

bread and butter at the breakfast table

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bread and butter at the breakfast table

by [blueberryink](#)

Summary

It is as if he cannot bear to have his eyes on her while the words come, “Mom. I need you to know that I did really try.”

To the ground, to the soil, he confesses, “I tried really hard. But I just can’t help it. I’m sorry.”

Shane apologises for something that could never, ever be wrong. While his hands tremble in hers, Yuna reflects on all the little moments that led them here.

Notes

hello! i watched the scene with yuna & shane in ep 6 and was SEIZED by the need to write about it. family dynamics make me insane

tw for:

- mentions of racism
- homophobia

please enjoy! ♥

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

One week has passed since Shane told them who he is.

Seven days since he held Yuna's hands in front of their cottage and could not bring himself to meet her eyes.

Yuna finds him fast asleep in their living room. Resting back cosy against the arm of the couch, snuggled into a nest of pillows. A blanket tucked fluffy beneath his chin.

Sleep softens him down sweet into the little boy that once fit puzzle-piece perfect in her arms.

Her little Shane.

He'll always be little, to her.

He'll always be so small.

"Shane," she whispers, and she melts the name too quiet to disturb his dreams. She sits gently beside him, on the edge of the cushion, and her fingers tingle with a wanting to stroke his cheek, to trace the pathway where tears had fallen that day. "Shane."

A lifetime has trickled by in the past week and still her heart aches with memories of everything she should have said and done when it mattered most.

She thinks about the look on his face.

She comes outside for fresh air and he follows her. At first, there is only quiet.

She stands there, hugging her elbows to chest, and studies him carefully from the corner of her eye. Watches how his own gaze sweeps low to creep along the gravel beneath their feet, the grass; how the tense rigidity of his legs gives away the curling-up tight and nervous toes in his shoes.

She doesn't know what to say. She doesn't know what to say. *She doesn't know what to say.*

Shane's shoulders draw inwards, tight as strings, as he turns slowly on his heels to face her. His neck lifts his heavy head up, but it withers down again, and it is as if he cannot bear to have his eyes on her while the words come, "Mom. I need you to know that I did really try."

To the ground, to the soil, he confesses, "I tried really hard. But I just can't help it. I'm sorry."

It stings. White-hot, pinprick, like a needle that steals her breath. The look on his face. The crumpling in of sadness, of regret, of disappointment. Of loathing for himself, his actions, his choices.

Of *himself*.

It stings. It *stings*.

Does he not know, there is not a single thing that could change how she loves him? Not one thing that could loosen the baby fingers that tangled around her heartstrings the moment he took his first breath? She could learn every language under the sun, every symbol within the universe, and it would still fall hopelessly short. There is simply nothing. Nothing, nothing, nothing. He is everything. He has *always* been everything.

She reaches for his hands, then, where they hover in the air between their bodies. He's fidgeting with them, scratching, nails scrawling into the hems of his linen shirt and tugging the fabric down low over his palms to flick his thumb at the pearly-white button.

When she folds her hands around his, she glances down and she thinks about cradling these very same fingers when he was a little child. Guiding them around the snow-white shoelaces of his favourite sneakers, teaching him how to tie a bunny-eared loop. She remembers sitting together on the doorstep of this very cottage, shoulder to shoulder, hands around his and easing him through the ritual in the summer sunshine.

"And then... you tie it!" she'd explained, way back then. "See? You've got this, Shane."

Shane had huffed out an aggrieved sigh when his knot fell short of his perfectionistic six-year-old standards. He did not have much patience or self-compassion, her little Shane, when hockey was not in the picture. He flopped back heavy onto the porch, flinging his arms out starfish-wide, and scowled his ruffled eyebrows up at the scorching morning sky.

"I can't do it," he grumbled. "This is stupid."

Yuna had watched him with a fond smile on her lips.

"I'll do it for you," she promised, softly, and she wrapped her fingers around his small bird-bone ankle and lifted his foot into her lap. Cradled there, in the bowl of her skirt, she deftly threaded the dangling laces, double knotting just as he liked.

