

i've never been a natural, all i do is try, try, try

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by [hanna \(tsaritsas\)](#)

Summary

Shane and Ilya are about to start their first season in Ottawa as a married couple. Yay! They have been celebrating up until this moment. But anxiety always catches up to Shane when he least expects it. And a new team means new dynamics, new playing styles, and new people. Shane knows, logically, that he's ready for it. But emotionally, maybe not.

post long game

Notes

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

“Do you think they’ll like me?”

Ilya was relaxing, lying out on the navy couch cushions. He looked up from his phone, his eyes sympathetic. “Lyubov, what kind of a question is that?”

Shane got up from the table and walked over. He was happy to be starting on the Centaurs this year. Finally, he got to live with Ilya, his *husband*, and love him publicly and properly. But even though the Voyageurs had betrayed him in the end, he still played with them for eight years. He knew everyone on that team, and they all knew him, even if they thought they didn’t. Despite his quirks, he was a good enough player that everyone accepted him, at least until the end. And he’d met the Centaurs players through Ilya introducing them. They all seemed like perfectly nice guys, and they probably were perfectly nice guys if they were so kind to Ilya. But that didn’t make Shane any less nervous.

He knew he wasn’t the best socially, and he didn’t want that to hinder the team dynamics. The rest of the guys were already so close; even though they were all nice and welcoming to Shane, including him in conversations and inviting them to all their team functions even before the season, he still felt like he was intruding.

He sat down at the end of the couch next to Ilya’s feet, which began lightly tapping his thigh. He looked at Ilya and gave him a small smile before his face dropped again. “The rest of the Centaurs, I mean.” His voice sounded tight. “Do you think they’ll like me?”

Ilya smiled and pulled himself up, scooting over to Shane and looking directly in his eyes. “Shane,” he said, putting a hand on his shoulder, “they came to our *wedding*.”

“But like—” Shane couldn’t quite describe it, at least not properly. He began to fidget with the hem of his shirtsleeve. “I don’t know. I just—we haven’t spent a lot of time together. And they only really know me as Shane Hollander the Voyageur, and now Shane Hollander, Ilya’s husband. And you like me—”

Ilya leaned towards him and kissed his cheek. “Actually, I think you mean I love you.”

Shane blushed. That did make him feel a little better. But not better enough.

“Okay, but they haven’t played with me yet. You know me, you know what I’m like. But I’m gonna get in there, and I don’t wanna be so rigid or be such a control freak that I scare them all away.”

“Hey, hey, hey.” Ilya massaged his shoulder. “They admire you so much already. Little Haas was so excited when he found out you were coming,” he chuckled, “he didn’t talk about anything else for days. Hazy is so excited as well. He wants to work with you during drills because he wants to be good enough to stop your shots on goal. Based on the conversations you had at our wedding.” Ilya still sounded a little giddy when he said our wedding, and Shane found it insanely adorable.

“I think they love you already.” He wrapped an arm around Shane’s shoulder and pulled him close. “And if they don’t, then they will love you soon.” Ilya kissed Shane’s temple and ran a hand up and down his bicep. “I promise.”

Shane hugged his husband and put his head on his shoulder. Ilya kissed his hair and whispered against it, “You’re gonna be great, moy lyubimyy. You’re gonna be great.” He lifted Shane’s head, tilting his chin up with two fingers. “Don’t ever doubt yourself again. You’re amazing. And everyone who’s talked to you is lucky to have known you. I’m so lucky to know you. Our teammates will be so lucky to know you.” He kissed his forehead. “Okay?”

Shane buried his face in Ilya before kissing wherever his lips could reach. “Okay,” he murmured into the warm skin. He could hear Ilya’s pulse through his carotid, the steady rhythm providing a calm anchor for his brain to focus on.

Ilya kept on rubbing Shane’s back, making him just a little bit sleepy. “It’s perfectly fine to be stressed, Shane. It’s a lot of new people. You’re allowed to be a little scared. But I love you,” Ilya told him quietly, “and I’ll be there for you.”

Shane squeezed him hard. He knew Ilya wouldn’t go away, but he wanted him closer. He wanted to melt into him or crawl into his chest. Just be tied to him so that he could be stable without a complicated routine that made sense to no one else around.

Ilya whispered into his hair, “I wish you could see yourself the way I see you.” He could feel Ilya smile against him. “I love every part of you. Even the boring ones.”

“Shut up,” Shane yelled as he lightly slapped the other man’s thigh.

“I’m serious,” Ilya laughed against him, and the vibrations through Shane’s body made him feel like maybe it wouldn’t be so bad. He was himself around Ilya. And Ilya still loved him for it. Maybe other people could love him for it, too.

Shane didn’t realize until he lifted his head that there was a wet spot on Ilya’s shirt. It was over for him now, because once he knew he was crying, was when it would actually begin to tear him up inside. He felt the moisture in his eyes, and he buried his face back in Ilya’s shirt, hoping he wouldn’t notice. But Ilya started rocking him back and forth. Because Ilya always noticed.

“Is okay, solnyshko, you’ll be okay,” he whispered calmly. “You always tell me it’s okay for me to cry. It’s okay for you, too.”

