

## Call Your Mom

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# Call Your Mom

by [bookstaylorsversion](#)

## Summary

Ilya Rozanov doesn't like asking for help, especially at four in the morning. Unfortunately, his appendix doesn't care about pride.

When the pain gets bad enough to force his hand—and Shane is hours away—he calls Yuna. She answers before the second ring.

Ilya is dreaming about his mother.

At least, he thinks he is. The dream is already slipping away by the time his eyes open and he jolts awake. He can't remember what she was saying, or even if she was really there, but the feeling of her lingers in his chest. He has just enough time to register that before something else cuts in.

A twisting, terrible pressure low in his abdomen.

It's deep and wrong and sudden enough to make him suck in a breath. He lies there in the dark, staring up at the ceiling, trying to get his bearings.

*It's nothing*, he tells himself because he has a team breakfast tomorrow and he doesn't have time for this. He can't afford to be dramatic about a random ache in the middle of the night.

So he stays still. Doesn't shift, doesn't test it. He waits for it to fade on its own.

It doesn't. It gets worse. Just enough that it's impossible to ignore. It pulses, sharp in a way that makes his jaw tighten. Sleep is clearly not happening. He closes his eyes anyway, stubborn about it, but every breath seems to set it off again.

He wishes, as he does every night, that Shane were there beside him.

But Shane is in Montreal, and Ilya is in his Ottawa house, alone in the dark. If Shane were here, he'd probably be sprawled half on top of him asleep, and Ilya would have to nudge him off his chest which would probably wake him up. Shane would probably already be asking what's wrong...

*Okay*, he thinks. *Enough*.

Ilya shifts toward the edge of the bed, moving carefully, like that might make a difference. Maybe he just needs water or maybe there's something he can take for the pain. His feet hit the floor and for one stupid second he thinks it's fine—

Then the pain spikes, sudden and blinding, and the room tilts violently. His knees give out before he can grab anything, and he goes down hard onto the floor, the impact jarring and loud in the quiet house.

He lies there, gasping, curled around the pain, knowing with cold certainty that this is not something he can ignore.

The anger comes next, sharp enough to almost cut through the pain.

He's furious with himself for lying there and being weak. He's had so many hits on the ice, he's lost count. He knows how to push through discomfort; it's practically a job requirement. This shouldn't be enough to put him on the floor.

And then a worse thought slips in, quiet and horrifying that makes him feel so alone, alone and scared.

What if he dies like this—alone on his bedroom floor, the house dark and empty, no one even knowing something is wrong. The idea makes his heart race, panicked and uneven.

*What if he never sees Shane again?*

The thought is unbearable. He tries to shove it away, to replace it with something simple. He tells himself to get up. To move. To stop being ridiculous. He digs his hands into the floor, tries to push himself upright.

It's not determination so much as instinct. He drags himself across the floor, slow and awkward, the movement setting his stomach on fire. His phone is still on the nightstand. The distance to it feels ridiculous, like it's on the other side of the house instead of just a few feet away.

He gets there eventually and fumbles it into his hand, fingers slick with sweat. The screen lights up the dark. **4:07 a.m.**

He opens a text to Shane anyway.

The blank screen stares back at him. He can picture Shane waking up to it, groggy and alarmed before he's even fully conscious. Texting him in the middle of the night would send him straight into panic mode, and Ilya can't do that. He doesn't want to be the reason Shane spends the rest of the night terrified hours away.

He doesn't know what he would even say. *Hey, I think something's wrong* feels like too much.

Another spike of pain rips through him, sudden and brutal, bright enough to wipe the thought clean from his head.

His breath catches, vision blurring, and his thumb slips off Shane's name as the decision is made for him.

He calls Yuna.

He isn't entirely sure why. Maybe because she's listed as his emergency contact on a dozen work forms and in his phone, so his brain goes to her automatically. Maybe because she's close by. Maybe, secretly, because he loves Shane's mother very much, and she's the kind of person who will know exactly what to do.

She answers before the second ring, and Ilya opens his mouth and realizes he has nothing. The words are tangled up and useless. English refuses to cooperate.

For a split second he thinks, *If I were still in Russia, I wouldn't do this. I wouldn't call anyone. I wouldn't be this weak.*

The thought turns in on itself almost immediately. If he were still in Russia, there would be no one to call.