"There we go," she said, and before she set his foot back down, she dusted a kiss to his knee, right beside the bandage he earned from falling off his bike. "All done."

She thinks of those once-upon-a-time little hands as she holds his now. They are bigger than hers. They could close around her as mittens, if he wanted. So much wider, too. Longer in the fingers, broader in the palms. So very different to the chubby, wiggly things that used to latch onto her thumb and hold tight while skipping along the garden path beside her.

So very different. And yet entirely, wholly, the same.

"Look at me, Shane."

He's struggling to do so. Bowing his head, scuffing the ground with his heels, wrenching tight shut his eyes. Her chest throbs.

“Look at me, Shane,” she begs, and she *knows* it is begging. She can hear the brittle edge of it in her voice. Her hands, still around his, gently squeeze, in and out, in and out. A heartbeat. *Badum, badum, badum.* “Look at me.”

He does and *there you are*, she thinks. *There you are.*

He’s twenty-seven and he’s standing before her, shaking, his gaze climbing up slowly to meet hers, and the sadness, the *fear*, she finds in his eyes, it rattles her breath. It does. He’s twenty-seven and she’s holding his hands and she’s promising him, her heart twisting in words that she grieves are coming too late, “You have nothing, *nothing*, to apologise for.”

He’s twenty-five and he’s sitting on the couch with the corner of his thumbnail hooked in his mouth as he smiles down at his phone screen. And she knows – god, she *knows* something, something, there’s something special and meaningful here, even if she is not sure exactly what – and the words could be right there in her mouth, on her tongue, she could say something, *anything*, yet she says nothing. She says nothing. But when he walks past on his way to bed, she catches his hand and she squeezes.

He’s eighteen and he has just been signed to the team of his biggest, wildest dreams, and she’s holding his hands and wiping his tears as he blinks at her with big, terrified eyes.

He’s thirteen and he’s travelling abroad without her for the first time and she’s kissing his cheeks and holding his hands and wishing him a safe flight.

He’s twelve and he’s sick with a fever, his hair plastered sweat-sticky to his forehead, his cheeks flushed a cherry-red, and *oh*, she feels so guilty for admiring how cute, how sweet, how adorable he looks like this. So much in his too-big, Bambi eyes like the baby she used to rock on her lap years and years ago, and she holds his hands as another round of coughing wracks his body.

He’s ten and the medic is patting damp gauze against his bleeding elbow after he took a nasty fall on the ice, and she’s holding his hand in the cradle of both of hers, stroking gentle fingertips soft as a lullaby over his knuckles, as he bites his wobbly lip quiet and smothers down the urge to cry.

He’s seven when he wins his first trophy and she is too far away to hold him, but she presses her hand against the plexiglass of the rink, and as he stands in the centre of the ice, bouncing on his skates, he grins a gap-toothed smile and reaches out to open-close his palm in delight at her.

He’s five and his small body is quaking at the onslaught of lights and noise in the supermarket, but she holds his hand and, cupping the other over his ear, promises they can abandon the groceries and escape.

He’s one and she’s holding his hands as the crescent moon spills milky light through the curtained kitchen window and he takes his first steps.

He’s six months-old and she presses his hand to her face when he reaches up and tip-taps it along her cheek.

He's less than one day old and she settles him cosy in her arms, tucked up snug against her chest, and she holds his little, tiny hand in hers as she breathes kisses into his downy hair.

He's twenty-seven, now, and she's holding his hands. She's holding his hands. She's holding his hands.

He is holding her hands and he is dropping his head again, hiding his face from her. But this time, she follows him. Dipping down, waiting – waiting for him at twenty-seven, at ten, at five, at six months, at all ages – to crawl his way back to her. She'll be waiting. She will always be waiting.

He does.

"I am sorry," she whispers, breathless, "that I made you feel like you couldn't tell me."

There is things she could have done better. She knows. She mknows. There is so many things, really.

