Forever

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Forever

by Fandom_Stuff

Summary

When Ilya is jumped in an alleyway by some homophobic hockey fans, the entire Ottawa Centaurs team comes to his rescue.

Notes

See the end of the work for notes

Ilya had hoped the bad days would eventually stop coming. Therapy was helping, his meds were helping, but there was still one thing that neither of those things could fix: grief. The anniversary of his mother's death was always hard. Shane did his best to help but he couldn't help *enough.* Ilya knew it killed Shane that he couldn't do anything but hold him when the tears came and give him space when he asked for it; it killed Ilya too.

Ilya had agreed to go out with the team after celebrating yet another home victory–even though he'd honestly rather be anywhere but in a bar packed full of screaming guys and loud music–but he was their captain and he had a duty to the team. His friends. Because that's really what they all were now. He'd put so much work into making the Centaurs the best team they could be and it was always rewarding when it paid off, but his heart wasn't in it tonight. So when he gave Shane's hand a squeeze and told him he was going to step outside for a minute, Shane understood.

Ilya had managed to keep his smoking down to a minimum these days, but this week he'd fallen back into the bad habit. Shane had only commented on it twice. Right now, he really needed a cigarette and he lit one up as he stepped outside into a side alley. There were puddles on the ground from recent rain and the smell of something rotting was strong even over the smoke.

He took a few drags and leaned against the wall, trying to stop himself from spiraling into a pit that he wouldn't be able to climb out of. He didn't know how long he'd been out there but he'd burned through most of his cigarette when the door opened and four guys piled out into the alley. Ilya didn't spare them more than a glance, he just dropped the butt of his cig on the ground and when he bent to pick it up he felt a hand on his shoulder.

He was backed against the wall in a matter of seconds, the other three guys boxing him in on either side. "So, you're that hockey player, yeah?"

"The *married* one," another guy said, his lip curling.

"A lot of hockey players are married, you will have to be more specific," Ilya replied, jaw set. He attempted to straighten up but the guy's fist curled into his jacket, shoving him harder against the wall.

"The *faggot*," a third one spat.

Ilya had been called that and worse for pretty much his entire life, so the insult glazed off him. He shrugged. "Yes."

"Scott Hunter was bad enough, but you? You fucking ruined hockey!"

The first punch hit him in the diaphragm and then they didn't stop coming. He was wrenched from the wall as one of them held him from behind, locking his arms behind his back so he couldn't hit back. He spat blood onto the ground as a fist connected with his jaw; he felt a tooth knock loose. His knees gave out eventually and the guy holding him must've gotten tired because he let Ilya fall to the ground, and then it just got worse. Boots dug into his back

and ribs and he couldn't even raise his hands to protect his head. Ilya had a fleeting thought that he was going to die here in some backwater alley at some backwater bar.

I love you, Ilya thought desperately, hoping that Shane would somehow pick up on it, wishing that telepathy was somehow real so that he could make sure that Shane knew what he'd already told him a thousand times before.

I love you. I'm sorry it ended like this.

Ilya closed his swollen eyes, trying to block out the pain. He focused on his mother, on her bright smile, on her hands combing through his hair; her laughter; her light. It would be over soon.

Shane resisted the urge to follow Ilya out of the bar. He knew his husband needed a moment, it had been a difficult week, but Shane also didn't like letting him walk off when he was in such a vulnerable state. He forced himself to smile and laugh at something Bood said and he let Dykstra slap him on the back and toast to another victory with 'the dream team.'

Harris had his arm around Barrett and was whispering something in his ear that had them both smiling at each other in a way that made Shane's heart swell. He wondered if that was what he and Ilya looked like to outsiders. Boyle and Young went off to get more drinks and Shane quickly downed the rest of his beer.

It'd been five minutes since Ilya had disappeared and Shane used that as an opportunity to tell his teammates that he was going to find his husband. "Can't be away from each other for more than five minutes," Hazy said, but he was smiling.

Shane left his beer bottle on a table and made his way to the door he'd seen Ilya go out of. He poked his head out, sweeping his gaze along the alleyway to spot Ilya, what he saw made his blood run cold. He barely managed to yell over his shoulder for help before he was pushing his way outside and grabbing a hold of the guy closest to him, the guy who was dragging his foot back to kick at the body on the ground again. God, the *body.* Ilya.

