

i meet your friends / i say they're mine

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by [middyblue \(daisyblaine\)](#).

Summary

Mostly when Ilya thought of Rose he remembered those months of agony, of not being allowed to have him, of thinking that Shane didn't want him, that Shane was better off if Ilya amputated the messy feelings and tried to forget. There had been a lot of vodka, those months.

Shane wants Ilya and Rose to get to know each other. Ilya has concerns.

Notes

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

Ilya's phone vibrated in his pocket. He ignored it and zipped the orange Spyder through a yellow light; there was no need to see the text to know Shane was wondering where the fuck he was.

He'd promised to be on time for lunch today, and really he did want to be, but it had taken longer than he'd expected to convince Haas to come with him. He glanced at the rearview and was pleased to see Haas' SUV keeping pace through another yellow.

It wasn't like he'd *meant* to be late. He hadn't even meant to bring Haas, really, but on the drive over to the training rink this morning a part of him had known that he wasn't going to be able to show up to this thing alone.

Finally – twenty minutes late – he pulled up to the restaurant, climbed out of the car, and tossed the keys to a valet, bouncing on his feet as he impatiently waited for Haas to pull in behind him, put the SUV in park, and hand over his keys. He'd never realized before just how many stupid little steps there were to going between car and place.

"I'm still not sure why I'm here," Haas said, tugging at his hoodie with a nervous look at the restaurant.

"You are hockey player, is food, this is not complicated," Ilya said. He planted his hands on Haas's shoulders and steered him inside. "Let's go, let's go."

"But – "

"You like steak tartare, yes? Lobster bisque?"

"I – yes, but –"

"Good, yes," Ilya said loudly over his protests, pushing him through the heavy, carved-wood doors. "Think of all the excellent food we will eat. Mm, yum."

There was probably a different vibe to the restaurant at night; now, during the day, it felt like they'd showed up to a party early, when the lights were still on and the food was still being prepared. The carpet was thick underfoot and each table was neatly set, ready for the rush, but the air was hollow with absence except for muted kitchen noises coming from somewhere hidden.

Across the islands of white-clothed tables Shane awkwardly half-stood from his chair like he'd been watching the door and at his table, glancing over her shoulder at Ilya and Haas, was the whole reason for all of this: Rose Landry.

Haas froze, nearly causing a waiter to crash into him. "Fuck, sorry, I'm so — *is that who I think it is?*" Haas hissed at Ilya.

"Unfortunately." Ilya put on his best smile.

Shane's irritated expression said, *Get the fuck over here*, so Ilya went the fuck over there, to his husband of less than six months and the woman his husband used to date.

Her perfect hair was smooth and shiny and her perfect clothes were chic and flattering and her perfect mouth was open like she'd been about to say something to Shane, who was staring at Ilya with that scrunchy peeved look, which did not bode well for how this lunch was going to go.

Ilya waved a hand at Haas to tell him to sit; Haas picked the seat with no place setting, and, yes, Shane was going to be pissed that Ilya brought him, but two on one was really not fair. Now it was a balanced table; although, if he could have, maybe it would have been better to bring Svetlana instead.

The last and only time he'd met Rose was at the wedding, when Ilya could distract himself with his new husband, chirping at his teammates, and relaxing into cackling diatribes of Russian with Svetlana. That was the best day of his life; this was... a nightmare. Like finding himself on the ice, nude, in the last period of the cup final, and his stick was a plastic squeaky one made for children. And one of Shane's closest friends was in the audience, watching.

Haas bumped the table leg as he shifted his chair in, rattling the dishes. A waiter hurried over with a place setting for him and Haas looked like he wanted to die.

"You brought Haas to lunch?" Shane muttered through gritted teeth at Ilya. "*Today?*"

"*You brought her,*" Ilya said, eyeing the fucking movie star sitting across the table, who not only was all over his and everyone's Instagram feed but who had specific knowledge of his husband's dick and was unreasonably *nice* in a way that Ilya could never manage.

Rose smiled at Ilya with perfect red lipstick.

Haas uncomfortably tugged at the collar of his slightly-ratty hoodie again and a teeny part of Ilya regretted telling him so last-minute about lunch that he didn't even have a chance to change into a good shirt.

