

Home is What We Create

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Home is What We Create

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Summary

A year after Ilya Rozanov transferred to Ottawa for a fresh start, he gets a new neighbor. Said neighbor happens have very cute freckles and is also pregnant.

When Shane Hollander moves back to his hometown, after coaching youth in Montreal for many years, the last thing he's expecting is for Ilya Rozanov, the Ottawa Centaurs captain, star center and well-known menace, to be the best neighbor he could ever ask for.

Notes

I swear this one has been writing itself through my fingertips.

Chapter 1

When Ilya had first moved to Ottawa about a year ago, he was just trying to get away.

His father had passed, he finally told his brother to fuck off, he finally decided he couldn't keep going back to a place he was seen as an ATM and nothing more, a place that would reject him the moment they found out who he really was. A family that didn't feel like family, a home country that no longer felt like home.

He was a free agent, then, decided he wasn't signing with Boston again and instead, to everyone's utter shock, he signed with the Ottawa Centaurs. He's seen many rumors, speculations, none of them was close to the truth.

The truth was, Ilya Rozanov needed a fresh start, he needed space to breath.

He wasn't expecting much, Ottawa's team sucked, they haven't made the playoff like... ever.

Except they didn't actually suck and slowly but surely, things have turned around for them, for the better, throughout the year. Things have turned for the better for Ilya, too.

At the very least, he felt like he found his place. He was content sticking around for the long run. Things were okay here.

Lately, though, he started feeling off again. Something nagging at him and he's not sure what's wrong with him but something just is.

Which is how he ends up, instead of joining his team for barbecue Friday night at Bood's, carrying a bag of beers and ridiculous snacks from the small grocery store around the corner, back to his apartment.

"Oh, fuck." He hears someone exclaim as he starts making his way to the stairs, the elevator has been out for about a week now. Ilya doesn't mind too much, he's in good shape.

Whoever just made that noise, must not be. His gaze travels over to the source and his heart nearly stops when he sees him.

He's beautiful. Probably the most beautiful man Ilya has ever seen, dark hair, a splash of freckles across his nose and cheeks, face scrunched up in annoyance as he reads the 'out of order' sign on the elevator, like it would change the meaning if he read it enough times.

He has a good, athletic build, broad shoulders, nice biceps, and then Ilya's gaze lowers and he realizes - very, very pregnant.

He is also holding grocery bags and Ilya thinks on it for about three seconds before making a beeline towards the elevators.

“Is out of order, they will probably not fix until next week.” He says, because he is very helpful like this.

The other man jumps, like he wasn’t expecting anyone to be there or talk to him.

“R-Right.”

“Here to visit someone?” Ilya asks, because he’s never seen this man before and he is pretty friendly with his neighbors, at the very least he knows all of them by face.

“No, I just moved here.” The stranger says with a sigh, “My luck.” He glances at the sign again, then at his bags.

“What floor? I will help.” Ilya says, already moving to grab the bags that are now on the ground.

“What? No, I don’t need...” But it’s too late, Ilya is already making his way towards the stairs again.

“If you don’t tell me floor I will steal your food!” He teases and the beautiful stranger grumbles that he’s on the fourth floor and starts following him.

“Oh, so you are my new neighbor.” Ilya grins, because there was only one vacant apartment on that floor, he knows because it’s the apartment right next to his.

“I’m Ilya.” He says, looking briefly at the other man who’s slowly making his way up by his side. There is a frown on his face when he looks back at Ilya, a frown that soon turns into shock then awe.

“No...” The man says, and stops in his tracks, gaping in him, “You’re Ilya Rozanov.”

“In the flesh.” Ilya smirks and winks at him. “Do I get to have your name, mystery neighbor?”

“Shane Hollander.” Shane replies, rolling his eyes which only makes Ilya want to tease him more, there is something endearing about how worked up he gets, in a different way to what Ilya is used to from people.

“Is nice to meet you, Shane Hollander.”

“You’re very good at hockey.” Shane states the obvious, but Ilya grins nonetheless.

“I know.”

“But you missed twice last night, you could have had both these shots if you weren’t going so fast you couldn’t make a turn in time.”

This is getting more interesting by the second.

“Oh yeah? You are hockey expert then?” Ilya asks, grin never leaving his face.

“I know my stuff.” Shane shrugs but when Ilya raises his eyebrows at him he adds,

“I coach kids, just moved here from Montreal, been coaching there for a few years now.” He provides the explanation.

“Ah. So I will be seeing you, then. On ice, I mean.” Ilya’s grin widens again, he knows some people at the local program, they have the kids meet the team once in a while, skate together, make a fun day. Those are always some of his favorite days.

“Maybe. Probably not for long.” Shane sighs, glancing down at his very obviously pregnant belly, he looks sad, Ilya almost feels bad for bringing it up.

They climb up the rest of the way in silence, each to their own thoughts.

Once they reach the fourth floor, Ilya follows Shane to his apartment and waits for him to unlock the door.

“You can leave them here, it’s okay... it’s um... a mess, still.” Shane flushes and Ilya thinks it’s the cutest thing he’s ever seen, the way it makes his freckles stand out even more.

“I don’t mind, let me help. Want to be good neighbor, yes?” Ilya says, he notices Shane takes his shoes off the second he steps in so he does the same before walking inside and setting the groceries where Shane tells him to. The apartment isn’t that messy, it’s just very... unpacked.

“When did you move in?” He asks, he didn’t see him moving a week ago which is the last time he was home, so it must have been while he was away.

“A few days ago.” Shane says, looking even more flustered now, like he’s admitting something extremely embarrassing.

“And you still don’t have this place looking like museum? I am so shocked.” Ilya announces dramatically, that gets a laugh out of Shane.

“You’re an asshole.” He pouts and somehow that is even more endearing, if that’s even possible.

“I have been told so, yes. But am also very good neighbor.” Ilya notes, “You need help.”

“I’m fine, don’t worry about it.” Shane complains but he takes a seat on the couch, which is currently one of the very few pieces of furniture standing, and lets out a pained groan as he does.

“No, is okay, you need help, I have free time.” Ilya shrugs, as if he spends all his free time helping new neighbors unpack. It occurs to him then, that even though it doesn’t look like anyone else is living there and Shane hasn’t mentioned anyone, there might still be a partner, he shouldn’t assume things.

“Unless the job is taken?” He tries, eyes meeting Shane’s for a moment and he can see panic flash in his eyes but it goes away after another moment.

“No, not taken.” Shane sighs, “Just the two of us here, though this one isn’t much help organizing.” He sets his hand on his stomach and Ilya gets the memo.

Ilya chuckles, “No, probably not, ah?”

Ilya ends up staying, they have dinner together, which Ilya cooks because Shane can barely stand at that point and he helps him unpack and even changes a bulb Shane had apparently intended to change on his own, which sounds like a terrible idea so Ilya is glad to make himself useful.

He realizes, once he gets home that night, that it’s been a very long time since he’s felt this way, just doing boring mundane things with someone, taking care of someone who appreciates it. It’s been a long time since he’s felt like he could just be himself, and tonight he kind of was. He goes to bed with a smile on his face that night and he doesn’t have nightmares for once. Not about mama, not about his father, not his brother, no getting exposed while in Russia, none of that. Instead he dreams of beautiful freckles and shy smiles.

Meeting Ilya Rozanov at his new building was not something Shane could have anticipated.

Ilya Rozanov being his neighbor at that. But even more so, he would never have imagined, in a million years, that Ilya Rozanov would be standing in his living room on a Sunday afternoon, putting together a baby crib, his tank top sticking to his back as he works, making his back muscles very prominent through the thin material and Shane has to try really hard to not stare and be a fucking creep. It's really hard, though, when Ilya just keeps flexing and moving in ways that make it even worse.

Shane has told him he really, really doesn't need to but Ilya insisted and here they are.

"Don't you like... I don't know, have weekend plans or something? I doubt you get much free time as it is, why spend it doing this?" He asks eventually, mostly in attempt to distract himself from Ilya's way too impressive physique.

Ilya shrugs but he doesn't answer for a while. When he finally does, he turns to look at Shane.

"This is weekend plans." He gestures at the crib and Shane rolls his eyes,

"I'm serious, we've known each other, what, two days? You don't have to help me just because..." Shane trails off.

"I am helping because I feel like being helpful." Ilya says, then adds, "But if you want me to leave I can leave."

Shane doesn't know what comes over him, he really doesn't, maybe it's the hormones, they make him so weird sometimes. But the moment those words leave Ilya's lips his heart sinks.

"No, don't leave." He says, all too fast. "I just... I don't know. I'm not used to this."

"What, having friends?" Ilya lifts an eyebrow at him and Shane can see he's teasing.

"Oh shut up."

Ilya finishes the crib, it turns out very nice and sturdy, passes Shane's safety inspection on first go.

They spend more time together, watching a game, talking about hockey, mostly.

It's easy, Shane kind of feels like they've known each other for ages, something about Ilya just puts him at ease and it's only when he's finally left alone, later that night, that he realizes how dangerous that is. Letting things be easy... that's how he got in this mess in the first place. Not that he considers his baby a mess, it's everything around it that is.

He doesn't care anymore, he put all of that behind him. He said no more fucking hockey players, quite literally. No more feelings. No more danger.

He will have a child to care for soon, he can't handle anything complicated again. Not now.

Except that's the problem, Ilya makes it all too easy to just want to let him in.

Whatever. Shane can have a new friend. It's not like this is anything beyond that.

Ilya was probably just being nice anyway, maybe he really was bored and decided this was his weekend entertainment, right?

His phone buzzes and he looks to see a few missed texts.

His mother, telling him to take it easy and asking if he wants her to bring anything specific when they come over tomorrow. They were trying to get him to let them help with the move all the way from Montreal but Shane insisted he could do this on his own, he hired movers, he was perfectly capable of handling unpacking. But it's been close to a week and he has no reason to not let them come over and he also just misses them. As much as he doesn't want to burden them, he does truly miss them. Which is okay now, because now they're about fifteen minutes ride away.

The next text he opens is from Hayden.

Hey bud, you doing okay? Are you sure you don't need me to drive over and help? Jackie said she can handle the kids if you do.

Shane winces. His best friend Hayden and his wife Jackie have been his biggest support this entire time, only second to his parents, actually. Jackie figured out what was going on before Shane himself, she was the one who told him he should check. She was also the one who listened to him cry about how this is all fucked after Trent. She was also the one who told him if this is what he wants no one can take it away from him and having the baby is his decision. Hayden joined her in reminding him they will always have his back and fuck that stupid piece of shit. Hayden also made sure to tell him if he ever saw that guy he can't promise there won't be trouble, it made Shane laugh a little through the tears because Hayden was one of the kindest people he's ever met, silly and ridiculous at times, yes but he was not a violent guy. But when it came to his family, and somehow Shane has been lucky enough to

be considered part of the family, he had no limits. Shane understood that, he still felt bad for leaving, still missed them and their hoard of kids.

He sighs, smiling at his phone as he types a response,

I'm okay, sorry I didn't text sooner. All good here, I had some help.

He hits send then realizes that might have been a mistake.

Some help? Like, not your parents kind of help?

Comes the response almost instantly. Fuck.

He doesn't even get to think of a response before his phone goes off again, this time with an incoming face time request. Of course. There goes nothing.

"Ilya fucking Rozanov?!" Hayden shrieks once Shane is done explaining.

"Hayden." He warns but Hayden cuts him off again,

"Don't you Hayden me. You're telling me your new neighbor just happens to be fucking Ilya Rozanov, the best player in the league, asshole captain of Centaurs, *that* Rozanov was helping you build a fucking crib two days after you met?"

When he says it like that, yeah it sounds fucking insane. But that is pretty much what happened, right?

"I don't know, he helped me with groceries because the elevator wasn't working and we just... you know, hit it off, got friendly. He was just being nice." Shane shrugs, "And he's not

really an asshole, I'm pretty sure it's like... I don't know, media persona thing. He's... different." Shane catches himself too late, why is he defending Rozanov so much? They barely even know each other.

"Oh no... are you...?" Hayden starts and it's Shane's turn to cut him off.

"No. Fuck off, Hayd. I'm not anything. He's my neighbor, he was just being friendly, probably because I look pathetic, honestly."

"You don't look pathetic, buddy, you're pregnant there's a difference."

They change the subject and Shane is happy to not bring up whatever thing this is or isn't with Ilya Rozanov again for the rest of the call.

They exchange phone numbers, Ilya insists if there's any emergency, Shane should have someone in the building he can talk to. It takes some convincing that Ilya really just wants to help but eventually Shane relents and gives him his phone. They start texting some time after that. Mostly, it's just about hockey, it seems to be Shane's favorite subject, and not in the way Ilya would have some star-struck hockey fans going on and on, Shane actually knows what he's talking about, he's much more passionate about it than Ilya is, too.

It's endearing and he doesn't know what to do with that.

Not just hockey, though.

Shane doesn't seem to mind when Ilya starts sending him photos of things that he thinks are funny or just make him smile. For example, how the barista at Starbucks decided to spell Yila Razanav on his cup, he's not even sure that's an actual name that exists.

Shane

Ouch, do you get that often?

Ilya chuckles as he types back.

Ilya

You would be surprised how many ways people find to mess my name.

Shane

People are stupid, it's not even that hard. 🙄

Shane

Also I hate you now I'm craving a stupid frappuccino. I don't even do sugar.

That makes Ilya grin, he's done with practice for the day, he was going to hit the gym but this sounds like a more fun use of his time. He goes back in the Starbucks and orders 3 different decaf ones.

