

Your Number One Fan

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/85380606) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/85380606>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Heated Rivalry (TV)
Relationships:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov , Ilya Rozanov/Original Female Character(s)
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov , OFC , Cliff Marlow Cliff Marleau , Svetlana Vetrova , Hayden Pike , Yuna Hollander , David Hollander , Coach LeClaire (Game Changers) , Ruby Pike , Jade Pike , Arthur Pike , Montreal Voyageurs Montreal Metros Team Ensemble (Game Changers) , Boston Bears Boston Raiders Team Ensemble (Game Changers)
Additional Tags:	tuna melt scene , Shane Hollander is Confused , and will get more confused before less , Ilya Rozanov is a Menace , and a full on softie , Kid Fic , oops accident baby , Ilya Rozanov Needs A Hug , Hook up era turned uhhhhh 'friends' era , Everyone is going through it , they should all go to therapy , AU , AU canon divergent , au kid fic , Embedded Images , Never AI NEVER , slight angst , Suicidal Ideation , oh but everyone is always sad lol so it's not depression , Smut , Explicit Sexual Content , Coming Out , Getting Together , lovers to boyfriends to basically married fast track , Hurt/Comfort , Homophobia , Homophobic Language , accidental self outing , Implication of Violence , as in it is talked about but not really on screen
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-05-23 Completed: 2026-07-20 Words: 59,628 Chapters: 20/20

Your Number One Fan

by [EtoileGarden](#)

Summary

"I know you said you couldn't do this week," a woman was yelling from outside, "but I have to take an extra shift, and Magda is away. Ilya! Are you th-" She paused upon finally stepping inside, a colourful backpack hanging over her shoulder and a bag in her hand. "Oh."

Shane could hear Rozanov scrambling behind him, probably wiping his stomach off and pulling his clothes out of their rumped sex state, before he stepped into view of the door.

The small child who had been staring at Shane with her gigantic blue eyes turned at the movement, and her face split into a wide grin. "Papa!"

Picking up right after the tuna melt scene Shane is confronted with Ilya Rozanov's secret child, a move that everyone except for the child is embarrassed and awkward about.

Notes

i'm back way too quickly.

Russian translations in end notes xxx

NB - I don't edit at all, so apologies in advance for typos, etc.

Chapter 1

Chapter Notes

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

2016

The whole day so far had been fucking weird. Shane wouldn't lie - it had been nice - but it had been weird. Rozanov had been so... attentive. And not just in bed, though he had been more so in there as well. And he'd always paid close attention. Shane always felt scrutinised when he was with Rozanov. Not in a bad way, like in a media scrum or by a new coach or team member. Sort of like. It sounded bad, but sort of like Rozanov had pinned him to a board like a bug.

Today Shane still felt a bit like a bug on a board, but, like Rozanov was up on the board with him. None of that made sense.

They had napped together. Rozanov had asked him to stay. They had cuddled, and touched without going straight to sex again. Rozanov made him lunch. Had his favourite ginger beer chilling in the fridge. Kept bringing up weird topics. Looked so. Vulnerable. After his conversation with his father.

Shane should have left after they'd fucked the first time. Should have kept it to the status quo. Because the longer he stayed here, letting Rozanov hold him and feed him and exist around him, the more obvious it was that this. Wasn't a hook up. And hook ups were what they did.

Shane understood hook ups. They had clear cut rules. Sometimes he blundered through the rules, but that wasn't the rules' fault, it was just because Shane kept forgetting the first vital rule of hook ups. Which, if the internet was to be believed, was to not 'catch feelings'. If this was not a hook up he did not know what the rules were. And if he didn't know what the rules were, how was he supposed to know where the lines were? What he was allowed to want and ask for? It was reasonably easy to stick to the sex rules. He and Rozanov had always been good at sex communication. Mostly because Rozanov told him clearly what to do and then made Shane feel so fucking good he couldn't help but say exactly what he felt and wanted.

He hadn't left, though. He'd stayed in the warmth of the weird affection he was receiving. And now it was coming to bite him on the ass.

It shouldn't mean so much. Hearing Rozanov say his first name. Saying *Ilya* in return. It shouldn't feel like an empty cavern opening up inside of him. But it did. And he had to leave. He was a coward, and mean maybe, and he had to leave. Had to pull himself together, and ignore how badly he wanted to turn back so Ilya would stop sounding so hurt.

And he made it nearly to the door when the door opened and a small child ran in and then stopped dead in front of Shane, eyes wide.

"I know you said you couldn't do this week," a woman was yelling from outside, "but I have to take an extra shift, and Magda is away. Ilya! Are you th-" She paused upon finally stepping inside, a colourful backpack hanging over her shoulder and a bag in her hand. "Oh."

Shane could hear Rozanov scrambling behind him, probably wiping his stomach off and pulling his clothes out of their rumpled sex state, before he stepped into view of the door.

The small child who had been staring at Shane with her gigantic blue eyes turned at the movement, and her face split into a wide grin. "Papa!"

-

2014

When Ilya made it home to his Boston flat it was dark and smelled bad. He'd forgotten to take out his rubbish before he'd left to Russia for the Olympics, and the musty, rotting smell pervaded the still space.

Maybe if he had led Team Russia to victory - or at least to a less embarrassing defeat than Latvia - he would have arrived home able to turn the lights on and open windows and take out the stinking trash. Maybe winning would have made the time spent with his father bearable. Maybe he wouldn't have worn his sense of great big loser despair so loudly that even Shane 'was that sarcasm' Hollander could tell he was upset and come over to try and talk to him even though Ilya had told him he shouldn't. Maybe if Ilya wasn't a great big loser -

As it was, he dumped his bags in the entrance way and made his way through the dark to his bedroom, where he closed the door and climbed into bed and did not even plug his phone in. He didn't want to be contacted by anyone in or out of Boston.

If he had had his way, he would have stayed in his dusty bed all the next day after waking up feeling stiff and stupid. Would have stayed in bed the following day too. Would stay in bed until he had to go be Ilya Rozanov of the Boston Raiders again.

The following morning, as he lay twisted in his bedsheets, one arm flung over his face to block the morning sun because he hadn't closed the blinds when he'd gotten in, someone knocked on his door, and did not stop knocking until he got out of bed to go answer it.

He expected Marlow, maybe, or the building manager. Svetlana was still in Russia for a couple of weeks more so it couldn't be her. Whoever it is in persistent, still knocking even as he stomped over to the door to fling it open.

He had not been expecting a woman who looked so pregnant he felt in the splash zone standing in front of her. He did not recognise her, even as she folded her arms and glared up at him.

"Um," he said. Maybe she was lost? He wished he had put on a shirt rather than coming to the door in only his boxers. He wished - "Hello? Can I help?"

She swore under her breath, unfolded her arms only to fold them again resting on top of her belly. "Figures you don't remember me," she said coolly. "I know I was just a one night stand, but I thought you might remember when you take someone to buy them the morning after pill. How many condoms are you breaking on the regular?"

He squinted at her as if that would slow her down, make her quick angry words easier to translate in his morning still brain. He had gotten used to not needing to work so hard to understand people since being in Russia, and it was always a process to get back to his semi fluency.

"Morning after pill," he repeated slowly. She was still not familiar to him in a personal way, but she did look like someone he would hook up with. Beautiful. Freckled. Big angry brown eyes. "But you," he began to gesture at her stomach and then paused. It was bad manners to assume someone was pregnant, he was pretty sure. Except. She was either pregnant or had swallowed a буй. (Oh the English was the same. Almost. A buoy.) He finished his gesture at her stomach. "It looks not to have worked."

She swore again, this time not as angry sounding. “You think?” She snapped. Sighed. “I did take it,” she added when he didn’t say anything immediately. “I followed all the instructions. It’s not 100% reliable.”

“Oh,” he said. “And it is. Uh. No other choice for father?”

“Fuck you,” she said. “No. What? You think I’m following goddamn hockey news so I can figure out when you’re back in Boston on a fucking hunch? There wasn’t anyone else in the right time frame.”

“Time frame,” Ilya mumbled. He wanted to turn around and go back to bed because this was absolutely a nightmare of some sort. He hadn’t slept well since he’d arrived in Russia and that probably caused weird dreams. “Is mine.”

“Hopefully smarter than you,” she said. “Listen. I would have had an abortion if I’d caught it early, but I didn’t realise until it was like. A baby looking thing inside me. And then I just couldn’t do it. I’m not trying to fucking baby trap you, or whatever. This isn’t a shakedown. You can get a paternity test when she’s born.”

Her words were still too quick for easy parsing, but she wasn’t sounding as angry anymore. More resigned. He wondered if he’d met her at a dance club, or an event, or somewhere else. He could hear Sveta in his ear telling him to be fucking careful. She was always telling him that.

“When will,” he said, slow, careful. “When will baby be born?”

“Soon,” she said. Sighed again and scrubbed her hand over her face. “In a couple of weeks maybe. March. Are you going to let me in?”

“Oh,” Ilya took a step back. Hesitated. “Uh. The house is. Stinky. I was away.”

“I don’t care,” she snapped, “you want to have the rest of this conversation in the hallway? Go to a cafe and let the fucking paps see us? I don’t want that.”

“Okay, okay,” he said, stepping further back hastily and opening the door wider for her to come in.

She came in. He shut the door. They walked out of the entranceway into the living area, and she gagged. It wasn’t that bad, was it?”

“Sorry,” he said. Moved past her to throw open the nearest window, and then to open the sliding door onto his little balcony. “Is bad?”

“Forgot smells make me sick now,” she said, honing in on the balcony and heaving in breaths of cold morning air. “Fuck.”

“Water?” he asked, “or, uh, not coffee, yes?”

“God I miss coffee,” she sighed, leaned against the railing with her head tipped back towards the sky. “Water. Please.”

“Okay,” he said. “I get.”

He opened more windows on his way through to the kitchen. Flicked on lights as well. Got her a glass of water, and then also grabbed one of his dining chairs to drag out onto the balcony as well in case she wanted to sit. He only had a couple of low sun seats out there and he was pretty sure she wouldn’t want to sit that low with that much of a counterweight on her.

She took the water, sat in the chair. Drank half the glass.

“Do not be angry,” Ilya said, preemptive. “What is your name?”

She didn’t look angry so much as exasperated. “Mandy,” she said. “We met at my friend’s bachelorette. You and some other hockey guys were at the bar we were at and came to talk to us. We hooked up here. The condom broke. You let me shower and borrow some comfy clothing before driving me to a 24/7 pharmacy for the pill before driving me home. Orange car.”

“Ah,” he said. “I. Do not have very strong memory of it. But.” he pauses, face screwing up while he thinks. “You were in. Blue dress. Yes? Um. Your hair? A different colour?”

“I grew out the black dye, yes,” she said, nodding. “I do look different as a blonde, I’ll give you that.”

“Sorry,” he said. He wanted to make a joke about how he got hit in the head for a living so she shouldn’t count on his memory. But it felt too cheap for this situation. And he felt too shitty right now to make a self deprecating joke without fully meaning it. “What. Uh - what do you want to do?”

-

2016

“Малыш,” Ilya said, his voice stunned but soft, “Привет, hi, I was not expecting you, моя милая.”

Shane did not move - standing like a statue in front of Ilya - as Ilya’s daughter darted past him to leap into Ilya’s arms. Ilya bent down and caught her out of reflex, standing up with her bundled tight to him as he looked past the statue of Shane at Mandy who was still standing in the door way, eyes wide.

“Mandy,” he said, did his best to keep his voice even and not angry around his sweet baby. “I told you I couldn’t - what about your mum?”

“God,” Mandy said, “I know, I know, but my mum? You know she’d just plonk her down in front of the tv all day, and I knew you didn’t have a game or practice today, so I just - I am sorry, Ilya, but I have to go. Kezya’s off vomiting and she was the back up. I’m the back up’s back up today and if I don’t go in, they’re down a surgeon.”

Ilya swore. Quietly, so as not to infect little ears. Good on Mandy for being so good at her job. Yes. He loved that she was so clever, and so good. And maybe yes sometimes he felt like she felt that

his job was not important next to hers - and maybe he agreed with her - but they had agreements in place. His time was as important as her time in those agreements.

To throw gasoline into the fire, this is where his beautiful clever little daughter pointed at the slab of marble that was the silent Shane Hollander, and said in her sweet and very loud voice, “Is Hollander!”

Chapter End Notes

буй - Buoy

Малыш - Baby

Привет - Hi

моя милая - My sweet

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

Russian Translations in end notes.

Also - from Ilya's POV I'm trying to write the Russian in Cyrillic, and in Shane's POV in latin alphabet.

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

2014

Mandy was in her first year out of medical school, although to Ilya it still kind of sounded like she was now just a full time doctor and student somehow. He wasn't sure he understood the process more than it was extremely stressful and took a long time. She said she had been lucky with her cohort because they had been very understanding about her pregnancy, and that she had been worried she would be sidelined, but that hadn't happened.

When Ilya asked why she hadn't gotten in touch sooner, she had been a little awkward about it, but firm.

"I only found out when I was already five months in," she said. "I hadn't really started showing, and my period is always weird, so - I didn't know. And then. When I decided I wanted to keep her, that I couldn't bring myself to - well. I was worried that when I told you you'd want me to get an abortion. Or you'd have your lawyers try and make me. I don't know. I've heard. Not nice stuff about people having accidental pregnancies with professional athletes, and I thought that if I waited until it would be insane for anyone to demand I got an abortion it would be safest. I was going to do it a little earlier, but then, uh, you were in Russia for the Olympics?"

"Yes," Ilya said. "You really are not sports fan, are you?"

"No," Mandy laughed. "I mean - I appreciate the body it gives you - but I don't watch any sports. My family isn't into sports either, so I was just never around the culture of it."

“I think I like that,” Ilya admitted. “And you said. You said you did not tell anyone who father was? They do not know is me?”

“They don’t,” Mandy said. “Well. My best friend does, but she isn’t going to tell anyone, and she also isn’t into sports at all. My mum is mad that I keep referring to you as my one night stand, but I didn’t want to tell anyone until I’d talked to you.”

-

Ilya had brought lawyers into it, a week after Mandy made contact, because Svetlana threatened to murder him if he did not. She was like a lion sometimes. Flew back to Boston as soon as she could and began making discrete phone calls.

“It’s for both of you,” she told him. “You are not in a relationship. You are famous even if she doesn’t care. We work with lawyers to make sure the three of you are safe and protected.”

Mandy had agreed with Svetlana on the benefits of having a lawyer involved, especially when Ilya said that he would want to keep the baby out of the public eye in connection to him.

In Ilya’s mind, the lawyer was the baby’s lawyer. She was there to make sure the baby was protected, and if she also helped protect the baby’s parents, that was good for the baby too.

Nora - the lawyer - had advised Ilya to change agents, to set up a bank account for the baby, to move somewhere it would be easier to hide the comings and goings of a baby. Nora also got a lot of NDA’s ready. She was an NDA queen according to Svetlana.

In the midst of all of this - the paperwork, selling and buying a new place, changing agents, freaking out, researching baby things - Mandy had the baby a week early.

Ilya had been out of town at a game in Toronto that they lost due to an OT goal, and hadn’t even known she was in labour until he checked his phone in the locker room and saw the missed calls and pile up of missed texts.

When he had opened his phone, the latest message was a photo from Svetlana of Mandy sitting up against hospital pillows, a blanket clutched to her chest, a flash of pink cheek poking out. Under the photo Svetlana had added 7.10z Девочка))) <3

At that point the only person on his team he had told about his upcoming fatherhood was his coach, and he'd tracked him down while still half in his gear to show him the message. He had left the stadium barely ten minutes later, without his gear, with only the clothes he'd changed into and his phone and wallet. He caught the flight that LeClaire had arranged to be booked for him, mumbling thanks under his breath for a coach that cared about family shit more than the media scrum.

On the flight back to Boston he had thought - not for the first time - about calling his father. His brother. To let them know that they had gained a new family member, to let them know she was amazing (he knew she was amazing without having to meet her, and that just proved how amazing she was). But he had changed his agent for a reason. He had kept it a secret - if only for barely nine days - for a reason.

He had changed his agent because his agent had been hired back when he was still a teenager in Russia, hired by his father. His father had made sure his agent was loyal to Grigori, not to Ilya. He had not told the remnants of his family still in Russia, because he knew they would not be happy with him. Not just for the carelessness of accidentally knocking someone up, but for the Americanness of it. For the way it might make them look. He knew they would want him to come home. Would want the baby to come to Russia so she could be raised right. Would treat her maybe like they treated him.

He was sending money back to Russia regularly (on top of the money he knew his agent had been skimming off to take for himself and for Grigori), and that had been enough in the way of communication with his family. A few texts between him and his brother about the money. A few texts between him and his father about his losses. If there was a baby, the communication would either increase unbearably, or, perhaps worse, would not change at all.

It was easier to just not. His new agent had no connections to Grigori, or even Russia. His new agent had already drawn up several plans with his lawyer about keeping the baby out of the news.

So he did not call his family. Svetlana was already at the hospital with Mandy and Mandy's mother, and the baby. He went to them.

-

Shane turned slowly at his name, dragging his gaze from the harried looking woman in the doorway to the excruciating sight of Ilya fucking Rozanov, bare chested, holding a small child.

She was still pointing at him, smiling wide and excited, looking from him to her... father on delight, as she said again; "Is Ho-ander? Sane!"

"Da, Mila," Ilya said, his voice soft. "Yes, is Shane Hollander. You are so good at recognising, he looks all ruffled right now, not like on the TV, hm?"

"Mm," the baby - Mila - hummed in imitation of her father.

"Ah, Shane," Ilya said then, speaking almost as if this was entirely casual and normal, "could you hold Mila while I speak with her mama? Will be just a moment."

Shane was going to say absolutely not, because hello? He had no idea this baby existed, and he was sweaty, and what the hell was going on? But his body - traitorous when it came to Ilya - nodded and held his arms out.

"Mila, malysh, stay with Shane and tell him how he needs to work on his backhand, yes? I will be right back, Milashka."

Then there was Mila in his arms, and Ilya was sweeping past them both, speaking lowly to Mandy, and the two of them stepped outside.

Shane looked down at Mila, who was already staring up at him, her eyes somehow bigger than before, the same blue as Ilya's, but framed with dark lashes.

"Hi," he said. "Um." He was usually better with babies. Or. The couple of babies he knew, which were the Pike children and he had known them from birth. Maybe he wasn't good with babies at all.

"Sane," Mila said, she put her hand on his cheek, very solemn. "Have to hit harder."

Shane blinked at her, his brain processing both what she and Ilya had said, and then snorted with disbelief.

“Oh?” he asked, bouncing her a little and repositioning him better on his hip. “Is that what Ro-your d- papa says?”

“Is what I say,” she replied, grinned at him. “And is what he says too. My papa is bestest at hockey. ‘Cept for you.”

Shane would have dropped her if he was a little less adept at handling hits. “I am the best,” he said, cleared his throat as a hysterical sort of glee crept over him. “Your papa is the second best hockey player?”

“Mhm,” Mila agreed, “we watch you and I see you whooooosh and we go yay!” Her hand was still on his cheek, but she was dragging one finger across it now like she was tracing something. “Papa says my freckles are krasivyy.”

“Ah,” Shane found himself saying, “he tells me the same thing.”

“Okay Mila,” Mandy was stepping back inside. She’d put the bags down in the doorway now. “Mama has to go to work. I love you. Be good.” She leaned forwards and dropped a kiss on her forehead, ignoring the fact that Shane was a very unusual part of this situation. “Nice to meet you, Shane, you’re holding your number two fan there.”

“Bye mama!” Mila said, apparently unbothered by her leaving. “Sane, we do tape?”

What the hell. Was Ilya raising a fucking hockey master here, keeping her a secret so he could release her on the public like a fucking demon.

“No tape, Milashka,” Ilya said, scooping up the dropped bags after shutting the door behind Many who had left so quickly she would be an asset on ice, “mama says you have watched enough today and would not take your nap.”

“YA ne ustal,” she whined, dropped her hand so she could wrap it around the back of Shane’s neck to hold onto him tighter. “And is Sane! Is hockey time.”

Ilya snorted, “Shane is not just for hockey,” he said, “I know is surprise.”

Mila screwed her face up into such a copy of Ilya’s grumpy face that Shane found himself snorting again.

“We have to say goodbye to Shane,” Ilya said then, coming close enough now to brush his knuckles against Mila’s cheek with his free hand. “He has, uh, team meeting.”

“I don’t,” Shane said, like an idiot.

“No leave,” Mila insisted.

“You need a nap.”

Shane should agree with Ilya here, hand Mila over, and then leave like he desperately needed to. Instead, like he had been fucking possessed, he bounced Mila a little again and said; “Maybe I could read you a story to help you nap?”

Which is how he found himself upstairs in a room he had assumed was an office, or a spare bedroom, but was actually Mila’s room. The walls had a mix of fairy decals and hockey posters - including several of himself, and there was a mini goal in the corner, a soft looking puck sitting in it next to a stick and several barbies. Mila was sitting on her bed expectantly, a large picture book in hand. Ilya was standing in the doorway with Shane, a look on his face which very clearly said *you made this bed, go sit in it*. So Shane sat on the bed next to Mila, and he read a ridiculous book called ‘The Day My Fart Followed Me to Hockey’, and then he read ‘The Very Hungry Caterpillar’, because she had looked up at him and said “please”, and he had to.

She fell asleep before the caterpillar became a butterfly, and Ilya watched him, amused, as Shane extracted himself from the bed and tiptoed over to the door. Ilya held his finger to his lips, turned and headed downstairs, and Shane followed.

He waited until they were back in the lounge, took a deep breath, and said; “What the fuck, Rozanov.”

Ilya raised his eyebrows at him. “I say what the fuck, too,” he said. “What the fuck, Hollander. I give you out and you suggest you stay and read book?”

Shane did not have an adequate defence for that, so he moved on. “You have a kid. Is - was that your girlfriend? Mandy? What is going on.”

Ilya tsked, folded his arms. Unfolded his arms so he could rub at his ear, and then at his necklace. “Yes I have kid. No, Mandy is not my girlfriend, Hollander. I would tell you if I had girlfriend. She is Mila’s mama. Was accident.”

Shane stopped himself from saying something stupid like; ‘obviously’. Swallowed hard. He should go. He should so go. “And no one knows about - about Mila?”

“No,” Ilya said. He had folded his arms again, was holding them stiffly against his chest. “Not many people know she is mine.”

“But some?”

“Yes,” Ilya groaned, waved one hand in a frustrated gesture. “Most of my team. My agent. Svetlana. We have people like Magda our nanny. Mandy’s friends and family. But to world is secret. No one spills it. Is nicer for Mila this way.”

“Why?” Shane could feel his cheeks heating, was mad about that.

“Why secret? Why nicer?” Ilya stared at him. “You of all people, Shane Hollander, should know answer to this. Who am I.”

He seemed to be waiting for a response, so after a moment, and with his face blazing hot, Shane mumbled; “Ilya Rozanov.”

“Da,” Ilya said, rolled his eyes. “And am I known to be nice? To be family man? Or do all the papers say Ilya Rozanov is crazy man. Ilya Rozanov is violent man. Ilya Rozanov is slut. You think they would say different if they saw Mila? No. They would say Ilya Rozanov is careless slut. They would say Ilya Rozanov has baby in every city.”

Shane frowned, hated how he had no rebuttal. He was still too confused by everything. Felt like his nervous system had gone haywire. He had gone haywire. Like seeing Ilya with a child had broken something in his brain, and that was the only reason he said what he did next.

“Why wouldn’t you tell me?”

Ilya stared at him with something like exasperation on his face. “You?”

“Yeah,” Shane grunted, turned his face away so he could stare at the wall instead of Ilya’s face. “I know we’re not. We’re not. But I’ve been - we’ve been. I’m not the world.”

“No,” Ilya said. Huffed out a heavy breath. “You are not the world. You are Shane Hollander. Who tried to run away when I say his name.”

Shane burned. Blinked hard. “I didn’t run away,” he pointed out.

“Nyet,” Ilya sounded harsh. “You did. You ran and would not have stopped if there was not a Mila obstacle. You think I should have told man who runs from his name about most precious thing in my life?”

Well. When put like that. Except - “I wasn’t running from my name,” Shane snapped. Mostly truthful. He turned to look at Ilya again, feeling stubborn and unsettled.

Ilya did not look like he believed him. “Verno. Blyad. Why argue about this? You know now. Do I need you to sign NDA?”

“What? No!”

“Yes, Shane Hollander couldn’t spill this secret,” Ilya said, nodded. “He would think everyone would see and know he is happiest on his knees sucking my cock. Secret is safe with man who is so boring.”

“Fuck you.”

“Da, like I say. Boring.”

“You didn’t think I was boring when you were asking me to stay,” Shane shot back, chest hurting. “When you were fucking cumming with my name in your mouth.”

Ilya’s eyes glistened, and he was the one who turned his head now, blinking and frowning at nothing. “Shane,” he said. “You have choice. You can be mad at me for my feelings, or you can be mad at me for not telling about Mila. Not both.”

Shane had no idea what the fuck that meant. He could be mad about multiple things. He was great at multi tasking. You had to be to play any sport. He was the best fucking hockey player in the league, even Ilya’s daughter agreed.

“I’m not. Mad.”

Now Ilya laughed a little. He still wasn’t looking at Shane. “No?” He shook his head. “You are happy? This is your happy face?”

“I’m confused,” Shane shrugged, “I’m - this whole fucking day has been insane. It’s been - we don’t do this sort of thing and it threw me, so I’m fucking sorry if I was already feeling - feeling overwhelmed and then found out that you have a secret baby. I’m sorry if it’s kind of a lot to take in, when I have been seeing you and texting you and - and sharing my life with you only to find out that. Never mind. I’ll go.”

“You’ll go?” Ilya’s voice raised just a little. “Of course you will. You have to finish the run away.”

“Fuck you,” Shane said again, weakly. Ran his hands through his hair and pressed the heels of his hands into his eyes into they hurt. “You want me to go this time.”

“When have I said this?” Ilya snapped at him, finally looking at him again as he took a sharp step forwards. “I have not said this.”

“Do you?” Shane asked. Dropped his hands back down to his sides. He should go. “Want me to leave?”

Ilya made a noise in the back of his throat like a growl, and shook his head just once. “No,” he said. “I have been telling you all day to stay. Is like a need a leash for you just to get you to sit and listen.”

Shane shuddered. He could feel the allure of the door. Ignored it. Ilya took another step towards him.

“You watch my games with her,” Shane mumbled.

“Yes,” Ilya closed his eyes for a long moment. “She is your number one fan.”

That hadn’t been what Mandy had said. “Does she skate?”

“Hollander,” Ilya said, sighed, “She is two years old. Of course she skates.”

“Oh,” Shane said. He couldn’t remember how old was normal for kids to start skating.

“No,” Ilya said, reached out to bump his knuckles against Shane’s arm. “She does not skate. Not really. She is baby. So baby steps. She can stand on ice. I am very proud of her.”

Shane found himself blushing again. Maybe he had never stopped, not really. “Right,” he said. “Yeah. That makes sense. Um. I don’t - I don’t know what to... do.”

Ilya sighed again. He didn’t sound annoyed anymore. He took one more step forwards, so he was right in Shane’s space, and leaned in. Kissed him slow and careful like Shane might explode if bumped. Kissed him until Shane melted into it, let his weight fall into Ilya’s, and their arms wrapped around each other.

Shane pressed his face into Ilya’s neck and thought about how he might have left here earlier and never found out about Mila. How if he left here right now Ilya might not let him in again. How he didn’t want that.

“We’ll go to the kitchen,” Ilya said, quiet in his ear, “and make ourselves a nice drink. And sit down. And you can ask questions. Or we could just kiss. You do not have to stay the night if you do not want to, but Mila would like to see you when she wakes up.”

Shane nodded, kept his eyes screwed shut against the heat of Ilya’s skin. Focused on the way Ilya was rubbing his thumb in small circles against the small of his back.

“I have seen photos,” Ilya mumbled. “Of you with Pike children. I knew you would be good with her.”

“You’ve looked at Hayden’s instagram?”

Ilya made a noise of disgust. “No, no. I look at Jacki’s. She writes better captions.”

Chapter End Notes

Девочка - baby girl / girl

Da - Yes

Malysh - baby / kid

Milashka - sweetie / diminutive of Mila

krasivyy - beautiful / handsome

YA ne ustal - I'm not tired

Nyet - No

Verno - right / sure
Blyad - whore / fuck

Chapter 3

Chapter Notes

Russian Translations in end note

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

2014

The house Ilya buys is modest compared to the majority of the ones Svetlana had wanted him to buy, but it's still bigger than he needs, even with Mandy having a bedroom and a study, and another room just for the baby. Not to mention Ilya's room, the nanny's room, the gym room, the living areas, etc. It's not a gated community, which his lawyers had suggested, but it is the only house off this road, and surrounded by fences high enough that they don't need to worry about being accidentally spotted in the yard.

Mandy brings her car with her, despite Ilya offering her free range of (most) of his cars. Her mother wants to come as well but Mandy refuses to pack her, and she is on a day visit only kind of basis.

Magda is hired through Svetlana's connections, and she and Mandy hit it off astoundingly well. Magda - while not on duty, being a live in nanny - is studying to become a psychologist, and she and Mandy have a lot to say about the state of health care. They chose Magda because she was born in Russia and moved to the states with her family in her teens. Had retained her Russian well, so she could speak it with Ilya and with the baby, but also communicate easily with Mandy and others.

Ilya was determined that his daughter would grow up bilingual. Just because he didn't want her connected to *his* Russian family didn't mean he didn't want her to feel connected to her Russian heritage. He wanted her to be able to understand him when his English wasn't as clear as he wanted it, and he wanted to make her the food he loved his mother making him.

And English is hard as a second language, much better she know it from beginning.

The naming of the baby takes longer than the entire moving into the new house does. Mostly because Mandy has terrible taste in names and isn't interested in having a baby named after Ilya's favourite fairytale because apparently she thought calling her Василиса (Vasilisa) was just begging her to be picked on for her looks. Which was rude, because any baby of Ilya's was obviously going to be beautiful enough to be compared to Царица Василиса. Also rude because Mandy suggested they could just call her *Lisa*, like that was a compromise.

Eventually they manage to settle on a name they both liked - Mila, and Mandy is the one to suggest her middle name could be a family name. Someone who has passed. Ilya had not told her about his mother, but he had told her that he had cut contact with his father and brother, and she must have made the correct assumption.

Officially her last name ends up being Mandy's, so as to raise less attention, but they add Ilya's surname as a second middle name.

Mila Irina Rozanova Turner.

He hopes his mother would have liked it. Wouldn't be disappointed in him.

-

Leclair gave him a month to get settled. Keeps the statement bland and simple. Rozanov away for a family emergency. Looking forward to him coming back. Moving on to tonight's game -

His team doesn't leave him alone for the month. Marly texted him every fucking day after he left the game so suddenly when Mandy was in hospital.

He gives into the incessant nagging, both from Marly's direct texts, and from the team group chats sending increasingly unhinged 'checking in' messages, only after Mila had been named, and Magda had moved in, and Ilya felt like he could hold the tiny scrap of human who was his fucking daughter without feeling like he was going to crush her.

He really ought to have worked with his agent, or his lawyer, or Svetlana and Mandy even, on a good way to tell his team. Or at least the members of his team who were also his friends. Real friends. A polished block of text to explain the situation, and an attached NDA for them to all sign.

Instead he took a selfie of him slumped in the rocking chair in Mila's room, Mila asleep on his bare chest, mouth open and dribble smeared between her mouth and his chest. Then he sent it to Marly.

TO:Cliff face

9:22 PM



Meet Mila. She just did poo so smelly i cry and she cry and then she falls asleep and i am left with trauma by self.

If you come here link my house tomorrow i let you share trauma.

FROM: Cliff face

9:30 PM

Roz did u steal a fuckin baby

Is that ur baby

Holyyyyyyyyy fuck

She has ur fuckin stink butt

What time? Should i bring anything? Anyone?

TO: Cliff face

9:33 PM

Is my baby. Yes. would not steal baby unless it was very cute and sad.

Is hush hush. Mila not for public.

Bring Vic and Hammy if you can. Dont tell them why though. Will be funny to see their dumb faces go crazy.

FROM: Cliff face

9:36 PM

U r crazzzy bro

I love it

This is insane.

Mila looks cute btw

Am i godfather?

-

By the time Mila wakes up from her nap Shane has calmed down enough that Ilya is pretty sure he won't freak out again. This version of a calm Shane was still a Shane stretched thin with barely concealed stress, but it would work for now. It wasn't like Ilya could pull out the calmer version of Shane right now, because that required an empty house and Shane in his bed.

Mila comes down the stairs slowly, dragging her giant bear behind her, thunking quietly on each step. Part of the reason he had chosen this house in particular, way back when, was because the staircase was made up of wide shallow steps, easy for short legs to climb.

In the hand that wasn't holding the ear of the bear, she held her puck, and she held it up triumphantly as she caught sight of Shane and Ilya sitting on the couch.

They hadn't been kissing any more. Had actually been attempting to talk like how Ilya assumed well adjusted humans did. Difficult to attempt with two badly adjusted ones. They had barely manage to cover how Ilya had been keeping everything under wraps.

"Hockey," she said very clearly. "Papa. Sane. Mila. Hockey."

"Oh my god," Shane murmured under his breath, looking from Mila on the staircase to Ilya on the couch. "You cloned yourself. The whole Mandy thing is a ruse. This is just you. In a different font."

"In different what?" Ilya snapped, elbowed Shane playfully, and held his hand out to Mila. "Милая, come sit first, Сядь тут." He patted the couch next to him.

Mila sighed, very put upon sounding, but made her way down the rest of the stairs and beelined directly to the couch. She abandoned her bear on the ground, but clutched to the puck still as she climbed up next to Ilya, and then climbed into his lap to rest her face against his chest.

"Good sleep?" Ilya asked, stroked her dark hair off her forehead and pressed a kiss there.

“Да,” Mila replied, and not at all distracted. “Is hockey time, papa. I slept. Hockey. Now.”

“Does your mama play hockey with you?” Shane asked then, directing the question very seriously to Mila, his whole body angled to her.

“No,” Mila pouted, her body going heavy and floppy in Ilya’s lap for a moment until Ilya wrapped his arm around her. “Mama is only watch hockey.”

“Yes,” Ilya said, kissed her forehead again because she smelled so sleepy and warm. “Mama is too busy to play hockey. But she takes you to your soft play, yes? Very fun.”

“Yes,” Mila says, whines, “but no hockey! No hockey all week. Papa!”

“I know, I know, моя любовь,” he pulled her closer to squash her in a big hug, to press a wet kiss to her cheek. “We need snack, first, mm? We eat snack and we put on our hockey clothes, and then we play hockey. Inside hockey today, yes?”

“Ice tomorrow?”

“Нет,” Ilya kissed her again on her other cheek. She was so wriggly but not trying to escape. Too much energy for how tired he felt today. “I have game tomorrow, Милая. I know,” he soothed when she whined again, “is annoying! Is different papa time with game on. Ice soon, okay?”

She condescended to be kissed and soothed, pressed her cheek to his to sigh again as if harried by his affection. Her arms tight around him.

“Okay,” she said. “Indoor. With Sane?”

Ilya looked at Shane.

“Yes,” Shane said. “Mila, papa, and Shane.”

Ilya was going to have a heart attack.

“Snack,” he said, adjusted his grip on Mila, and stood up quickly, swinging her so she squealed, and then holding her on his hip. “Apple pieces?”

-

2014

Mila comes to her first Hockey game when she is three months old. Mandy and Magda come together, and they do not sit in the family and friends seats - a choice they had all agreed on - Mila strapped to Mandy's chest and asleep for most of it. It is a nothing game. Boston wins. He knows Mila does not care, and knows Mandy and Magda are here only because he asked.

They had managed to avoid even a whisper of any connection to him so far, and he ought to be pleased. They had all agreed it would be a bad idea for them to come to the family room after, even though most of the team knew now. A photo could be taken, a new WAG might talk. Rumours would start and spiral. He wanted Mila to be separate from this life in the too bright light. She would not be treated the way his teammates children were treated. Sometimes they would be photographed on the edge of the ice like little ducklings as a fluff piece, a softening of the rough hockey player image could always be achieved by a photo of him holding his child.

