love is stored in the paid partnerships

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by eunoise

Summary

> “We were doing brunch. It was nice. Your dad made their kitchen look like the fancy brunch places on Instagram. We were talking about my schooling, hobbies, friends, movies, normal shit. Boring shit. Then your mother starts talking about my sponsors and savings and suddenly I am giving her my banking information and the phone number of my accountant and I am signing many, many, many papers. She had a scary folder.” Ilya pulls out the scary folder and the thing was thicker than the book Shane was reading. He tosses it on the couch and it lands with a heavy thump. “It was under her chair the whole time and I did not see. The places I had to sign were already highlighted and the date was already written in.”
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> Ilya tosses his body on the couch. Somehow, he makes less of an impact than the Scary Folder. “She owns me now, yes?”
>
> Seemingly on cue, Shane's phone lights up with a notification that *Yuna Hollander has shared a calendar with you.*
>
> Oh, God.

or: shane's mom keeps slutting out his boyfriend (!!!) to sponsors and shane's totally cool and chill about it no really he's FINE

Notes

this was inspired by all the connor storrie photoshoots i've been seeing and yuna hollander having one of the funniest reactions to her son being gay that ive seen in fiction and also just general thoughts ive had about modeling

i imagine ilya does do ads and had sponsors and stuff, but maybe not to the extent shane does whatever man i had a great time writing this

i know nothing about hockey or brand deals or canada or anything at all while writing this ive forgotten every possible brand that exists i had to google 'cars' and 'clothes' and 'drinks that are gatorade but not gatorade' and 'shoes' so if there's any inaccuracies youre just going to have to live with those feelings there's a hornier version of this that lives in the alternate reality where i wrote that instead but here's the silly/sweet version bc our boys deserve that too

See the end of the work for more notes

A couple weeks after Shane comes out to his parents, Ilya walks into Shane's Ottawa apartment with a confused look on his face that would have been adorable had the next words out of his mouth not been, "Uh, your mother runs my life now, I think?"

"Yeah, she does that," Shane replies before he processes the cold shiver dripping down his spine. He had just started *The Boys of Winter* after it's been sitting on his 'to read' pile for a couple of years now. "Wait, what? I thought you were just doing brunch?"

Brunch *without* Shane. That should've been his first clue that it was some kind of trap, but he was just so…*relieved* that his parents wanted to spend time with Ilya, get to know him. Shane saw that an Ilya Rozanov jersey appeared in his dad's Amazon cart the day after, you know, the whole thing happened. He hasn't pulled the trigger and actually ordered it, but it's the thought that counts. He's probably having difficulty physically pushing the button that will take money out of his bank account and give it to the Boston Raiders. (The thought makes Shane a little bit ill himself, he's not going to lie.) Shane's watched that jersey jump back and forth between the shopping cart and the 'save for later' list a dozen times. It'll happen eventually.

He was kind of hoping that today was the day. That Ilya would have pulled together enough self-control during brunch to not make any sort of joke about Boston or Montreal or the New Yorker or turn anything into a sexual innuendo and Shane's parents would have fallen in love with him and said "Oh, Ilya, you're perfect for our son. We give you our blessing to marry him and have babies together even though it doesn't work like that biologically and you two and Hayden Pike can form a hockey team where all the players are your children."

That was maybe a fantasy too far, but, listen, a lot of crazy shit has happened recently. If Scott Hunter could win the Stanley Cup and then be secretly gay this whole time, anything can happen. Pigs could fly. The Mets could win the World Series.

"We were doing brunch. It was nice. Your dad made their kitchen look like the fancy brunch places on Instagram. We were talking about my schooling, hobbies, friends, movies, normal shit. Boring shit. Then your mother starts talking about my sponsors and savings and suddenly I am giving her my banking information and the phone number of my accountant and I am signing many, many, many papers. She had a scary folder." Ilya pulls out the scary folder and the thing was thicker than the book Shane was reading. He tosses it on the couch and it lands with a heavy thump. "It was under her chair the whole time and I did not see. The places I had to sign were already highlighted and the date was already written in."

Shane picks up the Scary Folder and starts flipping through the papers.

Holy shit.

Ilya tosses his body on the couch. Somehow, he makes less of an impact than the Scary Folder. “She owns me now, yes?”

Seemingly on cue, Shane's phone lights up with a notification that *Yuna Hollander has shared a calendar with you.*

Oh, God.

Shane calls his mom, of course, and she arrives at his apartment with a speed that implies that she was not only on her way over already, but she had already parked.