Simple things. But it is the simple things, isn't it? The bread-and-butter of everyday life. The shoes and coats tumbled in thrown-aside lumps at the bottom of the stairs. The toothpaste on the bathroom sinks, and half the puzzle pieces lodged beneath the jam-splattered couch. Those are where the magic happens.

Times where they watched movies, splayed across the couch together, eyes blinking sleepy and slow, when a queer love story arose. She feels it even now: how her shoulders narrowed, how her eyes snapped open out of a drowsy glow and shot careful glances across the room. To her husband first, and then to Shane.

She knows she cleared her throat a little too loudly, a little too awkwardly, and she knows she froze, all the way down to her skeleton, as the room bloated with silence all the way to the windows.

She knows she could have said something, there. She *knew*, even then, that she *should* have said something. As easy as silk, as satin, as water, the assurance should have come, "*They're cute, aren't they?*" or a simple "*Wow, I can't wait to see the sequel.*"

Bread and butter. Shoes and coats. Toothpaste. Puzzle pieces.

She knows she could have done better as she watched Shane, at twelve, twirl a lock of hair around the tip of his finger and blush strawberry-milkshake pink in the cheeks when he met an older player from the senior team. At the time, she told herself it was just admiration, that he was just shy and nervous at meeting and playing in front of an idol. But it was too often, really, when she thinks back. The way he never looked at girls that way, but tilted his head and chewed his lip with his crooked front tooth as his gaze trailed after boys.

She could have said something, then. As easy as breathing. As easy as nothing and everything and anything. Maybe even on the car journey home, she could have said, "*That guy, he was cute, huh?*" and maybe Shane would have balked in the passenger seat. Maybe he would have curled his legs into his chest and gaped at her, open-mouthed, jaw-dropped,

and accused her of being *weird*. But maybe she would have tossed her head back on her shoulders and laughed and knew that what she had just whispered to him beneath it all was: *It's okay. You can tell me. You can tell me.*

She remembers the chaos, one year, of preparing for Christmas. Her own family descending upon their small house for an entire weekend, followed quick on their heels by her in-laws. The living room and kitchen stuffed full of hungry guests, teeming from the ceilings to the walls.

She remembers Shane, that day. Just a little restless baby, not yet one-years-old, sitting contentedly on her hip as she worked in the kitchen.

She wishes, in the here and now, that she could melt herself back in time and step into that very kitchen on that Christmas morning. To walk across the cold tiles, to stand in front of herself, to put a hand on her face – her tired, tired face. To lift her chin and find her eyes and say: *Look down, Yuna. This is what you will remember. This is what you will remember. He will be twenty-seven and fully grown and this is still what you will think of.*

Back then, she does look down. Shane's head is tucked over the curve of her shoulder, chin nestled warmly, gazing out the doorway into the hustle and bustle of the living room. He doesn't like being passed around or held by others. He flinches at loud noises and huddles away from bright lights. When her sister took him, he cried immediately for Yuna, arms outstretched and wailing his distress, and since then he's kept one doughy fist knotted in the neckline of her shirt as if to ensure that she cannot slip away.

He feels her shift when she looks down. He echoes the movement in reverse, lifting up a little to wiggle around and face her. When he tilts his head back, the tip of his nose is as rosy as a pink petal. A smile blooms across his lips.

"My baby," she whispers, and her fingertip finds the soft curve of his cheek, dusting butterfly-light across his honeysuckle freckles. "My little, tiny Shane."

She wonders what might have happened if she had made it safe enough for him to tell her about his sexuality right away.

She wonders if he was scared once he realised he had feelings for a boy. For boys in general. If it frightened him. If it panicked him. If it disgusted him. If he stood in her home in the dead of the night with her bedroom door closed to him and felt suffocated by an awful, terrible aloneness.