Ilya's agent, his lawyer, his baby mama, his nanny, his friends. They all agreed it would not work the same for Ilya.

The MVP awards in Vegas loomed overhead. He would fly to Vegas, probably with a few of his teammates. He would have no friends or family with him in the audience. To clap for him. To stop him from going back to his hotel room with Shane Hollander.

He had had Hollander on his mind a lot, recently. That wasn't quite right. He always had Hollander on his mind, all the time. Sometimes just in the very back of his mind, but he was always there.

He had considered doing like he had with Marly. Sending Shane a photo of Mila. To break back into their text thread with Shane's last few messages unanswered since before the Olympics. He would text back if Ilya shocked him like that. But telling Shane about Mila felt. Too big. Not like he thought Shane would let the media know about Mila, or let anyone know. But. What he and Shane had had to be casual. It had to be. Ilya had been trying to make that point with his texting silence.

If Ilya told him about Mila, what would that even do? Would they still hook up? If they would even hook up again, would he not want to if he knew Ilya had a child? Did that make any sense? If he told Shane about Mila did that wipe away the casual status, letting Shane in on a secret didn't feel casual. And it wouldn't be.

If he told Shane, it would be just one more secret for Shane to have to keep and stress his stupid little brain about. He didn't want that.

He did want Shane. A lot.

He hadn't been with anyone since he'd learned about Mila's existence. Had been shocked and exhausted and afraid. And then busy with a baby, and living with said baby and also baby mama and nanny and the secret of it. He had opportunity when he went back to playing, on away games, but he kept finding himself staying in his hotel room. Playing cards with Marly and Hammy. Watching stupid videos with Vic. Talking about nappy brands with Anders.

So. he was horny. And lonely, despite his teammates best efforts. And he wanted Shane. And the best way to have Shane was to be so very fucking casual about it, which meant no telling his... fuckbuddy about his secret child, and no being weird and needy about the sex.

Chapter End Notes

Милая - Cute/cutie

Сядь тут - Sit here

Да - Yes

моя любовь - My love

Нет - No

Putting Ilya in the feelings vortex of horrors

Chapter 4

Chapter Notes

) Thank you everyone for your lovely comments! Glad you're enjoying the story)))

2016

Mila is very serious about their hockey game. All of them holding weighted foam sticks in her bedroom. She puts on some padding and a helmet - not quite a dress up version of the real thing, but probably only useful off ice.

It's not like Shane hasn't seen kids in hockey gear before - he had attended plenty of publicity and charity style events where they had training camp style lessons for children. He had often been tapped to teach these events alongside the actual trainers because of his reputation (his reputation being *softer* than a *normal* hockey player. He wasn't very good at not being annoyed by this).

But Mila was younger than the kids he'd taught, and more serious. She reminded him a little of himself as a kid; determined and in love with the game.

He hadn't seen Ilya like this either. He had had a feeling that Ilya would be good with kids - he was great at goofing around and meeting people where they were at - and Shane had seen the clips of him meeting young fans. He wouldn't have immediately translated that -being good at being fun with kids - into being good at being a - well - a dad.

But he'd just watched Ilya chop up apples and measure out yogurt drops, and make sure Mila's hands were clean before she ate, and got her her water sippy cup. Watched Ilya kiss the top of her head every time he came close enough. Handling her impatience with ease. He'd given Shane a little plate of apple and yogurt drops as well, alongside a wink. No kiss on the head though.

"Now, Milaya," Ilya said as he held the puck ready for the drop, "be nice to Shane, yes? This is friendly game, so we keep our chirps friendly."

Shane wasn't sure if Ilya was joking here, his tone so soft and amused, eyes on his daughter's bright eyes, but Mila nodded as if he was being fully sincere.

"I do not call him poo bum," she agreed easily, "we are friends."

"Yes," Ilya nodded, glanced at Shane with his smile still lax and easy, "still beat him though, Da? For your papa?"

"Da," Mila said. Her grin was still just slightly gummy - her teeth not even fully grown in evenly yet. "Ready."

The puck dropped. Shane hadn't figured out yet how much he was supposed to be play acting. Faking his effort. He wasn't good at this at all. He let her win the face off - partly because he was worried that if he feigned an attempt he was going to scoop her up on his stick along with the puck.

"Ah, Turner is off with the puck," Ilya called from where he'd retreated to press his back to the wall, "she's off like a shot with Hollander struggling to keep up behind!"

Mila giggled loudly, lost the puck for a moment due to the giggling, and then regained it again as Shane made a half hearted swipe at it, moving his feet in an exaggerated shuffle.

"Hollander tries and fails a steal," Ilya reported, "and Turner is already in goal shot, no goalie in sight, it's up to Hollander to get the puck away - oh! She shoots! Hollander is too slow for a deflection! Goal! Goal for Turner! Boston Bears are up one to Montreal Metro's zero!"

-

2014

Vegas had been a mistake. Ilya had known that it was a mistake as he was doing it. He knew he shouldn't have pushed Shane, or invited him up to his room, and he definitely shouldn't have fucked him like he had. He had been aiming for... detached. Keeping Shane at arms' length. Which

hadn't worked, because the moment Shane had really *asked* for him, Ilya had caved. Had still held himself back - his emotions back. Which really just meant not talking, because he didn't think he was actually capable of having a conversation with Shane right now without bursting like an overblown balloon.

-

He was going to Russia for a couple of weeks to keep up appearances, and he was not looking forward to the company, or to the time apart from Mila. He didn't regret his choice for secrecy, but he regretted that it existed. Because it made it all a choice. He was choosing to isolate himself. He was choosing to be away from his daughter. Not for the whole summer, he had managed to make believable enough excuses to his father to be able to leave Russia early, but he was still going to miss out on a chunk of time he could have spent bonding with Mila.

He wanted his mother. He wanted more people in on the secret. He wanted to have pulled Shane close to him after fucking him hard and rough in his penthouse hotel suite, and kissed him until everything was just warmth and closeness. He wanted Shane to have pushed when Ilya withdrew after they had fucked. For Shane to not let Ilya act like the moody brat he was, to have refused to leave until Ilya could look at him again.

Which was not something Ilya deserved after ignoring him for over six months. So it was good Shane hadn't pushed.

-

Mandy and Magda video called him several times while he was in Russia - holding Mila up to the camera so he could see her and she could blink at the image of him. It wasn't enough. He was glued to his phone every second he could be. Waiting for a call, looking at photos of Mila, opening his text thread with Shane to stare down at it like it would suddenly unfurl and reveal hidden answers to his entire life.

His father was ever present - his mind fading in and out of lucidity, his moods nearly always brutal. His brother was much less present than he ought to be - abandoning most of the day to day chores to his wife and to Ilya. Ilya's niece was the only bright spot in his family here, and she was already subdued and quiet around her father and her grandfather. Only lighting up and willing to talk with Ilya about ponies and fairytales when it was just the two of them or the two of them with her mother. Raisa looked much more like her mother's family, and Ilya couldn't help but wonder if she and her cousin Mila would share any features, or if they would be always as strangers to each other even in appearance.

By the time he made it home to Boston he was exhausted with secrecy. With wanting things. Normally he would have spent his free time in Russia in clubs, at parties, hooking up. He was too tired for that, this trip. He only had room in his brain for stupid stale grief and that quiet, stomach churning fear he always carried with him from country to country.

Holding Mila again had helped. Helped most because she had still recognised him despite his absence. Had still gone to him easily, and slept happily in his arms.

-

“Maybe you should not go to Russia for so long next time,” Magda said to him, two days after he had returned. They - she, Mandy, Ilya, and Mila - were sitting in the lounge. Coffee for the adults, a bottle of milk for Mila, Ilya holding it and her in his arms.

He did not look up from Mila’s milk drunk face, her chubby cheeks, the wisps of hair curling behind her ears.

“You don’t seem to like it there,” Mandy added. It was obvious that she and Magda had been talking about this. “All our video calls - you looked... unhappy. And it seems more than just unease about your father’s condition, or about keeping Mila quiet.”

“I know you are working on your permanent visa,” Magda continued, neither of them needing Ilya for this conversation apparently. “But we could maybe talk with Nora about trying to get it faster? If it is stability you need? To feel like you do not have to return.”

Mila detached from the nipple of the bottle, burped wetly. He lifted the spit up cloth from under her chin to dab at her lips. She was more asleep than not.

“It is my home,” he said. “My family is still there, Magda. Is not like how you have.”

“Family you don’t like,” Mandy pointed out, “family who - Magda translated for me. What we heard them say over the phone that time your brother and father walked in. They don’t deserve you, Ilya.”

Ilya shot a halfhearted scowl at Magda, who simply shrugged, unaffected.

“Raisa is there,” he said, returning his gaze to Mila. To her milk full stomach rising and falling with satisfied sleep deep breaths. She was wearing a jumpsuit covered in rainbows and clouds. “Her mother, Katerina. My mother’s grave. My father, who is ill. If I do not go, who will make sure he is being looked after? Who will make sure Alexei is not pissing and fucking away all the money and leaving Katerina and Raisa homeless? Who will take flowers to mama’s grave and say her prayers for her? This conversation is not useful. It does not matter what I want.”

-

2016

Shane should have left for real by now. Surely there was no way he could stay the night like Ilya had asked for, not with Mila here. But. Since before Mila’s nap, Ilya had not said anything to indicate that Shane should leave, or was not welcome.

Which was why Shane was still there for dinner. Hockey gear put away, Mila hockey satisfied after asking what felt like a million hockey questions about how Shane played. She said she liked his away jersey the most. And that she liked when the Metros played the Bears the best because she said it made him skate like zoom zoom wow and do big smiles.

Ilya was cooking. Much more cooking cooking than he had done for their tuna melts for lunch. He had sat both Shane and Mila down at the counter - Mila in Shane’s lap because she had requested that over her high chair - and requested they help by being cute and funny.

Shane was pretty sure the request was for Mila, not Shane, so he left the being cute and funny to her seeing as it appeared to come naturally. She was definitely Ilya’s.

Right now she had her hand on Shane’s cheek again, her eyes narrowed as she scrutinised his face carefully because Ilya had asked her who had more freckles.

“Sane has three,” she said eventually, very confident. “Lots of threes.”

“Ah very good,” Ilya called, stirring a pot on the stove and glancing over his shoulder, “and how many does Mila have?”

“More,” Mila said, then scrunched her face up to reconsider. “Not more,” she said. “I’m two.”

“Makes sense,” Shane said, “I am older than two.”

“Maybe you are. Five,” Mila suggested. “So big.”

“Maybe,” Shane agreed.

-

He stayed for dinner - a beetroot and cabbage soup that was extremely red, with thick bread (Mila had much less of the broth, and Ilya had carefully cut up all the chunks in her bowl).

He stayed to read Mila another story. And then he stayed while Ilya put Mila to bed, and put things to rights upstairs, and then came downstairs very slowly.

“You stayed,” Ilya said when he made his way from the foot of the stairs to the couch Shane was sitting on. “I thought you would. Well. Leave.”

“I probably should have,” Shane said. Shrugged one shoulder. “Hayden just messaged to ask where I was.”

“Ah,” Ilya raised his eyebrows. “Hayden, your mother, yes. What do you say to him?”

“Nothing yet,” Shane said. Swallowed heavily. Shifted on the couch until he was right on the edge of the seat. He wondered if Ilya had been cleaning up his bedroom, tidying up the evidence of their sex this morning.

“Hm,” Ilya took a step closer, and then paused again. “You are wanting to leave?”

“No,” Shane said. Had to swallow hard again so as not to try and neutralise his no by adding on a *I don't care*, or something. “Unless you want me to.”

Ilya was looking at him with an expression very close to anger. Shane was pretty sure it wasn't anger.

“I do not want that,” Ilya said. He cut his eyes to the staircase, back to Shane, and then to the couch beside Shane. “We are not fucking again,” he said. “With Mila in house. Maybe I suck you off, or we do hands only.”

Right. Shane did want to have sex again, but that was only a minor part of what he wanted right now.

“What was today meant to be?” He asked. He had had time to try and think about it now. A day of being in Ilya and Mila's presence, just hanging out. Playing. Laughing. Before Mila had arrived, it had been like that as well, just with sex and kissing added in.

“Uh,” Ilya scratched the back of his head, “hook up. You know I was not expecting Mila.”

“I know,” Shane shook his head. “I mean. It was different. I - I felt it was different. With us.”

Ilya's jaw jutted, like he'd gritted his teeth, and he turned his head to look away from Shane like he had earlier today when they had tried to have this same conversation. Shane didn't want to let it get away from them this time.

“Ilya,” he said. “You said. Earlier. That I could be mad about your feelings. Which, I - I'm not. But I'm also not sure I entirely understand what the feelings are. That you are talking about. I mean. I think I do, but I - I'm confused.”

“You are confused,” Ilya repeated, still not looking at Shane. He had closed his eyes when Shane had said his name, like it had hurt, or like Shane had cupped his hand around Ilya’s face and held him. “I - I have. Shane. I had plan for today. Plans.”

“Okay.”

“I was going to not scare you away with your own name. I was going to keep you here. In my arms on this couch. Keep you fed, and fucked, and stress free. I was going to cook dinner. I was going to say to you, Shane. Do not freak out. Can you keep secret. And you would roll your eyes, and do hand waving between us and say yes. Then I would tell you about Mila.”

“Oh,” Shane said. He could imagine himself rolling his eyes at Ilya asking if he could keep a secret. At the amusement and fear that question would have sent through him, especially prefaced by a request not to freak out. “You were going to tell me about her?”

“Ugh,” Ilya groaned. He stepped around Shane’s knees and sat down on the couch next to him, perched on the edge as well, his knee pressing hard against Shane’s thigh. “Yes. To say. Look. Shane. Hollander.”

Shane waited. Ilya had screwed his face up. Despite being pressed up against him, he still kept his head turned away a little, his eyes on the middle distance.

“Ilya,” Shane said. “Rozanov.”

Ilya snorted a little, it sounded slightly too sniffly to be real amusement. He spoke stiffly. “To say I want you real in my life.”

Shane sat with that for a moment. Watched as Ilya’s posture grew rigid, like he was one wrong breath away from running.

“Real?” Shane asked.

“Not leaving right after we fuck,” Ilya said harshly to the air in front of him. “Staying to talk. To be friends. To know about me and Mila.”

The part of Shane where he kept all his hurt feelings and fear wanted to point out that Ilya was almost always the one leaving first. Pushing Shane out the door. Shutting Shane down when Shane tried to reach for more. He pushed that part down.

“You want that?”

“Mm.”

“To... know about me, too? My life.”

“Mhm.”

Shane paused. Tried to think about it without climbing into Ilya’s lap to kiss him until Ilya would look at him again.

“To be friends?”

“Da,” Ilya gritted out. “I said that. Stop - say no or yes, Hollander, do not play.”

“Yes,” Shane said. “I mean - it - I don’t - yeah we can be friends, Ilya. I want that. Yeah. I dunno if we can - like, publicly - I dunno how people would react, like, the league, and our agents. Our teams. But, like -”

“Stop planning,” Ilya sighed. “I am not saying I want you to do next after game interview and announce to world we are bosom friends. We can keep close to our chests, yes?”

Shane bit his lip. He wasn’t sure he had actually gotten to the point of this conversation. Not properly. But he wanted Ilya to smile. And he wanted Ilya’s friendship. He wanted to be let in and looked at.

“You do like to be close to my chest,” he said, “you know I don’t actually have tits, right?”

Ilya scoffed, and finally, finally, turned to look properly at Shane. The tops of his cheeks were pink and his eyes were bright as he grinned at him. “No, this is lie.” he said, bared his teeth. “I suck on your sweet little tits and you moan just like girl. Is very hot.”

“Shut up,” Shane said, pleased, flushing far too easily. “They’re pecs. I’m built.”

“Mm,” Ilya hummed, his eyes flicking up and down Shane’s chest. “Built for me to bite. Take your shirt off.”

Shane laughed, held off stripping even as his fingers twitched to comply. “Weren’t you just saying we couldn’t fuck? Getting me naked on the couch doesn’t seem very in line with that.”

“So we go to shower,” Ilya said, his eyes on Shane’s fingers brushing against the hem of his shirt. “And maybe I suck on your tits while I get my hands on you, hm?”

Shane didn’t have an argument against that.

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Russian Translations in end notes x

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

2015

Ilya would not have thought Mandy would care about holding a birthday party for Mila's first birthday. She was very sensible almost all of the time, kept herself on a strict routine of working, studying, pilates, reading, and mothering. She allowed her friends to talk her into going out one time a week, except for the special occasions, and she never drank more than what got her tipsy.

Ilya only remembered vaguely how when they had hooked up he had liked how clear headed she had been. Liked how she made them both drink water before she let him fuck her. Liked how her hair - dyed black and shiny - framed his face when she rode him, leaning in to kiss him, and all he could see were her brown eyes and her freckles and her soft lips.

All of that to say. That, well. Mila did not really care that it was her birthday, Mandy did not like superfluous parties or events, and Ilya would have been fine to celebrate just the three of them.

Maybe it is Mandy's mother who is really behind the party, but it is Mandy who tells Ilya they should do it. That even though the party will be more for them than for Mila, Mila would one day be old enough to look back at photos and would appreciate the party, even if only at a distance.

So they invited Mandy's best friend, and her mother, and also her grandmother. And Magda was obviously there because she lived with them and also because Svetlana loved to hang out with her and Svetlana was invited. Ilya invited Marlow, even though he didn't have any kids, and Hammy and Vic because they both had kids. Hammy's two kids were a few years older than Mila, and Vic's kid was half a year younger, but it wasn't like Mila cared about having friends her age.

Svetlana had insisted on hiring caterers - which was a ridiculous thing for a one year old's birthday party - and she and Magda had decorated the house and the yard with balloons and streamers and put down rugs on the lawn.

Ilya had been told to arrange the cake, and he had ordered one from his favourite Russian eatery that was nearly an hours drive away but very worth it. He got медовик, and he had even researched beforehand if it would be safe for Mila with the honey. He had asked them to decorate it with flowers and to write Мила Ирена on it, because he hardly ever got to see her name in cyrillic, and barely ever got to see her middle name - his mother's name.

He had asked Marlow to pick it up on the day of the party, gripped with sudden fear that he would go himself and they would know instantly that he had a baby, and then it would be all over the news, and all over the world, and his brother would call him and call him, and Mila's sweet chubby face would be plastered over news sites with gossip about how her father was a whore, and -

Marlow picked up the cake, delivered it safely to Ilya's house before the party started.

He stood with Ilya in the kitchen while Ilya fussed over the creases in the box where cardboard *almost* touched cake, and then bullied him into a hug.

"What is this," Ilya asked, not attempting to escape. Pressing his face in hard against Marlow's shoulder.

"You can't tell me *Russians do not do this*, Roz, I know they do."

"Why is this, then?"

Marlow tightened his hold on him, and then half released him only to drag him back under his arm to rub his knuckles hard against the top of his skull.

Once Ilya had managed to wriggle free, laughing and cursing, he punched Marlow's shoulder lightly and Marlow grinned back at him.

"Looked like you needed it," he said, easy as. "You know we all have you, yeah?"

He could play dumb about this, laugh and make fun, smack Marlow again and then drag him into the chaos that was last minute primping of balloons and Mila.

He nodded, lips thin. Marlow was stupid, sometimes. Had taken many hits to the head. Was happy to grin and go along with dumb plans and act up his stupidity. But he was still -

“You’re protecting Mila,” Marlow said. “And we’ll protect you. Right? Cap?”

He managed a nod.

“I have to go find Mila now,” Marlow informed him. “Because Magda said she was dressing her up as a butterfly and I have plans to throw her up in the air so she can fly like one too.”

“Ah ah ah,” Ilya snorted, moving quickly as Marlow turned on heel to leave the kitchen, grinning over his shoulder at Ilya, “you are not throwing my precious little бабочка around, you великан, she would leave air, go to space!”

-

2016

Hayden is well past amused by the time Shane makes it back to their hotel room with only twenty minutes before they need to be at the rink for pre-game meetings and warm ups.

“Holy fuck,” he said as Shane tore through his bag to find his preferred underwear. He was wearing a pair of Ilya’s, and they were fine, but wrong. “That’s a hickey.”

Shane ignored him.

“You texted me at quarter to midnight,” Hayden said, from his perch on his unmade bed. He had obviously taken advantage of Shane’s absence, to eat on Shane’s empty bed and there were crumbs on the duvet cover. “To say you’d lost track of time and were staying over. Like you’re someone who loses track of time. Or someone who stays over. You didn’t take your toothbrush -”

“There was a spare there,” Shane said, a little breathless as he stripped his trousers and underwear off in one go to get getting changed over and done with as quickly as possible. He was relying on the *bro code*, or the *no homo code* or whatever to save him from Hayden looking and seeing the hickies bitten into his inner thighs, over his hip bone. He should have told Ilya to stop, but his mouth had felt so good on him in the shower, and so many crazy things had been said and done already, and it had just happened. “And - I mean - you’re always telling me I should let myself be more, uh, impulsive.”

“I’m not mad about it,” Hayden said, “dude, I’m fucking pumped for you. I know you’ve been, uh, *chatting* with this girl for ages. Years, right? About time you start spending nights, or whatever.”

Shane both hated and loved the fact that his team knew about *Lily*. Hated that he had been obvious enough to have been noticed, loved that it was an easy excuse.

“So,” Hayden continued. “I’ll get to meet her soon, then? I have been so chill for so long about this, but if it’s going to be more than casual, I am intent on getting to meet her. Jacki wants in, too.”

“Um,” Shane said. He had his trousers back on and felt a lot more put together, but not put together enough for this. He wanted to tell Hayden that he could meet Lily in just a few hours. On ice. That Lily would probably slam right in to Hayden and chirp at him. That Lily had a kid just a little older than Arthur, and that Lily and Jacki would probably get on like a house on fire.

“Not yet, man.”

“Soon,” Hayden said. Got off his bed to bump his knuckles against Shane’s shoulder, lightened his tone. “Just want you to let me in, bro.”

-

Shane had been around for the arranging of Mila care that morning. He and Mila had played sock hockey in the lounge while Ilya called a couple of his teammates, looking for one of their wives to take Mila for the game.

Shane had listened in with half an ear, letting Mila lead the conversation with her little burbling voice as they batted the balled up sock around.

It sounded like Ilya had good people in his life. The type of people who he could reach out to for help with ease, and laugh about it with them over the phone. Knew the names of their wives and children (which, Shane did also know the names of his team's wives and children and so on, but not in the same kind of social way that it very much sounded like Ilya did. Like he had hung out with them and enjoyed it), and knew he could call in a favour. Like maybe they asked him to babysit sometimes.

And it was so great that Ilya and Mila had that, obviously. She was a secret to the world, but Ilya had managed to surround them with community anyway. Had enough people he trusted with the secret. It was just that if Ilya had these people, his team, his friends, his... family. Why did he need Shane in the know?

And okay, Shane wasn't a complete idiot. He knew he was a different category to all those other people. He was another secret, for one thing. And Shane *wanted* to be in on this, wanted to be part of the safety net around Ilya and Mila, but -

He and Ilya still hadn't gotten down to the meat of the question, really. They had agreed to be friends. But that still wasn't exactly what they were. They weren't even just friends who fucked, because Shane might not have a huge wealth of experience in romance and hook up culture and all that, but he was pretty sure fuck buddies - god he did not like that term - weren't meant to cum when the other one moaned their name. Weren't meant to feel like the hickeys left over afterwards were as special as a fucking golden ring, or -

-

He saw Mila in the family and friends section on the Boston side. Seated with a gaggle of other children bookended by vaguely familiar woman. He didn't know if all the children were kids of players, or if these were friends' kids as well, a ploy to blend Mila in with more anonymity. She waved at him as he skated past on his warm up loop, and he waved back, grinning as the majority of the children and adults there booed at him. All of their boos meant nothing when he knew that the daughter of their fucking hero - Ilya Boston Bears Rozanov - was his biggest fan.

He wondered if she had a Hollander jersey. If he sent her one, Ilya would ever let her wear it, or if he'd burn it in the yard and send a video of it to Shane.

He wouldn't do that to his daughter. Shane had seen the posters in her bedroom. Ilya would let her wear it.

-

2015

“I’ve taken her to family skate before,” Ilya said.

He was sitting at the kitchen table, folding tiny shirts, and glaring down at them so he wouldn’t direct his glare at Mandy, sitting opposite him with her laptop open so she could do paperwork while arguing with him.

“With her in your arms,” Mandy pointed out. “Which is probably the safest place for anyone on a family skate.”

“Everyone is careful,” he protested. Reached for a pair of trousers with lady bugs embroidered all up one leg. “You’ve come before, you have seen how it is. No one does silly things on ice with babies around, Mandy.”

“The children do,” Mandy pointed back. Typed something with such a flurry of speed it was impressive. “I’ve sewn on fingers cut off by skates before, Ilya, I know how bad it can be. What if she falls and someone goes over her fingers? They’re too small. They’d get crushed. I wouldn’t be able to fix them.”

He winced hard at the image of it, at the sound his mind came up with to accompany the image. Shook his head to try to clear it. “You are doing cat thing,” he said. “One where you think of worst thing and think it will be real.”

“Catastrophising. And I’m not, I’m just pointing out things that could realistically happen.”

“I will be there, whole time,” Ilya said, attempting to commit *ca-tas-tro-fi-zing* to memory. “I will be holding her little hands. They will not touch ice, no blades will touch them. She asks always to come on ice with me, Mands. She says *Плиз напочка*, she is so wanting her own skates, she says to me, *напочка ice shoe Мила ice shoe*.”

“Stop doing those eyes at me,” Mandy says with a snort. “I know. She tells me too. And I know you would keep her safe, as well as you can. I just.”

She didn't continue. Kept typing, her forehead furrowed. Ilya waited, folding more clothes.

“It's a dangerous sport,” Mandy said eventually. “I know it's your sport. Your life. And you think it's worth it, getting hit and hurt out there. But it worries me, anyway. Every game I wonder if and how you'll be hurt. I've lived with you for not even two years and I've seen you come home in pain more often than I ever have.”

She paused again, and Ilya continued his silent wait. Gave her space to finish the thoughts in her head.

“She wants to do it because she loves you, and she loves to watch the games. She doesn't understand the impacts.”

Silence again. Ilya waited a little more, and then cleared his throat. Waited another moment more in case that spurred her on, and then tried to speak careful and clever.

“I love our Mila,” he said. “And some day she will get hurt. Bad. Heartbreak, maybe. Broken bone, maybe. I don't know. Is human, yes? To be hurt. To love and be hurt when they are hurt? I get this, Mands, I understand. I am scared, always, always, always of this.” He pauses here to clear his throat again, his hands resting on the pile of folded clothing.

“I am not saying I want Mila to play hockey. I am not saying I want Mila to do nothing but skate. I am saying Mila is asking to skate. And we can give her safe skate. No hockey for babies. Not on skates. Not until she is old enough to know where her safety is. Her - her limit?”

“Self preservation, maybe,” Mandy mumbled. “Limits work, too.”

“Да,” Ilya nodded. “For her is maybe like new language. She speaks so good already in her English, in her Russian, yes? But she can only walk, and she sees how there is walk and there is skate, and she wants to learn to. Is just this, for now. New language for her feet.”

Mandy sighed. “You would be there all the time,” she said, not a question. “And won’t buy her skates until she’s done it a few times and actually enjoys it.”

Ilya nodded again. “Да,” he said. “It will be careful introduction. Like swim lessons we talk about for summer.”

Chapter End Notes

медовик - Medovik (layered honey cake)

Мила Ирена - Mila Irena

Плиз папочка - Pliz papa

папочка - papa

Да - yes

((Okay if I say I want to add a few more chapters because I am enjoying this story and keep getting sidetracked, would that be a good thing?))

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

Thank you guys so much for all the lovely comments and encouragements for more chapters! I love explicit permission to ramble lol 🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷🍷(๑'۪'๑)
(๑'۪'๑)(๑'۪'๑).

As always, Russian translations are in end notes xxx (Feel free to let me know if I mistranslated anything - I don't speak Russian at all. (Mistranslations are basically the only editing I do for my fics :/))

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

2016

Shane had gotten used to the way he and Ilya communicated - or didn't communicate - through half encoded texts and suggestive goodbyes. They could joke, chirp, tease, flirt, but they didn't *converse*. And they didn't plan. Not in a real way; they would set up a plan by acknowledging when they would be in the same city, sending addresses and room numbers, and never admitting that they would keep their schedule clear for each other when they could.

Going to Ilya's house had already been more *planned* than their usual meet ups, if only because Ilya had invited him in advance to Shane arriving in Boston. Shane going back to his house after the game as well - it wasn't the first time they'd met up before and after a game, but they rarely did. No time. Felt too needy. This time, before Shane had left the house for the game, Ilya had looked at him and verbally invited him to come back. To hang out. Because they weren't even going to be fucking, seeing as Mila was there, so it would be a genuine for real hang out. Intended to be a hang out. A sexless afternoon.

Shane's flight home was far too early to stay the night again, but he'd agreed to come for dinner and a few hours on either side of it.

—

So now that he was back in Montreal, safe inside his own apartment, he wondered if and how things were actually going to change. Communicationwise.

All the new jumps in their... friendship had been made face to face. Which was good. It just meant that Shane had no evidence of it. Had no text to refer to to prove to his anxiety that Ilya had said he wanted more. For them to be real.

What if Shane texted something - innocuous, like, *hope you guys are having a nice day*, and Ilya didn't reply. Or he did reply, but only to shut Shane down. What if the *real* Ilya wanted was limited only to their usual meet ups.

He knew he should text - or even call - to clarify. Knew that was the simplest, cleanest option. Was even pretty sure he did know that Ilya wouldn't be... mean about it. He knew Ilya could be mean, but he also knew it wasn't his default setting, knew it was only something he turned on when he felt hurt and trapped. But maybe a call would make him feel hurt or trapped. Maybe given the space of Shane leaving Ilya had realised what a stupid idea it was to tell Shane anything.

Maybe when Mila had turned up Ilya had just panicked, had wanted to shove Shane out the door but didn't want to look mean in front of Mila.

Shane was well aware that he was being stupid. That he was sitting alone on the floor in front of his couch hyperventilating over things that were not real. That he was overreacting.

It was just that he'd... he'd worked so hard to keep a lid on it the whole time he was in Boston. To not let any of the panic burst out and scare Mila, or Ilya, or even Hayden and his team. And he had --- he had almost had a full on panicking breakdown right before Mila arrived. He had been on his way to fucking leave and make his way back to the hotel so he could cry in the bathroom and hope Hayden wouldn't notice. He only hadn't because he had been so startled it had pulled him out of his panic.

Hadn't gotten rid of it, just pushed it aside for later, which just so happened to be now.

-

Mila was not a natural on skates, which was a relief honestly. It was much easier to protect a bumbling beginner from themselves than an over confident natural. Ilya got to hold her gloved hands tight in his own, skating backwards smoothly while her feet slid and wobbled.

Her first few lessons were just the two of them - he'd booked one of the Bear's smaller practice rinks, and Mandy brought her in separately to him. That was how they had done it for family skate as well, except Mandy had joined in then. For these lessons she just sat on the benches outside the rink, doing paperwork and occasionally taking photos, while he and Mila made their way slowly around the ice.

When Mandy was satisfied with Mila's movements on ice, she was the one who suggested they sign her up for some public classes. This time it was Ilya who had said no. He would love her to go to some fun kiddy classes to skate, he would, but how easy would it be for Mila to let slip who her papa was? It was much less risky for her other activities and socialising with Mandy, but on ice? In Boston?

"Bear cubs only," Marlow suggested after team practice. Ilya had been complaining about the Mila skating predicament in between drills, and so far Marlow had just been making affirming grunts.

"What?" Ilya asked, yanking off his helmet so he could shake his head. Sweat from his hair was definitely landing on Marlow's face right now.

"Gross," Marlow said, "fucking wet dog, Roz. Lots of teams do it."

"What?" Ilya asked again, "get animal mascot? Getting baby bear in here is very Russian of you."

"Fuck off," Marlow snapped, instinctive. "I meant having a kids team. Kids of the players. Family only, y'know? It's not an official thing, but like I said, lots of teams do it."

"We don't have one?" Ilya asked, yanking his pads off as he talked. He hadn't heard of this before, was pretty sure he would have known if they had one.

"Nah," Marlow shook his head. "Haven't had enough kids interested, y'know. But, maybe we get the WAGS chat on it and if we get enough interest we could have management set one up? That way Mila gets to have her social time and skate time, and you don't need to keep sneaking her in."

Ilya blinked water out of his eyes - sweat for sure - and nodded once. "You can bring up to WAGS?"

"Yeah, I got you."

-

2016

"Лицо," Mila announced, coming up behind Ilya in the kitchen where he was notching the tops off strawberries. "Фона."

"Что?" He peered around under his own elbow to see her. She was still in her pajamas because they were having a lazy morning, and she was holding a piece of paper and a serious expression. "Кому вы хотите позвонить?"

"Face," Mila said sternly, she held her paper up until Ilya reached down with his non strawberry hand to take it. "Face call. Sane."

She had drawn a very beautiful picture as she was extremely talented, and could grow up to be whatever she wanted - probably a world famous artist. He squinted at the blue scribbly circles with the sharp black scrawls coming off it. There was a pink squiggle with black lines as well, and then an almost entirely black scrawl with a small gap of yellow crayon smudged somewhere near the top of it.



“You want we call Shane?” He asked, holding the masterpiece up a little higher so the sun hit the paper and he could make out the mostly hidden lines that he was pretty sure were smiley faces.
“Show him pretty picture?”

“Да,” Mila held her arms up in obvious request.

He put the paper down on a clean bit of bench, scooped her up. “Сначала завтрак,” he told her, “А потом мы звоним.”

-

He hoped Shane would pick up the call. Facetime was the kind of thing they didn't do unless it was for sex, and even then rarely. He hoped Shane would pick up, because Mila very badly wanted to show him her picture of the three of them playing hockey, but he also --- If Shane picked up, this would be the first real sign that they had agreed to change the rules of their relationship. That Shane wanted them to let each other in.

Shane picked up on the fourth ring, looking wide eyed and a bit frazzled, the background dark around him.

“We wake you?” Ilya asked, his eyes darting quickly from the indistinguishable shape of the background to Shane's red eyes to his stiff shoulders. “You okay?”

“No,” Shane said, cleared his throat. “I'm fine. I've been up since early. Early flight. I'm home. Um. Hi. Hi Mila. How are you?”

“Look,” Mila instructed, not interested in paltry small talk. She was in Ilya's knee - the both of them on the couch - and she held the paper up over her own face. “See us.”

Shane made a small noise. Ilya couldn't see his phone screen past the paper, so he readjusted them until he could see Shane on his phone, and also be sure he was getting the picture in full.

“Wow,” Shane said, voice so soft Ilya almost missed it. “You drew this, Mila?”

“Yes,” Mila sounded proud. She wriggled one hand out around the paper to point at the blue and black figure. “Is you.”

“Yeah it is,” Shane agreed. “You got my hair just right. It's beautiful. And is - is that you next to me?”

“Uh-huh,” Mila nodded enthusiastically, pulled the paper closer to her chest and holding it there with her chin so she could use both hands to point. “Me, and papa. We play hockey.”

“I really like it,” Shane said. He had been quite pale when he’d answered the call, but now his cheeks were pink. “Thank you for showing me, Mila.”

“I give you?” Mila asked. She looked up at Ilya now, tipping her head back and letting the picture slip down into her lap. “We take to Sane?”

“Hm,” Ilya said. “I could take it with me in a couple of weeks, when I go to Shane’s home to play hockey there. Would that be okay?”

Mila pouted, looked back to Shane. “He wants now,” she said.

Shane laughed a little. His face was even pinker. “I - I can wait,” he said earnestly. “I do really want it, Mila, but I can be patient for it.”

“Hmf,” Mila said. “I want to give.”

“Ah,” Shane said, nodded. “That makes it. Trickier, yes.”