"Rose," Shane said with a sigh, "you remember Ilya. My husband. And Luca Haas, our teammate, was also at the wedding."

"I'm so sorry," Haas blurted. Ilya tried to kick him under the table and missed. He really should have asked Svetlana to fly out for this, as much as she would've given him shit for it. "Ro— Ms. Landry. I didn't know this was — you — he made me come."

"It's nice to see you again," Rose said kindly. Haas turned red.

"What did we miss?" Ilya said. He bumped Shane's elbow accidentally-on-purpose as he shook out his napkin — he needed to get a reaction, any reaction, and he wasn't above poking at Shane to make it happen.

Shane nudged the little basket of butter pats closer to Ilya's plate, which was a good sign, although he still looked kind of pissed.

“I was just telling Shane that you’re taller in person than on TV,” Rose said sweetly.

Ilya smiled and helped himself to a piece of bread.

“Cuter, too.”

“I like you,” Ilya said, playing along. “Shane, I like her.”

“Although maybe that goes for all hockey players.”

“Hmph. Shane, I take it back.”

“It’s — helmet,” Haas said, and immediately looked like he wanted to sink down into the floor. “And, um, pads. Make us look bigger.” He held his hands out in front of him like an estimate of how far out his pads extended.

“Sure,” Rose said, amused. “I can see how that might throw off someone’s proportions.”

The table fell silent.

Shane exchanged a look with Rose, which made the stupid bear in Ilya’s chest want to grumble: *look at me!* Shane cleared his throat. “Um. You guys were working on Haas’s new move this morning?”

Ilya grunted. It’s not like he made it up this morning when he left the house, but needing to work on it with Haas *today* was, maybe, a lie. Luckily Haas did not have much of a social life and was all too happy to get some one-on-one time with his captain even when their game today was cancelled due to Boston getting snowed in.

“How is it going?”

“Is fine. Good. We will use it to destroy New York.”

“I don’t know about that,” Haas said bashfully.

“What goes into creating a new move?” Rose asked, all polite curiosity.

Ilya shrugged. It was so many things, and she was looking him right in the eyes, and the English words weren’t coming. The bear prowled his tongue.

Haas opened his mouth but said nothing and closed it again.

“It’s hard to explain,” Shane said, which was not even as much as he’d give a reporter asking. He shook his head minutely and Ilya could almost hear Shane’s internal monologue ranting at himself.

And now Ilya really felt like shit. His leg bounced under the table until Shane kicked him.

When the waiter came to take their order Ilya wondered if he could tell what a shitshow this was. Probably, since as soon as he left they dropped into silence again.

“Has anyone seen any good movies lately?” Haas asked the table hopefully. The innocent optimism dropped abruptly from his face when, visibly, he realized that he had just asked a current Oscar nominee if she’d seen any good movies, and then looked like he desperately wanted to get up and walk out of the restaurant and keep walking until he reached Nonavut.

Rose just smiled politely. “I haven’t had much time to get out, unfortunately. How about you, Ilya? Are you looking forward to Christopher Nolan’s biopic about Wayne Gretzky?”

“No.” All he could think to add was that, if he were going to watch hockey, he’d actually watch hockey, not some actor who could barely skate pretending to be the league’s favorite player from fifty years ago. He was mature enough to know that he should not say that. The silence nearly made him do it anyway.

This was horrible. He was fucked. The absolute worst-case scenario was that Rose would walk away from this lunch having decided that he, Ilya, was shit. He couldn’t see a way to fix it. He couldn’t fucking chirp at her, because Shane would kill him, and he couldn’t be the best at anything here in this restaurant besides, like, drinking the most water or whatever the fuck, and his only other move was sex and even if he remotely wanted to Shane would kill him twice.

Rose stirred her ice water with her straw, filling the quiet with tinkling, and Haas stared determinedly at his empty plate.

Around the restaurant, waiters were efficiently moving between tables as smoothly and coordinated as players on the ice. Ilya could appreciate that, miserable and awkward as this was.

“Ilya, come to the bar with me?” said Shane suddenly. He stood, dropping his napkin on his chair.