About ten minutes later a very confused Shane opens his door to him.

"I didn't know which one you liked." Ilya says, holding up the cup holders.

"You..." Shane gapes at him, looking between Ilya and the cups and then Ilya again, which makes Ilya feel extremely pleased with himself.

"You got me... frappuccinos because of that text?" Shane asks in disbelief.

"I hear pregnancy cravings are very serious business." Ilya shrugs like it's not a big deal, because really, it isn't. He just wanted to be nice to his new friend Shane Hollander who happens to be very pretty and very cute.

"Right." Shane steps aside so Ilya can come in, then pouts as he follows him to the living room. "That is so much sugar, though..."

“You will not die from drinking one frappuccino, Hollander. Are all decaf too.” Ilya laughs, shaking his head because Shane looks truly torn by that dilemma.

“You brought three.”

“I can finish others.” Ilya supplies helpfully.

“Aren’t you supposed to be on like, I don’t know, professional athlete diet?” Shane lifts and eyebrow and Ilya bursts into laughter, trust this guy to think about that right now.

“Ah, worried about my health?”

“No, just worried Ottawa won’t have a captain soon.” Shane shrugs, but Ilya can see the smile playing on his lips as he picks the caramel one.

Ilya makes a mental note of that.

Chapter 2

Chapter Notes

smut alert for this chapter, just in case.

Showing up at Shane's door at the end of the day with whatever it is Shane seems to be craving that day becomes a routine and suddenly Ilya realizes, not only is he looking forward to that every day, he's also just kind of... doing better.

He doesn't feel as heavy as he did before. Maybe he just needed a purpose, outside of hockey. Maybe he needed someone who appreciated him outside of hockey.

Shane cares about hockey, but he doesn't care that Ilya is... well, Ilya. He doesn't treat him different. It's nice.

Now, Ilya is pouting at his calendar because their next scheduled game is an away game and there is another one right after, he will be gone for almost a week again. He shouldn't be this upset by that, it's stupid.

"Cheer up, Roz. We'll beat everyone and come back to celebrate at my place next Friday!" Bood brings Ilya back to earth, bumping into his shoulder to get his attention.

"Of course that is what you are thinking about already. First lets score some goals." Ilya nudges him back. He does truly love his team.

"I'm just saying, something to look forward to. Maybe even bring someone for once, doesn't have to be a date or anything, just you know, would be fun, yeah?" Bood gives him a friendly smile and Ilya wonders if maybe...

"Maybe."

They win in Buffalo, lose in Florida. If Ilya is being honest, he's just eager to get home.
He's at the airport in Florida when he gets Shane's text.

Shane:

That looked painful. Did you forget your aim in Buffalo, Rozanov?

Ilya:

Fuck you.

But he is grinning down at his phone, probably looks like a lunatic but he couldn't care less.
Shane has the cutest chirps, it's like a little kitten that thinks it's big and intense.
Adorable.

Ilya:

What are you doing tomorrow night?

Shane:

I don't know, reading pregnancy books and eating sugar free ice cream?

Ilya:

Want to meet the best hockey team in the league? 😊

Shane:

Why, are the Voyageurs coming to Ottawa?

Ilya:

You wish. One of my teammates does really good BBQ parties, you can come with me, will be free dinner and you will meet cool hockey stars, even though you already know the coolest.

Shane:

You're an asshole. But would that even be okay for me to come?

Ilya frowns, why wouldn't it be okay for him to come?

Ilya:

You are my friend, of course you can come. He told me to bring someone, I am bringing my very good friend.

He can see the three dots appearing, disappearing, reappearing again, multiple times.

He doesn't get the response until after they land.

Shane:

You don't have to bring me just because you feel bad I'm alone, Ilya. But thank you.

Ilya kind of wants to strangle him, only a little bit.

He doesn't text back. Instead he gets home, drops his luggage off and goes to knock on Shane's door.

"Wha..?" Shane starts but Ilya gently pushes him inside and steps in, closing the door after himself.

"I thought you were still in Florida."

“Just got in.” Ilya says, “Now you.” He jabs a finger at Shane’s chest,

“Are very stupid today, so I had to come make sure head is still attached.”

Shane just blinks at him, confused.

“Oh my god you are so boring.” Ilya groans, shaking his head.

“I don’t feel bad for you because you are alone, I feel bad for me because I want my friend to come to stupid BBQ party with me and he is being even more stupid than hockey players with history of concussions.”

“Well, technically...” Shane starts but Ilya glares at he doesn’t finish that sentence. Instead, his expression softens, goes a little sad.

“I don’t have... very good experience, with professional hockey players taking me places, okay?”

It doesn’t take a genius to figure out what he means, not with the way his hand keeps rubbing his baby bump in gentle, slow circles, like he’s trying to ground himself.

“Ah.” Ilya says, deciding they don’t have to get into this, not right now. Shane doesn’t seem like he’s ready and he doesn’t need to know the details to get the gist of it. He’s perceptive like that.

“Is not the same.” He moves his hand to rest lightly on Shane’s shoulder instead.

“I really do like spending time with you, Shane. And... I am a very shitty captain, who would skip BBQ night with team because I want to spend more time with my new friend. So maybe I was thinking we could combine.” He gives Shane a little shrug and he can practically see the cogs turning in Shane’s brain as he processes his words.

“I’m not... the best at social events.” Shane admits after a moment,

“Is okay, is nothing formal or big, is just hockey players, family and friends.” Ilya shrugs, it’s technically true.

“Yeah, well...” Shane trails off and Ilya can’t help but wonder...

“Someone said something to you. About this. Back in Montreal, didn’t they?” He glances briefly at the baby bump, which seems to have doubled the size over the past two weeks somehow.

Shane doesn’t meet his eyes, so Ilya knows.

“Not just this... you know, it comes with... other stuff.”

“I know.” Ilya says softly now, because it’s starting to click.

Why Shane moved here suddenly, why he left his job of many years in Montreal, why he’s always so wary and cautious.

“Is different here, I promise. You won’t hear anything like that there.”

Shane lets out a snore of bitter laughter but Ilya shakes his head,

“I am serious. They are not homophobic assholes. A lot of the guys in the league are. Not this team.” If there is one thing Ilya is certain of at this point, it’s that.

“I’m not even the only one.”

“The only what?” Shane looks at him, wide eyed and like he’s afraid he’s making the wrong conclusions.

“Well, I guess maybe only one... depends how you look...”

“What are you talking about?”

“I’m bi.” Ilya hadn’t come out publicly yet but a few months ago he finally decided to come out to his teammates, Troy came out not long before him, when he started dating their social media manager, Harris, so it felt like as good time as any to come clean.

He didn’t want secrets with his team, they were good. Still, saying it out loud to someone who isn’t them is different, it feels strange but also good kind of strange.

“You’re what?” Shane gapes at him like he’s certain he heard wrong but there isn’t judgment in his expression, it’s more like he wasn’t expecting this and Ilya can’t exactly blame him.

“Means I like both women and men-“

“I know what fucking bi means, I just mean... you are..?” The surprise on Shane’s face softens, melts into something else, something else Ilya can’t quite figure out.

“Yes. Is that problem?” He lifts an eyebrow, the corners of his lips turning up in a smirk as he watches Shane going through ten stages of internal battles before responding.

“No! I mean, of course not. That would be hypocritical of me, right? I just mean... you’re... you know, they say you’re like... very into girls, I guess.” Shane is blushing as he says that and it makes his freckles look even cuter, Ilya really might just die.

“Ah, so you keep up with my dating life?” Ilya’s smirk only widens

“No! I mean... I just... get sport gossip in my algorithm sometimes, I don’t like... look for it or anything.” Ilya has a feeling that might be a lie, because Shane wouldn’t meet his eyes and the tips of his ears are a dark shade of red at this point.

“Come with me tomorrow. Promise if someone makes you uncomfortable I will kick their ass and take you home right away, if you ask.” Ilya says, voice softer now, he reaches up to cup Shane’s cheek in his hand to make him actually look at him.

He’s even more certain he wants Shane to come. He deserves to have a better experience.

“Okay.” Shane says quietly, finally meeting Ilya’s eyes.

“Okay?” Ilya smiles, stroking Shane’s cheek with his thumb. He’s almost tempted to lean in and close the gap between them, if he’s being honest.

“Okay.” Shane repeats and something between them shifts.

It’s Shane who leans in first but Ilya meets him halfway.

The kiss is somehow both soft and hungry at the same time, Ilya cups Shane’s jaw, he can feel Shane’s hand on his bicep, then on his chest, they pull back eventually but Ilya can’t help pressing a brief kiss to the corner of Shane’s lips and a few smaller ones along his jaw, enjoying the little sounds it gets out of him.

“Is okay?” He asks, lips close enough to Shane’s that he can feel his breathe.

Shane nods but Ilya needs to be sure, “Mmm?”

“Yes.”

That’s all the confirmation he needs before kissing him again, harder this time, tongue slipping past Shane’s lips, Ilya forgets the last time he wanted someone this bad.

Shane pulls back, but only to pull Ilya’s shirt off of him, he then fumbles to get his hand into Ilya’s pants.

“Fuck, Hollander.” Ilya lets out a low moan when Shane’s hand finds his cock, already half hard.

Ilya strokes Shane’s cheek with his thumb, except when his thumb brushes the corner of Shane’s lips, he just takes it in his mouth, sucking on it for a few moments before pulling away and that might be one of the hottest things Ilya has ever seen, which says a lot.

“Fuck...” Shane gasps, “I...” His eyes dart down to Ilya’s crotch, he almost starts lowering himself before the realization seems to hit him that it’s probably a bad idea to get down on his knees in his current state, so instead he fucking *pouts*.

“What is it?” Ilya laughs softly, because he’s just too adorable for his own good.

“I want...” Shane starts, his cheeks flushed but he looks determined, instead of answering properly, he moves back to sit on the couch, pulling Ilya closer and Ilya realizes what he’s trying to do.

“Careful, you will hurt yourself.” Ilya warns, running his fingers through Shane’s short hair and Shane makes a needy whine as he pulls Ilya’s pants down, along with his underwear,

“Not if you get closer.” He says before taking Ilya in his mouth, like it’s the most natural thing to do. Ilya almost laughs at how ridiculous it is, in the best way possible.

Shane’s mouth is hot on Ilya’s cock, he takes him deeper than he expected, swallowing around him before pulling back and eagerly running his tongue along the shaft.

“Fuck...” Ilya gasps, it comes out breathy and he has to brace himself on the back of the couch behind Shane to not fall over on him as he feels the heat building up and he has to hold back from moving his hips too harshly.

He tries to pull Shane off just before he cums but Shane keeps going, swallowing around him until Ilya’s mind goes completely blank, fingers tangled in Shane’s hair.

“Good?” Shane smirks when he finally pulls off, watching Ilya as he tries to remember how to breath and moves to sit next to him on the couch so he doesn’t collapse on top of him.

“Mmm... not bad.” Ilya teases, as if that wasn’t one of the best blowjobs he’s ever gotten.

“Fuck you.”

They both laugh.

Then Ilya reaches to wrap his hand around Shane's cock, needing a moment for his legs to stop feeling like they're made of jelly and not wanting him to think he's just going to leave him like that.

He rubs his thumb over the tip, smearing the precum that's dripping out already.

"Wow... never seen someone get so wet from giving a blowjob." He chuckles, finally sliding off the couch and down to his knees. He trails kisses down Shane's thighs, then to his balls, before finally slowly licking up a stripe up the shaft.

"F-Fuck... Ilya..." Shane shudders under his touch and Ilya smirks, looking up at him.

"What? Need something?"

"Jesus Christ, I'm going to kill you if you don't... just... *fuck*." The moan that comes out of Shane when Ilya takes him in his mouth almost all the way in is the most wonderful sound he's ever heard.

He wants to keep getting those noises out of him so he keeps going, bobbing his head to take more, swallowing around Shane's cock as he reaches down to squeeze his balls in his hand.

He can feel Shane tense and is only encouraged to go harder by that, until Shane's hips still as he shoots down Ilya's throat. He swallows again for good measure before pulling back a little, letting the remaining cum hit his tongue and swallowing that too, finally pulling off with a kiss to the tip.

When he looks up at Shane again he looks dazed, more relaxed than he's ever seen him and Ilya thinks, for a moment, he wants to keep seeing him like that forever.

Which is an extremely dangerous thought and he files it away for now, instead moving back up so he can pull Shane into a kiss.

"You okay?" Ilya asks some time later, they are laying back on Shane's couch, Shane has his head on Ilya's chest, Ilya's arms wrapped around him and he's still trying to catch his breath.

"Yeah..." He says after a moment, pressing a kiss to Ilya's peck,

"Perfect... just, you know, a bit winded." He laughs, though he can't help wondering.

Sure, they both leaned in for that kiss, they both were very eager to get each other off and yes, Ilya is nothing like... *him*.

This is different, it feels different. Ilya literally asked him out to his teammate's party tomorrow, that was before any of this was even on the table, right?

"I can hear you overthinking." Ilya says, bringing him back to earth and Shane's heart skips a beat, how could he always read him so well?

There is another thought nagging at him, though, and Shane can't help asking, "Do you really not mind?" His hand absently goes down to his stomach and he doesn't quite meet Ilya's eyes but he can still tell he's looking at him like he just asked the most ridiculous question in the world.

"Did it look like I minded?" Ilya's tone is light, teasing but also genuine.

His hand comes up to cup Shane's cheek, his other one finds Shane's own on his stomach and covers it.

It feels intimate, probably more intimate than it should and Shane kind of wants to cry, which would be even more embarrassing.