“We talk about it, okay?” Ilya said to his now grumpy faced daughter. “Yes? Моя драгоценная?”

Mila sighed, nodded.

“If you still want to go play hockey outside,” Ilya continued, “you should go get changed now. Phone says it rains later.”

“Okay,” Mila said, still frowning a little before putting her smile back on as she looked at Shane in the phone again. “I go change! Bye Sane.”

“Bye Mila,” Shane said, smiled back at her. Kept smiling as Mila scrambled off Ilya’s knee and made her way noisily to the staircase. “Um,” he said, “do - d’you need to go too?”

“Not yet,” Ilya said, felt himself smiling back, soft and wide, at Shane and his hesitancy. “I have to tell you off, first.”

“Tell me off?” Shane sounded a little nervous, and then his eyebrows shot up with clear affront. “For what?”

Ilya sighed, tipped his head side to side. “Is not fair,” he said, as stern as he could manage, “for my baby to like you more than me. She is all, ‘Sane’ this, and ‘Sane’ that. And now she draws fanart?”

For a moment Shane looked like he might actually apologise, and then his face crooked in a half smirk and he shook his head back at Ilya. “Yeah,” he said, “that’s what happens when you’re only the second best hockey player, man. Sorry you had to find out this way.”

“Fucker,” Ilya snorted, felt fondness building up in his chest like a shaken can of coke. “Maybe we add you to parent schedule, huh? Mandy days, Ilya days, Sane days. Like a messy throuple break up.”

“Throuple,” Shane repeated, his head still shaking side to side slightly as if he was unaware of it. “You say the weirdest shit, sometimes, Ro- uh - Ilya.”

Ilya was going to be burping fondness for days. He rolled his eyes. “You love it,” he said. “I make your life exciting. Good for boring Canadian boy, yes?”

Shane rolled his eyes right back at him, but then said; “Yes.”

Ilya wondered if he could add to his will that he wanted his gravestone to say that Shane had killed him. Died of cuteness overdose from Shane Hollander. Shane Hollander and his stupid freckles made Ilya Rozanov too happy and his heart stopped. Something simple and sweet like that.

“Maybe,” Ilya said, without his brain really being involved at all, “maybe we could find way for Mila to give you drawing. To see you again.”

Shane stared back at him. His eyes were still red. Ilya couldn't tell in the dimness of Shane's room if it was exhaustion or tears that had done it. “Yeah,” he said. “Maybe.”

Ilya nodded. “You are,” he began, glanced over at the staircase Mila had disappeared up. He could hear her opening drawers in her room. “You are okay?”

An expression darted across Shane's face too quickly for Ilya to read it before it smoothed out into a sort of neutral smile. “Yeah.”

“Shane,” Ilya said. Wondered how long it would still feel like a thrill to say his name to him like this. Wondered if Shane felt it like a thrill as well, or if it was still sending panic coursing through his veins like it obviously had the first time.

“Ilya,” Shane replied. Another thrill. He cleared his voice. “I'm a bit overwhelmed,” he said steadily. “I'm okay.”

Ilya eyed him carefully, looked for the lie in Shane's face, in the carefully contained expression. Shane smiled at him, a real smile.

“This call helped,” he said. “Tell Mila thank you for me.”

“I will,” Ilya nodded. “Thanks for picking up.”

“Course,” Shane mumbled, his face had been slowly losing its pink flush over the last minute or so, but it came back now. “I - yeah. ‘Course.”

He could hear Mila beginning her descent now, clomping fiercely. “I have to go have my ass kicked by baby bear,” he said. “She is very tough.”

“She is.”

“We talk soon, yes?”

“Yes.”

“Goodbye, Shane,” Ilya said, “eat something with real flavour for breakfast.”

“Fuck off,” Shane said, “Bye, Ilya.”

Chapter End Notes

Лицо - Face

Фона - call/phone

Что - what

Кому вы хотите позвонить - Who do you want to call

Да - Yes

Сначала завтрак - Breakfast first

А потом мы звоним - and then phone call

Моя драгоценная - My precious

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

Hi! All your comments are so lovely, thank you! And about the now non-existent chapter count; I do have the story outline in my head, I just cannot currently predict how many side streets I'm going to scramble down. I'll update the chapter count once I know :)))

2015

Ilya had always been impressed with the WAGs - the way that they organised behind the scenes so effectively and so quickly. The way they were a support group for each other - partners of stupid men who got hurt all the time and were away from home the rest of the time. They arranged meal trains, birthday parties, carpools, kiddy playdates, girls' nights, team BBQs, and so much more. He knew that when he let more of his team in on Mila's existence it had been the wives and girlfriends of his teammates who had rallied so quickly in making a gift basket of useful newborn items. Who had sent gift vouchers for massages for Mandy. Who had passed on messages to say they were happy to babysit.

They had tried to poach Mandy for their group as well, but Mandy refused on the basis that she was not a wife or girlfriend, just a friend and mother. And that she had no time for the fun parts of the chat, and no desire to be involved in the hockey aspects either. She still met up with the group every so often - BBQs, family skate days, play dates - but she made it clear that they were Ilya's people, not hers.

He was more impressed than ever now. Anders' wife, Yulia, was the one most invested in getting Marly's idea off the ground. Marly had showed Ilya screenshots of the group chat that his girlfriend had taken and sent to him; Yulia making polls, spreadsheets, estimates on pricing, sharing her communications with the Bears' management teams, etc.

The problem she was facing was that there just weren't enough members with children to make it look good enough for management. They were coming in at about six kids who were of an age, and wanted to skate. Of an age would maybe not have contained Mila if it weren't for the fact that she wanted it so badly. Yulia had already decided on a work around, based mainly on the fact that Anders had so many siblings who all had so many children. Children and close relations of the Bears; kids, cousins, siblings, nieces, and nephews.

Closed practice, photos on request and approval only. Three classes a week; one for beginners, one for intermediates, and one for whoever wanted to come twice a week.

Yulia had it sorted within two weeks. Was already sending pictures of uniform designs into the WAGs chat on the twelfth day.

Three weeks after Marly had brought the idea up to Ilya, the Bear Cubs had their first practice.

It was easy getting Mila to the practice without having to do any sneaking. Marly's girlfriend - Sammy - had volunteered to pick Mila up for practice (on her way into the rink where she worked in the social media office), on days that Magda couldn't. They tried to limit Mandy's trips to the rink on Mandy's own request - she didn't think it was a good idea to be seen with Mila at the rink too often, and Ilya begrudgingly agreed. Once Mila was at the rink, Ilya could easily go watch her at practice, or collect her afterwards to come watch his practice. Some of the other dads on the team did the same thing, or one of them would just go collect all the children and bring them back like a litter of kittens all clumsy in their gear, excited and over tired and entirely adamant on getting on the ice with their fathers to play what LeClaire had begun calling *Chaos Hockey*.

-

Mila was still not a natural on ice, but she was something better. She was determined. Devoted. Delighted, even.

Ilya was not being biased when he said she was the absolute best, probably better than most of the Bears' rookies. Sure, she was still a little wobbly sometimes, and her edges were definitely messy. But she always got back up when she fell, because he'd taught her to fall clean. And she trusted her footing, so her strides were never hindered by doubt. And most of all, she knew hockey. She loved hockey. Her favourite show was not one of the brightly coloured shows he sometimes saw other children watching - like the one with the little girl and her monkey and her backpack -, but hockey games. She liked the Bears' games (nearly) the most because she knew so many of the players, but she was happy to watch almost any game. Her favourite games to watch, however, (and this was entirely Ilya's fault) were any game with Shane Hollander in them.

Ilya liked to tell himself the only reason *he* watched so much Hollander tape was because Hollander was actually his rival on the ice and he needed to observe him as much as possible so he could beat him. Mila watched because she liked how Hollander moved. That's what she said when he asked, anyway. Which was a relief, because she could have said it was because Ilya talked about how good he was all the time, or because Ilya watched like a hawk whenever Shane came onscreen, or because Ilya watched all his interviews and heckled along like he could be heard by anyone but Mila who laughed at him the whole time.

-

Shane had only gone out to the club with JJ and some of the team because he had been promising JJ he would come when he was free, and he hadn't been able to come up with an excuse quick enough.

It was kind of cool that the cast of X-squad were there as well, but it wasn't like Shane was a huge fan. He liked the movies well enough on planes - was pretty sure he had actually seen Rose Landry's entire oeuvre while flying back and forth between games, but he didn't know anything about her or the rest of the cast.

He'd managed to get away with just one drink so far, clutching it in his hand and only drinking occasionally so he wouldn't be offered another one. Was already exhausted with the scene, though, and his phone had been buzzing against his thigh for the last few minutes.

He escaped upstairs, found a quieter room, and snuck down into a booth, pulling his phone out as he did to look at what Ilya had been texting him.

Because he knew it was Ilya texting him. No one else texted him with this kind of frequency, a bunch of small texts one after the other as if he was typing them out as he had the thoughts.

FROM: Lily

9:07 PM

Only just got her down

She kept saying she needed to see your goal

Fucking hollander

9:08 PM

We watch goal twelve times

Twelve

Wasnt even that good

Worth ten watches

At best

9:10 PM

Also

I hate you

So much

My beautiful baby, delight of my life, reason of my breathing

She shuns me

Says no to her amazing rozanov pjs

Says no to her bear pjs

9:11 PM

MY daughter?

She INSIST

She insist she wear her new Hollander shirt

That her 'bestest friend sane' send her

Just to fuck with me

9:12 PM

You are so evil i consider not even sending photo of her in it

But i am nice and kind

Not like mean hollander

Canada should swap you for me

Better nicer model

I send cute photo

9:13 PM

IMAGE ATTACHED



Shane snorted as he read through the absolute rubbish Ilya sent, tapped an angry face onto the message calling him mean, a heart on the message calling him Mila's bestest friend, and opened the picture Ilya sent so he could see it better.

Mila, standing up on her bed wearing the Hollander shirt Shane had sent, half as a gag, half because he thought Mila would really like it. He'd gotten her a couple of sizes too big on purpose, guessing it would be turned into pajamas because there was no way Ilya would be pleased with her wearing it out of the house. She wore a grin so giant it squished her cheeks up into her eyes, and showed off all of her little teeth.

"Very cute," A woman said, and Shane startled so hard he dropped his phone onto the table in front of him. "Sorry! I didn't mean to startle you, I just - uh - hi? Did you think this booth was empty?"

Rose Landry was sitting opposite him, tucked into the back corner of the booth like she too had been trying to hide from the press of socialising happening below them. Her eyes were wide, eyebrows lifted, but her mouth was pursed in something Shane was pretty sure was amusement.

"Sorry," he said, automatic, grabbed for his phone to lock the screen. To hide Mila. Jesus. Imagine if this was how Mila's existence leaked. Ilya had kept it and her safe for this long, and Shane Hollander finds out and barely a week later he leaks it to a famous actress. "I - yeah, I didn't see you. Sorry. I didn't mean to interrupt, or to ignore. I'm - hi - I'm Shane Hollander."

She smiled at him, amusement very clear now. "I know," she said, "I'm a big hockey fan. I'm Rose, Rose Landry."

"I know," Shane repeated, slightly gobsmacked. His phone was vibrating with another incoming text, and he flipped it face down on the table. "I - uh - didn't know you were a fan."

"My whole family is," she replied, her eyes darting down to the movement of his phone, and then back to his face. "Really nice goal tonight, by the way."

He didn't know if she'd read that in the texts, was mocking him, maybe, or if she meant it. He fell back on his media training. Kept his face as neutral as possible.

"Thank you," he said. "It was a team effort."

She laughed at him - not unkindly. "It was not," she said, shook her head. "Shane - I have watched a lot of hockey in my life, and I have a lot of respect for how you manage your team and their play. But that goal tonight? Both players who should have gotten an assist on it fumbled. You only regained the puck and made the goal because you're good enough to save their fumbles. It was a beautiful goal, and it did not involve your team."

Shane blinked at her. This did not sound like mocking. Not of him, anyway. Also; "Not to, uh, speak ill of my teammates," he said, dropped his voice lower, "but Cedz should have been able to fucking make that pass in his sleep - I made him the whole goddamn alleyway for it and he sent it sideways instead. Nearly pulled my hamstring saving that."

She was grinning at him now, "ooh," she said, "I am very honoured to get to hear your real opinions. You always sound so contained and polite in your interviews, but I always thought you were probably sarcastic as fuck in real life."

"Me?" Shane raised his eyebrows, and she laughed a little more. "If I'm a bit sarcastic to you," he said, "I can trust you not to tell anyone that you were right about that?"

He didn't know why he was saying any of this, except for the fact that she seemed tired as well. That she seemed pleased to see him, for him. That she seemed safe.

"Of course," she said, "in return, I'll even be sarcastic right back. Is it tough being Canada's sweetheart? Do you have to give the government a loony every time you swear?"

"I never swear," Shane said solemnly, "on Canadian soil."

-

He gets back to his apartment later than he intended. Had had more fun with Rose than he ever had at clubs normally. They had swapped numbers and agreed to actually text and meet up again. When women asked him for his number, Shane generally told them he didn't give it out, sorry, and excused himself as quickly as possible. He couldn't even pretend to be confused about why he wasn't running away from Rose. Because when she asked for his number, she met his eye firmly and said; "I want to be friends, yeah?" and he had said; "I'd like that. Friends."

And it hadn't felt like when Ilya said friends, the word simply a door holding back everything else about them, it was just friends.

Ilya had sent a few more texts, but nothing in the last couple of hours, and nothing that really required a reply. Still, Shane texted him back before putting his phone on the charger and going to sleep.

TO: Lily

1:29 AM

Sorry i didn't reply - club was crazy! Just got home and am already half asleep. Mila looks so cute, i should send more hollander clothing ;)

-

2015

"I think it's time I moved out," Mandy said, out of the blue, over dinner.

Ilya had just gotten back from an away game in Toronto, and he'd taken a puck to the tit hard enough that he now had a dark blue bruise that hurt all the way to his heart when it was pressed on. Mila had given it a kiss, and put one of her colourful plasters in the middle of it, and was now sitting on the floor in front of him playing with the puck that did it. Marlow had scooped it out of play and tossed it onto the bench, winking at Ilya as he did. It was a weird souvenir. Mila liked it.

He looked up at Mandy, she was perched up at the kitchen counter, her laptop open in front of her like it was perpetually, and a slice of pizza in her hand. Ilya had picked it up on his way home, and she'd grinned at him when she had seen it.

"What?"

“Well,” she shrugged, took a bite from her slice, and slid her eyes from Ilya, to Mila, back to her laptop. “It was really good,” she said. “When Mila was so small. And I have really enjoyed living here, with you, even when you smell so bad, and even though it’s turned our daughter into a hockey maniac, but -” she sighed heavily, did not look back at Ilya.

He put his own slice of pizza back into the box on the table beside him. He fought back the urge to pull Mila up onto his knee. She wanted to leave? To take Mila? Where?

“But?” he asked, carefully not grabbing Mila and legging it. His legs were sore, anyway.

“But I can’t live my life here,” she said. “Not with how much secrecy it has to be in. I can’t invite casual friends over, I can’t date properly, I can’t... live. I want to have my own place that isn’t tied to you. That isn’t tied to a secret.”

Ilya could understand that. Did. It was just that. He thought. They had a lawyer, and. He thought they were going to keep Mila a secret together. Not just.

“Mila?” he asked.

Mila looked up at him, eyes wide, but he looked away from her to Mandy.

“We’ll work it out with our schedules,” Mandy said. “We - I’m not taking her away, Ilya. Not really. She’ll keep her room here, this will still be her house, she’ll just have another room and another house with me.”

Slight relief. Ilya exhaled. Mila was still looking at him, had taken one of his hands in both of hers.

“I don’t mean to leave immediately,” Mandy said, sounded a little sorry, like she’d come in harder than she meant to. “I just - I want to start moving on in my life again. I feel like I’m stuck, here. Which isn’t your fault. It’s just how it is.”

“Okay,” Ilya said. “Yes. I get. Okay. I help? Look for your new house?”

Mila climbed up into his lap, and he held her tight.

“I would appreciate it,” Mandy said, she smiled at him. “I promise,” she said, “I’m not taking her from you.”

Chapter 8

Chapter Notes

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

2016

It wasn't weird to not hear from Shane for a day or two at a time - he often got caught up in hockey to the extent that it seemed like he forgot he existed as a human and not just an idea. It had been happening less and less since he had met Mila, though.

Maybe because he was aware that by not replying to Ilya's messages he was also sometimes ignoring messages from Mila, and he didn't want to do that. Ilya understood that very well.

It was weird to not hear from him for just over a full day, and then, while working out with his own team to be shown tabloids of Shane Hollander and Rose Landry being touted as the new It couple.

Which was obviously very fine and extremely cool. Rose Landry was good looking, and if the photos were to be believed, Shane enjoyed her company, even found her funny. Shane deserved that. And - look, they were plastered over the internet and in magazines so obviously - no secrecy here.

Ilya was absolutely not seething with jealousy that he was trying very hard to stuff down out of his stomach and into his legs as he got onto the treadmill to try to run it out. He was not, because he had no right to. He and Shane hadn't agreed to be anything more than *friends*, anything more than *real*. And they hadn't been - not since Shane had left Boston last. They had been texting, talking, joking around together. Sending photos and having video chats. And all in a very platonic, friendly way. Ilya hadn't even snuck in any innuendo laden messaging. Hadn't even sent the photo he had taken earlier this morning of himself flexing in front of the gym mirror, his biceps bulging.

And maybe Ilya had been labouring under the assumption that Shane was gay. That he didn't like women at all, because he had never seen Shane do so much as cast a second glance at a good looking woman, had never heard even a whisper of gossip about Shane hooking up with anyone at all. Maybe he had been hoping that Shane was only interested in Ilya. That he was, more or less, Ilya-sexual. It was a stupid fantasy Ilya harboured. Brought on by thinking too hard about how he had had so many of Shane's *firsts* with him. How he, Ilya, had shown Shane so many things about himself.

None of which mattered currently, because Shane, apparently, was dating Rose Landry, and Ilya very much doubted (hoped) that she was going to give Shane the same experiences Ilya had given him.

He texted Shane.

TO: Jane

12:26 PM

Congrats.

When Shane did not immediately reply (nor reply within the next ten minutes), Ilya pocketed his phone and continued running. Did not think about how he didn't even know Shane knew Landry. Did not think about how Shane had said nothing about this at all to Ilya even though they had been saying so much about so many things to each other.

-

2015

The week Mandy moved out was the hardest week for both Ilya and Mila. They had agreed - alongside Mila's lawyer - on their official custody split. What made the most sense around both of their work loads, around closeness to places Mila liked to go to, people Mila trusted. Magda was moving with Mandy and Mila, Ilya joked that all the M'n'M'n'M's liked to stay together. It made more sense for Magda to be with Mandy, because according to their schedules, Mila would also be with Mandy more. Despite the fact that both Mandy and Ilya's workloads set them on weird timetables, Mandy's work only kept her out for a half day at a time, whereas sometimes Ilya's took him out of the country for over a week. He traveled around the states constantly, and it wouldn't be fair to Mila or to Magda to just abandon them both in his otherwise empty house, when they could be with Mandy.

It was what made the most sense, even if Ilya hated the fact that now he came home to an empty house more often than not. He and Mandy had also agreed that they would be casual about the official schedule. If she couldn't take Mila for a couple of days of her time when Ilya could, he would, and it wouldn't be 'paid back', or whatever. And vice versa. He still got to see Mila off schedule as well, when Magda brought her in for hockey, or when she had a playdate with one of his teammate's kids.

The first week he came over for dinner every night he could. The four of them sitting around Mandy, Mila, and Magda's new dining table and eating and talking like things were normal, even though Ilya would leave afterwards. Mila cried every time he left. Ilya also cried every time he left, he just managed to keep it in until he was in his car on the way home.

Mandy was very nice about it. Hugged Ilya tightly. Told him it would get easier. Would feel better when they got into the swing of it and he'd had her home with him again a few times. Magda was nice about it as well. They were all very nice about it. Neither of them pushed him at all about the links to various therapists they sent him.

He didn't want to have to go to therapy, and he maybe would not have if he hadn't made the mistake of bringing it up to Cliff. Cliff, because he was more often referred to as *Marly* was immediately on the side of the M's.

"No shame in it," he said genially, when he was caught openly reading over Ilya's shoulder as he looked at the latest email briefing him on a potential therapist. "Could probably do us all some good."

Ilya sighed. Pocketed his phone. He had been hoping that the buzz of the email had been a message from Shane about meeting up at his place in Montreal tomorrow night, not another breakdown on why this therapist would be a good fit for him. It was kind of like having a matchmaker email him, except he knew if he went on any of the 'dates' that he wouldn't leave in anyway satisfied.

"Sure."

"Seriously, bro," Marly said, elbowed him in the back, then hooked his head over Ilya's shoulder, his chin digging in to Ilya's collarbone. "It could. And - uh - I know you're. You know. You said just last week -" here he put on his dreadful approximation of Ilya's Russian accent "- *Russians do not get sad. We get horny and we get revenge. That is all Russians get.* But like. If you were to get sad, that's not. Like, weak?"

"You have been abusing your group chat with Mandy and Magda," Ilya sighed. "They are feeding you lines, now, hm?"

“No,” Marly huffed, slung one arm over Ilya’s other shoulder to stop him from shrugging Marly’s weight off and escaping. “I can say deepish things myself from myself. And maybe Mandy asked me to like. Mention that I support you. If like, the opportunity presented itself, is what I think she said. But all these words are my words. And I. Guess. I’m worried about you, bro.”

“Worried about me?” Ilya made one half hearted attempt to wriggle out of Marly’s grip, decided it would turn into too much of a struggle if Marly declined to let go, and resigned himself to the semi-embrace. “I am fine. You see me on ice demolishing lines? You see this grin on my face?” he turned his face to Marly’s, a wide grin gritted out across it. “I am fine. Bro.”

Marly swore slightly at the sight of Ilya’s admittedly deranged looking grin. “Shit,” he said. “That, more than anything makes me think you need some therapy. Smiling therapy or some shit, I don’t know. Be serious with me, Roz. Please. I’m not claiming to be fucking clever or whatever, but if Mandy and I agree about something, it’s usually because it’s so fucking true that even I can’t overlook it. You’re fucking sad. And you’re not talking about why with me, or the boys, or Mandy, or even Magda. So. Like. Yeah.”

Ilya imagined attempting to open his various cans of worms in front of his teammates. He liked most of them, loved a good handful of them, trusted some - like Cliff - with his fucking life it came down to it. But to just spill out that - that - that...

That it wasn’t just about Mandy, Magda, and Mila moving out. It wasn’t just about coming home to an empty house. It wasn’t just about how he was pretty sure he had abandonment issues that ran a mile long. It was all of that, yes, but it was also that he was losing heart blood every fucking day like he’d taken a bullet to the chest because he was, maybe, in love with someone who he had treated very badly and did not deserve and yet still wanted.

He was the rat, the trap, and the cheese. And if he said any of that, then he might have to say why he did not deserve the person he loved, and he might have to admit that very often he just hated himself, and no he did not have any plans to kill himself, but yes maybe he would not mind it so much if he just stopped. If he did not wake up one day.

Because, and he would have to ask them to hear him out here, he knew they would protest, but they didn’t understand. Mila was young enough that if he died now, it would not matter so much, in the long run. She would forget him and grow up happy with Mandy.

And he was sure Mandy would feel sad about it for a while, but it wasn’t as if they were romantically involved. He wasn’t even her best friend. She had good support, and a good house, and he would make sure she always had enough money for her and Mila, and whatever either of them wanted to do.

Probably the Boston Bears would take a little hit, but imagine how much fame they would get. Ilya might even be awarded medals posthumously. He could be an unofficial ghostly mascot they could call upon to score goals.

His family in Russia did not care. He did not talk to them at all except to send money and check in on his father's deteriorating health, try to make sure his care was happening properly. They would lose the money, but they would be okay.

And the person he loved and knew he shouldn't? He couldn't say who to his team, because even if he died Shane would still be alive and it wouldn't be fair to him to be outed as a sidenote to Ilya Rozanov's untimely death. But Shane would be fine. Ilya was sure of it. He would be sad about it, but. Shane was so good at compartmentalising. At pushing through. At overcoming. And he would. And without Ilya around, he would be the indisputable best. It would be good for him.

He did not say all of this now, to Marly, because he was sure it would make Marly explode like an overfilled water balloon.

"Cliff," he said, "is fine that I am sad. Everyone is sad. I have no plans to jump off bridge, so I think I am still on safe side of sad. Yes?"

"Jesus, Roz," Marly said. "Not yes. No. Everyone is not sad, actually. Most of the time I'm pretty fucking happy."

"Ah, well, that is symptom of being hit in head too often," Ilya said lightly, "you forget why you should be sad."

"Nope," Marly said, very firm. The type of firm he was on ice when he decided that his check was actually going to be a bulldozer. The guy in front of him was going down and probably being taken off the ice. "You cannot tell me you're sad, and then make a - a - a suicide joke? If you don't choose a therapist yourself and prove to me that you're actually going, I'm going to kidnap you and take you myself."

"I think that is illegal."

"I don't give a fuck, do I look like I give a fuck?"

Ilya eyed him over his shoulder again. Cliff Marlow did not look like a gave a single fuck. He sighed heavily. "I am not damsel in tears, Marly."

"You will be when I chuck you over my shoulder and carry you into an office," Marly shot back. "Hell, if I have to, I'll kidnap you and a therapist and lock you up together until you're feeling better. Than I'll drop your therapist off at another therapist's place to talk about being kidnapped."

"You are so stupid."

"Say you'll go to therapy."

-

Ilya's therapist was the third one Mandy and Magda had sent him. She was about the age his mother ought to be, and she spoke Russian, and her website said that her business was discrete, LGBTQ+ friendly, and home based so he didn't have to go in to an office block. She lived a half hour drive from his house, and her home was filled with tall windows and taller bookshelves. A lot of light. A cat curled up on one of the armchairs in her therapy room. He sat on the couch and hoped the cat might come curl up with him instead.

His therapist asked him to call her Van. Asked if he would prefer to speak in English or Russian. Asked if he would like a coffee or a tea or a water. Asked him why he was here.

-

2016

FROM: Jane

10:52 PM

Thanks! Pretty pleased with the trick!

Wait, sorry. Didn't see your text until now and thought it was about my game.

Congrats for what?

11:00 PM

Is this about people saying I'm dating Rose Landry?

TO: Jane

11:20 PM

Obviously. Good catch.

FROM: Jane

11:20 PM

I think I'm still confused. Is good catch related to the game or to Rose?

To: Jane

11:21 PM

I didn't see you take a hit to the head, you are concussed anyway?

Good catch about landry.

She is very hot

And famous

More famous than you

You know that means more dot light on you

11:22 PM

But she is worth it am sure.

FROM: Jane

11:23 PM

Wait.

You're jealous about this.

What the fuck.

TO: Jane

11:24 PM

No.

INCOMING CALL: Jane

-

"It's very late, Hollander," Ilya answered, kept his voice low even though he was by himself in his hotel room. They had flown out late afternoon, and he really ought to be asleep already to be fresh for the game tomorrow morning. "You know I am on game time."

"Shut up, you wouldn't be sleeping until at least midnight, anyway," Shane replied, "too busy watching stupid videos on your phone."

"They are vines," Ilya retorted, "must be healthy like grapes."

"You know they -" Shane cut himself off with a muffled curse. If the media knew how much Shane really swore it would tarnish his golden boy reputation. Probably not too much. "Why are you mad about what the fucking media is saying about me and Rose?"

"I'm not," Ilya said. "I already said."

"No," Shane grunted, "you said you weren't jealous. Which I also don't believe, by the way. You would really be jealous if Rose and I dated? Like you haven't been with more people than goals you've scored."

Ilya kind of liked the idea of keeping track of hook up numbers in relation to goals he scored. Wondered idly if he ought to try and figure it out, see how they matched up. That wasn't the fucking point right now, though.

"I said no," he snapped, "I am not jealous. I do not do that. I am not jealous person. Not jealous lover. You be with whoever you want to fucking be with. All I said was congrats, Hollander, no need to be so weird about congratsing. I do not give fuck about who you fuck, is not my business apart from when fuck is with me."

He hung up the phone extremely irate with himself.

INCOMING CALL: Jane

"Don't just fucking hang up on me," Shane snapped, the moment Ilya answered the phone. "Jesus, Ilya. I'm *not* dating or fucking Rose, and I'm not fucking stupid. You can't just yell at me like a - a spurned - a - you can't get so obviously pissed off at me and then lie to me about getting pissed off at me."

Ilya considered hanging up the phone again. Partially because it would piss Shane off so much more and that was always a little fun. Mostly because he felt like he needed to run away so he had time to think.

Shane sighed heavily over the line, his anger obviously already spent now he'd spat it out. Ilya wished he could do that as quickly.

"Ilya," Shane said, after a few more heavy moments of shared silence. "I've been busy with hockey today, and with dealing with media. I was not ignoring your text message. I've only just got home. I'm fucking exhausted. I'm not - I like Rose. As a friend. We had a fun night together. Chatting. I - I told her that I'm. Not interested. In women. Or, like, she guessed, basically, and I confirmed, but. Yeah. There's nothing romantic there, and we both know it. And I guess I just. Assumed that you knew it too. I wasn't like. Purposefully withholding information."

Ilya took all of this in slowly. Closed his eyes. He was already in bed, head on pillow. He could go to sleep just like this, listening to Shane breathe and speak.

“Ilya,” Shane said again, soft and quiet like he thought maybe Ilya had gone to sleep.

“Shane,” Ilya murmured back. Kept his eyes closed like if he didn’t look he could avoid the embarrassment of being so transparent and so stupid. “Okay.”

“Okay?”

“Maybe I was jealous,” Ilya sighed. “Maybe I thought she would also have cute child to baby trap you with and then Mila would be so sad.”

“Mhm,” Shane hummed. He did sound exhausted. Ilya had seen his game, watched it on the flight. It had been rough, and Shane had been amazing in it. “I don’t want Mila to be sad,” he said. “And I don’t want you to be sad. Rose is - we’re friends. But we’re not friends the way you and I are friends. Not - Ilya.”

Ilya should have never introduced Shane to the concept of breathing out Ilya’s name like that. Like everything about them was real and allowed. Like he knew how the shape of it shuddered down Ilya’s spine. He wondered if saying Shane to Shane did the same thing, or if in this thing Shane was better adjusted than him.

“I want it to be my business who you fuck,” Ilya said. Because Shane was tired, and Ilya was tired, and so, so, so relieved. Relief made him reckless. “And your business who I fuck.”

Shane made a noise like a strained chuckle. “Hm,” he said. Not very informative. “I don’t think I want a - a text every time you fuck someone,” he said. “Not my kind of subscription. Um.”

“No,” Ilya groaned. Sometimes he wondered if Shane was really not getting it or if it was a ploy to make Ilya explain things outright. Like the way he sometimes pretended to not know words just to get Shane to fumble around explaining them for him. “No. I mean, no texts about other people. All business would be your business because all business would be with you.”

“You’re,” Shane started, very slow, “you’re asking to be exclusive?”

“Exclusive?”

“Like, just. You and me. We don’t sleep with anyone else. We - you fucking know what exclusive means, you asshole, I’ve heard you use it before.”

Ilya laughed, his face felt like an iron had been laid on it. “So, yes?”

Another short silence.

“Yes,” Shane said. “It’s not like it’s... I don’t sleep with anyone else anyway. Not really. So it’s not hard for me to - but for you to --- are you sure?”

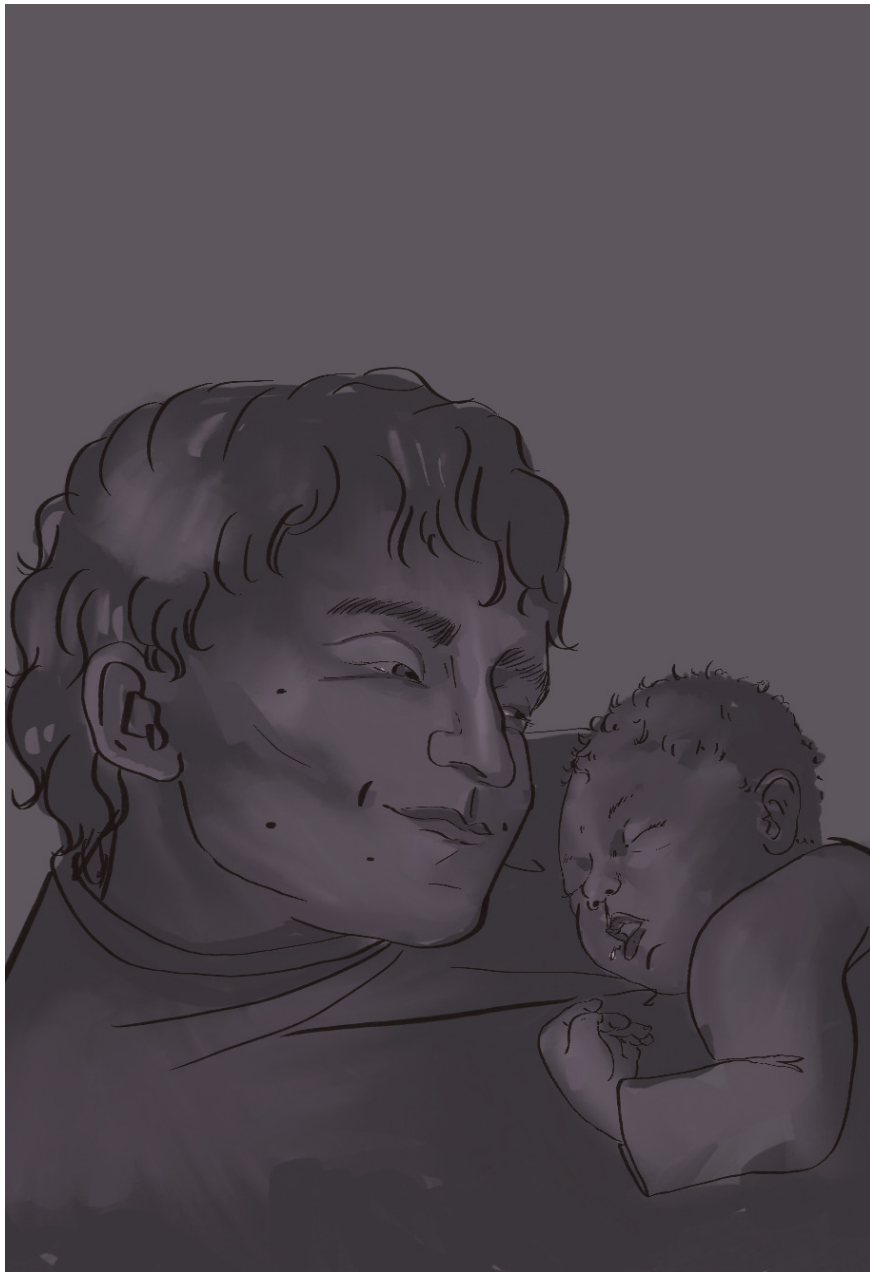
“Yes,” Ilya said. “Hollander, I do not know if you have noticed, but I am a papa now, you see? I do not have time or want to go out clubbing and hooking up all time. I stay home with my baby girl, I play hockey, I watch my healthy vines on my phone, and I text my most boring friend congrats because I am jealous maybe someone else is getting to kiss his lovely mouth and lick his lovely freckles.”

Shane laughed, sounded almost shy about it. “Gross,” he said, absolutely not meaning it. “No one else is doing that. No one else gets to.”

“Okay,” Ilya said.

They breathed over the line together. Ilya kept his eyes shut, his face soft. If he tried hard he could imagine Shane next to him in the bed, his breathing slowing down as he slipped into sleep.

“Call me after your game tomorrow,” Shane said, after Ilya had lost track of time in the shared susurrus of their breaths. “And we can talk about getting Mila and her art, and her papa to come see me.”







