

Home

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Home

by [VentrueDomination](#)

Summary

In the middle of the night, Ilya muses about home, only to realize that he's found it.

Home was a strange concept for Ilya.

Home had been his mom and her gentle smile that never reached for her eyes. Home was the embrace of her arms, too thin and shaky when Father had screamed at Ilya for any transgression.

Home was her room, that smelled lightly of her perfume and the products she used for her hair.

Home was her bed, where they would cuddle together when he was a little child and still allowed to get the comfort of her silent presence before Father deemed him too old for cuddles and screamed at her that she would turn him Пидорас.

That had been the first time Ilya had realized that Father was never and he would never be home. Even as a child he was terrified of him, of his words, of his rage, of his judgment. Alexey was a copy of him.

He never perceived his older brother as safe. At first, or at least Ilya thought, he had been a normal older brother, always ready to break his things or to eat the last sweets because he could, because he was older and bigger and Ilya didn't want to fight him.

Then it happened, the shifts in their lives that would forever separate them. Ilya had been picked for sports, and Alexey never forgave him for being better at something. But it wasn't that which sealed their fate, that decided that Alexey could never be home.

No, that happened when Alexey saw him with Sasha. That was the moment Alexey began to hate him, to resent his mere existence. That was the moment Ilya began to die inside knowing that he was alone. None of his family would ever love him for who he really was.

Russia was complicated.

Russia was supposed to be home. It was the place where he was born. The place where he had learned what a mother's love felt like. Russia was where his mom died by her own hands because she couldn't keep living like she was, a ghost in her own house, always scared of her husband, always mistreated and abused, always alone.

Russia gave him his mom and then took her away, and yet Ilya loved Russia, like a boy who learns to love the land that gave him birth. But Russia couldn't love him back as Ilya craved. He craved a place to belong, but Russia rejected him for his sexuality, for the sin to love both boys and girls.

Russia issued laws against people like Ilya. Russia made them criminals. Russia would witness, silent and cold like an evil stepmother, while those who dared to love in different ways were arrested, beaten or killed. Russia didn't care for those like Ilya and for that Ilya couldn't love Russia as much as he was supposed to.

Russia still demanded his sweat and his blood. When he wore the Russian colors at the Olympic games, he was forced to give everything on the ice.

It didn't matter if the same people who were his teammates would probably be in the mob formed to lynch him if they knew Ilya was different.

It didn't matter if Father had screamed at him and Ilya had felt like the powerless child he once was, the one who was beaten to make him stronger, taken from everything he had loved to be turned into a machine made only to destroy his opponents on ice.

Ilya wasn't the monster many believed he was, but he had to play the part to protect himself, to keep himself safe as much as he could.

That monster was Father, that monster was Alexey, that monster was Russia, however it was Ilya who had to play the role.

When he went to America Ilya felt like he could breathe for the first time in years. With Svetlana by his side, a connection with Russia yes, but also his childhood friend, one who never betrayed him, who never questioned him, one who perhaps even knew Ilya's secret and never told anyone, Ilya felt like he could perhaps have both, freedom and something that reminded him of home.

America never became home.

Sure, there Ilya could allow himself to be more open about who he was than he ever could be back in Moscow, but who was he really?

Ilya didn't know.

There were too many parts of him, too many pieces who couldn't fit together. Ilya had been broken too many times and now he didn't know who he was supposed to be.

The only constant in his life was that he was good at hockey — damn good. One of the best players in the division, one of the rising stars of this brutal sport. Ilya knew he could be that. He could rebuild himself around being a player, even if that meant to be alone. Always alone.

On ice Ilya was a beast. The Russian Monster everyone feared. On the ice Ilya could delude himself that he had a home, a place where he belonged. Out of the ring he was lost. He was someone who tried to fill the aching void inside his chest with warm bodies and expensive vodka.

It worked for a bit, but little by little the void grew deeper in his chest and swallowed him whole. Ilya sometimes was sad, like his mom had been, so sad all he wanted to do was to curl up in bed and cry until nothing remained of him, but he couldn't. He had a team to lead, he had games to win.

Father and Alexey loomed over him from afar. *Send money. You are only good for that. You lost. We need more. We want more. More. More. More. More* and the more he gave them, the more they hated him. The more he gave them, the emptier he felt inside, until, once again, nothing was left of him.

Svetlana was another constant in his life and one day she found him passed out on the couch. Too much alcohol he told her, but she knew better. She knew Ilya better than Ilya knew himself sometimes.

He took more than alcohol that night and while Svetlana never called him out, while she never threw the truth in his face, she made him promise he would never give up, that Russia and Father and Alexey wouldn't get the satisfaction to dance all over his grave.

So Ilya didn't do it again. He hugged Svetlana to him that night, trying to breathe the same air she was breathing, trying to allow her warmth to seep into his bones and chase away the cold of the Siberian winter that inhabited him.

Svetlana was a house, a safe haven where Ilya could rest sometimes. He loved her and she loved him, but no matter how much Ilya wished things could be different, she never became his home.

