

For You (In Sweetness)

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For You (In Sweetness)

by [Lila_Mac](#)

Summary

In which Shane Hollander acquires a baby and Ilya Rozanov loses his fucking mind.

Notes

To anyone who is waiting for the next chapter of [so it's gonna be forever](#), sorry! You'll have to wait another week, probably. In the meantime, I hope you enjoy this. This is set after Sochi in 2014, and written on the premise that Shane is already out to his friends and family and that the situationship with Ilya has always been more serious on his part. It was love at first kiss y'all.

Thanks so much to my beta, winds_wanderer, for your help <3

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

He knows the second he lays eyes on her.

It's instant and jarring and happens in the span of a blink—just like that, a missing piece of his heart slotting into place. A puzzle made whole.

How strange, Shane thinks. He hadn't even known a piece had been missing.

Her name is Robin, they tell him. She is nearly seven months old; the only survivor of a devastating car crash that has stolen both of her dads and the drunk driver who'd swerved into their lane.

"She has no living relatives, Mr Hollander. You have been appointed guardian in the will."

The words don't make much sense.

Shane and Joe are from the same place in Ottawa. They'd gone through kindergarten and elementary school together, but their paths diverged there. Shane's future was hockey, and Joe was a figure skater. They'd stayed friendly and had worked out together a few times in their teens, but if pressed on their friendship, Shane wouldn't ever claim they'd been particularly close. He'd heard Joe had gotten married a while back, and had left a congratulatory comment on the Instagram post announcing the birth of their baby girl, but Shane hasn't spoken a word to him since the Olympics four months ago, and even that had been brief.

He'd never met his husband, Joseph.

He doesn't understand, then, why they have given him guardianship of their child; they hadn't told him beforehand.

"Does it say *why*?" Shane asks, and finally manages to tear his eyes away from the baby to look at the lawyer. She has warm eyes and a kind face.

She looks like the kind of person who is really good at delivering bad news—or maybe that's just been Shane's own personal experience.

"I'm afraid not, Mr Hollander, but I assure you, the will has been legitimised. For whatever it's worth, in the event of their untimely deaths, Joe Devon and Joseph Darling wanted you to raise their daughter."

"I just don't understand," Shane admits. "Joe and I were barely friends. We weren't close at all. Why would he want me to take care of his baby? There has to have been someone else in their lives who's better suited."

The lawyer sighs. "Perhaps, but that is not the choice they've made. They picked *you*, Mr Hollander."

Shane opens his mouth again, but the lawyer holds up a hand to stop him from speaking. "I want to make it very clear that you are by no means legally required to accept the

guardianship. The will only states Joe and Joseph's wishes; you are not obliged to take on this responsibility if you are unwilling or unable."

Shane looks back at the baby, at where she looks perfectly content in her little hospital crib. Her eyes are open, a murky dark colour with specks of something that may be blue or green. She's absolutely beautiful.

She is grabbing at her tiny little feet, pulling one against her mouth to gnaw at as she makes soft cooing noises.

"What will happen if I don't take her?" Shane asks.

He thinks he already knows the answer, but there is a part of him that needs to hear it, so that he can justify to himself later what he's about to do.

"She will enter foster care where she'll remain until she either ages out or is adopted."

Maybe she will be one of the lucky ones. Maybe she'll end up with people who can care for her and love her and who won't be travelling for half of the year. Maybe she'll have piano lessons and play soccer and paint messy pictures with stick figures holding hands to put up on the fridge.

Maybe she'll be happy.

But.

Maybe she won't, and Shane will spend the rest of his life making up scenario after scenario about where she is, what she is doing, and who she is with, and none of it will be pleasant.

He'll always wonder.

"Mr Hollander?"

Shane looks at her, at this sweet baby girl he'd known existed but had never expected to meet.

Robin, his soul sings. The first girl he has ever loved, because Shane only needed that one look to know:

There she is. My daughter.

**

Ilya finds out with the rest of the world.

What the fuck, he thinks as he reads the statement. What the fuck, he thinks again when some harried PA calls to tell him he's now doing his Awards sketch with Scott fucking Hunter. Ew.

Tripple what the fuck, he thinks, staring at the text thread on the screen of his phone and the last nine unanswered messages Ilya has sent Shane:

????

where the fuck did you get a baby??????

is this joke?

are you pulling prank on the whole world??

????

DID YOU STEAL A BABY??????????

HOLLANDER!!

you are really not coming to vegas?

hollander?

Ilya is feeling tragically hurt to have been left on read like this. It's probably on purpose. Probably Shane being petty and taking revenge for Ilya having more or less ghosted him for the last five months.

Since Sochi.

And okay, yeah, maybe Ilya has been a bit of an asshole, but also, just maybe, Shane doesn't have the time to respond.

He is probably legitimately busy, what with recently having become a single father to a baby girl, what the actual fucking *fuck*? Who even does that? What kind of premier hockey player is going to adopt a baby *alone* and still play professional hockey?

"How does that even work?" Ilya asks himself. Is Shane going to drag his baby along on road trips for seven months of the year? Will they put her in tiny hockey gear and keep her on the bench during games? Ilya blanches at the mental image, envisioning the Montreal players handing a baby down the line before jumping the boards for play. He shakes his head.

That obviously is not going to happen. Probably.

With a sigh, he exits the messenger app and opens up Twitter again. He's read the statement what feels like a thousand times, but he needs to see it just one more time.

New player acquired! the tweet says, and then, in the attached image:

The Montreal Voyageurs are pleased to announce that our captain, Shane Hollander, has recently adopted an eight-month-old baby girl.

On behalf of the entire organization, we would like to extend our most heartfelt congratulations to the entire Hollander family.

We ask for the family's privacy during this exciting time as Shane settles into parenthood and helps support his daughter. Consequently, Shane will not be appearing at this year's NHL Awards. We look forward to having him back on the ice with the rest of his teammates for training camp in September.

Welcome to the team, Robin Hollander!

The first time he'd seen it, Ilya had, for a moment, believed that the Voyageurs' Twitter account had been hacked. That had made more sense to him than Shane adopting a baby. But then people started interacting with the tweet, liking and replying and retweeting—the official NHL account retweeted and congratulated Shane—and Ilya had started thinking that maybe the world had entered into a mass psychosis before accepting that no, Shane Hollander really did go off and get himself a baby.