Chapter End Notes

hi! I'm going to put these drawings in the story at the time they're mentioned, but for those who are reading chapter by chapter as I post, I thought I would put them in this chapter too so you can see them without having to search for them :)

First is a selfie of Ilya and Mila that he sends to Cliff
Second is the photo of Mila in her Hollander shirt

Third is Mila's drawing of her, Shane, and ilya

these are my own drawings, and are originally posted on my main tumblr [etoilegarden](#). I also have an art tumblr [ardenetoile](#) :)

As always, thank you everyone for reading! And your lovely comments are so nice, and fuel to my fingers xxx

Chapter 9

Chapter Notes

<3 <3 <3 <3

[edit because i forgot to add] Russian translations in end note

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

2015

Ilya's therapist is a force of evil. She keeps somehow sliding in right under his defences like that stupid college professor who steals things, what was his name? Always dropping his hat as gates were dropping, risking his life for it like there isn't a boulder on track to squash him.

One of the things Van was evil about was when she pointed out that Ilya tended to avoid the subject by taking a question and turning it into something else, for example, Indiana Jones. That was his name.

Another of the evil things, a worse one, was how she was forcing him - basically at gun point - to talk about what he wanted. Which was stupid. Obviously he wanted to be rich and famous, and he was, so, there. Done. She hadn't accepted that answer, or the next blase answer he threw at her, or even the next, and he had been mostly truthful about wanting to get his forklift licence.

She told him he didn't need to tell them to her, not yet, if he didn't want to. He could write them down. He could think about it. She just wanted him to be able to pin point for himself some tangible things that he wanted. And not just his wants for Mila. He was not allowed to just write down a list of things he wanted for her, like getting to always be happy, and to do whatever she wanted, and to never have to go to a therapist and feel like she's been shredded with those stupid cleaning scrubber things that looked like if robots had pubic hair. He was also not allowed to make them a joke.

So yes. Van was evil and it was like being in a gulag for forty five endless minutes, clutching his mug of extra sugar coffee while sitting on a couch with a purring cat on his lap. She should be tried by the Hague for war crimes.

He was. Perhaps. Feeling a little bit like. Maybe. He could see a future in which he didn't believe that he deserved to feel the way he felt. Wasn't quite sure yet he could believe in the future Cliff kept telling him about where he was happy more often than not. Because, honestly, that wasn't even just Ilya feeling shitty, it was just the way the world worked. Happy moments were few and far between, and generally hard worked for.

-

He wrote out a list of wants. It was a dangerous undertaking. Maybe danger could be on his list.

- *Be good papa*
- Maybe entirely change how people see me so no longer slutty sexy playboy who is mean and maybe then could let people know am actually papa and make easier for everyone
- Fuck Shane Jane so good she cries and makes the little noise that is so insane and hot
- Do that again
- Is not a joke. Desperately want this.
- Tell ShaJane about Mila
- Win stanley cup again
- *Play with Shane Hollander on same team*

Maybe Van would think some of these were not what she was asking for from him, but they were things he wanted - no joke - so he had done his homework.

He was trying not to dwell on the fact that when he told her about wanting to tell *Jane* about Mila she would probably try to get him to talk about Jane. Like. About how he felt about this person he had not mentioned to her yet, and why he hadn't mentioned them. He could already hear her pointing out that Jane was on his list four times, and he was already getting ready to say that technically it was only twice, and then she would raise her eyebrows at him and ask if Jane was someone he wanted in his life for more than fucking seeing as he wanted Jane to know about Mila. And then Ilya planned on leaving the room and taking her cat.

-

2016

TO: LILY

12:02 PM

ASGw/e. Get Magda (and/or Mandy), and Mila a hotel room in hotel near asg hotel. They can be part of the crowd most of the time without people noticing them. We can meet up at their hotel room to see them, and maybe she could come to some of the interactive ice events I'm doing because no one is going to connect her with you if she's just interacting with me. We can do drawing and hollander merch swap, play hockey.

FROM: LILY

12:42 PM

If i get extra hotel room in same hotel as M'n'M's we could fuck without you freaking about being heard by scott fucking hunter

TO:LILY

12:50 PM

Is that yes, then? And also that you want me to order Mila custom Hollander skates?

FROM: LILY

1:00 PM

You are actual awful man

Yes is yes

Yes also to fuck room?

TO: LILY

1:03 PM

Yes. But not if you call it that.

FROM: LILY

1:03 PM

Sorry. Sex hotel room for sex.

-

2015

He was right that Van wanted to talk about Shane, though he was much more careful verbally to always say Jane. He did think that maybe she saw through *Jane* in some ways though. Not necessarily even that she knew he was a man, but that she knew Jane was a fake name and a mask *somehow*.

She did, however, always use ‘they’ in place of the feminine pronoun Ilya used to speak about Jane, so probably she did know Jane was a man and was just patiently waiting for him to break and talk to her about that part of it.

Which he would. He knew he would. Because so far every part of his life he had let slip and she had attached to as a topic to dig out he had given over.

So while he talked about how he had hurt Jane by ghosting her for six months, for being rude to her, for not kissing her, for not allowing himself to give in to his desire to just hold her - he knew Van was waiting for a good moment to stick her hand in and carve his chest open to get the rest out.

She liked to ask him what the barriers were. What was stopping him from doing things. Like what was stopping him from telling Mandy when he was feeling sad, even when they lived together. Or what stopped him from telling any of his friends about his mother. Why couldn’t he tell Jane how he felt.

He should probably quit therapy before she started asking more.

-

“ты очень храбрый,” Magda murmured.

They were in Ilya's lounge, which still felt like it belonged to Magda even though she had moved out months ago now. She still had her room here, so it was kind of like he had custody of her too, except that she was an adult who he paid to be here with him and Mila.

(He had talked with Van about this in his last session, about how he felt bad for how he often treated Magda like she was a friend, and how she probably felt obliged to be nice to him because he was paying her a lot of money. It was different now, without Mandy, because she and Mandy got on really well and were actually friends.

He thought Van would probably have given him a little smack upside the head if that didn't go against therapy rules or whatever.

So he was trying to pretend like it made sense that Magda could be truly his friend as much as he felt like hers. Because they did chat all the time, and they laughed and joked together, but. Ilya found her funny and lovely because she was, and she probably laughed and chatted because he paid her and -

He kept going around in circles in his head and it was infuriating. He wouldn't be if he hadn't been strong armed into therapy by the Mighty M's or whatever their group chat name was now. Before therapy he hadn't bothered to think more about it at all, to argue with himself about it, because it was just a fact. He liked Magda very much, and he paid her, so she was very nice to him. A little sad, yes, but just what it was.

He didn't want to have to think about things like this. To delve into why he felt things and what it meant. Van was ruining his brain connections. Ruining his ability to put his bad feelings away in a cupboard in the back of his head and leave them there.)

He looked at Magda. She was sitting on the couch next to him, tatting in hand. He still could not believe she was making actual lace with her hands like it was a casual thing, especially when she churned out Vologda lace like it wasn't something so special and ancient in Ilya's mind. She was not looking at him when she spoke, still wasn't now. He appreciated that.

“Нет.” He took a sip of the shallow glass of vodka he'd poured himself before sitting down. “за что?”

He could feel her rolling her eyes at him. He's glad when she switched to English to keep speaking, like she knew he needed a barrier between him and his feelings.

“You are brave,” she repeated, firm. She also had a glass of vodka at her elbow, but unlike him, she didn’t need to hide herself in it. “It is just a fact, Ilyushka. You are so determined to be good papa for Mila that you go against how you were raised.”

He snorted, took another sip of his vodka. “Is not brave,” he said. “Is just how it should be. If I try to raise Mila like I was raised I think maybe I get arrested here in America. So is only sensible.”

Magda kicks him in the thigh. She has her legs tucked up under her in perfect easy kick position. “Don’t,” she said. “You know how easy it is to be bad parent. Anywhere in the world. Don’t make light of being a good papa. How many people you know from your time in Russia that would go to therapy? Hm?”

Well, probably zero, which was a large factor in the whole his mother killed herself thing. He shook his head again. “Was not my choice,” he reminded her. “I would not have gone on my own.”

“A lot of people don’t choose to go without friends pushing them into it. It does not lessen the bravery for going through with it. I know you find it hard. There is so much, uh, masculine posing? In our culture, and in American culture, and in hockey culture. So it is brave, to push through all of that, to keep going even when it is scary.”

He pushed down the urge to say he was not scared of anything. He was scared of this conversation. He was scared of how he kept having to feel his feelings so much more now Van was helping him unravel them. He was scared of being his father, somehow more scared of being his mother. He felt so guilty.

“I never said thank you,” he croaked. Downed the rest of his vodka and put the glass down. “I want. I want so bad to be good papa for Mila. Good friend for you and Mandy and team. Would not be possible without you pushing me. You and all the M’s.”

Magda smiled, at her lacework not at him which was helpful, and gave him a considerate out from his own emotions. “Marlow does love to be in our Merciful M’s group chat.”

“Merciful?” Иля laughed, clarified; “милосердный?” Magda nodded. “I did not know name had changed again.”

-

2017

Shane had texted when his plane had landed, and then again when he had checked in to the hotel room he had been given for the ASG weekend, and then again when he arrived at the hotel Ilya was currently at with Mila and Magda.

(Mandy was working all weekend, and, she had raised her eyebrows at him when he explained about Mila wanting to see Shane again and told him that she wouldn't want to *get in the way*. Sometimes Ilya thought that maybe he should be less transparent with his co-parent. But then again, after she had walked in on him having Shane over, he had felt the need to explain a little more than what she'd pieced together. She had laughed herself sick when she realised he had accidentally raised Mila to hero worship her papa's crush.)

"He is almost here, девочка," he said, quickly sending a text with the hotel room number to Shane. "Do you have all your notes from his last game to tell him?"

Magda snorted at them from her position on the bed, book in hand.

"He is too nice," Mila said promptly, "to slow team. Pass to 13 why?"

"Very good," Ilya nodded seriously, "is my note to him as well. If he was a little more selfish he could have just kept the puck and made his own move, and then they would have gotten goal, девочка? Not have puck stolen by silly handling."

Mila nodded emphatically. She had been on the floor by the wardrobe, playing with some toys in the open bottom drawer she had claimed as her toy rink, but she abandoned them now to put her arms up to Ilya. He scooped her up, kissed her on both her cheeks while she giggled at him, and then blew a raspberry on her forehead.

"папа розовый," she said to him, once she was free from being covered in affection. She poked his cheek with one finger, and laughed again when he pretended to bite at it.

“Noooo,” Ilya said, shot a quick glare at Magda who had snorted again. “Is not true, дорогая девочка, your papa does not get pink. Is flush, from how hot room is.”

Mila narrowed her eyes at him while her incredibly clever brain sorted through what he’d said, and she shook her head. “Pink,” she said firmly, in english, as if maybe he had misunderstood in Russian. “Cute.”

“Ah,” Ilya gave in, “if it is cute, then yes, I admit, I am pink! I am excited, дорогая, we get to see your best friend so soon!”

“Is exciting,” Mila agreed. “Maggie says she is excited to see him beat you in skills. Me too!”

“My own flesh and blood,” Ilya sighed, “such a deep betrayal, I think I will never recover.”

Mila loved it when he pulled out the dramatics (not that he had to pull very deep for them), and giggled at his overwrought tone, giggled louder as he faked a swoon with his hand over his eyes and pretended to drop her.

-

Shane spent all of two and a half seconds being shy and formal upon entering the room, and then Mila attached herself to his legs, slotting her feet on top of his.

“Skate me,” she demanded.

Shane, pink cheeked, looked down at her. “I’m not in my skates,” he pointed out, too sensible.

“Fake skate,” Mila adjusted, tugged at the sides of Shane’s trousers. “Please!”

Shane gave in with much more ease than Ilya might have guessed. He reached down to grasp Mila's hands lightly, and slid his feet across the carpeted floor in imitation of the motion of skating, and Mila whooped delighted.

"I have new skates for you," Shane told her, once they'd ended up across the room and he'd dumped her on the bed Magda wasn't on. "Your papa told me your ones were getting a bit too small."

Chapter End Notes

ты очень храбрый - You are brave

Нет - No

за что - What for

девочка - Baby girl

папа розовый - papa pink

дорогая девочка - darling girl

дорогая - darling

Chapter 10

Chapter Notes

Some more drawings :) I'm having fun just doing some little doodles as I write

2017

The thing is. Shane hadn't expected it to feel so bad.

He and Ilya had been doing the sneaking around thing for as long as they'd known each other. He was used to trying to act like he wasn't always paying attention to where Ilya was in any given event they were both at. At stopping himself from grinning on ice when Ilya made a particularly good move.

He was used to pretending it didn't hurt.

It was different with Mila. Because he *could* to some extent, interact with her in public. She was a Hollander fan at an event where she gets to skate with Hollander. But Hollander would not sweep any of the other young skaters on the ice up into his arms for a hug so he could not do so with Mila. Hollander would not know a young fan's nicknames, or probably, even their name unless it was a smaller meet and greet, so he could not call her *Milashka*, or *malysh*, or even just Mila.

And Mila was so good. She didn't pout at the lack of proper affection, she didn't talk about how her whole outfit had been bought and given to her by Shane. She just joined in the event and skated circles around the other kids, and called out for Shane to look just like so many of the other kids did

She was in the crowd for his skill events as well, her and Magda with big grins, and there for the game where he and Ilya got to play on the same team. And he and Ilya both waved at them in the stands, and then made sure to wave at other fans as well so it wouldn't stand out, and Shane was having a great day - he was - but *god*. He wondered how Ilya managed to keep himself from looking heartbroken constantly.

If *Shane* felt this bad about it, for one fucking day, it must eat Ilya up inside. Not for the first time Shane found himself wondering how many masks Ilya wore at once. How many he would have to

take off to reveal what was underneath. Or if that was doing Ilya a disservice - each layer was Ilya, they just got *more Ilya* the further down they went. He knew he did that a fair amount himself - hiding underneath his social media training mask, or his *I'm just here for hockey* mask.

His and Ilya's team won - obviously. Their teammates did a good job, of course, but Shane barely noticed them in the moment. Getting to be on the ice, passing without any hesitation, knowing Ilya would be in the right place. Connecting every time.

He didn't actually care. About the game. Which was a confusing thing to find himself thinking. He'd been teased before for caring too much about the ASW game, taking it too seriously when it was just for fun. Every game, in Shane's mind, was worth playing as seriously as if it were a play off's decider. But he didn't care this time. He cared about playing the game, yeah, but mostly because he was playing with Ilya. What he found himself caring about - even as their teammates slammed into them in celebration as they won - was how after this he got to go back to the other hotel and tell Mila how well she skated, and how happy he was having her cheer for him.

He wanted to thank Magda for carting her hockey obsessed charge around for a day while her father couldn't interact with more than an impersonal wave. He wanted to ask Ilya if he was okay. Like, for fucking real, was he okay? Because Shane wasn't, and he didn't think Ilya was either.

-

They met up in Magda and Mila's room for dinner, three moving parts converging. They had all bought takeout to bring back - Ilya's idea - to create a sort of pot luck style dinner. An easy way for Shane to be sure he would be able to eat something.

They ate on the floor, because Mila requested they picnic, and Magda shared all the photos she had taken throughout the day, and Mila told them about everything else she had done, and Ilya held her in his lap for most of dinner, pressing kisses into her curls and over her cheeks at every opportunity while she giggled at him and called him her *silly papochka*.



And there was something Shane wanted to say, or just *wanted*. Something he wanted so fucking badly that his chest hurt about it, and he had no idea what it was. Or. Had no idea how to put it into words. To take the feeling and the want and make it coherent.

He and Ilya played barbie hockey in the wardrobe drawers while Magda went out for a drink with a friend in town.

He cleared up all their dinner mess while Ilya gave Mila a quick shower and helped her change into her pajamas - the shirt Shane had sent. They sat back where dinner had been and drew pictures together, Mila directing Shane and Ilya both in how she wanted things coloured. And then he and Ilya sat on either side of Mila in the queen sized hotel bed that absolutely dwarfed her, and took turns reading her books until she fell asleep.

Shane had done this before, with Jade, Ruby, and Arthur. But not usually like this. He either did their full routine by himself - babysitting while Jacks and Hayden went out for a quiet night - or he ducked in to read one story while he was over for dinner. He was either a babysitter or a guest speaker, not a ... he was being stupid. It was just that it felt more domestic, doing it with Ilya and

Mila. Spending the evening with them like it was normal. Which was what they had done the first time as well, he supposed. Just slotting himself into Mila's routine because she wanted him to and Ilya let him.

And like. Shane liked kids well enough. He had agreed to do the kids meet and greet today, for example. And he liked being the Pike kids' godfather - though he hoped fervently that it would stay a more symbolic title. But he'd never like. Wanted to hang out with a kid. That would probably be weird. He liked hanging out with his godkids because that was basically family, but. But he'd met Mila and felt like she was family too. Which was ridiculous because that implied that he considered *Ilya* family, and.

Well. Shane had, just a few weeks ago, almost run away when Ilya had moved their usual hook up into slightly more intimate hang out territory. Which didn't exactly scream family. It mostly just screamed that Shane was a neurotic freak. A muscled meat bag of ants all scrambling to follow unknown orders.

-

"Thank you," Ilya said, voice low.

They were still sitting on either side of Mila. She was fast asleep, clinging tightly to Ilya's hand like it was a stuffed animal. Her favourite stuffed puck was tucked under her cheek in lieu of the big hotel pillows they'd thrown on the ground. Magda had texted while Shane had been reading the last book of the night - Mila's eyes more closed than not - to say she'd be another half hour. They had been sitting in hushed silence for only a few minutes now the books had been put down, and Shane had almost expected them to keep it up until Magda arrived.

"What for?" Shane whispered back. "I don't think I did a very good frog or toad voice for that last story."

"Was perfect," Ilya said, waved his free hand in dismissal. "For being here. I know is not our usual... hang out. I know we are asking for a lot."

Sometimes Shane wished Ilya would actually ask for a lot. Would *ask*. Would tell Shane straight up exactly what he wanted, all of it. And Shane would probably freak out a little, but he would do his best not to, and then he would give it to Ilya. Whatever it was Ilya wanted. Anything. Probably he shouldn't think like that.

“I like it,” he replied, shrugged. Dropped his gaze to Mila’s face, lax with sleep, curls wild, and then looked up to Ilya’s face and wild curls. “I like you.”

Ilya’s throat clicked, loud in the mostly quiet room, and his eyes darted away from Shane’s, blinking quickly.

“I like you so much,” Shane continued, his own throat constricting around the words. “I don’t think I - I can’t pretend I don’t like you anymore, Ilya. Not like. You - you ask me to be - be exclusive, and I want that. You let me in to *this*, and I want this too. But I want - Ilya I want you.”

Ilya was staring at the hotel door like it might burst open at any moment. Shane waited, semi-patiently, watching Ilya’s throat move.

“Is not simple,” Ilya finally said. His voice was lower than it had been before, exhausted. “You know this.”

“Yeah,” Shane shrugged. He lifted his hand to tuck one of Mila’s curls up behind her ear so it wouldn’t keep brushing against her nose every time she snuffled, and then lifted his hand to Ilya’s jaw. Touched lightly, just his fingertips. “So maybe I can help.”

Ilya looked at him, turning his head so his cheek was pressed against Shane’s whole hand. “Wanting me does not help you,” he said. “We know this from experience. You stress so much sometimes I think you will pop. I know this - being here now - is scary for you. You want more? More stress? More scared? I can not do this to you. Even I am not so much of an asshole.”

Shane wanted very much to roll his eyes, and he might have if Ilya’s voice hadn’t wavered so much while delivering this stupid little speech. He rubbed his thumb hard against Ilya’s cheekbone, pressing in under the eye and sliding up to the peak of it.

“If I’m going to be scared anyway,” he said, “if we’re both going to be scared anyway. Then why not?”

“Who says I am scared?” Ilya shot back weakly, scowled at Shane’s expression, closed his eyes.

“I know we can’t be - can’t be public about it,” Shane said, quiet. “I know that it’s... I mean, we both know how it would go down in the league. And I know it’s... unsafe? In Russia. If you were to be, out. So.”

“So what are you asking for?” Ilya grunted, leaned in hard to Shane’s hand like it was the only thing keeping him upright.

Shane glanced from Ilya, to Mila, back to Ilya. “I’m asking for us to be really real,” he said. “Not saying to each other that we’re ‘friends’. I want - I want you to know that I’m. That I wanna be in this with you. Not just for a hook up, or a hang out. I want you to call me when you want, or need, and - and for you to not shut me out. I want you to tell me what’s *wrong*.”

Ilya kept his eyes shut, face screwed up as he listened. “That is a lot of wants,” he said. “Usually only thing you say when I ask what you want is *harder*.”

Shane snorted, then pinched Ilya’s cheek. “Shut up,” he said, “wait until we’re in our own room. C’mon.”

“You will get bored,” Ilya said, after he’d batted at Shane’s pinching hand a little, and then repositioned himself into a sort of arch over the top of Mila so his head could rest on Shane’s shoulder. “Of secrets. Of sameness. Shane Hollander is big name, almost as big as Ilya Rozanov, and people always wondering about who he is with.”

“It’s not like I would date some other guy and be open about it,” Shane said, frowning even though Ilya couldn’t see him now. “Whatever I do, about - about dating, would be a secret anyway.”

“Maybe not always,” Ilya shot back, “I think Shane Hollander, beautiful, talented, household name, could maybe find some nice Canadian man who is sensible and has many achievements to come out of closet with. Would be big shock for league, yes, but who is going to stop you from skating? They would make Shane Hollander day for you, probably, and all bigots in league would have to grit teeth and play nice, and -”

“Ilya, Jesus,” Shane sighed, lifting his hand to press against Ilya’s mouth. He’d started to talk a little louder, but that was only part of why Shane wanted him to shut the fuck up. “I don’t want some hypothetical perfect guy. I want you. And - and we could make a plan. To get you, uh,

Canadian residence, or a permanent visa or something. And to come out when we retire, maybe. But we could be together, in private, the whole time. We could make it work. I want to make it work.”

2016

TO: Cliff Face

7:52 PM

I am being terrorised by cute hockey demon

Is my own fault i know

[PHOTO ATTACHMENT]



*I say to her is bedtime and she looks at me like this and says no, nyet papochka, is hockey time.
how to say no to this face?*

her mama will kill me she is up so late and will be so grumpy tomorrow

FROM: Cliff Face

8:01 PM

ohhhh man, roz, she has you round her finger all right

i wont tell the M chat but man it will blow up tomorrow i bet

the photo is so cute though, man. she looks just like a mini you

got any photos of you at that age? we should do a guess who.

Chapter 11

Chapter Notes

mmm the first half of this chapter is mostly smutty with little plot movement, and if you're not into that you can skip straight to the beginning on the section titled 2016 :)

Russian translations in end notes x

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

2017

Ilya had purposefully booked his second hotel room away from Mila and Magda's one, wanting a few more walls between them so he could persuade Shane into letting go a little and making some of his fantastic noises.

They hadn't seen a single other All Star in this hotel so far, which was probably why Shane was so relaxed walking down the hall with Ilya to their shared room, looking soft and tired and intensely touchable. Ilya managed to restrain himself from touching until they had come into the new room and closed and locked the door, and then before he could unrestrain himself, Shane beat him to it.

Pressed Ilya against the wall by the door, his hands sliding under the hem of Ilya's shirt to grip his waist, fingers digging into skin. Kissed him quick, like he was being timed. Should be a new category in the skills challenge. Shane would blow them all out of the water. Would blow Ilya too, hopefully.

"Wanted to do that all evening. All day," Shane confessed against Ilya's lips, not pulling back or even really breaking the kiss.

"You could have done it," Ilya replied, also not bothering with pulling back at all, not with Shane tugging him closer and mouthing at his lips. "In front of Mila and Magda - I - Mila would not care and Magda is already keeping my secrets, she can keep more."

They kissed for a few more moments before Shane replied, breathless like he'd forgotten to inhale at any point since they started kissing. Ilya may also have forgotten that breathing was required.

“Couldn’t,” he panted, took a couple of deep lungfuls of air while pressing his face against the side of Ilya’s, “not for the way I wanted to kiss you. Would’ve been inappropriate.”

“Mm,” Ilya could not argue with that, especially since he could very easily feel Shane’s inappropriateness pressing hard against Ilya’s lower stomach. “You can not resist me, hm? I am too charming, too sexy, poor Shane Hollander, he could not resist.”

Shane made a noise like he was about to disagree with this, or shoot something sarcastic back, but Ilya had finally gotten his hands into the action properly, and had shoved one of them up the front of Shane’s shirt to palm his pec, and the other hand down the back of Shane’s sweats to grab a handful of Shane’s ass.

“Yeah,” Shane breathed, “can’t. Which is - I wanted us to talk, so, after, we’ll talk. Okay?”

Ilya was pretty sure he would agree to anything Shane asked for in that voice, pressing his hard on against Ilya, hips shifting in small circular movements.

“да, любовь моя,” he said, “let me take you to bed, да? Я хочу тебя трахнуть. You look so fucking hot in game today, always do, but somehow hotter when your score is my score too.”

“Yeah, yeah,” Shane agreed, voice rough and hurried. He was tugging at Ilya’s clothing, pulling them away from the wall, but otherwise making no move to lead them to the bed. “Please. It was so hot. The way you were just *there* when I needed you, like you were in my mind.”

“Want to be in you,” Ilya shot back, shifting his hands to grip Shane’s hips tightly as he used his whole body to bully Shane backwards, towards the bed. “Your mind, your mouth, your ass. All. For me.”

“Jesus,” Shane swore, let himself be manhandled to the bed, and then scrambled back onto the mattress off his own steam before flopping against the pillows and reaching back for Ilya. “C’mon, *c’mon*.”

“Impatient,” Ilya tutted. Had only paused so he could shuck his shirt and trousers as quickly as possible. It was a crime that Shane was still fully dressed, but he would fix that in a moment.

“Greedy, мой котенок, mm? Need me.”

“Yeah, yes, whatever,” Shane was doing a bad job of sounding sarcastic, his eyes dark and fixed on Ilya’s cock, where it had bobbed up to press across his upper thigh the moment he had released it from his underwear. “Need you to hurry up and get in me.”

Ilya snorted, crawled onto the bed and into Shane’s waiting grabby hands. His own hands hooked over the waistband of Shane’s sweats and underwear and tugged them down his thighs, and when Shane lifted his hips a little to help, pulled them down to his knees. They had to rearrange a little to get them the rest of the way off, and Ilya liked to think this was one of the reasons Shane was so obsessed with his yoga routine. So that Ilya could simply fold his legs up towards Shane’s chest to yank the pants the rest of the way off while also grinding his hard cock against the cleft of Shane’s ass.

Another pause for Ilya to halfheartedly fold the sweats with the underwear trapped inside (probably losing points in Shane’s good book for that), before dropping them over the side of the bed. Shane watching him with his mouth half open. Then Shane was dropping his legs back down around Ilya’s sides, gripping him tight between his thighs in the kind of way that made Ilya feel like he was about to be juiced. But like. In a sexy way. Probably. Yes.

He was not as bendy as Shane was, but he could still bend enough press his mouth against Shane’s bare hip as he began pushing his shirt up. Followed the fabric with sucking kisses to newly revealed skin, and then bit at Shane’s neck while Shane was distracted with getting the shirt off his head.

Shane was the one to halfheartedly fold his shirt here, Ilya still mouthing wetly at his neck, biting at the rabbiting pulse under his tongue, and then threw the shirt haphazardly off the bed, undoing the folding.

Ilya had already been to this room, before Shane had arrived. Mostly to drop his stuff off here rather than at his ASG hotel room, and mostly so he could stash his lube and condoms handily among the pillows for a later date.

He felt like a magician pulling the lube out from behind Shane’s shoulder, would have said something silly like *tada* if his mouth wasn’t otherwise occupied with kissing every inch of Shane’s jaw from ear to ear.

When he clicked the bottle open, one handed, he felt Shane’s cock stiffen further against him. Had he Pavlov-ed Shane’s cock? Good. He liked the way Shane’s body responded to him. Loved to see

how easily he could work him up. He didn't think anyone else could do that to Shane, not like Ilya could. Didn't want to think about that right now because the mere reminder that someone else might have touched Shane filled him with a very stupid type of jealousy.

"God," Shane bit out, "I need you to fuck me, Ilya, need you in me, yesterday."

It was a pity Ilya could not time travel because he would have loved to fulfill every single one of Shane's needs, including having been in him yesterday.

"Да, да," he soothed, pressed another kiss to Shane's mouth, wet and sloppy, before pulling back to sit on his haunches, caught tight between Shane's thighs. "I have you, Shane, I fuck you now. Have to let me move, да? Let me get my hand on you? In you?"

Shane groaned, but relaxed his legs, dropping his thighs wide while lifting his hips up restlessly. Ilya took the opportunity to grab one of the many useless hotel pillows and shoved it under Shane's hips before they got distracted again. He was going to get so much lube on the pillow, but he'd leave a hefty tip. *After* he finished getting his hefty tip in Shane. He carefully kept that thought to himself as he squeezed lube onto his fingers.

He tossed the bottle further onto the bed, then used his still dry hand to hook Shane's left leg under his knee and heaved it up over his shoulder, spreading Shane further. Shane was hot and lax under his fingertips, his hips still shifting like he couldn't keep them still, but the rest of his body loose like he was already fucked out. He drove Ilya fucking insane.

He jerked Shane's cock first, wrapped his hand firmly around it to give it several firm strokes do that Shane would gasp and buck in his hand. He kissed the inside of Shane's knee, bit at it, dropped his hand from Shane's twitching cock to press the pads of two fingers against his hole. Rubbed in circles almost like he would to a clit, to warm it up.

He stretched Shane open slower than Shane wanted, judging by the grinding down on his fingers, and the huffs of annoyance whenever Ilya wouldn't speed up with him.

"Patience," he said, trying to sound more amused and less so turned on he thought he was having a medical emergency, "I give to you, Shane, I give. Let me make sure it is good."

He thought Shane would probably be complaining more, except that Ilya kept ducking down to kiss him. Couldn't keep himself from it. Wanted to be in Shane's mouth and in his ass and his mind, his body, his everything. Wanted to keep Shane wanting him, hungry for him, hands needy and tight in his hair, and on his arms, shoulders, waist.

Wanted to keep fucking his tongue into Shane's mouth as he gripped himself, finally, finally. Had had to pull away from Shane's mouth and ass for a moment far too long to get the condoms, to pull one out, to open the fucking packet, and roll it down onto himself. The pillow under Shane's ass was soaked with lube. Ilya had used too much - was addicted to getting Shane so messy and slick like this.

And from everything that Shane had been saying recently, today especially, he might - Ilya might get to keep doing this. Wouldn't have to keep wondering if each time he kissed Shane might be the last fucking time.

It was an insane thought to have, while pressing deep into Shane until his hips met Shane's ass, but Ilya really needed to send Van a gift basket or something.

-

2016

Ilya could have called a car. Magda had dropped him off to therapy an hour ago on her way to Mandy's with Mila, because Ilya had twisted his ankle in practice yesterday like a fucking idiot, and he had been forbidden from using it, even just on the gas. He didn't actually think it would make that much difference if he drove himself, but, he was attempting to work on the *looking after himself* thing, and it felt like it would be too much to purposefully go against doctor's orders to get to therapy. It would be like contradicting two doctors at once, and at least one of them was very good at tripping his guilt.

He was also good at it, which was why he had told Marly that seeing as *he* had been the one to trip Ilya accidentally in practice, he had to be Ilya's personal chauffeur. Which was funny in theory, and less funny in practice because Van had gone hard today and Ilya felt like if one more person fucking perceived him he was going to vibrate out of his body.

"We don't have to talk about it," Marly said, awkward and somewhat hunched over the steering wheel. They had been sitting in silence in Marly's car for the entirety of the drive so far. Ten

minutes without even Marly's dogshit music taste filling the air. "But, um. You good, bro?"

Ilya would love to drop one of his asshole smirks and some sarcastic whatever about how he was always good, but it was difficult to do when both he and Marly were well aware that Ilya had tears literally dripping off his chin.

"Да."

The lie sat heavy between them for a few long moments, Marly side eyeing him as he navigated a stupid intersection. American drivers were all so stupid. No one ever seemed to know who was supposed to go first here, so they all did dumb hesitates and slowed everyone down. Lot of honking. Ilya always just sped through it because someone had to be the leader.

"I can stay, this afternoon," Marly said, once he'd finally taken his right of way. "Or for however long. If you don't want to be alone."

"Am not good company," Ilya said stiffly, turned his head so he could stare blankly out the side window.

"You never are," Marly joked, and then sighed heavily. "Roz," he said. Paused. Hesitating like he did at the stupid intersection. "I'm not like, asking for a *hang*. I'm - I wanna be there for my best bud. You're feeling shit, and you're injured. So -"

"I don't need babysitter, Marlow," Ilya snapped. "Is just sprain. Is just hard talk. I am fine."

Marly, because he was a bulldozer, was not even slightly swayed by Ilya's harsher tone. "Yeah," he said. "I know. I wanna be here anyway. Just say yes, Roz, so I don't have to kidnap you and take you to mine instead."

"What is with you and kidnapping?" Ilya grouched, folding his arms, and then unfolding them so he could swipe roughly at his face. It was rude that his eyes were still dripping so much after he had informed himself that he didn't want to be crying anymore. "Fine. Come home with me and watch me be boring. Will be good fun. Bonding moment."

“Good,” Marly grinned at him.

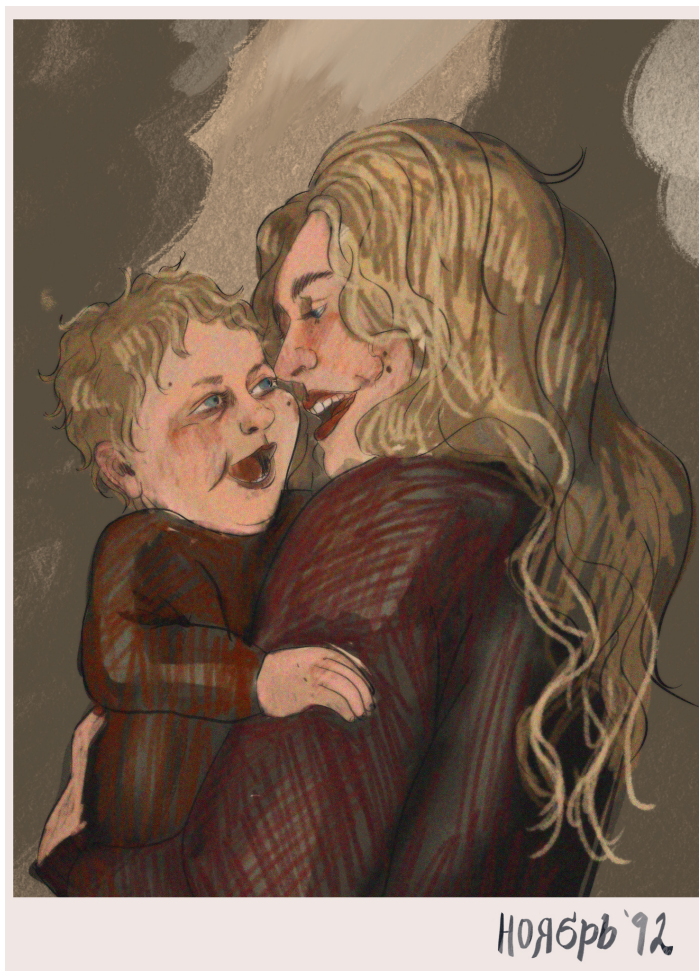
-

“You wanted baby photos, yes?” Ilya asked, after he and Marly had eaten lunch and watched trash tv in relative silence for a good hour. “For comparing with Mila?”

Marlow looked at him, eyebrows raised, and then fumbled for the remote on the couch between them, and turned the tv off. “Yeah.”

Ilya had looked for them after Marlow had brought them up a couple of weeks ago. He didn’t think he had many - his father hadn’t been keen on keeping any of his mama’s thing after her accident, and photos had always been her realm.

