

pictures of us

Posted originally on the [Archive of Our Own](https://archiveofourown.org/works/76679966) at <https://archiveofourown.org/works/76679966>.

Rating:	Teen And Up Audiences
Archive Warning:	No Archive Warnings Apply
Category:	M/M
Fandom:	Heated Rivalry (TV)
Relationship:	Shane Hollander/Ilya Rozanov
Characters:	Shane Hollander , Ilya Rozanov
Additional Tags:	Mentioned Irina Rozanova , Soft Ilya Rozanov , POV Shane Hollander , Shane Hollander's Cottage , Post-Episode: s01e06 The Cottage (Heated Rivalry) , Light Angst
Language:	English
Stats:	Published: 2025-12-29 Words: 1,753 Chapters: 1/1

pictures of us

by [labeledbones](#)

Summary

“Do you have any pictures of her?” Shane asks. Middle of the night. Later than that, Shane notices when he glances at the clock on his nightstand. Ilya is asleep beside him while he sits up in bed, his brain whirring away once again. Just a little moment of Shane and Ilya at the cottage talking about Ilya's mom.

Notes

Hello, I'm new here and come with a humble little offering :) I have not read the books (yet) so this is solely based on what we've seen on the show. Thank you for reading!

“Do you have any pictures of her?” Shane asks. Middle of the night. Later than that, Shane notices when he glances at the clock on his nightstand. Ilya is asleep beside him while he sits up in bed, his brain whirring away once again.

But of course Ilya automatically stirs awake at the sound of his voice, his body shifting under the covers, a groan at the back of his throat. “Who?” he asks, eyes still closed.

“Your mom,” Shane explains, realizing Ilya is not in his head with him where he’s been trying to picture a woman who looks like Ilya, wondering what her smile was like, if the corners of her mouth curved upwards in the same way as Ilya’s.

Ilya takes in a deep breath and finally opens his eyes, tilting his head towards Shane. “Yes,” he says simply. He brushes his lips over Shane’s arm, kisses his way up to his shoulder, pulling his body halfway to sitting as he goes. His chin comes to rest on Shane’s shoulder.

“Would you ever show them to me?” Shane asks carefully, thinking that he might be asking for too much.

Ilya’s chin slips off of his shoulder, his forehead resting there instead. “Most are in Russia,” he says, the words strained. “But—” He sits up and reaches for his phone, unlocking it and going to his photos.

Shane leans into Ilya, watching as he scrolls silently back through his photos. Shane isn’t sure what he’d expected to find in Ilya’s photos, but he’s surprised by the assortment, how it feels both completely random and carefully curated at the same time. There are meals Ilya’s eaten. Neon signs in empty towns framed in interesting ways. Close ups of raindrops on flowers. Wide shots of mountain ranges. His teammates in candid moments, sweaty and midshout after a win or sitting solemnly on the locker room bench after a loss. Wistful photos taken from airplane windows, oversaturated sunsets or banks of clouds that look like a rolling sea or cities lit up far below him.

Shane catches just one photo of himself in amongst the others, mostly inconspicuous, someone scrolling by would hardly notice. Shane recognizes the photo as being from a press day they’d done together years ago now. Shane, young and awkward in his suit, turning his head to talk to someone out of frame, smiling. Only in the background but undeniably the focus. Unless Ilya really had been that interested in the glass of water set on the table next to the microphone.

Eventually Ilya scrolls back far enough and there is a picture of a picture of a young woman and small boy that Shane recognizes with the sort of tug on his heart that he is still getting used to. As if his heart wants to climb out of his chest and into the phone, into this picture, find young Ilya and never come back to Shane.

Shane turns his eyes to Ilya’s mom who has her arms around Ilya from behind, sunglasses up on her head, pushing back her wavy, dark blonde hair, her eyes bright and alive, and her smile—It’s just how Shane has been picturing it, identical to Ilya’s, the same bow-shaped lips, the same slightly mischievous twist. Shane assumes the photo was taken in Moscow, but

it looks sunny and warm, Ilya in a tank top, his own hair nearly white, his face softer but with the same moles and freckles, his smile just as big as his mom's. Nothing but blue sky behind them.

"My favorite," Ilya says quietly. "She was *so* happy that day." He zooms in on his mom's face, his fingers moving in a gesture that feels familiar, practiced, as if he has zoomed in on her face over and over, looking for something. Shane's heart tugs again, this time wanting to get out and go to grown Ilya right next to him. "But maybe it was an act."

"It wasn't," Shane says with a certainty that he can't possibly have, but he feels it so strongly in that moment.

Ilya turns to him with shining eyes and says, "No?" And then turns back to the picture, the edge of his thumb moving over his mom's beaming face. Shane watches Ilya's own face settle into something bittersweet.

"Ilya," Shane starts and then pauses, giving the thought he's having time to fully form before he says it out loud. "She loved you like I love you," he says, stealing Ilya's words from him. "And it's not an act to be happy around you."

Ilya doesn't say anything. He keeps looking at his mom. He zooms out. Him and his mom together, her arms over his shoulders, hands stacked over his heart. Shane's heart too, Shane thinks. He can almost feel the warmth of her palms.