Ilya frowned and bit back the instinctual, did-I-hear-you-right *Sweetheart?* “You are getting a drink?”

“*Come to the bar with me, please.*”

“Ah.” Ilya followed his husband to the bar, tipping his head back on an inhale to steel himself for what was coming.

It was a long walk to the bar, where the starched and bowtied bartender was drying some glasses and probably thinking to himself, *please don’t come over here, I don’t want to hear your problems.*

“What’s up with you?” Shane hissed as soon as Ilya joined him at the gleaming, solid dark wood bartop lined with high-backs. Shane put his arm on the bar, changed his mind and leaned against a chair instead, then gave up and just crossed his arms. He was so *fucking* adorable and Ilya might be the worst husband in all of Ottawa.

“Get you anything?” the bartender said, all professional disinterest.

“No, thanks.”

He desperately wanted vodka. “A coke. Please. Thank you.”

Shane lifted a hand as if to run it through his hair, then seemed to decide the better of it, and just sighed.

The bartender slid a glass of soda over and Ilya thanked him again. The awkward silence seemed to have followed him over from the table. He’d like to blame this restaurant, but more probably it was his fault.

He needed to figure out the right English words that would make this okay, or would at least make Shane smile again. He bumped the toe of his shoe against Shane’s.

“I really want you to get along,” Shane said, glancing down. “Rose is one of my oldest friends and you’re — *you*. This is important to me and I thought you knew that. We’re here so you can get to know each other, for me, not so you can show up late and sulk. And, for fuck’s sake, why would you bring *Haas*?”

Ilya didn’t know what to say — *how* to say — *can you see I’m scared*, because scared of what? Rose was, after all, just a friend, and that wasn’t even it. It was *because* she was a friend, because she was *Shane’s* friend, and he was the hockey player who made Shane stay closeted for a relationship for *years* and showed up late and sulked and brought *Haas* because he couldn’t fucking face seeing himself through Shane’s ex’s eyes.

Shane studied him, irritation and concern playing over his face, and Ilya let his husband’s gaze settle over him like thick-falling snow.

He wondered if Shane would ever guess how he could body-check Ilya with just that look. It was serious and earnest and without manipulation and every single time he *saw* Ilya, right to his core, it winded him.

Shane flushed and muttered, “Goddamn it,” under his breath, swaying closer to Ilya like he couldn’t help it.

Ilya was barely even doing anything and he could see, in the heaviness of his eyelashes and parting of his lips, that Shane wanted to slump against the bar and let Ilya murmur horny shit against his cheek, which while not a bad turn of events was not really what he meant to happen. He just... liked being watched by Shane. He liked having his full attention. He liked....

Fuck. They really couldn’t do that here, in public, where Rose fucking Landry was watching and judging how Ilya was treating his husband. He needed to be better.

“I know.” Ilya took a sobering deep breath. “I am sorry.” He would pull his shit together. He would do this for Shane. “Is important. I know. I will do this. I just wanted... *podderzhka*.”

Support, that was the word. Shane softened and, after a brief glance around the restaurant, gently touched his waist.

“Ilya, I support you,” he said softly. “I’m here for you. Always.”

Ilya’s mouth twitched a smile. “I know.” He ducked his head for a moment and when he met Shane’s gaze again it was soft and still worried, a little, and fuck, Ilya loved him with all the heat in his blood.

Shane smoothed his hand down the front of Ilya’s shirt, pausing briefly below the join of his lower ribs, where there was hidden a newly-healed tattoo of two handwritten Xs at a slight angle.

Ilya’s eyes flicked to Shane’s left pec, where a similar tattoo in Ilya’s handwriting was under his shirt, accompanied by a hickey, and he smirked.

“Stop,” Shane said, blushing. “I’m trying to say — I love you very much.”

“I know.”

“You don’t need to be — jealous, or whatever. Prickly.”

Ilya frowned. *Prickly?*

“Like, irritated or annoyed.”

“I am not *prickly*. Where do you come up with this?”

