost accusatory. "Since you're hungry right now."

"Because I don't want to make crumbs in car." Ilya said honestly with an exhale. "Not very polite to your mother. To steal car and also make crumbs."

The way Ilya had said that made Shane realize that maybe there was a way he could word what he wanted to say too.

He turned to Ilya but he couldn't really look at him just yet.

"Can we just... be open and honest with each other? Kind of like what you just said about the crumbs?" Shane asked carefully.

Ilya took a second to process what Shane might be saying. He wondered if it meant he could actually tell Shane about things he was never supposed to say out loud.

He wondered where the line he wasn't allowed to cross would stand if that was the case.

"I feel like sometimes you talk like you know what you're doing." Shane told him "But then you don't actually know what we're doing. And I don't either. And I-"

Ilya listened to him and it almost felt like an accusation. He wondered if Shane had only said that because none of Ilya's efforts were actually good enough.

But at the same time, Shane wasn't wrong about the fact that Ilya didn't know what they were doing. At least not in that moment.

But it wasn't like Ilya didn't want to figure out what to do and actually do it right.

He could have tried to tell Shane he just wanted to help. And he could have told him that he really just tried his best because he wanted to be there for him.

He usually held back when it came to defending himself because he absolutely wasn't allowed to do that at home. And he didn't want them to fight again.

So Ilya decided to just listen and let Shane finish.

“And I’m just-” Shane tried again but he couldn’t bring himself to continue just yet.

Shane looked around like he was doing his best to just hold it together in the parking lot. Like maybe if he looked away or tried to watch his breathing he wouldn’t actually burst into tears right there in the passenger seat.

His breath caught but he inhaled just enough to be able to say it.

“I’m... really fucking scared right now, okay?” he almost sounded frustrated when he finally said it.

He turned to Ilya like he couldn’t just sit there and wait for a response. He looked at him like he desperately just needed him to say something back.

“I know.” Ilya said simply “Me too.”

Shane tried to find reassurance in the fact that they were both on the same page in some way. But at the same time he knew that every possible solution the two of them could have come up with wasn’t going to cut it.

“Fuck...” Shane exhaled in defeat.

His shoulders slumped like he was actually giving up. He took a second to breathe with the realization that they were truly fucked and there was no way things would go well in the end.

“Let’s just go.” Shane finally breathed out. “I don’t want to be here anymore.”

Ilya wondered if he had somehow disappointed Shane with his response. He watched as Shane turned to look out the window like he was just waiting for Ilya to drive him home again.

“Can you hold these things?” Ilya asked him carefully as he held out the stack of papers he had been keeping in his lap.

Shane glanced at what Ilya was holding out very briefly, like not looking at it for too long would keep him from accidentally reading the words.

“Only 15 minutes.” Ilya reassured him “Then you give back to me.”

Shane took the stack from him silently and looked away again. Ilya decided it was probably best if he didn’t say anything until they made it back.

Shane felt too zoned out to even talk to him.

Ilya waited for Shane to ask if he could hold his hand again as he drove, but the question never came.

“Are you cold?” Ilya finally asked him.

It broke the sound of cars moving through the road around them and Ilya almost regretted trying to go through with it.

“No.” Shane answered in the same way he was used to brushing that question off from his mother.

He almost sounded annoyed. Ilya knew he should have been used to Shane pushing him away or trying to shut down his efforts to be closer. And he felt like he should have probably stopped, but something told him he would regret it forever if he didn’t try.

“My hand is cold.” he finally told Shane “And you say you are warm so”

He moved his hand up and it took Shane a while to register the fact that Ilya was trying to hold out his hand as he drove. Ilya waited, fully expecting Shane to just get frustrated or start accusing him of just wanting to touch him.

He just hoped they wouldn't end up arguing about it.

When Shane finally took his hand, it felt completely different from their drive earlier that morning. His hand felt just as cold, if not colder than Ilya's own hand. Ilya adjusted his grip a little but Shane felt completely lifeless against him.

Ilya wanted to tell him that it actually meant a lot to him at times. That it was just really nice to be close to each other sometimes. That he enjoyed not being completely starved of any form of comforting physical touch.

That he hoped it wasn't too much to ask for it.

Shane held the stack of papers with his other hand. Ilya had flipped his report so Shane wouldn't have to look at it but that didn't stop Shane from noticing the envelope he was holding on top of it.

It felt like Ilya somehow knew so much more. Shane felt like they had absolutely no idea what they were doing, but Ilya still somehow knew more.

“Did it look gross?” Shane finally asked.

“What?” Ilya asked, unsure what Shane was really asking.

“When you... got to see inside of me.” Shane continued quietly. “Was it... weird? Did it look gnarly or something?”

Ilya didn't know what gnarly meant but he still needed a second to choose his words carefully. He couldn't afford to have Shane opening the envelope in the car and actually spiraling after he had worked so hard to defuse any potential breakdown.

“No.” Ilya finally said. “I don't think it's weird. Just... maybe you should not open this here.”

Shane wanted to ask why. But he wasn't sure if he wanted Ilya to explain what he meant.

“What's on your mind right now?” Shane asked instead, almost like he just wanted to test if Ilya was on board with being open with each other.

Because that would mean that the answer Ilya had given him was the truth. And it would mean they could just be honest with each other.

Ilya wondered what he was actually allowed to say.

“I think we should not yell later. This is nicer, no?” he said as he adjusted his hold on Shane's hand.

He could have joked about how he didn't want them to scare their child before they even got the chance to see the world for the first time. Except he knew that it wasn't a joke and the possibility of everything going to shit for all three of them was actually very real.

He also wondered if their child would look like Shane. And he wondered if he would ever get to meet their child beyond just seeing a grainy black and white picture. He wondered what it would be like to see those same features he adored so much on someone so small.

But that was still something he had to keep to himself. Because he knew that it didn't matter as much as Shane's priorities mattered. Shane wanted to play. And Shane already had some vague plan that Ilya knew he would have to follow.

"Not food?" Shane finally asked, almost like the smallest shred of his normal self was somehow poking through the cracks.

"Yes, also food." Ilya said sarcastically.

Shane smiled for a fraction of a second but Ilya never got to see it.

Chapter 29: Honest

Chapter Notes

I'm back! I was writing what I had in mind for this chapter and I just realized I was 7k+ words in. So I decided to post this part now and include the rest in a separate chapter.

It's also hitting me that I absolutely need to update the description of this story because so much more has happened since I posted Day 1. 😭

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

Shane felt gross when he finally sat down on his living room couch. He wondered if his skin was sticky from the ultrasound gel. He realized he never actually felt his skin with his own hand after he used the tissues to wipe the gel off.

Maybe he really was sticky.

He could have lifted his shirt up and checked then and there. But he didn't feel like checking just yet. The idea of trying to feel his stomach suddenly made him nervous.

What if he felt something? What if it felt weird?

"Do you want to sit with me in kitchen?" he heard Ilya ask him from accross the open living room. "I want to eat."

Ilya asked because he knew that Shane didn't want to be left all alone. But he also knew that it wouldn't be polite to just bring food to the living room.

"I uh-" Shane felt like he was talking before he had formed an actual answer. "You can just eat here."

Ilya glanced at the coffee table Shane's family kept in front of the couch. It still felt disrespectful to eat on the spotless unscratched surface even if he had Shane's permission.

He decided to at least get a tray.

"Okay." Ilya said as he moved closer so he could place the stack of papers from Planned Parenthood down on the coffee table. "I will come back."

It didn't take Ilya long to get a tray from the kitchen. By that point he was already getting used to where everything belonged in Shane's kitchen.

"Okay. I am here." Ilya said as he put the plain gray tray down on the coffee table. "I have drink for you too."

Shane didn't say anything. He watched as Ilya started digging into his food on the living room coffee table and he felt like the little time they had was slowly running out.

He thought he would feel more comfortable if they sat on the couch but he realized he still felt really stiff.

They were supposed to talk. He wasn't sure if he should wait for Ilya to finish eating. And Ilya always ate so quickly which meant that Shane probably couldn't stay quiet for too long.

"I've had surgery before." Shane finally said nervously before realizing how dry his lips felt.

Ilya looked up at him from his food, almost like he was letting him know that he was listening and Shane could continue.

It actually sparked his curiosity too. Shane had never mentioned it before. He watched Shane patiently and gave him room to continue.

"Before we met. I uh- dislocated my shoulder twice in seventh grade." Shane continued because he felt like he had to justify himself. "I had to have surgery the second time."

Ilya opened his drink carefully, making sure it wouldn't accidentally fizz out and spill all over the furniture.

In his own way, Ilya thought it felt a little nice to know little things about Shane's childhood. He was getting to hear about something Shane rarely told anyone.

"Your left one, yes?" he asked Shane once he felt like his mouth wasn't too full to talk.

Shane looked up at him like Ilya had just seen right into his soul. He wanted to ask Ilya how he knew. He wondered if Planned Parenthood somehow managed to identify him and ended up showing his medical records to Ilya.

"Here?" Ilya said as he put his food down on his plate and pointed to the back of his own shoulder. "Where you have your... line?"

Right. The scarring.

"Uh- yeah." Shane nodded a little as he replied.

He reminded himself to just breathe evenly. But the fact that his technician had suggested a C-section and told him he would need time to recover from the incision still reminded him of the only other time he had to recover from surgery.

He kept thinking about how much recovering from that surgery had set him back.

He spent the entire summer after seventh grade off the ice. And even the few months after that, he had been only cleared to do no-contact drills.

Going through that again sounded like hell.

"Do you want?" he heard Ilya say next to him and it snapped him out of his thoughts.

Shane looked up and saw Ilya holding up an unopened can of ginger ale. He almost felt dazed looking at it.

"Sure." Shane said meekly.

He felt like Ilya was definitely serving him ungodly amounts of soda over their weekend together but his lips felt so dry that he couldn't turn down the drink.

Ilya opened Shane's green can and placed it down on a coaster on the coffee table.

They had already agreed to plan it out together. But he still felt like he was about to enter a dangerous territory that could make Shane spiral in front of him again.

“So you think you can do this?” Ilya asked him carefully “Have surgery now in spring?”

It felt absolutely uncanny to reduce the fact that Shane would have their child to just getting surgery.

It sounded wrong from the second it left his lips. Almost like a grammar mistake that was already out in the open before he could correct himself.

But if that was the word Shane felt comfortable using then Ilya felt like his safest bet was to just use the same word.

“Maybe.” Shane said quietly. Just that single word felt heavy with the weight of everything it entailed.

Shane felt like his mouth just stayed dry no matter how many times he had tried to lick his lips.

He reached to the coffee table and took his drink. He felt like he might start choking on his words if he tried to use full sentences.

Ilya kept eating like nothing was wrong despite how nervous he felt about the conversation too.

“When my shoulder was fucked up...” Shane started hesitantly “I had to just sit around and do nothing for months. And then I played like shit.”

Saying it felt heavy in his throat. With everything that had been happening lately he felt like he was probably cursing himself by saying his fears out loud.

Every single fear he had voiced to Ilya over the past four days had somehow ended up materializing itself into a living nightmare.

“I can come to your house.” Ilya said casually without really looking at Shane, like he was simply stating a fact. “We can... watch Montreal again, if you like.”