He had found two photos of him under twelve. Like when his father had wiped out all trace of mama, that had included all of young Ilya. One photo was a formal portrait of him and Alexei - a first day of school type of photo Ilya was pretty sure. Alexei still had chubby cheeks and a smile. The second photo was of Ilya being held by his mama. He was probably younger than Mila was now, his hair short and scrubby. Irina’s hair was long and curly, her face half turned from the camera as she bent her neck to press a kiss to Ilya’s cheek where it was tucked up against her shoulder. It was all half glimpses of both of them, and he only had it because it had been tucked into his favourite book.



He still harboured hope that there were more photos out there somewhere. That Alexei had some. That there were still some hidden away at their father's house even. For now he showed these two pieces of his childhood to Marly like some sort of plea to be understood.

This is it, Marlow, what it is I am fucking terrified of every day.

He did not say it, and he knew Marly did not get it as exactly as Ilya would have liked, but he watched a new understanding flick across Marly's face - an impressive trick for someone who had been concussed as often as Marly.

"Mandy's genes really are just a suggestion, huh," Marly said eventually. "Mila looks just like you, and like your mum."

"She got Mandy's freckles," Ilya offered, "and hopefully her smarts, too. But yes, so sorry Mandy. I love to be best and come first, even in making baby looks. Good thing I am so gorgeous, hm?"

“Good thing your mum is so gorgeous,” Marly began, and Ilya jumped in quickly just in case.

“Uh-uh,” he said, “you should know before you think up any stupid jokes, Marly, that my mama is dead, and even if I think joke is very funny I would still have to give you punch to nose.”

Marly paused for a long moment as if re-calibrating, and then nodded. “Wasn’t going to make a yo mama joke,” he said, “but thank you for the heads up. Explains a few things about your rookie year.”

“What? Like what? I was perfectly capable man. Could do my own laundry and fry eggs.”

Snorting, Marly shook his head. “You once threw out an entire load of laundry and bought everything new again because you fucked it up so bad. But I was talking about the randomly punching guys bit.”

“Ah, yes. Maybe I had little bit of anger issues.”

Chapter End Notes

да, любовь моя - Yes, my love

да? Я хочу тебя трахнуть - Yes? I want to fuck you

мой котенок - My kitten

Chapter 12

2017

They showered together after they fucked. Shane needed to hold on to Ilya to keep his legs steady underneath him, so it was partially practicality. It was also because Shane wanted to keep his hands on Ilya. Wanted to have him as close as possible for as long as possible. Neither of them were going back to their league booked rooms tonight, but even an entire night together felt like nothing at all.

He waited until after they had cleaned up. Dried themselves. Made out a while longer in the bed after they had removed the top blanket. Shane felt a little bad about the mess on it, but not bad enough to do anything more than sink into Ilya's embrace.

He was lying half on top of Ilya's body, their hips, stomachs, shoulders pressing together. One of his legs was caught between Ilya's. His face was pressed into the side of Ilya's neck and Ilya was pressing kisses to Shane's forehead.

It was soft, and warm, and there was still a heated ache inside Shane where Ilya had been, and he wanted this all the fucking time.

"I'm sorry," Shane said, "for not noticing. All this time. How hard this has been for you."

Ilya's mouth stilled on Shane, and then he tucked his head down so they were eye to eye. "What?"

"Everything," Shane said, cast his eyes down, and then brought them back up to Ilya's. Didn't want to run from his gaze even when it felt awkward. "Dealing with so many secrets. Um. It was - today - seeing how badly you wanted to - to be with Mila, and holding yourself back. It hurt me doing it, and I'm only - I didn't realise. I didn't think."

"You say it hurts you," Ilya said, slow and careful, his face scrunched up, "but you still want more. With me and Mila."

“Yeah,” Shane shrugged. Pressed forwards to kiss Ilya quick on the lips before pulling back again. “I want - I said I wanted this to be real. I want to be a real, uh, help? For you. I don’t know how we do that yet, but I wanted you to hear it. I want to hear what’s wrong.”

Ilya just stared at him for a long time, like he was searching Shane’s face for a lie, or an ulterior motive. Shane kissed him again, just because.

“I can’t give you... what I want to give you,” he said eventually, speaking slowly. Not for the first time Shane wished he spoke Russian so that Ilya could speak easier. “Mila is - most important thing.”

“I know,” Shane said, “she is.”

Ilya exhaled slowly, his eyes drifting over Shane’s face still, he lifted one hand to cup Shane’s cheek. Rubbed his thumb over the bridge of Shane’s nose, the ridge of his cheekbones.

“I tell you what I want,” Ilya said, “and you don’t run away?”

“I won’t,” Shane agreed. Tightened his hold on Ilya. “I promise. Okay? I might - I might freak out a bit, but that’s just - I just do that. I’m not leaving.”

Ilya studied him a moment longer, and then nodded tightly. “Okay,” he said. “First, I want you to know I know these things are not... possible. Is just what I want.”

Shane wanted to argue about what may or may not be possible, but nodded instead.

“I want today all the time,” Ilya said. “On same team as you. Eating together. Fucking. Kissing. Being with Mila and having it feel like normal day. Like we wake up tomorrow and get to do again, instead of counting down weeks and months ‘til next fuck. One day I want to - to be able to know I am safe here - not be able to be sent back to Russia if my secrets are spilled. So I can say here is my boyfriend, and here is my daughter, and have it not be big news. Is my own fault, I know, secrets.”

He stopped here, and Shane waited a few beats more, but Ilya appeared wrung out. He had closed his eyes half way through speaking and tipped his head forwards to press their foreheads together. His hand was still on Shane's cheek, and Shane lifted his own hand up to cover Ilya's, to bring it to his mouth to kiss at the palm.

"Okay," he said. "It's not your fault, Ilya."

He felt, rather than heard Ilya's snort at that. Ilya spoke without lifting his head from Shane's. "If I was less fuck up, she could already be not secret. Instead I am *rehabbing my image* with help from therapist, and publicist, and friends just so I am not a scandal Mila has to carry."

"It wouldn't be a scandal if you were the same guy in a normal life," Shane offered. "I mean, we have - your image is not you. It's not just on you how it looks, right? It's a - an act that we're encouraged to play up."

"You sound like my therapist," Ilya sighed. "Okay. Fine. Is not fully my fault. Still enough my fault. I am fixing."

"You are fixing it," Shane said, "which is impressive. I'm impressed."

"Because I beat your record in speed trial today?"

Shane pinched his bicep, and Ilya yelped. "No," Shane said. "Because you beat my speed from last year, and then *I* beat your new speed like half a minute later. Asshole."

They devolved into a quick pinch fight, wrestling in the sheets until Shane was on his back underneath Ilya, Ilya's mouth pressed against his neck.

"Okay," Shane got out, "you win this one - I - we're still *talking*, Ilya, I can't go another round yet."

"Hm," Ilya said, bit at Shane's neck, "next time we wrestle properly, and loser sucks winner cock."

“Sure,” Shane said easily, rocked his hips underneath Ilya in an ill-advised attempt to get him to roll off. “Fuck - sorry. I need your cock off my cock so I can think.”

They readjusted.

“Okay,” Shane said. Breathed deeply. “So. I don’t have the answers yet, but I’ll - I’m going to try and work out how we can maybe get what you want. What I want. Because I want today all the time too.”

“Big hockey IQ is going to work on non-hockey problem?” Ilya asked, teasing gently. He ran his fingers through Shane’s hair, pushing it off his sweaty forehead, and then kissing at his temple. “You will help fix with me?”

“Mm, yes,” Shane sighed. “I - I think I - I need to know that this is *real*. You and me. Like. That we’re just. You and me. Um -”

“Boyfriends?” Ilya suggested. “Lovers?”

“Ew,” Shane’s whole face scrunched up. “Not lovers. Boyfriends?”

“Mm, yes, okay. Good,” Ilya said. Kissed at Shane’s scrunched face. “So yes. Is real. Boyfriends.”

“Okay,” Shane said again. “Good. So. I’m. I’m going to come out to my parents. Because I think - because I know my mum is really good at like. Problem solving. And if we’re going to be real, it’s only fair. I think. To you. That you’re not a secret to people in my life who can keep it a secret.”

Ilya looked at him like Shane had just said he was going to go outside and walk across the ocean. “You are going to come out,” he said slowly, “and tell people about you and me?”]

Shane nodded, despite the wave of nausea running through him at just the thought of doing any of that.

“You,” Ilya added, “who is one breath from panic attack any time we are in same room with other person? At thought of them knowing?”

“Yeah,” Shane said. Took a deep breath and let it out slowly. Pressed his face against Ilya’s shoulder. “If that’s okay with you. I want to do that. And you could tell people you trust. About me. If you want.”

“I want,” Ilya said, quick. “I - would tell them about me first. To check that I am not wrong about homophobic leanings. But I would like to tell about you.”

“You don’t have to, yet,” Shane said. “If you - I know it’s more dangerous for you. If it got out about us. Will be dangerous until you get a non-work related way to stay here. Not that you’d lose the work one, probably, but -”

“Shane, is fine. I understand danger, yes? I will be careful. Will start very small.”

“Okay,” Shane nodded. “Good. I wish I could bring you home with me. Introduce you to my parents. I won’t - I won’t tell people about Mila yet -”

“Tell your parents about her,” Ilya said. “Is big deal for them, their baby boy dating scary Rozanov, maybe will be easier when you say he is actually big softy for his baby girl. You have photos as proof.”

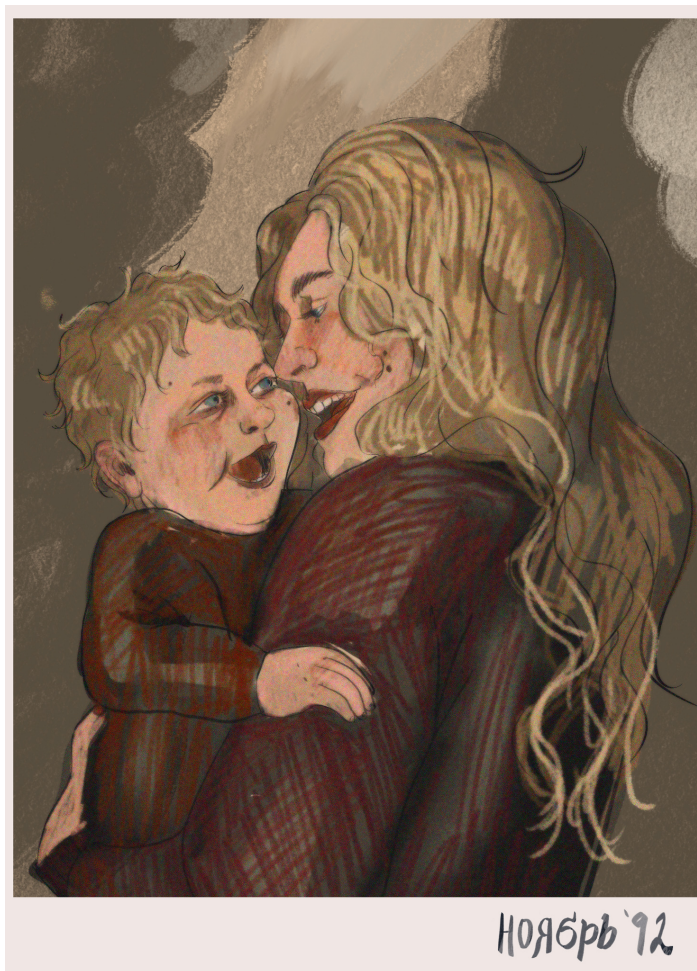
“True,” Shane snorted. “Okay. I will.”

Chapter 13

Chapter Notes

PS. the picture at the beginning of this chapter really belongs a couple chapters earlier but for those who are reading along as I update rather than all at once, here it is so you don't have to go back. It's baby Ilya and Irina.

November 1992



2017

“The media is loving you right now, honey,” Yuna was saying. “They always do whenever you do events with kids, but there was just something about the ASG weekend that caught everyone’s eye. I’ve had a couple of skating schools in Ottawa and Montreal reach out about doing some ad spots with you, just in the last few days, and I really think -”

Shane appreciated his mother so much. She was hardworking, and dedicated, and had her finger on the pulse of everything hockey related. She was also a great mum, even if sometimes she was more manager than mum. He loved her very much, and it was nice knowing how excited she got about his career, but -

He’d invited his parents to lunch at his apartment on the first available afternoon they had all had after arriving back in Montreal, and he had been building up the courage to tell them everything, and it was kind of hard to do that when his mum had so much business she wanted to talk about.

“Mum,” Shane interrupted, his voice slightly higher than it ought to be. “Can I just - uh - we can talk about that later, maybe? But I - I really wanted to talk to you both about something.”

His mum put down her phone that she’d been showing him the screeds of emails she’d been receiving on, and lifted her eyebrows at him. Luckily she didn’t look annoyed at the interruption, more surprised.

David, sitting between his wife and son, put down his coffee mug as well, his eyes flicking from Shane to Yuna. “Go ahead, Shane,” he said, “we’re listening.”

Shane also appreciated and loved his father, especially in the moments like this when his calm voice reminded Shane that despite the bombshell he was about to drop on his parents, he had never had any reason to fear them. He’d talked with Ilya more about their families, and while he knew Ilya was still holding some things back, Shane knew enough about the shape of Ilya’s father to have a newfound sense of relief over the luck in having a father who Shane had never ever even imagined hitting him.

“It’s - I just want to say, first,” Shane began, clumsy right off the bat even though he had practiced it. It was one thing to practice media ready speeches for cameras and deliver them to a nameless crowd, and another to tell people he loved something that he knew would change their opinion of him. Even if not negatively, it would change how they saw him. “Just that I - I’m sorry I didn’t tell you earlier. About any of it. That I - it’s been - I’ve been working it out myself for a while, and I didn’t know how to say it to myself, let alone anyone else, and I -”

“Shane,” David broke in, thank god, before Shane could run out of air. “Take a breath. It’s alright. We’re not going anywhere.”

Across from Shane, Yuna nodded, reached over the table to take one of his hands which he realised belatedly were shaking slightly. He took a few slow breaths.

He was a fully grown adult, and he could do this. It was something people did every day.

“I’m, uh, gay,” he said, was pleased he’d managed to say the word in his normal voice, not in the slightly higher pitched one he’d interrupted his mother with. “And I - I guess I have been for a while, or like, always, and just didn’t realise. I thought I could - if I tried, y’know, I could be attracted enough to a - a woman to date one, and - and I *tried*, I really did, I promise. But I am just. Fully gay. So.”

He took another deep breath. Stared down at the table top through blurry eyes. His mum was still holding his hand. In his periphery he saw his dad move, and then his dad was holding his other hand with both of his, warm and firm around his shaking fingers.

“Shane,” Yuna said, and she sounded immediately so sad that Shane wanted to recoil, but he couldn’t bring himself to let go of her hand until she did. “Baby.”

If he kept blinking at the tabletop he could probably pull himself together soon.

“Shane,” David said. He didn’t sound as sad as Yuna did, but he still sounded sad, and Shane hadn’t - he hadn’t imagined his parents would be like, overjoyed about any of this, but he didn’t think they would be actually *sad*, and - “Shane,” David said again. “Hey. We love you.”

Shane swallowed hard.

“We love you,” Yuna repeated, “so much. And I’m - I’m so sorry you felt like you had to try and - to try and be something that you weren’t.”

“It wasn’t your fault,” Shane said, cleared his throat. “It just.” He didn’t know how to finish that sentence.

“Thank you for telling us,” David said now, he was squeezing Shane’s hand in his carefully. “It sounds like it’s been stressing you out a bit, hey bud?”

A snort of laughter burst out of Shane’s mouth, and he finally lifted his head to look at his parents. “A little,” he admitted. Looked at their smiles, their wet eyes. Knew he looked the same. “I’m sorry,” he said, “for not saying anything earlier.”

“No,” Yuna shook her head firmly. “You told us when you were ready to. And we know now, so-”

“I don’t - I’m not coming out yet,” Shane said, words slippery and quick, “I can’t - not right away. I want - it’s not safe.”

A moment of silence. David cleared his throat in a way that Shane was uncomfortably aware meant he wanted to cry. It usually only happened during nature documentaries when a baby animal died. He kept his eyes on his mum, because if his dad actually did start to cry, Shane would start to cry too, and he wasn’t sure he would be able to stop.

“Not safe,” Yuna repeated. “Because of hockey,” she said, unnecessarily. Nodded. “I know it’s - it’s a very... straight space, and I know that there are some... words thrown around a lot more than they should ever be, but do you think that - in your own room - you wouldn’t be safe?”

Shane was pretty sure Hayden would stay his friend when Shane told him he was gay. And that Miitka wouldn’t be homophobic to him, if only because his wife’s brother was gay. And hopefully JJ would be okay. They didn’t really talk about anything like that because Shane avoided subjects like it like the plague. But those were three maybes out of his entire team.

“I don’t know,” he said eventually, once the tears welling in his mother’s eyes were a little too close to breaking containment. “I - I hope they would be okay with it. Like. I think I’ve proven myself to them enough that - that any reason they might have for not wanting a, uh, gay teammate would be proven wrong. But I don’t know. It doesn’t matter right now anyway, though,” he barrelled on quickly, “because that’s not - it’s not relevant to this right now.”

“How is it not relevant?” Yuna asked, swiped once at her eyes with her free hand, and then brought it to grip onto Shane’s hand as well, so he was held by all four hands of his parents. “It’s your life - you spend so much time with those men, and -”

“I have a boyfriend,” Shane said, wanted to get this next reveal moving before they could get too sidetracked by the threat of homophobia from people Shane had given his life to. “And I - I love him. So much. He’s part of the reason - he *is* the reason I’m coming out to you guys. I want you to meet him, I want him to have more people who can know who we are to each other. And it’s - it’ll be harder for both of us if I come out as gay, even to my team, because it’ll put more scrutiny on the both of us.”

His parents blinked at him. David didn’t look so much like he was going to cry now though, so that was better.

“He’s a player as well?” David asked, “On the Metros?”

“No,” Shane shook his head, sighed, started again. “Yes, he is a player. Not for the Metros. He’s um. He’s based in Boston.”

Yuna gasped, a sharp noise, and Shane put his head down and ignored it so he could keep speaking without watching his mum begin to write him out of her will.

“Uh, it’s. Ilya. Rozanov. Captain of the Bears? You probably know of him?”

“Shane,” Yuna breathed.

Shane continued on, breathless. “We’ve been - there’s never been a rivalry, off ice, between us. We’ve been. Um. Meeting up since our rookie year, and, I’ve been. We’ve been falling in love. And we recently decided that we want more than meeting up. We want to be together. Really together, telling people when we can.”

“That sounds like it’s been very lonely,” David offered here, “I’m glad you’re asking us in, to help the both of you be less lonely.”

Shane's chest hitched painfully, and he nodded, flicked his eyes to his mum. His dad let go of Shane with one hand and reached out to rest his hand on her shoulder, rubbed his thumb over her collarbone.

"Rozanov?" Yuna asked.

Shane nodded.

"But you hate him?"

"No," Shane shook his head, couldn't help but chuckle a little wetly over how ridiculous this was. "No, I kinda, I love him."

"But he - he's an asshole?" Yuna sounded slightly strangled. "He's always - always chirping at you, and -"

"No," Shane said again. "I mean, yes, he's an asshole, and he's always chirping at me, but it's - it's not. That's part of the game. Most of the assholiness is a - is an act. Not all of it, he is. He is an asshole. But in a funny way. And the way he chirps me is - ugh - most of it is flirting. With me. And I like it."

He could feel his face heating up so much he could probably cancel heating for his apartment.

"He's so nice," he continued, speaking again quickly before his mother could come up with another negative about Ilya. "He - he's really funny, and he really cares about people. About me. About his team. About, um, his daughter. Mila. She's lovely too. Really clever. Ilya is really clever too, he just hides it because people don't understand. That's what I think, anyway. And, he's such a good dad, Mila loves him so much, and he's so careful with her, and -"

"Give us a moment, Shane," David butted in here, squeezing Shane's hand again. "Just so we are all clear, here. You are telling us that you and Ilya Rozanov - your league appointed rival - are in fact boyfriends, and also that Ilya Rozanov has a child. A daughter, Mila?"

A moment of silence again.

“Yes,” Shane said. “Yes, that’s what I’m telling you.”

A longer moment of silence. Perhaps three of them.

“Is the... mother in the picture?” Yuna asked.

“Yes,” Shane nodded a little jerkily. “They have a good co-parenting relationship. I’m pretty sure. From what I’ve heard about it all. And I’ve meet their - their nanny Magda, and she’s really cool too, so. I might meet Mila’s mum, Mandy, next time I’m in Boston. Depending on schedules. She’s a surgeon, so she’s really busy, and -”

“You’ve meet Mila?” David asked.

“Mm,” Shane nodded again. He pulled his hands back from his parents’ because they were getting sweaty and he wanted to sit on them to dry them off and also to squish his fingerbones into the wood of the chair. “Yeah. She was at ASG as well, I met her before that, but we hung out over the weekend too. She was one of the kids at the event. In the full Hollander merch. I bought it for her.”

Up to five moments of silence now.

Yuna was the one to break it this time. “I think I - I think I know which kid you’re talking about. From the photos of you at the event.”

“Yeah, I, hang on, Ilya sent me a photo of her and her mum and Magda, like, an hour ago. Here -”

He fumbled his phone out of his pocket, pressed into his messages with Lily, and then opened the photo Ilya had forwarded him from Mandy, of Mila swinging between the two women’s hands, grinning widely. She was wearing one of the jumpers he'd bought her. It was a little blurry but still cute. He held his phone out towards his parents and they both leaned in to look.



“Oh,” Yuna said.

“She’s very young,” David added.

“Rozanov isn’t sleeping with the nanny or the mother?” Yuna asked.

Shane jerked his phone back towards his chest. “What? No. I told you he’s - he’s my boyfriend. We’re exclusive.”

“I know, I know,” Yuna held her hands up in appeasement. “I’m sorry. I just - Rozanov is always in the gossip magazines with a new woman, and this is just. A lot to take in. Were the women all just... beards?”

“No,” Shane shoved his phone into his pocket, glared down at his hands. “No. He’s bisexual. He - he has dated a lot. Or. Like. Hooked up a lot with a lot of people. But that was before. He’s not even been - even before we made it official, basically since he had Mila he hasn’t been that guy anymore. People just see him with a woman and automatically assume they’re together. Like they did with me and Rose.”

Only two moments of silence here.

“Okay,” Yuna sighed. “I’m sorry, baby. I am. I know I’m being... judgemental. I’m just, I understand I’m on the outside looking in, but what I’ve seen from the outside has made me worried.”

“If you tell us that he’s a good man,” David said, “then we believe you. He’s a good man. We would like to meet him, and Mila, if you want us to.”

“I do,” Shane admitted. Looked to his mum.

She sighed. “He’s still a Boston Bear,” she said, “I can believe he’s a good man, but I’m afraid he still has that hanging over him.”

Shane allowed himself to laugh at that. “His one flaw,” he agreed. “But you should see Mila in her bear cub outfit.”

Chapter 14

Chapter Notes

Russian translation in end note xx

Also you may have noticed I've added a chapter count now! six more chapters to go :)

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

2016

Mandy was over for dinner at Ilya's house - they often did full family dinners on swap days, helped everyone ease into it. Magda and Mila were both in their respective bedrooms; Magda on the phone with someone, and Mila insisting she needed to spend time in her goal with her books all by herself thank you very much.

Ilya and Mandy were prepping for dinner. There wasn't much to do, Ilya had put the pasta bake in the oven before anyone had ever arrived, and the salad was really just chopping things up and putting them in a bowl. He still appreciated Mandy helping. They didn't get much time to hang out, just the two of them, anymore. Which he knew would happen, and was fine with, it was just still weird going from living together to living two separate lives and only meeting occasionally.

It was still good between them. They had been chatting the whole time, about Mandy's work and Ilya's team, and Mila's latest quirks and favourite stories. Mandy brought the new topic up as she began slicing cucumber.

"You don't get papped out with girls much anymore," she said, very casual.

"Uh," Ilya said, fighting with the capsicum seeds that escaped his initial unseeding of the vegetable. "No, I think, uh, last time was with Connor's sister. She thought it was funny the magazines said we were having an illicit affair."

Mandy shook her head, smiling. "Yeah, you are not her type, from what you've told me. Let me rephrase, I don't think I was being clear earlier. I, well, I suppose I believed that you were quite a womanizer, when we met. I expected to be seeing a lot of hook ups coming and going from the

house. And when I didn't, I thought you must be conducting them elsewhere, except I never saw anything online. And now that we have our own houses, I thought maybe, you'd be going back to some more... partying behaviour. Are you?"

Ah. Ilya succeeded in flicking the light tiny flat seed out of the curve of the capsicum, and could finally start to cut it. "No," he said. "No. I have not. I, uh, I do not do that, much. Anymore."

"Much?" Mandy pushed, "I'm not judging, Ilya, I'm just curious. You stopped because of Mila?"

"Yes," Ilya shrugged one shoulder, focused on cutting even pieces because Mila didn't like it when they were too big or too small. "And now. Yes, because I want as much of my time for Mila as possible, and yes because I want to be... I want people to see me as responsible man and that is... hard to do with so many blurry photos of me on dancefloor with my drunk mouth all over someone. So. Yes, I stop for Mila. But I also stop for me. I want - I want to be this man. Stable man. Not boring, I still love to party, and I do with my team, but I - I want much more to be safe."

"I know," Mandy slid her cucumber slices into the salad bowl - perfectly even chunks thanks to her surgeon hands and her particular daughter. "I just... worry sometimes that you're over correcting. You're allowed to have fun, you're allowed to have hook ups, and be a bit silly. All that stuff. I trust you to make good decisions."

An insane thing for someone to say to Ilya. Maybe he needed to bring that up to Van. But maybe not, because then they would have to talk about it and especially talk about why Ilya didn't trust himself to make good decisions, and -

"I do still hook up," Ilya said, cleared his throat, glanced up and around the kitchen to make sure Mila hadn't snuck in silently while they'd been chatting. "I have a - there is someone I hook up with. As often as we can. Which isn't very often, but it's - it's good."

Mandy put down her knife and turned to face him, arms folding, eyebrows raised, grinning. "You're dating someone?"

"Not dating," Ilya shook his head, cleared his throat. "He - um. Is hard to do. Because he is he. And we are both. We are both hockey players, and you know how hockey is. And how Russia is."

Expressions flittered over Mandy's face until she landed on a pinched grimace, and she reached out to wrap her hand around his bicep. "Oh," she said. "Ilya."

"No," Ilya shook his head, forced himself to make a laugh noise. "No, is fine, Mands. He is - he is so good and lovely, but he is - he does not live close to here. Is better we are just hook ups."

"You want more?" Mandy asked. She still held him, and he relished the contact.

"Yes," he admitted.

They were both quiet for a moment. Mandy moved the bowl closer for him to slide the capsicum in, and then she grabbed the salad tongs to toss them in with everything else in the bowl while Ilya grabbed the dressing from the fridge. When the salad was fully dressed, and placed on the table, Mandy spoke again.

"If - if you find a way to have more, with him, or with anyone," she said, "I'd be really happy for you, y'know?"

"I do," Ilya nodded. "And same. For me. For you if you found person for you."

"Not right now," Mandy shook her head and exhaled loudly, "the only people I can stand to be around outside of work half the time are you, Mila, and Magda."

"We are the best people," Ilya agreed.

"Also," Mandy said, "I wanted to point out that - well - you've successfully hidden an entire child from the world for this long. And this hook up of yours. Maybe, maybe you could have it be a little more than a hook up, in secret, if that's safer for you both."

"Maybe," Ilya sighed. "Maybe."

2017

-

Ilya had started off very small. After he had talked to Shane in the aftermath of Shane coming out to his parents, he felt he owed it to Shane to do something, no matter how small.

Despite the fact that Shane had been smiling through the entire facetime as he relayed his talk with his parents, it was obvious he had been stressed out about, that he was still anxious. He told Ilya that of course Yuna and David had some reservations about the whole dating Ilya Rozanov of the Boston Bears, Shane's rival, known playboy, etc, but he was sure they would come 'round, and already had a little. He said that telling them about Mila and both helped and hindered. Helped because Mila was so gorgeous and lovely, and helped in every single situation, and hindered because now Shane's parents were slightly worried he was babytrapping himself. They were also wanting to send Mila gifts, though Shane said he'd told them to hold off on that for now.

Ilya could imagine it - Shane's parents being grandparents to Mila - and it made him feel all warm and fuzzy inside, and also like he'd missed a step and almost fell on his face. Disorienting.

Anyway. He started off small, with Marlow, who Ilya knew for a fact would not be homophobic, and who he also knew would be the most likely to accidentally hear the news through Mila first if Ilya didn't hurry up.

-

Marlow was definitely too big to fit into the fairy wings Mila wanted him to wear, but they'd worked around it with a couple of safety pins instead. Ilya had been asked to be the waiter for this tea party, so he wasn't required to wear any wings, but he did wear the mermaid tail apron per Mila's request while he served her and Marlow juice out of the tiny teapot.

"Fairy Marly," Mila said, lifting her little teacup towards him, "you lost new tooth?"

Marly lifted his own miniscule cup to cheers with Mila, and nodded very solemnly. “I did,” he said, reached with one finger to pull the corner of his mouth up. “I’m getting a new tooth fit soon, though, don’t worry.”

“Will tooth fairy still pay?” Mila asked, sipping at her juice.

“Why wouldn’t she?” Marlow asked, downed all his juice in one go like it was a shot. He held his teacup in Ilya’s direction, and Ilya filled it again while rolling his eyes.

“Cause was big tooth,” Mila pointed out. “Mama says big teeth are meant forever. Maybe tooth fairy doesn’t come for big teeth?”

“Yeah, you’re right,” Marlow nodded, “that’s why there’s the hockey fairy instead.”

Mila’s eyes lit up. “Hockey fairy?”

“Yeah,” Marlow downed his second juice shot, and put his cup on the coffee table they’d turned into a fairy tea table. “She deals with big teeth, and like, she wears full hockey gear. Sometimes she turns up for a big tooth and the regular tooth fairy is there too, like, she got the wrong memo or something, and then the hockey fairy checks the regular tooth fairy out of the way and gets the big tooth. It’s pretty exciting.”

“Wow,” Mila’s eyes were wide. Ilya could see a new dress up outfit in her future. “So cool!”

-

“Mila loves it when you come over,” Ilya said, a good hour and a half later, once he’d put Mila down for a nap. He was washing the tiny tea set out, because he forgot to a few times ago and there had been milk left in the little milk jug and it had gone evil bad. “Thanks.”

“Nah,” Marlow shrugged, grinned. He was standing at Ilya’s side with a tea towel, drying each tiny cup, using his pinky finger to get the towel in. “I love it. My niece is too old to want to play with her boring uncle anymore.”

“You are boring,” Ilya agreed easily, laughed as Marly smacked him with the teatowel. “So domestic, sitting here in my home playing tea parties. I should send photo the newspapers next time they do photos of you at club calling you party boy.”

“Shut up,” Marly was still grinning, “like you can talk. Mr Ilya ‘I would never settle down’ Rozanov. With your family home and your kid. Now you just need a wife. Me, Mandy, and Magda will help vet some women for you if you want -”

“Not a wife,” Ilya interrupted. Cleared his throat and focused on washing out the milk jug even though it hadn’t even been used today. Just to be safe, in case the evil vibes were still hanging around it. “Not anymore. I - I think for me, now, there is only one option, and I think he would be mad if I asked him to be my wife.”

To his credit, Marlow barely even blinked. He took the milk jug from Ilya and dried it as well as he could.

“You’ve got a boyfriend, then?” he asked. “And you haven’t presented him to the Maneater Ems?”

“You guys need to choose one name and stick with it,” Ilya complained, “I am always learning one name only for it to change to next. Maneaters? Which of you are that? You and Magda only eat women as far as I am aware. Is this you also coming out to me, Marly? Taking my thunder, hm?”

“It’s like a secret club password,” Marlow defended, “it’s fun. And like, no? As far as I know?”

“As far as you know?” Ilya pressed, “Marly, Marly, wait -”

“Nah,” Marlow laughed now, dropped the tea towel on the counter and turned to grab Ilya by the shoulders, shook him gently. “Stop going off topic. You have a boyfriend? Who is he? Can I meet him? It’s so serious you know it’s him or nothing?”

Ilya let himself be joggled, reached up with both his hands to cling onto Marlow’s wrists, because it was such a relief for them to be being silly right now after what could have been a scary admission.

“Yes, I do, and I think, I hope yes, maybe you can meet him soon. It’s - it is very serious with him. I think if I do not get to have him forever I will have to become very sad tragic figure.”

“Okay,” Marlow squeezed his shoulders, “so we’ll try not to let that happen. You’re still avoiding who he is - is he a big deal? A celebrity? Do you have an NDA?”

“He is big deal,” Ilya allowed. Closed his eyes briefly. “You have to promise not to be insane about this, okay?”

Marlow blinked slowly at him. Nodded once. Looked like he would go insane about this.

“Shane Hollander,” Ilya said, “is my boyfriend. And I am in love with him and want to have his babies. If he could get pregnant I would already be planning names for Mila’s siblings. I would even be the one to be pregnant for him if he wanted. I would birth whole hockey team for him if he wanted.”

Okay, maybe it was Ilya who was insane about this. Marlow continued to stare at him, eyes wide like Mila’s had been about the hockey fairy. Maybe the hockey fairy had just checked the both of them, and they were both concussed, and that was why Ilya was saying ridiculous things.

“Shane Hollander,” Marlow said, “like, THE Shane Hollander. Of the Metros. Your hockey rival? The guy who is so focused on all things hockey that the only time I’ve ever seen him in the news for anything but hockey was with Rose L- Hang on, isn’t he dating Rose Landry?”

Ilya probably shouldn’t, but he fucking hated Rose Landry at this moment. “No,” he snapped, “stupid people made stupid assumptions. They are friends. They never dated. Shane is mine.”

Marlow raised his eyebrows at him.

“I am his too,” Ilya allowed.

A moment more of staring, and then Marlow pulled him in for a bear hug, crushing them so closely it felt like he was trying to meld their abs.

“It makes sense, when you think about it, really,” he said when he finally loosened his hold, but not the hug. “You’re both the biggest names in hockey, you guys are probably the only ones who could really stand up against each other.”

“Yes,” Ilya nodded, “exactly this. And also he is so hot and I am so hot. Makes sense.”

Marlow snorted, and then; “I mean, yeah. Hollander is kind of a smokeshow.”

“Hey,” Ilya smacked his shoulder, finally pulled them out of the hug properly. “He is my boyfriend. Keep your probably straight eyes off him.”

-

“I promise you,” Ilya laughed into his phone, had to laugh quietly because it was late, and he was supposed to be going to sleep, but Shane had asked if he wanted to call, and who was he to say no. “Yes, Marlow called you prince of hockey, asked if I would also become royalty if I marry you, and then remembered I am king of rats, so wanted to know if I would be princess, or you would be queen.”

“Marlow is an idiot,” Shane said fondly. He sounded sleepy, and Ilya could imagine him all bundled up in bed looking soft and delicious. He wished they were face timing, except they had agreed it would be a short call and their lights were off so it would just be a dark screen. “But a good guy. You’re feeling good about telling him?”

“Yeah,” Ilya agreed. Closed his eyes so he could imagine Shane lying in front of him. “I talked with him about telling more of the team. About me, first, and then, I guess, waiting to see if news leaks? Before I tell about you.”

“That’s sensible,” Shane sighed. “A little sad, but I get it. I’ve been thinking about how I would go about telling my team.”

There were a couple of guys on the Bears that Ilya wasn't sure how they would react, and one guy he knew was at least happy to call other players faggots, despite how vocal Ilya had been about them not using slurs. On whole, however, he was pretty sure his team would be receptive, welcoming to him. They were his family, his community. But Shane's team... there were always rumours about other locker rooms, and the bad rumours always traveled furthest. They were always hearing talk about the Metros. Not as bad as the Toronto room, but still. Ilya wouldn't trust the majority of the team as far as he could throw them, and even though he was pretty fucking strong, he didn't think he could throw any of the Metros. Off ice, anyway.

"Yes?" Ilya attempted to sound very neutral.

"Mm," Shane also sounded like he was trying to sound neutral. "I want - I'm going to tell Hayden and Jackie first. And get their input on it as well. But I already feel like - after telling mum and dad about you and Mila - I want to not hide."