“You know, I’ve said for *years* that you haven’t been doing enough from a branding perspective. Haven’t I been saying that, Shane?” She doesn’t wait for anyone to answer her and just steamrolls ahead. She’s had two glasses of the red wine he keeps for her, which is when she is at her most powerful. “I mean, sure, you’ve got your energy drink contract, but you’ve bought how many luxury sports cars and you’re just giving away all that publicity away. *For free?”* She says those last two words with a kind of bone deep disgust that Shane is used to, but leaves Ilya with a baffled look on his face.

Listen, Shane would be the first person to admit that his mom was…kind of intense. It was kind of a running joke in the MLH. It was usually just some lighthearted ribbing and anything that pushed past lighthearted ribbing turned into one of the four total fights on the ice where Shane had thrown the first punch.

He was a mama’s boy, sue him. If their mamas had negotiated sponsorships worth millions of dollars that set them up for life post-hockey, they’d be mama’s boys too.

He knows she comes across as cold, but not once has Shane ever thought she didn’t love him. She tells him that she loves him all the time, that she’s proud of him, she’ll hug him in the privacy of their own homes like God intended. She wasn’t mushy, which suited Shane just fine though he recognizes this might be a nature-nurture situation. She shows her love in other ways.

Like by usurping control of his boyfriend’s (!!!) finances and becoming, like, his shadow manager.

“Aston Martin!” Ilya exclaims. He’s finally reading through the stack of papers from the Scary Folder and, now, has Shane blindly signed an uncountable number of papers without reading them because his mother put them in front of him? Yes, but she was *his* mother. Shane *has* to get Ilya in a financial literacy class or something.

“Yeah, I thought you would like that one.” She sets her now empty glass of wine aside and pulls out her laptop. On the screen is the new calender she’s shared with Ilya and Shane. Technically speaking, it’s *Ilya’s* calendar because every event on it involved him in some way

- workouts, training, practice*, doctors' appointments, physical therapy* - but he had no hand in the calendar's creation.

(In Ilya's inbox is an unopened message from Svetlana: *why did you send me a calendar invite for getting drunk at your apartment and watching terrible movies together????i'll do it but what?????????)*

He especially had no hand in the photoshoots and business meetings with Aston Martin, New Balance, and some guy named Thom Browne.

"They've actually tried to reach out to you before, but your manager never replied to their inquiries. Now, Ilya, I would hate to overstep," Yuna lies, "But I'm not sure if your current manager has your best interests in mind."

"Have you fired him already?" Ilya asks. Shane is relieved that he's caught on so quickly.

"You sent him a lovely fruit basket and his severance package was industry standard."

"Mrs. Hollander," Ilya starts.

"Please, I keep telling you to call me Yuna."

"Yuna, this really is too much." Shane has never seen Ilya so off-kilter and his father died not too long ago. "I appreciate all this work you've done already, but you don't need to go to all this trouble for me."

Yuna looks at him like he's a crazy person. Once she leaves, Shane is going to need to figure out a way to explain how this is his mother's version of, like, doing Ilya's laundry or cutting orange slices for him.

"Ilya, I look out for my family and maybe you haven't accepted that you are a part of it already. That's alright. We have time for you to figure that out." She reaches across the table to pat Ilya's hand. "But we don't have time for you to waste these very promising business opportunities I spent all week arranging. It took me a minute to get my mind wrapped around it, but you are going to be a part of my family's future and as much as it might pain you to think about, you can't play hockey forever." Ilya makes some kind of unreadable noise at that. "So I just want to make sure you and my son are set up to be comfortable for the rest of your lives. Now, please accept this calendar invite I'm about to send you."

Ilya accepts the calendar invite. He does not read it.

Ilya thinks he is starting to get this whole modeling thing. According to him, all he has to do is go to a location, put on an outfit and pretend he is an alien and it is his first day on the earth. The earthlings will then present to him a chair and he must figure out based on context clues the function of the chair and how to sit in it and also what sitting is. It's not always a chair. Sometimes it is a bathtub or a luxury sports car or a pair of roller skates, but it's the same basic principle.

He's shared this insight with one of the other models at a recent photoshoot - she's never slept with him before so she is very friendly with him - and she had looked at him for a long time, opened and then closed her mouth a couple of times, and then shrugged so he's basically got it.

He's a big hit with his new sponsors because he's the most gorgeous man to ever walk the face of this earth and the fact that he has Yuna Hollander breathing down his neck which means that he is behaving like a responsible adult. He shows up on time, does what he is told, and is beautifully photographed wearing his New Balances and driving his Aston Martin and wearing these nice shirts with stripes out in the wild.