"You are perfect, as you are." Ilya says and Shane feels like the air has been knocked out of his lungs.

He's been called a lot of things, many compliments, many insults as well, but nobody has ever sounded so sincere, so convinced, as Ilya does when he says those words. *As you are*.

When was he ever enough as he is?

"Ilya..." Shane tries because he needs to say *something*, but he's too overwhelmed, the words don't come.

"Hey... you do not have to tell me anything, but whatever happened before... this is not that." Ilya wraps his arms back around him and holds him tight, Shane doesn't remember the last time someone made him feel so safe. He shouldn't ask for more.

He shouldn't even consider more, but before he can think better of it he hears himself ask,
"Do you have to leave tonight?"

"Not if you want me to stay." Ilya says and when Shane glances up at him he can see him smiling.

"Take me to bed?"

Chapter 3

Despite what happened the night before and despite Ilya staying the night, Shane can't help being nervous as they make their way to Ilya's car.

It's chilly outside and he starts saying something about going back to get a better jacket when something is dropped on his shoulders.

It smells like Ilya.

"I don't get cold easily, you know, Russia and all..." Ilya shrugs, wrapping Shane better in his hoodie, zipping it up.

"O-Oh... I mean, I could just go back... wouldn't it look weird? To your teammates? That I'm wearing your stuff?" Shane's brain is working overtime, overthinking all the possibilities and worst case scenarios but Ilya offers him an easy smile and squeezes his shoulder lightly.

"No. They will not even notice but if they do, nobody will care. I told you, is a very good team." He just watches Shane's expression for a few moments then adds, "But if you feel weird about it, I will wait."

"No, no. I..." Shane realizes he likes having Ilya's hoodie on, engulfed by his scent and warmth like this, it feels safe.

"I don't want to make you late." He murmurs and it gets a laugh out of Ilya, "You are a really bad liar."

They get in the car, Ilya helps him with the seatbelt even though he doesn't really need help, then presses a kiss to Shane's cheek before going around to the driver's side.

"Okay?" Ilya asks before he starts the car and Shane hesitates for a moment, he doesn't mean to, but it's enough to have Ilya turn to him fully.

He takes Shane's hand and squeezes it lightly, the pressure is reassuring, Shane didn't even realize how much he needed it.

"Sorry, I'm being weird, huh? We're friends, you're just introducing me to your other friends... I know it's nothing..." He looks away, realizing he's rambling but Ilya's hand stays

firm in his.

“Is not nothing.” Ilya says softly, the warmth in his voice makes Shane’s heart flutter.

“We *are* friends... and if it’s all you want, is okay too. But you are important to me, Shane Hollander.”

Shane’s breath hitches, did Ilya just say what he thinks he said?

Before he can overthink it anymore, Ilya lifts their hands to his lips, briefly.

“Whatever you want. My team will be good about it, would be good to have more friends here, yes?”

Shane isn’t crying.

He is not fucking crying.

“Shane..?”

He breaks down in tears. He can blame stupid hormones for that.

“S-Sorry, sorry, it’s just...”

“Hey...” Ilya’s hand comes up to rest on his neck, gently massaging it the way he’s been doing whenever Shane has been getting anxious these days.

“You’re good here. We do not have to go if it is too much.”

Shane shakes his head, not wanting Ilya to think that’s what this is.

“No, no, I want to. I just... you’re... this...” He can’t quite form a coherent sentence but Ilya, somehow, as usual, seems to understand without him having to.

He keeps massaging the back of his neck, whispering comforting words, in English, some in Russian, but the tone of his voice makes Shane relax.

After a while he stops sobbing, gratefully taking the tissues Ilya offers from the glove box.

“I’m a mess...” Shane complains,

“You’re a very cute mess.” Ilya says, poking his cheek playfully and it gets a laugh out of Shane.

“Thanks... Ilya, I... I don’t know what I’d do if I hadn’t met you.”

The ride to Boodram’s is relatively quiet but it’s a comfortable silence.

Ilya keeps one hand on the wheel, the other holding Shane’s hand.

Shane is grateful for it. It grounds him and makes it easier to calm down and not psych himself out on the way.

Turns out, he really was worried for nothing.

One of Ilya’s teammates greets them at the door with a giant smile,

Shane recognizes him as Evan Dykstra,

“So you are the mysterious Shane Hollander that’s been stealing our captain these days.” He teases lightly once they’ve introduced themselves and shook hands.

Shane flushes, “I didn’t mean...” He starts but Ilya has this shit eating grin on his face, like he’s way too satisfied and that makes Shane glare at him instead, “Oh, fuck you, Rozanov.”

That only makes Dykstra’s smile widen, they’re soon joined by the Centaurs goalie, Wyatt Hayes,

“Who did Roz piss off this time?” He laughs, they all keep teasing and bickering and it’s all good natured, they include Shane like he’s part of the group, not like he’s some weird outsider.

It’s so different to what he’s used to from Montreal he’s kind of in awe. Ilya wasn’t lying, not that he thought that he was lying but... everyone here is just... nice.

Some of the guys’ wives are there too and they’re all completely in the loop too, nobody is insulting anyone in a way that’s actually hurtful.

“Sorry we’re late!” A bright, slightly breathless voice comes from behind them and when Shane turns around he sees one guy he recognizes as Troy Barrett, next to him is a shorter man and Shane doesn’t notice much else because he realizes they are *holding hands*. Not like, one of them is dragging the other by the hand, their fingers are laced together, they don’t pull apart when they reach the group.

“We got... um, distracted.” The bright shorter man says, his cheeks flushed and Shane can see Troy swallow visibly.

“Can’t keep your hands off your man, Harris?” Ilya wiggles his eyebrows playfully, “Shane, this is Harris Drover, the team’s social media manager, savior of our images and Troy Barrett, his boyfriend.” He provides helpfully for Shane’s benefit.

“Oh, um... Hi...” Shane clears his throat, not sure how to process this information. He didn’t even know Troy was gay? Bi? Anything that isn’t straight? Then again, it’s not like he’s been following hockey gossip that closely over the past few months.

“This is my good friend Shane. He is new in Ottawa, was big coach in Montreal!” Ilya is exaggerating but Shane shakes their hands and greets them all the same.

He tries not to think too much about the fact Ilya keeps introducing him as his good friend. It’s not like they were anything more, Shane was the one who was freaking out in the car too.

This only makes sense. He can’t help feeling a little greedy though. Maybe it’s just his hormones again.

It gets worse when one of the rookies, Luca Haas, joins them.

Luca is sweet and young and there is no reason for Shane to dislike him - and he doesn’t, really. But the kid looks at Ilya like he’s the literal sun and beams when Ilya returns any attention.

It’s stupid, really, Luca could be Ilya’s baby brother, it probably is nothing more than that. Shane knows that. And even if he wasn’t, it’s not like *they* are something, right?

“You are overthinking again.” Ilya’s voice takes him out of his thoughts, his arm wraps around his shoulders, grounding him.

“I’m not.” Shane lies with a slight pout,

“Ilya, stop bothering him,” Lisa, Wyatt’s wife, slides into the chair next to him.

“You know I can’t do that.” Ilya winks at her and Shane melts, it was stupid of him to feel jealous when Ilya is just so... Ilya. It’s like he always knows the level of energy to respond with, knows the right thing to say.

Shane learns Lisa is a doctor at a children's hospital and it's not long before he has her contact saved in his phone and is made to promise to get in touch if he ever needs anything.

He's touched. More than he could ever put in words.

Nobody treats him differently that night, nobody groans over the fact he can't drink alcohol, in fact, Cassie brings him ginger ale before he could even say anything. He has a suspicion it's Ilya's work but it doesn't make it less nice.

By the end of the night, most guys are drunk or at least tipsy, though he hadn't seen Ilya drink more than just the first beer he had when they had just arrived a few hours ago.

"You can drink, you know, I can drive back." He tells him at some point but Ilya just shakes his head and smiles at him in response.

"Tired?" Ilya asks him now and Shane wants to say he's fine, not wanting to drag Ilya home too early and ruin his night but he breaks into a yawn instead of responding, which doesn't help the argument.

"Okay everyone! Was very fun, is now baby's bedtime!" Ilya announces, much to Shane's embarrassment. It gets a wave of laughter out of the others,

"Blink twice if you need saving from crazy Russian man, Shane!" Someone calls and Shane can't help laughing too.

"I think I'm okay." He smiles, looking at Ilya, who wraps an arm around his shoulders again, like he's been doing all night, and does a quick round of goodbyes before leading Shane out to the car.

"Thank you for taking me." Shane says once they're on the road, heart fluttering as he recalls details from the evening.

"I told you it would be good." Ilya smiles, satisfied.

"Your team is different, than what I'm used to... good different. They're... nice." Shane can see Ilya's smile widening, he looks *proud* and he should be, his team is wonderful. If they start winning more in hockey, Shane has to admit, he'd probably ditch the Voyageurs in a heartbeat. Perhaps he already has.

Over the next few weeks, Ilya finds himself dropping by Shane's place more often than his own after practice. Most nights they end up naked in Shane's bed, sometimes they do that without doing more than making out or just cuddling. It's comfortable, it fills a void Ilya never even realized he had in his heart.

The dark thoughts quiet down when they're together and when they're not he fills his mind with thoughts of Shane anyway. It's better this way, Ilya feels calmer, he has a purpose, even if the darkness still sits at the edge, looming over him from the shadows.

This week they have a home game, they wrap up practice late afternoon the day before the game and he drops by the store to buy one of those large pregnancy pillows he saw on the internet when he was looking into things that help with back pain after Shane texted him that he had to call out of work today because he couldn't get up.

It took everything to not be completely irresponsible and drop practice in the middle of the day but Ilya knows Shane would be upset with him if he did, too.

Instead he gets the pillow and makes a quick groceries trip so he can make them dinner, he's been enjoying these little moments, making dinner for someone who isn't just himself.

He never really bothered cooking before, even though he enjoyed it. It felt like a waste of time and energy when it was just for himself.

He lets himself in, Shane gave him his spare keys a while ago, after he had a scary fainting spell. It wasn't serious, thankfully, and Ilya was there with him already at the time but they agreed it would be better if he had a way to check on Shane, just in case.

"Shane? Is me." He calls out, not wanting to startle him, but he frowns when there is no response right away.

He drops the bags he's holding and makes his way further into the apartment, looking around the living room and the kitchen, before making his way to Shane's bedroom, it's then that he hears a whimper.

"Shane?" He asks softly again, just in case, but still no response.

Ilya walks in the dark bedroom to find Shane, thankfully, in bed and not on the floor like last time. As he steps closer to the bed, he realizes Shane is asleep, his eyes are closed but his

expression is restless, a nightmare? Ilya is all too familiar with those.

He hesitates about waking him up, though, it's not always the best way, especially when he doesn't actually know.

"No..." Shane whimpers again, and it's then that Ilya notices the wetness on his cheeks and his heart can't take it anymore, he gently rests a hand on Shane's cheek, wiping the tears with his thumbs,

"Shane... hey..."

"I'm not... I... can't..." Shane cries and Ilya's heart shatters into a million pieces, he doesn't know what happened, he doesn't know what's haunting Shane in his sleep, but he can tell whatever it is, it's bad and Ilya wants nothing more than to take him out of it and provide some sort of comfort. Maybe the sort of comfort he secretly wishes *he* had.

"Shane... you are okay... you are safe here..." He says softly and finally Shane wakes up, with a gasp, chest heaving as he tries to catch his breath, a few more tears slipping out.

"Ilya...?" He asks, voice still strained and broken as his eyes finally focus on Ilya.

"Yeah, is just me... you had nightmare, yes? Is just a dream..." Ilya keeps stroking Shane's cheek with his thumb,

"I thought I was..." Shane starts but he shakes his head, "Sorry, I didn't mean to worry you, you're right, just a stupid dream." He says and Ilya can tell he's trying to compose himself.

"No..." He takes a seat on the edge of the bed, brushing the sweaty hair off Shane's forehead, "You don't need to tell me, but if you want, I will listen."

"It's nothing... I..." Shane bites his lip, looking away, "I was back in Montreal, the... the other guy..." His hand goes to rest on his stomach and Ilya doesn't need him to elaborate more than that to understand who he means.

"It just kind of happened, you know?"

Ilya just watches him, letting him take his time and decide how much he wants to share.

"He was volunteering at the school for a bit, having professional players interact with the kids does them good, you probably know that, though... so... we hit off, he asked me out but we couldn't go out in public so... I went to his place. Things got..." He trails off and is quiet for a few moments, Ilya thinks of telling him it's okay again, that he doesn't have to but then Shane takes a deep breath and continues.

"Intense." He says quietly and it hits Ilya like a truck.

"You were not ready." He says, it's not a question.

“Stupid, right? I should have known, going to his place... I mean, I *knew*, I’m not stupid... but... when it came to it... I didn’t realize he didn’t even put on a condom until it was way too late. So...” He glances down, Ilya can see the shame in his eyes, he can’t even imagine how torn he must have been this entire time.

“Is not your fault.” He says softly but firmly, covering Shane’s hand with his own.

“I let him.”

“Shane. Look at me.” Ilya insists and Shane finally does.

“Is not your fault. He is piece of shit, if I ever find out who... but that doesn’t matter right now. What matters is you are having baby, is *your* baby. Nobody will ever take them away from you, yes?”

Shane gives him a tearful nod, sniffing a little.

“He has connections in Montreal...” He says after another minute of silence, “Said if I don’t ‘get rid of it’...” A shiver runs through Shane as he says those words and Ilya can feel it in his own spine, he feels sick.