She wonders what it would have been like if he had stumbled his way to her house while grappling with his feelings for Ilya. If he had knocked on the front door with his hands shaking all the way up to his shoulders as he rap-rap-*rapped* on the wood. If she had opened and caught him in her arms as he tumbled over the threshold, tripping over his toes. If she had held him close to her chest and felt him tuck his nose into the crook of her neck, like he did that one Christmas morning as a baby.

She wonders if she would have led him to the couch and eased him down to sit with her, gentling his fall when he crumpled at the back of the knees, house of cards-feeble.

“Okay,” she would say, if she could go back, if she could make it happen. If she could change things. If she could make things better. “Okay, Shane. I’m here. I’m here.”

Would he have curled up beside her, on the couch? Would he have allowed her to hold him as he crumbled, to promise him that she would put him back together?

Would she have whispered, her hand softly combing through his hair, “Tell me, Shane. It’s okay. Tell me.”

Would she have put a hand against his cheek and tilted his head up to kiss his forehead when he whimpered, “I’m so sorry. I tried so hard. I’m so sorry.”

Would she have said, “You can tell me anything. Anything, sweetheart. Anything.”

Would she have meant it?

Would she have been able to mask the sudden ice-cold straightening of her spine when he dragged the words out of him: “I think I’m gay.”

She doesn’t know. She doesn’t know.

Maybe it’s for the best it didn’t happen in that way, then. Maybe it’s for the best that Shane was spared the disappointment of that.

Because Yuna does not care that her son is gay. She does not care that Shane is gay. But what terrifies her is that she didn’t know, and she *still* doesn’t know, the right thing to say, to do, to *be*. She has read stories about bullying, and heard nightmare tales about mental health risks. She’s listened as bigots on the radio grabbed microphones in violent fists and spat *vitriol* about the queer community.

It would be a lie to claim she never suspected that Shane might be gay. And yet, she said nothing.

She knows now, as Shane stands in front of her, hands in hers and fingers trembling, that anything would have been better than nothing.

Anything.

As a baby, Shane cried. Shane cried. Shane, *god*, he cried. For the entire first year, actually, Yuna does not remember a single day where she did not find herself folded on the edge of her unmade bed, head in her hands between her knees and her fingernails in her scalp.

He won’t stop crying. He won’t stop crying. He won’t stop crying.

She thought, isn’t this when motherhood is supposed to come easiest? Isn’t there supposed to be a flood of maternal instincts? Of intuition? Of innate knowing? Of *magic*?

If there is none, then... Isn’t she failing him?

She called her own mother, once, at four in the morning, on a night where Shane had not stopped screaming for hours. As she stepped through the patio doors into the garden, the winter snow drifted from the sky. Snowflakes landed frostily on her bare toes. She gripped the phone trembling in her hand as she dialed her mother's number.

Ten rings before a voice clipped through the line. "*Yuna?*"

Yuna shuddered out a sigh and dug the heel of her hand into her eye. Behind her, in the house, Shane's raw newborn cries rattled the kitchen windows. How he still had energy left to make noise, she had no idea. How he still had vocal chords left to scream with, she had *no idea*.

"Mom," she whispered. The word felt like gravel in her mouth, like rocks scrawling her teeth. Her throat ached around the weight of her shame, her failure. "Mom, he won't stop crying. Shane. I've tried everything. Mom, I've tried- I've tried *everything*."

Silence buzzed through the line until her mother scoffed. "*You were like this, too. A difficult child.*"

Yuna knew her mother well enough to know that was not a joke. But despite her wince, despite the guilt that noosed her tighter, she needed something. Someone. Anything. She needed her *mom*. Voice muffled by tears, she cleared her throat, and said, "I've fed him. Changed him. Cuddled him. Sang to him. He just- he won't stop *screaming*. No matter what I do. There has to be something that- that I'm missing, or-"

"*Let him cry, Yuna,*" her mother interrupted, tongue clicking in irritation. "*He'll stop eventually. You did. Children are manipulative. You're coddling him by picking him up every time he makes a sound.*"

Yuna pressed her hand to her forehead, this time, Tapping it there in a dull rhythm. *One, two, three, four. One, two, three, four.* Even the thought of leaving Shane to cry, to scream, to *suffer* like that by himself... She shook her head sharply to crack whip the images away.