He felt like he had said it non-chalantly enough despite how heavy every single word felt. It was such a simple suggestion and yet he knew that it might not even be a possibility. It wasn’t really up to him.

“I can help you with other things home too.” Ilya continued hoping he was implying what he meant clearly enough without scaring Shane. “If you want.”

Sitting around and watching replays of old hockey games was definitely not something they could do with the responsibilities of having a newborn flooding the entire household.

But at that point he already knew he could only say things Shane found comfort in. He could only let Shane imagine outcomes that felt safe.

“Sure.” Shane finally answered.

“April I can come here. Then May I will play with you in ice building.” Ilya continued while picking up the rest of the cold wrap that was left on his plate.

It looked like he could easily eat the rest in a single bite. But he stopped when he realized he almost missed an important part of the timeline ahead of them.

“Draft is late June, no?” he added, not really expecting an answer. “So in June there is more time too.”

He skipped March because he knew he probably wouldn't be allowed in the hospital.

He really wanted to be around as much as he could but he knew it wasn't really up to him. He didn't even know if he would even be allowed at Shane's house after his family found out.

He wondered if he would still be allowed to see Shane so Shane wouldn't have to recover all by himself again.

He wondered if he would ever be allowed to see their child.

"I think you will play good." Ilya said instead "Surgery is not for bones this time."

Ilya ate the last of his food like it was a little reward. A little reward for completely mapping out how Shane could have the one thing that truly mattered to him.

A little reward for completely ignoring everything that was on his mind and only focusing on the problem that mattered to someone else. Exactly the way his family had raised him.

"Yeah." Shane exhaled with an absent nod. "Maybe you're right."

Shane felt the heaviness they had previously left behind them creep out of the back of his mind. They had already had the same conversation multiple times. But it felt important to bring it up again.

"And then you'll get your money in June too right? So you'll just... leave Ottawa?" Shane asked and his tone betrayed the fact that he knew he was probably crossing a line.

Ilya wanted to push back because he felt like it was the last thing Shane should be thinking about.

If they were really going to jump beyond making sure Shane could just be happy and make it to the draft there were certainly other things that Shane was absolutely skipping over in that moment.

"Shane-" Ilya said while leaning forward like that would somehow help him find the words to approach the subject more carefully.

Ilya had no idea how to actually bring it up without getting a horrible reaction out of Shane. But he wanted to know what Shane's plan was too.

"Look, just-" Shane exhaled breathily like it would somehow help him stay calm. "We said we would be open and honest with each other, right?"

And Ilya really wanted to actually have the space to say everything that was on his mind. Except Shane had a track record of absolutely exploding on him.

Just in the past 24 hours Shane had already slammed him back against the door because Ilya dared to touch his hand in the back of their uber. And earlier that morning, Shane absolutely lost it when Ilya even suggested the possibility of them having a child together.

Ilya wasn't mad about it. He just didn't want things to go that way anymore.

"And we said we will not yell, no?" Ilya said, doing his absolute best to avoid sounding like he was mocking Shane.

"Yeah." Shane exhaled and his nods sped up as he looked back up at Ilya again "Let's just... actually say what we think, okay?"

Ilya felt like he needed a second to gather his thoughts.

He didn't know where the line stood anymore. But he knew he had to somehow cross it.

He looked around and his eyes landed on the plate that he had left on the coffee table. All that was left on it were small loose pieces of the wrap contents and the sauce-stained aluminum foil it had been packaged in before.

He couldn't believe how comfortable he had gotten at Shane's house. He would never hear the end of it if he dared to eat in his own living room and just left food out afterwards.

"Okay. Wait." Ilya said as he took the opportunity to conveniently pause their conversation. "I need to throw this. I don't want ants in your house."

Shane felt like Ilya was blatantly looking for any excuse to abandon him and get out of the conversation. The same conversation about how Ilya absolutely had every intention of leaving him behind.

"What?" Shane huffed out in panic and it almost sounded like an accusation. "What does that even mean?"

"Bugs, Shane!" Ilya exclaimed like he was just stating an obvious fact. He couldn't afford to look even a little glad that he had something he could do while he gathered his thoughts. "You leave food then bugs come."

And with that, he was already on his feet and gathering everything back on the tray. Shane watched as Ilya carefully held the aluminum foil down against the plate so it wouldn't fall off and make a mess while he moved the plate.

"I don't have bugs in my house?" Shane argued back while doing his best to avoid yelling despite the fact he was completely taken aback.

"Hm yes, no bugs because we throw crumbs from plate quickly last night." Ilya replied sarcastically while keeping his eyebrows raised. "We leave this now and bugs will see food and come to your house."

Shane felt like Ilya was making absolutely zero sense. He looked at Ilya with absolute disbelief.

Ilya was not longer looking at Shane. He kept his eyes on the tray so he could handle it as carefully as he could. He definitely didn't get to sleep nearly as much as he needed to. It wasn't completely obvious but something still felt off about the way his hands moved when he held the tray.

He absolutely couldn't afford to drop it on the furniture.

"Okay. Whatever." Shane finally said in defeat.

Ilya turned to him like he had forgotten something important.

"Do you want something from kitchen?" he asked Shane more gently. "There is also fruit I think."

"No." Shane answered flatly.

He almost sounded upset. But the way Ilya had bothered to ask made him feel a certain way that he couldn't fully grasp.

Ilya left and Shane's eyes somehow landed on the stack of papers on the coffee table this time. Part of him wondered what his report said. He wondered if his medical history would be permanently stained in the same way.

He told himself he could always pretend there had been some kind of mistake. He could claim he had some other surgery. Maybe he had his appendix removed. Maybe his doctor just made a mistake when adding it to his records.

Maybe he could eventually bribe his doctors into silence once he had his own money too.

But then there was his mother. And they would have to tell her long before any of what he was starting to imagine could even be a possibility.

Shane wanted to groan at the thought. He wondered if what he was thinking about was similar to how Ilya felt about his own family. Ilya was constantly counting down to the day he could finally have his own money too.

The thought felt wrong as soon as it fully formed in his head. Because he knew that Ilya's family was much worse than his in so many ways. He hoped Ilya would never find out he even tried to make the comparison in his head.

"Can you bring some water?" Shane called out like changing the subject would somehow erase the thought from his head.

"Okay." he heard Ilya say back.

Ilya only took a couple of minutes to himself. It was all he needed to just take a step back and breathe for a second and continue treading lightly so he wouldn't somehow ruin everything. He couldn't afford to say too much and scare Shane away.

He came back with two glasses of water and neatly placed them down on the colorful coasters that the Hollanders used.

He chose to sit closer to Shane. It would probably be easier to talk if he sat closer. No one was around anyway.

"You're not going to tell your dad, right?" Shane asked.

The question hit Ilya like a splash of cold water and he suddenly felt like he might be sitting too close to Shane. He felt himself recoiling back a little.

He hated it when Shane mentioned his father. There were things that Shane was never going to understand and this was always going to be one of them.

"You think I am stupid or what?" Ilya raised his eyebrows at Shane and quickly realized that his response came out sounding much harsher than he intended.

He really wanted to handle everything carefully. But doing so meant that he couldn't afford to think about his own family in that moment.

It wasn't just the fact that he knew his father would absolutely kill him if he found out. Ilya had always told himself that if he had children one day he would never want his father to meet them.

He didn't want to think about how that would play out. He wanted to focus on making sure he would somehow get to meet their child himself.

"No I will not tell him. Or my brother. Or anyone else." he told Shane a little more lightly.

"Okay." Shane nodded distantly. "Sorry. Just..."

Shane felt like he might have accidentally crossed a line and he suddenly felt nervous about everything.

Shane leaned towards the coffee table and carefully took his glass off the coaster. He drank small sips, carefull not to accidentally spill the water all over himself.

He decided to try again. He noticed that Ilya was looking into the distance like there were a billion unsaid things looming over them.

“I uh-” Shane started “I was just asking. I just wanted to know what you thought.”

Ilya paused his thoughts to look at Shane. He reminded himself that he needed to do his absolute best to avoid ruining the entire conversation.

“You want to know what I am thinking?” Ilya asked. “Right now?”

Because did Shane really want to know all of it? Did he want to know how much it absolutely devastated him to see Shane go through all of it?

Did Shane really want to know that Ilya actually felt so guilty it was threatening to start eating him alive?

Did he want to know how Ilya felt seeing their child on the screen? Did Shane need to know that as much as Ilya wanted to try his best they were probably fucked because there was no way it would work out as early as fucking April?

“Yeah.” Shane said.

Did Shane want to know that despite all of it Ilya was still desparately holding onto every single second he got to spend with Shane? That he absolutely dreaded trying to go home after the weekend was over?

Did Shane really want to know how Ilya was so hopelessly in love with him because he couldn’t imagine ever meeting anyone else that both understood his hobby so well and was as polite and gorgeous as Shane?

“We said we should be open and honest with each other, right?” Shane said again nervously.

Ilya shook his head a little because there was no way he could fully be honest. But he decided to try. He looked at Shane and decided to choose his words as carefully as possible.

“I like you, Shane” Ilya said sincerely “I think you do not believe me when I tell you. But I like you.”

Because he couldn’t just say he actually loved him. Because Ilya couldn’t just casually bring that to the table and he just had to learn to live with it for the time being.

“I say I like you” Ilya continued “and you always think I want to leave.”

Shane looked back at him like he wanted to say something. But Ilya felt like he had to continue.

“I want to leave from my family.” Ilya said with an exhale. “This is true. Because it is not nice to live with them, you know?”

He tilted his head little at the end of his rhetorical question like he wanted to let Shane know that he didn’t really need to answer.

Shane looked down because he already knew it was bad. He had known about it for a long time. And he almost felt guilty because he never knew how to handle the fact that it was a part of Ilya’s life.

He never even knew what to say about it.

“I know.” Shane said quietly. It almost sounded like an apology.

“But it is nice to stay with you, you know?” Ilya said a little more hopefully. “And just eat food. And just joke. And laugh. And spend time with you.”

Shane gave him a defeated look. Because part of him remembered that he missed it too.

“Maybe not so nice today, I know.” Ilya clarified. “But I like when we do nice things.”

Because he loved it when Shane finally laughed at his jokes and he would have done anything to see Shane laugh again. Because he had fallen for Shane long before any of this.

It didn’t matter if they were actually together as long as they got to have their little moments and Ilya could know that Shane enjoyed being around him too.

Shane could probably never comprehend how much their time together really meant to Ilya.

“When you go to hospital I will come with you. If they let me.” Ilya said as casually as he could. “We can do something... watch boring television in hospital room together.”

He shrugged and shook his head a little as he talked like that would somehow make the whole idea seem less stressful to Shane. Like it wasn’t really a big deal.

Ilya could almost picture it in his mind. He remembered how it used to physically hurt to laugh when he had bruised ribs. He hoped laughing wouldn’t be painful for Shane too.

“Yeah...” Shane started quietly. “You’re right.”

Ilya felt like it was going well. Shane was handling the conversation much better than he expected.

“And then maybe someone can just take it.” Shane continued absent-mindedly. “And then we can just move on.”

Ilya stopped to do a double take because he wasn’t sure what that meant.

“Take what? TV from hospital?” he asked while looking directly at Shane.

Shane felt like he had somehow trapped himself into saying words he didn’t want to use.