Wordlessly, Shane and Ilya shift their positions. Ilya sitting up a little more, pressing his back to Shane's chest. Shane's arms over his shoulders, hands stacked over Ilya's heart. Shane kisses the top of Ilya's head. "Tell me about this day," he says, lifting a hand to touch a finger to little Ilya's dimpled cheek.

Ilya's head rolls back and forth on Shane's shoulder, his forehead to Shane's cheek, eyes still on the picture. He laughs gently to himself. "She told me we were on a secret mission," he says. "My father and brother could not find out about it."

"What sort of secret mission?" Shane asks, lips in Ilya's hair. The night sky starts to turn lighter outside the cottage.

"Ice cream," Ilya says. The words float dreamily from his mouth as if he's being taken back to that day. "It was a hot day. Unusual." He pauses, and when he continues, he's lost that dreamy tone. "My father had been awful. His temper—" He breaks off, shakes his head. "So my mother and I, we escaped together."

Shane closes his eyes, imagines the heat on his skin, the muffled shouting of Ilya's father, his mother's kinder, softer voice mapping out their escape route, coming out of a dark, suffocating house and into the clear day.

"We had our ice cream," Ilya goes on. "And then we walked around. For hours. We made up stories about the strangers we saw. Everyone was a KGB agent or an American spy to me." He stops, laughing. Shane laughs too. "My mother—She was more—She gave people good stories. Happy lives." Another beat of silence, Ilya's head turning, his mouth brushing

Shane's jaw. "She would have liked this story for me." Shane angles his head down so that Ilya can kiss the corner of his mouth. "A happy ending."

Shane swallows around the knot in his throat and opens his eyes, looking again at the picture. "Who took it?" he asks.

"One of her happy strangers," Ilya says with a small shrug. "My mother had this—Camera. Old. Film. Always with her." Shane can hear his English starting to slip away from him. Tired, emotional, wanting to do his mother justice.

"What did she take pictures of?" Shane asks.

"Everything," Ilya answers. "Beauty. She always looked for it. Like maybe if she found enough she would—" He stops, clears his throat. "Trees. Statues. Fucking *birds*."

"You," Shane says softly.

"Me," Ilya agrees, after only the briefest hesitation.

"Do you have any of those other pictures she took?"

"Gone," Ilya says, the syllable bare and sharp.

Shane doesn't ask where they went. He sees the shadows of Ilya's father, his brother, locking them away somewhere. Or worse. "I'm glad you have this one," he says.

"They don't know about it," Ilya says. And then, his voice low and a little jagged, "You're the only other person who has seen it."

"Not Svetlana?"

Ilya shakes his head. "No." He doesn't explain further.

Shane lifts Ilya's head up and kisses him. A soft kiss that Shane does his best to control, allowing a slow swipe of Ilya's tongue but then pulling back as Ilya starts to surge forward. "Thank you for showing it to me," he says. "I wish I could—" He stops himself.

"I will tell you more about her," Ilya says, nodding. "Later."

Through the windows, the sun is beginning to filter through the trees. Soft orange light and the flickering of leaves caught in a breeze. "I think she would take a picture of you right now," Ilya says. He grins at Shane and brings his head back to look more carefully at his face. He shakes his head. "She would waste *entire* roll of film on you. Black and white. Freckles."

Shane blushes, rolls his eyes, and then guides Ilya back to where he'd been before, resting against Shane's chest, Shane's arms around him. Shane sees Ilya's phone, abandoned in the bedsheets, screen gone dark. He thinks of the photos he'd seen as Ilya scrolled. "You do it too," he says. "Take pictures of things."

Ilya makes a noncommittal noise, pressing his cheek to Shane's body. When his eyes fall closed, Shane can feel his eyelashes flutter on his skin. "Sometimes," Ilya says.

They lie together in silence for a few moments. Shane watches as the sunlight makes it slow way across the floor, as it starts to inch up and over Ilya's face. He leans down and brushes a kiss over Ilya's cheekbone as if he might taste the sunrise on his skin. Impossibly, he does. Though he cannot begin to explain it to himself. He cannot begin to explain any of this to himself even now.

"I am not as good as she was," Ilya says just when Shane thinks he's fallen back to sleep. "At finding beauty."

Shane looks through the window: the trees, the sun, a distant glimpse of the water, the red flash of a darting grosbeak. "We can look for it together," he says, his voice turning up at the end. Optimistic but also uncertain.

But Ilya says right away, "Yes, I would like that." Another beat of silence and then he says, "These Canadian wolf birds of yours. Are they beautiful?"

"Loons?" Shane asks, and then he considers it. "Sure, in their way. They have these little red eyes."

"We will find them and take pictures of them," Ilya decides, lifting Shane's arm and roughly kissing the inside of his wrist.

Shane laughs. Photographing loons isn't exactly what he'd had in mind, but Ilya is grinning happily as the sun finally floods the room. Beauty. "Sure, alright," he says.

Please [drop by the Archive and comment](#) to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!