“He would make sure I couldn’t coach anyone in the city. Turns out, not an empty threat, so...”

“So you came here.” Ilya deduces and it breaks his heart all over again, he is happy Shane is here, because it means they met, it means he’s away from assholes like that, means Ilya gets him in his life. But the fact it happened like this... he’s fucking furious but he knows the anger won’t help right now, so he pushes it aside.

“So I came here.” Shane nods, “I thought of doing it... I could do it... but... I don’t know, it felt like from something terrible... I could maybe make something good, you know? I’m probably not making any sense...” He laughs dryly but Ilya shakes his head and squeezes his hand.

“It makes all the sense. Is your choice, only yours. Will be luckiest baby in all world.” He smiles slightly, bringing Shane’s hand to his lips.

“Ilya...”

“Is just truth.”

“Fuck, please come here...” Shane’s voice breaks again and Ilya doesn’t need to be told twice, he climbs on the bed and wraps his arms around him. Shane practically melts against him and Ilya reaches up to run his fingers through Shane’s hair, he can feel him shaking slightly, he knows he’s crying.

“You’re good here... Shane... I will not let anything happen to you or baby, yes?”

“I know...” Shane whispers, breaking into a sob mid-word, “You’re too good to me. To us...”

Ilya can’t help smiling at that, he keeps stroking Shane’s hair, tilting his head to press his lips to Shane’s temple, just holding there before he speaks.

“Because you are important.” He says finally, “Because you deserve to be taken care of and protected.”

“So do you...” Shane says softly after a few moments of silence and he pulls back, looking up into Ilya’s eyes and Ilya feels like his heart might explode.

“I like you.” He blurts out before he can stop himself, it’s not entirely true, what he feels is beyond that at this point but he doesn’t want to freak Shane out even more. He’s about to add something, tell him he doesn’t need to respond, that they can stay as they are, nothing has to change but then the corners of Shane’s lips curve up and his eyes are practically *shining*.

“I like you too.” He says, handing coming up to cup Ilya’s cheek and Ilya wonders if maybe he’s dreaming, maybe this is just all happening in his head, except Shane’s touch is warm and firm, it has to be real.

“I want to be there for you when you need someone, when baby comes... whatever help you need. Even if is just get ice cream in middle of the night.”

Shane laughs tearfully, “Ilya, you already *are* getting me ice cream in the middle of the night, that happened like, three times just this week.”

Ilya grins proudly, “Yes, I want to continue doing that, Shane.” He leans in closer, brushing their noses together.

“If you let me.”

“Ilya...” Shane says his name so softly, Ilya barely hears it, and then Shane’s lips are on his and he forgets about everything else.

This kiss is different, it’s softer than usual, more reverent, neither of them is in a rush for it to go anywhere.

Then Shane pulls back, his eyes go wide and Ilya’s heart sinks, did he do something wrong? Did he just fuck everything up?

“Shane? What is happening?” He asks, even more concerned when he realizes Shane brings his hand to his stomach.

Then Shane smiles and wordlessly takes Ilya’s hand and guides it to rest on his stomach too, a beat, two beats, and then Ilya feels it.

“Is that..?”

“I think they are making themselves known...” Shane laughs, a tear rolling down his cheek that Ilya reaches with his free hand to wipe.

“Very strong, like dad.” Ilya chuckles, unable to believe Shane is actually sharing it with him, it feels like a sacred moment, something much more intimate than anything they’ve done together. More than anything Ilya has ever done in his entire life.

“I...” Shane’s smile drops slightly, “I know we come as a package deal and...” But Ilya cuts him off with a kiss this time.

“I know that, I knew that from very beginning, yes?” Ilya reminds him, pressing their foreheads together, “If you let me... I will be here for both of you. If you want...”

It’s his turn to overthink now, mind racing as he considers all the possibilities, that Shane might not want him in the long run, that Shane deserves to find someone better, less broken, less dark. Maybe this is all a terrible idea. He should take it back, he should...

“Ilya.” Shane brings him out of it, voice gentle, a press of his lips to Ilya’s.

“I want.” He whispers, brushing their noses against each other again, “I want that more than I’ve wanted anything in a very long time... but... I don’t want to hold you back.”

“You would not hold me back, Shane.” Ilya is beyond relieved that *this* is what Shane is worried about. “I want this.”

“Okay.” Shane finally smiles again, Ilya can’t help mirroring the smile, he kisses him again, then pulls him back into his arms, both of them relishing in the closeness.

Chapter 4

It's not that things change drastically after that night.

Ilya still comes over pretty much every day after practice and home games.

They still text back and forth throughout the day and when he's away for games, they still joke around and have dinner together when they can.

It feels more natural now, less guarded, Shane feels less like he's building everything up in his mind and is about to lose it all any second. It's a relief.

He stops coaching when he gets to his third trimester, he can't exactly skate and even standing at the rink and yelling commands gets him too winded now.

He has more than enough savings and passive income from his real estate investments that his mom got him on early in his career, he doesn't *need* to be actively coaching on top of it right now. He misses it, though. He misses hockey.

Ilya gets him tickets for the next home game, which Shane accepts despite the panic bubbling inside of him when he thinks how that would look, for him to show up in Ilya's seats. Especially now that he's in his third trimester and very visibly pregnant.

Ilya assures him he doesn't give a fuck and Shane decides to trust him.

He ends up enjoying it, though he finds himself hyperfocusing on Ilya rather than the game as a whole, which is very new to him when it comes to hockey.

Ottawa wins that night and Ilya is a fucking star.

Shane makes sure to let him know that when they're back home later that night, though he can't quite move like he usually would, Ilya assures him this is more than enough,

"Anything with you is more than enough, solnyshka." Ilya murmurs against his skin and Shane gasps, "Sun?"

He can feel Ilya's breath hitching, the tremor that runs through him as he looks up, his eyes glassy and surprised.

Shane smiles, though his cheeks feel all too warm suddenly, “I’ve been learning... a bit.” He admits, “I want to understand.”

Ilya comes up to kiss him, Shane can feel the wetness on his cheeks when he brings his hand up, he gently wipes the tears away.

“You’re important to me too.” He whispers, because he realizes he never vocalized it back, not like this, and maybe Ilya needs to hear that too.

“Fuck, Shane...”

Later that night, when Shane wakes up, he realizes Ilya’s side of the bed is empty.

He waits, figuring maybe he just got up to the bathroom or to get water, but the bathroom light is off. Shane gets up, first to pee, because the baby thinks his bladder is a squeeze toy nowadays. Then he makes his way to the living room, the door to the balcony is slightly opened. Shane grabs the throw blanket of the couch and heads outside,

“Ilya..?” He asks quietly, not wanting to startle him.

Ilya turns around, he has an unlit cigarette between his lips.

“You smoke?” Shane asks, frowning slightly because smoking is bad for Ilya and second hand smoke is probably very bad for the baby, but the cigarette remains unlit and he sees no lighter in sight.

“Used to... I didn’t... you know, I would not do it here. Just...” Ilya seems to struggle with his words, Shane noticed it happens sometimes, when he’s stressed, too tired or too emotional, despite his English being impeccable most of the time.

He steps closer, throwing the blanket around both of their shoulders, wrapping an arm around Ilya’s waist to bring him closer. He’s freezing.

“Hey... you know you can talk to me, right?” He asks softly after a moment, leaning his head against Ilya’s shoulder and he can feel him relax a little.

“Is not... is not something I know how to say.” Ilya says finally,

“You can say it in Russian, if you want, I probably still won’t understand much but... maybe it would help?”

Ilya lets out a shaky laugh and leans a little more against Shane’s side.

“You are too good to me, Shane Hollander.” He whispers instead,

“I could say the same thing about you.” Shane lifts an eyebrow at him, still feeling like there is more to it he just can’t seem to grasp.

“I am just maybe... thinking too much tonight.”

“Because I said you’re important to me too?” Shane makes a guess,

“Maybe... maybe I’m afraid you will get to know me more and decide is not worth it. Maybe I do not deserve being important to you.” Ilya speaks quietly, voice low and shaky.

He is actually scared. It’s so silly because he has nothing to be scared of, Shane has never, in his life, been so certain of anything. Other than maybe when he decided he is having the baby. But he wants to understand better, he wants to be there better for Ilya when he needs him, like he seems to right now.

“Would you tell me... why you think that?” He asks gently, stroking Ilya’s shoulder with his thumb.

They sit there in silence for what feels like a long time.

“I have told you before... my parents are both dead and I do not talk to my brother, yes?” Ilya finally breaks it and Shane nods,

“Yeah... you said it’s complicated.” He recalls, Ilya told him he never really got on well with his father and brother, and after his father’s death, he cut ties altogether. He wanted to ask more back then but even that much information seemed like a lot for Ilya to share so he didn’t push.

“It is.” Ilya remains quiet for a few more minutes, then he lets out a shaky breath.

“I’m sure you still miss them...” Shane says softly, “Even if they sucked...”

“My mother didn’t suck. She was great.” Ilya sounds a little choked up so Shane presses closer, reaching up to run his fingers through Ilya’s curls.

“How did she die?”

“By accident.” Ilya says and Shane patiently waits for him to continue, at his own pace.

“She accidentally swallowed a whole bottle of pills.”

Fuck. Shane’s heart clenches, he can’t even begin to imagine.

“How old were you?”

“Twelve.” Ilya says, leaning into Shane’s touch as he speaks, looking ahead at the night sky, “I found her.”

“Ilya...” Shane’s heart *shatters* completely, all of that is terrible, he hugs Ilya closer, pressing a kiss to his cheek. “I’m sorry, that’s...”

“I don’t want you to think she was weak.” Ilya says instead,

“I don’t.” Shane replies instantly because he really, really doesn’t.

“She was so funny and beautiful... she was so... sad. And my dad was so hard on her...” Ilya bites his lip and Shane can see he’s contemplating if he wants to share more.

“Sometimes I think maybe... maybe I am like her.”

“You think about..?”

“No, no... not like that... but sometimes I think I could... and sometimes I think maybe I should not be around you. With baby... what if...” Ilya seems to lose his words again but Shane understands this time.

He understand and it hurts. It hurts that Ilya feels like he has to deal with that alone, that he had to deal with it all alone until now. It hurts that he thinks him being here could be something bad.

Shane moves so he can face Ilya properly, he cups his cheeks in both his hands and looks into his eyes,

“Ilya, you are *human*. You’ve had a lot of hard experiences, I can’t even begin to understand half of it, how it must feel. But I know one thing...” He pulls Ilya closer, so he can brush their lips together briefly,

“There is no one, not a single person, I would rather do this with, okay? I mean it, you *are* important to me. As you are, good and bad. Even when you’re sad. All I’m asking is... don’t keep it all to yourself anymore, okay? I want to be there for you too.”

Ilya looks back at him, eyes bloodshot and glassy, still, but he nods.

“Okay.”

“Good.” Shane kisses him again, “We should head back inside, you’re freezing.”

He says softly, but neither of them moves just yet.

Ilya wraps his arms around him too now, presses his forehead to the crook of Shane’s neck and murmurs something in Russian, Shane doesn’t quite catch it.

Then Ilya pulls back and looks into his eyes again, their foreheads touching,

“I love you.” He says wetly, voice thick with emotion, Shane’s breath hitches.

“Holy shit.”

“I mean...” Ilya starts and Shane realizes he needs to respond before Ilya gets a chance to try and take it back, think something stupid.

“I love you too.” He says, more certain than ever.

“*Fuck.*” Ilya’s voice breaks and he hugs Shane a little tighter and Shane brings his hand up again to stroke his hair, the way he can tell soothes Ilya.

“Oh my god, I love you so much...” He says, kissing Ilya’s forehead.

They stay like this for a while, just breathing in each other’s presence, then Ilya kisses his shoulder, pulls back and kisses him on the lips again..

“Hey...” Shane says softly, “Let’s go back to bed, okay?”

Once they’re in bed, Shane covers them with his comforter, the throw blanket on top, just in case, and hugs Ilya again. He’s shivering, still and Shane isn’t sure if it’s from the cold or something entirely else.

Eventually, his breathing evens, his body relaxes and Shane knows he’s fallen asleep.

Only then he allows himself to shut his eyes and drift off too.

The next morning Ilya wakes up feeling better.

It probably has something to do with the warmth of Shane’s arms wrapped around him.

He turns slightly so he can look at him, Shane looks so peaceful like that too.

He stirs awake, a sleepy, content smile spreading on his face when their eyes meet.

“Good morning...” Shane murmurs, snuggling a little closer.

“Good morning.” Ilya chuckles, leaning over to kiss his cheek, because he knows Shane would kick his ass if he kissed him properly before brushing their teeth.

“Did you sleep okay?” Shane asks and Ilya feels a little guilty for worrying him last night, but then he remembers what it led to and his heart fills with so much affection he doesn’t know what to do with it.

“Hey…” Shane’s hand comes up to cup Ilya’s cheek,

“More than okay.” Ilya smiles, unable to resist leaning in and kissing the tip of his nose.

“You?”

“Good, I had my favorite pillow.” Shane breaks into a grin.

“Are you going to morning skate?” He asks and Ilya shakes his head, he probably should but it’s optional and he isn’t sure he has the mental capacity to do it right now, after last night, all he wants is Shane.

“I will brush teeth and make breakfast?” He offers, stretching so he can get up, as much as he would like to just laze around in bed, Shane needs proper breakfast.

“Okay…” Shane smiles and Ilya truly isn’t sure how he’s supposed to not melt every time he gets one of those directed at him.