“No, I mean...” he tried “Like... the kid, I guess. So we just... you know.”

“Ah. Okay.” Ilya felt like he had to tread so lightly now that he was actually in this territory. “I mean I can take. If you want.”

He tried to say it so casually he sounded like he might as well be talking about who would go to the kitchen to get drinks for both of them.

His hands felt restless while he waited for Shane’s reaction. So he looked back at the coffee table and lifted up his can so he could at least drink something cold while he waited for a response.

Shane took a second to replay what he had just heard in his mind so he could make sure he wasn’t completely mishearing everything.

“You?” Shane asked, like Ilya had just suggested the most absurd thing in the world.

Ilya put the can down.

“I mean, yes.” he shrugged like it was no big deal “Is no problem for me.”

Except they both knew that it would be a problem.

“That’s not happening.” Shane scoffed out nervously. “Your family-”

“In June.” Ilya told him “When I go to new house. Hockey is good money so-”

It sounded less casual than he wanted it to. He told himself to take it more slowly.

“Okay just... stop. I can’t. We can’t do this right now.” Shane stammered out before he could actually begin to envision what Ilya was suggesting.

Shane slumped down into his own hands. He needed everything to just stop for once second before the thought could fry his entire brain.

None of this was a part of the plan. He didn’t understand why Ilya had to make everything so difficult.

“Shane, it’s...” Ilya almost laughed nervously “It’s not some big deal.”

Shane needed to get out of there before he could start overthinking what Ilya was saying.

Because Ilya wasn’t just promising to stick around for the recovery anymore.

He was actually asking to raise their child. They were supposed to go their own ways that same year and now Ilya wanted to change the entire trajectory of their lives.

Ilya Rozanov wanted to raise a child that would undeniably look like Shane too and also play in the fucking NHL while doing it. And then what? What would he tell people when they asked about it?

‘I uh-’ Shane started talking because he couldn’t afford to have another coherent thought beyond what was already flooding his mind. “I’m sorry I just-”

He tried to breathe more slowly but he felt like the space around him was so vast and there was so much air rushing into his lungs. It didn’t help that the open living room in their house wasn’t just a simple room with four walls that he could walk out of.

He felt so exposed. He felt so vulnerable and out in the open and he knew he couldn’t afford to possibly imagine-

“I need to shower.” Shane said breathily while doing his absolute best to avoid looking at Ilya “The gel... I just-” he shook his head like it would help him finish his sentence. “I feel gross.”

He bolted off the couch and disappeared towards the downstairs bathroom before Ilya could say anything.

I love my little forced proximity because Shane can't even pull a full tuna meltdown. What is he going to do? Go to the other room?

Anyway I will try to post the rest this weekend. I hope you all enjoyed watching my boys start to unravel their feelings.

Chapter 30: With Eachother

Chapter Notes

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

Ilya felt all alone in the living room.

The coffee table felt like a mess with the two soda cans and their unfinished glasses of water sitting abandoned on the coasters.

And then he had the stack of papers from Planned Parenthood sitting in the far corner of the table.

He sighed to himself and wondered if he actually messed up by crossing the line. It wasn't like he even said that much.

Maybe he should have said more. It was so hard just trying to find the right words.

Maybe he was being selfish again.

Ilya could suddenly hear the faint sound of a phone buzzing near him. He exhaled loudly because the last thing he wanted was to have to deal with his father again.

Maybe his brother was calling him. Which wouldn't be much better.

He checked his pocket and quickly realized that no one was actually calling him. He looked around in confusion and saw Shane's phone abandoned on the couch where Shane had been sitting.

Of course it was Shane's phone. Ilya took it in his hand and saw Yuna's face staring back at him from the screen.

Ilya actually felt so nervous about picking up this time. But he decided to try.

"Hi. Mrs. Hollander." Ilya said fondly "How are you?"

It wasn't loud or enthusiastic. He tried to smile on the other end of the line but his voice came out sounding like it was being weighed down.

"Oh, Ilya, hi again" Yuna said on the other line. "We're good, I just... wanted to check how Shane was doing. I haven't heard from him all day."

"He is showering." Ilya told her. "He was running outside."

"Well that's definitely a very long run." she noted. "Is everything alright? You seem nervous."

Ilya stretched out his legs with bent knees and sank lower into the couch like he just wanted the furniture to shield him from the world.

He already felt like he was fumbling the conversation. There was so much weight in his voice and Yuna could clearly tell.

Ilya pursed his lips and shook his head a little.

"Yes." he said. "Nothing is wrong. He is fine."

For the first time, lying to her made a sense of guilt start building up in his chest.

Because it was probably the last time he would get to have this conversation. It was probably the last time she would be this nice to him.

Maybe it would be the last time he could stay at their place and forget about what went on in his own home. He didn't want it to end just yet.

"And what about you?" she asked him gently "How are you holding up?"

Ilya wasn't sure if he wanted to laugh or cry at the question. Because he couldn't remember the last time an older adult asked how he was doing. And it wasn't like he could actually tell her.

"I'm good." he said like it was a script he had to follow. "Thanks."

Yuna didn't know what to say. She knew things weren't the best for him. But he had never personally confided in her. She never got to see the side of him that she imagined Shane did.

"Did something happen? You just seem... upset." She pushed and Ilya finally understood why Shane could never lie to her.

"No, no. Nothing like this." Ilya said with a forced laugh. "Just... you are really nice. Other people are not always so nice, you know?"

Ilya inhaled through his nose in a way that caught.

"Thank you." he continued before forcing another laugh. "You buy so many drinks for me. I cannot drink them all even."

"Aww, Ilya-" Yuna said. "Of course we got drinks for you. Shane told me how you had them back home when you were growing up."

It killed her that someone her son's age would be so emotional over the bare minimum a parent could provide.

She wanted to tell him she was sorry he had to go through so much. Not because she pitied him, but because she really wanted him to know that she cared too.

"You know you're always welcome in our home." she said and Ilya could feel how emotional it made her. "You're Shane's friend. I think you're one of the closest friends he's ever had."

Ilya exhaled loudly because he knew all of that could change soon.

"Maybe." he said.

"And your drinks will always be there waiting for you." she told him. "You can always come have dinner with us."

Yuna hesitated a little before continuing.

"I know it's none of my business but Shane has mentioned... some things you've had happen at home before." she said like she might be overstepping with where she was headed.

Ilya shook his head and looked away like that would somehow make him escape that conversation. He hated talking about it.

“And Shane never wants to talk about what you’ve been dealing with at home.” She clarified. “But I’m really concerned. I really worry about how you’re doing sometimes.”

Ilya wished she would stop because he just wanted to breathe. Because why would she ever try to talk about that? Why couldn’t she ignore it in the same way he tried to ignore what went on?

Why couldn’t she help him pretend that whatever other life he had didn’t exist for the few days he got to be away from it?

“Sorry if you don’t want to talk about it, just... mom brain.” Yuna said a little more lightly “But I really do worry.”

Ilya sank deeper into the couch and his hair moved against the cushions as he shook his head.

He pulled the hood of the hoodie he had borrowed from Shane over his head so he could feel more comfortable.

“This is...” he tried to force a fake laugh but it came out sounding nothing like what he intended.

He wanted to say it was nothing but he couldn’t bring himself to finish for some reason.

So he blinked once and forced his eyes wide open just so he could look away into nothing.

The entire room felt silent until her voice came from the speaker again.

“I hope you know you can always talk to me if you want.” Yuna offered. “You can even spend the night at our place if you feel like you can’t go home again.”

It was almost funny because she was completely right about him not being allowed to go home.

“Can I tell you something?” Ilya asked carefully.

“Of course.” Yuna said. “Anything.”

“This is true. My father does not want me home now. Well until Monday.” he breathed out. “Because now he is angry. And thinks I am ungrateful and lazy.”

He said it almost like he was begging for permission to stay. Like he was absolutely terrified they would throw him out the second they got home and found out what they had actually been up to.

“Awh, Ilya-” Yuna choked out before fixing her composure to sound more encouraging. “You are one of the sweetest kids Shane has ever been friends with.”

Ilya breathed out what almost sounded like laugh. He kept his lips tight because he felt like she was so wrong and he had just manipulated her into thinking of him in that way.

But he didn’t want her to stop.

He wished he could just hear it one more time. He wished he could just keep hearing her talk in that same tone that used to almost make him angry because it always stirred up so much grief inside him.

“We never thought you were lazy or ungrateful. Hell, you got up early and immediately started doing the laundry today.” Yuna said almost jokingly, like she wanted to congratulate him. “I think you’re a great kid. And you just... appreciate everything so much. I don’t know what’s ungrateful about that.”

Ilya never let himself feel the enormity of how being around Yuna actually made him feel. But if it was going to be the last time then he wanted to indulge.

He let himself sit there and take it in and he realized that this time he actually wanted to cry. He had always held it together when she had been nice to him in a way that absolutely destroyed him.

But this time he thought about crying because she was on the other end of the line and would never see it.

“Maybe I’m- overstepping.” Yuna said once she realized that Ilya had nothing to say back. “But I’m here if you need me, alright? And you can always just call me too. Or you can text my number. I know you kids prefer texting nowadays.”

Ilya hoped the microphone couldn’t pick up on the noise that left him.

“Maybe.” he said as simply as he could manage.

He didn’t want to sound like he was turning down the offer. But he wasn’t even sure if that offer would still be available to him later on.

He let out a deep breath.

“Thanks.” he continued. “Sorry. Just... you are so nice with me. Like my mother was nice with me when he is angry too. So thank you.”

It absolutely devastated her. She wanted to be there for her son’s friend but it felt so heavy coming from someone at his age. She could never imagine her own son carrying so much grief so soon.

“I’ll tell you what.” Yuna said while straightening her expression on the other end of the line “We’ll be back tomorrow since all the pipes are fine.”

Ilya followed what she said and secretly tried to map out how their own plan to break the news would fit into the timeline.

“And all of us can just... have dinner together.” Yuna suggested. “We could do something nice. We haven’t had family night in a while now that Shane is all fussy and grown up.”

Ilya knew that family night wasn’t going to happen. Because there was no way Shane would be able to pretend nothing was wrong.

He decided to tell her over dinner.

“Okay.” he said. “Maybe.”

“Let’s plan something later.” Yuna told him fondly. “I’m sure you’ll have some fun ideas.”

Ilya closed his eyes so he could try to carve how that sounded into his memory.

“Okay. Later.” he said.

“Take care, alright?” Yuna said caringly.

The fact that he kept his eyes closed and that was all he could hear made him think he would actually remember how hearing that sounded this time.

“Yes.” Ilya nodded on his end of the line. “Bye. Have a good day.”

He kept holding the phone up to his ear long after she hung up.

He usually hated how it felt. He hated being vulnerable but this time he was all alone in Shane's living room. No one could just walk in out of the blue.

No one would ever see it.

He remembered the other recent time Yuna had made him feel the same way. The night when Shane had a panic attack at 8 in the evening and Ilya showed up to be there for him.

And Yuna kindly invited him to try their leftovers while Shane took a second to calm down.

He pushed all of it aside so he could focus on handling what Shane needed help with. He abandoned all his feelings so he could go up the stairs and be the responsible one that handled everything.

