

**room for more**

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# room for more

by [aurora\\_chiroptera](#)

## Summary

For several years, Shane and Ilya have been the center of each other's worlds. But when a new kid transfers into their grade, their duo turns into a trio. Cue shenanigans from hockey rinks to stray kittens.

## Notes

I am mixing book and show canon for Svetlana, mostly taking from the book that her father was a Russian NHL player so that he can be transferred from Boston to Ottawa. I have some vague memory that flipping quickly through the book didn't confirm that he was a goalie, so that's what I'm going with. Otherwise characterization and appearance will be sticking to show canon.

I am unsure I un-Americanized all the language around school correctly. My research seems to be that Canada uses a lot of the same words as the U.S. but if I messed up (should grade be year?), let me know!

September 2003

Shane and Ilya were so wrapped up in talking to each other in Russian about their team for that year, with their new head coach, that they almost didn't notice when a girl walked up to their table in the cafeteria.

It wasn't until she asked, "Can I join you?" also in Russian that they both looked up.

Shane remembered their homeroom teacher introducing her as a new student, coming in a couple weeks into the start of classes. "You're Svetlana?"

She nodded. Her curly red hair was in a single thick braid down her back. Her posture was perfect and Shane would feel intimidated by her, except that she shifted on her feet in the same way he did when he was nervous.

It would be scary, starting in a new school in a new country. He remembered how hard it had been for Ilya. Shane moved his backpack and scooted down the bench. "Yeah, you can join."

She smiled then and it made Shane feel like he had done well.

As she sat, Ilya leaned over the table to get her attention. "I'm Ilya, this is Shane."

"Nice to meet you." Svetlana's posture started to relax and she pulled out a lunch box. "Are you both from Russia?"

No one had ever thought Shane could be from Russia, so it made him smile in surprise to hear the question.

"I am, he is not," Ilya pointed to himself and then Shane.

"You're Russian is very good," Svetlana told Shane, turning in her seat to face him better.

"I taught him," Ilya said proudly, with one of his new, annoying smirks. Did he practice the expression over the summer when Shane wasn't looking?

Shane rolled his eyes. "You helped."

Svetlana laughed. "I heard you talking about hockey. My dad was just traded to the Centaurs so I know a lot about it."

"Do you play?" Shane asked. Ilya reached over to tap a finger near Shane's own lunch, which was largely untouched. He sometimes got too distracted talking that he forgot to eat, but Ilya didn't let that happen after the first couple of times. He started on his apple slices.

"Sometimes I wish I did," Svetlana pouted. "My parents aren't super excited about me playing, so I've never been on a team."

Shane felt himself frowning, trying to understand.

“Are you bad at it?” Ilya asked, talking even though his mouth was full. “Or is it something stupid, like because you’re a girl?”

Svetlana took a big bite of the pasta that seemed to be her lunch. She swallowed before answering, “I’m good, though I would be better if I could practice more. I think my mom is scared for me to do it because of my dad getting injured. Which I think is stupid - if I am better at it, then there is less chance of injury!”

Shane couldn’t imagine what it would be like if his parents suddenly decided he wasn’t allowed to play hockey. It would be a nightmare. “You’re right, that’s so stupid!” Shane’s mind immediately started to think about ways that Svetlana could play anyway.

“You should come skate with us sometime,” Ilya said, jumping ahead by several thoughts before Shane could plan them. “If we practice while we skate, who would blame you for joining in? Then we can see how good you are.”

Svetlana smiled, “I’d like that a lot. Would that be okay?” She directed the question to Shane.

Shane liked having practice time just with Ilya. It was something their parents had been letting them do for years, happy to spend money to access a local year round rink. But having someone else to play with would probably only improve their game. Plus, Svetlana seemed nice and she wanted to play.

“Of course,” Shane said. “We usually go on Saturday.”

Svetlana’s smile grew wider. “I’ll ask my parents tonight! What positions do you play?”