Shane tossed the guy to the ground, anger and fear fueling him as his vision narrowed to take in the other three guys. They were all decently built but Shane was pretty sure he could take them, he'd taken bigger guys on the ice. The guys froze, stopping their assault on Ilya to focus on him. Shane wanted to run to Ilya but there was no way these assholes were going to let that happen, he'd have to fight them.

The guy he'd thrown to the ground was getting to his feet and Shane prepared himself for the attack. They all seemed to move at once, converging on Shane like a massive wave. Shane managed to land a few solid punches before one got him on the cheek and he stumbled backwards. At that moment, the door opened to the entirety of the Ottawa Centaurs team, and then it was an all out brawl.

Hazy threw a guy into the wall so hard his head smacked into the brick. Bood punched one of the guys square in the nose while Dykstra and Chouinard took on the other two. Haas was

crouching by Ilya and now that there was a clear path to him, Shane dropped down beside him, his hands hovering over Ilya's body.

"Ilya?" he called out desperately. Haas moved out of the way so that he could cradle Ilya's bruised face, he hardly recognized him under all the swelling that was already building up.

Ilya's breath hitched. "Mom?" His voice sounded small and Shane wanted to gather him into his arms and press him into his chest cavity where no one could hurt him again. "Shane?"

"I'm here," Shane said, running a light finger over his cheek, wiping away a tear. He felt his own tears spilling over his waterline. "I'm right here."

Ilya blinked up at him. "You're so beautiful," Ilya said, there was blood in his smile. "Like an angel. Are you here to take me with you? I'm ready." Ilya let out a broken sigh and his eyes slid back into their sockets. Shane's heart dropped.

"Ilya! No, no hey, stay with me, come on," Shane said, giving him a little shake. "Ilya!"

"Out of the way, paramedics!"

Thank God. Oh thank God.

"How long has he been down?" one of the EMT's asked, she had kind eyes.

"Uh, I don't know, ten minutes?" Shane replied. "Maybe more."

Haas helped him stand and then all they could do was wait as Ilya was assessed. A neck brace went on and he was rolled onto a backboard. Shane felt like he was going to be sick, and sure enough a moment later he was spewing his beer onto the pavement. Another EMT came over to him, a hand on his back.

"Are you okay?"

Shane waved him off. "I'm fine."

"You've got a real shiner there, do you want me to take a look at it?"

Shane shook his head, forcing down another wave of nausea. "No."

When Shane straightened up, he took in the alleyway for what seemed like the first time. The entire Centaurs team had the four guys backed into the dead end and a police officer was cuffing them. The Centaurs had formed a tight line to keep them from running and Shane heard Hazy ask if the officer needed help getting them to the car. A rush of warmth cut through Shane as he realized just how much this team cared about Ilya, how hard he'd worked for them to be something in a world where no one ever believed in them. They were all here because of Ilya and Ilya was…

Shane snapped his attention back to his bleeding husband who was now being lifted onto a gurney. "I'm riding with him!" Shane said, running up to hold Ilya's hand. "And before you ask, I'm his fucking husband."

“You got it,” an EMT said, hardly batting an eye.

Shane climbed into the ambulance, only letting go of Ilya’s hand when they needed his arm to put in an IV. “You’re going to be fine,” he said, brushing a stray curl from Ilya’s forehead; it was stained red. “Stay with me,” he murmured. “Please. Don’t give up. Ya tebya lyublyu.” Ilya’s hand tightened in his, not much but it was enough for Shane to know he could hear him.

Watching Ilya get carted off behind double doors that he wasn’t allowed to follow through was almost enough for him to break down then and there. He took a few steadying breaths, trying to push through the fog in his brain that was telling him he should give into the panic. He couldn't do that. He had to give the receptionist Ilya’s information, he had to call his *parents*, and he had to get someone to go back to their house to check on Anya.

Shane’s legs wouldn’t move, no matter how much he willed them to, and it wasn’t until Shane realized that the receptionist had left his desk and was standing in front of him that he managed to unstick his feet from the floor.