He thought about the night before, when he fell asleep holding Shane thinking about how Shane was all he had. When he relaxed enough to imagine a world where they could just exist like that.

He stupidly thought about how in another universe his mother was probably still alive and that version of her would want to hear all about it. Because he really wished they could all just do nice things together.

So he decided to just tell Shane about it. He wanted Shane to just take a step back and breathe for the day with him.

Because he just wanted to pretend everything would be okay. Because maybe if they believed it enough things would really actually be okay in the end.

He took a deep breath slowly and exhaled audibly as he started getting up. He needed to try to talk to Shane again. Because they needed to focus on the present instead of getting caught up overthinking the future.

Ilya walked up the stairs slowly and carefully, like he might somehow get in trouble if someone caught him moving through the house. He walked into Shane's room just in time to catch Shane putting a clean sweatshirt over his damp hair.

Shane was standing in front of his closed door but he jumped the second he heard the movement behind him.

"Holy shit you scared me" Shane said as he turned around and caught Ilya by the door frame.

He finished smoothing his sweatshirt over himself and immediately noticed that something felt off. It felt like more than just the weight of the conversation they had had before.

"What happened?" Shane asked him.

Shane usually ignored everything around him when he wanted to take a second to himself. But in that moment he felt like this might be more important.

For the first time, he realized that he might actually have the strength to put his own thoughts aside for one second if Ilya needed him too.

"Nothing." Ilya said quietly while shaking his head at the floor.

"Is it your family again?" Shane asked quickly.

Shane felt a wave of panic hit him at the thought of Ilya having to go home early and leaving him all by himself. He hated it when Ilya left early. And he hated knowing the bits and pieces of what Ilya usually

went home to.

He wished Ilya could just stay a little longer.

They could try again and then they wouldn't fight and they would somehow figure everything out.

"No. Not my family." Ilya said as slowly as he could so he wouldn't actually fall apart in front of Shane.
"Your mother. She called your phone."

Ilya held out his hand so he could hand the phone back to Shane.

Shane stared at his own phone in horror, completely unaware that he had left it in the living room. He felt like his entire soul had just dropped down to the ground.

"What?" Shane breathed out. "What did she say?"

He stepped forward and quickly grabbed the phone so he could start checking the messages his mother might have sent him.

"Nothing." Ilya said before lightly shaking his head a few more times. "Just... tomorrow they come back. And we will all sit downstairs. And eat."

He almost choked on his words thinking about how that might be the last time he would get to stay at Shane's house and just enjoy eating together.

Because there was no way they wouldn't figure it out. Yuna wasn't stupid and Ilya knew that anyone with a shred of critical thinking would be able to put two and two together and unravel the entire timeline.

He was the only person that Shane spent that much time with the summer before.

Ilya knew he was absolutely fucked and they would finally realize that he had just manipulated them into thinking he was nice and polite.

"Did you tell her?" Shane asked with urgency in his voice "Does she fucking know now?"

It was loud. He wasn't yelling but it was loud. It was loud enough that he felt like he might accidentally be breaking the promise that they wouldn't yell at each other anymore.

"No." Ilya said simply.

"Then what?" Shane asked desperately.

Ilya pursed his lips and looked around like glancing over their surroundings might help him inhale more oxygen. His own thoughts rushed at him faster than he could filter them into words that would be palatable to Shane.

Then nothing. It's just that you are genuinely all I have in this world and I can't imagine being with anyone else in this way.

I fall asleep in your bed pretending that us playing house for the weekend is our forever because this is the only place where I feel cared for.

It would freak you out but I can't imagine ever having children of my own without searching for your features when they smile up at me.

“Hey-” Shane was the one to take his wrist and bring him back into reality before he could spiral this time. “Look...we’ll figure it out, okay?”

And Shane sounded absolutely terrified too. Because the fact that Ilya wasn’t holding it together anymore was just as terrifying as what they were dealing with.

Because Ilya was the one that knew how to do things. He knew how to do the laundry. He knew how to make food. He knew how to drive.

He knew how to figure out what to do next when Shane couldn’t turn to his family and even if it wasn’t perfect Ilya was the only one that knew how to do it.

He took both of Ilya’s hands like it would help him stabilize himself too.

“We still have time.” Shane continued and he couldn’t believe he was actually saying those words. “So we’ll figure out what to say. And then you’ll help me practice for the draft.”

He looked at Ilya like he absolutely needed him to say that it was true. Because even Shane wasn’t sure if what he was saying was going to come true.

“Okay?” Shane asked nervously because he desperately needed Ilya to say it back.

Instead, Ilya pulled him in quickly and it was still somehow one of the most gentle embraces Shane had ever experienced. It felt like he was being held. His hair was still damp but Ilya seemed to have no issue with pressing his face against it.

“Okay.” Ilya said breathily before burying his own face into the side of Shane’s neck.

Ilya knew he had to say it then. It was best to say it before anything went downhill from there.

He had to actually say it. Not silently and not muffled against fabric in a language that felt safe solely because Shane couldn’t understand it.

He closed his eyes and braced for Shane’s reaction.

“I love you.” he whispered into the fabric of Shane’s collar and it was so close that the words travelled across Shane’s entire being.

Ilya had never said it with that kind of sincerity in English before.

It was a phrase that came out of pop culture and existed in songs and movies. It was something he would jokingly say to teammates after a particularly good game.

And if it was too much for Shane then maybe he would tell him that it was just... because they were handling this as a team. If Shane wanted to forget about it then Ilya would never say it again.

Shane pulled back and looked right at him. He had never seen Ilya look like he was actually on the verge of tears before.

“Holy shit.” Shane said with complete disbelief.

Because that was the last thing Shane expected. They were never supposed to become attached. They were supposed to go their separate ways and play for whatever team drafted them.

Because it was never supposed to be more than just messing around.

It was never part of the plan. It wasn't even part of the new plan they had started coming up with.

Ilya shook his head a little. He was already coming up with ways that he could apologize or somehow convince Shane that it was nothing.

But Shane mustered up the courage to speak first.

"I love you too." he blurted out and he started breathing so nervously because part of him still felt like there was no way Ilya felt the same way.

Shane was the first one to start crying.

It wasn't messy or loud but whatever anxious tears had started pooling in his eyes were suddenly weighing down on his own breath. He felt like he was barely talking but maybe if he said it out loud it wouldn't feel as heavy in his chest.

"I love you so much it fucking scares me" Shane whispered before pulling Ilya back into his own arms.

Before Ilya knew it he could feel Shane's fingers latch onto the back of his head. And his face went crashing towards Shane's shoulder.

The embrace felt different. Shane held on more tightly than Ilya had when he initiated it.

Ilya felt torn between the relief of hearing how Shane felt and the guilt of knowing that he started it. Because in the bigger picture it was all his fault.

He was the one that ruined their entire friendship because he couldn't stop thinking about Shane in that way. He was the one that stupidly decided to test the waters and see if Shane would go along with it one day.

He was the one that always kept suggesting more like they had some sort of imaginary deadline to one-up what they had already been doing.

Shane already told him that the entire pregnancy was because of his stupid fucking idea.

"Sorry." Ilya said just so he wouldn't start to absolutely break down in front of Shane.

"No, I'm sorry too." Shane breathed out.

They stayed like that for a bit until Ilya realized that he was probably pressing his entire weight down on Shane.

He opened his mouth and took a breath with an open throat. It sounded even louder when he exhaled.

Shane heard it and just rubbed his hand just under the back of Ilya's neck in response.

"Let's just..." Shane exhaled "Enjoy our day together for now."

Because he remembered how much he missed having Ilya around as soon as he was all by himself in the shower. And he hated the fact that Ilya would eventually have to go home.

But they could still choose to do nice things. Ilya always wanted to do nice things.

"And then we'll worry about telling my mom tomorrow." Shane added like it was a wish.

Like he desperately wanted to just worry about it later too.

And when Ilya finally responded, the whisper under Shane's ear felt like a promise that the wish would be granted.

“Okay.”

Chapter End Notes

Thank you all for reading, writing these scenes made me so emotional!! 😭😭😭 Now we all get to cry together ;____;:

Chapter 31: Home.

Chapter Notes

This took a while but this story now has [\[a prequel\]](#) too! 🙄🙄

This chapter skips random parts of their day because I felt like it might be repetitive if it didn't.

Enjoy!

It felt nice to just hold Shane on the couch and watch the same boring content Shane was obsessed with on the smart TV.

They never considered doing anything even remotely suspicious there before. Shane tended to have very firm boundaries about where he felt comfortable crossing any line of plausible deniability.

But it somehow felt fine that day. It felt fine to just lay against Ilya with his head turned away from the TV and rest his eyes for a brief second.

Shane actually felt comfortable against him. The cotton shirt Ilya was wearing felt soft against his face and he could even feel the body heat subtly radiating off of him through it.

And if he focused enough, he could hear his heartbeat too.

“Are you sleeping?” Ilya eventually asked him.

Because maybe Shane wanted to take a late afternoon nap after all of that.

Shane didn't reply. Instead he leaned further into Ilya and at that point the hockey replay they had put on the TV for Shane was just a distant noise.

He slid his arm across Ilya so he could rest his hand on his waist.

He remembered the conversation they had earlier and his stomach turned at the memory. It was nice but it was terrifying at the same time.

It was terrifying because they crossed the line together. And after that point, it just felt like some consequences would just eventually follow.

Ilya realized that Shane was far from asleep and decided to move his left hand back into Shane's hair. The back of Shane's head felt so close to his face. He could still smell the shampoo Shane had used when he showered earlier that day.

“Are you hungry?” Ilya asked him before moving his head a little to press a kiss against the top of Shane's head.

He had toasted the wrap leftovers for them earlier but Shane never finished his and just let Ilya have the leftovers. So he promised Shane he would make him something else.

Maybe it was time to start making that meal he had promised.

“Hungry for what?” Shane asked absent-mindedly.

Ilya took a second and then started quietly laughing underneath Shane. He moved a little so he could try to get a look at Shane’s face.

“Food.” Ilya said jokingly. “Pervert.”

Shane turned his head into Ilya like he just wanted to hide from the lights. He laughed a little too.

“Do you want to eat or no?” Ilya asked him again.

Because he really wanted to make him food too.

“Later.” Shane said against him.

He wanted to stay there a little longer. But even if they got up, they could just go back to being against each other in the same way after they were done eating.

They could even fall asleep like that again. And Shane wouldn’t even have to worry about whether just wanting to sleep against Ilya was too much.

“When is later?” Ilya asked him.

Ilya realized that he would probably need to start reading the little booklet he got soon too. He wondered if Shane was supposed to be eating more.

Was he supposed to avoid certain foods? Pasta was probably fine, right?

“I don’t know.” Shane said “Maybe in half an hour?”

Ilya turned even more and just kept looking at him.

“Ah.” he said while trying to sound jokinly annoyed. “So I should go make food for you now?”

Shane didn’t want him to go just yet. But Ilya was also suggesting actually cooking for them.

“You’re... really going to cook for us?” he asked and a small smile tugged on the corners on his lips.

Ilya wanted to roll his eyes. “Yes, Shane. I make food in my house sometimes.”

He didn’t really know how to make too many things and he definitely didn’t know how to make anything that was anywhere close to a gourmet meal. But he knew how to make at least something that would keep him fed.