"I know," Ilya nodded despite the lack of video. "One step at a time, Дорогой."

Chapter End Notes

Дорогой - Darling/dear

Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

Russian translations in end notes :)))

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

“She is being little myshka,” Ilya whispered over the phone to Shane.

Shane was theoretically on his way to Hayden and Jacki’s house for dinner, and to also tell them about how he was, as Ilya put it, ‘super gay’. Technically he was on his way, it was just that more literally he had only made it as far as his car before he had facetimed Ilya.

“A mouse?” Shane had been picking up a few Russian words, mostly just the endearments that Ilya spilled all over the place. At Ilya’s nod, Shane grinned. “Ah, that explains how she is so small and quiet!”

He could hear Mila giggling from behind Ilya, where she’d crawled a few moments ago when she’d heard Shane on the phone.

“I didn’t know you had a mouse, Ilya,” Shane continued, “do you feed her cheese?”

“Yes, yes!” Mila mouse called from behind Ilya, and then squeaked loudly.

“I suppose I am fetching special cheese now,” Ilya laughed. “Maybe moy myshka can talk to moy solnyshko while I get?”

He turned as he spoke, already handing the phone down to Mila, and Shane blinked through the weird vertigo moment that came with the movement, and then grinned as Mila’s face came into view.

“Sane,” Mila said, “when am big I will be hockey fairy.”

Shane had heard about the hockey fairy, had also seen the photo Ilya had taken of Marlow in his fairy wings, and had been imagining that image as the hockey fairy, but he guessed there could probably be more than one.

“I like that idea,” he said, “I think you have to be very sneaky and clever to be a type of tooth fairy. Are you still a mouse? Because they’re very sneaky and clever sometimes too.”

“Mm,” Mila nodded, nodding the phone with her. “Mouse hockey fairy,” she said slowly, careful with each word. Then she frowned, her lips moving almost silently, and then she yelled - much too close to the phone speakers - “Papa! YA, khokkeynaya foya? Feya? Fara? Papa! Kak skazat'?”

“Feya,” Ilya said, coming back into view - though just his knees - “Indoor voice, Milashka, da? We do not want to hurt our Shanya’s ears, hm?”

“Feya,” Mila mumbled, and then, “Sorrrrry Sane. I am baby who is learning.”

That sounded like something that had been said to her often, and Shane wondered who she was repeating. Wished he could be involved more, not just over phones, so he could just know this sort of thing. It was like hearing inside jokes that he was outside of. He was used to that, had always been outside of those sort of things except with a very few people, but he wanted in now, in a way he hadn’t cared about at school, or in locker rooms.

“Yes you are,” Ilya was saying to Mila, had crouched down, feet flat on the ground, until he was more or less level with Mila, and kissed her head before handing over a chunk of cheese. He had cut it into a nice storybook looking wedge. “Here you are, moy myshka.”

“I’m going to tell Hayden and Jacki about you,” Shane said, his lips feeling numb. “If that’s - if that’s okay. I want to tell them about Mila too, if you’re okay with it. I think - I think Mila and Arthur would get on really well, and maybe sometime we can work out how to do a - a dinner or something with us three and the Pikes, and - I just. Can I tell them?”

Mila was devouring the cheese and didn’t seem to even notice when Ilya took the phone back from her. He stayed crouched down there, smiled at Shane like Shane had actually said anything coherent rather than just a mess of words.

“Da,” he said. “Yes. I would like that. If you think it is safe, and good, I trust you. I still think maybe Hayden Pike is mediocre hockey player, but I like Jacki Pike’s instagram, so they are probably good people.”

“You’re such an assho-” Shane began, remembered himself a little too late. Could almost hear The entire Pike family in his head saying ‘swear jar’. “Dork,” he decided on. “I have to go now, I just. I wanted to see you first.”

“You are one who is dork,” Ilya told him, “dork I love. Go have dinner with thirteenth best Metro and his lovely family.”

“I’ll call you after?”

“Yes. If it is late, uh, after little mice are all tucked up, maybe we find way to balance phones so we can have a more, mm, physical talk?”

“Shh,” Shane hushed, cheeks already hot. “I can’t think about that right now, I need to focus!”

“Go focus,” Ilya said, smiling innocently. “Say bye, Mila, Shane is going to go have very important dinner now.”

“Bye Sane!” Mila said immediately, grinned a very cheesy grin.

-

Shane let it be a normal dinner for the most part. He arrived, and let the twins climb onto him like he was a jungle gym. Let them drag him around until Arthur woke up from his late nap and wanted to be the one carried, and then followed Hayden and the twins around with Arthur in his arms as they did a pre-dinner tidy up. Every so often he tried to escape into the kitchen with Jacki, but Jacki told him that it would be better for all of their nerves if Shane did not see the amount of butter and salt being put into things. He did try to convince her that it would be even better for their nerves if there was less butter and salt, but that just got a sterner instruction to leave.

He had debated the merits on coming out in front of the kids, versus after they had gone to bed. Because on one hand, it wasn't like he didn't want them to know as well, but on the other hand, what if Hayden and Jackie didn't want them to know? Shane was mostly sure that wouldn't be true. But what if it was. And if Hayden and Jacki didn't like what Shane was saying, it would be cowardice to say it in front of the kids, like using them as a shield. Again, he wasn't expecting that to be the reaction, it was just. What if it was.

So he waited until the twins had been sent upstairs to start their wind down routine, and Arthur was occupied with taking out all of the building blocks to line them up in order of size.

They were all in the kitchen - Arthur sitting just through the doorway with his blocks - doing the dishes. Hayden washing, Shane drying, Jacki putting away.

"So," Shane said, focused hard on the plate in his hand. Remembered that Ilya had also been doing the dishes when he came out to Marlow, and had to bite down on a laugh. "I, uh, I had something I wanted to talk to you guys about."

"Oh my god," Hayden groaned, "finally! Thank fuck."

"Hayd," Jacki snorted, reached around Shane to smack Hayden's ass, "we said we were going to be patient!"

"I have been so patient," Hayden retorted, "I am patient," he added, then looked straight at Shane. "But fuck, man, I have been dying to hear about this. You have not been being subtle."

Shane attempted to not look panicked. Swallowed hard. They probably did not know exactly what he was going to tell them. It was just that he'd been acting... his parents had said he was acting different. Happier.

"Okay," he mumbled. Jacki patted him on the back, then took the plate from his hand. "Um. Yeah. I know - I think maybe you're... not expecting what I'm going to say, but I know some bits are probably obvious. Yeah."

“It’s about Lily?” Hayden asked, elbowed him gently. “Because the whole team knows something has happened with Lily.”

Jesus.

“Yeah,” Shane admitted. He was still gripping the tea towel tightly, but couldn’t bring himself to do more than squeeze it between his hands. “Um. Um. Um.”

“Deep breaths, buddy,” Hayden said. He’d given up on washing the dishes now as well, was just leaning against the counter, wet hands braced against the side of the sink. “It’s just us. We’ve got you.”

Jacki patted his back again, and then left her hand between his shoulderblades as a comforting weight.

He wondered if it would be like this every time. Like he was going to break apart. If he would always be a coward about it. He didn’t want to be. He didn’t want to look like he was ashamed of who he was. Even when he was. Because he wasn’t ashamed of Ilya.

“It is about Lily,” he said, could hear how wooden his voice was coming out. Focused on the firm heat of Jacki’s hand on his back, the solid presence of Hayden beside him. “But Lily isn’t - that’s not actually his name. We’ve been... using code names, to keep it a secret. The fact that we’re. That I, that I am gay. He’s, um, he’s bisexual. That’s not the point. What I wanted to say was, I’m gay, and Lily is a man, and I - I love him. I want to. Share. With you guys.”

He felt a little light headed. Took a deep breath. Jacki’s hand was still on his back, rubbing in small circles now. He kept his head down, staring at the twisted towel in his hands. No one said anything for a few beats, though he could basically feel Jacki and Hayden communicating wordlessly behind his back.

Then Hayden reached out, slow, put his hand over Shane’s on the teatowel. His hands were still damp, but Shane didn’t really care too much about that now. He let go of the teatowel, let Hayden take his hand in his. It was a bit awkward, maybe more so because Shane couldn’t make himself look at either of his friends, but.

“We really want that too,” Hayden said, his voice sounded a little odd, but not in the way it got kind of nasal when he was telling a lie. “To get to meet him. Get to - to be part of your life like that.”

“We really do,” Jacki chimed in here, “thank you so much for telling us about him. And about you. We love you, Shane.”

The fact that he’d managed to come out again to such a good reaction should really be rewriting his nervous system, but Shane was not confident he would be bringing any of this relief with him for whoever he had to come out to next. For now though, it was like finally getting to drink after a long run.

“Fuck,” he groaned. “Love you guys too. That’s not all I wanted to say.”

“Okay,” Hayden sounded like he was grinning now. “Jesus, man, take a moment to breathe. Give me a hug, will you?”

Probably a good idea to get a hug now before he told Hayden that the man he was in love with was the asshole chirp king of hockey. He let Hayden tug away the teatowel completely, was pretty sure Jacki took it from him as well, and fell into the hug.

Usually he and Hayden were bro hug only type of huggers, except for special occasions. So far the special occasions had been things like Hayden’s wedding, the births of his kids, big wins at hockey, and also, apparently, Shane coming out as gay.

Hayden did finish the hug with a very bro hug style clap on the back, but it didn’t take away from being the tightest hug from Hayden Shane had ever gotten. Plus then Jacki hugged him as well, less tight than Hayden, but still tight, and she didn’t follow it up with a slap on the back.

“Okay, okay,” Shane mumbled, pulling himself upright, and rubbing the heels of his hands against his eyes. “Okay, this isn’t - it doesn’t need to be. Let me say the rest?”

He felt a little bit like a ping pong ball, being gently batted between Hayden and Jacki’s hugs, and it was making him overly emotional and also very tired.

“Go ahead,” Jacki said, “we’ll try and be less touchy feely about it.”

“Lily is Ilya,” Shane said, figured he may as well just get it out as quick as possible. “Ilya Rozanov. We’ve been hooking up since, um, since our rookie year basically, and we’ve - we’ve realised we want more. And that we. Love each other. So we’re boyfriends now. And we’re serious about it. And I’m not finished yet, I just need to breathe for a bit, okay, so don’t - don’t say anything yet.”

He leaned forwards, hands on the counter, then lowered himself down so he could press his forehead to it. He probably looked ridiculous. He could hear Ruby and Jade’s night time wind down music still playing upstairs. Could hear the quiet clicking of wooden blocks being put to order by Arthur just through the door. Jacki and Hayden stood quiet on either side of him like sentinels, letting him breathe.

“Okay,” Shane said, once he’d refilled and emptied his lungs enough times to rinse out the panic in them. Maybe he needed to manually rewire his nervous system, Jesus. This should not scare him so much. He played a dangerous game on a dangerous terrain in front of thousands of people live, and millions of people on camera, and he was never this scared about it.

“Okay,” he repeated. Kept his head against the counter. He would regret it later because it was damp, but right now it was cool and comforting. “This bit is not my secret, except that I - I want it to be. Ilya has a kid. Her name is Mila, and she’s almost three. She’s really cool. Ilya is such a good dad to her, and he - he’s so fucking good, you guys. I was already - I already fucking loved him, and then I see him with her, and I think I’m going to die about it.”

He breathed a few more heavy breaths.

“Okay,” he said again. “That’s. That’s what I wanted to say. Oh, and also that, like, when we can wrangle it, because it’s difficult with our various schedules, but we’d like. Like to have a dinner or something with you guys and Mila, because I really think Mila and Arthur would get along, and actually, did you know that Arthur means bear? So that’s kind of fitting actually.”

There is silence in the kitchen for a long moment. Hayden breaks it.

“Don’t tell me my kid is a Bear,” he said, sounded shocked, “he’s a metro like his dad.”

Shane snorted. Pushed his arms straight and lifted himself off the counter. Very much wanted to wash his face. “Okay,” he said, “sorry for pointing out the meaning of his name. It was very rude and wrong of me.”

“It sure was,” Hayden replied, poked Shane in the ribs. “I - I’m still taking in the, uh, Rozanov of it all. But. I’m happy for you, man, I really am.”

Shane nodded.

“I’ve taken it all in,” Jacki said, sounding very pleased, she wrapped her arm around Shane’s waist and squeezed. “Rozanov is hot, I bet he looks so good as a daddy.”

“Oh my god,” Shane mumbled.

-

Shane was lit up only by the light of his phone, which was not enough, because it meant Ilya only got to see the outlines of his expressions. To be fair, he had gotten to see a lot more before Shane had turned off the light and gotten into bed after wiping himself down from the earlier part of their facetime, but he was greedy for it. He wanted to see all of Shane, all of the time.

“Your eyelashes are so long,” he murmured, “catching the light, so pretty. Кружево. You are so sleepy.”

“Mm,” Shane hummed, opened his eyes slowly, maybe even batting his eyelashes a little for Ilya, though he would probably never admit to it. “Yeah. Tonight was a lot. I know it went well, but it still - I felt like I’d done a full workout.”

“Big emotions,” Ilya shrugged, “makes blood rush hard. Like earlier, hm? I think your blood rushed very hard.”

“Shaddup,” Shane snorted. His eyes were closed again. “You’re feeling okay about it?”

“Hm?” Ilya squinted at Shane’s slightly pixelated face, the dark making the camera act up. He needed a camera that would always work perfectly to capture Shane’s beautiful face. Ah, he needed to get Shane a phone with a camera like that. Okay. “Yes, yes, Shane. I said I trust you. You said it went well, and you trust them. I am happy. You are happy?”

Shane nodded, the picture glitching slightly. Maybe Ilya would look up new phones after Shane fell asleep. "I am," he said, his mouth catching the light as he smiled, "gotta sleep now, though."

-

Ilya had discussed it with Marly, and then with Marly and Sam. And then Marly again with Magda, with Mandy. Also with Van. Then some more with Svetlana, and then on her advice, with his agent and lawyer.

And then he went to LeClaire with it. Because he didn't want to drop what might be a bombshell on his team and leave his coach to clean it up. Not when LeClaire had been there for him this whole time, helping him. And because if it went badly with LeClaire, that would set the tone, the rules, for the rest of the plan.

He even made an official meeting, through the office, because he had been told that if things went badly it would be useful to have a paper trail. His team was adamant that Ilya would receive no flack from coming out without handing flack back in turn. Ilya enjoyed the word flack. It sounded like a swear word while still being a little posh sounding.

So he met with LeClaire, and he brought Marly with him, and he thought about how if this went well he could tell LeClaire who his boyfriend was and watch as his jaw dropped. He wished he could take a photo to show Shane. God, everyone was going to be so jealous of him, locking down THE Shane Hollander, as Marlow put it.

-

"Thank you for telling me," LeClaire said, solemn, like he had sat through a sensitivity training course and was doing his best to remember all of it. Then he looked from Ilya to Marly. "And is this - am I getting an HR form out, for the two of you? Or is this just a heads up? I don't think we need to fill out a form unless it's serious, which isn't to say it isn't, I just don't know yet, obviously, and -"

"Woah, woah," Marly laughed. "Coach, I am actually so flattered, but like, I'm here as support. I'm not Roz's man, and I think if I tried to take his man's place I would actually get murdered. Secretly and sneakily, on ice, in the middle of a game."

LeClaire stared, Marlow continued to laugh, Ilya debated whether or not he could actually film this.

“So is okay?” Ilya asked, eventually deciding it was probably best not to film, “I am not about to be kicked off team, deported to mother Russia?”

“Jesus,” LeClaire said. He leaned over his desk to swat at Marlow. “Of course it’s - Jesus,” he repeated. “Ilya. Rozanov. Your job is safe, fuck, you’re the best captain we’ve had for the Bears for probably a decade, at least. You can be as gay as you like, that’s not a problem. Not for me. And I’ll make sure it won’t be a problem for any of the rest of our management. Pretty sure Nicole is a lesbian, so. Maybe I wasn’t supposed to say that. Anyway - this is me officially saying that this is fine. And this is me unofficially asking if you are dating another Bear? As in a teammate, bear is a gay word isn’t it? Big hairy men?”

Ilya should have ditched common sense and filmed this. He was going to crack a rib trying not to laugh, and then he would be benched and *then* they would get rid of him. It would be very embarrassing.

“No Bears for me,” he managed to choke out, “not team ones and not big hairy ones. My Shane is, uh, maybe he is otter? If we are doing the, ah, gay words, you say? Marly, is Shane an otter?”

Marlow was not even attempting to hold back his laughter, and he’d sprawled back in his chair, his hands on his face. He was too far gone to give Ilya any answer that wasn’t just sputtering and cackling.

“Hm,” Ilya thought about it for a moment. “No, maybe Shane is twunk. He would hate that. This is very funny. Coach, this does not leave your office, yes?”

“Uh,” LeClaire said. He often looked a little harried in his meetings with Ilya, but never in an irritated type of way, and Ilya liked that about him. Right now he looked mostly amused and shellshocked. “No. This is personal information and will be treated as such. Unless it is something that needs to be noted down in your file, and then it will be available only to those with clearance to see it.”

That was enough, Ilya was pretty sure. “So, I think you know my twunk? Shane Hollander. Second best hockey player? Does this need to be in file? Maybe a conflict of interests thing. Not that it is, of course, Shane would not even let me win game of get fish in front of my own baby girl.”

Marlow was still laughing his head off. He sounded like a donkey. An ass. Ilya hated a lot of things about the English language, but sometimes it had good words. Ass was good.

“THE Shane Hollander?” LeClaire asked, hands flat on the top of his desk like he needed to keep himself upright.

Chapter End Notes

myshka - mouse

solnyshko - sunshine

Papa! YA, khokkeynaya foya? Feya? Fara? Papa! Kak skazat - Papa, I am, hockey foya?

Fairy? Fara? Papa! How to say -

Feya - Fairy

Кружево - lace

Chapter 16

Chapter Notes

I was sick and asleep all of yesterday when I meant to write and post this chapter, but here it is now :))))

Russian translations in end notes x

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

2017

It had been kind of terrifying to hear that there was now official evidence of the fact that he was dating Ilya. Official evidence within the NHL, specifically. And then, not only had that gone well, Ilya had come out to his team. Just about being bisexual and having a boyfriend, not about Shane yet, but it had gone well, and even if maybe some of the members hadn't been happy, no one had said anything awful, and most of them had been good about it, and it had been an entire week with no sign of it in the news cycle. It was also extremely exciting, in a way Shane hadn't expected to find it. He was so used to believing that everything about this, not just the Ilya and Mila part, but the Shane being gay part would have to be kept hidden until he retired, at the very least. Hadn't even attempted to think about a future for himself where he wasn't hiding for another decade, or so.

Now they were making real moves in telling people about them, it made Shane feel a little insane. Looking back at who he had been a week, ago, a month ago, who he was when he almost ran out of Ilya's life because they'd said each other's names. Realising he had been so desperately unhappy and hadn't even noticed because that was just what life was.

And now he was waking up in the mornings feeling excited. Not just for hockey, not just for a hook up in the near future, but for his actual life. He wanted it now. How had they ever survived so long on so little? He and Ilya were facetimeing nearly daily and it still wasn't enough because he wanted to be there.

Another terrifying thing that was also actually a good thing, was that at the next Boston vs Montreal game, Mandy had asked to meet up with Shane. Said she'd heard so much about him for Mila's whole life, and now so much more, and as he was going to be a real part of Mila and Ilya's lives, she wanted to be a part of his. Ilya had assured him it wasn't going to be like meeting an ex, because it had been a one time thing, and even when they had lived together it had only been friendship, nothing more. Shane was hoping meeting Mandy would be a little like exposure therapy for meeting Svetlana, who was also a friend of Ilya's, but who he had slept with a lot more. No. He wasn't going to be jealous.

He was going to be a little bit jealous, but he was trying not to be, and that had to count for something.

-

He had gotten permission to fly into Boston early and then to fly out late as well, telling his coach he was going to visit his partner, and trying not to act too skittish about using the word *partner*, as if Theriault would see through it immediately and know he was dating Ilya, and that Ilya had a baby, and then everything would go wrong.

It didn't. Theriault had given him permission easily, saying it was about time Shane took advantage of being Captain, and to enjoy the extra day or so with his sweetie.

A big win, because it meant that Shane got to go stay with Ilya and Mila for a day and a night before the game, and then play, and then come back to spend another day, then meet up with Mandy over dinner as they swapped Mila back to her house, and then a night and a day with just Ilya before he had to leave. Plus, Mila had her cubs skate the day he was arriving, so he was going to sneak in to see it, and he was excited for that too. Ilya had suggested the idea, and said Mila would be so happy, had been telling her friends she had gotten to skate with him at the ASG weekend.

It was almost too many good things he had to look forward to, it felt wrong. He kept waiting for the other shoe to drop.

-

2016

Mila was supposed to be asleep, but instead she was sitting in his lap sniffing, and it was entirely Ilya's fault. Or maybe it was fucking Curtis from Florida's fucking fault for his dirty check.

In Ilya's defence, Mila wasn't usually affected by the violence in hockey, except when it was him getting hurt, and then she was only a little upset if he was upset as well. Otherwise she would

usually pat him and shake her head like her mama, and tell him *Храбрый*.

But it had never been Shane Hollander being hurt. Shane got his fair share of checks, and jostling about, obviously, but it was rare for him to get actually badly hurt because he was just too fucking fast. Ilya was pretty sure all his teeth were real, even, which was crazy. Not that he had any confirmation on that other than not hearing anything to the contrary, and his own tongue in Shane's mouth.

Tonight Curtis's stick had gotten Shane in the face in the last period, and it had been bloody enough that game had stopped so the ice could be cleaned. Shane had been helped off ice by the medic and his team mate Pike, and Mila had been beside herself. Ilya had also felt sick about it, but he couldn't say that to his *девочка*, so he had instead spent the rest of the game reassuring her that of course her lovely Shane would be okay, he was okay, look, here he comes for media, see? He's got a stitch in his cheek but he's okay, they fixed it all up, *милая*.

Shane's whole face had been swollen and pink though, and he'd winced through the entire interview, and it had not convinced Mila that he was fine.

So now they were sitting in Mila's room, on her bed, her in his lap, still inconsolable.

"Sane," she said, in between disconsolate huffs, "sad."

Ilya had texted Shane as soon as he had disappeared off their tv screen, asking for him to send details on how he was feeling, and was anything broken, and did he want Ilya to kill Curtis? Because actually Ilya might do that anyway, for making his Mila cry. It had been a couple of hours since he'd texted, and Shane still hadn't replied.

"He will be okay, *милая*," Ilya soothed, rocking Mila in his arms and pressing a kiss to her curls, and then to her crying hot cheeks. "He is *храбрый мальчик*, yes? Like me?"

"Mm," Mila agreed, one of her hands - sticky with her tears and spit from chewing on her fingers - reached up to prod the scab on his chin where he'd gotten a small injury in his last game. "See you," she said, frowning wetly up at him. "No Sane."

That was the problem. Ilya checked his phone again. He and Shane had been texting more, recently. Not just about their next hook ups, but real conversations. And he wanted - fuck it.

He hit the facetime button before he could talk himself out of it. It was dark in Mila's room, the main light turned off, the only light coming from her small nightlight down beside the end of her bed.

He watched the screen of his phone as it rang, and had almost convinced himself to just hang up when Shane actually answered.

He looked confused, and worried, and his face was still swollen, but not as badly as it had been in the interview.

"Rozanov?" He asked, voice low, glancing over his shoulder before speaking again. "What's wrong?"

"Where are you?" Ilya asked. He didn't recognise the small amount of room he could see around Shane. Mila, in his lap, squirmed, and then stared at the screen filled with Shane's face.

"Sane!" She whispered.

"I'm at Hayden's and Jacki's," Shane said, voice still low. "We had dinner together. What's wrong? Where are you? I can barely see you."

"Ah, sorry you must miss out on my face," Ilya said, "nothing is wrong, Hollander. I just wanted to check *your* pretty face was still pretty."

Shane frowned, but he blushed as well, and Ilya could see his mouth twitch like he was trying to hide a smile. "Idiot," he mumbled.

"Mm," Ilya shrugged, squeezed Mila gently. "I think probably some of your fans must have been worried to see you hit like that. Blood on ice is scary."

“Yeah,” Shane said. “I’m fine. It looked way worse than it is. Sorry I didn’t reply to your texts, I was with Hayd the whole time. It’s just a cut and some swelling. I put ice on it and it’s already gone down a lot, see?” He tilted his head so Ilya could see his cheek in profile. There was a muffled noise from somewhere behind Shane, and she glanced over his shoulder again. “I have to go. Promised I’d read the twins a bedtime story, and they’re getting impatient. Talk to you later, Rozanov.”

“Bye, Hollander,” Ilya said, waited for Shane to hang up, and then dropped his phone onto the bed beside them, and looked down at Mila. “Not sad,” he said to her. “He is okay, hm? Just little cut now.”

-

2017

Ilya was pretty sure he should be feeling maybe a little jealous over how excited Mila was to see Shane, when he and Shane entered the rink at the end of the Bear cubs skate. Her teacher had pointed them out, and she had whirled around so quickly she’d fallen on her butt, and then was immediately up again and skating as fast as her little legs could carry her towards Shane.

She had never fallen over in her hurry to get to him, before, but. Ilya could relate. He’d picked Shane up from the airport an hour ago, and rather than bringing Shane right here, he’d driven them home first just so he could kiss Shane properly, and then drove to the arena. It had been incredibly time inefficient, according to Shane, but it had been worth it.

Shane caught Mila easily, his posture braced, and then picked her up to swing her around, tucking her skates in close to his body first, and she laughed in delight, throwing her head back.

“You were so good!” Shane told her, once he’d finished the twirl, “I saw you doing your balancing drills.”

“I am being hard working,” She told him, “bal-enss is important for sneakings.”

“That’s true,” Shane nodded, “I work hard on my balance as well, so I can be fast and speedy and steal the puck from your papa,”

Mila laughed, and then threw her bodyweight backwards, towards Ilya, who grabbed her and pulled her into his arms for a quick hug as well.

“Rude, Hollander,” he told Shane, kissed Mila on the cheek. “I think for that, Mila, we should make him be goalie, hm?”

“Yes!” Mila crowed, “I am been practicing shot. I show you.”

-

They only skated for about a half hour after Mila’s class had finished. Taking time to play with the other kids who stayed a little later as well, but not wanting anyone to get too exhausted, especially their littlest cub, who would probably keep going until she dropped if they let her.

As it was, she was tired by the time they got back home, had insisted on being carried inside by Shane. Tired as she was, she still had a lot to say. She had apparently been saving up a lot of thoughts for Shane, and she told them all to him on the drive home, and as they got into the house, and as she changed out of her hockey gear. She had to take a break while she showered, but the moment she was in her pajamas, she was back at it all the way up to dinner. Which she ate half of, and then fell asleep.

Ilya carried her up to bed, tucking her in, telling her a short nonsensical story when she woke up very briefly, and then kissing her forehead before he left.

He came downstairs to find Shane doing the dishes and smiling like he couldn’t help it, his cheeks puffed up with it.

“Hm, so domesticated,” Ilya said, slotting himself in behind Shane at the sink and pressing a kiss to the back of his neck. “Я должна выйти за тебя замуж. Сделай меня домохозяйном. You look so pretty like this.”

Shane huffed in an attempt at disapproval, but his smile didn’t even falter as he leaned back in Ilya’s arms and tilted his head to encourage more kissing. Ilya obliged happily, kissing along his

neck, nosing up his jaw line.

“Why are you smiling so big?” Ilya asked, bit at Shane’s chin, and then kissed the corner of his smile. “So cute.”

“I’m happy,” Shane said, blinked at Ilya, his eyes suddenly wet and shiny. “I’m just happy, Ilya.”

Like a kick to the chest. Ilya groaned a little, kissed Shane properly, his hand moving to grip his jaw to turn his face further to Ilya’s. Pressed his tongue into Shane’s mouth, needed to be in him. Needed to devour him. Fuck. Shane moaned back into the kiss, his whole body going lax, his hands falling away from the counter. Fuck the dishes, there weren’t many left anyway.

He dragged Shane away from the sink, turning him bodily until they were pressed stomach to stomach and Shane was panting into his mouth as Ilya grabbed his ass and pulled him in to grind against him.

“Missed you,” Ilya grunted, pushed his thigh in between Shane’s legs, and pulled him in harder to grind against his thigh, feeling Shane already so hard and hot through his soft trousers. “Missed seeing you smile like this. Missed feeling you hard like this. So needy for me, дорогой.”

“S’not fair,” Shane groaned, letting Ilya manhandle him, his muscles putty in Ilya’s hands. “Saying things I can’t understand but they still make me so turned on, fuck,” he added, as Ilya’s hand slipped down the back of his pants. “Not in the kitchen, Jesus, Ilya -”

Maybe when Mandy had Mila in a couple of days he could persuade Shane to fuck in the kitchen. And in the lounge, and the entry room, and the office, and the gym, and the -

“Bedroom,” Ilya said into his mouth, “I need you.”

-

Magda turned up in the morning before they left for the game. She usually stayed the full time in whichever house Mila was currently in, but recently she had been spending more time at Mandy’s

even when Mila was at Ilya's. Which they had talked about, of course, and Ilya was happy with, working it out so that on days Ilya didn't have hockey it was just him and Mila, and hockey days Magda would be there too. Ilya was also happy to be noting down a couple of suspicions he had been having, but he would leave it to Magda to say anything.

So, Magda turned up, and they all had breakfast together, and she and Mila waved the two of them goodbye, and then Ilya dropped Shane off outside the hotel his team was staying in.

-

This was where the other shoe fell, or, in this case, skate. Shane had known it couldn't stay as good as it had been, but it was still upsetting to be proven right.

At least it wasn't as bad as it could be.

He had been pleased to see how well Ilya's team were working together. Had seen them in other games since Ilya had come out, yes, but not in person. Not a one of them looked like they were harbouring ill will towards their captain, and it was heartening. He had been worried, in the beginning, that with Ilya's propensity for being a provoking player, he could get really hurt if his team decided not to protect him.

As it was, it ended up being Shane's team that hurt him, and all of it was bad luck. Anders had tried for a goal, and the Bears' goalie had blocked it with so much ease that Ilya had chirped Anders about it, and Anders had been mad enough to make a swipe at him. That would have been dumb enough, except then Anders had made another swipe, and accidentally caught one of his own teammates with his stick, and tripped them, and as they fell, their stick flung out and tripped Ilya.

Everyone was fine, except for Ilya, who had landed badly and sprained his wrist, and then had to be off for the rest of the game. The Metros won, 3-2, which Shane was happy about and mad about at the same time, because he knew it was only a win because Ilya wasn't playing, and if his team could only beat the Bears if the Bears didn't have Ilya, what was the point?

He chewed Anders out about being too reactive, afterwards, and for making stupid moves, and not paying enough attention to his surroundings, and Anders had said something stupid about how Shane should be thanking him for taking out that dumb Russian, and Shane had *not* punched him, but he had wanted to, and it had shown on his face, and Anders had taken a step back like he'd been actually scared. Fucked up.

“Dude,” Hayden hissed, after they’d changed out, finished media, and were back at Hayden’s hotel room which was technically also Shane’s, he just wasn’t going to spend a single night in it. “I know no one else is going to even suspect you and Rozanov, but, man, that was hardcore revenge Shane face.”

“I don’t even know what that means,” Shane groaned, slinging his gear bag down on the floor next to Hayden’s. He was glad it could travel with the team so he didn’t have to take it with him on his own flights. “Anders was stupid, it wasn’t about Ilya.”

“It so was,” Hayden shot back. “And yeah, he was being stupid, but you would usually point that out a bit nicer. Not that I think he didn’t deserve to be told off properly, it’s just you don’t do that much.”

Shane considered it, then groaned again and flopped down onto the bed. “Okay,” he agreed, hands over his face. “I know. I overreacted. I was mad that it was Ilya who got hurt.”

“Which makes sense,” Hayden said. “It’s not like you went crazy and went after Anders on ice. I think you’re fine, I was just like, pointing it out. Because it was kind of amazing seeing you actually pissed off and acting on it.”

Shane snorted. “Yeah, well,” he said. “I don’t get to see my boyfriend enough, and now he’s got a sprained wrist. Kinda puts a damper on, uh, some things.”

Hayden paused, and then laughed out loud, shocked. “You’re telling me you’re that mad because he can’t give you a handjob now?”

“Ugh, no!” Shane retorted, kicked his leg out in Hayden’s general direction, did not make contact. “He still could, anyway, he’s good with both hands. It’s just - fuck. Things have been so good, y’know? For us. And I’ve been waiting for something bad to happen, and now it has, and it makes me worried more bad things will happen. It doesn’t make sense that I get to be happy for so long.”

The bed bounced as Hayden dropped himself on it next to Shane, and then he flicked Shane hard in the shoulder.

“Ow.”

“It makes sense,” Hayden said, “that you get to be happy. It sucks that Rozanov broke his wrist, but it’s not like it’s a fucking omen or something. You’re going to go back to his soon, and have a great couple of days. You’re gonna meet his baby mama, right? And it’s going to go well.”

“Hopefully,” Shane said. He dropped his hands from his face and stared up at the ceiling. “If she doesn’t like me, I don’t know what’ll happen.”

“What?”

“I mean,” Shane sighed, “Ilya and Mandy are really good friends, and their coparenting relationship is good, and it’s important to them. So if she doesn’t like me, that’ll be a wedge between them, and that wouldn’t be good for Mila, and Mila has to come first. So.”

“I think,” Hayden said, rolling onto his side and then propping himself up on his elbow before flicking Shane in the shoulder again, “that you are getting stuck in your head. Meet Mandy first. If things don’t click, you talk it out. Jacki’s mum didn’t like me until the twins were born, you know that, and she still isn’t my biggest fan.”

“That’s different,” Shane said, but then nodded, rubbed at his shoulder. “But yeah. I know. I’ll try.”

-

The next thing to go wrong was Mandy’s car not turning on. It wasn’t the worst thing, it just made things slightly more difficult. It would have been completely fine because Magda also had a car, but she’d dropped it off at the garage that afternoon for a service, and wasn’t getting it back until the following morning.

A collection of annoying things, was all. Nothing to panic attack. Was what Shane was reminding himself. It was just, with Ilya’s sprain, and also a badly bruised knee that meant his team doctor wanted him to keep weight off it, it made more sense for them to have dinner at Ilya’s, rather than Mandy’s. So Ilya didn’t have to move much. And Magda could borrow one of Ilya’s cars and go pick Mandy up, so that was fine, it would work.

It was just stressful. Only stress. Totally fine.

They ordered food in for dinner, because they hadn't shopped for a bigger dinner, and because Ilya couldn't cook right now, and didn't want Shane to have to do it all.

-

At home, once Shane had turned up, and Magda and Mila got back from Mila's playdate, Mila came to sit with them on the couch where they had been watching the game they'd just played so Shane could rant about the other stupid things his teammates had done. He paused his ranting for Mila, or, toned it down a little, at least. Mila had kissed her papa's wrist in it's plastic brace, and pouted about his knee, and climbed very carefully on his non-injured side, and touched one finger to the tiny cut he'd managed to get on his cheek.

"Like Sane's," she said.

"I'm not hurt," Shane pointed out, held his hands up. "Maybe a couple of bruises, but that's all."

"No," Mila shook her head, and pointed at Ilya's cheek again. "Like you before."

Shane frowned, staring at the tiny cut on Ilya's cheek for a long moment, before remembering the stupid hit he'd taken to the face the year previous.

"Oh," he said, "yes," he lifted his hand to his own cheek, felt for the tiny dip in his skin that was the only remnant of the injury. "It didn't even scar. You have a very good memory, remembering that, Mila."

"Was scary," she said, simple, pressed her cheek to Ilya's, and blew air into her cheeks so they bulged like a frog. Ilya did it back, and their cheeks bounced against each other.

Shane watched, smiling, and then remembering.

“You called me,” he said to Ilya. Ilya deflated his cheek, and then puffed it up again to make Mila giggle. “The night I got that hit. To check on me.”