Ilya is just about to call Shane over as he sets their food on the table when the doorbell rings and Shane emerges from the bedroom, looking confused.

“Expecting someone?” Ilya asks,

“No…” Shane frowns as he makes his way to the door to check who it is, his expression shifts into panic, which makes Ilya step closer.

“Who is it?” He asks, worried.

Shane swallows and looks at him with wide eyes, “My mom.”

“Oh?” Ilya is confused, as far as Shane has told him, his parents seem to be great. Somewhat boring, like him, but they seem good. So why is Shane panicking right now?

“What is it?”

"I... well, I may have been putting off telling them about... well, this. Us? I didn't know how to because I didn't know myself what we were doing until recently and then..." Shane runs out of breath by the end of the sentence and Ilya rests his hand on his shoulder.

"Shane. Breath." Ilya says softly, "You do not have to tell her anything if you are not ready. Maybe I am just friend, yes?"

Shane scans him then laughs, shaking his head, "Ilya you're half naked in my apartment at 9 AM." He hesitates for a moment, "What if I tell her?"

"Then you tell her." Ilya squeezes Shane's shoulder, "But maybe better open door before she decides someone kidnapped you." He adds with a little smile.

"Yeah, right, okay." Shane takes a deep breath before finally unlocking the door.

Yuna Hollander's expression shifts between concern, confusion and surprise in a matter of seconds.

"Hi mom." Shane says awkwardly and Yuna snaps out of it.

"Shane, sorry I didn't call, I was in the neighborhood and thought I'd bring you some fruit." She holds up a groceries bag, "Didn't think you would have company." She eyes Ilya cautiously, Ilya can tell she knows exactly who he is, the glint of recognition in her eyes is not something he's unfamiliar with.

"Oh... I mean, this is Ilya, Rozanov... but you already know that..." Shane mumbles, blushing and Ilya would die of how cute he's being if he wasn't a little nervous himself.

"Oh." Yuna doesn't offer much commentary, still taking in the scene in front of her.

"Can you just like... come in and we can sit down or something?" Shane asks, voice very much on edge at this point.

Yuna's expression softens instantly, "Of course."

She steps inside and Ilya sticks to Shane's side as they make their way to the couch and take a seat.

"So..." Yuna looks between the two of them and Ilya has a feeling she already figured it out and is just letting Shane tell her on his own terms. He can tell she cares.

"Is very nice to meet you." Ilya holds his hand out and Yuna shakes it, still scanning him head to toe and glancing between the two of them. Ilya can't exactly blame her, with what he knows happened and him being who he is, especially with his reputation from Boston sticking around even though he hasn't exactly been sleeping around since he moved here.

"Ilya is my neighbor, he helped me when I just moved in and we became friends and then we became..." Shane trails off so Ilya decides to be helpful,

“Lovers.”

“No, Ilya, that’s gross.” Shane says, exasperated. Ilya isn’t sure why it’s gross but maybe he used the wrong word, English is weird sometimes. Most of the time.

“Oh... so you weren’t lying when you said you’re not alone.” Yuna finally breaks into a smile.

“You thought I was lying?” Shane practically pouts and Ilya can’t help chuckling quietly,

“I can’t imagine why.” He tells Shane, “He does not like asking for help.”

“Tell me about it.” Yuna laughs, Ilya can sense her relaxing and it makes him feel much more at ease too. He knew Shane’s parents are good but he had almost forgotten what good parents are like. His mother died so long ago, it’s different.

“Are you two just here to gang up on me?” Shane folds his arms.

“No, I am here to make sure my very pregnant son doesn’t starve my grandchild before they are born.” Yuna lifts an eyebrow, setting the bag of fruit on the coffee table.

“We were just about to have breakfast, would you like to join us?” Ilya asks her, ignoring Shane just to annoy him a little.

“Who cooked?” Yuna looks at him skeptically,

“Ilya cooked. He wouldn’t let me do anything.” Shane complains, which makes both Ilya and Yuna laugh.

“Well, then. If I’m not intruding, I would love to hear all about your... neighborly adventures. Maybe not too much.” She adds quickly,

“Mom!” Shane groans and Ilya is grinning as he makes his way to the kitchen.

“So...” Yuna nudges Shane’s shoulder while he’s still staring after Ilya.

“So?” Shane asks, a little dazed still,

“So... is this serious? Is he good to you? And the baby? Does his team know?” She throws the questions at him so rapidly Shane gets a little dizzy.

“Mom, please. Just... it is... serious. I think. He’s good to both of us, like... I never thought someone could be like that good.” He admits, cheeks feeling warm but he needs his mom to know how important Ilya is, because he needs the most important people in his life to understand.

“It’s not like... you know, before. He’s... different. Not like what they say about him either.”

Yuna hums thoughtfully, he knows all the cogs in her brain are turning and thinking of all the scenarios, much like his own tends to do, but maybe ten times more intense.

“I have met his team. I mean, before we were... you know, official or anything but it’s really, really nothing like back in...” He trails off again, it’s stupid, really, how hard it is still to bring this up, especially to his parents. It’s embarrassing, even though he knows she has never judged him for it. She wanted to sue the hell out of that asshole but Shane convinced her to let it go. He didn’t want the drama, he just wanted to live his life, in peace.

“I would tell them in a heartbeat if Shane wants me to.” Ilya says behind them and makes Shane jump a little, heart fluttering at how certain he sounds.

“Ilya... I...”

“You do not have to want to.” Ilya rests a hand on Shane’s shoulder and he relaxes into it instantly.

“Come on, food is ready.”

Breakfast with his mom and Ilya is not something Shane expected to be experiencing when he woke up this morning but it turns out, once they got past the initial caution stage, Yuna was just about ready to adopt Ilya as her son, maybe even replace Shane with him, if given the chance. It warms his heart, because Ilya deserves to feel just as loved and he knows he hasn’t in a very long time.

By the time they are done with breakfast, Yuna has already made both of them promise to come over for dinner later this week, has exchanged phone numbers with Ilya, and has complimented his hockey skills more than once, which is big praise coming from her.

Shane feels like his heart could burst from how good this feels, to watch them like this.

“I’m sorry, I know she can be... intense.” He tells Ilya once they’re alone again and Ilya just laughs,

“Yeah, I see where you get it from.” He’s grinning and Shane can’t even bring himself to be annoyed, “Fuck you...” He says and it practically comes out as an endearment.

“She is nice.” Ilya says eventually, “I think I forgot what real families are like.”

Shane’s heart clenches painfully and he pulls Ilya into a hug.

“You know you’re already part of it too, right?” He whispers into Ilya’s soft hair.

“Not alone anymore.” He kisses the top of his head and he can feel Ilya melting against him.

“My dad is going to love you too, hope you like puzzles.” He adds with a smile and he can feel Ilya’s shoulder shaking, this time he’s not sure if he’s laughing or crying, maybe both, but he continues to hold him like this, it feels like Ilya needs this.

Dinner with the Hollanders turns out to be a delight.

David makes Chicken Parmesan, which Ilya has now declared to be his new favorite dish.

Yuna gets out tea, some pastries and hand pies Ilya picked up in town after practice earlier.

Nothing feels forced, there is none of the tension Ilya has learned to associate with ‘family dinners’. They bicker and tease each other, lovingly, they let Ilya in on inside jokes and embarrass Shane, much to Shane’s dismay and Ilya’s delight.

There is a small part in the back of his mind reminding him how he never had this, how he could never really have this. But he’s taken out of that spiral by Shane’s foot touching his under the table.

“You okay?” Shane whispers, so that only Ilya can hear and he nods but Shane doesn’t look convinced.

“We can call it a night if you want, I know they can be...” He glances towards the kitchen, where his parents insisted to take care of the dishes, refusing any help from either of them.

“No, no, is okay. They are very nice. They love you.” Ilya smiles softly, yes he is sad he can’t ever have this with his own mother, or father for that matter. But seeing how loved Shane is, getting even just a glimpse of what it’s like, feels like more than he could ever dare to ask for.

“I think they love *you*, too. Now that you have won them over.” Shane chuckles, then leans in for a brief kiss.

“Of course they do, I am very cool.”

“Oh fuck you, Rozanov.”

Ilya wiggles his eyebrows with a smirk, happy to divert the attention to something that isn’t how affected he is by witnessing a simple family dinner with his boyfriend.

“Ilya, do you want to help me with this puzzle? I’m stuck and these two have no patience.” David asks when he returns, Ilya glances at Shane, who’s grinning and takes that as a good sign.

“Of course. Puzzle sounds very exciting!” He lies, except it’s not exactly a lie, is it?

Turns out puzzles can be exciting, if you’re doing them with the right people.

Yuna and Shane both keep arguing over hockey predictions and giving unsolicited puzzle advice, while he and David carefully assemble it together, piece by piece.

It's one of the most peaceful dinners Ilya has ever attended and by the end of the night, when they're back at Shane's place, he pulls him into a tight hug and whispers, "Thank you." In his ear. He knows it probably makes no sense, but Shane doesn't comment, instead he just kisses Ilya's jaw, then his lips, then pulls him to the bathroom to shower together.

"I always wondered what it would be like to have family like this..." Ilya admits quietly once they're cuddling in bed after.

"Ilya..."

"No, I mean, is good. Is... nice."

Shane finds Ilya's hand and Ilya laces their fingers together.

"I know it's not the same, of course not, but... for what it's worth, you are part of it now, too." Shane kisses him softly and moves their hands to rest on his stomach, Ilya just about melts all over again.

"Okay." Ilya whispers and kisses Shane again because nothing he could say feels like enough.

Chapter 5

Chapter Notes

Sorry for taking so long with this one, life got very hectic and then I fell and hurt my hand last week so typing has been fun lol anyway hope you enjoy this chapter!

The next few weeks fly by before Shane even realizes it.

It's been getting harder to move around but he stubbornly sticks to the recommended workout regimes and diet, he refuses to get completely out of shape.

He's been better about visiting his parents these days, something about the way they just accepted Ilya as their own, watching them together, shifted his thought process from not wanting to burden them to just wanting to have more time with them when he can.

And maybe it has something to do with the fact Shane's apartment started feeling extremely empty and too quiet now that Ilya has been getting more and more busy.

Its odd, Shane has never minded peace and quiet, he craved it more often than not.

Except Ilya is a different kind of presence, he's loud and ridiculous but Shane loves every tiny bit of it, even when he's being a menace.

That doesn't mean they don't fight.

Especially now that Shane gets more irritated by the smallest things, Ilya being an ass is the last thing he needs and of course today of all days, he decides to get on Shane's case.

"You need proper food, Shane, you can't survive on gross smoothies, is not healthy." Ilya tells him that morning, it's their last morning together, before Ilya flies off to Tampa.

Ilya has been doting on him more than usual these days and Shane knows it's because he feels bad leaving him alone. He knows that because Ilya suggested the insane, completely ridiculous idea of him figuring out a way to just not go. Shane had to enlist Yuna's help to convince him that was a terrible idea and Shane would be staying with his parents for a few days anyway, so he's not even going to be alone.

“Ilya, it’s literally a health smoothie and I eat enough food.” Shane groans, it comes out a bit more snappy than he means but he’s tired, his entire body aches, he’s too hot all the time and he really, really, doesn’t want to do this right now.

“At least have some eggs.” Ilya insists, pushing a plate of scrambled eggs towards him.

Shane should really just eat it, it’s not even that he doesn’t want to, it smells good and he *is* actually kind of hungry but the words spill out of him before he can even think to control them.

“Fuck off, I’m not a fucking baby!”

“I never said you were.” Ilya frowns, and Shane can’t quite read his expression, he doesn’t look angry or upset, instead he looks like he’s trying to read Shane’s mind and scan his soul for some reason.

“I’m just worried, because you and baby need...” Ilya starts but Shane cuts him off,

“I fucking know what my fucking baby needs!” *Fuck.*

It’s only once the words have left his mouth, that Shane realizes how it sounds, he wants to take it back, he opens his mouth to say something but Ilya’s expression is so heartbreaking he can’t find the words.

“Right.” Ilya says and Shane can hear the tremor in it, despite Ilya’s obvious effort to keep it steady. “Okay.”

“Ilya-“

“I am sorry I overstepped, you are right. Is not my baby, is yours.” Ilya says quietly, and when Shane looks at him he can see the tears in his eyes that Ilya is desperately holding back, which instantly makes him tear up as well.

“Ilya, no, that’s not what I...” He tries but Ilya just sets down his still mostly full coffee mug and shakes his head, “Is true. I should go, flight is soon.”

It’s true, to a degree, he was going to leave in a little while anyway but Shane knows that’s not why and it’s *killing* him.

“Ilya, wait.”

“Is okay, Shane.” Ilya insists but he sounds distant, like he has put all the walls back up and left Shane on the other side.

“No, it’s not, I didn’t mean that. I just...”

Ilya sighs, Shane loses his words again.

They just stand there for a few moments, then Ilya steps closer, presses a kiss to his forehead and says,

“Maybe we need some time apart. To... figure things out, yes?”

That finally has the tears rolling down Shane’s cheeks, this is not how he wanted this morning to go, this is not what he meant at all, he feels so stupid and gross and...

“Okay...” He says quietly, looking down but Ilya cups his cheeks in his hands and lifts his face so he doesn’t have a choice but to look at him. He can feel Ilya’s thumbs gently wiping the tears away.

“Is less than one week.” He promises, kissing Shane briefly on the lips and then he’s gone.