"Mom, I can't do that," she said. "If I need a break, I do put him down. I do that already. I walk away for awhile, but I come back. I always come back. Or David does. We take turns. We can't just- *leave* him, Mom, he's just-"

"*You're too soft, Yuna,*" her mother grunted. "*You're too soft. I've told you this before. And if you're not careful, what will you give him?*" Quiet. So loud in her ear that it buzzed, like static, like standing too close to a broken television. "*Your softness. Your softness, Yuna.*"

Yuna cupped her elbow with her free hand, closing her chest off to the world. "Mom," she tried. "I-"

"*Do not burden him with it. You'll need to teach him to be a man, yes?*"

She closed her eyes.

Before severing the connection, her mother added, “*Do not call me in the middle of the night with nonsense.*”

Soft. Soft, soft, soft. Yuna was too soft. She was too soft.

But she wasn’t. She wasn’t. She was not too soft. Maybe, actually, she was not soft enough. Maybe.

She thinks about the first time she heard one of the kids on Shane’s hockey team hiss a racial slur at him. The boy’s wrinkled-up face crumpled in fury at how Shane’s natural skill outshone his, and because there was no easy faults to grasp at, he turned to stabbing a finger at what made Shane different. He spat the insults under his breath at first, but then the ugliness grew louder, bigger, more vicious, when others joined in. Mob mentality of wicked glances beneath deceptively sugared lashes. They knocked their bodies into Shane. Pushed him sideways, backwards, forwards, up, down.

He was so sweet and so kind, her Shane, when he was spoken to. But he struggled with holding conversations. Outside of practice, friendships were less than scarce, and birthday parties or playdates were not events he was often invited to. He was sensitive, too. Noises, lights, food, sudden touches. Some days, and those were times that Yuna grieved, it seemed his body knew better how to flinch and cower and hide than to enjoy.

And the other kids... Oh, they noticed. Oh, they *knew*. They saw that something was different about Shane. And *oh, gotcha!* they were cruel.

Shane. Her little Shane. Her little, little Shane. He didn’t understand, at first. He sat with Yuna and David at dinner and as he reached for his glass of water, his shoulder winced up to his ear at a flare of pain. He’d been tripped by his own teammate, earlier that afternoon. Smacked hard to the ice on his hands and knees by the boy’s overzealous tackle.

Yuna had shot to her feet at the side of the rink with a shocked gasp. Shane had simply pushed himself back up, elbows wobbling, and clambered to his feet.

“Shane,” David said. He frowned and set his cutlery down. “Are you hurt, buddy?”

Shane gritted his teeth as he lowered his arm. “I fell today. During practice. Landed a bit awkwardly, I guess.”

“Did you have somebody take a look? Check it over?”

Shane shook his head. “No. I was just messing around with the guys. It’s not a big deal, Dad. Just a fall. We all get our bell rung sometime, right?”

Yuna, sitting opposite, said nothing. But she saw the cautious, frail edge to Shane’s smile. She saw the way his eyes flicked nervously to hers and asked: *Right? Am I right, Mom? Is this right?*

She should have said: *You do not deserve to be treated so cruelly.*

She should have said: *They are not your friends.*

She should have said: *I will fix this.*

Instead, she thought about how alone he would be if they excluded him even farther. How giving the cruelty a label might hang a rope around Shane's neck, one that only waits to be pulled. How she could not trust the league to understand and act against racism at all, how she did could not trust any flimsy, reactionary shields they would put in place.

How naming any of it might invite it to find a chair at the dining room table.

She didn't want Shane to *feel* like he was different, even if he was. She didn't want him to carry the shame that would come with that, to feel the stony weight of it settle in his chest. The hurt of it that lingers like a bruise in her own ribs, since childhood.

