tu peux sauter loin de la peur

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by Revenant

Summary

David goes to Shane's cottage to get his phone charger. Or maybe, it's really not about the phone charger.

Podfic Available

Notes

A/N: This fic is 100% free-range fanfic, 0 use of AI involved. Please help me keep it as safe as possible by not reposting to any other site.

This is very likely divergent from book canon. I haven't read either (any) of the books, so whatever personality/relationship the Hollanders have there isn't relevant here. I’m basing this on the performances from the show, the reactions of Shane’s parents really stuck out to me, and I wanted to explore the family dynamic based on what is said (and not said) in the show and what we see (and don’t see). The one thing that is (I think) book canon is the ice rink at the cottage? I’m taking that. Title from L'anarchie des jours heureux by La Bronze (the song that plays in ep 6 when they’re driving to the cottage) mostly because I had no idea for a title and I love the song very much.

It’s not the phone charger. David makes it about halfway to Shane’s cottage before he realizes that.

Well, it is the phone charger. He’d forgotten it at Shane’s place and it’s the only one that works with his phone because he never replaces it. As far as he’s concerned, a cellphone is for making phone calls; that’s all he needs it to do. Yuna rolls her eyes at him but it’s true. Every year phones get more complicated. His wife keeps current, tries to talk him into the latest features and he listens because interspersed in her comments about her new phone are snippets of things she’s coming-up against in her work, things that make her day-to-day easier. These things are small frustrations that Yuna doesn’t think are worth bringing up when he asks about her day, about work, about this or that. But he hears about them as these frustrations ease with the latest technological advancements, and he’s glad. He’s glad the phone is evolving and making his wife’s life easier. But when she finally throws up her hands and tells him it’s enough, his phone is so antiquated it’s embarrassing that he still carries it, he goes to the kiosk and asks, “Which phone has the smallest number of steps between him and making a call. Texting, he has grudgingly adapted to because his son has a tendency to go silent some times, or not ‘go silent’ so much as prefer it. Even when he sometimes screens his calls Shane is always reachable by text and David likes to check in.

So it’s that.

The phone charger, because he only has the one, because his phone is over five years old now and all the chargers in the house are Yuna’s from the phones she sheds like a snake sheds its skin, yearly, like clockwork.

“Maybe he’s not answering because he’s doing that silent retreat,” Yuna had said. “Try texting him”

David had tried texting, and he'd called more than once, and so David had said, “I’m just going to go over.”

“Honey.” Yuna had dropped the book she’d been reading, mouth frowning and head tilting in that way she does when she can see he’s getting worked up about something that she thinks isn’t as big a deal as he’s making it out to be. “I’m sure he’s fine.”

“No, I know that. It’s my charger.”

David had genuinely believed that was it until he’s halfway to Shane’s cottage and he realizes the real issue: he’s worried.

It’s this whole ‘silent retreat’ thing. David doesn’t get it. It’s not like Shane. Or, more accurately, it’s not like Shane in the off-season. Ever since the construction on the cottage had completed it’s been his son’s place to unwind and let loose from what is—if David’s being completely honest with himself—an insane schedule. Between sponsorships, games, training and travel, it's a lot. The time at the cottage marks two weeks of the year that Shane has guarded from the start, but those two weeks have always included his parents. Casual drop-bys, dinners, invites to swim or use the boats. Shane can’t stand fishing, but sometimes David

swings around and they skate on the rink and play one-on-one even though David is acutely aware of how little effort Shane puts into those games. David doesn't take it personally, it's always fun and he admits he was only ever a mediocre player at best.

But this year Shane had said he wanted quiet. Absolute quiet. No drop-bys, no visits. "It's been a crazy year, dad. I just want some time to decompress. Do some yoga, meditate. Try to build back my focus."

He's not wrong. The year has been particularly hectic, but that's what makes David nervous. Shane hasn't really talked about any of it. Even when he was staying at their house, recovering from his concussion and his arm still in a sling.