And pasta was easy. All he had to do was boil it and add whatever sauces were in the fridge.

Shane probably had more things he could add to the pasta laying around in the fridge. Maybe Ilya could make the meal a little nicer for him.

“Oh. Um...” Shane said as he remembered that Ilya did most things he needed around his own house. “Can you show me how to use the washer later?”

Because all Ilya did was press a few buttons and the washer was just running in a matter of a couple of minutes that morning.

He needed to figure out how to wash his own clothes. The fact that he had left dirty clothes for Ilya to see too was fucking embarrassing. He was so grateful Ilya never ended up teasing him about it.

“What you can’t read buttons?” Ilya said.

“No, I mean-” Shane said back “You seem to know how it works. And I just want to wash my clothes by myself sometimes.”

“Aha. Okay.” Ilya laughed because he knew exactly what that meant. “Pervert.”

Shane slid off of him.

“Fuck you.” he said playfully. “Don’t make fun of me.”

Ilya got off the couch because Shane was no longer resting against him and he couldn’t feel bad about pushing him off anymore.

“Okay. Maybe I make food first and then you fuck me.” he said jokingly.

“Shut up.” Shane said back.

Shane kept trying to look away but he somehow ended up turning to look at Ilya as he left.

He still couldn’t believe that Ilya was just... in his house. Doing all these things that people usually did at home.

Shane turned back to the large TV and his eyes caught a glimpse of the same stack of papers they had left on the coffee table after coming back.

He almost panicked for a split second but he reminded himself that they could worry about it in the morning. He forced his gaze up and went back to watching the hockey game replay Ilya had left on for him.

Ilya had fun going through the fridge on the other side of the first floor.

The Hollanders had so many unique things stocked beyond the shelf full of drinks they had left for him.

At some point he even ended up looking for nicer ways to make pasta for Shane on his phone.

He knew how to boil and strain the pasta and add the sauces. But the internet told him that he could also put it in a pan so all the extra stuff can be extra cooked into what he was making.

He used a large wooden fork to stir and felt so lost in the moment under the lights above Shane’s stove.

But then he felt the familiar buzzing of someone double texting him in his pocket. He put the wooden spoon away and exhaled to himself.

He really wasn’t in the mood to read a long series of messages from his brother.

But he knew things would get worse if he ignored them.

So he pulled his phone out and looked at his notifications. He moved his phone closer to his face when he realized that someone was texting him in English.

Yuna

Found your number 😊

You let Shane use your phone when he left his things in the car a few months ago

Ilya still felt nervous about talking to her. But he decided to forget about everything he had been letting overwhelm him for a second.

Ilya

Ah I remember))

He decided to indulge. He had already let himself play house and pretend that his life at Shane's house could actually be his forever.

Yuna

What are you two up to?

You can order dinner if you're hungry

He could let himself pretend that he had a loving parental figure in his life too.

Ilya

No

Now I am making food)

He stepped away from the stove so he could lean on the counter. His thumbs hovered over his screen playfully as he waited for a response.

Yuna

How responsible of you ☺

He wanted to show her.

His father never let him cook with his mother when he was growing up because he insisted that it was something that only women should do.

And then all of a sudden, he had to start making his own food. He usually just put canned ingredients together or stuck the frozen stuff in the oven.

But he almost felt a sense of pride when he made something on the stove and it turned out okay.

Ilya

Do you want to see?

Yuna replied almost immediately.

Yuna

Of course 😊

Ilya didn't stop his lips when they curled up in a smile and almost exposed his teeth.

He turned away from the counter and excitedly took a picture for her.

Ilya



I put in pan too

He felt like nothing truly existed beyond just his counter and his phone. It felt so nice. He was so glad he let himself pretend even if it was just for one day.

Yuna

Oh you're using the import stuff!

Looks great! 😊

Let me know if the Korean stuff is any good

Ilya stopped to look at the things he had taken out of the fridge.

He didn't think too much of it when he picked out what to add to the pasta because he was under the impression that they could just use anything that was in the fridge.

He wondered if he should have used something else. Things from the import store were usually expensive.

Ilya

Sorry(

I don't know if you are maybe saving this

I don't put too much

He glanced at the stove and took a second to stir the food a little so he wouldn't ruin it. He quickly looked back at his phone so he could see if she was mad at him.

He wanted her to like him.

Yuna

No you're good, use as much as you want

We could go down to the import store together if you want

I usually end up going by myself but you could keep me company if you want 😊

Ilya was sure he knew what store she was referring to. He had been there before. He remembered being really shocked to see it when he moved.

They had a lot of the exact same things he grew up around. He remembered how it felt funny to see the price tags in dollars instead of rubles.

Ilya

Yes I want

I know this place))

There is russian food too in this store

His family only got a few things occasionally. His father always complained about how the prices were three times higher than what the exact same things used to cost in Russia.

Yuna

You should come pick something out

Maybe you could show me how to make some Russian food 😊

It sounded so exciting. He hoped they would have time to go.

He hoped he could get the nicer bags of frozen pelmeni and make them for Shane too. He really just wanted to see Shane's reaction.

Mainly because they were a huge part of Ilya's childhood.

His mother used to get the same bags when he was growing up. She was always expected to just have everything ready for the entire family around the house.

Not having to make the dough from scratch definitely helped her stay on track.

Ilya

Can we go tomorrow?
And then maybe we make pelmeni from store))
I like this food from russia

The stove was already off but he still checked. He realized he needed to get Shane soon.

He speedwalked to the couch excitedly and looked down at Shane, who was watching hockey YouTube on the TV again.

“Come.” Ilya told him. “Food is not so hot anymore.”

He almost felt jittery. He turned to the TV just to check what Shane had been so immersed in. It seemed to be about notable shots that the Admirals had scored.

“You know this player?” Ilya asked while nudging his head towards the TV. “Scott Hunter.”

Because Shane loved talking about hockey. Every time they hung out, Shane loved talking about all the different players and the different teams.

Ilya cherished those hangouts so much. Because it was so easy to make Shane happy just by talking about something he liked so much.

“Yeah.” Shane said. “He plays for the Admirals.”

Shane straightened himself off the couch and reached down to get the remote from the coffee table so he could turn the TV off.

He didn’t really care about seeing Scott Hunter score again. But he had completely forgotten about the stack of papers that laid forgotten on the same coffee table.

“He is good player. I like him.” Ilya told him just to keep the conversation going.

Shane somehow didn’t seem interested in talking about the video. The TV was already off and Shane was already putting the remote back down on the coffee table.

“But I also like you” Ilya continued in a tone that sounded like he might start laughing a little soon. “You are also good player.”

“Better than Scott Hunter?” Shane asked jokingly.

Ilya could almost see the faint hint of a smile forming over Shane’s face.

“Maybe. He is older.” Ilya said just as jokingly “Next season we play and he is already hundred year old fossil.”

Shane laughed a little at the suggestion. Ilya loved talking shit about other players around him. And he was actually funny when he did it.

“Come.” Ilya reminded him. “Food is nice.”

Shane followed him to the kitchen lazily, his plain white socks trailing behind Ilya’s gray ones.

He sat down and watched as Ilya moved around the kitchen to serve everything for him.

He remembered how he felt when Ilya served him food the night before. It didn't feel as intense this time. Almost like he was at least somewhat used to it.

Before Shane knew it, Ilya was sitting on the other side of the corner and checking his messages like nothing had happened. Like it wasn't a big deal to him either.

Ilya's mind was already elsewhere. Yuna had texted him back while he wasn't looking.

Yuna

Hmm looks like its closed on Sundays
Maybe next week 😊

Ilya felt disappointed. But it just felt so nice to talk to her like that. It didn't really matter if they could get the bag with the frozen pelmeni.

He fidgeted with his thumbs for a brief second before typing a response.

Ilya

Can we make something together still?
Something else?

Shane noticed how completely lost Ilya seemed in his phone. He couldn't even begin to guess who Ilya might be texting. Ilya never texted anyone like that.

Who are you texting?" Shane eventually asked.

Ilya looked away from his phone briefly.

"Your mother." he said distantly while looking back at his phone again.

Shane did a double take and even leaned over the corner so he could try to glance at the screen Ilya was holding up in his hands.

Ilya looked at him without locking his phone or even moving his hands.

"I did not tell her." Ilya clarified calmly. "We are just talking. For fun."

Shane saw the new messages as they appeared on the screen too.

Yuna

Of course! 😊
Family night is still on too.

"Since when do you text my mom like that?" Shane asked.

He couldn't believe Ilya was actually on that kind of decent terms with his mother. Maybe it would actually work out.

Maybe Ilya would manage to talk to her without everything going horribly the next day.

"Today. She is just talking to me. She wants to make food with me tomorrow too" Ilya said.

Shane wondered if Ilya was still on board with actually telling her.

"Then I will tell her. After we make nice food." Ilya continued with an exhale like he could almost read Shane's mind. "Maybe she will not be so angry because first we make food, you know?"

Shane went back to his food. It actually tasted so nice.

“This is good.” Shane said firmly, like he was stating a fact rather than complimenting Ilya.

Ilya put his phone down and watched Shane enjoy the pasta he had made for them. He reached his hand out just to roughly stroke the back of Shane’s head as he ate. Shane sank lower into his plate but still allowed it.

The touch felt so much rougher compared to how Ilya played with his hair on the couch. He liked both in their own ways.

“Well I want to make nice food for my boyfriend, you know?” Ilya said casually.

Shane stopped to process what that meant. Was Ilya talking about him?

Was he actually really talking about him like that?

Shane swallowed and turned his head so he could look at Ilya, who seemed to be eating his own food so casually after saying that.

Ilya definitely felt that look. But he also felt ready to pull back and brush it off as whatever if that word was too much for Shane.

Shane cleared his throat quietly after downing the pasta he had been chewing. His lips looked small on him with the expression he made, but they somehow slightly curved into a smile.

“Your... boyfriend?” he asked.

Ilya pouted in thought at the question as he kept chewing his own food.

“I think, yes.” he told Shane.

It didn’t end up being weird. It actually felt nice to be called that.

Shane would be lying if he said that it didn’t scare him a little in terms of what the future might hold for the two of them if they were going to start calling each other that.

But he would also be lying if he said that it didn’t feel special to hear it.

They kept the rest of their day slow.

Shane tried to calm himself down whenever he caught his mind wandering off to what they would need to do the next day.

He found the same thoughts coming back to him late into the night when he could barely shake them off as he tried to fall asleep.

Shane realized he couldn’t exactly relax on his own so late into the night so he rolled back into Ilya’s arms in his bed to face him.

Ilya eventually opened his eyes to look at him like he could sense that something might be wrong.

“What?” he asked Shane lazily in the dark.

Shane took a while to say anything so Ilya exhaled. Because he really just wanted to go back to dozing off against him.

“I like you.” he told Shane lazily like that might be what he needed to hear.

He pulled himself closer towards Shane so his face was almost against the same shoulder Shane apparently dislocated multiple times before they met. Now he knew the story behind that scar too.

It actually felt so intimate to be aware of little things like that.

Shane swallowed so he wouldn't somehow choke on air before talking and his voice was quiet when he finally spoke.

“I like you too.” he said and he felt so nervous saying it.

Because it was almost over. They said they would worry about it the next day but it would already be the next day once they woke up.

