keep this love in a photograph

Posted originally on the Archive of Our Own at https://archiveofourown.org/works/77211456.

Rating:	General Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandoms:	Heated Rivalry (TV), Game Changers Series - Rachel Reid
Relationships:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov, Yuna Hollander & Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander, Ilya Rozanov, Yuna Hollander
Additional Tags:	Good Parent Yuna Hollander, Ilya Rozanov Loves Shane Hollander, Ilya Rozanov Needs A Hug, Shane Hollander Loves Ilya Rozanov, Autistic Shane Hollander, POV Shane Hollander, photo albums, Childhood Photos, Established Relationship, Fluff and Angst, just a teeny bit of angst, you know how it is
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2026-01-06 Words: 1,454 Chapters: 1/1

keep this love in a photograph

by Pale_Blue

Summary

"And then this is Shane on his first day of school," Yuna said, whipping out another photo with a flourish. "He was so nervous, do you remember, honey? We had to hold your hand all the way up to the classroom door."

Ilya gazed at the photo, not bothering to conceal his obvious delight.

It struck Shane suddenly that he'd never seen any photos of Ilya as a child. Had never seen what he had worn on his first day of school, never seen the gap-toothed primary school days. He wondered if his hair had used to be lighter. If his mother had held his hand tight on his first day at school as well.

Notes

Title from Photograph by Ed Sheeran

See the end of the work for more notes

“Shane!” Ilya called from the living room. “Come look at little you.”

Of course they were looking at photo albums. It had only been a matter of time before his mom got those out. Shane quickly made his way over from the kitchen and dropped down into a free armchair, resigned to his fate.

Ilya and his mom were sitting close together on the couch, bent over one of the carefully put together photo albums that documented Shane’s entire childhood. The window was open to allow the summer breeze to circulate through the warm room, and Shane could hear one of the neighbours mowing a lawn. It was a strangely peaceful scene to walk into.

The photo Yuna was showing Ilya was from one of Shane’s early skating lessons. His younger self stared earnestly at the camera from under an oversized helmet, arms held out awkwardly to hold his balance. He was wearing dungarees and a thick jumper he could remember hating the texture of.

“You were so *cute*,” Ilya cooed, snatching the photo from Yuna and bringing it up close to his eyes. The summer sun had lightened his hair to spun gold and Shane longed to run his hands through the soft curls.

“He really was,” Yuna said, smiling across at Ilya. “You took it so seriously, Shane, even then.”

“Maybe I take this home,” Ilya mused, eyes not leaving the photograph in his hands. “Put it on fridge so I can look at it every day.”

Shane scowled at him and quickly reached across to snatch the photo out of his hands.

“No chance.”

Ilya pouted at him and Shane felt something inside his chest relax, unwind ever so slightly.

The last few weeks hadn’t been easy. Ilya had been struggling again, sleeping too much, sitting dead-eyed on the sofa for hours staring at nothing for hours. Needing repeated prompts to shower, to eat, to take his medication with breakfast.

It was good to see him laugh. See his eyes alight again, sparkling. Alive.

“And then this is Shane on his first day of school,” Yuna said, whipping out another photo with a flourish. “He was so nervous, do you remember, honey? We had to hold your hand all the way up to the classroom door.”

Ilya gazed at the photo, not bothering to conceal his obvious delight.

It struck Shane suddenly that he’d never seen any photos of Ilya as a child. Had never seen what he had worn on his first day of school, never seen the gap-toothed primary school days. He wondered if his hair had used to be lighter. If his mother had held his hand tight on his first day at school as well.

“Such a round face you used to have,” Ilya said, carefully holding the photograph by the edges so he didn’t leave behind any fingerprints. “Such a cute kid.”

“You were the smallest in your grade,” Yuna said, smiling fondly at Shane. “A whole head shorter than most of the other kids.”

“He is still short now,” Ilya said with a lazy grin.

“Shut up.”

Ilya flopped back on the couch and held the photo up to the light. The angle pulled his t-shirt up, revealing a tantalising sliver of golden skin. Shane made a mental note to kiss there later, back at the cottage. Taste summer on honeyed skin.

“Please can I put it on the fridge?” he asked Shane with a broad grin. “It will make me so happy.”