His break-up with Rose? "It's fine. It was mutual, we're actually really good friends now," which had seemed to be the case because in that stretch of time when Shane was camped on the living room couch there seemed to be no shortage of texts from the young movie star, or phone calls, and they always seemed to make his boy smile. David and Yuna have wondered if the break-up is temporary, or if they're even broken up at all, but Shane says they are. He says he's fine, and it's true he's never seemed to struggle when his relationships have ended--not that there have been many relationships--but enough that David has noticed this pattern his son has. This is the first time his son has remained friends with an ex, and it's also the first time that he's dated someone who had seemed to complement him so well. Yuna had been over the moon, for those few months at least, "Jesus, Metros PR could not be happier. This is bringing so much attention to the team. What a power couple," she'd said, and she still hints, sometimes, that it might be nice if that started back again. Is Rose available for a weekend sometime?

Then there's the accident. It's been almost a month since the doctors had given Shane the all-clear, and the headaches are fewer and far between these days. His shoulder has healed well, his physio coming along. Still, it was his son's first major injury since joining the MLH and certainly David wasn't over it.

He'd been sitting with Yuna on the living room couch watching the game on tv when it had happened. He hadn't even been in the same province as his boy--over two hours away--and there Shane had been, lying crumpled and still on the ice.

David remembers how he felt his blood pressure drop, how the room felt hot and cold at the same time. He'd sat there and kept staring--searching for any hint of movement--even as Yuna had popped up from the chair and pulled out her phone; making a call as she paced.

Five minutes later and the game had restarted but David was still sitting there seeing an imprint of his son's body lying there when Yuna had grabbed the remote and turned the tv off. "He's at CHUM. Let's go," and it had felt good to have a task: drive to Montreal, drive to the hospital. Get to his son. He'd snagged his keys and was out the front door, sliding behind the wheel. It wasn't until Yuna was stepping out a moment later, a small bag over one shoulder and her own set of keys in hand so she could lock the front door, that David realized it wasn't so simple. They'd be staying overnight at least, some clothes and toiletries might be helpful. And Shane, he would need things too, even though they could always swing by his apartment.

“Okay,” Yuna had said as she’d slung the bag in the backseat and then buckled her seatbelt. She’d paused and squeezed his wrist where he clutching the gear shift. “Okay?”

“Yes, let’s go.” and they’d gone. Shane had been loopy and bruised, with his arm in a sling, but he’d been okay.

David did not feel like he was okay.

Maybe that was a part of it. It had helped, to have Shane at home again in a way he hadn’t been since his late teens. Some of David’s friends from work had kids who hadn’t moved out yet and they complained about the noise, the mess, the interruptions in their routines, the desire to have their space back. David didn’t get that. Shane’s career had been building up around him when he was still so young, and even as David knew that his son had a gift, that being able to watch his kid do something he loved was something not all parents got to see for their kids, it still felt like too much too soon. That Shane had grown up too fast.

Under normal circumstances, having his son back in their home was a rare treat. These circumstances were far from ideal, but it soothed David’s nerves when the memory of seeing that hit, of seeing his son laid out, unmoving. The cluster of team doctors and medics circling the sprawl of Shane's body while the sports casters described the events on screen like it was still a play-by-play, still hockey and not David’s worst nightmare. He’d think about it, remember that cold dread in his stomach, the way it was suddenly so hard to breathe, and then he would go poke his head into Shane’s room and check-in, or find him out on the couch with the curtains drawn staring up at the ceiling and he’d say, “Hey, you want to do a puzzle?”

“I can’t focus on the pieces right now, dad...”

“Right,” David would say, because he was always forgetting. “How about cards?” So, they’d play cards together, or he’d bring a book into the living room and turn on a soft light if Shane’s head was hurting him, and read. Looking up every time the fear got hold him again: he’s right there, my boy, he’s okay.

Maybe for all that Shane insisted he didn’t hold a grudge against Marleau for the hit, which had been clean; that he was fine, and feeling better and healing well and, ‘Stop worrying, dad, I’m okay. I promise.’ Maybe his boy was just being strong for his old man, for his worried mom, and trying to deal with his fears and hurts alone. It was a habit David was all too familiar with.

Then there was Scott Hunter.