“We’re both forwards,” Shane said. “I’m usually center, but Ilya’s also really good.”

“I’m flexible,” Ilya said, the smirk back. Shane kicked his shin under the table, which earned him a glare.

“I actually have some goalie gear. I bet I could bring it. Then you could really practice making shots!” Svetlana said.

“That’d be amazing!” Shane liked this idea more and more.

“So how was your day today?” Dad asked. They were sitting around the kitchen table, and Mom had just finished her answer to the same question, a good portion of which Shane didn’t understand but he liked to listen anyway.

“Ilya and I made a new friend, I think,” Shane said, once he finished his bite of food.

“Oh?” Mom said and Shane was a little annoyed at her surprise. Ilya was still better at making friends, so Shane had talked about Ilya’s other friends before, even how Shane hadn’t thought of them like they were also his friends. Mom wasn’t wrong, but it was still annoying.

“Yeah, she just moved here,” Shane said, fiddling with his napkin. “Her dad is on the Centaurs. He’s Russian, but apparently Svetlana was born in the United States. She’s only lived there and Russia, so she is brand new to Canada.”

“Oh yes her father must be-” Mom started, but stopped when Dad’s hand rested on hers.

Dad smiled at Shane, which meant he wanted Shane to continue. “And her name is Svetlana?”

“Yes, and she really likes hockey too, so Ilya and I invited her to skate with us this weekend,” Shane said, and realized this was a perfect opportunity to ask. “Can I give our number to them so her parents can talk to you about it?”

“Oh course,” Mom said. “That sounds fun. Your dad and I can figure out the details.”

It wasn’t surprising that Svetlana’s dad didn’t come on Saturday - he would be busy with the pre-season. Shane’s dad had wanted to, but Shane had overheard him and Mom discussing that maybe it would be good for Irina and Mom to greet the new mom. Dad had laughed and said, “I know this is an excuse for you and Irina to hang out without me, it’s okay.” Shane didn’t know if it was weird or not that Mom and Irina were friends, just that it did make spending time with Ilya easier.

Svetlana’s mom had brown skin, and hair similar to Sevtlana’s, just darker. She seemed nervous and Svetlana was back to her perfect posture. It looked like they had gotten there first and Svetlana relaxed once she saw Shane and Ilya. Mom had driven, picking up Irina and Ilya on the way, so they all arrived together.

Svetlana hurried over, black hockey skates over her shoulders. “You’re late.”

Shane glanced at the clock sitting high on the wall. “By one minute.”

Ilya grinned, tossing an arm around Shane’s shoulders. “Don’t worry, we would not stand you up.”

Svetlana huffed a dramatic sigh. “How am I supposed to know that? We just met.”

“Come, come. Let’s get our skates on and we can settle this on the ice,” Ilya started walking, and Shane let himself be pulled along. As they passed Svetlana, Ilya put his free arm around her shoulders.

Svetlana didn’t shrug him off, but the look she gave was pretty murderous. “Since I’m goalie, when you get no shots in, we’ll talk.”

“We’re talking now,” Ilya said. “Because you know what? We’re friends.”

“I don’t think it works that fast.” Svetlana huffed again, but from Shane’s vantage, peeking around Ilya, he was pretty sure she was... hiding something. Maybe she was really nervous.

“It can! Shane and I were best friends as soon as we met,” Ilya assured. “And we couldn’t even talk to each other in the same language. We can talk in two.”

“It’s true,” Shane said. He’d never had an experience like it but he could see Svetlana coming close. After a week of lunches together, he liked her and, unlike how he felt about some of Ilya’s other friends, it didn’t leave a sinking feeling in Shane’s stomach; the fear he was going to be left out. She seemed to like him just as much as she did Ilya.

“You’re both weird,” Svetlana said, shrugging Ilya’s arm off now and sitting on a bench to put her skates on.

“That’s why we’re so charming.” Ilya sat beside her.

Shane settled on her other side. “Don’t mind him. He just wants to show off.”