“Yes,” Ilya shrugged. “Mila would not sleep until she knew her Shane was okay.”

“Oh,” Shane breathed. “She was there? You saw me on your papa’s phone, Milashka?”

“Uh-huh,” Mila nodded, lifted herself carefully over Ilya’s sore knee, and dropped herself down in Shane’s lap. “Not sad in it.”

“She was worried you were sad,” Ilya said, “you looked sad in your interview after the hit, and, yeah.”

Shane blinked a few times. Mila had been wearing a princess crown which she was now carefully transferring from her head to his.

-

They had ordered curry for dinner, and Magda picked it up on her way back to the house with Mandy.

Shane met them in the kitchen doorway that led to the underhouse garage, and took some of the containers from them.

Ilya was still sitting in the lounge, Mila curled up next to him with a book. Had told Shane he didn’t needed to prove how useful he was, but also hadn’t stopped him from hopping up the moment he’d heard the downstairs door open.

“Thanks, Shane, you’re a prince,” Magda said, transferring the bags over, “Mandy got some mango lassi as well, are you a fan?”

“Um,” Shane hesitated, moving to put the containers on the table so he could have his hands free, “I - yeah, when they’re yogurt based ones. Sometimes they’re icecream based and it doesn’t fit my diet. Hi, um, you must be Mandy.”

Mandy had come through the door, holding a big bottle of orange liquid which must be the lassi, and she smiled at him and his outstretched hand.

“Yes,” she said, taking his hand and shaking it once. “I’m sorry about the last time we met, Shane Hollander. Probably wasn’t the most graceful of meetings.”

“No, it’s, it’s totally fine,” Shane shook his head, held his hand out for the bottle, and Mandy handed it over. “Ilya explained it all. I’m sorry I just stood there like a rock. I was kind of... um, in shock.”

“Understandable,” Mandy rolled her eyes, looked through the archway to the lounge where she could see Ilya. “I heard about how his communication skills were lacking.”

“Your mum’s communication skills were lacking!” Ilya retorted, like a child, and Mandy laughed.

“Mama,” Mila called, “Maybe papa needs knee cut open!”

“I do not!” Ilya added, loudly, “it’s just bruised, please keep sharp knives away from me! Mila, trying to cut me open!”

A loud squeal of giggles, he’d probably tickled her.

Shane had put the bottle on the table, and fetched glasses. He’d already put plates and cutlery on it earlier. Felt a little bit like he was trying to be a housewife. Which he wasn’t. He just wanted this to go better than the small series of unfortunate events that had already happened.

They joined Ilya in the lounge to have a less jelly greeting, and Mila flung herself at her mama for kisses, and Shane remembered he was wearing a princess crown, and Mila told them all about her plans to build a rink in her dreams tonight so she could do dream hockey.

Shane helped Ilya hobble into the dining room so they wouldn't get curry all over the lounge, and Mandy said it was useful Shane was also a hockey player, as it made for easier hauling of Ilya, and Shane thought a little sadly about he would not get hauled tonight.

They talked far more easily than Shane had thought, and the jealousy he had been working not to let surface, dissipated entirely. He could see the affection between Ilya and Mandy and Magda, but there was nothing there between Ilya and Mandy that felt anything more than friendship. If anything, Shane thought Mandy and Magda had more chemistry than Mandy and Ilya, and he wondered how they had come to hook up. Not that she wasn't beautiful, and clever, and funny, it just seemed weird.

Mandy was the one who made some of the connection for him, unknowingly answering his unasked questions. There was a lull in the conversation, everyone busy eating. She pointed her naan bread in Shane's direction, and then nodded at Ilya. "It makes a lot of sense," she said. "Getting to see you in person."

"Oh?" Shane asked, glanced at Ilya to see him looking steadily at his own food, cheeks actually tinging pink for some reason. "What does?"

"He told me," Mandy said, grinning at Ilya, and then at Shane, "that he had been drawn to me at the party because I reminded him of someone. He told me this, like, after Mila was born, not in the club. That would have been rude."

Shane raised his eyebrows, still not quite getting it.

"He didn't say who, at the time, but he made a few hints that I can now see for myself," Mandy continued, elbowed Magda, who laughed a little, nodding. "My hair was dyed black, when he and I met," she said.

Shane blinked at her. Imagined her with black hair.

She smiled at him. "My freckles were more prominent, I was outside more then," she added. "And he kept telling me, that night, how beautiful they were, and my big brown eyes. He was so focused on them. And here I find myself seated across from his favourite hockey player, with big brown eyes and freckles. It makes sense."

Shane blinked a little more, and then turned to look properly at Ilya, who was truly pink now. “Ilya,” he said. “Seriously?”

“Don’t talk,” Ilya said, “I was missing you.”

Shane stared at him, and then snorted. “You’re ridiculous,” he said. “I love you. Idiot.”

Ilya, still pink, grinned, and then leaned over to kiss him quick, his hand tucking under Shane’s chin to hold him for just a moment before returning to his bhaji. Shane smiled down into his daal. Felt so stupid to have ever felt jealous over Mandy.

-

Shane drove Mandy, Magda, and Mila home after dinner. Ilya had offered that they should just take his car and keep it at Mandy’s place, but Magda had pointed out they didn’t have enough room, and her car would be fixed tomorrow, and Mandy’s would be fixed soon.

Ilya pouted about staying home, but looked soft and relaxed and happy underneath it. He gave Mila a big cuddle before she left, kissing her cheeks until she was giggling and holding her hands up. Both Mandy and Magda left him with a kiss on the cheek and orders to not hurt himself further, and to be careful with his knee tonight, which had made Shane blush.

They talked casually in the car on the drive there, and it was nice getting to spend time with them without Ilya, if only because he could be sure things still felt comfortable without his presence acting as a buffer.

When they arrived, Mila whined about having to say goodbye, so to compromise Shane agreed to carry her inside. Her shoe fell off, which Magda snagged easily, and he carried her around the drive and up the stairs to their little house. It was nice, not as ostentatious as Ilya’s by a mile, but a nice house in a nice area, and Mandy told him it was close to her hospital, and lots of playgrounds, and her mum. He handed Mila over in the doorway, pressing a kiss to the crown of her head, and accepting a kiss on the cheek from Magda, and from Mandy.

Then he drove home to Ilya, pretended it was for real. Like he did this all the time, and he would get home and it would be his home for real, and he and Ilya would go to bed and wake up together

and go to bed and wake up together, and never worry about not having enough time.

Chapter End Notes

Храбрый - Brave

девочка - baby girl

милая - darling/honey

храбрый мальчик, - brave boy

Я должна выйти за тебя замуж. Сделай меня домохозяйинном - I must marry you. Make you my househusband

дорогой - darling

Chapter 17

Chapter Notes

Russian translations in end notes xxx

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

2017

It's the day between that really fucks Shane up. Like it would have been easier to deal with it had come out in the very next news cycle, while he was still in Boston. Instead, he's just letting himself into the locker room for morning practice - arriving a good half hour earlier than he was expecting anyone else so he had time to prep for making his apologies to Anders, or at the very least make himself clear about what he expected from his players without resorting to threatening looks.

He hadn't been on his phone all morning because he knew Ilya would still be asleep, so he was surprised when his phone rang while he was half dressed for the ice.

He had to get his compression shirt on before he could answer, just because he was mostly in it already and he couldn't answer it with his squeezing him all wrong like it did until it was pulled just right.

It was Farah, his agent. Who he had been meaning to make an appointment with. To let her know how potentially difficult Shane was making his life and her job. Had his parents got in touch with her?

"Good morning," He answered, trying to sound professional and not breathless and a little freaked out.

"Morning, Shane," Farah said, actually sounding professional and like she had never freaked out once in her life. She was probably never breathless either. She could probably run on a treadmill while talking on the phone without having it show in her breath. "Do you have a moment to talk? It's - well, there's a little bit of media speculation about you that I think would be prudent to talk about and clean up quickly."

He sat down heavily in his cubby, swallowed down on the urge to run through all the things that the media could be talking about, and focused on getting the correct answer instead. “Yeah I have time. What’s going on?”

“Okay, good,” Farah said. Shane could hear clicking through the phone, like she was typing on a laptop. “So, this morning a popular gossip magazine ran a photo of you with a young child, and a woman. There is a speculative article that is suggesting that you have a secret ‘baby mama’ in Boston, and that the child is yours. The photo and article have since been widely spread online, mostly twitter, and there is a hashtag that I think will be trending quite soon. #Hollandeadbeatdad. I’m sending you a a screenshot of the original article, as well as a separate image of just the photo.”

His phone chimed in his hand, and even though his brain was still a few steps behind, not wanting to compute what he had heard, he pulled the phone from his ear, switched it to speaker, and opened the messages.

It was a dark photo of him carrying a sleepy Mila in his arms, her face thankfully turned away. Mandy was half hidden behind him, only showing her back and her hair really. Okay. Fuck. It was bad, but it wasn’t as bad as it could be. He scanned the article, checking hurriedly for any speculation that hit a little too close to the truth.



Nothing near it. Except for the fact that while Mila wasn't his baby, she was still --- he was still her something. He couldn't claim he wasn't connected to her. Just that he was not what the article was suggesting; hiding a wife and child.

"Shane?" Farah prompted, her voice echoing in the empty locker room. "You alright there?"

"Yes," Shane said. Could hear suddenly how heavily he was breathing. "Sorry - I was just - reading. The article is bullshit. Sorry for swearing."

"It's okay," Farah sounded calm and amused. "I figured it wasn't true, I just wanted you to be aware of exactly what the article was saying. Okay. So, you carried a fan's kid to the car, or something?"

Shane glanced around the locker room, and then switched his phone off speaker, and huddled further into his cubby. It was a tight fit, but it was comforting being squished in.

“Farah,” he said, voice low. “I - I’ve meaning to. Um. Fill you in on some things.”

He heard Farah’s intake of breath, like he had surprised her somehow. The constant tapping of keys paused. “Oh?”

“So I - I don’t know how to say - no. I do. Um. Oh, I should first say, I don’t have a secret love child. I have no biological children. But, so, I’m - uh - gay, and my boyfriend does have a kid. The kid in the photo. That is her mum, as well, we’re all friends, there’s no drama there, just so you know. It - it - most people don’t know the kid - Mila - who Mila’s dad is, but, um. You’re - I know you wouldn’t tell anyone -”

“Shane,” Farah cut in. She still sounded a little shellshocked, but kind and firm underneath it all. “Your privacy is my number one concern. This extends to the privacy of any partner you have.”

“It’s Ilya Rozanov,” Shane said, very quickly, and exhaled heavily. “Mila’s dad. And my boyfriend. We’re serious about each other, and I - I’ve been thinking about coming out. As gay. Not to the world yet, just, maybe like, to the team. Only a few people know about me, and us, so far. But Ilya’s told his team that he’s bi, and his coach and a few friends know we’re together, so - I’m just - I should have told you all of this earlier, because I know if any of that leaked you’d have a curve ball thrown at you, and -”

Farah cut in again here, very kindly. “Shane,” she said, “it’s okay. Take a breath. I understand why you might have hesitated to say anything. It’s a lot of information to share, especially when it has so much potential for drama, which I know you dislike.”

Shane breathed. “I dislike it intensely,” he said quietly.

Farah laughed, a light sound of half disbelief. “Okay. So we’ll do our best to avoid it as much as possible. Which brings us back to the first thing - what sort of message do you want me to push out in response to the photo of Mila?”

“I don’t know,” Shane admitted, groaned as he rubbed his hand over his face. “I should - this should probably be a conversation with Ilya, and Mandy - Mila’s mum - and, I don’t know. Ilya’s agent. We never talked about something like this, I don’t know what he’d want.”

“Okay. So we’ll just sit tight for a while,” Farah said, “ignore the internet. If you can get Ilya’s agent to contact me, I can work with them on a resolution. Get me their number, call Ilya and find out what he and Mandy want to do, and call me back, alright? I’ll think up some possible strategies in the mean time. It’s going to be fine, Shane.”

“Okay,” Shane said. Knew he must sound panicked even over the phone, and hated how Farah felt she needed to calm in, even as he appreciated the calming itself. “Thank you. I’ll be back in touch as soon as I can.”

They said goodbye, and Shane hung up, and then stared down at his phone. He did have a lot of notifications - plenty of them slipping in unnoticed because his automatic focus mode didn’t turn off until after practice on rink days. His phone only let through very specific people. He was glad he’d added Farah to the list when his mum had told him to.

He ignored the rest of the notifications for now, because none of them had been from his other priority contacts, and called Ilya instead.

Ilya answered right before his voicemail clicked in, and he sounded raspy and warm in Shane’s ear. “Moy lyubimyy?” He asked, “you are okay?”

“Yes, hi baby,” Shane whispered quickly. Didn’t need to be whispering, he was still alone. He brought his voice up to near normal volume. “Um. My agent, Farah? Just called me to tell me there is a photo of me holding Mila being spread around online. You can’t see Mila’s face,” he rushed to add, “and Mandy is in the background as well, but, like, again, you can’t see her face. Or most of her. People are saying she’s my kid. No one knows anything about you or about the truth. I’m so sorry, Ilya, I am so sorry.”

Ilya didn’t reply immediately, and Shane bit his lip in an effort to keep himself from apologising again, to stop himself from starting to snuffle into the phone, because he was an adult, and he could deal with this, and this was his fault. Knew about Mila for barely anytime at all and was already fucking shit up.

“Shane,” Ilya said, his voice still raspy but somehow soft. “Is okay, is okay. I am looking at photo on twitter now. Is very cute photo. I know is Mila, but could be any cute baby.”

“Fuck,” Shane mumbled. His waterline felt hot and itchy, and he felt like an idiot for wanting to cry about this. He needed to get a hold of himself. “Okay, I - I don’t know what to do.”

“Mm,” Ilya still sounded tired, and Shane assumed the phone call must have woken him. He could imagine Ilya all ruffled and sleepy, still wrapped in his duvet. “What does your Farah say?”

“I said I needed to talk to you first,” Shane said. “Um. I told her about us, and me, and about Mila. So she knows now. I should have done it before. She - she suggested I send her your agent’s details? So they can work together if need be.”

“Good idea,” Ilya said, yawned. “I will send you details to send to Farah. Shane, solnyshko, I think everything will be okay, yes? I will have Mandy talk to agent as well, but no one is recognisable but you. I think you can get away with saying you are holding baby of a friend. Is truth, hm? Mandy is your friend now.”

“Yeah,” Shane said, sighed in relief. “Thank you,” he added, sniffed a little. “I was freaking out a bit. Thank you for - for being sensible.”

“Ah, I must have turn of being boring sometimes,” Ilya said, “maybe you will have turn of being bad boy in media? I see they are calling you dead beat dad. Hollan-dead-beat-dad. Do they not see you holding Mila like she is most precious thing in world?”

“I’d prefer not to be the bad boy,” Shane said.

“Oh I know, you are my good boy, hm?”

Shane’s ears turned pink and his stomach lurched in a very distracting way. “Shut up,” he hissed, extremely aware of his surroundings suddenly like his skin had upped its receptors to take in every detail of around him. “Don’t say things like that over the phone. I’m in my locker room!”

“With team?” Ilya asked, thankfully dropping his teasing tone. “Is not still too early?”

“I’m early,” Shane said. “By myself for now. Not for too much longer, though. Don’t act like your team never does early skates.”

“Mmmm, maybe, but my team is very cool, so is not so bad. We are all bad boys here, see, so we chirp all good boys on other teams getting up so early.”

The teasing tone was back, and Shane found himself rolling his eyes fondly. “Okay,” he said. “Whatever. Send me the details for your agent? I’ll call Farah back and let her know everything.”

“Okay,” Ilya said. “We will all be okay, Shane,” he added, and then; “I love you.”

Shane had been practicing, and he knew he was still clumsy with it, but he said it anyway; “Ya tebya lyublu.”

“Fuck,” Ilya sound startled. “Shane. YA tozhe tebya lyublyu. You learned for me?”

“Of course,” Shane shrugged awkwardly in his confined space. “I kept thinking it in English, and then thought how it would be nicer for you to hear in Russian, probably. So. Da. I learned for you.”

“Aghhhh,” Ilya groaned, “I love you very much, I wish you and your clever mouth were here with me so I could show you how much I love you. Ochen' sil'no. So much.”

“We need to say goodbye,” Shane said, deadly serious, “because you are getting me hard and I need to call Farah.”

“My poor Shanya,” Ilya said, “having to be good boy while I am going to lie in bed and jerk off thinking of your beautiful face and your beautiful ass and your -”

“Bye!” Shane squeaked out hurriedly, ended the call.

He took a moment to take some calm centering breaths and to think about as many non-horny things he could. That time he threw up on ice in his peewee team, and then six other players threw up in reaction. It was very gross. Ice had to be cleaned for so long the game was canceled.

Sufficiently unturned-on again, Shane forwarded Ilya's text with his agent's details through, and then called Farah back.

-

He'd only just hung up with Farah when Hayden burst into the locker room, looking around a little wildly, and then beelining towards Shane.

"Holy fuck," Hayden said, before Shane could say anything. Holy fuck, dude, was that Mila?"

"Shh," Shane hissed, his eyes fixed on the door Hayden had just come through. "Yes. Keep your voice down. Farah is going to release a statement soon saying it's a friend's baby. We have to act like it isn't a big deal if we want anyone to believe it."

Hayden paused, one hand reaching out to Shane, and took a deep breath. "Right, yes. Of course, man. Sorry. I just saw it when I pulled up outside, Jacki sent it to me, and I got worried when you didn't answer my call."

Shane would put Hayden on his priority call list if he didn't insist on sending Shane memes every morning. Maybe he could figure out how to make it so phone calls came through, but texts didn't. Something to consider later.

"Sorry," Shane said, meant it. "I was just - I was sorting things out with Farah, and I had to call Ilya, and I also had to freak out for a bit. So. Yeah."

"All good, bro," Hayden said. He stepped close enough to finally finish his arm stretched movement, and patted Shane on the shoulder. "He took it okay?"

"Yeah," Shane nodded. "He was a lot calmer about it than I was. Says it's okay. I feel like an asshole though. She's been so safe and looked after, and now here I come, stamping all over that."

"No, nah, Shane, man," Hayden said, cajoling until Shane looked up at him. "This isn't on you. It's on whoever thought it was a good idea to take a photo of you with a kid. I hate it when people take

photos of me in public with my kids. It's like, hey, they aren't public property, y'know?"

"Yeah," Shane nodded heavily. "And that's what Ilya has been trying to avoid, this whole time, and _"

"Nope," Hayden said, firm. "You just said he said it was okay. He isn't blaming you, so don't blame yourself, bro."

Shane felt like he had more he could argue back about to this, but then more hockey players were coming in, and Shane's plan to plan hockey related conversations before his team got here, was fully thrown out the window. Any hope that his team would not immediately start in on him about the photo was also tossed.

"Yo, cap," Anders, of all people, was the one to first approach Shane with it.

Shane had only just managed to get out of his cubby to continue the getting dressed process he had abandoned with Farah called.

He grunted to acknowledge Anders, because he was actually still pissed off at him. In a roundabout way this was actually his fault. If Ilya had been able to drive, the whole night would have looked different. But then again, maybe if things had been different, the photographer would have gotten a photo of him and Ilya together, or with Mila, or Ilya with Mila and Mandy. Fuck. He was still going to blame Anders a little anyway.

"So do we finally have an answer for why you're always so keen to get away from us in Boston?" Anders asked, coming to lean beside Shane's cubby.

"We'd've never guessed you'd knocked Boston Lily up," Drapeau called, from over by his own cubby, and several others of the team laughed.

Shane blushed, which wasn't useful for trying to seem chill about this.

"I did not knock anyone up," he said, as solid and firm as he could manage. "And I'm keen to get away from you all after Boston games because you have terrible taste in clubs there."

A few jeers, a bit of laughter. Anders shrugged, grin on his face like he'd already forgotten about being told off last game. Apparently Shane didn't need to talk to him about it again.

JJ came to stand on Shane's other side, brushing knuckles with Hayden as he came over. "Okay, but capitaine," he said, "are you saying you are a step daddy? Your Boston Lily has you coming over to put the baby to sleep?"

"No," Shane said, his chest panging as he did. Because. Well. He did go over to his Boston Lily's place to put the baby to sleep. And he loved to do it. "The - the photo is just me with a friend and her kid. I'm not - that's not Lily, and I'm just friends with her."

He could see a lot of eyebrows raising around him. Hayden was looking at him like he was asking if Shane wanted him to intervene, but Shane shook his head at him. Felt like it would just fan the flames if Hayden jumped in to defend him about this, like it would show there was something to defend.

"Oh, yeah, for sure," someone else said, "that's not what the internet is saying."

"Yeah, well," Shane shrugged, "you're getting it straight from the source, so you can forget what the internet is saying."

"What the internet is saying is more fun, capitaine," JJ protested, grinning, because for him this was just some silly teasing. Shane could see he already believed the story, was just poking fun. "I saw a tweet while I was on the toilet and it said that not only was this your kid, but that Pike's kids are yours too. Something about a polycule? It had a lot of replies for suggestions for how many women you are getting pregnant."

Shane's face felt like it was burning. Thank god he and Ilya and Mila hadn't worked out how to do a playdate with the Pikes yet, he could imagine a photo of that being released and being so much worse than this. He shook his head at JJ, grimacing.

He could see Hayden tapping JJ's elbow, shaking his head, and that was also a bad move, because now JJ's face was doing the thing where he showed everything so clearly on it that Shane - who knew he was not the best at reading expressions - could read it as clear as text. JJ was now realising that Shane had lied, and there was actually something else.

At least JJ lowered his voice when he asked his next question; “Wait,” he hissed, “Shane, what the fuck? You have a kid?”

“No,” Shane snapped back, and then his heart clenched, and it must have been as obvious on his face as JJ’s realisation had been on his, because JJ’s eyebrows shot right up. “I mean - fuck. I don’t have any - any - biological children,” he had again, picked the worst thing to say even if it did feel less like a stab to say.

“Step child?” JJ asked. He as still speaking quietly, but the entire locker room had decided that for once they knew how to be quiet when someone was speaking, and Shane had no hope that they were not all listening to this.

“Can we talk about this later?” Shane asked, “It’s not - this isn’t just for me to share -”

“Fuck that,” Anders called, he had at least gone from right beside Shane, was beginning to change out. “Now we know there’s tea, and we want it!”

Shane hated Anders a little bit right now. He shook his head at JJ, whose face was set in firm lines of disbelief and hurt.

“Come on, cap,” Comeau called, he was taping his stick, and he rapped it hard on the floor. “We’re just happy you finally got a woman locked down! Now hopefully all the fag rumours can be put to peace, eh?”

Someone else echoed their approval of this, and Anders chimed right back in again; “I mean,” he said, “we already know about Boston Lily, but now there’s a kid in the pic, you could let the world know too, show you’re a real man with a real woman.”

Laughter echoed around.

Possibly Shane had been possessed by the spirit of some chaos demon. Or maybe he was already feeling so fucking rubbed raw at the idea of having to keep denying Mila, and downplaying who she was to him, and who her mum was to him, and especially, who her dad was to him. Either way, he opened his mouth and said probably the worst thing he could have said at that moment.

“It probably won’t put them to peace, Comeau, seeing as I am a fag,” Shane spat, and then swiveled on his heel to glare in the other direction; “ and, fuck, Anders, my boyfriend would fucking laugh if you called him a real woman, even if he is prettier than any woman you could get.”

“Oh shit,” Hayden murmured behind him. “Okay, I think maybe it’s time to get a little bit of fresh air -”

“The fuck did you say?” Anders yelled, he was making his way over to Shane like a goddamn steamroller, “You insulting my girl? What the fuck! If you’re a fag you don’t even know what a pretty girl is, you asshole.”

Shane winced, but couldn’t bring himself to feel really bad about insulting some woman he didn’t know. He probably would feel bad about it later, but right now he was just mad. Mad and hurt and feeling like a fucking stripped wire.

“I don’t like girls and I still have more of them hit on me then you ever will,” he snarled, the words pouring out of him in a rush of stupidity. Was it possible to have diarrhea of the mouth? He could easily have caught it from Ilya, who appeared to always have it. “And I’d probably treat them better than you could, too.”

“Fuck you, cocksucker,” Anders yelled, and then he was swinging for Shane.

Chapter End Notes

Moy lyubimyy - my love
solnyshko - sunshine
Ya tebya lyublu - I love you
YA tozhe tebya lyublyu - I love you too
Ochen' sil'no. - so much

Chapter 18

Chapter Notes

Russian translations at end))))

Weeeeeeeeeeeeeee

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

Shane was still supposed to be at practice - wouldn't even stop for lunch for another few hours, so Ilya was surprised when he saw Shane was ringing him again. He'd only just gotten off the phone - a joint call with Mandy and his agent Verity - and had been about to go take a shower. His plan for the morning had been to sleep in for another hour or so, and then take it easy, but for some reason their so called fucking fans were always looking for another pounding of meat, or whatever that phrase as.

“любимый?” He answered, continuing on to the bathroom, hoped Shane would not hear the absence of the crutch he was supposed to be using to help him keep weight off his knee.
“Something else has come up? A second photo?”

He was imagining another shot, another angle, which showed Mila's face, or Mandy's face, and then they would be tracked down on the internet, or by word of mouth. Mandy didn't have a very active social media, but all it took was one photo, one person noticing.

“No,” Shane said. He sounded off, just this one word shaped oddly. “No more photos. I just - I didn't say anything about *you*,” he said, still off and sounding a little desperate. “I didn't say any names.”

“Shane,” Ilya was more worried now than he would have been if their had been a second photo.
“What is going on?”

Shane hesitated, his breath hitching audibly like he was having trouble getting his words out, and then in the background of the call, Ilya could hear the faint rumble of another voice before the audio suddenly shifted louder. Car engine, traffic noises, Shane's breathing.

Hayden Pike spoke. "Hi, man," he said, "you're on speaker phone. I'm driving Shane home from practice."

"What?" Ilya asked. "What is happened? Shane? Are you okay?"

"I'm fine," Shane mumbled, and Ilya was beginning to understand the way his words were wrong. Like he as speaking through a fat lip or a bleeding tongue. "I just. I fucked up, Ilya."

"They fucked up more," Pike said, quiet and angry. "He fucking swung first, Shane."

"Who fucking swung?" Ilya asked, had to sit down so his knee would stop throbbing, so he hiked himself up onto the bathroom counter. "Fuck, мой любимый you are hurt?"

"Not much," Shane said. "I accidentally came out to my team. Some of them were not nice about it. I might have been not nice back. Then Anders tried to hit me, and it turned into a scrum."

The last word sounded pointed, and Pike immediately made a noise of protest.

"I was fucking defending you, man!" He complained, "He was going to punch you in the face!"

"And I was going to deflect it," Shane replied, sounding like he'd already said this a few times too many, a mutinous tone. "It doesn't matter. There was a fight. I got hit by an elbow to the jaw. *Hayden* got smacked with a fucking stick."

Ilya sat and processed. His knee was probably okay enough that he could drive. It would slow down his healing process, but he would most likely have to be benched for a while anyway after he'd beat the shit out of Shane's stupid asshole teammates.

"Who was on your side?" He asked, "Who do I leave off kill list?"

"There is no kill list," Shane groaned. "I don't know what everyone thinks. Like I said, there was a scrum. It was chaos. Theriault sent me the fuck home, and Hayden said he was taking me. I haven't

- I haven't actually talked to any of them to ask if they care that I'm gay. I don't even know if I still have my captaincy after starting a fucking brawl in the locker room."

"You didn't start it," Pike piked again. "Fucking Anders doesn't know how to leave well enough alone."

Shane started to reply with something that sounded grumpy and unhelpful, and Ilya interrupted.

"Shane," he said, firm. "Switch to video. I need to see your face."

"I'm fine," Shane said immediately, which was not switching to video. "It's okay."

"So switch to face," Ilya said, "please."

Shane sighed, and then there was a slight fumbling noise before Ilya's phone pinged with the request, and he accepted it.

Shane's jaw was smeared with blood, like he'd left so quickly he hadn't even wiped his face. Ilya could see the split in his lip still oozing blood, and the bright pink swell of what he was sure would be a massive bruise. His face looked okay, otherwise. Tense, as little sweaty, but no other visual facial injuries, and his eyes looked focused and even.

"You are okay," Ilya said.

"I said I was," Shane replied, but his voice was soft, like he knew exactly how Ilya felt. His eyes were locked on the screen, and Ilya flicked his own eyes to the little view of him to check he didn't still have sleep gunk in his eyes. "You look tired."

"I am tired, but not much," Ilya said. "You fought?"

"He punched Anders when Anders got me in the gut," Pike said loudly, "and then he grabbed Comeau and got him with a fucking knee hit that was *insane*, and-"

“Not much,” Shane said loudly, “I only - it was self defence -”

“It was self defence,” Pike agreed, louder, “and it was also fucking badass. You *never* fight on the ice, so where the fuck did you learn how to throw a punch like that?”

“I took classes,” Shane said, vague and huffy. “And I have fought on the ice before.”

“Yeah, like, twice maybe,” Pike snorted, “and one of them was that weird shout fight with Hunter, and that doesn’t count.”

“It was very cute though, малыш,” Iyla chimed in, amused but also frustrated by the conversation. He needed details. He needed names. He needed to know Shane was actually fucking safe. “What is happening now? You are calling Farah?”

“Yeah, yes,” Shane sighed. “I mean - I’m calling you right now. I wanted to - I wanted to give you a heads up in case someone posted about this. Which they probably will. Berkes is a chronic tweeter. But yes. I’ll call Farah. I feel bad, throwing this much shit at her.”

“Is her job,” Ilya said, taking note of the name Berkes for later investigation. He liked how he was starting with an alphabet, Anders, Berkes, Comeau, easy to remember. “She will be okay. You will be okay. What is - was your coach, uh, hearing what fight was about?”

“I mean,” Shane shrugged, his eyes shifting sideways and then not returning to his phone. “Comeau kept yelling about how I was a fucking fag who probably spied on them in the showers, and they should check my phone for secret recordings. So, he might have put it together.”

Ilya was putting Comeau on the list again. Double Comeau. Maybe he could ask Marly and Connors to slam into him in next game, one after another. Or maybe he should just do what he wanted and get in his car and drive to Montreal. Pit stop at Killing Comeau Ave before he drove to Shane’s place.

“And you are only one sent home?” Ilya asked, his voice much more of a growl than intended. “Or were everyone sent home.”

He watched Shane's face wiggle with suppressed expressions, his eyes still to the side.

"Just me," he said. Cleared his throat. "He said he would call me in the afternoon. And we would schedule a meeting to discuss my conduct."

Ilya let out a hiss between his teeth. Shane was still not looking at the phone. "Only answer call with Farah on phone line," he said. "And take her or lawyer with you to meeting."

"That feels like it'll come off as... bad faith," Shane muttered, lines crinkling between his eyes as he frowned, his nose scrunching in a way Ilya usually found adorable, and still did, but wanted to be able to soothe in person. "Shouldn't I be coming in as - as peacefully as possible, so -"

"Fuck that," Ilya snapped. "You are not fucking criminal, Shane. Handling this peacefully is their job. They should be already talking to you, saying sorry our captain who is only reason Metros ever win games, we did not realise some of the cretins here were homophobics, we will banish them. You are not in wrong."

Shane's eyes flicked only briefly to the phone, and then away again. "I hit a couple of my teammates," he said. "I did do something wrong."

"Sounds like they also did hitting," Ilya said, furious, "and Pike did hitting too, yes? So why send only you home? Pike was not banished, he left with you of his own accord, yes?"

Shane nodded, tight, his jaw biting down hard enough that Ilya could see the muscle jump, and it made Shane's lip bleed a little more.

"I am coming to Montreal," Ilya said, his mind made up by the sheen in Shane's eyes. "I am already on IR for rest of week. I come to you, we will handle together."

"Ilya," Shane's eyes closed for a long moment, and Ilya could see his eyes darting around beneath his thin lids, like Shane was physically searching for the right thing to say. When he opened his eyes again he was finally looking back at Ilya in the phone, and he looked exhausted. "You don't

have to do that. I know I fucked up. With the photo, and with this - this coming out. I don't want you to be in the firing range."

"You being in firing range is also me in firing range," Ilya replied. "I am coming, when I get there you can let me in if you want, but I will sit outside your door."

He heard Pike make a noise sort of like; *jesus*, but he couldn't quite make it out. Shane was blinking at him, wet eyed, but no tears falling.

"Please, солнышко ," Ilya said, dropped his voice low and pleading. If that didn't work, he would drop it lower and sultry instead. "I need to be with you, and I have time to be with you, so let me. We said we do this together, no? Let us be together."

"Fuck," Shane said. "Okay. Of course I fucking want you here, Ilya. Let me just - let me call Farah first, okay? Before you book tickets or anything. You're still injured, I don't want - traveling could exacerbate the injury."

"Okay," Ilya conceded. Didn't want to stress Shane out more than needed. "What do you need me to do right now, hm?"

Shane sniffed, then narrowed his eyes at the image of Ilya on his screen. "You should shower," he said, "and get dressed."

"Oh?" Ilya raised his eyebrows and fake pouted, "I look so gross, hm?"

"Shut up," Shane said, finally smiling. "You know you don't. Go shower. I'll call you back soon."

"Okay, okay. Listen to Farah. Я тебя люблю"

"Love you too," Shane said, kept smiling as he ended the call.

Well fuck.

-

He is now at least showered and dressed, and also eating a late breakfast or an early lunch by the time he sees the firsts tweets.

He didn't follow any of the metros - not even Shane (because he never posted) - so it's retweets and tweets about tweets that he saw. One of the retweets was of a Comeau tweet that had Ilya adding him to his list for a third fucking time.

Metros-Voyeur-24

Holy fuck, what is happening in my man aquarium???

Gilbert Comeau

Fags should be banned from lockerooms #notmycaptain

Ilya hoped Shane had broken one of his stupid ribs with that knee hit. He hoped Shane's knee was okay. Should have asked to see Shane's hands. Stupid.

Fuck he hated not knowing exactly what was happening. What was Farah saying? He should have asked for it to be a joint call thing, so he could hear what they needed to do, so he could say stupid things every so often to keep Shane in his head

He called Mandy again, and she answered on the fourth ring, sounding stressed.

"I've seen the posts about Shane," she answered, "fuck, he's having a tough day, huh?"

"Worse than you think," Ilya gritted out. "His stupid, useless, bad at hockey team mates thought was good idea to try and hit him about it."

"What the fuck," Mandy said, and then, "I'm putting you on speaker so Madzia can hear as well. She is fuming right now."

“Hi Mag,” Ilya said, knowing she would be now fuming at him as well, “I was just saying how we should form Boston братва to go kill Metros for being huge violent bigots.”

“Did you see fucking post from Anders?” Magda asked, sounding madder than the time he called her Magma flow. “One where he’s talking about how Shane throws such a weak punch because he has limp wrists? Does he even know who he is talking about?”

Ilya mentally reread Anders as well. “He is already on list. He tried to throw first punch.”

“Seriously?” Mandy asked, “They tried to - to beat him up? Their own captain? What the hell has been happening this morning?”

“People decided to be assholes,” Ilya said, and then; “Mila is having nap? She has been sleepy in mornings.”

“Yeah,” Mandy said. “She woke up super early, so she crashed out when we got home from the playground.”

“Good,” Ilya said. “I am - I am worried for Shane. I want to go to him, while I am off from games.”

“Yeah,” Mandy said, Magda humming her approval as well, “that’s a good idea, Ilya.”

“He is worried me being there will have people put pieces together,” Ilya expanded, even though he would prefer to keep the conversation in which Mandy and Magda agreed with him. “If they see, baby, Shane is gay, and then me?”

“Ah,” Magda said. “I mean. Maybe, yes? Could be dangerous. But, well. Only dangerous if you are spotted. And even then, what is this danger, now?”

Ilya sighed. "You know dangers," Ilya said. "Just because Shane is outed does not mean things can keep moving on in our plan like nothing has happened. More people will be looking and gossiping now. He hates this."