David likes to think he’s a pretty open minded guy. Or, well the truth is there’s admittedly been a lot of things that genuinely didn’t occur to him to even think about. But when you have a kid sometimes you have to broaden your horizons. Shane’s had girlfriends over the years—not many, but he’s had them. Those relationships never resembled any of the relationships David’s had so it’s come up, between him and Yuna. That maybe... well.

It always seemed fifty-fifty, to David. Sometimes he wondered if he son was gay. Sometimes he thought it was just the awkward nerves that seemed to have his boy in a chokehold. Never

seeming to be standing on solid ground unless he was out on the ice. But that question was there, and so David had to think about. Had to actually consider what it would mean. How he would react.

So he likes to think he's open minded. He's been happy with the direction his country's been going over the years: more rights and recognition is a good thing, in his opinion. And he's lived in Ontario his whole life, and even before the country recognized queer relationships the province had, and he'd thought that was good, but he'd thought it in a sort of generalized, distant way, and it was a little surprising that when he brought it closer to home things felt a little more...complicated.

That made him more than a little disgusted with himself, if he were honest. Shane is his kid. He's always insisted that there was absolutely nothing Shane could do that would change David's opinion of him. And then to discover that maybe there was? Well.

That was a tough time.

It was tough work, to unpack that. And the thing that did it was realizing that there was a very simple bottom line. There were differing opinions (there always were) but any opinion that David read or sought that made any sort of sense made it clear that one didn't simply choose their sexuality. It was a part of you. A thing you acquired through whatever means (divine, scientific, or otherwise) like hands and feet, a heart and so on. It was a thing you had but discovered over time, like the toy in the middle of a Kinder Surprise. And this meant that either he accepted his son completely and unquestioningly, or he accepted him not at all. There were no half-ways. It was not something David could ask his son to reconsider, even if he explained how much simpler life could be if he was just...not.

And all that he'd been digesting slowly while his son was sixteen and in the middle of one of the strangest relationships David ever observed, with a girl who loved soccer almost as much as Shane loved hockey. They spent their time comparing and contrasting their preferred sport and arguing superiority of one over the other; sometimes holding hands or going to movies, but mostly they took a ball over to the nearby park, or they went over to the local rink.

"I don't get it," David wondered aloud, observing from the window. "Is she his girlfriend? Or just a friend?"

Yuna had scoffed and rolled her eyes. "Oh, let them be. They're fine." Then she smiled and leaned against him, rubbed a hand up his arm as she perched her chin on his shoulder. "Are you trying to tell me you were Mr Suave and Debonair when you were that age?" she snorts, but it sounds fond. "That's not how I remember things, and you were already in college by the time we met. Our kid is sixteen."

"Hey, I still landed you, didn't I? Had to be doing something right," and she'd smiled and they'd kissed, but David still wondered. Because he does remember being an awkward sixteen year old dating his first girlfriend. He'd been neither suave nor debonair, but he still remembers stealing kisses and touches, trying to sneak the door closed while studying at each other's houses. They've never had that trouble with Shane, and that could be that he was gay. But then again David remembers the way Shane had found him in the kitchen one day, eyes

glued to the floor as he awkwardly explained that a girl had asked him out and, “What do I do?”

“Well,” David had said, poking at the steaks he had in the pan while he took a moment to consider. “You have fun. You be yourself.”

Shane had scrunched his nose and made a face. “Be myself?” he asked. “Are you *sure*?”

David had watched that kiss at the Stanley Cups with a kind of relief and awe. Awe, because he knew all too well what the MLH was, the type of culture it had. Not a lot of room to be different, there. He’d been finding that out every day with the off-hand things his wife repeated various CEO and sponsors had said about their own son, “we’re thrilled that Shane is Asian-Canadian!” So David knew it had taken a lot of guts for Scott Hunter, and he respected the hell out of it.

But he was also so damned grateful that it was Scott Hunter and not his own damned kid.

Let someone else pave the way. Thank god.

He remembers looking over, looking to where Shane was sat at the end of the couch, like he’d just got his bell rung for a second time in as many months, and David wondered. And he wondered still when Shane’s phone had rung and his kid had hopped-to straight out of the room, quicker than a rabbit. He’d been quiet and distracted when he’d come back.