As the ice became the only place where Ilya felt free, his name began to be whispered with fear and resentment. Oh he knew he was good at going under people's skin. He had learned from the best after all, from Father and Alexey.

He learned how to bite before others could. He learned how to hit where it hurt the most, but once again he was a disappointment for Russia and Father and Alexey. He would use words to unsettle his adversaries. He would make fun of his opponents, but he never became dirty. He never ended careers, he never broke others.

His first coach, back in Russia, taught all of his students how to do that. He forced them to become vicious, and they didn't complain. They kept their heads down and did what they were told.

The moment Ilya arrived in Boston Ilya spent months destroying the player his coach had created. He spent months trying to build himself into someone his mom could be proud of. He would remain a smart-ass and an asshole when needed, so that people wouldn't want to know the real him, the one behind the many masks Ilya wore, but that was okay.

He didn't need people to know him. That was dangerous and stupid, something irresponsible that Ilya couldn't effort. So it was better like this. People loved to whisper and gossip behind his back, never to his face because they were scared of him, and Ilya decided to let them have their fun.

It didn't matter to him.

The rink became his ivory tower. Not a home, but something similar, something that would allow him to keep his secrets. The rink was cold and the ice unforgiving and it reminded Ilya of Russia. It was familiar and for a very long time he thought it was enough.

But unlike Russia, the rink gave him something. Beautiful freckles and a sweet smile. Eyes that couldn't keep contact with others and yet made at home in his heart, the same one Ilya wasn't sure was still beating.

The rink gave him Shane while everyone else tried to take him away, and the more they had to fight against the press that wanted them to be bitter rivals, and Father who wouldn't accept him losing to the gentle Canadian athlete that changed his life, and the fans who booed him even harder every time his stick crossed Shane's, the more Ilya did the unthinkable.

He fell in love with the one person he knew he couldn't have. For years he fought to keep his heart locked in a cold cell in a forgotten corner of his being. For years he had been cruel and cold to the only person he wanted to beg to stay.

He was too afraid. There was too much for him to lose. If he was found out he could lose his visa. He would lose his visa if he wasn't allowed to play. Without a visa he would be forced to go back to Russia, and Russia was more unforgiving than Father. He would die there, suffocated by the gloomy gray atmosphere and the hate, thinking about beautiful freckles and gentle smile. He would die trying to remember Shane's taste on his lips.

A tear escaped the prison of his long eyelashes but Ilya didn't try to stop its path, he didn't try to hide how the thought of losing Shane, of causing him pain, destroyed what was left of the facade behind which he had hidden himself for years.

Since the rink gave him Shane the bad thoughts and the punishing voices quieted down. They were still there, Ilya was aware of it, but they were weaker and not that scary anymore, and the idea of leaving everything behind and reach for his mom was less and less appealing since he opened himself to Shane and allowed him to meet the real Ilya.

More tears joined the first one and Ilya wasn't even sure why he was crying. He was happy, happier than he had been in a very long time. He was safe, he was loved and he began to rebuild his own family, one that cared for him this time, one that wasn't forced together by blood and obligations but that gathered around him out of love.

They were there because they wanted to be, not because they had to. The rink gave that too to Ilya, and even if it was scary and they had been forced out by a stupid mistake, they were ready to face whatever the world would throw at them.

They were ready to be together and for everyone to know about them. About the years spent trying to convince themselves that what was between them was just sex, that it didn't matter. Years in which they hooked up with others less and less, because all they had always wanted was the other, but they weren't ready to admit it.

Ilya wasn't as sad as he usually was, not anymore, and yet those stupid tears wouldn't stop.

"Ilya?" Shane's sleep voice called and Ilya froze.

Back in Russia if he made a noise Father would go so mad, even now, after so long, Ilya couldn't stop himself and his body from reacting. His mind would always offer him the worst case scenario.

Was Shane mad that he woke him up? Was he too noisy, was he...

Shane's big hand, always so gentle, cupped Ilya's face and forced him to turn his head so that Shane could properly look at him.

"I'm sorry." Ilya whispered. "I'm sorry." He repeated. A small part of him that sounded dangerously like Shane, reminded him that he didn't have to apologize, that to show his emotions wasn't a weakness but something that Shane cherished.

However, for as long as Ilya remembered, he was taught that to show emotions was wrong. It was something for girls, not for boys, not for players, not for Russian and Ilya never forgot the lesson he learned in such hard ways.

"Are you okay? Did you have a bad dream?"

Ilya shook his head. No, he didn't. He didn't have bad dreams since he moved in with Shane, since he could sleep by his side every night. Did Shane know how strong he was? So strong he saved Ilya from himself and the maelstrom inside his mind.

Shane was still touching his face. His body was closer now, and his warmth threatened the ice that was trying to form around Ilya all over again.

"Are you okay?"

Was he? Ilya didn't know. He didn't know if he would ever be okay again. All he knew was that he was where he was always supposed to be. All he knew was that Shane Hollander was the love of his life and Ilya could finally rest.

"I am." He said with a small smile. "I'm home."

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