He clears his throat and finally blurts out, “It’s not an emergency.”

There’s a beat of silence, and then Yuna says, “Honey, tell me what’s wrong.” Her voice is worried but steady. He can hear movement on the other end of the line, the sound of her getting out of bed.

The simple thought of her already moving toward him nearly undoes him.

He tries to explain the pain, but it comes out fractured. Sharp, deep, everywhere. He loses track halfway through and has to stop to breathe.

Yuna listens anyway. She asks, “Have you called an ambulance?”

“No,” he says immediately. The idea of paramedics feels insane. Embarrassing.

“Ilya,” she says, “I’m coming to get you.”

“No,” he says, again too fast. The thought of her driving over in the middle of the night and making this her problem sends a spike of guilt through him. “Don’t—”

Pain detonates through him without warning, white-hot and total. His vision goes spotty. He gasps, curls tighter on the floor, the sound tearing out of him before he can stop it.

“Don’t rush,” he manages when he can breathe again, weaker now.

Yuna ignores that completely. “Talk to me,” she says. “Tell me exactly where it hurts.”

He names it as best he can. Low right side. Worse when he moves. Worse when he breathes too deep. He tells her it feels wrong, like something is twisting inside him.

“That sounds like your appendix, Ilya. How long has it been hurting?”

He hesitates. “I don’t know. A few hours, probably.” He thinks it started last night, but he’d assumed he strained something while working out, which happens often. And it did not feel like *this*.

“If it ruptured, the infection could spread inside you. That can be very serious, not something you can wait out.” Yuna says.

The room seems to tilt again. “Oh,” he says faintly. For a second he’s convinced that this is it—that this *is* how he dies after all.

“I’m on my way,” Yuna says firmly. “Do not hang up.”

He doesn’t argue. He doesn’t have the energy. The pain takes over after that, swallowing everything else. He can’t speak anymore. He can barely breathe through it. The phone stays pressed to his ear as he lies there, shaking.

They don't talk while she drives. But he can hear her steady breathing on the other end of the line, and it anchors him in a way nothing else can.

By the time Yuna arrives, Ilya is barely aware of anything beyond his own breathing.

The sound of the door opening cuts through the haze, followed by her voice saying his name. It takes him a second to register that she's really there in his bedroom.

It's only then that he realizes he's on the floor in only his underwear. The thought floats up distantly that he should probably be embarrassed.

Normally, he'd make a joke. He'd say something like *this is awkward* or *at least I'm not naked*, something to make himself feel more in control of the situation.

Yuna is already beside him, kneeling, her face tight with concern. She reaches for him carefully and tries to help him sit up.

The pain explodes the second she moves him. He makes a small, helpless sound before he can stop it.

"Oh, sweetie," she says quietly.

Ilya can't look at her. He stares at a spot on the floor instead. He doesn't trust himself not to fall apart if he meets her eyes.

She helps him get dressed anyway. "It's freezing outside," she says, like this is a small problem they can tackle together. Between the two of them, they manage to get sweatpants on him. It's clumsy and slow and humiliating in a way he doesn't have the energy to fully register. She grabs a coat from his closet and tries to get that on him next. The fabric brushes his skin and makes him shiver.

The second they try to move again, he knows he's too big for this. He's a six-foot-three, two-hundred-plus-pound professional athlete. There's no way Yuna can hold him up. He braces himself for her to hesitate, to let him sink back to the ground under his own weight.

She doesn't.

She slips a steady arm around his shoulders and starts guiding him down the hallway like she's done this a hundred times before. Her voice stays calm and constant. "I've got you," she says. "Slow is fine. We're okay."

Halfway down the hall, he realizes how much she's actually struggling. The slight hitch in her steps, the way her grip tightens when his weight shifts wrong.

He hates feeling like a burden, like he's taking advantage of this new family he's been let into so seamlessly, that he still doesn't quite trust himself to believe in yet.

He remembers the night Shane brought him home, his literal hockey rival that he'd been seeing in secret for many years, and him being a man on top of that. A huge complication to put it lightly. Yuna has been startled for maybe a minute. And then she'd let him into her

home so gracefully. Her and David had fed him. Treated him like he'd always been meant to be there. He'd assumed it would wear off eventually, that they would get to know him and the politeness would fade.