Ever since that night, if David were honest. A little jumpy, a little distracted.

He’s stayed about another week before he’d insisted on moving back to the cottage, and at first he’d still allowed the visits, even though whenever David had dropped by Shane always seemed to have a pen and paper in his had, been idly taking notes or scratching things out. “Planning a party?”

“Huh?” Shane had asked, glancing up. “Uh, no. Groceries. I just—sometimes I forget what I like to eat in the off-season.”

David had clapped a hand on his son’s shoulder and had offered to go with him to the store, but Shane had insisted he could manage on his own.

And then his son had seemed to grow more quiet, more introverted, more distracted. Until one day, over lunch a the cottage, he’d pushed his plate away and folded his hands and said, “I’m, uh, I’m thinking that I’m going to do a silent retreat for a few weeks. Try to meditate, get my focus back.”

Yuna had reached out, rubbed a hand on Shane’s back. “Are you okay, sweety?”

“Just, the whole year, you know? Kind of feels...like I need to clear my head for a bit.”

“Well, I think that sounds like a great idea,” and she’d shot David a pointed look, “Don’t you, honey?”

“Yeah,” David had agreed, even though he absolutely did not like the impulse Shane had to isolate himself to process a year like the one he’d just experienced. Shane internalized so much, and David sometimes felt that when he was left on his own too long, he’d overthink himself into knots and make any situation ten times more complicated and stressful than it needed to be. David was used to being around to tease out some of his son’s complicated thinking.

So he needs the phone charger. His cellphone is at 67% power, but there’s a part of him that knows there’s no need to rush over like this. That maybe Shane had spent the morning by the water, and meditating, and hadn’t come in for lunch yet, hadn’t had a chance to check his messages. There was every chance that he’d text back and give David a good time to come by. Or maybe he’d call and say he’d finished with his retreat, that he wanted a good home cooked meal and to sit with his parents for dinner again, like they usually do at this time of year.

As he lets himself into the cottage, it certainly seems like a morning down at the lake is the likely explanation. There’s no sign of Shane inside, and David collects the charger from where he left it: the kitchen counter by the outlet. There’s a bowl filled with snacks sitting in front of it, obstructing it from view, and that makes David pause. It’s not unusual for Shane to change-up his habits in the summer. He’s strict with himself during the year, strict with what he eats in a way that David doesn’t like but that Yuna insists is fine, “He has a nutritionist. He’s following protocols,” and that might be the case but David doesn’t like how inflexible Shane can get about it some times. But in the summer that goes away and he lets himself have the things he enjoys again.

That usually doesn’t include potato chips.

David doesn’t know what it is about them, but Shane has never liked potato chips, not in any flavour. And here is a bowl with three different brands and three different flavours.

He hesitates for a minute, torn. He’s technically achieved his goal: here is his charger, he has it, he can go.

But he hasn’t seen Shane, hasn’t checked in and made sure that his son is okay. How is he doing? How’s the meditation? David doesn’t even think that he’d need Shane to talk if he doesn’t want to; if he really needs to stay silent on this retreat. The thing is, Shane is so expressive, he doesn’t need to say a thing to convey what he’s feeling. David could take one look and know: he’s okay. He’s handling things. He’s healing. He’s sorting things out.

Whatever it is, David just wants to be sure, and he’s standing there debating with himself whether to respect his son’s desire for privacy and leave, or sooth his own frayed nerves and check-in, the way he would have checked-in if it had been any other time. Any other time that his son didn’t decide he needed absolute quiet and absolute privacy.

There’s a hum of voices.

It’s surprising. There’s two voices, soft and even, a conversation bouncing back-and-forth easy and smooth, and David is stuck processing: his son is doing a lot of talking on this silent retreat, and he’s thinking that and standing there when Shane and another man appear, clearly

coming up from the water, towels over their shoulders and discussing lunch plans and David finally registers who the other man is.

Ilya Rozanov.