Shane, meanwhile, is losing his entire mind.

"Did you see the new magazine spread!" His mom is ecstatic with how well everything is going. Shane can practically hear her skipping over the phone. "The photographer was incredible and I've gotten emails from other fashion houses who want to style Ilya!"

Has Shane seen the new magazine spread? What kind of question is that? He has five copies sitting on his bedside table as they speak and twenty more in the trunk of his car. One of his closets is slowly becoming the Ilya closet. This is a closet separate from the drawer where Ilya keeps his stuff when he sleeps over. He tells Ilya it's a boring closet where he keeps lightbulbs and batteries and a spare smoke alarm and once upon a time that was true. But now it is a closet where Shane stores every single advertisement he comes across that has Ilya's face on it.

Shane cannot emphasize enough that this closet is *not a shrine.* Most of the stuff is in boxes. They're not displayed anywhere. He doesn't go in there to look at them or caress them or say sweet nothings to them. If he wanted to look at Ilya or touch him or say things to him, he would just do that to the real Ilya because they're boyfriends (!!!).

Part of him wishes it was something like that. That he was, he doesn't know, jerking off to them or something. At least that would make sense, but no. He sees Ilya's face on the cover of a magazine or the corner of the cover or something and then he buys every single copy in that store along with a can of Monster as if that would make the purchase seem more normal. He speeds home praying he doesn't get pulled over by the cops, who would then search his car to find dozens of magazines featuring Ilya Rozanov instead of the bricks of cocaine they would be expecting to find based on how much Shane is sweating. He then takes the magazines up to his apartment and throws them in the Ilya closet and then he sits on his couch for the thirty minutes it takes for his heart to return to a normal rhythm.

This has happened three times already.

Shane feels a little lightheaded with everything that's going on.

"How come you never got me any of these fashion shoots?" Shane asks.

"Honey, what would you do at one of those fashion shoots?"

"I don't know? Throw up everywhere?"

“Well, there you go.” She moves on like she’s answered his question, which she kind of has. His mom has gotten Ilya a bunch of advertising campaigns that he’s actually having a lot of fun with that Shane would never do in a million, billion years for a million, billion dollars. He’ll put on a white t-shirt and get water splashed on him, fine, but he draws the line at sticking a fake lobster down his underpants. He draws that line a million, billion miles away from that actually.

Ilya kept the lobster. He named it Dimitri and put it in his fridge.

His mom is aware of their stance on going public with their relationship and he has her approval for his plan that he stayed up all night thinking about in the dark while Ilya was sleeping next to him. She’s following the timeline.

But that doesn’t stop her from mentioning it like coming out was the grandchild she wants them to be having for her in the next 3-5 years.

“Oh, of course,” she said over a video call with Shane and Ilya about the photoshoots they need to go to (separately) that week. “I made sure to work with brands that have shown support for the LGBTQIA+ community or are interested in showing support.”

“The responses to Scott Hunter and his boyfriend have been overwhelmingly positive. Did you see his new ad with Burberry? They have such nice coats.” At least he knows what to get her for Christmas this year.

“Oh, I got you some new socks. They’re fleece-lined so they’re very warm and they were on sale!” And they were rainbow colored.

“You have to get her to stop,” Shane begs his father.

His dad doesn’t even bother looking up from his crossword, where he’s been stuck on 47-across: *Creatures formed from the fingers of the sea goddess Sedna, in Inuit myth.*

“Well, bud, you know how your mother is when she gets going. She just wants to support you and Ilya.”

“I don’t want to sound like I’m ungrateful or anything.” He knows his mom could be having much, much worse reactions to having a gay son who is in love with his hockey rival.

“You don’t sound ungrateful at all.”

“It’s just,” Shane is struggling to put it into words. He struggles to put a lot of things into words, but he’s working on it. He’s been getting better. “It’s a lot. There’s a lot going on. Changing. I don’t- It’s a lot,” he finishes lamely.

“I know, kiddo. Are these good changes or bad changes?”

Shane thinks about where he was a year ago, six months ago, one. He thinks about just the weight of it all. It was like there was someone standing on his chest. Multiple someones and

they were all staring at him, unblinking, and he had to stare back.

He didn't know he didn't have to feel that way. He didn't know he felt that way until the weight of them all disappeared. He had all of this love he was carrying around and he didn't know what to do with it. He didn't realize it was supposed to lift him up, not weigh him down. He's starting to get it.

"Good changes, I think."

"Well, that's something, isn't it?" His dad says warmly. "Oh! I got 47-across. Seals!"