She knew that pain. She knew that pain well. And she hoped, *fiercely*, that if she could keep guiding him forward, if she could avert his eyes, if she could cover his ears, maybe the pain would not dig roots in. Maybe it would not stay. If she could spare him, by pretending it did not exist, then...

She thought about her mother's warnings, and how her own personal downfall, always, had been her softness. A tenderness that yielded, that *gave*, and so Yuna had become direct to weaken the edges, had become *blunt* to allow her space to stitch the sore edges of her wounds. Had become unrelenting.

And so, with Shane, with *this*, she chose words she hoped would protect him. Not because she did not see his suffering, but because she saw it too crystal clearly.

"Boys can be rough. They're jealous," she said. "You just have to get back up. Try again. I believe in you."

Shane's eyes slid towards his aching shoulder, then moved back up to her face. He nodded. "Yes, Mom. I'll try harder next time."

Less than a year later, Shane was ushered off the ice by one of the coaches in the middle of a game. Tucked beneath the wing of the coach's duffle coat as he cupped his shaking hands to his face and caught the rivulets of blood drip-dropping from his nose. He flopped onto the bench beside Yuna, groaning a hiss through his teeth.

"Bad hit," he grumbled, as she crouched down in front of him. "He didn't mean it. He just—he was reaching for the puck, and the swing of the stick... I dunno. Just, smacked me."

Yuna knew what she saw. She knew what had been no accident or mistake by the opposite team's player. She heard the vile words the boy spit like dirt at the ice even as he was hauled to heel by his coach's hand on the back of his jersey.

She should have said: *I'm so sorry. You do not deserve to be hurt. You deserve better.*

Those words crowded her mouth, the ones that could spill the pain out of him and let her catch and cradle and cure the infection. But instead, *instead*, she cracked open the first aid box at her feet, pulled out some gauze, and said, her movements almost frantic, "He's an

idiot. Let's get you cleaned up and back out there. You've got this, Shane. They're relying on their captain."

May the sting not stick. May the sting not stick. She could feel the bitterness of it lodged in her own chest. But if she could just steady her hands, and steady his shoulders, and steady his breath... she could lead him forward right past it.

There is so many things she should have said. Because she sees Ilya, now. She sees Ilya with Shane. She sees how he soothes Shane through the swell and fall of a panic attack. How his hands are so gentle, his words so soft, as he lullabies Shane back from the brink of hyperventilation; how he guides him away from shuddering breaths all the way down to calmness.

Ilya says, "This is scary. It is."

Ilya says, "This is hard. Makes sense you're freaking out. Doesn't mean we can't do it."

Ilya once said, and Yuna only caught the tail-end of it, as she passed the bathroom door, where Shane had retreated to, "Being sad, is okay. This is sad. Is okay to cry, Shane. Is okay."

Yuna never said those things. Not really.

She did not say *I'm sorry they are so awful* because she never wanted him to dwell on the other kids' words. To fester, to linger, to come back to himself trapped like a sunken rock at the bottom of a dark lake. Because he was a bright, golden light, her Shane, and he didn't need the stain of others to eclipse his glow.

But maybe she had missed something, there. Maybe there had been space, after all, to hear what he was feeling and still encourage him gently through to the end. Maybe there had been room to remember and honour the sensitive little boy in the spinning-around middle of it all.

Maybe there had been moments where she could have made him feel safe enough to come to her. To lay his worries in her lap, to whisper the secrets and truths that trembled most terrified inside of him.

Because when he learned how to swallow hurt like a pill, to stand back up without protest, to ignore the insults rolling off his back, he learned something else, too.

No. He did not learn. It was something she taught him. Collateral damage born of her own fears.

She taught him that some hurts are meant to be carried alone. Some struggles are supposed to wither away unspoken of. She taught him that there are pains she will carry him out of and there are pains that he should hide from her.

In protecting him, in shielding him, she taught him, unintentionally, how to disregard his own needs. She taught him how to turn away from himself. In her effort to care, she handed him a blueprint of instructions on the habit of being blind to himself.