He stays standing there because he's so exasperated for a moment. For one single moment, David thinks this cloak-and-dagger 'silent retreat' is cover because his kid is embarrassed about being friends with Rozanov. David can't even begrudge that because his wife is viciously protective and ruthlessly competitive and David knows she's almost as invested in this 'rivalry' as the MLH. "Better than *my* son?" she scoffs, "I don't think so." David's always just been happy to go with the flow.

That pocket of exasperated fondness lasts for only a second. Long enough for Rozanov to push David's son up against the glass sliding doors of the cottage and get is hands over him. That's...friendly. Certainly...more than friendly.

And that jolts him out of the strange stillness, desperate to get out before he's noticed. Desperate, because it occurs to him with a cold-douse of shame, that this was actually the reason for the silent retreat. Protecting this, holding this space for whatever this between his son and Rozanov to take shape and to exist. And David had been so caught up in himself and his worries that he hadn't listened to the boundary his son had set. Hadn't respected that his kid was a grown man and maybe didn't need his parents hovering when he'd been taking care of himself just fine for years now.

More years than David would have preferred, but still.

Rozanov looks up and meets his eyes, his hands dropping from Shane's body, and that sets David moving. Cursing himself for being too stunned to start walking earlier, when there might have been less damage. He keeps walking even as Shane turns around and sees, and his whole expression turns: goes flat and wide-eyed when he'd been bright and smiling a second before.

David can't stop walking. Can't stop thinking about how he wishes he could take this moment back. How he wishes he could have sat still with his book, and kept texting. Let his son come to him in his own time. He walks out and drives away and he sees Shane standing there, sees his son standing reflected in the rearview mirror in his flip flops and his swim trunks, alone in the gravel driveway watching David go and he thinks: is this worse? Am I making this worse? But he can't stop driving and he hopes that Shane understands what he means by this: we don't have to talk about it if you're not ready. We don't have to do this now.

I didn't mean to take this from you.

"Did you get your charger?" Yuna asks, when David gets home.

"Uh, yep."

"How's Shane?"

“Good. Fine,” he bobs his head, and then holds up the charger. “I’m just gonna,” and he walks out to the kitchen, plugs his phone in, and then braces his hands on the counter and breaths.

Then he goes back to the front room, picks up his book and settles down, watching the driveway more than he’s engaging with the novel. Hoping Shane stays at the cottage and continues his day, but knowing his son too well to think that will happen.

Five minutes later the Land Rover pulls into the driveway. Shane, with Rozanov in tow, walks up the front steps and David sighs even as Yuna shoots up from her chair, “What,” whirling towards the front door like she might have to shoo Ilya Rozanov away from her son with a broom. Like Rozanov didn’t just climb out of the passenger side of Shane’s truck, and step along in Shane’s path the whole way to the front door.

He catches the look his wife shoots him, *“What is going on? Did you know about this?”* it asks, and he keeps his eyes slightly averted even as Shane enters.

“Hey, it’s me...Shane...” and appears in the front hall, hands in his pockets, closed up tight and tense.

David thinks, “You don’t have to do this,” and he thinks, “If I could turn back time for you...”

“I left my charger at your place, and it’s the old one that fits into my phone,” he rushes to explain. “All the other chargers we have are newer so...” because it was a violation. Lie or not, his son had made it clear he wanted space, wanted quiet. And David had let his worry build, let the excuses and justification build until he invited himself passed the boundaries Shane had set, and now his son was left with the consequences.

But Shane doesn’t hear any of that. Let’s him off the hook with simple understanding, “It’s okay, dad,” and then proceeds to break David’s heart by adding, “I’m sorry, you shouldn’t have found out that way.”

And he’s right, is the thing. David and now Yuna, should never have found out this way, but not in the way Shane is thinking. David isn’t sure how he can explain this to his kid.

The thing that David keeps getting stuck on isn’t the gay thing, it’s the Rozanov thing. He’s never had the opportunity to meet the guy in person, but he’s seen enough post-game interviews and heard enough of the stories to have formed a pretty solid idea of the Russian’s character. He’s the type of outgoing, charismatic, rakish player that the MLH loves: good for publicity, good for fans, great for engagement.