It never did. Instead, they started inviting him over for holidays and weekly family dinners. Even when Shane was in Montreal and didn't have the time, they still invited him.

He swallows hard and keeps moving, leaning on her more than he wants to.

The stairs are worse. They take them one at a time, his arm hooked over her shoulder, his other hand gripping the railing for dear life. Each step sends a fresh flare of pain through him, sharp enough that he has to stop and breathe through it before they can take the next one.

"Thank you," he says, once, because he realizes he hasn't said it yet. Then again, a little softer. "You didn't have to—thank you."

Yuna squeezes his shoulder. "Shh," she says gently. "It's okay. We can do this."

They reach the bottom of the stairs, and Ilya realizes just how much he's sweating. His skin is slick with sweat, and he can feel it soaking into the place where Yuna's arm is braced around his side. The humiliation flares as he keeps his eyes on the floor, wishing he could make himself smaller.

"Sorry," he whispers one more time, rough and earnest.

Outside, the cold night air hits him. He thought it might help, but it doesn't. The cold only sharpens everything, makes the pain feel more precise. His breath fogs in front of him as they slowly make it down the driveway.

When they reach the car, Yuna shifts her grip on him to open the door. It's only for a second, but it's enough. The moment her arm leaves his shoulders, the world tilts violently.

He doesn't have time to react. The ground rushes up, the edges of his vision going dark, and then there's nothing at all as he passes out right there in the driveway.

He wakes to the cool press of a damp towel against his face.

It startles him enough to make him blink, the world swimming back into focus in uneven pieces. Yuna is right there, close. Her mouth is tight, eyes wide and shining. There's a crease between her brows he's never seen before.

"You're okay, baby," she says, steady and sure, as she helps him upright and guides him back toward the car.

*Baby.* The word lands hard in his chest. For an irrational second, he wants to take her hand. Wants to ask her to stay with him, to sit by his bed until he falls asleep, the way you do when you're a little kid and you don't want to be alone.

Then he remembers where he is. He lets her ease him into the car while he tries to control his shaking.

“I’m sorry,” he starts again.

Yuna shoots him a look. “*Please* stop apologizing.”

Something about the way she says it, exasperated, almost makes him laugh.

Yuna drives fast. Not reckless, but decisive, zooming through the empty roads at night. He respects it. Shane would never drive this fast.

Yuna rolls through a yellow light without hesitation. After a minute, she says, “Do you want me to call Shane?”

“No. I don’t want to worry him,” Ilya says, staring straight ahead. His voice sounds thin to his own ears. “I don’t want him to feel like he has to drive all the way here.”

Yuna glances at him briefly before returning her eyes to the road.

Ilya swallows against another wave of nausea. “He would not be able to explain why he is suddenly in Ottawa if anyone sees him. It would be...complicated.” He gestures vaguely. “And he has practice in the morning, he will not want to miss it.”

Yuna lets out a slow breath. “Honey,” she says gently, but there’s steel under it, “Shane is your boyfriend. I am fairly certain practice wouldn’t be his top priority if we told him you were being rushed to the hospital.”

He presses his head back against the seat, eyes closing briefly. “I don’t want him scared,” he says finally.

“He would be more scared if something happened and he didn’t know.”

“I’m not—” he starts. “I will be fine.”

Yuna’s grip tightens on the steering wheel.

By the time they reach the hospital, the pain is no longer exploding through him in spikes. He manages to walk in mostly on his own.

The automatic doors slide open. The lights are too bright and the air smells like disinfectant and something metallic. Yuna stays close with a hand at his back in case he sways.

At the front desk, they hand him a clipboard. “Please fill this out.”

When he sits, the letters blur immediately. His brain feels like it’s moving through water and the English won’t stay still long enough to make sense.

Yuna notices and without a word, she takes the clipboard from him.

Gratitude floods him again. She fills it out efficiently, asking him quiet questions as she goes while he leans back in his chair, eyes half-closed.

“I’m putting myself down as your emergency contact,” Yuna says, glancing at him.

“Thank you.” He watches the pen move as she writes in her phone number.