-

By the time Shane had gotten off the phone with Farah, his mother had already called six times, and by the time he'd gotten off the phone with her, and he'd missed a call from Coach, who had left a short and to point voicemail. Shane had called Farah back, and she had said she would call Theriault back and told Shane to not pick up any Metros call currently. His phone was buzzing like a hive of angry bees because his focus mode had turned off. And then Shane was going to call Ilya back, but he was at Hayden's place because Hayden had refused to just take him home and leave him there like he requested, and Arthur had a crying tantrum until Shane would come pick him up and carry him around the lounge upside down.

Then Shane called Ilya back.

"How does phone call to Farah take two hours?" Ilya answered, "I have been sweating guns, here, Shane."

"Bullets," Shane said, "sorry. I - my mum called, and then I - there was just a lot. Sorry. I'm calling now."

"Okay," Ilya said, sounding much more stressed than Shane had ever heard him. "You scared me."

"Sorry," Shane said again. "Will you come? To Montreal?"

"Yes," Ilya said, "I have tickets in shopping cart now. I can be there in three hours, yes?"

"You don't have to rush," Shane said, even as he wanted to tell Ilya to get here even quicker. "I'm okay. I'm at Hayden's."

“I must rush,” Ilya said through the tapping on his phone screen as he bought his tickets. “I have to come kiss you as soon as possible. There is leak in my heart and I need you to patch for me.”

Shane’s own heart twinged, and he turned away from the window where he’d been watching Hayden run around the yard with Arthur on his heels. Didn’t want Hayden to glance up at see his face right now.

“Okay,” he said. “I’ll do that. You better hurry up, then.”

“That is what I said,” Ilya snarked. “Okay. I have to get going, my Shane. I will see you soon, yes?”

“Yes. See you.”

Ilya hung up, and Shane sniffed a little. Wiped at his eyes with his sleeve, and then threw himself down on the couch, avoiding the still damp spot where Hayden had haphazardly cleaned up some yogurt Arthur had spilled.

Jackie had taken advantage of Hayden coming home unexpectedly (after she had been very mad about the circumstances and had hugged Hayden and Shane multiple times) to run some errands without taking Arthur with her. Shane appreciated this because it meant he could sit all slumped in here by himself for a few more minutes without anyone seeing him. He loved the Pikes, but he also liked to not be seen when he was feeling so... out of control.

This was all awful. He hadn’t looked online yet, but his mum, and then Farah as well, had told him that some of his teammates had already outed him on various social medias. Not surprising, but still hurtful. Farah was apparently working on getting the Metros to tell their players to delete their posts, but honestly, what was the point? It was already out. Shane was already out.

He would turn his phone off and throw it away if he didn’t still need it for Ilya (and his parents, and agent, and etc), but for now he was stuck with switching it back to focus and trying to ignore that he could still see notifications arriving even though they were muted.

His mum sent him a bundle of photos, that message coming through with a ding, as he tried to focus on box breathing. For a moment he thought she was just sending him a photo of him and Mila from ASG weekend as a little... cheerful reminder or something.

Except it wasn't just a photo of him and Mila grinning at each other on the ice, it was also a screenshot of someone posting this photo and the one of him carrying Mila, with a little caption saying; *Same kid?*

And then another screenshot of the same post with a photo reply of Shane waving at the crowd from the ice, a red arrow drawn on the photo and pointing directly to Mila in Magda's arms, her curls free from her hockey helmet, and her face clearly visible.

Another screenshot. The original post, the reply, and another new photo reply. Of the Boston game right after he'd met Mila for the first time. Him waving at her through the glass, sitting in the Bear's family and friend's section.

All of the posts already had high numbers of reposts, or reblogs, or whatever, and lots of likes.

His phone rang in his hand as he stared at the photos. Farah.

Chapter End Notes

любимый - beloved
мой любимый - my beloved
малыш - baby
солнышко - sun/sunshine
Я тебя люблю - I love you

Chapter 19

Chapter Notes

Rushing these translations to end notes xxx

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

2014

“And what if new about Mila comes about before your image is sufficiently rehabilitated?” Verity asked. They’d gone over their long term plan. How long she thought he and Mandy could conceivably hide Mila’s paternity, what steps Ilya needed to take to make his image more family friendly, how they would begin a soft introduction of the fact that he was a father. “Say, someone posts a photo of the two of you together? Or your finances or your data gets hacked.”

Mandy shifted in her seat, eyebrows up at Ilya, and Ilya made a face back at her, because he didn’t know either. Mila was asleep in his arms, and she was still so tiny it seemed impossible she could be real. Mandy liked to point out that she wasn’t so tidy when you thought about dimensions in relation to spaces within the human body, and Ilya liked to agree before he had to think too hard about how insane it was to try and push an entire human out of a space so small.

“Uh,” he said.

He liked Verity. He thought she was very funny, and very to the point, and he liked that her name made people trust her more, even though in her line of work it didn’t actually ring *true*. Verity said it was a misnomer, and he had looked the word up and thought about other misnomers. His mama, Ирина, whose name meant peace, and who he had never seen looking it. He hoped she had it now, but how could he know? She hadn’t looked peaceful when he had found her, a lifetime ago, her face contorted and still. He hoped that Mila would have more luck with it as her middle name, and that he and Mandy had given her a name that she would fit. Мила. Gracious, dear, darling. He would do anything to let her have peace and kindness.

“I do not know,” he admitted, when no one else hurried to amend his ‘uh’. “I - I do not want to - I never want world to see her and see me and think she is not everything to me. моя любимая. I would not want to deny who she is to me, or who Mandy is to me. But I am scared to, what is phrase? Paint with, uh, смола... tar?”

“Tar with the same brush,” Mandy said, and shook her head. “And I don’t agree. We’re not hiding her because we’re embarrassed of you, Ilya. We’re hiding her to keep her out of the spotlight for as long as possible.”

Ilya shook his head back at her. “Is not true,” he said. “I mean, is true, but, for both. I have told you already about times people have posted photos of me with other babies. Was not nice, to me, to baby, to women. Was bad enough then, I do not want for Mila, or you.”

Mandy frowned, but didn’t seem to have an immediate retort, because she only huffed at him, her eyes flicking from Mila to his face.

“For whichever reason we’re doing this,” Verity said, slotting back into the conversation firmly, “we’re doing it. Which means we need a back up plan. If news comes out before we are ready, how do you want to play it?”

-

2017

The conference call had come through while Ilya was still driving to the airport, and he almost ignored it. Because he knew everyone would be pissed if he did, he accepted the call on speaker so he could keep driving.

“Verity, Farah,” he greeted, eyes on the road, “I am driving to airport. More has happened?”

He could imagine so many things that might have happened. Shane’s teammates following him back to Hayden’s house and continuing the fight they’d started in the locker room. More photos of Mila. Someone with an NDA about Mila going rogue for the money they stood to make with the news. Someone with no sense and a twitter replying something too close to the truth on one of the tweets about her. The MHL firing Shane for being gay, and then sniffing out Ilya and firing him too.

“We’re heading swiftly towards contingency territory, I’m afraid,” Verity said. “Photos from the All Star Games weekend, public photos, are being shared with Shane and Mila linked in them. Also from a home game in Boston. Magda was spotted as connected to Mila at the ASG weekend as well, and has been pointed out in some more game crowd photos and stills. At this point the heat is still entirely on Shane, but that will build into something entirely unwieldy.”

Ilya bit at his lips, his hands squeezing hard on the steering wheel. Con-tin-gin-see. He didn’t like how it translated when he had looked it up years ago now. Unforeseen circumstances. непредвиденные обстоятельства. This was foreseen, or at least partially, that was why they had the fucking plan in the first place. Now was not the time to be mad about words.

“You have told Shane, Farah?”

“Yes,” Farah replied, she sounded a little distant, like she wasn’t speaking directly into the phone, focused on something else. “I’ve told him to sit tight for now, and not to start anymore brawls.”

“He didn’t start it,” Ilya grumbled, offended on Shane’s behalf, and also feeling a little like Pike. Terrible. “Okay. Fine. He is sitting tight and having panic attack. We are watching whole internet dig into our lives like we are fun mystery game. I am driving to airport to go be in Montreal with Shane, are you going to tell me to tell me I need to be somewhere else?”

A short pause filled with clicking.

“No,” Verity said after Ilya had had time to mourn getting to be seeing Shane in just a few hours. “No, we can work around that. It might be even better, actually. We’ll have to check in with Shane and Yuna, but Farah and I are thinking maybe a press conference in Montreal would be best.”

“Ugh,” Ilya said, “they hate me there. No reporters will want to come.”

Both agents ignored him. “Shane has already heavily implied to me that seeing as he’s already being outed he wouldn’t mind going with the flow, rather than fighting it only to come out later,” Farah said briskly. “So depending on what angle we end up going on, this could be the time to bring out the entire story, but center the attention on the two of you rather than Mila.”

“I am worried,” Ilya started, slow, because he knew what he was worried about but putting it into coherent words was getting harder the more worried he got. “I am worried, maybe, telling world - telling Metros - about me and Shane, will make bad reaction much worse for him.”

Another short pause. He wasn’t sure if they were muting their call with him and talking to each other while they did this, or if they were just telepathic or something.

“Something we will discuss further,” Verity acknowledged. “For now Farah and I will work on getting a press conference in Montreal set up. We’ll play it as being for Shane, not for both of you, so there won’t be time for a huge furor beforehand. While you travel, we’ll connect with Shane and work out more of the details on what will actually be said. When is your flight?”

“Twenty minutes,” Ilya grunted, rolling down his window as he did so he could grab the ticket at the airport entrance so the bar would rise for him. “I am at airport now.”

“Send us your flight details,” Farah directed, “and we’ll arrange a car for you. We’ve been in touch with Mandy and Magda about these new photos, and will keep them posted on what’s happening.”

“Thank you,” Ilya said. “Is - no one has found them? From first photo?”

“No,” Verity confirmed. “I know you’ve been worried about this. The photo’s original poster didn’t give any further information on location, and hasn’t posted since, and the photo itself is too dark to make out any identifying details. We have our eye on it, though, and if something about their location does leak, we’ll get them elsewhere. For now, don’t worry about it.”

“Don’t worry,” Ilya grumbled, driving slowly into long term parking, because he wasn’t sure how long he was leaving his car and it was too beautiful to mispark. “So easy to do. I will stop all my worrying.”

“Funny,” Verity said, “worry as much as you want, I suppose, just know that we’re on it.”

“I know,” Ilya said. Sighed. Pulled in to the first park he saw. “Sorry.”

“You’re fine,” Farah told him, “we’ll loop back in when you’re with Shane.”

-

Despite the fact that part of Shane’s actual job was in fact speaking in press conferences, and to reporters, and being seen on television, he still fucking hated it every time. He wished that just being good at hockey was enough. Probably was better to have had the practice, now, though.

He wasn’t entirely sure what his mum, Farah, and Ilya’s agent Verity had told the Metros - management or PR, but whatever it was they were getting to use the press room at The Tire Centre for it. His normal PR handler, Daryl, was looking put out in the corner of the prep room, because Farah had told him he wasn’t needed, and he was welcome to just hang back. A suggestion like that from Farah was a direct order, and Daryl hadn’t peeled away from the walls since then, no matter how sour his face was about it.

He had been hoping that Ilya would be brought to Hayden’s house when he arrived. That they could have had an actual greeting and moment to decompress, but he understood the time pressure. It wasn’t like it could get hugely worse, but it still could get worse. Without any answers from Shane, except for his original one from that morning that people were claiming full bullshit on, things would continue to spiral, be dug up, and speculated loudly and angrily about. The less bullshit they had to deal with, the better.

His mum had turned up at Hayden’s, though, saying that his dad was on his way as well just coming from work. And she took him home to get him dressed for the conference, and patted his cheek, and hugged him tightly, and told him everything would be fine. That he was brave, and that she was sorry he had to be so brave just to be.

Mandy sent him a photo of Mila eating a huge slice of watermelon, and a message to say she wasn’t mad, and Magda sent him a text to complain about how the photos of her being put online made her look weird, because they never chose ones where she wasn’t wearing her, what Ilya called, ‘Resting Fuck You Face’, and that she did actually smile. She also sent him a little smiley emoji, so probably neither her or Mandy were mad at him.

He wondered how they were keeping Theriault out of the room, while they waited for Ilya. If it was his insanely efficient agent team, or if management decided that having Theriault there would be a optics risk due to his lack of temper keeping, and his opinions on gay people. Wondered if any of his teammates knew he was about to give a press conference, and if they were laughing at the idea

of him having to come out on TV because they'd tweeted about it. He hoped Anders and Comeau were in pain right now.

Ilya was let in through a door near the back of the room, close to Daryl, and Shane was as Daryl quite noticeably jumped. Shane was getting the idea that maybe the Metros had been told very little about what was happening. Especially because when Ilya crossed through the room to Shane, ducking down a little, and kissed him on the lips, Daryl made a slightly squeaky noise of further shock.

His mother always preferred to have full, written permission for things before she did them, but sometimes she would get a sharp look in her eye, and roll out the red carpet of *better to ask forgiveness*, and it appeared he and Ilya were about to be walking out on that red carpet tonight.

"You are okay, my Shane?" Ilya asked, head still ducked down, hand on Shane's cheek. "We do not have to do this."

"Yes," Shane nodded, knew his swallow was stupidly audible, but he could be nervous and sure at the same time. "I know. I want to, though. Get it over with. Because then we - I want to see what we can have when it's not a secret."

"Okay," Ilya nodded as well, eyes darting between Shane's, serious and searching. "Moy lyubimyy," he said, thumb shifting from Shane's cheek to press gently at his still swollen lip. "Hurts still?"

"A little," Shane admitted. Resisted the urge to take Ilya's thumb into his mouth because holy shit his mother and their agents and several staff members were in the room with them right now. "But it's fine. Cleaned up and I took painkillers and stuff. I'm good."

"Maybe after we finish chat with reporters who are about to poop their pants, we go visit some not very good hockey players so I can tell them how much I dislike them?" Ilya suggested, pressed a light kiss to the unbruised side of Shane's face.

"No," Shane said, met his mother's eye over Ilya's shoulder, and realised that he and Ilya were being a little rude. "Uh, Ilya, um, this is my mum, Yuna."

Ilya dropped his hand from Shane's face - unfortunate - and swiveled on his heel to hold a hand out in her direction, and then took her hand in both of his to squeeze. "Is good to meet you," he said, sounding like he actually meant it, and not like this entire situation was a little insane. "Thank you for making Shane, he is my favourite Canadian invention."

His mum laughed a little, breathless like she was as shocked as Daryl. "It's nice to meet you too, Ro- Ilya. David - Shane's father - is looking forward to meeting you when he gets here."

"I will make sure to thank him for his part also," Ilya said, very serious.

"Okay," Farah said, from where she had been mostly ignoring them by the desk with Verity - where they had been conversing in low voices - "Ilya, we talked you through the plan on the phone on the car ride here, but do you need a bit more prepping?"

"No," Ilya shook his head. "I am pepped and prepped. I have very easy script to remember, is basically just fun facts of myself."

Shane saw Verity roll her eyes from behind Farah. "Fun facts you will present seriously," she prompted. "Correct?"

"Yes," Ilya nodded, his face immediately dropping his mask of silliness, and settling into something intense instead. "This is not joke to me, and I will not say a joke."

-

Shane had walked out onto a stage with Ilya before, but never to such deafening confused silence. Never to a whole room of people who seemingly as one, perked up, and then reared back as they took in who Shane was walking shoulder to shoulder with to the table in front of them all.

They sat as the quiet dispersed, the rustle of conversation steadily inclining into pure noise. Under the table, Ilya pressed their feet together, put his hand briefly on Shane's thigh.

Daryl had apparently been given permission to be more than a wall hanging now, because he was doing his media wrangling, telling everyone to sit down, and quiet up, that there would be a statement first and then a few questions, but no questions if they couldn't behave like fucking adults.

Shane added the fucking, because it was what he thought every time he saw the mob of microphones, he actually had no idea what Daryl was telling them.

He could see Farah and Verity in his peripheral, standing off to one side, and off to the other side, past Ilya, he could see some very confused looking members of Metros management. God he hoped they were going to get away with this with minimal casualties.

His mum was still in the prep room, watching on the computers in there, because they had agreed it was a stronger look without his 'momager' standing over his shoulder.

When the room was finally quiet, and Daryl had stepped out of the way, his face still squinting with confusion, Shane took a steadying breath, and glanced at Ilya before he leaned towards the microphone.

"Thank you for coming in on such short notice," he said, doing his best to sound as much like her normally did for these things, and not like he was moments away from sweating through his jacket. "Due to the, um, nature of the things being said online about me currently, my team and I - my - my personal team, that is - thought it would be best, um, prudent, that is, to be transparent about what is happening, so as to shut rumours down before they become harmful. To - to myself, and to people around me who are being sought down on the internet, and having their lives, um, made into a spectacle."

He had to pause her to take a breath, and Ilya's hand landed once more on his thigh, warm and heavy, grounding. He kept forgetting the words he was supposed to be using, was stuttering so much, could feel how hot his face was. He glanced sideways and Ilya smiled at him. Shane continued.

"I wanted to first address the - the photo of myself carrying a child that was posted without my permission or knowledge. I admit I stretched the truth this morning when I said that she was the child of a friend, and I did that to try and keep them from being thrust into a spotlight they do not want. She is a child of a friend, she is also, however, the child of my partner. This is something I would have spoken about earlier, maybe, except that doing so meant I needed to make an entirely different statement. One which my teammates have helpfully been posting all day for me. So, for those who still needed to hear it from me, yes. I am - I am gay. I have kept this fact hidden from public because I knew the backlash I would receive for coming out, and until now it had never felt

worth it. I - um - am sure you've all been, uh, wondering what - what Ilya Rozanov is doing here for this, so I'll - he can tell you."

Ilya squeezed his thigh once, and then leaned sideways slightly to knock their shoulders together.

"Otlichnaya rabota, malysh," Ilya whispered, and Shane knew enough to know he'd been called 'baby', and that was good enough for him.

"Thank you, Hollander," Ilya said, leaning closer to the microphone now, his face still turned to Shane for a moment more before he turned to face the crowd. "This looks like crazy set up, ah?" he said to them, his eyebrows raised, and a few people chuckled. "Probably is one you will all have to get used to," Ilya added, bringing his eyebrows down flat over his eyes now.

Shane sometimes wondered if Ilya practiced this sort of thing in the mirror.

"Shane and me are here for this, not for fun," Ilya began, words slow, "but because we have decided is best and only way to fix situation. Beautiful baby in photos is moy devochka, my baby girl. Her mama and I are good friends, but we are not involved in romantic way. Our baby is a surprise gift from a once off meeting. Her mama is woman in photo with Shane, because they are now friends. Other woman in photos with my baby is our nanny, and she does not appreciate people making gossips about her and Shane."

Ilya paused here, probably as aware as Shane was that he had gone off track somewhat, and was trying to get back to the point he'd left at. Shane, because why the hell not actually, lifted his hand to rest between Ilya's shoulder blades.

"Shane is my boyfriend," Ilya said then, all in a rush. "So I also do not appreciate people thinking he is maybe with other people. He is my partner, and he is being so good stepping up with moy devochka. She thinks he is best of all time, and is always wanting to skate with him even more than with me. Her mama and I did not want her in public eye, did not want people to do as they now have and take photos of her in public and post on internet for everyone to look at. She is just baby. We knew people would find out one day, and I knew being with second most famous hockey player would make it more easy to be found out.

That is all, I think. Oh. I am bisexual. I like both. My Bears all know this, and are good with this. Was secret from world because is not safe, for me, to be open about this and still be able to go home to Russia. This is choice I am making now, before is made for me."

Ilya shrugged here, and then reached over to Shane to slide his arm along the top of Shane's chair and wrap around his back as well, before leaning in to whisper; "I think maybe I am more nervous than realised, and also Verity will kill me so much for how off book I was."

Shane kissed him on the cheek before Ilya drew back, "I think it'll be okay," he whispered back.

The crowd, which had been mercifully quiet while they spoke, became merciless again.

-

**NHL REELING AFTER SHOCKING PRESS CONFERENCE WITH CAPTAINS SHANE
HOLLANDER AND ILYA ROZANOV**
FROM A HEATED RIVALRY TO A ROMANCE? WHAT A FACE OFF.

After a hectic day of the hockey corner of the internet going wild with rumours about the captain of the Montreal Metros, Shane Hollander, the captain announced he would hold a press conference to answer the questions being bounced around by fans, players, and the league alike.

It all began with a blurry photo of Hollander with a small child in his arms. Rumours of who the child was to him were rife, but stifled somewhat when he put out a statement to say the child belonged to a friend of his. Unfortunately for this statement, online sleuths discovered multiple other photos and instances of him interacting with this child in various places, and people became suspicious once more. While this was happening, unrest unravelled in the heart of the Metros as various players began posting on their social medias about their captain. Posts either saying outright or heavily implying that Hollander is gay. Many of the posts were horrifyingly homophobic and cruel, and some of the worst ones have already been taken down. Not before they were screenshot and shared everywhere, however.

Shane Hollander did not release any statement about these particular rumours, until mid afternoon, in which he acknowledged there was something to address, and announced his press conference at The Tire Centre.

To add further shock to the already surprising day, given Hollander's usual drama free persona, he came onto the stage for the conference with none other than his career rival, Ilya Rozanov, captain of the Boston bears.

Hollander did not immediately address the Bear in the room, but instead spoke to the rumours circulating about him. He repeated once more that his original statement about the child had been true, just not the whole truth. The child did belong to a friend, but also to his partner. He then clarified that his team were correct, and that he was gay, before handing the conference over to Rozanov.

Rozanov thanked his fellow captain, acknowledged how unusual it was for them to be there together, and then announced the unthinkable - the child belonged to him! Here we were thinking he was still in his playboy era, and yet he went on to say how much he loved his daughter, and respected her mother. This is where Rozanov then went on to state what ought to have been obvious, but still garnered several gasps of surprise, that he was in fact Shane Hollander's partner. He added on that he was bisexual, so those puck-bunnies who have spent years singing his praises can rest assured it wasn't an act.

The two went on to answer questions, and while we will attach the full transcript at the end of the article, we have the answers to our most pressing questions first.

- *Hollander and Landry were in fact never an item! Though Hollander did say they were good friends.*
- *Rozanov will not give out his daughter's name at present, and has asked for her privacy, and that of her mother and nanny to be respected.*
- *Hollander, upon being asked about his thoughts on his teammates reactions to his coming out to them, said 'No comment'. He then reached over and covered Rozanov's mouth with his hand.*
- *Rozanov, upon being asked about his teammates reactions to his sexuality, said that he 'loved and respected his team', and that it was mutual. He then added on that 'Some teams know not be bigoted shitstains, especially about their most valuable player'. He went on to apologise to his and Hollander's agents for the vulgarity.*

CONTINUE READING BELOW

Metros-Voyeur-24

*Anyone know if I'm accidentally on an acid trip right now?
#NOTAHollandeadeadbeatdad #Hollandadwhosteppedup??*

Bicuspid-Bicupid-Bicycle

Rozanov is bisexual party at my place!

Who The Puck Asked

what kind of name is deevodka for a baby??

Chapter End Notes

Ирина - Irina

Мила - Mila

смола - tar

моя любимая - my darling/beloved

непредвиденные обстоятельства - Unforeseen circumstances

Moy lyubimyy - My love

Otlichnaya rabota, malysh - good job, baby

moy devochka - my baby girl

Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

Russian translations in end notes :)

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

Sarah.F.Duke

Montreal Metros continue to show disrespect to their captain with hateful tweets. Rumours of trades are swirling, but no word yet on who or where.

DrapeauPatrice

*You only keep a secret like that when you know
It's fucked up and wrong. #notmycaptain*

Hayden-Pikelet

*You fucking do NOT. #MYCAPTAIN
#HOCKEYISFOREVERYONE #24*

Bouchardgreensofficial

i think i speak for all of the team when i say #notmycaptain

BearyberryBaryinBoston

Bro are you for serious?

Who The Puck Asked

what kind of name is deevodka for a baby??

-

2017

“You can just not answer,” Ilya suggested, when Shane returned to the couch he was on and climbed into Ilya’s waiting arms. “Is not your job to explain to idiots why you are allowed to be human.”

“They’re my - my friends,” Shane mumbled, pressed his face in against Ilya’s shoulder, his words muffled but still audible. “Or I thought they were. They feel, like. Betrayed, I guess. For keeping this from them, and then springing the press conference on everyone.”

“You kept a secret that was dangerous to be shared,” Ilya pointed out, kissed the top of Shane’s head. “And was not entirely your own. And you were right to be secret with it. You were hurt when you came out, and only Hayden was speaking up for you. None of them have legs to stand on for feeling hurt now.”

Shane sighed, rubbed his face against the fabric of Ilya’s shirt. It was one of Shane’s shirts, and smelled like Shane’s laundry powder, but Ilya actually wearing it seemed to make it smell and feel better than ever before.

“Malysh,” Ilya said, rubbed his hand firm down Shane’s back, pressing the heel of his hand into the tight muscles of his lower back. “Answering calls and making excuses and explanations for them is making you sad and tight everywhere. Not even in sexy way. You feel like bag of rocks.”

“Ugh,” Shane replied. “Do that again.”

Ilya brought his other hand to work as well, focused on pressing and kneading at the bundled mess of Shane’s back, keeping firm pressure as Shane breathed damply into his shirt, breath hitching in pain and relief in turns.

“I just want to give them a chance,” he said, once Ilya’s hands moved from massaging to rubbing, smoothing down his back and then up again, palms curved in like he was carving planes into Shane’s muscles. “I just want - I want them to know that I didn’t - that it wasn’t me who said we

were done. That I was willing to hear them out and tell them my side. I want to - to get out of this feeling like I did my best.”

Ilya kissed the side of his head, then shifted to get a better angle, kissed his temple. “You could do your bare minimum and have it be better than their bests,” he said, “but okay. Keep answering, giving them their chance. I will keep being here to hold you, yes?”

-

Ilya had known this coming out would be the final nail in the coffin of his relationship with his family. He had been starkly ignoring all and any messages and calls from anyone saved in Cyrillic, apart from Svetlana, leaving it to his lawyer Nora to action their contingency plan as well.

They had already dealt with his visa, getting him permanent and safe residence in America, so they did not need to deal with so much of the Russian Government side of things. But he had trusts that needed to be delivered to the right people in Russia, and accounts that needed to be closed, and apologies that he had wanted to make in person and would probably never be able to make count.

Nora called him on the fourth day after the press conference. So far she had just been updating him through emails and Verity, letting him know that things were going according to plan. The call meant something had gone awry, and he very much didn’t want to answer.

“Алло,” he answered. “что не так?”

“Алло,” Nora replied, and then, “Твой отец умер.”

“Ах.”

-

So. His father was dead. Some of the phonecalls and messages he had been receiving and ignoring for the last few days were about that. Nora had been quick to tell him that he had died before the news about Ilya and Shane had broken. The timing was a coincidence, no matter what Alexei was saying in all the texts he had sent that Ilya had now looked at. The funeral had already happened. She told him he wouldn’t have been able to go even if they had waited for him. He was safe here,

but not there. Hadn't been wanted at the funeral. Alexei was asking for money, to be paid back for what he had had to spend to hold the funeral.

Nora told him she would deal with everything. That this was part of why they had decided on a plan, and written things out. She reminded him she wasn't just Mila's lawyer, she was his lawyer as well.

He let her deal with all of it. Except for the call he made to Alexei, because he felt like he owed his older brother that much, at least. Had left Alexei to look after their dying father, left him to plan the funeral, to grieve, to worry. He knew Alexei had faults, knew there was little if any love left for Ilya from his brother. But he still had some love left, caught in the cracks and broken apart bits of him. Memories of when they were young together, holding hands to cross roads, sitting with their mama and listening to stories. Alexei's face when mama died.

-

"I am scared," Ilya admitted, his phone clutched in his hand. Hated to be adding one more emergency on top of their already packed emergency schedule. Shane didn't move except to tight his hold on Ilya.

They were wrapped together on Shane's bed, Ilya's head on Shane's chest, listening to the beat of his heart and willing himself to be stronger.

"Tell me," Shane whispered.

"I am scared to hear him say it," Ilya replied, his eyes tightly closed like by not seeing he could save himself. "To hear him tell me never come home, and know he means it, and know I couldn't anyway. I am scared I will be angry and he will be angry and we will say goodbye and never speak again. I have not been more than a distant wallet to them for so long, but I am still scared to lose my family."

Shane kissed his forehead, pressing the kisses into his skin so hard Ilya could feel Shane's nose smushing against him.

"I'll be here," Shane said, simple. "While you talk to him. I'll hold you. And I won't leave you."

“Okay,” Ilya sniffed. He should really sit or stand up to call, but he couldn’t bring himself to move more than to bring his phone closer.

“The cocksucker finally calls,” his brother answered, voice hard. *“They are already done with you and your kind there, ah? You are calling to beg forgiveness and come crawling back?”*

“No,” Ilya replied, flat. Shane’s hand carded carefully through his curls. *“I am calling to say I am sorry I was not there when papa died. I am sorry you had to deal with it alone -”*

“Fuck you, Ilyushka,” Alexei spat, and his voice sounded sodden with inebriation suddenly, like he had been holding it together and acting sober for long enough to answer the phone, but no longer. *“You are not sorry. You are having a wonderful faggy time and leaving me all the hard work. You are a coward, and I-”*

“Shut up,” Ilya bit out, because so much of him felt like he did deserve to hear this vitriol, but the part of him that Shane was holding, the part of him that wanted Mila to never hear anything like this, was stronger now. *“Listen to me, Alexei, because I think probably we will never speak again, and then you can pretend you never had a brother and be happy for it. My lawyer is arranging money to be paid to you for the expenses of the funeral. She is arranging for my inheritance to be handed over to you, along with my apartment there. I have set up a trust for Raisa that only she can access, for when she is older. This is everything I will give you. No more money from bank of Ilya. I love you and I never want to hear your fucking voice again.”*

They were both silent, Ilya breathing hard. Shane’s hand didn’t stop moving, and he focused on the rhythm of it and not on the hot burn of tears slipping out of his screwed shut eyes.

“Enjoy your American whores,” Alexei said, damp and quiet. *“Your daughter looks like mama.”*

Alexei ended the call. Ilya let the phone slip out of his hand and slide off Shane’s chest onto the bed. Shane’s arms shifted around him, moving the both of them until they were lying face to face, arms tight around each other. Kissed him slow and gentle.

Shane had expected to feel more cut up about it. He'd spent his entire career so far with the Metros, making them better, making them win. And he was hurt. He was hurt that so many of the men he had thought were his friends didn't want him now they knew he was someone inside of his hockey shell. He was hurt that management was treating him like he hadn't spent years bowing to their wishes and letting them use him like a monkey for media interactions.

But he found that he didn't care as much as he might have when they let him go. He didn't ask for details on how it happened, and what arguments were made. He told Farah and his lawyer what he wanted, and they got it for him.

So. He wasn't devastated, but still. He felt winded by it. Like he'd stood there and let a line of people wind up and punch him in the stomach, one after another. They did that in gym sometimes, if some unlucky player's birthday landed on a full team gym day. Mostly only if they were a rookie, some light hazing. It hadn't been all that bad when it was Shane's turn, on his first birthday as a Metro. Most of the players were jovial, landing a light punch to his tensed stomach, and chirping him. A joke, almost kind. Like they were all part of it. Some of them didn't see it like this, like a group thing. To them it was a them thing and the thing being punched. Separate. They would wind up with real power and deliver something that bruised muscles, and everyone would laugh it off, because it was a joke, and the rookie could take it right, he wouldn't cry about it like a baby.

So Shane wasn't going to cry about it like a baby. Because this was what he wanted. He had wanted that team camaraderie on his birthday as well, everyone treating him like one of them. Most of them treating him like one of them. He wanted to be traded, and he wanted to go to Boston, and he had tensed his muscles for the hit. A harder punch must have just snuck in somehow though, because it still hurt.

-

Hayden took family leave when Shane actually moved. He and Jackie and the girls flew to Boston with Shane in one large group, surrounding him on the plane and on their way to Ilya's house, that was now Shane's house as well.

Theriault had been pissed off with Hayden, but Hayden had shrugged it off to Shane. Said he didn't care enough right now. Not when Theriault was under review for how he had run his team, and how he had helped run Shane off. Several of Shane's old teammates were also under review, the league being forced to act as if they had any clue on how to create an inclusive environment with the media spotlight firmly on them. The scandal had broken Hockey containment, and Shane had seen his face on too many magazine covers and phone screens.

As they approached his new house, Jackie driving, him in the passenger seat, and Hayden holding court with the children, Shane knew they were driving into an ambush. A friendly one. His and Ilya's friends had wanted it to be a surprise welcome party, and Ilya had told him about it so he could prepare to be surprised and not horrified.

He did mostly want to just arrive home and get to lie down for several hours with Ilya and Mila and hide away, but.

But he did like that there were already so many people in Ilya's community who were welcoming him in, and welcoming in Shane's community with him. His parents had chosen to drive in, earlier in the day, because they wanted to bring some things down that they said were too big to take on a plane. Shane was purposefully not thinking about what insane gift they must have gotten for Mila.

-

Marlow had Shane in a tight hug before Shane had even stepped fully inside the house. He was wearing fairy wings attached with safety pins.

"I've been wanting to do this for a long time," he informed Shane, squished together as they were. "Fuck, you make Roz happy, man. I'm sorry it all came out like it did."

"Uh," Shane said, breathed gratefully when Marly released him. "Thanks - I - yeah, I love him and Mila. They make me happy too."

"She has been talking about you all day," Marly told him, laughed, "says she has wings for you too."

"Oh, good," Shane nodded, glanced over his shoulder at the Pike children still being helped out of the car because half of them had fallen asleep on the trip from airport to here. "I hope there will be enough for everyone."

-

HOLLANDER-ROZANOV FRONT LINES UN-BEAR-ABLY UNBEATABLE.

RIVALS TO LOVERS TO TEAMMATES = THE STANLEY CUP APPARENTLY

Despite the many think pieces and opinion articles on the likelihood of both Shane Hollander and Ilya Rozanov's careers going down the proverbial drain, both men have proven inarguably the opposite. The two men on the same line is something we had only ever seen the once at the last All Stars Games weekend. That game turned out to be only a teaser for what more could come, as the two elite players now both playing for the Boston Bears have shown what a powerhouse they are together. The Bears have held reasonable play off streaks throughout the years, but nothing comes close to the Hollander - Rozanov run of this season. There has been chatter about how the rivalry must evolve within the team, with Hollander now only Alternate Captain to Rozanov's Captain status, but from the outside it appears to be an easy truce. They hoisted the cup together, moving in sync like they do on the ice, before sharing a quick kiss, mostly hidden behind the cup.

The duo continue to keep up a level of privacy around their relationship that infuriates fans and journalists alike, but the two of them deigned to post to their social medias after the cup game with matching posts. Four photos, the first of the entire Bears team with the cup, the second of just the two of them with the cup, the third a family photo, both men grinning widely at the camera, standing on the ice, they are holding the cup, and assisting with this is Rozanov's daughter, in a rare public appearance, grinning wide for the camera, and the fourth of just their hands with rings on their ring fingers. While they made no comment with their posts, it is widely believed to be an engagement announcement, and if so, we are so pleased to congratulate the happy couple. If they would like to share more photos or news, we will await eagerly.

CONTINUE READING

MontrealBears

*Hey m*tr*s do you feel dumb now. Do you feel like you
Fucked up now? Idiots. #Hollanov #mycaptains*

Green-Eggs-and-Rams

*I don't even go here but it's so cute they kissed
like they think they're being sly behind the cup lol*

Man-in-MY-crease

*Oooh i spied the kiss! Not to be uhhhh invasive but
When will we get more kiss pics. They're hot.*

#Hollanov #morekissesplease #cupkiss

Who The Puck Asked

im still stuck on why the baby is called deevodka

Chapter End Notes

Malysh - baby

Алло - phone greeting/ hello

что не так - what's wrong

Твой отец умер - your father died

Ах - oh

Hi everyone! Thank you so much for reading this fic and giving me so much love for it xxxx
It's been really nice hearing from people who know me from kid fics from nearly a decade ago!

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!