Maybe that's why, years later, at twenty-seven, he is holding her hands and struggling to meet her eyes as he apologises for something that could never, ever be wrong.

The tears gathering at his lashes make her lungs clench with guilt. If she could soak the sadness out of his skin and into her own bones, she would. She would drench her soul in devastation if it saved him from a single drop.

"I am," she says, "so, *so* proud of you, Shane."

She thinks of her little baby and how he slept peaceful as a lamb with his face on her chest. Her little boy standing atop his bed and hop-hop-*hopping* in delight as he completed his folder of collectable cards. Her teenager flushing rich-red as a cherry when earning praise from coaches.

She thinks of her son leading the love of his life into her home and standing in front of her.

She thinks of her son drawing a breath in and leaving it carefully out with the words: "I'm gay."

She thinks of all the times she could have done things differently. Better. All of the small bread-and-butter moments at the breakfast table that she could have reached for him sooner or tiptoed an inch closer. The days she could have held on a moment longer. All of the things she could have said or done.

"Please," she whispers, and he's squeezing her hands back, now. "Please forgive me, Shane."

He steps forward when she opens her arms. To hold him, to welcome him in, to welcome him home. He leans and folds down into her embrace, face bowing to her shoulder, and he sighs out a shuddery breath. She closes her eyes into it and wishes, *wishes*, she could have done this for him so many years ago.

It will have to be enough, now. It'll have to be enough.

And she'll do better. Oh, she will do so, so much better.

"Please," she says. "Forgive me."

Shane breathes and he says, as easy as nothing and everything and anything: "I forgive you, Mom. I forgive you."

She watches, now, as Shane begins to stir from his sleep. His eyes fluttering half-open, dizzy with dreams, and he looks first, in the dozy light of sunset, for Ilya. One hand sliding out over the couch to instinctively seek where his warmth had last lingered, and his nose scrunches up with disappointment when he finds an empty cold.

"He's with your dad," Yuna soothes, with a smile. "Talking something-something about that Russian vodka."

The sound of her voice draws Shane the rest of the way awake. He tilts his head back to blink up sleepily at her. His hair a glossy spill of dark ink across the pillow, and she lets herself reach out to smooth a curling lock of it back into place, tucking it behind his ear. Her breath falls out a little shivery from her throat as she does.

Shane's eyes widen and soften all at once at the hitch. "Mom," he whispers, knowing. Knowing. Knowing. "*Mom.*"

Her vision blurs at the edges with the threat of crying. He shuffles a hand free from his blanket to curl his fingers around her elbow and he tugs, gently, until she softens like honey into his hug.

"Mom," he says again, and as he wraps her fully in his sleep-warm arms, she can hear the warmth of a fond smile in his voice. Gently exasperated, playful. "It's really okay," he mumbles, drowsy. "I promise."

He knows what she is about to say, what she has said countless times in the past week, but she needs to say it again. One more time. One more time.

"There is so many things I wish I could have done differently, Shane." A tear slips weakly through and dampens Shane's shirt, even as she brushes it away with a clutch of her sleeve. "I am so proud of you."

Shane rubs her back in slow, soft circles. He hides a yawn in her hair.

"I forgive you," he promises, again. Again and again and again, he forgives her. As if it has never been in question. As if no other choice could ever exist.

He smiles again, she can feel it in how he holds her a little closer for a moment, a little tighter, before he wiggles back to grin at her and tease, "Can we stop being emotional and get ready to watch the game now? It's on in fifteen minutes."

Her Shane. Her little, little Shane.

"Yes," she whispers. And this time, when she takes his hands, they do not shake. He meets her eyes. "*Yes, Shane.*"

End Notes

tysm for reading !! i would love to hear your thoughts ♥

dedicated in a way to everybody who deserves an apology from their parents or loved ones. if you never got one: i am now your mom. and here it is

BIG THANK YOU to wilder & kay for helping me with this. i appreciate you SO MUCH <3

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