Ilya sensed that he was anxious. So he pulled back and tried to look at Shane as his eyes started adjusting to the dim room.

“Ah. So now when I say I like you and you also say you like me.” he said teasingly almost like he had the right to be offended. “You don't say ‘no Ilya you will leave’ now.”

He realized he might have fucked up as soon as those words left his lips. He was too tired to actually think it through. Shane looked away for a second before he started talking and Ilya almost held his breath.

“Well you won't really leave forever, right?” Shane said quietly. “I'll still get to see you.”

Ilya let all the tension he briefly held leave him. It felt like such a relief.

“Yes.” he told Shane with an exhale. “If I go somewhere then later I come back.”

Shane hugged him like that was exactly what he needed to hear.

Ilya found himself relaxing almost enough to doze off but Shane spoke again and suddenly he felt fully awake for him.

“What's on your mind right now?” Shane asked.

“I don't know, Shane.” Ilya said with an exhale. “English is hard right now.”

“Maybe you could teach me Russian one day.” Shane said.

And that somehow made him feel like he was suddenly in too deep. Trying to learn the language Ilya grew up speaking and probably felt more comfortable communicating in definitely felt way too intimate so early on.

“Hmm... yes. I can teach you how to be bully to Russian players.” Ilya said jokingly. “Very important skill in league. You can not just speak polite French.”

Shane laughed a little. He looked at Ilya like he was still processing what Ilya had just told him. Then he laughed even more but still kept his voice down like he might accidentally wake up the whole neighborhood if he allowed himself to laugh.

“Okay” Shane said with the faint linger of a snort.

Because Ilya really envisioned him playing in the league despite all of it.

Ilya closed his eyes again.

“Okay. Good night, Shane.” he said.

He pulled himself closer to Shane so he could feel more comfortable.

“Don’t wake me up at 7 please.” he added. “I don’t know if you go to toilet so early every day but I want to sleep.”

Shane wanted to defend himself but he decided to just smile.

“I won’t.” he said almost sarcastically.

He wondered if Ilya was still waiting for him to say it back. He felt like he was supposed to say it back. It somehow felt awkward and out of place to say it but he still decided to do it.

"Good night, Ilya."

Shane ended up being awake again several times throughout the night. The dread somehow ended up pulling him out of sleep even after he managed to calm down.

“Hm?” Ilya said as Shane rolled right into him yet again at 4 in the morning.

Shane didn’t reply but Ilya knew exactly what was wrong. So he placed a sleepy kiss on Shane’s forehead before he felt his face relax again with loose strands of Shane’s hair still brushing against it.

For the most part, Ilya slept pretty peacefully.

Even when Shane ended up randomly waking him up throughout the night, it felt nice to feel Shane against him when he opened his eyes.

It felt nice to feel warm in his bed in the middle of the winter. And it felt even nicer to be able to relax right against Shane and remember that it was actually okay to have feelings for him.

And even though Shane slept horribly he always found himself relaxing just enough to eventually go back to sleep whenever he turned to Ilya for quiet comfort.

The night and the morning eventually blended together.

Ilya was used to faint sound of steps and just the general noises of people existing around the house. So he didn’t think too much of it when it started seeping into his dreams in the morning.

He was too tired to actually think about what might be going on. He had Shane and that was all that mattered.

And Shane was tired enough to oversleep his usual routine after worrying himself awake so many times.

The sound of movement got less faint but Ilya just hid his face against Shane, like blocking out the sunlight that had crept into the room would somehow make everything more quiet.

And then there was the sound of knuckles lightly taping against the thick wood of the door followed by faint talking.

“Shane?”

Shane's eyes shot open and he jolted awake as he heard his name being called by a voice he recognized all too well.

He found himself looking right at Ilya who was still right against him. He tried to shove him off forcefully but Ilya just shut his eyes thinking that Shane might be having a panic attack after overthinking again.

"Hm, what?" Ilya asked Shane without looking up but it was too late.

Shane sat up just in time to see his father standing at his doorframe with an increasingly concerned expression spreading across his face. His mouth opened like he wanted to say something but the words remained unsaid for what felt like a moment that stretched into eternity.

And then the door closed loudly enough to startle Ilya into being fully awake. He shot up too and looked around but couldn't figure out what had just happened.

He saw Shane and immediately knew that whatever he had just missed was far from good. His blood felt like it was rushing through his entire body way too quickly.

"Fuck!" Shane shouted out as he pulled even further away in panic "That was my fucking dad!"

Ilya felt like he had just been splashed by a wave of cold water. He suddenly felt like his ears were more attuned to what might be happening outside the door than to the sound of Shane continuing to swear to himself in front of him.

He grabbed Shane's upper arm like that would somehow stop him for spiraling for even just a second.

"Shh- shh." he hushed Shane as he turned towards the door again.

Shane felt completely trapped in his own bed but he watched as Ilya moved with swiftness and efficiency.

Ilya jumped off the bed and stopped right at the doorframe where Shane had just seen his father. He turned the lock quickly and moved his body sideways so he could press his weight down against the door.

His shoulder and forearm felt stiff against the hard wood and he figured it would be enough to stop anyone from trying to forcefully open the door.

His heart was racing so fast he felt like it might actually shoot up his body and get trapped in his throat.

He placed his right ear against the wood and tried to get a sense of what might be happening outside.

At first he could only hear the faint sound of his own heartbeat reflected back to him as the thick wooden door blocked out the other sounds in Shane's room. But then the sound of the blood rapidly rushing through his body made room for what sounded like footsteps. Someone was walking down the stairs.

The voices were too faint and distant but he was confident that Yuna and David were already talking.

Ilya swore involuntarily too as he backed away from the door.

He turned to Shane but Shane wasn't in the mood to be told it was nothing.

"There's no way he didn't see that." Shane said frantically. "You're supposed to be in the other room."

In his daze, Ilya had completely forgotten that the Hollanders fully expected him to be using their guest bedroom.

The room that they only set foot in briefly just so they could have sex. The room that he never actually slept in.

“Okay. Okay.” Ilya said hurriedly as he walked back to Shane.

“No it’s not okay!” Shane said completely mortified “We are actually so fucked, Ilya!”

Ilya quickly realized that he never managed to tidy up or even put anything away. Because he had told himself he would take care of that the day after.

And suddenly it was the day after. And Shane already looked like he wanted to cry.

Ilya crouched down next to the side of Shane’s bed and took his hand.

“Okay, listen.” he said like it was a game strategy. “I will go, okay? You stay here and lock door.”

“What?” Shane huffed out.

Shane was breathing so frantically that his question blended into the sound of the shallow breaths that were leaving him.

“Just lock door when I go.” Ilya said while looking straight at Shane. “Then he will not come.”

Shane felt like he had woken up into another living nightmare. They didn’t even get to plan how to break the news.

They didn’t even get to clean up. That realization mortified him even more visibly than it had mortified Ilya.

They were trapped in Shane’s room with all the things they were supposed to carefully put away or dispose of spread accross the entire house.

Shane felt like he couldn’t even breathe. Like the air around him was way too thin to actually make it to his lungs.

Ilya moved up to place a brief kiss on his forehead again but instead of calming him it just made Shane feel like the air around him had grown even heavier.

“Wait here, okay?”

And with that, Ilya was gone.

Chapter 32: New Beginnings

Chapter Notes

Sorry this took a while, too many things happened but I finally have time to write again!

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

Ilya felt like he was walking to his death in the hallway outside of Shane's room.

It felt so much more narrow compared to how it felt during his entire stay at their house, and yet he somehow felt more exposed than ever. The morning light had found its way all around him and he felt completely out in the open.

And he could somehow just sense Yuna and David existing nearby. The faint little noises of their early morning presence already made their way to him too.

He still couldn't pinpoint what they might be doing but he just somehow felt them existing so close to him.

"Did you go up to the washer?" he eventually heard Yuna say in the distance.

He barely felt awake and yet he still felt a whole new rush of adrenaline in his guts. He almost froze the second he actually heard her voice.

But he still somehow decided to actually walk rather than just eavesdrop.

He vaguely heard Shane's father say something back. But by the time David was done talking, Ilya realized that he never actually managed to comprehend what David might have said back.

It was too early to be dealing with any of it. And he was undoubtedly genuinely terrified by the situation he had been thrown into.

They were back so early. And they were probably back early because of what he had told Yuna about wanting to do something together.

He felt like it was his fault again.

"Is Shane not up yet?" he heard Yuna speak near the stairs again.

Ilya didn't know what to think of it. The words felt like he might as well be hearing them in a dream.

He wasn't even sure what he planned on saying yet. He had just woken up and his body only felt awake because of the pounding heartbeat in his chest.

Part of his mind still felt so blank and dazed.

He somehow found his feet carrying him with just enough caution and before he knew it he was right where the stairs ended. He looked down and he could already see the Hollanders on the other end of their stairwell.

And then suddenly he heard the floor creaking under him, like his feet had somehow failed him.

“Oh.” Yuna turned to look up at him first, like she was actually startled by his presence. “Ilya-”

He felt so cornered. Part of him wanted to run away but he found himself unable to move.

David turned to look up the stairs next and Ilya instinctively recoiled back a little like he fully expected Shane’s father to rush up the stairs and strike him.

Ilya tensed and leaned back forward when he realized no one was actually coming for him. He reached to hold onto the rail so he wouldn’t somehow lose his balance and trip over the air around him.

“I just... went to put some things in the washer.” David exhaled while looking at Ilya “I wanted to talk to Shane.”

Ilya suddenly remembered that they had completely forgotten to dispose of any of the things they had left laying around the bathroom too.

Shane had been so worried about finding the perfect way to dispose of their trash all week and they just left everything out in the open for the Hollanders to see.

Fuck.

He felt like he just needed to run back in time and somehow fix it. The realization that he completely failed Shane felt like it would actually crush him under its weight.

“Why did you want to talk to Shane?” Yuna asked.

She briefly looked up at Ilya who looked like something horrible had just happened and then turned back to David.

“And where is he?” Yuna continued “I couldn’t get a hold of him all day.”

“He’s upstairs, I-” David started but Ilya quickly interrupted him.

“We were not doing anything” Ilya said frantically with a forced laugh and they both looked back at him again.

It sounded nothing like a laugh. It was very evident that he was absolutely terrified about everything he was saying.

He felt like he had been caught red handed but something about it felt completely off at the same time.

There was no way David didn’t actually see them. And yet he didn’t really seem to want to do anything about it. He didn’t even seem to want to mention it.

“Okay... what’s going on?” Yuna narrowed her eyes a little as she asked.

Maybe Ilya could lie his way out of it somehow.

Because Ilya really just wanted to laugh and brush it all off. He wanted to invent another excuse on the spot again like he had many times before.

He just wanted things to feel normal for at least a little longer. Because he just wanted them to have a good time together first.

He wanted all the little plans Yuna had texted him about to actually happen.

“David what’s going on?” Yuna repeated anxiously.

David exhaled and turned to Ilya without saying anything like he wanted to give him a chance to talk first. Because the least they deserved was to be able to say it on their own terms.

Their eyes met and David didn’t even have to say it out loud.

He knew. And Ilya knew that he knew. They didn’t have to say it to each other. David nudged his head at Ilya in defeat to confirm it.