“Sorry,” he said.

“It’s okay,” Jacob, as his nametag proclaimed, said. “If you need a minute that’s fine.”

Shane shook his head. He had to do this now or he never would. “I’m good.”

He followed Jacob back to the desk and accepted the clipboard with a blank information sheet, plopping himself down in a chair to fill it out. When that was done, he was told that he’d be informed when there was any news. Shane wanted to tell them that wasn’t good enough, that he needed to be in there with Ilya, he needed to make sure they were doing everything for him. Did they even know that they had Shane Hollander’s entire world behind those doors?

With shaking hands, he pulled his phone from his pocket and pressed the one on speeddial. Yuna Hollander picked up on the third ring. “Shane?” her voice sounded sleep-rough and one look at the clock told him it was past one a.m.

“Mom,” was all he managed to choke out.

“What’s wrong? What’s happened?” Shane heard rustling on the other end and an urgent “David!” as she no doubt woke his Dad.

His throat was closing up and suddenly he couldn’t stop the tears. “Ilya.”

“Shane, *what happened?*” Only someone who knew Yuna would be able to hear the intense terror in her voice, to anyone else she would simply sound stern.

“He’s–” Shane hiccuped on a sob. “I don’t know. I’m at the hospital.”

“Queensway?”

“Yeah.”

“We’re on our way. Hang tight.”

Shane’s head found its way between his knees and he stayed like that until a hand landed on his back. “Hollander?” Hazy’s voice.

It took a lot of effort for Shane to sit up, wiping snot from his nose as he looked at his concerned teammates. Everyone was here. Not a single person had gone home. Shane almost burst into more tears just at the sight of them.

“Hey guys,” he said, offering them a smile he hoped was full of gratitude.

Bood sat down in the open chair on one side of him while Hazy took the other and the rest of the team filed into their own seats. “Those guys are gonna be held for forty-eight hours if you want to press charges.” Bood said.

“Good. I do.”

“Damn right you do,” Dykstra agreed. “I mean what the actual fuck, right?”

That was a good fucking question. “Did they say why they attacked Ilya?”

“Assholes said Roz started it,” Bood replied.

“Bullshit,” Dillon said. “Roz can get heated sometimes but he’d never start a fight off the ice.”

Shane felt a million miles away when he said, “He only went out there to smoke.”

“Those guys followed him out,” Boyle said. “I saw them leave the bar but I thought they were also going for a smoke.”

Shane felt sick again. “So you think they went out there to hurt him on purpose?”

“It was four vs one, that’s not just some random fight,” LaPointe said.

“Fuck.” Shane pressed his head between his knees again, a poor attempt to ground himself.

“Why would someone want to do that?” Haas asked.

“People are crazy,” Barrett replied.

Hazy’s hand landed on his back. “He’s going to be fine.”

“Yeah, it’ll take more than this to keep Roz down,” Holmberg said.

Shane let the voices of his teammates blend into white noise. Hazy’s hand never left his back, it didn’t have the same weight as Ilya’s but it was something and Shane was grateful. When a new voice broke into the mix he snapped back into the room.

“How long has he been like this?”

“Fifteen minutes, maybe.”

“Mom?”

“I’m here,” Yuna said. Shane raised his head and found his Mom looking back at him, crouched on the floor so she could be at eye level; his Dad was standing just behind her.

“Hi.” His voice was still thick with tears.

“How’s Ilya?” Yuna asked.

“We don’t know yet,” Hazy answered for him.

“And what exactly happened?”

“He was attacked,” Shane replied.

Yuna gasped. “Attacked!?”

“Yeah, we don’t know why, just some assholes at the bar,” Bood added.

Shane watched in real time as Yuna’s face changed into one of pure rage, the kind of look that told Shane he didn’t have to worry about dealing with the police, his mother would handle it. “Well, I’ll need the full details, everything you can tell me.”

David beckoned to Shane and he stood up, letting his Mom have his seat. “Let’s get you a coffee or something.”

Shane followed his Dad through the hospital until they came across a keurig. Shane stood in a daze as David filled two cups and handed him one, he didn’t feel like he even had the strength to bring it to his lips, so he let the warmth of it spread through his hands instead.