Shane sighed, his expression tilting toward upset, and this, *this*, was the low point of Ilya’s day. He could see how this would go, and it was unacceptable: Shane would feel like he couldn’t get mad here, in public where anybody might have a phone pointed at them, and would instead just bury it inside and cry a little when he thought no one could see. No; Ilya was going to have to drop his gloves and fight for the English words.

“Listen.” Ilya stepped closer, nearly chest to chest with him, and waited until Shane turned those dark, serious eyes up at him. He touched the back of a knuckle to Shane’s cheek. “I want you to be happy. This is the most important.”

Shane nodded and tipped his head until Ilya bent and touched his forehead to Shane’s.

“I hate that she knows parts of you that I do not,” Ilya said quietly. “I cannot explain, exactly, in English, but I know that feeling is stupid. This is fine and good. You should have friends who are not your captain.”

Shane half-heartedly punched him in the liver and Ilya chuckled, rolling their foreheads together. *Thank Christ.*

“But I also feel... she knew you a long time ago, before we were... this.” They’d been fucking before Shane met her, sure, but mostly when Ilya thought of Rose he remembered those months of agony, of not being allowed to have him, of thinking that Shane didn’t want him, that Shane was better off if Ilya amputated the messy feelings and tried to forget. There had been a lot of vodka, those months.

“Yeah, I guess so.”

“I have this feeling, that I cannot say is wrong, that if she dislikes me there will be... problem.”

Shane frowned.

“She matters to you; I know. And you complain about me, yes?”

“I mean, sometimes, like when you nearly finish the milk and put the container back in the fridge with, like, an ounce left in the bag.”

Ilya rolled his eyes. “Then you finish and open another bag.”

“Why –” Shane cut himself off and sighed hard through his nose. “You drive me nuts sometimes.”

“I understand. Must be difficult living in the shadow of the best player in the league.”

“Such an asshole,” Shane said, but he was smiling, so he must not have been too annoyed.

“It is not that she knows these things,” Ilya said quietly. “Is that, maybe, she will also think I am asshole, and for better reasons than not finishing milk. For the years hiding, or for being dumb, rude hockey player, or... sad. And she will tell you, and you and I... Yes. Problem.”

“Moya lyubov.” Shane thumbed at Ilya’s chin, his brown eyes warm and serious, the color of a log at the heart of a crackling fire. “I’m sorry your brain does this to you. Why didn’t you say something before?”

Ilya shrugged uncomfortably.

“Last season was hard,” Shane said slowly. He spread his hands on Ilya’s waist, warmth bracketing him, holding him upright. “I was kind of worried, when I joined the Cens, that they wouldn’t like me because of all the shit I put you through.”

“Of course they like you. Everyone likes you.”

“Sweetheart, they *adore* you.”

“Well. I am pretty fantastic.”

“There he is.” Shane smiled, tilting his face up, and Ilya desperately wanted to kiss him. “Rose sees it too, Ilya. Do you remember what she said after the wedding?”

““Stop making out; is time for pictures.””

“No.”

““You missed a button.””

“No. Shut up. I’m talking about when she left, she hugged you and thanked you for making me happy.”

“Oh,” said Ilya, stupidly. “That.”

“You ridiculous man,” Shane said fondly. “That’s all there is. You make me so happy that she can tell just from the way I talk about you; the way I *look* at you. She loves you for that already.” He traced his fingertips along Ilya’s hairline like he was smoothing a curl back, but there could be no loose curls; Ilya had spent fifteen minutes he did not have in front of the mirror at the training facility carefully applying product. Shane smiled, like he noticed that Ilya had gone to the trouble, and his cheeks lifted the freckles that Ilya wanted to dot with kisses. “Do you know what *I’m* worried about?”

“Tell me.” Ilya took a fortifying swig of his soda. The ice was mostly melted and it was watery and gross.

“I think she’ll like you better than she likes me.”

Ilya nearly laughed. “I think probably she must, if she is a smart lady.”

Shane did laugh, a little, still looking at Ilya like he was better than the moon and stars and not an idiot. “She’ll love you as much as I do. I’m sure of it.”

“Hm. Maybe not *as* much.” If he didn’t turn it into a joke he was going to kiss Shane so deeply it would probably scandalize the bartender. He smirked. “Unless you would like to invite her over tonight and see?”