The silent acknowledgement felt so heavy between them that Ilya almost forgot that he was expected to say something to Yuna.

He suddenly heard her voice and it snapped him out of his thoughts.

“Were they trying to smoke in the bathroom?” She asked David intensely like the assumption might get at least some kind of answer out of him.

Ilya just about twitched at the accusation.

“No. No no no.” he held out his hands and actually managed to laugh nervously.

He felt bad that Yuna knew he smoked. She had even seen him smoke in his own car before driving home before. It had happened a long time ago but he still felt like it didn’t exactly make him look good.

David turned to Yuna but she turned to look at Ilya.

“Then what?” she asked both of them like she just wanted an answer.

But instead of an answer she was met with complete silence. She waited a little and decided to try again a little differently.

“Look,” Yuna exhaled with her eyes shut before looking at Ilya and trying to talk a little more slowly. “You’re not in trouble. And we’re not asking you to leave.”

She nodded at him a little but Ilya remained stiff in front of her.

“I just want to know what on earth is going on so early in the morning.” She almost laughed at the end of her statement.

She figured that maybe Ilya would tell her if he could be sure that she wasn’t actually mad at him.

But Ilya wasn’t ready to tell her just yet. He was supposed to spend the morning figuring out how to word everything perfectly and he never even got the time to think.

“Ilya-” she said slowly because she felt like he wasn’t paying attention.

She looked at him and her eyes drifted down his face where she could catch a glimpse of the bruising fading into a faint shade of green.

Part of her still didn’t believe the backstory about him getting shoved into the boards during hockey practice.

“Can I just... borrow you for a second?” she said more quietly. “Maybe we could talk alone.”

No one was yelling and yet Ilya still felt like he didn't have a choice.

"Okay," he said.

He suddenly remembered that they really left everything laying around.

She headed for the living room and Ilya trailed along while looking around to make sure she wouldn't accidentally find anything else too.

And then his eyes landed right on his stack of things from Planned Parenthood that was still sitting forgotten on the coffee table.

The little envelope that he never even got to open alone was right there under the report that he had turned face down.

His own dull steps already felt too loud against the floor and he felt like Yuna was moving so fast.

"Wait-" he said.

By the time Yuna turned to look back at him, she was already right next to the coffee table.

"I should take this," Ilya said lightly and his words almost betrayed how absolutely terrified he felt about it.

He tried to make his way to the coffee table but it was already right behind Yuna. He felt like she was actually blocking his way.

"Take what?" she said a little more casually than before, unsure what he actually wanted.

"Papers," Ilya said quickly. "For class."

Because that always worked within his family. His family had no clue how the school system Ilya had been thrown into actually worked or what he needed to do.

Even his brother completed all his education in Russia before they moved.

"Oh. Sure, I can hand your papers to you," Yuna said lightly before turning around and picking up the little stack. "What class are they for?"

He felt so taken aback when she actually asked. He somehow didn't know what to say on the spot for once.

Her overbearing curiosity got the best of her and Yuna started sorting through the little pile before actually handing it to Ilya.

And then he noticed how her gaze narrowed and how too much time had passed without her actually handing anything to him.

Fuck. Ilya knew that everything was about to go downhill from there.

He wished he could just freeze time and take everything she was holding away from her. She wasn't supposed to see any of it like that.

"Whose is this?" Yuna's tone was already shifting and Ilya felt like everything was actually falling apart before his very eyes.

“Just... papers. For class.” he insisted.

“No. No, this...” she said and he already couldn’t even look at her.

Even if he couldn’t freeze time he wished he could at least slow it down so he could think for one second.

“You didn’t get this from class” Yuna continued as she tried to wrap her mind around what she was holding. “You... who was here with you?”

No one. But Ilya only replied in his mind because he couldn’t even bring himself to talk anymore.

Yuna clearly expected him to answer so he forced himself to tell her.

“Just me.” he said “And Shane.”

Saying Shane’s name like that felt like choking on sand. He was supposed to protect Shane and somehow take the fall and he was already mentioning him.

He felt like he was betraying him.

“No-” Yuna continued like she didn’t really believe him “You... Shane ordered a lot of food the other day. I saw the invoice for it.”

Ilya found it ironic that he still somehow had a way out. He could have just lied and said it was someone else. He could have just postponed the inevitable.

But then what? Then Shane would have to explain everything all by himself.

He had a way out of the nerve-wrecking discomfort but he chose not to take it.

“It was nice food.” he barely said as he remembered how Shane really wanted to make sure Ilya would have something he liked eating too. “Potatoes and wraps. We were hungry so...”

He waited for Yuna to say something too after he trailed off. He wished she would just say anything.

He felt like she already hated him.

“Sorry...” he eventually said to the floor.

He felt like everything was actually falling apart. Like any chance he had at getting to do anything nice with Shane’s family was slipping away from him.

He wished he could have just remembered to stash everything away the day before instead of being lazy again.

He remembered the conversation he had with Yuna over the phone the day before and he felt like a complete fraud.

He remembered how he knew that she wouldn’t say any of those things if she knew the whole truth. And now the alternate version of Yuna he had envisioned was actually coming to life.

And that version of her was putting her hand on his forearm and trying to get him to look at her.

The touch felt so foreign to him. The weight of her hand felt so much lighter than he could have imagined. It was almost like it was barely there and yet he could feel its presence so intensely.

“Ilya...” she said in a way that terrified him “Can you just tell me what’s actually going on?”

He shook his head to gather his thoughts but he didn't pull his arm away.

“Can you... sit down with me?” she continued. “Because you’re scaring me too.”

Her hand slid down his forearm and took his hand to guide him and he felt like he wanted to disappear.

He felt like the moment when she would actually start hating him would come any second. And every time he thought it was about to happen, something completely different washed over him.

The uncertainty felt like it would actually destroy him.

“Okay.” he said quietly because it eventually had to happen.

He didn't look when Yuna moved back in a way that forced him to take an extra couple of steps. But before he knew it they were already sitting down on the same couch where he had talked to her on the phone.

He wished he could just sink into the couch again.

He cautiously eyed the little stack of things Yuna was holding and he wished he could have just hidden them as soon as he got back.

“Can you... give to me?” he forced himself to say without actually looking at her. “I should not show to people like this.”

Because even if he was going to tell her he felt like all those papers and booklets were just so personal. They were supposed to be kept away where people wouldn't be able to see them.

It felt so invasive to have anyone else see them, especially after he promised Shane he wouldn't show anyone.

“Right.” Yuna's expression kept frantically shifting as she talked. “I'm sorry, I shouldn't have accidentally snooped through your things. It's really none of my business.”

Hearing those words somehow made everything feel so much worse when Ilya took the little pile from her.

He wondered how much she actually knew. Shane always said that his mother somehow knew what he was up to but that didn't seem to be the case this time around.

He could have said it was anyone else. But he promised Shane he would actually tell her and handle the worst part of it.

“They're... your things, right?” she asked cautiously.

“Well, yes.” Ilya kept his eyes down as he replied even more cautiously “But also...”

He trailed off and Yuna continued before he could figure out how to finish. He did match the age and height she had seen printed on the paper.

“So you're-”

“No. No, no, not me.” he said frantically hoping he would be able to word what he needed to say soon. “Just... mine.”

He didn't know how to finish yet but Yuna still tried to lead the conversation.

"Does your family know?" she asked sympathetically.

"No." Ilya said immediately and he finally looked at her like it was a warning. "They can not know."

"Okay." she said heavily. "Okay. It's okay."

Except Ilya knew that it wasn't okay. And it was only a matter of time until she realized how much it really wasn't okay.

He looked away and shook his head a little.

Actually telling her that it was Shane's report was somehow so difficult.

Yuna waited for him to talk and put her hand on top of Ilya's above the papers he was holding down away from her sight.

"You'll be fine." she said "You're a really responsible kid. And if you... ever need help or advice you can always talk to me too."

Ilya shook his head again because it felt wrong. It felt wrong that she was trying to comfort him.

"And whoever it is... maybe he could talk to me too." she offered and Ilya wished she would just stop because he knew that wasn't what she actually wanted to say.

He shook his head and pulled his lips back as he decided to just end the illusion of acceptance that was needlessly torturing him.

"Shane." he said.

He didn't look at her when he said it because that somehow made it easier. He felt like it would make it easier but it somehow made it even scarier when he had no idea what to expect.

He knew it would make the kindness disappear before his very eyes.

It took Yuna a second to try to process his words and her stomach dropped the moment she realized what he might be trying to say.

"Shane?" Yuna's tone shifted from shocked to mortified as she said his name too and Ilya felt like he could actually die on the inside.

He looked up at her nervously because he had no idea what to expect by that point, but she didn't seem interested in talking to him anymore.

She couldn't get a hold of her son for a whole day and suddenly the reason behind it was falling in place.

"Shane!?" she repeated in a way that felt like it was eating Ilya alive.

There was no way it was actually Shane. She would have noticed something. She should have noticed something.

She felt like she had actually failed as a parent.

Ilya wanted to say things he hadn't even worded in his own mind yet but Yuna was already off the couch and speedwalking away from him.

“Shane-” he heard her say again as she made her way up and Ilya practically ran after her too.

Except he felt like he couldn’t even fully run. Because even if he caught up with her then what? He couldn’t just tackle Shane’s mother in her own home and stop her from talking to him.

“Wait-” he said as his last resort as he trailed behind her breathlessly.

He felt like the scariest thing was unfolding before his eyes when he watched her make her way up the stairs.

He wished she would at least wait and talk to him first. Because Shane was already so scared and just waiting for Ilya to handle the worst part of it.

“Shane-” Yuna called out with concern in her tone and already sounded like she was barely holding it together.

Shane didn’t say anything back but she just opened the door to let herself in.

He never took Ilya’s advice. He never locked it from the inside to keep everyone out.

Ilya stayed behind in the distance forgotten in the hallway and caught a glimpse of Yuna embracing Shane before the door slowly slid shut behind them just enough to shield the sight away.

“It’s alright.” was all Ilya could make out from afar as Yuna talked to Shane. “I know.”

Their conversation became muffled in the distance and it quickly hit Ilya that none of the comfort or reassurance was ever really meant for him.

Because that was Shane’s family, not his. And if anything affected Shane too, Shane would always come first.

It was just the way things were. The fact that there was no other family for him to seek comfort in was unfair but the burden was never actually going to fall on the Hollanders.

And it was only a matter of time before they would confront him and ask him to leave.

At least Shane was going to be fine. At least Yuna was being nice to him about it instead of making it even harder for Shane.

Ilya made his way down the stairs slowly so he could just get all the things he had left on the couch again. He felt like he just needed to leave their whole family alone.

He wondered where he could even go. All his things were in Shane’s room and it wasn’t like he could just go home.

He could just retreat to the guest bedroom where he was supposed to be anyway. The room where he should have been when the Hollanders returned.

Ilya made his way back to the living room quietly, like he was a ghost haunting a home that he never should have made his way into. He reached for the little pile of things from Planned Parenthood carefully and the sound of paper moving in the air felt like it was filling the space around him.

“You alright, bud?” Ilya heard someone ask behind him while he was still leaning down towards the couch.

He quickly turned around and saw David standing near the open living room and awkwardly keeping his distance.

It practically jumpscared him. Shane's father somehow moved without making any noise and always ended up so close to him.