He hadn't even told Ilya about it. Surely, that would have been the polite thing to do? Friends and family usually got baby announcements. Is a fuckbuddy not a type of friend? It is right there in the word.

But no, Shane had not told Ilya, and instead, he had found out via his Twitter timeline, as if Ilya is no one special.

Shit.

He's not, is he? Not to Shane Hollander.

"And whose fault is that?" he asks his empty house.

Predictably, he doesn't get an answer.

**

"How did you do this with two babies? How are you *still* doing it?" Shane asks as he collapses next to Jackie on the couch, exhausted.

Robin is a good baby, sweet and happy for the most part, but she seems entirely convinced that naps are for the weak and feeble and people like her grandpa. If she ever gets to be the kind of teenager that sleeps the day away, Shane is going to delight in telling her about when she was a baby and he had to beg her just to nap.

Jackie lets out a quiet laugh. "I'm not sure to be honest. You just have to. You'd think with a baby for each of us we'd break even, but I still feel as if they outnumber us." she says. "How does that even work?" She shakes her head, baffled, and Shane feels for her.

Robin is just one baby, and he loves her more than he could ever put into words, but she is so, so much work. He can't imagine twins.

"Hayden helps, though, right?"

"Yeah, when he's home, but...you know. You guys play on the road so much, a lot of the burden falls on me. Which is fine!" Jackie hurries to explain. "I knew what I was getting into when I married a professional hockey player, but..."

"It's still a lot," Shane finishes for her, and Jackie nods, giving him a sheepish smile.

"Have you decided yet what you're gonna do with Robin once the season starts up?"

Shane sighs. “Not quite. My agent is working to get a special dispensation from the League. I’m going to have to bring her along for road games if I don’t want her to be raised by nannies away from me, but they won’t accept her hitching a ride with the team. I want to be able to travel on my own so I can bring Robin and a caregiver; I’m hoping it goes through if I pay for it myself.”

Jackie winces. “That is going to cost you so much money.”

“Yes, well. It won’t be for every trip, but at least she’ll be with me most of the time.”

“And he’s got that Rolex money,” Hayden shoots in as he walks into the living room from the kitchen. He hands Shane a plate with a sandwich on it and Shane’s stomach rumbles in appreciation.

This is his life now. Eating what he can, when he can.

“Thank you,” he says, so pathetically grateful not to have to fix his own food even if it’s just two slices of bread with some cheese and deli meat in the middle.

Hayden snickers. “Dude, you have got to settle on a nanny soon. You can’t keep up with your training and work obligations on top of Robin. It’s been almost three months, man.”

“I know, I know. It’s on my list, I swear, but I just feel so guilty about it. She’s already lost one set of parents, and she was looking around for them for *weeks*. It was horrible. I don’t want her to get used to missing me too.”

“Shane,” Jackie says. She reaches out to squeeze Shane’s arm gently. “She’s going to miss you. You can’t be with her every second of the day; that’s just how it is. But you’ll always come back to her, and she’ll always be happy to see you.”

“Yeah, I guess. I just wish it was easier.”

“It will be, once you get into a routine with a person you trust to be her caregiver outside of yourself. Have you gone through any of the candidates the nanny company gave you?”

Shane nods. “A couple of them looked okay, but I’m waiting for Mom and Dad to come back from their vacation. I want my dad to sit in on the interviews. He’s really good at reading people; apparently the Treasury Board of Canada is a lot more cutthroat than people think.”

They chat a little more, but it isn’t long until a baby starts crying, and then two more follow suit.

“Guess that means nap time is over,” Jackie says with a laugh.

Shane checks his watch, brows raising when he sees the time. “Robin has been down for almost forty minutes. That’s a new record, I think. Do you think she’ll keep it up?” he asks hopefully, and he should have known she wouldn’t when Hayden just looked at him sympathetically.

A few days later, Robin is crying from how tired she is, but is still refusing to go down for her nap, and Shane is beyond begging at this point, because if she doesn't sleep now, she'll stay awake through the night and they'll both be miserable.

The thought of having to go through the same thing all over again the next day, and the day after that, is soul crushing.

"Please, sweet girl, you have to sleep, we can't keep doing this." He's swaying her gently in his arms, exhausted and hungry and in desperate need of a shower. He's alternating between talking to her softly and humming nonsensical melodies when he decides they really cannot go on like this.

He needs help.

"Yes, this is obvious," Milena tells him the first time they meet; she is the third person Shane and his dad interview from the nanny company, and it quickly becomes apparent she'll be the last.

She is sixty six but no less spry than a fifty-year-old and tells Shane he is a magarac if he thinks otherwise.

"A what?"

"It means donkey. Donkeys are very foolish," she says, and the look she gives him is so judgemental Shane can feel himself shrink back into his seat. Probably, the wild look in his eyes and the spit on his shirt did not make for a good first impression.

His dad likes her no-nonsense manner and Shane likes the way she is not afraid to run his household with the same kind of precision and authority as a drill sergeant.

Milena is a Bosnian refugee. She fled across snow-covered mountains with a child on her back and another on her hip, all while holding the hand of a third, and she looks at Robin *exactly* as if she's seen war.

"I survived the Serbs," Milena says, showing Shane the scar on her leg from where she'd gotten caught up in the blast of a landmine. "I will survive your baby."

It only takes her a little over a week to bully Robin into submission.

Milena is Shane's hero now.

With her, Robin and Shane go from struggling through the days to something that actually resembles a functioning routine, and it's only when most days turn out to be good that Shane realises there'd been quite a few bad ones.

He's questioned himself so many times since that day in the hospital when he first saw Robin. He'd loved her at first sight, had been so sure in the moment that he was doing the right thing, but then the everyday realities of having sole custody of a baby made themselves known, and the doubt soon followed.

Had he made the right decision? Had he done right by Robin? Shane had known almost nothing about babies. What if he was a terrible parent and he'd ruin her life?

(What if he'd ruined his own?)

Somehow, it's having known to ask for help—to admit to himself that he was struggling on his own—that makes him look at Robin and say, “We’re going to be okay, aren’t we? We can do this. You and me.”

She coos back at him, small fingers pressing against Shane’s face until her pinky catches on his mouth. Her eyes go wide at the feel of his teeth, and she looks so shocked Shane startles into a laugh. It’s far from the first time her hand has found its way into his mouth, but she’s always so surprised by it.