It’s not the sort of character that David ever considered might be good for his son.

He’s sifting through and reframing moments of the rivalry, trying to make it make sense. He keeps getting stuck on the last All-Star game. Yuna had been half-convinced the game would fall apart before the second period, that Rozanov would be so unprofessional that he’d refuse to cooperate with Shane on the ice, or the teamwork would be so bad they'd never get any momentum. What had happened instead was an earth-shattering synergy, both Shane and Rozanov moving so fast, operating so well together that it was almost as if no other players were in the rink with them. The puck had slashed back-and-forth in clean passes so fast no one could intercept and before David had even caught-up to where the puck had landed the goal had already been scored.

And there was the kiss. It wasn’t surprising in itself, because Rozanov was always affectionate with his teammates, but it had struck David as he’d seen it that Shane hadn’t pulled away or tensed. He'd return the loose embrace, one hand curling forward to rest on Rozanov's shoulder, and he'd ducked his head and let the Russian plant a solid smooch on the side of his helmet. David remembered how that had stood out to him, even then.

But apparently whatever this is has been going on longer than that. Much longer. What stands out to David, then, is the bickering. The quiet back-and-forth exchange, Ilya’s insistent, “No, longer than that...the summer before” and Shane’s, “Not helping.” in the same way he had whispered, “No, Ilya, that’s gross,” and Ilya had seemed to be quietly erasing the term ‘lovers’ from his vocabulary.

This is a big thing. It’s big for anyone, but David knows it’s especially big for a professional MLH player, especially one on Shane’s level, who already breaks the norm of what a professional hockey player should look and act like. He can’t stop thinking about Scott Hunter. Can’t stop thinking about how that moment felt groundbreaking to him when he'd watched it happen, and he had no idea how much it was impacting the people who meant the most to him. His son.

David wants to know his kid isn’t alone in this—whatever it is. If it isn’t serious, then is there someone else who might be better for Shane? Easier? And if it is serious, is it equally serious for Rozanov? He can’t lie, the fact that Ilya likes both men and women shakes him a little. If things get hard, Ilya can make another choice and still be true to himself, still be completely himself. Shane doesn’t have that option.

He’s trying to be open-minded. He’s trying to be understanding. Still, it’s been years of clips and interviews, and he doesn’t like the cavalier way Ilya seems to hold things. It’s his kid. That’s his kid that this guy has got in his hands, and David’s protective. He can’t help it.

And then Ilya says, “It’s true, I’ve been with many women, but I have only been in love with one person.”

And that’s...well.

And Shane...

When Shane was three years old, David brought him to the rink. He remembers how small those ice skates had been when he'd laced them onto his son's feet. How Shane was bundled in layers, his scarf wrapped up to cover the bottom half of his face. Those brown eyes were

shifting everywhere, taking in everything. There weren't many people on the ice, and David had stepped out backwards into the rink, his arms outstretched, "Hold my hand," he'd told his son. "We'll go slow."

He remembers the frown of concentration on Shane's face as he had watched his dad's feet out there standing on the shining ice, and his own feet standing on the thick rubber mat. And David remembers every second of that moment, watching his son step out for the first time, tentatively, cautiously, into a place where he unquestioningly and absolutely belonged.

He's reminded of that moment when Shane answers, "Same here. Only one," and can't meet anyone's eye but does seem settled in the answer.

Wow. David thinks. Wow wow wow. Because they'd said that before rookie season it hadn't been serious, and it certainly seemed like they were still feeling things out now, testing new waters, like they were breaking new ground. But he has the sense, very suddenly, that it's been serious for much longer than either one is disclosing, and it almost makes him smile, strangely relieved to hear and see that however hard it's been, or will be, his son had found a soft place to land.

"Excuse me," Yuna says, and she stands up from the table and disappears through the kitchen.

Shane turns to watch her go, and then forces himself to look back at his hands clasped on the table, and his glass, and the space over David's own shoulder. His eyes constantly shifting, but never straying back to where Yuna has gone.

The silence stretches, David wonders if he should say something.