“Fuck you,” Shane said, still grinning. He grabbed Ilya’s soda and downed the rest of it.

“Hey!”

Shane made a face as he swallowed.

“Don’t steal when you know you are not going to like it.”

“You snooze, you lose.” Shane set the empty glass down and absently thumbed a drop of soda from his lip. Ilya could have whined. “Are we okay? She’s going to think we’re being weird if we keep standing here. And, oh god, poor Haas.”

Oh, yes. Ilya winced and tossed a bill on the bar next to the empty glass. “I maybe should go easy on him next practice as apology.”

“Will you really?” Shane led the way back to the table, careful not to bump into other diners; the place had filled up a little while they were talking.

Ilya caught his eye and winked as they took their seats. Of course not.

“That’s a beautiful way to think about it,” Rose was saying as Haas blushed.

“What is beautiful?” Ilya asked. He hooked his ankle around Shane’s under the table and Shane smiled down at his plate. A person should not be allowed to be so adorable.

“Luca was just telling me about how he thought the cinematography in my film *Sally* represented the beauty she was oblivious to around her, both in nature and in her relationships.”

“It was just a thought,” Haas said shyly.

“It was a good one. You have an artistic eye.”

“Um. I draw.”

“Really? That’s amazing,” Rose said, smooth and gracious like some of the WAGs acted around nervous players recently traded to the team. “I always wish I had a talent like that. What do you like to draw?”

“Uh, portraits, mostly, but some comics for fun.”

“Shane, I can’t believe you’ve been hiding this man from me,” Rosa said, touching Haas’s arm. Haas stared at the spot where he’d been touched by Rose Landry.

Luckily, the waiter came by then to drop off their food and saved Haas from combusting.

“Rose likes Haas?” Ilya muttered to Shane when the two were distracted by Rose asking for a hot tea.

“I dunno,” Shane whispered back. “She’s, like, ten years older than him.”

“Hm.”

“Don’t meddle,” Shane warned, but Ilya ignored this. He was the *best* at telling his teammates to get their shit together and be in love.

Well. It had worked with Troy and Harris; surely it would work again. Also, he needed to find a way to make conversation, for Shane, and this was something. If he could help Haas find love, all the better.

“Rose,” Ilya said as soon as the waiter was gone again, “are you single? Haas is single.”

Haas groaned and hid his face in his hands.

“Ilya,” Shane muttered, closing his eyes. “Fuck’s sake.”

“Haas is a good man,” Ilya said innocently. “Rose is your favorite friend. Makes sense.”

“Am I?” Rose looked pleased at this and Ilya felt good about not mentioning Hayden here, especially when she then added, graciously, “Aside from you, Ilya, of course.”

“Of course.”

“That’s debatable,” Shane muttered.

Ilya nudged his foot under the table and Shane kicked back; Ilya hooked their ankles together again and Shane let him.

Apparently not interested in arguing the point further, Shane started drizzling tahini across his vegetables with an adorable look of concentration like he was trying to distribute it exactly evenly across each sweet potato cube and broccoli floret, his foot still gently resting against Ilya’s. There wasn’t a more perfect man in all the world, Ilya was sure.

“Tell me, Ilya,” Rose said, leaning forward, “if we were friends, would you send Auntie Rose pictures of Anya? Shane never sends me any good ones and I have a mighty need for adorable puppy pictures, especially when I’m stuck in a trailer all day.”

Ilya slowly smiled. “He is terrible at dog pictures.”

“She doesn’t pose for me,” Shane protested.

Ilya waved that away and said, “She is perfect angel.”

“Of course she is,” Rose agreed as Ilya pulled out his phone, and out of the corner of his eye he saw her wink at Shane. It would be annoying except it was nice, actually, that she would make Shane roll his eyes like that. Maybe she was a little bit asshole too. “Shane just doesn’t understand how to take a good picture.”

“Yes, you get it. Here, put in your number. I think we must be friends.”

Rose took his phone and cooed over the home screen photo of Shane holding Anya, which was centered on Anya and cut Shane off at the chin.