“It’s just a lot,” Shane muttered into his shoulder. “I signed with the team, and then we moved and, hell, we got married. And I’m so happy. But it was all such a rush, and it happened so fast and,” he sniffed, “I guess I’m crashing.” Shane tried his best to breathe in and feel the air in his lungs. He couldn’t tell whether or not it worked. “I don’t know. I forgot to be nervous, and now it’s all hitting me.”

“I know, milyy, I know.” Ilya pulled back just slightly, and Shane tried to chase him. He wanted Ilya as close as possible. But then Ilya cupped his face, and maybe it was okay. His eyes held so much concern, eyebrows knitting closer together. A dark blond curl had fallen

into his forehead, and Shane wished he had the mental strength to reach and push it back. Ilya ran his thumb along Shane's cheeks. "Let's lie down, okay? Let your body rest."

Shane nodded, and Ilya pulled them down. He put his head against the other man's chest, doing his best to focus on the steady heartbeat in his ear. Shane felt a hand thread into his hair, lightly scratching his scalp. The new position and light caresses helped his airways open up, and he could feel his brain getting more oxygen.

He heard Ilya murmur above him. "Don't worry, baby, you're gonna be fine."

I love it when you call me baby. Please do it again. I can't talk, but please do it again.

Tears were running down his face. His brain moved too fast for him to feel emotions like other people. They would come and go whenever they pleased. It was the one thing he couldn't control, and that irked him. At first, he'd thought, *Oh my god, a new team with supportive players, and my husband and I get to move back near my parents and my hometown. This is gonna be great.* He should've known that the anxiety was going to catch up to him when he least expected it. He wanted to tell Ilya that he knew this wasn't rational, that he was freaking out over nothing. It just didn't mean it would stop. The anxiety would eat at him all the same. And Ilya knew this. Ilya knew *him*. But he still wanted to confirm it; he didn't want Ilya to worry. And Ilya started worrying as soon as he first asked the question.

Ilya, who was whispering sweet comforts into Shane's ear as he cried. Ilya, who was rubbing Shane's back slowly, was dragging his fingernails against his spine. It felt so lovely. *He* was so lovely. Shane never felt better than when Ilya's hands were on him. Whether they were making each other crazy in bed, or a small tap on his arm at the store, or a hug from behind while he was cooking dinner. It relaxed him in a way nothing else could. The envelope of Ilya's body was what he looked forward to most at the end of every day. Shane felt him lean his head down and place soft kisses on his forehead. He breathed in the smell of Ilya's t-shirt, cologne still lingering from the start of the day—vanilla and citrus and sandalwood. Ilya's chest was so warm and solid, covered in grey fabric that felt soft and silky against Shane's tear-stained face.

Shane blinked the tears from his eyes and realized his breathing had evened out. His face still felt wet and puffy, but it didn't hurt from crying anymore. He lifted his head just enough to be able to meet Ilya's warm hazel eyes. They were so unbelievably gorgeous: gold around the center and green around the edges, always sparkling with a hint of mischief and framed by thick, dark lashes that made the color pop out even more. Shane wanted to lose himself in them. Ilya placed a hand along Shane's cheek, running his thumb up and down the bone. He looked a little sad now, too, probably on Shane's behalf. "How are you feeling, my milyy?" Ilya asked, eyes studying Shane intently.

Shane exhaled, "A little better, I think." He placed a hand on Ilya's shoulder, lightly tapping his fingers. "I'm sorry I made you worry."

"Don't apologize. I just hate seeing you so sad, moy lyubov." He kissed Shane's forehead. "You never deserve to feel that way." He put Shane's back onto his chest and continued to play with his hair. "I'm very happy you are feeling better. Is there anything you want?"

Shane smiled. “Like from you or in general?”

“Well, I meant from me. But if there are other things you want, I will get them too,” Ilya chuckled, and Shane felt his chest vibrate with the motion. It made his heart clench.

“I just want you to stay here with me,” Shane said, his voice still a little wet. He lifted his chin to kiss Ilya’s neck.

Ilya looked down at him with big, soft eyes that always made Shane melt. “Oh, baby, of course.” They were face to face now, Shane finally smiling after minutes of his brain running wild with stress and nerves. Ilya ran a thumb under his eye, and Shane leaned into the touch.

And then Ilya tilted Shane’s chin up and captured his lips in what was one of the sweetest kisses Ilya ever gave him.

His lips were so soft and warm, interlocked with Shane’s own as his tongue ran slowly along Shane’s bottom lip. Shane opened his mouth just a little to welcome him in, and his tongue caressed Shane’s in a way that made his thoughts fuzzy. He wanted to say something to Ilya—maybe a *thank you for being there*, or *I’m so glad I have you*—but he couldn’t remember what it was. He kissed Ilya back with everything it could be.

It came back to Shane when they pulled away, as he stared into Ilya’s eyes through his lashes still littered with teardrops. “Ilya,” he whispered. He was so overwhelmed with affection that he almost couldn’t speak. “I love you so much.”

The other man ran his gaze over Shane’s face, taking in the fact that he’d felt better now. *You always make me feel better*, Shane thought.

Ilya exhaled a sigh of relief and ran his hand through Shane’s hair. “Oh, sweetheart,” he whispered back, pressing a kiss onto Shane’s cheek, “I love you too.”

End Notes

i have horrific social anxiety and i have no idea how to interact with people, so this is for me.
i deal with it (mostly) alone though rip

anyways hope u enjoy!

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