“Silly girl,” Shane says after gently pulling her hand away. He peppers her face with kisses, and smiles wide when she bursts into delighted giggles.

Yeah, he thinks. They’re going to be just fine.

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Ilya stares at the bear. He flits his gaze over to the elk, and then back to the bear.

The elk is basically a moose, so obviously appropriately Canadian, but the bear is likely to piss off Shane once he sees who it’s from, which satisfies Ilya on a spiritual level.

Ilya isn’t quite sure why he feels the need to buy Shane Hollander’s baby a stuffed toy, but after several weeks and countless more unanswered texts, all he knows is that he *needs* Shane to respond, to answer just one of his many messages and was this what Shane had felt like, during those long months when Ilya had been the one to ghost him?

Ilya would like to go back to the past and punch himself in the face, because, as it turns out, there is no reason to have a fear of attachment when the person you’d like to attach yourself to won’t even acknowledge your fucking existence.

He thinks this, at least, will force Shane into giving him a reaction; his Canadian manners won’t let him ignore a gift for his baby. He’ll feel compelled to thank Ilya, if nothing else, and it’s pathetic that Ilya is willing to live off of scraps of Shane’s attention, but he’s come to the unfortunate conclusion that he’s starving without it.

It’s been two months since the announcement and Ilya still can’t believe Shane is a father now. He wants to know how it happened, because there is no way it was planned. Shane is only twenty three, hasn’t even won a Cup yet, so why the hell would he decide to take on the responsibility of fatherhood?

Ilya doesn’t know, but he really, really wants to find out.

First though, he’s going to buy a stuffed teddy bear and then pay an exorbitant amount of money to fast track shipping from Russia to Canada.

**

The package arrives while Shane is at the rink.

Milena has signed for it in his absence and Shane's curiosity only lasts until he sees the Russian stamps and the return address on the box, and then he's so taken aback he needs to go sit with Robin for a while.

"What's he up to, hm?" he asks her, and Robin spits up all over herself in answer. Shane makes a face. "Yeah, that sounds about right. All right, let's go get you washed up, sweet girl."

Shane...conveniently forgets about the package. He leaves it, unopened, on his kitchen countertop for the better part of three weeks before Milena decides he's being a magarac again.

"Donkeys are stubborn, too," she tells him, and it's the unimpressed look on her face that has Shane caving.

He waits until Milena is putting Robin down for a nap—after Shane has made his own attempt that all three of them knew only had about a twenty-four per cent chance of success. Robin has decided who the alpha in their household is, and it's not Shane.

Grabbing the box from the counter, he brings it with him into the living room and puts it down on his coffee table. For a minute, he just stares at it, trying to figure out why the hell Ilya Rozanov has sent him a package all the way from Russia. Shane has been ignoring it for so long he's probably not even there anymore; the pre-season is right around the corner. Ilya should be back in Boston.

"Come on, Hollander. Are you gonna back down from Ilya fucking Rozanov?"

He never has before, and he's not about to start now. Shane knows what this box is; it's a challenge, just another way for Ilya to say, *I dare you*, and Shane facing it head on. He always does when it's Ilya standing opposite him.

He shakes his head, bemused.

Here Shane has been desperate for some kind of sign from him for *months*, and the second Shane starts ignoring him back Ilya can't seem to shut up, spamming their text thread with so many messages Shane has lost count. He'd laugh from the irony of it all if it wasn't so fucking tragic.

"What the hell do you even want from me?" he asks the box, before deciding to just open the thing. He's not letting Ilya hold this over his head, whatever *this* is.

The first thing he sees when he pulls the flaps apart is a sea of foam peanuts, but after some digging around he finally pulls out a stuffed teddy bear.

Shane can't help himself; he does laugh then.

Ilya, that son of a bitch, has dressed the bear in a miniature Boston Bears jersey with the number 81 printed on its back. Attached to a band around one of its wrist is a Stanley Cup keychain, and tucked between its fluffy little arms is a picture of Ilya in his actual jersey, holding the actual Cup.

“He’s *such* an asshole,” Shane informs the bear, but he’s smiling helplessly, lips stretched wide in amusement and here is a problem Shane has had since he was seventeen:

He finds it so, so charming.

Months of no contact with this larger than life man, someone who’s spent years spinning Shane around and here he is, still just as caught up in Ilya’s orbit as he always has been, because the truth is that Robin is the first girl he has ever loved, but Shane has only ever been in love once.

“What are you doing?” he asks himself—or maybe Ilya, wherever he is in the world—because Shane is a father now and whatever games he’s been playing before needs to end.

Robin comes first, hockey second, and then everything else, and even if Shane would have liked for there to be some romance in that mix, Ilya had made it clear it wouldn’t be with him.

Shane sighs. He tugs the picture out from the bear’s arms, and furrows his brows when he sees Ilya has written something on the back:

~~Shane~~. Hollander, congratulations on your baby. This bear is for her, so she can hug someone who has actually won Stanley Cup.

I hope to meet her one day.

Sincerely,

the best hockey player in the world.

Shane stares at the text, at where Ilya has written out his name before crossing it out. He traces his finger over it, and suddenly finds himself sniffing, holding back the press of tears. The letters are precise and beautifully cursive, and in some far off part of his brain where Shane stores all his facts about Ilya, he notes two things:

1. Ilya has pretty handwriting.
2. It’s the first time he’s ever written Shane anything.

**

Ilya doesn’t see Shane until the season begins.

Montreal and Boston weren’t scheduled for any pre-season games this year, so by the time he actually gets to lay eyes on Shane in person, it’s for a game in the middle of October, and Ilya has been living off of a simple, *Thank you*, and a picture of Shane holding his baby; she’s clutching the bear in her arms, her little face buried in the soft fur.

It's fucking adorable—Ilya has the picture saved to a folder in his phone that is hidden inside four other folders with the first one titled NHL ESCROW (EXPLAINED), because if any of his teammates ever find it, the dumb shits will leave off at the first sign of anything CBA related.

(Ilya loves his team, but if he has to explain the revenue split between players and owners one more time, he's going to kick one of them in the nuts. Probably Cliff.)

So yeah, Ilya saves the picture in a place where no one will find it, and then spends so much time looking at it anyway he doesn't know why he bothered in the first place.