That was maybe not a good husband move. Ilya opened his photos app and showed her the other photos with Shane’s face in, although in those Anya had been distracted by the neighbor kids’ voices as they played outside and her eyes were flashing red. He kept swiping; there were better ones in there.

“How does he still look like a model when he’s passed out?” Rose said as Ilya scrolled through photos of Shane asleep on the couch, having tried to wait up for Ilya to get back from a dinner out with the team owners as captain. There was drool and a crease across his cheek from the couch cushion. He was beautiful.

“Is unfair,” Ilya agreed.

“It really is. Don’t you hate it when you get photographed with him and you’re, like, mid-blink or something —“

“And he looks perfect. Yes.”

“Yes! I swear, half of the pap shots of him turn out better than most of my shoots. It’s really rude how good-looking he is.”

Shane blushed. “I regret introducing you two.”

“Too late,” Ilya said, patting his arm. “We are becoming best friends.”

Shane set his hand on Ilya’s thigh under the table, picking up his fork with his left hand to keep eating his salmon, and didn’t argue any more.

“Rose. Very important question. Do you like music?”

Rose let out a very unladylike snort.

“Because Shane knows nothing about music, and as his friend –”

“Hey, I know some things,” Shane protested.

“Name one Queen song, lyubimiy.”

“Uh.” Shane squinted. “What’s that one they play at games? Like, ba ba *ba*, ba ba *ba*?”

Ilya made a buzzer noise. “Nope.”

“We Will Rock You,” Haas said helpfully.

“Yes!” Shane snapped his fingers. “Thank you!”

“Tch,” Ilya said. “No. Does not count.”

“Shameful,” Rose agreed. Oh, yes; she was a little bit asshole, Ilya thought approvingly.

“What about you, Luca? Please tell me you listen to music.”

“I, uh, I like Jade’s new album,” said Haas. This was an understatement. Ilya liked it, too, but he had been forced to listen to the whole album through three times at practice this morning before he took back control of the aux.

“Oh, me too!”

“Jade is a singer,” Ilya informed Shane.

“Yeah, I know,” Shane said unconvincingly. Ilya just smiled fondly at him.

The waiter came back to check on their food and, when Rose thanked him prettily, Haas knocked his soup spoon to the floor. Ilya passed his clean, unused spoon over to Haas with a commiserating thump to his back.

“Hey,” Shane said softly with a squeeze of Ilya’s thigh.

“Mm?”

“Thank you.” Shane’s eyes were shining under the fancy mood lighting, melting Ilya’s heart all over again. “Just — thank you.”

Ilya stood and bent to press a kiss to Shane's temple; Shane closed his eyes and smiled as Ilya murmured, "For you, sweetheart." This lunch, his heart; it was all for Shane. "I will go pay."

They won against Philly and Washington, and although they lost the game to New York Ilya had the great pleasure of watching Haas execute the new move beautifully against Scott Hunter.

On the flight back home, Shane claimed the window seat so he could read his boring book in peace and Ilya took the aisle so he could get up and talk to Hayes or Bood or whoever, whenever he had a thought about game strategy or wanted to shit-talk what they'd posted on Instagram.

"You fucking wish," he was saying to Troy — there was no chance of him turning over Ilya's accuracy shooting record at the upcoming All-Stars, no matter what he said — and dropped back into his seat next to Shane, who was frowning at his phone.

"You're not going after my accuracy shooting record this year, are you?" Ilya asked, wary. *Shane* could turn it over.

"Yeah, I'm gonna kick your ass," Shane said absently, knocking his cute fucking glasses up his nose with a knuckle.

"Bullshit."

"Yep. You're toast. Hey, why is Rose messaging me about Pittsburgh's chances of losing a center this summer?"

"She heard rumor he is marrying a pop singer and moving out west for her."

"What?" Shane frowned harder and took off the glasses, which was unfortunate for Ilya.

"Wait, how do you know that?"

"She texted me."

"You guys text?" Shane leaned against the window to face him and grinned triumphantly.

"You're *friends*."

Ilya shrugged and contentedly watched Shane process this. *Friends* was maybe a generous term, but he tried, and Rose was just enough of an asshole to get along with, and Shane's delight in this moment made it all worth it.