At least he wasn't yelling.

They watched each other stiffly in silence for what felt like an eternity until David decided to speak again.

"I... shouldn't have just walked in like that." David exhaled in defeat like everything was his fault. "Not when we have a guest around."

What?

Ilya looked at him like he had just seen a ghost. Like he was genuinely hallucinating and there was no way Shane's father of all people was saying that.

He stayed stiff and almost expressionless.

Was Shane's father actually... like that? He didn't really know him. He actually didn't really know him at all since David was usually just minding his own business in the distance.

"Do you... want a glass of water?" David asked to soften the tension.

It was already such a rollercoaster of a morning. He just stood on his own side of the couch and held his papers as closely as he could.

Ilya would normally wonder if he was even allowed to say anything. But this time it actually seemed different.

"Okay."

He held his things close as he followed David to the kitchen.

It felt like an obligation. Even with David's back turned to him, he felt like he couldn't just leave. He felt like he was somehow required to be there.

"Please, sit." David said heavily once he turned around and had a glass of water ready for Ilya in his hands.

Maybe it was just David's way of getting him away from everyone. Maybe you had to sit down at the table to get yelled at in their house.

Ilya sat down and rigidly waited for David to speak first.

"I never really got to know you." David said awkwardly in a way that reminded Ilya of Shane. "But I mean... I've only been seeing you around here for less than a year."

Ilya still didn't know what to say. He balanced the little pile in his lap away from David's sight and slowly placed both of his palms on the glass of water in front of him.

"I don't know, time moves differently once you get to my age, it's really not that long so-"

Ilya had no idea what any of that meant.

“Maybe now’s still... a good time to start?”

He had no idea what he was expected to even say. It felt like he suddenly had to deal with too many people so soon after waking up again.

Ilya glanced at the large glass of water David had placed in front of him.

“Okay.” he said without looking up.

Because he genuinely had no idea what else he could possibly say.

He didn’t want to give himself false hope that things could still go well.

Before he could let himself overthink it, he heard the sound of steps frantically rushing down the stairs.

It was Yuna.

He wondered how things went with Shane. He didn’t even have his phone so he had no way of texting to ask.

“Ilya. I-“ Yuna started before noticing David on the other side of the dining table.

She turned to her husband and once again Ilya felt like he didn’t really belong there.

“David. Can I just borrow him for a second?” she said.

“Of course.” he replied and Ilya noticed that David spoke much more quietly than Yuna did.

Yuna didn’t seem to have much else to say to her husband so she turned to Ilya instead.

“Okay. Can you... can you come for a second so I can talk to you?” She said seriously.

She spoke in a way that seemed so hectic and determined at the same time and yet she still somehow sounded so emotional.

Ilya got up and a billion things felt like they were swarming his mind.

Did Shane tell her that they stole her fucking car too?

Surely she was actually going to tell him to leave this time. It was all just too intense.

“Can you um...” she started “Just come up with me?”

It already sounded so bad.

Go upstairs with her and then what?

“Okay.” Ilya said because once again he didn’t really have a choice.

So he followed her up the stairs and tried not to look when Yuna inhaled and rubbed her temples like she had a headache.

He wondered where they would go. Maybe they would go get Shane too. He wasn’t even sure if that would be a good thing or a bad thing.

Instead Yuna led him to the guest bedroom. The room where he had been expected to actually stay during his visit.

None of his things were there. He held onto the little envelope and brochure under the report with nowhere to even put them.

“Ilya-” Yuna finally started and her words felt heavy between them. “I’m sorry...”

She already looked absolutely defeated and Ilya braced for it.

I’m sorry, but I just really don’t think you and Shane should spend time together anymore.

I’m sorry, but I just don’t think you’re a good influence.

At least he knew Shane was going to be okay at home. They had already started building a solid plan for him to keep playing too.

They would get to keep playing together for at least a couple more months.

Maybe they would even play against each other someday. He hoped it would all work out for them. He would get to keep seeing Shane that way.

And he could keep scouting the audience, hoping to see glimpses of their child growing up happy and cared for.

He could learn to live with it. He had accepted loss in its ugliest enormity before. Distance would never be the same as the emptiness of knowing you can never see a loved one again.

“I’m so sorry you two went through all of this alone.” she continued “I know you’re adults now but you’re still too young to be handling this all by yourselves”

Ilya looked at her. She wasn’t mad at him. And she wasn’t even disappointed.

“And I know what Shane is like.” Yuna said while inhaling and holding the tears in. “I know you probably did most of it.”

Ilya felt so completely exposed but he could have sworn he saw a faint quiver take over her bottom lip for a second.

“You... you did well.” She said. “But that should have been my job.”

He pursed his lips and looked to the side at the empty nightstand. He hoped that looking away for a second would somehow make the air around him easier to breathe in.

“I’m sorry both of you felt like you couldn’t tell me.” she continued “I really meant it when I said you could tell me anything.”

Ilya took a breath and it somehow felt like it wasn’t enough. He waited a little so he could keep holding his composure together but Yuna kept talking.

“And I mean... I suspected it at some point.” she said with an inhale. “That maybe you were more than just friends.”

Ilya suddenly felt more rationally alert again. Like he needed to ask for important information.

“What is suspicious? That we do?” Ilya asked her.

He wanted to know so he could stay safe. He needed to make sure others and his own family wouldn't catch on as well.

"Ilya, I raised Shane." Yuna almost laughed and yet her voice sounded so fragile. "I've seen how he acts around his friends his whole life."

Maybe Shane really was right about his mother always knowing everything.

"I saw how he talked about you." she continued "And I saw how he acted around you."

Ilya tried to at least remember how Shane acted around their other teammates. But even in a crowd, Ilya always tried to pester him and get at least a fraction of his attention to himself.

"At some point last year it just seemed... a little different." she clarified for him "But I couldn't just jump to conclusions and accuse anyone."

"And you did not want..." Ilya paused a little as he tried to make sure he was choosing the right words "...to come stop this?"

"Of course not!" Yuna exclaimed "We always wanted you to feel welcome in our home. I never expected *this* to happen but... it doesn't change how we feel about you."

Ilya felt like she had just dropped a brick on his entire soul. It should have felt nice but it somehow hurt to hear it at the same time.

He didn't even know why hearing that was actually so painful. And it was still so much he felt like he was barely breathing.

He wished he could have his own little space where he could process those words properly.

"Oh-" Yuna choked out like she actually felt bad for saying it "Can I... can I give you a hug?"

She was looking at him with so much care while on the verge of tears and it absolutely destroyed him.

Ilya didn't say anything back. His only response came in the form of two rapid nods.

He leaned to the side so he could put the things he was holding on the little guest nightstand so they wouldn't somehow get damaged in the process.

When she hugged him it somehow felt like getting the little space he had longed to have to himself. He was still out in the open, but even with her holding him so close he felt like he was actually somewhere where no one could see him.

Her embrace felt so gentle that he felt like he was actually ready to cry his entire soul out. Yuna felt like she was so much smaller than him once they were actually so close.

It was the first time he had felt an embrace like hers.

Even when he remembered his own mother comforting him, she was always so much bigger than him in his memories. He always felt like she could shield him from the world as long as she held him close.

He had grown so tall without her even being around to see it.

He had spent the whole morning holding it together. Every shred of his attention had been absolutely devoted to trying to keep everything under control.

But he could no longer keep himself under control. And he couldn't hold it together.

He allowed himself to cry but only enough that he wasn't completely losing himself. Only enough where she still hopefully wouldn't notice.

Except she noticed how the sound of his breathing changed and how his breaths changed against her own body as he hung over the side of her shoulder.

"Awh-" Yuna exhaled weakly as she ran her hand across his back in comfort. "It's okay. We'll make sure everything's alright from here on out."

It sounded like such a vast promise to him.

Ilya briefly swiped his hand down his face like it would somehow help him come to his senses faster. Because they still needed to talk.

There were so many things they were supposed to go over but he couldn't even list them in his own mind anymore.

"Okay." Yuna exhaled sympathetically when Ilya pulled back like she felt the same way too. "Well this is definitely... a lot"

Ilya almost wanted to laugh a little with how nervous he felt. But at least he could finally feel a shred of relief underneath all of it.

"Maybe I should just... leave you to it." She decided "It's way too early and I think we all need to just breathe for a second."

Ilya didn't notice when she actually started walking away but he definitely noticed when she turned back to weakly smile at him.

"We'll talk more later, alright?" She promised, just like he had promised Shane when all his worries started. "And we could go over those... papers together if you want."

She gave him one last reassuring look before he was all alone in the lifeless room again.

And then he remembered that Shane was all alone in the other room down the hallway too.

He could actually go back to him. He could see Shane again and they could tell each other what happened.

Shane had told him he didn't want to be left all alone so many times over the past few days and he could finally go back to him again.

Ilya's feet felt like they quickly carried him on autopilot and Shane's bedroom door felt like it slid so easily under his hand.

The sight of Shane sitting on the edge of his bed and immediately turning to look up at him both worried and comforted him at the same time.

Shane didn't have to say anything for Ilya to immediately notice how overwhelmed he felt.

"Hey-" Ilya started as he rushed to kneel down in front of him "Hey, hey..."

He took Shane's hand, confident that it would actually be okay to hold it in that moment.

“Fuck...” Shane exhaled before closing his eyes briefly. “This is just... it’s a lot right now.”

“I know.” Ilya exhaled back with exhaustion too “But it’s okay, yes?”

He just needed Shane to confirm that things were as alright as they could be. Because he wasn’t sure himself either.

“No... yeah. I guess” Shane stammered absent-mindedly “Just... it’s too much right now.”

Ilya took both of his hands and looked up at him.

“Fuck, just...” Shane continued “It was really weird actually talking to her about it.”

“She talked with you?” Ilya asked. “And talk is okay?”

“Yeah.” Shane said “I told her what we planned... about me still making it to the draft.”

Ilya listened carefully. Of course Yuna also wanted to make sure her son could keep playing.

“Well, yes.” Ilya reassured him “Draft is what you want. And you are good player so...”

“Yeah. And I guess maybe...” Shane exhaled like almost half his worries had been lifted “Maybe it could actually work out.”

Ilya looked at him like he had all the patience in the world. Like he was willing to do anything to make sure everything could go as perfectly as possible.

“I think so too, yes.” he told Shane.

“Yeah. I just... I feel like you understand better.” Shane confessed like saying it was absolutely a big deal to him. “And I think I’d rather just... be around you for now?”

Shane looked at him like he had so much more to say. Like he still had a billion more things on his mind. Like he was still absolutely scared shitless but he somehow trusted Ilya to make sure everything would be fine.

“Okay.” Ilya nodded quietly because deep down he just wanted to be around Shane too. “Me too.”

He moved off the floor to sit next to him and Shane didn’t pull back. Instead Shane gingerly scooted closer so he was sitting right next to Ilya and that was when Ilya knew.

He knew that it was okay to hold him close. And it was what Shane wanted.

When he pulled him in, Shane’s body eased against his in a way that felt like they fit together perfectly.

And when he held Shane, it felt like he was being held too.

Chapter End Notes

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Thank you all for the love and support you have shown this story along the way! 

This was my first longfic! I really love this AU so this is definitely not the actual end for this universe!!

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