Ilya pouted, which made Svetlana laugh. “Shane! You are so mean to me!”

“I’ve never been mean to you in your life.”

“Untrue! This is untrue. I am victim.” Ilya clutched his chest above his heart.

Svetlana continued to laugh, her hair falling around her face. Ilya caught Shane’s eye when she wasn’t looking and gave a thumbs up. Shane just smiled helplessly back.

It seemed between the two of them, they had gotten Svetlana relaxed enough to goof around on the ice before they got serious. Svetlana wasn’t quite as fast as Shane or Ilya, but that wouldn’t matter if she was good at being a goalie.

Some high school players had claimed one side of the rink, but Mom helped them set up with a goal and bucket of pucks. She skated in front of Svetlana to ask, “Are your pads and everything in good shape?”

Svetlana nodded, smiling behind her mask. Her hair stuck out in a poof from the back of her helmet. “Don’t worry, I’ll be fine. But these boys’ egos might need some help when I’m done with them.”

Mom laughed at that. “I like it. I’ll get out of your way now.” As she staked back towards the edge of the rink, Ilya held a hand out and Mom fist bumped it.

Ilya then skated over, knocking into Shane’s shoulder. “Me first!”

Shane pushed back into him. “No way, you were first last time we played!”

“Someone hit a puck, I’m getting bored!” Svetlana’s shout halted the scuffle from devolving further.

Shane pushed Ilya out of the way, grabbed one from the bucket, and shot it at her. She blocked it, and grinned. Shane tried again, acting as if he was going for one corner, before slipping it in another. That one went through. Svetlana’s smile didn’t dampen.

After Shane had done five, Ilya knocked him out of the way with a shout of, “My turn!”

The rhythm was easy after that, ending only when Ilya stole Shane’s final shot and took off across the rink. Shane chased after him, keeping close, and it ended with a crash into Svetlana and the net.

They all breathed heavily for a moment laying on the cold ice, before Ilya laughed, pushing himself up and holding one hand out to Shane and the other to Svetlana. Shane accepted, but caught Svetlana’s eye. As soon as they were both righted, they tugged and started pulling Ilya across the ice.

Shane felt tired and happy when it was time for them to take off their gear, gathering all together to go home. “You’re good,” he said to Svetlana.

“I know,” Svetlana said with a smirk to rival Ilya’s.

“Do you want to be a goalie, like your dad?”

Svetlana shrugged. “It’s what I’m best at. What I’m used to.”

“Does it make you happy?” Ilya asked. Shane wouldn’t have thought of that question - hockey was one of his favorite things in the world and almost always made him happy.

Svetlana shrugged again. “Sometimes. But I feel like I don’t know exactly what I want to do. I want to play... but is that just because of my dad?”

Shane turned this over in his mind. His mom’s love of hockey was part of why Shane also loved it, but she didn’t play herself. Maybe that was the difference.

This set a different question off in his mind.

On the ride home, when there seemed to be a pause in Mom and Irina’s conversation, Shane asked, “Mom, why didn’t you ever play hockey?”

Mom glanced at him using the rearview mirror. Not for long, she focused back on driving quickly, so Shane had a hard time reading her face. “No one told me I could. By the time I’d figured it out for myself, I was already too far behind to be considered for high school, let alone college, teams.”

After a moment of quiet, it was Ilya who asked. “Did you always like hockey?” Shane appreciated it because he had follow up questions but hadn’t gotten them in order yet.

“It wasn’t really something my family watched, but I really clung to it starting in middle school,” Mom answered. “I used to make fun of it, because hockey was one of so many little things that left me feeling like an outsider in my own country. But then something just spoke to me, when I caught a game at a friend’s house. I started seeking it out for myself and I guess the rest is history.”

Shane had never heard this story before. “You used to go to Dad’s games, that’s how you met right?” Shane had heard this story many times, but he liked it a lot.