Shit.

Ilya can probably describe every detail of that image. Can tell anyone who asks exactly how soft Shane looks with his rumpled hair and pretty freckles. With the smile that is aimed at his daughter and the love on his face, plain as day.

He's tried to pick out the baby's features—some part of him is convinced that the adoption is a cover for the fact that Shane has gotten someone pregnant(!)—but her face isn't truly visible in the picture, and other than the dark hair, Ilya hasn't been able to tell what she looks like at all.

“Hey, Roz, you know that thing we don't talk about and we pretend not to know about but we know about it anyway?”

Ilya looks away from where Shane is doing filthy things on the ice as he stretches in preparation for the game, and turns to look at where Cliff has sidled up next to him.

“Did you get hit in the head? What the fuck are you talking about?”

Cliff arches his brows meaningfully. “You're staring, man,” he says, clasping Ilya on the shoulder and giving him a pitying look before skating away.

Ilya stares after him.

...No way.

There is no way his loveable but stupid teammates have any idea what's up. Ilya has been hooking up with Shane for the entirety of their NHL careers; has his teammates known the whole fucking time? What the hell? Are there fewer himbos on the team than Ilya has previously believed?

Ilya shakes his head. He doesn't have the time to think about that right now, because now he has to embarrass the Voyageurs in their own barn and silence the jeering crowd. He rolls his shoulders and feels a calm settle over him, anticipation buzzing under his skin.

Yeah. It's feeling like a good night.

**

A fucking five-point game; Shane is incensed and turned on in equal measure.

He is on the ice for the three assists, but is stuck on the bench, gritting his teeth during the two power-play goals that gives Ilya Rozanov his first NHL five-point game.

Ilya blows the Montreal bench a kiss after his last goal, but Shane knows it's aimed at him and, for a second, thinks red wouldn't look too bad on his skateblade.

"Fucking Rozanov," Hayden says next to him, scowling at where Ilya is celebrating with his teammates, and once Shane has curbed his more murderous desires, he wholeheartedly agrees.

"*Such* an asshole," he bites out, because Ilya is never as annoying as when he decides to put on a show on the ice.

(That Shane finds it sexy is entirely unrelated.)

The game is a bust, and once Shane has answered for their poor performance with the media and told the guys to, "Go home, lick your wounds. We'll take the next one," he finally gets to leave the arena. As usual, he's one of the last people out, the parking lot near deserted as he makes his way to his car; he wasn't expecting to find Ilya there, leaning back against the driver's side.

"What? Not even a hello?" he asks when Shane stops up short, staring at him. He gives Shane a leering once over, eyes dark as his lips stretch into a grin. "Not even a kiss?"

Dangerous.

That grin is dangerous; that grin makes Shane do stupid things.

"What are you doing here? Shouldn't you be out celebrating? It was a big night for you tonight."

"Ah, so you do know how to speak!" Ilya says, the words dripping with sarcasm as he pushes off the car. "You are right, *котёнок*. I should be celebrating, I was very good tonight, yes? Better than you." He's closed the distance between them, and when his hands come up to grab at Shane's waist, pulling him close, Shane goes.

(He always does.)

Ilya hums, satisfied, sure of his welcome as he bends to nose at Shane's hair, trailing down his cheek and leaving behind ghost impressions of his lips until finally he captures Shane's mouth into a deep kiss.

Shane sighs against him.

He feels Ilya's tongue press against the seam of his lips, and it's muscle memory to accept his tongue into his mouth, grinding against Ilya's crotch as Ilya's hands tighten on his waist before sliding down to find Shane's ass, squeezing possessively.

Exactly the way Shane likes.

Fuck.

What is he doing?

He ends the kiss, forces Ilya's hands away from him and takes a solid step back.

"What the fuck do you think you're doing? Are you *insane*? We're in public," Shane says, the words a furious hiss, worried that someone might overhear even though he knows, logically, that they're alone.

Ilya lifts his brows. "What does it look like, котёнок?"

"Don't call me that."

"But you are. My greedy little kitten, always so hungry for it," Ilya croons out, and because Shane knows he lives for the thrill of poking the bear, he reaches out and grabs Shane's face between his hands, gentle, so fucking gentle, as he steals another kiss.

Shane *hates* that he finds that charming, too. He lets it go on for far too long before he breaks the kiss.

"Don't," he whispers against Ilya's mouth, and Ilya must hear some of the heartbreak in his voice because he lets go of him, stepping away enough for Shane to catch his breath.

"You have been ignoring me," Ilya says, watching Shane with those shrewd eyes of his.

Shane can't help it. He laughs, and ugly, bitter sound. "That's rich."

"Shane—"

"No, you know what? I'm not doing this. I have a daughter to get home to, and you should be with your team."

"Котёнок—"

Shane muscles past Ilya. He unlocks the car and opens the door, pausing before getting into the driver's seat to look at Ilya.

"Let's stop, Ilya. Whatever this is; let's just end it now."

Ilya looks at him for a long, tense moment, and in the darkness of the parking lot, Shane can't make out the expression on his face. When Ilya has been silent for another long minute, Shane nods to himself. "Okay, then," he mumbles out, and finally sits down in the seat. He just wants to go home.

As he goes to close the door, Ilya suddenly grabs hold of it, bending down to catch Shane's eyes with his own.

“What if I do not want to?”

“Then what do you want?” Shane sighs tiredly, and before Ilya can answer, says, “You are the one who said we were just fuckbuddies, Ilya. You were the one who said we could never be anything more. *You* said that.” He lets out another laugh, the sound as ugly as before. “Guess I just finally listened.”

“I was wrong,” Ilya says insistently, but Shane is already shaking his head.

“How many people have you fucked since Sochi?” he asks quietly, and when Ilya doesn’t answer, he smiles grimly. “That’s what I thought.” He reaches out and grabs for the handle, and this time when he moves to close the door, Ilya lets him.

**

Shit, Ilya thinks as he watches Shane drive away.

He’s just been broken up with—they hadn’t even been together, not officially, but Shane has so clearly just broken up with him it doesn’t matter that the last time they were together was before Sochi. Not when Ilya can feel the lingering memory of Shane’s words grating over his heart, slicing away at the soft, unprotected tissue there.