"I can't believe she gave you hockey gossip." Shane looked at his phone again. "She's never told me anything like that."

"Yes, because you are boring."

"Fuck off."

Ilya smirked. "I will ask her for coffee next time she is in town. I will get all the tea; do not worry."

"She's *my* friend," Shane protested. His freckles were scrunched and his eyes were bright and amused and Ilya loved him more than English words could say, more than the XX written over his heart, more than the ring on his finger.

"We are besties now, sorry."

"Fuck you," Shane said happily, settling against Ilya's side. "You're not allowed to steal her from me."

"Maybe I will take her to Oscars."

"Isn't she dating what's-his-name? What happened to him?"

"Pft. He is not good enough." Secretly, Ilya hoped she would dump him for Haas, but first Haas had to stop turning red as a tomato around her.

"Hold on, why can't *I* take her?"

Of course he could, Ilya thought, his fingers playing absently at the hem of Shane's jacket, but he couldn't face Shane's expectant smile and *not* tease him. "We will decide at All-Stars."

"Whoever gets the best accuracy score," Shane said immediately. "You're on. And your last record doesn't count. It has to be what you get *this* year."

"What the fuck."

"I don't know if you remember, but I *am* currently in the lead for goals this season." Shane grinned, eyes sparkling like he was proud of himself for the dig. "You don't stand a chance."

"By two goals! I will overtake next game."

"I don't think so."

"Fuck off, I will!"

"Do you guys realize you do this?" Hayes interrupted, his face suddenly appearing over the seats in front of them. "Like, out loud?"

"Excuse me," Ilya said hotly, "I am talking to my nemesis."

"He's your husband, Roz."

"That too."

"Okay." Hazy didn't even blink. "Hey, what about McCord? He's getting close, like, six behind, right?"

“No fucking way,” Shane said immediately. “Did you see them play Boston last week? They had a right winger out with a concussion and it was a shit show. He can’t handle not having a strong line. Remember 2018 when Reed was out for a few games and it threw off their whole dynamic? McCord completely fell apart...”

Ilya smiled to himself and closed his eyes, slouching down in his seat until his head was resting on Shane’s shoulder. His husband could remember every single fact about hockey from the last fifty years and could – and did – win any argument about it with exacting specificity. It was hot as fuck.

Without moving Ilya from his shoulder or stopping for a breath, Shane tugged his arm out from between them and draped it over him, his thumb making small comforting circles on Ilya’s waist.

Ilya dozed a bit, letting Shane’s voice wash over him until the seats creaked as Hayes got up. “Good chat. Nice playing today, Hollander. Cap.” Ilya listened to him thump toward the back of the plane, where some of the guys were, supposedly, watching game film.

“Okay?” Shane quietly asked Ilya once they were alone again.

“Hush. I am sleeping.” Ilya took Shane’s hand, pressed a kiss to his palm, and set it on his head. “Ya lyublyu tebya.”

Shane chuckled and took the hint to card his fingers through Ilya’s hair, gentle on the tangles. “Love you too, weirdo.”

Ilya cracked his eyes open, just to look at Shane’s face for a minute, and got a good angle up Shane’s left nostril and the dark sweep of his eyelashes, looking at Ilya like he’d never in his whole life been happier.

There was a peace, Ilya thought, in being exactly where he wanted to be. He tugged at the gold chain tucked under Shane’s shirt.

As Shane stroked his fingers through Ilya’s hair, Ilya slid a fingertip through the ring at the end of the chain. Shane bowed his head forward a little with the tug of the necklace and, smiling, murmured, “If we get a championship ring this year, that’ll be my third favorite of the rings you’ve given me.”

If. Listen to this man, Ilya thought. There was no *if*.

Like he could hear Ilya’s thoughts, Shane smirked. He said gently, his fingers still combing, “Get some sleep, Ilya.”

Yes; this was a good peace.

End Notes

Shane beats Ilya's score at the skills competition, but not his previous record. When they tell Rose that Shane will be taking her to the Oscars, her reaction is basically, *I never agreed to this and I will be taking my boyfriend, whom I actually like quite a lot, and you two are idiots.*

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