Shane doesn’t even get to tell him he loves him, that he’s sorry again. He knows it’s better not to go after him. Ilya is probably right, Shane needs to figure out how to accept the care without feeling like it’s taking his independence away. He knows it’s stupid, he knows Ilya doesn’t mean it that way at all. The same way his parents don’t.

Fuck, has he fucked everything up now? What if Ilya comes back and breaks up with him? If he realizes Shane isn’t worth it, that he’s too much, too demanding.

He spends the next half an hour repeating it all in his head, another half an hour trying to think of every possible outcome and worst case scenario, then he grabs his phone and with shaky hands calls his mom.

“Shane? What’s wrong?” She asks because somehow she always knows.

“I messed up.” He says quietly,

“What? With what? Shane? Are you okay? Do you need me to take you to the hospital?” She asks and Shane can hear the ring of her picking up her keys so he hurries to say,

“No, no, with... with Ilya.”

“Oh.” Yuna sounds relieved which is weird to him, “Honey, I don’t think you can mess up with Ilya. Why don’t you tell me what happened?”

He tells her, hating himself more and more as he repeats what he said, how it sounded, how hurt Ilya looked.

“Oh, Shane...” She says sympathetically, “It’s going to be okay, you’re not going to lose him over something like this, believe me. You can ask your dad the ridiculous arguments we got into while I was pregnant with you...” She trails off for a few moments, then sighs.

“He loves you, you love him. You will figure it out.” She promises and despite everything, Shane believes her, he wants to, because Yuna Hollander has never been wrong.

“Okay...” He murmurs, taking a deep breath in an attempt to calm himself down.

“Do you want me to pick you up? I don’t want you driving like this and you shouldn’t be alone...” She suggests,

“No... I...” Shane’s heart sinks, he almost forgot, Hayden is coming to visit him this afternoon. Fuck.

“Hayden is coming today... maybe I should tell him to not-“

“Oh but that’s wonderful!” Yuna cuts him off, “I know you might not feel like it right now, but I think it’s a good idea for you to spend some time with Hayden, you two haven’t seen each other in a while, might do you some good. Call me if you want me to come by at any time, okay?” She adds,

“Yeah, okay...” Shane agrees even though he knows he’s not actually going to.

“We’ll watch the game together tomorrow and you two will work this thing out. I know you will.”

After they hang up, Shane ends up pouring his remaining smoothie down the drain, he eats the eggs Ilya made for him, throat tightening as more tears come to surface but he doesn’t want it to go to waste. He hesitates before snapping a quick picture of the empty plate and sends it to Ilya,

Thank you, it was very good.

He types, then adds:

I'm sorry, have a nice flight.

He sets his phone on mute and turns it screen side down, so he's not tempted to check it every few seconds and be disappointed, and starts cleaning the apartment, not that Hayden would care if it's messy but Shane would and it gives him something to do for the next few hours.

Ilya is more out of it than usual today.

His conversation with Shane keeps repeating itself in his head and he knows this isn't the end of anything. It was just a stupid argument, they need to have a conversation about this, yes, but it wasn't time for that this morning, he didn't want either of them to say more things they don't mean and make it worse.

He sees Shane's texts when he gets to the airport and he can't help smiling a little at the image of the empty plate, even if his heart still aches.

I will call you later, okay?

Have fun with Hayden.

He replies but he never gets a response back, he's almost tempted to text Yuna and ask if he's okay but he holds back. This is what started this stupid fight in the first place.

Shane isn't some helpless damsel in distress and Ilya knows that, of course he does, that doesn't mean he doesn't want to take care of him. Of them.

“Roz, you okay?” Wyatt asks him at some point as they wait for takeoff,

“What? Yes, of course.” Ilya lies, not like he’s going to open up to his teammates about his personal love problems, not right now, not like this.

“Just tired, is all.” He can tell Wyatt isn’t buying it, “Really.”

“Sure, I believe you. Get some rest on the flight then.” Wyatt pats his shoulder.

He spends the rest of the flight trying to think of the right things to say later, when he calls Shane. He even manages to take a nap before he’s shaken awake by a pretty bad turbulence.

He grumbles and takes a sip of his coke, only to choke on it a little when it happens again.

“What the..?” He starts, looking around, Harris, who was on his way from the bathroom, seems to have fallen straight into Troy’s lap, which Ilya would find amusing if the plane didn’t suddenly start *falling*.

Panic, chaos, screams. Ilya may have screamed himself, he’s not sure but he fumbles to get his phone with shaking hands. If this is it... if he never sees Shane again, he can’t let him think he was upset with him. He has to make sure he knows how much he means to him, how much Ilya loves him and the baby, even if they're not his, even if he never gets to meet them. He can feel the tears streaming down his cheeks as he types out the message.

He doesn’t have a particularly strong relationship with any deity, but for the first time since he was a child, Ilya prays, one hand coming up to touch his mother’s necklace.

If this happened a few months ago, maybe he would have just accepted it, after all, maybe afterlife exists and he could be with her again. But now... he closes his eyes and all he can see is Shane. Shane and the baby they said they would care for together... this can’t be it.

Shane manages to relax a little once Hayden gets there, they catch up, he tells him about this morning, to which Hayden just says,

“If he’s that big of an idiot he doesn’t deserve you.” With a shrug but that doesn’t make Shane feel any better, “Come on, Hayd, I know I messed up too.”

Hayden shakes his head and bumps their shoulders together before suggesting they watch a movie, Shane knows he’s just trying to take his mind off of things.

It helps, a bit.

It’s only later, when Hayden goes to grab the food delivery they ordered, that Shane finally checks his phone. There is a message from Ilya, telling him he will call later.

He has a notification from his Instagram, which is odd, he hardly ever even goes on the app, it’s probably just spam, he should probably ignore it but something makes him swipe and open it. He’s even more confused when he realizes it’s from Ilya, sent about an hour ago,

Ilya:

I am sorry about before, all I can think of right now is that I need you to know that I love you, and baby, more than anything in this world. Whatever happens, I know I will always be with you, always safe in your heart.

That’s... odd. It sounds almost... Shane doesn’t get to finish that thought because suddenly Yuna is calling him and dread fills his stomach even before he picks up.

“Shane? Did you hear from Ilya?” She asks, her tone serious, concerned,

“I... he sent me a message from the plane I think? What’s going on?” He asks and it comes out choked,

“Their plane made an emergency landing, there’s not much information yet, there seem to be some injuries.” She says carefully, “I’m going to make some phone calls, see what I can find out.”

Shane thinks she says something else too but everything feels distant, like his entire world flips, he doesn’t even realize Hayden has come back until he feels his hands on his shoulders.

Hayden looks extremely worried, which makes sense considering he must have been trying to get his attention for a while.

“Shane! What’s going on, bud? What happened? Do you need me to drive you to the hospital?” He asks and Shane takes a shaky breath, then realizes he has dropped his phone at some point too, probably after Yuna hung up.

“Their plane... Hayd, I...” He chokes out and reaches to grab his phone again, fumbling with it as he tries to get to Ilya’s contact, hands trembling so much that Hayden takes the phone from it.

“Ilya?” He asks as he does it for him and Shane nods

Hi, this is Ilya, I will never listen to your voicemail.

“Fuck.” Shane sobs helplessly, “I have to go there.”

“Okay, hold on, bud.” Hayden says, already pulling out his own phone, “It looks like the emergency landing happened when they were already in Tampa, should you even be traveling?”

Shane glares at him and Hayden sighs, shaking his head.

“Okay, okay. Then let me drive you to the airport.”

Chapter 6

Chapter Notes

Sorry it's taken me so long to update again, hope this longer chapter makes up for it! Also, there is some Russian dialogue in this chapter, I initially wrote it in Russian just to get in the right headspace but decided to leave it in (and provide a translation right under), because it felt more authentic to me.

Ilya is sitting on the swing in the park near the rink and watches Irina as she comes back to him with a Plombir ice cream from the kiosk, she opens it and hands it to him with a smile. She doesn't say anything, but her smile is real, not one of the sad ones Ilya is used to.

"Mama?" He asks as he takes the ice cream from her and his thoughts slowly start coming together, why this doesn't feel real, why it's odd that he's here and even more so that she is here. He remembers the plane, the sinking feeling, scrambling to message Shane, screams and noise around him, something hitting his head hard enough for him to see white for a moment and then everything went dark and silent.

Is he dead? Is this what they call afterlife? Did his mother come to greet him here?

As if reading his mind, Irina reaches up to fix his hair, then cups his cheek.

"It's not your time yet, Ilyusha." She tells him gently,

"I miss you." He looks up at her, trying to commit all her features to memory and a wave of sadness rushes over him, the realization that she would never get to meet Shane or her grandchild, it hurts. That makes him wonder if Shane even wants him there, still.

If Ilya died now, would he be able to just move on like nothing happened?

"I miss you too." Irina says, bringing him back from the spiral of thoughts,

"But I am always with you, solnyshka, you know that." Her gaze falls to the necklace on Ilya's neck,

"I know." Ilya brings a hand up to touch the necklace. He wants to tell her everything, wants to just spend a little time with her, even if it's all in his head, even if it's just a dream, but he doesn't know where to start.

"You are going to make a wonderful father." She says instead and Ilya can feel tears stinging his eyes,

"Do you think he would still want me to be?" He asks, meeting her eyes,

“I think you should ask him yourself...” She smiles and glances somewhere behind Ilya.

He turns around to see Shane, just standing there, a few feet away, close enough for Ilya to know it’s him, not close enough at all.

“Ilya?” He hears him, Shane’s voice echoes, like it’s coming from somewhere above,

“Ilya, please...” Is he crying?

Ilya wakes up, his heart racing, his eyes wet and his head is throbbing with pain but he forces himself to open his eyes because he can still hear it. The faint crying, the murmurs of his name, the weight of a warm hand on his.

“Shane...?” His voice comes out rough and quiet, his throat is so dry he breaks into a cough just from that.

“Ilya? Ilya! Hey, easy there...” Shane gets up and moves closer, Ilya isn’t sure what he’s doing until Shane presses a plastic bottle to his lips and helps him drink.

“Better?”

Ilya nods, still trying to figure out what all of this is, he assumes he’s in a hospital, if the rumbling and beeping from the machine next to him are anything to go by.

“You scared me.” Shane says, his voice breaks and Ilya finally gets a proper look of him.

He looks tired, pale, dark circles under his eyes, lips chapped and there are stains of tears on his cheeks.

“Sorry...” Ilya murmurs, then adds, “What happened..?”

“Your plane had to make an emergency landing, everyone is okay but you got a pretty bad hit on the head, you have a concussion and a fracture in your left arm and your ribs.” Shane explains, “They didn’t want to tell me anything, kept saying only family, mom pulled some strings.” Ilya wants to laugh, because of course Yuna Hollander would have the ability to pull said strings, no matter what or where. Though the thought of them caring enough to do any of it makes Ilya’s throat tighten with emotion.

“Could have been worse.” He says finally, deciding that joking is easier than to deal with the amount of feelings he’s feeling right now.

“You’re lucky you’re injured or I would be kicking your ass right now.” Shane glares at him,

“You can’t... you can’t do this to me... to *us*.” Shane’s voice breaks and he rests one hand on his stomach.

“Shane...” Ilya tries but Shane cuts him off,

“No, listen. You can’t just... fuck. I’m sorry, I’m so sorry for what I said before. I was being stupid and hormonal and it’s not an excuse but then you almost...” He shakes his head, “You are their father just as much as I am, you know that, right? It’s *our* child, has been from the moment you helped me carry those groceries upstairs.”

“Fuck, Shane...” Ilya struggles to reach for him again, even with his good hand, but he’s too stubborn not to, he squeezes Shane’s hand weakly.

“I know, I shouldn’t have stormed off so fast. All I could think of on the plane... I just had to leave you something, I had to make sure you knew.”

Shane squeezes his hand back, then brings it up to his lips before speaking,

“I know... and you fucking had me terrified, okay? If Hayden wasn’t there, I don’t know what I would have done. He drove me to the airport, then came here with me.”

That has Ilya raising an eyebrow, “Hayden?”

Shane rolls his eyes at him, “Yes, Hayden. He came to visit after you left, remember?”

“Wait. You got on flight and traveled... but you should not be traveling now!” Ilya’s eyes widen as he finally processes everything.

“I wasn’t going to sit on my fucking ass in Ottawa and wait for news! Of course I came!” Shane frowns at him, like Ilya has just said the most ridiculous thing.

“But...”

“I’m fine. We are fine. I’m just glad you’re still here... that you’re still with us... I mean...” Shane looks like he’s about to trail back on that so Ilya cuts him off now,

“Of course I am still with you. Always.”

“Fuck, I was so scared, Ilya...” Shane says quietly, his hold on Ilya’s hand tightens.

“Me too.” Ilya admits, because he was, he was so terrified when he was typing out that message, when the plane started sinking and the masks came down.

“I wish I could hold you right now.” Shane says quietly and Ilya almost caves and tries to move to get him in his arms instead but he knows it would only upset and stress Shane out even more so he stays put for now.

“Maybe I can go home soon...” He pouts instead, which earns him a snort of laugh from Shane.

The next morning they have a call with Yuna and David, Shane holding the phone so Ilya can hear but not letting him look at the screen. Yuna almost hops on a flight over but they assure her they are okay and there is no reason for it.

Shane makes a quick bathroom trip after they hang up, he returns to Ilya still sitting in bed, staring out the window, his eyes glassy and when Shane steps closer he can see the wetness on his cheeks.

“Hey...” He says softly, carefully placing a hand on Ilya’s arm, not wanting to startle him, but he can feel him lean into the touch.