No one has ever broken up with him before. Ilya has never let anyone that close, everyone kept neatly at arms length before Shane somehow managed to inch his way closer, step by step, until one day, Ilya realised he was the last thing he thought about before bed and the first thing on his mind in the morning and all kinds of alarm bells had started ringing.

Shane is beautiful and smart and wonderful and in love with Ilya—at least at some point he had been. And the horrible thing is that Ilya had known. He’d known how Shane felt about him, but opening his heart to him would mean slamming it shut on Russia, and so Ilya had been a coward and said nothing, while still clutching with both hands to keep Shane in his bed because giving him up wasn’t an option either.

Then Sochi came around, and with it the expectations of an entire country. The plan was always for Ilya to lead their team to gold at the Olympics on home ice. In the end, they hadn’t even medaled.

The aftermath was a shitshow. So many voices Ilya had to answer to and explain his failures—and it was easy to ignore Shane among all the bright lights and the clamouring noise.

Easy, too, to fall into bed with pretty girls who liked him but wasn’t in love with him, and so fucking them didn’t mean breaking their hearts at the same time.

The same thing Ilya always did when thinking about Shane became too much and too dangerous.

And now Shane has finally had enough; he’s moving on without Ilya. Shane, and his baby girl, Robin.

“You look like shit,” Cliff tells him once Ilya makes it back to the hotel. He’s propped up on his bed, the TV on in the background as he scrolls on his phone. He takes another look at Ilya, and then winces, putting his phone away. “Things didn’t go too well, huh?”

Ilya stops. He remembers Cliff’s comment from before, the pitying look and the implication of a secret shared.

Cliff is probably his closest friend on the team, and Ilya loves the guy, but he’s not exactly known for his observational skills. If Cliff even knows half as much as he is suggesting, Ilya has been far more obvious than he’s realised these last few years.

“What exactly do you think you know?”

Cliff shrugs. “Probably more than you’re comfortable with.”

“Marly.”

“Look, all I’m saying is that I’ve seen you pick up enough to know what you look like when you’re eye fucking someone, and like, eighty per cent of the time, Hollander is on the other side of that look. Besides, you know, Shane Jane. It wasn’t that big of a leap.”

Ilya breathes in, knows he’s safe with Cliff and so doesn’t bother to deny it.

“No way you figured that out by yourself.”

Cliff grins easily. “Vicky did. You know those French guys are all about sub-text or whatever the fuck he calls it.”

“Fuck. How many of you know?”

“Relax. It’s just me and Vicky. I think Price knew, though. He covered for you once; remember that time we overlapped with the Voyageurs in Buffalo because of the snowstorm?”

Yes, Ilya does remember the time he snuck away from his team to wade through half a metre of snow just so he could sneak into Shane’s hotel for what had been an incredibly ill-advised romp in the sheets. It’s in Ilya’s top three of best sex ever, and was only possible because Pike had not made the trip and so Shane had a room to himself. Totally worth the risk of being caught after curfew.

Fuck. Ilya isn’t ready to give that up. Doesn’t want to let Shane go when nothing in the world compares to the feeling of being with him.

“I messed up, Marly. He ended it. We were not even together, not like true partners, but he ended it because I would not give him what he wanted.”

“What did he want?”

“Someone who can love him back.”

“And you don’t?”

Ilya doesn’t answer, and he doesn’t think Cliff expects him to.

The problem, after all, had always been loving Shane too much.

**

Ilya keeps texting him.

Like a journal, he seems to use their chat to jot down random thoughts throughout the day, observations he thinks Shane might find funny or questions he doesn’t expect an answer to.

The lack of responses doesn’t seem to bother him much.

Shane knows he should block him, that this isn’t good for either of them, but it’s so incredibly fascinating to see the things that interest Ilya. To get this glimpse into the part of his life that he’s so carefully kept separate from Shane.

Their relationship had always been a tight circle of sex and hockey, and any time Shane had tried to expand that circle to include other things, Ilya had shut him down, until finally, after the Olympics, Shane stopped trying.

It isn’t that Shane is prepared to be out now, necessarily—there is already a long-term plan and a short-term plan in place, as well as three different contingency plans just in case he’s outed—but he wants something permanent. He wants romance and love even if that has to look different from what other people get, at least for the time being. He wants to parent his child with a partner.

(You know who you want, his heart tells his brain, and Shane ignores them both.)

Once, a few weeks into whatever it is Ilya is doing, he texts, *Is it hard? Being a father.*

It’s the closest Shane comes to breaking his self-imposed silence.

He wants, suddenly, to tell Ilya everything. To tell him how harrowing it had been to wait for the court to decide Shane was a fit guardian and then for the adoption to go through. He wants to tell him about how he’d seen Robin that first time and just *known* she was his; how so many people had asked him if he was sure he knew what he was doing and the doubts that had matched his own thoughts.

He wants to tell him about Milena, and how she’d saved Shane and Robin from drowning.

He wants to tell him about the first time Robin cried and cried and Shane was going out of his mind with panic because there was nothing *wrong*; she was fed and clothed and clean and had just woken up from a long nap and still she found fault with the world and with Shane.

He wants to tell Ilya how he had cried for hours that night, feeling the weight of his helplessness crushing down on him and how he’d felt so horribly alone as he’d spoken his most darkest and ugliest thoughts into the room, “I can’t do this; I have to give her back.”

(In the morning, he'd gone to pick Robin up from her crib and when his face came into view, she'd smiled, so delighted to see him that Shane had started crying all over again, pressing kisses into her skin and apologising for the terrible things he'd said.)

He wants to tell him about the first time Robin said dada, and how Shane had cried happy tears then. All the books said she was too young to actually mean it, that it was the kind of babbling all babies did, but she'd looked at Shane as she said it. She'd known who he was and she only called him that from then on.

Shane wants to tell Ilya so much, but he's still mending his broken heart and no one hurts Shane the way Ilya does.

He knows it's not on purpose, because for whatever else he is, Ilya is not a cruel man; he is never deliberately mean if he can help it, but Shane had handed him his beating heart on a silver platter and Ilya had left it out to rot.

Shane stares at that text for a long moment. *I miss you*, he types out.

He doesn't hit send.

**

"No, sweet girl, don't put that in your mouth, that's yucky."

Ilya's head shoots up at the sound of that voice, eyes scanning the crowd.

They're in Boston, and they don't play the Voyageurs for another two nights; Shane shouldn't be here yet, but that's definitely his voice. He must have flown in early, then.