“I’m sure it’ll be okay,” David said.

Shane blinked back more tears. “You didn’t see him, Dad. It’s bad.”

“He’s strong.”

Shane wasn’t one to pray, in fact he could probably count the number of times he’d done it on one hand, but as they walked back to the waiting area he found himself sending one up to anyone who was listening. God, Ilya’s mother, mother nature; anyone.

Please don’t take him yet.

The team was still there when they got back but Yuna was pacing a little ways away on the phone. She ended her call when she noticed Shane was back, coming up to him with her business face on.

“Right, so I’ve called Hayden and he said he’ll go stay with Anya until you can get back home. I’m about to make a call to the police station and then we’ll see if we can’t get some information on Ilya, okay?”

Shane nodded. He was so glad she was here.

“You guys can go,” he said as he reclaimed his seat. “You don’t have to stay.”

“No way we’re leaving,” Hazy replied. “Right boys?”

“Right!” came the chorus of voices in return.

“I’ve got some work to do to handle this before it hits the press,” Harris said. “So I’ll be up anyway, might as well be here.”

Shane loved this team. He loved Ilya for making this team into what it was now and he loved that they all loved Ilya enough to be here. “Thank you,” he said quietly. Bood just clapped him on the back in response and Shane settled in with his coffee to wait with his team.

Yuna managed to get an update out of poor Jacob at the front desk. Ilya had three broken ribs, a broken nose, and a concussion.

“All things that will heal,” Yuna said as she rubbed a hand up and down his back.

“But he won’t be able to play in the playoffs,” Shane said. And shit. They had a game in two days against Boston. There was no way Shane could play when Ilya was this hurt.

Hazy seemed to understand before Shane could say anything. “We’ll survive without you.”

“It’ll suck ass,” Bood added. “But Boston’s awful since Roz left so I think we can put them in their place.”

“You think you’re up to being captain?” Dykstra asked, jostling Bood where he sat on the other side of him.

Bood grinned. “Ordering you schmucks around? Absolutely.”

“Oh fuck off,” Chouinard said.

The team fell into a comfortable silence.

The clock ticked on.

Barrett was asleep with his head on Harris’ shoulder, Haas was on his fifth coffee, and Bood was about to use brute force to get some more answers, when a nurse called out Shane’s name.

Shane rocketed up from his chair. “How is he?”

“Stable,” the nurse replied. The tension in the air snapped in half, like the room could finally breathe.

“Can I see him?”

“You can.” She glanced behind him at the entirety of the Ottawa Centaurs and said, “Just you, I’m afraid.”

“Tell him we say hi!” Hazy called out.

“Of course.”

Shane followed the nurse down the hall, listening to her rattle off everything that was wrong with Ilya. Alongside what he already knew, Ilya had a bruised spleen and liver and they were treating him for minor internal bleeding.

When Shane stepped into the hospital room, a new wave of nausea washed over him. Ilya looked so… small. His massive hockey player husband was being swallowed up by the hospital bed, wires protruding from his body as the steady beat of his heart echoed in the room.

“I’ll give you two a little while,” the nurse said gently. Shane was already at Ilya’s side before she’d closed the door.

“Oh my god, Ilya,” he said, sitting down on the bed and pressing a kiss to Ilya’s forehead.

“Hi,” Ilya said softly, his voice was slightly muffled through the swelling but Shane was so glad to hear it nonetheless.

“How are you feeling? Sorry, stupid question, I just…God, I was so scared.”

“Yes, me too,” Ilya replied.

Shane took a moment to look over his husband, the splint holding his nose in place, the bandages on various parts of his face, the way he was propped up to keep his ribs from being aggravated. “I love you,” Shane said.

Ilya smiled like it was the first time Shane had told him that. “I love you, too.”

“The whole team is here,” Shane said as he took Ilya’s hand in his.

“Really?” Ilya’s surprise was evident on his face, even under all the bruising.

“Really. They won’t let them come in but I thought you should know they were out there.” Shane said. Ilya’s eyes shone with tears and Shane kissed his hand.

“Is nice of them, but…send them home, they need sleep,” Ilya said.