Something must happen, some silent communication, because then Shane is startling a little and glancing toward Ilya and Ilya nods his head towards the door that Yuna disappeared through. "You should go," he says, soft.

"Are you--" Shane cuts himself off, licks his lips. "Will you be okay?"

"We will be fine," Ilya says, with a surprising certainty. "I promise. Go."

Shane gets up from the table, glances at David and David nods once, tries to look comfortable and non-threatening, and maybe it works, because his son follows Yuna out to the garden, and he's left sitting at a table with Ilya Rozanov, who bickers with his son like they're an old married couple even though both seem adamant that they're not that serious.

The silence stretches between them. Ilya takes another sip of vodka, and David fiddles with his own mug. "Did you have lunch?" he asks. "I think I interrupted those plans."

Ilya's smile looks a bit like a grimace. "Yes, a bit," he acknowledges. "We have not eaten."

"Okay." David stands up because he feels infinitely better to have a task in front of him. "Why don't you help me throw something together, then."

"Okay," Ilya says, and pops up to follow him into the kitchen.

He tries to pretend he doesn't see the way Ilya keeps glancing towards the front of the house. He trusts his wife, knows that she has a very different bond with their son and the news would hit her different, but could never damage that bond she has with Shane.

David doesn't think telling Ilya that Shane will be okay out there will settle the other man, so he doesn't try.

"Here," he says, instead, taking down the big pot and handing it over. "You handle the spaghetti, I'll handle the sauce."

Ilya hesitates for a moment, holding the big pot and looking between the stove and the tap, while David opens the tall cupboard and grabs his apron from where it hangs on the peg. "Once you get that started, I'll conscript you to chop some vegetables."

"Okay," Ilya says, again, steals one more glance towards the door and then turns on the tap.

It's quiet while they work. The pot filled and set to boiling, and a saucepan beside with tomato paste that David starts adding seasoning to. He sets out the cutting board and a knife and starts Ilya chopping vegetables for the sauce. Nothing fancy, some carrots and peppers and onion, enough to give it flavour.

"You ever made pasta sauce from scratch before?" David asks.

"No, not really."

So David steps over and walks Ilya through how to chop the veggies so they're the right size. Everything's quietly simmering and bubbling when Shane and Yuna return, Yuna back in full stride, talking about brand deals.

He catches Ilya's eye and nods in a way he hopes is encouraging. "They're okay."

"Yes," Ilya says, but he still checks-in with Shane the moment the man steps into the kitchen. David notes that his son has been crying, but Shane meets Ilya's eyes calmly and nod's once, and that seems to be enough to settle Ilya. "Okay."

Moments later, David sits at the table and watches a storm build behind his son's eyes. Watches the way he hunches over, struggling to keep his breath steady, until he loses the battle to hold himself in check and has to rest his forehead down on the table. "I'm fine, I'm just freaking out."

And it's not fine because a glance at Yuna shows she didn't know about this either. The panic attacks. They'd thought those had stopped when Shane was a kid, and it's shocking to see that there's yet another thing that Shane has been keeping private. But then,

"We're good here. Your parents are here. Your boyfriend is here--" and that hand, loosely gripping the back of Shane's neck. "We're good here."

The way Shane's head pops up. "Boyfriend...?"

“Mm,” Ilya says, and it sounds a little casual. “I think so. Probably. Yes.” but there’s nothing casual about the way he knows what to say to get Shane’s breath back. Nothing casual about the easy kiss he plants on Shane’s mouth—chaste and brief, yes, but the familiarity, the way there’s pasta sauce on his fingers and grease on his lips, and even as he tries to keep his fingers from smearing sauce on Shane’s chin there’s nothing to be done about the grease and Shane doesn’t flinch away, or scrunch his face, or protest.

When Shane can finally bring himself upright off the table, Ilya smiles, and there’s nothing casual about that, either.

“Since rookie season,” Yuna whispers, and she’s thinking it too. It started casual, sure, but most relationships do.

Whatever this is between them is serious. David feels more like he’s being introduced to his son’s secret husband than his secret boyfriend. He smiles. “Summer before,” he corrects his wife, and bumps his shoulder to hers.

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