“Talk to me?” He asks because he may be terrible at reading expressions and social cues, but he can tell there is something Ilya needs to let out. Even if Ilya himself might not realize it. “I just want to help.”

“Is nothing... was just...” Ilya bites his lower lip and Shane just watches him for a few moments, letting him take as much time as he needs.

“Before I woke up last night, I had a dream, about my mother. And you... I woke up before you could meet, you were too far.”

Shane’s heart breaks when he realizes what Ilya is talking about, why the conversation with his parents must have reminded him of that, of what he doesn’t have.

“I’m sorry... I wish I could meet her.” He says, taking a seat on the edge of Ilya’s bed just to be a little closer to him.

“She would have loved you.” Ilya looks at him, the certainty in his eyes has Shane taken aback.

“I know that nothing can ever replace her, your family... but... my parents already love you too, you know that, right? You’re not alone anymore. He carefully takes Ilya’s hand and guides it to his stomach. “We can make our own, together. Okay?”

Ilya smiles up at him and Shane swears he would do anything to make sure he keeps smiling at him like that. It also gives him another idea, but he decides to keep this one to himself for now.

“Okay.”

Ilya gets discharged a few days later, once they are certain his injuries are under control and he’s stable enough. Thankfully, by then he is cleared to fly, which is a relief. Shane would rather not give birth in fucking Tampa if the baby decided to come early, though he still has some time until he’s due, if they had to stay longer, he might end up not being cleared to fly and that would be a whole other mess he would rather not deal with.

Hayden visits the hospital once and then comes to pick them up, Ilya is all too happy to take advantage of his current predicament to boss Hayden around and have him wheel him out to

the car on a wheelchair, even though Shane knows Ilya is perfectly capable of walking at the moment, the doctor even recommended it, as long as he doesn't overdo it and as long as he's wearing sunglasses outside.

There is something endearing about watching these two bicker, even if Shane would really like for them to get along. He will take what he can get for now.

As they make their way to the airport, Shane thinks back to the other day, when Ilya's teammates dropped by. Thankfully most of the other injuries were minor enough that the game didn't get canceled, but unsurprisingly, the Centaurs lost this one. Shane could tell Ilya was trying to cheer them up, despite being the one in his hospital bed.

"You will win next game for me, yes?" He said, looking at Luca Haas who seemed on the verge of tears from the moment he stepped in the room.

Shane kind of wanted to wrap the poor kid in a blanket and give him a teddy bear, which was probably a little ridiculous and he can blame the pregnancy for it.

Shane is glad Ilya's team is nothing like what he was familiar with before from other places. Even in youth teams, even between coaching staff. It's a relief Ilya's teammates are nothing like that.

"You are okay?" Ilya asks and brings him back from his thoughts,

"Yeah," Shane answers, maybe a bit too quickly, "Was just thinking your team is nice."

"Yes." Ilya breaks into a proud smile, "Oh! I should take selfie to send in group chat! Maybe Luca would stop crying if he sees me not in hospital anymore."

Shane laughs, "Okay but you can't look at the screen, I'll take it for you." He shakes his head, reaching for Ilya's phone in his pocket. He's been carrying it to make sure Ilya doesn't get tempted, after he caught him trying to check his phone last night.

"You are so boring." Ilya complains but he poses for the camera as well as he can, wide grin on his face.

"You know what," Shane says on a second thought and swaps the camera mode to video, "Hey guys, this is your ridiculous captain on his way to the airport." He narrates,

"Hey! That is unfair, I am just trying to bring up team moral with how handsome I am!" Ilya whines, now they're both laughing.

"Wow, get a room!" Hayden complain's from the driver's seat.

"Oh but we will! If you drive faster and not make us late for flight, grandma Pike!" Ilya sticks out his tongue and Shane wonders if he's actually having two babies. Probably.

He sends the short video, which results in about a thousand notifications from said group chat after not even five seconds. Mostly just the guys thanking Shane for taking care of their captain and telling Ilya to behave and that they will win games for him.

Everything is fine until they finally board the plane and Shane notices Ilya's leg bouncing nervously and fingers drumming on his thigh like he does every time he's trying to calm himself down.

"Hey..." Shane reaches over to take Ilya's hand, lacing their fingers together and squeezing lightly, "It's okay that you're nervous, you know."

"Russians do not get nervous." Ilya argues but Shane can tell he's just trying to joke to make himself feel better so he decides to humor him, "Sure. Never."

"Fine, maybe a little nervous. Is very stupid."

Shane's heart clenches slightly, he thinks back to everything Ilya has told him of his past and he wonders how many times he has been told *feeling things* is stupid.

"It's not, it's a perfectly normal reaction to a traumatic experience." He says, squeezing Ilya's hand again, "But it's going to be okay and you're not alone, okay?"

"Okay." Ilya says and his voice is soft, quiet, Shane can tell he's more scared than he's letting on, so Shane makes it his mission to distract him as well as he can through this flight, it's not as efficient as some other ways he could distract them but they're in public and Hayden is on his other side, so Shane just talks about hockey, because that's just his default and then he talks about baby things, which seems to do the trick to get Ilya excited enough to forget he's scared.

"I was thinking... I know we set up everything in my apartment but I was thinking maybe... if you want... I have a cottage, where I go to get away from everything in the summer..." He tells Ilya quietly, glancing sideways to make sure Hayden is fast asleep in his headphones at this point because Hayden would probably be very upset about Shane inviting Ilya there before him.

"A cottage?"

"Yeah, like... it's nice and I was thinking maybe once we settle a bit with the baby, we could go there? Together? I've never had anyone there but it's my favorite place in the world and..." Shane realizes he's rambling when he sees the amused smile on Ilya's face,

"Yes I will come to your cottage." Ilya grins, this time it's a proper smile and Shane melts, he can't even begin to describe how much that means to him.

"And then..." He continues after a moment, remembering the rest of his plan, "I was thinking to maybe find a nicer place, maybe a bit more private? So we could like... not worry about anyone bothering you and maybe have a garden and stuff... I don't know." Shane blushes,

because he *does* know, he has visualized and researched options and he knows exactly what kind of place he wants to make a family with Ilya in. But admitting that out loud is a whole other thing.

“Shane...” Ilya brings Shane’s hand to his lips and it’s only then that Shane realizes his eyes are glassy, “That sounds like fairytale.”

“I mean, we don’t... wait, what?”

“Like... dream? Fantasy? Is that not how you say it in English?” Ilya frowns slightly and Shane melts all over again, “It is, I just... wasn’t sure if you would really want that, I guess...”

“I do. With you, anything.” Ilya says and Shane can’t help himself anymore, he leans in and kisses Ilya properly, everyone can get fucked.

“Me too, as long as it’s with you.”

“Will you guys be okay?” Hayden asks for the tenth time since they have landed,

“Yes, Hayd. My parents are picking us up, they’ll be here soon. Go on, Jacki and the kids are waiting for you, right?” Shane shakes his head with a smile then pulls Hayden into a hug, which is a little awkward considering how big he is at this point but he doesn’t care, “Thanks for everything. I don’t know what I would do if you weren’t there.” He says quietly,

“Of course, bud. That’s what friends are for, right? Even if I think you could probably do better...”

“*Hayd.*” Shane warns, rolling his eyes,

“Fine, fine,” Hayden pats Shane’s back before pulling back and looking at Ilya,

“Get well soon, Rozanov.” He tells him and to Shane’s surprise Ilya doesn’t respond with a witty insult or sarcasm, his expression softens and he holds his hand out for Hayden to shake, “You are good friend, Pike. Thank you.”

Hayden seems to be in loss of words at that, he opens and closes his mouth a few times like a lost fish and Shane has to hold back his laughter because that would be mean.

“Right, um, of course. I’ll just... get going.” Hayden says, before finally leaving them alone.

“Ah, I think I found new way to torment your friend.” Ilya chuckles,

“Oh my god, you’re such an asshole!” Shane rolls his eyes again but it can’t cover the fond smile from spreading on his lips.

Ilya is surprised when Yuna and David arrive to the airport and Yuna immediately goes to hug him first, before she even acknowledges Shane.

“We were so worried!” She says as she rubs Ilya’s back gently,

“Oh... I... I’m sorry.” He murmurs, which has her instantly pulling away and looking at him so pointedly Ilya is suddenly scared he messed up.

“Don’t you dare apologize for that! You have *nothing* to be sorry for, we were worried because you’re family.” She brings her hand up to Ilya’s cheek and makes him look at her properly.

Ilya Rozanov does not cry in public.

Except the way she says it and looks at him with such conviction that he finds himself struggling to hold back tears. She must sense it because she hugs him again and rubs his back for a while before finally pulling back.

“Okay, now. Since both of you are out of commission, you’re coming home with us.” She announces in a tone that says she is not going to hear no for an answer and Ilya is amused because Shane looks like he’s torn between wanting to argue and not wanting to be rude to his mother, he looks like his head is about to explode.

“But... we wouldn’t want to, I mean... I’m not out of commission!”

“I think what your son is trying to say, is that we would love to come over. I do not want to impose but he would probably hurt himself trying to do things if we don’t.” Ilya smiles at Yuna, then looks at David, and the irrational fear of disappointing a father comes back full force for a few moments, even though he knows David is nothing like his own father.

It passes just as fast as it came, when David laughs and shakes his head, moving to pat Ilya on the back.

“Come on, let’s get you boys home so you can get some proper rest.”

Once they’re settled in the car, Shane rests his hand on Ilya’s thigh and squeezes and it’s only then that Ilya looks at him and notices how worried he looks.

“Is okay, just tired.” He says, not wanting Shane to spiral because of him.

He’s not sure Shane buys it but Yuna and David are in the car so he just nods and leans over to press a kiss to Ilya’s cheek.

The truth is, it's not that Ilya isn't okay, it's more that he doesn't know how to wrap his mind around all of this.

Them accepting him is not news, but before that he wasn't a burden, he was just there, he was somewhat useful, even, taking care of Shane and making sure he doesn't overdo it.

Now he's injured, he can't even do that much, and rather than taking Shane with them and dropping Ilya off on his own, there was not even a question about him coming with them too.

The way Yuna hugged him when they got there was something Ilya hasn't felt in years, a motherly hug that said *I was so worried, I'm glad you're safe*. It was almost too much.

Shane's hand on his thigh keeps him grounded, though, at least for now.

And when they're finally alone in Shane's childhood bedroom, he finally breaks.

"Hey..." Shane hurries to hug him, "Talk to me?"

But Ilya doesn't know how, he just holds onto him as best as he can and presses his forehead to Shane's shoulder, he can feel him stroking his back, fingers running through his hair.

"You can say it in Russian, if you want, just... don't hold it inside." Shane suggests after a few long moments of silence.

Ilya considers for another moment before nodding, "Okay."

Shane leads him to bed and once they're both on it he pulls Ilya closer again.

"С тех пор как мамы не стало, я всегда был один. Мой брат всегда меня не мог терпеть. А папе важны были только успехи.

Я не думал что когда-то у меня будет семья, которая примет меня каким я есть.

Но ты принял. Твои родители приняли меня за своего, больше чем мой собственный отец. Я не знаю что с этим делать, я не знаю как принять такую заботу."

(Ever since mom passed, I've always been alone. My brother could never stand me and my dad only cared about successes. I never thought I would ever have a family, that would accept me as I am. But you accepted me. Your parents accepted me as their own, even more than my own father. I don't know what to do with that. I don't know how to accept this kind of care.)

Ilya can feel Shane's fingers running through his hair, his lips on his temple, and the tears just keep streaming.

“Я так сильно тебя люблю. Но я боюсь, что однажды ты поймёшь что я тебя не достоин...”

(I love you so much. But I'm afraid, that one day you would realize I am not worthy of you...)

Ilya presses closer, taking a few deep breathes in an attempt to calm himself down.

What he doesn't expect, is for Shane to respond, in *Russian*. Sure, he knows Shane has been trying to learn, but he still didn't expect this.

“Я тоже тебя люблю, я не когда тебя не брошу.”

(I love you too, I would never leave you.)

His accent is thick, he stumbles a little through the words but Ilya understands and that's all that matters. His heart races as he moves to look up at Shane, his eyes are also wet with tears, he looks so determined.

“I didn't understand everything but... I've been practicing and... you *are* worthy, Ilya. Of all of it, of everything, of so much more.”

“Fuck, *Shane*.” Ilya doesn't care that his ribs hurt, he doesn't care about anything, he moves so he can kiss Shane's lips, it's soft and slow, not trying to start something, he just doesn't know how else to convey what he's feeling right now. The fact Shane would go out of his way to learn Russian, enough to understand and to say something like this.

The fact that Shane actually for some reason thinks he is worthy enough not only as a partner but as a father to his child? It's hard to wrap his mind around it but Ilya is trying, he really is.

“Get some rest, okay? I'm not going anywhere.” Shane murmurs, pressing a kiss to Ilya's forehead.

“Okay... but you need rest too, yes?” Ilya glances up at him and Shane smiles and nods,

“Okay.”

For the first time since the morning of their argument, Ilya feels like he can breath a little. He can feel Shane relax against him too and that’s all he needs to finally let his eyes close and drift off.

Chapter 7

Chapter Notes

Final chapter!

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

The next couple of weeks pass in a blur.

Shane is feeling more and more antsy and uncomfortable with every passing second.

He is excited to meet their child, of course he is, but everything feels like it's taking too long and happening too fast all at once. New worries keep popping up in his mind every five seconds, he has woken up Ilya in the middle of the night, more than once, multiple times over the past two weeks. Then burst into tears when Ilya talked him through his ridiculous ideas, no matter what time it was.

