Not Alone Out There

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Not Alone Out There

by writeitininkorinblood

Summary

It's Shane's first game playing against Montreal, and he's feeling a lot of things. Ilya's also feeling a lot of things.

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“Do not play. Please,” Ilya said, tracing over Shane’s freckles almost reverently.
“Are you asking me as my husband, or telling me as my captain?”
Shane already knew the answer. Ilya would never order him off the ice against his will unless it was a medical necessity.
Ilya’s voice sounded raw as he answered. “Asking. Begging.”

Notes

First fic in a new fandom! Always terrifying. New characterisations are so hard to get a hold of. Hopefully it's okay!

See the end of the work for more notes

Shane was overwhelmingly grateful that the first time he'd be facing off against the Montreal Metros, it was a home game for the Centaurs. The home crowd was a blessing, promising an arena packed with the usual support and appreciation for a team going from strength to strength. There was immeasurable value in knowing the fans weren't going to start hurling homophobic abuse his way if he missed a shot. The same could not be said about the Montreal fans. Or, come to that, some of the Montreal players.

He'd spoken to guys who'd been traded before, and almost everyone said it felt odd to play against former teammates, but this was different. Most people hadn't left their former team in quite the same way that Shane had. But at least the game being in Ottawa meant Shane got to wake up in his own bed and cuddle Anya before he left for the rink, and he knew, no matter what, he'd be going back to somewhere he felt safe afterwards, rather than a bleak hotel room. And then there was Ilya, who hadn't stopped touching him all day.

The fingers carding through his hair while they slowly woke up; the arm around his shoulders when they sat together on the sofa; a constant supply of gentle kisses. Ilya was doing all of it to calm him down, and Shane was only a little mad at himself for how much it was working. It was like Ilya had his instruction manual and knew exactly which buttons to press to get the result he wanted. He always had.

At that moment, Shane was grateful for it. He was drawing courage from the warmth of Ilya's palm against his thigh as he pulled his—sensible, normal, not boring—car into their usual parking space outside the rink. Usually this was when he gave Ilya a quick kiss, the last one they'd get until they were done with work, before going in to greet the other guys. The pressure of the identity of the opposing team on the roster kept Shane in his seat. He just needed to take a few deep breaths.

Ilya's hand tightened on Shane's thigh, but before Shane could get out some vague promise that he was okay, his husband broke the silence.

"I do not want you to play," Ilya said softly, rubbing his thumb in small circles over Shane's trousers.

It was enough to startle Shane out of his meditative breathing and he turned to find Ilya's eyes heavy with concern.

"Ilya—" He searched for the right words of reassurance, but they were out of reach.

"You are Shane Hollander. Canada's golden boy. Would not hurt fly," Ilya said, his Russian accent thick in a way that betrayed the weight of the emotion he was trying to hold back. "Nobody has ever wanted to hurt you before. Your biggest rival your whole career is me, and I would die before hurting you."

Shane couldn't help but smile, reaching up to brush over Ilya's cheek. "I think you're an exceptional case."

Ilya turned his head to kiss Shane's thumb, but he was undeterred.

“But the Metros, they hate you. They hate you because you left them and they suck now. They hate you for tripping. They hate you because they are stupid fucking bigots.”

In any other scenario, Ilya’s expansive vocabulary would have made Shane smile, but he was sure it was a word his husband would rather not have to know.

The reminder of how much resentment lingered within the Metros was heavy in Shane’s chest. It was a team he’d played on for a decade. They should have been like family. But Ilya was right; they hated him. He’d barely heard from any of them since he’d left.

“Not all of them,” was the best reply Shane could give, thinking of Hayden, who had been texting him all morning with plans to go out after the game regardless of who won.

“Enough of them,” Ilya countered. “They are going to go after you and I cannot see them hurt you.”

He was right. Shane knew the form grudges took on the ice. He knew he needed to be prepared for malicious chirping, for people he once called friends to spit at his feet, for brutal hits that clattered him against the boards. It wasn’t going to be a pleasant game in any capacity, but he was hoping it could still be a satisfying one, if they could win. But it wasn’t going to be satisfying to watch his team, a team that already *did* feel like family, do all the hard work while he sat on the bench.

Shane could have mentioned how Ilya has been pissing off other players for his entire career, goading people into hits that were harder than they needed to be. He could have pointed out that he’d watched his husband get hurt time and time again, long before he had any right to show how much it concerned him. He could have joked that Ilya might finally understand how all that felt. But Shane knew this was different. This was almost an entire team that single-mindedly saw him as the enemy. Ilya’s concern was far from unwarranted.

Taking advantage of how flexible hours of yoga had left his limbs, Shane crawled over to climb into his husband’s lap, his legs folded either side of Ilya’s thighs. This was another bonus of driving something sensible, rather than one of Ilya’s stupid sports cars. It was a tight fit and had required no small feat of contortion, and it was definitely more intimate than Shane ever usually was outside the walls of their home, but he sensed they both needed it. Better to get it out of their system out here, rather than in the locker room with an audience.

Ilya never complained about having Shane in his lap and he clearly wasn’t about to start. His arms went around him automatically, steadying him.

“I’m the fastest skater in the league. They can’t hit me if they can’t catch me,” Shane reasoned. And there was some truth to it, but he wouldn’t be able to evade everything the Metros were going to throw at him. He’d be ending the game with bruises, and they both knew it.

“Do not play. Please,” Ilya said, tracing over Shane’s freckles almost reverently.

“Are you asking me as my husband, or telling me as my captain?”

Shane already knew the answer. Ilya would never order him off the ice against his will unless it was a medical necessity.

Ilya's voice sounded raw as he answered. "Asking. Begging."

Tipping his head forward to rest their foreheads together, Shane closed his eyes.

"I need to. You know I need to," he said, his voice soft but unyielding. "I want to win this game more than I've ever wanted to win anything. I'll be okay, Ilya. I know how to play hockey."

It was a weak attempt at humour. Any other day, Ilya would take the bait and run with it, teasing Shane about points totals and rankings and past losses, but all he did was hold Shane tighter.

"I know you do," he said, simple and honest. "I will protect you, best I can."

Shane pulled back to deliver a stern look, poking Ilya in the chest.

"You cannot punch anyone," he ordered. When all he got in response was a roll of Ilya's eyes, he doubled down. "I'm serious. I need you on the ice, not in the penalty box."

He really did want to beat the Metros, and he knew between himself and Ilya and the rest of the Centaurs, they did have a fair chance. But they'd be shooting themselves in the foot to take one of their best players out of the equation.

"Okay. Legal hits only," Ilya said, in a tone that left Shane sure he was going to be stretching the rules as far as they'd flex.

"Ilya," Shane warned.

Ilya just shrugged, unconcerned.

Secretly, Shane liked how intensely Ilya was willing to fight for him. He was very much hoping it didn't end in broken bones or a missing tooth, but the way Ilya had his back, and how he had Ilya's, it made them unstoppable both on the ice and off.

"You are not alone out there," Ilya mumbled as he pressed barely-there kisses along Shane's jaw, like he could read his mind. "You never will be."

And if that didn't give Shane the courage he needed to get out of the car and walk into that rink, nothing would.

End Notes

I hope you enjoyed <3 I may write a second chapter that involves the rest of the Centaurs because I need more of Shane having a family around him on the ice.

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