Ilya keeps an apartment close to the rink, and he'd gone there straight after practice only to find the fridge empty, so he'd headed right back out again to a nearby Trader Joe's for some milk and eggs.

Now, though, he's found something much more interesting.

Shane is standing in front of the chips section, baby in one arm as he contemplates a bag of root vegetable chips before exchanging it for the pink lady apple ones instead.

Ilya can't help but smile.

Shane likes to pretend he's not picky about food, but he always goes back to his favourites.

"This is pleasant surprise," he says, and watches as Shane freezes in place.

"Ilya," Shane greets as he turns to face him, and it's been nearly half a year since Shane adopted his baby girl, but this is the first time Ilya has seen her face.

With the exception of her dark hair and the shape of her eyes that are remarkably similar to Shane's, he thinks she looks a little like Ilya—like what he looks like in his baby pictures.

She looks like what he'd imagine a child of him and Shane would be like, if such a thing were possible.

"What—?" he chokes out, but then the baby starts fussing and Shane's attention is immediately on her.

"Oh, she's going to need a diaper change." Shane makes a sympathetic face down at the baby. "Sorry, sweet girl, but we're still a twenty-minute walk from the hotel."

"Can change at my place. My apartment is nearby," Ilya blurts out. It's probably the last thing Shane wants, but Ilya is desperate for him not to walk away again.

And he needs answers.

Is it really a coincidence that the baby looks like him?

(If Ilya wasn't so intimately familiar with Shane's body, he'd think he'd been hiding a pussy and a pregnancy, because how the hell has Shane ended up with a baby that somehow looks like them both?)

"Ilya," Shane starts saying, clearly looking to say no when Ilya hurriedly interrupts him.

"Come on, котёнок. Will be better for your baby, hm? Robin, right?" He fashions his face into his most beguiling look, the one that charms grandmothers and babies and Canadian hockey players alike.

Especially Canadian hockey players.

"Hello, малышка. You are most beautiful, just like your daddy," he says, and is answered by a gummy smile that shows off Robin's two bottom teeth.

God, she's adorable. Ilya is half in love with her already.

When he lifts his gaze to Shane, the look on his face is so familiar. It's the same kind of exasperated fondness Ilya so often inspires in him, when he's done something Shane finds charming despite himself.

It's one of Ilya's favourite expressions.

"How close is your apartment?" Shane asks, because he hasn't been there before.

Ilya had always brought him to the house, the place he considers home—and that's just so fucking telling isn't it? Ilya doesn't bring his girls home; Shane was the only one he wanted to see in the space he's made his own.

Now there are no girls and no Shane, because Ilya has been living like a monk since Shane's fatherhood was announced.

"Close," Ilya promises. "Only five minutes from here."

It's more like ten, actually, but Shane doesn't say anything about it as Ilya unlocks the door to his apartment and ushers Shane in. He's got Robin strapped to the baby carrier he'd pulled out of the large bag he's been carrying.

("She prefers being held in my arms, but I couldn't be bothered with the stroller and she gets heavy after a while.")

"Sure," Ilya had replied, knowing nothing of babies or how they travelled.)

"Oh, this is amazing," Shane gushes as he takes in the floor to ceiling windows covering two full walls. "That view is really something. Is this an investment property?"

"No, Mr Real Estate, not everything needs to be an investment," Ilya says, and the words are supposed to come out mocking, but instead they're coated in so much affection he makes it awkward instead.

Shane shuffles on his feet, stroking a hand over Robin's head as he avoids Ilya's eyes.

"Sorry," Ilya says, and before Shane can say anything to that, adds, "the bathroom is over there. Use whatever you need."

"Thanks."

"Of course. I will fix us something to drink."

"Ilya—"

"I insist."

Shane sighs, and in the carrier on his chest, Robin has started fussing again. "Fine. I'll be right back," he says, offering Ilya a tight smile before closing the bathroom door behind him.

**

"That was weird, right?"

Robin coos, waving her lovey blanket at him in answer.

"I agree," Shane says, "he *was* being weirder than usual. What's he up to now, hm?"

He keeps up a steady stream of words as he changes Robin's diaper. She likes the sound of his voice, Milena has told him, and it's good to talk to her anyway, to pause at natural points and let her respond with her baby babble so she gets used to the flow of conversation.

Sometimes, Shane wonders what she's thinking. It's so obvious that she has opinions and likes and dislikes and while Shane is excited for when she starts talking, he likes this too. When she's small and safe and cuddled in his arms.

"Come on, sweet girl. Let's say our goodbyes and get the hell out of dodge, okay?"

He's smiling at Robin as they exit the bathroom, laughing when she pats at his face as if to say, "You can do this," and grabs her little fist to press a kiss to her tiny knuckles.

"She is good baby," Ilya says when he sees them, and Shane doesn't think it was a question, but he nods anyway.

"Yes. A terror when it comes to sleep, but otherwise she's the sweetest little girl you'll ever meet. Aren't you, sweet girl?"

He rubs his nose against hers, grinning when Robin lets out a torrent of baby talk in response. When he looks back at Ilya, he is staring at them with a dumbfounded look on his face; he looks rattled, as if he's taken a hit on the ice he didn't see coming.

"Are you okay?" Shane asks, just as Ilya blurts out, "Milk!"

Shane stares. "What?"

"Milk," Ilya repeats, in a calmer voice. He's lost some of that dazed look, but now there is a sheepish expression on his face instead. "My fridge is empty. It is why I was at the store. But I only bought milk and eggs," he says, shrugging helplessly at Shane and looking so lost Shane can't help but indulge him. He can't remember ever having seen Ilya this wrongfooted.

"Okay, I wouldn't mind a glass of milk."

He follows Ilya over to the kitchen, accepting the glass of milk Ilya hands him before taking another look around the apartment. It really is quite nice. It's obviously a luxury apartment, sleek and modern, but there's something very subtle about it that Shane finds very appealing. He especially likes the natural lighting from the large windows.

"So," Ilya says, and Shane can feel his eyes on him as he looks around. "How did you end up with Robin? Adopting a baby is a very big decision."

"It was," Shane agrees, and when he doesn't say anything else, Ilya makes an impatient noise.

"You plan to adopt her for a long time before?"