"Maybe we shouldn't have left the gender a surprise." He says one of those nights, after tossing and turning for an hour, unable to get comfortable or get the spiral of thoughts out of his head.

"Well, is easy fix, you can call doctor in the morning, find out, yes?" Ilya yawns, propping himself on his elbow, facing Shane with a sleepy smile.

"But... we got this far..." Shane bites his lip, not sure what he's arguing to start with.

"What if they don't like their nursery? What if..."

Ilya lifts an eyebrow at him and Shane knows he's being ridiculous even before he says anything,

"Is baby, Shane. They will like anything that has colors or makes funny noise. You wanted gender neutral nursery, is very cute pastel colors, any child would like."

Shane takes a deep breath, then frowns again, "What if it's not enough colors? Or too many or..."

"Shane." Ilya rests a hand on Shane's arm and somehow it's grounding enough for him to take a deep breath.

"Okay. Sorry, I'm just..."

"Very pregnant, yes." Ilya squeezes his arm, smile softening, "I know."

“What if I can’t do this? What if... what if it’s too much and I get so overwhelmed I can’t handle it and I’m a terrible father?” He asks after another moment and pouts a little when Ilya fondly rolls his eyes at him.

“Shane Hollander, there is no universe in any Marvel multi-verse bullshit, where you are not good father.” He says and it gets a choked laugh out of Shane.

“Also, you are not alone. Yes, will be hard, but we figure it out. And if we don’t know something, we ask your parents or doctor or Google.” Ilya leans in to kiss Shane’s nose and Shane can’t help laughing again, “Maybe not too much Google.”

“I still hate that you got injured, that it was bad enough for you to have to sit out the rest of the season...” Shane says softly after a while, “But I’m glad you’re here now. I don’t know how I would have done this without you.” He admits,

“Things turn out how they should.” Ilya replies, bringing a hand up to Shane’s cheek,

“We will figure out whatever happens, together, yes?”

“Yes.”

As the days pass, Ilya finds it easier to just let himself indulge in spending time with Shane and his parents. He doesn’t mind Shane waking him up in the middle of the night or him crying about silly things, all Ilya wants to do is to make it easier for him, take care of him.

But even in the peaceful moments, there is a voice in the back of his head, nagging at him that he can’t be a good dad. Not with his upbringing, not with his lifestyle and how busy he is.

What if he wasn’t injured and had to miss all of this? What if later, something happens and he’s not even in Canada?

Realistically, he knows it’s not that bad. They talked about it, Yuna and Shane made a whole giant binder of plans to make things work with any scenario imaginable.

And still... what if he really isn’t good enough? He can’t talk to Shane about that right now, he’s already too stressed out, the closer the due date, the more anxious he has been getting.

“What’s wrong, son?” David’s voice brings him back from his thoughts.

They're sitting on the couch in the Hollanders' living room with a puzzle. Shane is down for a nap in the bedroom after a restless night and Yuna left to run some errands, so it's just the two of them now. Ilya likes David Hollander, he may be where Shane inherited his boring from but it's the same endearing type of boring. The kind Ilya has been craving for longer than he would ever admit, even to himself. The only thing close to this he's ever done with his father back in Russia was chess, and that came with a whole array of judgment and ridiculing him for not being good or smart enough. Ilya shudders at the memory and reminds himself those days are long gone, he's here, doing a puzzle with one of the kindest men he knows.

He shakes his head, realizing he still hasn't responded, "Nothing, just thinking."

David gives him a sympathetic look and Ilya knows he's not buying it.

"You know, I was really nervous when Shane came along, too. So many things could go wrong, I could make so many mistakes, right?" David says with a warm smile,

"But I like to think we've done okay."

That makes Ilya smile too, they've done more than just okay.

"Shane is lucky to have you as his parents." He says quietly.

"*We* are lucky to have him as our son." David corrects before adding, "We are lucky to have you, too."

Ilya's breath hitches at that and he finally looks at the older man,

"You see," David continues, "We couldn't have more kids, so we put everything into Shane and I wouldn't change that for the world. I never imagined it turning out this way, but I'm proud to have *two* amazing sons now. And I know you will both do even better than us."

Ilya swallows and his throat feels tight, he is not going to cry here.

He can feel David's hand on his shoulder and he doesn't mean to say it but the words spill out before he can stop himself,

"My father was... not very good. Sometimes I am scared, maybe I will be like him one day? Shane deserves better." He's not even sure he's making much sense but David squeezes his shoulder gently and there is something comforting about that.

"You are not him, Ilya. I like to believe my son has a pretty good head on his shoulders, he chose you, not anyone else."

That breaks the dam, the tears come down and Ilya has no chance of stopping them now.

It's embarrassing, really. But David doesn't call him names, doesn't tell him men don't cry.

He just rubs his back, somewhat awkwardly, but not in a bad way.

At some point Yuna returns, and Ilya finds himself wrapped in her arms, he thinks she asks him what's wrong but he can't form the right words in English. A little while later he's wrapped in a blanket and handed a large cup of tea.

He can't believe how lucky he is to be able to call these people family now.

"Everything okay?" Shane heads to the living room, having woken up from a nap, he feels a little better rested now, at least. He's still rubbing his eyes when he sees Ilya, who looks like he's been crying. Shane frowns, concerned, "What happened?"

Ilya offers a tearful, sheepish smile, then takes a sip from a giant cup of tea.

"I'm going to see if your dad needs help in the kitchen." His mom offers him a knowing smile, presses a kiss to the top of Ilya's head and makes her way out of the room.

Shane is even more confused but at least he knows Ilya wasn't all alone, whatever it is.

"Hey..." He says softly, then with some effort, lowers himself on the couch next to Ilya.

"Did you sleep okay?" Ilya asks and Shane can't help laughing,

"Yes, are you going to tell me what's going on?" He asks, wrapping an arm around Ilya's shoulders to bring him closer.

"Is nothing, just... never imagined I would have a family like this." Ilya says after a long silence and Shane's heart aches.

"Ilya..." He tightens his hold, pressing a kiss to Ilya's temple, "You do. *We* do."

Ilya shifts, sets down his tea, then sits back and wraps his arms around Shane too, resting his forehead on Shane's shoulder.

"I love you." He murmurs and Shane knows he would never, ever, let this man go.

"I love you too." He whispers back.

It's later that evening, after dinner, that they decide to take a walk together.

Shane has been getting progressively uncomfortable no matter what position he sits or lays in, he doesn't want to worry Ilya too much about it yet, it's not like he's having full on contractions yet. He also thinks Ilya could also use the fresh air. They don't go far, just to a park nearby but he can tell, by how much more relaxed Ilya is as they walk, that he really needed this.

“I was getting worried too, you know.” He says, breaking their comfortable silence,

“About... you know... *how* it happened.” He explains quietly, hand absently coming up to rest on his stomach, he doesn’t want to think about it, he never does, saying any of it is still hard but he needs Ilya to know that, especially now.

“If I made the right choice, if... I don’t know. But then I look at you and I know we’re going to be okay. Because we have you, and I know we’d both do whatever it takes to make sure our child grows up happy and healthy, so... I guess, what I’m trying to say, I worry about a lot of things, you being the most amazing father to our child, is the one thing I know I never have to worry about.”

“Shane...” Ilya’s voice breaks slightly when he says his name, then his arms are around Shane and Shane hugs him back tightly, running his fingers through Ilya’s hair.

“I will work very hard to live up to that, promise.” Ilya murmurs and Shane feels his lips on the side of his neck.

“You already are.” He smiles, they stay like this for a while.

Shane finds, for the first time maybe ever, his brain feels a little more quiet.

It’s not rushing anywhere or spiraling in a whirlwind of worries, there is just the comfort of Ilya, warm and steady in his arms.

Which is probably why the strength of the contraction hits him by surprise and he lets out a pained “Holy fuck”.

“Shane?” Ilya asks, worried, moving backwards so he can look at Shane properly,

“I... I’m fine.” Shane says but his breathing is labored and he’s clearly in pain.

“It’s not that bad yet, probably have a while.”

Ilya’s eyes go wide, “Are you...?!”

“Yeah... I mean, they’ve been coming and going since before I took that nap but...”

“You didn’t say anything! Why did you not say anything? Nevermind, we should go to hospital?” Ilya realizes, he’s probably freaking out a bit more than he should.

They have been through their plan about a million times, rationally he knows how it’s supposed to go, but seeing Shane’s pained expression makes him panic regardless.

“I’m pretty sure it’s too soon for that...” Shane laughs softly but he soon breaks into another yelp of pain and Ilya hurries to wrap an arm around him, gently rubbing his back.

“Okay, maybe just... get home.” Shane says once it passes.

By the time they get home, his water breaks, and Ilya has never been more grateful for Yuna Hollander as he is in those few moments because his mind is racing through all the things he's supposed to grab, do, remember to make it easier on Shane but it almost makes him dizzy. Yuna just goes full operational mode, commanding Ilya to get the hospital bag and coaching Shane through breathing while he does that.

Ilya takes over the breathing exercises when they reach the car, Shane is holding his hand so tightly at some point he thinks it might get broken again, but he could not care less.

Everything that happens when they get to the hospital is truly a blur, it goes too fast and also not fast enough, as Shane's contractions progressively worsen and all Ilya can do is try to keep it together and make him as comfortable as he can manage until they give him something for the pain.

He's not sure how much time passes from the moment they arrived, it feels like hours and seconds at the same time, Ilya doesn't even have the time or capacity to think of anything except for just being there for Shane the entire time.

Then, just as suddenly as all of this started, a cry fills the room.

Ilya can tell Shane is barely keeping his head up but they both turn to look up.

Shane has never felt so many emotions at once, as he does when their baby girl is placed in his arms. He can feel Ilya's arm wrapping around his shoulder and he leans into him a little.

He forgets even how disgusting he feels, drenched with sweat and tears and whatnot, nothing matters.

She's no longer crying, instead cuddled up to his chest and making adorable little noises.

"Ilya..." He sobs, glancing up at him, and he thinks he falls in love all over again when he sees the expression on Ilya's face, it's so full of affection and awe, he never thought it was possible to love so deeply but he does, both of them, so much.

"Is really our daughter..?" Ilya asks, like he can't believe this is real and it makes Shane laugh tearfully as he nods,

“Yes.” He feels Ilya’s lips on his temple and for a while they just stay like that, watching her in awe, staying as close as possible.

“I was thinking...” Shane says eventually, now that he has calmed down a little, “I mean, for a while really, I know we have a list of names but...” He hesitates, hoping Ilya won’t take it the wrong way or hate it.

“I’ve been thinking for a while that if it’s a girl... maybe we could name her Irene.” He glances up at Ilya, bracing himself, “I mean... you know... for Irina, not that we have to but I thought maybe this way your mom is always with her too. It was just an idea...” He trails off when Ilya remains silent for another moment.

“I love you.” Is the next thing Ilya says, voice thick with emotion and Shane is so relieved he thinks he might cry again, though he’s not sure he even has any tears left at this point.

“I love you too.” He smiles, “Is that a yes?” He asks gently, just to make sure.

“Yes.” Ilya laughs tearfully, holding Shane a little closer and Shane’s smile widens as he looks back down at their little girl.

“Hi there, Irene...” He says softly, just as stirs.

It’s peaceful for a few more seconds before she breaks into crying again.

“I think the princess demands to be fed.” Ilya chuckles and presses one more kiss to the top of Shane’s head.

While Shane isn’t kin on staying on his own, Ilya does end up leaving them alone for a minute to get Shane’s parents, who were probably going insane waiting to meet their grandchild. He’s still in awe, as he watches her, that she’s actually his. *Theirs*.

“Shane? Everything okay?” Ilya’s concerned voice brings him out of his thoughts and it’s only then that Shane registers the wetness on his cheeks,

“Yes, yes. Perfect. Just... stupid hormones, probably.” He laughs tearfully and Ilya moves closer and wipes the tears away for him before Shane finally looks up at his parents, smiling.

“Mom, dad... meet Irene.” He says softly, both his parents are tearing up too, he carefully transfers her into his mom’s arms and as much as he mourns the loss of her warmth against her chest, he does take a moment to close his eyes and lay back down, the exhaustion finally catching up to him.

“You can get some rest now...” Ilya says softly and Shane feels his lips on his forehead.

“You will wake me up if she needs me..?” He asks, eyes still closed.

“Of course.” Ilya assures, taking a hold of Shane’s hand and squeezing it lightly, “For now she is very busy with grandparents.” He adds, Shane laughs, breaking into a yawn,

“Okay...”

Both Shane and Irene are asleep, Ilya eventually forces himself to lower her down to the bassinet by Shane’s bed, just so he doesn’t accidentally disturb her sleep.

He managed to convince Shane’s parents they should go home and get some proper rest for the night. So for the first time in hours, he’s alone with his thoughts.

Usually, that would terrify him, and it still does a little, but when he looks between the sleeping man in the hospital bed and the tiny baby girl in the bassinet next to it, Ilya’s heart fills with so much love and affection, he can barely contain himself.

The darker thoughts are still there, they never quiet down for good, but he knows there is nothing he wouldn’t do for them and fighting those thoughts is the first step.

He’s not going to be like his father. He’s not going to be like his mother, either.

He has to be there for them and he has to be good to them, he’s not sure what he’s done to be so lucky but he knows he would do anything to keep his family safe and happy in the home they created together.

Chapter End Notes

Thank you so so so so much for reading! I hope you enjoyed it!

I’m still working on an epilogue, that will be up at some point in the near future, hopefully.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!