“Yes, I did some work with the team too, but I tried to get the best seats at every game, and even traveled for some of the away ones.” Shane saw she was smiling in the mirror.

“Do you wish you’d been able to play?” Shane asked, after hesitating a moment. He didn’t want to say anything that would upset her.

Mom sighed. “Sometimes I do, but I’m really very happy with how my life turned out.”

“Being human means lots of different paths open, or don’t, throughout our lives. Sometimes we miss them, sometimes it’s a relief to watch it go by.” Irina said, twisting around in her seat, when Mom had finished. “I’ve found it’s best to follow the joy. Which seems for both of you to be hockey, yes?”

“Yes,” Shane said. “Do you think that it would also make Svetlana happy?”

“None of us can answer that,” Mom said.

“And she’s probably dealing with a lot of different feelings. Moving can bring up a lot,” Irina said. “I think it’s good you invited her though.”

“Could she play on the same team as us, if she wanted?” Shane asked. He’d never given it much thought, the way hockey had always been divided, how he’d never played with or against girls since he was very little.

“Probably not, unless something changes in all sports,” Mom said, and Shane once more struggled to read her emotions.

“Why can’t she play with us?” Shane asked, crossing his arms.

“Yeah, she’s really good,” Ilya backed him up. “Did you see how many shots she blocked? When Shane and I are the best!”

“They need good players on the girls’ teams too,” Irina’s tone was almost scolding. “But it’s kind of silly to separate you all like that, huh?”

Shane turned the thought over in his mind - why wouldn’t it be best to put all the best playing together? He nodded.

“You can still be friends with her though, even if she doesn’t play hockey,” Irina said.

“I’ve decided she’s stuck with us,” Ilya said and grinned when Shane looked over at him.

Shane rolled his eyes at Ilya, before focusing on Irina. “Yes, she’s stuck with us. As long as she wants to be.”

October 2003

Shane chewed on his bottom lip as he listened to the phone ring. He peaked around the wall again with the receiver pressed to his face, making sure his parents hadn't come in from working on the front gardens, preparing them for winter.

"Hello." It was Irina who answered.

"Hi, it's Shane. I was wondering if Ilya might want to come over," Shane said the words quickly, exactly as he had practiced them. "I know we didn't have anything planned..." Shane really needed his help but he also didn't want any of the parents to know with what.

"I think so, let me put him on." There was the muffled sound of Irina calling Ilya's name and conversation in quick Russian.

After a minute, Ilya's voice, full of smiles, "Shane! I'm coming over?"

"Yes, as soon as you can," Shane said. "Could you call Svetlana? I think we'll need all three of us."

"Sounds serious," Ilya's tone was teasing.

"It is, but your mom can't know, and neither can hers," Shane said, lowering his voice. "Say I just want to show you a new drill or something."

"Oh," Ilya was quiet for a long moment. "Are you okay?"

"Yes but... Just come over, I think I just need to show you."

"Okay, okay, I'll call Sveta," Ilya assured. "Be there as soon as I can."

Shane hung up, warmed by the thought that Ilya would come help him whenever he called. Shane hurried to the front door. Sticking just his head out, he called, "Ilya and Svetlana are coming over!"

Mom straightened, a frown on her face. "We didn't have anything planned, did we?"

"No, but that's okay, right?" Shane asked, knowing the answer because it hadn't changed since Ilya's first visit.

Mom looked at Dad, who shrugged. "Sure, that's okay!"

"Tell them I'm in the backyard!" Shane called and then hurried back in before either of his parents could look at him too closely. Shane had rarely lied to them, but he wasn't sure what else to do until Ilya and Svetlana got there.

Before going out back, he gathered supplies. First, he dug out some towels that were going to be made into rags soon, sitting at the bottom of the linen closet. Then, he cleaned out a plastic lid from the recycling, removing peanut butter still clinging to the light blue. Filling up a water bottle, he then went to find one of the new toothbrushes Mom always kept in case they had guests (which came in handy because Ilya had forgotten his a couple times).