Shane laughed, *yeah right.* “I don’t think I could make that team do anything they don’t want to do. They’ll be here until visiting hours in the morning.”

“Mm, you are probably right. But you should sleep also.”

“No chance.” Shane couldn’t stop himself from leaning forward to press the softest of kisses to his husband’s lips. “I thought I might lose you,” he said in the space between their mouths.

“I’m here.”

“What even happened? Why would those guys…”

Ilya attempted to shrug but he hissed in pain before he could complete the movement. “They did not like that we are together and think I ruined hockey.”

Shane couldn’t believe that. “Seriously?”

“Is what they said.”

“Well we’re pressing fucking charges,” Shane said and Ilya smiled. “They won’t get away with this. My Mom is already taking care of it.”

“Of course she is,” Ilya said, his eyes slipping shut.

Shane watched Ilya breathe for a few moments before he said, “I should let you rest– wait, are you allowed to sleep?”

“Mm, da, nurse said is okay for an hour at a time.”

“Okay.”

“Stay.”

“Forever,” Shane replied.

Yuna Hollander was a force to be reckoned with. Within a week, she had managed to get the four men who’d assaulted Ilya into court, charged with aggravated assault, and sentenced to fourteen years in prison. Shane didn’t know how she did it, but he was eternally grateful that she was on his side.

She’d been staying with them as Ilya recovered and while Ilya might complain about her hovering and fetching him things when he was ‘perfectly capable’, Shane knew that he secretly loved it.

Shane was taking an extended leave from the team for about a month, much to Ilya’s dismay.

“No, you should be playing!”

“We can look after him,” Yuna had said.

Shane was firm in his reply. “No. I need to be here.”

That was the end of that.

He spent his days with Ilya's head on his lap, reading aloud from the 'boring hockey books' that Ilya always said he despised. Shane was always surprised when he looked down and saw that Ilya was still awake and listening, it made him grow impossibly fonder of his husband.

When it was time for bed, Shane helped Ilya upstairs and drew a bath. It still killed him to see Ilya hurt so badly. The bruises were ugly shades of green and yellow now and he was careful when he dragged a washcloth over them. He took great care washing Ilya's hair– making sure no water got onto his nose splint– and he changed every bandage after Ilya was dry and safely tucked in their bed.

In the mornings, he brought Ilya breakfast in bed and they spoke quiet Russian to each other over coffee (Shane was getting better at the language every day). After breakfast, Shane kissed every bruise, and Ilya smiled down at him as he did.

It had been two weeks when Shane felt brave enough to bring it up.

"Ilya?"

Ilya looked up from where he'd been lazily rolling a ball along the floor for Anya to fetch. "Yes?" Shane sat down next to him and Ilya let out a sigh. "You have your serious face on. What is wrong?"

Shane wasn't one to beat around the bush. "You're okay, right? I mean mentally, like you're not… you don't want to…"

"Don't want to what?" Ilya asked.

The word scraped itself out of his mouth, "Die."

Ilya blinked. "No, of course not."

"Because when you were hurt, you… well, you said you were ready." He bit his lip to try and stave off the tears but he already knew it was a lost cause. "To die."

"Oh." To his credit, Ilya sounded surprised.

"I don't want you to feel like that, I want you to want to be *here*. With me. I– we still have so much I want us to do and I don't–"

"Hey, hey," Ilya said, reaching up to cradle Shane's face in his hands, forcing eye contact. "I'm not going anywhere."

"I know you've been off because of your Mom, but is it really that bad?" Shane asked, steamrolling through Ilya's reassurances.

Ilya shook his head. "No, I am just sad sometimes. I cannot help it."

Shane would take it all from Ilya if he could. “And you’d tell me, if it was that bad, right? You’d schedule an emergency session with Galina?”

“Of course, moy lubyimyy,” Ilya said.

Shane nodded, sniffling. “Okay.”

He reached for Ilya and his husband tucked himself under Shane’s chin, letting himself be held. Shane kissed the top of his head and clung him with every intention of never letting him go again.

End Notes

Thank you for reading! I exist on Twitter and Tumblr if you want to come say hello!

Comments and kudos are always appreciated <3

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