He's trying to sound casual, Shane thinks, but when he turns to face him, there is an intent look in his eyes. Shane blinks, surprised.

"No," he says slowly, wondering why Ilya even cares. "It happened pretty quickly." His brows furrow as Ilya makes a gesture to encourage him on, and while Shane has chosen not to explain the circumstances of Robin's adoption to the public, it's not exactly something he's trying to keep secret.

He doesn't know why Ilya seems so interested in this, but he doesn't mind sharing the truth.

"She'd already been adopted once. My childhood friend, Joe, and his husband adopted her when she was a newborn. They were in a car accident when Robin was seven months old; she was the only survivor, and they'd appointed me her guardian in the will." Shane looks down

at where Robin is quietly chewing on the bunny ear of her lovey. “It was hard becoming a dad overnight,” he admits, “but when I saw her for the first time, I just knew she was meant to come home with me.”

“She—” Ilya clears his throat. “She did not have other relatives? What about her birth parents?”

“No, both Joe and Joeseeph—that was Joe’s husband—lost their parents young, and neither had siblings. I hope they had other friends who would have taken Robin if it really came down to it, but they named me in the will, and no one contested the guardianship when the court was deciding if I would get to keep her.”

“And her birth parents?”

Shane shrugs. “As far as I understand it, it was a closed adoption. That means all the identifying records of her biological mother are sealed. She wouldn’t even have been told about Joe and Joseph’s deaths.” He looks back down at Robin, pressing a gentle kiss to the top of her head. “The only thing I know about the birth mother is that she was twenty-five when she had Robin, had no known medical issues, and is of mixed European and Asian heritage. You know, my mom thinks actually thinks Tobin looks a little like me.”

“She does,” Ilya says quietly. “I think so too.”

Shane hums. He doesn’t really see it himself. They share the same colour hair, and maybe there’s something around the eyes if he really looks for it, but otherwise he feels as if Robin is uniquely herself.

Ilya asks him a few more questions—when is Robin’s birthday? What things does she like? Is she talking?—and Shane is so bemused by his interest that he keeps answering, but eventually he can tell that Robin is getting antsy.

“We really should get going. Robin is due for her nap, and she’ll be a monster tonight if she doesn’t sleep now.”

Ilya seems reluctant for them to leave, but he doesn’t come up with another excuse for them to hang around. Once Shane has Robin back in the baby carrier, he follows them to the door, waiting patiently as Shane roots around in his bag to make sure he has everything.

“Oh, the diaper!” Shane exclaims. “Sorry, I left it in a disposable bag in your bathroom. I’ll just bring it with me.”

Ilya shakes his head. “Is okay, Shane. I will take care of it. You get your little one back to the hotel so she gets her sleep.”

“You’re sure?”

Ilya makes a big show of rolling his eyes, and Shane hides a smile, but doesn’t press further. “Thank you for the milk,” he says instead. “And for letting us borrow your bathroom.”

“Was no problem. Glad I can help.”

“Right, well. I guess I’ll see you for the game?” Shane asks, and when Ilya nods, he says, “Okay, bye, see you later,” and leans in to give Ilya a goodbye kiss the way he’s done a hundred times before. That easy press of lips to tide them over until the next time they met up at a hotel room or, more frequently before it all ended, at either of their homes.

Shane is so, so dumb; why the hell would he do that?

“Shit! Sorry, oh my God, that was so inappropriate. I’m really sorry, we’re going now—”

Ilya reaches for him, mindful of Robin as he grabs the back of Shane’s head with one hand and reels him into a bruising kiss. His other hand has come to a rest on Shane’s chin, tilting him just so for easier access. He nips playfully at Shane’s bottom lip, and then places a gentle kiss there, as if in apology.

When they break apart, Shane stares up at him with wide eyes, and Ilya just smiles at him softly. He leans in and kisses his right cheek, his left, and then the corner of Shane’s mouth, his lips lingering there as if he can’t bear to pull away.

“Ilya,” Shane breathes out, and Ilya hums, the sound of it vibrating against Shane’s skin.

“You said we were done, but you are wrong, Shane Hollander,” Ilya tells him. “You waited for me before, so I can wait for you now. But when you are ready, there is no holding back, hm?”

He kisses Shane one last time, and when Robin starts making unhappy noises at being ignored for so long, he gently pushes them out the door with a short goodbye until Shane and Robin are left out in the hall, staring at the now closed door.

“What the hell was that?” Shane asks, and Robin says, “Dada,” but it sounds like a question, so Shane figures she’s as confused as he is.

Just what are you doing, Ilya Rozanov?

**

Ilya is freaking the fuck out.

He spends an hour convincing himself that Robin *has* to be his, and then another hour deciding she can’t be.

It’s a roller coaster of a ride.

She does look like him, he thinks, but apparently not enough for Shane to take notice, so maybe it’s more that Ilya is seeing what he wants to see and she looks like Ilya as a baby because *she* is a baby and all babies resemble each other to a degree.

Thinking about it, Ilya reluctantly acknowledges that if he were to compare his actual baby pictures to one of Robin, he’ll probably find more differences than similarities.

Apparently, Robin was born in November last year, which incidentally is nine months after the last time Shane had tried to end things between them. Ilya had drowned his sorrows in bad Canadian vodka and a woman in Ottawa that could have been Shane's twin, but he'd been so drunk he hadn't been able to get it up again after she'd blown him and he'd been so heartsore from missing Shane that he'd spent the rest of the night crying into her arms as he talked about how he was in love with someone else but that he kept messing it up all the time because he was scared and stupid and too much of a coward.

(In the morning, she'd made him eggs and bacon and told him to get his shit together and stop wasting time being a fuckboy, and then she'd sent him off with a kiss on his cheek and she'd been really lovely, actually.

Two weeks later, Ilya played a game against Shane in Montreal, they fell into bed like usual, and were back on again from there.

That time had lasted them until the days before the Olympics.)

Now, the love of his life is parenting a child that Ilya has to concede is probably not his—even though he really wouldn't have minded that—and Ilya is dying for want of them both.

What a fucking mess.

Ilya has known for months now that Shane is it for him. He'd known before—maybe always, if he's really honest—and the thought of everything he has to give up in order to love Shane is still vast and terrifying, but less so when he's lived out the alternative and found that it was no life at all.

He has hockey and fame, money and girls—if he wants them—but it's all without sense, without enjoyment, if there is no Shane.