Shane piled his supplies in the center of one of the towels, using it to carry everything out back. He checked to make sure neither of his parents had come around. He could not answer any questions right now. The coast clear, he hurried towards the shed that held all his various sports gear and practice equipment. It was supposed to be a garden shed, but a section of the garage has been converted for that purpose instead. Shane was the one who used it the most, kept it organized as part of his chores, so it was very unlikely anyone but him would go in.

It was stuffy but warm enough, despite the fall chill, sunlight coming in the dusty plexiglass window. Shane crouched, then sat on the floor. He tugged the cardboard box he'd left there close. Holes were poked in the top with a few carefully placed pucks holding down the flaps.

This immediately started the sounds that led Shane to his initial discovery.

"It's okay, I told you I'd be back," Shane said, voice as soft as he could make it. He moved the pucks and opened the box.

The kitten in it looked right at him. Her yellow eyes were squinty, with some dirt and gunk around them. Her coat of black fur was patchy in areas. She seemed too thin, though her belly was big. As small and sick as she looked, she let out a demanding meow that seemed bigger than her body.

"I'm sorry, I don't know where your mom is," Shane said, and began to unpack what he brought. The most important thing was to put in some smaller towels, so she would be warmer and more comfortable. He left one corner of the box empty, carefully filled up the lid and put it in as a small water dish. The kitten moved away from his hands and hissed a bit, but she did start kneading some of the towels after she sniffed everything Shane presented her.

"Now comes for the not fun part," Shane informed her as he opened the toothbrush package. It was the smallest brush they had on hand. Shane hoped it would work on kitten fur as well as human teeth. "If this doesn't work, I might use water, but let's try just a few brushes."

The kitten was less pleased about this at first, but then to Shane's surprise, she started to lean into the strokes. Shane remembered from some of the books he'd read in the library a few years ago - when he'd been doing research to convince his parents they should get a kitten - that mother cats would clean their babies with a rough tongue. Maybe the toothbrush felt similar.

He made a face when he saw some black spots on the brush though. He was pretty sure that meant she had fleas, so would need special medicine. Shane had no idea how to get that on his own or how much it would cost.

The kitten looked a little better now that she was brushed, and Shane put the brush down outside, hoping that might get rid of some of the fleas. He then held his hand into the box. The kitten hissed at this, but Shane was good at sticking to something. He waited until she decided he wasn't a danger, carefully sniffing his fingers. He didn't try to pet her, just let her take her time examining him.

"Shane!" The muffled sound of Ilya's voice. "Are you in there?"

The door to the shed opened and Shane prepared to hide the box if one of his parents had come back with Ilya. Instead, it was Svetlana who was peeking in, Ilya looking over the top of her head.

“What was so urgent?” Svetlana asked, in Russian, before coming in when Shane motioned.

It was stuffier to fit all three of them, but Shane stepped over the box to settle against some of the older equipment at the back of the shed. Ilya and Svetlana crouched so they could look into the box.

Svetlana gasped and Ilya let out a coo that their teammates would’ve never let him live down. He reached his hand in and got hissed at for his troubles. He was gentle, just as Shane knew he would be.

“I found her, while I was making sure I had everything in for the winter. She was hiding in the back field,” Shane explained. “But I’m not allowed to have a pet.”

“Do you want a pet?” Svetlana asked as she continued to study the kitten. “She needs food.”

“Yes and I know... I have some allowance saved that could buy something,” Shane sighed. “I just don’t know how to sneak that past my parents.”

“Can’t you give her milk?” Ilya asked. His hand was still in the box, and the kitten had started to sniff his fingers in between hisses.

“No, that’s not good for them,” Shane explained. That had been one of the first things he learned in his research. “Though maybe something would be better than nothing...”

“Do you have canned tuna fish?” Svetlana asked.

“Yeah, it’s good protein.” Mom always got a fancy kind that was supposed to be better for the environment.