Then he watches as she writes *mother* in the relationship box.

Something in his chest gives way—she’s written the word down without hesitation.

*Of course she put that*, he says to himself. *It’s practical. She can sign him out later if they think she’s family.* He knows it doesn’t mean anything, but a pressure builds behind his eyes anyways.

Then the pain in his stomach surges back without warning, violent and total. His vision flashes white and the ceiling skews sharply to one side.

He hears someone say his name and then the world drops out from under him again.

He wakes slowly. It’s more like drifting upward through something until light exists again. His body feels distant and his mouth is dry.

He doesn’t know where he is and the ceiling above him is unfamiliar. Too bright. There’s a steady beeping somewhere and the air smells sterile.

It takes him a moment to understand that it’s morning, that thin light is filtering in from somewhere off to his right. That he’s lying in a hospital bed.

He shifts slightly and regret immediately follows. There’s a deep soreness in his abdomen. Not the sharp, tearing agony from before, but still tight and bruised.

A hand is resting on his arm. It’s warm and steady. A quiet relief spreads through his haze.

“Yuna,” he murmurs, the name thick on his tongue. He turns his head just enough, blinking against the light.

But it isn’t Yuna. It’s Shane.

For a bright second, Ilya stares in awe at the man beside him, who is smiling softly at him. The relief is so sharp it almost feels like another kind of pain. Shane is here. He’s sitting next to his hospital bed with his hand wrapped around Ilya’s arm.

And then it turns to panic. “Practice,” Ilya croaks, the word barely formed. “Did you miss—”

Shane leans forward immediately. “No. No, hey. Don’t worry about that.” His voice is wrecked. And his eyes are red and his mouth is tight.

Ilya looks at him, more questions building and then dying on his lips.

“You had surgery,” Shane says softly. “It’s the next morning. You’re fine. Well. You’re not fine, but—you’re okay now.”

The words move slowly through Ilya’s foggy brain. He shifts slightly and becomes aware of the soreness in his abdomen again.

“Oh,” he says faintly.

“Your appendix burst,” Shane adds quietly. “They were shocked you were conscious at all.”

The word *burst* echoes in Ilya’s head. *What a stupid, useless organ*, he thinks. He studies Shane’s face instead—the tightness around his eyes, the way his shoulders tense. Ilya moves slowly, unsteadily and takes Shane’s hand in his.

“You scared us so much,” Shane says softly, and his voice cracks on the last word. “My mom waited until I woke up to call me. I was pissed she didn’t wake me up sooner.”

Ilya blinks at him. “You needed your beauty sleep,” he mutters weakly.

Shane lets out a breath. “Ha-ha,” he says. “They rushed you into surgery pretty quickly though. I wouldn’t have made it here before you went in. I’m so sorry I wasn’t there. You must’ve been so scared.”

“I have a sexy scar now, yes?” is all Ilya asks.

Shane just shakes his head, like he doesn’t know what to do with him. “Yeah, probably.” His voice wobbles, and his eyes are reddening again, fixed on the place where Ilya’s hand has curled into his.

Ilya looks toward the door, making sure nobody’s outside. Then he uses all his strength to move over in the bed—which is only about an inch, but it makes his intention clear. Then he looks back at Shane, silent and hopeful. *Please*.

Shane hesitates for one breath, then carefully climbs into the narrow hospital bed beside him, moving slowly so he doesn’t touch anywhere near Ilya’s abdomen. The mattress dips as Shane curls his body carefully around him, one arm tight like something might still try to take him away. Now forehead to forehead, Ilya closes his eyes as their breaths mingle. He doesn’t feel alone anymore.

“Mom is on her way back with dad,” Shane murmurs, his voice low against Ilya’s face. “I sent her home for a few hours. She was still here in her pajamas.”

Ilya blinks at that. He thinks about Yuna sitting upright in a hospital chair all night, waiting for Shane to arrive because Ilya begged her to wait to call him. Guilt creeps in and settles deep in his chest, heavier than the soreness in his stomach.

“She shouldn’t have stayed,” Ilya says softly.

“She was *not* going to leave you.”

“I made her get up in the middle of the night. I shouldn’t have called. I just—” Ilya trails off, shaking his head faintly. “I feel bad. Was a lot to ask.”