“Yeah, you can,” Shane said. “If you want to sleep on the couch. Forever.”

Ilya sighed dramatically. Then he theatrically handed the photos back to Yuna, like he was being forced to hand over something precious.

“I would not want that.”

“Alright, enough embarrassing Shane for one day,” Yuna said, slamming the photo album shut and resting it carefully on her knees.

“Do you have any childhood photos?” Shane suddenly asked before he could think about it.

Ilya’s face fell so fast it was almost comical.

His mom didn’t realise, clapping her hands together once at the thought.

“I bet you were a blonde tearaway, Ilya,” she said with a laugh, bumping her shoulder into his. “Breaking hearts all over the playground.”

Ilya smiled, but it didn’t quite meet his eyes.

“There are some,” he said, tone full of forced levity. “But nothing fun like these. And they are all in Russia.”

“Well, if you ever get your hands on any, I’d love to see them,” Yuna said, getting up and putting the album carefully back on the shelf.

“I will see,” Ilya said woodenly.

Shane hated that he’d ruined the moment. Again. Hated that he always put his foot in it, no matter how hard he tried not to.

“Mom, do we still have any of those biscuits left?” he asked quickly. “The ones you got in Tokyo?”

“There should be some left,” Yuna mused. “I didn’t know you can eat those with your diet though, Shane.”

“I thought Ilya might like to try one,” Shane said desperately, ignoring the quizzical look Ilya was shooting him from the couch.

Yuna gave him a strange look and Shane tried not to let on he wanted her to leave for a few seconds. To give him the space to apologise to Ilya. He got the impression his mother knew exactly what he was doing though. She was a hard person to hide from.

He quickly got up as Yuna made her way to the kitchen and sat down beside Ilya. There was a lingering tension in his shoulders that hadn’t been there a few seconds before, and Shane ran a comforting hand over them.

“Sorry,” he said quietly, apologetically. “I didn’t think.”

Ilya kissed him on the cheek and pressed their knees together.

“Nothing to worry about,” he said, running a warm hand over Shane’s cheek, letting his thumb linger near the outer corner of Shane’s eye. “You always think so much.”

Then he sighed and stared out of the window. At the carefully manicured lawn, the patio with the fire pit, the flowers Yuna bought every summer to brighten everything up before the snow took out the lot come winter.

“Truthfully, there are not many photos. Only school photos, you know the kind. Or ones my mother took, when I was very small. But I do not know where they are now.”

“Well, I hope I get to see them one day,” Shane said.

He meant it, more than he’d realised until the words left his mouth.

Shane had had grown up in a culture of loving documentation. Every first day of school, every award, every birthday party. All immortalised, cherished, kept safe in handmade photo albums or framed. Endless copies to send to relatives, so that everyone would know how proud his parents were. Shane wondered what it was like to have so little to look back on. So little proof of a past before memory.

He wondered if it ever bothered Ilya that there was such disparity between them at times. That Ilya could giggle and coo over Shane’s baby photos in Shane’s childhood home, sitting on the couch Shane had watched hockey games on for years. That he’d been taken to the rink Shane had skated in for the first time, the frozen yoghurt place Shane had taken his first ever date to. That photos of Shane at every stage of life grinned down at them from the walls, that his parents cared so deeply about his life that they texted almost every day.

Ilya would never be able to show Shane those things. His life before seventeen would remain transmittable to Shane only through words in his second language, in tears spilled, in the way

he bit his crucifix and struggled to let people in. In how he knew when snow was coming, in how he took his coffee. In old footage online from hockey matches played in cities Shane had never heard of.

“You will be the first person to know,” Ilya reassured him. “Then your mother, because she has such lovely pictures of you.”

Shane shook his head at him in mock-despair as Ilya grinned.

“Such a cute baby,” he said, patting Shane’s cheek. “So small.”

“Here we go,” Yuna said, putting the plate down in front of them on the table. “Have you ever tried matcha, Ilya?”

As his mom explained the flavour, Shane pulled Ilya’s hand into his and squeezed it tightly. He wondered if the void left behind by his family would ever heal for Ilya. If he would ever be able to talk about them without grief clouding his features.

If the new life they were trying to build would be enough.

End Notes

Thank you so much for reading!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!