“That’s a lot like cat food,” Svetlana pushed herself up. “I’ll find it.” Svetlana carefully left the shed, peeking out the door like a secret agent before running off.

“Why didn’t I think of that?” Shane murmured, examining the kitten. Her protests had become quieter, though there was a low growl now and then as a reminder to Ilya that she wasn’t to be messed with.

“Sveta is smarter than us.” Ilya shrugged. “Though I’m sure you would have remembered soon enough.”

Shane rolled his eyes, though he didn’t argue. He looked at the kitten. “I want to keep her. So much.” He said it in a whisper, as if that could keep any hurt from finding him.

“You really don’t think that’s possible?” Shane could feel Ilya’s gaze on him even though his hand was still in the box.

Shane shook his head. "My parents would never allow it." Shane had been asking them for years, so he knew it well. All the reasons that Shane should focus on hockey and school, that a responsibility as big as a cat would be a distraction. That kittens were cute, then grew up to be cats who still needed a lot of attention. Shane could practically hear Mom's voice.

Ilya frowned at this. Shane knew that Ilya had a very different relationship with Mom and Dad than he did, but so did Shane with Irina. Parents were stricter with their own kids.

"Some day when we're older, we'll be roommates and you can have all the cats you want," Ilya said, his tone final. He always wanted to find solutions.

Shane smiled at that, imagining how fun it would be to live with Ilya and do whatever they wanted. Still, Shane felt he needed to correct something, "I just want one."

"Okay, just one cat for you and three dogs for me," Ilya's tone tipped into teasing.

Svetlana opened the door and came in again before Shane could explain why having three dogs would be a bad idea. She had an open can, a spoon, and a small plastic plate that had been Shane's when he was a baby.

The kitten must have smelled the fish, because she started scrambling against the side of the box. Ilya snatched his hand away. Svetlana reached in carefully, putting the food down. The kitten lunged for it, knocking over her water in her hurry. Shane put in another towel to soak up the mess.

"So what's the plan?" Svetlana asked, gently running a finger along the kitten's back. Since she gave the food, it seemed the kitten would allow this with only mild grumbling.

"We haven't come up with one yet," Shane said.

"Shane wishes to keep the cat but can't," Ilya sighed.

"And I don't think I could keep her secret." That had been Shane's idea when he first called, but the longer he sat with it, the more impossible he realized it would be. It wouldn't be good for the kitten to live in the shed, no matter how well he would try to take care of her. He had no idea how to schedule vet visits or give her medicine.

Svetlana continued to pet the kitten. "I bet I could get my parents to let me keep her. They're still trying to make it up to me for moving us so suddenly. Then you could visit her whenever you want."

That sounded... as perfect as it could get. Any other option would mean Shane would never see the kitten again. It also felt like a promise of Svetlana's friendship lasting. "I'd like that. And I did a lot of research so if you ever have questions, I would love to help take care of her."

"We're going to have to tell your parents she's here," Svetlana said to Shane. "They'll need to know because my parents will definitely talk to them."

“I’ll do it!” Ilya hopped up. “I don’t think they would be mad at Shane but I can be extra charming.” He left the shed with a lot less stealth than he had entered.

“What do you think we should name her?” Svetlana added a little more fish to the kitten’s plate since she’d licked it clean.

“Sunny,” Shane said. He’d been thinking about it all afternoon.

“But she’s a black cat.”

“Her eyes are bright yellow though,” Shane was able to pet her now that she was eating again. The eyes were the first thing he spotted, peaking from various shadows in the backyard, watching him.

Svetlana seemed to think this over, before nodding. “Sunshine then. Sunny for short.”

“Thank you for taking her.”

“It’s not selfless, I want to keep her,” Svetlana said, wrapping her arms around her legs. She was wearing jeans with fashionable holes in them.

“Yeah but...” Shane wondered how he should say this. “We’re a good team.”

This got her to smile. “Yeah, I think we are. And Sunny can be part of it, too.”

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