Shane goes very still beside him. Then he leans back just enough to see Ilya’s face properly. “It was not,” he says. “Thank god you called her. And you didn’t make her do anything. It was an emergency and she wanted to be there. You’re family.”

Ilya’s mouth presses thin. He blames the anesthesia for making him feel this way.

Shane’s hand slides up to cup the side of his face, thumb brushing lightly along his cheek. “She loves you...” he whispers. “Like I love you.” The confidence in his voice is steady, like this is the simplest fact in the world. He presses his forehead gently to Ilya’s temple. “That’s not conditional. You do not have to apologize for needing help.”

And for the first time since the night began, the guilt loosens its grip just a little. And maybe for the first time in his life—or at least the first time since his mother died—he feels something else clearly. Not temporary. Not conditional.

A real family. The thought is almost too big.

“My mom already demanded you stay at their house while you recover,” Shane says. “They’re not even going to pretend it’s optional, just so you know.”

Ilya snorts faintly. “And then I will be their favorite son, yes?” he mutters, but his throat burns when he says it.

Shane laughs softly. “Trust me, they love this stuff. Actually, please let them baby you.” He nudges Ilya gently with his knee. “You’re going to have to play cards with my mom. And let them cook homemade meals for you three times a day.”

“Tragic.”

“And,” Shane continues, clearly enjoying himself now, “you’ll have to read *The New Yorker* every morning with my dad.”

Ilya makes a face at that. “I wish I stayed unconscious.”

Shane huffs out a real laugh at that, warm against Ilya’s chin.

“I will thank them by buying them a new house,” Ilya jokes, but emotion swells up quickly again. His vision prickles, so he blinks hard and clears his throat. “It’s the drugs,” he says quickly. “Very emotional medication.”

Shane smiles in a way that says he doesn’t believe that for a second. He just holds him closer, pressing a kiss to his forehead.

The door opens and both boys spring apart, Shane pulling himself off the bed. It's automatic—that old, ingrained fear of being caught together, even now. They turn their heads toward the door. But it's Yuna and David.

Relief washes through Ilya so fast. Yuna steps in first, already scanning him, her expression softening the second she sees his open eyes.

“Oh, thank God,” she says, crossing the room. David follows more quietly, but there's the same tension easing out of him.

She comes to the bed and touches his arm, rubbing gently. “I'm so glad you're awake.”

Ilya feels something unclench in his chest. He leans slightly into Yuna's touch. “Hi,” he says back, voice rough.

Both Yuna and David pull out chairs and sit close to the bed, while Shane stays sitting by his side, their hands never leaving the other's.

“We spoke to the doctor,” Yuna says gently. “They're keeping you here at least a day. They want to monitor you and make sure there's no infection.”

Ilya's instinct is an immediate *no*. He has a game tomorrow. He has practices all next week. Ottawa's captain can't disappear in the middle of the season.

He opens his mouth, but nothing comes out. And the harder he tries to focus on it, the more the idea of hockey feels distant and abstract. He's so tired.

Shane squeezes his hand, like he can hear the argument forming in his head.

Yuna continues. “You'll be on antibiotics for a bit and you're going to be sore. So no lifting, no skating, no workouts for a couple of weeks.”

She exchanges a look with David. “And once they discharge you,” she adds, softer now, “we'll take you home until you recover.”

Home.

A warmth swells in Ilya again. He turns his head toward his boyfriend, who's watching him with a steady smile. Then Shane's mouth quirks up into a smirk.

“What?” Ilya mutters.

Shane shrugs lightly. “Just thinking that with you out, Montreal won't have much trouble beating Ottawa this weekend.”

Yuna makes an indignant sound and David huffs a laugh. Even Ilya feels the corner of his mouth lift.

“Yes, I did this for you,” Ilya says dryly. But he's grateful that Shane cut through the heaviness in the room.

“Don’t worry,” Yuna says, leaning close to Ilya’s side. “By the time we’ve finished rebuilding your strength, you’ll be playing better than you ever have. Montreal won’t know what hit them.”

Shane looks genuinely aghast. “Mom!”

But now they’re all laughing and the room feels warm. Safe. Full in a way Ilya really likes.

And for once, he doesn’t argue.

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