"Oh, that makes sense."

They're at Ilya's apartment this time, just cuddling while they watch TV. That's something that happens now. Sometimes they'll touch each other and it won't lead to sex. It leads to sex 9 times out of 10, which is awesome, but the 1 time out of 10 it doesn't happen is pretty good too. They don't have to use lust as an excuse to touch each other anymore. Sometimes the need to feel Ilya's heart beat is excuse enough.

Shane is seconds away from falling asleep like this, cocooned underneath a million blankets and his head resting on Ilya's chest when Ilya suddenly jolts.

"Oh! This is the new commercial I was telling you about! Where's the remote? Turn up the volume!"

The commercial was in black-and-white and mostly entailed a shirtless Ilya smouldering at the camera in various states of undress while he walked around in slow motion. To say he was half-naked most of the time would be an insult to math. He was 80% naked. Sometimes there were other people on screen, but Shane couldn't really focus on them at the moment. There was some pounding synth beat happening in the background and then eventually the image of a 90% naked Ilya faded to a black screen with a logo that Shane vaguely recognizes from a fashion show he went to with Rose once.

"So…what were you selling?"

"I don't know," Ilya shrugs. "Sexy lifestyle? But clearly commercial did not do its job if you are not trying to have sex with me right now. I wore smaller shorts during that shoot, but they did not include it in the commercial. If I wore the smaller shorts, would you want to have sex with me?"

Shane wants to have sex with Ilya right now because he always wants to have sex with Ilya. If Shane doesn't want to have sex with Ilya, that would mean Shane was dead.

"It's just-"

"What is it? You've been very strange lately."

God, Shane wishes he could explain, but to explain, he'd have to understand what was going on with him.

"It's just." He starts. "You want this right? The photoshoots and magazine spreads and brand deals? You're not doing this because my mom told you to?"

"Well, I am doing this because your mother told me to, but if I didn't want to do it, I wouldn't. I don't know if you've noticed, but I can be very stubborn. But I am not an idiot. I can see a good business opportunity when one is shoved in my face. You mom gets me more interesting deals than my old, terrible manager. Before, I have to hold a can of terrible energy drink and follow a dumb script. Now, most of the time I don't need to say anything. I just put on weird outfit and glare at a camera and pretend I am an alien who has never used refrigerator. It's fun. And the money is very good."

"It doesn't make you…uncomfortable?"

Ilya doesn't say anything for a while. Just runs a finger up and down Shane's arm, wrist to elbow to shoulder. "Does it make you uncomfortable? To shoot your commercials?"

"A little. Not enough to stop doing them." He's not an idiot. It was never his favorite thing to do. All the people looking at him, fussing with his hair or his clothes. He'd see his face dozens of times from a bunch of different angles and then he and his mom would sit in meetings and decide which angles were the best even though all the pictures looked exactly the same to him. It's not like the crowds at MLH games. They watched him because they came to watch a game and he was playing that game. These people were looking at him just to look at him. It's weird. Unnatural.

"Your mom wouldn't make you do this if she knew you hated it. I am beautiful enough for the both of us. You can stop now if you do not like it."

"I don't hate it." And he really doesn't. "And I can't stop. Contractually. Just…I need to know you're not just doing all of this for me. Because my mom decided to take over your life and you let her because you want her to like you."

Ilya is silent for even longer now. "That is part of it, but a very, very, very small part. You need a magnifying glass to see it. But, I think, this is how she takes care of people, yes? Managing?"

Shane snorts. "God, yeah."

"So, then it's nice that she is doing this for me. She cares. She finds brands and jobs that will be fun for me. I do not have to do anything I do not want. She said, at the beginning, that she looks out for her family. That includes me now, right?"

"Yes." Shane says. He reaches up to cup Ilya's face. "Yes, of course."

"Okay," Ilya says, like it's simple because it is. "Then I will continue to go to photoshoots where people keep telling me how sexy and handsome I am all the time and then I make a lot of money. Such hardship your mother puts me through."

Shane laughs and pulls Ilya’s mouth to his own.

Love is a funny thing. Sometimes it’s shaped like a kiss and sounds like a Russian phone call you can’t understand and sometimes it’s the Sunday crossword and a tuna melt and sometimes it’s multi-million dollar brand deals. Shane has all this love he doesn’t know what to do with so he’ll have to settle for climbing into Ilya’s lap and they’ll just figure out the rest later.

End Notes

heated rivalry invented love so say thank you to shane and ilya and scott and kip for inventing love it didn't exist before them

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