Seeing Shane in his apartment with Robin in his arms and that smile on his face that was just for her, had been like taking a sledgehammer to the gut because Ilya has previously been unaware that he wanted children, but apparently he does.

He really, really wants them with Shane, specifically.

The realisation had left him breathless.

Ilya has been stupid before. He has let fear and shame rule his heart, but he's been telling Shane his everyday thoughts for weeks now, without filter, without censure, and it's been freedom from a cage of his own making. The fear is still there—Russia, his family—but it's not in control anymore.

Ilya touches his mouth, feels the sense memory of Shane's lips on his from that first kiss as he was leaving, habitual, quick, a loving ritual so ingrained in them both that Shane had forgotten himself for that one second.

It was all Ilya needed to know there is still hope for a happy ending.

He can get his man.

(And his man's baby too.)

**

Shane leaves Robin with Milena during play, and once they've beaten the Bears in overtime for what had been a nailbiter of a game, Shane finds them waiting for him outside the visitor locker room.

"Oh," Shane says, surprised as he accepts Robin into his arms. "Did someone know to guide you here?"

Milena gives him a considering look. "Yes, a Mr Rozanov arranged for an assistant to help us, apparently," she says, and Shane blushes for no apparent reason. "He also gave Robin this."

Milena holds up a bag with the Bears logo on it and pulls out three sets of Boston Bears onesies in what looks to be Robin's size. They all have Rozanov 81 on them, of course.

"Unbelievable," Shane mutters, but when they leave for Montreal, he packs the onesies and Milena only gives him a knowing look and says nothing.

It's not the last gift they receive.

For Robin's first birthday, Ilya sends a Pikler Triangle set that is supposed to help with her motor skills and coordination and that Shane knows is expensive because he'd looked at it several times before deciding he should probably wait until Robin is a little older.

It comes with another handwritten note:

*For Robin,
so she can be a fun baby and not boring like her daddy.
Sincerely,
the best hockey player in the world.*

Shane rolls his eyes so hard it physically hurts, but he saves the note next to the picture he hadn't managed to throw out, and lets Robin have her fun.

Ilya keeps up his persistent texting; sometimes—most times—Shane replies.

(He thinks they might be something resembling real friends now.)

For Christmas, they get even more gifts. There's about a hundred for Robin, half a dozen for Shane, and a box of expensive Swiss chocolate paired with what Shane knows to be really good Russian vodka for his parents.

"Why is Ilya Rozanov sending us Christmas presents?" his mom asks, sounding far too curious, and when Shane only shrugs and mumbles something about how no one could possibly know anything about what goes inside the head of Ilya Rozanov, Milena snorts and even his dad gives him a pointed look.

When all three disappear into the kitchen to tend to the dinner, Shane knows they gossip about him.

“Why are people so nosy, hm?” he asks Robin, who is too busy playing on the climber to be interested in anything he says.

For Valentines, Ilya sends him so many roses Milena shakes her head and asks, “For how long will you keep this man in the doghouse. Don’t be a magarac for too long, hm?”

Milena doesn’t know the full story—no one really does—but she’s both sharp and observant and she’s managed to put together enough clues to form a picture.

That they’ve graduated from texts to calls, probably doesn’t help.

By the end of the season, they’re being outright flirty, and when the Bears are knocked out of the playoffs and Ilya says he doesn’t want to return home to Russia, Shane jokes, “You could come here. Hang out with Robin and Milena when I’m on the road,” and Ilya shows up at his door the *next day*.

“Are you ready now, Shane Hollander?” Ilya asks him when he opens the door, and Shane greets him with a kiss that captures the air from right out of their lungs.

“This is your last chance, Ilya. I’m being so fucking serious. Do not mess this up. Please.”

Ilya pulls him into a hug, holds him so tenderly Shane could cry from it. “I am serious too,” he says, and Shane believes him.

This time, when he offers Ilya his heart on a platter, shy and hesitant and a little bit scarred, Ilya cradles it in the palm of his hands, where it will sit for the rest of their lives, safe and unhurt.

**

By the time Robin looks at him and calls him, “Papa,” Ilya knows she is the child of his heart, but she hadn’t come from him.

He loves her anyway, of course, but whatever resemblance there is between them really is just a happy coincidence, and besides, Shane never sees it, so probably it was just Ilya wishing for the impossible.

(He thinks, in some secret, dark and desperate part of him, he wanted it to be true, because if he was her biological dad, Shane could never truly leave him; Robin would always tie them together.)

So regardless of her DNA, she is his child. His and Shane’s.

The first of many, he hopes.

They spend the whole summer together after Shane’s Cup win, and it’s a whirlwind of exuberant joy and so much love Ilya could float on it forever and never be scared of falling

off that raft.

Going back to Boston in the fall is so depressing Ilya alerts management that he would like to request a trade to Montreal.

"You're a fucking lunatic," Shane says when he tells him, but then he proposes in the next breath, so Ilya knows he's done good.

When they get married the next summer with friends and family and teammates in attendance, it's after the first Cup they've won together and with Robin as their flowergirl.

She is, unsurprisingly, the star of the show.

Later that night, after he's taken Shane to bed and they're sweaty and panting from their lovemaking, he says, "Let's have another one."

Shane hums in question, too fucked out to follow Ilya's line of thinking, so he leans over him, pressing kisses into the marks along his collarbone where Ilya had set his teeth in before.

"Котёнок, let's have another baby. Give Robin a sister or brother."

Shane blinks up at him. "Really? You'd want more?"

"I would fuck one into you right now if I could," Ilya says, grinning roguishly down at Shane and feeling his cock stir valiantly at the thought.

He thinks Shane will roll his eyes at that, but instead his gaze goes dark and he licks his lips. "Yeah?" he asks, all breathy and inviting and Ilya thought he would need another twenty minutes to recover at the very least, but with incentive like this, how can he resist?

They don't talk very much after that.

**

Two years later, when they win their third championship, they put their baby boy in the bowl of the Cup.

(This is how they come out.)

End Notes

Imao at Ilya being so gone on Shane he took one look at his baby and decided that baby needed to be his too. I leave it up to you guys if there actually was a resemblance or not, or if Ilya simped so hard he was seeing things.

Малышка - "Baby girl" or "little one".

Котёнок - kitten

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